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Review of *The Fatal Confrontation: Historical Studies of American Indians, Environment, and Historians* By Wilbur Jacobs

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The Fatal Confrontation: Historical Studies of American Indians, Environment, and Historians. By Wilbur Jacobs. Introduction by Albert L. Hurtado. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996. Photographs, selected bibliography, index. xvi + 214 pp. \$45.00.

Throughout his long, distinguished career Wilbur Jacobs has been a fervent and consistent advocate for a more inclusive approach to the study of American history. Using the implements of the ethnographer, demographer, and environmentalist, he has not simply painted our historical landscape with a broader brush; more importantly, he has added clarity and texture to the canvas.

The ten essays reprinted here show the breadth and depth of Jacobs's scholarship and remind us of his profound influence on the succeeding generation of historians. Spanning almost forty years, they not only trace Jacobs's intellectual development, but also show our historiographical evolution. Indeed, interdisciplinary and comparative studies are now so common that students today may not recognize just how original and provocative these essays were when they first appeared.

The opening section, "The American Frontier Environment," includes two essays that decry America's "conquistador mentality" toward the environment and explain the link between the destruction of the environment and the destruction of Native American societies. The three essays in the second section, "Contact and Its Consequences," written in the early 1970s, call for a revision and reassessment of the contact experience. These pioneering efforts in comparative ethnography and historical demography demonstrated the need for a more pluralistic historical perspective.

The final four essays appear in the section entitled "Great Interpreters of the American Frontier Experience." As a student of the frontier experience and the historical craft, Jacobs, perhaps quite naturally, has had a lifelong fascination with the works and influence of Francis Parkman and Frederick Jackson Turner. Though critical of Parkman's overly romanticized portrayal of American frontiersmen and his negative depiction of Native Americans, Jacobs finds much worthy of praise. He admires Parkman's literary accomplishments and argues for seeing him as a nineteenth-century environmentalist and wilderness advocate. Similarly, Jacobs criticizes Turner's ethnocentrism, but appreciates his originality of thought and method. Turner's lasting importance, he argues, is measured by how he shaped the investigative process of later historians.

While not everyone will endorse his assessments of Parkman and Turner, most readers will agree that Jacobs's treatment is even-handed and clearly written. General readers will enjoy these selections as representative of the fine body of work Wilbur Jacobs has given us, and libraries will want to add this volume to their collections.

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