**Conflicting Views of Native America**

During the second half of the nineteenth century, tensions between Native Americans and Euro-Americans came to a head. Two views of Native peoples emerged in Euro-American literature and art during this turbulent period. These views were the “doomed Indian” and the “noble savage.” Both stereotypes represented Euro-American cultural values and attitudes toward Native Americans. Both are evident in Stanley’s art.

Stanley depicted Native cultures as destined to perish, as seen in his large-scale canvas, The Last of Their Race (1857). Stanley conversely celebrated America’s Native cultures with the promise of continued longevity in A Family Group (circa 1856). The idea of the “doomed Indian” resonated with many Euro-Americans. They felt that once Native Americans were subdued or erased, they would pose no threat to national expansion. It was easier for Stanley to sell paintings that foresaw the elimination of Native peoples though he passionately dreamed of their continuance.

**The Trial of Red Jacket**

This massive canvas depicts an event that took place before Stanley’s birth, the trial of famed Seneca leader Red Jacket in 1802. Red Jacket was famous for his eloquent speeches and here he successfully defends himself against wrongful accusations of witchcraft. As a heroic figure, Red Jacket was the subject of other paintings by Charles Bird King and George Catlin. They, like Stanley, capitalized on Red Jacket’s reputation and tapped into nationalist sentiment and nostalgia.

Here, Red Jacket’s dress and posture link him to an ancient civilization. With a blanket draped over his shoulder (much like a toga), an outstretched arm, and his weight shifted to one foot, Red Jacket resembles classical depictions of Roman orators.

**Fellow Painters of the West:**

**John Mix Stanley’s Peers**

Working in the mid-nineteenth century, John Mix Stanley was not alone in his quest to paint Native Americans and the American West. Before and after him, other artists depicted America’s Native cultures and the uncharted lands west of the Mississippi River. Some of Stanley’s peers traveled around the West looking for subjects like he did. Others painted representations of Native American leaders when they visited the East Coast.

Stanley’s contemporaries included George Catlin, Henry Inman, Alfred Jacob Miller, and Charles Bird King. These men shared pride and purpose, each believing their paintings would provide for posterity a visual record of Native cultural traditions, lifestyles, and ceremonies.

**Stanley’s Indian Gallery**

Stanley returned to the East Coast and reunited with his former business partner Caleb Sumner Dickerman in 1850. Together, they organized a traveling exhibition of Stanley’s Indian Gallery. The Gallery now included about 150 portraits and western scenes. Alongside his paintings, Stanley exhibited Native American artifacts he had collected during his travels. Critics commended Stanley’s artistic ability and praised his paintings as truthful reflections of life on the western frontier.

In 1852, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. displayed Stanley’s Indian Gallery and subsequently published a catalogue of his paintings titled *Portraits of North American Indians*. Stanley was encouraged by the public’s positive reception of his western works. He asked Congress on three separate occasions to purchase the Indian Gallery for its historical and artistic value. Similar to artist George Catlin, Stanley was unsuccessful in gaining the government’s patronage.

**Stanley: The Northwest and Hawaii**

After completing his assignment for the U.S. government, Stanley ventured north to Oregon Territory, in the area of present-day Washington and Oregon. He briefly settled in Oregon City and continued to document a broad spectrum of Native American life for his Gallery. To finance further travels, he painted portraits of prominent settlers in the area.

Stanley visited Protestant missions on the Oregon frontier. En route to the Whitman Mission at Wailetpu (near present-day Walla Walla), some alarming news discouraged him from completing the journey. Just before Stanley’s slated arrival in November 1847, Marcus Whitman, founder ofthe mission, and twelve others died in hostilities between Cayuse Indians and the Euro-American missionaries. Stanley narrowly avoided the attack and retreated to Oregon City.

He traveled next to the kingdom of Hawaii, where he stayed for a little over a year. There, he painted portraits of King Kamehameha and Queen Kalama and others among the upper tiers of Hawaiian society.