Following his 2007 award-winning book *Leviathan: The History of Whaling in America*, Eric Jay Dolin has written another sweeping narrative of American history. In *Fur, Fortune, and Empire: The Epic History of the Fur Trade in America*, Dolin tells the history of 400 years of fur trading activity in America. The story he tells is one of exploration, settlement, war, and profits made and lost. It is also the story of a diverse cast of characters including presidents, explorers, mountain men, and America’s first multi-millionaire. Readers will find striking similarities between the themes of resource speculation and market fluctuations that drove the fur trade and issues in the news today.

The history of the fur trade is not without controversy, and Dolin does not shy away from this fact. From unscrupulous traders to the ravaging of the land, the fur trade often had negative outcomes. Even today, the trade in fur is a controversial topic, and while Dolin acknowledges the controversy, he chooses not to address the issues surrounding the fur trade during the last 100 years. *Fur, Fortune, and Empire* also shows how the pursuit of profits in the fur trade also drove exploration, innovation, and birth of the mythical mountain men. Even at the lowest point of the fur trade, the near extinction of many species would lead to the conservation movement and new protective regulations for wildlife.

One of Dolin’s most riveting stories is that of the race to claim the profitable trading grounds of the Northwest. Captain Cook’s famous voyages to the Pacific Ocean at the end of the 18th century introduced the world to the rich potential of the Pacific coast. More than a decade before Lewis and Clark would make their famous cross-continent trip west, it was American Fur traders who first tread upon the beaches of what would become Oregon. The profit from the furs of this region also contributed to the growth of America’s first multi-millionaire, John Jacob Astor, and America’s introduction to the China trade.

In attempting to write a comprehensive history of the fur trade, certain stories may not get the attention they deserve. While Dolin lavishes attention on the trade during the 17th and 19th centuries, his treatment of the fur trade during the 18th century is thin. Readers interested in Pittsburgh’s important role in the fur trade will be disappointed to find little mention of the booming trade that took place here in the 1750s through 1770s. Fortunately, Dolin has meticulously footnoted this book, providing paths to further reading.

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