

History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century

By Steven Conn

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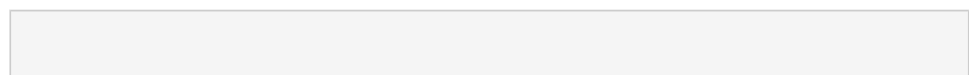
Who were the Native Americans? Where did they come from and how long ago? Did they have a history, and would they have a future? Questions such as these dominated intellectual life in the United States during the nineteenth century. And for many Americans, such questions about the original inhabitants of their homeland inspired a flurry of historical investigation, scientific inquiry, and heated political debate.

History's Shadow traces the struggle of Americans trying to understand the people who originally occupied the continent claimed as their own. Steven Conn considers how the question of the Indian compelled Americans to abandon older explanatory frameworks for sovereignty like the Bible and classical literature and instead develop new ones. Through their engagement with Native American language and culture, American intellectuals helped shape and define the emerging fields of archaeology, ethnology, linguistics, and art. But more important, the questions posed by the presence of the Indian in the United States forced Americans to confront the meaning of history itself, both that of Native Americans and their own: how it should be studied, what drove its processes, and where it might ultimately lead. The encounter with Native Americans, Conn argues, helped give rise to a distinctly American historical consciousness.

A work of enormous scope and intellect, *History's Shadow* will speak to anyone interested in Native Americans and their profound influence on our cultural imagination.

“*History's Shadow* is an intelligent and comprehensive look at the place of Native Americans in Euro-American’s intellectual history. . . . Examining literature, painting, photography, ethnology, and anthropology, Conn mines the written record to discover how non-Native Americans thought about Indians.”

—Joy S. Kasson, *Los Angeles Times*



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Editorial Review

Review

"History's Shadow is an intelligent and comprehensive look at the place of Native Americans in Euro-Americans' intellectual history during the period bracketed by the Lewis and Clark expedition at the beginning of the 19th century and the Wounded Knee massacre at its close. Examining literature, painting, photography, ethnology, and anthropology, Conn mines the written record to discover how non-Native Americans thought about Indians and what influence those ideas had upon the development of American science, social science, and history. . . . The most fascinating aspect of Conn's book is his account of the rise of anthropology and the ways in which the 'scientific' study of culture erased the history of the native peoples as well as the story of Euro-American responsibility for their condition."—Joy S. Kasson, *Los Angeles Times*

(Joy S. Kasson *Los Angeles Times*)

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From the Inside Flap

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About the Author

Steven Conn is associate professor of history at Ohio State University. He is the author of *American Museums and Intellectual Life*, also published by the University of Chicago Press.

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