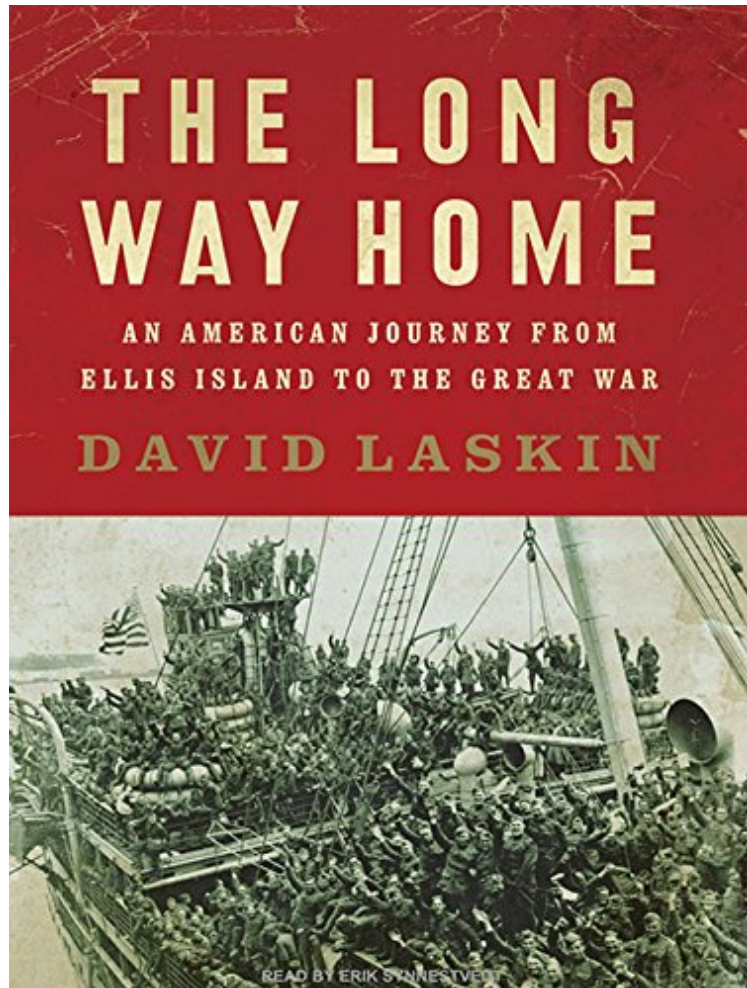


[Free pdf] The Long Way Home: An American Journey from Ellis Island to the Great War

# The Long Way Home: An American Journey from Ellis Island to the Great War

David Laskin

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**David Laskin : The Long Way Home: An American Journey from Ellis Island to the Great War** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Long Way Home: An American Journey from Ellis Island to the Great War:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Both heartwarming and heartbreaking. By Tralfamidorian The author follows the lives of 12 men of varied backgrounds and ethnicities who immigrated to the United States and who later were drafted or enlisted into military service during World War I. The irony was that many of the men immigrated to avoid conscription in their countries of origin. He details the reasons why they came, the difficulties and prejudices they faced and the means by which they persevered. After unimaginable horrors experienced in the Great War, the

survivors returned to be exemplary citizens. Poignant!21 of 21 people found the following review helpful. Vivid Portraits of Immigrants in US Military in the Great WarBy Mary WhisnerIn the late 19th and early 20th century, millions of immigrants came to America, fleeing poverty, pogroms, and the draft. When the U.S. entered World War I, thousands of immigrant men enlisted or were drafted to serve in the military, returning to Europe in similar ocean liners to the ones that had brought them. David Laskin sees this military service as a critical step in the Americanization of the immigrants -- even though they returned to often virulent xenophobia during the Red Scare.As he did in *The Children's Blizzard*, Laskin makes vivid a sweeping story by focusing on a small number of individuals (in this case, 12 men). He begins with the immigrants' lives in Europe -- the Italian boy in a rocky farm, the Norwegian man who left the farm to work on a fishing boat, the Jewish scrap hauler in the Russian pale. And then he follows them on their journeys to America in the fetid barracks of steerage. On they go to their new homes: the copper mines in Butte, a blanket factory in New England, the Lower East Side. A couple of them enlisted long before World War I; one was part of Pershing's force chasing Pancho Villa (earlier he'd been a mercenary selling arms to Pancho Villa).And then there's the military. The transition from civilian life was difficult. How could the Army train a crowd of recruits who spoke dozens of languages and were often malnourished and in terrible shape? How could the immigrants get past the ethnic slurs flung at them by the native-born soldiers? And what sort of soldiers would these immigrants make?Eventually, they shipped out, fully trained or not, and Laskin takes us to the trenches and the shattered forests of the Great War. Using the immigrants' own words -- from letters home, diaries, and, in a couple of cases, interviews (he met one veteran who was 107!) -- and accounts from others who were in the same battles, he gives detailed accounts of the horrors and the heroism of war.This isn't a war book just for military history buffs. Recommended for those interested in the immigrant experience and U.S. history generally.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. David Laskin has written another great book that talks about my favorite subject-genealogy and how ...By CustomerDavid Laskin has written another great book that talks about my favorite subject-genealogy and how our country was built with the hard work of immigrants-our grandparents and in some cases our parents. I truly recommend this book to anyone who wants to learn about their past and their present lives.

The United States has always been a nation of immigrants-never more so than in 1917 when the nation entered the First World War. Of the 2.5 million soldiers who fought with U.S. armed forces in the trenches of France and Belgium, some half a million-nearly one out of every five men-were immigrants. In *The Long Way Home*, David Laskin, author of the prizewinning history *The Children's Blizzard*, tells the stories of twelve of these immigrant heroes. Starting with their childhoods in Europe, Laskin unfolds the saga of their journeys to Ellis Island, their struggles to start over in the land of opportunity, and the ordeal of their return to Europe in uniform to fight-and win-a war that had already killed tens of millions. Three of these soldiers died on the battlefield; two won the Congressional Medal of Honor; all were transformed forever by their experiences in combat. It is a transformation that continues to be felt in the pride and pain and cherished memories of immigrant families that have long since assimilated. In tracing the lives of these twelve men, Laskin tells the story of an immigrant generation-a generation that streamed into this country in unprecedented numbers around the turn of the last century, that sweated to support their families through back-breaking physical labor, and that fought loyally for their adopted country on the battlefields of Belleau Wood, Soissons, St. Mihiel, and the Argonne forest. Based on stories, letters, and diaries passed on by descendants-as well as Laskin's personal interviews with two foreign-born Doughboys who were still alive at the time he was researching the book, *The Long Way Home* is a reverent work of history and a deeply moving evocation of the dreams and sacrifice at the heart of the American experience.

From BooklistThis is an engrossing and moving story of 12 men, all of them immigrants to the U.S., who were transformed by their brief but intense experiences as soldiers in WWI. They included Italians, Poles, Scandinavians, Slovaks, Jews, and Irishmen. Most of them did not relish military service, and some of them fled their homelands to avoid conscription. Before they were drafted or enlisted in the U.S. military, few of them understood or cared about the issues that had torn apart a Europe that they had left behind. These men were not atypical, since an estimated 20 percent of U.S. military draftees were foreign born. Laskin tells their individual stories with eloquence and feeling while avoiding cheap sentimentality As he traces their paths from bootcamp to combat in France, one can see their gradual merging with their fellow soldiers into a true band of brothers. This is a superb chronicle that illustrates how some young men were transformed into Americans. --Jay Freeman "[A] quietly absorbing glimpse of some of the brave soldiers who helped win WWI." ---Publishers WeeklyFrom the Back CoverIn *The Long Way Home*, award-winning writer David Laskin traces the lives of a dozen men who left their childhood homes in Europe, journeyed through Ellis Island, and started over in a strange landonly to cross the Atlantic again in uniform when their adopted country entered the Great War.Though they had known little of America outside of tight-knit ghettos and backbreaking labor, these foreign-born conscripts were rapidly transformed into soldiers, American soldiers, in the ordeal of war. Two of the men in this book won the Medal of Honor. Three died in combat. Those who survived were profoundly alteredand their heroic service reshaped their families and ultimately the nation itself. Epic, inspiring, and

masterfully written, this book is an unforgettable true story of the Great War, the world it remade, and the humble, loyal men who became Americans by fighting for America.