If caste and gender are the fundamental fractures in the sociology of Sanskrit, fractures of race and gender define its study in America. A pedagogical interest in redressing these inequalities prompts me to think about their genealogy. Is there a fault line that runs through this field, in both its philological and area studies guises, that we can trace historically? Is this a question of research method or, also, a research imperative? This talk features elements of my research into the papers of Charles Rockwell Lanman and the early study of Sanskrit at Harvard and Radcliffe. I draw particular attention to the number of women who populated the turn-of-the-century Sanskrit classroom, and attempt to follow the threads of their careers. I also briefly investigate the role that Sanskritists played in constructing racial categories particular to the American experience. Ultimately, I suggest that we think of American Sanskritists not just as Orientalists but as Americans. In doing so, I propose an alternative history of South Asian Studies, not according to macro-narratives that tell of the shift from philology to area studies, but through attention to the field’s unheralded acts of occlusion, forgotten but always present.