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UNITED STATES HISTORY TEXTBOOKS, THE PLAINS WARS, AND PUBLIC MEMORY

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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

History education is the cornerstone of public memory construction in the United States, and it has the potential to facilitate the necessary process of reconciliation with our troubled past. And yet after a century of progress in both pedagogy and Native American history, our secondary U.S. history curriculum continues to reinforce settler colonial narratives of Native history. In *Teaching Us to Forget: United States History Textbooks, the Plains Wars, and Public Memory*, I contend that rather than mere artifacts of archaic thinking, secondary history textbooks are active distorters of U.S. history based on a romanticized frontier experience. Native history is the context in which U.S. history occurs, not a minor thread within it, but textbooks invert the narrative, alienating Native students and preventing all students from wrestling with the contradictory elements of American identity.

Despite decades of historical scholarship and history education reform, the narrative of the Plains Wars presented in U.S. history textbooks remains structurally unchanged from its first appearance in the late nineteenth century. This dissertation traces the formation of that narrative. Organized around the chronological construction of Plains Wars narratives in historiography and textbooks from the 1870s through the early 1980s, this dissertation analyzes the ways in which nineteenth century narratives of the Plains Wars and U.S. history textbook narratives shaped each other. U.S. history textbooks serve a powerful and largely unrecognized role in shaping public memory in the United States. Their Plains Wars narratives were contested throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, and groups like Indian Wars veterans, Native rights organizations, educators' organizations, and historical societies actively worked to frame them. This project seeks to better understand how this curricular marginalization of Native history reinforces white supremacy, closing avenues for students to reconcile with the past.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. FROM CUSTER’S LAST STAND TO GREASY GRASS: INDIAN WAR VETERANS AND THE PERSISTENT LEGEND OF THE BATTLE OF THE LITTLE BIGHORN.....	27
III. ‘I WILL FIGHT NO MORE FOREVER’: THE JOSEPH MYTH DOMINATES TEXTBOOK NARRATIVES OF THE NEZ PERCE WAR.....	88
IV. ERASING THE LAVA BEDS FIGHT: THE MODOC WAR AND ITS HISTORY OF DISAPPEARING FROM HISTORY	115
V. FROM THE SADDLE TO THE CLASSROOM: THE CHANGING EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT OF PLAINS WARS NARRATIVES IN U.S. HISTORY TEXTBOOKS.....	154
VI. SAVING HISTORY FROM THE COWBOYS: THE STRUGGLE TO DISMANTLE ANTI-NATIVE PREJUDICE IN THE CLASSROOM, 1955-1984.....	204
VII. CONCLUSION.....	254
APPENDIX.....	267
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	271

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DEDICATION

For Huck

in hopes that he grows up with the courage to learn true stories instead of easy ones.

Chapter 1: Introduction

On the frigid morning of December 10, 2016 a group of young men and women rode out on horseback from Oceti Sakowin Camp near Standing Rock Reservation to join fellow Lakota and Dakota riders in the annual wokiksuye zuya for the Dakota 38+2.¹ The riders, many of them teenagers, left the camp where they and their horses had spent the last few months protecting peaceful demonstrators from unlawful militarized police attacks. From there, they embarked on the ride in memory of the victims of the largest mass execution in U.S. history, an execution carried out after a sham trial and motivated by local settler desires for Dakota land.² It is hard to imagine that the historical parallels could go unnoticed by the public. And yet both the 2016 conflict at Standing Rock and the 1862 Dakota War remain relatively unknown outside Native communities and the U.S. West enclave of the historical profession.

Public memory is a slippery thing, and public memory about the history of the American West, slipperier still. The historical West has become such an iconic piece of American identity that its image is nearly unassailable in the minds of many Americans. Although western historians have interrogated the history of the U.S. West for decades, re-centering and reframing its narratives, in public memory the myth of the Old West has calcified into perceived factual history. That white supremacist myth, framed as the rightful and heroic conquest of untamed land and peoples by Euro-Americans, embedded itself as a core foundation of American identity early in U.S. history. As historian Robert Athearn writes, "... the images and the simple story of

¹ The Dakota 38+2 Memorial Ride is a relatively recent tradition revived and perpetuated by leaders like Greg Grey Cloud and the Sungawotada ("fearless horses") to remember the Dakota men executed under Lincoln during the Civil War, offer Dakota youth a way to connect with their culture through horses, and as a spiritual practice to heal generational trauma. One such ride began in 2005 after Cheyenne River Dakota Vietnam veteran Jim Miller imagined a ride involving all Dakota youth as part of reconciliation and healing.
<http://sunktanka.weebly.com/dakota-38-plus-2-memorial-ride.html>. Accessed March 26, 2019.

² Dakota historian and activist Waziyatawin (formerly Angela Cavender Wilson) led a series of march protests against Minnesota's sesquicentennial celebrations in light of the Dakota 38+2, expanding the political context for public events like the memorial rides.

the western legend first caught on in the early nineteenth century, those years when the young Republic, like a proud and gawky adolescent, was trying to decide who and what it was. This myth has been around ever since...”³ It is the West’s history of violence, especially committed by and against Native people, which most shapes that myth. White settlers violently seized Native land, and retelling that violent seizure as a celebrated origin story reasserts the legitimacy of continued settler occupation of those lands for every generation.⁴ While scholars have spent decades focused on the Plains Wars and their legacy in the lingering popular myth of the American West, that scholarship does not yet include the most ubiquitous form of public memory construction where the story is retold most often: U.S. history education.

From the first textbooks published after the Civil War to textbooks in use in classrooms today, the narrative structure of the “winning of the West” is presented as a simple story of an expanding American state enacted by enthusiastic pioneers and resistant but quickly defeated Native peoples. This narrative structure ignores the complexity evident even in Euro-American sources from the period. On August 24, 1877, Captain Charles Beaujolaïs Throckmorton struggled to finish a letter to his mother from the saddle of his cavalry mount on a stormy day. “Howard is a great fraud,”⁵ he confided as his company struggled to pursue the fleeing Nez Perce through the newly-minted Yellowstone National Park. Throckmorton had seen service in the lava beds of northern California against the Modocs four years earlier, and wrote to his mother “I am on the side of the Indians as I believe they have been very badly treated by the

³ Robert Athearn. *The Mythic West in Twentieth-Century America*. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 272.

⁴ In their crucial article “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang remind readers that, as Patrick Wolfe argued in 1999, “This violence is not temporally contained in the arrival of the settler but is reasserted each day of occupation.” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* Vol. 1 no. 2 (2012), 5.

⁵ Throckmorton to Mother, 24 August 1877. Charles Beaujolaïs Throckmorton Letters, 1872-1880. Ayers Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago. General O.O. Howard commanded the U.S. military’s pursuit of the Nez Perce as they tried to make their way across the Canadian border to avoid being forced to abide by a treaty they never signed and abandon their ancestral lands.

agents and I am satisfied the matter ought to be looked into.”⁶ But newspaper accounts, government reports, and early histories of the Plains Wars rejected evidence like Throckmorton’s in favor of celebrating the troops’ fight “to make America safe from blood-thirsty Indians.”⁷ The story of the American West in the late nineteenth century was the story of heroic conquest, the fulfillment of America’s manifest destiny through Native erasure.

This seeming consensus narrative was never settled history. Like Throckmorton, other people questioned the conquest narrative while the violent conflicts unfolded. Omaha woman and journalist Susette La Flesche, who published under the name “Bright Eyes,” used her column to contest violently racist newspaper characterizations of the Ghost Dance movement in 1890. Her friendships with Thomas Tibbles, Helen Hunt Jackson, Elaine Goodale, and Charles Eastman produced alternative narratives that inspired reformers in their time and historians who consulted them later. Even the accounts of Native leaders after combat on the Plains ended, heavily filtered as they were through non-Native sources, cast popular doubt upon the simple story of American frontier heroism presented to the public. But the pull of romanticism often overwhelmed these accounts. Enriched by a wealth of western booster literature, yellow journalism, pulp fiction, and wild west shows, and bolstered by published memoirs and battle commemorations perpetuated by veterans of the Plains Wars, the nationalistic narrative of winning the West dominated popular and professional history in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When it came time to incorporate these stories into the history classroom, valorized narratives of the Plains Wars entered school textbooks and reshaped United States history curriculum.

⁶ Throckmorton to Mother, 20 February 1873. Charles Beaujolais Throckmorton Letters, 1872-1880. Newberry Library, Chicago.

⁷ Donath to National Tribune, n.d. United Indian War Veterans Collection, Box 2, Folder 1, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma.

American history textbooks notoriously present flattened and distorted narratives of U.S. history that perpetuate racism and present an essentially white nationalist version of American history that harms many historically marginalized groups. But textbooks distort Native history in a way that is unique to other misrepresented threads of U.S. history. In schoolbooks, the story of the West after the Civil War serves to redefine American identity, culturally and politically. It is westward expansion at Native expense that legitimizes America's rise as a unified, modern state power. These Plains Wars narratives, carried from nineteenth-century historiography and embedded in textbooks throughout the twentieth century, work to preserve an inverted framing of U.S. history. Native history is the context in which U.S. history occurs, geographically, politically, and socially. Rather than presenting U.S. history as an invasion and continued occupation that disrupted and seeks to erase or assimilate Native nations, however, textbooks invert the narrative, presenting the U.S. as a nation of immigrants born in an attempt to escape political and religious persecution. As Tuck and Yang argue, "the horizons of the settler colonial nation-state are total and require a mode of total appropriation of Indigenous life and land, rather than the selective expropriation of profit-producing fragments."⁸ To maintain the legitimacy of the settler colonial nation-state, its children must be taught a national history that turns invasion and occupation into migration and civilization.

History education is bound up in the settler colonial project, especially in its narratives about the Plains Wars. Because the U.S. continues to exist on stolen land, the creation and promotion of American national identity must refute the claim that the land was stolen. Instilling patriotic ideals in students therefore relies on remaking and reinforcing white nationalist narratives about Native history. These textbook distortions are not merely lingering vestiges of

⁸ Tuck and Yang, 5.

scientific racism, outdated language, or underemphasized historical actors. Anxiety surrounding social cohesion and the schools' role in securing it demands a national narrative, and that national narrative has been established as one that rejects the real history of Native America. In her essay "Empire of Innocence," Patricia Limerick argues, "conquest forms the historical bedrock of the whole nation," and yet "even when they were trespassers, westering Americans were hardly, in their own eyes, criminals; rather, they were pioneers."⁹ In remaking the innocence of their intentions in the brutal conquest of the continent, Americans reframed their history to begin with a benign arrival marred by sporadic conflicts. U.S. history textbooks continue the work of constructing settler innocence, all but erasing the full history of Native America both before European arrivals and throughout centuries-long contests for power in North America.

Confronting the Past

It is always difficult for societies to reconcile with their traumatic pasts, especially when violence became formative to their cultural identities. In 1996, historian Daniel Goldhagen provoked outrage with the publication of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, a scathing rebuttal to the historical conversation concerning Germany's path to the Holocaust. Using intentionally provocative terms to lay out an argument that indicted ordinary Germans in the crimes of mass genocide, Goldhagen shocked the academic community out of its sanitized discussions of intentionality versus functionality in the rise of the Third Reich. He declared "The most appropriate, indeed the only appropriate *general* proper name for the Germans who perpetrated the Holocaust is 'Germans.'"¹⁰ While it had serious flaws as a work of scholarship, and

⁹ Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1987), 27, 36.

¹⁰ Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 6.

Goldhagen certainly had a propensity to bridle at criticism rather than consider it, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* opened new avenues for German to wrestle with their own history, deepening the process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.¹¹

The Holocaust is an exceptionally vivid moment in the history of crimes against humanity, and as such it tends to occupy a unique space in historical study. The level of organization it required, its place in the era of photographic and film documentation, and its role as the manifestation of centuries of anti-Semitism make it an episode that is difficult for its perpetrators' descendants to relegate to analysis within the ivory tower. Debate over memory among intellectuals, artists, and the general public has occupied German society since the end of World War II, but that level of open dialogue about the traumatic past is somewhat rare. American historians have struggled with legacies of historical oppression in the United States, but the American public does not feel the same sense of urgency or collective responsibility for those atrocities that characterize expressed German public memory. Rather than a source of national shame, these American histories are a source of American identity and even pride. The history of slavery may be regrettable, but its narratives often end in triumphal abolition. The conquest of the Plains, while brutal, becomes a necessary step on the way to establishing a thriving modern America. Not only does this historical myopia leave these crimes unexamined, it also shields modern Americans from the uncomfortable knowledge that the white supremacy that led to those crimes is still alive, well, and structurally embedded in law and society today. We are still on stolen land.

¹¹ The process of coming to terms with the Nazi past is such an important and specific task that it has its own term: *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. The word is a composite of two other words, *Vergangenheit*, which means the past, and *Bewältigung*, which means mastering, or coming to terms with. The term implies a continuous struggle against the past, not a brief debate with a finite end.

In 1987's *The Legacy of Conquest*, Limerick engages with that foundational white supremacy. She argues that understanding the legacy of anti-Native prejudices in the history of the American West is not simply a matter of including more points of view. In fact, she writes, “the very notion of “the Indian side of the story” requires one to hold resolutely to the Euro-American angle of vision, by which Indian diversity flattens out into one, simple story.”¹² In addition, the continued representational violence non-Natives commit against Native people in history textbooks, entertainment media, and popular culture continues to cloud public memory both from the ways in which representational violence, cultural expectations, and unintentional violence have happened in the past and the ways in which they are still at work today. As Tuck and Yang note, “in order for the settlers to make a place their home, they must destroy and disappear the Indigenous peoples that live there... the settler positions himself as both superior and normal.”¹³ Normalizing white presence in North America is the primary narrative purpose of U.S. history education, and the foundational assumption of U.S. history textbooks. They therefore present narratives of white ethnocentricity. While historians can and do interrogate those narratives, quite often that ethnocentricity stems from the cultural mythology that inspires historians to enter their profession in the first place.

Robert Utley, celebrated historian of the American West, cites Erroll Flynn's portrayal of General George Armstrong Custer in his 1941 film *They Died with Their Boots On* as the moment when “I found my new obsession” in the history of the American frontier.¹⁴ Inspired by that love of the romance of the heroic conquest of the Plains in the late nineteenth century, young Utley read Frederick Whittaker's *Complete Life of General George A. Custer* until he nearly

¹² Limerick, 217.

¹³ Tuck and Yang, 6.

¹⁴ Robert M. Utley. *Custer & Me: A Historian's Memoir* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 8.

committed it to memory, and then on a whim at age sixteen, hopped a train by himself to visit the Custer Battlefield National Monument where he talked his way into a paid summer position as a historical aide despite being underage. Utley's trajectory is not terribly unusual. Historians are often drawn into the profession through their love of stories; a spark ignited by the compelling tale of a single historical figure or event has inspired many a declared major. As these students learn the profession and begin to gain its skills, often those romanticized notions that drew them to it fall away and, like Utley, they find themselves critiquing the dramatized narratives that first captured their attention. Those affinities can linger enough to influence historians' interpretive lenses, however, especially when they're deeply embedded in public memory. Despite historians' efforts in recent decades to confront it, the myth of the American West thrives in American culture.

Constructing Memory in the West

The myth of the American West is the narrative of U.S. history that says white settlers, having thrown off the tyranny of imperial British rule, heroically ventured into a continental wilderness in order to rightfully claim and cultivate the land and either "civilize" or eradicate the Native nations who stood in their way. Any action of westward expansion, the myth asserts, is in the service of securing and spreading American freedom in North America. The myth thrives in part because of the early establishment of its ideological hold on the emerging American nation. As Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz argues, the early Republic's desire to establish its authority in the Ohio River Valley in the decades following the Revolution, driven by both military necessity and the need to appeal to western settlers suspicious of federal power, led the Washington administration to hire settler militias to fight growing pan-indigenous resistance movements.¹⁵

¹⁵ Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 81-3.

Later bolstered by military successes like Fallen Timbers and Tippecanoe, as well as the popularity of literary works like James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*, this scattershot frontier conflict became the front lines of America's establishment as a nation. As Henry Nash Smith argues, "one of the most persistent generalizations concerning American life and character is the notion that our society has been shaped by the pull of a vacant continent drawing population westward."¹⁶

That generalization is no accident, and its persistence is not a product of a culture unreflective about its past. On the contrary, Tuck and Yang argue that moves to settler innocence are the primary catalysts for these narratives of erasure. They argue "settler moves to innocence are those strategies or positionings that attempt to relieve the settler feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege."¹⁷ Whether through defiant triumphalism or expressions of regret for the means but not the end of westward expansion, the literature that constructs the myth of the U.S. West through the history of the Plains Wars is a near-perfect facilitation of that move to settler innocence. Western booster literature played a vital role in shaping the image of the American West in the mind of the American public, especially potent during the transition between centuries, an "anxious transition from the premodern to the modern."¹⁸ Frontier presses joined in the work as well, forming what historian Barbara Cloud calls a symbiotic relationship with the West as a region, both dependent upon each other for their growth.¹⁹ The pages of those newspapers were also battlegrounds for the narrative of the region's history, publishing thrilling tales of U.S. cavalry daring against Native

¹⁶ Henry Nash Smith. *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 3.

¹⁷ Tuck and Yang, 10.

¹⁸ David M. Wrobel. *Promised Lands: Promotion, Memory, and the Creation of the American West*. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 2.

¹⁹ Barbara Cloud. *The Coming of the Frontier Press: How the West Was Really Won*. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008).

warriors penned by scouts and soldiers, bloodthirsty calls for federal action against Native people whose presence thwarted settler expansion, and rebuttals from Native people like Susette La Flesche. As decades passed, the western narratives were further shaped by soldiers' memoirs, veterans organizations' petitions and letter-writing campaigns, interviews with Native warriors who resisted the U.S. onslaught, and popular entertainment in the form of pulp fiction, film, and wild west shows. From editorial battles between the *Omaha Bee* and the *Omaha World Herald* over the Ghost Dance controversy to the self-choreographed performances in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, the narrative of the invasion of the U.S. West was contested at every stage of its development.²⁰

Despite that robust contestation, American public memory about the U.S. West is still far more favorable to Custer's Last Stand than to the Battle of the Greasy Grass. Public memory is in constant motion, revisiting and reinterpreting fixed points of fact in light of present uncertainties. As anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot writes, "ultimately, the production of history is an exercise in power."²¹ That production process offers ample opportunity to shape the narrative even as events are still in motion; both the details included in the narrative and those omitted contribute to the power dynamic the historical narrative will enable through its dissemination²². Silences, Trouillot writes, are often the most effective parts of historical narrative that shape public memory, in part because they can be incredibly difficult for those who

²⁰ For more on the assertion of counternarrative by Native performers in wild west shows, see Linda Scarangella McNenly's *Native Performers in Wild West Shows: From Buffalo Bill to Euro Disney* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012). La Flesche's story is told in several sources, perhaps best in an unpublished thesis by Amanda L. Paige. "Susette La Flesche: Indian Rights and Rural Protest in 19th Century America." University of Arkansas, Little Rock, 2009.

²¹ Michel-Rolph Trouillot. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 26.

²² Patricia Nelson Limerick traces the production of memory while a Native-white war unfolds in her essay "Haunted America" which uses the Modoc War to illustrate a twelve-step pattern of escalating conflict, enacting violence, and then constructing white innocence. *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 33-73.

the narrative favors to detect. Historical silences are not always the result of individual antagonism or organized campaigns. As Trouillot writes, “Effective silencing does not require a conspiracy, not even a political consensus. Its roots are structural.”²³ That structural silencing provides the perfect conditions for historical narratives to find re-creation in generation after generation, especially when those narratives are connected to the creation or affirmation of national identity. As Michael Kammen argues in his landmark study of the Americanization of memory, “traditions are commonly relied upon by those who possess the power to achieve an illusion of social consensus,” rarely more so than in times of national identity crisis.²⁴

In the nineteenth century, the trauma of civil war and trials of Reconstruction threatened a national unity that was tenuous at best, and the conflict divided Christian denominations that had once provided ideological foundations for a unified white American identity.²⁵ As the country felt its way toward a postwar identity, the new discipline of American history emerged, as Kammen argues, as “a vital component in American civil religion.” While religion (especially Protestant Christianity) remained central to American cultural identity, Kammen asserts that the new generation “seemed to love religion less and history more; and correlations between the two were neither accidental nor casual.”²⁶ Founded in diverse colonial identity and navigating through the conflicting loyalties of sectionalism and burgeoning nationalism before the Civil

²³ Trouillot, 106.

²⁴ Michael Kammen, *The Mystic Chords of Memory: Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 4-5.

²⁵ For more on the theological instability the Civil War evoked, see Mark A. Noll *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

²⁶ Kammen, 194. Historian Patricia Crone suggests that religion is chief among the many factors that influence the formation of human societies and political structures. Religion offers organization that humans, as animals without genetic programming toward social organization, lack. In the absence of a biological mandate to form them, human societies coalesce around invented elements, either religious principles like Christianity or Islam, or abstract ones like democracy and class struggle. She observes, “whatever they are, we are here confronted with an irreducible oddity about human societies: all are strung around figments of the human imagination.” Due to the political, social, and religious crisis of the Civil War, professional history stepped into that organizing role in the late nineteenth century. Patricia Crone, *Pre-Industrial Societies: Anatomy of the Pre-Modern World* (Oxford: OneWorld Publications, 2006), 125.

War, Americans sought a common history in which to anchor postwar American identity. Above all, Kammen notes, Americans seemed driven by “worries about security, freedom, swift social change, and a sense of radical discontinuity” to a search for timelessness, settled truth that would always remain and could always serve as reference in dire times.²⁷ In other words, Americans sought a common narrative that could transcend the sectional divisions that had caused the war to reframe their identity and allow citizens to be Americans first, southerners and northerners second. A new westward expansion, with its roots in rousing frontier tales of literary nationalism like James Fenimore Cooper’s, offered that anchor.

Before Grant accepted Lee’s surrender at Appomattox, the Civil War’s survivors sprang to work shaping the way it would be remembered. As historian Caroline Janney notes, “memory is not a passive act.”²⁸ After the unexpectedly brutal war that nearly destroyed the country, remembrance was far more than honoring the dead. As Janney argues, “it had powerful social and political connotations, not the least of which was at the very heart of the conflict: how would a nation that had been so divided that it went to war move forward as a truly *United States of America*?”²⁹ It seems that for more than just the famed Buffalo Soldiers, the answer to that question was to head west and fulfill America’s unfinished manifest destiny.³⁰ In order to understand the shape that public memory took from the Plains Wars and its persistent impact on

²⁷ Kammen, 538.

²⁸ Caroline E. Janney. *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 4. David Blight traces the struggle among Union survivors between seeking harmony with the freshly-defeated South and forging a new racial order built on the promises made to black Americans in his landmark work *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

²⁹ Janney, 5.

³⁰ Although Janney, Blight, and others point to the Spanish-American War as the first time ex-Confederates fought alongside GAR veterans under the American flag, ex-Confederates who took an oath of loyalty to the United States were allowed to serve as frontier regulars during the Plains Wars. Many did and found camaraderie among the ranks of the Indian Wars veterans associations for decades after. Recognition of their service was often obscured by the more prominent Spanish-American War, and their associations fought for equal recognition for their actions against Native nations.

racist attitudes toward Native people, therefore, it is vital to understand the early formation of that memory in the context of the intense Reconstruction-era battle over Civil War memory. Historian William Deverell notes that, like John Dunbar in *Dances With Wolves*, Civil War veterans and their physicians saw the U.S. West as a place for postwar healing, reconciliation, and redemption.³¹ Policymakers certainly saw its settlement as a solution to postwar tensions. If the West was a place for redemptive post-Civil War rebirth, any study of Civil War memory must incorporate the role the Plains Wars played in refocusing and redefining American identity.³² As David Blight has observed, reunion of North and South became the priority of the postwar years. Few circumstances reunite warring parties like a common task and a common enemy. Western settlement was that task, and Native nations defending their treaty-protected homelands became the enemy.

The impact of that shift in foundation American identity is long-reaching and still at work in public memory today. Historian Philip Deloria notes that non-Natives perceive Native people as static, relics from earlier times who are disjointed from modernity. This misunderstanding, Deloria argues, jars because “non-Indians came to reframe their understandings of Indians in the wake of what seemed the final confinement of western Indian people to reservations.”³³ Those misunderstandings follow a pattern as old as the European invasion of North America. From the earliest days of violent conflict with Native nations, Euro-Americans committed to an origin

³¹ William Deverell. “To Bind Up the Nation’s Wounds: The West After the Civil War.” OU/Western History Association Distinguished Speaker Series, March 1, 2019, Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, Norman, OK. Deverell also argues that it was westward expansion’s contribution to the slave/free state balance fight in the Senate that catalyzed the secession crisis and the war. Westward expansion after the war ended was intimately connected to creating public Civil War memory.

³² It is not inconsequential that in Christian theology, redemption emerges from violent substitutionary atonement. The Plains Wars as part of the redemptive act of westward expansion would not necessarily seem contradictory within that religious context, especially built upon earlier notions about manifest destiny that relied on metaphorical comparison between English colonization and Old Testament Promised Land narratives.

³³ Philip Deloria *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 7.

story firmly planted in devotion to a Protestant understanding of Christian Scripture and evoking that religious context as moral justification for colonization, independence, and expansion. As such they struggled to reconcile the genocidal violence they committed against Native people with the command to love thy neighbor.³⁴ After the Civil War, Horace Greeley's cry to "turn their faces Westward and colonize the public lands" beckoned, ready made with a 'vanishing' race of people to either conquer or 'civilize.'³⁵ But it was not terra nullis anymore than the Eastern seaboard had been two centuries earlier, and Native people of the West, refusing to vanish, stood in the way of both military expansion and this new historical narrative.³⁶

With violent wars for the U.S. West a distant memory by the twentieth century, much less the twenty-first, the assumed link between indigeneity and violence had to be continually reasserted in order to persist as it has. Popular entertainment often cast Native people as existential threats to white characters and American progress, but U.S. history narratives about Native people in schools ensured that those depictions were confirmed every school year by the authority of the teacher and the textbook. As education historian Francis FitzGerald noted in her study of twentieth century American history textbooks, the descriptions of the crimes committed against Native people almost never mentioned the perpetrators of the crimes. Instead, they followed what she called the "natural disaster theory" of Indian history in which Indian people rebelled against the inevitable advance of American progress, murdering settlers along the way,

³⁴ Jill Lepore explores the long history of this philosophical struggle with the legacy of King Philip's War in *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1998).

³⁵ "The Homestead Law," *New York Tribune* July 13, 1865, 4.

³⁶ Steven Conn explores the evolving identity of Native people and their relation to the imagined wilderness of North America. He notes that by the late nineteenth century, prominent historians who founded the romantic tradition of American historical writing like Hubert Howe Bancroft, Francis Parkman, William Prescott, and John Lothrop Motley, abandoned even the earlier "noble savage" trope that described Native people as capable of assimilation in favor of a few that depicted Native people as mere extensions of the landscape, obstacles to American progress. Steven Conn. *History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 200-10.

but were always swept away as if earthquakes or floods, not the U.S. military, committed the violence against them.³⁷ As a result, U.S. history narratives marginalized Native history to the point of erasure, as if Native history was not central to the development of the U.S. state and society. While that marginalization permeates much of professional historical writing, in recent decades scholars from various alcoves of U.S. history have pushed against relegating Native history to the perimeter of the narrative. In U.S. history textbooks, however, very little has changed since the late nineteenth century.

Textbooks, the U.S. West, and Memory

In the earliest days of education in the United States, history textbooks more often served to instill republican virtue and moral instruction than to relate historical fact. As public education expanded at the end of the nineteenth century and historians sought influence in the development of history instruction in schools, their character changed to meet the perceived needs of the students. The professionalization of history and the Progressive education movement led to experimental textbooks like Harold Rugg's *American Problems* series, which asked students to grapple with contradictory evidence to teach historical thinking rather than simply memorize a series of events. Later, major events like World War I, World War II, and the Cold War imposed ideological constraints on US history textbooks, requiring the promotion of pro-American narratives to foster patriotism and harmony among diverse communities in U.S. This odd trajectory means that U.S. history textbooks are time capsules of Americanization, agenda-driven documents designed for mass consumption with the purpose of shaping beliefs and actions about political, social, and personal identity. At the same time, however, these ideologies continue to

³⁷ Frances FitzGerald, *America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 158.

be built around old narratives. For instance, the structure of late-twentieth-century textbook presentations of the Plains Wars scarcely differs from century-old histories of the conflicts.

Why, after a century of progress in both pedagogy and Native American history, does our secondary U.S. history curriculum continue to reinforce demeaning stereotypes about Native people and erase Native history? Despite attempts to adjust course content in order to better reflect the contributions and accomplishments of Native people within U.S. history, educators have failed to correct the core error because we have never properly diagnosed the problem. In fact, attempts to emphasize the contributions of Native people to U.S. history and soften inappropriate terminology regarding Native people have only served to embed the inaccurate narrative more deeply in the curriculum and maintain its constructed settler innocence.

Despite a surge of interest in incorporating minority perspectives into the curriculum in the latter half of the twentieth century, the old narrative structures remain intact. Scholars eagerly reviewed new textbooks in the 1970s and 1980s expecting to find a significant shift in portrayal of Native people and their history in the wake of leaps forward in historiography of the American West. Instead, textbooks stubbornly persisted the triumphalist national myths with very little change regarding Native people. In *Whose America?* Jonathan Zimmerman's study of the culture wars in social studies education, Zimmerman argues that "the new information about minorities was not allowed to alter the old story about peace, justice, and freedom. The price that white America extracted for diversity in the textbooks was triumphalism in their tone."³⁸ In 1984 Frederick Hoxie published a study of American history textbooks that reports the same trend. "As victims or obstacles, Indians have no textbook existence apart from their resistance. They have no families, they do not begin cattle ranching, they do not develop new religious systems,

³⁸ Jonathan Zimmerman, *Whose America? Culture Wars in the Public Schools* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 118.

they do not become artists. The fullness of tribal culture is lost in dramatic portraits of warriors on horseback and bodies in the snow.”³⁹ As Patricia Limerick writes in *Something in the Soil*, “With very few exceptions, the textbook treatment of the West follows a deeply worn set of ruts.”⁴⁰

By presenting a narrative that casts Native history as at most a minor thread within the history of state formation, U.S. history textbooks present a false history of both, leaving generations of American schoolchildren to grow into adulthood without a framework grounded in historical reality for thinking about the country’s history with the continent’s host peoples. In doing so they support the ongoing project of settler colonialism, instilling public memory of constructed settler innocence in students’ first introduction to the events of U.S. history. That construction relies on factual misrepresentation of the past. Even if the goal of U.S. history education is simply to understand the history of the United States as a political entity, Native history is central to the process of state formation. The history of the United States cannot be understood without understanding the negotiation of U.S.-Native nation power relationships that shifted between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries.

Textbooks invert this narrative. In his essay “Indian Warfare in the West, 1861-1890,” Jeffrey Ostler writes that the vast majority of Native people avoided militant resistance to American encroachment, opting instead for creative and sustained negotiation of power with the increasingly oppressive federal government. Textbooks, however, tell a different story. Their emphasis on inaccurate accounts of white-Indian violence “...carries potential problems. One is that Indians will be portrayed primarily as victims; another is that Indian people will not be seen

³⁹ Hoxie, 23.

⁴⁰ Limerick, *Something in the Soil*, 95.

or heard.”⁴¹ Most damningly for the problem of public memory and the ethical legacy of white-Native violence, historian Ruth Miller Elson argues the tendency of textbooks to interest students in history by reporting on ‘exciting’ episodes of war warps the perceptions of new learners.

“Although war is condemned in the abstract, it is presented fully and gloriously in the concrete,” she writes, arguing that “from schoolbook depictions one would draw the conclusion that war is a natural and normal relationship between nations; it is dreadful but inevitable. And its horror is full of interest.”⁴² Since the nineteenth century, teachers’ need to captivate student attention and textbook publishers’ desire to capture the classroom market has led to sensationalized textbook descriptions of Native violence casting Native people as either brutal perpetrators or brutalized victims. In reducing these incidents to the physical enactment of violence, they perpetuate both the doctrine of inevitability and justified retaliation. They set a template of U.S. history education that fails to ask students to wrestle with moral questions about the conflicts, offering instead the false catharsis of redemptive violence.

The excitement of descriptive warfare is but one reason for these textbook deficiencies. Partisan ideology plays a role, and across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries political pressure has shifted the focus of elementary and secondary U.S. history education significantly. The tenacious appeal of the myth of the American West and American triumphalist exceptionalism is another piece of the puzzle. Practical considerations factor into the inadequacy of history curriculum to address Native history as well. Even the reliance of current textbooks on previous editions for their basic narrative structure is at work in this dynamic, and the fact that

⁴¹ Susan Sleeper-Smith, Juliana Barr, Jean M. O’Brien, Nancy Shoemaker, and Scott Manning Stevens, eds, *Why You Can’t Teach United States History without American Indians* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 160.

⁴² Ruth Miller Elson. *Guardians of Tradition: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 334.

Native history exists as a minor subplot rather than a main storyline in U.S. history textbooks itself perpetuates the deficient and even absent analysis of Native history in U.S. history curricula. Ultimately, it is the promotion of white supremacist American exceptionalism that shapes the partisan ideologies, nostalgic impulses, and narrative expectations that drive the classroom market demand which determines U.S. history textbook content and erases Native history from their pages.

The textbook narratives of the Plains Wars, shaped by market demand and developed to instill patriotism and beliefs in American exceptionalism since the late nineteenth century, became the basis for state-adopted curriculum content standards. After the move toward standardized testing, and state and federal legislative action to link school funding to test scores, those content standards in turn defined textbook content. After No Child Left Behind, it would take legislative action to amend textbook narratives, because it would require amending state content standards. Even in states as connected with Native history, like Oklahoma, state content standards parrot the late nineteenth century narrative formulation. For high school U.S. history classes, for instance, only Content Standard 1 requires that teachers address the Plains Wars, and insists that students study them through the lens of “the transformation of the United States through its civil rights struggles, immigrant experiences, settlement of the American West, and industrialization of American society...”⁴³ The narrative, according to the standards, must be taught as the myth of the American West. Students must be able to explain “the rationale behind federal policies toward Native Americans,” and only examine “the impact of the *Dawes Act* on tribal sovereignty and land ownership.” To incorporate the Native voice in these narratives, students “compare the contrasting view points of Native American leadership’s resistance to

⁴³ Social Studies. Oklahoma Academic Standards. (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2014), 60.

United States Indian policies”⁴⁴ in a handful of proscribed documents. The inevitability and justification of settler colonialism is lifted from older textbooks, embedded in state standards, and re-exerted on textbooks for the foreseeable future.

The general approach of state content standards like Oklahoma’s tends to be to provide teachers with a list of events, names, and facts to cover over the course of the year. With standards’ commitment to framing U.S. history around settler colonial narratives, they relegate all divergent narratives to the periphery. That sets up a zero sum game for including the histories of various minority groups which pits teaching African-American history against Native American history within the restrictions of state content standards. The solution, both to the inverted framing of U.S. history and to this zero sum game that would pit advocates of what are considered minority histories against each other for space in the list, is not to add more items to the list of things that must be taught. It is, instead, to reject the notion of the list at all. Chronology is a central component of historical thinking, as are cause and effect. But listing events in order is not necessarily teaching chronology or causal relationships. State content standards could be reoriented to better reflect historical thinking by focusing instead on guiding students through inquiries over context and contingency, using the events of history to ask questions about the narrative framing itself. The notion that students need a national narrative to understand the vastly complex national identity of the U.S. is misguided. As long as courses are built upon political history, that narrative will always result in a white nationalist narrative, because that is the political history of the United States. It is a narrative that will always seek to erase Native history, because that is its foundational purpose. And as long as historians and

⁴⁴ Ibid.

history educators maintain professional barriers between their respective work, it is the only narrative that will be taught in U.S. schools.

If western historians wish to understand the ways that public memory has been shaped concerning Native history, especially the legacy of atrocities committed against Native people, we must take history education more seriously. John Faragher argues “we are in need of a new national narrative that reimagines America in all its fullness, a new national myth that fully incorporates Indian people not as victims but as actors, not as opponents of progress but as American struggling for freedom, equality, and justice.”⁴⁵ In 2016, as president he issued a call to the members of the Western History Association to re-engage in elementary and secondary history education: to author textbooks, partner with teachers, and continue to work diligently to rewrite the history of the American past in light of continuing, evidence-based scholarship. But that alone will not be enough. We must seek to understand the history of our public memory as diligently as we seek to understand the past itself, and that cannot be done without wrestling with the history of our history education. As Boyd Cothran argues, “We will never escape the material underpinnings of historical knowledge production. But by investigating the marketplaces of remembering that give shape and meaning to American cultural memory of the past, we can deconstruct the narratives with which Americans have made and remade identity as fundamentally innocent.”⁴⁶ The largest of those marketplaces with the greatest member of participants is the history classroom.

Textbooks do not constitute the sum total of U.S. history curriculum, but they are its bedrock. Textbooks serve as most students’ first detailed introduction to the narratives of U.S.

⁴⁵ John Mack Faragher, ““And the Lonely Voice of Youth Cries: ‘What is Truth?’”: Western History and the National Narrative” *Western History Quarterly* (2016): 18.

⁴⁶ Boyd Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War: Redemptive Violence and the Making of American Innocence* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 197.

history and, for many students, they are the only U.S. history books they will read in their lives. I have chosen to examine secondary textbooks because they are used during the crucial years in which students develop conceptual frameworks for thinking historically. Those are also the years in which the students are first introduced to the history of the Plains Wars, events which, due to the mythos of the American frontier, have become a central component in the development of American identity. When the Plains Wars entered textbook narratives in the late nineteenth century, textbooks recast the entire American experience as a frontier narrative. That narrative remains embedded in U.S. history textbooks today, and remembrances of the Plains Wars have served in American public memory as iconic promoters of American exceptionalism.

Any teacher at any level, from elementary to higher education, despairs of convincing students to read the textbook from time to time. But textbooks remain the primary shapers of historical narratives in classrooms, especially at the secondary level. Secondary education credential programs primarily focus on teaching methodology, and while all incorporate elements that test candidates' subject matter knowledge, the focus of these programs is primarily to equip candidates for the pragmatic demands of the secondary classroom in school systems focused on reading and writing skills.⁴⁷ The result is that the vast majority of secondary history teachers enter the classroom with minimal historical training and are often tasked with teaching courses in fields they never studied themselves. Because they reinforce the work of credential programs, most professional development trainings for classroom teachers focus primarily on methodology, not content. Although teachers are painfully aware of the inadequacies of their state-adopted textbooks as sources of content, they are often forced to rely on textbook narratives

⁴⁷ The increased emphasis on standardized test results for reading, writing, and math skills exacerbated by legislative programs like No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top which tied federal education funding to test results has only further marginalized the evaluation of historical content in the classroom.

for lesson planning. Whether students do the assigned reading or not, the narratives they learn in the classroom are the narratives from their textbooks.

In September 2017 in Oklahoma, Fort Bend High School's homecoming parade featured a float in which students dressed as their rival team's mascot: Indians. In fringed t-shirts with paint on their faces, they war whooped from behind the bars of a makeshift jail emblazoned with "Cage the Indians." Less than a year after Native people protesting the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock were stripped and thrown into dog cages, these non-Native students felt no discomfort recreating the scene as a comedy in the heart of Cherokee country.⁴⁸ The problem is not that they should have known better; rather, the problem is that they are acting in accordance with what they have been taught. The inverted framing of the narrative of U.S. history presented in textbooks constitutes a form of representational violence that promotes white nationalist settler colonialism. As Nez Perce historian Allen P. Slickpoo wrote, "It was not possible to live as a Native American for sixteen hours a day and spend the other seven or eight hours with Dick and Jane who lived in a home designed for 'middle-class' people, and not become confused and unhappy."⁴⁹ U.S. history classrooms will continue to seek to erase Native history and Native people until our classrooms are no longer home only to history that belongs to Dick and Jane.

Dissertation Structure

In order to trace the evolution of Plains Wars narratives in U.S. history textbooks, I have surveyed textbooks published by prominent publishing houses between 1870 and 1980. Three

⁴⁸ Mike Elswick, "Parade float reaps negative feedback" *Muskogee Phoenix* September 22, 2017. Accessed September 23, 2017.

⁴⁹ Allen P. Slickpoo. *Noon nee me poo: Culture and History of the Nez Perces* (Lapwai, ID: Nez Perce Tribe, 1973), 237.

conflicts appear consistently throughout these texts: the 1873 Modoc War, the 1876 Battle of the Greasy Grass, or Little Bighorn, and the 1877 Nez Perce War. While other conflicts like the Apache Wars of the 1880s and the massacres at Sand Creek and Wounded Knee make several appearances in textbook narratives, those appearances are inconsistent and relatively infrequent. Textbook authors build the narratives of the late nineteenth century wars on the Great Plains around these three major conflicts. In order to understand why those conflicts became the cornerstones of textbook histories of the U.S. West, and what role they play in shaping those histories, I examine the historiographies of those conflicts from their earliest reports through their reinterpretations into the twenty-first century. Compiled from frontier newspaper accounts, military reports, and popular memoirs, the narratives of these events began to take shape before the earliest western historians turned their attention to them; perpetuated by veterans seeking pensions and their place in the creation story of modern American progress, these narratives found their sentimental home in popular memory and schoolbooks. Most important, the historians who crafted these narratives in historical writing and in textbooks were in correspondence with veterans of the conflicts and the reporters who covered them. Tracing that correspondence illuminates the ways the narratives developed, as well as how codified textbook narratives of the conflicts shaped public memory that later historians had to confront.

Chapter five examines the history of textbook publication and the development of U.S. history curriculum in the context of the professionalization of history and the rise of the social studies in schools. Using the American Book Company Records as a window into the editorial decision-making that shaped U.S. history textbook narratives, this chapter explores the ways in which the narratives of the Plains Wars entered textbooks in the late nineteenth century and why they remained relatively unchanged into the mid-twentieth century. Chapter six follows the

efforts of Native scholars and their advocates to subvert narratives about Native people in U.S. history curriculum in secondary schools and parallel and at times contradictory efforts by the National Council for the Social Studies to address anti-Native prejudice in schools.

A note on naming: Part of erasing the rich, diverse, dynamic history of Native people in U.S. history is the tendency of historians and textbook authors to refer to Native peoples by Euro-American names. To avoid perpetuating that erasure, whenever I could verify them I use the names Native historical figures and groups used to identify themselves rather than their more recognized Anglicized versions. When those figures took on a public persona like “Sitting Bull” to engage with the non-Native public, I use the popular names to describe those actions.

Chapter Two

From Custer's Last Stand to Greasy Grass

Indian War Veterans and the Persistent Legend of the Battle on the Little Bighorn

In February of 1935, western author Earl Alonzo Brininstool received a letter at his home in Hollywood, California. It came from Pine Ridge Agency, penned by an Oglala member of the tribal council named Charles Little Hawk. Brininstool was a prolific author of Custer-centered books about the Plains Wars, as well as a hoarder of related manuscripts and memorabilia, and he had been in correspondence with Little Hawk to identify Native participants in the Battle of the Greasy Grass ever since the two met on the site at a battle commemoration. In the letter, Little Hawk notes that Brininstool's work has helped correct many errors in the historical record about the injustice done to Native people. However, he laments, "but not until millions of school children have been taught, even our own children in our own schools have been taught and learned to believe what is wrong concerning the history of the American Indian tribes."¹ Despite what would become a herculean effort of hundreds of scholars, survivors, and activists to correct the historical record, Little Hawk knew that public memory about the historical events of the U.S. West was molded in the history classroom.

Classroom narratives remain one of the least-studied sources of public memory among U.S. intellectual historians, despite their disproportionate influence on the formation of U.S. identity and public memory about the events of the country's past. With the exception of scholarship that explores changing expressions of Civil War memory in U.S. history textbooks, scholarship examining the formation and evolution of U.S. history narratives is scarce. Rupert and Jeannette Costo and Joseph Moreau present valuable analyses of Native presence (or rather

¹ Charles Little Hawk to E.A. Brininstool, February 18, 1935. Earl A. Brininstool Papers, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Box 3G469, Folder 7.

absence) in U.S. history textbooks, but their surveys focus on the portrayals themselves rather than how they took the shape they did. Like any historical narrative, textbook narratives are built from the universe of experience, research, assumptions, and memory that influenced their authors. Narratives of Native history in U.S. history textbooks have a bizarre historiography all their own, cobbled together as a result of pressures and influences from popular culture, professional history, education reformers, political activists, frontier presses, and veterans' advocacy groups. For the Plains Wars of the late nineteenth century, these narratives were primarily products of Gilded Age journalism on the frontier, valorization campaigns from Indian Wars veterans, their widows, and children, and the near-immediate romanticization of the conflicts in popular culture.

The market-driven, mythos-embodiment, honor-claiming nature of the sources of Plains Wars narratives in the first decades of their appearance in U.S. history textbooks of the late nineteenth century lent a particular character to their descriptions in textbook accounts. Although the Plains Wars' presentations in textbooks tend to briefly highlight each conflict's particular details, they conform to a clear narrative pattern. In general, textbooks present each conflict as a bump along the road to realizing manifest destiny: settlers arrive, Native people commit atrocities against them, usually in violation of an agreement with the U.S. government, the army wages war to force the Native people to submit to the new interpretation of treaty law, and Native people vanish, either through cultural assimilation or destruction. In terms of context, framing, and the particular details of each conflict, these textbook narratives are almost always incorrect. Yet teachers rely on these narratives to teach the events of the late nineteenth century, and this classroom introduction serves as the foundation for most U.S. students' understanding of the history of the U.S. West.

Custer in the Newspapers

Of all the wars between Native nations and the U.S. government in the nineteenth century U.S. West, one short battle seems to dominate American public memory. On June 25, 1876, Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer famously led five companies of the Seventh Cavalry to their destruction along the Greasy Grass, a river they knew as the Little Big Horn. Not only did the surprising defeat fill the pages of newspaper dailies and weeklies for months, but the incident inspired a frenzy of publishing about Custer and the ill-fated regiments of the Seventh Cavalry, both fiction and non-fiction. In fact, in 2012 the University of Oklahoma's Arthur H. Clark Company published a two-volume annotated bibliography of works concerning Custer, the Seventh Cavalry, and the battle totaling 899 pages, and it was the fourth such bibliography in publication.² Historian Robert Utley observes in his Foreword that publication of Custer-related materials continues, rendering the bibliography "incomplete the moment it is published."³ As Little Big Horn enthusiast Frank L. Anders wrote to his fellow researcher R.G. Cartwright in 1954, "I do not think that the story of the Custer fight has been told, as yet. Whether it can be is the question."⁴

If Custer's story has not yet been told, it is certainly not for lack of effort. With newspaper correspondents embedded with U.S. Army units throughout the late nineteenth century, newspaper accounts were often the first recorded history of the battles of the Plains Wars, historical documents that historians relied upon to shape their narratives of the events.⁵ The Battle of the Greasy Grass is unique in the history of the Plains Wars because it is one of the

² Michael O'Keefe, ed. *Custer, the Seventh Cavalry, and the Little Big Horn: A Bibliography*. (Norman, OK: Arthur H. Clark Company, 2012).

³ Ibid, ix.

⁴ Anders to Cartwright, June 13, 1954, John M. Carroll, ed. *The Frank L. Anders and R.G. Cartwright Correspondence: Volume III*. (Bryan, TX: John M. Carroll, 1982), 51.

⁵ For a full discussion of the influence of newspaper reporting on the shape of historical narrative, see chapter four of this dissertation and my discussion of newspaper coverage of the Modoc War, 1872-1873.

few that newspaper correspondents did not witness. No one from Custer's five companies survived the battle, including the only correspondent who was embedded with General Terry's entire expedition against the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe people in the summer of 1876, the *Bismarck Tribune*'s Mark Kellogg.⁶ Reporting for the *Tribune* as well as the *New York Herald*, *Chicago Times*, and *Chicago Tribune*, Kellogg served as the main source of information for newspapers that, according to historian Oliver Knight, "seem to have concluded... that the Terry-Custer expedition was not likely to produce much news."⁷ Though the U.S. military was launching a large-scale campaign against northern Plains peoples in the wake of continued clashes with white miners and settlers, sending Terry into Montana and Brigadier General George Crook toward newly-minted Yellowstone National Park, newspapers did not devote the kind of fevered coverage build-up to the conflict that they would employ in 1890 before the Wounded Knee Massacre. In May, *Harper's Weekly* ran a short piece about the question of transferring Indian Affairs from the War Department.⁸ Newspapers, both dailies and weeklies, seemed to prepare themselves to cover a major incident without necessarily expecting one in the near future.

As Terry's column left Fort Abraham Lincoln on May 17, 1876, Kellogg sent four dispatches back to the *Bismarck Tribune* by courier, as well as keeping a diary. Knight's evaluation of their quality was not glowing, saying the writing was "of trained-seal quality," the

⁶ Curly, a Crow scout who served with the Seventh Cavalry, gave an account of the battle later. Initially reports claim that he and the other scouts were sent away before the fighting began and he witnessed the battle from afar. Later stories claimed he was engaged in the battle and managed to escape by disguising himself as a Lakota warrior. Most historians argue that the later stories were romanticized embellishments.

⁷ Oliver Knight, *Following the Indian Wars: The Story of the Newspaper Correspondents Among the Indian Campaigners*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 198. Some newspapers, Knight notes, paid cavalry officers to send in stories instead of committing newspaper resources to newsgathering. Most apparently thought Brigadier General George Crook was more likely to see action as the U.S. began its campaign against the "Sioux" and sent celebrated correspondents like John F. Finerty and Charles Diehl to cover his movements instead.

⁸ "The Indian Question." *Harper's Weekly*, May 13, 1876.

work of a “sycophant,” that was “not presenting a fully accurate picture.”⁹ Kellogg’s last dispatch to the *New York Herald*, eerily published two days after he was killed when he rode into battle alongside those officers, hints that he enjoyed the popularity he gained through his valorizing accounts of the men he rode with, saying “The officers of the expedition have written generally to their friends to watch for the *Herald*, as they now I am to record their deeds. I will endeavor to give you interesting letters as we go along.”¹⁰ The *Herald* published a few pieces that may have been authored by Custer himself, and the *Galaxy* certainly did, boosting the glowing reputation of the “boy general.” When the first wire came in on July 5 that Custer and his entire command of five companies had been annihilated, it is no wonder that even top brass like Sherman and Sheridan thought it an unreliable scout’s exaggeration at best, a morbid prank at worst.¹¹

Sherman and Sheridan, commanding generals of the U.S. Army and the Department of the Missouri respectively, were both in Philadelphia attending the Centennial Exposition when news first broke over the Associated Press wire of Custer’s defeat in Montana. Neither man had received a dispatch of the news, in part because scout Muggins Taylor had run into an unidentified ‘war party’ as he raced to Fort Ellis on horseback and had to trace his steps back to the steamboat *Far West* on the Big Horn for safety. He disembarked at Yellowstone and continued his journey, but that delay, along with confusion in the Fort Ellis telegraph office that left the dispatch unsent for two more days, allowed the newspaper story to race ahead of the official military report.¹² After coming to Colonel Marcus Reno’s relief and discovering the battlefield on June 27, Terry sent two dispatches, one west to Fort Ellis, the other east to

⁹ Knight, 201-4.

¹⁰ “After Sitting Bull,” *New York Herald*, June 27, 1876.

¹² Knight, 13.

Bismarck. But Taylor brought news through Bozeman on July 3, it reached Helena in time to appear in the late edition of the *Helena Herald* on the evening of July 4 and was wired to the Associated Press from Salt Lake City the next morning. It wasn't until well-known Bismarck telegraph operator J.M. Carnahan came on the wire demanding a line through Fargo to St. Paul on July 6 declaring "All the Custers are killed" that the story shifted from salacious rumor to confirmed fact. That same day, Terry's initial dispatch reached Sherman in Philadelphia.¹³

The news of the battle was shocked the public. The *New York Times* laid blame for the conflict entirely on the Lakota, editorializing that "Sitting Bull's band of Sioux left their reservation with hostile intent. They refused negotiations for peace. They defied the power and authority of the United States. They invited war."¹⁴ The *Bismarck Tribune* editor C.A.

Lounsberry who sent Kellogg in his place due to a family illness was far less reserved. "Let that christian [sic] philanthropy which weeps over the death of a lazy, lousy, lying and stealing red skin, whose hands are still reeking with the blood of defenceless [sic] women and children, slain on the frontier, and who are ever ready to apologize for these murderers, take a back seat," he frothed. The solution, he claimed, was a massive show of force from the U.S. military. "Invite the soldier to the front and sustain him while he causes the Indians to realize the power," he writes, to force Native people who survived the onslaught to "respect the white man." Like others, Lounsberry blamed the U.S. government for instituting too-lenient political agreements with tribal nations. "Wipe out all treaties, rub out all agencies and reservations, and treat the

¹³ Knight, 195, 212-8. The Fort Ellis telegraph office claimed that its lines were down, causing the delay, but historians cannot confirm that fact. Carnahan and his assistant famously stayed at the wire nonstop for 48 hours, taking only a three-hour break over that time in order to get the dispatches out as quickly as possible. Kellogg's posthumous dispatches were among those as the *New York Herald* and *Bismarck Tribune* fought to claim him as their exclusive, now hero correspondent. Knight says that Kellogg's notebooks went first to his editor, C.A. Lounsberry, and then to his friend J.P. Dunn, a druggist in Bismarck. I have not been able to determine if he is any relation to historian J.P. Dunn, Jr.

¹⁴ "An Indian Victory," *New York Times*, July 7, 1876.

Indians as they are, criminals and paupers,” Lounsberry insists. Leaving no room in his proposal for distinguishing between allies and enemies among tribal nations, he declares, “Let there be no captures, but send all caught with arms in their hands, whether professedly friendly or known to be hostile, to the happy hunting grounds of their fathers by a short cut.”¹⁵ In the emotional frenzy of the moment, especially as publicly expressed by his fellow journalists, dying on the field made Kellogg a hero. The *New York Evening Post* wrote “If it is heroic to face danger and meet death calmly in the discharge of duty, then Mark Kellogg... who died with Custer, was a hero.”¹⁶ In every story, newspapers reported the attack on the Seventh Cavalry not as a military defeat, but a massacre.

On the heels of the first shocking reports that made their way east came another, more complicated report that was never meant to fall under the public eye. Understandably distraught at the substantial loss of five companies of their fellows, Terry’s officers turned their anger on Custer. Believing that Terry had clearly ordered Custer not to engage until the rest of the companies joined him, the officers insisted that fault for the disaster rested squarely on the “boy general” and his thirst for fame. When they discovered in conversation with Terry that he had not reported any disobedience to Sherman and Sheridan, they urged him to send a second dispatch including that information. Terry did the next day, and it found Sherman and Sheridan in Philadelphia at the Centennial Exposition. Thinking he was handing this confidential dispatch to a government aid, Sherman accidentally passed it to a reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* instead. The paper published the story on July 7, as did the *New York Herald*, which also had a correspondent covering the officers’ gathering that night, and the *Chicago Tribune*.¹⁷ Terry’s

¹⁵ “Massacred,” *Bismarck Tribune*, July 12, 1876.

¹⁶ “Mark Kellogg,” *New York Evening Post*, July 11, 1876.

¹⁷ Knight, 218.

second dispatch presented newspapers with the only story better for business than the shocking defeat of gallant cavalry officers at the hands of the supposedly inferior enemy: a shocking defeat that was the result of flagrant disobedience of orders in the name of hubris.

Newspapers ran articles about the battle, most with a focus on the controversy over Custer's adherence to Terry's orders, for most of the summer of 1876. In those first months, the overwhelming majority of articles in both dailies and weeklies focused on Custer's command and the details of the military action. The *Chicago Tribune* repackaged the second Terry dispatch story on July 19, while the *New York Herald* released the posthumous dispatches from its now-celebrity correspondent Mark Kellogg, as well as at least one article likely penned by Custer himself.¹⁸ Brigadier General James Brisbin had recovered Kellogg's notebook either from the battlefield or the *Far West* and made notes to fill its gaps, which Lounsberry used to produce articles for the *Bismarck Tribune*.¹⁹ On July 22, *Harper's Weekly* ran its first report of the battle. Omitting any mention of the encroachment of white miners seeking Black Hills gold on the events that unfolded that summer, the coverage simple begins with "Early last spring a campaign was planned against the Indians located in this region to compel them to remove to the reservation set apart for them by the government, which they had refused to do."²⁰ The article ascribes the Native victory to the leadership of Sitting Bull, "a chief of great natural sagacity and intelligence sharpened by fifteen years of fighting, [who] knows how to avail himself of every advantage offered by the terrain." Having had a few more weeks than the dailies to investigate, the *Harper's* correspondent takes a middle path on the controversy over Terry's orders, claiming

¹⁸ "A Voice From the Tomb," *New York Herald*, July 11, 1876.

¹⁹ Knight, 216. There is some debate about the location and identification of Kellogg's body, as well as whether he had his notebook with him at the time of his death or had left it on the *Far West* before riding toward the Greasy Grass with Custer's contingent.

²⁰ This framing persists not only across most newspaper reporting of wars with Native nations but appears nearly word-for-word in U.S. history textbook accounts of those wars as well.

that “[Custer] left Terry to make a detour around by the Little Horn... He had pushed forward with greater rapidity than his orders directed, and arrived at the point where a junction of the forces was intended, a day or two in advance of the infantry. without waiting for the rest of the troops to come up, General Custer decided upon an immediate attack.”²¹ The article did not, however, take anything like a middle path in describing the battle as a massacre, nor did it shrink from demonizing the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho warriors who accomplished the victory. For *Harper's* the battlefield was a “fearful slaughter-pen,” the Native combatants “poured a murderous fire upon them from all sides,” causing a “dreadful slaughter,” leaving the rest of the Seventh Cavalry to discover “the bodies of the dead were terribly mutilated.” While other newspaper accounts inflated Custer's Civil War record and fawned over his image as a dashing Indian fighter, *Harper's* presented a somewhat bland image of the defeated officer. Unlike most other reports, *Harper's* clarifies both that Custer's status as brevet general was for “his eminent services” during the Civil War, and that “at the time of his death he was acting simply as commander of his regiment, the Seventh Cavalry.”²² According to *Harper's Weekly*, the military defeat that shocked the nation was the result of a tragic, perhaps foolhardy mistake, and evidence of both Native cunning and brutality.

Unlike local newspapers like the *Bismarck Tribune* and *Bozeman Times*, or even eastern dailies like the *New York Herald*, *Harper's Weekly* featured sparse coverage of both the Battle of the Greasy Grass and the larger conflict with the Native nations of the northern plains that became known as the Sioux War. An October article summarized the U.S. army's ongoing operations against the Lakota and their allies, but the focal point of the article was not the fighting itself, but rather an indictment of U.S. military unpreparedness for warfare against

²¹ “The Montana Massacre,” *Harper's Weekly*, July 22, 1876.

²² *Ibid.*

Native nations.²³ The following year *Harper's* covered Custer's funeral at West Point Cemetery in melodramatic description but made little mention of the battle in the meantime. One curious editorial in the September 16, 1876 edition makes passing reference to the battle in a curious argument about the cause and perpetuation of conflict with Native nations. Starting with the history of colonial New England, the author subverts the standard narrative of Native-settler relations. "They [Native people] were owners of the soil, and the white settlers were invaders and intruders," the article claims, "and the aborigines had as much right to defend their domains as the Scotch under Wallace and Bruce had to repel the English when they crossed the border."²⁴ Native people treated white settlers fairly, the article asserts, but settlers betrayed their trust and provoked war instead.

This, the article argues, is the cause of centuries of war between Euro-Americans and Native people. "Had the settlers recognized the rights of the Indians, treated them fairly, kept faith with them, and been as zealous to Christianize and civilize them as they were to wrest from them their hunting grounds, there would have been no desolating Indian wars," the author claims. The bloody history of war with Native nations in colonial New England would not have occurred, the article goes on, "nor should we, at this day, have been compelled to lament the death of the gallant Custer and his brave comrades, or to contemplate the extermination of the Western tribes as the only means of protecting the settlers in the far West, whither the Indians have been driven by the steady progress of the white races."²⁵ Printed beneath a dramatic

²³ "Our Indian War," *Harper's Weekly*, October 28, 1876. The article concludes "The result of this summer's operations against the Sioux shows that while it is practicable to surprise and destroy Indian villages, it is almost impossible to force a battle with the Indians." Citing superior Native horses and weaponry, the author calls for stricter regulation of the sale of arms to Native people in the West. Whether the comment about the difference between attacking Native villages and meeting Native warriors in open combat is meant to slight Custer's reputations at Washita and Greasy Grass or is simply another example of Euro-American failure to examine the moral inconsistency with attacking civilians is unclear from the article's context.

²⁴ "Attacked by the Indians," *Harper's Weekly*, September 16, 1876.

²⁵ Ibid.

engraving of settlers defending their wagon train from charging Native warriors, the article conjures the pathos evoked by familiar frontier stories of Indian attacks on settler women and children, but instead of wielding that pathos to demonize Native people, advocate military action against them, or laud the triumph of American progress into the “untamed” West, it turns that pathos against the myth of white innocence so often invoked in westward expansion.

The article in no way represents a wholly sympathetic view of Native people, problematically relying on old stereotypes of Native backwardness and Euro-American civilization to illustrate the depth of depravity of settler treachery by those who by all rights should have known better. However, the article represents a trend in publications like *Harper's Weekly* to push against the simplistic, triumphalist narratives of manifest destiny that were so ubiquitous in the dailies. Instead of Lounsberry's rabid call for genocide to avenge Custer's troops, *Harper's* published this article, concluding that “it is discreditable to Christianity and civilization that the settlement and development of the regions occupied by the tribes should be accomplished only by the extermination of these races.”²⁶ While a more accurate approach would have been to question the assumption that it was morally permissible to settle tribal land by any means, *Harper's* publication of an article that both questioned the scorched earth policy of westward expansion and laid blame for centuries of armed conflict with Native people on Euro-American misconduct suggests that a significant portion of its readership was at least sympathetic to such claims.²⁷

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ In *Illustrated Indians*, John Coward argues that illustrated newspapers like *Harper's Weekly* and *Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* often presented pro-reformist views on Indian affairs because their largely East Coast readership were both far from the danger of violence on the frontier and influenced by the work of activist “friends of the Indians” groups in eastern cities. These efforts, Coward writes, “helped open a space for more detailed and informed reports of Indian-white violence, stories accompanied by pictures that still offered the thrill of frontier danger.” John M. Coward. *Illustrated Indians: The Image of Native Americans in the Pictorial Press*. (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2016), 130.

That pro-reform sympathy, expressed in articles like *Harper's Weekly's* "Attacked by Indians" as well as a variety of other expressions in popular culture and social and political activism, offered Native leaders like Tathanka Iyotake the liminal space to craft their own version of their celebrity and use it to achieve political and economic objectives.²⁸ Scholars have explored the ways in which Tathanka Iyotake in particular wielded the persona of Sitting Bull in print and on Buffalo Bill's stage, most notably Frederick Hoxie's *The Patriot Chiefs* and Linda Scarangella McNenly's *Native Performers in Wild West Shows*. But as John Coward notes in *The Newspaper Indian*, that liminal space was limited by both the media in which Tathanka Iyotake performed as Sitting Bull and reader and audience expectations which translated his words and actions into a version of Sitting Bull that fell into categories of Nateness they understood. Tailored for a Euro-American audience, Coward writes, "the shifts in the language, themes, and meanings attached to Sitting Bull at each of these moments reveal the powerful racial assumptions at work in the press as it attempted to make sense of Indians in the final decades of the nineteenth century."²⁹ Those racial assumptions would continue to shape the narrative of the battle, in the historiography as well as in textbook narratives, regardless of well-sourced evidence that contradicted it.

Regardless of their initial sensationalized reporting, in 1876 the dailies attempted to frame the battle as Custer's fatal error in the context of an ill-planned and poorly-communicated attempt to engage Sitting Bull's forces before they had all the information they needed to do so wisely. But the image of the dashing hero of the plains falling bravely to Indian treachery was too compelling for the public to dismiss. In the midst of burgeoning circulation wars, it is not

²⁸ For a detailed discussion of how Native leaders exploited this liminal space in their roles as leaders of their people and the impact those performances had on the evolution of narratives of the Plains Wars, see my discussion of Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce in chapter three of this dissertation.

²⁹ Coward, *The Newspaper Indian*, 160.

surprising that “romantic, sentimental, and sensational writers were tempted and yielded.”³⁰ Print interest in stories about the Battle of the Greasy Grass long outlived the larger war it launched, as well as many of its participants. Writing to frontier photographer D.F. Barry in 1892, Colonel Frederick Benteen mentions that “a reporter of the principal evening paper” has been pestering him to tell his version of the events. Three years later, Benteen mentions that he wrote a short article for *McClure’s Magazine* “at the request of the editor of the magazine.”³¹ Like many veterans of the post-Civil War wars on the plains on both sides of the conflict, Benteen became a valued source for historians. Over time, the influence of Indian wars veterans shaped the narrative of those wars, valorizing their service, inflating the wars’ centrality to American identity and progress, and hardening their narrative structure against further inquiry in U.S. history textbooks narratives.

The Indian War Veterans Shape the Custer Narrative

The sheer number of Civil War veterans and their need for financial support in their later years dramatically increased the number of military pensions the U.S. government found itself obligated to offer in the late nineteenth century. In the climate of Reconstruction, the fraternal and hereditary organization of the Grand Army of the Republic successfully lobbied a largely sympathetic Congress to provide support for injured veterans as well as widows and orphans.³² Although many if not most Indian wars veterans saw their first action during the Civil War, Congress did not recognize their military service against Native nations as pension-worthy until 1917 after a decades-long, public campaign to secure that recognition fought by multiple

³⁰ Knight, 217.

³¹ Benteen to Barry. May 24, 1892 and August 29, 1895. John M. Carroll, ed. *The D.F. Barry Correspondence at the Custer Battlefield: (the juiciest ones being from Capt. Benteen)*. (Bryan, TX: John M. Carroll, 1980), 33, 39.

³² Although that funding, like all military pension funding, was hotly contested and often fraught with claims of inadequacy or used cynically as a tool for partisan contention (such as Grover Cleveland’s veto in 1887), the GAR had far greater success in securing pensions for its members than many other veterans’ organizations.

regional and national Indian wars veterans' organizations. From the founding of the Order in the Indian Wars in 1896 to the final annual meeting of the United Indian Wars Veterans, U.S.A. in 1968, these veterans associations collected and preserved members' stories, published and promoted sensationalized and laudatory accounts of their members' exploits, lobbied politicians, orchestrated commemorations, and perhaps most influentially, provided an avenue of easy contact between Indian wars veterans and historians of the U.S. West within the context of self-promotion.

Whether as an ultimate goal or simply a means to an end, Indian wars veterans' associations functioned as shapers of public memory from their earliest founding. The first such organization, founded as the Society of Veterans of Indian Wars of the United States, formed in Philadelphia on April 23, 1896. Almost immediately changing its name to the Order of the Indian Wars, the charter members created the organization as a fraternal and hereditary order for members who had been recognized for their valor in order to perpetuate memory of the wars. The order focused on recruiting officers, particularly famous ones of high rank like Nelson Miles and Oliver O. Howard, and most order activity centered on an annual dinner featuring a formal address, high-ranking invited guests from industry and government, and ceremonial elements patterned after vaguely pan-Indian practices. In keeping with the goal to elevate the military service of members and place their combat at the center of nineteenth century U.S. progress, membership certificates were inscribed on vellum and "bore an elaborate engraving of troops attacking an Indian village, as well as an elitist-sounding sentiment, honoring members for 'maintaining the supremacy of the United States.'"³³

³³ Jerome A. Greene. *Indian War Veterans: Memories of Army Life and Campaigns in the West, 1864-1898*. (New York: Savas Beatie, 2012), xix-xx

The OIW maintained its elite structure and activities for most of its existence. It very rarely if ever engaged in public lobbying efforts during the pension fights, choosing instead to invite members of Congress and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to its annual banquet as a means of political engagement. The OIW also played a vital role in preserving Indian war veterans' accounts. At the annual banquet on January 26, 1929, Samuel C. Vestal came before the gathered members and asked for their assistance in creating an archive of documents relating to the wars for the benefit of posterity. The collection, Vestal said, would be used by the Historical Section of the Army War College "that an official history of our Indian Wars may be undertaken at the earliest possible date to commemorate appropriately for our people the hardy achievements when you did so much to bring about."³⁴ Noting that General Nelson Miles had already contributed a good deal of material relating to his service, Vestal urged the members present to do the same before the knowledge could be lost to age and death. "Our earlier Indian Wars have been graphically told by Colonel Roosevelt in the "Winning of the West"; but the Seminole War, the Black Hawk War, and the wars of the fifties and sixties have not yet been told even as fully as the pictures in the "Winning in the West,"" Vestal notes. "The great Indian wars that went on simultaneously with the Civil War and the later wars of the seventies and eighties, when the number of hostile Indians had greatly increased and the slaughter had become more serious, have been recorded only in fragmentary records, some good, some bad, some spurious." In part, the problem was a lack of scholarly attention, but Vestal hints at a greater obstacle to constructing a comprehensive history of the wars, no doubt as a result of his interaction with document hoarders like Brininstool. "It is extremely doubtful whether we can ever have any such history unless we

³⁴ John M. Carroll and George S. Pappas, eds. *The Papers of the Order of Indian Wars*. (Fort Collins, CO: The Old Army Press, 1975), 71.

can supplement what the Government already has with what is in the possession of private individuals,”³⁵ Vestal pointedly adds.

Linking the work to Roosevelt’s *The Winning of the West* offered a powerful argument for the historical importance of the compilation of such an archive, but Vestal had another, stronger argument in mind. “The great cities and prosperous communities of a mighty nation now fill the land where you fought the Indian,” Vestal said. “The Historical Section knows the importance of these wars and wishes to see them occupy their proper place in our history... Grant [your cooperation] to us, and you will do your country service, and yourselves and your children and grandchildren justice.” Members were to accomplish that justice not merely by memorializing the wars, but by centering them in the history of the United States. Vestal concluded, “May your deeds and those of your associates who have passed on be rightly recorded and hold the place in the nation’s thought that they deserve.”³⁶ With the OIW’s help, the Army War College would assert that military engagement against Native nations, from pitched battles to war crimes veiled as legitimate engagements, was necessary for the existence and prosperity of the United States in the late nineteenth century.

Other Indian war veterans’ associations appealed to the same sentiment in their preservationist work and public outreach, but their work went beyond nostalgic banquets and archival collection. These other groups were “driven more by bread-and-butter issues regarding pensions,” and consequently tended to open their memberships to a broader group of veterans. The National Indian War Veterans’ Association, founded in Denver, Colorado in 1909 served as an activist body for a number of regional fraternal organizations that struggled to recruit and retain enough members to present meaningful petitions to government officials. Unlike the OIW,

³⁵ Ibid., 70.

³⁶ Ibid.

the NIWVA specifically sought veterans who had been regulars to boost their numbers. As a result, advocating for expanded pensions became the central focus of the NIWVA's work. Smaller regional organizations became "camps" within the NIWVA, most named after popular officers like Miles, Howard, and, predictably, Custer. As late as 1913, Indian war veterans' service did not qualify for pension status if it occurred after 1860.³⁷ In addition, any pension that did apply could only be claimed by those who formally joined the U.S. Army, leaving many veterans who saw combat in service to the military, including army scouts, off the rolls. In 1916, led by Fifth Cavalry veteran Charles Hauser, the NIWVA launched a national campaign in coordination with regional 'camps' to petition Congress for pensions.

Hauser's campaign combined the OIW valorization of Indian wars veterans' accounts with an equation of their service with the congressionally-recognized service of GAR veterans and veterans of the Spanish-American War. The final Senate Report No. 286 included thirty-three pages of letters, data, and other materials highlighting the courage and sacrifice of Indian war veterans and the importance of the wars to American progress. "It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the service rendered by these Indian fighters," Hauser writes. "They opened the West to civilization and settlement. They battled with a brave, cunning, merciless foe... They fought no Austerlitz, but every State of the trans-Missouri West is some

³⁷ The law recognized military service in antebellum conflicts with Native nations, such as the Black Hawk War of 1832. Because the wars against Native nations were undeclared, tended to be short, scattered actions in response to local crises, and involved large groups of volunteer militia fighters and service from non-military scouts, in the midst of the financial challenge posed by claims from GAR veterans, Congress refused to deem the Plains a theater of war. The 1913 law restricted pension status to army officers and regulars, prompting veterans like John W. Redington who had served as scouts to respond in fury. Redington sent Coolidge evidence of his service in combat, demanding a pension and access to military care, saying "I hope that you will admit that putting such service in the non-combatant class is unjust, erroneous, and ridiculous." Redington to Coolidge, August 30, 1930. Elmo Scott Watson Papers, The Newberry Library, Chicago, Box 23, Folder 331. To the pension commissioner, Redington was more frank in his closing: "Hoping that the hi-salaried swivel-chair scouts of your Buro [sic] never had an such tough xperience [sic] about their pay," Redington to Pension Commissioner, May 3, 1929. Elmo Scott Watson Papers, Box 23, Folder 331.

Thermopylae rendered immortal by their life's blood."³⁸ In addition to presenting the wars as central to U.S. growth across the West, Hauser argued that they elevated the U.S. from mere nation-state status as veterans "... opened and protected an Empire for the settlement by the citizens of our country." In addition to a lengthy description of the wars themselves, Hauser includes a letter from Miles in support of the pension bill. Miles was not only a hero of the Plains Wars, but also of the Civil War and Hauser links the two halves of Miles' service to legitimize Indian wars veterans' claims about their own. Miles had spoken about extending pensions to men who served with him on the frontier, and Hauser reminds the committee that Miles is not alone in that belief, but rather "... the opinion that soldiers who served on the frontiers against hostile Indians should be placed on an equal basis with the veterans of the Civil War has on different occasions been declared by many of the officers who commanded troops on the frontier."³⁹ The strategy worked. In 1917 as Congress introduced a new system of compensation for war veterans in anticipation of impending casualties from the First World War, the law also extended compensation to military veterans of post-Civil War Indian wars.⁴⁰

After their first successful lobbying effort, the NIWVA focused its efforts on pursuing government benefits for its members, both veterans and their widows. National Commander George Washington Webb launched the organization's formal publication, *Winners of the West*, in 1923, a national newspaper created to publish the stories of Indian wars veterans and keep them in the public eye. The newspaper, essentially a booster magazine for veterans' nostalgia, quickly became a prized resource for twentieth-century historians examining the Plains Wars. In

³⁸ "Pension for Indian War Veterans," Senate Report No. 286, March 22, 1916. Senate Reports (Public) Vol. 2. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 4. The classical allusions in Hauser's introduction are common in sources seeking to valorize the wars or promote their importance throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁰ Notably while the period of service expanded, qualifications did not necessarily follow, and scouts found themselves omitted from expanded benefits yet again.

1928, a group of members who objected to Webb's leadership broke away to form the United Indian War Veterans, U.S.A., taking *Winners of the West* with them. As the NIWVA dwindled, the UIWV, based in San Francisco, began to build one of the most influential publicity campaigns of any Indian wars veterans' association. While that publicity was intended to shape legislation to its members' benefit, the deeper impact of the UIWV fell upon the historiography of the wars. That legacy is the result of decades of strategic work from the UIWV's National Historian and Director of Publicity, Viola Ransom Wood.

In a letter inviting retired General John J. Pershing to participate in a joint national convention of war veterans in 1947, Viola Ransom Wood introduces herself as the "daughter of an Indian War and Civil War veteran."⁴¹ An active member of the NIWV since its inception, Wood was both mastermind and driving force behind the UIWV's public relations campaigns.⁴² Writing on behalf of multiple national commanders of the organization, Wood knew that the key to UIWV success would be securing public interest and sympathy for the aging Indian wars veterans. To that end, for decades Wood orchestrated a data collection and letter-writing campaign targeting veterans' newspapers like the *National Tribune* (later the *Stars and Stripes*) as well as local newspapers to keep the military deeds of the Indian wars in the public eye. While the NIWVA faded into obscurity in the wake of World War I, under Wood's leadership the UIWV became the public voice of the veterans of the Indian wars through the 1960s.⁴³ Even

⁴¹ Viola Ransom Wood to Pershing. September 19, 1947. Indian War Veterans Collection. Box 3. "My work in this organization is done in memory of him and my mother," she adds. Due to illness, the general declined the invitation.

⁴² Curiously, Jerome Greene omits her from his history of the organization, attributing her work to Webb, Donath, and others.

⁴³ Although Wood never held the post of National Commander of the organization, she remained the Chief Historian and Director of Publicity for the lifetime of the UIWV, not only directing behind-the-scenes publicity, but also signing her name as author to letters and orders sent to the full membership by its national commanders. While formal leadership suffered high turnover, in large part due to the age of the officers, with the exception of a brief resignation between 1937 and 1939 Wood remained the consistent voice of the UIWV from the late 1920s until its closure in 1968.

after membership had fallen to a point far below the organization's ability to sustain itself, Wood remained an active advocate of its members past and present as she partnered with historian Don Rickey, Jr. in his attempt to create an archive of Indian wars veterans' accounts at the University of Oklahoma in the mid-1950s.⁴⁴

Wood's plan to promote the interests of UIWV relied on evoking nostalgia and pride for the frontier era, and she saw UIWV members as valuable sources for material for the group's public relations outreach. Like Sam Vestal did with the Order of the Indian Wars, Wood appealed to UIWV members to share their stories and memorabilia out of a sense of duty to preserve the memory of their service and honor the memory of their fallen comrades. In her writing, the danger of allowing the American public to forget the Plains Wars played a central role in her calls to action. Wood sees school curriculum as the source of that public memory, writing "In recent years our public school children have, to some extent, been taught little if anything as regards the early history of the United States... Even as late as 1898, our troops were at war to make American safe from blood-thirsty Indians. Yet, where do we find any accounts in our public school histories of the trials and tribulations of the pioneers of the 70s and 80s of the last century?" Wood links absence of these stories from school curriculum with Indian War veterans' failure to secure adequate pensions, recalling "As a certain Congressman remarked last winter, when asked if he would support a bill to increase the Indian War Veterans' bill: 'Indian War Veterans? Why, I thought they were all dead!'"⁴⁵ The fear of being forgotten, or at least the argument that without active promotion they would, became the main message of the UIWV.

⁴⁴ Throughout her lifetime, Wood also advocated for individual members and widows. Using UIWV records, she engaged with the Department of Veterans Affairs on a regular basis, often continuing correspondence over the course of several years to secure benefits for veterans and widows. Examples of this advocacy can be found in the Indian War Veterans Collection at OU's Western History Collections.

⁴⁵ "Message from the National Commander," n.d., Indian War Veterans Collection, Box 2, Folder 1.

Faced with the Roosevelt administration's threatened cuts to military pensions in 1933, Wood designed letterhead that read "There's only a few of us left."⁴⁶ She issued a new publicity plan for the organization designed "... for assembling and preserving in the national files of the order, widely-scattered, and heretofore little known data of the various Indian War campaigns of western America."⁴⁷ Wood also instructed all members, both "comrades and ladies," to collect data that would make each camp correspondent's monthly reports "both historically accurate and valuable, as well as interesting to the public."⁴⁸ In her list of suggestions for what sorts of materials would prove useful, Wood mentions stories that would endear the public to individual veterans. To serve as an example, Donath submitted a handwritten account of his boyhood meeting with President Abraham Lincoln when the president stopped his carriage to chastise him for punching Tad Lincoln in the nose.⁴⁹ While the UIWV sought to valorize all service on the frontier, some conflicts and personalities made better press than others. It is little wonder that the UIWV's most prominent camp was named for Custer, nor that Wood took care to organize and publicize anniversary celebrations of the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

The sixtieth anniversary of the Battle of the Greasy Grass fell on 1936, a year that began with the congressional override of President Roosevelt's veto of the Adjusted Compensation Act and also closed on the San Diego Pacific International Exposition. Following Wood's publicity strategy, the UIWV had been promoting the history of the Indian wars for several years, especially among other veterans' organizations. In 1935, Donath wrote to W.L. Mattocks, editor of the *National Tribune* to request "a regularly allotted space in your publication, devoted

⁴⁶ UIWV Letterhead, 1933, Indian War Veterans Collection, Box 2, Folder 1.

⁴⁷ "Publicity Plan," 1933, Indian War Veterans Collection, Box 2, Folder 1.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Donath relates that Lincoln remarked "We have too much fighting now without boys fighting. You and Tad shake hands," then patted him on the head. Indian War Veterans Collection, Box 2, Folder 2.

exclusively to our organization.” The request was not merely to secure publicity, but also to elevate the Indian wars to the same popularity and status as the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, and World War I, and to equate their pension requests with the rest. As Donath writes, “each of the other class of veteran pensioners has such a space in your paper, and it seems only fair that the Indian Wars veterans, and auxiliary, should be given equal recognition.”⁵⁰ Mattocks agreed, and Wood wrote back on Donath’s behalf promising regular content every Thursday. In conjunction with the regular column, Wood launched an outreach campaign to members of Congress. She wrote to UIWV members requesting that they “do a little missionary work in bringing to the attention of their representatives in Congress, H.R. 2794.”⁵¹ Due to the efforts of various veterans’ organizations and their allies, Congress was converted. In January 1936, the bill became law.

Securing a regular column in the *National Tribune* offered the UIWV a platform of visibility among veteran subscribers to the newspaper, but Wood had a larger audience in mind. Custer’s defeat at the Greasy Grass, celebrated in popular culture through dime novels, radio dramas, film, and reenactments like Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show.⁵² Enthusiasts and veterans began gathering at the battlefield for commemoration on the tenth anniversary in 1886. Frontier photographer D.F. Barry was in regular attendance at these gatherings. He wrote to both Benteen and Custer’s widow, Elizabeth, about the gatherings over several decades. In 1929, Barry urged Custer to consider attending the sixtieth anniversary in 1936, saying “I was so pleased to see people from the Atlantic to the Pacific at the Custer Battlefield on June 25, 1926. If you could

⁵⁰ Donath to Mattocks, October 3, 1935. Indian War Veterans Collection, Box 2, Folder 1.

⁵¹ Wood to Mattocks, October 16, 1935. Indian War Veterans Collection, Box 2, Folder 1. The bill would raise pensions from \$50 to \$75 per month.

⁵² A reenactment of Custer’s death from Pawnee Bill’s Wild West show was filmed in 1905 and later used in the Pawnee Bill Film Co.’s silent film *The Life of Buffalo Bill*. Gordon Lillie, “Pawnee Bill” himself, served as state commander of the UIWV in 1939.

just taken one look [sic]... many times during the day I thought if Mrs. Custer could only be present for a few minutes to see the thousands who wer [sic] there from ocean to ocean.”⁵³ As time passed, Barry told Custer, attendance swelled, as did spectacle. “so different from the 10th anniversary. We wer [sic] mounted on 2nd Cavalry horses... What a change had taken place – 3 flying machines soaring over that historic field.”⁵⁴ Not all participants shared Barry’s enthusiasm. The acerbic Benteen responded characteristically when Barry asked why he missed the commemoration in 1896, “I had not thought of going to the 20th Anniversary of Little Big Horn. Indeed, didn’t know one was thought of.”⁵⁵ For Wood, however, a celebration at a battlefield in the middle of the Montana prairie would not do. She poured her energy into planning a celebration of the battle’s sixtieth anniversary on the global stage at the San Diego Pacific International Exposition.

Wood made certain to design a program that would capture fairgoers’ attention with music and novelty while building on that interest to promote the narrative messaging of the UIWV. Merkley’s Musical Maids peppered the program with tunes from the patriotic “Star Spangled Banner” to the sentimental “The Girl I Left Behind Me,” a song the program notes the Seventh Cavalry band played as the regiment paraded around Fort Abraham Lincoln on the day of their departure. UIWV Ladies’ Corps member Ora McClinton gave a speech entitled “How My Husband Recovered Custer’s Battle Flag,” UIWV National Commander Ralph Donath, “the only survivor of the men who, at that time, presented arms as the Custer Expedition left the fort on their ill-fated journey,” issued prizes to winners of the essay contest on “The Life of General Custer,” and San Diego County District Attorney Thomas Whelan offered the keynote address

⁵³ Barry to E. Custer, March 8 and June 16, 1929. Carroll, *D.F. Barry Correspondence*, 1-2.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Benteen to Barry, March 1, 1895. Carroll, *D.F. Barry Correspondence*, 37-8.

entitled “General George Armstrong Custer.”⁵⁶ The program also included a “specialty act” by “Black Hawk Indian Whistling Artist Singing Bird.”⁵⁷ Billed as an observance of the sixtieth anniversary of the “Custer Massacre,” the program, like so many Indian wars veterans events, blended valorization of the Indian wars veterans with sensationalized accounts of Native brutality and appropriative performances of the sort of pan-Indian culture more accurate to stage and screen than actual Native cultural practice.

Playing Indian was a common theme in Indian wars veterans events, and one that extended across various organizations. The OIW developed a strict liturgy of mock Native ceremony that they performed both at their annual meetings and at graveside services for members.⁵⁸ The NIWVA and UIWV incorporated some of those elements as well, but because their membership often included Native people who had served as army scouts, more often their programs included performances like Singing Bird’s, a gesture to reconciliation unironically presented alongside fiery addresses about “Indian savagery.” In her report to the national membership of the UIWV about the Custer observance at the San Diego Exposition, Wood highlighted Donath’s visit to the exposition’s “Indian Village” to meet Chief Shooting Star, listed as the great-grandson of Sitting Bull. Wood reports to the UIWV that Donath was impressed by Shooting Star, declaring, “I never thought, in those days, that I would be meeting a great-grandson of Sitting Bull, and find him to be such a personable and educated young

⁵⁶ Wood initially invited Earl Alonzo Brininstool to give this address. According to correspondence, Brininstool was on a trip East and could not guarantee he would return in time. His response, however, makes it unclear that he understood he was being asked to offer the address. He mentions not being able to judge essays for the essay contest (which he was also offered), but not the address when he declines the offer. It is, indeed, hard to imagine Brininstool turning down an opportunity to be a featured speaker. According to her notes, Wood selected Brininstool because he “was named ‘the greatest living authority on Custer’” and had been an honorary member of the OIW. Indian War Veterans Collection, Box 3, Folder 1.

⁵⁷ Greene, xxxix.

⁵⁸ For more on the OIW’s specific mock Native ceremonies, see Greene’s *Indian War Veterans*.

American...”⁵⁹ Donath goes on to remark that if Shooting Star is “one of the results our fighting achieved, our present service-connected rheumatic joints and aches and pains should not be too much regretted by any of us old Coffee Coolers.”⁶⁰ In reporting this meeting, Wood managed to craft a narrative that presented Custer and his troops who were seeking to repeat the Washita Massacre as innocents slaughtered, their sacrifice necessary to the existence of the United States, and their wars under Sherman’s orders to exterminate Native peoples as acts of preservation solely responsible for Shooting Star’s assimilated presence at the exposition. Of all the veterans, journalists, and historians who sought to reframe the Plains Wars for future generations, Wood might have been the most talented.

Under Wood’s direction, the UIWV’s publicity efforts took advantage of the popularity of the Custer narrative, frequently using it to center the importance of preserving memory and honoring service in other Indians wars. Based on the immense amount of material published in the late nineteenth century about Custer and his final battle, from memoir to early history, Wood understood that if she featured the battle, she would have a large, deeply-interested audience to speak to. The creation of that audience was not accidental, and not merely the result of touring dramatizations of the battle like Buffalo Bill’s. While veterans’ memoirs and the celebrity career of Sitting Bull certainly contributed to the battle’s transformation into legend, Elizabeth Custer might have had the greatest single hand in keeping her husband a household name and icon of the frontier.

In 1876, Custer collaborated with Frederick Whittaker to produce the best-selling *A Popular Life of General Custer*, and again to publish her own memoir of their life together, *Boots and Saddles* in 1885, just in time for the tenth anniversary of the battle. When controversy

⁵⁹ “A Message from the National Commander,” October 16, 1935. Indian War Veterans Collection, Box 2, Folder 1.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

over her husband's conduct erupted again in 1897, Custer printed a pamphlet of her own testimony exonerating him.⁶¹ In addition, Custer maintained correspondence with journalists, veterans, and other promoters who could assist her in her mission to see her husband's memory secured in the national consciousness. As late as 1929 she and D.F. Barry cooperated to keep General Custer, as well as the photographs Barry had relating to him, in the papers and memorabilia market. She also sought Barry's help in raising funds to erect a monument to Custer in Bismarck. While she insisted that her long decades of promotion were to preserve memory of her husband's sacrifice, Benteen unsurprisingly characterized them differently in a letter to Barry warning him of getting too involved in her work, writing "I am of the opinion that Mrs. Custer would approve of almost anything that would keep the fame of Custer to the fore; that being her capital stock in trade."⁶²

Efforts like Wood's and Custer's that elevated the Battle of the Greasy Grass to the central conflict of the entire period of westward expansion offered somewhat rare opportunities for Native participants to offer a different perspective on the battle. In his role as the celebrity Sitting Bull upon whom the spotlight had fallen as leader of the battle, Tathanka Iyotake offered newspaper interviews and wild west show performances. As active fighting in the West waned and his popularity increased, John Coward notes that "in New York and elsewhere, he became an object of considerable curiosity, a safe but unsophisticated relic from the once-proud but now

⁶¹ Elizabeth Custer. *General Custer at the Battle of Little Big Horn, June 25, 1876*. (New York: self-printed, 1897). Custer, Wood, and other widows of Indian wars veterans did work to promote memory about the wars that mirrors the work of women of the Daughters of the American Revolution, GAR war widows, and members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. See Janney's *Remembering the Civil War* for more on women and Civil War memory. A comparison of that work with the work of women promoting Indian wars veterans' memory would be valuable, especially considering the fact that some women did both because their late husbands served in both.

⁶² Benteen to Barry, August 29, 1895. Carroll, *D.F. Barry Correspondence*, 39-40. Benteen remained one of Custer's harshest critics throughout his life. Benteen's disdain seems to have stemmed from Custer's command at the massacre on the Washita and was confirmed in the disastrous command at the Greasy Grass. From his letters to Barry, it is difficult to know whether Benteen hated Custer more for his blunders or his public preening, but that dislike extended to Libbie Custer when she championed her husband's memory.

hapless race.”⁶³ Putinhin, known to English speakers as Dewey Beard, shared his memories of the battle as well and even testified before Congress in 1938 in support of payments for Wounded Knee survivors.⁶⁴ Native efforts to influence the narrative went beyond scattered episodes of individuals offering battle accounts in the late nineteenth century.

Like the Indian wars veterans, Native people and their non-Native allies designed and implemented publicity plans designed to shift the narrative about Native history in general, and the Battle of the Little Big Horn specifically. In 1927 when Chicago mayor William Hale “Big Bill” Thompson proposed sweeping education reform to combat a pro-British bias in U.S. history textbooks and called for them to be rewritten on the principal of “America First,” the Grand Council Fire of American Indians published a Memorial arguing that a true history of America must start with correcting the narrative about “the first Americans.”⁶⁵ The Memorial uses the controversy over textbooks’ British sympathies to redirect attention to narratives of Native history, saying “We do not know if school histories are pro-British, but we do know that they are unjust to the life of our people—the American Indian.” The authors put the linguistic construction of white innocence at the center of their claim, and they use the most popular of the Plains Wars fights, Greasy Grass, to illustrate the problem. Textbooks “call all white victories, battles, and all Indian victories, massacres. The battle with Custer has been taught to school children as a fearful massacre on our part. We ask that this, as well as other incidents, be told fairly. If the Custer battle was a massacre, what was Wounded Knee?”⁶⁶

⁶³ John M. Coward. *The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identity in the Press, 1820-1890*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 160.

⁶⁴ Philip Burnham. *Song of Dewey Beard: Last Survivor of the Little Bighorn*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 140.

⁶⁵ Thompson’s “America First” declaration was part of a larger, highly politicized battle in history education concerning the pro-British bias of U.S. history textbooks following the First World War. For more on the controversy and its impact on U.S. history textbook narratives, see Ch. 5 of this dissertation.

⁶⁶ “Grand Council Fire of American Indians Memorial,” May 11, 1928, Senate, *Congressional Record* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1928), 8369-8370.

The complaint levied by the Grand Council Fire was wide-ranging and presented both textbook inaccuracies and suggested corrections in great detail. “History books teach that Indians were murders—is it murder to fight in self defense?” the text asks. The authors take issue with the descriptive language applied to Native people in textbooks, especially words like “treacherous,” “always fighting,” “thieves,” and “savages.” Together with the categorization of Native violence as inherent, settler violence as justified, the Memorial argues, textbooks tell schoolchildren that Indigeneity is opposed to civilization. Yet the signifiers of civilization, arts, oratory, statesmen, games, and stories, can all be found in Native cultures, the authors contest, offering examples of each from various Native nations. “Then we were not savages,” the authors conclude, “but a civilized race.” The Memorial concludes, “the Indian has long been hurt by these unfair books. We ask only that our story be told in fairness. We do not ask you to overlook what we did, but we do ask you to understand it.” Treating Native history fairly, and giving it “a generous place” in textbooks, the authors argue using Thompson’s own rhetoric, would present a history that truly puts America first.⁶⁷

The Memorial was one of the earliest public efforts the Grand Council Fire of American Indians launched. Organized in 1923 in Chicago with both Native and non-Native membership, the GCFAI was founded as “a social service agency and a tool to education non-Indians about Indians.”⁶⁸ Continuing the sort of pro-assimilationist advocacy work begun by the Indian Fellowship League and individuals like Carlos Montezuma, the GCFAI sought to highlight the contributions of historical Native cultures while also promoting efforts to “modernize” Native peoples in order to address economic inequality and prejudice against Native peoples. However,

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Rosalyn R. LaPier and David R.M. Beck. *City Indian: Native American Activism in Chicago, 1896-1934*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 104.

the attempt to simultaneously elevate the cultural value of historical Native societies and argue that assimilation proved that “Indianness” was not inherently inferior to Euro-American culture proved to be difficult. The Memorial’s authors, led by GCFAI president Scott Henry Peters, all offered their tribal affiliation with their signatures, and emphasized the positive contributions of Native peoples to U.S. history. Yet within their own argument, these same authors chose to prove the worth of Native culture on the basis of its contribution to the growth and expansion of the United States, a country reliant upon legal and religious arguments that characterized Native people as inherently inferior to their colonizers.

As the impact of centuries of anti-Native prejudice limited the framing of GCFAI’s argument for correcting the history of Native America, so Custer’s popularity in U.S. culture shaped both the Memorial’s specific arguments about depictions of Native people in U.S. history and newspaper coverage of the Memorial. GCFAI “Chief Storyteller” Marion Gridley attached a list of what “History Books Do Not Tell” to the Memorial. In the list, Gridley devotes a lengthy paragraph to accounts of the Battle of the Greasy Grass.⁶⁹ When Chicago papers covered the issuance of the Memorial, correspondents reduced its message to a referendum on Custer. Alma M. Lorenz’s article titled “Custer’s Last Battle In New Light” reports “What the schoolbooks for the most part characterize as a massacre... was a fair fight, the descendants of the redskins claim.”⁷⁰ Ignoring the declared tribal affiliations of the various authors, Lorenz claims “a delegation of Sioux Indians” approached Thompson with evidence that textbook accounts of the Custer fight were incorrect. Lorenz makes no mention of any other point in the Memorial, nor of

⁶⁹ “A Memorial of the Grand Council Fire of American Indians,” *Congressional Record*, 8370. GCFAI advocacy for more accurate history did not stop with the Memorial. Under Peters’ leadership, the group continued the Indian Friends League’s annual “Indian Day” program at the Chicago Historical Society and “helped stage programs at schools across Chicago that included ‘songs, stories, and legends.’” “Schools to Observe Indian Day Today,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 28, 1928.

⁷⁰ Alma M. Lorenz. “Custer’s Battle In New Light,” publication information unknown. Elmo Scott Watson Papers, Box 27, Folder 399.

the curricular disagreement that provoked Thompson into calling for an “America first” version of U.S. history in Chicago schools. In Lorenz’s account, Native people simply petitioned a change in how textbooks report the Custer fight, with no mention of the complex, broader argument the Memorial presents about the role of Native history in U.S. history curriculum. Although Lorenz reports that historians agree with the GCFAI claims that the account of Custer in textbooks is more myth than history, here as in popular culture, historiography, and the textbooks themselves, the Custer myth dominates the narrative, silencing Native voices in its demand for center stage.

Custer in the Pages of History

The Grand Council Fire of American Indians targeted textbook narratives of the Custer fight in its 1927 Memorial because in textbooks as in historical literature, the Battle of the Greasy Grass was one of the most heavily reported incidents of the Plains Wars in U.S. history textbooks. First appearing in Joel Dorman Steele’s *A Brief History of the United States* a year before its tenth anniversary, the battle almost immediately became a mainstay of the narrative of westward expansion. Even books that omitted most of the history of the wars with Native nations found at least a sentence or two for gallant Custer and his dramatic defeat. These narratives reflected trends in the historiography, relying on presenting an exciting account of the battle to pique student interest and link the reported heroism of frontier warfare with the expansion and progress of the United States. In the Plains Wars, textbook authors found a compelling portrait of the America that emerged from the wreckage of the Civil War, and no figure better captured that romance than George Armstrong Custer. Backed by a popular culture that propelled Custer from famous to legendary and bolstered by western historians who did not successfully critique that

narrative either as it developed or in retrospect, U.S. history textbooks introduced generations of students to the history of the Plains Wars through the lens of the tragic, heroic Custer.

Custer's cultivated popularity produced an immense amount of written material about the Battle of the Greasy Grass, leading to disproportionate representation of the battle and its participants in the historiography of the Plains Wars. More than other clashes with Native nations, commercialization of Little Big Horn memory created an abundance of sources and sustained networks of communication between veterans and historians, especially those writing in the emerging field of western history. Seeing the mutual benefit of partnering in order to produce detailed histories of the wars, especially as the population of veterans began to dwindle in the early twentieth century, veterans welcomed historians as honorary members into Indian wars veterans' associations, and historians were eager to join. While many historians wrote critically of the events of the Plains Wars, even those who wrote within a decade of the events themselves, their narratives choices were shaped by their necessary reliance on the accounts of veterans, as well as friendships they forged with veterans across decades of correspondence, association membership, and, in some cases, working at the battlefield sites.

One of the earliest histories to cover the Battle of the Greasy Grass is J.P. Dunn, Jr.'s 1886 *Massacres of the Mountains*. A sweeping history of the military conflicts of westward expansion, Dunn introduces his work with a robust critique both of federal Indian policy and the ways in which history frames U.S. conflict with Native nations. He identifies the contradiction at the core of westward expansion, saying "We profess to place highest in the category of human virtues the love of native land. How comes it, then, that Americans can favor forcing our "wards" to leave the "rocks and rills," the "woods and templed hills" that they love?... The

American Indians do love their country. They have taught us that in a hundred bloody wars.”⁷¹ It is in this light that Dunn traces the history of war with Native nations beginning roughly with debates over the annexation of Texas. Listing sources from government documents, veterans’ memoirs, and published histories, Dunn also draws heavily from *Harper’s Weekly*. That is no surprise given that Dunn’s work was published by the Harper brothers and heavily promoted by their magazine.⁷² Although Dunn lists Frederick Whittaker’s Elizabeth Custer-prompted *Popular Life of Gen. Custer* as a source for his chapter on Greasy Grass, *Harper’s* promotes Dunn’s work in contrast as a uniquely serious work based on historical evidence.⁷³ When the magazine promoted the book again in its “Books for Holiday Gifts” guide in November 1886, the copy read that Dunn “has illumined the darkest page of American history with the light of truth in such floods that the horrible iniquity of our dealings with these people must be apparent to the most skeptical reader of his glowing pages.” As such, the ad goes on, the book “should be read and studied in every school throughout the land.”⁷⁴ While *Harper’s* call to incorporate Dunn’s work into school curriculum was certainly more marketing ploy than serious lobbying, it was the early form of calls to correct textbook narratives about the Plains Wars and allow the complicated narratives appearing in historical writing to find their way into history classrooms.

Unlike earlier published works about the Battle of the Greasy Grass from which Steele seems to have drawn, which tended to pattern themselves on Custer boosterism, Dunn’s work examines the complicated origins of the conflict. His reliance on *Harper’s* own published autobiography of Sitting Bull to complement his government sources is reflected in the

⁷¹ J.P. Dunn, Jr. *Massacres of the Mountains*. (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2002), 22-23.

⁷² “Massacres of the Mountains,” *Harper’s Weekly*, May 1, 1886.

⁷³ The ad proclaims that Dunn “cites indisputable authorities and produced indefatigable evidence to support them.” Ibid.

⁷⁴ “Books for Holiday Gifts,” *Harper’s Weekly*, November 27, 1886.

narrative.⁷⁵ Like his source and publisher, Dunn writes about Native people in derogatory terms that fit the stereotypes of the late nineteenth century, including speaking of them as racially and culturally inferior, as well as assuming that they were uniquely and inherently prone to brutality. However, Dunn also offers a detailed account of the grievances that led to the war, laying blame on greedy, lawless white miners and a federal government either inept or unwilling to curtail their incursions into treaty territory. Alone among early writers, Dunn also acknowledges Lakota claims about the sacred nature of the Black Hills, even offering his understanding of the Lakota name for the region, “Pah-sap-pa.”⁷⁶

The war, including its famous battle, holds a unique place in Dunn’s narrative. Unsurprisingly given the decade of promotion Dunn draws from, Dunn exceptionalizes the conflict, and not merely due to the victory at the Greasy Grass which shocked the U.S. “The Sioux war or 1876 was more like the wars between civilized nations,” Dunn writes. Somewhat tongue-in-cheek, Dunn explains the war was respectable because “There were the same violations of compacts on both sides, the same diplomatic skirmishing, and the same deliberate preparation for wholesale killing, that the civilized world has decided to be proper when two nations have reached so belligerent a feeling that peace is no longer satisfactory to either.”⁷⁷ While Dunn writes critically of Custer’s role in his own defeat, and somewhat glowingly of Sitting Bull’s leadership in victory, the efforts of newspaper editors, survivors, and widows like Elizabeth Custer to valorize the conflict already exerted enough influence in 1886 to shape

⁷⁵ The fact that the only newspaper listed in Dunn’s sources is *Harper’s Weekly* makes this a more self-serving claim than an assessment of the accuracy of Dunn’s research and also offers an explanation for why Dunn’s narrative structure tends to mirror the narratives of the period’s newspapers without repeating the hysterical tone of most frontier dailies like earlier histories of the conflict tended to do.

⁷⁶ Dunn, 585. He elaborates, “They considered it a “medicine” country, inhabited by their supernaturals, and not to be rashly invaded, though they occasionally hunted in its borders, or cut lodge-poles in its pine woods... they said it was sacred ground.”

⁷⁷ Dunn, 584.

Dunn's narrative even as he sought to dispel the myths that had grown around the battle.⁷⁸ Rather than question the war's place in the narrative of U.S. history, Dunn focuses on complicating its details. On the issue of Custer's culpability for his disastrous attempt to attack the village along the Greasy Grass, Dunn blames the fact that both he and Terry had faulty information, and Custer's desire to heal a wounded reputation with President Grant after his role in the Belknap affair encouraged him to overmarch his troop to the point of vulnerability.⁷⁹ Most interesting, Dunn argues that the myths surrounding the famous "last stand" storytelling does a disservice not only to the fitness of the Seventh Cavalry, but also to Lakota prowess in battle. He writes, "the unjustness of the estimate of our officers has been increased by an underestimate of the Indian leaders... It is a task requiring much tact and skill for a commander to conceal 15,000 people from the scouts of armies which are on all sides of him."⁸⁰

For all of Dunn's narrative innovation, however, his account buoyed rather than contradicted the early celebratory tone of Little Big Horn remembrance which had begun to permeate the national consciousness. Writing before Sitting Bull's murder and the Wounded Knee Massacre, Dunn concludes his account of the Sioux War of 1876 stating "There has been no trouble of any importance with the Sioux since 1877, and they are reported to be making remarkable progress in civilization."⁸¹ This narrative structure of the war contained three major plot elements: misbehaving Indians, violent clashes with the U.S. military sent to subdue them,

⁷⁸ Dunn spends considerable time addressing those myths in the text, including Native sources that counter the popular story that emerged of Custer's death on the battlefield, saying "The opinion most prevalent among Dakota people, to whom the talk of the Indians drifts, sooner or later, is that no one knows certainly who killed Custer—that he died by some bullet that could never be identified among the hundreds that were flying." Dunn, 615.

⁷⁹ Dunn, 603, 623. He also expounds on the mechanics of battle, arguing that capturing the cavalry horses was the crucial factor in the Native victory that day. Dunn, 612. This insight is clouded by Dunn's pejorative description of Tathanka Iyotake and his warriors as cowards who "have not the nerve to ride to certain death," and rather than present this as pure military strategy, he links it to characterizations of Native people as mere horse thieves, calling Tathanka Iyotake "one of the ablest horse-thieves the country has ever produced."

⁸⁰ Dunn, 624.

⁸¹ Dunn, 628.

and the eventual disappearance of Native people, either through death or assimilation. The ubiquity of the Custer story in historical literature bolstered that narrative pattern, both in historiography and U.S. history textbooks like Steele's.

The first textbook to mention the battle, Steele's 1885 *A Brief History of the United States*, presents the conflict with a narrative much better aligned with military reports, frontier newspaper accounts, and veterans' memoirs than Dunn's more nuanced approach. The first sentence of the section begins, "The Sioux Indians having refuse to go upon the reservation assigned to them by treaty..." and a footnote clarifies that an 1866 conference at Fort Laramie "could not prevail upon the Indian chiefs present to cede a wagon route to Montana," leading to Red Cloud's victory in the Fetterman fight, a defeat "as tragic as that of General Custer's command."⁸² The text tells students that the Seventh Cavalry's actions are therefore simply to enforce the law, which the "Sioux" have broken. The account of the battle itself is brief, its tragedy underscored by telling students that Custer lost his life, his command, and his brother and two cousins in the fight. The next page includes a melodramatic illustration with a horse dying in the foreground, Lakota warriors mounted firing with bows and rifles, Custer and his men on foot shooting with handguns.⁸³ Oddly, Steele's account leaves students to conclude that while Custer and his men fell in battle, the Seventh Cavalry managed to pull off a victory after all. Steele explains that Reno found himself surrounded until help arrived, and then "the Indians were soon beaten on every hand."⁸⁴ The narrative pattern of this first textbook account repeats in

⁸² Joel Dorman and Esther Steele. *A Brief History of the United States*. (New York: A.S. Barnes & Company, 1885), 292.

⁸³ One warrior in the illustration in full headdress is on the ground in the foreground, picking up a fallen cavalryman's rifle, implying the firearms are stolen. Steele, 293.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

U.S. history textbooks for decades to come, in part because the pattern remained in historical writing about the battle well into the twentieth century.

Before widespread professional recognition of western history as a legitimate field of historical study in the early twentieth century, scholarship of the Battle of the Greasy Grass was dominated by veterans, Custer enthusiasts, and even former journalists. Most of that writing focused on the minutiae of the battlefield as authors scrambled to explain the events of the day based on military and early newspaper reports of how evidence was found at the site and accounts of members of other companies of the Seventh Cavalry. John F. Finerty, correspondent for the *Chicago Times* assigned to cover the Sioux campaign in 1876, was embedded with General Crook and missed covering the Greasy Grass fight but combined his experiences along with other accounts to publish *War-path and Bivouac, or, The Conquest of the Sioux* in 1890. Finerty, who had seen service himself when he enlisted in the Union army shortly after immigrating from Ireland, “was quick to magnify the soldier to heroic proportions.”⁸⁵ Finerty’s account reflects the camaraderie he declared with the soldiers he was assigned to follow, and though well-researched, he drew his sources almost exclusively from Euro-Americans and their allies to tell the story of the war. For the account of the battle itself, Finerty turned to Curly’s testimony, buttressing its credibility by saying that Gall later confirmed most of its details.⁸⁶

Finerty’s valorization of the U.S. army’s actions in the Sioux campaign of 1876 had two goals. In his introduction Finerty writes, “These memoirs aim at laying before the public the adventures, privations, heroism and horrors of our last great Indian wars, exactly as they

⁸⁵ Oliver Knight, “Introduction” Finerty. *War-path and Bivouac*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), viii. Finerty went on to represent Illinois’s second district in the House of Representatives as well as author *Ireland: The People’s History of Ireland* (1904). Knight records that Finerty did attempt to interview Tathanka Iyotake in late summer 1879, but other journalists had beaten him there and Tathanka Iyotake refused further interviews. According to Knight, Finerty did not take kindly to the slight, which may be the reason he does not cite any of those interviews in his history. Knight, 298-9.

⁸⁶ Finerty, 130-3.

presented themselves to the writer in battle, on the march or in the bivouac.”⁸⁷ As both newspaperman and veteran, Finerty’s uncompromised sympathies lie solidly on the side of the U.S. military throughout the Plains Wars and especially during the campaign against the Oceti Sakowin (Seven Council Fires, or Sioux Nation). Finerty links their service on the plains to all exploits of the U.S. army throughout its history, and he does so with a flair for the historically dramatic. “From the day of Concord bridge, when the citizen-soldiery of Massachusetts “fired the shot heard ‘round the world,” to that of the Little Big Horn, when Custer, at the head of his three hundred, died like Leonidas at Thermopyl[ae], the American army, whether in victory or disaster, has ever been worthy of the flag which it carries, and of the nation which it defends,” Finerty writes. Not simply seeking to dramatize his prose, Finerty frames the entire work around this military heroism, writing “In this spirit I respectfully dedicate this book to the American army and the American nation.”⁸⁸ With Custer as Leonidas Finerty’s book and its subsequent popularity in print lent credence to Elizabeth Custer’s publicity campaign for her husband’s memory and offered a rhetorical foundation upon which members of the Indian wars veterans’ associations could build. According to Finerty, the “conquest of the Sioux” was merely another episode in the expansion of American democracy, and one every bit as necessary to America’s survival as the American Revolution. Groups like the OIW and the UIWV would take up that rhetoric in their publicity materials in later decades. The link between the establishment of the United States and settlement of the plains worked to solidify the narrative of triumphal westward expansion against counternarratives like those offered by the GCFAI and later scholars.

Finerty’s other goal for *War-path and Bivouac*, according to his introduction, was to provide material support for the Indian wars veterans he served alongside. As a veteran of the

⁸⁷ Ibid, xvii.

⁸⁸ Ibid., xviii-xix.

Grand Army of the Republic, Finerty enjoyed a military pension, but in 1890 few of his Indian wars veterans colleagues had access to such support. Finerty hints that the heroism he chronicles in the following pages is not merely for the amusement of the reader, but that he hopes to accomplish far more with the publication of the history of the Sioux War. His goal is to inspire readers to demand pensions, writing “If these frankly-written pages serve to place before the Congress and the people of the United States the deeds and the sufferings of the national army while struggling in several most important campaigns for the extension of our peaceful borders, the safety of our hardy pioneers and the honor of our martial name, I will feel greatly recompensed for the labor of their production.”⁸⁹ Finerty’s congressional service ended before the Plains Wars did, and he died before the first legislation to extend pensions to Indian wars veterans received serious consideration. Nevertheless, Finerty’s work, and his reputation as a journalist and statesman, laid a firm narrative foundation for Indian wars veterans’ associations’ efforts to leverage the history of the Plains Wars to secure pensions for their members. Finerty’s focus on the war with the Oceti Sakowin and their allies in 1876, and especially the Battle of the Greasy Grass, also centralized Custer’s defeat in those narratives.

Finerty published his memoir in 1890, the year that ended with the massacre at Wounded Knee. Most U.S. history textbooks published in the 1890s repeated the narrative of the Custer fight that vilified its Native participants and glorified the Seventh Cavalry, but toward the end of that decade and into the next, some authors began to introduce an additional element to the story. D.H. Montgomery’s 1897 *A Student’s American History* presents the “Sioux” as pure aggressors, their defeat just and triumphant, but included a caveat quotation from Miles. At the end of the full section on the Plains Wars, Montgomery writes “General Miles... adds his weighty

⁸⁹ Ibid., xviii.

testimony to that of leading military men who have gone before him in saying that he has never known an Indian war in which the white man was not the aggressor.”⁹⁰ Some textbooks followed suit, while others adhered to the narrative Steele presented in 1885 and omitted any discussion of settler encroachment instigating the conflict.

As time passed, Custer enthusiasts pursued details of the Battle of the Greasy Grass in even greater detail, seeking sources from as many perspectives as was possible, but usually reverting to the narrative framing that favored the point of view of the U.S. military. This is not surprising given that the vast majority of the sources were U.S. army veterans, and that the Wounded Knee Massacre had reminded Native veterans of the conflict that their celebrity status in pop culture did not erase Euro-American assumptions about the danger they might pose to the security of the country. White audiences might pay to see Sitting Bull perform with Buffalo Bill, but the U.S. Congress would still issue medals of valor to soldiers who massacred women and children.⁹¹ Most of this scholarship, both amateur and professional, tended to focus on gathering as much information as possible about the wars while survivors were still available to tell their stories. Railway engineer Walter Mason Camp, a self-taught enthusiast of Native history, culture, and custom, spent decades of his life conducting interviews, and investigating battle sites. Camp wrote to Elizabeth Custer in 1917 to enlist her help in his research, and Curly said after Camp’s interview with him that “he was the most painstaking person who had ever interviewed him.”⁹²

⁹⁰ D.H. Montgomery. *A Student’s American History* (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1897), 544. Montgomery may be mistakenly attributing to Miles comments from Crook to the *Unitarian Review* in 1891. George Crook. “The Late Indian Outbreak” in “February Correspondence” *Unitarian Review* Vol. 35, no. 2 ed. Joseph Henry Allen (Boston: February 1891), 156.

⁹¹ Those medals have yet to be rescinded. In recent years, Basil Brave Heart, a Lakota elder, has offered forgiveness ceremonies to the descendants of Indian wars veterans seeking healing for their ancestors’ part in these war crimes.

⁹² Kenneth Hammer, ed. *Custer in ’76: Walter Camp’s Notes on the Custer Fight*. (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1976, 3. In his letter to Elizabeth Custer, Camp professed his deep interest in the battle, saying he had studied it for over twenty years, visited the battlefield nine times, and interviewed over two hundred survivors on both sides of the conflict.

Camp's goal, thwarted by failing health that led to his death in 1925, was to write a comprehensive history of the Seventh Cavalry. Although Camp interviewed many more Native participants than other historians, his account of the iconic battle remains firmly planted in the army-favoring narrative structure. "It was no massacre," Camp insists, "there was no ambush, no trap set for the white troops to enter. It was a battle in three fights, fair and simple."⁹³

Camp was invited to address the annual banquet of the Order of the Indian Wars on January 17, 1920. There, he was made the first honorary member of the Order, beginning the tradition of close relationships between historians and Indian wars veterans. His address, a summary of the Plains Wars, highlights the exploits of officers in attendance like General Anson Mills and General Edward Godfrey. Like most OIW addresses, the text is a celebration of the "illustrious events of the plains," absolution for military action like the massacres at Washita and Wounded Knee, and assurance that "as resourceful as was the Indian, he was, in the end, at a disadvantage when pursued by the indomitable men of the Regular Army under determined commanders."⁹⁴ Whether Camp, the self-proclaimed "student of Indian customs and life" felt a need to flatter his audience given their nomination of him as the first non-veteran honorary member, or whether his enthusiasm for the wars' history simply clouded his interpretation, the address helped the OIW further promote their service as both heroic and central to U.S. history. Camp's interviews became cornerstone sources for scholars of the Battle of the Greasy Grass.

Other amateur scholars collected sources that would become invaluable to western historians. Eli S. Ricker, a former judge and newspaper editor, set out in the early 1900s to

⁹³ Ibid., 27. Camp does not, however, mention that Custer's military aim in initiating the engagement once he spied the encampment was to successfully repeat his massacre of combatants and non-combatants, at the Washita.

⁹⁴ Camp. Address to the OIW. January 17, 1920, 2. In the address, Camp insisted that his Native sources confirmed that the firing at Wounded Knee began with the Lakota, and argued that although Black Kettle and his village were peaceful, "no investigation could be made in advance of their attack, and the Indian custom of shedding the blood of the other race for the sake of revenge, without respect to who the individuals might be was imitated here." This text on page three of the speech, which Camp labels page 2 ½, is heavily edited by hand, presumably by Camp.

interview as many Plains Wars participants as he could, intending to write a book entitled “The Final Conflict Between the Red Man and the Palefaces.” Like Camp, Ricker devoted decades of his life to this study but died before his book could be completed. Unlike Camp, however, Ricker’s interest was not in the valor displayed by U.S. army troops on the battlefield. An incident at Lightning Creek, Wyoming in late 1903 had piqued his editorial curiosity, and Ricker traveled to the area to personally investigate conflicting accounts of a violent conflict between a local sheriff and a small hunting party of Oglala men, women, and children that left seven dead, including the sheriff. After interviewing people in the area, Ricker concluded that the Oglala had been unjustly blamed, newspaper reports wildly inaccurate, and the sheriff both at fault and motivated by anti-Native prejudice.⁹⁵ Based on the Lightning Creek incident as well as information from an earlier trip to Wounded Knee, Ricker believed that most reports of conflict between the U.S. and Native people was inaccurate. As his work progressed, he expanded his interviews, because he “realized he could not follow the lead of traditional historians of his era, who tended to write about sturdy pioneers conquering the West, while the army won glorious battles over the ‘savages.’”⁹⁶ Ricker’s work was never completed, and much of his material was lost in a house fire that killed his wife just months before his own death in 1925. However, Addison E. Sheldon of the Nebraska State Historical Society managed to preserve Ricker’s notebooks, and historians like Don Rickey, Jr. and Robert Utley later relied on them to round out an otherwise U.S. military-dominated source base.

As a graduate student in history at the University of Oklahoma, simultaneously serving as Historian of the Phillips Collection (later the Western History Collection), Don Rickey, Jr.

⁹⁵ Eli S. Ricker. *Voices of the American West Volume I: The Indian Interviews of Eli S. Ricker, 1903-1919*. Ed. by Richard E. Jensen. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 2005, xvi.

⁹⁶ Ricker, xvii. He set out to correct the record with the testimony of Native people, planning chapters for his book with titles like “The Butchery at Wounded Knee” and “The Political Battle on the Little Big Horn.”

sought to compile a comprehensive archive of sources relating to the Plains Wars, featuring interviews with Indian wars veterans. His Indian Wars Veterans Project “aimed at gathering in all types of papers, documents, maps, letters, books, photographs, etc. relative to the Indian Wars. Placed in our files, this material will be thus made available to scholars, students, and researchers.”⁹⁷ Working closely with the UIWV’s Viola Ransom Wood to identify and contact surviving Indian wars veterans, Rickey mailed hundreds of questionnaires and collected stories of service for his archival project.⁹⁸ Rickey’s work was inspired by Ricker’s interviews, which Rickey cites in his dissertation saying, “This collection contains a wealth of fine material on all the Sioux and Cheyenne campaigns, mainly from the hostile viewpoint.”⁹⁹ Completing his dissertation while working as Historian at the Custer Battlefield National Monument, Rickey’s goal was to preserve as many records of army life during the Plains Wars as he could, and to present a history of army service. While he may have been interested in “the hostile viewpoint” and suggested in his project proposal that being located in Oklahoma would allow him “to secure information from men, who in their youth, were once hostiles themselves,” Rickey’s clear goal is to document and report the U.S. military version of this history, not the complicated narrative like Ricker sought.¹⁰⁰

Working from the Army War College history of all Indian wars between 1865 and 1912 (compiled with the assistance of Indian wars veterans’ associations), Rickey produced a valuable collection of army sources about the wars and a book that became standard reference for Plains Wars history. *Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay*, published in 1963 heralds “the initiative,

⁹⁷ Indian Wars Veterans Project Proposal Draft, n.d. Indian Wars Veterans Collection. Box 1, Folder 1.

⁹⁸ Wood offered far more than a mere list of names and addresses. The Indian Wars Veterans Collection at OU’s Western History Collection is full of her handwritten annotations offering context for the UIWV documents.

⁹⁹ Don Rickey, Jr. “The Enlisted Men of the Regular Army on the Frontier, 1865 to the 1890’s” Unpublished dissertation. University of Oklahoma, 1959, 496.

¹⁰⁰ The Indian Wars Veterans Project Proposal Draft.

determination, perseverance and bravery of the Indian Wars soldier has become a part of our history that still lives on in us as inheritors of the American tradition.”¹⁰¹ Rickey’s work is not pure boosterism for the glory of the cavalry past. He continues “So also does the courage and heroism of the Indian live on, both in the descendants of the defeated hostiles and in the honor time has paid them in recognition of these qualities by all Americans,” and elsewhere notes “This is not meant to be a justification of the conquest of the western tribes, but a report on what took place when the Indian Wars were over.”¹⁰² Despite these caveats, Rickey’s focus on prioritizing the narratives he received from Indian wars veterans, both in his writing and archival collections, remains in true partnership with Wood’s efforts to valorize Indian wars veterans’ service against Native nations in the late nineteenth century. Rickey’s work strengthened narratives of righteous expansion and Native erasure, linking the Plains Wars with the rise of U.S. power and the spread of democracy.

Rickey was not the only historian to discover the benefits of befriending Indian wars veterans. One of the most prolific authors of works relating to the Battle of the Greasy Grass, Earl Alonzo Brininstool, relied almost exclusively on personal correspondence with Indian wars veterans to produce his written work. Popular writers like Brininstool straddled the line between professional historian and military history enthusiast. Brininstool in particular embodied the complexity of categorizing western history authors. A self-styled cowboy poet who lived in Hollywood for most of his life, an early career journalist who joined Indian Wars veterans associations as an honorary member, and a curator of one of the more extensive collections of correspondence with veterans, their widows, and Native participants in the Plains Wars, Brininstool’s work exemplifies the twisted path narratives of the Plains Wars often took from

¹⁰¹ Rickey, Jr. *Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 36.

¹⁰² Rickey, Jr., 35-6.

battlefield dispatch to history book. Declaring “there has been altogether too much “bunk” written about the history of the West,” Brininstool portrayed himself as a cranky mythbuster.¹⁰³ Whether due to the abundance of material or just a product of the veterans he was able to persuade into correspondence with him, his focus fell solidly upon the Battle of the Greasy Grass.

Around the same time another popular writer turned his attention to the Greasy Grass fight. University of Oklahoma English professor Walter Stanley Campbell established himself as an author with western-themed works under the penname Stanley Vestal.¹⁰⁴ While Brininstool spent the 1920s and 1930s corresponding with veterans like Little Big Horn survivor Theodore Goldin and Howard’s “original boy scout” J.W. Redington, and former Indian wars correspondents like Robert Strahorn, Campbell spent those years Tathanka Iyotake’s relatives in North Dakota and Canada. His interviews with White Bull and One Bull, as well as copies of Tathanka Iyotake’s pictographic autobiography formed the core sources of his 1932 *Sitting Bull: Champion of the Sioux*, as well as later works like 1934’s *New Sources of Indian History 1850-1891* and 1948’s *Warpath and Council Fire*. Campbell also established long correspondence with Indian wars veterans, and the UIWV recognized his support by granting him honorary membership in 1955 and appointing him to the UIWV Hall of Fame the following year.¹⁰⁵ Unlike Brininstool, Campbell looked beyond the military-aligned sources of veterans and their widows and children, instead choosing to focus on other participants and observers like Elaine

¹⁰³ Earl A. Brininstool. *Troopers with Custer* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1994), ix.

¹⁰⁴ Campbell and Brininstool corresponded several times between 1938 and 1946, sharing sources and correcting details of each other’s books. The relationship seems to have been cordial but not friendly. Walter Stanley Campbell Collection, Box 23, Folder 21. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma.

¹⁰⁵ Indian War Veterans Collection, Box 2, Folder 3. In his introduction to the 1957 edition of *Sitting Bull*, Campbell thanks Brininstool, C.E.S. Wood, George Grinnell, and Sam Vestal of the Army War College for their assistance. Among all the writers who tackled the Greasy Grass story, Campbell may have had the largest and most diverse network of sources, despite not being recognized as a historian.

Goodale Eastman and D. F. Barry. Yet writing western history in the early twentieth century kept Campbell connected to communities of veterans and army enthusiasts. A long friendship with Elmo Scott Watson drew Campbell into membership of the Westerners, a group of scholars who met regularly in Chicago to discuss their shared interest in frontier history. Watson became a trusted source in the 1940s, offering to share “considerable material on both [Custer and Sitting Bull] – newspaper and magazine clippings and some stuff which might be considered ‘source material’ (contemporary newspaper accounts) that might be useful to you.”¹⁰⁶

Unlike Ricker and Rickey, whose main goals were to preserve collections of materials from which they and others could produce books, Brininstool and Campbell were popular authors writing for a general audience.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, their abilities to procure rare accounts and documents associated with the fight made their books necessary sources for later historians to consult. Beyond the accounts Brininstool collected in his *Troopers with Custer*, he also convinced the prickly Benteen to divulge his story at last, reinvigorating the debate over Custer’s conduct in 1933. Campbell’s sourcework proved so valuable that Robert Utley wrote in his own Sitting Bull book *The Lance and the Shield* (1993) that although he planned to use Campbell’s own research “to challenge the domination of his biography,” the White Bull and One Bull sources were “the most important body of source material for this book.”¹⁰⁸ The impact of their scholarship on later histories of the conflict was substantial, and helped to entrench that

¹⁰⁶ Elmo Scott Watson to Walter Stanley Campbell. December 13, 1945. Walter Stanley Campbell Collection, Box 40, Folder 11.

¹⁰⁷ Far from preserving collections of materials, Brininstool was a hoarder and trader of them. Robert Utley writes to H.B. Berry “It is a damn shame that so much valuable material is in the possession of the little banty rooster, who won’t keep it together and place it where it will do good, but insists upon breaking it up and selling it for as much as he can get out of it.” Utley to Berry, February 25, 1950. Robert M. Utley Collection, Box 4, Folder 3. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma.

¹⁰⁸ Robert M. Utley. *The Lance and the Shield: The Life and Times of Sitting Bull*. (New York: Henry Holt, 1993), xvi, 317.

scholarship in personality-driven narratives that upheld late-nineteenth-century interpretations of the fight.

Brininstool was something of a collector not merely of documents but of acquaintances as well, and he remained loyal to the people who obliged him with their correspondence. *Troopers with Custer* is dedicated “To that under-paid, overworked, yet ever-dutiful body of men who paved the way for the advance of civilization through a land whose every inch was contested by the Red Man of the Plains—the men who marched, fought, bled and suffered—the Indian Wars Veterans.”¹⁰⁹ However, Brininstool resists the easy, melodramatic storytelling that characterizes so much literature about Custer and the Little Big Horn in early- to mid-twentieth century. He is also careful to note that narratives of the battle have misrepresented Native participants. “The Indian has been held before the young people of this country as a bloodthirsty, murderous, sneaking devil, always lying in wait for scalps, not to be trusted, and only good when dead,” he writes. Rather than deny that Native people exhibited any of those characteristics, however, he repackages and preserves the stereotype saying, “but the Indian was only what Uncle Sam himself made him in that respect.”¹¹⁰

As for the battle itself, Brininstool correctly identifies its origins in “the invasion of the Black Hills of Dakota (ceded Sioux territory) by white gold hunters.”¹¹¹ Custer’s defeat was due to strategic errors in planning, a failure to believe scouts’ estimates of the number of Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho warriors gathered, and “positive disobedience of the orders of General Terry in bringing on an engagement with the Indians.”¹¹² He was solidly on Benteen’s side when it came to Custer. Historian Brian Pohanka reports that Brininstool as so adamant in his

¹⁰⁹ Brininstool, *Troopers with Custer*, dedication.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xii.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 28.

criticism, he even risked alienating General Godfrey, who had sponsored Brininstool as Honorary Companion in the Order of the Indian Wars.¹¹³ Daring as he was in his interpretation, Brininstool confined his challenges to the Little Big Horn narrative to debates over the officers' conduct. Brininstool's Little Big Horn was lost by Custer's leadership, not won by Sitting Bull's.

Campbell presented a radically different perspective on the battle. His account of the battle itself and its aftermath relies almost entirely upon the accounts he received from White Bull and One Bull. In both *Sitting Bull, Champion of the Sioux* and *Warpath and Council Fire*, Campbell begins the battle account in the encampment along the Greasy Grass as Custer's regiments approach. He writes "Old men were yelling advice, young men dashing away to catch their horses, women and children rushing off afoot and on horseback to the north end of the three-mile camp, fleeing from the soldiers. They left their tents standing, grabbed their babies, called their older children, and hurried away..."¹¹⁴ According to Campbell, the chief objective of the combined Native force was to drive the cavalry away in order to protect the women and children. Their primary military target was not full engagement with Custer's five regiments, but rather protecting their own herds and, if possible, capturing army horses to give non-combatants an opportunity to slip away. Rather than a titanic clash between long-time foes Sitting Bull and Custer, or a battle with its fate determined entirely by the actions of the U.S. cavalry, Campbell's Little Big Horn is a brilliant, mad scramble to prevent a second Washita. Far from the violent outburst of a fierce grudge, Campbell emphasizes "It was not until some time after the battle that Sitting Bull learned who had led the soldiers against him. We have his own statement for this, and all his old Hunkpapa friends and relatives say the same."¹¹⁵ The ultimate reason for the

¹¹³ Ibid., xvi.

¹¹⁴ *Warpath*, 241-2.

¹¹⁵ *Sitting Bull*, 172.

Native victory, Campbell quotes Benteen, was simply “too many Indians; good shots, good rider, and the best fighters the sun ever shone on.”¹¹⁶ It was a spontaneous, defensive fight, not a trap, and given the total annihilation of Custer’s force, the only people who knew for certain what happened that day were Native; theirs were the only reliable sources.

The legend of Custer grew, Campbell contested, because “journalists made wild surmises, and palmed them off on the public as facts... Many of these legends were—very naturally—to the discredit of Sitting Bull, General Custer’s archenemy.”¹¹⁷ In both *Warpath* and *Sitting Bull*, Campbell is an open advocate for Sitting Bull’s perspective and historical reputation. Nevertheless, he fails to penetrate the valorized narrative of the Plains Wars. This failure is due in part to the fact that even by the 1930s, decades of memoirs, anniversary commemorations, pop culture depictions, and western histories established a solid foundational narrative of the wars that relied on centuries of anti-Native prejudice to present expansion itself, and any violence committed in the process, as necessarily heroic and patriotic. In part, however, Campbell’s failure rests in his own approach. Rather than refute the narratives that existed about the Greasy Grass fight, Campbell traded one valorization for another, inserting his Sitting Bull biography and narrative like the historical character spotlight inset boxes that would appear in history textbooks in the next few decades. Because Campbell’s work failed to confront the narrative framing of the war itself, instead of refuting triumphalist American accounts, it merely complemented them, adding the details of curiosity to a story he retold.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ *Warpath*, 250.

¹¹⁷ *Sitting Bull*, 177.

¹¹⁸ Campbell also maintained friendly correspondence with Don Rickey, Jr. in the 1950s, in which the two scholars shared sources and discussed their involvement with the UIVW. In one letter, Rickey discusses his excitement to have Campbell on his dissertation committee, but according to the physical copy of Rickey’s dissertation in the OU Libraries, for whatever reason Campbell did not stay on the committee. Rickey also offers Campbell extensive help in securing sources from the collections at the Custer Battlefield between 1955 and 1957. Walter Stanley Campbell Collection, Box 36, Folder 17.

Much like Campbell, textbook authors of the 1930s and 1940s began to make space in their narratives for characters like Sitting Bull without significantly altering the narratives of the battle they said he led. In the 1920s textbook had begun to incorporate the greed of white settlement into the motivation for the Greasy Grass fight, and in the 1940s textbooks began to acknowledge the capable leadership of Native war leaders, even if the narrative still framed Native violence as the catalyst for the wars. After the publication of Campbell's popular books on Sitting Bull, textbook authors began to describe him not as a merciless, honorless villain attacking "the nearest and most defenseless whites," but instead as "the last great Indian leader."¹¹⁹ With help from authors like Campbell, Native portrayal in western history was becoming more complex, even if the narrative framework of the Plains Wars did not. That change, it seems, was also reflected in U.S. history textbooks. The generation of historians who would bring western history back into the academy and found the Western History Association, like Robert Utley, were in secondary school when this shift happened.

Utley was drawn to Greasy Grass out of deep personal interest, an interest shaped by the legends of gallant Custer and contact with Indian wars veterans. Utley's interest runs so deep that in 2004 he published an autobiography entitled *Custer and Me*. Utley credits Errol Flynn's *They Died with Their Boots On* and Whitaker's *A Popular Life of Custer* with pushing him toward a lifelong love of history. At sixteen, he traveled alone to the battlefield in August 1946 where he received a private tour of the site from its superintendent, Captain Edward S. Luce. Standing in the tall prairie grass with a Seventh Cavalry veteran of World War I and Custer enthusiast spinning yarns for his eager ears, Utley was hooked. He writes "The monument, the gravestones tracing ragged battle lines and the final stand... stirred me deeply on first sight, as it has ever

¹¹⁹ Carl Russell Fish. *History of America* (New York: American Book Company, 1925), 427; John Holliday Latané. *A History of the American People* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1946), 546.

since. Rare is the visitor not similarly affected.”¹²⁰ Luce maintained a correspondence with Utley that became mentorship and friendship. Utley spent several summers touring guests at Custer Battlefield National Monument, relating stories he learned from Luce as well as from his own research in his hometown library. Those stories came from Whitaker, Elizabeth Custer, and Indian wars veterans, and they reflected the romanticization and anti-Native prejudice of those narratives. Utley admits, “Later generations would look in contempt on the story we told and demand a “balance” that easily strayed beyond to an opposite imbalance.” He counts himself among them, having put away Whitaker in favor of more reliable sources and acknowledging the open prejudice his mentor Luce exhibited toward the people of Crow Nation on the reservation bordering the battlefield site. However, Utley continued, “I have never looked back in contempt or shame. We were products of our time and place, reflecting the larger society. We thought and behaved just as our later critics would have thought and behaved had they been our contemporaries.”¹²¹ As a scholar, Utley’s career spans major turns in both western and Native history. His work contributed to those narrative turns, and yet in retrospect, Utley says he feels no regret for his role in perpetuating false narratives.

Utley’s work on Custer and the Little Big Horn never quite breaks away from the valorized narratives that first captured his imagination. To be fair, for most of his career Utley’s research focus was the history of the U.S. army on the frontier and it was a focus developed in a historiographical moment that favored triumphant westward expansion. His first work, *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation* focuses on the tragedy at Wounded Knee, and the book established Utley as an expert on frontier history of the late nineteenth century. Beginning with Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis as a framework for the text, Utley presents the massacre as the

¹²⁰ Robert Utley. *Custer & Me: A Historian’s Memoir*. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 21.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

final chapter in removing the “Indian barrier” from the U.S. West.¹²² Ultimately, Utley argues in his 1963 edition, *Wounded Knee* was the end of the people he called the Sioux, and “for the Indians of the West, there was no choice but to submit to the new life.”¹²³ In his preface to the second edition published in 2004, Utley confesses that his title is incorrect because clearly the people he still calls the Sioux continued to exist beyond 1890. However, Utley insists that he would not change his description of the massacre, arguing that the soldiers who opened fire have been wrongly judged by history. “They strove to spare old men, women, and children,” Utley argues, “massacre it may be called, a stigma the army will always bear and never succeed in explaining to a public that believes otherwise.”¹²⁴ Utley’s research is meticulous, but in his pursuit of telling the army’s story in detail he strays into apologetic.¹²⁵ Despite his claim in *Custer and Me* that he is “part of those later generations and, endowed with new insights and perspectives, participated in the quest for balance,” as late as 2004, Utley clings to the old narrative framework for *Wounded Knee*.

Throughout Utley’s scholarship, he consistently reifies old narratives frameworks for the Plains Wars. After *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation*, he published a series of books focusing on Indian wars veterans’ experiences on the frontier. His *Indian Frontier in the American West* account of the Battle of the Greasy Grass acknowledges white encroachments on Lakota treaty territory and calls Custer an invader but even his 2003 revised edition continues to present the

¹²² Utley. *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), xvi-xvii. Utley writes “From the beginning, few influences exerted themselves more powerfully upon the frontier than the Indians who resisted the westward advance of the white man... Only when the Indian barrier had been pierced, pushed back, and finally destroyed did the frontier of settlement spread farther into the wilderness.” The term “Indian barrier” dominates textbook narratives about westward expansion.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 285.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, xv.

¹²⁵ For all the meticulous research and excellent analysis Utley presents in *Last Days*, his account fails to explain that the decision to appease Indian Agent Daniel Royer and send Miles to Pine Ridge, as well as Miles’ decision to mobilize a response to the Ghost Dance incited the massacre. Heather Cox Richardson offers a better analysis in *Wounded Knee: Party Politics and the Road to an American Massacre* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

narrative framing that casts Native nations as consistent instigators of conflict. “These “northern Indians” stirred up constant trouble,” the section begins, casting tribal nations as provocateurs. The text continues to frame Native people not as sovereign inhabitants as recognized by treaty, but says instead “While on the reservation, they kept the agencies in turmoil, for they were ungovernable, a danger to white officials, and a bad influence on the agency Indians.” Further, Utley notes “While off the reservation, they did not always keep to the unceded hunting grounds guaranteed by the Treaty of 1868, but sometimes raided along the Platte and among the Montana settlements at the head of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers.”¹²⁶ Although Utley’s correspondence indicates a genuine desire to pursue Native sources and report them fairly in his accounts of the Plains Wars, especially the Greasy Grass, Utley’s work presents a perspective firmly planted on the side of the Seventh Cavalry.¹²⁷ His 1993 biography of Sitting Bull, *The Lance and the Shield*, in which he sought to correct Campbell’s historical analysis using the same source material from One Bull and White Bull. In terms of sources, however, Utley prioritizes Euro-American and Canadian authorities, and writes that he relied heavily upon reporting in the *Bismarck Tribune*, one of the more sensationalized and anti-Native newspaper sources for the conflict.¹²⁸ Even when writing a book focused on the Hunkpapa holy man, Utley employs the framework of a triumphalist American narrative.

In addition to propping up that old narrative framework with his writing, Utley actively dismissed and at times denigrated Native pushback against that narrative. Writing about the critical reception of *The Lance and the Shield*, Utley says “with one exception—a sour

¹²⁶ Utley. *The Indian Frontier, 1846-1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 175.

¹²⁷ Utley even recruited colleagues to the reimagined Order of the Indian Wars, a group predominantly composed of enthusiasts and descendants with the purpose of preserving and promoting Indian wars memory favorable to the U.S. military. Chappelle to Utley, September 6, 1979. Robert M. Utley Collection, Box 5, Folder 2

¹²⁸ Utley, *The Lance and the Shield*, 317-9.

commentary by the editor of the *Lakota Times*—the media greeted the book enthusiastically... *The Lance and the Shield* was clearly my best book to date and may turn out to be the best of my writing career.”¹²⁹ Elsewhere in the memoir he similarly dismisses criticism from a colleague, citing her Native identity in an attempt to discredit her critique. He writes, “One scholarly reviewer, an Indian woman, castigated me in fierce terms not only for failing to blanket the blue-clad butchers of Indians with unqualified opprobrium but for daring to write a serious book about them at all.” Utley relies on the popularity of the books on the market as his justification, concluding “Nonetheless, both *Frontiersmen in Blue* and *Frontier Regulars* are still in print and considered the standard authorities on the subject.”¹³⁰ It is understandable that Utley would bridle at the criticism. His book is about the U.S. army, and he had not set out to present a multipolar history of the conflict. Again, however, his research led him to develop an affinity for his subjects to the point that he acted as their defender.

In neither instance does he name his critic, and he conjures anti-Native prejudice within the academy by specifically identifying his unnamed reviewer as Native in an attempt to discredit her criticism on the basis of her assumed bias. Utley is even less civil in writing about a confrontation with American Indian Movement leader Russell Means at the centennial anniversary of the battle in 1976. Claiming with pride “I had helped face down Russell Means,” Utley dismisses any legitimacy behind AIM’s objection to the celebration of the U.S. army’s role in the Plains Wars, saying “The zealots cared for the historical record only as it could be twisted to fortify their campaigns.”¹³¹ Utley explains the ways in which the National Park Service toned

¹²⁹ *Custer and Me*, 218-9.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 237, 150. Utley also boasts of his standoff with Means in his correspondence a few years after the commemoration saying “I was last there [the ‘Custer Battlefield’] on the 100th anniversary, when I gave the principal speech to an audience surrounded by Russell Means’ AIM storm troopers.” Utley to Marcus A., February 7, 1979. Robert M. Utley Collection, Box 4, Folder 5.

down plans for an elaborate commemoration in response to shifting public attitudes about the role the military played in violence against Native peoples, a shift Utley claims is the result of uninformed sentiment rather than fact-based historical opinion. He simply failed to see the sentiment at work in his own historical opinion.

Writing derisively of AIM's presence that day, Utley says "Custer's rollicking battle song," was interrupted by "thumping Indian drums... The Indians, it seems, had gathered almost as stealthily on this battleground as they had a century earlier." Utley's description of Means and AIM members borrows heavily from anti-Native tropes of inherent violence and backwardness, referring to "he [Means] and his little army..." and "the tirade Russell Means delivered..." In contrast, Utley says his address offered "an appeal to avoid corrupting history and this battlefield for the purposes that Russell Means and his demonstrators were at that very moment inflicting the corruption," but that appeal was ineffective because "Means had left his palace guard behind... a dozen beefy Indians in red berets ringed the seated assemblage and stood with folded arms and scowling visages."¹³² Tensions were high enough that day to delay a wreath-laying ceremony and curtail the planned "Custer Reride," a reenactment troupe who had to stop at the park boundary because NPS would not issue a permit, a decision Utley derides as shameful cowardice. Over decades of writing about the Plains Wars by focusing on, corresponding with, and even advocating for U.S. army veterans, Utley's work upholds narrative framing that valorizes the U.S. war on Native nations of the late nineteenth century. That his early published work would do so is no surprise given scholarship of the time. That he would respond to Means and AIM with such open contempt and hostility in 1976, while disappointing, is understandable given the tensions surrounding the Red Power movement and Utley's affinity for the subjects of

¹³² Ibid., 152-3.

his books. That he would continue to deride Native critics and write proudly of his contempt for Means and AIM in a memoir published in 2004 is evidence of the pervasive influence of the national mythos of Manifest Destiny, even in the academy. Such a strong mythos could not help but appear in U.S. history textbooks.

Conclusion: Custer in the Textbooks

Identifying the sources that textbook authors used to create their narratives is difficult, and sometimes impossible. Textbooks do not follow the academic convention required detailed citations, and unless authors discuss a source explicitly in editorial correspondence or include it in a list of suggested readings in the text, researchers can only make educated guesses based on linguistic clues or knowledge of the author's other academic work. More often than not, it seems textbook authors' sources were earlier textbooks. With the Custer fight, rhetorical flourishes and the selection of specific details to include can help link textbook narratives to sources from historical writing and popular culture, but those links can only rarely be positively identified. The strongest evidence for the influence of Greasy Grass historiography on textbook narratives is often the fact that textbook narratives seem to incorporate new details about the conflict within ten years of those details appearing in the historiography and popular literature.

In keeping with the popular understanding of the battle, most textbook accounts across the decades present the events of the day in highly sensationalized terms. Authors wrote of a war that "raged on murderously," Custer and his men were either massacred or slaughtered in nearly every account, "their bodies mutilated," the Lakota violence a "desperate stand... to save their homes"¹³³ Most textbook accounts, even those omitting large amounts of detail about the battle,

¹³³ Susan Pendleton Lee. *A School History of the United States*. (Richmond, VA: B.F. Johnson Publishing Company, 1895), 561; Latané, 546; Willis Mason West. *The History of the American People* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1928), 477.

are accompanied by dramatic paintings and etchings of the imagined “Custer’s Last Stand,” underscoring for student readers the romantic tragedy of the defeat and the brutal violence of Sitting Bull’s warriors. Even into the 1970s, textbook accounts of the Battle of the Greasy Grass bore extraordinary rhetorical resemblance to the valorized accounts of the battle peddled by Elizabeth Custer, praised at OIW banquets, printed in dailies on battle anniversaries, and published in best-selling histories of the conflict. Patterned on all those sources, the textbook narratives relied upon the manufacture of white innocence and valorization of the U.S. Army’s actions in order to tell students the thrilling tale.¹³⁴ Above all, they relied upon the celebrity of Custer to frame army exploits on the Plains after the Civil War.

The narrative framing of the Battle of the Greasy Grass in U.S. history textbooks mirrors the framing the battle received in early newspaper accounts, memoirs, fictionalizations, reenactments, and many formal histories. As Utley framed the Wounded Knee conflict in *The Last Days of Sioux Nation*, Native people in these textbook accounts are presented primarily as “the Indian barrier.” Their presence on the Plains presents a threat to American expansion, and textbooks begin most accounts of Plains Wars history by explaining Native presence not as indigenous, historical, or preemptive to white settlement, but rather simply as an obstacle. In 1919, William Backus Guitteau writes “the desperate resistance of the Sioux was a hopeless struggle, the final stand of the Indian against the tide of civilization.”¹³⁵ In 1925, Carl Russell Fish frames the wars as necessary protection of stage lines and settlers, both vital elements in westward expansion.¹³⁶ In 1946 Adams and Vannest’s text opened its section on the wars with “a most important problem in the West was that of the Indian,” and in the same year Latané’s

¹³⁴ For a full discussion of the authorial and editorial decisions that embedded these accounts in textbooks, as well as the failure of attempts to remove Custer from the narrative entirely, see Ch. 5 of this dissertation.

¹³⁵ William Backus Guitteau. *Our United States* (New York: Silver, Burdett, 1919), 493.

¹³⁶ Fish, 426.

proclaimed “the Indians of the West, despite their lack of numbers and organization, stubbornly opposed the advance of the white man.”¹³⁷ Although most textbooks named lawless miners and belligerent settlers as the immediate catalysts of violent conflict in the Black Hills, most ended their accounts with statements not unlike William Porter Shortridge’s that in the conclusion of open warfare with Native nations on the Plains, “the final outcome in all cases was the same, the victory of civilization over savagery.”¹³⁸ Bookended by Native belligerence and the triumph of U.S. progress, Custer’s defeat at the Greasy Grass added both drama and dimension to these far-too-brief accounts of warfare on the Plains.

Most textbooks embraced the drama of the story of Custer, including its early controversies over Custer’s conduct. The first textbook appearance in Steele’s 1885 *A Brief History of the United States* includes the criticism that Custer charged “without waiting for support.”¹³⁹ Most textbooks took a position of some kind on Custer’s culpability, ranging from explaining that Custer was surprised by the enemy to claiming “impetuous Custer led his cavalry in a reckless manner.”¹⁴⁰ In the 1940s, several textbooks even reminded students that the ferocity of the Native response to Custer was in revenge for his merciless attack on women and children at the Washita.¹⁴¹ The authors’ opinions of Custer’s role in the disaster often coincides with whether they label him as general or lieutenant-colonel in the text. Regardless of what position

¹³⁷ James Truslow Adams and Charles Garrett Vannest. *The Record of America* (New York: Scribners, 1946), 466-7. Latané, 544.

¹³⁸ Wilson Porter Shortridge. *The Development of the United States* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1929), 510-1.

¹³⁹ Steele, 292-3. Interestingly, Steele’s account left students to conclude that while Custer and his men fell in battle, the Seventh Cavalry managed to pull off a victory after all. Steele explains that Reno found himself surrounded until help arrived, and then “The Indians were soon beaten on every hand.”

¹⁴⁰ Nathaniel Platt and Muriel Jean Drummond. *Our Nation from its Creation: A Great Experiment* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 462. In 1915, Edward Eggleston writes that the disaster was Reno’s fault for not supporting Custer. Edward Eggleston. *New Century History of the United States* (New York: American Book Company, 1915), 365-6.

¹⁴¹ Latané, 546; Adams and Vannest, 466-7; Oliver Perry Chitwood, Frank Lawrence Owsley, and H.C. Nixon. *The United States from Colony to World Power* (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1949), 573.

each author takes on Custer's conduct, these narratives all present his defeat as exceptional to the course of the Plains Wars. Even in accounts describing other Native victories in warfare, both structurally and often explicitly the Custer defeat remains an anomalous and short-lived victory of Native nations.

Textbook narratives of the Greasy Grass fight also function as a concession to Native military prowess. While the earliest accounts, especially those published while wars with Native nations were ongoing in the U.S. Southwest, are careful to emphasize the superior military power of the U.S. and inevitable Native defeat, within that framework textbook authors also recognized the skill, or sometimes at barest minimum the ferocity, of Native leaders and fighters. Sitting Bull's name first appears in D.H. Montgomery's 1897 *A Student's American History*, casting him as a villain by saying "the Sioux Indians led by 'Sitting Bull' massacred the gallant General Custer and his entire force near the Black Hills in Dakota territory."¹⁴² Most textbook accounts published before 1970 took up the same theme, describing Native participants as "fierce warriors," "especially difficult to subdue," "hostile tribes," and "the proud and warlike Sioux."¹⁴³ Sitting Bull appears as war chief in most textbook accounts, although in Thomas Bailey's 1966 *American Pageant*, in comparison to "the lithe and impetuous George A. Custer, the buckskin-clad 'boy general'" Bailey presents Tathanka Iyotake as "heavy-set... a medicine man as wily as he was influential." Bailey notes as sarcastically as a textbook allows that Sitting Bull did not fight the Seventh Cavalry that day because he "was safely 'making medicine' in his tent."¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Montgomery, 544. Oddly, this brief sentence is the only mention of the Sioux War of 1876 in Montgomery's text.

¹⁴³ In his 1920 *History of the American People*, West even used the notorious ferocity of the Sioux to describe Germany's depredations during World War I, saying "Germany soldiery became brutalized... [they] committed thousands of nameless outrages upon women and Sioux-Indian mutilations upon captives." (711) The comparison is especially telling given that West certainly could have chosen to draw from a rich history of descriptions of Germanic tribes' violence to make his point, but instead drew a comparison with "Sioux-Indians."

¹⁴⁴ Bailey, *American Pageant*, 1966, 567. Bailey's entire approach to Native history, and especially criticism to his treatment of Native history in *American Pageant* is problematic. See chapter 6 for elaboration.

After Bailey's text, Sitting Bull disappears from the textbooks again, receding into descriptions of "the Indians" on the opposite side of the battle, leaving Custer center stage once more.¹⁴⁵

From its first appearance in 1885 through the 1970s, and even into the present, the textbook narrative of the famous Battle of the Little Big Horn follows the "deeply worn set of ruts" Patricia Limerick identifies in textbook accounts of western history.¹⁴⁶ As Brian Pohanka notes in his introduction to Brininstool's *Troopers with Custer*, "No engagement in American military history has generated more interest than the battle of the Little Big Horn... greatest disaster to befall a U.S. Army contingent – and thus the most significant Indian victory – in the struggle for territorial and cultural domination of the western frontier"¹⁴⁷ Those ruts, ground into American public memory through Wild West shows, pulp fiction, and westerns, were fundamentally shaped and continuously reintroduced to the public through the efforts of Indian wars veterans working with western historians. Those same efforts, expressed through remarkably similar narratives, remained at work in classrooms around the country long after the films and books that inspired them went out of circulation and the veterans who promoted them passed away. In textbooks, the Battle of the Greasy Grass reflects the tangle of popular and professional history, of Custermania and attempts to shape that enthusiasm into something respectable. Together with accounts of the Nez Perce and Modoc Wars, the Little Big Horn narrative in U.S. history textbooks continues to play a central role in valorizing the history of the 'Wild West' and sidelining Native history in favor of U.S. triumphalism.

¹⁴⁵ After the 1980s, Sitting Bull returns to textbook accounts both by name in descriptions of the battle and often in special inset boxes featuring interesting facts about historical figures, like in *The Americans*, 2007. This inclusion does not, however, substantially change the narrative structure of the Plains Wars at large or of the Battle of the Greasy Grass specifically, which remains patterned after early accounts that blame Native people for the violence and then erase them from the main narrative of U.S. history.

¹⁴⁶ Patricia Nelson Limerick. "The Case of the Premature Departure: The Trans-Mississippi West and American History Textbooks." *Journal of American History* Vol 78 no 4 (March 1992), 1380-1394.

¹⁴⁷ *Troopers*, xiii.

Chapter Three

‘I Will Fight No More Forever’

The Joseph Myth Dominates Textbook Narratives of the Nez Perce War

On the Fourth of July in 1877, a twenty-six-year-old self-described tramp printer named John Watermelon Redington found himself stranded in Salt Lake City with a horse who could go no further. Redington had hitched a ride west from Cambridge, Massachusetts three years earlier by joining the state’s Volunteer Militia, then left the service and traveled further West “because they would not allow boys to go hunting and fishing on Sundays.”¹ In Salem, Oregon Redington took work as a printer’s devil, but finding apprenticing tedious and ambitious to start a career of his own, he set out for the Texas-Mexico border in the spring of 1877. His “Oregon horse” only got him as far as Salt Lake City, just as news broke of the brewing Nez Perce War where his efforts to land an assignment as a special correspondent for Salt Lake City newspapers failed. Ever the self-promoter, Redington wrote directly to Idaho Territorial Governor Mason Brayman, whom he had met and “nearly talked...to death” earlier, asking for transportation to “the front” to enlist as a volunteer. Brayman declined, leaving Redington stranded far from the war he knew could make his career. He telegraphed in response “Want to go to the front—Want to go *Bad*. Horse too tired to start back. Horse markets too dull to sell him for enough ticket to ticket me through. Will try to and make some arrangements to get back.”² However he managed it, he later wrote that he “headed back up into Idaho at an 80-mile-a-day gait” and served as a scout for the duration of the war.³ And, as planned, he turned his experiences fighting the Nez Perce and

¹ J.W. Redington to Elmo Scott Watson, n.d., Elmo Scott Watson Papers, Box 23, Folder 331..

² Redington to Brayman, July 4, and 13, 1877. *Nez Perce War Letters*. Idaho Historical Society. Ayer Modern MS, Newberry Library, Chicago.

³ Redington to Watson, n.d., Elmo Scott Watson Papers, Box 23, Folder 331.

Bannock nations into a printing career. In his retirement he maintained a robust correspondence with fellow veterans as well as historians of the Modoc, Nez Perce, and Bannock wars.

J.W. Redington exemplifies the problematic complexity of the primary source base of the wars against Native nations in the U.S. West after the Civil War. A participant who joined the fight in order to get closer to the story, a scout whose journalistic ambitions were evident enough that Lieutenant Charles Erskine Scott Wood mistook him for one of the unit's two embedded newspaper correspondents, and author of one of the most heavily-cited soldiers' accounts of the Nez Perce War by virtue not of the centrality of his service to the conflict but rather his enjoyable eccentricity as a willing pen pal to historians later in life, Redington presents a robust interpretive challenge to scholars of the wars in the West.⁴ His published accounts, and others like them, are not the only ways in which he influenced the narrative shape of the wars he witnessed. Earl Alonzo Brininstool, Lucullus McWhorter, Elmo Scott Watson, and other historians who consulted with him did not simply read his account of scouting under General Howard in 1877. They maintained lengthy correspondence with him, and those correspondences were peppered with his requests to use his story to convince the War Department and Congress to include scouts such as himself in government pension plans.

A man who peppered his accounts with phrasing worthy of a page in Charles Portis' *True Grit*, Redington's force of personality drew western historians to him.⁵ Though they read him critically and presented rebuttals to his embellishments, historians ultimately wrote histories as pronounced by Redington and other Plains Wars veterans, epic battles facilitating titanic clashes

⁴ Although Wood remembered Redington as a reporter, he did not think highly of the scout, saying he "came from Salt Lake City to join the command in order to get a mount." Sara Bard Field Wood to Watson, 12 February 1942, Elmo Scott Watson Papers, Box 48, Folder 773.

⁵ Redington routinely reported from the "Wheelchair Weather Bureau" and reported his progress in the National Soldier's Home in finding employment "winding up the sun dial in front of the public library, and on cloudy days taking it apart to find out why it did not tick." Redington to Watson, 27 March 1927, Elmo Scott Watson Papers, Box 23, Folder 331.

of noble heroes and worthy adversaries. As the history of the U.S. West developed from sensationalized reporting, dime novels, and wild west shows into a professional historical field, it was often defined by the charisma of its historical characters. Wedding the appeal of “big man” history to the romance of the fading U.S. West, western history became a pantheon of larger-than-life figures in a climactic fight for the future of the United States. No conflict is more clearly defined by non-Native portrayals of its Native antagonist than the story of Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce War of 1877.

The story of the Nez Perce War has been dominated since its first appearance in print by one personality: Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt, or Chief Joseph as he was known in the popular press. With writers elevating his centrality to the events of the war from the earliest reports of conflict, the story of the war became the tale of “Young Joseph,” the mastermind of one of the greatest military escapades in modern history. Like Sitting Bull, Geronimo, and other Native leaders famous in non-Native writings, Joseph’s role in his tribe’s history is inflated, misunderstood, mischaracterized, glorified, and, at times, demonized. But Joseph’s myth is a unique example of Native celebrity, one that resists falling into the easy structure of the typical white narrative of the “Indian story.” And as that story changed over time in the pages of Nez Perce history, though historians exerted significant effort debunking its details, the Joseph myth persisted. An unusually persistent and flexible myth, the legend of Joseph presents white culture with a Native who non-Natives want him to be, one who accepts his fate, absolves their guilt, and upholds their western history fantasies. Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt, along with the Nez Perce, exist in the pages of history in Joseph’s shadow.

The Joseph Myth, sometimes the Red Napoleon Myth, presents Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt as three things: a brilliant tactical military genius who orchestrated the flight down to the last

detail, an eloquent orator whose speeches rivaled those of the greatest statesmen in western history, and the emblematic chief of the Nez Perce people. While some myths about Native leaders grew slowly over time, the Joseph Myth sprang forth nearly fully formed during the conflict. It originated with military field reports from the Nez Perce flight, mostly those authored by commanding General Oliver O. Howard. Eager to maintain his tenuous command despite multiple blunders, Howard reported an Indian foe whose uncanny brilliance explained the army's failure to contain him. But inventing a monumental Joseph didn't simply absolve his command of their bumbling pursuit.⁶ Elliot West writes "Howard was also following the line the government's agents had taken for more than thirty years: pulling the Nez Perces into the national embrace, projecting onto them a single identity with one man at the top. It was what the government needed and expected."⁷ Though he would later continue to reinvent the story of the Nez Perce flight to his own advantage in subsequent books on his experience in the Indian wars, in his initial reports Howard portrayed a Joseph who was uniquely gifted as a military strategist with an almost supernatural power to slip through the competent army's grasp.

The Joseph Myth did not take hold in the public imagination simply due to Howard's reports of Joseph's military prowess. The Nez Perce already occupied an unusual spot in the American public consciousness. Known as a peaceful group who had consistently befriended non-Natives going back to their first encounter with Lewis and Clark, the outbreak of the Nez Perce War played very differently outside Idaho than within it. While local outrage at 'Native outrages' dominated early newspaper coverage near Lapwai, the American public was

⁶ Col. C.E.S. Wood's letters with Watson contain repeated references to maintaining Howard's image in the face of critical newspaper coverage, and Howard maintained that defensive posture after the war ended, including his insistence that the *North American Review* publish his rebuttal to Joseph's account of events from the *Army and Navy Journal*., Howard concluded his article with his chief concern: "Now I find eastern newspapers insisting that if Joseph's statements are borne out by the facts of history, General Howard should be removed from his department." *North American Review* 128 (April 1879): 53-64.

⁷ Elliot West, *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 162.

immediately skeptical of the causes of the Nez Perce revolt. However, national newspaper coverage of the flight of the Nez Perce was unusually sympathetic to the Native side of the story, and reporters uncharacteristically delighted in the blunders of the U.S. military as it unsuccessfully pursued the fleeing Nez Perce.⁸

Early in both military reports and newspaper accounts of the war, Joseph became the center of non-Native attention. Due to his central role as negotiator in the talks that, breaking down, led to the conflict, to the public the non-treaty Nez Perce became “Joseph’s band” and all military victories of the Nez Perce seemed the result of his careful, calculated planning. Not much could be further from the truth. Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt was the head of his band, but no war chief. During combat, he guarded the women and children, guiding them to safety, and stampeded the horses to keep them out of the army’s hands. Nez Perce leadership was decentralized, and though a prominent warrior usually suggested a general battle plan, Nez Perce combat was an exercise in skillful improv.⁹ But nineteenth-century U.S. culture at large had no category for that sort of leadership, so everyone from Howard to the newspapers rewrote it into terms they could understand. Partly because he was the last surviving chief of the non-treaty Nez Perce present at the Battle of the Bear’s Paw to surrender, partly due to his prominent role as diplomat during the initial negotiations with Howard that sparked the war, and partly because it was just too good a story not to tell, Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt emerged from the war, in non-Native eyes, as the undisputed and brilliant general of the Nez Perce people, selflessly trying to save his people from greedy white encroachment on his father’s lands.

Sourcing the Nez Perce War

⁸ Jerome Greene, *Nez Perce Summer 1877: The U.S. Army and the Nee-Me-Poo Crisis* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 2000), 350-351.

⁹ West, *The Last Indian War*, 158.

By the time the Nez Perce War erupted, the American public expected to read coverage of Indian wars in daily and weekly newspapers. The explosion of coverage following Custer's surprising defeat on the Little Bighorn had expanded the market for stories of Indian fighters, and both editors and ambitious correspondents were happy to provide that content. While other conflicts with Native nations featured scores of reporters who often blurred the line between reporting on action and participating in it, however, the Nez Perce War was sparsely covered with only one accredited correspondent embedded with U.S. troops. Thomas A. Sutherland, correspondent for the *Portland Standard* who sold pieces to the *New York Herald* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, rode with General Howard and doubled as a volunteer aide-de-camp alongside Lieutenant Wood. Two other correspondents, the *New York Herald's* Jerome Stillson and *Chicago Tribune* rookie Charles Sanford Diehl, traveled with Miles expecting to cover his peace commission with Sitting Bull. Instead, they found themselves left behind at Fort Benton as Miles fought at Bear's Paw and accepted the Nez Perce surrender, reporting the end of the war from word-of-mouth information via a private courier they hired to take their dispatches to the nearest telegraph station in Helena.¹⁰

To say that the newspaper accounts of the war were somewhat dramatized is an understatement. Later in his autobiography, Diehl recalled writing his story of Bear Paw "by candlelight, in a cold army tent" at Fort Benton in the midst of rereading Charles Lever's *Charles O'Malley*. Seeing his report in print, he pondered "whether I could have embodied all the swing of battle stir, had I not, that day, been fighting with the valorous O'Malley, in the Spanish Peninsula."¹¹ For Diehl, who credited Stillson with mentoring him during the war, the

¹⁰ Knight, 294-6. Stillson got his start in the industry as a reporter at the front during the Civil War. When his postwar job as managing editor failed to offer the same fulfillment, he resigned and asked to be sent to the front on the plains.

¹¹ Charles Sanford Diehl. *The Staff Correspondent* (San Antonio: Clegg, 1931), 15.

measure of good reporting of the Plains Wars was the ability to produce a thrilling story.

Sutherland approached his reporting in a similar manner, although the drama in his accounts largely sprang from the stark contrast he drew between the Nez Perce's peaceful history and the military brilliance of their flight. Upon later reflection in his published volume about the war, Sutherland, the embedded reporter and volunteer, underscored the valorization of the soldiers under Howard's command he relied on while reporting from the field. "Through the entire chase after Joseph (unparalleled in warfare), the foot-sore soldiers never once flagged, and no officer in the entire command was more anxious than they to reach the Indians..." Not content with valorizing the action before him, Sutherland makes it the template for American soldiery, writing "This is the stuff our American soldiers are made of. And when they were in actual combat, *not a man flinched*, and when they were told to charge, a yell of delight went up, and not a living soul held back. This is the American soldier as we found him by actual contact."¹² Like the reporters who covered the Modoc War, the Battle of the Greasy Grass, and wars with Native nations following the Nez Perce flight, Sutherland presented the soldiers he observed as the tip of the spear in securing the western frontier for American democracy.

It may be that Sutherland's reporting constitutes the vast majority of the war's accounts that a news maven would encounter during the war. One series of accounts that most influenced public memory of the conflict appeared in *Harper's Weekly*. Although *Harper's* does not name "our correspondent," similarities between Sutherland's articles and his 1878 published volume *Howard's Campaign Against the Nez Perce Indians, 1877* strongly suggest that he provided much of that publication's coverage.¹³ The series of articles exhibits the ways in which

¹² Thomas A. Sutherland. *Howard's Campaign Against the Nez Perce Indians 1877*. Excerpted in Peter Cozzens, ed. *Eyewitnesses to the Indian Wars, 1865-1890*. (Stackpole Books: Mechanicsburg, PA: 2002), 404.

¹³ Both the *Harper's Weekly* account of Joseph's surrender and Sutherland's version of that account published a year after the conflict made specific and glowing mention of Yellowstone scout George Huston. Some historians have

correspondents and editors wrestled with their desire to follow the template for Indian war reporting established by earlier conflicts like the Modoc War and Custer's defeat at the Little Bighorn. It was a narrative structure guaranteed to attract readers, but it did not fit the story of the Nez Perce, the tribe already legendary for popular stories of welcoming Lewis and Clark and sending emissaries to ask that the Gospel be brought to them.¹⁴ At first, *Harper's* tried to satisfy both expectations by casting Joseph as "not properly a chief, but merely a scalawag Indian who has gathered a band of disaffected warriors about him for the purpose of making a war or rapine and plunder on the whites."¹⁵ Within a few weeks, however, shaped either by a correspondent's changed opinion or readers' response, *Harper's* reports Joseph as "the redoubtable Indian warrior... a man of intelligence and strength of character."

The tone of the *Harper's* coverage shifted significantly on September 1, 1877 as the correspondent made considerable effort to present the Nez Perce point of view, even while reporting that the Nez Perce left Lapwai to encourage all their allies "to make war to the bitter end."¹⁶ *Harper's* continued to remind its readers of the common narrative of Indian wars even as it carved out the Nez Perce as an exception to their trajectory, reporting in an article placed two pages after the report of Custer's funeral that "the Indians betrayed none of the brutality usually manifested to wounded prisoners in their hands prior to their surrender, and while fighting

speculated that Charles Erskine Scott Wood submitted the surrender piece to *Harper's* because he famously took down Joseph's surrender speech and later wrote about being at the surrender. In a letter to historian Lucullus McWhorter in 1941 and 1942 that "never heard of George A. Huston any more than you have" and he did not draw the accompanying sketches that *Harper's* said the correspondent drew. "The Surrender of Joseph," *Harper's Weekly* 17 November 1877, 906; Sutherland, *Howard's Campaign*, 405; Sara Bird Field Wood to Lucullus McWhorter, 3 January 1942, Elmo Scott Watson Papers, Box 48, Folder 773.. Field Wood to McWhorter, 23 July 1941, Elmo Scott Watson Papers, box 48, Folder 773.

¹⁴ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, historians and pamphleteers reported an embassy of four young Nez Perce boys who came to St. Louis in 1831 to ask that missionaries be sent to their people to preach the Gospel. Alvin Josephy, Jr. presents a more analytical account of the expedition in *The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the Northwest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 84-94 (abridged edition).

¹⁵ "The Nez Percés Campaign," *Harper's Weekly* 18 August 1877, 643.

¹⁶ "Chief Joseph," *Harper's Weekly* 1 September 1877, 680.

stubbornly as long as they could, acted in a surprisingly civilized manner.”¹⁷ When the time came to recount the Nez Perce’s surrender, *Harper’s* tone shifted yet again to one of complete sympathy. After recounting the frantic flight of Joseph’s young daughter during the Bear’s Paw fight, the report outlines Joseph’s surrender speech, noting “Joseph has a gentle face, somewhat feminine in its beauty, but intensely strong and full of character. A photograph could not do him justice.” Even the article’s later mention of the bravery of citizen scout George A. Huston fails to mention any violence committed or danger presented by the Nez Perce, leaving only their tragic but noble defeat in its pages.¹⁸

Harper’s Weekly’s coverage of the Nez Perce War became the controlling narrative in the decades following the surrender at Bear’s Paw. While thrilling reports from the front had captured readers’ attention, it was the publication of Joseph’s famed surrender speech that became the focus of most reporting in the days and weeks following the war. Initially appearing simultaneously in the October 26, 1877 editions of the *Chicago Times* and *Bismarck Tri-Weekly Tribune*, the speech exhibited the traits that would define Joseph’s image to the eager American public. Gracious in defeat, manly in his grief, stoic in facing his fate at the hands of his U.S. enemies, the Joseph in these newspaper accounts offers one of the most eloquent speeches attributed to Native history.

Tell General Howard I know his heart. What he told me before I have in my heart.
I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed. Looking-Glass is dead. Ta-hool-hool-shoot is dead. The old men are all dead. It is the young men who say yes or no. He who leads the young men is dead. It is cold and we have no blankets. The little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run away to the

¹⁷ “The Nez Percés War,” *Harper’s Weekly* 27 October 1877, 842.

¹⁸ “The Surrender of Joseph,” *Harper’s Weekly* 17 November 1877, 906.

hills and have no blankets, no food; no one knows where they are—may be freezing to death. I want time to look for my children and see how many of them I can find. May be [sic] I shall find them among the dead. Hear me my chiefs: I am tired. My heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands I shall fight no more forever.¹⁹

On the heels of Miles' surprisingly swift victory over the formidable Nez Perce, only two weeks after Custer's full military funeral at West Point, and after months of coverage detailing the abuses the Nez Perce had endured before their attempt to flee to safety with Sitting Bull in Canada, the speech struck a sentimental chord. Easily the most widely republished report of the entire war, the speech immediately found its way into the pages of *Harper's Weekly*, the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Daily Inter-Ocean*, and then recirculated through periodicals of all kinds, from local dailies to subscription magazines like *The Graphic* and *Century*.²⁰

The speech became central to the story of the Nez Perce War in part because it presented such an appealing image of a Joseph as worthy, noble adversary. The circumstances surrounding the speech, and especially its reporting, contributed to the speech's appeal. Newspaperman John Andrew Rea, who described himself as "the whole newspaper world at Bis.[marck] at that time," met Howard as he disembarked from his trip down the Missouri River to telegraph his dispatch to General Philip Sheridan. Bismarck's was the closest telegraph office to the fighting for most of the war, and all information passed through that office. Rea, who served as managing editor for the *Minneapolis Tribune*, editor for the *Bismarck Tri-Weekly Tribune*, editor of the Dakota

¹⁹ "Joseph's Speech in Full," *Bismarck Tri-Weekly Tribune*, 26 October 1877, 3.

²⁰ For detailed treatment of the publication history of the Joseph surrender speech and its influence on non-Native perspectives on Native history, see Thomas H. Guthrie "Good Words: Chief Joseph and the Production of Indian Speech(es), Texts, and Subjects" *Ethnohistory* 54:3 (Summer 2007), 509-546. Huruo Aoki conducted a detailed study solely focused on the early newspaper republication of Joseph's speech in "Chief Joseph's Words" *Idaho Yesterdays* 33:3, 16-21.

edition of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, and correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York Herald* all at the same time, was determined to scoop Sutherland, Stillson, and Diehl, and convinced Howard to let him read the official report. Rea later wrote “I ate it up. Great pudding. Sheridan read it in the *Chicago Tribune* (my paper too) next morning before he had seen it in his office.” Furious, Sheridan ordered an investigation on the leak, but thanks to the discretion of Rea’s “friendly telegraph operator” Sheridan’s investigator traveled 350 miles and returned without a suspect.²¹ Excerpts of the report and Joseph’s surrender speech continued to be republished across the country.

For such a widely-circulated, well-known speech, its origins remain murky. Miles’ and Howard’s official reports of the surrender were brief and straightforward without reference to the speech itself. Later in life, Howard’s aide-de-camp, Wood insisted that only he, Miles, and Howard witnessed the surrender personally, later writing to historian Lucullus McWhorter, “I remember this surrender more clearly than the events of the last year.”²² Possibly due to its immediate, wide dissemination, and its subsequent romanticization in the press and early published accounts of the war, details of the surrender vary from account to account. Most accounts agree that two men with familial ties to the Nez Perce went into the camp on the fourth day of fighting to negotiate a surrender, and after those who disagreed fled north with White Bird, Joseph met Miles, Howard, and Wood to formalize the surrender. Wood claims on multiple occasions that although “No one was told to take it down,” he recorded the speech “for my own

²¹ John Andrew Rea to Heister Dean Guie, 19 October 1930, Elmo Scott Watson Papers, Box 48, Folder 750. Rea’s actions provoked a public relations battle between Howard and Miles waged in the pages of national newspapers. C.E.S. Wood, incensed that the papers had published a report that gave Miles more credit than Howard for the successful conclusion of the war and, feeling that earlier reports had unfairly labeled Howard incompetent, wrote a public rebuttal. Though both generals personally downplayed the conflict, their competition for credit continued in the pages of their published memoirs where each tried to portray himself as the general most feared and later befriended by Joseph.

²² Wood to McWhorter, 31 January 1936, Elmo Scott Watson Papers, Box 48, Folder 773.

benefit as a literary item.”²³ Though the circumstances remain unclear, Wood’s version of the speech appeared in newspapers on the heels of news of the surrender itself.²⁴ Despite the fact that the speech was far more likely Wood’s embellishment of a creation of volunteer scout and translator Ad Chapman given the fact that Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt did not speak English, Joseph’s surrender speech became the defining text of the Nez Perce War before the Nez Perce even made it to their imprisonment at Fort Leavenworth. It was on the way to Fort Leavenworth that Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt realized the celebrity that newspaper coverage had created for him, and the negotiating power his growing popularity with white Americans could offer him.

When Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt and the Bear’s Paw survivors arrived at Bismarck with Miles’ escort, the residents greeted the travelers with a cheery band and dishes of hot food. At a banquet that evening in his honor, Miles told those in attendance of Joseph’s reluctance to fight, his generosity and humane treatment of captives, and his peaceful surrender. The next evening, inspired by Miles’ words and the reported surrender speech, the people of Bismarck threw a second banquet, inviting Joseph to be their guest. With Ad Chapman translating, Hin-mah-tooyah-lat-kekt took the opportunity to speak of the injustices done to his people and their simple desire to return home. Local and national newspapers published correspondents’ reports of the banquet speech and Miles’ adulation, and as the army transported the Nez Perce to Fort Leavenworth, Joseph’s celebrity was such that at each stop crowds gathered to catch a glimpse of him and demanded that he give one of his eloquent orations.²⁵ Despite weariness, hunger, and the

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Wood reported in multiple letters and published accounts that his original copy, which he turned over to the Adjutant General of the Army for archival purposes, went missing at some point before he was able to include it in the autobiography he wrote in his later years.

²⁵ Few people were more delighted with Joseph’s celebrity than Rea, who reported that while Joseph and Miles were camped in Bismarck awaiting further orders, “I was in clover, Miles, my friend, and all that happened during their stay was my monopoly. I was a monopolist. Had no rivals...” Sutherland, Stillson, and Diehl, all attached to General Howard’s company, had gone with Howard into Canada to meet with Sitting Bull as planned before being diverted

strain of caring for his people as they struggled to survive the long journey, both to Fort Leavenworth in the dead of winter and then months later, in the height summer, to the Quapaw Agency in Indian Territory, Hin-mah-too-yah-lat kekt obliged.²⁶

Settled in Indian Territory and realizing the danger the climate, disease, and dishonesty of Indian agents presented to his people's survival, Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt turned again to Joseph as a means of keeping Nez Perce interest a matter of national concern. Assisted by his nephew He-Mene Mox Mox (Yellow Wolf) and with the translating help of Ad Chapman, Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt traveled to Seneca, Missouri to meet with representatives of a special joint congressional commission tasked with investigating Indian agents' fraudulent treatment of relocated tribes. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Ezra Hayt was so moved by the testimony that in the fall of 1878 he traveled into Indian Territory with Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt, He-Mene Mox Mox, Chapman, and the rest to scout a new settlement location for the Nez Perce.²⁷ Joseph, however, seeing the power his words had, requested a presidential audience in Washington, D.C.

After several failed attempts to secure permission to travel, it was Joseph's relationship with A.B. Meacham that facilitated his trip to Washington, D.C. Meacham's work on the Modoc Peace Commission and its disastrous result for the Modoc people inspired him to advocate for reform in Indian affairs.²⁸ In Washington to pursue reform efforts and publish his Indian reform

to the fight at Bear Paw. Rea to Guie, copied from a letter dated 1935, Elmo Scott Watson Papers, Box 48, Folder 750.

²⁶ Kent Nerburn presents a compelling account of the Nez Perce's journey from Bear Paw to Indian Territory, details gleaned from local newspaper reports along the way. Although his work somewhat dramatizes the events rather than presenting scholarly analysis, the depiction of non-Native reaction to Joseph during the journey is accurate. Nerburn, *Chief Joseph and the Flight of the Nez Perce*. (New York: HarperOne, 2005), 303-328.

²⁷ Struck by the depth of corruption and suffering of the Nez Perce under Indian Agent Hiram Jones during their time at the Quapaw Agency, Ad Chapman, once a foe of the Nez Perce, now a sympathetic advocate, began his own newspaper letter-writing campaign on behalf of the Nez Perce and exposing the injustice they were facing under Jones. Nerburn credits Chapman's efforts with putting significant public pressure on the Bureau of Indian Affairs to take the allegations seriously. Nerburn, *Chief Joseph*, 338-342.

²⁸ Of interest for the web of connections among the three Plains wars in this study, Nez Perce War scout J.W. Redington was A.B. Meacham's son-in-law and, as a result, wrote several published accounts of the Modoc War and

newspaper *Council Fire*, Meacham knew Joseph from his service at the U.S. Superintendent of Indian Affairs in Oregon. When he received word that Joseph wanted to petition for the Nez Perce in Washington, Meacham arranged the trip. Joseph spoke in Lincoln Hall on the evening of January 17, 1879, dressed in full regalia, embodying the image of Joseph that the audience expected to see. The *North American Review* published a rough transcription of his speech, which was then reproduced and excerpted in other forms, from newspapers to subscription journals and memoirs.²⁹ Joseph's account was buoyed by a series of articles in *The New North-West* that had been running since April 1878. Duncan McDonald, a relative of Nez Perce chiefs Looking Glass and White Bird was hired by Captain James Mills to record a Nez Perce account of the conflict from the eyewitnesses who had successfully evaded capture and crossed the Canadian border. Chapman's letters, McDonald's reporting, *Harper's Weekly's* sympathetic account, the surrender speech's dissemination, Joseph's celebrity appearances all laid crucial groundwork for Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt and He-Mene Mox Mox to wield public sympathy and secure the Nez Perce's return to the Pacific Northwest.³⁰

The Joseph Myth Becomes History

corresponded with Elmo Scott Watson about the merits of Jeff Riddle's book on the war. Redington to Watson, November "Something" 1930, Elmo Scott Watson Papers, Box 23, Folder 331.

²⁹ Young Joseph. "An Indian's View of Indian Affairs," *The North American Review* 128 (April 1879), 412-33. Nerburn's *Chief Joseph* contains a detailed account of the address and audience response, 348-354.

³⁰ The sympathy for Joseph was not universal, and as Thomas Biolsi notes in his study of tensions along reservation borders, *Deadliest Enemies*, hatred and prejudice are often strongest where Native and non-Native communities are in closest contact and perceive themselves to be competing for finite resources. Outrage among white settlers near Lapwai prevented Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt from returning to the Wallowa Valley, and he died at Colville having never returned home. Resentment of the Nez Perce lived longer than the survivors of the war in the pages of books like Norman B. Adkison's *Nez Perce Indian War and Original Stories* (Grangeville, ID: Idaho County Free Press, 1966). The *Idaho County Free Press* published harsh and prejudiced recollections of the Nez Perce War in the late nineteenth century, and continued to support publications like Adkison's, which purported to restore to public memory "the horrors of this regrettable and unnecessary conflict... children, whose minds were seared forever by scenes of brutal murder of their fathers and mothers." He concludes in his introduction "It must be remembered that Joseph's mother was a member of the cruel, treacherous tribe, the Cayuse, that committed the Whitman Massacre."

Early histories of the conflict reflect the influence of the Joseph Myth on the Nez Perce War narrative. Howard published multiple volumes in which Joseph remained the only leader of the Nez Perce. In *Famous Indian Chiefs I Have Known*, Howard is careful to tell the reader that Joseph extended friendship to him when they met again at a Carlisle Indian School graduation, further solidifying his own reputation as a brilliant general who not only defeated the most brilliant Indian leader of all, but also secured the chief's respect and eventual friendship.³¹ In *Massacres of the Mountains*, published in 1886 just months after the group was finally allowed to return to the Northwest, J. P. Dunn, Jr. opens by saying "The meanest, most contemptible, least justifiable thing that the United States was ever guilty of was its treatment of the Lower Nez Percés."³² While for most defeated Native leaders the transition from enemy to celebrity took time, the sympathy cultivated in war reporting made that transition unnecessary for Joseph. He had already achieved it. Even in the pages of the Indian Wars veteran publication *Winners of the West*, accounts of the war focused on soldiers' bravery and Joseph's brilliant leadership.³³

In academia, the Joseph Myth evolved during three distinct phases in historical writing about the Nez Perce War. Initially inspired the sensationalized newspaper reporting of eager war correspondents bored with only skirmishes on the frontier to report since 1865, early histories unsurprisingly leaned heavily on the side of the United States Army and the creation of exciting narratives with larger-than-life characters. One of the first and most influential sources for these histories is General Oliver O. Howard's 1881 account of the Nez Perce War of 1877, *Nez Perce Joseph: an account of his ancestors, his lands, his confederates, his enemies, his murders, his*

³¹ O. O. Howard, *Famous Indian Chiefs I Have Known* (New York: The Century Co., 1908), 194.

³² J. P. Dunn, Jr. *Massacres of the Mountains: A History of the Indian Wars of the Far West* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2002), 629.

³³ *Winners of the West* was both the most accessible means Indian Wars veterans had to publish their accounts and a vital tool the United Indian War Veterans Association and Order of the Indian Wars used to valorize their members' service in order to argue for increased military pensions.

war, his pursuit and capture. This is a book that casts Joseph as the enemy chief, militarily brilliant, ruthlessly brutal, and thankfully defeated. Howard's experience in the Nez Perce conflict was fraught with difficulty as he faced constant criticism for the Army's bungling pursuit of the bands and fought off attempts by officers back East to remove him from command.³⁴ His book, then, published while the Nez Perce were still in Indian Territory and petitioning the federal government to return to the Pacific Northwest, is Howard's self-vindication.³⁵

Claiming that Joseph was a belligerent who reneged on his promise to move to the reservation at Lapwai, steeped in "superstition and ignorance... the result to these have been murder, loss of country, and almost extermination" and instigated a bloody rebellion that was only stopped by the extraordinary brilliance of Howard's command, the story the general tells is one of violence and daring courage, but not an accurate one.³⁶ Although later authors like Dunn, Jr. rejected Howard's narrative of his own actions, the Joseph Myth stuck. In most historical accounts before World War II, Chief Joseph is the Red Napoleon, a Fenimore Cooper archetype of the suffering, stoic Indian who is reluctant to enact violence, brilliant on the field of battle, and accepting of defeat. But as decades wore on that image was due for a change, and Lucullus Virgil McWhorter was eager to correct it.

McWhorter was a farmer in Washington who, one day, saw a Nez Perce man riding through his property with a second horse in tow. The man rode to McWhorter and, pointing at his lame horse, asked in broken English if he could leave the animal there to recuperate and come back for it later. McWhorter agreed, and thus began the long friendship with a man he

³⁴ West, *The Last Indian War*, 212.

³⁵ It is a vindication that evidently worked, judging by the laudatory obituaries published upon Howard's death, most of which mention his role in the war.

³⁶ Howard, *Famous Indian Chiefs*, iii.

called Yellow Wolf, He-Mene Mox Mox, a nephew of Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt and survivor of the Nez Perce flight who, after a brief exile in Canada, returned to the Pacific Northwest where he lived at Colville.³⁷ As their friendship developed, so did McWhorter's empathy for the Nez Perce people and especially Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt. Over the next few decades, McWhorter dedicated himself to collecting the Nez Perce side of their own story.³⁸

Though methodologically and organizationally his work was something of a mess, McWhorter succeeded in laying the groundwork for questioning the entire narrative of the "last Indian war," based on McWhorter's claim that "contrary to Indian custom, history has accorded Chief Joseph unqualified preeminence over his four associate chiefs... The bare facts in Chief Joseph's career were sufficient without fictional embellishment by friendly, overzealous writers."³⁹ Published in 1940, McWhorter's *Yellow Wolf, His Own Story* suggested motives from the United States military and Treaty Nez Perce descendants for creating the myth of Joseph, but the most valuable contribution McWhorter's work makes for the history of the Nez Perce conflict is his insistence on questioning non-Native assumptions about Native political structure. Although anthropologist Herbert Joseph Spinden raised questions about centralized authority vested in one all-powerful chief among the Nez Perce as early as 1908, McWhorter's is the first non-Native historian's account to explain the decentralized nature of decision-making within Nez Perce tribal structure in detail.⁴⁰

³⁷ Steven Ross Evans, *Voice of the Old Wolf: Lucullus Virgil McWhorter and the Nez Perce Indians* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1996), 7-8.

³⁸ McWhorter fully embraced the Nez Perce point of view, so far as he was able, going so far as to date his letters with his idea of the Nez Perce calendar, using phrases like "Hunger Moon" instead of calendar months, as evidenced in correspondence with Elmo Scott Watson and Earl A. Brininstool.

³⁹ Lucullus Virgil McWhorter and Ruth Birgitta Anderson Bordin, *Hear Me, My Chiefs! Nez Perce History and Legend* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Publishers, 1952), 178-179.

⁴⁰ Herbert Joseph Spinden, "The Nez Percé Indians" *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association* 2 (Millwood, NY: Krause Reprint, 1974), 242-243. McWhorter's claim also coincides chronologically with John Collier's era at the Bureau of Indian Affairs. It is not unlikely that BIA-promoted renewed interest in helping Native cultures preserve their historical traditions would encourage scholars to reexamine assumptions like the ones that

The 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s saw an explosion of books about Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt and the Nez Perce, each one careful to point out Joseph's absence from actual fighting during the flight. However, most of these works continued to mythologize Joseph as the political leader of the fleeing Nez Perce, and with the exception of Nez Perce historian Allen P. Slickpoo, they merely replaced the myth of Joseph the Red Napoleon with the myth of Joseph the Red Cicero. Francis Haines emphasized Joseph's military power, and even tried to replace the Red Napoleon moniker with Red Hannibal, because "there is no resemblance between him and the little Corsican."⁴¹ Newly sympathetic accounts of the Nez Perce conflict continued to revolve around a Joseph who gave incredible speeches, ordered extraordinary restraint on the field of battle, and delegated military authority to warriors more capable than himself. But non-Native historians did not avoid Joseph glorification. Only Slickpoo's narrative, "one of the first of its kind, written by an American Indian as an answer to the many books that have been written by non-Indian authors and consequently present a non-Indian view of Indian history" portrayed Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt as a minor band leader with good diplomatic skills who became spokesman for the remaining Nez Perce while in Indian Territory by virtue of being the last chief present at the surrender.⁴² The substance of the Joseph Myth persisted.

That persistence began to falter in the next decade. M. Gidley published *Kopet*, an account of the end of Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt's life told through the words and photos of white men who knew him at Colville. Focusing on Joseph's later years, Gidley aims to offer "rather

ignored Nez Perce leadership practices, and perhaps in that context McWhorter's arguments found greater reception than Spinden's did several decades earlier when complete assimilation was a more widely held goal for Native peoples both in government and U.S. society.

⁴¹ Francis Haines, *Red Eagles of the Northwest: the Story of Chief Joseph and His People* (Portland: Scholastic Press, 1939), 218.

⁴² Allen P. Slickpoo, *Noon nee-me-poo (We the Nez Percés): Culture and History of the Nez Percés* (Lapwai: Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho, 1973), iii. Slickpoo's text is one of the few not heavily influenced by forces of settler personality like Redington, but unfortunately the book did not see wide circulation, allowing Indian war veterans to continue their disproportionate role in shaping the narrative of the war.

more in the way of interpretation than information, a rounding out of the received version of Joseph's figure so that he appears more human... Indeed, his mythical status brought into question somewhat..."⁴³ The narrative tends to focus more on the point of view of the non-Natives than the chief himself, but Gidley's account argues that the Joseph Myth is distinct from myths that grew up around other "celebrity Indians" of the period like Sitting Bull and Geronimo. Moreover, Gidley notes the way the Joseph Myth dominates Nez Perce history. It is a theme Kent Nerburn also found in his own research (which was largely field work) that "This sort of hero worship fit perfectly within the American penchant for glorifying the individual, but it stood in direct opposition to the fundamental native believe that the group was more important than any individual member. Yet it was only through Joseph that the Nez Perce retained any cultural status or visibility."⁴⁴ Though later historians cite McWhorter and Alvin Josephy, Jr. more often than Gidley, *Kopet* appears in their bibliographies and Gidley's argument serves as a solid foundation for the next phase of the Joseph Myth that dominated Nez Perce histories of the 1990s and 2000s.⁴⁵ Before Gidley, most historians refuted the military side of the Joseph Myth while perpetuating the diplomatic side of it. But starting with David Lavender's *Let Me Be Free* in 1992, scholars begin to target the diplomatic side of the myth as well. In these newer works, Joseph became a minor character in the Nez Perce flight rather than its architect.

⁴³ M. Gidley, *Kopet: A Documentary Narrative of Chief Joseph's Last Years* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, Inc., 1981), 5.

⁴⁴ Kent Nerburn, *Chief Joseph*, xix-xx.

⁴⁵ Josephy wrote one of the most influential histories of the Nez Perce War, his 1965 *The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the Northwest*, after a friend introduced him to McWhorter's *Hear Me My Chiefs!* and *Yellow Wolf: His Own Story*. After spending time with McWhorter's then-uncataloged papers at Washington State University, meeting with Nez Perce people, including Allen Slickpoo, and seeing the way the war continued to divide the Nez Perce along factional lines, he writes that he "was firmly committed to writing a narrative history that would make Chief Joseph and the injustice done to the Nez Perce Indians once again well known." Josephy, Jr. *A Walk Toward Oregon: A Memoir* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2000), 250.

And yet, to refute the Joseph Myth, scholars had to address it. Arguing that Joseph is not the main character still manages to place Joseph squarely in the center of each narrative. With the exception of Slickpoo's *Noon Nee-Me-Poo*, each monograph remains the story of Joseph. Each tends to tell the story of what Joseph did not do rather than of what he did. As Gidley writes in *Kopet*, at Joseph's grave there is a small tree "that grows beside the grave and bends over it, shading it from the full glare of the harsh sun... In a similar way, our present-day vantage point of the Nez Perces and their chief is one more fully overarched by the myth of Joseph."⁴⁶ The Joseph Myth casts its shade over the written history of the Nez Perce in such a way that no historian can ignore it. It dominates the story, even when scholars try to push it back.

In the past two decades, historians have spent a substantial amount of their time examining the Nez Perce War trying to explain the Joseph Myth. After McWhorter's initial conclusion that "why he has received credited for engineering the great retreat is something of a mystery, symptomatic perhaps of the white man's great ignorance of his Indian adversaries," anyone who published a book about the Nez Perce was compelled to devote some section of the book to explaining the inconsistency between Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt's actual role in the flight and the contradictory popular myth of Joseph's actions surrounding it.⁴⁷ Until Slickpoo's *Noon Nee-me-poo* in 1972, those refutations consisted largely of debunking the myth of Joseph's military role. By the 1990s, most historians also chipped away at Joseph's mythic role as chief as well, though with the exceptions of Nerburn's *Chief Joseph and the Flight of the Nez Perce* and West's *The Last Indian War*, few books mention (much less explore) the ways that Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt used the myth about himself to advance the cause of the Nez Perce to the U.S. public.

⁴⁶ Gidley, *Kopet*, 19.

⁴⁷ McWhorter, *Hear Me, My Chiefs!*, 502.

In 2004's *Chief Joseph, Yellow Wolf, and the Creation of Nez Perce History in the Pacific Northwest*, Robert R. McCoy explores several reasons for the resilience of the myth, not least of which is "the ways in which academics appropriated the Nez Perce story to enhance their own regional and national identities."⁴⁸ McCoy's argument for regional use of mythologized Native history applies outside the study of the Joseph Myth. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn argues that the narrative of white superiority in American history makes American historians "congratulatory narrators" whose work legitimizes any exercise of power the United States exerted in the past, and any it wishes to exert in the future.⁴⁹ In *The Settler's Empire*, Bethel Saler argues that Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis is a "field-defining argument" that recast all of American history in the light of expansionism. Under Turner's influence, state historical societies and the studies they funded "become evidence of the ongoing nature of national and individual state formation."⁵⁰ And, indeed, many early accounts of the Nez Perce War found publication in the journals of state pioneer associations and state historical societies. The inevitability of the white conquest of Native peoples lies at the heart of those narratives. If McCoy is right that the Joseph Myth fits this pattern, addressing it has implications for far more than an accurate understanding of the history of the Nez Perce War. In addition, it is precisely the inevitable white conquest of Native nations that embedded the Nez Perce War into U.S. history textbooks.

The Textbooks' Exceptional Joseph

⁴⁸ Robert R. McCoy, *Chief Joseph, Yellow Wolf, and the Creation of Nez Perce History in the Pacific Northwest* (New York: Routledge, 2004), ix.

⁴⁹ Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, *A Separate Country: Postcoloniality and American Indian Nations* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2012), ix.

⁵⁰ Saler, 302-303.

Despite a near-total absence from textbooks published in the nineteenth century, the Nez Perce War emerged as one of the three Plains Wars conflicts that appear most frequently in twentieth century U.S. history textbooks. Unlike the template narratives of the Modoc War and the Battle of the Greasy Grass, however, the Nez Perce War's textbook narrative fluctuates widely. These fluctuations reflect both the struggle scholars and popular writers faced in incorporating the unusual war into existing narrative structures for "Indian fights" as well as the developing uneasiness with which textbook authors approached the narratives of westward expansion over the course of the twentieth century. As with other textbook Plains Wars coverage, the Nez Perce War narrative is firmly anchored in the earliest accounts of the conflict, disconnected from developments in historical scholarship, and manipulated to serve as a concise exemplar that outlines the enactment of manifest destiny. Unlike the Modoc War and Greasy Grass, however, the details of the Nez Perce War and its inextricable identification with the fantasized person of Chief Joseph led textbook authors to use the war as an object lesson more often than as a reported event. Textbooks often frame the Nez Perce War in ways that acknowledge the injustice of their treatment under westward expansion, illustrate the hopeless resignation of Native people in the face of white settlement, and, in some textbooks, offer an optimistic coda to the otherwise tragic narrative of Native history.

The Nez Perce War begins to appear consistently in high school U.S. history textbooks published just at the turn of the twentieth century. As historians do throughout Nez Perce War historiography, and mirroring newspaper coverage of the conflict and personal memoirs of its participants, textbook authors present the war focused on Joseph's personality and exceptionalism as a leader of an exceptional people. John William Jones describes Joseph as "able and skillful" in his 1901 *School History of the United States*, Riegel and Haugh call Joseph

“the ablest of the Indian leaders” in their 1948 *United States of America: A History*.⁵¹ Thomas Bailey wrote in *The American Pageant* that “Chief Joseph, a noble and unusually humane leader, established himself as a remarkable strategist,” and Caughey, Franklin, and May take up the same theme in their 1971 *Land of the Free*, reporting that Joseph “led a masterly retreat.”⁵² Edward Eggleston’s 1915 *New Century History of the United States* further endears students to the Nez Perce, saying that “one little Indian war” was notable, largely because “they killed no women or children and did no scalping,” a phrase lifted nearly word for word from various newspaper accounts, memoirs, and even Sherman’s own assessment of their conduct.⁵³

From the textbook narratives’ first crafting, and consistently across a century of publications in various publishing houses, the Nez Perce War departed from the Indian wars pattern depicting ferocious enemies standing in the way of progress. Instead, textbooks present the “peace-loving Nez Perce” as the wronged party, victims of “gold-crazed white miners” and “goaded into warfare” to preserve their own lives.⁵⁴ Textbook authors who chose not to mark the Nez Perce conflict as exceptional to the Indian wars pattern usually omitted any details of the war of 1877, instead listing Joseph alongside Red Cloud and Sitting Bull as leaders of the “last stand” of Native nations.⁵⁵ Gertrude Hartman seems to have such trouble framing the conflict in her 1952 text that she only reports the arrival of missionary families the Spaldings and the Whitmans to Wallowa Valley, fails to identify their Native congregation as Nez Perce, and ends

⁵¹ John William Jones. *School History of the United States* (Baltimore: R.H. Woodward Company, 1901), 414;. Robert E. Riegel and Helen Haugh. *United States of America: A History* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1948), 453-4.

⁵² Thomas A. Bailey. *The American Pageant* (Boston: Heath, 1966), 567. John Walton Caughey, John Hope Franklin, and Ernest A. May. *Land of the Free: A History of the United States* (New York: Benziger, 1971), 443.

⁵³ Edward Eggleston, *New Century History of the United States* (New York: American Book Company, 1915), 369.

⁵⁴ Platt and Drummond, title, 462 and Bailey, *American Pageant*, 1966, 567.

⁵⁵ The “last stand” framing is particularly popular among textbook authors to describe the post-Civil War conflicts with Native nations.

the narrative neatly in 1842 without any reference to the 1877 war, or the murders of the Whitmans which preceded it.⁵⁶

Presenting Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt and the Nez Perce in a more sympathetic light than other Native resisters offered textbook authors the liberty to speak more frankly about the injustice that inspired Native resistance. Lacking the broad cultural pressure that pushed the American Book Company to restore Custer's story to the narrative and maintain the valor of the Seventh Cavalry's sacrifice on the Little Bighorn, textbook authors use the Nez Perce War narrative in a way that offers a minor counterbalance to the triumphalist settler narrative of manifest destiny that the textbooks present.⁵⁷ Still casting the Nez Perce primarily as obstacles to U.S. expansion and placed under section headings like "The Plains Indians Hinder Settlement," textbook authors present more sympathetic contextualization for Nez Perce resistance than they offer the Modocs or Oceti Sakowin. Riegel explains the Nez Perce's decision to reject the U.S. military's demands to surrender their homeland as the only way to survive, saying, "Joseph realized that he had to resist, run away or be annihilated. In this extremity he started toward the east..."⁵⁸ Platt and Drummond note that the Nez Perce "were proud that for many years not a single member of their tribe had killed a white man, until they were so shabbily treated by prospectors," and *History of a Free People* listed the flight toward Canada as one of the "heroic deeds" undertaken by Native peoples.⁵⁹ Mitchell Okun and his co-authors separate the Nez Perce War from other Plains wars entirely and cast their flight as the work of people seeking freedom, not mere antagonists to manifest destiny. "The Plains tribes were not the only Indians to resist

⁵⁶ Hartman. *America: Land of Freedom* (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1952), 348-9.

⁵⁷ For more on the American Book Company's struggle over including Custer in Rueben Post Halleck's 1923 *History of Our Country for Higher Grades*, see discussion in chapter three of this dissertation.

⁵⁸ Riegel, 453.

⁵⁹ Nathaniel Platt and Muriel Jean Drummond, *Our Nation from Its Creation: A Great Experiment* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 462. Henry w. Bragdon and Samuel P. McCutcheon. *History of a Free People*. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1967), 413.

the American government. Another group, the Nez Percé, became famous for their struggle to remain free. In 1877 the federal government decided to enforce a treaty that would confine the Nez Percé to a reservation in Idaho,” they write. The text casts Joseph as a reluctant warrior who only acted because his people demanded it, saying “Their leader, Chief Joseph, did not want to fight, but, when his people refused to surrender, he felt he had no choice.” One the decision was made, Joseph becomes the sole leader of the doomed flight. The text describes “Chief Joseph led his tribe toward Canada, where they could live in peace. The Nez Percé walked 1,500 miles through the snow, suffering terrible hardships... The army caught up with them thirty miles from the border, and forced them to surrender. They were then sent to a reservation.”⁶⁰ Noting the chief’s reluctance to fight and stoic perseverance in the hardships of the flight, Okun’s account, more than any of the others, reflects the Joseph Myth clearly.

Textbooks rely heavily on Joseph’s reported surrender speech to tell the story of the Nez Perce War, and that reliance both props up Joseph as an exemplar of nobility among Native peoples and reinforces the narrative of the vanishing Indian that pervades Plains Wars accounts in textbooks. *History of a Free People* describes the speech as a speech that “summarized the hopelessness of the Indian cause.”⁶¹ Ten years earlier, Boller and Tilford presented a portion of the speech in a special inset box with only the most minimal explanation of the conflict it ended. In U.S. history textbooks, garbled as it was from its first printing, the Joseph surrender speech serves as a simple “explanation for giving up the struggle against the white man.”⁶² It springs naturally from the myth of the Red Napoleon, brilliant military tactician and gifted orator, and serves as an assuring end to the narrative of conflict with Native people during westward

⁶⁰ Mitchell Okun, Stephen F. Bronz, William N. Murphy, and Helene P. Jennings. *The Challenge of America* (New York: Holt, 1973), 421, 423.

⁶¹ Bragdon and McCutchen, 413.

⁶² Platt and Drummond, 462.

expansion. A noble, willing surrender, followed immediately by a section detailing the work of Helen Hunt Jackson's *A Century of Dishonor* and, by the 1930s, bestowing citizenship upon Native people provides a tidy, optimistic ending to the romanticized merry wars on the Plains. As Howard sold a public, performative friendship with Joseph in his memoirs, so the textbooks sell a noble Joseph's genteel laying down of arms to soften the army's brutal war of annihilation on the Plains. In fact, the 2007 McDougal Littell *The Americans*' only mention of the Nez Perce is a special inset box that glowingly highlights the new construction of a federally-funded cultural center in Wallowa Valley. Opening with the explanation that the Nez Perce were "forced off their tribal lands in Wallowa County Oregon, in 1877," the textbook erases the war entirely, offering students an account of a reconciliation with no mention of the conflict requiring one.⁶³

Textbook constructions of white innocence are inextricably tied up in textbook insistence on simplifying narratives. As John Faragher noted in his presidential address at the 2016 meeting of the Western History Association, "the standard practice in American education is to put off the introduction of profane history—the dark realities that so complicate the exceptionalist narrative," opting instead for a unified narrative extolling the progressive fulfillment of the ideals of American democracy without mentioning the fact that those same ideals were foundational justification for many of the unjust practices the textbooks cast as obstacles to their fulfillment.⁶⁴ When the "dark realities" are finally introduced, they are presented as counterpoints rather than central pieces of the narrative, sidebars in the textbook or supplemental sources, but not turning points in the main storyline. Since the progressive education reforms of the early twentieth century, history educators have designed curriculum that asks students to wrestle with the

⁶³ Gerald A. Danzer. *The Americans* (Orlando: Holt McDougal/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012), 208.

⁶⁴ John Mack Faragher, "'And the Lonely Voice of Youth Cries: 'What is Truth?': Western History and the National Narrative" *Western History Quarterly* (2016): 4, Accessed October 22, 2016. doi 10.1093/whq/whw196.

complexity of our shared history, but they have met resistance from politicians, administrators, textbook publishers, and civil society groups in every decade. In order to understand how the inverted narrative of the Plains Wars persists in U.S. history education despite more than a century of education reform efforts to correct it, it is necessary to understand the history of those efforts and the individuals behind them.

Chapter Four

Erasing the Lava Beds Fight

The Modoc War and Its History of Disappearing from History

The Modoc War burst into dailies around the country in January 1873. Initially a skirmish between Modocs and settlers that was only reported in regional papers, the January 17 Battle for the Stronghold, an unexpected and costly defeat for the U.S. Army, caught national attention and sent newspaper editors scrambling to send reporters to the “front.” The *New York Herald* was so desperate to avoid being scooped it sent its yachting editor, Edward Fox. Robert D. Bogart was first on the scene, riding from Yreka to write for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*. He would not last the duration of the war, recalled by his editors on March 5, 1873 without explanation, possibly due to his acerbic coverage of the government-appointed peace commissioners, possibly because his criminal history caught up with him.¹ The *Sacramento Record* sent along local institution H. Wallace Atwell, better known to his readers as “Bill Dadd the Scribe,” and Alex McKay followed, on assignment for the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*. Less than a decade after the end of the Civil War, and on the cusp of what journalism historian Elmo Scott Watson identified as three decades of newspaper syndicate expansion and unprecedentedly fierce competition, the Modoc War provided a perfect focal point for newspapers to build what they hoped would be lucrative narratives.²

The Modoc War was one of the first major “Indian wars” of the 1870s. Like all military conflicts with Native nations after the Civil War, the roots of the Modoc War stretched back to

¹ Bogart had been convicted in 1869 of embezzling funds while navy paymaster during the Civil War and fled rather than serve his sentence. The historical record is silent on whether he was ever recaptured. Oliver Knight. *Following the Indian Wars: The Story of the Newspaper Correspondents Among the Indian Campaigners*. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 138.

² Elmo Scott Watson. *A History of the Newspaper Syndicates of the United States, 1865-1935*. Chicago: The Publishers' Auxiliary, 1936), 16-17.

the first encounters between Modoc people and white settlers. Living along what settlers named Lost River just northwest of Tule Lake on the California-Oregon border, the Modocs first maintained cordial trade relations with employees of the Hudson Bay Company in the 1820s and 1830s. When the Oregon Trail brought white settlers through Modoc territory seeking a shortcut around the mountains without regard for Modoc sovereignty, they provoked raids that prompted vigilante and federal troop responses. As time passed and prospectors discovered gold in northern California at the end of the 1840s, rather than passing through white settlers began to stay, exacerbating conflict with Modoc, Klamath, and Yahooskin Snake nations.

White settlement dramatically changed Modoc life. The establishment of Yreka and its outlying ranches offered the opportunity for Modocs to use their horse knowledge as ranch hands, and as white settlers curtailed Modoc self-sustenance, Yreka offered customers for sex workers and a small market for goods. Many Modocs learned English and secured work as interpreters and guides throughout the region, and some married white arrivals. Violence continued between the groups as more settlers arrived, and local vigilantes tried to take matters into their own hands. In November 1852, Ben Wright, self-appointed ‘Indian fighter’ and militia leader, rode into a Modoc village under a white flag of truce, then ordered the men with him to open fire, massacring men, women, and children.³ Skirmishes continued until the federal government established Fort Klamath just north of present-day Klamath Falls, Oregon in 1863 and sent judge and Indian agent Elijah Steele to negotiate a treaty with the Modocs, Klamaths, and Yahooskin Snakes in February 1864. That treaty’s language was vague on the topic of

³ Schonchin Jim, one of Keintpoos’ closest companions, escaped the Ben Wright Massacre but lost his family. Keintpoos’ father was among those killed in Wright’s treachery. Wright was rewarded by being named Indian agent for southern Oregon and northern California, but only served until February 25, 1856 when he was killed by Chetcoe Jennie, a Modoc interpreter he had attempted to rape and then beaten senseless in the streets of Port Orford, Oregon in December 1855. Cheewa James. *Modoc: The Tribe That Wouldn’t Die* (Happy Camp, CA: Naturegraph Publishers, 2008), 25-8.

Modoc homelands along the Lost River, and the Indian Bureau rejected it in favor of another negotiated in October 1864 by different agent.

The later treaty stipulated that the Modocs must move to the new Klamath Reservation near Fort Klamath. Some, led by Old Schonchin, did so. Others insisted on recognition of the Steele treaty and left the reservation to return to their home along Lost River. With white settlers pouring into the region and refusing to respect Modoc homelands, Modocs both fought back and continued their relationships with ranching families as hands until the army's attempt to enter Keintpoos' and another village (identified with Hooker Jim) on November 29, 1872 erupted in violence. After a civilian militia led by Oliver Applegate shot and killed two women and a baby in the other village, Hooker Jim led several men to retaliate, killing men and boys at settlements along Lost River.⁴ That same night Keintpoos and the rest of the Modocs retreated across Tule Lake and the California border to the lava beds that became "Jack's Stronghold." The Modoc War had begun.

In 1873, in the wake of the high tide of war reporting from the Civil War, the appeal of covering an Indian war was compelling. Watson writes, "When Appomattox stilled the guns of the Civil War, it brought a new problem to the American newspapers. For four years they had been filled with war news... Now that the nation had settled down again to the humdrum of civilian life, editors hoped for an acceptable substitute for the daily drama they had been giving their readers."⁵ The Modoc War offered newspapers another opportunity to capitalize on "graphic, first-hand accounts of skirmishes, raids, sieges, and battles" which previous post-Civil

⁴ Modoc historian Cheewa James notes that Hooker Jim's party did not discriminate between friendly white settlers and those who had participated in the raid on his village, however they were careful only to kill men and boys, sparing women and girls. In his account, Jeff Riddle (some of Tobey Riddle, later Winema) writes that the Modocs asked the white settlers to stay in their homes, but they refused. According to Riddle, Bogus Charley even told one of the women "Soldier kill our women, gal, baby, too. We no do that." Riddle, 47.

⁵ Watson, "The Indian Wars and the Press," *Journalism Quarterly* 17 no. 4 (December 1940), 301.

War military engagements like the conflict with Lakota people during Red Cloud's War had not managed to offer.

The Modoc War was a turning point for frontier war reporting as well. As journalist and historian Oliver Knight notes, it was "the first campaign of the Western War to be covered extensively, it was the first in which newspapers competed energetically to be first in print with the news, and it was one of the earliest of all wars in which the pool was used in war reporting."⁶ In many ways, coverage of the Modoc War set a pattern for the conflicts that would follow, both for the national dailies and illustrated weeklies like *Harper's Weekly* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. The number of reporters present, the length of time the conflict took to unfold, their access to the Native leaders involved in the conflict, and their papers' emphasis on the reporters' own heroic feats to get the story all set expectations for readers and editors that other correspondents would try to meet in the coming decades of war on the Plains. In the context of the post-Civil War settlement boom enabled by the Homestead Act, as well as the explosion of frontier press and its marriage of convenience with boosters across the rural West, Indian war reporting became a genre of its own, uniquely poised to shape the memory of an eager, westward-facing public. The correspondents of the Modoc War enthusiastically led the way.

The war's popularity in the press, its timeline of events that allowed reporters the leisure to construct colorful profiles of its key characters, and the U.S. military's close attention to the conflict all created a wealth of materials concerning the war. In addition, the timing of the war

⁶ Knight, *Following the Indian Wars*, 155. The press pool Knight refers to is the now-common practice of reporters combining resources and coordinating their information-gathering in order to produce a report that all could share. In this case, reporters took turns riding out to observe negotiations and events of the war, then wrote their individual stories from shared information. Their cooperation did not mean they were not in competition with each other to claim exclusives or wire the first report.

enabled peace commissioner Alfred Meacham to commercialize his experience by organizing a lecture tour featuring Kaitchkana, a Modoc woman known as Tobey Riddle who served as translator for the Peace Commission. At the height of nineteenth-century popularity for performative memory of the U.S. West, Meacham's presentation of Riddle as 'Winema' romanticized the conflict and helped create an audience for his own publications as well as *The Indian History of the Modoc War*, written by Riddle's son. Early histories of the wars with Native nations in the post-Civil War West like J.P. Dunn's 1886 *Massacres of the Mountains* and Cyrus Townsend Brady's 1907 *Northwest Fights and Fighters* featured the Modoc War as a conflict on the same level of importance as the Battle of the Greasy Grass. But the Modoc War fell into obscurity in the early decades of the twentieth century, only reemerging in Native history scholarship in the past decade. Between Meacham's 1875 *Wigwam and Warpath* and Boyd Cothran's 2014 *Remembering the Modoc War* only a handful of monographs examined the war as their main topic. In secondary U.S. history textbooks, the conflict disappears after the early 1920s. Despite all its credentials as the sort of compelling event scholars adore, heavily-sourced, culturally popular, and militarily significant, in the early twentieth century the Modoc War was misplaced.

The Modoc War grew out of the long, abusive history of Euro-Americans in California against the land's Native peoples.⁷ Until the January 17, 1873 battle at the Lava Beds, however, the string of skirmishes had not captured public attention. In fact, most observers familiar with Modoc history had thought reports of the November 29 battle along Lost River must have been

⁷ Two recent histories, Benjamin Madley's *American Genocide* and Brendan Lindsay's *Murder State*, link the Modoc War to California's longstanding policy of extermination against Native peoples. As Lindsay remarks, "Why the Modocs would choose this course [attacking the Peace Commission] was clear in the article: decades of broken promises and treaties, lies and double-dealing, theft of land, and numerous attempts to exterminate them by policy and by violence." Lindsay. *Murder State: California's Native American Genocide, 1846-1873*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 335.

exaggerated if not fabricated entirely. The *San Francisco Chronicle* sent Robert Bogart to investigate. Bogart arrived breathlessly demanding news of the battle, and a prankster telegraph operator in Yreka amused himself by stringing Bogart along, sending him on aimless trails, pretending to take him to the Lava Beds to interview “Captain Jack”.⁸ However, when the U.S. army attack on the Modoc stronghold failed spectacularly on January 17 leaving around forty soldiers killed or wounded and the Modocs unscathed, editors knew they had a reporting goldmine on their hands.

The race to cover the Modoc War gave its reporting an unusual character. Later military conflicts with Native nations erupted suddenly and tended to follow more standard patterns of engagement than the fight in the lava beds. Reports in later conflicts generally came from newspaper correspondents embedded with a particular military officer’s command. Those correspondents were often in camp during military action, sometimes even perched at the nearest telegraph office, paying runners to bring dispatches in order to beat fellow correspondents to press. Reporting the Modoc War was different. It appealed to newspaper editors who scrambled to send correspondents who could secure exclusive reports to boost circulation.⁹ But unlike other conflicts that would follow, the Modoc War was essentially a siege. Long stretches of inaction gave correspondents the opportunity to develop the story in great detail. It also offered unprecedented access to actors on both sides of the conflict and encouraged embellishment to produce content that would satisfy editorial demands. Subsequently, coverage of the war was

⁸ Knight, 105-7.

⁹ As Oliver Knight notes, the Modoc War was also the first time reporters used a pool to report on military action, which gave them the opportunity to offer greater coverage to a wider range of readers than just their own publications. It also contributed to a tendency to exaggerate their own personal heroism to set themselves apart from their rivals in the budding circulation wars.

detailed, often more focused on the coverage itself rather than its subject, and, by the end of the war, unusually sympathetic to the Native people it initially demonized.

In the immediate wake of the January 17 battle at the lava beds stronghold, the U.S. government sought to diffuse the situation as quickly as possible. Alfred Meacham, the Indian agent who had been working with the Modocs to address the grievances that sent them to seek refuge in the lava beds to begin with, urged Interior Secretary Columbus Delano to send General Edward Canby, commander of the Department of the Columbia, to personally oversee the negotiations. The hagiographic praise that showered Canby after he was killed was not out of step with the adulation he attracted during his life. Highly respected for his service in the Grand Army of the Republic, Canby's appointment also ensured the Modoc leadership that resolution, not destruction, was the goal of the U.S. government. "I have been very solicitous that these Indians should be fairly treated, and have repeatedly used military force, lest they might be wronged, until their claims or pretensions were decided by proper authority," Canby wrote to General of the Army William Tecumseh Sherman after the first fight at the Stronghold. Nevertheless, Canby saw Modoc hostility as a danger to peace in the region. He goes on, "That having been done, I think they should now be treated as any other criminals, and that there will be no peace in that part of the frontier until they are subdued and punished."¹⁰ With the conflict at a stalemate, however, Canby facilitated the Modoc Peace Commission as ordered by Secretary Delano at Meacham's request.

Reporters poured into the area to cover a war. What they found was a slow, diplomatic negotiation of hostilities, so they began to cast about for content. Long delays between scheduled parleys left correspondents time to dissect the proceedings and their participants in great detail.

¹⁰ Canby to Sherman, 30 January 1873. *Modoc War Correspondence and Documents Assembled from Various Sources, 1865-1878*. Edward E. Ayer Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago.

As Boyd Cothran notes in *Remembering the Modoc War*, Gilded Age newspapers thrived on “political brinkmanship, cowboy adventures, railroad scandals, and salacious Indian wars.”¹¹ Left without fighting to describe, the correspondents turned to the next best thing: government incompetence. Fierce partisan spin directed the coverage and its scathing critiques of the Peace Commission.¹² The Commission was controversial from its inception. Meacham had served as Indian agent at the Klamath Reservation (then called the Yainax Agency), the place where most Euro-Americans agreed that the trouble with the Modocs had all started.¹³ Another commissioner, Jesse Applegate, was uncle to two men who had notoriously cheated Modoc people out of their promised government annuities at Yainax, Ivan and Oliver Applegate. Oliver had also led the attack on Hooker Jim’s village in November 1872.

Negotiations dragged, and Meacham maintained a distance from the correspondents in camp with him in an effort to control the flow of information. However, he relied heavily upon two Modoc women, Sokegs Matilda Whittle and Artinie Choakus, who were free to carry messages between the peace commissioners’ camp and Modoc leadership in the Lava Beds. While Meacham took care to withhold information from reporters, they had been in camp long enough to establish relationships with Whittle and Choakus. When Meacham’s assurances contradicted the women’s reports, the correspondents saw scandal.¹⁴ Under the weight of that

¹¹ Cothran, 31.

¹² The history of the partisan press during Reconstruction and the history of the frontier press of the same era are both rich fields that cry for a study connecting them. The sort of analysis offered in James L. Crouthamel’s *Bennett’s New York Herald and the Rise of the Popular Press* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1989) applied to studies like Knights, Coward’s, and Watson’s could offer a critical perspective on the shape Plains Wars narratives took in the late nineteenth century.

¹³ While the Modocs’ affairs at Yainax were certainly mismanaged, Euro-Americans were eager to place excessive blame on government agents’ corruption and failure to prevent Klamath crimes against Modoc people. This both oversells the animosity between the Modoc and Klamath nations and deflects blame for the overarching cause of Modoc discontent: unjust practices that forced them away from their homelands in northern California in the first place. Personal email with Lynn Schonchin, Jr., January 5, 2019.

¹⁴ *New York Herald* March 8, 1873; *San Francisco Chronicle* March 2, 1873.

criticism, as well as the failure of the Commission to secure a peace agreement after several months, the first commission dissolved and another was assembled. Awaiting news of the second commission's attempts, Sherman wrote to Canby in early March that in D.C. "All parties here have faith in you but mistrust the commissioners."¹⁵ The correspondents, and presumably some of their readers, shared that sentiment.

Under Canby's leadership the new Peace Commission did not provide correspondents with scandal or incompetence to report. The narrative of partisan misconduct among government agents exhausted, reporters turned to their own exploits to fill column inches. Knight writes, "most correspondents of the Western War gave details of their personal experiences and the conditions under which they lived, sometimes in a tone of criticism... sometimes in terms suggesting self-pity or self-glorification through hardship."¹⁶ The former yachting editor, Fox, reported on the culinary hardships of camping with the Peace Commission, bemoaning "The fluid in use is called coffee, and has a brown appearance resembling a liquid we have seen before bearing the same name."¹⁷ Fox himself became the focus of his own reporting in late February 1873 when he snuck after a party sent to Keintpoos to arrange a meeting. The party, composed of John Fairchild, Robert Whittle, Whittle's wife Sokegs Matilda, and Artinie Choakus, forbid him from traveling with them for his safety. Fox, however, followed their horses' prints in the new snow. Once they discovered the reporter trailing them far from camp, Whittle and Fairchild decided it was safer to bring him along than send him back alone. The party spent the next few days in the lava beds speaking with Keintpoos. Not only did this offer Fox unprecedented and

¹⁵ Sherman to Canby, 6 March 1873. *Modoc War Correspondence*.

¹⁶ Knight, 115.

¹⁷ *New York Herald*, March 8, 1873.

unmatched access to a Native leader in the midst of hostilities, but it also offered the journalist with a flair for the dramatic the opportunity to shape a heroic narrative around his own exploits.

Fox's dispatches from the lava beds were celebrated by his own *Herald* editors as "a record of daring which is peculiarly the attribute of the *Herald* correspondent in the pursuit of his duty," and by competitors like the *Yreka Union* as a feat that "shall rank only second to Stanley's search for Livingstone in Central Africa."¹⁸ Under pressure to prove their own mettle the other correspondents, Bogart, Atwell, and McKay, accompanied newly-arrived commissioner Elijah Steele on his trip into the cave to meet with Keintpoos.¹⁹ After a race against each other to wire their stories which Bogart won, their papers, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Yreka Union*, and *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* reported their reporting from the lava beds as breathlessly as the *Herald* had Fox's. All told, four reporters had extensive access to Modoc people in camp with the Peace Commission at the Fairchild ranch, to Modoc family members of white Californians in the area. All four were hosted by the leaders of the Modoc resistance themselves and had the opportunity to interview them for several days.

Despite that wealth of detailed information about the multi-faceted Modoc perspective on the conflict, "newspaper editors and publishers across the country ignored the diverse opinions among the Modocs and the longer historical context they highlighted... they minimized the substance of the interviews by transforming the event into a spectacle of masculine journalistic prowess, to the readers' delight."²⁰ Thirsty for a circulation-boosting story, editors opted to highlight their reporters, caricature the Modocs, and present a rousing story of valor rather than the in-depth analysis of a complicated conflict that their correspondents' access offered to them.

¹⁸ *New York Herald*, Feb. 28, 1873; *Yreka Union*, March 5, 1873

¹⁹ It was at Keintpoos' request that Steel, as well as A.M. Rosborough who arrived in early April, handle the negotiations. Both men had respected relationships with the Modoc leaders.

²⁰ Cothran, 43.

As Cothran notes, through the editorial choices to present the interviews “not as a substantive statement on the causes and origins of the Modoc War, from the Indigenous perspective but rather as evidence of the bravery of the white adventurer-journalist,” the marketplace played the primary role in shaping the public’s first impressions of the conflict.²¹ This was a role that textbook publishers would mimic in decades to come.

Any nuance reporters included in their coverage of the tensions leading to the war, whether presented as portraying Keintpoos and his people as curiosities or as a critique of the apparent ineptitude of the peace commissioners, turned to simplistic, vehement demonization of the Modoc people after April 11, 1873. That day, against the advice of translators Frank and Tobey Riddle, Canby led the Peace Commission to meet with Keintpoos. In the middle of the parley, Keintpoos ordered an attack killing Canby and Thomas and wounding Meacham. Tobey Riddle survived on Keintpoos’ orders. “Massacre!” screamed the headlines, and “The Red Judas.”²² What had been a hyperbolized process story was suddenly an all-out war, and the press was eager to pounce. Correspondents who had dawdled around the Fairchild ranch hoping for something to report found themselves caught in skirmishes. Fox had no need to fashion himself an adventurer-journalist with headlines like “Rob Roy Mac-Modoc.” Instead, while riding toward the lines with a small group, he was caught in the crossfire that killed teenage local Eugene Hovey and had to run for his life.²³ Atwell declared “he wrote with a carbine by his side, and would keep it handy.”²⁴

²¹ Ibid.

²² *New York Herald*, April 13, 1873; *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, April 13, 1873; *Yreka Union*, April 13, 1873.

²³ Having secured his genuine credentials as an Indian war correspondent and earning the nickname “Modoc,” Fox left the field in early May 1873. Knight, 146-7, 150.

²⁴ Knight, 148.

The attack on the peace commissioners thrust the war to the front of the national gaze. *Harper's Weekly* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* began to cover the war, while the *London Illustrated Times* sent artist William Petersen to capture images of the fighting. Canby was the first and only U.S. Army general killed in action in wars with Native nations, and Keintpoos' attack on him seemed to come without warning of any kind while he was negotiating in good faith. The first *Harper's Weekly* story on the conflict was a tribute to Canby, heralding his valor and service, and printing in full Sherman's April 14 General Order No. 3 announcing his death. For the late-arriving coverage of the illustrated weeklies, Canby's death was the defining characteristic of "Captain Jack's band" and the sole catalyst for the war. The dailies' coverage aligned with that view, despite their months of published background and criticism of the Peace Commission. All government incompetence was apparently forgiven once violence erupted between Native and non-Native people.

The war reporting, as well as the post-war analysis that unfolded for months after its conclusion, framed the war as a battle between treacherous, bloodthirsty primitives and valiant avengers of a fallen comrade. Sherman himself legitimized the anti-Modoc tone in his communiques, which dailies and weeklies eagerly published. Writing to General John Schofield on April 13, Sherman ordered "The President now sanctions the most severe punishment of the Modocs, and I hope to hear that they have met the doom they so richly have earned by their insolence and perfidy."²⁵ Upon Keintpoos' capture and the Modoc surrender on June 1, Sherman made his recommendation for their trial, execution, and survivors' removal to Secretary of War William Belknap. He hoped that with these actions "thus the tribe of Modocs would disappear,

²⁵ Sherman to Schofield, April 13, 1873. *Modoc War Correspondence*.

and the example would be salutary in dealing with other Indians similarly disposed and similarly situated.”²⁶ The press followed suit.

The ferocity of the press’s calls for retribution, and those calls’ alignment with Sherman’s published orders, made such an impression that veterans continued to connect them in their published memoirs years after the fighting. Some writers, like William Henry Boyles, referenced it directly, writing “You will all remember the howl for vengeance and the demand for their extermination that went up from the American press... From *Harper’s Weekly*, which bears on its title page in bold type the claim that it is a journal of civilization, down to the most unpretentious provincial paper in the land, the demand for the last drop of blood that course through Modoc veins was made and insisted upon.” Boyles points out that it was not merely the embellishment of reporters that put these calls for indiscriminate violence in the press. Editors also published military wires, Boyles writes, some of which were intended for a secondary public audience. Of Sherman Boyles writes “the distinguished man who holds the high office of General of the Army, and whose word is law in military circles, sent flashing over the wires to his subordinate officer... this savage message: “*Let no Modoc live to boast that one drop of blood of the murderers of Canby runs in his veins.*””²⁷ The editorial fervor of war reporting, combined with Sherman’s determination to end the “Indian problem” by exterminating Native people in the U.S. West shaped the public’s impression of the events that unfolded in the lava beds of northern California. In this new narrative, the ‘vanishing Indian’ was not a natural consequence of white settlement; it was a military goal. Modoc War reporting helped reframe wars with Native nations as a necessary conquest. If American civilization was to expand across

²⁶ Sherman to Belknap, June 3, 1873. *Modoc War Correspondence*.

²⁷ William Henry Boyles. *Personal Observations on the Conduct of the Modoc War*, 37-8.

the continent, Native nations must be conquered. This was the first narrative of the Plains Wars that entered textbooks.

Predictably, press accounts of the war relied on presenting demeaning stereotypes of Native people to sensationalize an already sensational war with the Modocs. *Harper's* inaccurately and inexplicably describes Keintpoos as drunk during Canby's killing, saying Canby was slain "by the treacherous hand of a besotted Indian."²⁸ The magazine's next article linked the Modoc War with the larger "Indian question," calling the Modocs "wild beasts," "human tigers," and part of "that aboriginal race which is swiftly fading around us, like vegetation of some extinct geological era."²⁹ Coverage of the aftermath of the war was no different. The Modoc foe vanquished, *Harper's* offered readers descriptions of Modoc people that evoked the grotesque. A description of "Jack's cave" reports a correspondent observing an elder eating a "large, nasty-looking piece of black stuff," and claims "crickets and grasshoppers are a favorite article of diet." The cave, *Harper's* reports, was filled with "rubbish... increased by offal, bones, and dunghill stuff of all sorts."³⁰ As Cothran argues, reporters wielded the notion of the racialized Other to sensationalize their narratives during the Gilded Age, often with illustrators leading the way. One *Harpers* issue featured a political cartoon of the "Modoc Flea," with Uncle Sam trying in vain to rid his "lava bed" of pests.³¹ The allusion to extermination is hardly a metaphor given Sherman's explicit goal of destroying the Modoc people. Likewise, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated* published image after image of bloodthirsty Modocs preying upon fallen white officers, holding scalps aloft in triumph. Cothran argues that "extermination discourse, common before the attack on the peace commissioners, gained greater vehemence and

²⁸ "The Modoc Massacre" *Harper's Weekly*, April 26, 1873.

²⁹ "The Modocs" *Harpers Weekly* May 3, 1873

³⁰ "Captain Jack's Cave" and "Modoc Trophies" *Harpers Weekly*, June 28, 1873.

³¹ "The Modoc Flea" *Harpers Weekly*, May 10, 1873.

rhetorical effect through the pictorial journalism of the 1870s.”³² The Modoc War provided a perfect opportunity for illustrated weeklies to apply that rhetoric to the wars with Native nations in the West, a pattern that would continue throughout the end of the nineteenth century, searing dehumanizing images of Native people firmly in public memory.

After the war concluded, newspapers took a more nuanced approach to their reporting. *Harper's Weekly* ran a short series of articles lauding “Our Indian Allies” that highlighted Native people who served as scouts for the U.S. Army during the conflict. In a July issue, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated* featured profiles of Native people involved in the war, enemies and allies alike. While the article relates the merits of Native allies like Donald McKay, a Warm Springs scout, historian John Coward argues that the imagery the artist chose for presenting their portraits “misled readers by blurring the distinctions between these Indians, depicting all of them as hostile Modocs.”³³ Following several issues of vengeful rhetoric and dehumanizing images, the July 12 article was too little too late to serve as an adequate corrective to the flattened narrative of ‘bad Indians’ the newspaper had been feeding its readers for months.

In his study of memory and the Modoc War, Cothran traces the role commercialization played in promoting war stories and monetizing memorabilia that shaped public memory. Examining the gruesome trade in Modoc artifacts, even body parts, after Keintpoos’ trial and execution, Cothran writes “historical remembrances of nineteenth-century U.S.-Indian violence have been made and remade through the circulation of such cultural and memorial objects in commercial marketplaces...”³⁴ That negotiation, and commercialization, took place in the pages of newspapers covering the war, often in collaboration with the U.S. military. The execution of

³² Cothran, 61.

³³ Coward, *Indians Illustrated*, 39.

³⁴ Cothran, 14-5.

the convicted Modoc prisoners was staged as a media event, complete with correspondents racing on horseback to the telegraph office to report it.³⁵ The army granted correspondents and photographers access to the prisoners in the days leading to the October 3 executions, and newspapers published their ‘last words’ with all the flourish of a tragic romance.³⁶ According to Modoc historian Cheewa James, imprisoned Modoc men, women, and children, as well as their Klamath neighbors were required to attend the hanging. Louisa Boddy, a white woman whose family had been killed during the Lost River Battle was there to bear witness.³⁷ After the hanging, witnesses sold strands of rope, boards from the gallows, and more morbid artifacts as souvenirs. Just as newspapers had done with details of the war in its aftermath, souvenir hunters turned instruments of death and parts of the deceased into curiosities.

Correspondents, however, reported the Modocs’ trial and execution critically. “What to do with the captured Modocs is now an embarrassing question,” *Harper’s* reported in June 1873. The U.S. government insisted that a formal declaration of war never occurred, so the prisoners could not be categorized as prisoners of war, leaving their legal fate in question.³⁸ Local press howled for a mass execution, and a contingent of Oregon militiamen attacked a wagon transporting seventeen Modocs from the Fairchild ranch to Fort Klamath, killing four and wounding one.³⁹ Others, however, were not convinced. Atwell, whose reporting during the war called for utter defeat for the Modocs, argued in a letter to Secretary Delano that their court-martial was unjust and should be invalidated. “We know that those prisoners were tried without counsel, and before their counsel was aware that the day of trial had been named... we know that

³⁵ Knight offers a detailed account of the couriers’ ninety-mile race from Fort Klamath to the telegraph office in Jacksonville, OR which included multiple riders and horses, a ferry, sabotage, a drunk courier, and an unruly mule. Knight, 154-5.

³⁶ *New York Herald* October 4, 1873; *San Francisco Chronicle* October 4, 1873.

³⁷ James, 164-5.

³⁸ “Last of the Modocs” *Harper’s Weekly*, June 21, 1873.

³⁹ Cothran, 65.

gross wrongs have been committed by whites on these Indians, and will show them if permitted to do so,” he offers. Highlighting his familiarity with the region’s recent history and appealing to the ideals of just governance, Atwell continues “Having been on this coast for twenty-two years, having a good knowledge of Indians and their ways, I cannot, in common with thousands, avoid the feeling that a great wrong has been committed and should be investigated, for the honor of our Government, which is supposed to protect the weak.”⁴⁰ For whatever reason, Atwell chose to put his objections in a letter to Delano rather than publish them. He was not alone in appealing directly to government officials. Atwell joined Elijah Steele, John Fairchild, and Siskiyou County Sheriff William Morgan in petitioning Delano to release the prisoners who “earned an exemption from rigorous punishment.” They would, the letter suggested, work as farmhands for retired sheriff turned farmer John C. Burgess.⁴¹

Members of the public who learned about the trial from the papers appealed to officials as well. A Quaker from Pennsylvania, Lewis Palmer, wrote directly to President Grant petitioning for the release of all Modoc captives, including Keintpoos, suggesting instead that they “may be sent to some island or place of security for the rest of their lives, with or without some of the rest of their tribe, and that some one or more be sent with them to have charge over them... [and] lead them into a condemnation of their previous course.” Palmer volunteers to be their chaperone and prevent their execution “rather than to see the Christian name and power of this beloved nation lowered in the sight of God and man.”⁴² The Modocs had advocates, but the advocacy did not help them. After the executions the U.S. government split the tribe, removing some to Yainax, others to Indian Territory.

⁴⁰ Atwell to Delano, July 30, 1873. *Modoc War Correspondence*.

⁴¹ Steele et. al. to Delano, July 30, 1873. *Modoc War Correspondence*.

⁴² Palmer to Grant, September 24, 1873. *Modoc War Correspondence*.

The Modocs were assigned to the Quapaw Agency, and there attempts to dismantle their identity began in earnest. To avoid stigmatization for their connection with the war, many even adopted new names to improve their chances of finding employment.⁴³ The strategy is not surprising considering how influential the war was to their identity outside the Pacific Northwest. The *Bismarck Weekly Tribune*, decrying the leniency of the U.S. government toward Native nations after Custer's defeat, published a poetic racial screed. The speaker sarcastically claims that like the Modocs, he wants to "wield a tomahawk and scoop out people's brains... watch his writhing agony/With a "noble savages's" zest."⁴⁴ In the papers, even years after their exile and far from their Lost River home, the Modoc reputation remained connected to the infamous war.

The first author to popularize the war beyond the pages of newspapers was none other than Alfred Meacham, the failed peace commissioner and survivor of the Good Friday attack that killed Canby and Thomas. Intent on seeing justice done, Meacham testified against Keintpoos and the other defendants at the dubious trial that ensured their execution. If Meacham objected to the proceedings, as did his friend Elijah Steele and correspondent H. Wallace Atwell, he did not report it at the time or in retrospect. In direct refutation to Atwell's claims that witness and translator Frank Riddle "is unworthy of evidence...illiterate... cannot translate the idioms of our tongue" and Tobey Riddle "has shielded her relatives in his interpreting at the expense of others," Meacham's account of the trial in *Wigwam and War-Path* reports "All the foregoing testimony was faithfully interpreted to the prisoners."⁴⁵ Further, Meacham claims the trial was

⁴³ In some cases, tracing the identities of people who were sent to the Quapaw Agency is impossible, because "the names by which many Modoc were known during the Modoc War were not recorded and many lost." James, 186.

⁴⁴ "A White Man's Lament," *Bismarck Weekly Tribune* July 26, 1877

⁴⁵ Atwell to Delano, 30 July 1873. *Modoc War Correspondence*; A.B. Meacham, *Wigwam and War-Path: Or, the Royal Chief in Chains*. (Boston: John P. Dale and Company, 1875), 627. Meacham goes on to report that he offered himself to serve as counsel for the accused when he discovered that no attorney would represent them, but that his friends and the army surgeon discouraged him from doing so because he was not fully recovered from his wounds and they worried that the strain would exacerbate them.

fair and the conviction just. “The findings of the court cannot be doubted... This trial has been conducted with fairness on the part of the Government,” he insists. Further, he argues in direct refutation of critics like Atwell, “That it was policy to pardon these men was an encouragement to other Indians to betray their people is not good logic, when it is understood that they were the real instigators of the treacherous deeds of the Modocs.”⁴⁶ In Meacham’s account, the trial was fair, even generous, to the Modoc people and to the condemned.

In his writing at the time and in retrospect, Meacham took care to center himself in the trial of “Captain Jack” and cast himself as a preserver of the Modoc people. His memoir reports that in a pre-trial meeting with Keintpoos and Schonchin John, Meacham urged Keintpoos to “tell the other side” because by waging war Keintpoos created devastation for his people. In Meacham’s narrative, Keintpoos replies “My heart is not strong when the chain is on my leg. You can talk strong. You talk for me.”⁴⁷ Later, with sentencing complete, Meacham met with Keintpoos one last time. When “Jack” despairs that his story has not been told, Meacham takes on the mantle of advocate. He reports “I assured him that he had been fairly dealt with; that the officers who had tried him were all good men and had not done and would not do him injustice; and that I would write out a fair statement of all the facts for everybody to read.” In Meacham’s narrative, Keintpoos accepted his promises and offer of assistance wholeheartedly. Jack “clung to my hand to the last moment. I left him with feeling of commiseration for him, and with a firm resolution to keep my promise, to tell his story for him.”⁴⁸ Historians only have Meacham’s

⁴⁶ Meacham, *Wigwam*, 634-5.

⁴⁷ Meacham, *Wigwam*, 630-1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 636-7.

words as evidence of this exchange. In the decades that followed, Meacham did indeed embark on a career to talk for the Modoc people, using Tobey Riddle as a mouthpiece.⁴⁹

Testifying against the accused left Tobey Riddle in a difficult position. Whether petitions on her behalf for a government pension reported truthfully that she had been banished by the Modoc community for her testimony against its war leaders, Riddle relied on her relationship with Meacham and the non-Native community for support after the war. Going so far as to change her son's Modoc name, Charka, to Jefferson Columbus Davis in honor of the officer who took command after Canby's death and captured Keintpoos, Riddle embraced the public persona Meacham offered her. Hoping to capitalize on his brief fame as a survivor, Meacham embarked on the lecture circuit to tell his story. Realizing the appeal his show would offer if he included the 'wild Indians' his audience wanted to see, Meacham recruited Klamath and Modoc people to join him, including the woman who inspired the most dramatic part of his tale, Tobey Riddle.

Riddle's motivations for partnering with Meacham have been obscured by their dramatic collaboration. Klamath headmen sent along their representative David Hill because they viewed "Meacham's traveling show as tantamount to a delegation sent to address their specific concerns to Grant."⁵⁰ Meacham himself used the opportunity to present Riddle as an eminently sympathetic Indian woman for white America to embrace. Billed as Winema the 'woman chief of the Modocs,' Riddle and Meacham told the story of the Peace Commission attack on the pattern of the mythic Pocahontas saving John Smith from Powhatan's war club. Fellow reformer

⁴⁹ Richard Dillon is especially contemptuous of Meacham's work memorializing the war to his own benefit. "Less shocking than this brutal confirmation of assumed cultural superiority was the anticlimactic and unworthy termination of the Modoc story. The half-scalped and shot-up survivor of the Modocs' massacre of the United States' Peace Commission led a theatrical lecture tour in which the stars of his troupe were the very Modocs who tried to murder him, while the chief of the Army's Indian scouts parodied the Modoc War with a Wild West show and, later, prostituted his Modoc War reputation in order to peddle quack medicine. Thus was the sacrifice and suffering on both sides in the Modoc War defiled by the rampant commercialism of American civilization." *Burnt-Out Fires: California's Modoc Indian War*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), viii.

⁵⁰ Cothran, 88.

James Redpath helped organize the tour, confident that “by presenting their story on the national stage, Indian actors would prove to the American people that they deserved peace.”⁵¹ As the tour continued, Winema’s dramatized tale dominated the show, flanked by demonstrations of Modoc archery. The Klamath participant, Hill, left the tour when he realized after a disappointing meeting with President Grant that he was being used as a performer rather than an advocate. After a series of financial setbacks, Meacham published a biography of Winema in 1876, “in the interest of justice and humanity... with the avowed purpose of doing honor to the heroic Wi-ne-ma, who at the peril of her life sought to save the ill-fated Peace Commission to the Modoc Indians in 1873.”⁵² More than other accounts, it was Meacham’s promotion of Winema-as-Pocahontas that dominated the Modoc War narrative in the decade following the war.⁵³ The Pocahontas story featured prominently in nineteenth-century U.S. history textbooks, and the correlation between the two stories may have drawn textbook authors to the Modoc War narrative.

Meacham’s *Wigwam and War-Path* is one of the few books dedicated exclusively to the story of the Modoc War published before the twentieth century. Like Meacham’s *Wi-ne-ma*, nineteenth century books about the war tended to focus on personalities, including Meacham and Warm Springs scout Donald McKay.⁵⁴ Historians writing during the period folded the war into

⁵¹ Ibid., 90.

⁵² A.B. Meacham. *Wi-ne-ma (The Woman-Chief) and Her People*. (Hartford, CT: American Publishing Company, 1876), iii.

⁵³ Unlike the Indian war veteran pension petitions which valorized their service in order to argue for their pay, the bills advocating for Riddle’s pension focus on her rescue of Meacham. They did not serve to promote the war itself, but instead presented a gendered image of Native femininity creating white innocence. As Cothran writes, “The reason the Winema narrative continues to hold such currency is precisely because it embodies Americans’ desire to view the conquest and colonization of the West as an unavoidable cultural conflict. If only the other Indigenous peoples or the settler descendants had been more like Winema, the story goes, this tragedy could have been avoided.” Cothran, 109.

⁵⁴ Thomas Bland. *The Life of Alfred B. Meacham: Together with His Lecture, the Tragedy of the Lava Beds*. (Washington: T.A. & M.C. Bland, 1883) and Thomas Augustus Edwards. *Daring Donald McKay; or, The Last War Trail of the Modocs*. (Erie, PA: Herald, 1884). After Meacham’s death, his Indian reform advocacy newspaper *Council Fire* advertised Bland’s book.

their larger narratives of the history of westward expansion. Unsurprisingly, these writers drew mainly from official government records and other Euro-American sources for their research. The first major historian to devote serious attention to the Modoc War was Hubert Howe Bancroft. The war features in several of his works, *The Native Races* (1875), *California Inter Pocula* (1888), and most prominently *History of Oregon* (1886), where Bancroft devotes an entire chapter to the conflict. To call the work completely his is of course inaccurate. His assistants, better termed co-authors, constructed large swaths of his works, including passages concerning the Modoc War.⁵⁵ Frances Fuller Victor compiled most of the Modoc War accounts and later publicly demanded Bancroft acknowledge her authorship, which he refused to do. Victor also argued with Bancroft's editorial choices and objected to his methodological approach to writing history. However, Bancroft had the last word on the manuscript, and his devotion to writing triumphalist history heavily influenced by frontier press boosterism crafted a narrative of the war more in harmony with the bloodthirsty rhetoric of dispatches from the heat of action than the more nuanced reporting that followed the surrender.

In *History of Oregon*, Bancroft's text presents the Modocs as "the implacable enemies of the white race" who "were not on much more friendly terms with other tribes of their own race, sustaining a warlike character everywhere."⁵⁶ Relying heavily upon government reports and local newspapers like the *Yreka Union*, as well as a handful of volumes like the disgruntled O.C. Applegate's unpublished *Modoc History*, Victor's Bancroft-edited account reflects the

⁵⁵ His authorship was in question among scholars as early as 1903. "The popular estimate of Hubert Howe Bancroft as the historian of the Pacific Coast, is founded upon the vague references and indefinite assertions of the Literary Industries within the pages of which there is nowhere to be found a straightforward statement that this man wrote more than a part of the works to which his name is attached. . . . Instead of one Pacific Coast historian who wrote the Bancroft volumes, there were eight." William Alfred Morris. "The Origin and Authorship of the Bancroft Pacific States Publications: A History of a History." *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*. Vol. 4, no. 4 (December 1903), 355.

⁵⁶ Hubert Howe Bancroft. *History of Oregon*. (San Francisco: History Company, 1888), 555.

newspaper narratives that called for Modoc extermination. It features a treacherous and bloodthirsty “Captain Jack” who rampaged through innocent settlements until his hard-fought and well-deserved defeat. The narrative upholds the centrality of the conflict not just to the history of the Pacific states, but to the full history of U.S. engagement with Native nations, calling it “the most remarkable that ever occurred in the history of aboriginal extinction.”⁵⁷ According to Bancroft, like many writing at the time, the history of Native people is a long march toward extinction with no room for questions about the moral foundations of U.S. policy, the legitimacy of grievances Native peoples claimed, or even the chronology of aggression. In these pages, the Modoc War began when “Captain Jack” attacked, and nothing but the destruction of the Modoc people could serve as a satisfactory conclusion.

The parallels between the account attributed to Bancroft and the Gilded Age reporting are no coincidence. Nor are they necessarily Victor’s work. Although she constructed this narrative, and her other published work could hardly be considered a robust critique of the narratives of the settler colonialist ambitions of the U.S. government, Victor often tangled with Bancroft on the reliability of frontier newspapers as historical sources. Bancroft biographer John Walton Caughey reports that when Bancroft and Victor collaborated on the history of Nevada, Colorado, and Wyoming in 1884, letters reveal Bancroft’s insistence that Victor ignore Helen Hunt Jackson’s work on Native conflict in Colorado. Instead, “he suggested additional references and reported that he was getting dictation from the editor of the *Rocky Mountain News* that was “almost pure history” and would serve as a basis of the narrative on that state.”⁵⁸ Morris writes that Bancroft spoke with Jackson in person while researching the Colorado history. He wrote to

⁵⁷ Ibid, 636.

⁵⁸ John Walton Caughey. *Hubert Howe Bancroft, Historian of the West*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1946), 266. In 1971, Caughey co-authored a United States history textbook for secondary students.

Victor that his approach on Chivington's massacre of Cheyenne people at Sand Creek would be to "give their [Chivington's] side in full, then say some few took exceptions to this action, and there let it stand on its merits."⁵⁹ Jackson, it appears from a letter a month earlier, had neglected to thank Bancroft for his assistance with her articles on California history published in *Century*, rendering her views unfit for his consideration, even possibly targeted for discrediting.

In addition, Bancroft was reluctant to entertain interpretations of Indian wars that did not fit his predetermined theories for the patterns of those narratives throughout history. Morris writes, "In his treatment of Indian wars, the same tendency to adopt ready-made theories asserted itself." Most evident in Francis Fuller Victor's sections of *History of Oregon*, Morris notes that "in the manuscript... which "gave great credit to the veterans of that struggle and the settlers generally for their forbearance," the editor interlined some expressions, throwing the blame upon the settlers." According to editorial correspondence Morris examined, "When it was pointed out to him that this was not true, he replied that he had begun his History of Central America with this theory of Indian wars and must be consistent through the entire series."⁶⁰ Despite these editorial conflicts, as well as public challenges Victor brought against Bancroft for his authorial dishonesty, wrapped in the mantle of successful promotion or simply by virtue of being among the first serious histories published on the subject, Bancroft's works became foundational to later historical accounts of the Modoc War.

In 1886, J.P. Dunn published *Massacres of the Mountains*, a volume intended to be a comprehensive history of Indian wars in the U.S. West. To construct his account of the Modoc War, Dunn exclusively consulted official government reports of the conflict, preferring to draw his own conclusions about the war. According to his assessment, "No other tribe of American

⁵⁹ Morris, 327.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 359-60.

Indians ever leaped into notoriety so suddenly and unexpectedly as the Modocs, and no tribe has excited more interest since their appearance before the public.”⁶¹ Writing at the height of Winema’s popularity and in the midst of the lull in newspaper coverage of Native affairs that fell between the ‘Sioux wars’ and the massacre at Wounded Knee, Dunn placed the Modoc War among the most influential Indian wars of the time. This was in large part due to Canby’s assassination. Dunn writes, “there has never been an occurrence in any of our Indian wars that excited such wide-spread indignation as this act of treachery.” Lauding Tobey Riddle’s storied heroics during the attack on the Peace Commission, Dunn notes that in the public eye, “the Modocs were the objects of universal execration, and their outlandish names quickly became household words.” Confirming the impact of sensationalized newspaper reporting of the conflict, Dunn notes “For a time there was but one sentiment, and that was that the tribe should be exterminated.”⁶² While Dunn writes of the moral complexity of the Nez Perce flight later in his text, his presentation of the Modoc War is uncomplicated, further evidence that the close contact reporters had with Modoc leaders leading to and following the conflict failed to appear in papers or government documents.

Dunn offers mild critique in his discussion of the trial and execution of Keintpoos, evoking the Ben Wright Massacre in 1852. Dunn begins by conceding “it seems wrong that these men should be hanged for the very offence for which Ben Wright and his men were feted and rewarded, but the wrong done was in failing to punish the white assassins.” Disappointingly, Dunn follows this observation with an explanation that justifies the injustice and affirms anti-

⁶¹ Jacob Piatt Dunn. *Massacres of the Mountains; a History of the Indian Wars of the Far West*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1886), 543.

⁶² Ibid, 571. Dunn adds that “The soldiers had the same feeling, but extermination was not so easily accomplished.” While it is not completely inaccurate to make this claim on behalf of the soldiers, evidence like Throckmorton’s letters home to his mother present a compelling counter-example of lockstep ideology in support of U.S. military aims even among officers serving in the conflict.

Native prejudice, saying “It was right that [Jack] be hanged—and yet we killed him much as you would kill the mad dog that bites the hand extended to caress him, and we helped make him mad.”⁶³ Faced with the seemingly more complicated circumstances of other U.S. army engagements with Native people, Dunn is aware of the contradictions embedded in the military’s treatment of Keintpoos. Even so, Dunn maintains the official military narrative as if drawn directly from mid-war newspaper coverage. “Jack” and the Modocs appear in Dunn’s history as they do in the dailies as unrepentant aggressors who deserved their fate.

Cyrus Townsend Brady’s *Northwest Fights and Fighters*, published in 1907, presents a similar picture of the war. Several times in the text, Brady notes the connection between the Modoc War and military response to Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt’s flight. Brady reports the restlessness of “non-treaty” Nez Perce during the Modoc War and similar newspaper reporting patterns that traced to the “murderous Modocs” coverage from five years earlier.⁶⁴ Calling the Modoc War a “tremendous drama,” Brady devotes ten chapters of his volume to the war, each taken from a report by one of its veteran. The one exception is the first chapter, which lays the foundation for the conflict and explores its background. Brady cites two key sources for that chapter: reports of the Department of the Interior, and notes from the ubiquitous Colonel John W. Redington, Alfred Meacham’s son-in-law and later Nez Perce War scout.⁶⁵ It is an account entirely consistent with Brady’s dedication of the book “to the Peace loving, hard working, honor seeking, duty following, never failing, hard fighting Army of the United States.”⁶⁶ Having Meacham’s curated Winema as spokesperson for the Modoc people after the war perpetuated the valorized army perspective. The execution of Keintpoos and his companions robbed the Modoc

⁶³ Ibid, 582.

⁶⁴ Brady, 142, 199.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 229.

⁶⁶ Ibid., v.

people of more than their leadership. Without survivors like Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt and Tathanka Iyotake working to shape the narrative of the war for decades after they ended, the Modoc War entered historical writing as the frontier newspaper narrative bolstered by government reports.

In 1912, Jeff Riddle, son of Tobey and Frank Riddle, wrote a counternarrative, *The Indian History of the Modoc War*. In a forward addressed to “the public,” Riddle says that after reading all the books in print on the Modoc War he concluded that “the books I read was so disgusting I must say that the authors of some of the books certainly was never in the neighborhood of the lava beds. They must have dreamt of the Modoc War.”⁶⁷ After spending decades of his life touring in Meacham’s Winema show with his mother, Riddle sought to set the war’s record straight. Even so, he could not entirely refute the Euro-American narrative, even in his own book. “I aim to give both sides of the troubles of the Modoc Indians and the white,” he assures his readers. “The Indian side has never been given to the public yet.”⁶⁸ The editors’ preface further emphasizes that the account to follow will be balanced despite the author’s Modoc identity. “There have been other histories of the Modoc War and of some of these the author gives his opinion—an unflattering one,” Riddle writes.

The absence of Modoc perspective from previous accounts has hurt the war’s historical record, he explains, saying “Most of them were written from hearsay and naturally form the point of view of the white man. Here we have the point of view of the Indian, but it is a point of view that is consonant with accuracy and with impartiality.”⁶⁹ Much of Riddle’s account is lifted

⁶⁷ Quotations come from a handwritten copy of the manuscript in the Ayer Collection at the Newberry Library. When Riddle’s text found a publisher two years later (Marnell & Co. in San Francisco), the editors corrected his colloquialisms considerably for the print edition.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Riddle reprint 2004, 4. The heavy emphasis on Riddle, as a Modoc author, making sure to report “both sides” of the conflict finds a curious echo in Cheewa James’ Prelude to *Modoc: The Tribe That Wouldn’t Die*. She writes “Even though I am of Modoc descent, I have tried to show all sides of this conflict in an unbiased, well-researched

from Meacham's earlier work, including full trial transcripts and excerpts from *Wi-ne-ma* to provide a biographical sketch of his mother. In the first chapter, however, Riddle takes care to reshape Meacham's narrative of the nature of the Modoc people and origins of the war, opening the text not with the Modocs' warlike contention with the Klamath people, as Meacham claimed, but saying "Captain Jack's father and his people lived quietly on the shores of a beautiful body of water named Wrett Lake or Tule Lake."⁷⁰ Heavily influenced by Meacham's storytelling and designed to elevate the role his mother and father played in the Modoc War, Riddle's account nevertheless offers a valuable counterpoint to the Euro-American newspapers, government reports, memoirs, and published histories that dominated the marketplace of memory at the time.

And yet Riddle's work, valuable as it is, did not become a cornerstone of Modoc War historical sources. Poor distribution is partly to blame. In a 1920 letter to Elmo Scott Watson, Riddle offered to sell Watson a copy of the book, which "gives the true cause of the great struggle of the Modoc Indians—it gives the Indian side of the Indian story," for \$1.50.⁷¹ Evidently, Riddle was his own book agent at the time. If Watson purchased a copy, he did not cite it in his later work, nor did he continue correspondence with Riddle. He did maintain regular correspondence with Meacham's son-in-law, former Army scout and self-published journalist Colonel Redington, however. Watson consulted Redington about the Modoc War on a number of occasions, and Redington supplied details and photographs as requested. Although Redington's information about the war came from his father-in-law, his view was far less measured than Meacham's. Characterizing the Modocs as foolish and ungrateful he writes "He [Meacham] was one of the best friends the Indians ever had, but it was thro' no fault of theirs that his life was not

way." This is an assurance that non-Native authors do not seem to feel compelled to make in their works in any decade I have examined. James, 23.

⁷⁰ Riddle, "History of the Modoc War" MS, 1. Edward E. Ayer Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago.

⁷¹ Riddle to Watson. 3 November 1920, Elmo Scott Watson Papers, Box 28, Folder 410.

wound up in the Lava Beds...”⁷² Redington wrote a scathing account of the attack on the 1873 Peace Commission sarcastically entitled “God Among the Modocs,” in which he leaned into that interpretation, painting the commissioners’ good faith as the height of tragic folly, and lamenting that “Only three of these fiends of the forest and pirates of the prairie were hanged.”⁷³ In 1930, Redington wrote to Watson about Riddle’s book specifically. Watson was working on several articles about the journalists who covered the ‘Indian wars’ and Redington suggested consulting Riddle’s account because “plumb full of Modoc War stuff that can be found nowhere else.” He cautioned, however, “some of it is The Bunk.”⁷⁴ Watson sided with Redington. He chose not to cite Riddle’s work.

Given the long decades Redington spent in correspondence with historians of the U.S. West, it is possible that Watson was not the only one Redington dissuaded. After publication of Riddle’s book, the Modoc War began to fall out of historians’ interest. A handful of books on the war were published between 1920 and 1940, most of them popular novels like James Michael Allen’s 1956 *Wi-ne-ma*. Keith Murray’s 1959 *The Modocs and Their War* was the first historical monograph to focus on the war. Murray served as a Ranger-Historian at the Lava Beds National Monument in the mid-1950s, and when he tried to learn more about the conflict, he “found that the information available was widely scattered, and nowhere was there a single, chronological account of the war and its causes which made use of all the primary materials available.”⁷⁵

⁷² Redington to Watson, 13 February 1922, Elmo Scott Watson Papers, Box 23, Folder 331.

⁷³ Redington, “God Among the Modocs” undated, unpublished MS, Elmo Scott Watson Papers, Box 23, Folder 331. Redington sought Watson’s help in finding a publication for the piece, and Redington’s letters to Watson in February 1922 suggest that Watson suggested several for submission.

⁷⁴ Redington to Watson, November 1930, Elmo Scott Watson Papers, Box 23, Folder 331.

⁷⁵ Keith Murray. *The Modocs and Their War*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), ix. The NPS ranger turned historian is a common theme in U.S. West historical writing. Cheewa James, author of *Modoc: The Tribe That Wouldn’t Die* was inspired to write her history by her time as a Ranger at Lava Beds National Monument. Likewise, Robert Utley and Don Rickey, Jr. both cite their experience as a Rangers at (then called) Custer Battlefield National Monument as inspiration for their careers as historians (and in Rickey’s case, National Park Service Historian).

Frustrated by books on the war that either relied too heavily on decades-old memories from participants with limited knowledge of the war, or “pioneer reminiscences with all of their usual weaknesses,” Murray set out to compile a comprehensive history of the war as fully sourced as possible. It remains one of the foundational histories of the Modoc War. Not surprising for his time, Murray draws most heavily from recognized Euro-American authorities like Bancroft, Meacham, and government documents.⁷⁶

Despite his account’s attempts to present a nuanced perspective on the origins of the war, Murray either could not find or did not seek Modoc perspectives on the war. He cites Riddle’s *The Indian History of the Modoc War*, but does not treat it as the work of a Modoc author. He even erroneously claims that Frank Riddle named his son ‘Jefferson C. Davis’ out of an indication of his Confederate sympathy, apparently unaware that Riddle’s his parents changed his name to honor the commanding officer who received Keintpoos’ surrender, not the Confederate president.⁷⁷ Murray’s desire to present a thorough history was thwarted by his reliance on sources that had firmly established the tenor of the war and the nature of its people in public memory. These sources were bolstered by decades’ long silence in historical writing and veterans’ advocacy.

The war’s absence from Indian Wars veterans’ publications seems to suggest its relative unimportance. Instead, it indicates a public relations strategy in the early twentieth century that reflects public memory of the Plains Wars at the time. Many of the most vociferous Indian War veterans served in multiple late nineteenth century conflicts with Native nations. Because they sought to make the strongest cases they could in favor of their pension status in later decades,

⁷⁶ Murray is also the first historian to cite Frances Fuller Victor’s standalone work *The History of Oregon* in addition to her work in Bancroft’s volume (which he attributes to Bancroft without comment).

⁷⁷ Murray, 51; Riddle, 218, 220.

veterans tended to highlight their service in conflicts already more prominent in the public eye, like Greasy Grass or the Nez Perce War. Their comparative silence on the Modoc War contributed to its scarcity in historical writing in the first half of the twentieth century. Without much ground to stand on in order to analyze the war on its own terms, authors like Murray tended to link the war to other, better-known conflicts in order to make a case for its importance. “The conditions existing in the Lava Beds that made Jack fight were identical with those in the Wallowa Valley,” Murray claims, ignoring the radically different historical relationships the Modoc and Nez Perce peoples had with both local white settlers and the U.S. government before their respective conflicts. Instead, Murray attributes the disparity in the wars’ popularity to scale, saying “Joseph’s resistance, much more formidable than Jack’s and covering a vastly larger territory, is better known than Jack’s fight.”⁷⁸

The Nez Perce War was certainly a larger and more geographically expansive conflict than the Modoc War, but Murray’s assumption that the former therefore gets more attention than the latter, in historical writing as well as public memory, does not match the evidence of the wars’ comparative popularity in the press and popular culture of the late nineteenth century. It also does not explain the wars’ equal billing in government communications during that time. Murray’s argument fails to consider the intentional production of memory by journalists of the time, memoirists and promoters like Meacham in the years that followed, and historians whose conscious choices to embrace and ignore particular sources shaped the narrative well into the twentieth century. Those deliberate choices are reflected not only in the fact that the Modoc War did not receive the robust scrutiny of historians until the scholarship inspired by Boyd Cothran’s

⁷⁸ Murray, 313, 315.

Remembering the Modoc War, but also in the Modoc War's disappearance from U.S. history textbooks.

The Modoc War narrative in textbooks follows a curious trajectory. Unlike other post-Civil War conflicts with Native nations, the Modoc War's role in the wars for westward expansion changes over time. While the prominence of narratives of the Lakota-Cheyenne-Arapaho victory over Custer's Seventh Cavalry, the flight of the Nez Perce, and even conflicts with Apache nations in the Southwest vacillate over the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in U.S. history textbooks, the Modoc War vanishes entirely. Once upheld by textbook writers as a central conflict worthy of close attention, by the end of the 1920s writers considered the war unworthy of mention. This disappearance is especially strange considering the war's popularity until that time, as well as the dramatic characteristics it shares with conflicts like Little Bighorn and the Nez Perce flight. Both maintained their hold on the public imagination for well over a century, but the Modoc War did not. Like the other conflicts, the Modoc War's textbook appearances mirror its path through the historiography.

The Modoc War's first textbook appearance is in *A Brief History of the United States* published in 1876. Offering the war top-billing under domestic affairs of Grant's second term, Joel Dorman Steele presents the events in the familiar structure of Indian war narratives. With no mention of any events leading to the conflict, Steele writes "The Modoc Indians having refused to stay upon their reservation in Oregon, troops were sent against them."⁷⁹ The war is presented, like other Indian wars, without context and therefore casts the Native nation as the instigating belligerent using language designed to present Native people as children in need of discipline. Steele's account simplifies the escalation of violence considerably. In response to the army's

⁷⁹ Joel Dorman and Esther Steele. *A Brief History of the United States*. (New York: A.S. Barnes & Company, 1876), 291.

arrival the Modoc “savages... retreated to the fastnesses in the Lava Beds. The peace commissioners, hoping to arrange the difficulty, held a conference with the chiefs. In the midst of the council, the Indians treacherously slew General Canby and Rev. Dr. Thomas and wounded Mr. Meachem [sic].”⁸⁰ Gone are the months of peaceful negotiations, the nights commissioners and reporters spent safely in the Modoc camp, and the threats of violence against Modocs negotiating in good faith. Most important, gone is the white flag massacre California militia leader and self-proclaimed ‘Indian fighter’ Ben Wright from twenty years earlier. For the sake of brevity, Steele flattens the causal chain of events, despite a wealth of information available to him from nineteenth-century historians who wrote about the conflict. Instead the text presents students with a simple tale of violent, unruly, ultimately defeated Indians. “Captain Jack and several of the leaders of the band were executed,” Steele concludes, omitting the legal murkiness of the trials, public outcry at their injustice, and the fact that one of the attack’s victims, Alfred Meacham, publicly objected to their execution and turned to a life of advocacy for Native people after the war. By 1885, editions of Steele’s text even omitted the execution, and therefore any names of individual Modoc people, saying only “The Modocs were then bombarded in their stronghold and forced to surrender.”⁸¹ According to Steele’s text, the Modoc War perfectly fit the established pattern: rebellious Indians leave reservation, heroic U.S. troops meet them to fight, Indians are subdued to be heard from no more.

In 1895, Susan Pendleton Lee’s *A School History of the United States* built upon Steele’s foundation. Lee contextualized the conflict in light of Grant’s Peace Policy. “General Grant, who had lived in the West and knew a good deal about the Indians, was desirous to civilize them and induce them to live peaceably with the whites. To effect this, he put the control of Indian affairs

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Steele, 291.

principally in the hands of the Quakers or “Friends,” hoping that their influence might persuade the Red Men to give up their wild life and become farmers and cattle raisers,” she writes. The efforts were futile, Lee writes, saying “This humane policy could not induce the Modoc Indians to abandon their lands in Oregon and remove quietly to the Indian Territory. They refused to go and defied the United States troops to compel them.”⁸² Rather than present the standard, decontextualized narrative of belligerent Indians, Lee uses the Modoc War to illustrate both the weaknesses of Grant’s Peace Policy and the inherent wickedness of Native people. According to Lee it was in direct opposition to Grant’s attempts to institute humane policy that the Modocs rebelled. She, unlike other textbook authors (and historians) acknowledged that Modoc grievances were not without warrant. Keintpoos’ father “had been killed by the order of an army officer while under a flag of truce,” she wrote, but she mentions the crime to bolster her claim that Captain Jack “hated the whites.”⁸³ By contrast, General Canby offers a flag of truce to avoid “needless bloodshed,” but “the Indians could not resist such an opportunity to avenge their wrongs.”⁸⁴ Though ostensibly regrettable, in Lee’s account the court-martial and execution of Modoc leaders is morally justified.

Other nineteenth-century accounts echo Steele’s and Lee’s narratives. John Fiske and Frank Alpine Hill’s 1894 *A History of the United States for Schools* and D.H. Montgomery’s 1897 *A Student’s American History* report the Modoc War alongside the ‘Sioux War,’ with simplified narratives of rebellious Native nations who “were easily overcome.”⁸⁵ In the twentieth century, however, the narrative shifted slightly. Textbook authors of the century’s early years

⁸² Susan Pendleton Lee. *A School History of the United States*. (Richmond, VA: B.F. Johnson Publishing Company, 1895), 560.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Fiske and Hill. *A History of the United States for Schools* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, & Company, 1894); D.H. Montgomery. *A Student’s American History* (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1897), 544.

continued to uphold the Modoc War as a conflict of central importance to westward expansion, but they began to use the conflict to illustrate particular aspects of the subsequent trajectory of Native history. Blame shifted away from Native rebelliousness, Grant's Peace Policy, or the rash actions of the California militia and instead focused on settler provocations. In his 1901 *A School History of the United States*, John William Jones opens the account by explaining that the Modoc people "were removed from fertile and fine hunting grounds south of Oregon to a reservation that was sterile, and very distasteful to them," and therefore they "revolted and fled back to their former hunting grounds."⁸⁶ Elson's 1906 *School History of the United States* reported Canby's assassination without further explanation, laying blame with the vague statement that "Indian affairs were sadly mismanaged, and Indian troubles in the Northwest were due chiefly to this fact."⁸⁷ While these accounts all emphasize the "treacherous" attack on the peace commissioners, unlike the nineteenth century accounts the newer textbook accounts incorporate ideas expressed after the war by newspaper correspondents and authors like Meacham, Dunn, Jr., and Brady. With the wars with Native nations largely concluded, textbook authors presented the Modoc War with more context than their predecessors did.

In their 1912 *American History*, James Alton James and Albert Hart Sanford went further. Their account frames the wars of westward expansion as problems associated with settlement, particularly settler violations of federal law and treaties with Native nations. Indian removal did not "constitute a settlement of the troublesome problem of Indian relations," they write, because "Westward migration pushed constantly upon the limits of Indian lands." The text informs students that this movement was in violation of laws and treaties and tells students that settlers "invaded the numerous reservations." Although the text upholds the notion of usufruct

⁸⁶ Jones. *A School History of the United States* (Baltimore: R.H. Woodward Company, 1901), 408.

⁸⁷ Henry William Elson. *A School History of the United States* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1906), 405.

land seizure by emphasizing that settlers sought “the privilege of cultivating those unused acres of fertile lands,” and although it does not challenge the U.S. government’s moral authority to seize and re-allocate Native land, James and Sanford’s depiction of settlers as lawless invaders casts armed Native resistance far more sympathetically than previous accounts. The authors lead into their brief discussion of the wars saying “Chiefly owing to these encroachments, Indian outbreaks and wars were frequent in the West.”⁸⁸ However, despite the ways in which this account echoes reformers’ calls for a more sympathetic approach to Native people that came from activists like Helen Hunt Jackson, Alfred Meacham, and Susette La Flesche, James and Sanford tow the manifest destiny party line in the wars’ descriptions. The text claims that “the Modocs... were especially difficult to subdue” without questioning the ethical basis of waging a war in order to subdue them. Instead, *American History* uses conflicts with Native nations to illustrate the necessity of the Dawes Act and “attempts to civilize the Indian.”⁸⁹ Rather than a significant innovation in relating the history of the Modoc War, *American History* is yet another retelling. It simply uses different angles on the conflict to tell the same story.

As the second decade of the twentieth century progressed, the Modoc War began to fade from U.S. history textbooks. Eggleston’s *New Century History* published by the American Book Company in 1915 launches the short section on post-Civil War Indian wars with the Modoc War account. Omitting the context of settler encroachment or government mismanagement, Eggleston reports only that “the government undertook to remove the Modoc Indians... They refused to go.” Eggleston mentions Canby’s death and Captain Jack’s name, but little else.⁹⁰ Hart’s 1917

⁸⁸ James Alton James and Albert Hart Sanford. *American History*. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1912), 473-4.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Edward Eggleston and George Cary Eggleston. *The New Century History of the United States* (New York: American Book Company, 1915), 365.

New American History reduces the conflict to one sentence, saying only “the little Modoc tribe in the lava beds of northern California for many months (1872-1873) defied the whole United States government.”⁹¹ Adams and Trent likewise reduce the prominence of the Modoc War in their 1922 *A History of the United States*, mentioning their removal, their resistance to it, that “they put to death the peace commissioner who was sent to deal with them,” and were subdued.⁹² After that, the Modoc War disappears from textbook narratives. One brief exception is Caughey, Franklin, and May’s 1971 *Land of the Free*, in which the authors mention “Captain Jack” in a paragraph illustrating the military capability of Native leaders.⁹³

In the pages of U.S. history textbooks, the Modoc War vanished. Despite its prominence in newspaper coverage, illustrated weeklies, and the western show circuit of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Modoc War fell out of public memory before the Second World War. Not only did textbooks omit the conflict, but historians neglected to study it as well. Perhaps because members of organizations like the Indian Wars Veterans Association tended to herald their later service during letter-writing campaigns for pension promotion or in correspondence with western historians, later conflicts like Greasy Grass, the Nez Perce War, or the violence of Wounded Knee took center stage in Native historiography instead. Another factor could be the fact that the Native leaders of other wars survived their conflicts. Not only that, they

⁹¹ Albert Bushnell Hart. *New American History* (New York: American Book Company, 1917), 507. His 1920 *School History of the United States*, also published by the American Book Company, added only “Chief Jack” as the Modoc leader and numbers “eighty Modoc warriors.”

⁹² Charles Kendall Adams and William Peterfield Trent. *A History of the United States*. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1922), 466.

⁹³ “Captain Jack of the Modocs stood off an army ten times larger than his band of braves,” the authors write, arguing that “because of the disadvantages of the Indians, certain of their chiefs stand out as more brilliant [than U.S. military commanders].” Lest they ascribe too much credit to Native leaders, the authors are careful to add “though not in all respects, admirable.” The paragraph is placed on the page directly under a photograph of a U.S. soldier with a Gatlin gun with the caption explaining “guns like these were used in 1890 in the Indian wars.” The ‘war’ in reference is, of course, the Wounded Knee Massacre. John Walton Caughey, John Hope Franklin, and Ernest A. May. *Land of the Free: A History of the United States* (New York: Benziger, 1971), 443. Of note, Caughey wrote the 1946 Bancroft biography referenced earlier.

lived long enough to transition from headline villains to Indian celebrities. As Buffalo Bill's commercialized Sitting Bull, Thathanka Iyotake advocated for his people with the American public and politicians. Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt used his public persona as Chief Joseph to arrange the end of Nez Perce exile in Indian Territory. But Keintpoos never had the opportunity to turn Captain Jack into leverage for Modoc survival. His execution sealed his notoriety. After the war, the Modoc with the greatest platform to the U.S. public was Kaitchkana, Toby Riddle, who spent the post-war years traveling on the lecture circuit as Winema, the Modoc Pocahontas. Their romanticized and embellished version of the war, intended to inspire sympathy for the Modoc people, seems to have only further obscured the conflict from public memory with its focus on remaking the Pocahontas myth with Riddle and Meacham as its new principles.

Not because it lacked compelling narrative qualities or dramatic personalities, nor because it could not be made to fit the narrative pattern of triumphal U.S. westward expansion, but because it lacked public advocacy in a critical moment in the development of U.S. history education, the Modoc War fell into obscurity. The generation of historians who paved the way for the New Indian History attended school just as textbooks began omitting the Modoc War, and scholars of the New Indian history completed their secondary education with textbooks that ignored the conflict completely. While later textbooks began to introduce more sympathetic language to narratives of the Battle of the Greasy Grass and the Nez Perce flight and rehabilitate images of Sitting Bull and Chief Joseph, they had no space for mentioning Captain Jack or the Modoc people. Without tales of the lava beds fights to fire the imaginations of schoolchildren the way the image of a swashbuckling Custer did scholars like Don Rickey and Robert Utley, it is no surprise that the historiography of the Modoc War in scholarship is similarly sparse. A comparably rich source base, from newspapers to military reports, from Meacham's memoirs to

Jeff Riddle's *The Indian History of the Modoc War*, did not prevent the Modoc War from sliding away from the spotlight that seized Greasy Grass and the Nez Perce. Instead, it was the choice of Modoc War veterans not to advocate for their own heroism in the fight, and the absence of a compelling Modoc leader in the war's aftermath to capture the public imagination that allowed the American public to forget the war.

Disconnected from the larger narrative of the purported progress of democracy via westward expansion, the Modoc War became the strangest of Native conflicts: a once-nationally-famous Indian war reduced to provincialism that then faded into obscurity in its own state histories. The California state content standards for history and social science do not include the Modoc War.⁹⁴ In part, the war may have simply been overshadowed by the surviving personalities of the Custer defeat. But its disappearance from U.S. history textbooks during a period of full-scale reinvention of history education in U.S. schools is not coincidental to its evolving status as a minor conflict in the history of Native America. The connection between the Modoc War's textbook erasure and comparatively thin historiography illuminates the ways in which historical narratives about Native history evolved in the academy, and the ways in which that evolution was influenced by the presentation of Native history in secondary education.

⁹⁴ State content standards for history and social science in California, formally adopted anew in 1998 do not mention specific California Native nations at all, and very few others. Chief Joseph and Sitting Bull both appear. Content standards about the gold rush do not mention Native people at all. Further exploration of California state history textbooks is necessary to examine the Modoc War's trajectory in those texts and their possible connection with its absence from state standards.

Chapter Five

From the Saddle to the Classroom:

The Changing Educational Context of Plains Wars Narratives in U.S. History Textbooks

Ahead of his failed bid for the Republican presidential nomination in 2016, surgeon Ben Carson weighed in on the controversy surrounding College Board's revised framework for its Advanced Placement United States History (APUSH) course. Dismayed by the framework's new emphasis on a more complicated view of U.S. history than its previous incarnation, Carson took to Fox News to air his concerns. "I am a little shocked quite frankly looking at the AP course in American History that is being taught in high schools across our country right now. There's only two paragraphs in there about George Washington... A whole section of slavery and how evil we are. A whole section about Japanese interment. A whole section about how we wiped out American Indians without mercy," he remarked. Carson argued the approach was not merely strange, but dangerous, saying "I mean I think most people when they finish that course, they'd be ready to sign up for ISIS. This is what we are doing to the young people in our nation." Rather than face the difficult issues in examining U.S. history, Carson went on, "We have to stop this silliness. We have to stop crucifying ourselves. Have we made mistakes as a nation? Of course we have. Why? Because we are people and people make mistakes."¹ Despite the fact that Dr. Carson confused a framework for curriculum, the charges gained enough traction to dominate several news cycles, earn official condemnation from the Republican National Committee, and nearly become law that removed funding for APUSH courses in Colorado and Oklahoma public

¹ Valerie Strauss, "Ben Carson: New AP U.S. History court will make kids want to 'sign up for ISIS.'" *Washington Post* September 29, 2014. Accessed May 8, 2016. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/09/29/ben-...-new-ap-u-s-history-course-will-make-kids-want-to-sign-up-for-isis/>.

schools. In uncertain times anxiety surrounding the vision of America we present to the next generation runs high. And yet, education history tells us that such anxiety has been one of the constant forces that shaped history education in the United States since the antebellum period.

One of the more troubling objections in Dr. Carson's statement springs from that anxiety: "A whole section about how we wiped out American Indians without mercy." While it would be refreshing to hear a public figure question the tired declensionist narrative that relegates Native people to the past rather than the present and future, that is clearly not Dr. Carson's point. His objection is instead to the fact that a textbook would categorize the Plains Wars as wars of extermination and dedicate "a whole section" to the sad episode. And, indeed, it is difficult to maintain a triumphalist, exceptionalist narrative of U.S. history without ignoring most of Native American history. American history textbooks have notoriously glossed over, explained around, or simply excised entire episodes of history involving Native peoples, leaving generations of American schoolchildren to grow into adulthood without a framework grounded in historical reality for thinking about the country's history with the continent's host peoples. This failure is not the product of oversight, but rather the culmination of decades of mythmaking about the Plains Wars of the late nineteenth century, rooted in anti-Native prejudice established over centuries of encounters with Native communities and embedded in U.S. history textbooks by public memory and the demands of the market.

In the late 1800s, as military dispatches and frontier newspaper headlines became published memoirs, speaking tours, wild west shows, and histories, the landscape of academic history was in a period of substantial transition. The free school movement finally achieved significant gains in this period, offering the opportunity for secondary education free of charge to demographic groups who had never had the chance before. This increased the demand for

teachers, a demand that far out-paced colleges' and universities' capacity to train them. Taken together, these changes created a sudden and substantial market demand for U.S. history textbooks. In the early twentieth century, Arthur Schlesinger, Sr. wrote "whether we like it or not, the textbook, not the teacher teaches the course."² Before the expansion of teacher preparation programs at the turn of the century, his statement was even more true. Textbooks were crucial tools of education and became a major business enterprise for publishing.

In the years of escalating crisis that led to the Civil War, textbook publication accelerated, as did southern anxieties about courses taught by northern-trained teachers using northern-published textbooks. After the disruption of the war and Reconstruction years, states turned to schools to help accomplish the work of mending the broken union of the country. Built upon the foundational efforts of the common-school reformers of the antebellum period, after 1860 the U.S. saw a new educational paradigm which shifted to incorporate "increased schooling extended to the secondary-school years, and as high-school attendance became more widespread, educators devised different curricula for different groups of children."³ The role history courses would play in this changing paradigm, especially in the secondary schools, became one of central importance and, with the rise of the social studies, fierce contestation. Historian Bessie Louise Pierce notes in her history of the early battles over history education in the U.S. that these arguments were heavily influenced by public opinion in times of significant turmoil or transitions. Contention over history curriculum grew from 1860 to 1900, a period that "was characterized by the influences set in motion by the Civil War and the Economic Revolution." Pierce notes that another shift occurred between 1900 and 1917, when "the history curriculum

² quoted in Saxe, 29.

³ Carl F. Kaestle. *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 221.

reflected the new interest of the American people in the social and economic conditions that had developed.” After World War I, Pierce argues, “ the dominant note has been a dynamic patriotism growing out of the World War.”⁴ Pierce was writing in the 1920s, but the trend Pierce identified did not end in that decade. Rather, as education historian Linda Symcox notes, the battles continued cyclically across the entire twentieth century. Fought by “successive waves of reformers, textbook publishers, curriculum commissions, and national boards,” Symcox notes, the cycle continues with significant parental and community involvement because “traditionally the curriculum has been the primary site for each generation to define itself and transmit its values to the next.”⁵ The focus on history curriculum as the preserver and transmitter of national identity fueled arguments among education reformers, academic historians, classroom teachers, politicians, and interest groups, many of them public, most contentious.

Textbook publishers, as the commercially-driven providers of the bulk of the content of history curriculum for secondary schools in the twentieth century, often found themselves caught in the middle of a public fight with substantial financial consequences attached to decisions that were outside their control. Struggling to appeal to stakeholders with radically different agendas, mindful of their competition with each other, and trusting almost entirely in the quality of the work of their authors, publishers’ attempts to maintain commercial success while navigating the difficult, shifting political terrain surrounding history education shaped the narratives of their U.S. history textbooks to meet these myriad demands as best they could. While it is tempting to argue that textbook publishers, fearing controversy, simply chose to present patriotic narratives that did not challenge popular myth or correct faulty public memory, in reality the reasons for the

⁴ Bessie Louise Pierce. *Public Opinion and the Teaching of History*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), vii.

⁵ Linda Symcox. *Whose History? The Struggle for National Standards in American Classrooms*. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002), 11.

production of the inadequate narratives of the Plains Wars are far more complex. The chief factors that shaped textbook narratives before 1950 are the state of Plains Wars historiography at the beginning of the late nineteenth century textbook publishing boom, the waning influence of professional historians on secondary education in the late 1910s and early 1920s, the subsequent transition from traditional history curriculum to social studies curriculum of the 1920s and 1930s, and conservative political backlash against narratives perceived as anti-American in times of imagined patriotic crisis, namely the two world wars and their accompanying Red Scares.

The bulk of the violence of the Plains Wars unfolded in the 1870s, and the three conflicts that appear most prominently in U.S. history textbook accounts fell between 1872 and 1877. Public interest piqued, the 1880s saw a flurry of publications associated with those conflicts, from sweeping histories of westward expansion like Joseph P. Dunn, Jr.'s *Massacres of the Mountains* to memoirs and amateur histories like John F. Finerty's *Warpath and Bivouac*. In the same decade, two professional organizations consolidated to support and promote the work of their members. In 1884, the American Historical Association was founded in Saratoga, New York, chartered by Congress in 1889 "for the promotion of historical studies, the collection and preservation of historical manuscripts and for kindred purposes in the interest of American history and of history in America."⁶ In the same year, the National Education Association, its activities and membership relatively dormant since the Civil War, reemerged to assist teachers around the country in meeting the challenges posed by the shifting public school landscape in the late nineteenth century. By 1891, three major textbooks publication houses rose to meet the coming need for new textbooks. D.C. Heath was founded in Boston in 1885 by Edwin Ginn and

⁶ Congressional Charter of the American History Association, Approved January 4, 1889. Accessed March 4, 2019 <https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/brief-history-of-the-aha/congressional-charter>.

Daniel Collamore Heath. Houghton Mifflin, founded in 1832, opened a textbook publishing arm in 1891. But it was the American Book Company, formed in the consolidation of five smaller publishing houses in 1890, that dominated the early textbook market, both in terms of volume and popularity of its texts nationwide.⁷ Most famous for publishing the popular McGuffey Reader series and under the direction of leadership seeking to establish a corporate reputation as the distributor of the most innovative and reliable educational materials on the market, the ABC sought contracts with leading historians and recruited classroom teachers and administrators in key markets to advise and review textbooks during the editorial process. The ABC emerged as a leading publisher of U.S. history textbooks in the early twentieth century and its publications shaped the narrative structure of the Plains Wars in U.S. history textbooks, a structure that remained in textbooks long after ABC lost its dominance on the textbook market and persists through the twenty-first century.

In the aftermath of the Civil War and near-death of the Republic, American identity had to be remade. The trauma and failures of Reconstruction, growth of American imperialism, arrival of the ‘New Immigrants’, rise of industrialization and rapid urbanization, and other radical transformations of the second half of the nineteenth century presented serious challenges for the American identity that had emerged during the years of the Early Republic. As all levels of American culture grappled with restructuring American identity, professional historians turned their attention to the classroom. As Saxe notes, “No nation rightfully can be considered great without a past complete with a chart provided by history studies of its wanderings and discoveries, joys and triumphs, tragedies and failures, and heroes and villains. It was history and history alone that supplied a nation this chart.” That belief focused attention on the classroom,

⁷ The American Book Company emerged from the consolidation of Van Antwerp, Bragg and Col, A.S. Barnes & Co., D. Appleton and Co., and Iverson, Blakeman and Co.

and historians of the late 1890s “eagerly welcomed the opportunity to translate their faith in historical studies to the teaching of history in public schools, not simply for the sake of posterity but also for the sake of our younger citizens. Americans needed a sense of past amid all the progress; it was vital to the nation’s well-being to teach the American heritage to its youth.”⁸ Near the end of its first decade, the newly-reformed National Education Association (NEA) initiated the first of what became a series of five formal studies of history education in the United States in partnership with the AHA.

The NEA Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies, headed by Harvard President Charles Eliot, formed in order to iron out differences between high school coursework and college entrance requirements. Its Conference on History, Civil Government, and Political Economy, one of ten subject-specific focus groups and sometimes called the Madison Conference after their place of meeting, was a group composed of scholars and educators, most of whom also held membership in the AHA. Several members, including Charles Kendall Adams, Albert Bushnell Hart, and James Harvey Robinson, would also author popular U.S. history textbooks in coming decades. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, there was very little daylight between academic historians and history educators. However, as David Warren Saxe notes, the seeds of the coming schism between the two professional groups were sprouting even in that early period of cooperation.

While many historians characterized the period before 1921 and the split between the traditionalist historians and the Progressives over the social studies in school curriculum as one of relative harmony, in 1991 Saxe argued that in fact the period was one of contentious debate over the purpose of secondary education in general and history in secondary schools in

⁸ David Warren Saxe. *Social Studies in Schools: A History of the Early Years*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 75.

particular. That debate resulted in the rift embodied by the divisions within the AHA and the formation of the National Council for the Social Studies in 1921, but its origins lie in the early days of the AHA. Before the 1880s, Saxe argues, “history in the schools largely meant the study of myths and legends from ancient Greece and Rome, heroes of the American Revolution, discoveries of the New World, and other stories designed to inspire patriotism and moral certitude.”⁹ However the growth of public schools on the heels of the successful common-school movement, as well as the new urgency of providing a foundation for post-Civil War national unity that would also serve as a process of Americanization for immigrant children rendered the older model of elite, classical education intended primarily for college-bound male students from wealthy families unsuitable for the needs of a nation in radical transition.

The Madison Conference sought to bridge the gap between an older pedagogy centered on the flourishing of individual students’ intellectual development and the growing need for schools to promote citizenship and train students for social cohesion.¹⁰ The final report issued in 1893 made use of language that reaffirmed the value of classical education and individual student flourishing, but the report’s focus rested firmly on modernizing the curriculum in order to more directly prepare students to meet the challenges of the emerging modern U.S. social, political, and economic order. The committee, Saxe writes, “sought to forge a compromise

⁹ Saxe, 30.

¹⁰ It is important to note that during the 1880s and 1890s southern states were able to establish their first textbook publishing houses as well as teacher preparation programs. With northern-published books postwar laying heavy blame for the Civil War on Confederate belligerence, southern publishers pushed back with textbooks dedicated to promoting Lost Cause narratives. This struggle, especially in the pages of textbooks, dominated conversations about history education well into the 1910s. Textbook companies like the ABC found themselves needing to appeal to southern textbook buyers in order to stay competitive in southern markets. For example, J.R. Fairchild wrote “I do not wish to pander to them. I have in mind only the elimination of unnecessary facts or the toning down of statements of them... If I were a Southerner I would of course not use in my school a book that I considered untrue to the South... It [example statement] may be true – and I think it is – but why say it?” Fairchild to Benton, March 6, 1928. American Book Company Records, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries, Box 148, Folder F. Fish, Carl Russell.

between individualism and social responsibility; between intrinsic values of the mind and public order.” As a result, he argues, the Madison Conference report “constituted the formalization of history as a legitimate discipline for the emerging secondary school.”¹¹ The report did not proscribe a particular curriculum as later AHA committees would, but rather focused on the role history coursework should play in secondary education. The committee argued that role should be central and “believed in the value of historical knowledge to strengthen the individual, sharpen the mind, broaden the horizon, and give depth to the soul.... To these pioneers, history was a window to the past and a door to the future, and anyone who studied it properly could apply its lesson to everyday life.”¹² As education historian Hazel Hertzberg argues, the main impact of the NEA report was the assertion that “the primary purpose of the high school was not to prepare students for college but to give a good education to the vast majority of students whose formal education ended with high school.”¹³ Hertzberg notes that although committee members presented history’s importance in conjunction with the importance of economics, sociology, and political science instruction, history emerges as the primary subject in the Madison Conference report. The report’s authors became known as the History Ten.

The Madison Conference, as well as the full report from the NEA Committee of Ten, shaped conversations about secondary education among academics through the end of the decade. A more lasting effect, however, was the effect the History Ten had on textbook publishers. Saxe notes, “The Madison Conference resolutions appeared at a time when history in the school curriculum in terms of textbook production was largely in control of nonprofessional historians. These authors often viewed the business of history as an exercise in patriotism and

¹¹ Saxe, 41.

¹² Ibid., 30.

¹³ Hazel Whitman Hertzberg. *Social Studies Reform, 1880-1980*. A Project SPAN Report. (Boulder: Social Science Education Consortium, Inc., 1981), 9.

moralistic virtues, a mode of thinking that persisted throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."¹⁴ The popularity and near-universal embrace of the History Ten recommendations, especially their elevation of U.S. history as a course of its own, led to a scramble for “competent, scholarly, academic history.”¹⁵ Schools with the means to purchase such books sought them, and publishers rushed to provide them.

The Madison Conference was a critical moment in education history, not merely because it upheld the value of secondary education in its own right, separate from college preparation, but also because it laid the pattern for the relationship between academic historians, secondary educators, and textbook publishers. While that pattern would undergo significant changes over the course of the twentieth century, the expectations formed in the last decades of the nineteenth century for academic expertise and responsiveness to classroom needs shaped the business of textbook publishing in ways that are still in effect in the twenty-first century.¹⁶ In the late nineteenth century, with teacher preparation programs scrambling to meet the increased demand for well-trained classroom teachers, the influence of the textbook was at its height in secondary classrooms. While textbooks ceded some influence over classroom instruction to teacher innovation, state curriculum standards, and other factors over time, the textbook remained central to classroom instruction far beyond the professionalization of education. Saxe argues “Good textbooks, therefore, were the basis of good teaching, and the good textbook, in order to be published, prudently followed the guidance of two preeminent national history committees. For textbooks at the turn of the century this meant attending to the recommendations and suggestions

¹⁴ Saxe, 52.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ For example, while many U.S. history textbooks for general use published by companies like Holt McDougal do not rely on their authorship to promote their books, the most popular textbook on the market for A.P. U.S. History, *The American Pageant*, has relied on promoting its historian authorship in marketing materials since its first edition, first with Thomas Bailey, now with David Kennedy, both historians at Stanford University. Further discussion of the book and its impact on U.S. history textbooks appears in Ch. 6.

of the Madison Conference and the later Committee of Seven.”¹⁷ Textbook publishers linked the value of their products to their adherence to these committee recommendations. In 1916, Albert Bushnell Hart wrote to ABC editor-in-chief George W. Benton, “This book was very carefully prepared with consultation of the Report of the Committee of Eight on teaching history in the grades.” He goes on to argue that it should be of no concern that his text does not align perfectly with college entrance exams, saying, “I have not tried to make sure that all the probable questions of the Regents Examination could be answered out of the book. The Regent’s examination turns to details to a degree which seems to me undesirable. Is it not much more important that the Revised Essentials should meet those conditions?”¹⁸ For Hart and Benton, adherence to AHA committee recommendations outweighed college entrance exam preparation when it came to marketing a U.S. history textbook.

As schooling expanded, the AHA maintained its focus on history education, especially in the secondary schools. John Jay’s inaugural address as president of the AHA in 1890 was titled “The Demand for Education in American History” and called for “the importance of historical studies for the development of the national spirit and the proper education of the youth of this Republic.”¹⁹ Time and again, scholars argued the importance of historians’ engagement with the public through education, especially U.S. history education as a means for promoting citizenship and establishing American identity. At the 1896 annual meeting of the AHA, NEA chairman of the Committee on College Entrance Requirements August F. Nightingale asked for a report detailing the scope and sequence of history courses in secondary schools, accompanied by AHA

¹⁷ Saxe, 29.

¹⁸ Albert Bushnell Hart to George Benton, March 22, 1916. American Book Company Records, Box 29, Folder A.B. Hart IV.

¹⁹ John Jay. “The Demand for Education in American History,” *Papers of the American Historical Association* v. 5 (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1890), 43.

recommendations for a model curriculum. Eager to contribute to the historical education of young American citizens, the AHA formed the Committee of Seven, which issued its report *The Study of History in Schools* in 1899, a report Hertzberg calls “one of the most influential reports in the history of the social studies.”²⁰ Comprised of scholars and secondary school educators, the Committee of Seven presented a scope and sequence for secondary history education that incorporated current best practices into a model that further emphasized the goals of fostering citizenship, social cohesion, and intellectual curiosity.²¹

The Committee of Seven’s curricular model became a consistent structure around which schools built secondary history curriculum, and its longevity restricted the ways in which that curriculum could adapt to incorporate new historical scholarship. Modeled on historical scholarship of the time, the committee report suggested greater emphasis on the use of primary source materials in the classroom. At the time, however, available primary source materials overwhelmingly favored the Euro-American point of view, propping white-centered narratives of U.S. history. This was especially true concerning narratives of the Plains Wars, where military reports, frontier newspaper accounts, and Indian Wars veterans’ memoirs comprised the bulk of historical evidence. The report remained influential in high school curriculum design and secondary textbook publication for decades, even after historical scholarship moved toward examining the Native perspective of white-Native conflicts. Therefore, the Committee of Seven’s curricular model and its popularity, in part, ensured that the valorized narratives of the

²⁰ Hertzberg, 12.

²¹ To disambiguate terms, curriculum refers to the planned sequence of instruction, specific content, and methodology of the course. Scope and sequence refers to the broad outline of subject content in the order in which it should be covered. In recent years scope and sequence materials often include pacing guides to delineate the amount of time a teacher should spend on each unit of content, but that is a development of the past few decades and was uncommon for most of twentieth century education history.

Plains Wars remained in textbooks and made it difficult to remove them when historians began to question them decades later.

The Committee of Seven recommended a structure that would be familiar to any current social studies teacher. Focusing on high school curriculum, the committee recommended teaching ancient history in the first year, medieval and modern European history in the second year, English history in the third, and American history and civil government for the fourth and final year. A radical departure from the more traditional focus on European history in greater detail that had some secondary schools offering full years of French and German history as well, the committee's recommended scope and sequence reflected the newer trend in secondary schools to part ways with the older model and adopt a more social studies-oriented approach that elevated the importance of American history in secondary curriculum. Like the History Ten's report, the *Study of History in Schools* declared that the ultimate goal of history education extended beyond mere intellectual development of the student. "The greatest aim of education is to impress upon the learner a sense of duty and responsibility, and an acquaintance with his human obligations," the report declares, "and that a manifest function of the historical instruction in the school is to give the pupil a sense of duty as a responsible member of the organized society of which he is a part, and some appreciation of its principles and its fundamental character."²²

The curricular goal of history instruction that offers students an "appreciation of... its fundamental character" did not originate with the Committee of Seven, nor did it fade with other educational fads of the era. As education historian Carl Kaestle notes, "two enduring legacies of the common-school reform movement are the American faith in education and the cosmopolitan ideal of inclusive public schools. School reformers believed that common schools could solve the

²² Andrew McLaughlin, et al. *The Study of History in Schools, Report of the Committee of Seven to the American Historical Association* (New York: MacMillan, 1899), 76.

problems of diversity, instability, and equal opportunity. That faith has been resilient in American history.”²³ Schools could accomplish these lofty goals best, educators believed, by offering students an understanding of American principles rooted in a common narrative of the American past.

The importance of using history education to establish that national moral identity echoes across education history. Ellwood P. Cubberley, former dean and now namesake of Stanford University’s School of Education, called education “the great constructive tool of modern political society.”²⁴ Bessie Louise Pierce, a colleague and sometime education reform accomplice of Cubberley’s writes of the explicit link between the content of American history textbooks and the goal of instilling American values in future citizens of the nation. “Closely allied with the political concepts gained from reading history textbooks are attitudes and ideals, some of which are political, set up regarding the character and prowess of the United States. Here by direction and indirection the writers of textbooks have created impressions regarding American customs, institutions, and ideals which tend to separate the United States from other nations,” Cubberley writes with approval. For Cubberley, the goal of history instruction, and therefore history textbooks, is to present to students “The boon of freedom, denied to many peoples, the wonders of democracy and the democratic principles of the American people as presented to pupils inevitably must make a lasting impression. Through all runs the story of the

²³ Kaestle, 222. Journalist Frances FitzGerald takes the claim a step further. She argues in her review of U.S. history textbooks that the goal of educators in the humanities is far more transformative than intellectual training in academic fields or mere pride of country. Educators do not seek merely to teach content; they seek to teach content in order to mold character because “the assumption of pedagogy is, after all, that children are different from adults... weird, deformed creatures who require salvation rather than simply schooling in history or English.” Frances FitzGerald. *America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 214.

²⁴ Ellwood P. Cubberley. *The History of Education: Educational Practice and Progress Considered as a Phase of the Development and Spread of Western Civilization*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 739.

superiority of a people able to create and to attain the unusual.”²⁵ Designing U.S. history course content with the goal of instilling this sense of special calling and unique equipment for accomplishment in American students necessarily compromises the content textbooks can present to readers.

The success of using U.S. history course content to teach a narrative of American exceptionalism rests upon the ability to frame the United States as uniquely dedicated to the well-being of all peoples. That well-being was, of course, defined by the white Protestant majority deemed to be normative Americans and to whose culture all other peoples should conform. Although white supremacy was embedded in her institutions from the beginning, for American history to instruct students in the moral exceptionalism Cubberley describes, that systemic injustice had to be recast as charitable outreach. In her history America must be cast in the role of rescuer, a trend that educators and politicians found especially appealing after World War I, and even her mistakes must be explained to students as fundamentally well-meaning.

Many textbooks of the period included notes to students that framed their study in terms of this brand of redemptive patriotism. West and West urge student readers to embrace their 1926 textbook with enthusiasm, saying “America, *your* America! In a few years *you* will have a share in determining what this country shall be for the future. You should know then, what it has been and how it has come to be what it now is. You young Americans all like to salute the flag. That is well, even if you have no better reason than that it is your flag.” Knowledge, West and West argue, should enhance that natural patriotism, saying “But it is finer and better for you to love to salute it because you know with a joyous pride that it stands for freedom, for law, for fair opportunity in industry (and so for decent and happy homes), for goodwill to the peoples of other

²⁵ Bessie Louise Pierce. *Civic Attitudes in American School Textbooks*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), 106.

lands.” Rather than to teach students to think critically about U.S. history West and West tell students that “To help you understand how this America of ours has come to stand for these glorious principles is the purpose of this book.”²⁶ Presumably if it did not help students appreciate the lofty ideals of America, West and West did not include it in their textbook.

The West and West text was not unique in its professed purpose, and was not understaken without similar goals expressed by professional historians who sought to provide guidance for history education. A natural extension of the broader recommendations of the History Ten, the Committee of Seven sought to solidify the bridge the History Ten had begun to construct between traditional history and social studies, paving the way for a triumphalist national narrative promoting the ideals of good citizenship in the process. The Committee professed that “History bridged the gap between the incipient urban industrial state that degraded the individual and reduced the human being to a mere cog in the machinery of capital and finance, and the human spirit that gave each human a special quality. By utilizing the methods of science with the eloquence of literature, history took the hard edges off the sciences while celebrating humanity, a justifiable compromise.”²⁷ The narratives of the Plains Wars were perfectly suited to this process of shaving hard edges away. The pattern was already established in popular culture that turned Tathanka Iyotake into Sitting Bull as sideshow entertainment and among historians who regaled Indian wars veterans with flattering addresses at annual meetings of the Order of the Indian Wars. That narratives of the Plains Wars increasingly resolved into accounts of Dawes Act-facilitated assimilation in U.S. history textbooks published after the release of the Committee of Seven’s report is not surprising.

²⁶ Ruth West and Willis Mason West. *The Story of Our Country*. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1926), xxvi.

²⁷ Saxe, 62.

Several professional organization reports followed the AHA's Committee of Seven, most of them projects of the AHA. Most influential, however, was the report of the 1916 NEA Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education. Reflecting the presentist concerns of progressive history and the progressive education movement's emphasis on student needs beyond mere intellectual development, *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* asserts "education in a democracy, both within and without the school, should develop in each individual the knowledge, interests, ideals, habits, and powers whereby he will find his place and use that place to shape both himself and society toward ever nobler ends."²⁸ The study places the burden for achieving the goal of social harmony most squarely on history education. The report states "while all subjects should contribute to good citizenship, the social studies—geography, history, civics, and economics—should have this as their dominant aim." As such, "history should so treat the growth of institutions that their present value may be appreciated." As such, the report declared that understanding the past and developing the skills of historical thinking were secondary goals of history education in junior high and high schools. Ultimately, the report sought to encourage educators to use history education to promote both individual flourishing and social consensus. "The comprehension of the ideals of American democracy and loyalty to them should be a prominent aim of civic education," the report declares. It must offer specific instruction in social cohesion, because "The pupil should feel that he will be responsible, in cooperation with others, for keeping the Nation true to the best inherited conceptions of democracy, and he should also realize that democracy itself is an ideal to be wrought out by his own and succeeding generations."²⁹ Despite the fact that the 1916 report parted ways with AHA-

²⁸ National Education Association and the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1937), 9.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

promoted history curriculum by de-emphasizing formal historical training and expanding schools' focus on recent history, one trait remained constant: history educators were deeply concerned with creating a history curriculum that presented students with a coherent American identity and promoted patriotic devotion, not a curriculum that merely trained students in understanding U.S. history. As Ian Tyrrell observed in his study of professional history's engagement with the public, "Allegiance to the United States is based, so the nation's founding myth goes, on ideas and beliefs. What links Americans together is not the ethnic, religious, or cultural origins of its citizenry but a shared civil culture. Those ideas require a particular reading of history—a collective memory."³⁰

No longer primarily designed to prepare college-bound students for academic work, secondary history curriculum could focus on establishing collective memory upon which to base notions of civic duty and national identity. *Cardinal Principles* listed seven goals for secondary education: health, command of fundamental process (writing, reading, oral communication, and math), worthy home membership, vocation, civic education, worthy use of leisure, and ethical character. Social studies reformers saw a prime opportunity to use secondary history courses to forge what Gary Gerstle terms civic nationalism. U.S. history curriculum provided the best opportunity to accomplish it. As Cubberley wrote in 1919, "We have the makings of a great Nation, but the task before us is to make it... Our problem is to assimilate and amalgamate them all into a unified Nation, actuated by common impulses, inspired by common ideals, conscious of a moral unity and purpose which will be our strength..."³¹ It was U.S. history taught in secondary schools that would accomplish this unity and provide this common identity.

³⁰ Ian Tyrrell, *Historians in Public: The Practice of American History, 1890-1970* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 11.

³¹ Ellwood P. Cubberley. *Public Education in the United States: A Study and Interpretation of American Educational History*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919), 503. Cubberley continues that this instruction

In *American Crucible*, Gerstle traces the ideological conflict between civic nationalism (identity based in ideals embedded in the founding documents of the United States) and racial nationalism (the historical desire for a white republic expressed in those ideals' terms). While social studies reformers explicitly sought to present students with civic nationalism that embraced multiculturalism, the fact that civic nationalism was rooted in the founding documents of the U.S. alienated Native students from that shared identity. The Declaration of Independence and Constitution, espousing "the American belief in the fundamental equality of all human beings, in every individual's inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and in a democratic government that derives its legitimacy from the people's consent" are all rooted the assumption of the legitimacy of the American government to establish these rights under the Doctrine of Discovery and ensure them via the supremacy clause.³² By Gerstle's definition, civic nationalism as a concept is an affront to Native sovereignty and self-determination. It is not by legal American largesse that Native nations exist, but the civic nationalism of the United States declares it is so. Native people are sovereign, self-identifying nations, not a racial minority group. Racial nationalism targets them for elimination, but civic nationalism cannot welcome them without asking them to legitimize U.S. claims against them. That is why under the *Cardinal Principles*, U.S. history courses could retain the historical narratives of the Plains Wars with little alteration. The conquest of the West did not contradict civic nationalism's ideals; it embodied them. Few stories from American history offered as great an opportunity to inspire students with the excitement of a unique America than valorized stories of settling the Plains after the Civil War. In the early decades of the twentieth century, textbook authors' depictions of

will leave students "so filled with reverence for our type of national life that our youth will feel that our form of government is worth dying for to defend."

³² Gary Gerstle. *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 4.

the Plains Wars fit a particular narrative that promoted this vision of adventurous, triumphant American progress.

Given its rebuttal of the educational goals of traditional historians, the 1916 NEA Commission, and 1918 publication of *Cardinal Principles of Education* would have erupted into open ideological warfare between traditional historians and social studies advocates if it had not been interrupted by U.S. entry into World War I. As early as 1898, organizations like the influential New England Teachers' Association conducted surveys of history education in U.S. classrooms that highlighted the growing divide between AHA-promoted history-centered education and NEA-affiliated attention to more holistic, student-centered and civic-minded social studies curriculum. In the 1910s, progressive reformer John Dewey published several texts connecting new theories of child psychology with pragmatic philosophy, arguing for the school's central role in social change. Rather than challenge traditional history, Dewey worked within its framework to make changes that would fit the goals of social progress training, such as his suggestion to teach history in reverse chronological order to draw student interest to the timeline of historical events by appealing concerns with which they could relate. Child interest was the key to student learning, Dewey argued, and without child interest no subject could connect meaningfully with learners.³³

As advocates of traditional history curriculum and adherents to the Committee of Seven recommendations pushed against the expanding influence of social studies in secondary education, these battles were fought at annual conferences of teachers' associations and in the pages of publications like *The History Teachers' Journal*, then published by the AHA. As a

³³ Saxe, 118-22. Dewey's ideas became foundation to the Progressive educators, and Harold Rugg and others built the child-centered school model on Dewey's *Interest and Effort in Learning* (1913) and *Democracy and Education* (1916).

similar division among academic historians emerged, progressive historians like Charles Beard began to ally themselves with social studies advocates. At the 1913 fall meeting of the Association of History Teachers of the Middle States and Maryland, Beard proclaimed “How great was the wrong done to American democracy through this usurpation of dominion by history is apparent now, even to some historians, and a few are willing to concede a reduction of their overgrown domain.”³⁴ When the 1916 NEA report was released, it became the focal point for the battle between traditional historians and social studies advocates.

Saxe argues the historians had the upper hand in the coming clash. That advantage, he writes, was because “so many of the teachers being asked to change banners were accustomed to textbooks based upon the four-block model of the Committee of Seven. Given the training of history instructors, which even the historians admitted was poor, the classroom textbook became absolutely indispensable to teachers.”³⁵ Given the perpetual infrastructural weakness of teacher education programs and their failure to keep pace with demand for classroom teachers, the majority of disagreement over the future of history education centered on the textbooks. In the late nineteenth century, most criticisms of teacher performance tended to center on their failure to offer students coherent explanations of textbook contents, and most state legislation pertaining to education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries stipulated terms for textbook adoption. The stage was set for an epic battle between the two camps, and those battles would be, pragmatically, for control of textbook contents. However, wartime nationalism hijacked the conversation, making temporary and uneasy allies of them all.

As it did in other areas of American political and cultural life, World War I provoked an intense backlash of paranoid nationalism. The expansion of public schooling and the relatively

³⁴ quoted in Saxe, 136.

³⁵ Saxe, 98.

recent rise of U.S. history curriculum in secondary schools made history education a focal point for efforts to promote patriotism and root out disloyalty during the war. As in other postwar periods, these efforts rode a wave of popular support for years following the end of active military engagement. In 1926, Pierce wrote that 1920s legislative efforts to control textbooks and ensure patriotic loyalty from classroom teachers were linked to wartime anxiety, resulting from “opening the flood-gates of apprehension regarding the content of school histories.” It was the same legislative impulse as earlier attempts to regulate teachers’ speech in the classroom, she argues. Facing the new wartime-fueled legislative battle over history education, Pierce claims “Here, again, the vital thing in the mind of the lawmaker is to repress any statements considered by him as likely to undermine American patriotism.”³⁶ Just as the years following the Civil War saw an explosion of intense nationalism, the years following World War I were filled with state legislatures attempting to codify patriotic nationalism in laws regulating textbooks in public schools.

These efforts were consistent with the anxious lawmaking of the time, which included the 1917 Espionage Act, the 1918 Sedition Act, and culminated in the first Red Scare in the early 1920s. If speech and protest should be curtailed to protect national security and guard against the spread of Bolshevism, surely the classroom should be bulwarked as well. In New York in 1918, the legislature enacted a law forbidding “the use of any textbook which contained statements seditious in character, disloyal to the United States or favorable to the cause of any enemy country.”³⁷ Fueled by wartime sentiments, the 1918 New York law has its roots in similar legislation from the nineteenth century designed to ensure “a means of implanting patriotism in

³⁶ Pierce, *Public Opinion*, 100.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

the pupils of the public schools.”³⁸ That AHA, facing pressure from both external groups and its own membership to contribute to the war effort, formed the National Board for Historical Service, a group that formalized cooperation between historians and history teachers by producing materials designed to help both secondary and college teachers shape their history courses around the unfolding events of the war. Through this work, the AHA affirmed the position that history education was a matter of patriotic instruction, not historical inquiry.

Textbook companies responded to these demands predictably. Two chief concerns the ABC editorial staff expressed concerning marketability of their textbooks nationwide were student engagement and up-to-date content. As World War I unfolded, editors and authors discussed plans for treating the conflict in the newest editions of their textbooks. Committed to keeping his textbook context current, in 1917 Hart wrote to ABC editor W.A. Townsend, “I propose to begin a new deal substantially at the outbreak of war, in an expansible chapter, and I enclose the first two section of that chapter. My idea is that as the war goes on we can add a section so that the book will be close up to date all the time.” Hart acknowledged that immediate content might, in retrospect, need revision. Rather than avoid the risk of including impartial or incorrect content in the race to keep the book up-to-date, Hart suggests “when the war is over we can re-write it, diminishing some of the details which are now essential and keep adding to it for the next two years, whenever the book gets too bulky on that basis, we can fix it up by dropping out Chap. XXXVI. That seems to me an automatic method of dealing with the difficulty of

³⁸ Ibid., 56. Pierce cites laws ranging from textbook regulation to flag requirements to observations of patriotic holidays as the means by which state legislatures in the 1880s and 1890s tried to embed patriotism in school curriculum. The AHA Committee of Eight’s recommendation to design elementary social studies curriculum around the holidays throughout the year, released in 1909, is the logical outgrowth of these efforts and continues to exert influence on elementary school social studies curriculum in classrooms today.

treating enormously important events at short range.”³⁹ Such serious attention to recent events did not, however, extend to updating scholarly understanding of those events.

With the exception of narratives concerning the causes of the Civil War, correspondence between ABC editorial staff and ABC textbook authors does not discuss revisiting the historical narratives already established in their texts in light of recent scholarship.⁴⁰ During the war, and in the aftermath of the war years, the correspondence also lacks substantial discussions of the renewed ideological battle between traditional historians and social studies advocates. The formation of the National Council for the Social Studies in 1921 solidified the ideological division between history and social studies, but ABC editorial correspondence rarely comments on that division. In fact, several letters suggest that the ABC editorial goal was to use innovative textbook writing to “get out of the beaten path in history texts for secondary schools.”⁴¹ The ABC strategy was to appeal directly to their consumers: secondary classroom teachers. After World War I, however, that appeal had to be mitigated by appeasing patriotic organizations that had tasked themselves with guarding American tradition, and who saw their primary battleground as U.S. history textbooks.

The 1880s and 1890s were decades of establishment for professional academic organizations like the AHA, NEA, and others. Alongside those associations rose patriotic

³⁹ Hart to Townsend, May 22, 1917. American Book Company Records, Box 29, Folder Hart VI. The concern to present the most recent material in textbooks was not merely a concern of war reporting. In 1928, ABC editors made similar plans with Carl Russell Fish to leave space for the result of the 1928 presidential election which would occur just before the book went to press. Older bestsellers like Eggleston’s *New Century History* stayed on the market while ABC staff writers updated them, sometimes annually.

⁴⁰ Discussions over the southern textbook market permeate the ABC editorial correspondence. In 1914, editors and Hart corresponded concerning the difficulty of marketing the text to southern schools where pupils lagged a year behind their northern and western peers. In letters concerning Reuben Post Halleck’s 1923 U.S. history textbook, editors J.R. Fairchild and Benton discuss the delicacy of approaching even Revolutionary War narratives, saying “Our friends in the South do not like the word revolution. There is much to be said in support of their views. Revolution is the same as rebellion, and they say they were not rebels.” Fairchild to Benton, June 22, 1923. American Book Company Records. Box 80, F Halleck I.

⁴¹ R.B. Metcalf to Benton, April 6, 1925. American Book Company Records, Box 95, Folder C.R. Fish I.

associations. Pierce writes, “from 1880 to 1900 local pride evinced a quickened consciousness in the organization of such groups as the Sons of Veterans in 1881, the United Confederate Veterans and the Sons of the American Revolution in 1890, and the Sons of Confederate Veterans in 1896.”⁴² The Order of the Indian Wars and the United Indian War Veterans Association both emerged in the 1890s as well. Although few of these organizations formally coordinated their efforts they developed alongside each other, all seeking influence in various ways and with different goals in mind about the development of the narrative of U.S. history. After the first world war, their efforts began to converge in public debates over U.S. history textbooks. While Indian wars veterans’ associations focused on valorizing stories of their exploits to the public in an effort to sway congressional opinion, other organizations sought to control the narrative of U.S. history within schools entirely.⁴³ Through editorials, appeals to state legislatures, and the formation of organizations to promote patriotism in schools, groups like the American Legion, the Daughters and Sons of the American Revolution led the charge in condemning textbooks it deemed anti-American and promoting a narrative of national chauvinism for American students, especially in secondary education.

Concerns about patriotic backlash against their textbooks preoccupied the ABC editors before World War I concluded. In 1917, Hart even reluctantly proposed to omit the Declaration of Independence from his U.S. history textbook “to foster no animosity against our ally,

⁴² Pierce, *Public Opinion*, 22.

⁴³ Though they did not mount or join textbook influence campaigns like other veterans’ associations, under Viola Ransom Wood’s leadership the United Indian War Veterans’ Association, U.S.A. readily used anxiety about inadequate U.S. history education in messaging designed to promote UIWVA concerns. “In recent years our public school children have, to some extent, been taught little if anything as regards the early history of the United States... The same is true as regards the history of our Indian warfare. Even as late as 1898, our troops were at war to make American safe from blood-thirsty Indians. Yet, where do we find any accounts in our public school histories of the trials and tribulations of the pioneers of the 70s and 80s of the last century? As a certain Congressman remarked last winter, when asked if he would support a bill to increase the Indian War Veterans’ bill: “Indian War Veterans? Why, I thought they were all dead!”” Message from the National Commander, n.d. Indian War Veterans Collection. Box 2, Folder 1. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma.

England.” When editorial staff recoiled in horror, Hart wrote in relief “Personally, I feel as you do that there is no choice in the matter, especially in the year 1917 when patriotism is pitched as high as it is.”⁴⁴ During the war, textbook publishers were surprisingly nervous about accusations that their books could harm Anglo-American relations, so much so that in the early 1920s Hearst newspapers launched an attack on U.S. history textbooks for being anti-American in the course of being pro-British.⁴⁵ The attacks so consumed textbook authors and editors that W.W. Livengood wrote to textbook author Reuben Post Halleck in 1921 that “This History business is the worst field to tackle with various camps standing about each with brick bats. The Irish is on one side of us, the English on the other, the French in between, the Germans peeping over the top of the hill, and the Scandinavians propagating socialistic doctrine. The Catholic and the Protestants are pulling each other’s hair with the Masons kicking up a rumpus in between.” It was only American partisanship that spared him a headache. “In fact the only total amicability existing is that which obtains between the Republican and Democratic parties! They love each other!”⁴⁶ Livengood wrote in wonder.

The public attacks that so frustrated Livengood were orchestrated by a handful of individuals, most of whom were associated in some way with the Sons of the American Revolution or the American Legion.⁴⁷ In 1917 Judge Wallace McCamant, a member of the SAR,

⁴⁴ Hart letters, October 1917. American Book Company Records, Box 29, Folder A.B. Hart IV.

⁴⁵ It was this controversy that “Big Bill” Thompson made a major platform of his campaign for mayor of Chicago in 1927, which offered the Grand Council Fire of American Indians the opportunity to launch their public campaign for improved teaching about Native history in Chicago schools.

⁴⁶ Livengood to Halleck, April 5, 1921. American Book Company Records, Box 80, Folder Halleck V.

⁴⁷ ABC editors met the charges of “Anglicization” with particular scorn. In a letter to author Carl Russell Fish in 1922, Livengood writes “Yes, we are painfully aware of the activities of two or three gentlemen who have, apparently, dedicated their lives to barnstorming histories... So far as I am able to determine (and I can speak with no heat since a quarter of my blood comes from the Parnells!) the object of the group is to promote pan-Celticism at the expense of exploiting England. The reasoning appears to run thus: - England is an enemy of Ireland: Ireland needs America’s help: therefore, anything that derides England in American Text Books will help Ireland. This makes a perfect syllogism, and is perhaps as sound as this: - A circle is round – a ball is round – therefore, a ball is a circle.... This particular phase of mania will have run its course in due time and be forgotten.” Livengood to Fish, December 27, 1922. American Book Company Records, Box 96, Folder Fish IV.

began targeting David Saville Muzzey's wildly popular 1911 *An American History*, going so far as to release a pamphlet devoted to its betrayals of the American ideal.⁴⁸ The ABC did not publish Muzzey's textbook, but the controversy inspired other self-appointed patriotic guardians to investigate ABC texts, and ABC editors monitored anti-Muzzey attacks in order to prepare to defend their own books. The preparation became useful when in 1923 Charles Grant Miller of the Patriot League for the Preservation of American Memory targeted Halleck's new U.S. history textbook.

Reuben Post Halleck, popular principal of the Male High School in Louisville, Kentucky, entered a contract with the ABC just after the end of World War I. A local celebrity beloved of his students and community, Halleck had long wanted to write a history textbook that would appeal to his students. As an educator, Halleck was planted firmly in the traditionalist camp, running a school that offered "a stiff classical education with none of the "new-fangled" ideas like vocational courses and electives."⁴⁹ He was, however, a dynamic and engaged teacher, insisting to the Kentucky Teachers' Association that "teaching is a social game. The teacher must cultivate the social imagination, for the social game requires love and imagination."⁵⁰ In his role as principal, Halleck embodied that philosophy, offering dynamic addresses in weekly chapels and engaging personally with students. He wrote a book to match that philosophy, one the ABC advertised as a text that, "instead of, or in illustration of, abstract statements that have little meaning for children, this book gives a wealth of interesting concrete incidents that will get across and stick."⁵¹ Kentucky newspapers covered the upcoming publication with great interest.

⁴⁸ Pierce, *Public Opinion*, 254-8.

⁴⁹ Ninde Seaman Wilder. *Reuben Post Halleck*. Unpublished thesis, University of Kentucky, 1946, 42.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁵¹ Publicity document for *History of Our Country*, November 22, 1922. American Book Company Records, Box 80, Folder Halleck V.

Halleck, they reported, said “I know from experience that history is one of the most difficult subjects to teach and that it usually leaves little residuum in the pupil’s mind. I have endeavored to treat the main events of history in a definite concrete way just as if they had happened this morning... History remains a dead subject until it is called to life by the pupils’ imagination.”⁵² According to one biographer, Halleck’s first desire was to publish fiction, but after being dissuaded by his fiancé and sister, he turned to textbook writing instead.⁵³

Like so many textbook authors, his desire to present an exciting narrative led him to focus more intensely on the drama of the events of history, including the Plains Wars, than their narrative framing. Halleck was also dedicated to the moral instruction the past could offer. In *History of Our Country for Higher Grades*, Halleck combined both to present the excitement of westward expansion in the tone of a cautionary tale that both acknowledged settler greed and claimed that despite that greed’s critical role in accomplishing westward expansion, it was in contradiction to American ideals. The section opens by stating “Our country sent whole tribes of Indians west of the Mississippi with the promise that they would not be molested there. When the white people rushed to the West, they kept crowding the Indians out of their best lands and killing the buffaloes on which they depended for meat...” Unlike many of his contemporaries, Halleck criticized the justification of usufruct rights that underlies land seizures in the West. He writes, “The white people had the idea that the land should belong to them, since they could make better use of it than the Indian. This is a very dangerous idea for any race to have, for it encourages men in thinking that it is right for them to seize the birthright of a weak people. More than one nation has thought that it was right for the strong to grow stronger at the expense of the

⁵² Wilder, 123-4.

⁵³ Ibid., 40. According to his wife Annie, “Particularly were Prof. Halleck’s attempts to portray character through conversation pathetic.”

weak.” Halleck stops short of offering a genuine critique of this constructed white innocence, however, instead closing the section by saying “The United States has made mistakes, but we now believe that the weak should be protected, and that our country will grow stronger by making weak nations stronger also.”⁵⁴ Despite his admonition to care for the weaker nation, in Halleck’s account white insistence on taking Indian land forced the government to intervene not to protect Indian land, but to open it to white settlement.

As Halleck hints in the last sentence, well-meaning paternalism is a convenient argument for imperial ambition. This presentation of the morality of westward expansion was closely linked to his beliefs about patriotism. In an address to the students of Atherton High school in 1925, Halleck said “Patriotism never begins with an abstract love of country. Patriotism never starts suddenly any more than the buds of spring come out as the result of one day’s sun... The wider world patriotism teaches that we shall not be happy and prosperous if other nations are poor and wretched.”⁵⁵ Anna Blanche McGill, a reviewer for the *Louisville Post* and later collaborator with Halleck wrote that Halleck’s textbook “gives students of the volume no chance of becoming complacent jingoists, short-sighted, egotistic Americans, after they have here learned as a basic lesson the great and manifold debts of their land to Old World traditions, cultural and political.”⁵⁶ It was precisely that approach that alarmed Miller and his like-minded peers.

The complaints of patriotic organizations against ABC textbooks centered on concern about raising students with pride in their country and in the events of the country’s past. In 1923, Bridgewater M. Arnold wrote to ABC editor Benton on behalf of the SAR that their concerns

⁵⁴ Reuben Post Halleck, *History of Our Country for Higher Grades* (New York: American Book Company, 1923), 454-455.

⁵⁵ Wilder, 108.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 125.

about the transmission of patriotism were a matter of national security, not just for the physical existence of the country, but for its spiritual survival as well. “Historians are rapidly recognizing that the great forces, both spiritual and material, that compose the modern state must be conceived as an organic whole, and hence, in many ways a nation is comparable to a human being,” Arnold issues his appeal to the authority of professional history, hinting that Halleck’s training as an educator rather than a historian indicates that he should give way to this growing consensus. He continues, “I believe that patriotism is as essential to national success and happiness as pride is to personal, patriotism being pride written in letters of national size.”⁵⁷ Halleck coordinated with ABC editors to assuage those concerns, and while they successfully secured Miller’s endorsement of the textbook in 1923, that confidence was secured by paying Miller \$300 for a lengthy critique of the book.⁵⁸

From his published pamphlets to his reader report, nowhere did Miller’s complaint mention Halleck’s treatment of the Plains Wars. In part, that may be due to the fact that Halleck agreed with the changes Benton suggested for the sections on westward expansion. In a letter in 1924, Halleck tells Torrance to make the following revisions and explains their source, saying “Our youth should remember that the skies overarching prairie and mountain in every state beyond the Mississippi look down on the graves of the heroic dead whose struggles gave the West to the East.” Echoing the rhetoric of state history boosters and Indian War veterans’ organizations, Halleck affirms “The western states furnished their due proportion of heroes. Many of them lie in unmarked graves but their struggles and sacrifice were necessary to give the West to the East. (This second seems tame and ordinary in comparison with the first.)”⁵⁹ ABC

⁵⁷ Arnold to Benton and Lee, August 17, 1923. American Book Company Records, Box 90, Folder Halleck IV.

⁵⁸ Arnold to ABC, August 17, 1923, American Book Company Records, Box 90 Folder Halleck IV.

⁵⁹ Halleck to Torrance, April 7, 1924. American Book Company Records, Box 90 Folder Halleck II.

editors saw valorizing the history of westward expansion, especially the bloody wars fought after the Civil War to secure territory for settlers, as a tool to deflect SAR criticism that their U.S. history textbooks were insufficiently patriotic.⁶⁰ Even Halleck, who wrote to Santee Dakota Charles Eastman in 1921 to prove to ABC editors that Crow Dog's story deserved a place in the textbook, perpetuated the narrative structure that marginalized Native people in favor of valorized settler narratives.⁶¹

Miller was not appeased for long. In 1925, he published the Hirschfield Report, an attack on Hart's *School History of the United States* that placed it alongside Muzzey's in condemnation. The two would continue to be linked, despite the ABC's attempts to appease the book's critics.⁶² As postwar nationalism ballooned into Red Scare, Miller's efforts joined those not just by the SAR, but also by the Grand Army of the Republic, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Spanish-War Veterans, all of whom featured pro-patriotic textbook content reform in their annual conventions in 1923.⁶³ The attacks drew such public attention that even in the midst of the rift within the historical community over social studies, historians and educators partnered to defend both textbooks and the larger issue of intellectual freedom in the classroom. Historian

⁶⁰ At times, ABC editors did not bother to respond to criticism at all. In 1925, Benton wrote to Fish "I suppose, however, that if we do this, the K.K.K. will object. However, I am in favor of taking a chance on it." Benton to Fish, March 19, 1925. American Book Company Records, Box 95, Folder G.R. Fish I.

⁶¹ The Crow Dog incident Halleck refers to is the 1881 murder and subsequent trial that resulted in the Supreme Court's *Ex parte Crow Dog* decision in 1883 that affirmed the sovereignty of tribal courts. Kangi Sunká (Crow Dog) killed Spotted Tail, then submitted to Brulé Lakota court and compensated Spotted Tail's family. Halleck insisted in letters to ABC editor S.A. Torrance that the incident exemplified "Indian faith and honor." It is unclear in what way Halleck felt Kangi Sunká exemplified those traits, but he appealed to Eastman as a Native authority to defend its place in his text, something other authors did not do. Although the letter from Eastman has been lost, Halleck tells Torrance "I asked him for his authority and he referred me to *My Friend, the Indian* by James McLaughlin, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1910." Halleck to Torrance, American Book Company Records, Box 80, Folders Halleck II and V.

⁶² In fact, in some respects Miller's attacks helped. Fairchild wrote to Benton "We must not abandon Hart. His books have made too many friends. And the attacks upon them, while they have hurt them with some, have also made new friends for him." Nevertheless, the ABC made corrections to the books in response to the Hirschfield Report. Fairchild to Benton, July 9, 1923. American Book Company Records, Box 98, Folder Hart I.

⁶³ These veterans' associations were responding to McCamant's letter to the *Boston Herald* in August of 1923 which blamed educators and publishers, though not historians, for anti-Americanism in textbooks. Pierce, *Public Opinion*, 267.

and textbook author James Truslow Adams published a response in the September 1923 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*, the High School Teachers' Association's adopted resolution was published in the *Dearborn Independent* in October, and the AHA adopted a resolution defending the intellectual freedom of both textbook authors and teachers.⁶⁴ In 1934, the AHA published the report of the Commission on the Social Studies, affirming the imperative on schools to prepare individuals for a social economy that was shifting away from individual enterprise and toward cooperative labor. Although the report declared that the "supreme purpose" of education was "the development of rich and many-sided personalities... the preparation of the rising generation to enter the society now coming into being through thought, ideal, and knowledge," an echo of the traditionalist historians' goals, it also announced a full partnership with NCSS and collaboration with social studies scholars through the journal *The Historical Outlook* which would be renamed *The Social Studies*.⁶⁵ However, while historians and social studies advocates

⁶⁴ "... genuine and intelligent patriotism, no less than the requirement of honesty and sound scholarship, demand that text-book writers and teachers should strive to present a truthful picture of past and present, with due regard to the different purposes and possibilities of elementary, secondary and advanced instruction; -- that criticism of history text-books should therefore be based not upon grounds of patriotism but only upon grounds of faithfulness to fact as determined by specialists or tested by consideration of the evidence... that the cultivation in pupils... of a spirit of inquiry and a willingness to face unpleasant facts, are far more important objectives than the teaching of special interpretations of particular events; -- and that attempts, however well meant, to foster national arrogance and boastfulness and indiscriminate worship of national 'heroes' can only tend to promote a harmful pseudo-patriotism... charges that many of our leading scholars are engaged in treasonable propaganda and that tens of thousands of American school teachers and officials are so stupid or disloyal as to place treasonable text-books in the hands of children is inherently and obviously absurd... successful continuance of such an agitation must inevitably bring about a ruinous deterioration both of text-books and of teaching, since self-respecting scholars and teachers will not stoop to the methods advocated." Pierce, *Public Opinion*, 295-7. The AHA resolution is especially interesting because none of the organizations involved in the textbook attacks criticized historians specifically, merely a handful to textbooks written by them. That the AHA came to full defense of the entire teaching profession and textbook market is an indication that the division between historians and social studies advocates may not be quite as deep as some scholars have suggested. The collaboration between the AHA and NCSS and NEA throughout the twentieth century, though it certainly diminishes from the close collaboration of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, offers a useful counterpoint to that argument and suggests personal relationships and professional interest often crossed ideological lines that often divided historians and educators.

⁶⁵ *The Historical Outlook* had already been changed from *The History Teacher's Journal*. The trajectory of the journal's name changes provides an interested example of the changing strategy toward secondary history education over time. American Historical Association. *Report of the Commission on the Social Studies: Conclusions and Recommendations of the Commission*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), 39, 146.

were publicly united in the face of attacks on history education, they disagreed on how history education should be implemented in the secondary classroom. The disagreement was rooted in the argument over the ultimate purpose of history education, whether its ultimate goal was individual intellectual flourishing or preparing individual students for participation in America's changing, diverse social order.

Unable to reconcile their goals with the traditionalist aims of historians and frustrated by the postwar failure of both the AHA and NEA to implement social studies reforms suggested by the National Board for Historical Service's Committee on History and Education for Citizenship, social studies advocates like Harold Rugg and his brother Earle formed the NCSS as a new organization for education specialists.⁶⁶ The two sides fought their ideological battles in the pages of journals like *The Historical Outlook*, but the substance of those battles was fought in the textbooks. As Pierce noted in 1930, textbooks were still central to student learning. "In American educational practice of the present, the two chief agencies of instruction in subject matter are the teacher and the textbook," she writes. Textbooks must be the focus of efforts to improve history education, she writes, because "To call attention to the importance of the latter is both needless and commonplace, and to decry its influence in the hands of a good teacher is beside the point, for in many cases it falls into the hands of a poorly prepared teacher and therefore must have considerable weight in fashioning patterns of thought in the child."⁶⁷

Some social studies advocates saw textbook redesign as the primary means by which they could transform secondary history instruction. Harold Rugg, whose efforts made him something of a lightning rod for reactionary attacks, began publishing his *Man and His Changing Society* curriculum in 1929. A series of fourteen separate booklets, student workbooks, and teacher

⁶⁶ Saxe, 174.

⁶⁷ Pierce, xi.

guides, the series was both widely implemented and consistently dogged by accusations of anti-Americanism throughout the 1930s. Although Rugg and his publishers, Ginn and Company, attempted to push against onslaughts from the American Legion and other patriotic organizations, by the time the U.S. entered World War II the political pressure persuaded most schools to drop the texts.⁶⁸

Not easily daunted, Rugg produced another more expansive, and by extension more controversial, curriculum, *Problems of American Culture*. Centered on the idea that education works best when it engages student interest, the series ranges from elementary to high school education and builds an inquiry-based approach to understanding present American life using U.S. history not as an end in itself, but as a tool to understand the present.⁶⁹ Rugg's approach was not, as other social studies advocates proposed, to teach "history backwards," or take a topical approach and focus only on the history that immediately concerned the present. Chronology matters, Rugg writes in his teacher's guide, and he advocated what he called the "strand method," focusing on themes within history that offer students "swift movement, close relation between history and present problems, clarification of trends, and frequent illustration of concepts." Rugg cautions, however, that "the various aspects of life in any one period must be carefully integrated so that young people will see the civilization of an era as an organized whole." Otherwise students will not understand factors in a causal chain of events, but rather isolated, episodic topics in history with no relation to each other or the present. "This must be avoided at all costs," Rugg writes.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Joanathan Zimmerman. *Whose America? Culture Wars in the Public Schools*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 55, 66-7.

⁶⁹ Harold Rugg. *An Introduction to Problems of American Culture*. (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1931), 12.

⁷⁰ Rugg. *Teacher's Guide to An Introduction to Problems of American Culture*. (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1932), 52.

Rugg's approach to history education held great potential for challenging incorrect narratives of Native history. The curriculum he wrote was iconoclastic, and he did not flinch from asking students to examine the ways in which the United States failed to embody its own ideals. Rugg's goal was to equip students to think well about the problems they faced in the present, to understand the historical progression of those problems, and dedicate themselves to seek community-based solutions that promoted the social welfare. If any early twentieth-century textbook writer was likely to part from the triumphalist narrative of U.S. history on the Plains in the late nineteenth century, it was Rugg. However, his 1937 *The Conquest of America* failed to do so. Like other authors of the time, Rugg cast westward expansion as a triumph of American progress, introducing it by saying "in 1600 North America was the red man's continent; in 1890 most of it belonged to white men. That is the amazing story of America's settlement."⁷¹ Rugg's attempt to capture student interest peppered the text with phrases describing the advance of U.S. settlers as "an amazing spectacle," and "the thrilling story of the white man's march."⁷² Settlement, Rugg writes, destroyed Native people. "With the coming of permanent settlements in western United States the buffalo disappeared and the power of the Indian was gone forever," a heading reads. Rugg promises to tell "how treaties made with them were not kept, how they were driven from their lands, or how the remnants of the tribes were herded on reservations" in the next volume.⁷³

While Rugg does present the later history of Native people as a serious failing of the United States government in the next text, his narrative does not deviate from his era's evolution

⁷¹ Harold Rugg. *The Conquest of America*. (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1937), 310.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 308. The next volume, however, did not deliver on that promise. It mentions Native people in accounts of Bacon's Rebellion, conflict between Quakers and Scots-Irish in Pennsylvania, and addresses them vaguely as a threat to western settlement. Despite an extensive section covering westward expansion and life on the frontier, the text does not mention the Plains Wars or Native people after the Civil War. Harold Rugg. *America's March Toward Democracy: History of American Life Political and Social* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1937).

of societies framework. Permeating both geography and history books from the late nineteenth through the mid twentieth centuries, the progressive development of civilization from its more primitive forms framed textbook narratives of Native history. Rugg's is no exception, despite the fact that he worked tirelessly to counter prejudice and white supremacy in the classroom through his curriculum. His teacher guides contain instructions to "bring definitely to the pupil's attention the widespread existence of prejudice," and offered examples of guiding students in deconstructing assumptions of white superiority.⁷⁴

The content of Rugg's historical narrative, however, perpetuated anti-Native prejudice through an inaccurately-framed narrative of Native-white encounters. In her 1930 survey of textbooks, Pierce found no substantial difference in depiction of Native peoples and their history between Rugg's text and other leading textbooks of the period. "Characterized as 'wild,' 'uncivilized,' 'cruel and barbarous by nature,' the Indian of the day of our forefathers is often encompassed by 'a lurid trail of fire and blood.' Withal a 'vigorous and hardy people, well built, tall and handsome' and possessed of a 'bitter hatred of enemies,' the red man is sometimes, on the other hand, shown to be the victim of the greed of the white man to whom originally he was 'generally friendly,'" Pierce notes, although "some authors strive for balance, indicating that the Indian sometimes contributed materially to the welfare of the colonists and that both races frequently failed 'to comprehend the other's point of view.'"⁷⁵ Pierce goes on to note that there is no difference among the texts in terms of their approval for assimilationist government policy toward Native people after 1885. "Through all runs the story of the superiority of a people able to create and to attain the unusual," Pierce writes. Teaching students that they had the capacity to achieve the unusual in the face of tremendous odds was certainly a high priority of social studies

⁷⁴ Rugg, *Teacher's Guide*, 59.

⁷⁵ Pierce, *Civic Attitudes*, 91.

advocates and a goal of Rugg's curriculum. The story of westward expansion offered a thrilling example that Rugg and other textbook authors used to communicate that optimism.

In part, Rugg failed to offer an alternative to the triumphalist narrative of the Plains Wars because of the popular sentiments of the era. More sensitive to the injustice perpetuated against Native people than other authors (he listed Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* in his recommended reading list to students), Rugg was still writing in the 1920s and early 1930s, decades that were in some ways the height of popular culture's glorification and fetishization of the Plains Wars, and certainly before academic historians presented the first substantial interventions of the 1940s and 1950s. In addition, textbook writing has long been a practice of borrowing from earlier work.

Textbook authors, unable to become experts in every period of history their textbooks covered, consulted other textbooks, and even justified their authorial choices to editors citing other textbooks as evidence. In 1917, Hart agreed to revise the date of Ponce de Leon's voyage partially on the basis that Fiske's *Short History of the United States* called the date erroneous.⁷⁶ The practice is clear in textbook narratives of the Battle of the Greasy Grass. Willis Mason West's 1928 *The History of the American People* claims "Between 1865 and 1880 these wars cost us, in money alone, \$22,000,000, and just the names of the battles fill twenty printed pages." Twenty-five years later, William A. Hamm's *From Colony to World Power* reports "More than one hundred pages were required to print a list of the engagements of the troops with the Indians between 1868 and 1882. During the same period Indian wars cost the United States government \$22,000,000." Even Thomas A. Bailey, who, like many textbook authors claimed his *American Pageant* was an original, innovative work based on his own research, somehow provides the same information in nearly the same wording, saying "A printed list of the engagements alone

⁷⁶ Hart to Townsend, January 9-10, 1917. American Book Company Records, Box 29, Folder Hart IV.

covers over one hundred pages.”⁷⁷ Textbook authors, even those who were well-known historians, lifted text from their predecessors’ work. Rugg was not a historian, and certainly did not investigate every incident of U.S. history in his textbook himself. That his text echoed the narratives that were becoming entrenched in U.S. history textbooks about the wars of settlement after the Civil War is not surprising.

Ultimately, however, Rugg perpetuated the false narratives of the Plains Wars because, like other textbook authors, he was in pursuit of a greater narrative and he needed them to serve it. Again, as Pierce notes in her textbook survey, Rugg is not alone. “Here by direction and indirection the writers of textbooks have created impressions regarding American customs, institutions, and ideals which tend to separate the United States from other nations,” she notes. American exceptionalism, and white innocence in its realization, is central to textbook narratives in which “the boon of freedom, denied to many peoples, the wonders of democracy and the democratic principles of the American people as presented to pupils inevitably must make a lasting impression.”⁷⁸ For Rugg’s curriculum to achieve its goal, to equip students to face the challenges of American culture and seek solutions to bind together an increasingly diverse population, he must present an image of American identity that students will find desirable. Whether he knew enough Native history to be aware of it or not, Rugg sacrificed the truth of Native history for his vision of social studies education.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ West, 477; Hamm, 373; Bailey, 566.

⁷⁸ Pierce, *Civic Attitudes*, 106.

⁷⁹ Rugg later expressed pessimism about his success with the curriculum. “I gave 20 years to the work in the social sciences. And I’d say that was ten years more than I should have given. I ought to have done my work at Lincoln and then put the stuff together once and then quit. But I couldn’t. I was a slave to the books. I had so many of them, you see. And it was a treadmill, a kind of grind, I couldn’t get off the treadmill. Until they got me off... and so they succeeded.” Harold Rugg Interviews, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Tape 4, Side A.

Despite the fact that it upheld a history that promoted American exceptionalism, in the contentious political climate of the 1940s, Rugg's textbooks drew fire from ultra-patriotic organizations for presenting problems in American society to students at all. Reflecting on the controversy decades later, Rugg remarked, "In the background of it all is the problem of the education of enough of the people so they can't be swept off their feet, either by the prestige of one man or by the programs of the hierarchy of leaders in groups such as these various patrioteering organizations, some of which are really diabolical things."⁸⁰ Rugg's strong language is understandable. The attacks, spearheaded by the American Legion, effectively killed the curriculum as schools and communities ceased using them by the mid-1940s. "Various reactionary groups around the country... destroyed my earliest work in the social sciences," Rugg declared toward the end of his life.⁸¹

Rugg's textbooks were not the only casualties of wartime education battles of the early 1940s. During the war those battles, centered on history education's role in promoting American identity and patriotism.⁸² They gained new life after the war as the ideological struggle with communism began to dominate national security concerns in the early years of the Cold War. At first, the pattern of these attacks seemed to match the same course of events that surrounded patriotic criticisms of history textbooks and teachers during World War I. However, the main controversy of the period was sparked not by outsiders to the profession, but by historian Allan

⁸⁰ Rugg interviews, Tape 1, Side B.

⁸¹ Rugg interviews, Tape 4, Side A. For a detailed history of the Rugg textbook controversies, see Ronald W. Evans *This Happened in America: Harold Rugg and the Censure of Social Studies* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc., 2007) and *The Social Studies Wars: What Should We Teach the Children?* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2004).

⁸² Some prominent social studies reformers were tasked with writing U.S. history curriculum for use in Japanese-American internment camps, included Stanford's Paul Robert Hanna who took a graduate seminar to the camp at Tule Lake in 1942 to experiment with designing U.S. history curriculum for acculturation. In the future, I plan to explore the connections between assimilationist curriculum in BIA schools and curriculum designed for the internment camps. For more, see Thomas James *The Exile Within: The Schooling of Japanese-Americans, 1942-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

Nevins of Columbia University. As Hertzberg notes, “the impact of World War II on relationships between the social studies and some of the learned societies was markedly different from that of World War I. The most significant difference was the diminished interest of historians.”⁸³ Although the controversy began with the AHA, NCSS, and the Mississippi Valley Historical Association (now the Organization of American Historians) issuing a lengthy joint rebuttal, in the end academic historians and social studies educators went their separate ways, leaving textbook publishers faced with the decision of who to follow as classroom market demands steadily increased.

Nevins’ attacks began with an editorial published in the May 3, 1942 issue of the *New York Times Magazine* entitled “American History for Americans.” The contents of the article would be a familiar complaint in any era of U.S. history education. Nevins decried the ignorance of American students and decried their teachers’ neglect of American history education in favor of subjects and topics he deemed frivolous at best, dangerous at worst. With the war appearing “like a sudden flash of light from a terrific explosion,” Nevins writes it has raised questions about the state of patriotism in the U.S. “No nation can be patriotic in the best sense, so people can feel a proud comradeship, without a knowledge of the past,” Nevins claims.⁸⁴ That knowledge was compromised, he went on, due to schools’ and colleges’ neglect to teach U.S. history robustly. Too few courses were offered, too few states required students to take them in high school and college, and too few students left their years of schooling with adequate knowledge about the American past.⁸⁵ Appearing alone Nevins may have been dismissed, but on

⁸³ Hertzberg, 73.

⁸⁴ Allan Nevins. “American History for Americans,” *New York Times Magazine* May 13, 1942, 6, 28. Nevins links his concern over this historical ignorance to the war effort and the future of America beyond it: “A thorough, accurate and intelligent knowledge of our national past—in so many ways the brightest national record in all world history—is the best ground for faith in the present and hope for the future.”

⁸⁵ Nevins’ concern centers on his claims that students fail to recognize historical figures like Albert Gallatin, Hinton R. Helper, and Edwin L. Godkin, struggle with chronology, and cannot relate detailed accounts of causal

the heels of the Rugg controversy and immediately followed by a controversial survey conducted by the *New York Times* that purported to show that most American colleges and universities did not require American history for admission or graduation, as well as in the context of wartime, the Nevins piece gained traction. Edgar Wesley, a former president of NCSS, took the opportunity to publicly chastise historians for distancing themselves from curriculum-building in recent decades, blaming their aloofness for Nevins' ability to find evidence to justify an attack on U.S. history education in schools. In response, MVHA, AHA, and NCSS formed the joint Committee on American History in Schools and Colleges with Wesley at the helm. The resulting report discovered, unsurprisingly, that U.S. history instruction could be improved, and it suggested several reforms to expand the subject at all levels from elementary to higher education.⁸⁶ Shoring up defenses of teachers' intellectual freedom, the report insisted that curriculum should wrestle with the moral complexity of the nation's history because "exaggerated claims for the strength and virtues of the nation's history destroy history's values and are ineffective even as propaganda, since students experience life outside as well as inside the school. The study of American history can produce intelligent and cooperative citizens only if the society itself honors citizens who possess these qualities..."⁸⁷ Suggesting scope and sequences with titles like "Building a Nation," however, the report also made clear that a celebration of American progress was the ultimate narrative goal of teaching American history.⁸⁸

Nevins' attacks, along with those of self-martyred education policy-maker Hugh Russell Fraser did not catch the community of history educators as unaware as attacks from the SAR had

relationships in the U.S. past, such as the difference between the impact of the Molasses and Sugar Acts on the road to American Revolution. Nevins would not be pleased by current student test results, I imagine.

⁸⁶ Hertzberg, 66-70.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁸⁸ Wesley report, 118.

two decades earlier.⁸⁹ The NCSS, with two decades of professional organization, a strong base of teacher members, and publication funding from the AHA did not shrink from the confrontation. Erling Hunt, editor of the NCSS journal *Social Education* used the pages of the journal to respond to the charges to the cheers of his colleagues. AHA executive secretary Guy Stanton Ford wrote “This is just a line to say how delighted I was to read your comment on Allan Nevins and the group that are going to cure the want of patriotism as they see it with laws about the teaching of American history.”⁹⁰ Louis Hunter of The American University wrote Hunt “I obtain an unscholarly joy in seeing a certain A.N. taken down a peg from his pontifical seat,” and Bessie Louise Pierce, whose work Hunt quoted in response to Nevins advised “Better sharpen your weapons for I foresee the repetition of the 1920s!”⁹¹ Hunt did not act alone. NCSS executive secretary Wilbur F. Murra wrote an editorial for the *Times* countering Fraser’s claims that NCSS and Teacher’s College were plotting to destroy U.S. history in schools because “the social studies extremists have contempt for the facts of American history.” On the contrary, Murra insists, “one of the principal concerns of the National Council for the Social Studies and one of its most persistent objective, since it was founded 22 years ago, has been the improvement of instruction in American history in the nation’s schools. The record of its publications and meetings and of its collaborations with the American Historical Association bears ample

⁸⁹ Fraser dramatically and publicly resigned his position with the U.S. Office of Education (precursor to the Cabinet department) and formed the Committee on American History, an organization that seemingly existed purely to promote Fraser by making him a crusader against anti-Americans in U.S. schools. Allan Nevins was a member of the executive committee, as was Wendell Willkie. Fraser to Hoffman, May 7, 1943. National Council for the Social Studies Records, 1920-1976, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Box 2007-213/413, Folder 6.

⁹⁰ Ford to Hunt, October 14, 1942. NCSS Records, Box 2007-213/413. Later in the letter, Ford tells the story of another historian thwarting would-be patriotic crusader Charles Edward Russell at “a big dinner meeting of businessmen and a few from the University he attacked the eleven American historians who were debauching American youth; this included McLaughlin, West, and about every textbook writer. When he got through old Mr. James K. Hosmer, the distinguished scholar and librarian then eighty-eight years old, got up and laid him out completely. When I got on my feet following Hosmer, all I had to do was to mop up.”

⁹¹ Hunter to Hunt, November 9, 1942. NCSS Records, Box 2007-213/413, Folder 1; Pierce to Hunt, April 8, 1943. NCSS Records, Box 2007-213/413, Folder 2.

testimony to this fact.” In addition, Murra argues, “It is natural that the National Council should give so large a share of its attention to the subject of American history, for that is the most predominant subject within the field of the social studies.”⁹² The public debate continued to the point that Ford wrote to Hunt “I don’t know whether the *New York Times* flurry is really worth the heavy fire you have directed at it. I am inclined to think that it will peter out because of its own futility.”⁹³ The controversy eventually faded, though unlike the controversies during World War I, the AHA did not form anything like the National Board for Historical Service in response. Instead, NCSS was left, by virtue of the Wesley report, with the bulk of the responsibility for appeasing critics of U.S. history education.

Academic historians stepped away from heavy involvement in history education in secondary schools just at the time when narratives of the West, including the Plains Wars, began receiving serious reconsideration in academic writing. Walter Stanley Campbell’s 1932 and 1934 works on Sitting Bull and Lucullus McWhorter’s 1940 *Yellow Wolf: His Own Story* were among the new scholarship that paved the way for paradigm shifts within western and Native history. Historians continued to work with secondary educators, as advisors, textbook authors, and through the later establishment of the AHA Service Center for Teachers of History.⁹⁴ The lion’s share of the work on secondary education, however, landed on NCSS. Throughout the 1940s, NCSS used its professional clout to promote advances in social studies education and soothe political anxieties about training in American ideals and citizenship. NCSS could not, however, meet every challenge.

⁹² Murra draft, April 11, 1943. NCSS Records, Box 2007-213/413, Folder 2.

⁹³ Ford to Hunt, April 15, 1943. NCSS Records, Box 2007-213/413, Folder 3.

⁹⁴ The Service Center for Teachers was established in 1957 and existed primarily to produce publications for elementary and secondary classroom teachers. Hertzberg, 93.

In 1934, Stanford education professor Paul Robert Hanna introduced a Rugg-like social studies curriculum called *Building America*. First published as a series of monthly magazines to foster student discussion focused on the social problems approach, their success encouraged the California State Curriculum Commission to publish them as supplemental textbooks for classroom use.⁹⁵ When the series came under fire from SAR representative Aaron Sargent in 1946, Hanna did not have NCSS backing to persuade the California State Board of Education. Hanna was a relatively new scholar in the field who had not cultivated ties with NCSS leadership, and his biographer Jared Stallones speculates that NCSS avoided involvement in the controversy due to the growing hostility of the political climate in the late 1940s.⁹⁶ Eventually, California failed to endorse *Building America* after a series of public hearings that included rhetoric eerily similar to the successful attacks on Rugg's curriculum. Like Rugg, Hanna argued that failing to guide students through exploration of America's less proud history was dangerous. He argued that curriculum that glossed over the crimes of the past made students more vulnerable to hostile ideologies, saying "to deny our youth a chance to study a balanced statement of the good and evil in our own nation and in the world is to render our future citizens weak and unprepared for the struggle of our time."⁹⁷

It may be that NCSS was concerned about spreading its influence too thin. From 1942 to 1948, NCSS was heavily involved in publicly combatting Nevins, an effort in which the organization coordinated closely with textbook publishers and their collective organization, the American Textbook Publishers Association.⁹⁸ When the AHA and NCSS parted ways in the mid-

⁹⁵ Jared R. Stallones. *Paul Robert Hanna: A Life of Expanding Communities* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institute Press, 2002), 100-1.

⁹⁶ Personal interview, March 5, 2019. Stallones presents Hanna's substantial impact on social studies curriculum through the "expanding communities" curricular model in his 2012 biography *Paul Robert Hanna*.

⁹⁷ Paul Robert Hanna. Statement on *Building America*, March 30, 1948. Paul Robert Hanna Collection, Box 45, Folder 2. Hoover Institute, Stanford University.

⁹⁸ Extended correspondence, 1942-1948. NCSS Records, Box 2007-213/409, Folder 1.

1940s, textbook publishers followed their bread and butter. Social studies educators focused primarily on training students in citizenship and offering a foundation for social cohesion. As a result of their association with NCSS and relative alienation from the academic historical community, secondary U.S. history textbooks, as innovative as they would become in the next few decades, failed to reflect the reexamination of Plains Wars narratives that were slowly beginning to redefine the history of the U.S. West.

The American Book Company, which was at the height of its textbook market dominance in the 1920s and 1930s, continued its standard practices in appealing to the changing textbook market in the 1940s. Relying on the name recognition and prestige of academic historian authors, editors continued to push for up-to-date texts that presented teachers with a book could hold student interest. The ABC also continued to appeal primarily to teachers and administrators, hiring both groups to review their textbooks as well as purchasing prominent sponsorship at NCSS annual conferences.⁹⁹ Perhaps one of the most consistent influences on ABC textbook content was market appeal. In 1923, Reuben Post Halleck signed on to write a U.S. history textbook with the ABC. He claimed the book would be entirely new, and ABC marketing materials read “The text of this book stands out as strikingly different from other books. It is no mere compilation and working over of other men’s books. From the first page to the last it is Halleck’s own.”¹⁰⁰ Halleck declared he would streamline the narrative of U.S. history, omitting any event that did not substantially contribute to the growth of the U.S. nation, no matter how popular. In the course of writing, Halleck determined that the story of gallant Custer, while interesting, had no place in that broader timeline.

⁹⁹ NCSS annual conference programs, 1940-1960. NCSS Records, Box 2007-213/455, Folder 8.

¹⁰⁰ *History of Our Country for Higher Grades* Publicity Document, November 22, 1922. American Book Company Records, Box 80, Folder V.

In 1924, ABC regional book agents began writing to ABC vice president Louis Lee inquiring about the omission. Lee passed the question to Benton, who confirmed that the omission was intentional and explained and supported Halleck's decision. To assuage their concerns, Benton assures "we have considered this omission, which is just one out of about ten thousand which we left out, not because they were uninteresting, but because they seemed to have little to contribute to the story of the development of the American people." Of the battle specifically, Benton says, "it is true that the Custer Battle marked the end of Indian aggression, but it was not the determining factor: on the contrary, it was the confirmation of a conclusion long foreseen." Editorial concerns also focused on setting a precedent for allowing local interest to determine textbook content. Benton says "I can see that the Custer Battlefield and Custer himself would have great local interest, especially in Montana and adjoining States, but, in establishing a policy, if we decide to put Custer into the book, I fear that we shall have to make a place for a good many other more or less local, but interesting, matters, to the general disadvantage of the treatment of the book as a whole."¹⁰¹

As Benton's letter made its way to Lee, ABC South Dakota book agent R.S. Gleason wrote Lee "I would like to have Dr. Halleck's reason for not mentioning Gen. Custer... I note that other histories, Hart, McMaster, McCarty, Barnes, and Perry & Price mention the activity against the Indians after the Civic [sic] War and up until the defeat of the Indians in the west and southwest." Gleason's concern for the book's ability to sell in the northern Plains states is colored slightly by anti-Native bias typical of contentious local community relations when he writes that Grant's peace policy "placed the Indians on reservations, since which time there has been very little if any difficulty with them." Omitting the Custer story, to Gleason, amounts to

¹⁰¹ Benton to Lee, March 7, 1924. American Book Company Records, Box 90, Folder Halleck II.

“leaving out the history of the development of the middle west the story of the Indian,” despite the fact that Halleck’s text does include their story, but addresses the Plains Wars in general rather than specific terms.¹⁰²

Benton dismissed the criticism without refusing to consider revisions, and Lee proposed reasons to consider making revisions without insisting that Custer be added. On March 20, Lee wrote that he understood Halleck’s reason for omitting incidents like the Battle of the Greasy Grass that did not pertain directly to the development of the United States. However, Lee suggested, “to my mind, the primary function of history in the schools at least is to enable the pupil to form ideals. My mind goes back to “Horatius at the Bridge,” also to “Leonidas at the Battle of Thermopolae.” Custer, in that famous battle, or massacre, occupies a similar position in my mind in reference to American ideals. Therefore I, for one, should be glad to eliminate many things in history in order to include Custer in American history.”¹⁰³ Mythology, not history, won the day.

After a series of letters between book agents, Halleck, Benton and Lee, the pressure of the book agents serving Montana, the Dakotas, and Wyoming prevailed against Halleck’s attempt to excise the Custer legend from his history textbook. On April 1, 1924, Benton sent a hand-scrawled note to S.A. Torrance that conceded “I guess we shall have to make room for Custer.”¹⁰⁴ The myth of Custer’s Last Stand, and local sentiment for it, was so embedded in public memory that the ABC determined it could not sell Halleck’s text without it. Elizabeth

¹⁰² Gleason to Lee, March 4, 1924. American Book Company Records, Box 90, Folder Halleck II. In a subsequent letter, Gleason reported his own informal survey of several textbooks on the market, including ABC’s *Hart School History of the United States*, all of which included the story of Custer. See Ch. 2 for details on the appearance of the Battle of the Greasy Grass in these textbooks. In that letter, Gleason also takes exception to Halleck’s inclusion of the Crow Dog case appearing when Custer’s battle does not. He insists the textbook should include “the other side of the picture so far as the indian [sic] is concerned.” Gleason to Lee, March 25, 1924.

¹⁰³ Lee to Benton, March 20, 1924. American Book Company Records, Box 90, Folder Halleck II. Benton, to his credit, wrote back that he was skeptical of the comparison.

¹⁰⁴ Benton to Torrance, April 1, 1924. American Book Company Records, Box 90, Folder Halleck II.

Custer had done her work well. Her husband's memory was firmly implanted in western history, and the market assured its perpetuation.

Changes in history education over the next few decades did not alter the market-backed repetition of mythic Plains Wars narratives. By 1955, history textbook publishing was almost entirely in the hands of social studies reformers. As the decade progressed, academic history would see a series of major interventions in the history of the U.S. West that would call into question the narratives of the Plains Wars for decades to come. U.S. history education would endure a series of legislative reforms mandating a 'back to basics' approach to teaching U.S. history. In oppositional response, a new generation of education reformers would pick up the banner from Dewey, Rugg, and Hanna and carry it forward into the second half of the twentieth century, bolstered by the growing Civil Rights Movement. NCSS would turn its attention first to new interpretations of westward expansion, and then to the role of secondary education in facing the challenges of integration and achieving the goals of the Civil Rights Movement. But the strongest challenge to old settler narratives of the Plains Wars would come from a new generation of Native scholars. In simultaneous fulfillment of and rebuttal to Fraser's 1943 ultra-nationalist declaration that "a day of reckoning is coming. The story of America will yet be told fully and completely," a revolution in teaching the history of Native America began in Colorado Springs during the summer of 1956 when Sol and Rosalie Tax, D'Arcy McNickle, and a small team of colleagues hosted the first Summer Workshop in American Indian Affairs.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Fraser. "U.S. History in Our Schools," *National Republic* (November 1943), 31. NCSS Records, Box 2007-213/372, Folder 2.

Chapter Six

Saving History from the Cowboys

The Struggle to Dismantle Anti-Native Prejudice in the Classroom, 1955-1984

In 1982, *NCSS Bulletin*, the journal for the National Council for the Social Studies, published an issue titled “Teaching American History: New Directions.” The goal was to highlight the ways in which teachers could improve how they approach certain topics in U.S. history, especially in light of the seismic social change of the past two decades. In her contribution to the issue on Native history, however, Dr. Lawana Trout made a more radical claim. “With rare exceptions, Native American history is not taught in secondary classrooms,” Trout writes. “It is an indisputable and startling fact that most high school teachers omit Native American tribal history and distort the history of Indian-White relations.” The problem is not unprepared or malicious teachers, Trout argues, but rather a century of relying on U.S. history textbooks that present a false narrative of America’s Native past. “These teachers do not deliberately ignore Native American history; they are simply unaware of its existence,” she says. Perpetuating the problem is the teachers’ main (and often only) source material. “Secondary textbooks are equally unreliable,” Trout writes. “Extraneous notes on Native Americans are tucked in with material about the landing of the Pilgrims and the winning of the West. In walk-on roles, Pocahontas [sic] saves John Smith, Chief Joseph surrenders, and Geronimo goes to the Ft. Sill prison... Inadequate texts and unaware teachers perpetuate a cycle of cultural blindness.” However, Trout argues, “teachers may break this cycle by bridging the gap between scholarship and their classrooms.”¹ Trout knew the secondary education landscape well. She was named 1964’s National Teacher of the Year by President Lyndon B. Johnson, served as a professor of English

¹ Lawana Trout. “Native American History: New Images and Ideas,” *NCSS Bulletin* No. 67 (1982), 103-4.

at Central State University (now the University of Central Oklahoma), and was the Director of the Institute for American Indian History, an arm of the Center for the History of the American Indian at the Newberry Library. By 1982, she had been engaged for over a decade in an intense effort to design both teacher training and curriculum guides that could correct the misinformation about Native history taught in secondary classrooms.

Trout's work at the Newberry to correct narratives about Native history in American classrooms is part of a rich heritage of Native scholarship and activism that sought to subvert and disrupt anti-Native prejudice across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. From Susette La Flesche's efforts to publish a Native perspective on the conflicts between Native nations and the U.S. military in the late nineteenth century to the Grand Council Fire of American Indians' public outreach efforts to elevate Native history and culture in Chicago in the 1920s to Lawana Trout's efforts from the 1970s to the 1990s to train secondary teachers to reframe U.S. history to more accurately reflect the Native experience, Native and non-Native scholars have consistently and publicly pushed against the ever-calcifying narrative of triumphant westward expansion and vanishing Indians in the U.S. West. That narrative, embedded in public memory through entertainment, memoir, politics, and U.S. history education was a formidable barrier to efforts to correct it, renewed periodically throughout the twentieth century through anxiety-fueled nostalgia in the face of new crises of war, communism, and social upheaval.

Some of those anxieties shaped textbook content in the form of state legislation stipulating history curriculum and textbook content, as well as political pressure from patriotic organizations raising accusations of anti-Americanism against textbooks in use. Educators and scholars who believed the textbooks presented a false narrative of Native history continued to work against those forces, in NCSS conference sessions, textbook surveys and adoption criteria

like those done by Rupert and Jeannette Costo's Indian Historian Society, teacher training programs like Trout's. These efforts sought to alter and supplement classroom materials where they could, and to transform the teachers themselves where they could not. While these decades of interventions did not succeed in substantially changing the secondary textbook narratives themselves, taken together they offered a framework for continuing that work and began laying the foundation in history education necessary for arguing for textbook narrative reform.

For most of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, education reform efforts concerning Native students primarily focused on accomplishing assimilationist goals.² In the 1910s and 1920s, organizations like the Society for American Indians and the Grand Council Fire of American Indians worked to both educate the non-Native public about Native history and to encourage Native students to follow in the footsteps of leaders like Dr. Charles Eastman, Dr. Carlos Montezuma, and Zitkála-Sá (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin) to seek a western education and leave "the blanket" behind them. In 1928 SAI founding member Henry Roe Cloud assisted with the Meriam Report which launched a series of policy reforms in Indian Affairs, including attempts to respond to the report's damning assessment of the failure of Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) efforts to offer education to Native children. It was the report's assessment that "the vocational training taught in many Indian schools was antiquated, while boarding schools stunted growth by tearing young children away from their home communities" that helped launch John Collier's proposals that the OIA abandon attempts to fully assimilate Native people and eradicate historical Native culture and practice.³

² Frederick Hoxie presents an excellent summary of the ways in which shifting ideology and the failures of assimilationist policies in the late 19th century influenced federal policy, including federal efforts to educate Native students at boarding schools like Carlisle and reservation day schools, in *A Final Promise*.

³ Shreve, 22.

Collier's philosophy was based in part on ideological sea change among Indian reformers. With reform efforts failing to produce the results reformers expected, Hoxie notes "Writers and politicians turned away from the hopeful view they had created a generation before." Instead of holding up Native people as the example of the ease with which stripping away a people's traditions could accomplish full assimilation, social scientists argued "that Indians belonged to primitive, static cultures that would require years of instruction and training before they could join a complex industrial society."⁴ Collier was not alarmed by Native refusal to entirely shed their traditional practices, and after spending the better part of a year at Taos Pueblo in 1921, argued that helping to preserve Native cultural practice and arts should be the goal of federal Indian policy, not full assimilation.⁵ No single scholar or politician can claim responsibility for the major turning points in history, but there are figures whose actions were pivotal to those moments of transformation, whose work facilitated and amplified the work of many others, clearing a path for the cumulative effects to change the direction of scholarship, practice, and policy. One of those figures emerged in this particular moment, a young assistant to John Collier at the OIA, D'Arcy McNickle.

D'Arcy McNickle, a member of Salish Kootenai (Flathead) Nation, received his education at both reservation mission schools and boarding schools.⁶ By the time he began work

⁴ Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 112, 145.

⁵ Collier's views did not amount to full self-determination and sovereignty, and his advocacy of Native cultural preservation was limited by his paternalist attitude toward Native people. Marsha Weisiger details the devastating impact of this paternalism on Diné people in *Dreaming of Sheep in Navajo Country* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009). For more on Collier's time in Taos and its influence on his policy goals as BIA Commissioner, see Kenneth R. Philp. *John Collier's Crusade for Indian Reform, 1920-1954*. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1977).

⁶ McNickle attended the St. Ignatius mission school on the Flathead Reservation until 1913 when their parents' divorce disqualified the McNickle children from attending the Catholic-run school (at their disgruntled father's urging). They were sent to the Salem Indian Training School in Chemawa, Oregon. His sisters Ruth and Florence stayed at Chemawa through graduation, but D'Arcy's mother regained custody of him and he attended several public high schools as they moved, finally graduating in Missoula, Montana. Dorothy R. Parker. *Singing An Indian Song: A Biography of D'Arcy McNickle* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 17-23.

with Commissioner Collier at the OIA in 1936, McNickle had published his first novel, *The Surrounded*, and studied abroad at Oxford University and the University of Grenoble. McNickle shared Collier's vision for equipping Native communities to succeed in the modern American political and economic landscape while also preserving their rich cultural heritage, and in 1944 he, alongside other young Native scholars like Ruth Muskrat Bronson [and others] working in the OIA founded an all-Native organization to facilitate intertribal cooperation and collective organizing against forced termination and other threats to sovereignty, the National Congress of American Indians. McNickle continued his work at the OIA, which became the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in 1947, and in 1952 he became the founding director of American Indian Development, Inc. (AID), an organization with the goal of assisting Native communities "to maintain self-sufficiency through economic progress."⁷

Despite Collier's success in seeing his accommodationist policies enacted through the OIA, the fierce debate between assimilationists and accommodationists continued to rage within the reformist community, and among white and Native scholars alike. As he took leadership of AID and prepared to direct its development, McNickle strove to redirect that argument. "Until we have studied the subject of assimilation and know more about its complexities, and what damage we are capable of inflicting on personality through heedless action, I propose that we stop talking about the subject and devote ourselves instead to the observance of simple decencies toward the Indians and toward all racial and cultural minorities in our country," he argued in a paper offered to the Association on American Indian Affairs' 1952 Institute on American Indian Assimilation. In the midst of the termination crisis, McNickle declared "The battle for civil rights

⁷ Ibid., 36.

may not yet be won, but the battle for the right to be culturally different has not even started.”⁸

McNickle argued that cultural identity, its preservation, and the right of people to determine its meaning for their own communities, was central to Native communities’ ability to resist antagonistic federal policy as Congress pursued termination and land seizure in the early 1950s.⁹ As the director of AID, McNickle saw two major issues that perpetuated poverty in Native communities and prevented Native nations from gaining the necessary resources to assert their sovereign rights against congressional attack: health and education. AID invested deeply in both areas, and one of McNickle’s most impactful legacies on the course of Native political activism and Native reclamation of historical narrative from Eurocentric narratives of U.S. history was AID’s institution of the Summer Workshop on Indian Affairs.

As AID began to implement programs to assist new tribal governments formed in the wake of the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, AID leadership realized while working with the current generation of tribal leaders was vital, it was the next generation that would have the best chance to be fully equipped to fight for tribal sovereignty and self-determination. Education was a major policy area of focus for AID, and under McNickle’s leadership AID began planning to sponsor annual summer workshops for Native students. The workshops were designed to offer college-aged students something of a crash course in Native history, cultural heritage, and federal Indian policy, all while earning college credit for their work. Through these workshops, historian Bradley Shreve writes, “McNickle and his cohorts hoped to teach students the NCAI’s vision for a brighter Indian future. Tribal sovereignty, treaty rights, cultural preservation, and

⁸ D’Arcy McNickle, “A Battle Yet to Wage,” May 8-10, 1952. Dorothy R. Parker D’Arcy McNickle Research Papers, The Newberry Library, Chicago, Box 4, Folder 37.

⁹ Termination was a policy pursued primarily through HR 108 and PL 280, congressional attempts to dissolve the legal tribal governments created by the Indian Reorganization Act. Helen Peterson, who would later be instrumental in the design and implementation of the Summer Workshops led the NCAI efforts against termination.

self-determination remained the most salient issues facing Indian country; these stood as the ideals the next generation had to protect.”¹⁰ AID first envisioned this intervention as a series of regional workshops held around the country. They advertised these workshops as a crucial step in assisting young Native students to move their communities toward self-sufficiency, and host talks about how “the needs of our ailing communities could best be met through self-help.”¹¹ In 1956 AID changed the format and instead hosted one six-week summer workshop for Native students at Colorado College in Colorado Springs.

Through AID’s regional summer workshops beginning in 1951, McNickle and AID leadership began to realize that the challenges facing Indian country were not merely political or economic. Systemic anti-Native prejudice hindered Native communities’ ability to engage as self-sufficient communities in the American democratic system. It also contributed to generations of Native people’s struggle to maintain a firm sense of cultural identity. Years of assimilationist curriculum, from the boarding schools, mission schools, and BIA day schools all taught an exceptionalist narrative of U.S. history that had been specifically designed to erase Native identity. Some Native people had always resisted that erasure, some had tried and failed, and some, like Carlos Montezuma, had calculated that the only path forward for Native people was to embrace assimilation and claim a place in American society as fully modern ‘Indians’ who rejected historical traditions, teachings, and practices. Collier’s efforts to ennoble the Native past had compounded this confusion and the new generation of Native students found themselves on the cusp of adulthood having been told, essentially, to be Indian but not too Indian, to honor cultural pageantry but pursue tribal governance patterned on the Euro-American model. All of this was rooted in education in various types of schools, all offering only history classes that

¹⁰ Ibid., 37.

¹¹ AID brochure, 1952. D’Arcy McNickle Papers, Box 23, Folder 3.

fully embraced the triumphalist narrative of U.S. history and lauded westward expansion across Indian country as the birthplace of American identity.

Secondary textbook narratives about the Plains Wars remained relatively unchanged from the 1920s to the 1960s. The same triumphalist narrative structure of brave settlers, unruly Indians, heroic cavalry, and regrettable but necessary violence that framed textbook accounts of the Plains Wars in the early twentieth century repeated in the pages of textbooks across the midcentury. Partly due to the practice of “borrowing” passages from earlier texts, partly because the narrative was so deeply ingrained in public memory and remained relatively unchallenged in historical scholarship by the 1950s, textbooks failed to present students with an accurate narrative framework from which to understand the violent conflicts with Native nations after the Civil War. As Native people moved to urban areas seeking employment, first at the behest of the U.S. government for the war effort in the 1940s, then as part of the BIA relocation programs, Native students found the same triumphalist narratives in mainstream public school textbooks that they encountered in BIA-designed curriculum at reservation day schools. Despite the efforts of groups like the Grand Council Fire of American Indians to correct these narratives, and bolstered by Native promotion of assimilation from figures like Carlos Montezuma, textbook narratives of the Plains Wars remained unchanged even as historians began to seriously question the hagiographical accounts of U.S. cavalry service on the frontier.

The 1950s were tumultuous years for textbook publishers and social studies educators. The anti-communist hysteria of the early Cold War created opportunities for politicians and patriotic organizations to put the U.S. history classroom under intense scrutiny. While student populations and education funds were booming, making the textbook market rich, some states

were beginning to adopt content standards for their history curriculum.¹² State content standards began to change the marketing landscape for textbook companies that could not simply rely on appealing to classroom teachers or administrators for textbook sales, but had to ensure that their books were legally viable in multiple states with different laws for curriculum content. At the same time, two other forces were at work to reshape the textbook market. Social studies educators continued to innovate and refine the structure of K-12 social studies education, while patriotic organizations like the American Legion and the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution continued to wage public campaigns against popular textbooks that did not pass muster as pro-American materials. While the American Historical Association participated in some of these engagements when textbook authors were members of the organization, textbook companies worked most closely with the National Council for the Social Studies to combat efforts to denounce U.S. history textbooks.

From the 1950s forward, NCSS embraced the changing political landscape of social studies education. The Cold War exposed history educators to Red Scare witch hunts, but it also opened congressional pockets when educators could convince their representatives that the classroom was preparation for the intellectual battlefield against the Soviet threat. As such, NCSS participated in a years-long international textbook survey conducted by UNESCO and dedicated portions of its annual conference to teaching the histories and political systems of Latin America, Asia, and other areas of U.S. engagement during the first decade of the Cold

¹² For more detail on the advent of state curriculum content standards, see Linda Symcox *Whose History? The Struggle for National Standards in American Classrooms* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002). By the end of the decade, textbook companies began to enter a second period of consolidation (the first in the late nineteenth century created the American Book Company, DC Heath, and others), creating both the larger textbook firms of the late twentieth century and shifting their differentiated market appeal to supplemental materials and test preparation rather than relying on charismatic authors and dramatic narratives to sell the books. The 1990s saw another period of consolidation that further simplified the textbook market and placed most bestselling titles under the umbrella of larger publishing houses.

War.¹³ These good faith efforts gave NCSS the political capital to mount robust defenses of its members and materials when they came under fire for anti-Americanism or communist sympathies. However, these efforts also took the focus of textbook scrutiny off the content of the textbook narratives and instead placed it on minute detail and rhetoric.

This refocusing perpetuated the tendency of social studies educators to accept textbook narratives as fundamentally factual. They turned their attention instead toward how to present those narratives in the classroom rather updating those narratives in light of recent historical scholarship. When the Supreme Court issued its decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1955 ending legal segregation in schools, NCSS responded by issuing curriculum and offering its members training in minority histories. Once again, however, these efforts did not involve re-examining historical narrative content, but rather focused on designing supplemental materials and classroom activities that would promote social cohesion across racial divides. The educational innovation of social studies teaching in the 1950s was transformative, yet for all its development there was no serious effort to reframe U.S. history narratives into more accurate representations of the past. This was especially true for narratives about conflicts with Native nations in the U.S. West.

The 1950s saw a revival of interest in western history in popular culture and the academy that was reflected in the U.S. history classroom. In 1955, the NCSS annual conference featured a session with textbook author and Dartmouth professor Robert E. Riegel entitled “The Historian and the American West During the Past Decade.” In his address, which was printed the following year in *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, Riegel offered his audience an overview of progress in history of the U.S. West since the end of World War II, highlighting

¹³ UNESCO Textbook Study, 1953-6. NCSS Records, Box 2007-213/301; Annual Conference Programs, 1950-70. NCSS Records, Box 2007-213/8.

areas of strength as well as new approaches to scholarship on the horizon. According to Riegel, “the first stage of the western story is that of Indian life and of red-white conflicts.” Historians have moved away from the more dime-novel approach of the turn of the century, Riegel notes, and instead “favor the anthropological approach, with the Indian neither a cruel, skulking savage nor a noble and unspoiled child of nature, but rather a human being with the usual complexities of mankind, and operating in a simpler civilization than that of the whites.”¹⁴ He also suggests that teachers should read D’Arcy McNickle’s 1949 *They Came Here First* in order to familiarize themselves with these advances in scholarship. On one hand, Riegel’s address is a refreshing, open challenge to dehumanizing portrayals of Native people in the U.S. history classroom. On the other, however, Riegel’s improvement fails to address the core problem of incorrect narrative framing. As textbooks would do in coming decades, Riegel’s address offers less pejorative language describing Native people and even includes a Native voice in the McNickle recommendation but does not suggest that the narrative casting Native people as obstacles to American progress could be flawed.

Also like the textbooks, Riegel makes room for Custer. He tells his audience of classroom teachers that of all the conflicts with Native nations, the fight with Custer has been studied the most, then recommends several books about the episode, including *The Custer Story*, a collection of love letters sent between George and Elizabeth Custer throughout their marriage.¹⁵ Likewise Riegel recommends Angie Debo’s *Prairie City* for its imaginative approach to theoretical analysis of frontier growth, but fails to mention her controversial history of Oklahoma, oil, and Native dispossession *And Still the Waters Run*. He highlights the importance of studying “early

¹⁴ Robert E. Riegel, “The Historian and the American West: During the Past Decade,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* Vol. 6 no. 2 (Spring 1956), 16.

¹⁵ Ibid.

land acquisition” with no mention of who the land previously belonged to and he suggests that the Turnerian theory of the frontier as a process rather than a place has prevailed among historians and would remain the consensus. Riegel concludes, “if the study of the expansion of the United States, and of the growth of the customs and ideals produced by historic growth, are important, then there can be real hope for the products of the work of the historians of the West.”¹⁶ Riegel’s assessment of the field matches the narrative in his textbook, which presents Native people as formidable but primitive obstacles to “the inexorable conquest of the west by the whites” who “did not feel bound by a white man’s paper and continued their raids,” bringing their doom upon themselves.¹⁷ In his NCSS address, he reinforced that narrative of righteous inevitability to an audience of teachers teaching from books that taught the same.

Interest in the U.S. West continued to be reflected in NCSS programs during the 1950s and 1960s. In 1956, the conference offered a session on “The West in American History” while textbook companies took out ads in the program featuring buckskin-clad explorers.¹⁸ The 1958 conference, held in San Francisco offered participants tours of the local Shawnee Mission and Fort Osage, and in 1960 the conference offered a session on “The Frontier Thesis Today.”¹⁹ Three years later, Ray Allen Billington gave a talk on Frederick Jackson Turner and his impact on interpreting U.S. history, and three years after that Denver Public Schools teacher George L. Jensen addressed a session specifically devoted to “Western History in the Secondary Schools.”²⁰ Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, NCSS conferences maintained a steady focus on

¹⁶ Ibid., 21.

¹⁷ Robert E. Riegel and Helen Haugh. *United States of America: A History*. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1948), 453.

¹⁸ Conference Program. 36th Annual Meeting, National Council for the Social Studies, 1956. NCSS Records 2007-213, Box 8.

¹⁹ Conference Programs, 38th Annual Meeting and 40th Annual Meeting, National Council for the Social Studies, 1958, 1960. NCSS Records, Box 2007-213/8.

²⁰ Conference Programs, 43rd Annual Meeting and 46th Annual Meeting, National Council for the Social Studies, 1963, 1966. NCSS Records, Box 2007-213/8.

the role of western history in secondary classrooms. During these decades, scholarship about the Plains Wars was beginning to shift to incorporate Native perspectives. Between 1940 and 1970, Walter Stanley Campbell, Lucullus McWhorter, and Alvin Josephy all published groundbreaking histories of Plains Wars conflicts that contributed to the foundations of the New Indian History in the next few decades.²¹ Like the textbooks, however, social studies education ignored new scholarship in favor of old narratives.

Even textbooks pitched as innovative, cutting edge scholarship perpetuated old narratives that vilified Native people and cast them as usurpers of their own homelands. In 1956, Stanford history professor Thomas A. Bailey decided to write an American history textbook for college freshmen. Its release coincided with the establishment of College Board's Advanced Placement curriculum in secondary schools, and the book quickly became a favorite of secondary classroom teachers to prepare students for the A.P. United States History exam.²² Bailey's textbook, *The American Pageant*, was modeled on his own U.S. history survey course, and he claims "enrollees had seemed to like my general course, and a few of them had urged me to put my material within the covers of a book so that other bored or struggling students—often in captive classes—could enjoy the material also."²³ Bailey was so proud of the text, he wrote a memoir about writing it, in which he claims that writing the textbook was not a vanity project or mere professional task, but rather "one of the motivations for taking on this task was the determination to render a public service, not altogether unlike the call that I felt when I decided to enter the ministry."²⁴ That

²¹ Stanley Vestal *Warpath and Council Fire* (1948); Lucullus McWhorter *Yellow Bull: His Own Story* (1940) and *Hear Me, My Chiefs! Nez Perce History and Legend* (1952); Alvin Josephy, Jr. *Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the Northwest* (1965).

²² Bailey's *The American Pageant*, in its sixteenth edition at the time of writing and credited now to Stanford history professor and Bailey's protégé David Kennedy, continues to be in wide use in A.P. U.S. History classrooms today.

²³ Bailey. *The American Pageant Revisited: Recollections of a Stanford Historian*. (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institute Press, 1982), 179.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 180. In other parts of the memoir, Bailey claims that students "in a southern California college" held public protests when their professor tried to substitute a different textbook for *Pageant* and that he "received letters from

higher calling was linked with the myth of American exceptionalism, not surprising during the early years of the Cold War. Bailey writes that his goal was to write for students, not their professors, and to present a text that was “readable” that would also “reveal it [the United States] as a beacon-light success in democracy.”²⁵ D.C. Heath published the classroom textbook in 1956, and followed it with a trade edition through their imprint Little, Brown, & Co. a few years later. Bailey’s book sold well, peppered with amusing turns of phrase that border on the absurd like the opening sentence “several billion years ago, that whirling speck of dust known as the earth, fifth in size among the planets, came into being” or the description of pre-annexation Texas as “the bride was so near, so rich, so fair, so willing.”²⁶ Yet for all Bailey’s later claims that part of the purpose of his textbook was to demythologize U.S. history, his accounts of the Plains Wars fall into the same, mythologized, inaccurate patterns as other textbooks of the time.²⁷

Having had several decades to reflect upon his book, its popularity in the classroom, and his critics, Bailey dismissed critique, even when it came from established scholars. He did not see the role of a historian, or a teacher of history, as revolutionary, but rather caretaker. “My basic philosophy as executive head of the History Department was to do what centuries of trial and error with teaching history had already proved best, but to perfect these techniques,” Bailey writes.²⁸ As such, Bailey seems to have trusted the narrative structures he was handed and merely sought to root out extraneous elaborations or embellishments. His response to criticism for his portrayal of Native history is particularly robust and stiff-necked. He writes in retrospect

students in which they said that they had approached American history with dread but had found my book lively and enjoyable, and consequently life had become more bearable.”

²⁵ Ibid., 180.

²⁶ Bailey. *The American Pageant: A History of the Republic*. (Boston: Heath, 1961), #.

²⁷ As noted in chapter 5, Bailey also borrows phrasing from older textbook accounts.

²⁸ Ibid., 176.

“representatives of various ethnic groups have registered protests with me. I have heard from the Native Americans (Indians) because I wrote from the point of view of the conquering white man, not that of the conquered and horribly abused Indian.” Rather than engage with a legitimate critique, Bailey reverts to tired tropes, dismissing the concerns by saying “It is usually the fate of the defeated to have their history written by the conquerors. Who ever read a history of the wars between Rome and Carthage from the point of view of the Carthaginians, who were finally wiped out?” Faced with criticism about the constructed white innocence of naming battles and massacres, Bailey similarly ignores the point entirely, saying instead that at Greasy Grass “actually no quarter was given, and evidently none was asked.”²⁹ Not only does Bailey’s attitude toward Native history reflect the textbooks and many professional histories of the midcentury, but his classical allusions to [prove his point] also echo across textbook passages and editorial correspondence from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. This was the attitude and Native history and the role of Native people in the development of the United States that textbooks presented in unanimity. This was the barrier D’Arcy McNickle and AID found to progress with Native students in regional workshops, and it was the barrier that inspired them to establish the Summer Workshop on American Indian Affairs.

The Summer Workshop was largely a product of McNickle’s vision for AID, although like all such projects it was the result of the hard work and extraordinary vision of many people. Sol and Rosalie Tax, non-Native anthropologists associated with the University of Chicago were architects and directors of the workshop, as was Helen Peterson of NCAI. Designed first as a training ground to equip young Native students with the skills they needed to lead their

²⁹ Ibid., 193-4. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Bailey is equally dismissive of critics of his portrayal of women, African-Americans, and other ethnic minorities. And perhaps most alarming, many of the passages that fell under justified criticism in Bailey’s edition continue to be reprinted under Kennedy’s name today.

communities toward self-sufficiency and rebut attempts at tribal termination, within the first few years organizers realized that these students were suffering a crisis of identity. Schooled in non-Native settings, they were ingesting the assimilationist narrative of American exceptionalism that cast Native culture as primitive and antithetical to progress. Before these students could take up the task of leading their tribal communities in self-determination, workshop organizers had to help the students confront this crisis of identity.

In 1961, organizers headed by Rosalie Tax changed the focus of the workshop. Instead of six weeks of pure course work, the 1961 workshop would open at the University of Chicago with “a week-long conference on Indian life... Workshop students will observe and participate in this conference, then travel by chartered bus to the University of Colorado at Boulder, Colorado, where they will devote six weeks to an intensive study of Indian affairs.”³⁰ Seeking an education, the brochure proclaims, used to mean that a Native student had to sever ties with his reservation community, his family, and his traditions. “Indian tribes lost many potential leaders while such an attitude prevailed,” the brochure says, and the Workshop seeks to help students reconcile their Native identity with a modern education by “helping the students gain a better view of themselves, of their abilities, of their place in the future.”³¹ As McNickle wrote to Workshop instructor Robert Reitz “The Workshop gives American Indians the opportunity to be students of and for themselves.”³² That was an opportunity that a classroom dedicated to the portrayal of Native nations as obstacles to American progress could never provide.

The Workshop offered Native students a rare opportunity to be fully Native in community without feeling as if they had to compromise their integrity as students or young

³⁰ AID brochure, Frank B. and Josephine Duveneck Collection, Box 3, Folder 7, Hoover Institution Archives.

³¹ Ibid.

³² McNickle to Reitz, December 4, 1961. D’Arcy McNickle Papers, Box 24, Folder 212.

people of serious potential. For many students, this was their first experience of that kind of freedom. McNickle writes of the fulfillment it gave him to see students engaged in that way, saying "It's a real experience to watch these kids chasing ideas around, once they realize that they are all Indians working things ou[t] together, without any white man bearing down on them. True, the director has been white, but we have been lucky so far in our choice of director. It has always been someone who had the good sense to let them think things out for themselves."³³ The Workshop students concurred. In 1960, the Workshop began producing a newsletter called *The Indian Progress*, and its pages are filled with accounts of the impact of the Workshop on participants. One student editor writes, "American Indian history is not adequately taught in our public schools. In this Workshop I have become much more familiar with Indian history. The need for a more rounded out knowledge of American Indian history is absolutely essential."³⁴

As Peterson notes in 1965, the students' experience of the Workshop, and the ways in which it obviously met a deep need, shifted the goal of the Workshop itself. "There can be no question now but that the Workshop is effective in helping the students "find themselves"... the evidence is mounting that not only do many of these students begin to have respect for themselves, their families, and their communities, but their work in college following the Workshop is greatly improved with some students." She writes that they will continue to facilitate this growth, knowing "that with this greater security they will be better able to function in non-Indian society; that there will seem to be less of "education Indian young people away from their families" less pitting them against their own people which is so often done, even by the most ell meaning individuals or groups who truly mean to help Indians."³⁵ The problem

³³ McNickle to Amelia, November 29, 1961. D'Arcy McNickle Papers, Box 24, Folder 212.

³⁴ "From the Roving Reporter: What are we getting out of the workshop?" *The Indian Progress: Newsletter of the Workshop on American Indian Affairs*, no. 4 (July 17, 1961). D'Arcy McNickle Papers, Box 23, Folder 2.

³⁵ Peterson to Malmgron, May 7, 1965. D'Arcy McNickle Papers, Box 24, Folder 212.

remained, of course, that each new group of students found only brief respite from a hostile outside world because that world continued to resist changing the narratives that formed anti-Native prejudice. As a training ground for reformers, activists, and scholars, the Summer Workshop was successful.³⁶ But the Workshop was designed for Native students, not non-Natives. While it impacted a generation of young Native scholars and activists, its work did not reach the general public, and although it corrected their falsehoods in its seminars, the Workshop certainly did not target textbook narratives for change. It did, however, lay an ideological foundation upon which scholars associated with McNickle could build a program designed to correct false teaching about Native history in American classrooms. If the Workshop could achieve success in awakening Native students to the value of their cultures' histories, a similar program could similarly enlighten their teachers and stop the perpetuation of anti-Native prejudice in the classroom.

Beginning in the mid-1960s, several different groups launched studies to challenge U.S. history textbook narratives not, as had been done in the past, on the basis of their relative adherence to patriotic goals but based on their portrayal of members of ethnic and racial minority groups within the United States. Some of these efforts, like the work of the Council of Interracial Books for Children (CBIC), sprang from the efforts of reformers like the teachers of the Mississippi Freedom Schools. Other efforts were an extension of longer scholarly traditions, like the work of Rupert and Jeannette Costo's Indian Historical Society. As an extension of the efforts of social studies educators to produce curriculum that would promote social cohesion and good citizenship, the Educational Products Information Exchange Institute (EPIE) dedicated an entire issue of its review journal in 1969 to the portrayals of minority groups in American

³⁶ Bradley Shreve documents the connection between the Summer Workshops and the rise of the National Indian Youth Council and Red Power in *Red Power Rising*.

textbooks. Oddly the AHA, in cooperation with the Historical Association of England and the British Association for American Studies conducted a multi-year study of American and British textbooks to analyze them for anti-American and anti-British bias. The report was chaired by western historian Ray Billington, and when it was published in 1966 it offered one of the most powerful analyses of the unconscious construction of bias in textbook writing to be produced in any century of such study. The Billington Report focused solely on nationalistic bias between the United States and Britain and only examined textbook accounts of conflicts involving the two nations, yet its published version quite accurately describes the process by which textbook writers embed bias in textbook narratives and offers practical suggestions to textbook authors and publishers as well as teachers and parents for countering bias and preventing it from becoming part of public memory through the schools that could readily apply to textbook narratives about the Plains Wars.

In addition to reviewing these reports and others, in response to the events of the Civil Rights Movement, NCSS conference sessions reflected an increased interest in equipping teachers to address race issues in the classroom. While the majority of these civil-rights-focused sessions between 1965 and 1970 concern urban and black populations, the conference programs for those years also list sessions dedicated to the needs of Asian, Hispanic, and Native students. In planning materials for the 1969 conference, several members petitioned for sessions about Native students, and the 1969 conference included a session chaired by University of New Mexico professor of education Le Roy Condie on “Indian Children and the Social Studies: A Bi-Cultural Approach.”³⁷ In the same year, however, the NCSS Ad Hoc Committee on the

³⁷ 1969 program; Indian Children Session Abstract, June 1, 1969. NCSS Papers, Box 2007-213/386. Interestingly, but potentially unrelated, there is an unusual increase in the number of books on Native history advertised in the 1970 NCSS conference program.

Evaluation of Textbooks took up the question of whether or not it should recommend that NCSS conduct a textbook evaluation project in connection with the work on civil rights and minority student populations. Somewhat surprisingly, the committee decided against making the recommendation, even while it verified the fact that textbooks were central to instruction.

“Because textbooks are the most common resource used in the classroom, there is a continuous struggle to control their selection. In states which use the “approved list” method of textbook selection, the school’s freedom of choice is obviously limited, the committee acknowledges. The situation was further complicated, the committee notes, because “even in states which leave textbook selection to local districts, pressures from individuals or special interest groups may circumscribe freedom to teach and to learn.”³⁸ Instead of reviewing textbooks individually, in 1971 NCSS responded to a high volume of requests from member teachers and administrators for guidance in selection social studies curriculum materials with a set of curriculum guidelines.

These guidelines acknowledged the weaknesses of existing curriculum materials, saying “School history” is often repetitive, bland, merely narrative, and inattentive to the non-Western world; it is distorted by ignoring the experiences of Blacks, Chicanos, native [sic] American Indians, Puerto Ricans, and Oriental Americans.”³⁹ However, in keeping with the long tradition of twentieth century social studies education goals, the guidelines stipulated “1) the program should be directly related to the concerns of students; 2) the program should deal with the real social world; 3) the program should draw from currently valid knowledge representative of man’s experience, culture, and beliefs...”⁴⁰ By necessity, such an approach would merely perpetuate existing misunderstandings and false narratives about Native history rather than

³⁸ “Academic Freedom and the Social Studies Teacher,” November 7, 1969. NCSS 2007-213/92, Binder 1.

³⁹ NCSS Curriculum Guidelines, 1971, 19-20. NCSS Records, Box 2007-213/366.

⁴⁰ Gary Manson et al. Document Resume, Abstract. NCSS Records, Box 2007-213/366.

correct them. In fact, the vast majority of NCSS initiatives and trainings, though carefully designed to dismantle racist opinions held by schoolchildren, failed to address the foundations of those opinions.

By focusing on methodology rather than historical narrative, social studies educators left that narrative uncorrected, and although students learned through discussion that anti-Native prejudice was incorrect, they memorized historical timelines for exams that reinforced that same prejudice. For example, in 1971 and 1972, NCSS worked to defend a textbook from the Georgia state legislature's attempt to ban it from classrooms. The text was a revolutionary social studies textbook based on the inquiry learning approach, developed by the staff of the Social Studies Curriculum Center of Carnegie-Mellon University under the direction of Edwin Fenton. Rather than presenting a traditional narrative text, the book was designed to work in conjunction with an interactive workbook, classroom activities, and technology like slide presentations and filmstrips, and the text itself presented a series of chronologically-ordered vignettes that walked students through the timeline of U.S. history. The goal of the textbook was not to produce students who could recite a chronological chain of events, but rather to use the events of the past to teach students critical thinking skills. Therefore the text centers on the students' immediate experience and seeks to link that to events of the past in order to foster understanding of the connection between the two. In theory, this appears to be an excellent approach to teaching historical thinking and seeking student engagement.

The first unit on exploration, for example, begins by asking students to discuss times when they faced something unknown. In the pursuit of helping students make the connection while including representatives of different people within the American population, however, the authors include an example that trivializes, others, and historicizes Native people. The text urges

students to “think about an Eskimo’s unknowns. He lives in the cold Arctic regions near the North Pole. He builds his home of snow and ice. He has no electricity. he uses dogs to pull his sled. He hunts for his food. He makes his own clothes. He educates his children himself. Sometimes he will go for months seeing only his own family.” Therefore, the section concludes, “his list of unknowns would include a television set, a washing machine, a record player, or an automobile,”⁴¹ firmly planting Arctic peoples in students’ minds as backwards and trapped in the past.

In 1970 when the book was published, electricity had made its way to the continent’s northern territories. And yet students reading Fenton’s text were left not only calling Inuit and related peoples by the incorrect name “Eskimo,” but thinking that to be “Eskimo” was to be pre-modern. The text was even accompanied by a humorous drawing of a stereotypically-phenotyped Alaskan Native man trying to paddle across icy water on top of a television. Worse, Fenton’s enthusiasm for involving students in the dramatic moments of history induced him to exclude the history of Native people during westward expansion almost entirely, and replacing any historical figures or events with one brief fabricated skit of a Native council trying to decide if they should move West, framed with the inadequate historical explanation “some Indians who are forced to decide if they should move West.”⁴² In an effort to teach students communal decision-making through role playing, the authors forgot to tell them that nations had made decisions that way here in North America for millennia.

Focus on pedagogy and social education goals at the expense of content evaluation continued to thwart efforts to correct the ways in which U.S. history narratives recreated and

⁴¹ Staff of the Social Studies Curriculum Center, Edwin Fenton, ed. *The Americans: A History of the United States* (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1970), 7.

⁴² Edwin Fenton, ed. *The Americans: A History of the United States* (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1970), 136.

reinforced anti-Native prejudice in each generation of American students. In the early 1970s, NCSS launched a series of anti-racism clinics in order to help teachers address racial divides in their classrooms. One set of experimental curricula these clinics tested was “The American Experiment,” a curriculum unit designed for ninth grade students. The course “examines the interactions between the dominant American culture and groups outside the culture (American Indians), groups entering the culture (immigrant ethnic groups), and groups within the culture (blacks, the poor).”⁴³ Framing Native people as other, the course asks students to define what it means to be American by juxtaposing that identity with “a group excluded from American society, the American Indian.”⁴⁴ Then, the curriculum instructs teachers to lead students through a discussion of options for “the future of the Indian.”

While the ultimate goal of the course is to help students devise a working definition of pluralism that can incorporate all the disparate groups within the country’s borders in social harmony, its reliance on civic nationalism to do so ensures that students will not think of Native people as equal participants in the nation. The curriculum does not guide students through an exploration of Native history, political practice, or social order. Instead, it uses Native people as complete outsiders, and asks students to discuss solutions to challenges facing Native communities without reference to their long histories of political, economic, and social progress. Rooting its ideological framework in the ideals expressed in the nation’s founding documents without reference to how those ideals’ historical expression of colonization and dispossession caused the challenges it identifies facing Native communities in the present, the curriculum trains students in paternalism. Successful completion of its assignments rely student answers that subvert Native self-determination and sovereignty.

⁴³ The American Experiment curriculum, September 1, 1970. NCSS Records, Box 2007-213/6.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

the curriculum relies on the subversion of Native self-determination and acceptance of Native dispossession to teach students the meaning of American identity.

Encountering such opposition even from educators sympathetic to goals, some Native scholars and activists decided their efforts to enact change in the history narratives of American education were best spent elsewhere. When California stone-walled Costo's Indian Historian Society's work to persuade the California State Curriculum Commission to enact its research-driven criteria for textbook adoption, the IHS founded the Indian Historian Press and produced alternative curriculum about Native history for California schools.⁴⁵ In the Twin Cities, Native parents and activists whose students faced intense anti-Native prejudice in school curriculum and disciplinary practices took advantage of the opportunity offered by the Indian Education Act of 1972 and formed their own community-based survival schools in cooperation with leadership of the American Indian Movement. These survival schools functioned in some ways like the AID Summer Workshop in American Indian Affairs. According to historian Julie L. Davis, Heart of the Earth School and Red School House were trailblazing institutions, innovating a postcolonial curriculum before the development of postcolonial theory. She writes that along with other models like the Navajo Nation Rough Rock Demonstration School in New Mexico, the AIM survival schools "helped pave the way for others to practice culture-based, community-controlled Indian education. They made something new possible."⁴⁶ Like the Workshop, these sovereign schools implemented curricula to prepare Native students for a hostile society, not dismantle the hostility they would face. By 1970, however, the Workshop was in the process of changing that focus.

⁴⁵ American Indian Historical Society. *Textbooks and the American Indian*. Rupert Costo and Jeannette Henry, eds. (San Francisco: Indian Historian Press, 1970).

⁴⁶ Julie L. Davis. *Survival Schools: The American Indian Movement and Community Education in the Twin Cities*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2013), 235.

As the Workshop on American Indian Affairs came to a close, AID board members sought to establish a more permanent program that would reach a broader audience and, they hoped, have a more lasting, transformative impact on American culture. In 1971, the preliminary advisory board for the Center for the History of the American Indian (CHAI) secured a five-year grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to establish a research center at the Newberry Library. Headed by D'Arcy McNickle and making use of the Graff and Ayers collections of Western History at the Newberry, the Center would be "a unique national center whose intentions are to support young Indian scholars in rewriting of their own history, to train high school teachers in Indian history and to publish book lists and Indian studies libraries for tribal, high school and college use."⁴⁷ The Center's founders saw its establishment as an opportunity to go beyond the mission of the Summer Workshops. Rather than simply equipping young Native scholars for the challenges they would face at non-Native colleges and universities or offering them tools to do work in their own communities, the Center would attempt to address the problem of anti-Native prejudice itself. The NEH grant proposal pitched the project as a "program to stimulate the study of the history of the American Indians and of their relationships with the American whites."⁴⁸ At the heart of the project was a proposal for a new sort of summer workshop: the Center for the History of the American Indian Summer Institute for Teachers.

The CHAI Summer Institute for Teachers was a bold idea that sprang from the success of the student-focused Summer Workshops. Based on the belief that "That there are far too few individuals, Indian or white, who are prepared for research and writing in the field of Indian history or for teaching this subject on a graduate, undergraduate, or secondary level," the

⁴⁷ J. Peterson to Novak, May 9, 1973. D'Arcy McNickle Papers, Box 28, Folder 222.

⁴⁸ NEH grant proposal abstract, n.d. D'Arcy McNickle Papers, Box 28, Folder 214.

Summer Institute was designed to correct that inadequacy.⁴⁹ For the first year or two of its existence, McNickle proposed, CHAI would focus on fostering Native history scholarship through fellowships for doctoral students and established scholars. In the third year, he wrote to Sol Tax in 1972, they would invite ten high school teachers to participate in a six-week program in residence at the Newberry. There the teachers would attend seminars about Native history to address the significant knowledge gap about that history in secondary schools and use the collections in order to design units of instruction to improve their teaching of Native history when they returned to the classroom. McNickle writes, “In the History Departments as such, while the American Indian is naturally included in all American History courses, it is often cursorily, or perfunctorily... the historical dimension of the American Indian needs to be re-examined and that the proposed Center would be a fruitful device for accomplishing this purpose.”⁵⁰ McNickle argued that the impact of such a program would reach far beyond merely changing a handful of teachers’ classroom instruction. In discussions with members of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (now the Big Ten Academic Alliance), McNickle reported that CIC representatives believed the effect would resonate throughout the university system. As later CHAI president Francis Jennings wrote several years later, “The Center hopes that its Institute activities will thus become a leaven in the loaf of secondary school teaching throughout the country.”⁵¹ Improving Native history teaching in secondary schools was the primary purpose of the Summer Institute and remained its focus even while other facets of the program changed dramatically.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ McNickle to Tax, November 15, 1972. D’Arcy McNickle Papers, Box 29, Folder 214.

⁵¹ Center of the History of the American Indian information sheet, c. 1977 CHAI unprocessed, NL 07-05-01, The Newberry Library, Chicago, Box 2.

Initially proposing to reach forty secondary history teachers, the Institute's first purpose was merely to offer instruction and assistance with personal curricular design to Institute attendees, which the Center referred to as "interns." Because the Center planned to host research fellows at multiple stages of their academic careers at the same time, McNickle and others believed that hosting the teachers over the summer would provide them with the opportunity to spend time with graduate students, tribal historians, and established scholars, enhancing their experience and encouraging them to continue in this scholarly camaraderie after the Institute ended. Hoping to launch a pilot program with five teachers in 1973, organizers quickly realized that the needs of secondary teachers, as well as their lack of content knowledge in Native history, meant the program could not focus primarily on seminars and research to supplement their personal teaching. As Institute Curriculum Specialist and Co-Director Lawana Trout later explained, "Since most secondary texts fail to give fair analysis to Native American History, curriculum design is paramount in the institute."⁵² That pilot program never got off the ground, and Center staff spent the next two years instead tinkering with the design for the program, which launched in full during the summer of 1975, headed by historian R. David Edmunds, who was also a Center fellow working on his Tenskwatawa history, *The Shawnee Prophet*.

Early in the planning stages, Richard Brown suggested that the Institute could become "vehicle to develop curriculum for high school." Given the limited funding and short timeframe of the NEH grant, however, that proposal was rejected in favor of adhering to the terms of the original grant proposal. The expense of producing an alternative textbook for wide distribution far exceeded CHAI's means at a time when the Center itself was supported only by a five-year NEH grant. The odds of producing a high quality U.S. textbook that could compete with those by

⁵² Summer Pilot Program Proposal, October 12, 1972. D'Arcy McNickle Papers, Box 28, Folder 228; 1982 Summer Institute Narrative. CHAI unprocessed, Box 2.

increasingly powerful publishing houses, and the logistics involved in persuading fifty separate state education boards and curriculum committees to approve its use made such a project practically impossible. The Institute would serve primarily to “educate and sensitize high school teachers to the Native American’s role in the history of the United States.”⁵³

The push and pull between the Institute as a producer of corrective high school curriculum and the Institute as training ground for high school teachers continued throughout its existence, and that consistent tension highlights the ways in which the Center’s leadership planned to achieve their goal to “humanize and demythologize the teaching of Indian history and culture in secondary schools.”⁵⁴ It was clear, however, that throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, available U.S. history textbooks continued to present false narratives of Native history, and those false narratives drove CHAI to offer the Institute and the materials its interns produced in response. As Jennings explained in the second full year of the Institute, “basic to all of its activities has been the assumption that the history of Indian peoples is important in its own right and also as a significant part of the history of the whole people of the United States. It is only too clear that this basic assumption has not been reflected in the past, either in textbooks or in classrooms.”⁵⁵ Through seminars and facilitated research, the Institute sought to correct both.

The Institute drew from the strengths of the Summer Workshop and organizers hoped to facilitate a similar sense of community among the teacher interns. Duplicating that communal success was difficult, however, given the Institute’s commitment to admitting both Native and non-Native teachers. The overarching goal of the Center itself, and by extension the Institute, was to “increase significantly the number of qualified specialists in the United States, especially

⁵³ Draft CHAI Review to Advisory Council, n.d. CHAI unprocessed, Box 7.

⁵⁴ Jennings’ Report to CHAI Advisory Board, November 13, 1976. CHAI unprocessed, Box 7.

⁵⁵ CHAI Information Sheet, n.d. CHAI unprocessed, Box 2.

among the Indians themselves.”⁵⁶ In a draft announcement of the teacher program, McNickle explains that the entire goal of the Institute was to reach teachers who did not already have either materials reflecting the centrality of Native history to the U.S., or the knowledge necessary to make adjustments to inadequate textbooks on their own. McNickle writes that “The purpose of the Institute is to encourage an objective presentation of the history of Native Americans in the classroom; to develop greater awareness of the contributions Native Americans have made to the history of America; to provide teachers with methods for the analysis of events in Indian-white relations; and to foster understanding of the needs and aspirations of Native American youth.”⁵⁷ By necessity, if the mission of the Institute was to succeed, non-Native teachers had to be invited to participate. In reviewing applications, CHAI prioritized applicants’ desire to investigate Native history, proximity to Native students, and classroom experience. Anyone teaching Native history, whether as part of a history class or not, was eligible to apply.⁵⁸

The first Institute took place at the Newberry during June and July 1975. Documentation of the first year is sparse in the unprocessed collection at the Newberry. Helen Bannan, Dave Beaulieu, and R. David Edmunds shared directorship of the program that first year, and ten teachers were in residence at the Newberry between July 7 and August 15.⁵⁹ The Institute combined a travel to significant sites with seminars and a curriculum-building workshop at the

⁵⁶ Newberry Library Center for the History of the American Indian Proposal Abstract, n.d. D’Arcy McNickle Papers, Box 28, Folder 214.

⁵⁷ D’Arcy McNickle. Draft Announcement, November 20, 1974. D’Arcy McNickle Papers, Box 28, Folder 222.

⁵⁸ The Institute staff especially expressed excitement for Native applicants raised in their communities’ historical traditions. Sister Jeanette Kinlicheeny’s application for the 1976 Institute includes a letter of recommendation from her principal at St. Michael High School in Michaels, Arizona. In it, Sister Margaret O’Rourke writes “Jeanette is a full-blooded Navajo Indian from a traditional family who reside on the Reservation.” The word “traditional” is underlined and has an exclamation point handwritten beside it. O’Rourke to Jennings, April 8, 1976. CHAI unprocessed, Box 22. Brown to Trout, November 21, 1975. CHAI unprocessed, Box 8. Careful selection of seminar leaders, especially highlighting Native scholars and Native methodologies in those seminars was key to mitigating any damaging effects white teachers working through anti-Native prejudice might have on Native teacher participants.

⁵⁹ Helen Bannan. Memo to all Newberry Library staff, July 1, 1975. CHAI unprocessed, Box 22.

Newberry. Institute participants spent two days at the Koster Archaeological Site in Kampsville, Illinois, and also visited the Milwaukee Public Museum.⁶⁰ During the final two weeks of the Institute, Lawana Trout directed “an in-depth approach to new developments in Indian curriculum.”⁶¹ Three months after the Institute ended, the Newberry hired Trout as the Institute’s Curriculum Specialist.

Trout was an ideal candidate for the position. As CHAI fellow William Swagerty wrote, “no self-respecting academic can write individual sections in one unit and then move on to another on a daily basis. Lawana’s talents and energies are unique in this regard. She is the most remarkable person I’ve ever met in the context of ability to organize multidimensional [sic] schedules and projects involving many people and topics on a daily basis.”⁶² In her initial job offer, Brown explained that Trout would share organizational duties with CHAI fellow Martin Zanger. Zanger would organize content for the morning sessions and Trout would design and facilitate the curriculum development portions of the Institute. “Last summer was tantalizing for us,” Brown wrote, and he and Zanger were eager to begin planning for summer 1976.⁶³ Trout accepted, and her hiring marked CHAI’s commitment to use the Institute to develop curriculum for distribution beyond its participants. From the earliest planning stages, inadequate textbook coverage of Native history drove the creation of the teacher program. The first draft proposal for the Institute had envisioned the project as a facilitated workshop to use the Newberry’s archival sources and resident scholars to assist secondary teachers as they developed curriculum materials.

⁶⁰ Edmunds to Institute Participants, June 8, 1975. CHAI unprocessed, Box 22.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Memo to CHAI staff, n.d. CHAI unprocessed, Box 8.

⁶³ Brown to Trout, November 21, 1975. CHAI unprocessed, Box 8.

The goal was to “make a program immediately available to the large number of people who are responding to the Center’s requests for information about Indian education.”⁶⁴ The 1972 draft even mentions that while the curriculum developed at the Institute was primarily for use by the teachers who developed it, nationwide distribution was a future possibility. By 1974 the proposals shifted their approach and the Institute structure incorporated more historical and anthropological training for the teachers. A memo from William Swagerty to the Institute staff after the 1976 Institute highlighted the chief problem with the curriculum goals of the program. The teacher interns were eager to learn and change, he writes, but did not have the content knowledge they needed to write classroom-ready curriculum unites. While their effort was admirable, he writes “the present units in progress have the basic methodological problem of putting the cart before the horse.”⁶⁵ To meet the learning needs of the teacher interns, Trout, Brown, and CHAI leadership designed a program to offer both instruction from experts and guided research sessions for curriculum-writing. While training individual teachers was an effective means of improving their ability to teach Native history and culture accurately, and while CHAI valued that important work, the Institute remained dedicated to producing curriculum materials to correct the bad information about Native history appearing in U.S. history textbooks.

Organizers designed the Institute to address teacher interns’ need for better Native history education by dividing each program day into two parts. Morning sessions began at 9:00 am and were content-driven seminars led by Newberry-affiliated scholars on specific topics relating to Native history. Sessions like Francis Jennings’ “The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries on the East Coast” covered content unfamiliar to the teacher interns, while others like Dorene Porter

⁶⁴ Proposal for Summer Pilot Program, October 12, 1972. D’Arcy McNickle Papers, Box 28, Folder 228.

⁶⁵ Memo. Swagerty to Trout et al., n.d. CHAI unprocessed, Box 8.

and William Swagerty's "The Indian Image" and Henry Dobyns' "Demography of the American Indian" led the interns in more theoretical explorations of both Native history and public perceptions of Native people.⁶⁶ Afternoon sessions were devoted to curriculum workshops, led by Trout, as well as research hours for the interns. For the latter, CHAI hired Teacher's College professor and noted education reformer Hazel Hertzberg who offered sessions like "Indian History in the Secondary Classroom" and consulted with teacher interns on their curriculum unit projects.⁶⁷ Hertzberg continued her affiliation with the Institute for many years, serving as both instructor and consultant to teacher interns as they prepared their curriculum units. The Center strove to encourage discussion among all teacher interns and fellows at the Newberry over the summer in hopes that it could create a scholarly community that would foster collaboration across the secondary-higher education divide. In the Center's Annual Report for 1975-1976 McNickle writes that the various fellowships and the Institute "all succeeded in establishing the Center as a forum for the free exchange of ideas and perspectives between scholars, teachers, and students."⁶⁸

Starting in 1977, the Institute began to invite previous interns to return and continue work on their curriculum units. Much like the student participants in the Summer Workshops of the 1950s and 1960s, the teacher interns were often so overwhelmed by the content of the seminars that they were ill-equipped to produce a classroom-ready curriculum unit in the mere six weeks of time at the Newberry. As Jennings later observed, "I am sure they are good teachers and that they would be excellent judges of the teachability of a unit after it had been prepared... I do think that they have insufficient background in history and insufficient training (or ability) as

⁶⁶ 1977 Summer Institute Daily Schedule, n.d. CHAI unprocessed, Box 8.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ CHAI Annual Report 1975-1976, n.d. CHAI unprocessed, Box 7.

writers.”⁶⁹ Inviting teachers to return and spend a second summer working on their curriculum units would offer them the time they would need to internalize the new content as well as the opportunity to spend a school year considering ways in which to design that curriculum to fit current student needs.⁷⁰ The 1977 Institute schedule lists two tracks, one for ten incoming new teacher interns, and a separate track for the five returning teachers, and in subsequent years, some teacher interns returned multiple times.

Despite the challenge of simultaneously guiding history teachers through a paradigm shift in historical narrative and facilitating their curriculum-writing, as it developed over its first few years, the Institute embodied the spirit of study and dedication to curricular change first envisioned at CHAI’s founding. Although only a part time member of CHAI staff, Trout was the driving force behind the Institute. Jennings joked with Trout in 1977, saying “We shall be looking forward to your visit in March, though my feelings will be mixed. There is always so much work to do when you arrive, and you don’t let me sweep any of it under the rug.”⁷¹ Under her leadership, the Institute added sessions on oral histories, family history, and the growing field of ethnohistory.⁷² In addition to leading seminars on curriculum design or Native portrayals in popular film, Trout also developed practical workshops for teacher interns. At the 1982 Institute, Trout taught a demonstration unit correcting the history of the Battle of Little Bighorn, as well as a session in which the interns used the CBIC textbook survey *Stereotypes, Distortions, and Omissions in U.S. History Books* as a guide to analyze and correct textbook depictions of Native history, a model they could use to teach their students how to read for bias.⁷³ The narrative report

⁶⁹ Jennings to Trout and Brown, October 4, 1978. CHAI unprocessed, Box 8.

⁷⁰ Jennings. Draft Report to CHAI Advisory Board, November 13, 1976. CHAI unprocessed, Box 7.

⁷¹ Jennings to Trout, January 27, 1977. CHAI unprocessed, Box 8.

⁷² 1977, 1978, 1979, 1982 Summer Institute Daily Schedules. CHAI unprocessed, Box 8, 22.

⁷³ 1982 Draft Narrative, Summer Institute. CHAI unprocessed, Box 2. Unfortunately, a description of Trout’s lesson is not included in paperwork from the 1982 Institute.

for the 1982 Institute describes its atmosphere as that of a diverse scholarly community collaborating together.

Ideas spin at institute sessions. Al Ortiz opens the Tewa world with slides of the San Juan Deer Dance. Don Fixico surveys Indian Policy since World War II. James Riding In reads ethnographic accounts from the 1830's about his people, the Pawnee. Nancy David writes of being punished as a second grader speaking Navajo at boarding school. Cal Fastwolf analyzes the signatures of the Ft. Laramie Treaty in his native Lakota. Hank Dobyns shocks his listeners with revolutionary demography. These scenes show the 1982 institute in action.⁷⁴

The paperwork teacher interns submitted to the Newberry, both in fulfillment of NEH grant guidelines and in a continued professional relationship with Newberry staff, indicates that the experience was transformative, both professionally and personally.

The proposal for the NEH grant that first funded the Center for the History of the American Indian and its Summer Institute for Teachers projected the Center's ability to host as many as forty secondary teachers. By the end of 1982, eighty-six teachers from twenty-six states and twenty-six different tribal nations participated in summers at the Newberry.⁷⁵ Teachers applied for a variety of reasons. Some, like Ray Keller from Farmington, New Mexico, taught at schools near but not engaged with tribal nations. Farmington High School was "a Euroamerican enclave encircled by Indian reservations," Keller writes in his post-Institute narrative for the Newberry, but "The schools do not reflect this Indian influence... we have an unusual lack of programs for the enlightenment of non Indians concerning the U.S. Indian cultures."⁷⁶ Others,

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ray Keller. 1978 Summer Institute Evaluations, n.d. CHAI unprocessed, Box 22. Farmington High School, where Keller taught, now lists its school mission statement in English, Spanish, and Navajo and in 2017 listed its student

like Steve Cortez, Ava Doty, and Sister Jeanette Kinlicheen, taught at schools designed to serve Native students and many were Native themselves.⁷⁷

Most participants report being radically changed by their time at the Institute. New York teacher William Cleveland reported, “coming from no where, the 1976 Summer Institute was invaluable for me. I feel I am now at a point where I can incorporate much more on the Native American in the NYS American Studies syllabus. I have been exposed to enough to feel more comfortable in proposing an elective in American Indian Studies at my school.”⁷⁸ 1978 Institute participant Ava Doty wrote “I thought we were the most privileged ten people in the field of education to have the opportunity to study with such distinguished writers, teachers, and speakers...”⁷⁹ Dale Harrison attended in 1976 and returned in 1977. He called his time at the Newberry “the single most valuable educational endeavor I have ever encountered.” In his application to return for the 1977 Institute, Harrison explained that he believed the curriculum he planned to finish was vital to U.S. history because “the American Indian is an integral part of American History. For thousands of years prior to the coming of the White Man, the Indian was American History, not a sidelight of our national experience. The contributions of Native Americans in all facets of our existence could fill volumes and need not be mentioned here.”⁸⁰ For return applicants especially, the Institute seemed to inspire secondary teachers to attempt, as Doty writes, “to enlighten those with whom I communicated and to bring about an appreciation and better understanding of the true history and the original inhabitants of this nation.”⁸¹ The

population as 38% Native American. Farmington High School, “About FHS” <http://fhs.fms.k12.nm.us/about/> Accessed March 13, 2019.

⁷⁷ The Busby School of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Fort Sill Indian School, and St. Michael High School respectively.

⁷⁸ William Cleveland. 1976 Summer Institute Evaluation, n.d. CHAI unprocessed, Box 22.

⁷⁹ Ava Doty to Francis Jennings, October 7, 1980. CHAI unprocessed, Box 22.

⁸⁰ Dale Harrison to Francis Jennings, February 2, 1977 and Dale Harrison Summer Institute Application, February 22, 1977. CHAI unprocessed, Box 22.

⁸¹ Doty to Jennings, October 7, 1980. CHAI unprocessed, Box 22.

Institute offered teacher interns training for accomplishing that enlightenment in two ways: in the classroom, and through the creation of curriculum materials.

The curriculum teacher interns produced exemplified CHAI's efforts to correct classroom narratives about Native history. In early planning for the Institute, CHAI Assistant Director Robert Bieder contacted anthropologist Henry Dobyns about their rudimentary plans. Dobyns was the editor of the Indian Tribal Series, a set of supplementary materials focused on tribally-specific histories, and had been in contact with McNickle over the years about incorporating them into the Summer Workshops and later the Center. Initially Dobyns encouraged Bieder and Brown to consider "taking some role in making available for secondary school use a number of monographs suitable for such use but not presently marketed so as to be so used."⁸² His ITS series was popular among Florida teachers, he writes, because while the state mandated that they teach the history of Native people in Florida, available classroom materials did not cover the subject. It was the issue of state curriculum mandates that prompted Dobyns' second letter, however, an issue that seems to have shaped CHAI's plans for the curriculum component of the Institute. Dobyns warns Bieder that designing curriculum had logistical limitations from the teachers' perspective. He writes, "you probably would want to work with teachers within the framework of state curricular demands. Native American history must be taught somewhere in a curriculum that is still largely prescribed by law or administrative regulations. These vary from state to state."⁸³ Dobyns was heavily involved in the Institute as an instructor, and his advice

⁸² Dobyns to Bieder, November 19, 1973. D'Arcy McNickle Papers, Box 28, Folder 222.

⁸³ Dobyns to Bieder, January 30, 1974. CHAI unprocessed, Box 22. Dobyns also warned that television was competing for secondary students' attention and any curriculum the Institute produced would need to be designed to incorporate filmstrips, slides, audio-visual materials. Trout incorporated this concern into the Institute's morning sessions, offering seminars designed to help teachers think about the Indian in Image.

steered CHAI staff toward the individualized teacher-centered model they adopted for the Institute's curriculum workshop.

The curriculum teachers produced, and especially the curriculum CHAI decided to promote and publish, focused on two key interventions. The first was teaching students that Native people are diverse, dynamic, and present today. For non-Native teachers attending the Institute, and for some Native teachers who, like Workshop attendees, had been denied education free from anti-Native prejudice, this was the most popular approach and most curriculum they developed offered some variation on this topic. Tom Jenner, a 1978 teacher intern from Ganado Public Schools in Arizona reported that he left the Institute with the goal "to include historical material about many tribes' activities during my regular teaching of American history (I ever have done this before to any great extent.)... My teaching will become broader because it will include Indian History with "normal" U.S. history."⁸⁴ His curriculum unit would focus on Navajo history because his school was on the Navajo reservation. He would offer "a fairly detailed history of that group of people... to give the student the (proper) feeling that their culture has a rich past and should hold a promising future."⁸⁵ Trout's own published curricula pursued this same intervention. As late as 1992, she authored and published curriculum units to guide teachers through histories of the Aztec and Hopi peoples.⁸⁶

The second intervention was teaching students to critique the narrative framing of the U.S. history presented by the textbooks. Gerald Boevers produced a curriculum unit that embodied this goal so well it was the most highly promoted and widely published curriculum

⁸⁴ Tom Jenner. 1978 Summer Institute Evaluation. n.d. CHAI unprocessed, Box 22.

⁸⁵ Ibid. A common problem among teacher intern-produced Institute curriculum projects, Jenner's curriculum unit was not completed. If he finished it on his own in later years, the collection does not have a record of it.

⁸⁶ Lawana Trout. *Aztec: A Guide for Teachers* and *Hopi: A Guide for Teachers*. (Chicago: D'Arcy McNickle Center for the History of the American Indian, 1992). The McNickle Center published these guides in conjunction with the Smithsonian Institution's "America in 1492" retrospective.

unit the Institute produced. Boevers began designing the curriculum in 1977 around the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie. The project grew to become “a historical magnet attracting a chain of linked events: the 1973 siege of Wounded Knee, the 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee, the Battle of the Little Big Horn, and the 100-year battle for the Black Hills.”⁸⁷ The completed unit opens by asking students to discover what led to the 1973 standoff at Wounded Knee, then leads them to trace its origins back to Red Cloud’s War and the Fetterman Fight. Students engage in role play to draft a version of the 1868 treaty, then compare it to the Fort Laramie Treaty. One lesson requires students to differentiate between myth and fact in “What happened at Little Big Horn?” in order to participate in a mock trial for Reno, Benteen, and Custer. Later students reenact the 1923 Black Hills Court of Claims. After 1980, Boevers adapted the lesson to incorporate another mock trial of the Supreme Court case *The Sioux Nation v. U.S.*⁸⁸

At every stage, Boevers’ curriculum unit requires students to question the colonialist narrative of wars with Oceti Sakowin. This was his design from the beginning. In 1977, his update on progress explains the overarching goal of his curriculum unit, saying “Most United States history teachers at the secondary level deal with at least a score of treaties in the usual survey. One or two may involve Indian tribes, but I rather doubt it. Therefore, these treaties must be presented in such a way that they attain at least the same stature for the teacher as the so-called “normal” treaties between the United States and foreign nations.”⁸⁹ Boevers’ goal was not merely to create a unit for his own use, but to produce one that any teacher in any part of the country could implement in their classroom. Because he was a classroom teacher, he knew the restrictions he needed to work around in order to do so. He writes, “I was quite concerned with

⁸⁷ 1982 Summer Institute in Indian History, n.d. CHAI unprocessed, Box 2.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Boevers to Trout. Memo. “Curricular work progress report The History of the American Indian,” August 15, 1976. CHAI unprocessed, Box 22.

the minimal amount of attention given in texts to this topic, with few useful supplementary publications, and with the growing severity of limitations on teachers' reading and preparation time." His work, by far the most detailed of available lessons teacher interns produced, contains every piece of material and background information a teacher inexperienced with the history would need in order to implement the unit, and does so with teachers' challenge with time management in mind. Most important, Boevers' curriculum is designed strategically to connect with the existing "fragments" of Native history in the textbooks and pull those fragments together in an inquiry-based unit that re-centers one Native nation's treaty history with the United States from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. Boevers' work is based on his careful analysis of existing curriculum, and it is the most classroom-ready direct critique of the false narrative framing of U.S. history that the Institute produced.

Perhaps more important than curriculum production was the Institute's work to transform teachers' understanding of Native history, especially white-Native relations. With some exceptions, the seminar portion of the Institute seems to have been an overwhelming success.⁹⁰ Some, like William Cleveland, proposed and designed Native studies courses at their schools. His principal, Dominick DeCecco, reported that the board approved the course and by November sixty students had already signed up for a course that would begin the following September.⁹¹

After returning to his New Mexico classroom following the 1978 Institute, Ray Keller wrote "I

⁹⁰ Bringing non-Native teachers into sophisticated understanding of Native culture in the space of just six weeks was a difficult task and did not always succeed entirely. Dale Harrison enthusiastically embraced the opportunity to highlight Native history and culture at his school in Nazareth, Pennsylvania, and wrote about his plans to Jennings. "Hopefully I'll be able to use a tract of land adjacent to the high school for the construction of various types of aboriginal Indian dwellings. I have plans for a hogan, wigwam, longhouse, and if this weather persists, an igloo. (Maybe I should call Milton in as a consultant on the hogan – oops – he might think it degrading)." While Harrison's desire to center Native history and culture in his students' studies in a highly visible way is certainly commendable, his note to (fellow non-Native) Jennings exhibits something of a flippant attitude toward traditional Native practice. His mention of another participant finding it 'degrading' suggests that perhaps this topic came up at the Institute.

⁹¹ DeCecco to Jennings, November 28, 1977. CHAI unprocessed, Box 22.

feel strongly that I am in a much improved position now to provide a much better balanced, more knowledgeable program on Indian history and culture in my Social Studies classes in Farmington High School.”⁹² After years of struggling to teach an Indian Studies course to her Native students with few resources and little background knowledge, Ava Doty writes “Armed with notebooks filled with notes, a spirit refreshed from the most well-spent summer I have had in years, and an enthusiasm to get to work, I returned to school to revamp, enhance, and to build my Indian Studies course.”⁹³ Confident in her Institute training, Doty also shared what she had learned with teachers and curriculum writers affiliated with the Anadarko Area Bureau Schools.

Doty was not the only teacher intern who took her training to teachers outside her school. Several Institute participants brought what they had learned about Native history at the Newberry to their professional organizations. William Cleveland was a member of NCSS, the New York Council for the Social Studies, the NEA, and his local Democratic party. In October 1976, Cleveland wrote to Trout that he would be serving on the Steering Committee for the NCSS House of Delegates the following year as well as president of NYCSS. He promised to use both positions to push for sessions on Native history at their annual conferences in 1978. “I feel my work has just begun,” he writes, “Thanks to this summer’s institute I know more of what’s possible, available and desireable [sic].”⁹⁴ Gerald Boevers, Barb Vallaly, and Dorene Wiese presented their Native history curriculum units at the Illinois Council for the Social Studies annual conference on October 7, 1978. Audience interest was so piqued, Boevers writes, “At the close of the total presentation, the questions from the audience caused our session to run nearly

⁹² Keller. 1978 Summer Institute Evaluations, n.d. CHAI unprocessed, Box 22.

⁹³ Doty to Jennings, October 7, 1980. CHAI unprocessed, Box 22. Doty had earlier contributed to a history of the school, *Fort Still Indian School Centennial, 1871-1971* (Lawton, OK: n.p., 1971). The concern she expressed in her letter for the “bleak future” of the school proved valid and the school shuttered in 1980.

⁹⁴ Cleveland to Trout, October 1976. CHAI unprocessed, Box 22.

half an hour beyond the allotted time.” After the session, Boevers says he was approached by an ICSS officer who suggested that he submit an article on the program to the organization’s journal the *Councilor*, as well as a presentation proposal to the Great Lakes Regional Council for the Social Studies conference in the spring. “Everyone in the audience seemed extremely interested in what we are doing here. This is not surprising, for there are no adequate materials on the market dealing with Indian History,” Boevers concludes. “All in all, I think our appearance there was quite valuable for our program.”⁹⁵

The main thrust of that effort centered on the Institute’s goal to create curriculum materials that would correct misinformation in U.S. history textbooks that were in use in classrooms at the time. As early as the second year of the Institute, however, organizers began to realize that expecting the teacher interns to produce publishable curriculum units might not be realistic. In a CHAI board meeting on October 15, 1977, Trout “discussed the need for restructuring the Curriculum Workshop independently of the Institute.”⁹⁶ In the middle of the meeting, however, board members and staff learned that D’Arcy McNickle had been found dead in his home, and they adjourned in distress before the matter was discussed much further. To address the issue of teacher whose historical knowledge was not sufficient to construct their curriculum units, the Institute decided to make use of the scholars and fellows in residence at the Newberry over the summer months and asked the researchers to partner with teachers to read their materials and offer suggestions. Swagerty notes that this solution was not workable, saying “having someone constantly reading your “progress” is intimidating and has made each of the writers a bit defensive about their abilities and obligations... One of the problems this past summer was contradictory recommendations by the various consultants who arrived over the

⁹⁵ Memo, Boevers to Trout, n.d. CHAI unprocessed, Box 22

⁹⁶ CHAI Board Meeting Minutes, October 15, 1977. CHAI unprocessed, Box 7.

summer. Authors were nervous each time a new idea was added to their list of revisions.”⁹⁷

CHAI leadership agreed and instead offered to hire returning teacher interns to come back to the Newberry and finish the curriculum units they had started the previous summer.

Their efforts were part of CHAI’s attempts to invest the social studies professional community in the work of the Institute. Trout attended the NCSS annual convention in Washington, D.C. in 1976 and proposed a session on the Institute for 1977. In the same year, Jennings advertised the Institute in the NCSS journal *Social Education*.⁹⁸ In March 1977 Trout visited the ERIC Social Studies Curriculum Center in Boulder, Colorado, and scheduled trips to conferences of the Organization of American Historians and the National Indian Education Association.⁹⁹ She also served on the Indian Education Advisory Committee of the Illinois Department of Education.¹⁰⁰ Outside the summer program, Institute staff and graduates worked to establish inroads to the larger, national conversation about history education, hoping to bring the Institute’s work to a larger audience of educators.

By 1978, CHAI leadership realized that the two functions of the Summer Institute did not co-align as they had envisioned. Jennings writes to Trout and Brown, “It appears that the Institute proper is going well, but the Workshop is in trouble.” In addition to the teachers’ lack of adequate historical knowledge to prepare the curriculum, Jennings notes “the devotion of six weeks of more or less intense labor followed by ten months of absence from the task, is an inadequate procedure.” He suggests hiring experienced curriculum writers and inviting them to spend a week at the Newberry to identify sources. For Jennings, the success of the curriculum

⁹⁷ Memo. Swagerty to Trout et al., n.d. CHAI unprocessed, Box 8.

⁹⁸ Memo. Trout to Jennings, May 8, 1977; Handwritten note by Jennings, 1976. CHAI unprocessed, Box 22. The NCSS Collection at the Dolph Briscoe Center at the University of Texas at Austin does not contain programs from the annual meeting for the years 1976 or 1977, so it is difficult to know if Trout’s proposal was accepted or which session she may have attended in 1976.

⁹⁹ Trout to Jennings, May 8, 1977. CHAI unprocessed, Box 8.

¹⁰⁰ Jennings draft report to CHAI Advisory Board, September 2, 1980. CHAI unprocessed, Box 7.

project was a top priority. He writes, “I’d sacrifice the Institute entirely to get the units done if that were required.”¹⁰¹ In April 1979, Trout and Brown decided to separate the development of curriculum materials from the Institute. Instead, Trout would apply for a grant either from the NEH or the U.S. Office of Education and lead a separate CHAI project dedicated to developing curriculum.¹⁰² In August, Trout hired Gerald Boevers and Jacqueline Peterson as curriculum writers for CHAI.¹⁰³

Boevers and Peterson moved the incomplete curriculum along, but time was running out. The initial three-year NEH grant, renewed for five years in 1975, was set to expire in 1980. In early June 1979, Jennings wrote Trout that he was having difficulty getting completed work from curriculum folks, especially those who, like Peterson, were graduate students as well. “I am gravely concerned about the way the curriculum unit project has staggered along for so many years,” he began. Accountability for reporting progress to the NEH left him concerned, he writes, because “so far I do not have a single unit to show for all the thousands of dollars spent on them. If that is still true in September, I shall have to confess that the money has gone down the drain. It will not be a matter for rejoicing.”¹⁰⁴ Jennings’ concern went beyond the long-delayed curriculum. He writes, “I know what it will mean for the Newberry’s reputation (and mine) if we have nothing to show in September except more promises – it will certainly not enhance prospects of future financing.”¹⁰⁵ The 1979 Institute also saw a significant drop in applicants, and Jennings was facing the prospect of writing a narrative for the NEH that showed lackluster

¹⁰¹ Jennings to Trout and Brown, October 4, 1978. CHAI unprocessed, Box 8.

¹⁰² Memos between Trout and Brown, April 5 & 16, 1979. CHAI unprocessed, Box 8.

¹⁰³ Trout to Boevers, Peterson, [dates]. CHAI unprocessed, Box 8.

¹⁰⁴ Jennings to Trout, June 6, 1980. CHAI unprocessed, Box 8.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

performance in both endeavors of the Institute.¹⁰⁶ Rather than face drafting that disappointing narrative the Center chose not to host the program in 1980. Instead, Institute staff spent the summer working on the ongoing curriculum projects and applied for a one-year extension of the NEH grant in order to complete and publish them. “We expect at least six curriculum units to be ready for a publisher by the end of the extension period,” Jennings writes in the 1979-1980 Annual Report.¹⁰⁷

They accomplished the work in three phases. First, historians, anthropologists, and secondary teachers responded to the question “What are the most vital issues in Indian History that should appear in secondary textbooks?” They identified fifteen units.¹⁰⁸ Teachers researched and compiled materials at the Newberry, and then CHAI staff revised the units and added materials to complete teacher manuals and visual aids to accompany them. The shift in labor for producing curriculum units became a new format for the Institute. Offering teachers the opportunity to explore the Newberry’s archives fostered their own Native history education and accomplished the foundational work necessary to construct curriculum units. In addition, teachers knew best what materials would be appropriate for secondary students, a skill that researchers without classroom experience struggled to master. The teachers, however, did not have the time or the skills to write curriculum that was suitable for nationwide distribution, so Trout and her team of curriculum writers performed that portion of the work. Jennings’ report announced three complete units and six additional units that would be completed by August

¹⁰⁶ Memo to Jennings, February 22, 1979. CHAI unprocessed, Box 8. The memo explains that although they received a record number of requests for applications, only five were returned and only three of the applicants were qualified for the Institute.

¹⁰⁷ Annual Report, Semi-Final Draft, 1979-1980, September 24, 1980. CHAI unprocessed, Box 7.

¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately, records from this survey were not among the Summer Institute papers in the CHAI unprocessed collection. It is possible they are housed with papers from Frederick Hoxie’s directorship, and I plan to return to the Newberry to find them.

1981.¹⁰⁹ Of the nine curriculum units that would be ready by August 1981, four focused on wars with Native nations, and two of those were post-Civil War conflicts.¹¹⁰

After the brief hiatus, the Center maintained its commitment to both approaches to addressing the problem of inaccurate Native history in the secondary classroom. As they made plans to restructure the program, Jennings remained committed to both training classroom teachers and producing quality curriculum units to correct faulty textbooks. He reports “Our commitment to public education is fulfilled through summer institutes for high school teachers, and study units now being prepared for national distribution.” The project was, finally moving forward, Jennings writes, and “teachers who interned in former institutes have agreed to test these units in their own classrooms before final revision for the press. Former interns are reshaping courses of study as members of state and local curriculum committees.”¹¹¹ Trout emphasized the importance of facilitating an active network of past participants in order to support participants after they returned to their classrooms.¹¹² The 1982 Summer Institute Narrative, which Trout likely wrote, [emphasizes] the point again. Individual teachers wrestled with crafting the curriculum, she writes, but they also found community with each other in the process. Rather than working alone during the school year, Trout says, “these alumni form a national network dedicated to teaching accurate ethnohistory. In their classrooms across America, they share new ideas and shape new images with thousands of students.”¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ The Annual Report lists units covering Wounded Knee, the Ft. Laramie Treaty of 1868, Tecumseh, and the Black Hawk War. In addition, CHAI planned units on Cosmos and State in the Aztec Empire, pan-Indianism, May and Navajo cosmology, and the Great Lakes region fur trade. The full list of fifteen units the team identified is not with this documentation.

¹¹¹ Jennings to Morris (Mellon), n.d. (c. 1979), Lawrence W. Towner Papers, Newberry Library Archives, Box 37, Folder 1053.

¹¹² CHAI Board Meeting Minutes, September 26, 1981. CHAI unprocessed, Box 1.

¹¹³ “1982 Summer Institute in American Indian History,” n.d., CHAI unprocessed, Box 2.

The network that formed from AID's Summer Workshop series offered participants support as they took the knowledge they gained there away from the close community and sought to apply it in service to their communities, on their campuses, or through activism with groups like the National Indian Youth Council. The Summer Institute teacher interns needed the same kind of support if they were to carry the work on alone on their campuses across the country. Reflecting on the success of the Institute before 1979, Father Peter Powell writes about the effect of the Institute on white teachers. Gerald Boevers' Fort Laramie Treaty unit, Powell writes, is an example of the sort of new understanding the Institute could inspire in non-Native teachers and non-Native students. "Now, for the first time," Powell writes, "his students are hearing both the Sioux and the white interpretations of that treaty."¹¹⁴ In Boevers' classroom, at least, it was no longer possible for his students to assume, as most U.S. history textbooks taught, that conflicts on the Plains after the Civil War erupted because Native people disobeyed the government and the U.S. military was obligated to sweep in and force them to comply.

The Institute's work continued in similar form for the next two decades. In 1983, Frederick Hoxie was named director of the Center, and the Center itself was renamed in honor of D'Arcy McNickle. During his tenure the Center retained the belief that the Institute was a vital part of the effort to correct textbooks, even if the teachers did not produce alternate curriculum during their time at the Newberry. Trout notes in an article in the Center's publication *Meeting Ground* that they have applied for a new NEH grant to "continue the dialogue between scholars and the schools" through continued Summer Institutes and additional regional conferences. "Teachers must insist that the linguistic and visual bias disappear from textbooks and course syllabi," she concludes. Through the work of the Institute and an expanding alumni network for

¹¹⁴ Powell to unnamed, May 18, 1979. Lawrence W. Towner Papers, Newberry Library Archives, Box 37, Folder 1053.

the program, teacher interns were becoming “a nexus for new thinking, teaching, and learning about Native Americans in American History.”¹¹⁵

The Center did not place the responsibility for maintaining dialogue between scholars and teachers on the Institute alone. In 1984, the Center announced a series of conferences on Native history and its impact on teaching U.S. history. Funded through the NEH, the Center hosted the first conference in November 1984. Director Fred Hoxie facilitated presentations from Alvin Josephy, R. David Edmunds, James Axtell, Charles Wilkinson, Alfonso Ortiz, Raymond Fogelson, and Helen Hornbeck Tanner, most of whom had been fellows or scholars in residence if not on Newberry staff during the early Institute years.¹¹⁶ The Center published a series of occasional papers based on the conference, and Hoxie composed *The Indians Versus the Textbooks* in an effort to bring the conversation to national attention among history educators.¹¹⁷

The McNickle Center continued the twin approach for the next twenty years. It pursued publication of curriculum suitable for secondary classrooms as well as research guides designed to assist teachers and administrators as they designed coursework. It also continued to host the Summer Institute for teachers, and Lawana Trout stayed at the helm through the 1990s. The focus remained on correcting textbook narratives about Native history, and the event of the Plains Wars remained a major area of focus for those efforts, both in the teacher training and the Center’s published curriculum. That curriculum sought to place Native history at the center of

¹¹⁵ Trout “1983 Summer Institute in American Indian History,” *Meeting Ground* (Spring 1984), 6-7. Dorothy R. Parker Papers, Box 3, Folder 28.

¹¹⁶ Conference Program “The Impact of Indian History on the Teaching of United States History,” November 1-3, 1984. Newberry Library Archives, The Newberry Library, Chicago, Lawrence W. Towner Papers, 1948-1989, Series 2, Box 37, Folder 1053.

¹¹⁷ Conducting his own small sample textbook survey, Hoxie attributes the intransigence of anti-Native textbook narratives in part to the inability of authors to spin the narrative of dispossession “to fit the upbeat format of their books,” and perhaps in greater part the “chauvinistic nostalgia” authors exhibit by ignoring recent scholarship in favor of their own “cherished preconceptions.” Frederick E. Hoxie *The Indians Versus the Textbooks: Is There Any Way Out?* Occasional Papers in Curriculum Series, no. 1 (Chicago: Newberry Library D’Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian History, 1984), 5.

the narrative of U.S. history. It is unclear from the documentation why the Center did not attempt to change the textbooks themselves. Whether the Center was unable to convince major textbook publishers to change their Native history narratives, uninterested in writing a U.S. history survey textbook, or dedicated to building its own reputation as a publisher, the curriculum wing of the Institute for Indian History did not focus on major textbook publishing. Instead, it continued to produce curriculum units focused on singular events, issues, or people groups in Native history.

In her 1982 *NCSS Bulletin* article, Trout chose to highlight Gerald Boevers' curriculum unit on the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty. Due to the preponderance of writing about the conflict, central to that unit is a reevaluation of the Battle of the Greasy Grass, where "Sifting through rich piles of fact and fiction, students may collect evidence for a trial centering on the actions of Reno, Benteen, and Custer."¹¹⁸ For over a century, U.S. history textbooks presented the Plains Wars, and especially the Battle of the Greasy Grass, as a critical moment in the formation of rugged American identity. Trout subverts that teaching, instead linking Boevers' Fort Laramie unit to another curriculum unit the Center had to offer, a literature unit exploring Native memoir called "I Am History." Taken together, Trout writes, these units have the power to dismantle the false framing of U.S. history and the anti-Native prejudice it builds in students' minds that sets Native people and their history apart from the story of the United States.

Students have seen that legal words are pressed into service in battles over land in the "Laramie" study and that biased words carry racial scars in the "Image" analysis. Words create a common bond between Native American and other ethnic experiences as classes read and discuss vivid passage from Native

¹¹⁸ Trout *NCSS Bulletin*, 108.

American autobiographies and then write about similar feelings and happenings in their lives.¹¹⁹

With the textbook narratives calcified around the myth of heroic westward expansion, and social studies educators intent on pedagogy and social construction at the expense of content, Trout and her collaborators bypassed impossible battle of the textbook publication process altogether and designed teacher training and curriculum units that could exploit those same oppositional forces and enable teachers to disrupt damaging textbook history narratives in the classroom.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

Conclusion

On August 19, 1965 educators and scholars Rupert Costo (Cahuilla), Al Hicks (Navajo), Jeannette Henry (Cherokee), and Martina Costo (Cahuilla) appeared before the California State Curriculum Commission to present the findings of a textbook survey conducted by the American Indian Historical Society. Examining over 300 textbooks, the Society determined that the portrayal of Native people and their history in U.S. history textbooks at all levels was unacceptable. “Our examination discloses that not one book is free from error as to the role of the Indian in state and national history,” the authors declare. The problem is not merely one of factual error, they continue. Errors are common, and “a person also has the right to be wrong. But a textbook has no right to be wrong, or to lie, hide the truth, or insult and malign a whole race of people. That is what these textbooks do.”¹ Their 1970 study, which they published after it became clear that the Commission would not adopt their recommended criteria, argued that the matter of correcting these textbook errors was urgent. “The student,” study authors write, “has no choice; he is compelled to study from the approved book.”² These books, riddled with errors, endangered all students’ minds the study continues, and especially the minds of Native students subjected to their own history’s belittlement and erasure. Citing the Grand Council Fire of American Indians’ efforts to correct textbook narratives in 1927, the survey reports that Native scholars and activists continue to push to change these inaccurate narratives forty years later.

Writing a decade after *Textbooks and the American Indian*, CHAI Institute director Lawana Trout notes that despite efforts by textbook publishers to improve textbook coverage of Native history and people, little has substantially changed in their pages. “The textbooks of the

¹ Rupert Costo and Jeannette Henry, eds. *Textbooks and the American Indian*. (San Francisco: Indian Historian Press, Inc., 1970), 7.

² *Ibid.*, 11.

1980s have a new look,” Trout writes. “There are photographs of Red Cloud and Sitting Bull along with quotes from Black Hawk and Crazy Horse, but the revisions are cosmetic. Catlin’s portraits and Curtis’ photographs appear, but where are illustrations from fine Native American artists such as Mopope and Tiger?”³ Despite adding information about Native historical figures and removing pejorative descriptions of Native people, U.S. history textbooks did not adjust the errors in their narrative framing of the events of Native history. Therefore their textbooks continue to perpetuate inaccurate histories of encounters in Native America, distort the history of the formation of the United States, and perpetuate anti-Native prejudice in public memory.

Textbooks incorrectly present U.S. history as the story of settler-colonists from Europe establishing the nation-state of the United States of America in a wilderness dotted by a few primitive village societies. Native history as presented in U.S. history textbooks from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century is marginal to the main storyline of U.S. history, despite the fact that, as historian Richard White noted at a conference on the impact of Native history on teaching U.S. history in schools, Native history is the context in which U.S. history occurs. “Context, as in all history, is the critical issue here,” White writes, not the level of influence Native history exerted on “mainstream culture.” Native history is not important because there are traces of its residue in white American culture today, rather “what matters is that Indian peoples have created and continue to help create the context in which significant events and ideas arise. There is thus no real study of American history without them.”⁴ A course that claims to teach U.S. history without Native history is simply not teaching U.S. history. And yet, in pursuit of

³ Lawana Trout. “Native American History: New Images and Ideas,” *NCSS Bulletin* No. 67 (1982), 104.

⁴ Richard White “Response to Raymond D. Fogelson,” *The Impact of Indian History on the Teaching of United States History* Chicago Conference 1984, Sessions V-VI. No. 3 *Occasional Papers in Curriculum Series* The Newberry Library D’Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian History (Chicago: Newberry Library, 1984), 100.

American exceptionalism and valorized westward expansion, too many courses and their textbooks erase Native history.

It was no accident that textbooks erased the Native history context from U.S. history narratives. That erasure was a consequence of constructions of white innocence, a trend that has its roots in the earliest conflicts between Native people and white settlers.⁵ That trend accelerated in the aftermath of the Civil War, bolstered by the profit-driven frontier press, expansion-minded U.S. politicians, and an anxious white public eager to rewrite American identity in the wake of the war that nearly destroyed the nation. As Indian war veterans and their widows, Native leaders and reformers, and early western historians all struggled for income, remembrance, and survival after the last Plains Wars concluded, they struggled in over the meaning of those wars for the American public in print, on stage, and in Congress. Some, like John W. Redington, made their Plains Wars valor their stock and trade, embedding their ultra-patriotized experiences in the historiography of the battles they fought through their correspondence with historians eager for primary sources. Some, like Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt, embodied white expectations of them and played the role of Native celebrities in order to direct public sympathies to press Congress for their peoples' needs. And some, like Viola Ransom Wood, dedicated their lives to linking the genocidal violence of the Plains Wars to the survival of the United States. Markets of memorabilia, the rise of mass entertainment culture, and the professionalization of history all coincided in the late nineteenth century to set the triumphalist narrative of the Plains Wars in public memory.

⁵ Jill Lepore explored the construction of white innocence that sprang from King Philip's War, 1675-1678 in *The Name of War* (New York: Alfred P. Knopf, 1998). She claims white efforts to preserve memory of the war was an attempt to rewrite the violence they committed in its course in an attempt to establish their British identity in the Americas as something other than Spanish or Native identity, which they linked to violence. "Here, then, was the solution to the colonists' dilemma between peacefully degenerating into barbarians or fighting like savages: wage the war, and win it, by whatever means necessary, and then write about it, to win it again. The first would be a victory of wounds, the second a victory of words." (11)

At the same time, public schooling expanded rapidly, and the new challenges educators faced at the turn of the century provided the perfect opportunity to adopt that triumphalist narrative uncritically. At the height of the assimilationist theory of federal Indian policy and facing the challenge of incorporating enormous numbers of immigrants into American culture, schools saw the goal of U.S. history education as providing students a framework for adopting American identity in order to forge a social order that could absorb people from across the world into one harmonious whole. U.S. history textbook authors, many of them historians engaged in ideas like Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis, wrote secondary textbooks that cast the full history of the United States as a frontier experience, naming the Plains Wars the ultimate and final triumph of manifest destiny in which the continent became America and Native peoples and cultures vanished. Events of the twentieth century that stirred public anxiety over the social order exacerbated emphasis on these narratives. As Sarah Shear et. al. note in their study of Native representation in state content standards, "supporters of a more conservative view of American history work to silence minority experiences and historical narratives that do not support a united American master narrative."⁶ Even in periods of history when educators and activists correctly identified the inaccuracies of the settler-colonial narrative of U.S. history, concerns for a unified narrative that instilled a sense of common identity and patriotic duty in students maintained the narrative framing that incorrectly casts Native history as marginal to the history of the United States.

The commendable efforts of social studies educators in the twentieth century, especially in response to the events of the Civil Rights Movement, to restructure secondary history

⁶Sarah B. Shear, Ryan T. Knowles, Gregory J. Soden & Antonio J. Castro. "Manifesting Destiny: Re/presentations of Indigenous Peoples in K-12 U.S. History Standards." *Theory and Research in Social Education*. Vol. 43 no. 1, 69. doi: 10.1080/00933104.2014.99949 Accessed November 20, 2015.

curriculum to meet the challenges racism posed to American society and encourage students to adopt more expansive views of American identity fell short when it came to Native history. They failed to address the foundational inaccuracies that upheld the version of American identity taught in schools. Groups like the NCSS and reformers like Rugg, Hanna, and Fenton created curriculum designed to promote multiculturalism, but that curriculum failed to dismantle the establishment of whiteness as normative, especially in the case of Native history and cultural practice. As education professor Tyrone C. Howard writes, "... the comparison of any particular group to White students, consciously and subconsciously creates the notion of White performance and achievement as being the desired norm or standard against which all other groups are measured."⁷ The narratives of U.S. history, presented in textbooks and now mandated by state curriculum content standards through high stakes standardized testing, frame the entire history of the United States around the establishment and expansion of white America. Any attempt to introduce a multicultural approach to U.S. history instruction that does not begin with dismantling that basic narrative historical framework cannot succeed. A program promoting multiculturalism, highlighting contributions of members of racial and ethnic minority groups and encouraging explorations of "other" groups' contributions to American society is fatally flawed from the outset, because it necessarily characterizes non-white individuals and groups as "other" to American identity.

Instead Howard argues that educators should bring critical race theory to curriculum design, a theory that examines the ways in which power structures reflect historical racism in their construction and continue to perpetuate power disparity along racial lines. In education, Howard writes, "critical race theory presupposes the historical and contemporary role that racism

⁷ Tyrone C. Howard. *Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap in America's Classrooms*. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010), 6.

plays and has played in education, and asks a more penetrating question [than multicultural education or achievement gap theory]: “How has racism contributed to educational disparities, and how can it be dismantled?””⁸ One crucial answer to that question in the U.S. history classroom is the historical construction and perpetuation of U.S. history narratives that instruct all students to think of Native history as a natural world backdrop for the story of European colonization, unchanging as North America’s geography before white people arrive and the “real” story of America begins, and then as a periodic obstacle to the formation of the modern American state and society. No education reform effort, from multiculturalism to anti-racism to applied critical race theory will sufficiently overturn normative whiteness and prevent the continual remaking of anti-Native prejudice through history curriculum if it does not compel curriculum designers and textbook authors to reconsider textbook Native history narratives.

That necessary reconsideration faces greater hurdles today than it did in the past. Popular sentiment in the northern Plains states was enough to convince Rueben Post Halleck that “we shall have to make room for Custer” in his textbook in 1924, but now that popular sentiment has been encoded in legislation through state-mandated content standards for history curriculum. The Constitution leaves legislative efforts to determine curriculum content to the states, and for most of the twentieth century, state governments were content to enact legislation stipulating criteria for textbook adoption. When No Child Left Behind became law in 2001, however, it tied federal education funding to standardized test scores, prompting state legislatures to focus on designing NCLB-approved state content standards, and forcing textbook publishers to ensure that their textbooks aligned with those standards in order to remain marketable. It is no longer a matter of convincing textbook publishers to alter their textbook content. After NCLB fundamentally

⁸ Howard, 99.

altered the relationship between federal government funding and standardized tests based on federally-approved state content standards, the legislation mandating those content standards must change before textbook content will.⁹

The task would not be impossible. In the comprehensive study of non-Native attitudes toward Native peoples Reclaiming Native Truth, Echo Hawk Consulting and First Nations Development Institute found that when asked “Do you believe it is necessary or unnecessary that we make significant changes to school curriculum on Native American history and culture?” 72% of respondents replied that it was necessary. Respondents often expressed “disappointment or anger that what they were taught was so sparse or misleading.”¹⁰ While the prospect of significantly changing fifty separate state content standards through fifty separate state legislatures with their own processes and unique political cultures is a herculean task at best, and while there is no guarantee that historical framing that accurately teaches the U.S. as an invasive colonizing society that continues a military-backed occupation on Native land in violation of its own treaty agreements with Native nations would find the same level of support exhibited in this poll, the poll results indicate that there is significant public will to at least begin conversations about a path forward. That opportunity should not be wasted. Too much is at stake for Native and non-Native students alike.

Otoe-Missouri activist and educator Della Warrior offers a compelling argument for what is at stake in these prejudice-producing, inaccurate historical narratives. In 2006, Della Warrior gave an address at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, offering her reflections on decades of

⁹ Although NCLB was rewritten during the Obama administration, the legislative program that replaced it, Race to the Top, merely changed the model from one that penalized low-performing schools by revoking funding to one that rewarded schools that showed improvement through increased funding. Although it is less draconian than NCLB, the current formula still rests almost entirely on student performance on state-standards-aligned standardized tests.

¹⁰ “Research Findings: Compilation of All Research,” *Reclaiming Native Truth: A Project to Dispel America’s Myths and Misconceptions*. June 2018, 13. <https://rnt.firstnations.org/research/> Accessed July 6, 2018.

activism at the intersection of Native rights, education and the arts. She and her late husband, Clyde Warrior, had been early leaders of the youth movement that became Red Power, and it was their attendance at the Workshop on American Indian Affairs in the summer of 1963 that set them on that path of activism. “That summer, I met thirty-five other Indian college students for the first time, and for the first time I became proud of who I am as an Indian person,” Warrior recalled.¹¹ Their time at the Workshop lit a fire as they learned the ways in which federal policy and systemic anti-Native prejudice were at the root of the problems facing Native people in the United States. The realization that challenges like high dropout rates, poverty, and the rest were not caused by their identity as Native people, but rather the result of generations of white supremacy enacted as policy led participants to seek the training they needed to help their communities overcome those challenges. For Warrior, she told her audience that April day, addressing anti-Native bias in education was a vital part of that effort. “Everyone has seen it on television, all the stereotypes of war-whooping, backward Indians,” she told the audience. “It is so detrimental to the way Indian children perceive themselves, because they come to realize that the general society still sees them as savages. Yet we are living here today. We did not die, despite all the wars waged to kill us. We are still here.”¹²

For the most part history textbooks erased descriptions of Native people as “war-whooping, backward Indians” decades ago, replacing them with biographical sketches of Native leaders and recognition of rich Native cultural heritage. Yet the narrative structure of U.S. history textbooks still promotes a vision of settler progress triumphing over Native primitiveness, however much they might admit culpability for the manner in which “civilization” advanced. In

¹¹ Della C. Warrior. “Conclusion: Education, Art, and Activism,” *Beyond Red Power: American Indian Politics and Activism since 1900*. Daniel M. Cobb and Loretta Fowler, eds (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007), 296.

¹² *Ibid.*, 298.

popular culture and American public memory, the “war-whooping Indians” images are pervasive, from sports mascots to television and film. AMC’s *Hell on Wheels*, a historical drama centered on the building of the transcontinental railroad in the 1860s aired a series of episodes in 2014 in which a lead character is so corrupted by Comanche people after they discover him injured from a bear attack that when he returns to Hell on Wheels, he has become so dehumanized that his friend is forced to kill him.¹³ Joel and Ethan Coen’s 2018 *The Ballad of Buster Scruggs* leans into the classic mid-century image of the bloodthirsty Native menace on the frontier in the two vignettes in which they appear.¹⁴ It may be that the portrayal is meant to be an indictment on old attitudes, but instead it reifies these images.

In the 2010s, American society continues to struggle over the issue of Native mascots, despite research that clearly demonstrates the damaging effects these pop culture portrayals have on Native people, especially children.¹⁵ To understand the cumulative effect of these depictions on white attitudes about Native people, it is only necessary to look at the incident that took place on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in early 2019 between a group of white male students from Covington Catholic High School and Omaha elder Nathan Phillips. The group of predominately

¹³ In the episode, Comanche people are presented as an otherworldly group whose brutal violence is a common means of communication. Although Elam Ferguson’s injuries from the bear attack are verbally blamed for his changed behavior, sequences of Comanche ceremony are presented as if they are shaping his increasingly animalistic behavior. The depth of his corruption is revealed when he, a black former slave, returns to town and attempts to sell two white women as slaves. While it is true that the Comanche practiced captivity and enslavement during this time period, with one exception the series presents Native people as violent threats who cannot be reasoned with. That exception, Joseph Black Moon, is a Cheyenne convert who eventually realizes after fasting and praying in “the wilderness” that because he is Cheyenne at heart he cannot avoid violence and leaves Hell on Wheels.

¹⁴ The film is a collection of six short films all set in an American West that resembles its appearance in dime novels and the golden age of Hollywood. Native people only appear in two of these films, though a trapper mentions marrying a Native woman in a third. In the first, “Near Algodones,” Comanche warriors appear out of nowhere, kill a sheriff and his posse, then leave a criminal to hang after laughing at him. In the second, “The Gal Who Got Rattled,” unidentified Plains warriors attack two members of a wagon train, provoking the suicide of a young woman afraid of being raped and murdered by them.

¹⁵ “Summary of the APA Resolution Recommending Retirement of American Indian Mascots,” American Psychological Association. <https://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/indian-mascots>. Accessed March 24, 2019.

white students, waiting for their bus, engaged in a verbal confrontation with a group of Black Hebrew Israelites nearby, just where the Indigenous Peoples' March was ending. Phillips, at the urging of youth he was mentoring, tried to intervene, walking between the groups and singing a prayer with his drum in an attempt to deescalate the situation and prevent physical violence from breaking out between the two groups. Confused, the white students surrounded Phillips instead, and one student, Nick Sandmann, planted himself in front of Phillips and attempted to stare the elder down while smirking. Phillips kept praying while the white students mocked him, yelled goading encouragement to Sandmann, and performed the 'tomahawk chop.' Eventually the students' bus arrived and they dispersed.

The incident provoked intense media fallout for a number of reasons, but the narrative favoring the white students reveals the hold that images of "war-whooping backward Indians" still has on the non-Native public.¹⁶ White observers and pundits interpreted Phillips' peaceful prayer as an act of aggression, as pop culture and U.S. history courses have long trained them to do. The creation of a narrative of white innocence was similar in many ways to the news media narratives surrounding South Dakota's militarized confrontation with water protectors at Standing Rock over construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline in 2015. There, as in the Covington incident, white reporters and pundits referenced stereotypes evoking inherent Native violence, even when reporting incidents in which water protectors did nothing more than pray in front of construction equipment.¹⁷ Well over a century of Hollywood Indians, sports mascots,

¹⁶ A full analysis of the incident is far too complicated to include here, but the heated political climate surrounding the March for Life, which the students had attended, as well as heightened tensions provoked by the president's mockery of Senator Elizabeth Warren's claims to Cherokee heritage and the Senator's mishandled rebuttal of them served as a metanarrative for the entire conflict. The students were wearing MAGA hats. For more, see [links].

¹⁷ "Police Attacked Standing Rock Activists for Hours: Why Are They Calling It a Riot?" *The Nation* November 25, 2016. <https://www.thenation.com/article/police-attacked-standing-rock-activists-for-hours-why-are-they-calling-it-a-riot/> Accessed March 25, 2019.

dime novels, and wild west shows have primed non-Native eyes and ears to see war dances and hear war drums when Native people dance and sing their prayers.

It would be an exaggeration to say that the narratives of the Plains Wars in U.S. history textbooks created these expectations, but it would be inaccurate to say those narratives had no part in those expectations' formation. In one video of the Covington incident, a student from another high school with the group yells "Land gets stolen. That's how it works. It's the way of the world."¹⁸ The white students reacted just as they had been instructed, vaguely citing facts they memorized for U.S. history exams, the 'facts' themselves dim echoes of frontier newspaper editorials from the late nineteenth century. As Ray Billington writes in his study of history textbook bias in 1966, "Historical distortions are passed on from generation to generation, from teacher to pupil, from textbook author to textbook author at all educational levels. This frailty perpetuates nationalistic bias, for the folklore of every nation glorifies its own heroes and degrades its enemies."¹⁹ Early western historians' relationships with Indian war veterans, and textbook authors' desire to present an exciting, unified narrative of U.S. history that communicates shared American identity shaped Plains Wars narratives in early textbooks, teaching students that Native people were obstacles to American progress rather than creators and shapers of the entire context of United States history. As those narratives were transplanted into later books, their structure remained intact, their message to students relatively unchanged. The students from Covington Catholic High School offered proof when they responded to

¹⁸ "MAGA kids "Land gets stolen." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iiXIQrGIPtw> Accessed January 21, 2019.

¹⁹ Billington, 5-6.

Phillips' prayers with laughter and the demeaning tomahawk chop, and in white adults' defense of the students' actions as "just doing a sports cheer."²⁰

U.S. history textbooks alone did not create the misunderstanding that led to that moment, but it is the duty of their authors to ensure that they intervene to correct it. Della Warrior told audiences in 2006 "the general society still sees them as savages." The textbooks, for all their updated language, continue to train students in that view. It is the misframed narratives of the Plains Wars that most directly reify these stereotypes, and it is in correcting these narratives that educators have the greatest power to disrupt the cyclical re-making of anti-Native prejudice through U.S. history education. Because the Plains Wars are first significantly addressed in secondary school curriculum, the most effective means of using the education system to correct these prejudices would be to subvert the curriculum that embeds them into students' understanding of U.S. history as a whole. It is not enough for textbooks to offer special inset boxes of information about ethnic and racial minorities. The narratives of the textbooks must present an honest history, one that does not alienate groups of students by relegating their history to sidebars and privilege others by making theirs the main text.

Convincing stakeholders to correct them, however, is likely to meet staunch resistance. The narratives serve as bedrock myths of American identity and changing them in curriculum designed to forge that identity in each new generation of students necessitates reexamining that identity itself. Amid all the myriad reasons why the Plains Wars narratives have remained in textbooks in their inaccurate form, the fact that American identity rests on their heroic mythos presents the greatest barrier to correcting them. As Frederick Hoxie writes, "It is easier to add a

²⁰ "The History of the Covington MAGA Teens' Racist 'Tomahawk Chop'" *The Daily Beast* <https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-history-of-the-covington-maga-teens-racist-tomahawk-chop> Accessed March 25, 2019.

brief biography of Geronimo to a chapter on the West than to surrender our self-image as tamers of the wilderness or settlers in a virgin land.”²¹ The old narrative of westward expansion should be replaced by newer narratives crafted by Native scholars, resetting the U.S. history timeline in the context of Native history. The work of non-Native scholars and educators must be to dismantle the current, anti-Native narrative, to offer evidence-based arguments for rejecting it, and to call for a Native-authored narrative framework that offers all students, Native and non-Native alike, the opportunity to study the American past accurately, and to reconcile with it.

²¹ Hoxie, *Indians Versus the Textbooks*, 5.

APPENDIX

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