

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

The Indian Man: A Biography of James Mooney. By L. G. Moses.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7cd560xd>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 9(4)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Bieder, Robert E.

Publication Date

1985-09-01

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/>

Material on this man is scanty in my part of the world, therefore further information about C. N. Gorman can best be obtained from George Longfish, current director of the Indian Art program at D.Q.U. in Davis, California. Mr. Longfish was an instructor to the writer in American Indian Art Studio and Art History at the University of Montana in the early 70s. He remains a personal friend.

Alfred Young Man
University of Lethbridge

The Indian Man: A Biography of James Mooney. By L. G. Moses. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984. 320 pp. \$24.95 Cloth.

Recalling her first field work among the Kiowa Indians, Alice Marriott relates an incident that reveals the importance of James Mooney's Kiowa research. Her Kiowa consultant, Mr. Camp "re-entered the room with an outsized volume, bound in shabby green cloth and stamped with dulled gold, in his arms. 'There,' he announced, laying the volume on the table, 'that's Mr. Mooney. He wrote about us as Indians long time ago. Now when we don't know for sure what happen' we look him up in Mr. Mooney.'" (Alice Marriott, *Greener Fields: Experiences Among the American Indians*, 1953: 66).

It is possible that no greater testimonial could be offered to James Mooney and his work than the complete reliance that Mr. Camp placed on Mooney's *Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians*. But who was James Mooney and what were his contributions to American anthropology?

L. G. Moses's *The Indian Man* seeks to answer both of these questions. As such it is a welcomed contribution to the growing body of literature on the history of anthropology and should be read in conjunction with Joan Mark's excellent *Four Anthropologists* and the essays by Franz Boas that are brought together by George W. Stocking, Jr. under the title *The Shaping of American Anthropology, 1883-1911: A Franz Boas Reader*.

Moses deftly utilizes the fragmentary evidence and relates how Mooney's early years in Richmond, Indiana were years of trying to harmonize a vibrant Irish heritage with the demands of American culture. After involving himself in various Irish protest activities and discovering that life at a newspaper was not

as exciting as he hoped it might be, Mooney decided to pursue his hobby of Indian studies professionally. Writing to Major John Wesley Powell of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Mooney offered his services to the Bureau. Undaunted by several rejections, Mooney traveled to Washington to plead his case in person.

Powell eventually took Mooney on at the Bureau and so began Mooney's rise in the foremost ethnological institution of the day. Beginning with studies of the eastern Cherokee, Mooney eventually moved on in 1891 to studies of the Kiowa and other tribes then in Oklahoma. Some of this work was carried out in conjunction with George A. Dorsey of the Field Columbia Museum in Chicago. In between field work, Mooney worked on Cherokee linguistics, the *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*, and a study of Indian population.

Sympathetic to the underdog position of the Indian, Mooney is best known for his sensitive account of the Ghost Dance movement and the tragic events of the Wounded Knee massacre in 1890. His writing on this topic and his work on behalf of the peyote movement often placed Mooney in conflict with missionaries, Indian agents, school teachers, government officials, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The ire displayed against Mooney by these groups grew out of their belief that Mooney encouraged Indians to resist "progress" and "civilization." Mooney recognized that change was inevitable, but he was bothered by the pace and methods used by these agents of acculturation to bring about change. He also firmly believed that Indians had a right to their history and that ethnological investigations were the only means to preserve this history. In arguing the cause of "salvage ethnology," Mooney also grappled with the problem of what were the ends of ethnological research.

Moses has written an excellent narrative history of Mooney's career and one that will be a valuable source to scholars working on the history of anthropology for this period. But questions remain. One wishes for a deeper analysis of Mooney's ethnological writings and a fuller discussion of the influence that Mooney's lifelong interest with the Irish struggle to maintain an integral culture had on his Indian research. Did Mooney see Irish resistance in terms of a spiritual struggle, or rather, a struggle of the Irish spirit refusing to yield to the demands of another culture? Did Mooney see the spirit of the Indian rooted in their ceremonies, myths, and formulas, and that an understanding of

these aspects of their culture—that would provide information on the mind and will of the Indian to remain Indian—was more important than deducing where they were on the ladder of civilization? Did he see the Indian's struggle to preserve their culture and identity as similar to the struggle of the Irish for the same ends? This is implied in Moses account but it needs greater development, for this I believe is the main clue to a fuller knowledge of the life and career of James Mooney.

Robert E. Bieder

Indiana University

With One Sky Above Us: Life on an Indian Reservation at the Turn of the Century. By Mick Gidley. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985. 159 pp. \$9.95 Paper.

Through photographs, reports and other records, Edward H. Latham documented life on a Northwestern Indian reservation from 1890 to 1910. Those two decades covered an awkward period of transition in which reservation Indians were under excessive pressure to abandon their traditional culture and become farmers or ranchers. Colville reservation, where Latham served as a physician in north central Washington, provided a home for a variety of plateau Indians, including local Nespelem, San Poil, Okanagan, and Colville Salish bands as well as refugees from neighboring Nez Perce, Yakima, Umatilla, Wenatchee, and other dispossessed Columbia peoples. Regionally and nationally prominent leaders—such as Moses and Joseph—dwelt there along with about two thousand less noted inhabitants.

Latham's photography of life there offers an excellent social history coverage of far more than local interest. University of Exeter Senior Lecturer Mick Gidley provides a general historical context that summarizes nineteenth-century reservation development and problems. In order to survive in a hostile and difficult environment after all but a minor portion of their lands had been taken away, reservation Indians had to be exceptionally resourceful. They were left with no really viable means of support. Deprived of their traditional way of life and pressured to adopt an unacceptable alien culture, all of Latham's Colville peoples had to get by as well as they could under unsatisfactory conditions typical of reservation life everywhere. Their adaptation of