



Small Wonder: The Little Red Schoolhouse in History and Memory (Icons of America)

Jonathan Zimmerman

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The little red schoolhouse has all but disappeared in the United States, but its importance in national memory remains unshakable. This engaging book examines the history of the one-room school and how successive generations of Americans have remembered—and just as often misremembered—this powerful national icon.

Drawing on a rich range of sources, from firsthand accounts to poems, songs, and films, Jonathan Zimmerman traces the evolution of attitudes toward the little red schoolhouse from the late nineteenth century to the present day. At times it was celebrated as a symbol of lost rural virtues or America's democratic heritage; at others it was denounced as the epitome of inefficiency and substandard academics. And because the one-room school has been a useful emblem for liberal, conservative, and other agendas, the truth of its history has sometimes been stretched. Yet the idyllic image of the schoolhouse still unites Americans. For more than a century, it has embodied the nation's best aspirations and—especially—its continuing faith in education itself.

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