



Drugs in America: A Documentary History

David F. Musto

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Most Americans would be surprised to learn that large quantities of beer were brought over on the Puritan ships and that the hallowed Puritans were fond of drink. How many today realize that hemp was once one of our most lucrative cash crops encouraged by President John Adams and promoted by the Agriculture department? Or that cocaine, opium and heroin had several waves of popularity in this century and the last? Drugs and alcohol have been with us from the start. So have attempts to control or eliminate their use. In the first anthology of its kind, renowned drug policy expert David Musto chronicles the rise and fall and rise again of the most popular mind altering substances in the United States: alcohol, marijuana, cocaine and opiates.

In the section on alcohol we hear the Reverend Lyman Beecher, prominent radical abolitionist and father of Harriet Beecher Stowe, thundering against the evils of alcohol in 1826. We read medical documents that show how the first stirrings of concern about what is now termed fetal-alcohol syndrome in 1910 turned public opinion against drinking and helped move the country toward Prohibition. The sections on illegal drugs contain surprises as well.

With accessible, jargon-free introductions this anthology puts drug and alcohol use at the center of American culture. At this critical point in the "war on drugs" if we do not appreciate our drug and alcohol history we may become captive to the powerful emotions that lead to draconian repression, exaggeration, or apathy and silence.

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