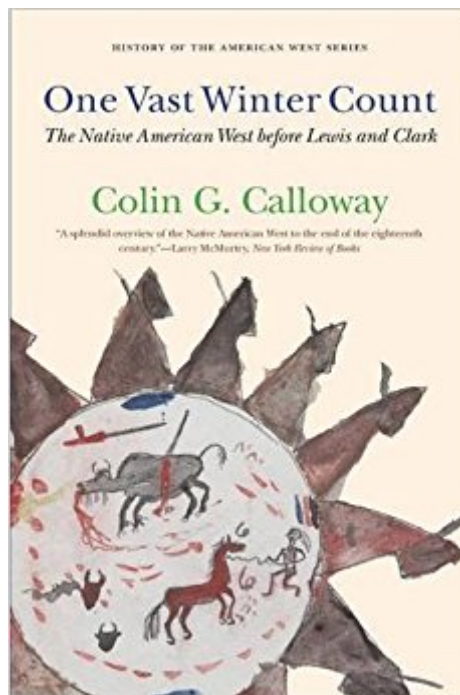


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# One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West Before Lewis And Clark (History Of The American West)



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

Series: History of the American West

Paperback: 631 pages

Publisher: Bison Books; Reprint edition (September 1, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0803264658

ISBN-13: 978-0803264656

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1.3 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.8 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 12 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #153,722 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #49 in Books > History >

Americas > Canada > First Nations #438 in Books > History > Americas > Native American

#3797 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History

## Customer Reviews

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. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

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 Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

This book is a page turner of breathtaking clarity filled with knowledge and wisdom not often found in such work. The scholar who can mesmerize, the story teller who can make it all work out, the scribe whose language is more than the sum of its parts, Calloway hits a high note up front and never falters. The best history is the greatest of knowledge and this book ranks with Churchill's history of World War II and Weir's chronicles of Europe's monarchs for its ability to take the impossibly complex and weave from it a cloth of rich and interesting and finally explanatory gold well

within the reach of even the most casual reader. Calloway has walked the trails of a continent in the fury of discovery and come away with the Golden Fleece, the Grail of getting the story right from everyone's perspective. Tall words but I think the author lives up to the billing. Based on the historical account and the points of view of the primary characters, including the oral historians of generations, Calloway weaves an unmistakably great work of art and wonder, nothing less than the tale of how we all got here to this moment, frozen in time, living on reserved lands, living on trust lands, living on conquered lands that now define all of us together as Americans. This is the book Mann cited as the reason he did not include a chapter on the Western US in his seminal work, 1491. A few chapters in you know the reason why. Mann simply could not have bettered the effort. If history rocks, this history rocks much of what you ever thought you knew about the story of America. This book is bed rock knowledge and should be required reading in any institute of higher education. From the first tentative exploration of the New World to the complexities of how the various tribes came to be at the moment in time when the US cavalry found them, fought them, and held them in place, this book is the single most important work of synthesis and original creative scholarship to yet grace the libraries of the best of the Western universities in the History of the Western US. How did the Crow manage to end up on their own lands when the Indian Wars of the 19th century ended? How did we manage to inherit a land full of wild hogs? Where did the Apache come from and why? Who are the Navajo? What were the impacts of horses and muskets meeting on the Missouri River and how are we all changed as a result? Did the Mercats really give the Indians plague blankets? Read this book. We can talk more when you're done!

This is an impressive treatment of a vast and often controversial subject. Although the details are sometimes daunting (e.g, the names of myriad tribes and bands that are probably unfamiliar to the non-expert), the overall structure and flow hold together nicely and provide a fine overview. I recommend that anyone who is at all interested in the history of the Plains cultures should read chapter 9, "Horse Diffusion, etc..." I was directed to this book by Charles C. Mann in his "1493: Uncovering the New World Columbus Created", which I also heartily recommend.

we are using this book in our neighborhood American History discussion and we ALL like it. Opens up a whole New (actually, Old) World of peoples that existed thousands of years before the 'discovery' of America. Thought I could 'scan' read this but it is so interesting I can't! Slows me down when I want to underline or high light so much. Well researched, well documented and foot noted, just plain well done. All peoples do atrocious, cruel things to other peoples and their own. And all

peoples are often kind, generous, hardworking and persevere despite catastrophic set backs. Calloway makes them come alive.

A good overall account of Meso America and related epochs. Scholars would call this a good synthesis of info,data, facts and told very well and not getting too bogged down anywhere. Should be more widely read.

This is a marvelous book. I've read a fair number of books on this subject, and One Vast Winter Count is by a considerable margin the best and most comprehensive I've encountered, and one of the most readable. Prof. Calloway knows as much about the history of the indigenous West as anyone out there, and writes clearly and well. He is fair to all sides and points out when the historical record is unclear and when experts disagree. I read the book when it first came out. Just now I reread it and liked it so much the second time around I thought I would review it here. I was surprised to find a previous reviewer complaining that the book fails to define terms when they are first introduced. I guess this is true, but it's way less common than he says. The reviewer asks, "And what is an Algonquin?" I just looked at the book to find out how the author used the term. Contrary to what seems to be implied by the review, Calloway defines how he uses the word in "a note on terminology" at the beginning of the book and then defines the location of the people on p. 56 (hardback edition), which is where the term is used, I think, for the first time. Similarly, it is true that Calloway doesn't define "potlatch" in its full complexity, but the context (pp. 408-412) makes it pretty clear this is a native festival/ceremony/party where people give away lots of stuff to earn status points. I wish, like that reviewer, that the book had more maps. I also wish the index were more complete. Maybe the subtitle should have been changed to emphasize that this history focuses on the area between the Mississippi and the Rockies, with excursions to the Pacific Coast. But this book is not likely to be surpassed as a history of the American West before 1800 for a long time.

Very good

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