



# Native American Women and the Burdens of Southern History

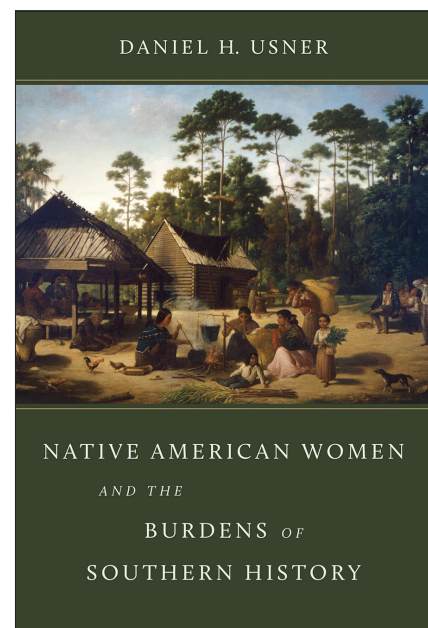
**DANIEL H. USNER**

Though long neglected, the history and experiences of Indigenous women offer a deeper, more complex understanding of southern history and culture. In *Native American Women and the Burdens of Southern History*, Daniel H. Usner explores the dynamic role of Native American women in the South as they confronted waves of colonization, European imperial invasion, plantation encroachment, and post-Civil War racialization. In the process, he reveals the distinct form their means of adaptation and resistance took.

While drawing attention to existing scholarship on Native American women, Usner also uses original research and diverse sources, including visual images and material culture, to advance a new line of inquiry. Focusing on women's responses and initiatives across centuries, he shows how their agency shaped and reshaped their communities' relations with non-Native southerners. Exploring basketry in the Lower Mississippi Valley and Gulf Coastal South, Usner emphasizes the essential role women played in ongoing efforts at resistance and survival, even in the face of epidemics, violence, and enslavement unleashed by early colonizers. Foods and medicines that Native women gathered, carried, stored, and peddled in baskets proved integral in forming the region's frontier exchange economy. Later, as the plantation economy threatened to envelop their communities, Indigenous women adapted to change and resisted disappearance by perpetuating exchange with non-Native neighbors and preserving a deep attachment to the land. By the start of the twentieth century, facing a new round of lethal attacks on Indigenous territory, identity, and sovereignty in the Jim Crow South, Native women's resilient and resourceful skill as makers of basketry became a crucial instrument in their nations' political diplomacy.

Overall, Usner's work underscores how central Indigenous women have been in struggles for Native American territory and sovereignty throughout southern history.

**DANIEL H. USNER** is the Holland N. McTyeire Professor of History at Vanderbilt University. He is the author of numerous books on Native American history, including *American Indians in Early New Orleans: From Calumet to Raquette*.



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**SEPTEMBER 2023**

136 pages, 5 ½ x 8 ½, 8 color images, 10 halftones

978-0-8071-7991-8

Hardcover \$29.95, ebook available

Native American Studies / Southern History

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Walter Lynwood Fleming Lectures in Southern History

Published with the assistance of the

V. Ray Cardozier Fund

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338 JOHNSTON HALL | BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70803

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