



One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West before Lewis and Clark (History of the American West)

By Colin G. Calloway



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This magnificent, sweeping work traces the histories of the Native peoples of the American West from their arrival thousands of years ago to the early years of the nineteenth century. Emphasizing conflict and change, *One Vast Winter Count* offers a new look at the early history of the region by blending ethnohistory, colonial history, and frontier history. Drawing on a wide range of oral and archival sources from across the West, Colin G. Calloway offers an unparalleled glimpse at the lives of generations of Native peoples in a western land soon to be overrun.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Author of *First Peoples* and a distinguished Dartmouth historian, Calloway concentrates on the Indian experience from the Appalachians to the Pacific, in a time frame from prehistory to the 18th century. The scope is staggering, but Calloway masters it, demonstrating a remarkable command of a broad spectrum of historical, ethnographic and archeological sources including printed material and oral traditions. Conventional American history moves from east to west. Calloway's narrative tends instead to follow a south-north pattern, with cultural innovations like corn and horses diffusing from Mesoamerica along the river-centered trade routes. Conventional histories of Indian-European relations place them at the center of the Native American experience in what became the United States. Calloway demonstrates that until the mid-18th century, the European impact was secondary and indirect on most of the cultures involved. Conventional myths assert the relative peacefulness of Native American interaction. Calloway shows that conflict was also a norm. Conventional wisdom presents Indian cultures as static, living in a timeless harmony with their environment. Calloway establishes that they were in fact constantly changing, adapting to climatic changes, animal migrations, ecological and technological innovations and, not least, the movements, peaceful and hostile, of other cultures. Indian response to European penetration was correspondingly flexible, ranging from partial accommodation to resistance, then rebellion, as European governments sought to move from asserting influence to exercising control. And Native Americans sustained that agency until the "Killing Years," the period from 1770 to the century's turn, when the impact of the American Revolution extended from the Appalachian Mountains to the Pacific Coast, and a smallpox pandemic unpredictably turned the Native American West into a graveyard. It was that last episode, mocking theories of historical determinism, that set the stage for the Lewis and Clark expedition to encounter shocked survivors and suddenly empty lands that seemed to invite European occupation. *One Vast Winter Count* is both a major work in its own right and a magnificent first volume in Nebraska's new *History of the American West* series.

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From [Booklist](#)

Many bands of Native Americans recorded their histories on the hides of buffalo or other game animals; they were called "winter counts." That is the source of the title of this enthralling and brilliant survey of the history and culture of various Native American groups from trans-Appalachia to the Pacific. Calloway is chair of the Native American Studies program at Dartmouth College; he was selected to write the opening volume in a projected six-volume history of the American West. This is revisionist history; like other "new western" historians, Calloway focuses on place rather than process. That is, he views the West as a series of regions in which various peoples entered, stayed, left, but always changed the land and were changed by it. He masterfully integrates the disciplines of archaeology, anthropology, environmental science, and history to provide a wonderful panorama illustrating both the diversity and the vibrancy of these rich cultures. *Jay Freeman*

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Review

"A splendid overview of the Native American West to the end of the eighteenth century."-Larry McMurtry, *New York Review of Books* -- Larry McMurtry *New York Review of Books* "Author of *First Peoples* and a distinguished Dartmouth historian, Calloway concentrates on the Indian experience from the Appalachians to the Pacific, in a time frame from prehistory to the 18th century. The scope is staggering, but Calloway

masters it, demonstrating a remarkable command of a broad spectrum of historical, ethnographic and archaeological sources including printed material and oral traditions... One Vast Winter Count is both a major work in its own right and a magnificent first volume in Nebraska's new History of the American West series."-Publishers Weekly (starred review) Publishers Weekly

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From reader reviews:

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Maria Lacher:

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