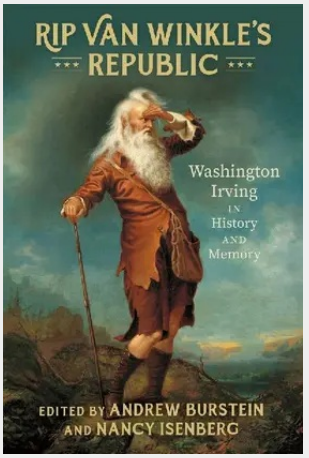
LSU Press

# Rip Van Winkle's Republic

Washington Irving in History and Memory




Two centuries ago, native New Yorker Washington Irving exploded onto the literary scene of Europe with the publication of his breakout collection of stories, The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent. Published in England and America in 1819–1820, and universally praised for its inventive characters and soul-searching qualities, including the immortal tales "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," the volume enjoyed remarkable transatlantic success, allowing Irving to become the first of his nation to support himself as a professional author. In this distinctive collection, historians and literary scholars come together to reassess Irving's imaginative world and complex cultural legacy. Alternately a satirist and a nostalgia merchant, Irving was ever absorbed in reconstituting a lost past, which the volume dubs "Rip Van Winkle's Republic." The assembled scholars explore issues of Anglo-American culture, the power of imagery, race, and the treatment of time and history in Irving's vast body of literature, as well as his status as a bibliophile, an antiquarian, and a prominent figure in an age of literary celebrity. Edited by acclaimed historians Andrew Burstein and Nancy Isenberg, Rip Van Winkle's Republic marks a rediscovery of this marvelous author of social satire and fabled tales of the past.

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