



# George Bird Grinnell and the Blackfeet: Blackfoot Lodge Tales and Blackfoot Indian Stories

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George Bird Grinnell (September 20, 1849 - April 11, 1938) was an American anthropologist, historian, naturalist, and writer who devoted much of his life to documenting and protecting the Plains - and the indigenous people - of the American West. Born in Brooklyn, New York, Grinnell graduated from Yale University with a B.A. in 1870 and a Ph.D. in 1880. Originally specializing in zoology, he became a prominent early conservationist and student of Native American life on the Plains of present-day Montana, Wyoming, North and South Dakota, Kansas, and Nebraska.

Of the two complete works republished here, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales* was Grinnell's second book, published in 1892, shortly after his return to the East Coast after an extensive stay among the Blackfeet. *Blackfoot Indian Stories* (1914), on the other hand, was published much later in Grinnell's career, and is a continuation of Grinnell's original ethnological style, although with more distance between his time with informants and the field. In both form and content, however, Grinnell's ethnology is founded on narrative, on myth, and story representing the "Indian mind." How much of Grinnell's work involves "unmoderated" story taken down exactly as his informants told him we can never know. The language used can sometimes edge into the romantic when Grinnell paints generalized pictures of Blackfeet life, but he personally would have denied this view of his relation to his informants, in part because of his deep intimacy with many individual tribal members and his expressed concern for tribal welfare over the years.

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