

Native American Relations with the New Settlers

Native Americans play an interesting role in most U.S. history textbooks written over the past two centuries. From the founding of the country until approximately the early 1900s, Native Americans were seen as opponents to U.S. progress. American students learned throughout the 1800s that these "savages" consistently fought white Americans and their desire to expand and improve this country.

Then, starting in the late 1800s to early 1900s, U.S. students began to learn about the concept of the "noble savage." This was the belief that although Native Americans could be barbaric in warfare and culture, they were also uncorrupted by civilization.

All of this changed in U.S. history textbooks by the 1960s and 1970s, when students were given both a more anthropological view of Native American society as well as a more balanced version of what life was like when the Native Americans first met their European counterparts.

this would have had on the young white students who read it, especially the "fact" that these new neighbors were all cannibals.

In the ancient world, tradition has preserved the memory of barbarous nations of cannibals, who fed on human flesh. But in every part of the New World there were people to whom this custom was familiar. It prevailed in the southern continent, in several of the islands, and in various districts of North America. Even in those parts, where circumstances, with which we are unacquainted, had in a great measure abolished this practice, it seems formerly to have been so well known, that it is incorporated into the idiom of their language. Among the Iroquois, the phrase by which they express their resolution of making war against an enemy is, 'Let us go and eat that nation.' If they solicit the aid of a neighboring tribe, they invite it to 'eat broth made of the flesh of their enemies.' Nor was the practice peculiar to rude unpolished tribes; the principle from which it took rise is so deeply rooted in the minds of the Americans, that it subsisted in Mexico, one of the civilized empires in the New World, and relics of it may be discovered among the more mild inhabitants of Peru. It was not scarcity of food, as some authors imagine, and the importunate cravings of hunger, which forced the Americans to those horrid repasts on their fellow creatures. The rancour [sic] of revenge first prompted men to this barbarous action. The fiercest tribes devoured none but prisoners taken in war, or such as they regarded as enemies. Women and children, who were not the objects of enmity, if not cut off in the fury of their first inroad into a hostile country, seldom suffered by the deliberate effects of their revenge.¹

1856

By 1856, most of the Native Americans who had previously lived east of the Mississippi River had either been forced off their land—such as the Cherokee (in the infamous Trail of Tears), Creek, Chickasaw, and Choctaw—or killed by disease and warfare. Therefore, for students living in the eastern part of the United States who had little contact with Native Americans, stories like the one below became interesting tidbits of historical knowledge, while for those white Americans who had traveled west to find land and gold, many of these stories served as an introduction to their new neighbors. Without a tinge of sorrow or regret, this passage informed students that in the future, Native Americans will not really be a concern because "they will entirely disappear."

The Indians were proud and happy when they were engaged in combat with the tribes around them. Next to these wars they were best pleased with hunting, for this was a species of fighting, the wild animals in the forest that they pursued being looked upon somewhat as foes. They, however, despised all labor. They sometimes possessed fields of corn, but they compelled the women to plant and hoe it, and to perform all other domestic labors. They would themselves do nothing when at home except make bows and arrows, or carve ornaments upon their clubs, or fashion other warlike weapons. To hunt and to fight was honorable, but labor in any branch of useful industry they considered beneath them.

When America was discovered and began to be settled by the whites, the Indians were gradually forced to retire from those parts of the country which the white men occupied.

Occasionally quarrels would arise, which would lead to wars between the Indian tribes and the white settlers. In these cases, the Indians would sometimes come rushing into the villages at midnight with dreadful yells and outcries, and massacre the inhabitants and burn the houses. At other times they would lurk in ambush among the trees near the fields where the white men were at work, and shoot them with the guns and gunpowder which they had bought of them before.

Not infrequently it happened that children from the families of some of the settlers were seized and carried off as captives, and kept in the wigwam for many years. Whenever the Indians succeeded in getting a white child in their possession in this way, they usually treated him kindly, and often made him a favorite and pet. They regarded him and treated him much as a boy would treat a young squirrel or young fox that he had succeeded in catching in the woods and bringing home. Still it was a dreadful calamity to the poor child to be taken thus away from his father and mother, and from the comforts and pleasures of his home, and compelled to dwell all his life with these rude and cruel savages.

The chief articles that they bought of the white men were gunpowder and rum, and the rum exerted an awful influence in demoralizing and destroying them. The effect of it upon them was to make them perfectly insane, and the imagination can scarcely conceive the horrors of the drunken orgies, which were sometimes witnessed around the midnight fires.

From these causes the Indians have been gradually melting away and

disappearing, until now there are few left on this side of the Mississippi River. Beyond the Mississippi the country is still filled with them, but their numbers are gradually diminishing, and there is no doubt that in time they will entirely disappear.²

1874

Written amid the Plains Indian Wars of the 1870s, this excerpt takes great pains to emphasize to students the "warlike" characteristics of Native Americans.

Aborigine

When our ancestors first landed upon the shores of the New World, they found it an almost unbroken wilderness, inhabited by numerous tribes or clans of Indians, each tribe under its own sachem, or chief. Of their number, when the English settled among them, we have no certain estimate. They probably did not exceed one hundred and fifty thousand within the limits of the thirteen original states.

The different tribes within the boundaries of the United States were nearly the same in their physical characteristics. In person the Indians were tall, straight, and well-proportioned. Their skins were red, or of a copper brown; their eyes black; their hair long, black and coarse. The same moral characteristics were common to the different tribes. They were quick of apprehension, and not wanting in genius. At times they were friendly, and even courteous. In council, they were distinguished for gravity and eloquence; in war, for bravery and address. They were taciturn and unsocial, except when roused by some strong excitement. When determined upon revenge, no danger would deter them—neither absence nor time could cool them.

Of their employments, war was the favorite. Their weapons were war-clubs, hatchets of stone called tomahawks, and bows and arrows. Their warlike expeditions usually consisted of small parties, and it was their glory to lie in wait for their enemy, or come upon him by surprise. They rushed to the attack with incredible fury, and at the same time uttered their appalling war-whoop. Their captives they often tortured with every variety of cruelty, and to their dying agonies added every species of insult. Next to war, hunting and fishing were esteemed honorable. In the former, the

weapons of war became the implements of the chase; in the latter, they used nets made of thread twisted from bark or from the sinews of the moose and deer; for fish-hooks, they used crooked bones. Their arts and manufactures were, for the most part, confined to the construction of wigwams, bows and arrows, wampum, ornaments, stone hatchets, and mortars for pounding corn; to the dressing of skins, and the waving of mats from the bark of trees, or from a coarse sort of hemp. Their agriculture extended not much beyond the cultivation of corn, beans, peas, potatoes, and melons. Their skill in medicine was confined to a few simple prescriptions and operations. When they knew no remedy, they resorted to their powwow, or priest, who undertook a cure by means of sorcery. The Indians, however, were liable to few diseases compared with the number that prevails in civilized society. Their women, or squaws, tilled their scanty fields. And performed the drudgery connected with their household affairs.

They had no books, or written literature, except rude hieroglyphics; and education was confined to the arts of war, hunting, fishing, and the few manufactures which existed among them. Their language was rude, but sonorous, metaphorical, and energetic, and well suited to the purpose of public speaking.³

1880

It is important to note that over the last two hundred years, U.S. history textbooks have loved the concept of "progress." A vast majority of the textbooks looked at for this study spend at least part of their time discussing America's newest technology and improvements in society. Within this context, this passage, found in the Barnes Historical Series, one of the more popular U.S. history textbook publishers in the 1800s, explains to students exactly what Native Americans are like and, in the end, offers the best solution as to how to save these people from utter destruction.

The Indians were the successors of the Mound Builders, and were by far their inferiors in civilization. We know not why the ancient race left, nor whence the Indians came. It is supposed that the former were driven southward by the savage tribes from the north.

INDIAN CHARACTERISTICS

Arts and Inventions—The Indian has been well termed the "Red Man of the Forest." He built no cities, no ships, no churches, no schoolhouses. He constructed only temporary bark wigwams and canoes. He made neither roads nor bridges, but followed foot-paths through the forest, and swam the streams. His highest art was expanded in a simple bow and arrow.

Progress and Education—He made no advancement, but each son emulated the prowess of his father in the hunt and the fight. The hunting-ground and the battlefield embraced every thing of real honor or value. So the son was educated to throw the tomahawk, shoot the arrow, and catch fish with the spear. He knew nothing of books, paper, writing, or history.

Domestic Life—The Indian had neither cow, nor beast of burden. He regarded all labor as degrading, and fit only for women. His squaw, therefore, built his wigwam, cut his wood, and carried his burdens when he journeyed. While he hunted or fished, she cleared the land for his corn by burning down the trees, scratched the ground with a crooked stick or dug it with a clam-shell, and dressed skins for his clothing. She cooked his food by dropping hot stones into a tight willow basket containing materials for soup. The leavings of her lord's feast sufficed for her, and the coldest place in the wigwam was for her.

Disposition—In war, the Indian was brave and alert, but cruel and revengeful, preferring treachery and cunning to open battle. At home, he was lazy, improvident, and an inveterate gambler. He delighted in finery and trinkets, and decked his unclean person with paint and feathers. His grave and haughty demeanor repelled the stranger; but he was grateful for favors, and his wigwam always stood hospitably open to the poorest and meanest of his tribe.

Endurance—He could endure great fatigue, and in his expeditions often lay without shelter in the severest weather. It was his glory to bear the most horrible tortures without a sign of suffering.

Religion—If he had any ideas of a Supreme Being they were vague and degraded. His dream of a Heaven was of happy hunting-grounds or of gay feast, where his dog should join in the dance. He worshiped no idols, but peopled all nature with spirits, which dwelt not only in birds, beasts, and reptiles, but also in lakes, rivers, and waterfalls. As he believed these had power to help or harm men, he lived in constant fear of offending them.

He apologized therefore, to the animals he killed, and made solemn promises to fishes that their bones should be respected. He placed great stress on dreams, and his camp swarmed with sorcerers and fortune-tellers.

THE INDIAN OF THE PRESENT

Such was the Indian two hundred years ago, and such he is to-day. He opposes the encroachments of the settler, and the building of railroads. But he can not stop the tide of immigration. Unless he can be induced to give up his roving habits and cultivate the soil, he is doomed to destruction. It is to be earnestly hoped that the red man may yet be Christianized, and taught the arts of industry and peace.⁴

1899

Nearly a decade after the Wounded Knee Massacre and with the Plains Indian Wars having come to an end, students still read about the savagery of Native Americans.

Accordingly, when Europeans began coming to America in 1492, they supposed it was Asia, and as they found the country peopled by red men, they called these red men "Indians." Europeans at that time knew very little about the inhabitants of Asia or India, else they would not have made such a mistake. The natives of America are not especially like Asiatics. They are a race by themselves. They have lived in America for many thousand years; just how long nobody knows. One thing is sure, however. Before ever white men came here, the red men had for long ages been spread all over North and South America, from Hudson Bay to Cape Horn, and differences of race had grown up among them. All alike had skins of a cinnamon color, high cheek bones, and intensely black eyes and hair, with little or no beard. But in respect of size, as of general appearance and manners, there were differences between different tribes as marked as the difference between an Englishman and an Arab.

THE SAVAGE INDIANS

Some of these Indians were much more savage than others. There were three principal divisions among them: (1) savage, (2) barbarous, and (3)

half-civilized. In North America the savage Indians lived to the west of Hudson Bay, and southwardly between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific coast, as far as the northern parts of Mexico. The Athabaskans, the Bannocks, and the Apaches were, and are, specimens of savage Indians. They had little or no agriculture, but lived by catching fish or shooting birds or such game as antelopes and buffaloes. They were not settled in villages, but moved about from place to place with very rude tent-like wigwams. They wove excellent baskets, but did not bake pottery.

MORE ABOUT THE BARBAROUS INDIANS

The religion of these Indians was the worship of their dead ancestors, curiously mingled with the worship of the Sun, the Winds, the Lightning, and other powers of nature, usually personified as animals. For example, lightning was regarded as a snake, and snakes were held more or less sacred. Religious rites were a kind of incantation performed by men especially instructed in such things, and called "medicine-men." In most religious ceremonies dancing played a great part.

The Indians had dogs (of a poor sort) which helped them in the chase and served also as food; but they had neither horses, asses, cows, goats, sheep, nor pigs—no domesticated farm animals of any sort. Without the help of such animals it is very difficult to rise out of barbarism into civilized life. The Indian's supply of food was too scanty to support a dense population. The people lived in scattered tribes, without any government higher than the tribe; and hence they were almost always at war. Fighting was the chief business of life, and a young man was not considered fit to be married until he had shown his prowess by killing enemies and bringing away their scalps. Such a kind of life tended to make men cruel and revengeful, and the Indians were unsurpassed for cruelty. It was their cherished custom to put captives to death with lingering tortures.³

1912

By 1912, the "Indian problem" had become a thing of the past, since Native Americans had, for the most part, been removed to the reservations. This textbook reflects the new situation by portraying Native Americans less as a physical threat to whites and more as "inferior" individuals who need to improve their ways. It also

shows a change in how students read about Native Americans: for the first time, the history of these people and events are reported in a more detached way.

The earliest settlers in the English colonies were indebted to the Indians in several ways. They learned the Indians' methods of hunting, fishing, and trapping; also, the value of maize and how to produce it upon new land. Thus colonization was assisted by a more available food supply. The Indians' canoe and their methods of travel and fighting were also adopted by the settlers.

On the other hand, the natives soon acquired from the whites tools and utensils, especially guns; these, together with cloth and horses, changed in many ways the character of their daily life. They learned few virtues, but acquired destructive vices, especially the use of intoxicants. Some efforts were made by the English to convert the Indians, but they were conducted, on the whole, without enthusiasm or persistence. The loud profession of missionary zeal with which the English colonization began was not made good.

The history of Indian relations in colonial times is one of continual strife. This was inevitable at that period in the contact between a superior and an inferior race. Of incidental causes for these troubles there was a large variety; the vicious and the drunken, whether whites or Indians, were especially numerous on the frontier, and they were ever ready to commit outrages and to begin quarrels. But the fundamental cause for this condition was the land question. The character of Indian industry, which was mainly hunting and fishing, with comparatively slight attention to agriculture, and the frequent movements of most tribes from one locality to another, made the Indians occupants rather than owners of the land in the true sense. In their simplicity and short-sightedness they were ever ready to part with their right of occupancy; but they did not comprehend the white man's idea of permanent transfer and possession. The purchase of Indian lands was a universal practice in colonial times. The different colonial governments undertook to regulate this subject by law, prohibiting the settlers from occupying lands until the Indian title was extinguished. The laws enjoined in many ways the fair treatment of the Indians in other transactions; for instance, the sale of fire-arms and liquors was quite generally prohibited. These laws, however, were little obeyed.

Trouble arose as soon as the natives realized the slow but sure advance

of the whites into the country and the permanency of this process. Hunting grounds were destroyed, and the strip between the frontier of settlement, and the Allegheny Mountains became gradually narrower. The Indians were able to make but spasmodic, and on the whole, feeble, resistance to the advance of settlement because they did not present a united front; and this in turn was owing to their lack of political organization.

Under these circumstances the result was inevitable: civilization triumphed over savagery, doubtless through the commission of innumerable wrongs, in our judgment of which we must remember the ethical standards of that time and the failure of each race to comprehend the other's point of view.⁶

1916

This textbook story is a perfect example of the stereotype of the Native American as a noble savage.

Traits of Character

Living an outdoor life, and depending for daily food not so much on the maize they raised as on the fish they caught and the animals they killed, the Indians were most expert woodsmen. They were swift of foot, quick-witted, keen-sighted, and most patient of hunger, fatigue, and cold. White men were amazed at the rapidity with which the Indian followed the most obscure trail over the most difficult ground, at the perfection with which he imitated the bark of the wolf, the hoot of the owl, the call of the moose, and at the catlike tread with which he walked over beds of autumn leaves to the side of the grazing deer.

Courage and fortitude he possessed in the highest degree. Yet with his bravery were associated all the vices, all the dark and crooked ways, which are the resort of the cowardly and the weak. He was treacherous, revengeful, and cruel beyond description. Much as he loved war (and war was his chief occupation), the fair and open fight had no charm for him. To his mind it was madness to take the scalp of an enemy at the risk of his own, when he might waylay him in an ambush or shoot him with an arrow from behind a tree. He was never so happy as when, at the dead of night, he roused his sleeping victims with an unearthly yell and massacred them by the light of their burning home.⁷

1920

Reinforcing the stereotype of the noble savage, this story from the 1920s does suggest a change in the way that the original encounters between the Native American and the white settler were being perceived in the classroom.

Character and Fate of the Indians

In character the Indian showed the most astonishing extremes, now immovable as a rock, now capricious as the April breeze. Around the council fire he was taciturn, dignified, thoughtful, but in the dance he broke into unrestrained and uncontrollable ecstasies. He bore with stoical fortitude the most horrible tortures at the stake, but howled in his wigwam over an injured finger. His powers of smell, sight, and hearing were incredibly keen on the hunt or the warpath, but at the same time he showed a stolid stupidity that no white man could match. The Indian seems to have been generally friendly to the European on their first meeting, and it was chiefly the fault of the white man's cruelty and treachery that the friendly curiosity of the red man was turned so often into malignant hatred instead of firm alliance.⁸

1927

Rather than just discussing ambushes, savagery, and the brutality that used to be associated with Native Americans, twentieth-century history textbooks began to take a more balanced view of their culture and society. This period also saw a change in how the Native American woman was portrayed: she was no longer a virtual slave to her "lazy warrior husband" but rather an important member of her society—although this 1927 passage still refers to her using the derogatory term "squaw."

Columbus Finds a Strange People in America

The people Columbus found in America were very different from the Europeans with whom he was familiar. As we have said, he called them Indians, and they have always been known by that name. Since they were to play a considerable part in the history of our country, it is desirable we should know what kind of people they were.

THEIR DIVISION OF WORK

Although the Indian was a true child of nature, with a wild love of freedom, his life was not, as some have supposed, an idle one. Hunting and fishing were his chief occupations, these being the necessary means by which he obtained his food. But the Indian brave was first of all a warrior. He had to defend his hunting-grounds and ward off attacks of hostile tribes; and sometimes he took the war-path for his own gain. When not following the war-path or the chase, he had to make his weapons. They were mainly the bow and arrow, the war-club, and the tomahawk. He also required canoes and snowshoes for covering distances, and these, with other necessary conveniences or tools, he made with his own hands.

The squaw, too, led a busy life. Digging with shells and pointed sticks, she cultivated the soil and gathered the crops. These were more varied in the South than in regions farther north, for the climate was warmer and more attention was paid to a rude kind of agriculture. Indian corn was the chief crop, but tomatoes, beans, pumpkins, squashes, and tobacco were also raised. Besides cultivating the soil, the squaw dried the meat brought home from the chase and dressed the skins, making from them moccasins and other wearing apparel, for the hunt supplied clothing as well as food. She also rudely fashioned the simple household utensils, gathered wood, made fires, cooked the food, and set up the wigwam when on the trail, for the brave was supposed to be busy providing game or guarding against the enemy.

THEIR CHARACTERISTICS WERE PRIMITIVE

The instincts of the Indian were untrained, but he could be kind and generous. In the midst of famine he would cheerfully share his last morsel with a fellow sufferer, and in the hour of danger would lay down his life for a friend. He was also capable of lofty ideas of right and duty, and frequently gave proof of them in making and keeping treaties and in the beautiful and poetic expression of his thoughts.

THEIR BELIEF IN THE AFTER-LIFE

The Indian had faith in good and bad spirits, but had no clear idea of one God over all. He believed that Indians, good and bad, would after this

life go to the happy hunting-grounds. This was his name for heaven, where life, he believed, would continue with the same occupations as in this world. It is thought that the practice of scalping enemies killed in battle was associated with the belief that the loss of the scalp prevented the spirit from entering the happy hunting-grounds. The Indian would, therefore, take almost any risk to save the dead body of his chief or his friend from being scalped by the enemy. It was common practice to bury arms with the "brave," so that he might have them in the happy hunting-grounds. That he might lack no means of comfort other articles of common use also were buried with him.⁹

1961

By the 1960s, Americans had become much more conscious of the multicultural makeup of their country, due in part to the Civil Rights Movement that began in the 1950s. Many U.S. history textbooks started to inform their students that Native Americans were actually a diverse group of people who had a different way of life, rather than a backward or savage one. Students were told that some Native American tribes not only had "fairly advanced cultures" but also may have helped the new Europeans instead of just acting as barriers to American progress.

Ancestors of the Indians Come from Asia to Settle in the New World

The American Indian is the most truly "native American." Between 20,000 and 40,000 years ago, people from northern Asia—the ancestors of the American Indians—began crossing the Bering Strait from Siberia to settle in Alaska. Over a period of thousands of years, they pushed down from Alaska and spread throughout the length and breadth of North and South America. In time, they lost all contact with Asia and began to develop various cultures of their own. By the time of Columbus, there were millions of Indians spread thinly throughout the vast areas of the New World. They were divided into hundreds of tribes, with different languages and customs, and were isolated from one another by great distances.

Some of these tribes lived by hunting and fishing. Others learned to support themselves by agriculture. Most of them were in a primitive stage of development when Columbus reached the Caribbean. Some of them, however, like the Incas of Peru and the Aztecs of Mexico, had developed

fairly advanced cultures. But, on the whole, the American Indians were at a great disadvantage when confronted by fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europeans. Even the most advanced Indian tribes lacked the wheel, the plow, iron implements, and livestock. Nor did any of them possess ships or gunpowder.

THE EUROPEAN SETTLERS RECEIVE MUCH FROM THE INDIANS

Nevertheless, the Indians had much to teach the white man. From the Indian, European settlers learned of many new products: maize (Indian corn), white potatoes and sweet potatoes, tobacco, pineapples, peanuts, maple sugar, various kinds of beans, tomatoes, squash, pumpkins, chocolate, quinine, vanilla, and rubber. It is estimated that one-third of our agricultural products came originally from the Indians.

The ability of the early white explorers and fur traders to survive in the wilderness was due, in part, to the forest lore they learned from the Indians. Like the Indians, the European pioneers wore deerskin clothing, used canoes and snowshoes, and learned to move in Indian file and fight in open formation for greater safety. The European settlers also borrowed many Indian names for villages, cities, lakes, rivers, and mountains throughout America. The names of 26 of our 50 states are taken from Indian names. Thus, the heritage of the United States is Indian as well as European. The Indian was to play an important part in the white man's exploration and colonization of America. He was to prove valuable as a friend and dangerous as an enemy.¹⁰

1986

By the 1980s, the story of Native Americans in U.S. history textbooks changed a great deal. One can see the impact politics has played on the publishing of textbooks simply by noting that terms such as "Indian," "squaw," and "savage" are no longer a part of the textbooks' vocabulary. Students also read more about anthropological research rather than the historical hearsay they were given in textbooks written one hundred years earlier. Finally, women in Native American society are given a vastly different set of societal roles as compared to earlier textbooks.

What did it feel like to be among the first humans to reach this great, empty land? We know what the first astronauts experienced when they set foot on the moon. They were aware that they were doing something no one had ever done before. We do not know exactly what the first Americans experienced. They did not know that they were exploring a new continent. Understanding the difference calls for an act of historical imagination. Having a good historical imagination means being able to look at past events from the outside, keeping in mind what the people of the day knew, but at the same time remembering what they did not know.

Once in North America, the wanderers moved slowly southward and to the east, following the life-giving game and grasses. The distances they covered were enormous. It is 15,000 miles (24,000 kilometers) from their homeland in Asia to the southern tip of South America and 6,000 miles (9,600 kilometers) to what is now New England. Many thousand years passed before they had spread over all of North and South America.

As they advanced and multiplied, the first Americans gradually changed their ways of life. Some made their homes in fertile valleys, others in tropical jungles. Some settled in mountainous regions or in deserts. Each group had different problems, and each learned to see the world in different ways. As a result each society created its own culture.

A society is a group of families who live and work together and who have common values and patterns of behavior. The culture of a society consists of the special characteristics of the people who make it up: the language they speak, their government, how they make a living, their family relationships, how they educate their children. Some sense of how many different cultures these first Americans and their descendants created comes from the fact that the peoples of North and South America spoke between 1,000 and 2,000 languages.

EARLY AMERICAN CULTURES

About 500 years ago there were more than 25 million people living in North and South America. Only about 1 million of these inhabited what is now the United States and Canada. Partly because they were so few in number and spread over such a huge area, these people had developed a number of distinct cultures. But they had many things in common. Most

did not rely entirely on hunting and living off berries, fruits, and other wild plants. Many were farmers. Seed corn 4,000 years old has been found in caves in the Southwest. Those who planted seeds and cultivated the land instead of merely hunting and gathering food were more secure and comfortable. People who had mastered farming, or agriculture, could settle in one place instead of roaming in constant search of food. They built permanent houses. Their societies grew to include more members.

These agricultural people were mostly peaceful, though they could fight fiercely to protect their fields. The hunters and wanderers, on the other hand, were quite warlike because their need to move about brought them frequently into conflict with other groups. Some early American cultures were matrilinear, which means that family relationships were controlled by the female side. When a man and woman married in such a society, the man became a member of his wife's social group, or clan. A typical household might consist of an older woman, her daughters, and her granddaughters. Of course, the woman's husband, her sons-in-law, and her grandsons would also live in the household group. But only the female members were truly permanent members of the clan.¹¹

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The Vikings

The presence of the Vikings in U.S. history textbooks has become less and less important over the years. In the 1800s, textbooks gave a great deal of space to these seafaring adventurers. By the end of the twentieth century, the Vikings seem to have become more of a historical anecdote rather than crucial historical story for America's young to study.

1844

Most of the information we have about the Vikings' travels to North America comes from the Icelandic Sagas and archaeological findings. Today, while most Viking historians would agree that the Sagas are of immense historical importance, they are also quick to point out that there is a great deal of legend and myth interwoven into these tales—as opposed to this author's claim that the authenticity of the Sagas "seems indisputable."

The remarkable fact that in the tenth century the continent of America was visited by Europeans, who founded settlements on the shores of New England, seems to be fully substantiated by the Icelandic histories which