



Men, Machines, and Modern Times

Elting E. Morison

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Men, Machines, and Modern Times, though ultimately concerned with a positive alternative to an Orwellian 1984, offers an entertaining series of historical accounts taken from the nineteenth century to highlight a main theme: the nature of technological change, the fission brought about in society by such change, and society's reaction to that change. Beginning with a remarkable illustration of resistance to innovation in the U.S. Navy following an officer's discovery of a more accurate way to fire a gun at sea, Elting Morison goes on to narrate the strange history of the new model steamship, the Wapanoag, in the 1860s. He then continues with the difficulties confronting the introduction of the pasteurization process for milk; he traces the development of the Bessemer process; and finally, he considers the computer. While the discussions are liberally sprinkled with amusing examples and anecdotes, all are related to the more profound and current problem of how to organize and manage system of ideas, energies, and machinery so that it will conform to the human dimension.

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