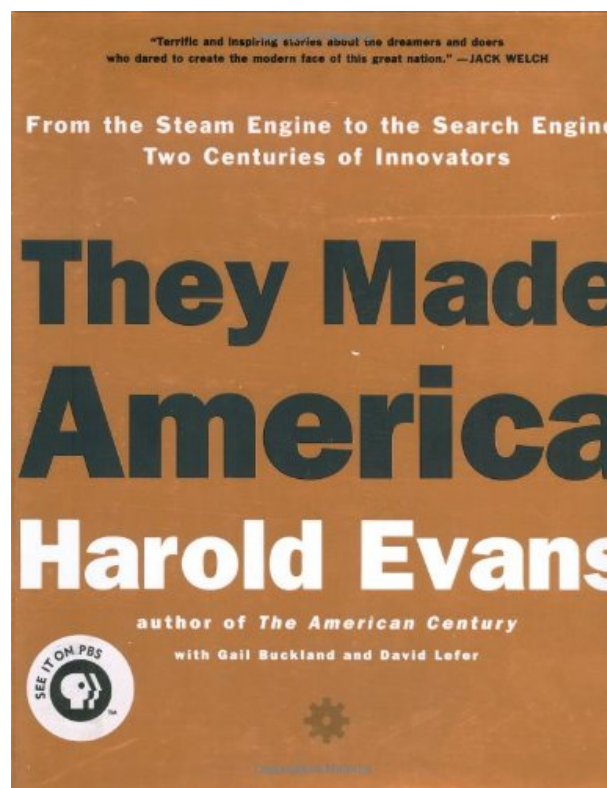
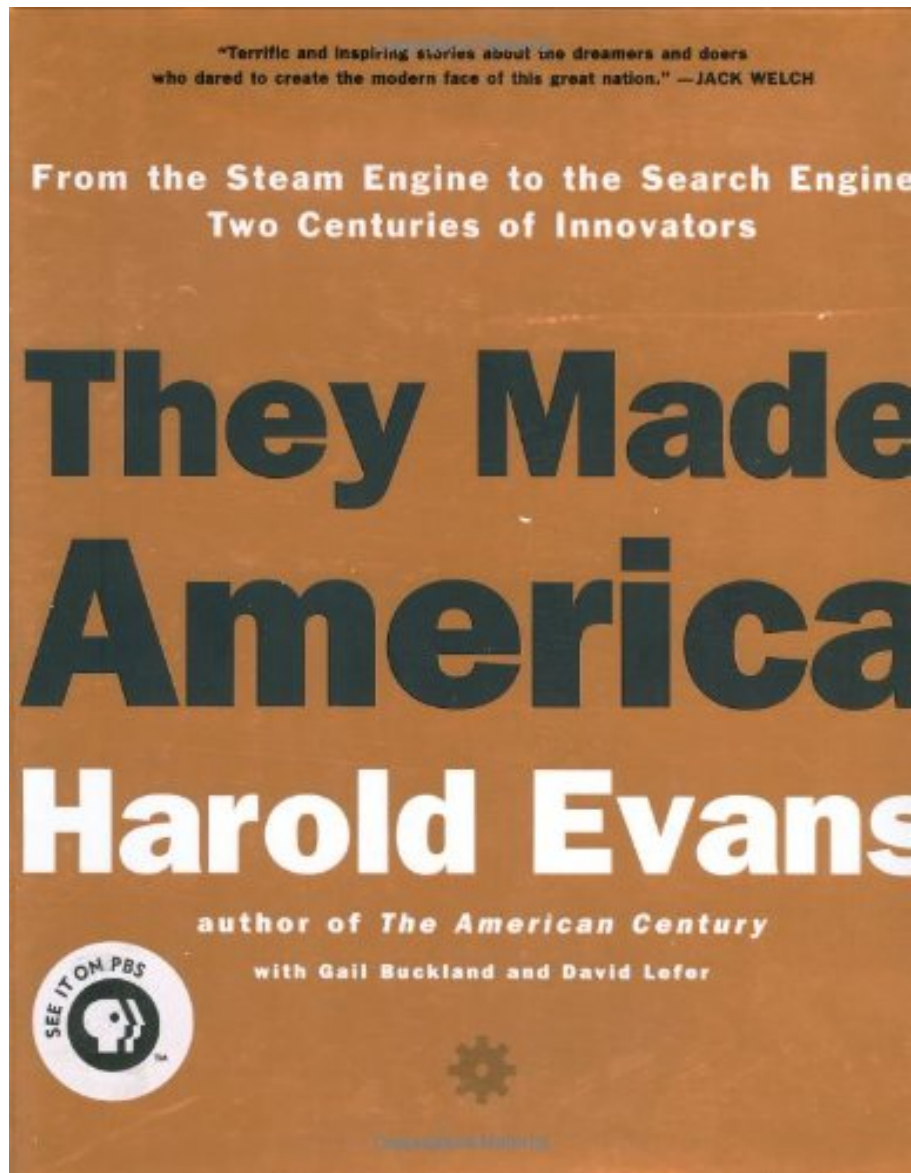


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ENGINE TO THE SEARCH ENGINE: TWO
CENTURIES OF INNOVATORS BY HAROLD
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An illustrated history of American innovators--some well known, some unknown, and all fascinating-- by the author of the bestselling *The American Century*.

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Most helpful customer reviews

72 of 79 people found the following review helpful.

This book should be in everyone's home

By Robert Morrisette

This book is large (9 x 11, 496 pages) and heavy. I can barely lift it with one hand. There are 500 illustrations, many in color, almost one on every page. The accomplishments of 70 innovators are included, such as Morse, Singer, Eastman, Ford, Noyce, Land, Watson, etc. Since I work with computers, I was interested that my former boss, Gary Kildall, is listed as the true founder of the personal computer revolution. His surprising story took 16 pages, IBM and Watson got 19 pages, Edison, 21 pages. This book would make a great Christmas gift. A PBS series follows in November.

26 of 28 people found the following review helpful.

Innovation as a Political Spirit Colorfully Chronicled

By Ed Uyeshima

Author Harold Evans has chronicled American history in a most personalized way, by spotlighting seventy innovators driven by the American spirit to be remembered for their particular contributions to our everyday lives. Divided into three parts and filled with hundreds of photographs and illustrations, this coffee table book is an ideal introduction to the people, both the famous and the forgotten, who have inspired the rest of us to think beyond our self-imposed boundaries and capitalize on ideas that would benefit the greater good. What Evans does very well in his incisive narrative is show how these ideas are not exclusive to any specific group or place and how they often came about by accident or through circumstances they could have never been foreseen. The common thread is a faith in technology in its earliest incarnation when the early settlers devised windmills as a way of getting water on the Great Plains to the latest trends with the electronic whiz kids of the Internet. Even more importantly, the author traces how most of these innovators have time and again proved to be "democratizers", driven not by greed but by an ambition to be remembered. In aggregate, these innovators translated the nation's political ideals into economic reality.

Part One covers our history up to the Civil War, and the inventions one remembers from the social studies class of our youth are covered here - the cotton gin, the Colt revolver, the telegraph, the sewing machine, the bicycle - but also some surprising things like blue jeans and the credit rating. The emergence of electricity and its subsequent predominance in our lives are covered in Part Two, when Edison indeed invented the incandescent bulb, as well as the "kinescope", an early motion picture projector. Of course, the Wright brothers and Henry Ford are in this section for obvious reasons, but so are those responsible for plastic, gas

masks, Weight Watchers, Walt Disney Enterprises and even Barbie dolls. Probably the most interesting portion is Part Three, which covers the Digital Age with the personal computer revolution fathered by DRI's Gary Kildall and the recognition of Steve Jobs and Bill Gates for commoditizing PCs into "the software equivalent of fast food". The emergence of biotechnology is covered here, as is Ted Turner's introduction of "24-hour electronic news", Joan Cooney's Sesame Street, hip-hop, eBay, and Google.

Evans makes some unsurprising conclusions - persistence is a definite requirement as is a "make it work" mentality, and many ended up in debt or destitute in the process. There is apparently no character requirement as several were not particularly moral characters and abrasive to those who hard to work with them. But they delivered...and Evans enthusiastically celebrates their creative spirits. This is a terrifically educational book for not only adults but also children as a way to inspire them to tap into their own ideas.

18 of 21 people found the following review helpful.

Good look at innovation/entrepreneurs in the US

By Gagewyn

They Made America contains biographies of nearly 50 innovators who changed the course of American history. Rather than cover inventors, Evan focuses on people who popularized existing inventions - innovators. After all if an invention never becomes popular then it has little effect on the course of history. John Fitch invented the steam engine, but Robert Fulton who you may remember from history class was the first to start a large shipping company using the technology.

The people Evans discusses have a wide range of backgrounds. For example immigrant Ida Rosenthal worked out of her home as a seamstress. She began to sew reinforced dresses meant to be worn without corsets. Customers asked for separated reinforcement as an undergarment for other dresses. Eventually demand was so high that she hired more seamstresses and focused on producing only her most popular item - the bra. Ted Turner was of course a colorful character who inherited a regional billboard company and worked his way up to founding CNN, an around the clock news channel updated continuously. The biographies also come from all time periods of American History: Part 1 covers history up to the War Between the States, Part 2 covers around 1870 to the very recent past (as the search engines mentioned in the title suggest). I was amazed to find out that the author, Evans, is British. He was drawn to study innovation in America from seeing pragmatism and the effect the country has had on modern history.

This is a neat book, and good to look through. (The actual dimensions of the book are huge, but only about 10 pages are devoted to each biography so it is easy to read in shorter sections.) History buffs, potential entrepreneurs and libraries from college to grade school would benefit from it.

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