

Historiography and the Nadir of Race Relations

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Lies about Native Americans

**Lies My Teacher Told Me
About American Indians/
Native Americans**

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Indian Education for All 2013

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- **In the beginning...**
- **“Primitive” vs. “civilized”**
- **\$24 myth**
- **Removal**
- **Three critical terms: ethnocentrism, historiography, syncretism**

U.S. History For All

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- **In the beginning...**
- **Storylines**
- **“Primitive” vs. “civilized”**
- **\$24 myth**
- **Nadir**
- **Three critical terms: ethnocentrism, historiography, syncretism**



Gleeful White Supremacy (rare)



Dishonest White Supremacy (common)



First Person Singular

Among the giants of history

**Kawther Elmi, 50 // Ranger,
National Park Service**

INTERVIEW BY KK OTTESEN

I feel very grateful that I came to a country that is rich in many, many ways. And the agency I work for takes care of those riches. In our park you've got Washington, and Jefferson, you've got Vietnam, you've got World War II, almost all of America's history. But I love the Lincoln Memorial best — the idea of respecting equality, and the way we have gone to war to make that more real. We are the nation that perfected democracy by going to war with itself. Lincoln said: We will keep this nation together, and we will work out our problems within it; the United States' existence is far more important.

It's hard not to be humbled by a human being just like yourself, having done so much and done it for everyone — and



THE WONDEROUS STORY, ILLINOIS

THE FERTILE PRAIRIES IN ILLINOIS ATTRACTED THE ATTENTION OF FRENCH TRADER LOUIS JOLLIET AND FATHER JACQUES MARQUETTE AS THEY EXPLORED THE MISSISSIPPI AND ILLINOIS RIVERS IN 1673. FRANCE CLAIMED THIS REGION UNTIL 1763 WHEN SHE SURRENDERED IT TO GREAT BRITAIN BY THE TREATY OF PARIS. DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, GEORGE ROGERS CLARK AND HIS SMALL ARMY SCORED A BLOODLESS VICTORY WHEN THEY CAPTURED KASKASKIA FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA, AND ILLINOIS BECAME A COUNTY OF VIRGINIA. THIS AREA WAS CEDED TO THE UNITED STATES IN 1784, AND BECAME IN TURN A PART OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORY AND THE INDIANA AND ILLINOIS TERRITORIES. ON DECEMBER 3, 1818, ILLINOIS ENTERED THE UNION AS THE TWENTY-FIRST STATE.

U.S. 36 TOUCHES SIX COUNTIES WHICH WERE PART OF THE EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT. FROM 1839 TO 1860 ABRAHAM LINCOLN FOLLOWED THE COURT AS IT MOVED FROM COUNTY SEAT TO COUNTY SEAT WITHIN THE CIRCUIT. THUS HE CAME TO SUCH CITIES AS PARIS, SULLIVAN, MONTICELLO, DECATUR AND SPRINGFIELD FOR THE BI-ANNUAL TERMS.

WEST OF DECATUR THIS HIGHWAY PASSES NEAR THE LINCOLN TRAIL HOMESTEAD STATE PARK ON THE BANKS OF THE SANGAMON RIVER. THIS WAS THE SITE OF THE FIRST LINCOLN HOME IN ILLINOIS WHEN THE FAMILY CAME FROM INDIANA IN 1830. THE FOLLOWING SPRING THOMAS LINCOLN MOVED TO COLES COUNTY AND ABRAHAM MOVED ON TO NEW SALEM, 20 MILES NORTHWEST OF SPRINGFIELD. U.S. 36 PASSES THROUGH SPRINGFIELD WHERE LINCOLN'S HOME AND TOMB ARE STATE MEMORIALS. SPRINGFIELD IS ALSO THE SITE OF THE OLD STATE CAPITOL WHERE LINCOLN DELIVERED HIS FAMOUS "HOUSE DIVIDED" SPEECH.

ERECTED BY THE DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS AND THE ILLINOIS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 1965

SEE
HISTORICAL
ILLINOIS

7-11-65
Straw

R

HISTORIC

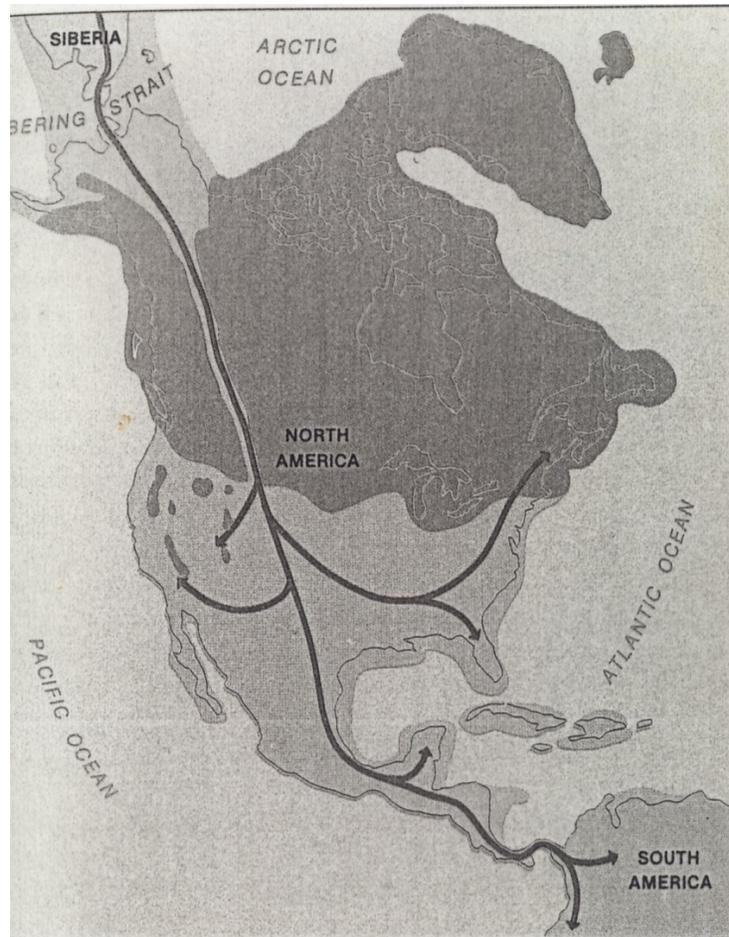
THE

ILLINOIS

WHAT ABOUT
THE NATIVES

©

They got
screwed.



How did the first folks get here?

Teach “compartmentalize”

- Adam & Eve, c. 4400BC or BCE.
- “Old” Mormon, lost tribes of Judea, c.700BC
- Ute, “We have always been here.”
- “Old” Archaeology, c.13,000 BP, Beringea
- Archaeology, 15,000BP? 35,000BP? Etc.?

Three critical terms

- Ethnocentrism (and Eurocentrism)
- Historiography
- Syncretism

Syncretism

- Putting things together from two or more cultures
- Examples: Xmas, foods (Boston baked beans, gumbo, Szechuan, Italian, etc.!)
- Example: Plains Indian culture
- False choice: be Native or be American

Why Did Europe Win? Syncretism!

- Gunpowder from China
- Caravels from Egypt
- Bookkeeping (“Arabic numerals”) from India
- Drill from Europe
- Portable religion from Palestine

Earlier storyline:

Native Americans were primitive.

“We” were advanced.

“Naturally” they fell behind.

BS!

“Nicer” storyline:

Native Americans had diverse interesting cultures.

But they could not or would not acculturate.

So, “naturally,” they fell behind.

BS!

“Couldn’t/wouldn’t Acculturate”

- Compare Vann house (next slide)
- De-Agriculturization
- Forced “Wandering”



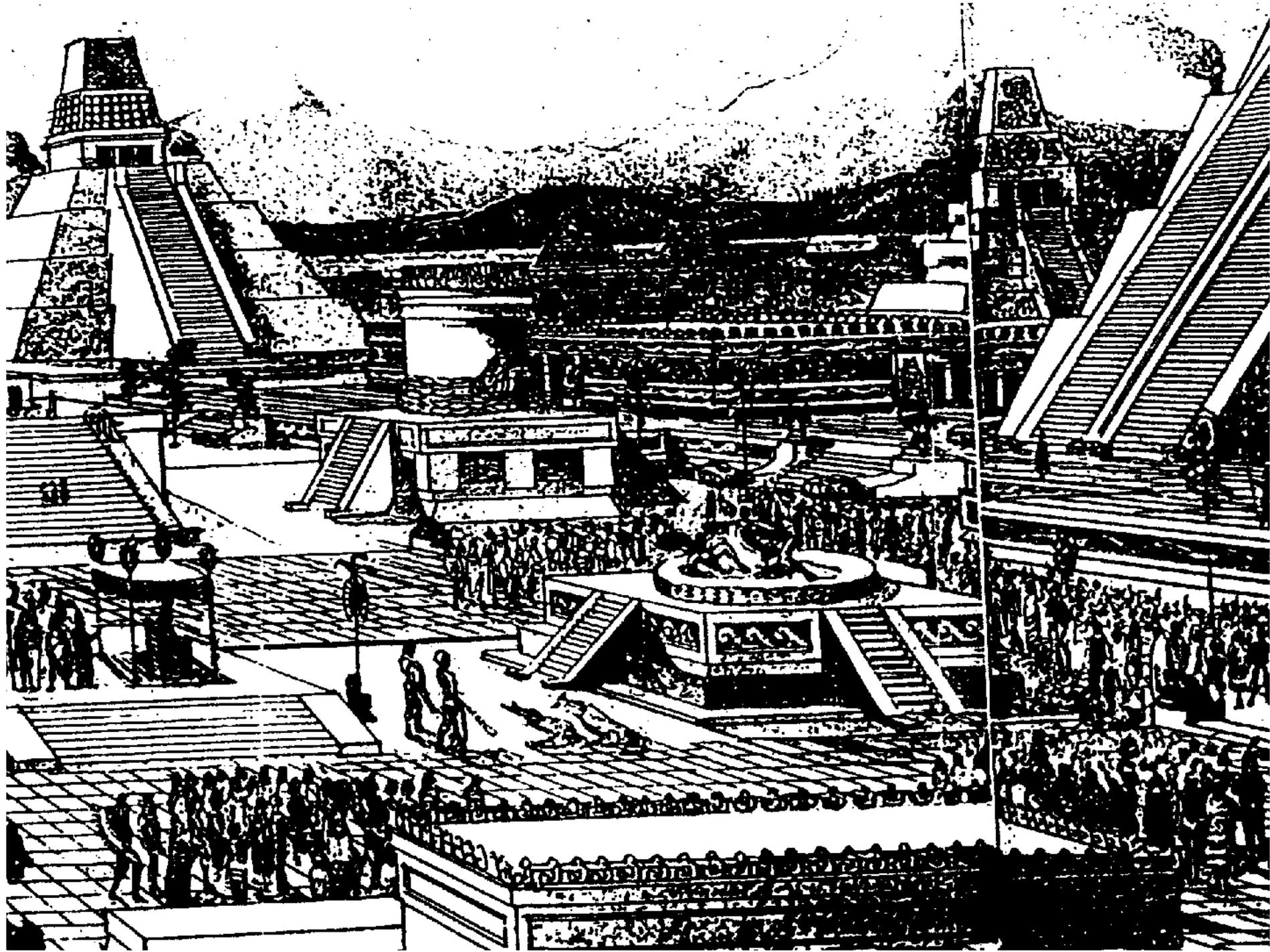
Chief Joseph Vann house: Failure to Acculturate?

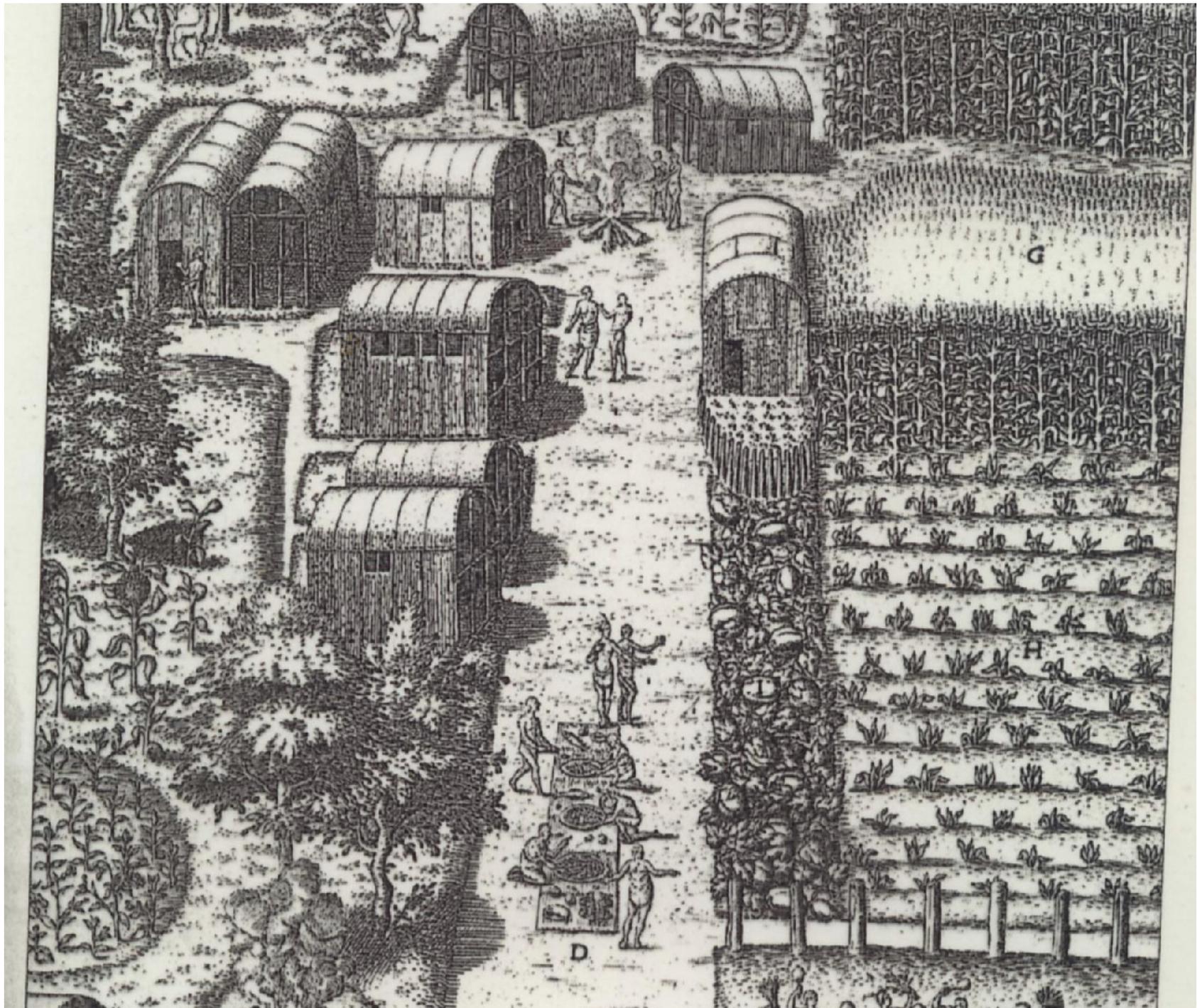


Storyline: “Automatic” Replacement



“Manifest Destiny”

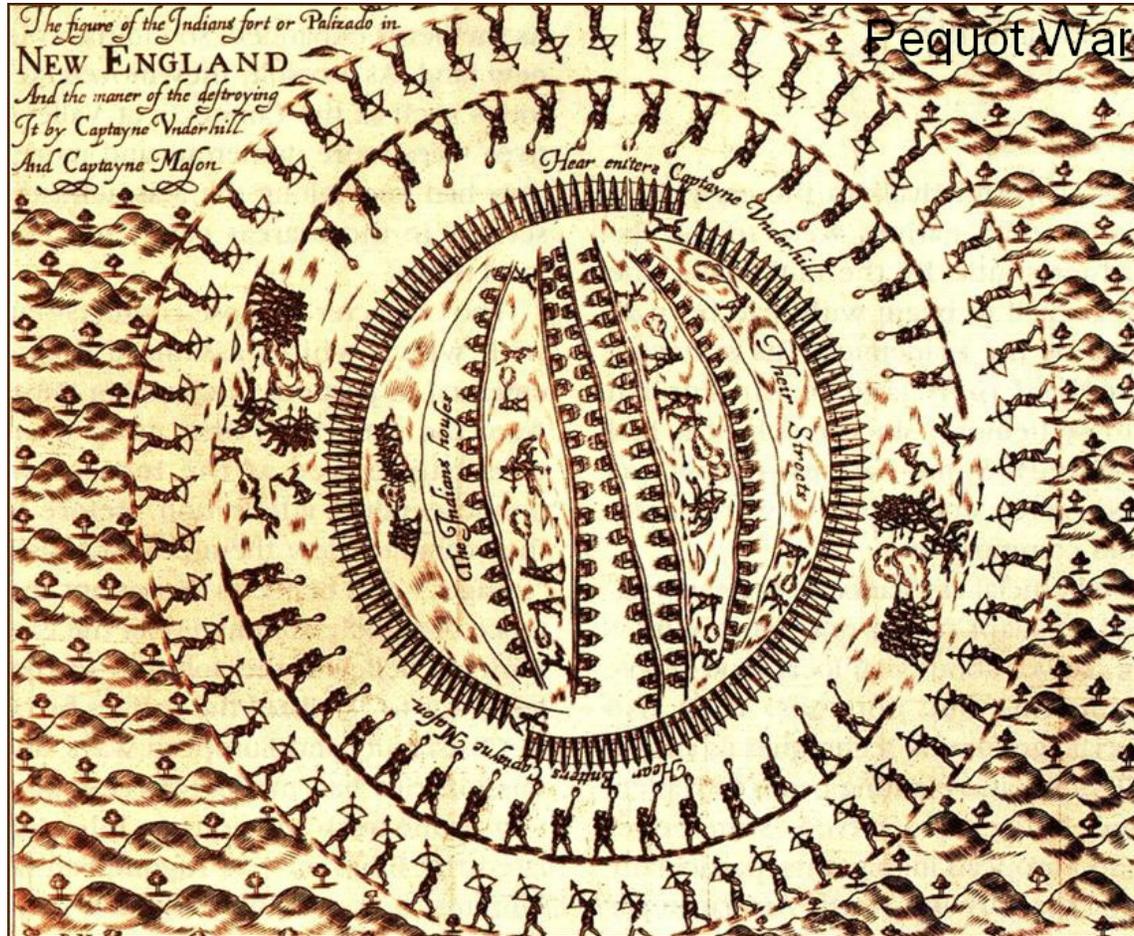




“Primitive,” “Civilized”

- To anthropologists, “civilized” means highly developed division of labor
- To most folks, “civilized” means advanced, nice, polite, refined
- Was Nazi Germany “civilized?”
- Was Aztec society?
- Was Eastern Woodland Indian society?

Pequot Massacre



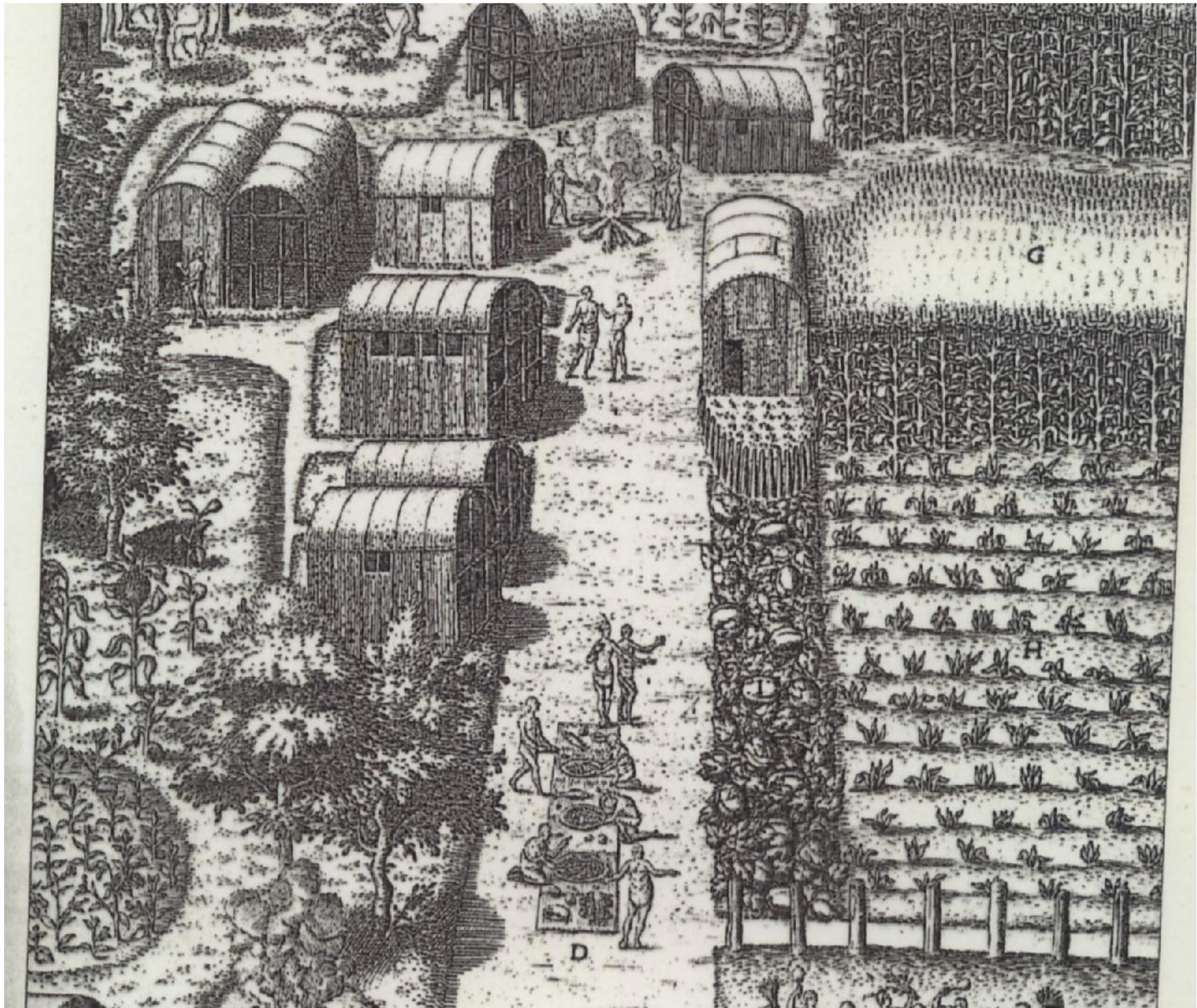


Teach against this fabrication!

What's wrong with this picture?







“If you think buying Manhattan for \$24 was a bargain... take a look at what I bought!”

“How! I’ll tell you How. Frank called me, he works for a company that barter television time for merchandise. He bought 180,000 pair of leather slippers from the most famous maker of cold weather slippers and was having a hard time finding a buyer. They usually barter with the major television users for food or hardgoods like televisions or lawnmowers...he didn’t understand sizes and colors and he didn’t know what they were worth...but I did. I offered him a price that I thought would be a starting point in the negotiations and he took it! What a deal for me and for you.”

- Judy Campion, Shoe Buyer

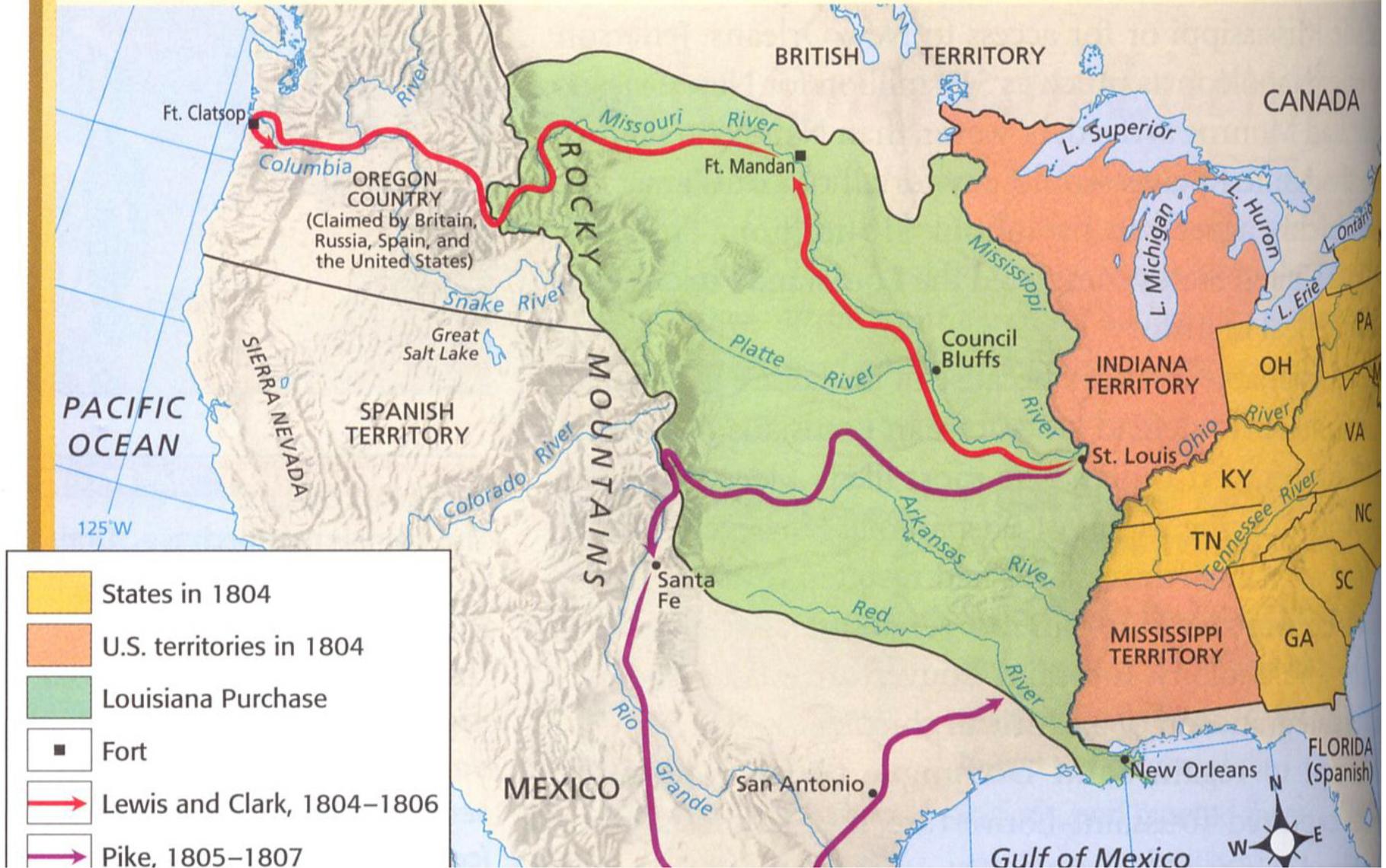
WHEN WE BUY BETTER...YOU BUY BETTER!



50% to 62% OFF

Interpreting Maps The Louisiana Purchase added some 828,000 square miles of rich land to the United States, roughly doubling the nation's size.

? HUMAN SYSTEMS What rivers did Lewis and Clark follow from St. Louis on their way to the Pacific Ocean?



We bought Louisiana from the wrong tribe

The French didn't own it.
Later we spent >\$30 million buying it
from Native Americans
and we fought
at least two dozen battle
raking it from them.

But they don't get onto the map!

Time to act?

- If you were Native American, would you feel good when your teacher told the \$24 story?
- If you were white? Asian? Latino?
- What should be done? What can YOU do?





ILLUSTRATION BY AARON SECREST



Smithsonian
National Museum of the American Indian



Charlene Teters appears at Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, May 5, 2011 .

Washington ‘Redskins’?

- The team started out as the Boston Braves.
- Owner George Marshall changed to “Redskins” to differentiate his team from the Boston Braves baseball team (now in Atlanta).
- He said he meant it as a compliment to American Indians (Native Americans).
- Should the name stand?

What do we think about
“the Atlanta Niggers?”
the “New York City Kikes?”
the “Chicago Polacks?”
the “Washington Redskins”

Need more information?

- Some Natives and historians claim “redskins” stems from the requirement to show the scalp or other part of a Native to claim a bounty, in colonial times, for killing an enemy.
- Over half of Native Americans do not claim to be offended by the name.
- Would we say, “There are two ‘redskins’ in Congress at present?”

Time to act?

- If you were Native American, would you cheer for the Washington Redskins?
- If you were white?
- If you were Latino? Asian?
- What should be done? What can YOU do?

Columbus and the “Flat Earth”



Columbus Day?

When Congress was making it a holiday in 1963, Rep. Roland Libonati said, "His Christian faith gave to him a religious incentive to thwart the piratical activities of the Turkish marauders preying upon the trading ships of the Christian world."

Columbus started the trans-Atlantic slave trade, from west to east (of Natives). His son started it from east to west (of Africans).

SD has renamed it "Native American Day. Should the name "Columbus Day" stand?



Columbus solicits funds for a promising project. Spain. 1488.

Without project funding, the world might still be flat.

Great discoveries. Today, they're most likely to be raised so far through R&D limited partnerships.
found in the new world of high technology. And as Working with recognized leaders in high technology

The Great Discoverers

- “Vasco da Gama finally reached India and returned home with ... jewels and spices.”
[*American Pageant*]
- “Columbus had discovered America.” [*A History of the U.S.*, Boorstin & Kelley]
- Hernando de Soto “discovered” the Mississippi River. [*Triumph of the American Nation*]
- Etc.

What did they do when they got there?

- Vasco da Gama ...
- Columbus ...
- De Soto ...
- Etc.

THE COLUMBIAN EXCHANGE



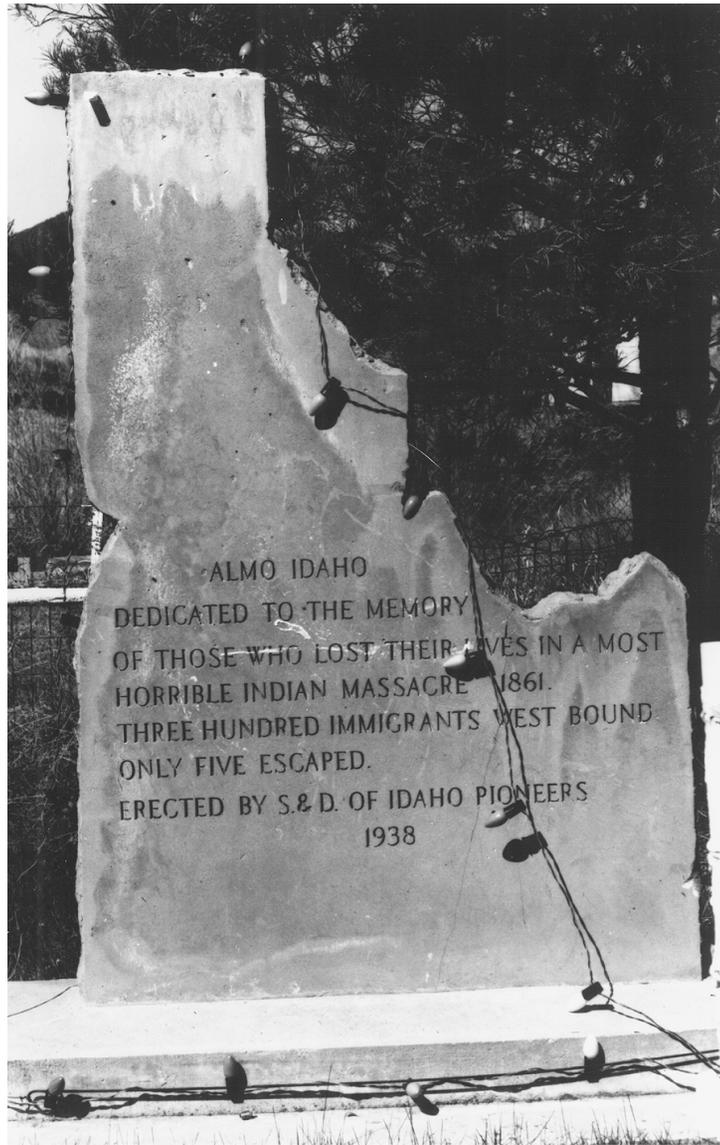


Three critical terms

- Ethnocentrism (and Eurocentrism)
- Historiography
- Syncretism

Historiography:

- The study of history
- Who wrote this? When?
- Who *didn't* write it?
- Who is “comforted” by it?



ALMO IDAHO
DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY
OF THOSE WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN A MOST
HORRIBLE INDIAN MASSACRE 1861.
THREE HUNDRED IMMIGRANTS WEST BOUND
ONLY FIVE ESCAPED.
ERECTED BY S.&D. OF IDAHO PIONEERS
1938

“Savage Indians”



Show The Nadir, 1890-1940

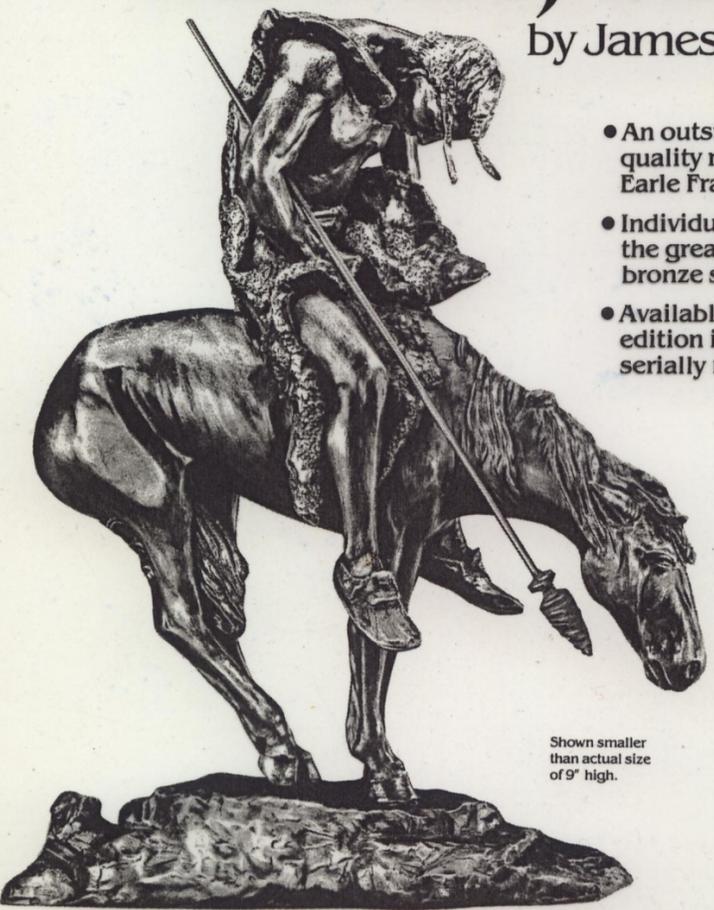
- Use “manuscript census” to show Native American population decline
- Show decline in acreage owned by American Indians

The Nadir, 1890-1940

NE

"The End of the Trail"

by James Earle Fraser



- An outstanding museum quality reproduction of James Earle Fraser's greatest work.
- Individually hand-finished in the great tradition of classic bronze sculpture.
- Available in a single limited edition issue of just 9500 serially numbered sculptures.

Shown smaller than actual size of 9" high.

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The Worst Time for History: The Nadir of Race Relations

- Racism (as ideology) to all-time high
- 1890-1940
- “Three I’s”
 - Indian Wars
 - Immigrants (San Francisco, Ellis Island)
 - Imperialism



“Muscogean Tribe #95, Improved Order of Red Men, 1926. Nadir of Native Americans: 244,000; “Red Men,” 500,000. Natives could not be “Red Men,” of course.

A different kind of hieratic scale



George Rogers Clark, warrior against Native Americans,
Charlottesville, Virginia

Legacies of the Nadir Today in “Indian Country”

1. Allotment, loss of land base,
weakening of tribal government
2. Natives viewed as inferior
3. “Standardized testing”

“Primitive,” “Civilized”

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Syncretism

Examples:

- Christmas
- Gumbo; Szechuan, Hunan, and Thai food; spaghetti sauce; etc.
- Democracy!
- Inuit art
- [What will they think of next?]

Go Syncretize!:

- America is not a “white” culture.
- It is multicultural.
- Whites don’t have all the answers.
- We need you! In architecture, medicine, poetry, restaurants, political decision-making, living!

Other Resources

- NMAI, *Do All Indians Live in Tipis*
- Natl.Geog., *1621: A New Look at Thanksgiving*
- Vine Deloria, *Red Earth, White Lies*
- Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, & Steel*
- Beverly Slapin, *Through Indian Eyes*
- Gary Nash, *Red, White, and Black*
- Sherman Alexie, anything
- Louise Erdrich, anything
- R.A. Lafferty, *Okla Hannali*
- CA: Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier*; Sanchez, *Rabbit Boss*

Who was Vasco da Gama?



Leaving out what Vasco da Gama
did makes a difference.

U.S. history is still “white.”

“Patriotism” [Frederick Douglass]: “rebukes his country for its sins and does not excuse them.”

“Nationalism”: “always right, never wrong, except by accident, and with the best of intentions.”





CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS
BORN IN GENOA, ITALY 1451. DISCOVERED
AMERICA OCTOBER 12, 1492. THIS LAND
OF OPPORTUNITY AND FREEDOM WAS
THUS PRESERVED FOR HUMANITY BY THE
PERENNIAL GENIUS ABIDING IN THE
ITALIAN RACE.

REFURBISHED BY
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS 1956