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Ruins are as central to the image of the American Southwest as are its mountains and deserts, and antiquity is a key element of modern southwestern heritage. Yet prior to the mid-nineteenth century this rich legacy was largely unknown to the outside world. While military expeditions first brought word of enigmatic relics to the eastern United States, the new intellectual frontier was seized by archaeologists, who used the results of their southwestern explorations to build a foundation for the scientific study of the American past. In *Ruins and Rivals*, James Snead helps us understand the historical development of archaeology in the Southwest from the 1890s to the 1920s and its relationship with the popular conception of the region. He examines two major research traditions: expeditions dispatched from the major eastern museums and those supported by archaeological societies based in the Southwest itself. By comparing the projects of New York's American Museum of Natural History with those of the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles and the Santa Fe-based School of American Archaeology, he illustrates the way that competition for status and prestige shaped the way that archaeological remains were explored and interpreted. The decades-long competition between institutions and their advocates ultimately created an agenda for Southwest archaeology that has survived into modern times. Snead takes us back to the days when the field was populated by relic hunters and eastern "museum men" who formed uneasy alliances among themselves and with western boosters who used archaeology to advance their own causes. Richard Wetherill, Frederic Ward Putnam, Charles Lummis, and other colorful characters all promoted their own archaeological endeavors before an audience that included wealthy patrons, museum administrators, and other cultural figures. The resulting competition between scholarly and public interests shifted among museum halls, legislative chambers, and the drawing rooms of Victorian America but always returned to the enigmatic ruins of Chaco Canyon, Bandelier, and Mesa Verde. *Ruins and Rivals* contains a wealth of anecdotal material that conveys the flavor of digs and discoveries, scholars and scoundrels, tracing the origins of everything from national monuments to "Santa Fe Style." It rekindles the excitement of discovery, illustrating the role that archaeology played in creating the southwestern "past" and how that image of antiquity continues to exert its influence today.