

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Indians and a Changing Frontier: The Art of George Winter. Compiled by Sarah E. Cooke and Rachel B. Ramadhyani.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1m85w3tn>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 17(4)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Zastrow, Leona M.

Publication Date

1993-09-01

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Indians and a Changing Frontier: The Art of George Winter. Compiled by Sarah E. Cooke and Rachel B. Ramadhyani. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Historical Society, with the Tippecanoe Historical Association, 1993. 269 pages. \$49.95 cloth.

This book is a valuable asset for students of American Indian history, because it provides information about the cultural changes of two American Indian nations that chose to compromise with the demands of the United States Indian policies of the 1800s and therefore survived as distinct groups of people. George Winter's journal, sketches, and paintings about the Potawatomi and Miami nations of Indiana provide valuable insights about the acculturation of both of these Indian nations of the 1800s.

Survival, acculturation, conflicts between value systems, and the forced westward movement of the Potawatomi Indians of Indiana were major points of interest for this reader. George Winter's writings and artwork about the Potawatomi and Miami Indians furnish documentation and examples of government policy toward American Indian people. In addition, the book provides a graphic picture of what happened to other American Indian peoples whose ancestral homes were east of the Mississippi in the 1800s. Many Indian nations lost their ancestral homes and traditional lifestyles because of the Removal Act of 1830 and were sent to live on reservations in other parts of the United States.

Winter's journal indicates the choices given to the Potawatomi Nation by the United States after the War of 1812: Move westward to Kansas or lose everything; trade your woodland way of life for reservation living in Kansas. Many of his observations about the Potawatomi people were made before and during the Keewaunay Council of 1837.

Winter sketched many of the famous Potawatomi leaders such as Pel-waw-me, No-wash-moan, Noah-quet, and I-o wah, and his sketches provide evidence of the acculturation process of the Potawatomi and Miami people. In these portraits, both Indian women and men wear European types of clothing: long cloth dresses, frock dress coats, long-legged cloth pants, and ruffled shirts. Very little evidence appears of the traditional dress and culture of either group. Buckskin, beads, and feather headgear are not evident in the majority of his sketches. In his writing, Winter indicates that he sometimes requested his Indian subjects to add or change clothing to indicate "Indianness" in the romantic sense, as expected by the non-Indian audience.

Winter's journal provides insights into the values and lifestyles of the Potawatomi and the Miami, including the ceremonial use of tobacco, the roles and responsibilities of women and men, the spiritual beliefs, and the communal nature of possessions. Sometimes Winter's lack of understanding of these people is evident, especially when he calls women *squaws* and refers to tribal members as *primitive* or *aboriginal* peoples. He admired their culture but did not understand the rationale behind many of their customs.

As a researcher and teacher, I liked the organization of this book. It is divided into three parts: The first, an essay by Christian F. Feest, prepares the reader to understand the artist, George Winter. The discussion of his life in England and America serves as a foundation for understanding his writing and artwork.

The second part of the book is an essay by R. David Edmunds, who provides background for understanding the Potawatomi and Miami people. He describes their origins and the history of their emigration, their lifestyle and values, their language, dress, and occupation as fur traders. He describes how both tribes adjusted to the culture of French settlers nearby. Many lived peacefully with their French neighbors, intermarried with them, learned their language, and adopted some of their clothing styles.

The third part of the book contains the actual writings and artwork of George Winter. His verbal portraits of people and scenes are colorful and clear. In describing the Indians who agreed to sit for paintings, he often included explanations of local Native American traditions, such as the giving of tobacco.

Winter sketched Indian leaders, women, log homes and trading posts, horses, and the peaceful scenery of lakes and woods. Included in this book are forty-eight pages of color reproductions of many of his American Indian paintings.

Several years ago, I reviewed a book about George Catlin by Brian W. Dippie. In reading this book about George Winter, who was Catlin's contemporary, I noticed several similarities between the two men: Both were poor, struggling artists who had trouble supporting their families. Both portrayed American Indians during the 1800s, and both wanted to sell their collections to the United States government. It appears that neither was successful in the attempt.

The major difference between these artists was the way they portrayed their Indian subjects. Winter's view of American Indian peoples was much more realistic. He painted Indians as he saw them and did not romanticize them as much as Catlin did.

Throughout my perusal of this book, I kept asking myself, "How did the Potawatomi Nation end up in Indiana?" During my childhood in Wisconsin, I spent many enjoyable days in Potawatomi State Park near my home, and I knew that the Potawatomi were a Wisconsin Indian nation. When did the Potawatomi move to Indiana? My answer was found in *Keepers of the Fire: The History of the Potawatomi Indians of Wisconsin*, published by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. The Potawatomi Nation migrated down the St. Lawrence River and settled along the shores of Lake Michigan. Years later, as the population of the nation grew, some members moved south to Indiana. Thus Winter found the Potawatomi Nation in Indiana and recorded part of their history in both writings and pictures.

I recommend *Indians and a Changing Frontier* for both high school and college students. Serious study of this book will help students learn about the causes and effects of the Removal Act of 1830 and will provide them with some important understandings of acculturation and survival. In addition, it will help American Indian youth develop some insights into how their people have changed.

Leona M. Zastrow
St. Catherine Indian School
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Musical Repercussions of 1492: Encounters in Text and Performance. Edited by Carol E. Robertson. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992. 486 pages. \$62.00 cloth.

Now that the Columbus quincentennial is finally over, the numerous events, actions, and reactions that it spawned in the Americas should be documented and analyzed. In the United States, where 1992 was presidentially proclaimed the "Year of the American Indian," some celebrated a deified Columbus, an inquisitive explorer, a discovering hero, with hoopla and hype, parades, parties, and special masses honoring the arrival of the first Christian missionaries. But, simultaneously, others were bashing Columbus and demonstrating against a villain, a demon, a murderer, an oppressor. Journalists reacted accordingly, taking one side or the other, as did universities, museums, professional societies, and speakers on tour. Some described the rich