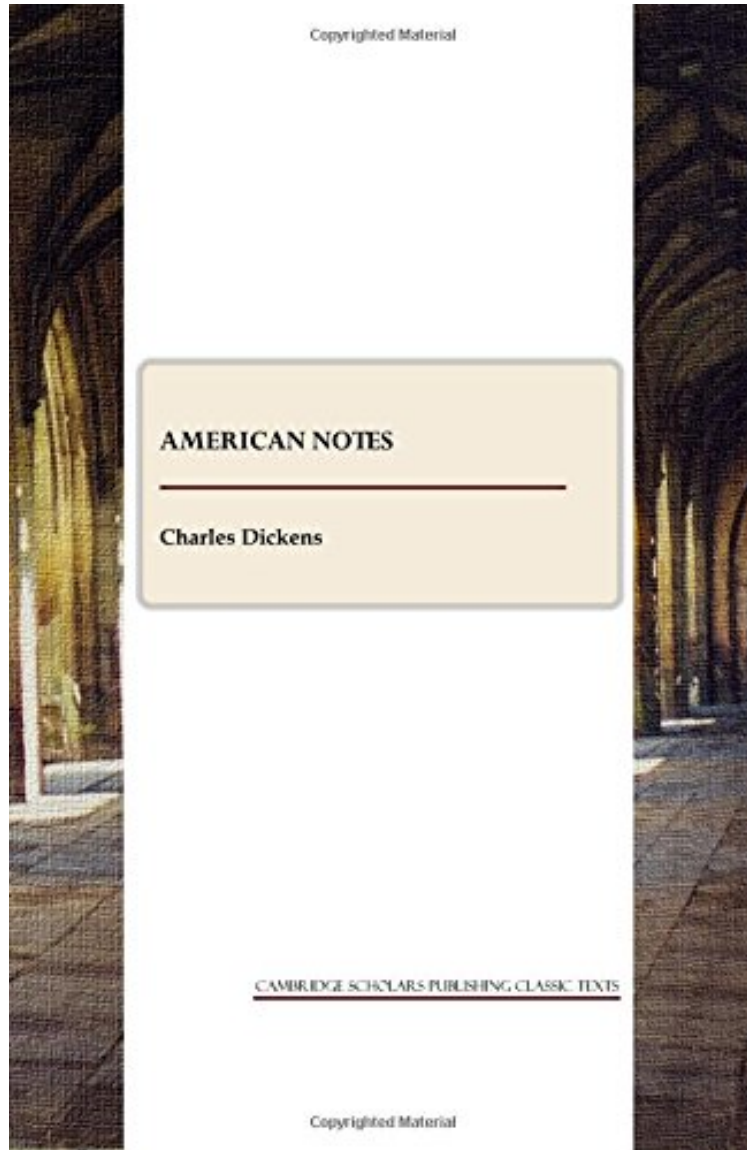


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American Notes

Charles Dickens

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Charles Dickens : American Notes before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised American Notes:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Mr. Charles Dickens tours a young America in 1842By C. M MillsCharles Dickens left London for America in the cold January of 1842. He left behind several children and such bestsellers as "Pickwick Papers"; "Oliver Twist"; "The Old Curiosity Shop" and "Nicholas Nickleby." He and his wife Catherine Hogarth Dickens would journey to the land of their Yankee cousins for six months. This long journey

resulted in a short account of the famed novelist's time in the United States. The passage from Liverpool took 18 days with storms and heavy rain to propel the Britishers forward to the land of the free and home of the brave! Dickens visited several cities. He had good and bad things to say about America. Dickens:

- Visited Boston and New York insane asylums and homes for the indigent. He also visited prisons. Dickens was a liberal social reformer and thought the treatment of the insane could be improved. He did not think much of American penology believing the prisoners should be worked harder.
- From the East the Dickens party traveled West. They passed through Louisville, Cincinnati and Sandusky. Dickens complained about pigs in the streets of these burgeoning cities. He thought Americans bold and brassy with an inordinate patriotism manifestly condescending to foreigners.
- Dickens traveled to St. Louis complaining of the isolated life found in log cabins and the hot temperatures of North America.
- Dickens disliked the partisan American press; he thought Americans were ruled by mobocracy and often used guns and fisticuffs when they were not necessary!
- The travel in stage and by train was difficult in this era in the new American nation. Dickens often comments on how miserable he was!
- Dickens saves his greatest wrath for the abominable practice of chattel slavery in the American South. In his journey to Virginia he comments on how run down the farms and homes were. Like the earlier English visitor Fanny Trollope he is to be commended for his hatred of slavery which was the curse of American life in the antebellum period.
- Dickens also hated the American propensity to spit tobacco juice everywhere in sight including the floor of the US House of Representatives and in the Senate Chamber! Dickens also toured Canada which at that time was ruled by Great Britain. He is much less critical of Canadians! Dickens is critical in many pages of the book. The book was not liked in America and little read in England. Dickens also was appalled at the lack of copyright law protecting him and English authors from the pirating of their literary efforts. Dickens would write his next novel "Martin Chuzzlewit" in which the hero travels to America only to be greatly disillusioned by this experience. Dickens returned to America late in life amending some of his earlier harsh views about the 1842 visit. Slavery had then been abolished. It should not be forgotten that Dickens was also very critical of society in Great Britain! This greatest of Victorian novelists was a man who believed society needed to improve in education, care for the poor giving people more equitable justice and a higher standard of living. Dickens failed to realize on his 1842 tour that America would take time to grow as a nation and society. Some of his pointed observations, though, such as our love for elections, guns and military titles still stand! American Notes is dry reading in many places. It is valuable for how a famous author saw America when he and the United States were both young.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great Story of 19th Century Travel in America. By Karmann Guya Dickens captures the essence of what traveling was like in 19th century America. Interestingly, we have conquered most of the problems he mentions (slavery, poor roads and infrastructure) but Washington continues to be the same. He points out that politicians are so derided and maligned that only the worst type of individual would want to be a politician in Washington. The more things change....

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Only Half of a Book By Compulsive Reader As an earlier reviewer noted, this edition is grossly incomplete. It is missing Chapters XIII - XVII of "American Notes" (about 100 pages) and ALL of "Pictures from Italy" (about 200 pages). A warning does appear in place of a copyright page saying that this "reproduction of an original work published before 1923...may have occasional imperfections such as missing or blurred pages..." The absence of 300 pages, including the entire "Pictures of Italy," -- though that title appears on the cover and is listed in the table of contents -- ranks as considerably more than an "imperfection."

This account of Dickens' first tour of the United States was deeply, and probably to some extent deliberately, controversial on its first publication. It shifts between specific observation and outspoken general comment on the USA at the time.