



1816: America Rising

C. Edward Skeen

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The year 1816 found America on the cusp of political, social, cultural, and economic modernity. Celebrating its fortieth year of independence, the country's sense of self was maturing. Americans, who had emerged from the War of 1812 with their political system intact, embraced new opportunities. For the first time, citizens viewed themselves not as members of a loose coalition of states but as part of a larger union. This optimism was colored, however, by bizarre weather. Periods of extreme cold and severe drought swept the northern states and the upper south throughout 1816, often referred to as "The Year Without a Summer." Faced with thirty-degree summer temperatures, many farmers migrated west in search of better weather and more fertile farmlands. In 1816, historian C. Edward Skeen illuminates this unique year of national transition. Politically, the "era of good feelings" allowed Congress to devise programs that fostered prosperity. Social reform movements flourished. This election year found the Federalist party in its death throes, seeking cooperation with the nationalistic forces of the Republican party. Movement west, maturation of political parties, and increasingly contentious debates over such issues as slavery characterized this pivotal year. 1816 marked a watershed in American history. This provocative new book vividly highlights the stresses that threatened to pull the nation apart and the bonds that ultimately held it together.

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