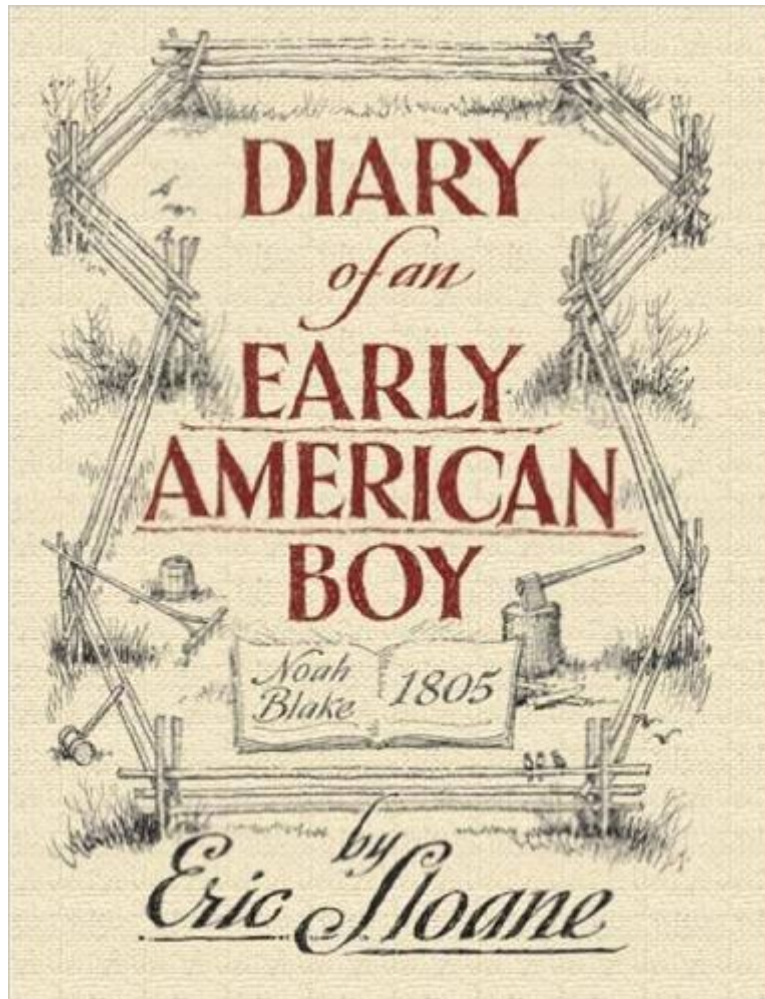


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Diary Of An Early American Boy: Noah Blake 1805 (Dover Books On Americana)



Synopsis

For his fifteenth birthday in 1805, young Noah Blake's parents gave him a little leatherbound diary in which he recorded the various activities on his father's farm. This reprint of an actual early nineteenth-century book provides today's readers with a delightful rarity — a view of bygone days through the eyes of a young boy. Eric Sloane has taken the notebook with its brief comments and expanded the daily entries with explanatory narrative and 72 of his own remarkable drawings. Verbal and graphic sketches detail the construction of an entire backwoods farm as well as such common tasks as making nails, building a bridge, splitting shingles, spring plowing, and maple-sugaring. The result is "an extraordinary glimpse into everyday Early American rural life . . . [that] will delight readers of all ages." — History in Review.

Book Information

Series: Dover Books on Americana

Paperback: 128 pages

Publisher: Dover Publications (December 13, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0486436667

ISBN-13: 978-0486436661

Product Dimensions: 8.4 x 0.2 x 10.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (47 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #100,921 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #17 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Antiques & Collectibles > Americana #235 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > Great Britain #925 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Pop Culture

Customer Reviews

What a unique and interesting concept: take a diary of a 15 year old boy and write a virtual living history book around it! That takes quite a bit of writing talent, knowledge of the time period, and, for the detailed sketches, an artistic talent. And, thankfully for all of us, Mr. Sloane had it all, as he is the one with all of the above said talent to put such a piece together. Interspersing the original 1805 writings of Noah Blake and Mr. Sloane's own "liberties" was a stroke of genius that brings to life the lives of early Americana - farming, milling, building, forging, as well as interaction of parent and child, friendships, and courtly love. This is the sort of style that would get school-age kids, from the upper EI through high school, interested in our historical past. What did the folks of 200 years ago

do during rainy days? It's here. How about the affects on their lives do to seasonal changes? Yep, that info is here, as well. Mr. Sloane has a passion for history and it shows in his writing and detailed sketches. He tends to bring up the minute details of daily life that is rarely - if ever - brought up in the "scholarly" history books that cost five times as much. Mr. Sloane's work is always interesting and never stodgy. I have numerous books by this author and have yet to be disappointed. If you have any interest in American social history, then *Diary of an Early American Boy* (and all of Eric Sloane's books) come highly recommended.

I had this book in an earlier edition (1970's?) and found it delightful. As a boy I pored over the text and line drawings to learn how farm life was 150 years hence (I grew up on a farm). The knowledge of the means of labor and variety of tools which were crafted and used has been with me since, and it is interesting to see some of those tools in antique stores and know exactly how they were used. It also has given me great insight into how my ancestors settled the regions where they made their homes, as my family history research progressed.

Somehow the sum of the story, descriptions of tools and techniques, and simple drawings adds up to one of the most compelling, accessible, and effective depictions of life in 19th century America I've ever read. I came across this wonderful book while doing research for my undergraduate thesis over thirty years ago, I used it very effectively to teach high school history, and just last year I had a great time reading it with my 11 year old son. In all those years I have never seen it fail to engage and energize the reader, often compelling them out of their seats to try one of the contraptions for themselves (the ink recipe works well). How cool is that!

Like the previous reviewer, this book was not what I was expecting. Thinking that most teenage boys hundreds of years ago are just like teenage boys today, I was very surprised to find a published diary of a kid who was willing to write down his thoughts on life. With many entries consisting entirely of one or two words like "Plowed today." and "Do." (ditto), this book does little to offer the reader insight into the thoughts of this boy. The diary portion of the book is disappointing, and is used as a jumping off point for the author to explain in words and pictures about the technology of the early 19th century. The explanations are fascinating, the technology amazing. Anyone who has ever thought about how the pyramids could have been built by thousands of slaves should take a gander at how a covered bridge (that could hold the weight of oxen and a cart and its load and driver) was constructed by a few neighborhood farmers. The illustrations are the

backbone of this book and they are excellent. I wish the author would strike a deal with the publishers of Laura Ingalls Wilder's "Little House" series to draw and explain the machinery described in those books. I would recommend this book as a gift for anyone, kid or adult, who is interested in architecture or engineering, or who loves history.

Ok, I'm an admitted "history geek" so I love most things that have to do with history, and especially early U.S. history. But this book was fascinating. I discovered it completely by accident one day when cleaning out my classroom of "stuff" left by three previous teachers. I teach, you guessed it, U.S. history. I only grabbed it and put it in my purse because I was going on a weekend trip and needed a read for the car ride; I had never heard of the book nor of Eric Sloane. What a great accidental discovery! I studied early U.S. history in college and have taught it for four years, and still learned a great deal from this book. What makes it so fascinating to me is that it doesn't concentrate on what was going on in politics at that time, or world affairs, or what the aristocracy was doing (things that most history texts focus solely on) but just what life was like for the everyday white New Englander (important to point out white and New Englander because this was not everyday life for a great majority of folks). Still, this is the obscure and even arcane things that people did everyday that went unnoticed at the time, but are so completely enthralling to imagine doing these days. A great read and quite educational!

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