



A Social History of American Technology

Ruth Schwartz Cowan

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For over 250 years American technology has been regarded as a unique hallmark of American culture and an important factor in American prosperity. Despite this American history has rarely been told from the perspective of the history of technology. *A Social History of American Technology* fills this gap by surveying the history of American technology from the tools used by the earliest native inhabitants to the technological systems -- cars and computers, aircraft and antibiotics -- we are familiar with today. Cowan makes use of the most recent scholarship to explain how the unique characteristics of American cultures and American geography have affected the technologies that have been invented, manufactured, and used throughout the years. She also focuses on the key individuals and ideas that have shaped important technological developments. The text explains how various technologies have affected the ways in which Americans work, govern, cook, transport, communicate, maintain their health, and reproduce. Cowan demonstrates that technological change has always been closely related to social development, and explores the multiple, complex relationships that have existed between such diverse social agents as households and businesses, the scientific community and the defense establishment, artists and inventors. Divided into three sections -- colonial America, industrialization, the 20th century -- *A Social History of American Technology* is ideal for courses in American social and economic history, as a correlated text for the American history survey, as well as for courses that focus on the history of American technology. It offers students the unique opportunity to learn not only how profoundly technological change has affected the American way of life, but how profoundly the American way of life has affected technology.

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