

NINTH EDITION

# EXPERIENCE HISTORY



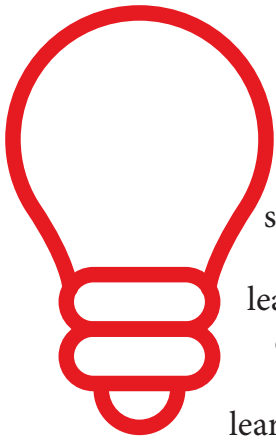
INTERPRETING

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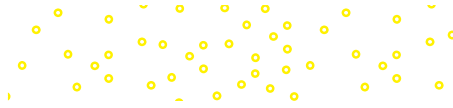


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# EXPERIENCE HISTORY

INTERPRETING AMERICA'S PAST

**NINTH EDITION**

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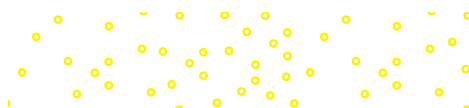
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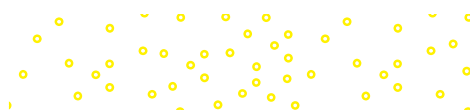
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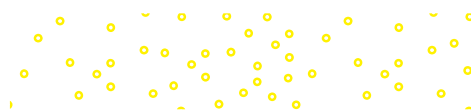
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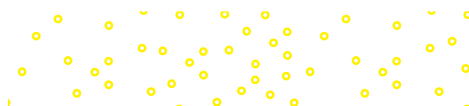
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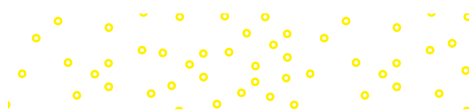
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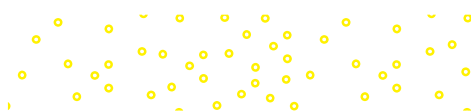
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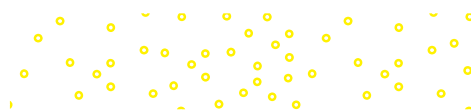
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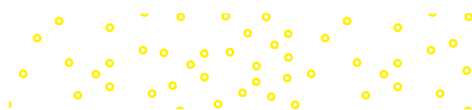
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## HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE HISTORY?

The answer to that question requires an active verb. *Doing* history is not simply a matter of reading a narrative or memorizing a set of facts. That's because history is not merely "the past"; it's a reconstruction assembled from the past's raw materials. The history you make depends on how actively you've engaged with those materials.

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By nature, textbook programs strive to be comprehensive, smooth, and seamless. The narrative speaks with a single authoritative voice. But history doesn't consist of one voice; it has multiple voices, like our diverse nation. Historians must take into account the dialogues, disagreements, and diverse actors that all have been a part of American history.

In this text, we hope to show you those multiple voices. With our *After the Fact* essays, we reveal how historians grapple with the large themes that help make sense of the past. With our *Historian's Toolbox* feature, we explore how historians cross-examine all sorts of evidence, from diaries and newspapers to political cartoons and sheet music; from furniture and clothing to photographs and films. In short, this program is designed to let you *experience* history the way historians do.

Our narrative is further enriched by a comprehensive set of learning activities found in Connect History. By harnessing the power of Connect, your students will get the help they need, when and how they need it, so that your class time can be more rewarding for your students and you.

## PRIMARY SOURCES HELP STUDENTS THINK CRITICALLY ABOUT HISTORY

Primary sources help students think critically about history and expose them to contrasting perspectives of key events. The Ninth Edition of *Experience History* provides three different ways to use primary source documents in your course.

## Power of Process for Primary Sources

>> **POWER OF PROCESS FOR PRIMARY SOURCES.** Power of Process is a critical thinking tool for reading and writing about primary sources. As part of Connect History, McGraw-Hill Education's learning platform Power of Process contains a database of over 400 searchable primary sources in addition to the capability for instructors to upload their own sources. Instructors can then select a series of strategies for students to use to analyze and comment on a source. The Power of Process framework helps students develop essential academic skills such as understanding, analyzing, and synthesizing readings and visuals such as maps, leading students toward higher-order thinking and writing.



**Features that offer contrasting perspectives or showcase historical artifacts.** Within the print or eBook, the Ninth Edition of *Experience History* offers the following features:

>> **MANY HISTORIES.** Two primary source documents offer contrasting perspectives on key events for analysis and discussion. Introductions and Thinking Critically questions frame the documents. For example, how did Spaniards and Aztecs differ in their account of first contact? Or, what were the arguments used to justify the internment of Japanese Americans during WWII, and how did they compare to the experiences of those imprisoned?



## Many HISTORIES

**WHO WAS TO BLAME FOR THE BOSTON MASSACRE?**

*Following the shootings in King Street, Captain Thomas Preston and six of his men stood trial for murder. Two radical patriot lawyers, Josiah Quincy Jr. and future President John Adams, served as defense counsel. Convinced that Boston must prove itself fair and faithful to the rule of law, both lawyers performed brilliantly. The jury acquitted Preston and four of the soldiers, and convicted two others of manslaughter. The depositions from the trial provide some of our best evidence for how soldiers and Bostonians viewed the standoff differently.*

---

**DOCUMENT 1**  
Deposition of Captain Thomas Preston, March 12, 1770

The mob still increased and were more outrageous, striking their clubs or bludgeons one against another, and calling out, come on you rascals, you bloody backs, you lobster scoundrels, fire if you dare, God damn you, fire and be damned, we know you dare not, and much more such language was used. At this time I was between the soldiers and the mob, parleying with, and endeavouring all in my power to persuade them to retire peacefully, but to no purpose. They advanced to the points of the bayonets, struck some of them and even the muzzles of the pieces, and seemed to be endeavouring to close with the soldiers. On which some well-behaved persons asked me if the guns were charged, I replied yes. They then asked me if I intended to order the men to fire. I answered no, by no means, observing to them that I was advanced before the

muzzles of the men's pieces, and must fall a sacrifice if they fired; that the soldiers were upon the half cock and charged bayonets, and my giving the word fire under those circumstances would prove me to be no officer. While I was thus speaking, one of the soldiers having received a severe blow with a stick, stepped a little on one side and instantly fired, on which turning to and asking him why he fired without orders, I was struck with a club on my arm, which for some time deprived me of the use of it, which blow had it been placed on my head, most probably would have destroyed me. On this a general attack was made on the men by a great number of heavy clubs and snowballs being thrown at them, by which all our lives were in imminent danger, some persons at the same time from behind calling out, damn your bloods—why don't you fire. Instantly three

or four of the soldiers fired, one after another, and directly after three more in the same confusion and hurry. The mob then ran away, except three unhappy men who instantly expired, in which number was Mr. Gray at whose rope-walk the prior quarrels took place; one more is since dead, three others are dangerously, and four slightly wounded. The whole of this melancholy affair was transacted in almost 20 minutes. On my asking the soldiers why they fired without orders, they said they heard the word fire and supposed it came from me. This might be the case as many of the mob called out fire, fire, but I assured the men that I gave no such order; that my words were, don't fire, stop your firing. In short, it was scarcely possible for the soldiers to know who said fire, or don't fire, or stop your firing.

Source: [www.famous-trials.com/bostonmassacre/t20/evidence](http://www.famous-trials.com/bostonmassacre/t20/evidence)

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**DOCUMENT 2**  
Deposition of Robert Goddard

The Soldiers came up to the Centinel and the Officer told them to place themselves and they formed a half moon. The Captain told the Boys to go home least there should be murder done. They were throwing Snow balls. Did not go off but threw more Snow balls. The Capt. was behind the Soldiers. The Captain told them to fire. One Gun went off. A Sailor or Townsman struck the Captain. He thereupon said damn your bloods fire think I'll be treated in this manner. This Man that struck the Captain came from among the People who were 7 feet off and were round on one wing. I saw no person speak to him. I was so near I should have seen it. After the Capt. said Damn your bloods fire they all fired one after

another about 7 or 8 in all, and then the officer bid Prime and load again. He stood behind all the time. Mr. Lee went up to the officer and called the officer by name Capt. Preston. I saw him coming down from the Guard behind the Party. I went to Goad the next day being sworn for the Grand Jury to see the Captain. Then said pointing to him that's the person who gave the word to fire. He said if you swear that you will ruin me everlastingly. I was so near the officer when he gave the word fire that I could touch him. His face was towards me. He stood in the middle behind the Men. I looked him in the face. He then stood within the circle. When he told 'em to fire he turned about to me. I looked him in the face.

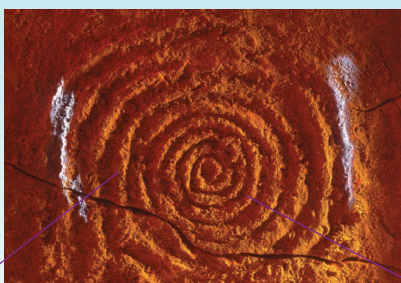
**THINKING CRITICALLY**  
*Preston and Goddard came to different conclusions about the shootings but describe similar details (the snowballs, the man who struck Preston). Can details from these two accounts be reconciled? Do they simply have different perspectives on the same event, or do you think one of the depositions must be misleading? Given the tensions these accounts relate, do you think that a violent confrontation between soldiers and Bostonians was inevitable?*

Source: [www.bostonmassacre.net/t20/16goddard.htm](http://www.bostonmassacre.net/t20/16goddard.htm)



## Historian's TOOLBOX

An Ancient Calendar



©Charles Walker/TopFoto/The Image Works

**During summer solstice, the spiral is bisected by a single shaft of light. At the winter solstice, as shown here, sunlight shines at the outside edges of the spiral.**

On a blazing hot summer day in 1977, Anna Sofaer climbed up to the top of Fajada Butte in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico, spotted three sandstone slabs resting carefully against a wall, and walked over to investigate. What she saw against the wall astounded her: a spiral glyph, bisected by a pure shaft of light. An artist and amateur archaeologist, Sofaer had keen interest in how indigenous American cultures harnessed light and

**Why might the Chacoans have used a spiral rather than another image?**

shadow in their architecture. Knowing that it was nearly the summer solstice, she recognized instantly that she'd discovered an ancient Ancestral Puebloan calendar. Later research revealed that the device also marked the winter solstice, the summer and winter equinoxes, and the extremes of the moon's 18- to 19-year cycle (the major and minor standstills). These discoveries prompted still more research, and scholars now believe that there are structures throughout Chaco Canyon aligned to solar and lunar events.

**THINKING CRITICALLY**  
*What practical reasons might there have been to build these sorts of sun and moon calendars? Might there have been cultural, religious, or social purposes to track accurately the movements of the sun and moon?*

>> **HISTORIAN'S TOOLBOX.** In each chapter, these feature boxes showcase historical images and artifacts, asking students to focus on visual evidence and examine material culture. Introductions and Thinking Critically questions frame the images.

>> **CREATE.** Select primary source documents that meet the unique needs of your course. No two history courses are the same. Using McGraw-Hill Education's Create allows you to quickly and easily create custom course materials with cross-disciplinary content and other third-party sources.

- **CHOOSE YOUR OWN CONTENT:** Create a book that contains only the chapters you want, in the order you want. Create will even renumber the pages for you!
- **ADD READINGS:** Use our American History Collections to include primary sources, or Taking Sides: Annual Editions. Add your own original content, such as syllabus or History major requirements!
- **CHOOSE YOUR FORMAT:** Print or eBook? Softcover, spiral-bound, or loose-leaf? Black-and-white or color? Perforated, three-hole punched, or regular paper?
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# MAP TOOLS TO PROMOTE STUDENT LEARNING

>> **MAPPING THE PAST.** This feature provides students with a map's historical context along with questions designed to develop map-reading skills as well as to launch an interpretive analysis of the map.

## >> MAPPING THE PAST << ROUTES OF EUROPEAN EXPLORATION



"I am not taking pains to see much in detail because I could not do it in fifty years and because I want to see and explore as much as I can"  
—Christopher Columbus, Diary, October 19, 1492.

### CONTEXT

Mostly ignorant of indigenous language, geography, culture, history, religion, economy, or politics, European explorers moved clumsily through the New World. But as they did, they unleashed profound changes, changes that often outpaced the explorers themselves. This map tracks the winding routes of exploration by water and land, along with the dates and nationalities of the voyages. Read together, these three kinds of information can reveal much about the ignorance, ambition, and competition that shaped European discovery in the Americas.

©Steve Granger/The Granger Collection, New York



### MAP READING

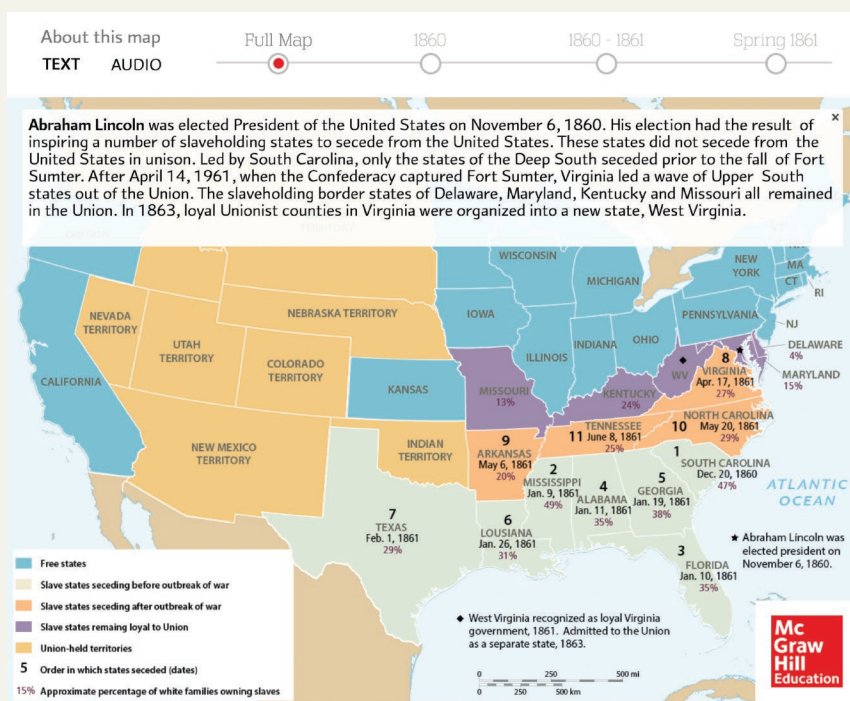
1. How did Columbus's routes differ in 1492, 1493, 1498, and 1502?
2. When did the French and British begin exploring the New World?
3. How long did it take Europeans to begin exploring the continental interior?

### MAP INTERPRETATION

1. What regions did early European explorers seem to have avoided? What might explain the apparent disinterest?
2. How did competition among rival European imperial powers shape the pattern and timing of exploration around the Americas?

Using Connect History and more than 100 maps, students can learn the course material more deeply and study more effectively than ever before.

>> **INTERACTIVE MAPS.** Interactive maps give students a hands-on understanding of geography. *Experience History* offers over 30 interactive maps that support geographical as well as historical thinking. These maps appear in both the eBook and Connect History exercises. For some interactive maps, students click on the boxes in the map legend to see changing boundaries, visualize migration routes, or analyze war battles and election results. With others, students manipulate a slider to help them better understand change over time. New interactive maps feature advanced navigation features, including zoom, as well as audio and textual animation.



A complete list of maps can be found in a separate section of the frontmatter.

## SMARTBOOK 2.0 TAILORS CONTENT TO THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT



# SMARTBOOK™

Available within Connect History, SmartBook has been updated with improved learning objectives to ensure that students gain foundational knowledge while also learning to make connections to help them formulate a broader understanding of historical events. SmartBook 2.0 personalizes learning to individual student needs, continually adapting to pinpoint knowledge gaps and focus learning on topics that need the most attention. Study time is more productive and, as a result, students are better prepared for class and coursework. For instructors, SmartBook 2.0 tracks student progress and provides insights that can help guide teaching strategies.

## CONTEXTUALIZE HISTORY

Help students experience history in a whole new way with our new **Podcast Assignments**. We've gathered some of the most interesting and popular history podcasts currently available and built assignable questions around them. These assignments allow instructors to bring greater context and nuance to their courses while engaging students through the storytelling power of podcasts.

The screenshot displays the SmartBook interface for a podcast assignment. The top section is titled "HISTORY PODCASTS" and includes instructions: "Please listen to the following podcast and answer the questions that follow. Questions will focus on the first 30 minutes of the podcast." Below this, the "PODCAST SOURCE" is listed as "Stuff You Missed in History Class". The "EPISODE TITLE" is "13 Reasons for the American Revolution". The "SUMMARY" states: "No taxation without representation" is often cited as one of the most important parts in the bigger picture of the American Revolution. The "TOTAL PODCAST TIME" is 30 minutes. A disclaimer is provided: "Our website contains links to websites owned and operated by third parties for convenience only and are not an endorsement by McGraw-Hill Education of the content or services of any linked website and is not responsible for these websites or their content or services." Below the disclaimer, there is a section titled "What did the listeners to the podcast write ..." with a "Multiple Choice" question: "The Battle of Bunker Hill". To the right, there is a preview of the podcast player for "13 Reasons for the American Revolution" by "Stuff You Missed in History Class". The player shows the episode title, a play button, and a progress bar. Below the player, there are social media sharing options (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Email) and a "TOPICS IN THIS PODCAST" section listing "American history", "18th century", and "U.S. history".

## NEW CONTENT IN *EXPERIENCE HISTORY, 9E*

- >> A **THEMATIC TIMELINE** at the beginning of each chapter is a new feature that previews key events and the themes connecting them.
- >> **NEW MAP EXERCISES**, “Mapping the Past,” in most chapters provide students with a map’s historical context and then take them through a series of questions designed to develop map-reading skills as well as to launch an interpretive analysis of the map.
- >> **CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHIES** have been updated to reflect new scholarship.
- >> **CHAPTERS** have been revised to reflect new trends in scholarship. For example, **CHAPTER 7, THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**, includes a new section about the varied roles of women in the Revolutionary War, and the discussion of the contribution of the French in the war has been expanded.
- >> **CHAPTER 9, THE EARLY REPUBLIC**, looks beyond America’s shores to consider the significance of Caribbean slave rebellions to the early republic and the connection between the Haitian Revolution and the Louisiana Purchase.
- >> **CHAPTER 12, AFIRE WITH FAITH**, includes expanded coverage of abolitionism reflecting the pivotal role played by free blacks in the North, like David Walker, in radicalizing the antislavery movement after 1830. The influence of British abolitionism is also discussed.
- >> **CHAPTER 13, THE OLD SOUTH**, has added material on the Upper South and the domestic slave trade, reflecting new scholarship.
- >> **CHAPTER 18, THE NEW SOUTH AND THE TRANS-MISSISSIPPI WEST**, features a new Historian’s Toolbox, “Custer’s Defeat, Indian Style,” that analyzes the colored pencil-and-ink drawings of the battle by Red Horse, a Lakota Sioux Indian. The chapter has also added material clarifying the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887.

- >> CHAPTER 19, THE NEW INDUSTRIAL ORDER, includes expanded coverage of the environmental costs of industrialization as well as additional material on the Homestead Steel Strike of 1892.
- >> CHAPTER 20, THE RISE OF AN URBAN ORDER, adds new material on the gender transition from prim “young ladies” to more liberated “school girls,” in the section on “Public Education in an Urban Industrial World.”
- >> CHAPTER 25, THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND THE NEW DEAL, provides a new Historian’s Toolbox, “Wonder Woman, Women’s Rights, and Birth Control,” exploring the connections between Margaret Sanger and Wonder Woman’s creator.
- >> CHAPTER 30, THE VIETNAM ERA, expands coverage of the adverse environmental effects of the American escalation in Vietnam, changing riverine ecologies and cultural traditions.
- >> CHAPTER 31, THE CONSERVATIVE CHALLENGE, features a new chapter introduction, “Born Again,” profiling the rise of Jerry Falwell and his campaign to move evangelicals away from political quietism to support for Ronald Reagan.
- >> CHAPTER 32, THE UNITED STATES IN A GLOBAL COMMUNITY, adds a new document to the chapter’s Many Histories feature, “Our Changing Climate,” from *The National Climate Assessment*, issued by the U.S. Global Change Research Program. This chapter also includes a new section, “A Divided Nation,” on the election of 2016 and Donald Trump’s economic, ethnic, and racial nationalism, put forward during his first years in office. There is discussion of the Paris Agreement on global warming; the attack on Obamacare; the passage of a new tax cut; and the controversy over Russian meddling in the election, Trump’s firing of James Comey, and the appointment of Robert Mueller.

# LIST OF Author-Selected Primary Source Documents in Power of Process

Power of Process for Primary Sources is a critical thinking tool for reading and writing about primary sources. As part of Connect History, McGraw-Hill Education's learning platform, Power of Process contains a database of over 400 searchable primary sources in addition to the capability for instructors to upload their own sources. Instructors can then select a series of strategies for students to use to analyze and comment on a source. The Power of Process framework helps students develop essential academic skills such as understanding, analyzing, and synthesizing readings and visuals such as maps, leading students toward higher-order thinking and writing.

The following primary source documents, carefully selected by the authors to coordinate with this chapter, are available in the Power of Process assignment type within Connect History at <http://connect.mheducation.com>.

## Chapter 1

1. Thoughts on Creation, from Native Peoples of New Netherlands
2. A Traveler from Virginia Viewing Indian Ruins in the Ohio Valley

## Chapter 2

3. Excerpt from a Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies by Bartolomé de las Casas, 1542
4. A Spanish Conquistador Visits the Aztec Marketplace in Tenochtitlán

## Chapter 3

5. A Virginia Settler Describes the Indian War of 1622 in England
6. An Act for the Apprehension and Suppression of Runaways, Negroes, and Slaves, Virginia, September 1672

## Chapter 4

7. Mary Rowlandson's Narrative of Being Taken Captive by the Indians
8. A Puritan Wrestles with Her Faith

## Chapter 5

9. George Whitefield Sermonizes on "The Eternity of Hell-Torments"
10. Franklin Attends Whitefield's Sermon

## Chapter 6

11. Thomas Hutchinson Recounts the Destruction of His Home during the Stamp Act Riots
12. Thomas Paine Attacks Monarchy

## Chapter 7

13. Abigail Adams Reports on the Fighting around Boston
14. A North Carolina Soldier Witnesses the Partisan War in the Southern Backcountry

## Chapter 8

15. The Confederation Congress Passes the Northwest Ordinance
16. "An Aged Matron of Connecticut" Urges Women's Education

## Chapter 9

17. George Washington Takes His Farewell
18. Tecumseh Responds to William Henry Harrison

## Chapter 10

19. Moving On by Basil Hall
20. Lowell's Female Factory Workers Voicing Their Protests

## Chapter 11

21. Margaret Bayard Smith on Andrew Jackson's Inauguration in 1828
22. Chief Justice Marshall Delivers the Supreme Court's Opinion in *The Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*

## Chapter 12

23. Lyman Beecher Warns Against Roman Catholicism
24. Women Issue a "Declaration of Sentiments" from Seneca Falls

## Chapter 13

25. A Southern Master Describes Disciplining His Slaves and Their Resistance
26. Nat Turner Explains His Motives

## Chapter 14

27. The United States Promises to Save Mexico from Indian Raiders
28. Disappointment in the Gold Diggings



### Chapter 15

- 29. The Know-Nothing Case for Repeal of Naturalization Laws
- 30. Charles Eliot Norton: I Have Seen Nothing Like the Intensity of Feeling

### Chapter 16

- 31. A Union Doctor's Diary, Jan–May, 1863
- 32. A Georgia Plantation Mistress in Sherman's Path

### Chapter 17

- 33. An Anguished Ex-Slave Writes the Wife He'd Thought Long Dead
- 34. The Mississippi Plan in Action

### Chapter 18

- 35. Chief Joseph Speaks
- 36. Frederick Jackson Turner's New Frontier
- 37. Henry Grady's "New South"

### Chapter 19

- 38. The Sherman Anti-Trust Act
- 39. "The Story of a Sweat Shop Girl"

### Chapter 20

- 40. George Washington Plunkitt Defends "Honest Graft"
- 41. The Chinese Exclusion Act

### Chapter 21

- 42. Booker T. Washington's "Atlanta Compromise"
- 43. George Hoar's Case Against Imperialism

### Chapter 22

- 44. Alice Paul Suffers for Suffrage
- 45. John Muir's First Summer in the Sierras

### Chapter 23

- 46. Theodore Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine
- 47. Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points Speech

### Chapter 24

- 48. "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" by Langston Hughes
- 49. Calvin Coolidge on the Business of America
- 50. Mexican corrido, "El Enganchado" ("The Hooked One")

### Chapter 25

- 51. Franklin Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address

### Chapter 26

- 52. Einstein Letter to Franklin D. Roosevelt
- 53. Franklin D. Roosevelt's Four Freedoms Speech
- 54. D-Day Survivors

### Chapter 27

- 55. Truman Doctrine Speech (excerpt)
- 56. Speech of Joseph McCarthy, Wheeling, West Virginia, February 9, 1950
- 57. J. Edgar Hoover, Excerpt from Speech before the House Committee on Un-American Activities

### Chapter 28

- 58. John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address
- 59. 1963 Nuclear Test Ban Treaty
- 60. Excerpt from Dwight D. Eisenhower's "Military Industrial Complex" Speech

### Chapter 29

- 61. The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society
- 62. *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*
- 63. Opinion on Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965—Sam Ervin
- 64. Opinion on Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965—Ted Kennedy

### Chapter 30

- 65. John F. Kennedy: American Opinion on the War 1963
- 66. Gulf of Tonkin Resolution
- 67. Richard Nixon's Silent Majority Speech

### Chapter 31

- 68. Excerpt from Plan B Committee on the Present Danger (CPD)
- 69. Ronald Reagan and the Evil Empire Speech
- 70. George H. W. Bush's Address to Congress on the Gulf War

### Chapter 32

- 71. Barack Obama Keynote Address to the Democratic National Convention, July 2004
- 72. George W. Bush on Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change

# Acknowledgments

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RECEIVED HIS PH.D. FROM YALE UNIVERSITY. A historian who has pursued a full-time writing career, his works include *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection* (with Mark H. Lytle), *The Logic of Millennial Thought: Eighteenth-Century New England*, and *Great Heart: The History of a Labrador Adventure* (with John Ruge). He is co-editor with Michael Stoff of the *Oxford New Narratives in American History*, which includes his study *'They Say': Ida B. Wells and the Reconstruction of Race*. Most recently he wrote *A Little History of the United States*.

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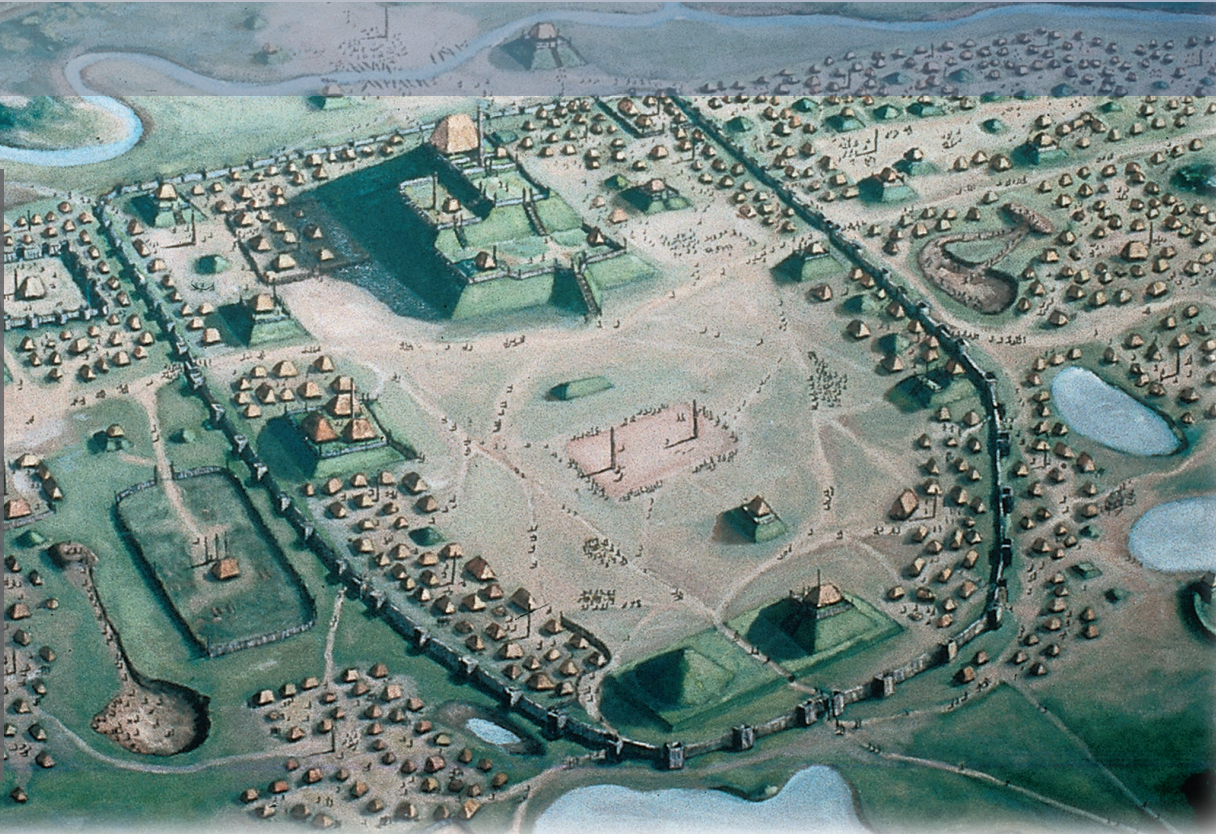




## 1

# The First Civilizations of North America

An artist's reconstruction of the city of Cahokia, ca. 1100 CE, whose population may have reached 30,000. More than 100 flat-topped pyramidal mounds dominated the settlement. Note how tiny the human figures are in comparison to the temples built atop the mounds. The two tall poles at the center of the open plaza were where the important game of chunky was played, as an illustration later in this chapter explains.



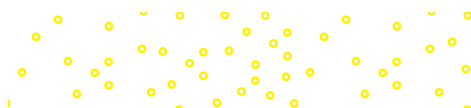
Courtesy of Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, Collinsville, Illinois. Painting by William R. Iseminger

## >> An American Story

## THE POWER OF A HIDDEN PAST

Stories told about the past have power over both the present and the future. Until recently, most students were taught that American history began several centuries ago—with the “discovery” of America by Columbus, or with the English colonization of Jamestown and Plymouth. History books ignored or trivialized the continent’s precontact history. But the reminders of that hidden past are everywhere. Scattered across the United States are thousands of ancient archaeological sites and hundreds of examples of monumental architecture, still imposing even after centuries of erosion, looting, and destruction.

Man-made earthen mounds, some nearly 5,000 years old, exist throughout eastern North America in a bewildering variety of shapes and sizes. Many are easily mistaken for modest





©Werner Forman/Universal Images Group/Getty Images

*The skilled craftspeople of the Hopewell tradition worked most often with copper but made exquisite objects from a variety of materials. This image of a human hand, discovered in a Hopewell mound, was cut from a single sheet of mica.*

hills, but others evoke wonder. In present-day Louisiana an ancient town with earthworks took laborers an estimated 5 million work hours to construct. In Ohio a massive serpent effigy snakes for a quarter-mile across the countryside, its head aligned to the summer solstice. In Illinois a vast, earthen structure covers 16 acres at its base and once reached as high as a 10-story building.

Observers in the colonial and revolutionary eras looked on such sites as curiosities and marvels. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and other prominent Americans collected ancient artifacts, took a keen interest in the excavation of mounds, and speculated

about the Indian civilizations that created them. Travelers explored these strange mounds, trying to imagine in their mind's eye the peoples who had built them. In 1795 the Reverend James Smith traced the boundaries of a mound wall that was strategically placed to protect a neck of land along a looping river bend in the Ohio valley. "The wall at present is so mouldered down that a man could easily ride over it. It is however about 10 feet, as near as I can judge, in perpendicular height. . . . In one place I observe a breach in the wall about 60 feet wide, where I suppose the gate formerly stood through which the people passed in and out of this stronghold." Smith was astonished by the size of the project. "Compared with this," he exclaimed, "what feeble and insignificant works are those of Fort Hamilton or Fort Washington! They are no more in comparison to it than a rail fence is to a brick wall."

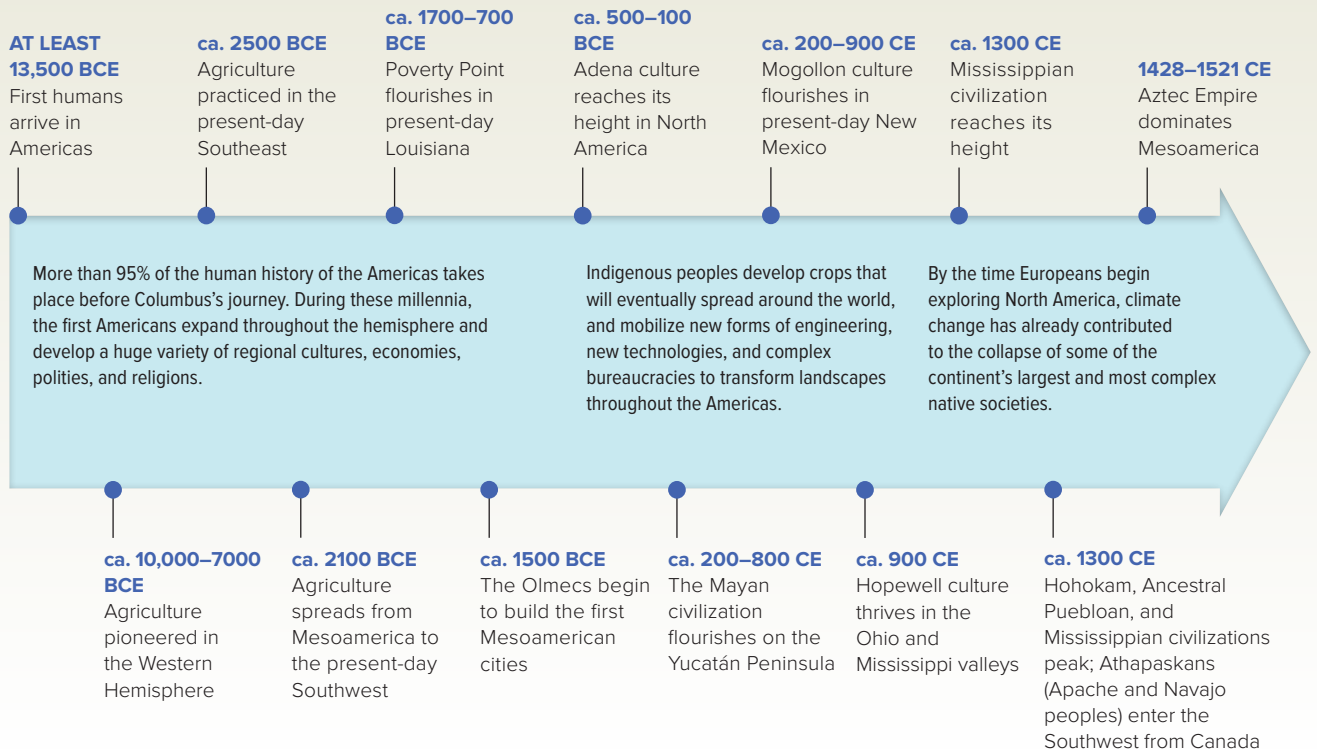
But in the 1830s and 1840s, as Americans sought to drive Indians west of the Mississippi and then confine them on smaller and smaller reservations, many observers began thinking differently about the continent's ancient sites. Surely the simple and "savage" people just then being expelled from American life could not have constructed such inspiring monuments. Politicians, writers, and even some influential scientists instead attributed the mounds to peoples of Europe, Africa, or Asia—Hindus, perhaps, or Israelites, Egyptians, or Japanese. Many

nineteenth-century Americans found special comfort in a tale about King Madoc from Wales who, supposedly shipwrecked in the Americas in the twelfth century, had left behind a small but ingenious population of Welsh pioneers who built the mysterious mounds before being overrun by Indians. Some observers even thought Indian skin boats resembled Welsh coracles, designs brought over by King Madoc. The Welsh hypothesis seemed to offer poetic justice, because it implied that nineteenth-century Indians were only receiving a fitting punishment for what their ancestors had done to the remarkable mound builders from Wales.

These fanciful tales were discredited in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In recent decades archaeologists working across the Americas have discovered in more detail how native peoples built the hemisphere's ancient architecture. They have also helped to make clear the degree to which prejudice and politics have blinded European Americans to the complexity, wonder, and significance of America's history before 1492. At least 15,000 years of human habitation in North America allowed a broad range of cultures to develop, based on agriculture as well as hunting and gathering. In North America a population in the millions spoke hundreds of languages. Cities evolved as well as towns and farms, exhibiting great diversity in their cultural, political, economic, and religious organization. <<



## THEMATIC TIMELINE



## A CONTINENT OF CULTURES

**IMMIGRANTS FROM ASIA** ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND GENETIC EVIDENCE indicate that the first inhabitants of the Americas arrived from Siberia at least 15,500 years ago BP.\* New evidence suggests that the first arrivals could even have come tens of thousands of years earlier than that. (For more details, see the After the Fact essay “Tracking the First Americans,” at the end of the chapter). Gradually these **nomads** filtered southward, some likely following the Pacific coastline in small boats, others making their way down a narrow, glacier-free corridor along the eastern base of the Rocky Mountains and onto the northern Great Plains. There they found and hunted a stunning array of huge mammals, so-called megafauna. These animals included mammoths that were twice as heavy as elephants, giant bison, sloths that were taller than giraffes, several kinds of camels, and terrifying, 8-foot-long lions. Within a few thousand years the descendants of these Siberians, people whom Columbus would

wishfully dub “Indians,” had spread throughout the length and breadth of the Americas.

This first colonization of the Americas coincided with, and perhaps accelerated, profound changes in the natural world. The last Ice Age literally melted away as warmer global temperatures freed the great reservoirs of water once locked in glaciers. A rise in sea levels inundated the Bering Strait, submerging the land bridge, and creating new lakes and river systems. The emergence of new **ecosystems**—climates, waterways, and land environments in which humans interacted with other animals and plants—made for ever-greater diversity. The first human inhabitants of the Americas had fed, clothed, warmed, and armed themselves in part by hunting megafauna, and some combination of overhunting and climate change resulted in the extinction of most of these giants by the end of the Ice Age. As glaciers receded and human populations increased, the first Americans had to adapt to changing conditions. They adjusted by hunting smaller animals with new, more specialized kinds of stone tools and by learning to exploit particular places more efficiently.

\*Before the Present, used most commonly by archaeologists when the time spans are in multiple thousands of years. This text will also use CE for Common Era, equivalent to the Christian Era or AD; BCE is Before the Common Era, equivalent to BC.

**DIVERSIFIED SOCIETIES** So it was that between 10,000 and 2,500 years ago distinctive regional cultures developed among the peoples of the Americas. Those who remained in the Great Plains turned to hunting the much smaller descendants of the now-extinct giant bison; those in the deserts of the Great Basin survived on small game, seeds, and edible plants; those in the Pacific Northwest relied mainly on fishing; and those east of the Mississippi, besides fishing and gathering, tracked deer and bear and trapped smaller game animals and birds. Over these same centuries, what seems to have been one original, common language evolved into regional dialects and eventually into a multitude of distinct languages. Linguistic diversity paralleled other sorts of divergences, in social organizations, kinship practices, politics, and religion. Technological and cultural unity gave way to striking regional diversity as the first Americans learned how to best exploit their particular environments. Glimpses of these profound changes may be found today in burials, stone tools, and some precious sites of long-term or repeated occupation.

## Civilizations of Ancient Mexico

**AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION** To the south, pioneers in **Mesoamerica** began domesticating squash 10,000 years ago. Over the next several thousand years farmers added other crops including beans, tomatoes, and especially corn to an agricultural revolution that would transform life through much of the Americas. Because many crops could be dried and stored, agriculture allowed these first farmers to settle in one place.

By about 1500 BCE, farming villages began giving way to larger societies, to richer and more complex cultures. As the abundant food supply steadily expanded their populations, people began specializing in certain kinds of work. While most continued to labor on the land, others became craftworkers and merchants, architects and artists, warriors and priests. Their built environment reflected this social change as humble villages expanded into skillfully planned urban sites that were centers of trade, government, artistic display, and religious ceremony.

**OLMEC CITY-BUILDERS** The Olmecs, the first city-builders in the Americas, constructed large plazas and pyramidal buildings, and sculpted enormous heads chiseled from basalt. The Olmec cultural influence gradually spread throughout Mesoamerica, perhaps as a result of their trade with neighboring peoples. By about 100 BCE, the Olmecs' example had inspired the flowering of Teotihuacán from a small town

in central Mexico into a metropolis of towering pyramids. The city had bustling marketplaces, palaces decorated with mural paintings that housed an elite of warriors and priests, schools for their children, and sprawling suburbs for commoners. At its height, around 650 CE, Teotihuacán spanned 15 square miles and had a population of nearly 200,000—making it the sixth-largest city in the world.

**MAYAN CIVILIZATION** More impressive still were the achievements of the Mayas, who benefited from their contacts with both the Olmecs and Teotihuacán. In the lowland jungles of Mesoamerica they built cities filled with palaces, bridges, aqueducts, baths, astronomical observatories, and pyramids topped with temples. Their priests developed a written language, their mathematicians discovered the zero, and their astronomers devised a calendar more accurate than any then existing. In its glory, between the third and ninth century CE, the Mayan civilization boasted some 50 urban centers scattered throughout the Yucatán Peninsula, Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras.

But neither the earliest urban centers of the Olmecs nor the glittering city-state of Teotihuacán survived. Even the enduring kingdom of the Mayas had collapsed by 900 CE. Like the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome, they thrived for centuries and then declined. Scholars still debate the reasons for their collapse. Military attack may have brought about their ruin, or perhaps their large populations exhausted local resources.

**AZTEC EMPIRE** Mayan grandeur was eventually rivaled in the Valley of Mexico. In the middle of the thirteenth century the Aztecs, a people who had originally lived on Mesoamerica's northern frontiers, swept south and settled in central Mexico. By the end of the fifteenth century they ruled over a vast empire from their capital at Tenochtitlán, an island metropolis of perhaps a quarter of a million people. At its center lay a large plaza bordered by sumptuous palaces

and the Great Temple of the Sun. Beyond stood three broad causeways connecting the island to the mainland; many other tall temples were adorned with brightly painted carved images of the gods, zoological and botanical gardens, and well-stocked marketplaces. Through Tenochtitlán's canals flowed gold, silver, exotic feathers and jewels, cocoa, and millions of pounds of maize—all trade goods and tribute from the several million other peoples in the region subjugated by the Aztecs.

Unsurpassed in power and wealth, in technological and artistic attainments, theirs was also a highly stratified society. The Aztec ruler, or Chief Speaker, shared



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**Aztec merchants, or pochtecas, spoke many languages and traveled on foot great distances throughout Mesoamerica and parts of North America. Pictured at left is Yacatecuhtli, Lord Nose, the patron god of merchants. He carries a symbol of the crossroads, with bare footprints. The merchant on the right carries a cargo of quetzal birds.**

governing power with the aristocrats, who monopolized all positions of religious, military, and political leadership, while the commoners—merchants, farmers, and craftworkers—performed all manual labor. There were slaves as well, some captives taken in war, others from the ranks of commoners forced by poverty to sell themselves or their children.

## Farmers, Potters, and Builders of the Southwest

**MOGOLLON AND HOHOKAM PEOPLES** Mesoamerican crops and farming techniques began making their way north to the American Southwest by 1000 BCE. At first the most successful farmers in the region were the Mogollon and the Hohokam peoples, two cultures that flourished in New Mexico and southern Arizona during the first millennium CE. Both tended to cluster their dwellings near streams, relying on either floodplain irrigation or a system of floodgates and canals to sustain their crops. The Mogollon came to be the master potters of the Southwest. The Hohokam pioneered vast and complex irrigation systems in arid southern Arizona that allowed them to support one of the largest populations in precontact North America.

**THE ANCESTRAL PUEBLO** Their neighbors to the north in what is now known as the Four Corners Region of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah, commonly referred to by the term Anasazi, are today more properly known as the Ancestral Pueblo peoples. The Ancestral Pueblo peoples adapted corn, beans, and squash to the relatively high altitude of the Colorado Plateau and soon parlayed their growing surplus and prosperity into societies of considerable complexity. Their most stunning achievements were villages of exquisitely executed

masonry buildings—apartment-like structures up to four stories high and containing hundreds of rooms at such places as Mesa Verde (Colorado) and Canyon de Chelly (Arizona). Villages in Chaco Canyon (New Mexico), the largest center of Ancestral Puebloan settlement, were linked to the wider region by hundreds of miles of wide, straight roads.

Besides their impressive dwellings, the Ancestral Pueblo people filled their towns with religious shrines, astronomical observatories, and stations for sending signals to other villages. Their craftworkers fashioned delicate woven baskets, beautiful feather and hide sashes, decorated pottery, and turquoise jewelry that they traded throughout the region and beyond. For more than a thousand years, this civilization prospered, reaching a zenith between about 900 and 1100 CE. During those three centuries, the population grew to approximately 30,000 spread over 50,000 square miles, a total area larger than present-day California.

## Chiefdoms of the Eastern Woodlands

East of the Mississippi, Indian societies prospered in valleys near great rivers (Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, and



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**The remains of Pueblo Bonito, one of the nine Great Houses built by Ancestral Puebloans in Chaco Canyon. By the end of the eleventh century, Pueblo Bonito stood four stories high at the rear and contained 800 rooms as well as many towers, terraces, a large central plaza, and several round “kivas” for religious and ceremonial purposes.**





©Mary Evans Picture Library/The Image Works

**Chunkey** was the name of a small clay donut-like disk about the width of a human hand, the centerpiece of a game first made popular at Cahokia. The figurine, about 8 inches high, shows a player holding the chunkey in his right hand. It was rolled across a playing field while contestants chased it, taking aim with sticks. Over 600 years later the game was still being played by many Indian peoples, including the Mandan, who were depicted by artist George Catlin. The chunkey appears at lower right.



©National Geographic Creative/Alamy

Cumberland), the shores of the Great Lakes, and the coast of the Atlantic. Everywhere the earliest inhabitants depended on a combination of fishing, gathering, and hunting—mainly deer but also bear, raccoon, and a variety of birds. Around 2000 BCE some groups in the temperate, fertile Southeast began growing the gourds and pumpkins first cultivated by Mesoamerican farmers, and later they also adopted the cultivation of maize. But unlike the ancient peoples of the Southwest, most Eastern Woodland peoples continued to subsist largely on animals, fish, and nuts, all of which were abundant enough to meet their needs and even to expand their numbers.

**ADENA AND HOPEWELL** Indeed, many of the mysterious earthen mounds that would so fascinate Europeans were built by peoples who did not farm. About 1000 BCE, residents of a place now known as Poverty Point in northeastern Louisiana fashioned spectacular earthworks—six semicircular rings that rose 9 feet in height and covered more than half a mile in diameter. Although these structures might have been sites for studying the planets and stars, hundreds of other mounds—built about 2,000 years ago by the Adena and the Hopewell cultures of the Ohio and Mississippi valleys—served as the burial places of their leading men and women. Alongside the corpses mourners heaped their richest goods—headdresses of antlers, necklaces of copper, troves of shells and pearls—rare and precious items imported from as far north as Canada, as far west as Wyoming, and as far east as Florida. All these mounds attest powerfully not only to the skill and sheer numbers of their builders but also to the complexity of

these ancient societies, their elaborate religious practices, and the wide scope of their trading networks.

**MISSISSIPPIAN CULTURE** Even so, the most magnificent culture of the ancient Eastern Woodlands, the Mississippian, owed much of its prominence to farming. By the twelfth century CE these peoples had emerged as the premier city-builders of North America, and their towns radiated for hundreds of miles in every direction from the hub of their trading network at Cahokia, a port city of perhaps 30,000 located directly across from present-day St. Louis at the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. Cahokia's many broad plazas teemed with farmers hawking their corn, squash, and beans and with craftworkers and merchants displaying their wares. But what commanded every eye were the structures surrounding the plazas—more than 100 flat-topped pyramidal mounds crowned by religious temples and the palaces of rulers.

## Life on the Great Plains

**MIGRATORY PEOPLES** Cahokia's size and power depended on consistent agricultural surpluses. Outside the Southwest and the river valleys of the East, agriculture played a smaller role in shaping North American societies. On the Great Plains, for example, some people did cultivate corn, beans, squash, and sunflowers, near reliable rivers and streams. But more typically plains communities relied on hunting and foraging, migrating to exploit seasonally variable resources. Plains hunters pursued game on

foot; the horses that had once roamed the Americas became extinct after the last Ice Age. Sometimes large groups of people worked together to drive the buffaloes over cliffs or to trap them in corrals. The aridity of the plains made it a dynamic and unpredictable place to live. During times of reliable rainfall, bison populations boomed, hunters flocked to the region, and agricultural communities blossomed along major rivers. But sometimes centuries passed with lower-than-average precipitation, and families abandoned the plains for eastern valleys or the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

## Survival in the Great Basin

Some peoples west of the Great Plains also kept to older ways of subsistence. Among them were the Numic-speaking peoples of the Great Basin, which includes present-day Nevada and Utah, eastern California, and western Wyoming and Colorado. Small family groups scoured their stark, arid landscape for the limited supplies of food it yielded, moving with each passing season to make the most of their environment. Men tracked elk and antelope and trapped smaller animals, birds, even toads, rattlesnakes, and insects. But the staples of their diet were edible seeds, nuts, and plants, which women gathered and stored in woven baskets to consume in times of scarcity. Several families occasionally hunted together or wintered in common quarters, but because the desert heat and soil defied farming, these bands usually numbered no more than about 50 people.

## The Plenty of the Pacific Northwest

The rugged stretch of coast from the southern banks of present-day British Columbia to northern California has always been an extraordinarily rich natural environment. Its mild climate and abundant rainfall yield forests lush with plants and game; its bays and rivers teem with salmon and halibut, its oceans with whales and porpoises, and its rocky beaches with seals, otters, abalone, mussels, and clams. Agriculture was unnecessary in such a bountiful place. From their villages on the banks of rivers, the shores of bays, and the beaches of low-lying offshore islands, the ancestors of the Nootkans, Makahs, Tlingits, Tshimshians, and Kwakiutls speared or netted salmon, trapped sea mammals, gathered shellfish, and launched canoes. The largest of these craft, from which they harpooned whales, measured 45 feet bow to stern and nearly 6 feet wide.

**SOCIAL AND CEREMONIAL DISTINCTIONS** By the fifteenth century these fecund lands supported a population of perhaps 130,000. They also permitted a culture with the leisure time needed to create works of art as well as an elaborate social and ceremonial life. The peoples of the Northwest built houses and canoes from red cedar; carved bowls and dishes from red alder; crafted paddles and harpoon shafts, bows, and clubs from Pacific yew; and wove

*This ornately carved and painted house post once supported the main beams of a dwelling belonging to a Kwakiutl whaler in the Pacific Northwest.*

*Depicting a man of wealth and high rank, the figure has a whale painted on his chest and copper ornaments on his arms. Two smaller figures, in shadow by the whaler's knees, each support one end of a plank seat. These were his household slaves, most likely children captured in an attack on rival tribes.*

©The Granger Collection, New York



baskets from bark and blankets from mountain goat wool. They evolved a society with sharp distinctions among nobles, commoners, and slaves, the latter being mainly women and children captured in raids on other villages. Those who were free devoted their lives to accumulating and then redistributing their wealth among other villagers in elaborate potlatch ceremonies in order to confirm or enhance their social prestige.

## The Frozen North

Most of present-day Canada and Alaska were equally inhospitable to agriculture. In the farthest northern reaches—a treeless belt of Arctic tundra—temperatures fell below freezing for most of the year. The Subarctic, although densely forested, had only about 100 frost-free days each year. As a result, the peoples of both regions survived by fishing and hunting. The Inuit, or Eskimos, of northern Alaska harvested whales from their umiaks, boats made by stretching walrus skin over a driftwood frame and that could bear more than a ton of weight. In the central Arctic, they tracked seals. The inhabitants of the Subarctic, both Algonquian-speaking peoples in the East and Athapaskan speakers of



## EARLY PEOPLES OF NORTH AMERICA

Migration routes across the Bering Strait from Asia were taken by peoples whose descendants created the major civilizations of ancient America. The influence of Mesoamerica is most striking among the cultures of the Southwest and the Mississippians. **Based on the information in *After the Fact*, “Tracking the First Americans” (at the end of the chapter), which migration route on this map is being more closely considered due to recent archaeological discoveries?**

the West, moved from their summer fishing camps to berry patches in the fall to moose and caribou hunting grounds in the winter.

### ✓ REVIEW

How did native cultures differ from region to region, and what accounts for these differences?

## INNOVATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

THE FIRST AMERICANS THEREFORE EXPRESSED, governed, and supported themselves in a broad variety of ways. And yet they shared certain core characteristics, including the desire and ability to reshape their world. Whether they lived in forests,



coastal regions, jungles, or prairies, whether they inhabited high mountains or low deserts, native communities experimented constantly with the resources around them. Over the course of millennia, nearly all the hemisphere's peoples found ways to change the natural world in order to improve and enrich their lives.

## America's Agricultural Gifts

**RISE OF AGRICULTURE** No innovation proved more crucial to human history than native manipulation of individual plants. Like all first farmers, agricultural pioneers in the Americas began experimenting accidentally. Modern-day species of corn, for example, probably derive from a Mesoamerican grass known as teosinte. It seems that ancient peoples gathered teosinte to collect its small grains. By selecting the grains that best suited them and bringing them back to their settlements, and by returning the grains to the soil through spillage or waste disposal, they unintentionally began the process of domestic cultivation. Soon these first farmers began deliberately saving seeds from the best plants



©vainillychile/Shutterstock

| *Teosinte, a Mesoamerican grass. Selective harvesting by native peoples helped transform teosinte into maize (corn).*

and sowing them in gardens. In this way, over hundreds of generations, American farmers transformed the modest teosinte grass into a staple crop that would give rise to the hemisphere's mightiest civilizations.

**WORLDWIDE SPREAD OF AMERICAN CROPS** Indeed, ever since contact with Europe, the great breakthroughs in Native American farming have sustained peoples around the world. In addition to corn, the first Americans gave humanity scores of varieties of squash, potatoes, beans, and other basic foods. Today, plants domesticated by indigenous Americans account for three-fifths of the world's crops, including many that have revolutionized the global diet. For good or ill, a handful of corn species occupies the center of the contemporary American diet. In addition to its traditional forms, corn is consumed in chips, breads, and breakfast cereals; corn syrup sweeteners are added to many of our processed foods and nearly all soft drinks; and corn is fed to almost all animals grown to be consumed, even farmed fish.

Other Native American crops have become integral to diets all over the world. Potatoes revolutionized northern European life in the centuries after contact, helping to avert famine and boost populations in several countries. Ireland's population tripled in the century after the introduction of potatoes. Beans and peanuts became prized for their protein content in Asia. And in Africa, corn, manioc, and other New World crops so improved diets and overall health that the resulting rise in population may have offset the population lost to the Atlantic slave trade.

## Landscapers

Plant domestication requires the smallest of changes, changes farmers slowly encourage at the genetic level. But native peoples in the precontact Americas transformed their world on grand scales as well. In the Andes, Peruvian engineers put people to work by the tens of thousands creating an astonishing patchwork of terraces, dikes, and canals designed to maximize agricultural productivity. Similar public-works projects transformed large parts of central Mexico and the Yucatán. Even today, after several centuries of disuse, overgrowth, and even deliberate destruction, human-shaped landscapes dating from the precontact period still cover thousands of square miles of the Americas.

**CULTIVATED TREES OF THE AMAZON** Over the past generation, scholars have begun to find evidence of incredible manipulation of landscapes and environments in the least likely of places. The vast Amazon rain forest has long been seen by Westerners as an imposing symbol of untouched nature. But it now seems that much of the Amazon was in fact made by people. Whereas farmers elsewhere in the world domesticated plants for their gardens and fields, farmers in the Amazon cultivated food-bearing trees for thousands of years, cutting down less useful species and replacing them with ones that better suited human needs. All told there are more than 70 different species of domesticated trees throughout





| Theodore de Bry, Florida Indians Planting Maize. Both men and women were portrayed as involved in agriculture. Except for the digging stick at the center rear, however, the farming implements drawn by the artist are European in origin.

©Service Historique de la Marine, Vincennes, France/Bridgeman Images



©Emmanuel Lattes/Alamy

| In both North and South America native peoples used techniques to shape their physical environment, from burning prairies and forests (to harvest/hunt animals) to creating irrigation systems (to control floodwaters for agriculture). This photograph from present-day Peru shows the exquisite terracing Incas employed to maximize agricultural yields amid hills, valleys, and mountains. Some researchers think these circular terraces were used for agronomic experiments.

the Amazon. At least one-eighth of the nonflooded rain forest was directly or indirectly created by humans. Likewise, native peoples laboriously improved the soil across as much as a tenth of the Amazon, mixing it with charcoal and a variety of organic materials. These managed soils are more than 10 times as productive as untreated soils in the Amazon. Today, farmers in the region still eagerly search for the places where precontact peoples enriched the earth.

Native North Americans likewise transformed their local environments. Sometimes they moved forests. Ancestral Puebloans cut down and transported more than 200,000 trees to construct the floors and roofs of the monumental buildings in Chaco Canyon. Sometimes they moved rivers. By taming the waters of the Salt and Gila Rivers in present-day Arizona with the most extensive system of irrigation canals anywhere in precontact North America, the Hohokam were able to support large populations in a desert environment. And sometimes they moved the land itself. Twenty-two million cubic feet of earth were moved to construct just one building in the Mississippian city of Cahokia.

**FIRE AS A TOOL** Indians also employed fire to systematically reshape landscapes across the continent. Throughout North America's great eastern and western forests, native peoples periodically set low fires to consume undergrowth and fallen trees. In this way the continent's first inhabitants managed forests and also animals. Burning enriched the soil and encouraged the growth of grasses and bushes prized by game animals such as deer, elk, beaver, rabbit, grouse, and turkey. The systematic use of fire to reshape forests helped hunters in multiple ways: it increased the overall food supply for grazing animals, it attracted those animal species hunters valued most, and, by clearing forests of ground debris, fire made it easier to track, kill, and transport game. Deliberate burns transformed forests in eastern North America to such an extent that bison migrated from their original ranges on the plains and thrived far to the east. Thus, when native



hunters from New York to Georgia brought down a buffalo, they were harvesting a resource that they themselves had helped to cultivate.

## The Shape of a Problem

No matter how great their ingenuity, the first Americans were constrained by certain natural realities. One of the most important is so basic that it is easy to overlook. Unlike Eurasia, which stretches across the Northern Hemisphere along an east-west axis, the Americas fall along a north-south axis, stretching nearly pole to pole. Consequently, the Americas are broken up by tremendous geographic and climactic diversity, making communication and technology transfer far more difficult than it was in the Old World.

Consider the agricultural revolution in Eurasia. Once plants and animals were first domesticated in the Fertile Crescent around 10,000 years ago, they quickly began spreading east and west. Within 1,500 years these innovations had been adopted in Greece and India. A thousand years later the domesticated plants and animals of the Fertile Crescent had reached central Europe, and, from there, it took perhaps 200 years for them to be embraced in present-day Spain. Eurasia's east-west axis facilitated these transfers. Locations at roughly the same latitude share the same seasonal variation, have days of the same length, and often have similar habitats and rates of precipitation, making it relatively easy for plants and animals to move from one place to the next.

In contrast, the north-south orientation of the Americas erected natural barriers to plant and animal transfer. Mesoamerica and South America, for example, are about as far apart as the Balkans and Mesopotamia. It took roughly 2,000 years for plants and animals domesticated in Mesopotamia to reach the Balkans. But because Mesoamerica and South America are separated by tropical, equatorial lowlands, it took domesticated plants such as corn several thousand years to jump between the two regions. Sometimes the transfer never happened at all before European contact. South American potatoes would have thrived in central Mexico, but the tropics stopped their northward migration. Equatorial jungles also denied Mesoamerican societies the llama and the alpaca, domesticated more than 5,000 years ago in the Andes. One wonders what even greater heights the Olmec, Toltec, Mayan, and Aztec

civilizations would have achieved if they had had access to these large creatures as draft animals and reliable sources of protein.

**TRANSFER OF TECHNOLOGY, AGRICULTURE, AND ANIMALS** Dramatic variations in climate likewise delayed the transfer of agriculture from Mexico to regions north of the Rio Grande. Archaeologists have discovered evidence of 10,000-year-old domesticated squash in a cave in southern Mexico, an indication that agriculture began in the Americas nearly as early as anywhere else in the world. Yet squash and corn were not cultivated in the present-day American Southwest for another 7,000 years, and the region's peoples did not embrace a fully sedentary, agricultural lifestyle until the start of the Common Era. Major differences in the length of days, the growing season, average temperatures, and rainfall between the Southwest and central Mexico meant that farmers north of the Rio Grande had to experiment for scores of generations before they perfected crops suited to their particular environments. Corn took even longer to become a staple crop in eastern North America, which is why major urban centers did not arise there until approximately 1000 CE.

By erecting barriers to communication and the spread of technology, then, the predominantly north-south orientation of the Americas made it more difficult for the hemisphere's inhabitants to build on one another's



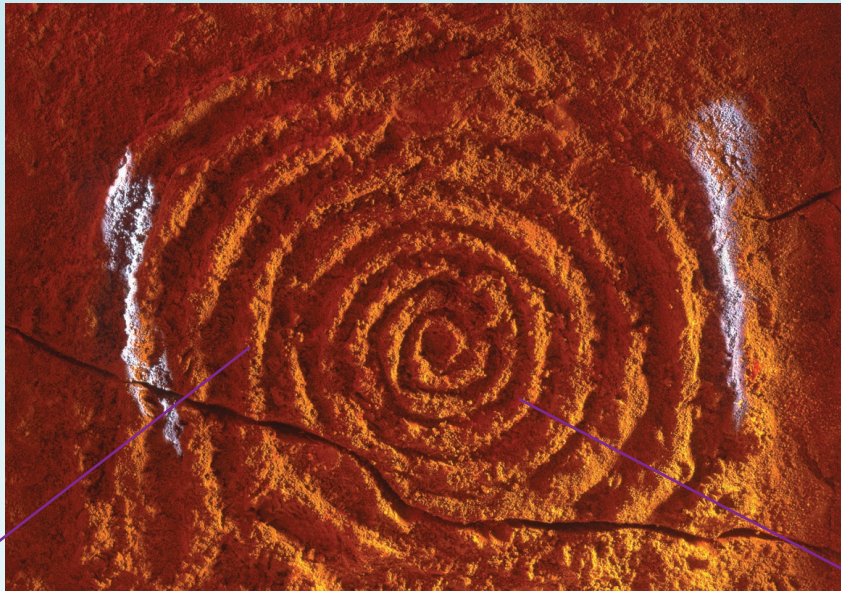
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*Fewer large mammal species were available for domestication in the Americas, perhaps because the first wave of humans on the continent contributed to mass extinctions. Native Americans did domesticate dogs, shown here in a watercolor-and-ink sketch of a Mandan dog sled painted by Karl Bodmer in 1834.*



# Historian's TOOLBOX

## An Ancient Calendar



©Charles Walker/TopFoto/The Image Works

During summer solstice, the spiral is bisected by a single shaft of light. At the winter solstice, as shown here, sunlight shines at the outside edges of the spiral.

Why might the Chacoans have used a spiral rather than another image?

On a blazing hot summer day in 1977, Anna Sofaer climbed up to the top of Fajada Butte in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico, spotted three sandstone slabs resting carefully against a wall, and walked over to investigate. What she saw against the wall astounded her: a spiral glyph, bisected by a pure shaft of light. An artist and amateur archaeologist, Sofaer had keen interest in how indigenous American cultures harnessed light and

shadow in their architecture. Knowing that it was nearly the summer solstice, she recognized instantly that she'd discovered an ancient Ancestral Puebloan calendar. Later research revealed that the device also marked the winter solstice, the summer and winter equinoxes, and the extremes of the moon's 18- to 19-year cycle (the major and minor standstills). These discoveries prompted still more research, and scholars now

believe that there are structures throughout Chaco Canyon aligned to solar and lunar events.

### THINKING CRITICALLY

*What practical reasons might there have been to build these sorts of sun and moon calendars? Might there have been cultural, religious, or social purposes to track accurately the movements of the sun and moon?*

successes. Had American innovations spread as quickly as innovations in Eurasia, the peoples of the Western Hemisphere would likely have been healthier, more numerous, and more powerful than they were when Europeans first encountered them in 1492.

### Animals and Illness

One other profound difference between the Eurasian world and the Americas concerned animals and disease.

Most diseases affecting humans originated from domesticated animals, which came naturally into frequent and close contact with the humans who raised them. As people across Eurasia embraced agriculture and started living with one another and with domesticated animals in crowded villages, towns, and cities, they created ideal environments for the evolution and transmission of infectious disease. For example, measles, tuberculosis, and smallpox all seem to have derived from diseases afflicting cattle.

## Place and Timing of Pioneering Plant and Animal Domestications

PLACE	PLANT	ANIMAL	APPROX. DATE
Southwest Asia	Wheat, pea, olive	Sheep, goat	8500 BCE
China	Rice, millet	Pig, silkworm	By 7500 BCE
New Guinea	Sugarcane, banana	None	ca. 7000 BCE?
Sahel	Sorghum, African rice	Guinea fowl	By 5000 BCE
Mesoamerica	Corn, beans, squash	Turkey	By 3500 BCE
Andes & Amazonia	Potato, manioc	Llama, guinea pig	By 3500 BCE
Tropical West Africa	African yams, oil palm	None	By 3000 BCE
Eastern North America	Sunflower, goosefoot	None	2500 BCE
Ethiopia	Coffee, teff	None	?

Source: Jared M. Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*, 20th ann. ed. New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 2017).

**EURASIA'S DEADLY ADVANTAGE** Eurasians therefore paid a heavy price for living closely with animals. Yet in the long run, the continent's terrible illnesses hardened its population. Victims who survived into adulthood enjoyed acquired immunity to the most common diseases: that is, if they had already encountered a particular illness as children, their immune systems would recognize and combat the disease more effectively in the event of reinfection. By the fifteenth century, then, Eurasian bodies had learned to live with a host of deadly communicable diseases.

But Native American bodies had not. With a few important exceptions, including tuberculosis, pneumonia, and possibly herpes and syphilis, human populations in the Western Hemisphere seem to have been relatively free from major communicable pathogens. Insofar as most major diseases emerge from domesticated animals, it is easy enough to see why. Indigenous Americans domesticated turkeys, dogs, Muscovy ducks, and guinea pigs but raised only one large mammal—the llama or alpaca (breeds of the same species).

This scarcity of domestic animals had more to do with available supply than with the interest or ability of their would-be breeders. The extinction of most species of mega-fauna soon after humans arrived in the Americas deprived the hemisphere of 80 percent of its large mammals. Those that remained, including modern-day bison, elk, deer, and moose, were more or less immune to domestication because of peculiarities in their dispositions, diets, rates of growth, mating habits, and social characteristics. In fact, of the world's 148 species of large mammals, only 14 were successfully domesticated before the twentieth century. Of those 14, only one—the ancestor to the llama/alpaca—remained in the Americas following the mass extinctions. Eurasia, in contrast, was home to 13—including the five most common and adaptable domestic mammals: sheep, goats, horses, cows, and pigs.

With virtually no large mammals to domesticate, Native Americans were spared the nightmarish effects of most of the world's major communicable diseases—until 1492. After that date, European colonizers discovered the grim advantage of their millennia-long dance with disease. Old World infections that most colonizers had experienced as children raged through indigenous communities, usually doing the greatest damage to adults whose robust immune systems reacted violently to the novel pathogens. Often native communities came under attack from multiple diseases at the same time. Combined with the wars that attended colonization and the malnutrition, dislocation, and despair that attend wars, disease would kill native peoples by the millions while European colonizers increased and spread over the land. Despite their ingenuity and genius at reshaping plants and environments to their advantage, native peoples in the Americas labored under crucial disadvantages compared to Europe—disadvantages that would contribute to disaster after contact.

### ✓ REVIEW

How did the native inhabitants of the Americas transform their environments, and what natural constraints put them at a disadvantage relative to Europeans?

## CRISIS AND TRANSFORMATION

**SUDDEN DECLINES** WITH ITS COASTAL PLAINS, ARID deserts, broad forests, and vast grasslands, North America has always been a place of tremendous diversity and constant change. Indeed, many of the continent's most dramatic changes took place in the few centuries before European contact. Because of a complex and still poorly understood combination of ecological and social factors,



the continent's most impressive civilizations collapsed as suddenly and mysteriously as had those of the Olmecs and the Mayas of Mesoamerica. In the Southwest, the Mogollon culture went into eclipse around the twelfth century, the Hohokam and the Ancestral Puebloans by about the fourteenth. In the Eastern Woodlands, the story was strikingly similar. Most of the great Mississippian population centers, including the magnificent city of Cahokia, had faded by the fourteenth century.

## Enduring Peoples

**TRADING CITY OF PAQUIME** The survivors of these crises struggled to construct new communities, societies, and political systems. In the Southwest, descendants of the Hohokam withdrew to small farming villages that relied on simpler modes of irrigation. Refugees embarked on a massive, coordinated exodus from the Four Corners region and established new, permanent villages in Arizona and New Mexico that the Spaniards would collectively call the Pueblos. The Mogollon have a more mysterious legacy, but some of their number may have helped establish the remarkable trading city of Paquime in present-day Chihuahua. Built around 1300, Paquime contained more than 2,000 rooms and had a sophisticated water and sewage system unlike any other in the Americas. The city included 18 large mounds, all shaped differently from one another, and three ball courts reminiscent of those found elsewhere in Mexico. Until its demise sometime in the fifteenth century Paquime was the center of a massive trading network, breeding macaws and turkeys for export and channeling prized feathers, turquoise, seashells, and worked copper throughout a huge region.



©Danny Lehman/Getty Images

*The rooms of Paquime, divided by adobe mud walls, help archaeologists estimate population.*

The dramatic transformations remaking the Southwest involved tremendous suffering. Southwesterners had to rebuild in unfamiliar and oftentimes less productive places. Although some of their new settlements endure even to this day, many failed. Skeletal analysis from an abandoned pueblo on the Rio Grande, for example, indicates that the average life expectancy was only 16.5 years. Moreover, drought and migrations increased conflict over scarce resources. The most successful new settlements were large, containing several hundred people, and constructed in doorless, defensible blocks, or else set on high mesas to ward off enemy attacks. These changes were only compounded by the arrival of Athapaskan-speaking peoples (known to the Spanish as Apaches and Navajos) in the century or two before contact with Europeans. These hunters and foragers from western Canada and Alaska moved in small bands, were sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile toward different Pueblos, and eventually became key figures in the postcontact Southwest.

**MUSKOGEAN PEOPLES** In the Eastern Woodlands, the great Mississippian chieftainships never again attained the glory of Cahokia, but key traditions endured in the Southeast. In the lower Mississippi valley, the Natchez maintained both the temple mound-building tradition and the rigid social distinctions of Mississippian civilization. Below the chief, or “Great Sun,” of the Natchez stood a hereditary nobility of lesser “Suns,” who demanded respect from the lowly “Stinkards,” the common people. Other Muskogean-speakers rejected this rigid and hierarchical social model and gradually embraced a new, more flexible system of independent and relatively **egalitarian** villages that forged confederacies to better cope with outsiders. These groupings would eventually mature into three of the great southeastern Indian confederacies: Creek, Choctaw, and Chickasaw.

**IROQUOIANS** To the North lived speakers of Iroquoian languages, roughly divided into a southern faction including Cherokees and Tuscaroras, and a northern faction including the powerful Iroquois and Hurons. Like Muskogean to the South, these Iroquoian communities mixed farming with a hunting/gathering economy and lived in semipermanent towns. The distinctive feature of Iroquois and Huron architecture was not the temple mound but rather the longhouse (some stretching up to 100 feet in length). Each sheltered as many as 10 families.

**ALGONQUINS** The Algonquins were the third major group of Eastern Woodlands people. They lived along the Atlantic Seaboard and the Great Lakes in communities smaller than those of either the Muskogean or the Iroquois. By the fifteenth century, the coastal communities from southern New England to Virginia had adopted agriculture to supplement their diets, but those in the colder

## A Continent of Cultures



	NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	BUILT ENVIRONMENT	PRIMARY SUSTENANCE
Olmecs	Tropical lowlands of south central Mexico	First city-builders: large plazas, pyramidal structures, sculptured heads	Beans, squash, maize (corn)
Mayas	Lowland jungles of the Yucatán Peninsula	Cities contain palaces, bridges, aqueducts, baths, pyramids topped with temples	Beans, squash, maize
Aztecs	Valley of Mexico	Tenochtitlán—an island metropolis with canals, marketplaces, palaces, temples	Beans, squash, maize
Mogollon	Southern New Mexico	Exquisite pottery	
Hohokam	Southern Arizona	Canals, ball courts	Beans, squash, maize
Ancestral Pueblo	Colorado plateau	Masonry buildings	
Eastern Woodlands	Centered in valleys of great rivers, Great Lakes, and Atlantic coast	Mound building, sometimes figurative and monumental	Primarily animals, fish, and nuts; gourds and pumpkins in the southeast; and later maize
Great Plains	Semiarid long- and short-grass plains; rainfall varied and unpredictable	Hide shelters on poles	Primarily hunting and foraging; buffalo stampedes, but some maize, squash, beans, and sunflowers
Great Basin	Plateau between Rocky Mountains and the Sierras	Bands usually numbered less than 50; simple shelters	Elk, antelope trapped; also a wide variety of small game as available; seeds, nuts, and plants
Pacific Northwest	Coastal areas from British Columbia to northern California; abundant rainfall, mild climate	Large and long houses of cedar beams and hand-split boards; complex works of art	Lush forests provide plants and game; rivers and ocean, abundant fish and shellfish
Subarctic and Arctic Peoples	Open boreal forest and tundra stretch across Canada; usually fewer than 100 frost-free days a year	Skin tents and igloos in the arctic winters	Hunting and fishing (including whales, seals, muskrats); moose and caribou



Photos: (left) ©The Granger Collection, New York; (right) ©Service Historique de la Marine, Vincennes, France/Bridgeman Images

northern climates with shorter growing seasons depended entirely on hunting, fishing, and gathering plants such as wild rice.

**CARIBBEAN CULTURES** Cultures of equal and even greater resources persisted and flourished during the fifteenth century in the Caribbean, particularly on the Greater

Antilles—the islands of present-day Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico. Although the earliest inhabitants of the ancient Caribbean, the Ciboneys, may have come from the Florida peninsula, it was the Tainos, later emigrants from northern South America, who expanded throughout the Greater Antilles and the Bahamas. Taino chiefs, known as caciques, along with a small



# Many HISTORIES

## HOW MANY PEOPLE LIVED ON HISPANIOLA IN 1492?

*Estimates of the precontact population of the Americas are necessarily speculative. Historians disagree sharply over these estimates, partly because they have used different data and methods and partly because of the moral or political implications that many people associate with high or low figures. The greater the initial population, so the argument goes, the greater the crime of its destruction. The range of estimates is particularly striking for the island of Hispaniola (present-day Haiti and the Dominican Republic), site of Europe's first American colony and of the hemisphere's first demographic catastrophe. Historians Sherburne Cook and Woodrow Borah, relying especially on population estimates in the primary sources, have argued that several million people lived on the island in 1492. The historical demographer Massimo Livi-Bacci, using other methods to estimate the island's precontact population, doubts that it could have exceeded 400,000. These short excerpts cannot capture the complexity of the arguments, but they illustrate some of the differences.*

### DOCUMENT 1

Sherburne Cook and Woodrow Borah

It is now more than four centuries since [Bartolomé de] las Casas insisted that when Columbus first sighted Hispaniola, the island had 3 to 4 million native inhabitants and perhaps more. This estimate has been denied vigorously. Yet if we accept as substantially correct the count for tribute carried out by Bartolomé Columbus in 1496, and we have seen that there is good evidence for it, we have to concede the reliability of Las Casas. We have set forth previously the reasons for estimating that in 1496 the entire island was inhabited by 3,770,000

souls. There must have been more than this number in 1492, particularly if in 1496 somewhere near 40 percent of the natives were dying annually. . . . The most probable number may be put at 7 to 8 million. This is the order of magnitude obtained if we assume that the Columbus' count was relatively accurate. . . . [This figure] would give an average population density for Hispaniola of approximately double the density we found for central Mexico just before the coming of the Europeans. . . . The American Indians in general had available to them food plants

of far greater yield per hectare than any cultivated at that time in the Old World except the yams of sub-Saharan Africa and the rice of southeast Asia. The Indians of Hispaniola, relative to the Indians of central Mexico, had cassava, which yields more per hectare than maize and has remarkable storage qualities; they had also the more favorable agricultural conditions of Hispaniola.

*Source:* Cook, Sherburne F. and Borah, Woodrow, *Essays in Population History, 3 Volumes*, Vol. 1. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1971–1979, 405–408.

### DOCUMENT 2

Massimo Livi-Bacci

There are many reasons to believe that the contact population could not have exceeded a few hundred thousand people. . . . The crown and the colonists were eager for gold. . . . Forcing the indios to work in the mines was a far more efficient way to obtain gold, and gold production reached a peak of 1,000 kg per year in the first years of Ovando's rule. Under the conservative hypothesis that annual individual productivity was 100 g, and that one third of adult males worked in the mines (about 8 percent of the total population), 10,000 laborers would have been needed to produce 1,000 kg, drawn from a total population of 120,000. This figure during Ovando's rule would be consistent with a population twice as large, or more, at the time of contact ten years before, as stipulated by Arranz.

[Another] approach is demographic in nature. It is during [Governor Nicolás de] Ovando's times (1502–1508) that the decline of the native population must have accelerated its pace—the logical

consequence of the wars of “pacification,” the Spanish occupation of the whole island, the growing number of colonists, and the increased demand for construction, agriculture, and mining labor. At the end of Ovando's rule in 1508, the native population was said to be 60,000: how many could they have been 14 years earlier? A contact population of 400,000—reduced to 200,000 after the high mortality of 1494–1496 and suffering three other major epidemic outbreaks, each one wiping out one third of the total population—would have been reduced to the estimated 60,000 of 1508. Although this is not impossible, epidemics are not mentioned in the abundant available literature prior to the smallpox epidemic of 1518–1519. The repartimiento of 1514 shows an age structure and a children to-women ratio consistent with rates of decline approaching 5 percent a year. This rate, if carried backward to 1492, would yield a population of about 80,000. . . .

These independent methods restrict the plausible range into which the initial contact population could fall. . . . The most likely figure [lies] between 200,000 and 300,000, with levels below 100,000 and above 400,000 both unlikely.

*Source:* Livi-Bacci, Massimo, “Return to Hispaniola: Reassessing a Demographic Catastrophe,” *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 83, no. 1, February 2003, 3–51.

### THINKING CRITICALLY

*What evidence do Cook and Borah use to produce their population estimate? What evidence does Livi-Bacci employ? Why do you think their approaches produced such dramatically different figures? Do you think that the moral implications of Hispaniola's demographic collapse are different if the original population was 400,000, as opposed to 8 million? Why or why not?*

# >> MAPPING THE PAST <<

## INDIANS OF NORTH AMERICA, C. 1500



Courtesy of Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, Collinsville, Illinois.  
Painting by William R. Iseminger

“A populous nation of people, and so extensive that those who give detailed reports of them do not know where it ends.”—Don Antonio Balcarcel, Bishop of Guadalajara, 1676, on the Caddo Indians of Texas

### CONTEXT

We need maps to orient our understanding of the past, but we should remember their limitations. No one has yet produced an adequate map of Native North Americans in the colonial period. Tribal names obscure complex, multifaceted identities. Labels like “Blackfeet,” “Creek,” or “Erie” falsely imply political stability, while the fixed position of these labels in one place masks the migrations, displacements, expansions, and contractions that kept the native world in constant motion.



### MAP READING

1. What are the three subsistence modes represented on this map?
2. What names do you recognize?
3. Do rivers seem to correspond to the location of native communities? Which ones?

### MAP INTERPRETATION

1. Based on this basic map, can you identify regions of denser and sparser population? What might account for the difference?
2. Try to locate a native group that seems out of place, based on what you already know about American history. How might you explain the geographic shift over time?
3. Choose a native group unfamiliar to you and briefly re-search it on the Internet. Are there any obvious reasons why the group is less familiar to you than others?



number of noble families, ruled island tribes, controlling the production and distribution of food and tools and exacting tribute from the great mass of commoners, farmers, and fisherfolk. Attending to these elites were the poorest Taino peoples—servants who bedecked their masters and mistresses in brilliant diadems of feathers, fine woven textiles, and gold nose and ear pieces and then shouldered the litters on which the rulers sat and paraded their finery.

## North America on the Eve of Contact

By the end of the fifteenth century, North America's peoples numbered between 5 and 10 million—with perhaps another million living on the islands of the Caribbean—and they were spread among more than 350 societies speaking nearly as many distinct languages. (The total precontact population for all of the Americas is estimated at between 57 and 112 million.)

**DIVERSE LEADWAYS** These millions lived in remarkably diverse ways. Some peoples relied entirely on farming; others on hunting, fishing, and gathering; still others on a combination of the two. Some, like the Natchez and the Iroquois, practiced matrilineal forms of kinship, in which women owned land, tools, and even children. Among others, such as the Algonquins, patrilineal kinship prevailed, and all property and prestige descended in the male line. Some societies, such as those of the Great Plains and the Great Basin in the West, the Inuit in the Arctic, and the Iroquois and Algonquins in the East, were roughly egalitarian, whereas others, like many in the Caribbean and the Pacific Northwest, were rigidly divided into nobles and commoners and servants or slaves. Some, such as the Natchez and the Tainos, were ruled by powerful chiefs; others, such as the Algonquins and the Pueblo peoples, by councils of village elders or heads of family clans; still others in the Great Basin, the Great Plains, and the far North by the most skillful hunter or the most powerful shaman in their band. Those people who relied on hunting practiced religions that celebrated their kinship with animals and solicited their aid as guardian spirits, whereas predominantly agricultural peoples sought the assistance of their gods to make the rain fall and the crops ripen.

When Europeans first arrived in North America, the continent north of present-day Mexico boasted an ancient, rich, and dynamic history marked by cities, towns, and prosperous farms. At contact it was a land occupied by several million men, women, and children speaking hundreds of languages and characterized by tremendous political, cultural, economic, and religious diversity.

### ✓ REVIEW

What was life like in the Americas on the eve of European contact?

## PUTTING HISTORY IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

MEDIEVAL SCANDINAVIANS SAILED as far west as Greenland. Then in 1001 a party of men and women under Leif Ericsson established an encampment known as Vinland on the northern tip of Newfoundland. That European outpost in North America may have endured several seasons or even decades, but eventually it was extinguished or abandoned. In contrast, the contact between Eastern and Western Hemispheres that began in 1492 was permanent, and the effects rising out of it were far-reaching. Epidemic diseases and the traumas of colonization would kill millions of Native Americans; animals and vegetables from both hemispheres would transform lives across the globe. And the newcomers from Europe, Africa, and Asia embarked on a series of encounters that reshaped North and South America.

So it is important to grasp the extent of American cultures before 1492, because for most of our nation's short history we have not wanted to remember the Americas as a populous, diverse, and civilized hemisphere when Christopher Columbus first dropped anchor in the Bahamas. In 1830, for example, President Andrew Jackson tried to answer the many critics of his Indian-removal policies. Although "humanity has often wept over the fate of the aborigines of this country," Jackson said, the Indians' fate was as natural and inevitable "as the extinction of one generation to make room for another." Pointing to the mysterious mounds that had so captivated the founding fathers, he proclaimed, "we behold the memorials of a once powerful race, which was exterminated, or has disappeared, to make room for the existing savage tribes." Just as the architects of the mounds supposedly met their end at the hands of these "savage tribes," the president concluded, so, too, must Indians pass away before the descendants of Europe. "What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and ranged by a few thousand savages, to our extensive republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms . . . and filled with all the blessings of liberty, civilization, and religion!"

Jackson and many others of his era preferred a national history that contained only a few thousand ranging "savages" to one shaped by millions of indigenous hunters, farmers, builders, and inventors. Yet what seems clear from modern research is the rich diversity of American cultures on the eve of contact between the peoples of Eurasia, Africa, and the Americas. We are still struggling to find stories big enough to encompass not only Indians but all those who have forged this complex, tragic, and marvelous nation of nations.

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

Thousands of years after Siberian hunters migrated across the Bering Strait to Alaska, their descendants created civilizations that rivaled those of ancient Europe, Asia, and Africa.

- Around 1500 BCE Mesoamerica emerged as the hearth of civilization in the Western Hemisphere, a process started by the Olmecs and brought to its height by the Mayas. Their built cities are remarkable for their art, architecture, and trade.



- The adoption of agriculture gave peoples in the Southwest and the Eastern Woodlands the resource security necessary to develop sedentary cultures of increasing complexity.
- Inhabitants of the Great Plains, the Great Basin, the Arctic, and the Subarctic relied on fishing, hunting, and gathering.
- Peoples of the Pacific Northwest boasted large populations and prosperous economies as well as an elaborate social, ceremonial, and artistic life.
- The first Americans shaped their environments, pioneering crops and transforming landscapes.
- Nonetheless, the continent's north-south orientation inhibited the spread of agriculture and technology, and a lack of domesticatable animals compared to Europe would leave Native Americans with little protection against Old World diseases.
- North America's most impressive early civilizations had collapsed by the end of the fifteenth century. In their wake a diverse array of cultures evolved.
  - In the Southwest, Pueblo Indians were joined by Athapaskan-speakers eventually known as Apaches and Navajos.
  - In much of eastern North America, stratified chiefdoms of the Mississippian era gave way to more egalitarian confederacies of independent villages.

## Digging Deeper

Scholars in several fields are transforming our understanding of the Americas prior to European contact. The magazine *Archaeology* offers clear explanations of the latest discoveries for nonscientific audiences. For an excellent overview, attentive to controversies among researchers, see Charles C. Mann, *1491: New Revelations of the Americas before Columbus* (2005). For North America specifically, see Alice Beck Kehoe, *North America before the European Invasions* (2nd ed., 2016). For the Southwest, see Linda S. Cordell and Maxine E. McBrinn, *Archaeology of the Southwest* (3rd ed., 2012). For the Eastern Woodlands, see George R. Milner, *The Moundbuilders: Ancient Peoples of Eastern North America* (2005); and Timothy Pauketat, ed., *Cahokia* (2010). Roger G. Kennedy, *Hidden Cities: The Discovery and Loss of Ancient North American Civilization* (1994), gives a fascinating account of how white Americans responded to the ruins of ancient American cultures. For the consequences of axis alignment and of domesticated animals, see the captivating work by Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (20th ann. ed., 2017).

For the cultures of precontact Mexico, see Michael D. Coe and Rex Koontz, *Mexico: From the Olmecs to the Aztecs* (7th ed., 2013). For exhaustive surveys of all regional cultures in North America, see William C. Sturtevant, general editor, *Handbook of North American Indians*, 15 volumes to date (1978–2008).





# After the Fact

| Historians Reconstruct the Past |

## Tracking the First Americans

What methods do historians use to discover the history of a past thousands of years before any humans knew how to write? Archaeological research is key; and by carefully unearthing layer after layer of soil, analyzing artifacts and their relation to these layers, scientists and historians have been able to discover a remarkable amount of information about the first immigrants to the Americas over 15,000 years ago.

But the deductions and inferences made about a past lacking historical documents are often contested. Like millions of other Americans who look to religious texts more than to evolutionary biology or archaeology for their deep history, many Indian people today reject what Western science has to say about their origins. Rather, they insist that their people are truly indigenous to America—that they didn't migrate here but *emerged* here from other planes of existence. A Navajo origin story, for example, explains how their ancestors came into this world, “the changeable world,” after a harrowing journey through the Four Dark Worlds. For some these stories are profound metaphors; for others they describe actual events in ancient times. But adherents of either perspective often share an understandable skepticism about scientific “truth” that over the past two centuries has taken so little interest in their oral traditions, has gone through so many massive revisions, and has so often been used to justify native dispossession. After all, Andrew Jackson and other supporters of Indian removal insisted they had “science” on their side.

Archaeologists rarely question the basis of scientific knowledge, but they have continually argued with one another over the scant evidence discovered about early migrations. And progress often depends on accidental finds, such as the one made by an African American cowboy, George McJunkin. McJunkin, a former slave, was a talented rancher, not to mention a capable fiddler, amateur astronomer, and surveyor. Old fossils also fascinated him, and he happened upon one of the most important of the twentieth century.

### THE CLOVIS DISCOVERIES

ON HORSEBACK ONE DAY IN 1908 near Folsom, New Mexico, McJunkin spotted some very old bison bones eroding from a slope. Bringing some home, he soon realized that they were far too large—that they must have belonged to an extinct bison species. Professional archaeologists ignored McJunkin's discovery, and only in 1926 after his death did New Mexican locals manage to convince scholars from the University of Colorado to investigate the original site. In doing so, they uncovered an exquisitely crafted stone spear-point embedded in the bison's ribs.

The discovery rocked the scientific community, which had long declared confidently that Indians had first arrived in the Americas only about 4,000 BP. Eleven years later another shock followed when archaeologists digging near Clovis, New Mexico, found a different sort of





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*Stone artifacts known as Clovis points have been found with skeletons of mammoths, mastodon, and bison.*

projectile point near butchered mammoth bones. Finally, in 1949, scientists confirmed the great antiquity of both finds by using radiocarbon dating, a method for measuring decay rates of the radioactive isotope of carbon, which exists in organic matter such as bone and starts to break down immediately after an organism dies. Tests revealed that the Folsom site dated to 10,800 BP and that Clovis was nearly a thousand years older still. Soon archaeologists around the continent discovered other sites of

comparable antiquity containing stone tools with the same Clovis characteristics. A new consensus emerged: Asian migrants first came to North America around 13,000 BP. These migrants brought with them a common stone-working technology, of the sort found at Clovis. The Clovis people fanned out across the Western Hemisphere, and, within one or two millennia, their culture gave way to regionally specific cultural and stone-working traditions, like Folsom.

## EVIDENCE OF MIGRATION FROM SIBERIA TO NORTH AMERICA

BUT HOW DID ASIANS GET to North America? According to the long-standing consensus, they walked to Alaska—a region now separated from Siberia by 50 miles of ocean known as the Bering Strait. During the last Ice Age, with much of the world's water locked up in continent-straddling glaciers, ocean levels were far lower. Consequently, between around 25,000 BP and 15,000 BP, a now-submerged landmass called “Beringia” linked Alaska and Siberia. Following game onto and across Beringia, the first Americans gradually occupied this land and, over the course of many generations, some eventually moved east into what is now Alaska. For centuries massive glaciers blocked the way farther south. But geologists have argued that around 15,000 BP an ice-free corridor opened up along what is now the McKenzie River, east of the Canadian Rockies. Game animals and the people hunting them (with Clovis-point tools) eventually began to filter south, gradually emerging into the warmer and totally uninhabited lands of the present-day United States. This scenario enjoyed support for several decades, not only from geologists but also from some geneticists, who found that modern-day Native Americans diverged from Siberians perhaps 15,000 years ago.

Still, several provocative archaeological finds in Tennessee, Pennsylvania, Florida, and elsewhere suggested that humans had been living in the Americas longer—perhaps far longer. For example, a mastodon bone discovered in Washington State, some 800 years older than any Clovis site, had what seemed to be another bone embedded in it—perhaps from a projectile thrown by a human hunter. In the late 1970s researchers from Vanderbilt University discovered an ancient campsite dating to 14,600 BP at Monte Verde, Chile—a full millennium earlier than the oldest known Clovis tools. But the Monte Verde site was thousands of miles to the south and difficult to visit, dating techniques were open to multiple interpretations, and most archaeologists rejected these pre-Clovis claims. The standard story had endured for decades, and it would take incontrovertible evidence of earlier occupation to overthrow it.





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## THE NEW CONSENSUS

FOR MOST ARCHAEOLOGISTS, THAT INCONTROVERTIBLE evidence has finally arrived. A 2008 study demonstrated that fossilized human feces excavated from a cave in Oregon were more than 14,000 years old. In 2011, archaeologist Michael R. Waters (himself once a staunch “Clovis-firster”) led a team that con-

firmed the antiquity of the mastodon bone from Washington State. They found that the invasive bone chip was indeed from another animal and had almost certainly been fashioned into a weapon by an ancient hunter. Most significantly, in 2011 Waters published yet another analysis of a site he excavated on Buttermilk Creek, outside of Austin, Texas. It revealed a typical collection of Clovis tools. But digging deeper into a layer of clay sediments, Waters and his colleagues found dozens of stone tools made with a strikingly different technique. Lacking the organic material necessary for radiocarbon dating, the team instead employed a newer dating technology called optically-stimulated luminescence that can determine when stone was last exposed to the sun by measuring light energy trapped in minerals. The results were remarkable: the oldest tools at the site dated to 15,500 BP.

Most specialists now acknowledge that humans arrived in the present-day United States at least 15,000–16,000 years ago, and that the Clovis stone-working tradition emerged here, long after they arrived. The “shattering” of the Clovis barrier has reinvigorated the study of ancient America, but there now seem to be more questions than ever. Previously excavated sites are being reopened and tested anew in light of the revised theories. A number of archaeologists insist that the earliest migrations took place 20,000 or even 40,000 years ago. Even these claims could soon be overthrown; astonishing new discoveries in Southern California suggest humans have been in North America for more than 130,000 years. Though many scholars still reject these very early dates, they now do so more tentatively, mindful of the way in which dogmatic loyalty to Clovis-first blinded the field to compelling evidence. And the controversy over dates has reopened the question of the routes Siberians first took into North America. Depending on the date of the first migration, immense glaciers may have made an overland route virtually impossible. For this reason archaeologists have become more interested in the possibility that the first arrivals came in small boats, gradually working their way down the Pacific coast.

Some of the most exciting developments in the study of ancient America are emerging from linguistics and genetics. Previous genetic research on the peopling of the Americas had compared present-day Native Americans and present-day Siberians by examining small regions of their respective genomes, usually Y chromosomes or mitochondrial DNA. These studies