Rough Forms:
Autobiographical Interventions in the U.S. West, 1835-1935

By
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Rough Forms:
Autobiographical Interventions in the U.S. West, 1835-1935

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Abstract

*Rough Forms* analyzes U.S. Western autobiographies from 1835 to 1935, focusing especially on ways that Native and non-Native authors complicate settler-colonial narratives. In doing so, my project deeply engages with two interrelated questions: “What kinds of stories does the settler tell?” (to quote Alan Lawson) and “What kinds of stories does society tell about the settler?” Settler-colonial theory describes the process through which settlers physically and narratively displace Native peoples. Scholars such as Alan Lawson and Margaret Jacobs typically use this theory to demonstrate how Anglophone authors and historical figures ignore or erase Native traditions. Over an introduction and four chapters, I prove that settler-colonial theory applies to a range of autobiographical texts, including works by Jotham Meeker (a Euro-American missionary and diarist), George Bent (a Southern Cheyenne warrior-writer), Robert and Daisy Anderson (African American homesteaders and self-publishers), and Alice Gossage (a Euro-American newspaperwoman and diarist). The dynamic local figures that I study share networks with and often respond directly to better known American authors such as Charles Eastman, Booker T. Washington, and Hamlin Garland, but scholars have not yet considered their writings together in order to deepen our literary history of the U.S. West. By linking traditional settler narratives, efforts to recover Native agency, defenses of women’s rights and writing, and studies of alphabetic, visual, material, and spatial literacies, *Rough Forms* crucially reframes U.S. Western autobiographical texts as dynamic sites of cultural and textual exchange whose authors uniquely establish and/or complicate regional belonging. Far from being merely of local interest, their dynamic intercultural and multiformal texts greatly increase our understanding of nineteenth- and early-twentieth century American literary studies by critiquing settler-colonial erasure and providing vibrant archives of resistance rarely seen in more canonical works.
Acknowledgments

I could fill a whole dissertation with gratitude for my truly incredible network of family, friends, and mentors. I couldn’t have managed this project alone, and I’m thrilled for the chance to share how much everyone means to me and how deeply they have shaped my life and work.

First, I would like to give a million thanks to my parents, Kevin and Deana Brown, for their unwavering assistance and support (especially over the past five years of doctoral studies!). In addition to inspiring me to persevere and pursue my dreams, my parents have also generously contributed photographs of locations and artifacts I could not access, helped me gather resources from out-of-state libraries, lent me their own books on women’s writing and the U.S. West, cared for my dog while I embarked on research trips and presented at conferences, and proofread parts of Rough Forms. It’s been a joy to connect with them through this project, and I have so greatly appreciated all that my parents have done. They’ve gone above and beyond, and I am delighted that Rough Forms honors their own deep love for, knowledge of, and ties to the U.S. West.

Many thanks as well to Jennifer Brown, my younger sister, who kindly let me use her beautiful Pea Ridge, Arkansas, photographs in the second appendix, and to Angela Cloud, my youngest sister, who has always believed in me. They’re both strong, intelligent, creative, hard-working, and talented. I’m immensely proud of them, and I’m also extremely grateful for their advice and optimism. To my whole family: I love you, and I’m super thankful for everything!

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appreciate all he has done to make this academic marathon successful. Thanks for being terrific, Matt, and I look forward to many more historical and outdoor adventures!

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Baby Brown in the Black Hills

Outside my family, I am deeply indebted to an amazing group of friends who have all provided comfort, advice, good memories, and encouragement throughout this academic journey. Joy Allen Polson, friend and neighbor, has been such a gift. Not only do we watch the Bachelor
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his support while on the job market; thanks to Randall’s efforts, I have become a more confident
scholar and job candidate. Misty has also profoundly influenced me by kindly offering some of
the most specific and thorough feedback I have ever received, ultimately pushing me to become
a more reflective and attentive writer and scholar. I will carry all that Misty has taught me into
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forward to seeing where the scholarship they’ve helped me accomplish so far goes from here.

As my acknowledgements draw to a close, I would like to share my immense gratitude
for travel and research support; my project is much more vibrant and well-researched because of the generous awards I have received at KU. Many thanks in particular for the invaluable support of the William Albrecht Memorial Scholarship (KU English Department), the Graduate Summer Research Award (KU Hall Center for the Humanities), the Graduate Student and Post-Doctoral Writing Incentive Fund Award (KU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences), and the Jim Martin Travel Award in the Humanities (KU Hall Center for the Humanities).

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Dedication

For my family—Deana, Kevin, Jennifer, Angela, and Baby.

In memory of my grandpas—James and Donald.
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Introduction

The “settler, it increasingly seems to me, is above all a teller of tales, or more crucially a self-narrating subject. It is in narrative that settler subjectivity calls itself into being and it is in narrative that it can be located.” Alan Lawson, “The Anxious Proximities of Settler (Post)colonial Relations” (2004)

Kit Carson and the “Objectionable Figure”: Uncovering Settler-Colonial Revision

At the intersection of West Colfax Avenue and North Broadway in downtown Denver—and cattycorner to the Colorado State Capitol Building—stands Pioneer Monument, a 1911 granite and bronze tribute to Euro-American settlers (see Figure 1). Crowning the monument is a statue of Christopher “Kit” Carson, a “trapper, a guide, a hunter, a mountain man, a frontiersman” (Remley xxvi). Carson’s legacy is complicated. Historian Nolie Mumey asserts in “The Pioneer Fountain-Monument” (1955), for instance, that “[n]o other person could have portrayed the pioneer spirit more than this famous man of the West whose life was full of adventure, and

Figure 1. Pioneer Monument. Author’s personal image.
whose services to the Indians and white settlers were of inestimable value” (9). Contemporary historians and biographers like David Remley, however, acknowledge that to some observers, particularly the Navajo, Kit Carson was “just a killer, even genocidal” (xxvi). Indeed, Kit Carson’s statue cradles a rifle, and Pioneer Monument’s three other Euro-American figures (a “pioneer mother,” a “trapper,” and a “miner”) are armed: the “mother” and “trapper” each hold rifles, and the “miner” sports a holstered revolver. While Mumey asserts that Pioneer Monument celebrates “human endeavor,” I propose that its armed figures reinforce a not-so-subtle narrative of white settlement underwritten by violent acts (1).

Pioneer Monument’s development further signals erasure and revision—two key features of narratives circulated in settler societies. Kit Carson was not originally included on Pioneer Monument. Poet Simon J. Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo) offers an even more pointed critique in from Sand Creek (1981), writing, “Colonel Chivington was a moral man, believed he was made in the image of God, and he carried out the orders of his nation’s law; Kit Carson didn’t mind stealing and killing either” (52). According to History Colorado’s “Zoom In: The Centennial State in 100 Objects” exhibit, while Carson “maintained friendly relationships with some tribes, he also participated in US Army actions against American Indian populations. From 1863 to 1864 he led the brutal campaign to remove the Navajo from their homeland.” Throughout my dissertation, I will refer to “settlers” rather than “pioneers” (except when quoting from texts). The term “pioneer” often evokes a romanticized image associated with being “first” in a region—especially when used to describe Euro-American settlers in the U.S. West; Jesse Brown and A. M. Willard’s Black Hills Trails (1924), for instance, overtly celebrates the “spirit of pioneer comradeship” in “the last quarter of the 19th century, a time when the Hills were truly western and still under the spell of frontier enchantment” (11, 10). Since Euro-American “pioneers” were often not the first residents in the regions they occupied, I will follow settler-colonial theory’s practice of referring to such individuals as “settlers.” As settler-colonial theorist Lorenzo Veracini explains, “Settlers are founders of political orders and carry their sovereignty with them” (3). The term “settlers,” I argue, also significantly differs from “pioneers” by more overtly tying settlers to colonial occupation, a less romanticized view.

“Frontier” is a similarly vexed term. Margaret Jacobs, for example, perceives the U.S. West “as both an ever-moving frontier at the outer limits of American colonization efforts and as a fixed place west of the Mississippi River” (12). To root my work in a “fixed place” rather than an Anglo-centric settlement process (i.e. “new” spaces to Euro-Americans on the “frontier” were familiar, often ancestral, to Native inhabitants), I will refer to the five contiguous states discussed in this dissertation as the “U.S. West” (except when quoting from sources).

Margaret Jacobs notes in White Mother to a Dark Race (2009), for instance, that the “colonial histories of the places I inhabited were buried and obscured” when she was a child (1).

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1 Poet Simon J. Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo) offers an even more pointed critique in from Sand Creek (1981), writing, “Colonel Chivington was a moral man, believed he was made in the image of God, and he carried out the orders of his nation’s law; Kit Carson didn’t mind stealing and killing either” (52). According to History Colorado’s “Zoom In: The Centennial State in 100 Objects” exhibit, while Carson “maintained friendly relationships with some tribes, he also participated in US Army actions against American Indian populations. From 1863 to 1864 he led the brutal campaign to remove the Navajo from their homeland.”

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3 Margaret Jacobs notes in White Mother to a Dark Race (2009), for instance, that the “colonial histories of the places I inhabited were buried and obscured” when she was a child (1).
Monument. Instead, Parisian sculptor Frederick William MacMonnies’s 1907 design called for crowning Pioneer Monument with a statue of a mounted Native warrior (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Pioneer Fountain. Image courtesy of the Denver Public Library.

In my dissertation, I will use “American Indian” (as a noun) and “Native” (as an adjective) when referring to non-tribally specific (unknown or collective) individuals who are Indigenous to what has become the United States. Whenever possible, I will use tribally specific names. Settler colonialism, which theorizes more broadly on the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and other settler-colonial nations, frequently employs “Indigenous” to describe individuals who occupy lands prior to European settlement. I will follow suit when incorporating perspectives from settler-colonial theorists who do not specifically refer to peoples Native to the United States.
While MacMonnies’s artwork privileges Euro-American presence (only white, well-dressed Victorian figures view the monument)—and although a June 10, 1909, Denver Times article alleges that MacMonnies’ “Indian was to typify surrender . . . a pathetic last look at the vast territory over which he and his forbears had been supreme for so many centuries”—Denver pioneers vigorously protested Pioneer Monument’s American Indian.⁵ A Denver pamphlet titled “The Pioneer Monument” (1910) explains that “as is not unnatural in a public work, criticism arose over the Indian crowning Mr. MacMonnies’ design for the monument . . . in August, 1907, Mr. MacMonnies made the journey from Paris to Denver to personally learn conditions existing. He decided to bow to apparent sentiment, and replace the objectionable figure.”⁶ Debate then ensued about where to place MacMonnies’s “objectionable” warrior; one possibility, according to the Denver Times article, was to create “a colossal bronze statue of an Indian at the entrance of New York harbor, and of proportions similar to that of the Bartholdi figure of ‘Liberty Enlightening the World.’” The statue—far removed from the contested U.S. West—would “atone for conquest.” This plan, which “Rodman Wanamaker, General Miles, Buffalo Bill and other notable characters” hatched, clearly did not come to fruition; the Statue of Liberty (also of French design) stands alone.⁷ Colorado’s outcry and subsequent removal of Pioneer Monument’s

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⁵ I have difficulty seeing “surrender” or a “pathetic” figure in this painting; the warrior appears triumphant and towers over the Euro-American figures below him. While the other statues (and white observers) are static, he and his horse are in motion. A May 29, 1909, Denver Municipal Facts article seems to support my interpretation, calling the American Indian a “heroic figure” who appears alongside statues who are “typical of the pioneer spirit” (7).

⁶ Although the pamphlet likely intended to convey that general debate over public works is “not unnatural,” its syntax seems to normalize controversies specifically about “Indian” figures.

⁷ Records of “MacMonnies’ Indian” end with the 1909 Denver Times article; it appears that the Colorado public, once confident that a Euro-American hero would top the monument, lost interest in the Native statue. As a brief
Native figure speaks volumes about the stories and images of Euro-American settlement memorialized at the turn of the last century. Pioneer Monument’s history proves that the most visible and accessible narratives (in this case, a testament to Euro-American triumph and ubiquity in the U.S. West) do not always offer the most complete records.

My dissertation intervenes in such revisionist narratives (both visual and textual) by studying a unique cross-section of autobiographical writing from Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and South Dakota—including texts by American Indian, African American, and Euro-American writers. Placing works that reflect major ethnic backgrounds in conversation with one another demonstrates that locally circulated life writing from the heart of the region designated as Indian Territory from 1834 to 1854 deeply complicates settler-colonial narratives. These complex yet understudied texts, which include Jotham Meeker’s diary (1835-1855), George Bent’s “Forty Years with the Cheyennes” (1905-06), Robert and Daisy Anderson’s From Slavery to Affluence (1927, 1967, 1986, 1995, and 1997), and Alice Gossage’s Azalia: A Brave Girl’s Ambition (1879) and Holiday Greetings from Rapid City (1915 and 1920), enhance our current understanding of turn-of-the-century American literature by critiquing settler-colonial endeavors, privileging regional history, preserving multiethnic views and experiences, and advocating for women’s rights. Far from being merely of local interest, Meeker, Bent, the Andersons, and Gossage intersect with better-known writers such as Hamlin Garland, Booker T.

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*st ylistic note, when using “settler-colonial” as an adjective throughout my dissertation, I will hyphenate; as a noun, no hyphens will appear.

8 This project is by no means comprehensive; other backgrounds that deserve study include Hispanic, Asian-American, and international immigrants, among others.
Washington, and Charles Eastman—important connections that literary scholars have not yet fully explored. Together, their texts help establish the turn-of-the-century U.S. West as a diversely occupied geographic and literary space whose self-narrating authors transcend rhetorical modes, geographic and temporal borders, and the margins between individuals and their communities.

*Kit Carson’s Coat: Tracing Settler-Colonial Inheritance*

Settler-colonial stories “endure” through familial and regional inheritance (Jacobs 4).⁹

According to a June 25, 1911, *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver) article about Pioneer Monument’s unveiling, for instance, the “cord releasing the folds of national colors from the heroic equestrian statue of Kit Carson was drawn by his granddaughter, Miss Leona Wood, 16 years old, of La Junta, Colorado.”¹⁰

And as Remley shares in his recent Kit Carson biography, “Today Carson’s name appears

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⁹ Jacobs likewise notes, “As I learned as a child, a curious feature of settler colonialism is that its founding and enduring narratives often obfuscate conquest and colonization” (4).

¹⁰ According to “The Pioneer Monument” (1910), the organizers’ first choice for unveiling Pioneer Monument was “either President Taft or Ex-President Roosevelt.” The organizers’ desire for either Taft or Roosevelt shows that they envisioned the U.S. Western memorial within a broader context of American nationalism (which they reinforced by draping the monument with an American flag).
everywhere in New Mexico and elsewhere across the West. There are Kit Carson Cafes; Kit Carson Motels; a Kit Carson Club in Carson City, Nevada; Carson National Forest in New Mexico; and Fort Carson, Colorado,” among other locales (xxvi). Artifacts associated with Kit Carson, including his quintessential fringed buckskin coat (which he might not have actually worn; see Figure 3, which typifies Kit Carson’s appearance), continue to captivate the American imagination. This garment, which MacMonnies used as a model for Kit Carson’s statue on Pioneer Monument, is currently on display in History Colorado’s “Zoom In: The Centennial State in 100 Objects” exhibit. History Colorado also possesses pictures of Kit Carson’s son and grandson—Kit Carson II (Figure 4) and Kit Carson III (Figure 5)—posing in the coat. Carson’s descendants bear the literal and figurative weight of reenacting their ancestor’s popularly circulated (and highly romanticized) image. His settler legacy perpetuates itself through his family.

I viewed Kit Carson’s coat while researching George Bent, a turn-of-the-century Anglo-Cheyenne writer and historian, at History Colorado in May 2018. Bent, who was born near present-day La Junta, Colorado, in 1843 (where Kit Carson’s granddaughter lived in 1911),
began locally publishing autobiographical and historical articles in 1905. This was the same year, according to “The Pioneer Monument” (1910), that the “first steps toward erecting a memorial honoring the pioneers were taken.” Bent’s second publication, “Old Times in the Southwest: A Reminiscence of Kit Carson” (1906), ran in the *Great Southwest Magazine*, a short-lived Denver periodical. This article centralizes Bent’s relationship with Carson (testimony that George Hyde, Bent’s Euro-American collaborator, initially doubted), revealing that Bent engaged with and even reframed Euro-American U.S. Western mythology. Bent’s article proves that settler-colonial legacies, including those of white “heroes” like Kit Carson, were subject to

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11 Bent writes, “I knew Carson very well after the Civil War. I bought from him a fine horse that he rode in his famous attack on the hostile Indians at Adobe Fort in 1864. Carson told me he had the saddle on the horse four whole days at the time of this battle, and when he took the saddle off the skin came off the animal’s back with it” (56). Hyde initially doubted the veracity of Bent’s memories. He writes in a September 25, 1929, letter to John VanMale (a Denver publisher) that “Bent told me when he went up to visit his father in 1867 or 1868, he saw Carson at Boggs’ and Carson was ill, died soon after this; Bent told me he bought Carson’s famous horse and had this animal for some years, used it in racing and won a lot of races, then the horse was stolen and turned up later in possession of an army officer’s wife at Camp Supply. Now, I knew Bent was acquainted with Carson, but I did not take this horse story as gospel. Men who have a nodding acquaintance [sic] with men like Carson have a way of becoming very close friends of the hero—in their reminiscences; but there again I was not just to Bent.”
interpretation by diverse authors. Bent seeks not to denigrate Carson in “Old Times,” but to cast
the famous frontiersman as an employee of Bent’s Old Fort, which Bent’s Euro-American father
founded. Removing Carson’s mystique and positioning him as a subordinate allows Bent to
_elevate his family’s regional prominence. While Kit Carson’s legacy is ubiquitous in the U.S.
West (and memorialized in dime novels), George Bent’s agency as a warrior-writer has been
largely overshadowed by his Euro-American collaborator, George Hyde. “Rough Forms:
Autobiographical Interventions in the U.W. West” is thus—at its heart—a mixed-production,
polyvocal recovery project deeply invested in establishing and analyzing a multicultural literary
history of the contested U.S. West.

My professional interest in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century U.S. Western
settlement narratives is deeply personal. I grew up listening to stories about my great-great
grandfather, Jesse Jefferson Brown, who settled in South Dakota’s Black Hills in 1876 (see
Figure 6). Although the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie prohibited settlers from entering the Black
Hills, an expedition led by George Armstrong Custer (of Little Bighorn infamy) discovered gold
there in 1874. Illegal settlements like the 1874 Gordon Stockade quickly followed.12 After
Custer’s defeat at the 1876 Battle of the Greasy Grass (Little Bighorn), the United States forced
the Sioux to cede the Black Hills. Prospective settlers like my ancestor flocked to the region.

12 The Gordon Stockade has since been rebuilt as a tourist attraction near present-day Custer, a town illegally
founded in 1875. The notorious town of Deadwood, illegally founded in 1876, became both the subject of and the
setting for the acclaimed HBO series *Deadwood* (2004-2006). The series largely omits Native presence in the
region, concentrating instead on its Euro-American, Chinese (and Chinese American), and African American
settlers.
During his lifetime (Brown was born in 1844 and lived to be 88), my great-great grandfather worked as a freighter, a rancher, a stagecoach guard on the Deadwood-Cheyenne Stagecoach Line, a sheriff, a general store owner, and a county recorder of deeds. According to family lore, Brown killed two would-be robbers on his first day as a shotgun rider near present-day Lusk, Wyoming; he was also likely complicit in the hanging of alleged horse thief Lame Johnny (née
Cornelius Donahue) in 1878. While family stories acknowledged Brown’s role in altercations involving other white men when I was growing up, his status as an 1860s “Indian fighter” was largely omitted. As an undergraduate English major, I stumbled across Brown’s accounts in *Black Hills Trails* (1924), a historical, biographical, and autobiographical text that Brown co-wrote. His brief “biographical sketch” at the end of the book details several 1860s conflicts with American Indians (not tribally specified). For instance, Brown recalls an 1867 attack on his wagon train near Crazy Woman Creek (present-day Wyoming), writing, “suddenly the reds were on all sides of us, shooting, yelling and screeching like so many devils turned loose” (517). Brown and a sergeant shot at “one of their big medicine fakirs,” killing him (518). Brown writes that he “wanted to go out and scalp him, but I knew the risk, and the sergeant advised me not to try it” (518). Brown’s racially charged rhetoric replays his own violence against Native peoples; as Richard Slotkin explains, such “conflict” is “a central and peculiar feature” of U.S. Western narratives (11). Overlooking Brown’s early hostility toward American Indians in family lore—and instead retelling his adventures as a legal settler—reflects a larger pattern of omitting settler

13 Brown was supposed to guard the stagecoach transporting Lame Johnny (and also Brown’s wife and daughters, who were arriving in the Black Hills for the first time), but in the middle of the journey, he inexplicably fell back. Without his protection, vigilantes attacked the coach and hanged Lame Johnny. Brown’s family was unharmed.

14 Alice Bower Gossage published *Black Hills Trails* through the Rapid City Journal Company. I have not yet been able to verify the story of Brown’s first day of work as a shotgun messenger in newspaper records; he also does not mention the episode in his book. Brown’s biographical sketch begins, “Upon request I will endeavor to write a brief outline of a few experiences of my life, although upon glancing back over the path that I have traveled things appear so insignificant that I am almost persuaded to stop right here. Nevertheless, I will make an effort and let it go for what it is worth” (515-516).

15 George Bent explains the origins of the name “Crazy Woman Creek” in “Forty Years with the Cheyennes.”
violence in colonialist narratives.\textsuperscript{16}

Tracing familial lore into regional narratives reveals the endurance (and present-day recirculation) of settler stories. Consider, for instance, the Nolin Monument, which stands adjacent to the Regional Health Sturgis Hospital and Clinic in present-day Sturgis, South Dakota. Charles Nolin was a Euro-American “pony mail carrier” killed en route to Deadwood in 1876. A plaque at his monument shares that Nolin “was ambushed, killed, and scalped here by Indians” after he disregarded warnings from Jesse Brown (among others) that “Indian war cries had been heard in the vicinity.” No historical or contemporary sources question this narrative; they also do not specify the tribe allegedly responsible for Nolin’s killing or contextualize the killing within a broader history of 1870s settler violence against Native peoples (or encroachment).\textsuperscript{17} Instead, the “Indians” become anonymous, threatening figures while Nolin is immortalized as a tragic white victim—a narrative that persists through multimedia sources and community reenactments.\textsuperscript{18} A 1932 film reveals both the Nolin Monument’s unveiling (in which Jesse Brown, one of the last white Black Hills “old timers,” helps pull the cover off the monument) and a reenactment of

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\textsuperscript{16} In 2010, I interviewed one of Jesse Brown’s surviving grandchildren, who remembered asking as a young boy (in the late 1920s or early 1930s), “Did you kill Indians?” According to his grandson, Brown looked sad and said, “Yes,” then allegedly expressed regret for how American Indians had been treated in the U.S. West. Such regret does not erase or excuse his actions, but does, perhaps, indicate some introspection (including from his grandson) about white settlement efforts in the U.S. West and what Jacobs identifies as their “attendant violence” against Native peoples (4). Greater attention to settler-colonial guilt can be found in Rebecca Weaver-Hightower’s Frontier Fictions: Settler Sagas and Postcolonial Guilt (2018).
\textsuperscript{17} This ambiguity prompts Abbey R. McNair to ask in her thesis All About a Line: The Sidney-Black Hills Trail’s Impact on the Cultural Landscape of Western Nebraska and South Dakota (2005), “Who killed Nolin? . . . The heritage of Native Americans seems to be absent from the historical markers that present the history of the Sidney-Black Hills Trail” (144).
\textsuperscript{18} Jacobs asserts that instead of illuminating their own violence, settler-colonial narratives often portray “European settlers primarily as victims” (4).
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Nolin’s 1876 killing; this film was subsequently digitized by South Dakota Public Broadcasting (SDPB) and made available online in 2015.\(^{19}\) Nolin’s romanticized role as a “pony mail carrier” was even more recently resurrected on June 15, 2018 (Sturgis’s Annual History Day), when the Nolin Monument Restoration Committee rededicated the monument. Attendees could purchase a “commemorative post card” that a “pony express mail carrier” delivered to the Sturgis Post Office (Holland). Altogether, the legacies of white male settlers such as Jesse Brown, Charles Nolin, and—more prominently—Kit Carson prove that the descendants of settler societies often perpetuate narratives that downplay Native presence, omit or reduce Euro-American violence against Native peoples, and celebrate (via memorialization and reenactment) Euro-American presence in the U.S. West.\(^{20}\)

As a white female scholar in the twenty-first century, I am aware that my ancestor’s story—that of a white male in the U.S. West—is more readily accessible and visible than the stories of others who populated the region, including women of all races, African Americans, and American Indians. I also recognize that I have lived my entire life—and been a tourist in—contested areas, including Missouri, Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, and, most recently, 

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\(^{19}\) The video of the unveiling and reenactment, which depicts white actors in stereotypical Native dress, can be viewed at: http://player.pbs.org/partnerplayer/69TDJCiO6QJu0bv6tUaqgO%3D%3D/?autoplay=false&start=0&end=0&chapterbar=true&topbar=true&endscreen=true&fbclid=IwAR1fhZ2aoasVBevZwvdS_cnuoJN817-2slIras0HmlpSnQOToTgKapY

The racist portrayal of American Indians in the film prompted Brian Gevik to note that “Native Americans have not always been portrayed accurately or with much historical context in movies” when introducing it. 

\(^{20}\) As a lawman, Brown was also involved in the apprehension and execution of Charles Brown (an African American settler) in Deadwood in 1897 and Ernest Loveswar (Dakota Sioux) in Sturgis in 1902. Loveswar’s execution was heavily photographed; images of the execution (including my great-great grandfather standing behind him on the scaffold) are on display at Wall Drug, South Dakota, a popular tourist destination east of the Black Hills.
Kansas, which the Osage, Pawnee, Wichita, Comanche, Cheyenne, Kansa, and Arapaho historically occupied. All of these areas continue to negotiate settler-colonial legacies. For instance, Lawrence, Kansas, touts its “Free State” identity, which is intimately connected to Euro-American settlement and Native dispossession.21 In 1854, white New England abolitionists sought to prevent Kansas Territory from entering the Union as a slave-holding state by settling in and around Lawrence. Their settlement efforts (and eventual clashes with pro-slavery “Border Ruffians”) are dramatized in Lydia Maria Child’s “The Kansas Emigrants” (1857), a story that propagates settler-colonial myths about “noble” and “vanishing” American Indians.22 At the story’s outset, William Bradford, a prospective “Free State” settler, reassures his future wife, Alice, that the Kansas Territory “Indians” are “few in numbers now. Their spirit has been tamed by accumulated wrongs . . . Who can read Catlin’s account, without being struck by the nobility of character often manifested by their much-injured race?” (304). Later, Child writes, “The distant whoop of Indians on the prairie, and the howling of hungry wolves disturbed [the settlers] not. They were in dread of a more infernal sound than these; the midnight yell of Border Ruffians” (339). In “The Kansas Emigrants,” then, Child largely relegates the Shawnees and

21 Consider, for instance, the Shunganunga Boulder (otherwise known as Founder’s Rock) in present-day Lawrence’s Robinson Park. A plaque on the rock dedicates this glacial stone to “the pioneers of Kansas who in devotion to human freedom came into a wilderness, suffered hardships and faced danger and death to found this state in righteousness.” The Shunganunga Boulder, however, had originally been sacred to the Kaw Indians and was located closer to Topeka; Lawrence residents surreptitiously moved the rock to its current site in 1929, thus appropriating this sacred natural object as a monument to Euro-American settlement efforts.

22 Lawson, for instance, explains that the frequent “‘scientific’ observation of the ‘dying race’ in the nineteenth (and indeed the twentieth) century enabled a narrative of ethical indigenization in which the ‘settler’ simply assumed the place of the disappearing indigene without the need for violence (or, of course, the designation ‘invader’)” (1217). Jacobs similarly notes, “[s]ettler colonial narratives, where they do acknowledge conflicts with indigenous peoples, often present the demise of indigenous peoples as inevitable” (6).
Delawares to the “prairie,” or the edge of white settlements. They share this peripheral space with “hungry wolves”—a dehumanizing categorization. Child’s story helps show that in Lawrence’s foundational mythology, Missouri “Border Ruffians” supplant Kansas “Indians” as foils to the virtuous abolitionist-settlers. Today, abolitionist “Free State” references (including Free State Brewing Company, Free State High School, Free State Church, and Free State Dental) are more prominent than signage that recognizes early Native presence in the Lawrence area.\(^{23}\)

Despite their peripheral status in white stories like “The Kansas Emigrants”—and despite recent debates over physical structures that risk displacing Native history—American Indians have continued to play a vital role in Lawrence’s development.\(^{24}\) For instance, Lawrence is home to Haskell Indian Nations University (previously known as Haskell Institute, an assimilation-era boarding school founded in 1884). George Bent’s son (also named George Bent; he stands under the X in Figure 7) attended Haskell, where he graduated with “a wide experience in all branches of athletics.” Bent later returned to Oklahoma and coached “basket ball” (“G. H. S. Beaten”).

\(^{23}\) A key exception is Haskell Indian Nations University, which I discuss in more detail in the next paragraph. It is also worth noting that the Lawrence school board recently renamed South Middle School “Billy Mills Middle School” to honor Olympian William Mervin Mills (Oglala Lakota). According to a February 26, 2018, Lawrence Journal-World article by Elvyn Jones, “[Jennifer] Attocknie and [Carole] Cadue-Blackwood told the board the committee rejected a generic Native American name at a December meeting because that instruction was viewed as ‘rooted in whiteness and colonial constructs,’ which sees all tribes and Indian nations as a homogenous group.”

\(^{24}\) Recently, debates over land owned by the Delaware Tribe north of Lawrence have arisen. Elvyn Jones reports on January 2, 2019, that the “Delaware Tribe has abandoned plans to develop as an agricultural heritage center a 92-acre site just northeast of Lawrence.” Jones continues, “The property was in the reservation granted to the Delaware in the 1830s after the tribe was relocated from its ancestral home near the Delaware River in New York and New Jersey . . . The Delaware were forced to give up the tribe’s Kansas reservation lands and move to Oklahoma in 1866.” The tribe’s initial plan was to build a casino, which the four federally recognized tribes in Kansas opposed.
Lawrence—and Haskell—once again became embroiled in debates about Native rights and legacies in the 1990s when plans for the recently completed South Lawrence Trafficway (SLT) proposed going through the Haskell-Baker Wetlands. Chad Lawhorn of the Lawrence Journal-World explains that the “wetlands were part of the campus when Haskell was a Native American boarding school . . . [T]he wetlands area is often where those homesick children would go to practice their religion and Native American beliefs.” After years of debate, construction began; the final stretch opened in 2016. The South Lawrence Trafficway proves that even in the present day, American Indian heritage—like Denver’s 1911 Pioneer Monument—risks being overwritten by local structures and needs; attorney Bob Eye, quoted by Lawhorn, notes, “If the history of this is written in a careful way, it will be hard to see how indigenous people’s interests weren’t
pushed to the side.” To help illuminate the diverse—and yet often omitted or sidelined—heritages of locales such as Lawrence, Sturgis, and Denver, my dissertation draws together a range of understudied texts, ultimately crafting a more “careful” literary history of settlement in the U.S. West through autobiographical writing.

From “Self-Narrating Subjects” to “Self-Narrating Authors”: Settler-Colonial Storytelling

My methodology involves archival research and rhetorical analysis informed by settler-colonial theory. Settler-colonial theory traces how settlers (often Euro-Americans) encounter—and subsequently control—contested spaces. Omitting Indigenous populations in local stories emphasizes the perceived primacy of settlers. For instance, just one allusion to American Indians occurs in Willa Cather’s *My Ántonia* (1918), a semi-autobiographical novel set in Pawnee lands: the town’s name is Black Hawk (coincidentally recalling the Sauk leader who published what many consider the first American Indian autobiography). Cather’s omission of Native peoples supports a Euro-American fantasy of unoccupied, and thus claimable, lands. While scholars like Alan Lawson have suggested that settlers like Cather become “self-narrating subject[s]” when pursuing geographic and literary dominance, autobiographies have yet to be considered as fundamental sites in which self-narrating *authors* participate in and/or challenge colonial efforts. In fact, Lawson’s interest in physical texts, which is relatively unique among settler-colonial scholars (who tend to focus on historical acts rather than literary records), is limited to “history,
fiction, politics, public discourses by and large” (1216). Lawson omits autobiographies, a common genre among early settlers of the U.S. West. The autobiographical texts I address in my dissertation are thus invaluable for locating and evaluating settler colonialism in American literature. Settler culture thrives on records of individual achievement; life writing, in turn, centralizes personal experiences and complicates definitions of the “self” (especially in collaborative projects), making this a particularly fruitful genre for studying the process of settler-colonial storytelling.

To date, few American literary scholars have issued full-length studies informed by settler-colonial theory—particularly of U.S. Western texts. Mark Rifkin does explore literary settler colonialism in Settler Common Sense (2014), in which he “seek[s] to consider the everyday phenomenology of settlement and the ways it affects forms of textual production in the nineteenth century” (5). Rifkin’s book, which focuses on canonical works by Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry David Thoreau, is the only thorough application of settler colonialism to American literature published to date; scholars much more often pair Australian literature and settler-colonial theory or concentrate solely on historical considerations. The most prominent and recent example of an American historical approach is Walter Hixson’s American

25 Without specifically analyzing literary texts, Jacobs outlines several prominent features of settler-colonial narratives. They include “retelling” histories that marginalize settler violence against Native peoples, circulating narratives of “early settlers as innocent victims,” and telling stories that centralize the “hardships pioneers endured,” a strategy that “has authorized a sense of entitlement on the part of settlers” (6). Veracini additionally notes that “[s]ettler colonialism obscures the conditions of its own production,” thus disguising certain (i.e. less flattering) narratives while highlighting others (i.e. celebratory stories) (14).

26 It is worth noting that scholars seem to be increasingly applying settler-colonial theory to literary texts, as evidenced by numerous settler-colonial panels at the 2016 Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists (C19) conference, whose theme was “Unsettling,” and at the 2018 Western Literature Association (WLA) conference.
Settler Colonialism: A History (2013). Many of the events and regions Hixson discusses are relevant to the primary texts in my dissertation, including his analysis of the Sand Creek Massacre, which George Bent survived (and subsequently wrote about in “Forty Years with the Cheyennes”). This literary-historical connection—and the current shortage of American literary scholarship about settler colonialism—proves there is ample opportunity for projects that ask how autobiographical writing by diverse authors (in contrast to Rifkin’s white male focus) complicates settler narratives. More specifically, I interrogate how autobiographical accounts of the U.S. West can be used critically to uncover broader narrative patterns within settler-colonial societies.

In my dual recovery of and intervention in literary histories of self-narrating authors, I participate in a tradition of broadly defining autobiographical texts (particularly those produced in the U.S. West). Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson define autobiography as “the retrospective life narrative,” autobiographical as “self-referential writing,” and life writing “as a general term for writing that takes a life, one’s own or another’s, as its subject” (4).27 In this vein, none of the texts I discuss in “Rough Forms: Autobiographical Interventions in the U.S. West, 1835-1935” are true autobiographies. Jotham Meeker and Alice Gossage both kept diaries; Gossage also published a semi-autobiographical novel, Azalia, in 1879, further blurring autobiographical categories.28 “Coproduction,” or collaborative life writing, also occurs among my subjects

27 It is important to note that autobiographies have historically exhibited a white male bias, a status that my research helps disrupt by analyzing two U.S. Western female writers and taking an overall multiethnic approach.
28 Incidentally, Smith and Watson give little attention to critically framing semi-autobiographical works, except a brief appendix entry on “autofiction.”
(Smith 68). George Bent worked with George Hyde to produce “Forty Years with the Cheyennes,” “Old Times in the Southwest,” and Life of George Bent; Daisy Anderson likewise collaborated with her husband by recording Robert Anderson’s oral testimony and then later adding her own essays. While not traditional autobiography, then, the writings that Meeker, Bent, the Andersons, and Gossage left behind are all “self-referential.” I thus refer to “autobiographical” and “life-writing” texts within “Rough Forms” rather than “autobiographies.” The U.S. West, whose inhabitants embody various education levels, genders, ethnicities, and political, economic, and geographic backgrounds, is particularly conducive to autobiographical diversity. As Kathleen Boardman and Gioia Woods assert in Western Subjects: Autobiographical Writing in the North American West (2004), “Historically, conditions in the American West have favored the production of lifewriting genres . . . that might serve to challenge traditional notions of autobiography. Many stories of the West have been marginalized by a national establishment that traditionally looked upon the area west of the ninety-eighth meridian as a repository of natural resources rather than of literacy” (12). Meeker, Bent, the Andersons, and Gossage, whose texts often reflect collaborative and multiformal efforts, help reveal the rich body of vernacular life writing circulated by U.S. Western individuals (and their communities) at the turn of the last century.

“I Have Traveled in Almost Every State”: Where and When is the U.S. “West”?

The U.S. West has been variously divided and defined. For instance, the turn-of-the-century Colorado Springs periodical The Frontier: A Journal of Early Days and Their Thrilling Events, which published George Bent’s “Forty Years with the Cheyennes,” identifies Louisiana as “western” because it was part of the 1803 Louisiana Purchase. For the same reason, the
Frontier’s “West” only extends to Montana—not the West Coast. In African Americans on the Western Frontier (1998), Monroe Lee Billington and Roger D. Hardaway “define the West as including those contiguous states whose areas are totally or in part west of the one hundredth meridian,” an invisible north-south line that runs through North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas, ultimately marking the start of the Great Plains. Kathleen Boardman and Gioia Woods move the boundary slightly east by identifying the ninety-eighth meridian as the U.S. West’s easternmost edge. My dissertation likewise interprets South Dakota, Colorado Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma as “West,” but not solely because they fall along or west of a specific meridian; as Daniel K. Richter notes in Facing East from Indian Country (2001), a location’s label depends heavily upon the viewer’s vantage. Richter explains that “our usual perspective on early American history faces west: the plot lines flow from Europe across the Atlantic and thence to the Mississippi. Words like ‘invasion’ and ‘conquest’ may now trip more easily from our tongues than quaint phrases like ‘the transit of civilization,’ yet the ‘master narrative’ of early America remains essentially European-focused.” I strive to avoid such a “master narrative” when defining the U.S. West by considering this region from a variety of historical, racial, and gendered vantages.

It is worth noting, I argue, that my subjects largely avoided perceiving themselves (at least in writing) as being in the West; they instead write of their experiences in particular

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29 Consider also that Josiah Gregg’s 1844 Map of the Indian Territory, Northern Texas, and New Mexico Showing the Great Western Plains provides yet another view of the region (encompassing present-day Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico)—one that sees “Indian Territory” as linked to “Northern Texas.”
locations, such as municipalities (Colony, Oklahoma; Denver, Colorado, Hemingford, Nebraska; Rapid City, South Dakota), territories, or states. Their local (rather than regional) affiliation indicates both rootedness and flexibility; to Meeker, Bent, the Andersons, and Gossage, the “West” was hardly a fixed destination. Over his lifetime, for instance, George Bent traveled as far east as Mississippi, as far north as the Dakotas, as far west as Colorado, and as far south as Oklahoma. Robert Anderson walked to Fort Albuquerque (New Mexico) and Fort Bliss (Texas) from Fort Leavenworth (Kansas) with the 125th U.S. Colored Infantry. He then headed northeast in 1867 to settle in Nebraska, after which he “traveled in almost every state in the Union, and in Cuba and Mexico” (58). Alice Gossage traveled both south and west by covered wagon to settle present-day Vermillion, South Dakota, with her family in 1870. As Cathryn Halverson explains in *Maverick Autobiographies* (2004), “The relative mobility of its writers reflects the West’s network of connections with other regions . . . It isn’t news that regional writers cover ground” (11). In defining the “West,” then, I acknowledge this geographically and politically complex region as a “network” whose shifting borders—and mobile authors—resist simple categorization.

For the purposes of this project, the “West” encompasses five contiguous states (Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, and South Dakota) in the heart of 1834 Indian Territory, a region that was also once known as “Western Territory.” Paul Frymer explains in *Building an American Empire* (2017) that Congress created “a massive new ‘Western Territory’ west of the Mississippi” four years after President Andrew Jackson “pushed Congress to authorize federal removal of the remaining indigenous population east of the Mississippi” (i.e. the 1830 Indian Removal Act) (126, 117). This “Western” or “Indian” Territory “was to be ‘a final home’” for displaced and forcibly removed American Indians “guaranteed by the ‘faith’ of the American nation,” according to Frymer (126). In *The Annual Register of Indian Affairs*
within the Indian (or Western) Territory (1836), Isaac McCoy also interchanges “Indian” and “Western” when referring to the 1834 Territory that encompassed present-day Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Montana, the Dakotas, and portions of Colorado, Wyoming, and Minnesota. In calling my dissertation “Autobiographical Interventions in the U.S. West” (rather than “Autobiographical Interventions in Indian Territory”), I acknowledge both contemporary and historical precedents that label Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Colorado, and South Dakota as “Western.” I also avoid defining my dissertation by Anglo-centric legislative acts that significantly reduced 1834 Indian Territory; settler encroachment throughout the nineteenth century prompted white legislators to designate smaller territories and states, ultimately expanding the United States. By 1890, Indian Territory only indicated the portion of land that is now eastern Oklahoma. Given this region’s history, collapsing Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and South Dakota into a more generic “West” might initially seem insufficient (particularly given other regional labels in the present-day “West,” including “Far West,” “Mountain West,” “Northwest,” and “Southwest”). Solely concentrating on the “West” that emerged from 1834 Indian Territory (a region that largely excluded the “Far West,”

30 Jotham Meeker printed this text at the Shawanoe Baptist Mission. McCoy explains at the Register’s outset that “[b]y the Indian Territory is meant the country within the following limits; viz.—Beginning on Red river, on the Mexican boundary, and as far west of Arkansas Territory as the country is habitable; thence down Red river eastwardly along the Mexican boundary to Ark. Ter. thence northwardly along the line of Ark. Ter. to the state of Missouri; thence north along its western line, to Missouri river; thence up Missouri river to Puncah river; thence westwardly as far as the country is habitable; thence southwardly to the beginning” (3). Although historical texts like the History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark, Vol. 1 (1814) likewise use the “Puncah river” as a northern boundary, the river seems to have a different name in the present day. 31 Kansas Territory (1854), Nebraska Territory (1854), Colorado Territory (1861), Dakota Territory (1861), and Oklahoma Territory (1890) all emerged from 1834 Indian Territory, for instance.
“Northwest,” and “Southwest”), however, allows me to focus on intersecting movements and narratives across a politically interlocked and deeply contested landscape. The U.S. “West”—understood as the region stretching from the Great Plains to the Rocky Mountains and initially set aside for American Indian use in 1834—is thus inherently a complex geo-literary landscape.

To more fully capture the range of relevant authors, movements, and historic events that have influenced life writing of the U.S. West, my dissertation will cover a hundred-year period: 1835-1935. This range corresponds with the first publication dates of the earliest and latest texts that I study. 1835 marks the second full year that Jotham Meeker printed alphabetic texts in what later became known as Kansas—an undertaking that his diary entries capture in minute detail. 1935 represents the first publication date of Laura Ingalls Wilder’s *Little House on the Prairie*, a book whose enduring popularity and recent controversy show the resonance of settler culture. Tracing a hundred years of literary settler colonialism into the twentieth century (and beyond) follows precedent set by Billington and Hardaway, who set aside Frederick Jackson Turner’s thesis and “consider the frontier era to extend from 1850 to 1912 . . . the year the last of the western territories attained statehood” (3). In fact, settler narratives by “old timers” like Jesse Brown continued to surface through the mid-1900s; Wilder continued publishing through 1943. “Rough Forms: Autobiographical Interventions in the U.S. West, 1835-1935” thus significantly

32 The U.S. West’s nineteenth-century history is defined by several dual legislative efforts (the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act simultaneously created both territories; North and South Dakota became separate states at the same time), overlapping borders (Kansas Territory once encompassed the region that is present-day Kansas and Colorado), and crisscrossing routes/trails (traversed by American Indians, African Americans, and Euro-Americans, among others).
proves that in a literary timeline, settler culture is both a nineteenth- and a twentieth-century production.

“Rough Forms”: Reclaiming Local Autobiographies in the U.S. West

My title, “Rough Forms,” serves two primary purposes. First, it reclaims George Hyde’s dismissal of George Bent’s “Forty Years with the Cheyennes,” which is the first of three texts that Bent and Hyde published together. “Forty Years” also significantly identifies Bent as the author—not Hyde. In an October 24, 1929, letter to John VanMale, Hyde writes that “[w]e (Bent and I) published part of the material” that eventually became Life of George Bent (1968) “in the Frontier a monthly, published at Colorado Springs: but the material was then in its first, rough form. We went over this printed stuff later, corrected it and added greatly to it.” Dismissing Bent’s “Forty Years” as a “rough form” while privileging a “later” work that bears Hyde’s name (despite emphasizing that “we” developed Life of George Bent, Hyde is identified as Life’s sole author) ultimately reinforces a narrative of Euro-American superiority in collaborative projects with Native subjects. For reasons I explore in Chapter Two, the “rough form” of “Forty Years,” including its conversational style, more fully captures Bent’s persona and agency. Reframing Hyde’s dismissive “rough form” remark as a moniker for U.S. Western writing that falls outside widely recognized literary traditions calls attention to less-mediated texts and de-centers Euro-American superiority.

“Rough Forms” also recognizes the vernacular qualities and nonprofessional nature of
the autobiographical texts I discuss. Jotham Meeker, for instance, “made several unsuccessful efforts as a boy and youth to get a more formal education, but in the end had to matriculate in the school of experience” (McMurtrie 16-17). Robert Anderson only had the opportunity for three months of formal schooling, and Daisy Anderson told interviewer Rudi Williams in 1997, “I ain’t been to no school. I went to school three months out of a year, and the white kids went nine months.” Alice Gossage, who was more educated than her husband, Joseph Gossage (founder of the Rapid City Journal), only attended school through the eighth grade (Nelson 19). Of all of my subjects, George Bent had the most formal training; he attended boarding schools in Missouri for almost ten years, including at the university level. While their varying degrees of education did not stop them from recording their experiences, my subjects often demonstrate less literary finesse than contemporaries whose works were more widely circulated, such as Zitkala-Ša, Booker T. Washington, and Hamlin Garland. Regarding Jesse Brown’s literary style and historical vantage in Black Hills Trails, for example, a September 27, 1932, Rapid City Daily Journal article explains,

Neither Mr. Brown nor Captain Willard could have written a completely impersonal story of the development of the Black Hills. They put a personal interpretation on many incidents and have probably preserved something of the attitude of the times through which they lived and which they describe, often in a homely manner. . . . As to literary style [Black Hills Trails] will never take a prize or be held up as an example to aspiring

33 In this regard, the subjects of my dissertation share similar educational experiences with more widely known autobiographers, including figures such as Benjamin Franklin and Frederick Douglass, who were largely self-taught.
literati, but its very homeliness gives it a charm all its own, a characteristic simplicity comparable to the work of Will James, a quality which can never be imitated.  

In pursuing “rough forms” rather than more heavily mediated and/or widely circulated texts, I join scholars like Halverson, who similarly explains that “each author” in her book “was a so-called ordinary woman rather than a renowned public figure, who wrote not in retrospect but in present-tense diary form; their autobiographies are their only significant publications” (x). Robert Dale Parker, in his response to Phillip H. Round, similarly calls for studying “the ordinariness of print culture in Indian life, the ways that print culture absorbs and expresses not the exotic or the hybrid but instead the hum of routine” (291). Kathleen Boardman, Gioia Woods, Dan Moos, and Julia Watson all likewise acknowledge autobiographies left outside the mainstream of print circulation in Western Subjects: Autobiographical Writing in the North American West (2004). My work supplements theirs by studying authors whose rural status meant they often sought publication through local newspaper offices. Robert and Daisy Anderson originally self-published From Slavery to Affluence on the presses of the Hemingford Ledger (Hemingford, Nebraska); Daisy Anderson later reprinted their joint text through the Steamboat Pilot (Steamboat Springs, Colorado). Gossage serialized Azalia in the Yankton Dakota Herald, then used the presses of the Rapid City Daily Journal to print regionally significant texts such as Jesse Brown’s Black Hills Trails and Holiday Greetings from Rapid City. Both Jotham Meeker and Alice Gossage worked as editors and newspaper publishers.

34 It is unclear which author the article alludes to here; French Canadian “Will James” published stories for a range of audiences about the U.S. West from 1922 onward, and it is possible that he is the reference here.
These authors affirm that newspapers played a prominent role in circulating autobiographical and historical texts in the U.S. West at the turn of the last century. Overall, “Rough Forms” are subject to typos in addition to a “homely,” or vernacular, style; my dissertation preserves their errata.

“Autobiographical Interventions”: A Chapter Outline

Each chapter of my dissertation analyzes writers who have not yet been the subject of detailed literary study. Central questions include how regional authors have interacted with mainstream traditions and how such interplay illuminates turn-of-the-century colonialism and settler print culture. My first chapter explores the significant literary figure Jotham Meeker. Meeker settled in Indian Territory as a missionary at the Shawnee Baptist Mission (1833-1837) and Ottawa Baptist Mission (1837-1855), experiences he addresses in his extensive diary (over a thousand pages long). I recover Meeker’s intercultural legacy by reading his diary alongside “alternative literacies,” including cemetery grounds and archeological artifacts (Rasmussen 13). This innovative approach challenges the “afterlife” of settler origin stories and offers a more nuanced record of cultural exchanges than is typically found in white settler narratives.

In Chapter Two, I challenge early scholarship that portrays Euro-American writers and editors as active and Native writers, editors, and/or subjects as passive in jointly authored autobiographical texts—an enduring perspective that defines recent analyses of George Bent’s relationship with Euro-American ethnographer George Hyde. Bent’s letters, maps, notes, and drafts offer a rarely recorded glimpse into the collaborative process shared between a Native writer and a white editor. Interrogating these documents alongside “Forty Years with the Cheyennes” reveals an ambitious Anglo-Cheyenne author who is both fluent in English and
Euro-American culture and deeply invested in celebrating Plains Indian identity, history, and orature.

Chapter Three incorporates the perspectives of both a formerly enslaved man and his wife to complicate our current knowledge of African-American authorial agency in the U.S. West. The first edition of *From Slavery to Affluence* (1927), which is half slave narrative and half U.S. Western settlement story, traces Robert Anderson’s antebellum escape and postbellum success as a property-holding citizen. Anderson’s soldiering and homesteading efforts in Nebraska, I argue, parallel mainstream U.S. Western experiences in which typically white settlers displace Native populations. I further establish that *From Slavery to Affluence* represents a unique collaborative effort: Daisy Anderson, who was almost sixty years younger than Robert Anderson when they married, recorded her husband’s oral testimony in the 1920s. Daisy Anderson’s later editions of *From Slavery to Affluence* (1967, 1986, 1992, and 1997), which feature her own essays, images, and poems, highlight her authorship, establish her regional embeddedness, and expose racially charged attitudes. Altogether, the Andersons’ text thus significantly interrogates racial and colonial legacies in the U.S. West.

My final chapter explores white women’s agency in semi-autobiographical texts. In particular, I link Alice Bower Gossage, a neglected literary figure who helped promote Euro-American settlement in South Dakota, with Laura Ingalls Wilder. Gossage’s writing (beyond her courtship letters and philanthropic and temperance efforts) has received little scholarly attention. My project addresses this gap by presenting Gossage’s first novel *Azalia: A Brave Girl’s Ambition* (1879) as a key text in the early pursuit of women’s rights in the U.S. West. Despite its Dakota Territory setting, *Azalia* rarely references American Indians—a phenomenon reflected in Gossage’s diary. In *Holiday Greetings from Rapid City* (1915 and 1920), however, Gossage, as a
writer and editor, lauds Native assimilation and celebrates Euro-American occupation. Gossage thus saw life writing as a platform for advocating for white women’s rights but was nevertheless indifferent to the ways her settler attitudes decreased Native agency. Juxtaposing widely circulated autobiographical authors like Wilder with regional figures like Gossage highlights the ways American life-writing studies have previously overlooked instances of literary colonialism.

A final word on my chapters (which are organized chronologically by each primary subject’s birth year): though they never met, my research shows that Meeker, Bent, the Andersons, and Gossage represent intersecting experiences in the U.S. West. For instance, Meeker, Robert Anderson, and Bent all traveled through present-day Kansas during their lifetimes; the Andersons, Gossage, and Bent likewise crisscrossed Nebraska, and both Daisy Anderson and Bent lived in Colorado. While Bent joined Colonel Martin E. Green’s Missouri Cavalry (Confederate), Robert Anderson served in the 125th U.S. Colored Infantry (Union). Bent subsequently remembered encountering “colored” soldiers in the 1860s West, and Anderson detailed his role as an “Indian fighter” in *From Slavery to Affluence*. Finally—in a twist of fate—both Meeker and Bent vividly describe the same meteor shower: Meeker wrote in his diary on November 13, 1833, “Rose as usual at 5 o’clock, and witnessed a great phenomenon in the skies; a constant flying of innumerable meteors. I learn from others that it commenced about midnight. The Inds. are much alarmed about it.” Bent likewise describes the “Year-of-the-Shooting-Stars” in “Forty Years with the Cheyennes,” sharing, “All the oldest Cheyenne men remember this year [1833], on account of the November night, made light as day by the myriads of shooting-stars flashing through the heavens, when amid screaming women and children and howling dogs the warriors mounted their fleet ponies and rode madly about on the prairie singing their death-
songs, for all believed the world was coming to its end that night” (3). Read together, I argue, figures such as Meeker, Bent, the Andersons, and Gossage help tell a multifaceted story of 1835-1935 settlement that geography, politics, and astronomical events intimately, even lyrically, link.

Closing Thoughts: Commodification and Memorialization

Overall, my dissertation engages with key questions of authorial agency, cross-cultural exchange, settler culture, and storytelling traditions across turn-of-the-century Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, Oklahoma, and portions of Colorado—important topics that have never been fully treated in a literary study of life writing of this era and area. Such work helps highlight settler colonialism’s imbalanced preservation of Native and non-Native legacies. For instance, while Kit Carson’s coat became a Pioneer Monument model and museum piece (a publically viewable artifact), Mary Bent’s (George Bent’s daughter) elk-tooth dress—a family heirloom—became a “historic trophy” at the turn of the last century. A 1901 article in the *Chickasha Daily Express* (Chickasha, Indian Territory) sensationalizes the elk-tooth dress’s story, associating Mary Bent’s and O. L. Richards’s (Euro-American) transaction with settler conquest. The article reveals that:

35 N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa) also addresses the 1833 Leonid meteor shower, noting in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969), “That most brilliant shower of Leonid meteors has a special place in the memory of the Kiowa people. It is among the earliest entries in the Kiowa calendars, and it marks the beginning as it were of the historical period in the tribal mind” (85).
Yesterday, O. L. Richards purchased for a big round sum in spot cash [$1,600], a famous squaw dress, ornamented with 1024 elk teeth. The elk teeth ornamentation has been in one Cheyenne Indian family for a period of 127 years, and for a long time speculators and lovers of curios have tried to purchase it.

Photographs of the dress have been taken scores of times, and fully forty squaws have been married in it for luck, but all offers to buy have been rejected until now.

The dress has at last passed out of the hands of the family, and into the hands of the white man.\(^{36}\)

Magpie, George Bent’s first wife, wears this dress in an 1867 photograph taken at the Medicine Lodge Council (present-day Medicine Lodge, Kansas) (Figure 8). George Hyde confirms this dress’s history, writing in a note held in History Colorado’s *George Bent Collection* that the elk-tooth dress had “been in her family for 200

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\(^{36}\) George Bent inserts himself into the story at this point: the article concludes, “George Bent, the girl’s father, called at the office today and stated that several of the teeth on the dress were gifts from Joseph, the great Nez Perses [sic] Chief. They have the chief’s mark on them.” Even at the transactional moment, then, Bent teaches the dress’s new white owner—and the newspaper’s subscribers—how to “read” the elk teeth and appreciate their significance.
years, handed down from mother to daughter” (1928). After purchasing the dress, O. L. Richards posed in it for the “Curiosities” section of The Strand Magazine, a turn-of-the-century United Kingdom periodical (Figure 9) (240). In doing so, Richards both appropriates and commercializes a distinctly maternal Native garment, manifesting Margaret Jacobs’s observation that a “common feature of settler colonialism involves the appropriation of indigenous symbols as emblems of the new nation” (7). Richards subsequently resold the dress to George Smith and L. C. Van Ness; according to an August 2, 1902, El Reno Evening Bell (Oklahoma) article, “They secured a rare bargain, not only from an intrinsic view, but also from a sentimental standpoint. Both gentlemen are prominent members of the order of Elks.” The article continues, “the probability is that [the dress] will become the property of Elks’ order and be treasured as one of its brightest and most historic trophies.” Mary Bent’s elk-tooth dress thus transitions from being an heirloom (to be used/worn) to a commercialized trophy (to be viewed) in an appropriative settler culture. Such cultural revision underscores the importance of complicating settler legacies and more overtly incorporating Native agency.

While ultimately grounded in American literary studies, “Rough Forms” thus often highlights the importance of visual, oral, and material texts; all of the writers in the chapters that follow intersperse their writing with non-alphabetic elements. For instance, prior to their marriage, Joseph Gossage sent Alice Bower rocks and ore samples from the Black Hills; Gossage and Bower also sent each other books, newspapers, and pictures. George Bent and
George Hyde likewise traded items such as magazines, moccasins, and photographs (one of which—an image of Magpie and George Bent—was published in “Forty Years with the Cheyennes”). Daisy and Robert Anderson also supplement their written records in From Slavery to Affluence with images; Robert, in fact, took his own photographs of the Kentucky plantation where he was born, and from 1967 onward, Daisy Anderson added various texts (essays, poems, letters, and a Nursing Home Appreciation Week certificate) and photographs to her autobiographical sections. These visual and textual artifacts extend her story well into the twentieth century. Finally, a 1985 archeological dig at Jotham Meeker’s farmstead (the Ottawa Baptist Mission site near present-day Ottawa, Kansas) yielded both bullet casings and miniscule pieces of type, thus intermixing print culture and violent potential. Telling a fuller story of U.S. Western settlement, then, involves also acknowledging the non-textual items that crucially supplement my subjects’ written records. For this reason, every chapter of “Rough Forms” includes multiple images reflecting the multiformal nature of U.S. West autobiographical texts.

A closing word on one last relevant form: the tourist attraction. Although not as well known as figures like Kit Carson, the subjects I study in “Rough Forms” have all been recognized by or are affiliated with monuments and historic sites that reveal the embeddedness of each of their legacies. A memorial to Jotham Meeker stands in Ottawa, Kansas, for instance, while Alice Gossage is recognized with a sundial and brick structure in Rapid City’s Halley Park. Robert Anderson’s original log cabin can be viewed at Dobby’s Frontier Town near Alliance, Nebraska, and Bent’s Old Fort—where George Bent was born—has been rebuilt. It is now a National Historic Site near La Junta, Colorado, that visitors can tour. Such sites, which indicate lingering possession and presence, highlight Meeker’s, Bent’s, the Andersons’, and Gossage’s varied efforts within the colonialist scheme of the U.S. West. While Meeker’s and
Bent’s affiliated sites embody cross-cultural heritages, for instance (Meeker, for one, is buried alongside Ottawa inhabitants of the Ottawa Baptist Mission; see Figure 10), Gossage’s and the Andersons’ artifacts and memorials concentrate on their individual literary, agricultural, and social contributions to settler culture. Together, Meeker, Bent, the Andersons, and Gossage prove that the story of U.S. Western settlement is not simply one of straightforward conquest.

Instead, this region’s literary history involves a more intricate (and ongoing) negotiation between cross-cultural and multimodal experiences. Such “rough” writers—who critique settler-colonial erasure and provide vibrant archives of resistance rarely seen in more canonical works—deepen our knowledge of self-narration in settler culture. They deserve greater attention in the present day.
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“I Then Preached to All Present”: Narrative Afterlives in Indian Territory

The Indian Territory diary (1832-1855) of Jotham Meeker, a Baptist missionary, printer, and orthographer, offers a unique record of territorial change and intercultural exchange that challenges our current understanding of settler origin stories, particularly their inception and circulation. Meeker was born near Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1804, just one year after “the Louisiana Purchase had added to the United States the far western territory in which [Meeker] was to spend most of his active life” (McMurtrie 16). He trained as a printer before relocating to Michigan Territory in 1825 as a boarding-school teacher and aspiring missionary. There, Meeker began intensively studying Native languages; with the approval of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (and after practicing his Ottawa speaking skills with Sauk leader Black Hawk), Meeker developed “a new Indian orthography” using only Roman letters (as noted in his November 9, 1832, diary entry).^1^ The Baptist Board of Foreign Missions transferred Meeker to the Shawnee Baptist Mission in 1833, where he installed the first “printing operation in what is today Kansas” (Lee's 11).^2^ After

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^1^ Roman letters were desirable because printers could use them to print translations without ordering custom typesets. On December 3, 1832, Meeker records in his diary, “Visit Mr. Schoolcraft, Ind. Agent. Consult with him relative to my Ind. orthography. Am invited to call again to consult on same subject.” Meeker does so on December 5, recording that he “[s]pent some time with Mr. Schoolcraft, who so far approves of my orthography as to urge me to spend no time in making a thorough experiment.” Regarding his meeting with Black Hawk, Meeker notes in his July 3, 1833, diary entry, “at 6, visit and converse in Ottawa with the noted Black Hawk.”

^2^ The Shawnee Baptist Mission is not to be confused with the more widely known Shawnee Indian Mission, which is now a Kansas State Historic Site (and was run by Methodists). Historically, the Shawnee Baptist Mission was spelled “Shawanoe”; for clarity, I adhere to the modern spelling, though I preserve “Shawanoe” in sources that I cite.

According to McMurtie and Allen (and cited by Lees), the press that Meeker brought to Indian Territory was a “used Seth Adams printing press manufactured around 1817” (Lees 11). Altogether, Meeker printed fifty-seven books (comprising over 81,000 pages) between 1833 and 1837; ten more books followed at the Ottawa Baptist Mission after Meeker moved the press there in 1849 (Lees 11). His publications (all using his orthography) included hymnals, bibles, and “First Readers” (educational texts) in Ioway, Ottawa, Chippewa, Wea, Delaware, Osage, Potawatomi, and Shawnee, among other languages.
founding the nearby Ottawa Baptist Mission with his wife, Eleanor, in 1837, Meeker largely
dedicated himself to farmsteading and missionizing. He maintained his diary on a daily basis
(totaling 1,500 pages across 3 volumes) until he became ill and died in 1855, just one year after
the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act opened the region to settlement. Meeker’s life and writing thus
intimately intersect with major territorial expansions and federal policies, including the Indian
Removal Act of 1830, that forced thousands of eastern Indians onto Indian Territory. His diary
both records a rapidly evolving historical situation and orients his settler-missionary identity
around diversely occupied U.S. Western communities—an extensive, and complex, chronicle.

Although Meeker’s diary reveals that he learned from (as a budding linguist), worked
alongside (as both a printer and a missionary), and most closely consulted with the Potawatomi,
Ottawa, and Shawnee, post-1855 lore often casts Meeker as an individualistic hero, ultimately
folding his intercultural legacy into a broader Anglo-centric settler origin story. Douglas C.
McMurtrie and Albert H. Allen, for instance, invoke the action-oriented rhetoric of Manifest
Destiny in Jotham Meeker: Pioneer Printer of Kansas (1930), asserting that Meeker was “an
American pioneer who encountered obstacles and difficulties apparently insurmountable, and yet
overcame them” (9). McMurtrie and Allen also argue that Meeker’s diary is “an inspiration to
Americans of a later generation” because it offers “a vivid portrayal of one man’s part in the epic

3 After her husband died, Eleanor Meeker ran the Ottawa Baptist Mission with the help of a “native assistant”; she
died in 1856. According to Doug Carder in “Women in History: Ottawa Trailblazers” (2014), Eleanor Meeker spoke
Ottawa “fluently.” Her textual record is less complete than her husband’s (a diary, if she kept one, does not survive).
4 Phillip H. Round further illuminates the significance of location when discussing Mecker’s life and writing, noting
that “the Shawnee Mission press was located at the center of a political hub, where the convergence of removed
tribes, Indian traders, and an emerging territorial government came together to form a powerful imperial nexus”
(87).
of the Winning of the West” (16). This celebratory view (which interprets Meeker’s diary as a record of individual heroism) recalls Margaret Jacobs’s observation in White Mother to a Dark Race (2009) that “[p]opular histories of westward expansion cast American settlers as brave individualists who were willing to endure great hardship to take up new opportunities and lands in the American West” (6). White settler lore, in other words, seeks verification by recirculating—and even coopting—the lives and writings of early (well-recorded) “pioneers” like Jotham Meeker.

I intervene in this settler storytelling tradition by analyzing Meeker’s diary alongside “alternative literacies” and archives (including cemetery memorials and archeological artifacts), ultimately restoring Meeker’s life story to its intercultural roots (Rasmussen 13). Rereading Meeker’s legacy through spatial and material “literacies” illuminates the diverse nature of settler-colonial storytelling. In U.S. Western settler culture, storytelling is an ongoing process whose primary audience members (settler descendants and local residents) often continue to circulate, and thus deeply shape, regional histories. Exploring the multiformal “afterlife” of a white settler like Meeker shows that in the process of establishing origin stories around historical figures, locations, and texts, intercultural exchanges can be mislaid and/or distorted. Alyssa Pleasant, Caroline Wigginton, and Kelly Wisecup highlight the significance of multiformal analysis in their recent introduction to Early American Literature, noting that “centering [on] spoken, image-based, material-object, and Indigenous-language texts might productively revise our respective disciplines’ conceptions of literary and historical evidence” (409). In Meeker’s case, such diverse evidence helps retrieve a rich intercultural narrative obscured by its post-1855 “afterlife.” Together, Meeker’s diary, the Ottawa Baptist Mission cemetery, and artifacts recovered from the Kansas State Historical Society’s 1985 archeological dig at the Ottawa
Baptist Mission site vividly portray Meeker as one contributor to a larger narrative of quickly changing territorial conditions.

Overall, this chapter crucially rereads Meeker as a *settler-subject, settler-witness, and settler-performer*. Such categories anchor my analysis of Meeker’s life writing in intercultural relationships (rather than white settler exceptionalism). I first explore Meeker as a “settler-subject” by tracing historical considerations of his life and writing, especially 1910s-1930s newspaper and historical society articles, which first linked Meeker to settler origin stories. While exploring Meeker’s socially constructed post-1855 legacy, I critically adapt Jean M. O’Brien’s (White Earth Ojibwe) language of “firsting” and “lasting.” O’Brien describes “firsting” as the process through which “[n]on-Indians stake a claim to being native” (xv); “lasting,” according to O’Brien, involves portraying Native subjects as the “last” of their tribe, thus contributing to narrative “Indian extinction” (James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* is a notable example) (xxiv). Reinterpreting O’Brien’s “lasting” as a keyword for *permanence* (versus erasure) provides a crucial framework for understanding settler origin stories, which seek to “first” and “last” their subjects in regional lore. I then contextualize

My approach counters previous Meeker studies, which almost exclusively frame him as an exceptional, authoritative figure (and so occlude alternative, more intercultural, possibilities for his identity). Eliza Keith (Meeker’s youngest daughter), for instance, asserts in a 1911 article that her father “not only had his own affairs to manage, but [he had] to plan & control all his people. He was their agent, physician, teacher, pastor, coroner, advisory [sic] and general manager of everything.” John Mark Lambertson’s University of Kansas master’s thesis “*Servant*: The Reverend Jotham Meeker and the Ottawa Baptist Mission (1992) likewise explores “Meeker as a Minister,” “Meeker as a Doctor,” “Meeker as a Teacher,” “Meeker as an Agent,” “Meeker as a Friend,” therefore frequently ascribing Meeker power over Native peoples.

This renewed interest coincided with the centennial of Meeker bringing the first printing press to present-day Kansas.
Meeker as a “settler-witness” and “settler-performer” whose self-constructed identities (as expressed in his life writing) become intimately intertwined with 1830s-1840s Native removals and arrivals in Indian Territory. Overall, Meeker’s diary proves that in addition to asking “What kinds of stories does the settler tell?” (to quote Alan Lawson), scholars should also inquire, “What kinds of stories does society tell about the settler?” Approached from such an alternative angle, Meeker’s diary emerges as a record that presents exchange—rather than conflict—as a basis for intercultural relationships in the U.S. West.

“Firsting”: Jotham Meeker as Settler-Subject

From the 1930s onward, local newspaper articles and historical studies frequently link Jotham Meeker and his family with a series of “firstings” and “lastings” that assert Euro-American primacy and permanence in Kansas. Such an approach crucially reveals U.S. Western society’s ongoing role in “authoring” settler histories, which often outlive, and even redefine, their original subjects. For instance, a 1907 Biennial Report of the Kansas State Historical Society notes, “The first children of pure white blood born in what is now Kansas is an item of such interest that it makes the circuit of the state press three or four times a year” (34). The report’s unnamed author claims to have combed “lists of names on census and election rolls, and in other forms, many of which can yet be recognized as bona fide settlers” (34, original emphasis). The article further specifies that these “first white native-born Kansas” children were “born in pre-territorial days” (34-5). Categorizing white children as “native,” “pure,” “bona fide,” and “pre-territorial” (i.e. pre-Kansas Territory; Indian Territory was established in 1834) reflects a conscious effort “to legitimize the settler, to put the settler in the cultural (moral) and discursive place of the indigene” (Lawson 1217). The first child on the Biennial Report’s list is
Napoleon Boone, who was “[b]orn at Kaw Agency, Jefferson County” in 1828 and was the “grandson of Daniel Boone,” a national folk hero (35). Maria Meeker, Jotham and Eleanor Meeker’s oldest daughter (born in 1834 at the Shawnee Baptist Mission), is seventh on the list, while Emma Meeker, her sister, is fifteenth (born at the Ottawa Mission in 1839). Eliza Meeker, the youngest Meeker daughter, is twenty-sixth; she was born at the Ottawa Mission in 1849. Of the Biennial Report’s 43 children, 34 were born at missions (the Shawnee Baptist Mission, Shawnee Manual-labor School, Iowa Mission, Kickapoo Mission, Ottawa Baptist Mission, and Quaker Shawnee Mission), 3 were born at agencies (Sac and Fox Agency and Kaw Agency), 1 at a fort (Fort Leavenworth), and the rest in newly established Euro-American settlements. Such locations show that even though the report sought “pure white” foundations, these children co-existed in an intercultural environment; white identity in Indian Territory (and eventually Kansas) was historically, even inextricably, linked with Native presence.

In 1935, local historian Howard Rounds sought to place Jotham Meeker’s family at the foundation of Kansas’s white settlement history by “firsting” the Meeker children. In an Ottawa Herald article titled “First White Child Here,” Rounds offers “authentic Franklin county history” by arguing that Jotham and Eleanor Meeker’s “first child, Maria, who was born at the Shawnee

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7 Incidentally, Napoleon Boone’s cousin, Albert Gallatin Boone, was George Bent’s guardian in Westport, Missouri, in the 1850s.
8 Children have historically received less critical attention than adults when analyzing settlement efforts. Elizabeth Hampsten, however, does explore the narratives of settler children in North Dakota, arguing, “By knowing more about how [settler children] remembered their settlement childhoods, we might gain a fuller sense of the history of regions and begin to reach the origins of some of the myths about our country. How people claim to remember their past or even how it was recorded privately at the time (in parents’ letters or diaries) of course may not agree with other accounts . . . Nevertheless, the stories we tell ourselves are the ones we are likely to want to believe” (4).
Mission in what is now Kansas City in 1834, was the first white child to be born in Kansas, at least by resident parents.” 9 Meeker makes no such claim in his diary, noting simply on September 4, 1834 (Maria Meeker’s birthday): “Comp. on Otoe book Cover—Call in some of the neighbors—at 11 o’clock Mrs. M. was delivered of a healthy looking daughter.” Maria Meeker’s birth almost seems like an afterthought. Two days later (after bringing an unnamed Ottawa “nurse” home to care for Eleanor and Maria Meeker), Meeker remarks that the “Otoe book” “is the fifth Indian book I have printed.” On September 8 (without mentioning his wife or daughter again), Meeker records that he has printed “50 large Alphabets,” and on September 12, he “works off” 300 copies of an “Otoe Hymn book.” Such entries reveal that Meeker focused on professional rather than territorial (or white historical) milestones when his daughter was born. Reading Rounds’ 1935 article beside Meeker’s 1834 diary entries thus highlights the evolving nature (and shifting locus) of settler stories. Rounds sought to elevate the regional significance of Maria Meeker’s birth, a “firsting” narrative (proven false by the Biennial Report) that has persisted into the present day. 10

More broadly, post-1855 “firstings” of Jotham Meeker’s legacy stretch his diary’s self-reported truths into exceptional claims about his educational and professional accomplishments. For instance, although Meeker served as a teacher (particularly to the Potawatomi), he did not—

9 Keith similarly claims that Maria Meeker was “the first white girl born into the great state of the present Kansas.”
10 Though a “citation needed” disclaimer appears, Meeker’s Wikipedia entry claims that Maria was the “first white child born in Kansas.”
as some biographers have alleged—establish a whole university. Nevertheless, Joseph Pettie Grant argues in his 1952 dissertation that “the Indian school [Meeker] founded survives today in Ottawa University” (2), and in 2010, the Ottawa Herald claimed that Jotham Meeker was a “famed OU [Ottawa University] founder” (it later published a correction). The founder, instead, was one of Meeker’s friends: John Tecumseh Jones (or “Tauy” Jones), a mixed-race (Euro-American and Chippewa) man adopted by the Ottawa tribe. Local and regional scholars tend to similarly exaggerate Meeker’s legacy as an orthographer. For instance, Grant claims that Meeker “was the inventor of the only usable Indian orthography, or syllabary, of his time” (1). This assertion overlooks Native orthographies that predated Meeker’s work. As Lees points out, “a decade earlier George Guess, or Sequoyah, had developed for the Cherokees the most famous of all Indian orthographies” (10). Jill Lepore provides further context, noting that “once Sequoyah’s work became known” in the 1830s, “it was almost immediately clear that he had

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11 Regarding education, Meeker, in fact, was subject to tribal permissions. After traveling south to Indian Territory (present-day Kansas) in the summer of 1833, for instance, Meeker attempted to establish a school. On October 20, 1833, he writes, “Travel 25 miles against severe wind and snow. Had an interview with the Kickapoo Prophet. Ask permission to teach among his pupils a school in Eng. & Ind. Receive from him what would amount to a refusal. Intend spending the Sabbath here and seeing him again on Monday.” And on October 22, 1833, he writes, “Again conversed with the Prophet, who listened, but gave no favorable answer.” After Meeker’s unsuccessful efforts with the Kickapoo, he approached the Delawares, and on October 24, 1833, writes, “Accompany the Ind. Agent and Br. Lykins & Blanchard to the Delaware country, hoping to obtain the consent of the Indians for Br. Blanchard to erect a School house, and to teach their children.” And on October 31, 1833, reveals that at a meeting, “Ak-kohnah-kse only comes, who seems disposed to not have a School in his band. May the Lord direct and over-rule.”

12 Incidentally, the creek where Meeker built the second Ottawa Baptist Mission has been renamed Tauy Creek. Ottawa University was originally intended to be an Indian school; William E. Unrau and H. Craig Miner trace how “the Ottawas were promised a university . . . paid for most of it,” and “lost it” in Tribal Dispossession and the Ottawa Indian University Fraud (1985) (6).

13 Meeker certainly helped shape Indian Territory’s literary landscape by publishing work in his orthography. His diary and publications show that such labor did not, however, occur in a vacuum of white exceptionalism. Round affirms that “Native apprentices were [sometimes] contracted to do the presswork. A proof sheet was then struck and again checked against the original—sometimes by a Native helper and sometimes by another missionary familiar with the particular Native language involved” (91).
succeeded where Pickering, Brown, Butrick, Evans, and Roberts [white orthographers] had failed. The Cherokee people were learning to read, it seemed, almost overnight” (74). Finally, when introducing Meeker’s orthography in his 1992 University of Kansas thesis, John Mark Lambertson declares:

The dividing line between the [prehistoric and historic eras] is man’s creation of a written form of his language . . . For centuries the peoples native to North America had developed a rich tradition of communicating their stories and legends orally and by drawings, but not in a written form. It therefore can be argued that for the Pottawatomies, Ottawas and Chippewas, and later other Native American tribes, that thin dividing line between prehistoric and historic was Jotham Meeker. (21-22, original emphasis)

Such a perspective not only overlooks Native free will (as evidence through the Ottawas’ desire for and contributions to texts Meeker printed, including the 1850 Ottawa First Book), but it also narrowly defines Native literacy—a shortcoming that more recent scholars correct. Birgit Brander Rasmussen reveals, for example, that “European newcomers to the American continents . . . found the indigenous people writing on birch bark and in screenfold books, in public and in private, on matters both sacred and profane” (19). “Literacy,” Rasmussen shows, is not strictly

14 Lepore quotes further statistics that show that as many as three-fourths of the Cherokee could read by 1838 due to Sequoyah’s syllabary (74).
15 Meeker’s 1850 edition of the Ottawa First Book, for instance, includes the “U. States Whiskey Laws” in Ottawa and the “Ottawa Laws” in both Ottawa and English. Meeker’s diary reveals that the Ottawa wrote their laws during a “council” held on June 8, 1844. Overall, Meeker published the 1850 Ottawa First Book in response to Ottawa requests: Meeker explains in his February 7, 1848, diary entry that “the Inds. have been calling for [it] more for over a year past. I commence, on to-day, the compiling of a new one . . . and to print in it the Ottawas’ code of Laws, &c.”
an alphabetic affair. In their quest to establish primacy through Meeker’s legacy, then, post-1855 narrators such as Rounds, Grant, and Lambertson mislay the diverse peoples, literacies, and perspectives that converge in Meeker’s diary. His life writing records an intercultural “present.”

“Lasting”: Jotham Meeker as Settler-Subject

Narrative “lasting,” which bookends “firsting,” shapes settler legacies like Meeker’s by establishing permanence in a contested area (and thus regional belonging). Such “lasting” most vividly orients itself (in Meeker’s case) around the Ottawa Baptist Mission cemetery; as Richard E. Meyer asserts in reference to Oregon’s pioneer cemeteries, such locations hold “the bedrock of regional identity” (88). A 1934 Ottawa Herald headline, for instance, reads: “Seeks Meeker Lore; State Historical Society Official Here; Pioneer Who Brought First Printing Press to Kansas is Buried East of Ottawa.” After describing how Kirke Mechem, the secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society, visited Ottawa to collect information about Meeker, the Herald again specifies that Meeker’s “grave is in the old Indian cemetery” (see Figure 1).

Fifty years later, William B. Lees similarly orients readers around Jotham and Eleanor Meeker’s headstone in his introduction to Jotham Meeker’s Farmstead: Historical Archeology at the Ottawa Baptist Mission, Kansas (1986). While he notes that “[t]ombstones and masses of limestone rubble” indicate both Ottawa and Euro-American graves, Lees draws special attention to the Meekers’

16 Colleen E. Boyd and Coll Thrust note that “tales of Indian burial grounds” are “familiar to most modern North Americans” (viii, vii). Rounds closes his 1935 article on the “First White Child Here” by explaining that the Meekers’ third daughter “Eliza, was born in 1849 on the site of the old Indian cemetery, where the Ottawa mission was then located . . . Here the Meeker parents are buried.”
memorial, calling it “the most impressive of all the monuments” (see Figure 11) (1). He does not identify or describe other graves in the cemetery, instead anchoring the Meekers in white settler history by solely stressing their presence.17 Such a narrow focus “extract[s]” this historical site from its “cultural heritage” and “transform[s] it into a literal point of orientation for a community seeking to confirm its identity” (Waterman 89).18 Community-authored origin stories, as one might expect, elevate some monuments and disregard others.

Figure 11. Jotham and Eleanor Meeker Gravesite (2018). Author’s personal image.

17 Lees’s focus is visually evident in a map of the 1985 archeological dig held at the Franklin County Historical Society, which shows that the Meeker grave was one of four sites that researchers located (along with the house, printing office, and church).
18 In this quotation, Adam John Waterman more specifically addresses white settlers’ appropriation of Black Hawk’s grave in Scott County, Iowa. His discussion is relevant for understanding how local settler cultural has oriented itself around the Meekers’ headstone, however.
A wide-angle view of the Ottawa Baptist Mission cemetery more precisely contextualizes the Meekers’ legacy and recovers Ottawa presence (or “lasting”). Significantly, a plaque at the Ottawa Baptist Mission cemetery’s entrance (installed by the D.A.R. in 1936) lists four notable graves, including “J. Meeker, Founder,” “Chief Compchau,” “Notino, the Medicine Man,” and “J. Tecumseh Jones, Founder of O.U.” (see Figure 10 in the Introduction). Notable Ottawas thus outnumber noted Euro-Americans by 3:1. Further, when approached from the southeast (the cemetery’s entrance), the Meekers’ grave is only a small white memorial in the distance (circled in red). At least ten Ottawa graves, some of which are distinguished by detailed memorials and limestone mounds of their own, occupy the foreground (see Figure 12). All the numbered boxes (including the memorial in the bottom right corner for Compchau, “Chief of Ottawas,” who died March 1863, “Aged 74 Yrs.”) mark Ottawa graves:

![Figure 12. Ottawa Baptist Mission Cemetery. Author’s personal image.](image)

Incidentally, both the map and the D.A.R. plaque omit Eleanor Meeker (as well as all other women in the cemetery).
Though certainly prominent at short range, Jotham and Eleanor Meeker’s memorial, when viewed from a wider vantage, becomes one structure in an otherwise well-marked scene. If the Meekers’ grave is a landmark of local settler “lasting,” then the Ottawa graves deserve similar recognition.\textsuperscript{20}

I would like to close this section with further attention to the material archive and the intercultural narrative (alongside the Ottawa Baptist Mission cemetery) that it supports. Artifacts discovered during the 1985 archeological dig signal an overlapping, intermingled, intercultural story. Two artifacts prompted local headlines of a “major find.” The first was printer’s type, “including eleven characters and five spacers” (Lees 91). The June 6, 1985, \textit{Ottawa Times} notes that the printer’s type “substantiates the printing activities of Jotham Meeker at the old Ottawa Baptist Mission four miles northeast of here,” and that “[o]fficials were elated over the discovery so soon into the dig.” In addition to confirming the printing press’s location, the type played a (potential) unsung role in the “afterlife” of Meeker’s settler identity; according to local lore, after Meeker died, the “type and other material used at the mission farm by Mr. Meeker were scattered broadcast on the prairie by the Indian children, and as late as 1865, handfuls of type could be picked up near where lies buried one of the most zealous missionaries that ever labored in any land” (Mechem). The second “major find” at the dig likewise invoked intercultural relations: an arrowhead. The June 13, 1985, \textit{Ottawa Times} explains, “officials have identified the base of a

\textsuperscript{20} It is interesting to note that some local newspaper articles, when they do discuss the Ottawa, emphasize that the tribe “only” lived in the area for 30 years (such as the December 6, 2011, \textit{Ottawa Herald}). Meeker died in 1855, and the Ottawa relocated to Indian Territory (i.e. Oklahoma) in 1867; they thus outlasted Meeker at the site by twelve years.
prehistoric Paleo-Indian projectile point as being over 12,000 years old. . . . Officials of the dig are thrilled over the prehistoric find because they have been able to establish that at least four different time periods are represented on the site.” Significantly, the archeologists found the arrowhead in the remains of Meeker’s hearth. Lees speculates, “It is possible that this point was an integral part of a religious bundle or other artifact possessed by the Ottawa Indians ministered to by Jotham Meeker” (111). The arrowhead’s presence in the hearth (where it had lain for over 100 years) proves that Meeker’s settlement story is not merely his own. Printer’s type and arrowhead co-exist.

Today, all the smaller metal objects from the 1985 Ottawa Baptist Mission dig are stored together in one plastic bag among boxes of other artifacts (including broken pottery, glass, nails, and mortar) at the Kansas State Historical Society Archeology Lab. These jumbled items include the printer’s type, empty bullet casings, and a handmade “tinkling cone” (otherwise known as a “jangle”) from a Native clothing item (see Figure 13 below).21 Viewing these objects together reinforces that Meeker is merely one author or one component of the narratives (and, indeed, the alphabetic texts) of this era and area. Viewing Meeker as a more recent and interculturally connected settler, then, disrupts the idea that his life story represents “one man’s part in the epic of the Winning of the West” (McMurtrie and Allen 16). Meeker is a part, but not the whole

21 According to Lees, “The five metal cartridges include one ‘separate primed’ cartridge and four ‘rim fire’ cartridges. The separate primed cartridge is the only cartridge from the site which may date to the use of the Ottawa Baptist Mission although it definitely postdates the tenure of the Meekers at this site” (82). He also notes that “[w]hether or not these tinkling cones were made by the Ottawa Indian residents near” the Ottawa Baptist Mission site “can only be the subject of speculation” (87). Even if these metal artifacts did not overlap in Meeker’s time, they intersect today.
story—and certainly not the “first” or the “last.”

Figure 13. Printer’s Type, Bullet Casings, and a “Tinkle Cone.” Author’s personal image.

“All of a Sudden, We Are to be Surrounded”: Jotham Meeker as Settler-Witness

While post-1855 “firsting” and “lasting” narratives are largely responsible for omitting intercultural contexts related to Jotham Meeker’s legacy, it is important to note that elements of his diary (and thus his self-constructed identity) do lend themselves to the type of settler heroism circulated in local histories. In his capacity as settler-witness, Meeker observed (and recorded) twenty years of Indian Territory history, including Jackson-era removal policies and white settler encroachments. In 1850, Meeker even transitioned from witness to participant by filing a “pre-emption” claim on Peoria lands in anticipation of legal settlement. Overall, then, Meeker’s diary serves an important (and critically understudied) documentary role; it is also inherently a white settler text. Tracing Meeker’s self-reported observations of Indian Territory history thus reveals narrative gaps that Native-authored records better fill. In particular, Meeker’s 1830s diary entries
catalog Native removals (and subsequent arrivals) in a pragmatic tone. As Meeker made his way from Sault St. Marie to Indian Territory on September 25, 1833, he wrote, “Learn from passengers that not 100 Ottawas live west of Missouri.” When further removal policies forced more Ohio Ottawas into Indian Territory in 1837, Meeker dutifully recorded the “emigrants” figures in his diary (and sometimes briefly remarked on the potential for intercultural relations). On October 6, 1837, for example, Meeker explains, “Learn that 123 Ottawas have arrived from Ohio at Choteau’s landing,” and on October 11, 1837, he writes, “170 Ottawas arrive from Ohio, who appear, generally, friendly to missionary operations.” Referring to the Ottawas in language that casts them as emigrants (emphasizing their peaceful arrival) elides the violence associated with 1830s removals. As one might expect from Meeker’s limited vantage (and typically concise writing style), little attention is spared for the perspectives of the recently displaced, newly arrived, Ottawa.

More recent scholarship and as-told-to Ottawa accounts crucially supplement Meeker’s sanitized record, ultimately complicating his self-reported story of Jackson-era removal. John P. Bowes acknowledges in *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal* (2016) that “[c]ertain images must not be forgotten, marginalized, or ignored in any discussion of Indian removal” (3). As one example, Bowes describes how “227 Shawnees and Senecas” en route to Indian Territory in 1827 were stuck “in a miserable condition” because their horses had starved (3). Bowes also quotes Colonel J. J. Abert, “who reported from Arrow Ferry [Arrow Rock, Missouri] on the west branch of the Missouri River on November 18, 1832 [that] ‘The Ottaway camp still continues healthy, but I should not be surprised if some of these Shawnees were found frozen to death to-morrow’” (3). Joseph Badger King, who survived the Ottawas’ removal from Ohio (under Abert’s direction) and whose father interpreted for Meeker at the Ottawa Baptist
Mission, provides an even more direct (and heartbreaking) account. King’s narrative appeared in
*Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1913-1914.* Then 90 years old, King recalls:

In 1836-37 the Ottawas of Blanchard’s Fork, Roche de Boeuf and Oquan oxa’s village . . .
. were moved to that part of the old Indian Territory which is now included in Kansas.
These Ottawas had been very loath to leave their old homes in Ohio, but there were
scheming land sharks who coveted Indian possessions in those days, just as there are
now. I remember that one old village chief, Thunderbolt by name, positively refused to
sign away the lands of his people. The land grabbers finally succeeded in making him
drunk and, while he was in that condition, they took him by the wrist and caused him to
touch the pen by which his mark was attached to the document. Thunderbolt was furious
when he became sober and learned what had been done. He not only denounced the
means used but he repudiated his signature and flatly refused to go when the time came
for the tribe to take up its long journey to the west. So he was tied, hand and foot, and
thrown into a wagon. (373-374)

King continues, “no excitement and no novelty could still the dull pain in hearts that were
homesick,” and “the beauty of our new home country and the variety and profusion of its wild
game did not serve to reconcile those who had been opposed to moving west” (374). King thus
supplies an alternative narrative of Ottawa arrival in Indian Territory, crucially supplementing

22 Joseph B. Thoburn, a history instructor at the University of Oklahoma, collected King’s testimony in 1913; King
is listed as the author of this article.
Meeker’s figure-oriented approach with an account of human consequences to federal removal.  

Meeker’s privately recorded catalogues of Native removals (and subsequent arrivals) intersect with the settler-missionary literature of his time through the *Annual Register of Indian Affairs within the Indian (or Western) Territory* (1836). Baptist missionary Isaac McCoy, who encouraged Meeker to remove to Indian Territory in 1834, wrote the *Annual Register*; Meeker subsequently printed it at the Shawnee Baptist Mission. The *Register*’s purpose, according to McCoy, was to “benefit a suffering remnant of a noble, and once numerous race of men; and to contribute somewhat towards relieving our government from unnecessary difficulties which have ever hung upon the subject of Indian affairs” (2). Such language invokes Margaret Jacobs’s observation that “[s]ettler colonial narratives . . . often present the demise of indigenous peoples

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23 Meeker records the removal and migration of several other tribes throughout his diary. Examples include:

Feb. 2, 1837
Learn that the Putawatomies [sic] are to be removed on to the Osage river.

Aug. 31, 1837
Haul hay. A delegation of Chippewas arrive from Saginaw to see the country on the Osage river.

Sept. 4, 1837
The Chippewa delegation start back. They speak of the country as being good, but think their people will not come.

March 17, 1841
All day translating. A great many Kaws pass by us on their way to the Osage country.

24 McCoy defined “Indian (or Western) Territory” as the entire central United States, including present-day Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, and portions of Colorado (north of the 1834 Mexico border) (3). Missionaries such as McCoy and Meeker pursued conversions within an overall context of government-sanctioned civilization; Lucy Maddox reveals in *Removals* (1991) that “[George] Catlin’s belief that the best hope for the Indians lay with the white missionaries, who might succeed in saving at least some of the Indians from extinction by making Christian citizens of them, was shared by many of the missionaries themselves” (29).
as inevitable . . . With a wistful sigh, popular accounts of westward expansion mourn the passing
of the Indians as a (perhaps) tragic but unavoidable result of progress” (6). McCoy and Meeker,
like many (perhaps well-intentioned) white writers of their day, thus perpetuate stereotypes of a
“vanishing” and “noble Indian” even as the Annual Register signals the perseverance and
growing presence of Native peoples.25 In particular, McCoy and Meeker include a table in the
Register that conveys Indian Territory’s intercultural reality in 1836. It lists eight “Indigenous
Tribes” (including the “Osage, Kauzau, Otoe & Missouria, Omaha, Pawnee, Puncah, and
Quapau,” encompassing an estimated 21,444 Native peoples) and fourteen “Emigrant Tribes”
(including the “Choctaw, Cherokee, Creek, Seneca & Shawnee of Neosho, Wea, Piankasha,
Peoria & Kaskaskias, Ottawa, Shawanoe of Kauzau riv., Delaware, Kickapoo, and Putawatomi
[sic],” encompassing an estimated 26, 289 Native peoples) (4). The table also shows roughly
1,150 enslaved African-American peoples among the Choctaw, Cherokee, and Creek (4). The
presence of so many “Emigrant Tribes” indicates the effects of Jackson-era removals. Though
intended to catalogue a “suffering remnant,” McCoy’s and Meeker’s list has the duplicate effect
of underscoring Native presence. O’Brien similarly observes of New England histories that in
“stark contrast to the narrative construction[s]” of white writers, “New England Indians actually

25 In this vein, it is particularly interesting to note that in her “Sketch of the Life of Jotham Meeker,” Keith ends by
asserting that after Jotham and Eleanor Meekers’ deaths, the Ottawa “tribe, broken-hearted & deserted, tried to keep
together for a time, but they gradually lessened in numbers & some died, and others moved away until at present
[1911] only a small remnant remain, being located in northeastern Oklahoma.” The editor (unnamed) then
intervenes with a bracketed note: “[The Ottawas have thrived there, and their numbers, as with most Indian tribes,
are growing.]” Joseph Badger King likewise affirms in his article that in “recent years the [Ottawa] tribe has been
gaining in strength and now numbers about two hundred members” (377).
‘last,’ and remain vibrant” (xv).

The population influxes recorded in the Annual Register contributed to regional tensions; Meeker’s self-constructed role as an unemotional witness begins to break down in the face of conflict. On May 28, 1836 (while still at the Shawnee Baptist Mission), Meeker writes, “Travel with my wife & child to Wea Mission—find but one man at the Station all having fled on account of a rumor that the Osages are coming to fight the Weas and Whites. The Weas are all prepared to defend themselves.” At a Sabbath meeting the next day, Meeker notes, “The Inds. carry their arms with them.” And on May 30, 1836, Meeker explains, “At 1 o’clock, A. M. we were aroused by the Weas, who stated that the Osages were in an adjoining settlement, 3 miles distant, killing the Piankeshas.—the women and children crowded into the Mission House for protection—it was soon found to be a false alarm—Conclude to not go to the Ottawa settlement. We return home.” Meeker’s sentences, which fail to capitalize “the” and “it” (and are connected by dashes) run together, reflecting his alarm at the situation. Two years later, on March 30, 1838, Meeker writes, “About fifty Osage Indiana arrived at our house about noon. On account of some recent difficulties between them and the Whites, some of us felt a little startled at their first appearance.” For a diarist who rarely reveals emotions, admitting that he (and others) “felt a little startled” by the Osage speaks volumes about the pressures of forced occupation and migration. Meeker’s diary, most overtly a personal record, thus acts as a barometer of intercultural relationships during the 1830s.

By the 1850s, Meeker’s relatively passive role as a “settler-witness” transitioned to full (though somewhat sheepish) participation in white settlement efforts; his diary, in turn, bears
On May 27, 1850, for instance, Meeker writes, “Set types... California emigrants have passed more or less perhaps every day from April 15 until last Monday, May 22.” And on June 17, 1850, he reveals even greater surprise at the stream of white emigrants, noting, “Three families by the name of Cart, Milner & Shaw stop here a short time, from Indiana—they are to settle on the Peoria lands, some 5 or 6 miles E. of us, Learn that many others are coming—so that, all of a sudden, we are to be surrounded by white settlements.” Meeker’s surprise, in which settlement seems to occur “all of a sudden,” reflects Stephen Warren’s assertion that “Meeker measured his success in the smaller world of his immediate surroundings. His mission concerned him far more than federal policies or border politics” (111). Meeker’s observations eventually convinced him to establish his own claim: on June 30, 1850, Meeker resolves, “As White men are thronging all of the settleable lands in this part of Kansas Territory, and making pre-emption Claims, I too, conclude to employ John King to mark out a similar claim for me to 160 acres of land lying some five or six miles east of us on the Peoria lands, putting ‘J. Meeker, June 30,’ on the corners.” Significantly, Meeker chose to establish his own homestead “on the Peoria lands” (not Shawnee or Ottawa lands, with whom he most closely lived and worked). He also buries his decision to do so in a lengthy introductory clause, a rhetorical move (uncharacteristic of his direct writing style) that seems to betray his

26 Greg Olson notes that prior to the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act, the number of settlers in Indian Territory “was small because the land that would make up Kansas and Nebraska had been set aside exclusively for Native people. Indian agents, missionaries, and licensed traders were the only white people legally allowed to live on the land. Others living in the region were technically squatters” (109).
27 If Meeker—and John King—did follow through, then records of the claim do not exist (probably because Meeker died before he could officially establish settlement there).
sheepishness at succumbing to settler pressure. Finally, on June 1, 1854, Meeker writes, “Learn that Nebraska and Kansas Territories are organized, that the Shawanoes have sold their lands, and that emigrants are squatting around us in great numbers.”\(^{28}\) Meeker’s desire to claim Peoria lands reveals his perplexity with, yet participation in, settler culture. As a witness to both removal and settlement efforts, Meeker saw Indian Territory vastly change in his life; his diary is thus an index of change.\(^{29}\)

“An Arrow of the Almighty Sent into His Heart”: Jotham Meeker as Settler-Performer

As a diarist, Jotham Meeker’s writing style is predominantly concise and action-oriented (example entries include “Writing and studying Indian. Warm and misty” from January 5, 1833, and “Chopping fuel and studying Indian” from January 19, 1833); however, Meeker’s prose becomes much more expansive and formal when describing religious encounters—especially

\(^{28}\) Olson notes that by May 27, 1854 (just one day after “Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act”), “thousands—one witness estimated as many as thirty thousand—of settlers were waiting along Missouri’s western border to stake land claims in the new Kansas Territory. Unfortunately when these settlers flooded across the border, there was no land legally available in the new territory for them to claim. The government had begun to negotiate land cessions with most of the Native nations living in eastern Kansas, but the U.S. Senate had not yet ratified any of the resulting treaties. Just two weeks before the Kansas-Nebraska Act took effect, the Ioways, Sacs, and Foxes had signed treaties that cut the size of their combined land from four hundred square miles to about one hundred square miles” (109-110).

\(^{29}\) An article from The Missionary Magazine in July 1855 provides an update on various missions; regarding the Ottawa Mission, the article notes that it is run by “Mrs. E. D. Meeker” and an unnamed “native assistant” (Jotham Meeker had died in January). The article asserts that “[b]y the opening of the territory to settlement, the tribe will be intermingled with a white population. According to past experience, the effect will be evil. But whether for good or ill, it is manifest that the religious interests of the Indians will not long be distinct from those of the general community in which they are to be merged, and the future care of the mission will be to conduct them as favorably as possible through the transition period.” The Ottawas, however, decided against this merger, and according to Lees, “In 1862, pressures in the new state of Kansas for the opening of Indian lands to settlement resulted in a treaty . . . which provided for members of the Kansas Ottawa to receive allotments with all surplus lands being offered for sale to settlers” (21).
Native conversions and baptisms. For instance, Meeker richly describes the conversion of Louis King (Ottawa), Joseph Badger King’s father, on September 2, 1838, using several complete sentences versus his characteristic fragments.  

Meeker writes, “In the evening L. King sent for me to come and see him and bring my bible. . . . he said that my address to-day was like an arrow of the Almighty sent into his heart. He made all the confessions and promises that I could wish—he wants all Christians to pray for him—to watch, admonish, rebuke him, and he wishes from this day forward to walk with God.” On September 9, 1838, Meeker records that “King declared in public his wish to live hereafter a Christian life.” Meeker’s attention to such acts invokes a tradition of religious performance. In “John Eliot’s Playing Indian” (2007), Joshua David Bellin writes that the “scene is inescapable in the mission literature of puritan New England: a man stands before an audience, and performs. The player may be either Indian or white; the audience likewise. The stage upon which the performance is set may take many forms: an Indian settlement, a . . . meeting-house, the banks of a river” (1). Bellin continues, “But whatever its details, the goal of the performance is set: to secure through physical tokens the genuineness of Indian conversions” (1). Participating in such a tradition—and carefully recording his accomplishments—reveals that the frontier identity Jotham Meeker most consciously constructs in his diary is that of missionary; incidentally, this is the aspect of Meeker’s settler identity that is least distorted by local histories.

30 Joseph Badger King recalls that his father, Louis King (Ottawa), played a formative role in Meeker’s development as an intercultural, linguistically fluid, preacher. King reveals that “[d]uring the two years that he was learning the Ottawa language [Meeker] preached regularly, my father acting as his interpreter” (376).
When self-reporting conversions and baptisms in his diary, Meeker gives special attention to “players” (most often Ottawa) and “stages,” including the first Ottawa Baptist Mission “school house” and a “frozen “river.” Entries about such performative events contrast strongly with the shorter and less formal records that surround them. Meeker’s February 1, 1840, diary entry, for instance, which details his preparations for a baptism, is characteristically concise and action-oriented: “Stay at home all day. Make preparations for our quarterly Ch. meeting, which is to be on to-morrow. Cut a hole in the ice in the river for a place of baptizing.” When describing the baptism on February 2, however, Meeker greatly elaborates. The scene in his diary, in part, reads:

We met in the school house at 11 o’clock. From 30 to 40 Indians attended, when a door was opened for the reception of members. Ce-ceel [Ottawa], our Br. D. Green’s wife arose and declared what the Lord had done for her soul, after which the members of the Church present unanimously voted that she be united with us in Church fellowship after baptism. I then preached to all present in the Ottawa language from “For God so loved the world” &c. After which we repaired to the river, and while the audience stood on the ice I immersed Mrs. Green in the name of the Holy Trinity. We again met in the school house, I gave Mrs. G. the right hand of fellowship, and we partook of the Lord’s Supper. Meeker’s February 2, 1840, entry continues twice as long, detailing the “earnestness” of “Br. David” (Ottawa) as he preached and the interest of an Ottawa man, Wasindossunk, in converting.

31 The first Ottawa Baptist Mission flooded in 1844. Meeker did not rebuild the school at the second Ottawa Baptist Mission site.
The length and content of this particular entry shows the importance of missionizing to Meeker; like Puritan missionary John Eliot, Meeker describes a moment of conversion as well as his role as God’s instrument. In the process, it is a performance conducted with Native converts.

Visual records reinforce the self-constructed nature of Meeker’s missionary identity—at least as we see it in his diary. In an 1846 daguerreotype, his only portrait, Meeker wears a formal black suit and cravat (see Figure 14). He points to a page in a book, presumably a bible (two smaller books rest on the table), and gazes heavenward. A faint halo rings his face, which is solemn (emphasizing the introspective nature of his profession). Meeker thus adopts the garb, props, demeanor, and scenery of an idealized missionary—not a settler. In contrast, Eleanor Meeker’s picture is more pragmatic; she gazes directly at the viewer (rather than staging a scene, she merely poses—a simple headshot). The discrepancies between the Meekers’ images even more greatly highlights the self-constructed and performative nature of Jotham Meeker’s missionary identity.

32 As Albert Furtwangler shares, “Protestants took their religion from the book, and, no matter what their particular denomination, their habits were deeply bookish . . .They came to impart salvation to the Indians, but salvation as they understood it included this literate worldview” (10). It is thus not surprising that Meeker poses with several books in his daguerreotype.
Meeker’s daguerreotype also signals the importance of missionizing to his life and writing, a view that counters Warren’s perceptions of Meeker. Warren alleges that Meeker’s “diary and other accounts of his life describe a man who labored longer in the fields than in the pulpit,” or a “farmer-preacher” (111). As evidence, Warren explains, “A child of one of the missionaries recalled that ‘when an Indian first commenced to plow, he would go with him and hold the plow, and show him how to manage it. He would often go and work with an Indian for hours.’ After a day of shared labor, Meeker ‘would sit down to rest, taking that opportunity to instruct the Indian
in some matter of religion or morality’” (111). Although Meeker certainly describes farming and settling efforts in his diary, his formal attention (both visual and textual) to missionizing proves that this specific aspect of settler identity fundamentally informed both his private (i.e. diary) and public personas.

Meeker, of course, did not perform his self-constructed missionary role in a vacuum; moments of Native consent, dissent, and/or ambivalence fundamentally shaped his successes and failures. On August 4, 1834 (when he still lived at the Shawnee Baptist Mission), for instance, Meeker wrote, “Accompanied the Ottawa Chiefs to the Agent’s, where they gave their public consent for me to become their missionary.” Such publicly granted permission, which centralizes Ottawa choice, counters William E. Unrau’s and Craig H. Miner’s assertion that “[o]nce in the new Canaan [Kansas], the Ottawas became almost hopelessly entrapped between McCoy’s grandiose plans and Meeker’s more mundane strategy for Indian civilization” (61). Moments of refusal likewise counter the idea that the Ottawa were “hopelessly entrapped.” Joseph Badger King, for example, remembers that “[s]ome of the Ottawas were very much averse to having a missionary laboring among them—so much so, in fact, that they made an open show of their displeasure by wrestling and playing the gambling game of ‘moccasin’ in front of the church door while services were being conducted inside” (377). For his part, Meeker records several intense interruptions: he writes on April 8, 1838, that “[d]uring our services a dozen or more men

33 Furtwangler normalizes, rather than criticizes, this approach, noting that the “explorers came to survey the land and treat briefly with its people. The missionaries came specifically to engage with the people, and immediately found themselves entangled with the land—with hoes in their hands from the start” (5).
came apparently to break up the meeting, but they failed. After meeting went to David’s [Ottawa] house. I read some scripture in Indian, sung & prayed in presence of eight adult Indians.” And on February 3, 1840, he notes, “Learn that Ottowukkee and others are madly raging against us and all those who listen to our teaching. They threaten to fight some and to pull the ears of others, they say that I am a devil, and worse than the devil. Some tell me that they will have to quit their attendance at meeting—because they are afraid of these enraged conjurers.”

Such a challenge to Meeker’s settler-missionary identity, which positions him—not the unconverted Ottawa—as a “devil,” prompts an uncharacteristically heated entry (i.e. “madly raging” and “enraged conjurers”). Bellin contextualizes such an exchange when describing Puritan missionary efforts to quell powwows. He asserts, “What the powwows’ acts signify is the possibility that the devil’s own surrogates may have invaded the mission sanctum in the guise of the godly” (18). Meeker’s missionizing is thus not a straightforward success story . . . both struggle and triumph define his self-reported identity.

In the end, Meeker’s diary preserves a series of interlocking performances that situate his missionary identity within a larger context of Ottawa agency; through their own carefully crafted productions, the Ottawa reconfigure Meeker (whether he realizes it or not) as an audience member who must wait for his turn to speak; as Bellin explains, “the mission provided Indian peoples comparable opportunities to define themselves” (3). For his part, including such episodes in his diary affirms Meeker’s ability to negotiate multiple “scenes” and “players,” underscoring his adaptability as a missionary-performer. The most vivid example of Ottawa performance in Meeker’s diary occurs on March 13, 1840, when the Ottawa summon him to a council (a follow-up to the February 1840 tensions that challenged Meeker’s settler identity). Meeker later writes,

On my arrival I found them in real council style, with two Am. flags hoisted over the
Council ground. After all [were] seated Ottowukkee addressed me, and said that
Kompchau [Compchau, buried near Meeker] would deliver a speech to me, after which I
might answer. Kompchow [Compchau] presented several charges against me, and
intimated that he did not want, nor never had wanted me in the country. I in my reply,
made it appear plain that I was clear of all the charges alleged [sic] against me.
The Ottawa took care to set the scene (hosting two American flags) and assign the participants
their roles: Compchau will “deliver a speech,” then Meeker “might answer.” On March 16, 1840,
Meeker learns more about the Ottawas’ underlying concerns with his missionizing. Ashtonukwat
wants Baptist converts David and Asees to “stop immediately their talk about subdividing the
Ottawa land, and David must stop his religious visits.” As this episode shows, resistance to
missionizing thus jointed with concerns over land use and division for the Ottawa (who removed
again in 1867). For his part, Meeker, a “preacher-farmer,” pursued conversion in a context where
the two activities could not be separated. Performing his missionary identity in rapidly changing
Indian Territory required intercultural negotiations for the right to both speak and remain “in the
country.” That Meeker and Compchau are buried at the same site (Figure 12) signals each of
their “lasting” legacies as inextricably linked.

Conclusion

Post-1855 public reception of Jotham Meeker’s life and writing proves that white settler
origin stories converge around “exceptional” sites and people. In other words, historic locations
like the Ottawa Baptist Mission cemetery and alphabetic materials like Meeker’s diary
(described as an archival “treasure”) become touchstones for settler authenticity (Lees 8).
“Alternative literacies” help correct the narrative distortions that occur through “firsting” and
“lasting.” Regardless of the stories they tell, U.S. Western settlers are fundamentally linked to—and often deeply informed by—the Native peoples they seek to displace. As a record of intercultural exchanges and territorial transitions, Meeker’s diary uniquely embodies Lawson’s idea that “the settler is located at the point of negotiation between the contending authorities of Empire and Native, the place where the operations of colonial power as negotiation are made most intensely visible” (1216). Rasmussen similarly notes that “[r]ecovering such textual interactions and reading them in dialogue with indigenous records enable us to imagine a literary tradition rooted in negotiation and dialogues—rather than simply conquest and colonial monologues—at the foundation of American literature” (9). While he did identify as a settler-missionary, overall, Meeker’s life story offers an alternative narrative to “conquest” in which “dialogue,” including refusals and permissions, intimately shapes both Native and white settler experiences in the West.

In closing, Jotham Meeker’s legacy, as well as the legacy of the Ottawa and Shawnee Indians with whom he lived and worked, continues to inspire intercultural performances. Tucked in a manila folder at the Franklin County Historical Society (Ottawa, Kansas), for instance, is a brief account by Randall M. Thies titled “The Meeker Service” (1985). Thies explains that on October 6, 1985, around 150 First Baptist Church members and “special” guests (including a “great-great granddaughter of the Meekers, and two descendants of Notino, the former Ottawa medicine man and Meeker contemporary”) gathered at the site of the second Ottawa Baptist

34 Jason Edward Black also insightfully argues that “the shaping of US identities and Native identities across a centuries-old colonial landscape can be found in an exchange of voices” (7).
Mission for a commemorative service (37). Since only the cemetery and a bare field marked the site, organizers drew the “location of the church walls” on the grass with “white lime” (37). According to Thies, “[c]hairs were set out in rows facing a small lectern placed at the north end of the church, where Meeker’s pulpit once stood” (37). In the simulated (even resurrected) church, attendees sang two hymns from Meeker’s Ottawa hymnal, and a local minister delivered one of Meeker’s sermons. Climaxing the reenacted service, Thies remembers, was a “very special event”:

the singing of the doxology in the Ottawa language. . . . two members of the congregation . . . held up a blackboard on which the words for the doxology had been written out in Ottawan, using the phonetic system developed by Meeker. Reverend Lambertson first sang it through alone so that we could hear the pronunciation, then we all sang it through together. For the first time in over a century, the sounds of the Ottawan words resounded across the hilltop. (38)

Other than listing Notino’s descendants as two of the commemorative event’s “special guests” (Notino’s grave lies west of Jotham and Eleanor Meeker’s; see Figure 15), Theis does not remark on Ottawa participation in the service—nor does he contemplate how white Baptist church attendees (rather than Ottawa tribal members) dominated the 1985 audience. Thus, many of the

35 The timing of this event likely coincided with renewed interest in the Ottawa Baptist Mission after the Kansas State Historical Society’s archeological dig there the previous summer. Several documents tied to Notino, including a letter that Notino dictated on behalf of the “Ottawa Nation” on October 4, 1843, and subsequently sent to “My Father” (President John Tyler), are included in the Jotham Meeker Papers at the Kansas State Historical Society.

36 Reverend Lambertson was John Mark Lambertson’s father.
“Meeker service’s” participants, to quote Bellin (who, in turn, quotes Philip J. Deloria), were “playing Indian” 130 years after Meeker delivered his last service there (2). Such a reenactment—a meticulously constructed, well-attended performance—helps illuminate the “afterlife” of settler legacies in contested U.S. Western spaces. Overall, evaluating both traditional and alternative archives as well as alphabetic and nonalphabetic texts helps uncover the process of settler storytelling traditions, ultimately restoring texts like Meeker’s diary to their intercultural origins.

Figure 15. Notino’s Grave (2019). Image courtesy of Matt Bristow.
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“Now for the Indian Story”: Conversing the Settler-Colonial Frontier

“We have read the other side of the story,” *The Frontier: A Journal of Early Days and Their Thrilling Events* [Colorado Springs] declared in September 1905. “Let us see what the red man has to say about it.” The “red man” was George Bent (1843-1918), an Anglo-Cheyenne boarding school student, Confederate cavalryman, Dog Soldier, historian, translator, and writer. His “story” was “Forty Years with the Cheyennes,” a six-part autobiography that ran as the *Frontier*’s leading article from October 1905 to March 1906. Though rarely read today, “Forty Years” complicates our understanding of early twentieth-century American Indian life writing, particularly jointly authored autobiographies. Among its diverse interventions, I argue, “Forty Years” privileges Bent’s agency, emphasizes Plains Indian warrior culture and communal identity, and critically engages with texts by white writers like Hamlin Garland. Bent also fundamentally challenges twentieth-century scholarship that defines non-Native collaborators as active and Native subjects as passive; Arnold Krupat, for instance, identifies seven activities for non-Native collaborators in *For Those Who Come After* (1985), but none for the “Indian” participants.¹ Subsequent scholars, including Hertha Dawn Wong, Robert Allen Warrior, Lisa Brooks, and David J. Carlson, have developed a more expansive view of Native agency.² I join

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¹ Krupat explains, “Indian autobiographies are . . . jointly produced by someone who translates, transcribes, compiles, edits, interprets, polishes, and ultimately determines the form of the text in writing, and by an Indian who is its subject and whose life becomes the content of the ‘autobiography’” (30).

² This chapter’s structure most closely follows Carlson’s methodology in *Sovereign Selves* (2006). Carlson explains, “This book argues that criticism of Native American autobiography should start with a broad sense of the way colonial discourse functioned in the nineteenth century, then proceed to close readings of individual texts” (14). Also, in the vein of Brooks, I seek to complicate longstanding binaries used to describe Bent; as noted in *The Common Pot* (2008), “Literary critics frequently portray early Native American writers either as individuals caught between two worlds or as subjects who, even as they defied the colonial world, struggled to exist within it.”
them by arguing that Bent’s unpublished letters, maps, drafts, and notes offer a rarely recorded
glimpse into the collaborative process. My recovery of “Forty Years” thus establishes George
Bent as a key Southern Cheyenne literary figure who, along with Charles Eastman (Dakota
Sioux) and Zitkala-Ša (Yankton Sioux), authored a multivalent response to settler colonialism in
the U.S. West.

Born in 1843, Bent was the son of
William Bent, a Euro-American trader who
helped found Bent’s Old Fort in present-day
southeastern Colorado, and Owl Woman,
whose father was White Thunder, a prominent
Southern Cheyenne Arrow Keeper (see
Figures 16 and 17). George Bent grew up
around the fort before attending schools in
Westport and St. Louis, Missouri.³ Though too
young to enlist legally at the outbreak of the
Civil War, he joined the Confederate cavalry

³ Bent’s Old Fort, reconstructed in 1976, is a national historic site in southeastern Colorado. For more information,
see David Lavender’s Bent’s Fort (1954), Douglas C. Comer’s Ritual Ground: Bent’s Old Fort, World Formation,
and the Annexation of the Southwest (1996), and Melvin Bacon and Daniel Blegen’s Bent’s Fort: Crossroads of
Cultures on the Santa Fe Trail (2002). George Bent first studied at a school run by Reverend Nathan Scarritt, who,
according to Halaas and Masich, “founded the Western Academy, a coeducational school intended for the children
of affluent Westport families” (73). In St. Louis, Halaas and Masich share, Bent initially attended the “Academy of
the Christian Brothers,” a strict “Catholic boarding school,” before transferring to “Webster College for Boys,”
which “sprawled over a hillside ten miles from the city’s heart and comprised 150 acres of scenic woodlands” (78).
and fought in battles at Lexington, Missouri; Pea Ridge, Arkansas; and Corinth, Mississippi. After being captured and paroled by Union forces in 1862, Bent returned to live in Colorado Territory with the Southern Cheyennes, who called him “Texan on account of [his] service in the Southern army.” In 1864, Bent and his siblings (Charley, Robert, and Julia) survived the Sand Creek Massacre. George Bent subsequently participated in Plains Indian raids against settler-colonial installations, including stage stations (Julesburg) and bridges (North Platte). Privileging such events in “Forty Years” reinforces Bent’s claim to personal and tribal coherence as a Southern Cheyenne warrior-writer.

4 Other than briefly acknowledging his Civil War service, Bent gives little attention in his letters and publications to his experiences as a Confederate cavalrman. His role in the Confederate cavalry allowed him, particularly after a decade of boarding school, to express a warrior identity. Bent’s choice to join the Confederates is likely tied to his childhood observations and educational settings; William Bent enslaved several African Americans at Bent’s Old Fort, and Missouri was a “border state” during the Civil War, both factors that likely influenced his decision.

5 Bent was seventeen when he enlisted. He discusses his service in his April 12, 1906, letter to George Hyde (DPL).
After settling in Indian Territory, Bent established himself as a prolific reader and writer who strove to preserve Southern Cheyenne history and culture. A notice in the May 30, 1912, Colony Courier [Oklahoma] proclaims that “Geo. Bent, son of the famous Indian trader of early Indian days Col. Bent, reads from one to two dailies and about fourteen weekly papers regularly,” and Bent’s letters frequently reference books and reports he has recently read (6). Bent published two texts in his lifetime: “Forty Years with the Cheyennes” and “Old Times in the Southwest: A Reminiscence of Kit Carson,” a 1906 article. He also wrote enough material to form the posthumously published Life of George Bent (1968). William Peterfield Trent and John Erskine highlight Bent’s turn-of-the-century literary efforts in the 1921 edition of the Cambridge History of American Literature, noting that “[t]he Indian side of much of the trouble of the years following 1861 may be read in ‘Forty Years with the Cheyennes,’ written by George Bent for The Frontier” (148). George W. Martin, an early Kansas State Historical Society secretary, likewise praised Bent’s “Forty Years” in 1905 as a “story . . . well told,” and Euro-American ethnographer James Mooney called the Frontier articles a “valuable series of papers of personal recollections” in 1907 (73, 429). Despite early recognition from high-profile readers, “Forty Years with the Cheyennes” is less frequently known today than the more widely distributed Life

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6 While the exact date of Bent’s move to present-day Colony, Oklahoma, is unknown, Richard Hardorff places Bent there by 1885 in Washita Memories (2006) (355).
7 An unpublished, undated, and untitled manuscript also currently resides at History Colorado; this two-page document covers a period of 1826 to 1856 and discusses how William Bent (George’s father) and his brothers established forts on the Arkansas and Purgatoire Rivers. A second unpublished manuscript, according to James Mooney in The Cheyenne Indians (1907), also once existed: Mooney writes that it was called “Cheyenne Personal Names, with Meanings” (1888), and that a record of it appeared in James Constantine Pilling’s Bibliography of the Algonquin Languages (1891). However, this manuscript, which had been housed “in the library of the Bureau of Ethnology,” “seems to have disappeared” (Mooney 428).
of George Bent. “Forty Years” warrants greater attention because it centralizes George Bent as the driving force of the narrative.

A dynamic collaborative approach produced Bent’s texts. Bent handwrote the content that became “Forty Years,” “Old Times,” and Life in hundreds of letters, which he sent to amateur Euro-American ethnographer George Hyde between 1904 and 1918 (Bent’s death); Hyde edited all three texts.8 In these letters, Bent offered stories, interviews, details of Southern Cheyenne skirmishes, rituals, and customs, and maps with penciled-in geographic features, camp locations, and trails. Hyde returned Bent’s letters with more questions, drafts, reading materials, and maps. To prepare for publication, Hyde typed Bent’s handwritten letters, annotated the transcriptions with colored pencils, compiled drafts, and then mailed them to Bent.9 Bent edited the drafts before returning them to Hyde, who then incorporated Bent’s suggestions. Aside from never meeting in person (at the time, Bent lived in Indian Territory near present-day Colony, Oklahoma, and Hyde lived in Omaha, Nebraska), the Bent-Hyde collaboration could only ever

8 Hyde writes in his October 24, 1929, letter to John VanMale that “I must have had several hundred Bent letters,” but “I took the Bent stuff and a lot of other old papers and burned them up” after Bent died (DPL). Hyde further explains that “the letters I sent you were in the bottom of a trunk . . . and thus were saved” (DPL). Incidentally, Hyde published two articles in the Frontier immediately after Bent’s “Forty Years” appeared, including “‘Kit’ Carson’s Fight at Adobe Fort” and “Custer in Virginia” in the April and May 1906 issues. “‘Kit’ Carson’s Fight at Adobe Fort” notably ends with “extracts from a letter recently received from George Bent,” which “give the Indian story of this fight” (5). Hyde glowingly writes in “Custer in Virginia” that “during the campaigns of the Army of the Potomac, Custer had a field of ample scope to afford free play for all his brilliant powers; and it was there in Virginia that he did his most important work and proved himself one of the greatest cavalry leaders of his day” (6). After collaborating with Bent in the early 1900s, Hyde published several more extended American Indian studies, including Red Cloud’s Folk: A History of the Oglala Sioux Indians (1937, 1957), The Pawnee Indians (1951), and A Sioux Chronicle (1956). Life of George Bent (1968), the first book Hyde ever wrote, was his last major publication.

9 None of Hyde’s letters to Bent survive. Faller explains, “We have only one side of their ongoing, fifteen-year conversation, and yet, as with hearing (or overhearing) only one half of a phone call, it is possible to say quite a lot about what went on between them . . . Hyde was in his early twenties when he began writing to Bent; Bent was in his early sixties. The letters don’t indicate they ever met” (68).
have occurred in writing: Hyde was deaf, and communicated with others solely through writing. This textual material undermined contemporaneous assumptions about their partnership. Hyde shares in his October 24, 1929, letter to John VanMale (a Denver publisher) that “[w]hen you ask if I took down the Bent material from his own lips, you are forgetting that I am a deaf man . . . everyone has to write whatever they say to me” (DPL). In other words, VanMale expected *Life of George Bent* to be an as-told-to (i.e. spoken) narrative; he did not assume Bent could write. Contemporary scholars, I contend, have similarly underplayed Bent’s role in the Bent-Hyde collaboration by lauding Hyde’s writing mastery without also recognizing Bent’s writing and editing skills. Closely reading both published and unpublished Bent-Hyde documents—including letters, drafts, and selections from “Forty Years” and *Life*—complicates this essentialist view while restoring Bent’s agency.

In this chapter, I assert that “Forty Years with the Cheyennes” deserves greater scholarly recognition because it—when compared to the more frequently read but more extensively edited *Life of George Bent*—better conveys the Plains Indian oral traditions that underlie Bent’s writing. “Forty Years” also privileges Bent’s authorial role; unlike *Life*, “Forty Years” prominently credits Bent as the author (as does “Old Times”). Filtering Bent through Hyde tempers how readers receive Bent’s views. Lincoln B. Faller, for one, argues in “Making Medicine Against ‘White Man’s Side of Story’” (2000) that “[m]y general problem with Hyde’s

10 The unpublished letters, maps, drafts, and notes in this chapter are found at four main sites. Parenthetical citations throughout will clarify each item’s source using the following acronyms: Denver Public Library (DPL), Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library (Yale), History Colorado (HC), and University of Colorado-Boulder (UCB).
representation of Bent” in Life of George Bent “is that he can make him seem too objective and detached, almost, at times, as if he were a professional historian” (78). In contrast, Faller describes Bent’s unedited style as conversational, noting that the “overall effect” of Bent’s letters “is as though he were putting the words down on the page just as he would speak them, breathings and all,” a view I share (73). My chapter extends Faller’s attention to Bent’s conversational style by suggesting that “Forty Years,” a text Faller mentions but does not otherwise explore, represents more than just a “first, rough form” (Hyde’s description of “Forty Years”). Instead, I assert that Bent’s Frontier articles crucially educate, entertain, affirm, and/or resist readers (depending on their cultural vantage), prompting them to consider the U.S. West from a frankly narrated Southern Cheyenne point of view.

My recovery of “Forty Years with the Cheyennes” intervenes in contemporary settler-colonial and life-writing studies in several key ways. First, I assert that regionally published autobiographies like “Forty Years with the Cheyennes” deepen our understanding of embedded settler-colonial discourses. More broadly, I argue that considering settler-colonial interplay in Bent’s “Forty Years with the Cheyennes”—including its serialization in a U.S. Western periodical called the Frontier—re-centers settler-colonial legacies in Native literature. Settler-colonial theory frequently attends to Anglophone subjects, authors, historical figures, and theorists (especially in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand), but less often grounds itself in

11 Hyde described “Forty Years” as a “first, rough form” in his October 24, 1929, letter to VanMale (DPL).
Native responses.\textsuperscript{12} Blurring settler-colonial binaries by studying settler, Native, and mixed-race subjects helps reframe autobiographies of the American frontier (including Bent’s) as dynamic, yet understudied, sites of literary exchange. Finally, I critically intervene in life-writing studies by recovering conversation, especially paraphrased interviews with Plains Indian subjects (which Bent intersperses in “Forty Years”) as a dynamic intertribal and cross-cultural collaborative mode that subtly orients—and even invites—readers into an ongoing discussion of Western settlement.

My present argument will proceed across three main sections. The first addresses various racial and settler-colonial contexts surrounding George Bent, including nineteenth-, twentieth-, and twenty-first century views of his life and writing. This angle intervenes in previous Bent scholarship by more thoroughly addressing his collaboration with Hyde. My second section links “Forty Years with the Cheyennes” with relevant literary productions, including works by Hamlin Garland (whom Bent personally knew and read) as well as Zitkala-Ša and Charles Eastman, two autobiographers with whom Bent regionally and temporally overlaps. This section also explores Bent’s style and organization, including his singular use of conversational modes in “Forty Years.” Finally, I examine how Bent’s writing functions within the Frontier’s narrative and visual demands by digressively appealing to diverse audiences. Such a strategy significantly establishes Plains Indian survivance, privileges Native orature, and intimately aligns Bent with

\textsuperscript{12} For the purposes of this chapter, foundational settler-colonial theorists and studies include Mark Rifkin’s Settler Common Sense (2014), Walter Hixson’s American Settler Colonialism: A History (2013), Lorenzo Veracini’s Settler Colonialism (2010), Margaret Jacobs’s White Mother to a Dark Race (2009), and Alan Lawson’s “The Anxious Proximities of Settler (Post)colonial Relations” (2004).
Southern Cheyenne tribal history. Overall, then, my chapter presents Bent’s “Forty Years with the Cheyennes” as a vital text in the ongoing effort to recover Native agency in U.S. Western autobiographies.

PART ONE: RACIAL AND SETTLER-COLONIAL CONTEXTS

“Rebel Emissary”: Living and Writing in the U.S. West

Reading a variety of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century newspapers, magazines, military reports, and books critically informed George Bent about inaccurate and/or racist portrayals of American Indians circulated by non-Native commentators. This knowledge fueled Bent’s desire to record his own Southern Cheyenne experiences. For instance, Bent immediately proposes writing a book with Hyde in his January 19, 1905, letter after asserting that African American trapper “Jim Beckwith wrote a poor book” about living among the Crow Indians (DPL). Bent complains in his next letter to Hyde (January 23, 1905) that he told James Mooney “a good many things he hasn’t got in his book” (i.e. *Myths of the Cherokee* from 1902) (DPL). After Bent decides to compose his own text with Hyde, his letters become enthusiastic: “Whenever I see an old Indian I ask him about the old battles which may do to put in the book,” Bent writes (February 20, 1905, DPL). A letter dated a few weeks later shows Bent has already

13 Beckwourth (Beckwith) was an African American writer who dictated *The Life and Adventures of James P. Beckwourth, Mountaineer, Scout, and Pioneer, and Chief of the Crow Nation of Indians* (1856) to T. D. Bonner. Bent does not specify why he thought the book was a poor one; it is worth noting, however, that Beckwourth was at Sand Creek during the Sand Creek Massacre. In his January 7, 1905, letter, Bent writes, “He and Kit Carson hunted for Bent and St. Vrain at Bent’s Fort. . . . Beckwith was a yellow negro. The Cheyennes called him Yellow Crow Indian, as he had been with the Crows a good many years. I saw a good many Crows in 1865 and they knew nothing about Beckwith” (DPL).
read and responded to an early draft: “I went over what you have written,” Bent begins. “It is all right” (March 9, 1905, DPL). When Hyde secured publication in the Frontier in August 1905, Bent became even more ambitious: “I am glad you have sold our writings to Magazine,” he declares. “Now we can write good deal more” (September 2, 1905, HC). Bent’s “our” and “we” underscore the joint labor he envisioned with Hyde, which he hoped would soon produce a book.

In addition to launching his nascent literary efforts, the Frontier’s acceptance piqued George Bent’s interest in how his legacy related to previously published reports, articles, and books. Many of these texts conveyed anti-Native views. As John M. Coward explains in The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identity in the Press, 1820-90 (1999), “To say that Native Americans received ‘bad press’ during the nineteenth century is to state the obvious” (5). Coward further notes that in U.S. Western newspapers, “stories of cooperation and mutual respect were often obscured by reports of violence, stories rich in drama and easily understandable to journalists and readers alike. This emphasis on violence ensured that a major theme of Indian news would be inflammatory and consciously anti-Indian” (5). For example, although Bent was never a Southern Cheyenne chief (nor had the Plains Indians elected an intertribal “War Chief”), a Rocky Mountain News (Denver) article published on March 19, 1866, hysterically proclaims:

THE RED MEN ON THE WAR PATH.—Col. Dodd, who arrived at Leavenworth from Fort Dodge a day or two ago, writes to a friend in this city that it was reported George Bent (a half breed son of one of the Bents of the Mountains) had been elected War Chief of the Cheyennes, Arapahoes, and other Prairie tribes, and that he was preparing to take the field against the whites. Notwithstanding his Anglo-Saxon blood, Bent is said to be a bitter enemy of the white; and as he is brave and daring, trouble may
be expected on the plains.—*St. Louis Democrat, March 7th.*

Well, what will be done about it? Will the authorities take any more notice of this than they have heretofore, or will they continue to load train after train with presents for these *damned infernal devils incarnate*? Our people *know* George Bent, and they also know Col. Theodore H. Dodd, and they know that he would not report as above if there was not something in it. (original emphasis)

The *Rocky Mountain News*’s vitriolic approach privileges Colonel Dodd’s erroneous testimony because “our people” (i.e. Euro-American settlers) “know” him, just as they supposedly “*know* George Bent.” These racist presumptions (and the settler-colonial violence they encouraged) fostered a hostile environment against Bent and the Plains Indians in the mid- to late-1800s. Bent’s awareness of such hostility surfaced as he prepared for publication. In his October 3, 1905, letter to Hyde, Bent professes, “I wish you would write to [the *Frontier* editors] and tell them what different Officers have to say about me in their reports and in the Books also” (*HC*). He makes a similar request of Francis Whittemore (F. W.) Cragin, a professor in Colorado Springs (DPL).¹⁴ Bent does not explain why he wants Hyde and Cragin to vouch for him, nor does he specify reports or books to send. He would have known from texts like the *Rocky Mountain News*, though, that much of what the “Officers ha[d] to say about” him was incendiary. In fact, Bent explains in Part One of “Forty Years” that “some men in Colorado” who were

¹⁴ Cragin had approached Bent for material about Bent’s Old Fort and family photographs (which he wanted to publish in a book he was working on). Cragin particularly desired pictures of Bent’s siblings. In his response, Bent asks Cragin to “[p]lease call on the Frontier Publishing Co. and tell them who I am as they are going to publish some of my writings in their Monthly Magazine” (October 5, 1905, DPL).
sympathetic to the Union “called me a ‘Rebel Emissary,’” and in Part Five, he asserts that “[d]uring the war so many false reports had been spread about me that it was not safe to go among the whites” (5). Bent was thus acutely aware of acerbic views against him. Publishing “Forty Years” helped reclaim his character from hostile turn-of-the-century mainstream presses.

Early twentieth-century responses to “Forty Years with the Cheyennes” reflect the persistent racism of settler culture, particularly to the first installment of Bent’s autobiography. The Frontier’s readership at the time was not large; in 1906, when the sixth article of “Forty Years” appeared, the Frontier had just 4,875 subscribers (Ayers 85). Although the Frontier’s readership was limited, Part One reached a wider audience when reprinted in the Denver Times on November 2, 1905.

The Denver Times warns that a “series of articles calculated to cause any amount of discussion among the pioneers of Colorado is appearing in the Frontier, a magazine published in Colorado Springs” (56). It further claims that Bent “gives descriptions of many historical encounters which vary widely from the accounts written by white chroniclers in the newspapers” (56). Part One, among other topics, details the Sand Creek Massacre—an account that does, indeed, “vary widely” from reports in the Rocky Mountain News and Denver Times.

In profoundly understated prose, Bent’s “Forty Years” captures the initial confusion and subsequent bloodshed suffered by the Southern Cheyenne on November 29, 1864. Bent writes:

_________________________

15 In turn, The Brand Book of the Denver Posse of Westerners (1963) reprinted the Denver Times article in full, including Bent’s narrative. In a second instance of “Forty Years” being reprinted, the Wray Rattler (Wray, Yuma County, Colorado) reproduced (and partially condensed) Part Five in its October 1, 1909, edition.
16 In a footnote to “Reminiscences of Dodge” (1905), an article that appeared in the Collections of the Kansas State
It was not light yet next morning when I was awakened by people shouting that soldiers were coming. I jumped up and ran out of the lodge. By the dim light I could see the soldiers, charging down on the camp from each side. When I looked toward the chief’s lodge I saw that Black Kettle had a flag up on a long pole, to show the troops that the camp was friendly; then the soldiers opened fire from all sides.

At first the people stood huddled in the village, but as the soldiers came on they broke and fled. One party made for the herd, toward which soldiers were also riding. Part of these Indians got ponies, the rest were driven back by the troops, who captured the rest of the herd. The main body of Indians retreated up the creek. I joined a party of about ten middle-aged Cheyenne warriors who were making for the sand hills west of the creek, but the soldiers’ fire was too hot for us and we were forced to turn back into the stream’s bed again. Next we started up the creek with two companies of cavalry following us and keeping up a hot running-fight all the way. We passed a great many dead Indians, lying in the wet sand of the creek’s bottom; men, women and children were lying together and many had already been scalped and mutilated by the Colorado One-hundred days’-men.

About two miles above the camp we came on the main body of Indians, who had dug pits under the high banks of the creek and were hiding in these holes, men, women and children all together, with troops on both sides of the stream firing in upon them. Just as we reached here I was wounded, but got into a pit with the rest of the party. (6)

Historical Society, George W. Martin commented that Bent’s “story is well told, and without passion” in “Forty Years” (73).
Words then fail Bent: he writes simply that “[t]he fight needs little description” (6). A few key readers reacted strongly to Bent’s story. Bent co-biographers David Fridtjof Halaas and Andrew E. Masich share that Jacob Downing, a local attorney, claimed in the *Denver Times* that Bent was a “cutthroat, and a thief, a liar and a scoundrel, but worst of all a halfbreed,” and that “only one squaw and only one papoose in the lot” were killed at Sand Creek (339).17 Downing continues, “Bent’s father, Col. Bent, for whom one of our counties was disgracefully named, was a renegade. Bent’s mother was a squaw. Bent’s father was too much of an outcast to marry a white woman” (339). Downing’s editorial betrays the deep-rooted racism underlying turn-of-the-century Denver, a city first settled and then explosively developed in Bent’s lifetime.18 The Sand Creek Massacre was a particularly touchy subject. As Coward explains, “the press played a major role in defining the original debate over Sand Creek,” and in “particular, the *Daily Rocky Mountain News* . . . was not a neutral party concerning Sand Creek or Colorado politics,” since figures like Colonel Chivington and John Evans (Colorado Territory’s governor), whom the newspaper supported, were tied to the “economic growth in Denver and of Colorado statehood”

17 Lindsay Calhoun explains in *Public Memory of the Sand Creek Massacre* (2012) that “[c]ontemporary estimates number the dead at 160, although Chivington boasted that as many as 500 had been killed . . . As a point of comparison, the Third and First Calvary regiment lost nine men; forty were wounded” (3).
18 Walter Hixson points out in *American Settler Colonialism: A History* (2013) that “Sand Creek . . . illustrates how massacres functioned not as isolated and episodic events but rather as engines of the larger genocidal removal” (121). Hixson further notes that John Evans, who helped Chivington orchestrate the killings as Colorado’s territorial governor, believed, “The benefit to Colorado of that massacre, as they call it, was very great for it ridded the plains of the Indians” (122). Two years before blasting Bent as a “War Chief,” the *Rocky Mountain News* echoed Evans’s racist sentiments: its December 13, 1864, headline for the Sand Creek Massacre reads: “Great Battle with Indians! The Savages Dispersed! 500 INDIANS KILLED. Our Loss 9 Killed, 38 Wounded. Full Particulars” (*Fifty Memorable Front Pages* 9). Such publicly distributed racism, which rewrites the massacre as a battle and glorifies Southern Cheyenne losses, shadowed Bent as a nineteenth-century survivor and a twentieth-century autobiographer.
Bent’s “Forty Years” articles thus crucially intervened in Denver-area newspaper accounts that celebrated, and even unabashedly revised, atrocities that non-Natives perpetrated against Native peoples—a key reason why Bent’s writing deserves greater historical and literary recognition from contemporary scholars.  

“Bent, This is Not Fair”: George Bent, George Hyde, and Settler-Colonial Collaboration

While Bent’s collaboration with George Hyde allowed him to address colonialist discourse by sharing the “Indian story” of nineteenth-century events like the Sand Creek Massacre, doing so required negotiating his partner’s prejudiced views. Hyde’s perceptions of Bent (and American Indians in general) have not yet been thoroughly explored. In a recent essay, Steven C. Haack alludes to minor tensions in the Bent-Hyde relationship, observing that “Bent was generally accommodating . . . though Hyde’s notes occasionally express frustration over Bent’s lack of cooperation” (4). Halaas and Masich, however, omit Hyde’s “frustration,” instead asserting that Hyde “loved Indians—he had loved them ever since he met real live Indians when the Trans-Mississippi Exposition came to town in 1898” (336). With some conditions, Faller

19 In a second example of a disgruntled Euro-American reader, Part Four of “Forty Years” ends with a note from the Frontier editors explaining that “General Carrington, in a recent letter to the editor,” disagrees with Two Moons’ account of a meeting at Fort Phil Kearney (6). Carrington writes that “Two Moons’ estimate of killed is plainly inaccurate . . . I counted sixty-five pools of blood myself, within a small area in the final struggle” (6). The Frontier editors respond that “[p]ools of blood are pretty poor proof of Indians having been killed. A pool might indicate, as General Carrington says, that an Indian had been either killed or wounded there; but probably nine-tenths of the pools only indicated a pony had been shot” (6).

20 Halaas and Masich also allege that “Bent’s pressure” to write a book “overwhelmed Hyde,” and that “Bent’s pestering had even brought on a nervous attack” (342). This led to a hiatus on Life of George Bent until “Hyde simply could not refuse his old friend’s pleadings” and continued writing in the mid-1910s (345). Halaas and Masich’s description of the Bent-Hyde collaboration thus renders Hyde as a friendly victim to Bent’s ambition.
likewise perceives Hyde’s attitude toward American Indians and Bent in a more altruistic light:

It’s all too easy to bash Hyde (and his patron, [Euro-American ethnographer George Bird] Grinnell) for oversights and omissions, to see them for all their friendly disposition toward Indians and even their advocacy of the Indians’ lost cause as rearguard imperialists, seeking to fill out the ‘other’ side of the history of the conquest of the American West so that that history might finally seem to be decently and honorably closed. (72)

But Hyde’s “disposition toward Indians” was not always “friendly,” nor was he merely a “rearguard imperialist.” In his September 26, 1929, letter to VanMale, Hyde minimizes Bent’s knowledge and reliability, writing, “[Bent] did the be[s]t he could in telling this story. He knew the Indian side only in most instances, and he showed some bias, naturally, but if he ever lied I have not noticed it” (DPL). Hyde then shares, “I am not an Indians’ Friend man.21 I think they usually got about what they deserved; I do not assume, as such people do, that the Indian is always right, and I kept a watch of Bent’s statements” (DPL). Hyde thus policed Bent’s writing rather than merely editing it, an action that underscores Hyde’s bias against American Indians. Furthermore, Hyde’s callousness when proclaiming that American Indians “got about what they deserved” raises provocative questions about how he viewed devastating events like the Sand Creek Massacre. Such topics recur throughout Bent’s correspondence; the Sand Creek Massacre

21 This opinion seems to contextualize Hyde’s dedication of Life of George Bent to his “good friend” Savoie Lottinville, the University of Oklahoma professor who discovered and edited the manuscript in the 1960s, rather than to George Bent, who supplied Life’s content in letters frequently addressed to “My Dear Friend” (i.e. to Hyde).
surfaces at least six times, for instance, underscoring this tragic event’s deeply rooted impact.\textsuperscript{22} Hyde’s personal beliefs about American Indians—and in particular, Bent—color the Bent-Hyde collaboration. Namely, Hyde injects settler-colonial views in notes left on Bent’s maps, transcribed letters, and eventually the \textit{Life} manuscript itself. In the top right corner of the South Platte map that Hyde and Bent traded, for example, Hyde penciled this comment: “Sent to Bent Cant get him to locate the camp \textbf{before this one} He’s either in doubt or lazy. Probably Lazy” (original punctuation and emphasis).\textsuperscript{23} Hyde’s note transcends mere frustration by leveling racial stereotypes against Bent. A similarly charged complaint about failing to adhere to Hyde’s demands appears in his introduction to \textit{Life}: Hyde writes, “George Bent differed from all the other mixed bloods I ever knew in that he liked to write letters. The other mixed bloods would fail to reply to your inquiry or would write a half-page in faint pencil a year after receiving your letter, and then they gave up” (x). Along with leaving notes on maps, Hyde also sometimes inserted parenthetical quips when transcribing Bent’s letters (i.e. in the earliest phase of their collaborative process). Several notes are innocuous questions for Hyde to ask Bent later, such as “12 tyoung [sic] Cheys belonging to Medicine Lodge (a chief or society?) . . .” (April 10, 1905, DPL). Other notes, though, reveal underlying prejudice. Hyde’s transcription of Bent’s February 15, 1905, letter, reads, “One day some Mexican traders came to the Arapahoe village with the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{22} This includes letters sent to Hyde on March 9, 1905 (DPL); March 14, 1905 (DPL); December 21, 1905 (DPL); April 2, 1906 (DPL and Yale); April 14, 1906 (Yale and UCB); and April 25, 1906 (DPL). It is worth noting here that Hyde complains in his September 25, 1929, letter to VanMale that Bent “[s]ometimes . . . told a story and then, two or three years later told it again, and then a third time, and I had to combine these versions” (DPL).}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{23} An image of this map is available at \url{https://history.denverlibrary.org/colorado-biographies/george-bent-1843-1918#PhotoSwipe1529800773552}. The same map appears with this prejudiced note intact in \textit{Life of George Bent} (167). Neither Hyde nor Lottinville contextualize or acknowledge Hyde’s comment.}
coat and wanted 2 or 3 ponies for it. Just then [an] Arapahoe who had found (I bet!) a fine American mule rode into the village . . .” (DPL). Slipping comments into Bent’s letters when transcribing them reveals inherent tension in the Bent-Hyde relationship; Hyde surrounded his Southern Cheyenne partner’s personal and historical accounts with his own racially charged views.

Although Hyde’s parenthetical comments likely remained private until he sold the letters to collectors (who, in turn, sold or donated them to libraries and archives), his draft notes on *Life of George Bent* periodically take issue with Bent’s version of events. Of the three Bent-Hyde collaborations, only *Life* survives in draft form, and thus demonstrates the type of annotations that Bent and Hyde traded. Most of Hyde’s comments are content oriented, such as a penciled addition to the “Sand Creek” chapter’s first draft: “Bent say [sic] W.A. [White Antelope] stood in front B. Kettle’s lodge with arms folded + was shot after nearly all had left camp.” A few of Hyde’s marginal notes, however, reflect settler-colonial policing rather than simple correction.

Consider the following unedited sentences from the first “Sand Creek” chapter draft, which describe Major Anthony’s role in helping lull the Southern Cheyenne into a false sense of safety:

24 The Denver Public Library owns both drafts: an incomplete early version on thin, flaking paper that contains additions, notes, deletions, and, most importantly, handwritten edits from Bent; and a second, complete, mostly clean copy (only minor corrections appear) on heavier paper. When Lottinville originally pursued publishing the *Life* manuscript, DPL only had one copy; Lottinville writes in his “Editor’s Foreword” to *Life* that at the same time he secured a copy of the DPL’s “portion of the manuscript,” “Mr. Hyde’s own working copy of the entire manuscript reached me . . . including the portion which carries forward from the point where the Library copy leaves off” (xvi). Lottinville also writes, “It is clear that the Library manuscript is the one originally intended by Mr. Hyde to see the light of day,” although Lottinville does not explain why (xvi). Since Hyde’s working manuscript (with much fewer notes and better paper) incorporates corrections made on the Denver Public Library’s incomplete version, I argue that it seems more logical that the complete, polished copy is the one Hyde intended for publication.
From what the major said [the Southern Cheyenne] believed that peace was going to be made and that they were under the protection of the fort. Further to deceive [sic] the Indians, Major Anthony permitted John Smith accompanied by a soldier from the fort, to visit the Cheyenne camp and remain there, trading with the Indians.

In the left margin, Hyde comments, “Bent, this is not fair. Change to ‘Indians were further deceived.’ G.H.” Hyde’s edit shifts Bent’s accusation from active to passive voice so that it becomes a series of actions that deceived rather than a series of intentional deceptions. Hyde’s comment also, in a troubling move, seeks “fairness” for Euro-American subjects in a chapter otherwise focused on atrocities experienced by the Southern Cheyenne. Bent alters the sentence in response, but does not precisely follow Hyde’s suggestion: Bent crosses out “Further to deceive” and instead writes, “The Indians were deceived when Major Anthony . . .” Not only does Bent correct Hyde’s spelling, but he also uses Hyde’s phrasing to sharpen his critique; Bent’s revision establishes a more direct cause/effect relationship between Major Anthony and the deception he orchestrated. In the end, Bent’s intent for this sentence comes closest to the final version: both the second “Sand Creek” chapter draft and the published version of *Life of George Bent* contain the line: “In order to deceive the Cheyennes still further as to his intentions, the major permitted John Smith to leave the fort . . .” (*Life* 148). Such debates in the margins of *Life*, though rare, vividly show Hyde’s prejudiced undertones and Bent’s rhetorical doggedness.

Interrogating Bent’s marginal comments privileges his agency as an editor (not merely a correspondent), a role scholars have previously overlooked or simplified. Faller writes, for instance, that “Hyde’s *Life* . . . is Hyde’s effort to make the stuff of [Bent’s] letters into a single, well-told, interesting, and readable story,” thus attributing the work of polishing *Life* to Hyde (67). Hyde himself minimizes Bent’s contribution (despite also asserting to VanMale that “Bent
did this”) by twice alleging that Bent made “few” corrections. In his September 25, 1929, letter to VanMale, Hyde explains, “I thought it best to leave the MS as it is, with scribbling on the margin, a few in Bent’s hand” (DPL). Hyde writes in his next letter (October 24, 1929) that “I submitted all the chapters of this MS to Bent, one by one, as they were finished, and he read them through and made a few corrections” (DPL). While Bent’s edits throughout are not necessarily extensive (most generally emending a word or phrase), they did impact *Life of George Bent*. For example, in addition to rewording his accusation of Major Anthony, Bent makes four corrections/edits on the same page of the previously quoted “Sand Creek” chapter draft: Bent changes Hyde’s “decieve” to “deceive,” “recure” to “secure,” “Anthony says in his own statements” to “Anthony says in his own reports” (eliminating the “says”/”statements” repetition), and inserts the phrase “ordered them” in an otherwise incomplete sentence (DPL).25 *Life* preserves all of these adjustments (147). These editorial moments in the *Life* manuscript thus highlight Bent’s meaningful role in preparing “well-written” and “readable” texts for publication.

Such editorial contributions might have been previously discounted because they less easily fit an essentialist narrative familiar in the study of white-Native textual collaborations: the Native’s impenetrability and the non-Native’s mastery. Even Bent—either flattering Hyde or sincerely praising him—helps propagate this storyline. In his October 3, 1905, letter, Bent writes, “I want you to write out my writings better as you understand better than I do. any thing you will put in will be much better” (HC). In a similar vein, Halaas, Masich, and Faller vividly imagine

25 Bent’s correction reads, “after ten days he returned the arms which the Arapahos had surrendered to him and brusquely [ordered them] to move away from the fort” (DPL).
Hyde’s difficulty in standardizing and reorganizing Bent’s letters, but do not dedicate the same attention to contextualizing these documents as informal drafts, nor do they acknowledge Hyde’s own imprecision in the drafting process. For instance, Halaas and Masich stress that “Bent’s letters were [not] easy reading . . . Bent’s style defied all known rules of capitalization, punctuation, and grammar” (336). Faller adds, “Though Bent’s handwriting is not difficult to decipher and his spelling is fairly accurate, his letters can be a chore to read . . . His use of capitals is erratic, and his punctuation seems to follow rules of its own” (72-3). Faller does later acknowledge that “Bent is still at times a very effective writer” who “could write with far greater formal ‘correctness’ when he chose,” but this concession follows his more extended description of Bent’s opacity (87). Emphasizing Hyde’s efforts when reworking Bent’s letters amplifies Hyde’s achievement while downplaying his Southern Cheyenne partner’s involvement.

I assert, instead, that cross-referencing Hyde’s typed transcriptions with Bent’s original handwritten letters proves that Bent’s spelling, phrasing, and explanations are often much richer and more precise than the copies Hyde created.\footnote{The letters held at the Denver Public Library represent a mix of handwritten and typescript copies, as do Yale’s; of DPL’s 92 Bent-Hyde letters, 35 are typed. All of History Colorado’s Bent-Hyde letters (the two other main repositories of the Bent-Hyde letters) are handwritten. Of all the handwritten Bent-Hyde letters, only a few are duplicated in typescript. They include correspondence from February 26, 1906 (the typescript is held by DPL and the handwritten version by Yale); April 2, 1906 (DPL holds the typescript and Yale owns the handwritten version); and April 14, 1906 (University of Colorado-Boulder holds the typescript and Yale owns the handwritten version).} While Hyde’s transcriptions were in turn reworked for publication through extensive editing (and thus do not represent Hyde’s best writing), comparing Bent’s informally drafted letters to Hyde’s informally typed transcriptions more fairly illustrates the ways each George challenges his readers when drafting. Consider, for
Dear Friend

I have been very busy [?]. the reason I have not written to you sooner than now but now I will have lots of time to write. the Indians that I wanted have their Photos taken are all here now. but the man that takes. them is [?] now. he wants to take them as he wants such photos for Mission ary papers and will cost [?] nothing to have him take them. I think he will be able to take them. in few days. I have borrowed Buckskin suits for Brave Bear Good Bear Yellow Nose and Two Crows. to wear in these pictures. you do not say what

27 This transcription is my own; I have rendered Bent’s line breaks, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation as faithfully as possible. Rather than guess at the words I could not make out, I have replaced them with [?]. Preserving the line breaks is important. As Faller points out, “Often only the right margin of the page indicates the end of a thought unit, as if each line of his handwrittten letter was to be seen, potentially, as standing by itself” (73). This phenomenon can be observed in the lines “I can get them made for you” and “you ask me what year I was born” from my transcription (on the second page); the margins of Bent’s letter mark the start and end of both sentences.
size those 2 pairs of Moccasins should
[page break]
be to have them made nice they will
cost $100 pair. all kinds of bead work is
done right here send me the size
I can get them made for you
you ask me what year I was born
I was born July 7th 1843 at Bents
Fort on Arkansas River. I first went
to school at Westport MO in 1853
was there 4 years . . .

Bent’s letter reveals his investment in procuring the photographs and moccasins as well as his overall conversational approach; Bent first informs Hyde about his preparations for the photographs and reminds Hyde about his foot size. Only then does Bent address Hyde’s inquiry about his early life.28 Hyde’s transcription sounds very different. Among other changes, Hyde condenses Bent’s opening discussion by combining most of the photograph information into one new sentence. He also tweaks “buckskin suits” to “buckskin shirts” (altering the garment type); rephrases “was there” to “remained”; shortens “photos” to “phos”; abbreviates “first” as “1st”; adds process words like “and” and “a”; and introduces typos, including “No e,” “1843. at Bent’s

28 Interestingly, Hyde should already have had this information; a section on Bent’s early life appeared in Part One of “Forty Years with the Cheyennes,” which came out in October 1905.
Fort,” and “schhool” (and maybe “phos”). Hyde’s transcribed version of the same pages reads:

I have been very busy lately. We will have some phos taken soon. I have borrowed buckskin shirts for Brave Bear and Good Bear, Yellow No e and Two Crows to wear. I can get moccasins made for $1 a pair. I was born July 7 1843. at Bent’s Fort; I 1st went to schhool at Westport in 1853 and remained 4 yrs . . . (changes italicized, DPL)

Despite his effort to smooth out Bent’s writing with additional process words, more concise phrasing, and more conventional punctuation and capitalization, Hyde’s version of Bent’s letter disrupts the reader through its own errors. It also less precisely conveys Bent’s personality (i.e. his concern for staging the photographs and getting the correct moccasin sizes) as well as his overall conversational tone. The other two Bent letters that exist in both original and transcribed forms exhibit similar corrections and errors.²⁹ Thus, Faller’s argument that “[o]ne of the major costs the Life pays for its clarity and coherence is that it makes its George Bent in many ways far less interesting than the George Bent to be found in the letters” can actually be traced to the Bent-Hyde collaboration’s earliest stage (73). In other words, before compiling Life, which Faller, Halaas, and Masich use as the benchmark against which to compare Bent’s letters, Hyde had already revised Bent in typo-laden transcriptions. Reading Hyde’s transcriptions alongside Bent’s original letters and edits to Life thereby complicates perceptions of Hyde’s writing mastery.

²⁹ History Colorado’s George Bent Papers finding aid (which includes a detailed calendar and index of its twenty-four letters) lists other errors made in its transcriptions of Bent’s correspondence with Hyde. History Colorado’s typescripts do not have handwritten notes from Hyde; it is unclear whether Hyde or another researcher made them.
Further questions arise when considering *Life of George Bent*’s authorship; *Life* breaks precedent with “Forty Years” and “Old Times” by neglecting to name Bent as the author (or at least co-author). Hyde’s authorial claim over *Life* complicates more altruistic readings of the Bent-Hyde relationship—particularly since Hyde profited by selling Bent’s writing to dealers and libraries after Bent’s death.³⁰ For their part, Halaas, Masich, and Faller categorize the collaboration as non-exploitative. Faller notes that “[i]t is to Hyde’s great credit that he . . . kept it a collaboration. It’s a sad fact that so many writers and researchers in Native American studies have left the Native people they’ve worked with feeling used and exploited, as though they’ve been treated as objects and not equal partners” (71). He does not question Hyde’s authorship of *Life*, though Faller does note that “Hyde’s book can seem somewhat misnamed” due to its focus on Plains Indian tribal history rather than Bent’s individual experience (73). Halaas and Masich also naturalize Hyde’s authorship by referring to *Life* as “Hyde’s manuscript” (349). Although Bent’s possessive pronouns evolve (as Faller points out, for instance, “Bent shifts from speaking of ‘our’ book to speaking of ‘the’ book or ‘your’ book in his letters to Hyde”), I assert that accepting Hyde as *Life*’s author overlooks Bent’s extensive textual contributions (i.e. his letters) as well as his previous authorship credits. To compare, *Cheyenne Memories* (1967), released just one year before *Life*, lists both John Stands In Timber (Northern Cheyenne) and Margot Liberty (Euro-American) as authors. Stands In Timber died the year *Cheyenne Memories* was published.

³⁰ Hyde sold Bent’s letters to various dealers. He also sold the manuscript version of *Life* to the Denver Public Library for either $200 or $300 in 1929 (Hyde and the Denver Public Library quote different amounts). Negotiating a deal to publish *Life* after Lottinville rediscovered it at DPL in the 1960s yielded further royalties for Hyde.
leaving Liberty (like Hyde) to curate his historical and literary legacy. Unlike Hyde, Liberty acknowledged her Native collaborator with co-authorship. Without negating Hyde’s time and effort in helping prepare and publish *Life*, then, I would like to suggest a more skeptical approach to accepting “Hyde’s manuscript” as “Hyde’s”; after all, “Forty Years” and “Old Times,” which Hyde and Bent created using the exact same process as *Life*, list Bent as their author—not Hyde.

Tracing the Bent-Hyde collaboration highlights an ongoing need for discourse that resists privileging non-Native collaborative efforts and more deeply interrogates colonial views. For instance, Halaas and Masich’s biography title—*Halfbreed: The Remarkable True Story of George Bent* (2004)—points toward the modern scholars’ own implication in white settler culture. Using a derogatory term without context risks naturalizing it. Reviewer Adam Kane, for one, writes of *Halfbreed* that “[t]he controversy surrounding the publication of Bent’s memoirs is one of the more intriguing aspects of this work, and certainly one of the least well known aspects of the halfbreed’s long life” (91, emphasis added). In his own review, Faller does not question the book’s title. James Lieker parenthetically notes that “half-breed” was “a polemical name common to the nineteenth century,” and Mark Anderson substitutes “mixed ancestry,” “mixed heritage,” and “mixed blood” (328, 115). Just two reviewers confront *Halfbreed*. R. Eli Paul explains, “Some readers . . . may object to the book’s title itself, less so because of its somewhat jarring usage than for the minimal explanation of why the authors used it as the primary


31 Though separated by a generation, Stands In Timber and Bent similarly strove for publication: Liberty writes that Stands In Timber “was one of the last Cheyennes to hear the tribal story from those who lived it” and that he “longed to write a book, but previous efforts had failed” (3).
descriptor of their hero” (77). And B. B. Swann notes, “The very title of this 448-page book might not sit well with certain readers, and not just because the noun ‘half-breed’ is hyphenated in most dictionaries. Half-breed is generally regarded as an offensive term” (58). The limited debate about *Halfbreed*’s title, combined with Halaas and Masich’s decision to feature this charged term so prominently, underscores the embeddedness of settler-colonial discourse in modern scholarship.

I would like to close Part One by noting that Hyde’s relationship with Bent was complicated and not strictly exploitative, as the obituary Hyde wrote for his partner suggests. Hyde appears to have been invested in seeing Bent’s voice into print. This is a reminder that settler-colonial ideology constrained Hyde’s publication access as well as Bent’s. After Bent died on May 19, 1918, Hyde—despite professing that “I am not an Indians’ Friend man”—strove to publish a ten-page obituary in the *Rocky Mountain News* titled “LAST OF COL. BENT’S SONS DEAD: George Bent Dies Among the Cheyennes. Had Many Adventures” (UCB). This document, which parallels “Forty Years,” includes over a page of material that “Bent used to say,” giving Bent a voice in his own obituary. After his first rejection from the *Rocky Mountain News* (the same outlet that railed against Bent as a “War Chief” in 1867), Hyde resubmitted Bent’s obituary. In a November 19, 1918, letter to editor Frank Farrar, Hyde writes,

I wrote the enclosed article for you at the time of George Bent’s death, but on sending it in, you informed me that the great press of material on the war made it impossible for you
to use my article.\textsuperscript{32} As I understand the stream of material on the war has now let up a little, I thought I would take a chance and submit this article to you once more. (UCB)

Farrar refused this resubmission, so Hyde sent it a third time on February 28, 1919. He also included a handwritten note: “Mr. Farrar—I am a persistent cuss, but if you do not want this stuff this time I shan’t bother you by submitting it again. Just making a Last Try.” Farrar typed a curt reply on the bottom of Hyde’s letter: “We do not seem to get things to a point where we can expand as we would like, so I am compelled again to refuse your story. You might try the K.C. Star or Chicago Tribune with it.” By nudging Hyde out of the Denver area entirely—and also refusing to suggest that he submit a shorter version of Bent’s obituary (which Farrar could have done if space to “expand” were the sole concern)—Farrar exemplifies an enduring settler mindset and a will to expunge Native voices and experiences from the turn-of-the-century U.S. West.

**PART TWO: LITERARY CONTEXTS**

*“Garland Could Not Get It”: Enriching the Euro-American Literary Record*

In addition to working with historians and ethnographers—including George Hyde, George Bird Grinnell, James Mooney, and F. W. Cragin—George Bent cultivated relationships

\textsuperscript{32} Hyde provides a similar reason for why Life could not be published during Bent’s lifetime. He explains in his introduction to Life that the “coming of the first World War made it impossible to find a publisher, and the manuscript was put away in a box and forgotten” (vii). Lottinville adds that “[t]hirty-six years had elapsed since Mr. Hyde had closed out of his thinking the frustrations he had experienced in trying to get the manuscript published in the early Depression years” (xv). Neither Hyde nor Lottinville attributes Life’s publication difficulties to the persistent racism of settler culture, though I would argue, given Hyde’s failed effort to publish Bent’s obituary, that it was likely an underlying factor.
with several nationally and regionally known Euro-American autobiographers. Bent’s highest-profile literary acquaintance was Hamlin Garland, a fiction writer and critic who also won a Pulitzer Prize for biography and autobiography. Bent and Garland met in 1905 when Garland visited Indian Territory, a trip Bent documents in his correspondence with Hyde. Bent writes on September 2, 1905, that “Hamlin Garland the writer is coming. he is story writing. he is going to write life of John H. Seger. he will be here in few days” (HC). In his October 12, 1905, letter, Bent shares that “Hamlin Garland, writer, came in this morning; went to Washita R with John H Seger, with whom he is doing some writing” (DPL). Twice introducing Garland as “writer” underscores Bent’s awareness of—and perhaps pride in—Garland’s reputation. Bent further links himself with Garland by including an interview with Two Moons (Northern Cheyenne) in “Forty Years.” Bent acknowledges his shared interviewee in Part Four: “Some years ago Hamlin Garland wrote Two Moons’ account of the Custer battle for McClure’s Magazine and called it ‘Custer’s Last Battle as Seen by Chief Two Moon’” (5). Citing Garland allowed Bent to counteract his presumptuous, but widely circulated, narrative; unlike Garland, who expresses

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33 Garland won a Pulitzer Prize for A Daughter of the Middle Border, a sequel to A Son of the Middle Border (his 1917 autobiography), in 1922.
34 Seger founded both the Seger Indian School, which several of Bent’s children attended, and the town of Colony. One of Bent’s letters to Hyde was written on Seger Indian School letterhead (May 3, 1905, HC). The University of Oklahoma published Seger’s Early Days Among the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians in 1924 (reissued in 1934).
35 The full title of Garland’s article was “General Custer’s Last Fight as Seen by Chief Two Moon.” While leaving off “General” in “Forty Years” might have been an accident (Bent also misspelled James Beckwourth as “Jim Beckwith”), his emendation effectively downgrades Custer’s rank while preserving Two Moons’ title (“Chief”). Further, Bent refers to Two Moons (with an “s”) rather than “Two Moon,” like Garland. My chapter follows Bent’s spelling (except when quoting Garland). Garland’s article, which appeared in September 1898, was widely circulated: McClure’s [New York] had over 320,000 monthly subscribers in November 1898, compared to just 4,875 for the Frontier in 1906 (Thompson).
colonial views through a Cheyenne interpreter, Bent is a well-connected and fully conversant tribal member. His writing thus more accurately and considerately portrays Plains Indian orality.

Despite his cultural and aural removal, Garland often privileges his own (white) aesthetic in “General Custer’s Last Fight.”36 At his article’s outset, for instance, Garland draws on colonial rhetoric to describe Two Moons’ home: he writes that the “barn-yard and buildings were like those of a white settler on the new and arid sod. It was all barren and unlovely—the home of poverty” (444, emphasis added). After Wolf Voice (an interpreter) introduces Garland and Two Moons, Garland demands: “Two Moon, I have come to hear your story of the Custer Battle, for they tell me you were a chief there. After you tell me the story, I want to take some photographs of you. I want you to signal with a blanket as the great chiefs used to do in a fight” (444).

Garland’s desires restrict Two Moons to an essentialized Plains Indian identity—one rooted in the mid-1800s rather than 1897 (when Garland interviewed Two Moons). As David J. Carlson explains in Sovereign Selves: American Indian Autobiography and the Law (2006), such quests for “‘authenticity’ . . . den[y] the possibility that ‘Indian’ self-definition can change (or vary) in productive ways within a colonial context” (12). Garland’s self-serving approach, according to Hertha Dawn Wong, mirrors that of other turn-of-the-century Euro-American ethnographers, who “asked their native informants about issues that interested them (the Custer battle, for instance) rather than allowing indigenous people to select their own concerns” (9). For Two

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36 Despite his shortcomings in this article, Garland was likely well-intentioned; Bent asserts to Hyde that Garland “wants to get things right, just as Inds tell them” (December 13, 1905, DPL).
Moons, pressing topics involve reservations and Native education. He “does not like to talk about” the Battle of the Greasy Grass (444). Garland imaginatively spins Two Moons’ “long silence” after hearing Garland’s visual and narrative demands as the “required time to go from the silence of the hot valley, the shadow of his little cabin, and the wire fence of his pasture, back to the days of his youth” (444). He does not consider that Two Moons might feel uncomfortable—or even unsafe—speaking with him. Garland’s colonially infused assumptions thus prevent “General Custer’s Last Fight” from offering a more nuanced record of Plains Indian expressions.

Bent, in contrast, more knowledgeably and considerately articulates Plains Indian views (including loaded silences) by establishing himself as a confidant. He presents himself as the

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37 Two Moons ultimately resists Garland’s essentializing pressure by sharing Northern Cheyenne concerns at the end of his interview. Through Wolf Voice, Two Moons explains,

> You have talked with me about fighting, and I have told you of the time long ago. All that is past. I think of these things now: First, that our reservation shall be fenced and the white settlers kept out and our young men kept in. Then there will be no trouble. Second, I want to see my people raising cattle and making butter. Last I want to see my people going to school to learn the white man’s way. That is all. (448)

Two Moons envisions a future in which Native peoples are “living,” “singing,” “dancing,” “raising,” “making,” and learning—not romanticized or stagnant (448). He thus embodies Warrior’s observation that “[t]he fact is, Eastman, [Luther] Standing Bear, Bonnin [Zitkala-Ša], and others wanted what the schools they attended offered. Yet they also wanted to have a stake in their own destiny” (116). For Two Moons, this “stake,” though ideally isolated from “white settlers,” nevertheless acknowledges “a colonial context” (Carlson 12). Garland, who intended to stage a photograph of a “great chief . . . in a fight,” struggles to describe Two Moons in light of the chief’s cross-cultural, future-focused views. After Two Moons finishes, Garland writes that “[t]here was something placid and powerful in the lines of the chief’s broad brow, and his gestures were dramatic and noble in sweep” (446). Garland continues, “There was no anger in his voice, and no reminiscent ferocity . . . He seemed the leader and the thoughtful man he really is—patient under injustice, courteous even to his enemies” (448). Garland’s description, despite filling a whole paragraph, is indistinct. “There was something” and “[h]e seemed” are imprecise phrases, and words like “placid,” “powerful,” “dramatic,” and “noble” invoke stereotypes rather than distinct character traits. Likewise, ending on “enemies” recalls the violence that Two Moons wishes to disregard, privileging Garland’s aesthetic interests. Ending “General Custer’s Last Fight” through Garland’s eyes—without commenting on Two Moons’ desires—therefore underscores Garland’s role as a settler-colonial outsider to this Northern Cheyenne community.
only writer capable of understanding and conveying another American Indian’s story. In his December 21, 1905, letter to Hyde, Bent writes, “I am sending you copy of Brave Bear’s statement of Custer Fight. I got this from him for Garland. Garland could not get it, as Cheys are afraid to talk about this fight, won’t talk to anyone except me” (DPL). Bent’s role, first declared in his letters to Hyde, becomes a common theme in “Forty Years.” In Part Five, for instance, Bent shares, the “Indians, of course, were very shy of speaking of [the 1867 Kidder Fight] to white people; but some months ago I got from Two Crows and Good Bear . . . a short account of how Kidder and his party fell” (4). And in Part Six, Bent states:

The Cheyennes always speak of Brave Bear and Yellow Nose as the two bravest men in the Custer battle. Some weeks ago I went to see Brave Bear and got him to come to my lodge and give me an account of the part he took in the fighting. At first he did not wish to talk; he had never told the story of the battle and was rather afraid he might get into trouble if he told about it; but I told him a good many white people believed that Custer did wrong in attacking the village and that no one would bother him for taking part. (6)

Like Garland, who finds that Two Moons is slow to reply, Bent initially encounters reluctance when interviewing Brave Bear about the “Custer battle.” Because he is fluent in Cheyenne, however, Bent knows that fear drives Brave Bear’s hesitation—a reaction he frankly (rather than speculatively) articulates for “Forty Years” readers. As a fluent English speaker versed in non-

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38 Bent also sought to publish the same material he had given Garland. Bent asks Hyde, in fact, whether “Frontir [sic] would like to print Brave B’s statement?” after first explaining he has given a copy to Garland, who “wanted this to compare [w]ith other accounts” (December 13, 1905, Yale and UCB).
Native public opinion, Bent can also reassure Brave Bear about sharing his story. Bent thus cultivates an intertribal narrative in “Forty Years” that carefully renders, rather than exploitatively demands, turn-of-the-century Native responses to nineteenth-century colonial acts.

Interweaving such responses roots Bent’s writing in Plains Indian orality—a sharp difference from Garland’s aural removal as a non-Cheyenne speaker. “Says” and “told me” cues, for example, permeate “Forty Years” (and later *Life*). In Part Four, Bent writes, “Two Moons says small parties of Sioux and Cheyennes had been running off stock from Fort Phil Kearney for some time” (5). Later, Bent reveals, “I once had a talk with a Sioux who came down here on a visit and he told me the Sioux whipped [Colonel] Cole,” and “Charley told me Connor used two cannons in this fight. Black Elk, a Cheyenne who still lives down here, told me he had a pony shot under him during the engagement” (5).39 Bent’s multi-voiced, community-based approach manifests Donald L. Fixico’s (Shawnee, Sac and Fox, Muscogee Creek, and Seminole) statement that “[b]eing Indian is telling and listening to stories about people, places, things, and experiences in a community of your relatives” (3). It further represents what Simon Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo) describes in an interview with Laura Coltelli as “a lifestyle. That whole process of that society in terms of its history, its culture, its language, its values, and subsequently, its literature. So it’s not merely a simple matter of speaking and listening, but living that process” (Coltelli 104). This *process*—which involves both familial and intertribal networking—prompts readers to *listen* to and *comprehend* the Plains Indians in “Forty Years,” not merely *observe* or

39 Charley was Bent’s younger brother.
essentialize them. Doing so distinguishes “Forty Years” as an oral and textual collaborative project.

Along with Southern Cheyenne, Northern Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Sioux perspectives, Bent also frequently intersperses non-Native reports, interviews, and interactions in “Forty Years.” Doing so signifies his key turn from listening to speaking in twentieth-century discourse about nineteenth-century settlement. It also upsets Hyde’s allegation that Bent “knew the Indian side only in most instances” (September 25, 1929, DPL). Bent explains in Part Three:

The other day when I was in Weatherford, Oklahoma, I saw an old man who was formerly a teamster in a government wagon-train. He was talking about these raids at Julesburg. He told how the burned stage station looked and described these eleven men whom our war party killed. He had passed along the road just after we raided it and had seen all these—all the wreck our raiders had left behind them. He did not know that one of his listeners had been with the Indians who killed those eleven men whose bodies he had seen in the road. (4).

Bent recognizes that the Euro-American teamster’s story, which sensationalizes “the burned stage station” and “all the wreck,” is one-sided, incomplete. Hearing it prompts Bent, an actual participant in the fight (versus an observer of its aftermath), to reflect on his own participation and knowledge. And as it turns out, Bent “knows” quite a bit, especially about non-Native views. In Part Four, Bent quotes reports from General G. M. Dodge and General Carrington that are
“not at all correct” (4). Bent likewise questions the accuracy and completeness of Anglo-centric records in Part Five. He explains, “the only story ever written about [the Kidder Massacre] was constructed by General Custer from facts gleaned by following Kidder’s trail and examining the dead bodies of the soldiers” (4). Custer, like the teamster, reconstructs a story rather than incorporating Native views. Bent addresses this omission by summarizing General Custer’s version of the Kidder Massacre, then observing that “[t]he Indians, the only living beings who witnessed the affair, were afraid to speak of it to whites, so up to the present time Custer’s version has been generally believed correct” (4). Bent continues: “Now for the Indian story of the fight” (4). As a well-informed speaker and listener, Bent both acknowledges non-Native records and wryly emends them—a vital move toward enriching U.S. West narratives.

Bent similarly interjects the “Indian story” in *The Second William Penn: Treating With the Indians on the Santa Fe Trail 1860-66* (1913), a self-published autobiography by William H. Ryus, a Kansas City, Kansas, writer.41 Despite his sympathy for American Indians (Ryus “begs the readers not to censure too severely the Indian,” and he “holds the Indians blameless for many

40 Bent provides General Dodge’s account of an 1864 meeting with “Red Cloud and two Cheyennes, Bull Bear and Dull Knife” verbatim before countering with his own version; Bent attended the meeting as a translator (4).

41 Ryus and Bent likely knew each other through Colonel Moore, who wrote the preface to Ryus’s autobiography, authored its twenty-fourth chapter, and was a “former school mate” of Bent’s (172). It is interesting to note that Bent sought publishing advice from Ryus. In his May 4, 1913, letter to Bent, Ryus writes, “my book will be ready for market the 15th of May, will send you several” (HC). Ryus then offers Bent support: “I am glad you are getting up a book. If I can be of any service to you let me know.” Ryus’s encouragement came at a crucial period for Bent; by the 1910s, Hyde had withdrawn from the Bent-Hyde collaboration (he later resumed work on *Life* in 1915). At the same time, Grinnell was “stringing [Bent] along” with intermittent publication promises that failed to produce the book that Bent desired (Halaas and Masich 345). Reaching out to Ryus allowed Bent to explore self-publication, but he likely found the cost prohibitive: Ryus shares, “The Riley Printing Co., Kansas City,” which published *The Second William Penn*, “was three hundred dollars on the first thousand, the lowest bid.” While Bent ultimately did not self-publish his own book, soliciting advice from Ryus illustrates his ongoing dedication to the *Life* project.

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of the attacks attributed to them”), prejudiced/essentialist sentiments tinge *The Second William Penn* (6). Ryus frequently credits himself—rather than his American Indian acquaintances—with forming peaceful relations. Chapter III’s subtitle reads: “Ryus’ Coach Is Surrounded by Indians, Their Animosities are Turned to Friendliness, Through Ryus’ Wit and Ingenuity—‘Hail the Second William Penn’” (23). Ryus thus reduces American Indians to malleable subjects rather than purposeful agents while flaunting his own diplomacy (his goal was to ferry settlers and supplies into “unexplored territory”) (5). Ryus later dehumanizes a party of “Indians” by calling them “fierce looking creatures,” and Colonel Moore recalls “constant struggles for supremacy between the Wild Red Man and the hardy White man” in his preface (25, 5, emphasis added). Ryus and Moore thus elevate white heroes even as they urge compassion for American Indians.

George Bent’s 1908 letter to Colonel Moore, which Ryus reprints near the end of *The Second William Penn*, significantly argues for archiving Native views in an otherwise Anglo-centric narrative. In Chapter XXIV (“Colonel Moore’s Graphic Description of a Fight with Cheyennes”), Ryus writes that the “story as told by Colonel Moore was incomplete in that he admitted he did not know by what Indians his party was attacked” (166). Bent, according to Ryus, provides a significant “sequel . . . in the form of a letter” (166). In his letter, Bent initially acquiesces to Colonel Moore’s request for details about the 1864 fight near present-day Dodge City, Kansas. He then significantly “select[s his] own concerns” (Wong 9). Bent states:

Sir: I have seen published in a Western periodical your paper now in the archives of the

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42 This document, which falls on pages 172 and 173, nearly offers the last word in Ryus’s 176-page autobiography.
43 Bent’s discursive move recalls the conclusion of Two Moons’ *McClure’s* interview with Garland.
Kansas Historical Society relating to a battle your train had with a war party in August, 1864, near where Fort Dodge was . . . As I was with the Cheyennes at the time I knew what took place. The Kansas Historical Society ought to get the Indian side of the history of all these wars between the whites and Indians. (172-3)

Bent’s call in his letter for archiving “the Indian side of the history” introduces a key conversation about who records stories, which stories are preserved, and how/where these stories are subsequently stored. Ryus does not comment on Bent’s proposal, but including his letter verbatim in *The Second William Penn* at least preserves Bent’s desire (the original letter has been lost). Tucked away at the end of the Anglo-centric *The Second William Penn*, Bent’s letter highlights the need to recover and contextualize a work like “Forty Years”; though obscure today, it prominently intervenes in mainstream historical and literary records from the turn-of-the-century U.S. West.

“My People, the Cheyennes”: Omission, Education, and Communal Identity

Although George Bent widely read and responded to military reports, articles, and books by non-Indians (including James Beckwourth), his letters do not reveal similar attention to contemporaneous alphabetic Native literature. Comparing “Forty Years with the Cheyennes” to autobiographical works like Charles Eastman’s *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* (1916) and Zitkala-Ša’s *Atlantic Monthly* stories (1900) reveals that Bent uniquely celebrates Plains Indian

44 Perhaps because Bent was more interested in tracing how non-Indians were narrating the U.S. West.
warrior culture while downplaying (but not completely disavowing) his Euro-American ties.\textsuperscript{45} This tactic simultaneously cements Bent’s narrative bond with the Southern Cheyennes, records Plains Indian “history” for future readers, and sidesteps educational rupture; unlike Charles Eastman and Zitkala-Ša, Bent does not discuss his boarding school experiences (Faller 74). Instead, he recounts wars, battles, fights, raids, attacks, burnings, and massacres.\textsuperscript{46} This approach significantly reverses Eastman’s narrative arc as a Santee Dakota Sioux student in \textit{From the Deep Woods to Civilization}; Bent returns from “civilization” to the Great Plains, where he becomes a Dog Soldier and associates with famous warriors like Two Moons and Brave Bear. Privileging “stories of the old-time warriors” helps Bent rewrite “our humanity . . . back into history,” an ongoing issue identified by Leo Killsback (Northern Cheyenne) (85). Such an approach also crucially supports Bent’s post-boarding-school reunification with the Southern Cheyenne—a contrast to the more complicated identities that Eastman and Zitkala-Ša convey.

Childhood and removal define Eastman’s and Zitkala-Ša’s early autobiographical texts. As Lucy Maddox explains in \textit{Citizen Indians: Native American Intellectuals, Race, and Reform} (2005), Eastman and Zitkala-Ša “write nostalgically, even reverentially, about their childhoods and the contentment and coherence of the days before they started school that was disrupted by the rude shock of their transportation into boarding school life” (127). Eastman vividly captures this “rude shock” at the end of \textit{Indian Boyhood} (1902), stating, “I felt as if I were dead

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
  \item Although Bent does not mention Eastman in his letters, the two writers shared a literary network: McClure, Phillips & Co., or the founders of \textit{McClure’s Magazine} (which Bent read), originally published Eastman’s \textit{Indian Boyhood}, and like Bent, Eastman knew both Hamlin Garland and George Bird Grinnell (\textit{Deep Woods} 191).
  \item All descriptive words found in “Forty Years.”
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
traveling to the Spirit Land; for now all my old ideas were to give place to new ones, and my life was to be entirely different from that of the past” (288). Zitkala-Ša similarly shares in “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” (1900) that “a sense of regret settled heavily upon me” (86). She continues, “I felt suddenly weak, as if I might fall limp to the ground . . . I was as frightened and bewildered as the captured young of a wild creature” (86). At school, Eastman and Zitkala-Ša undergo profound ideological and physical changes. Eastman, who is raised among the Santee Sioux to be “strong and brave” (and who once intended to avenge his presumed-dead father), proclaims that

[t]here must be no more warfare within our borders; we must quit the forest trail for the breaking-plow . . . I renounced finally my bow and arrows for the spade and the pen . . . Every day of my life I put into use every English word that I knew, and for the first time permitted myself to think and act as a white man. (Deep Woods 57-58)

Zitkala-Ša, forced to give up her hair, more acutely suffers when she arrives at White’s Manual Labor Institute. After being dragged out from under a bed, tied to a chair, and subjected to “the cold blades of the scissors against my neck,” Zitkala-Ša laments, “I lost my spirit . . . now I was only one of many little animals” (“School Days” 91). Zitkala-Ša’s heartbreaking account underscores her personal and cultural loss. Widely circulating this experience in the Atlantic Monthly helped expose the atrocities Native children suffered at boarding schools, where the goal was complete “transformation” (Adams 291). David Wallace Adams, in fact, quotes a Carlisle commencement address by Rev. J. A. Lippincott, who proclaims: the “Indian is DEAD in you . . . Let all that is Indian within you die! . . . You cannot become truly American citizens,
industrious, intelligent, cultured, civilized until the INDIAN within you is DEAD” (274). Such violent experiences left a “lifelong impression” on many Native students (Adams 300). Bent’s reticence about his Euro-American education—in light of its lasting effect—thus seems glaring.

Although Bent avoids sharing “boarding-school stories” in “Forty Years,” he harnesses what he learned there (i.e. reading and writing English) to claim/privilege his Southern Cheyenne ties. This strategy enriches our current record of nineteenth-century boarding-school experiences by downplaying their impact—a significant difference from Eastman and Zitkala-Ša. As Amelia V. Katanski explains in Learning to Write “Indian”: The Boarding School Experience and American Indian Literature (2005), “American Indian boarding-school students turned their ability to read and write in English to their own uses despite a curriculum that made English literacy the marker of lost tribal culture and achievement of ‘civilization’” (6). One such use, according to Katanski, was “staking a claim to continued tribal identity and connection to land, history, and language through the telling of boarding-school stories” (6). Bent thus joins Eastman and Zitkala-Ša in the “process of literary reinvention” by using English (the language of “assimilation”) to explore his Native identity (Katanski 6). He diverges from their literary precedents, however, by cementing his “tribal identity” through Plains Indian war stories rather than boarding-school tales. Compared to Eastman and Zitkala-Ša, then, Bent more overtly offers a narrative of cultural reunification, celebration, and preservation in his “Forty Years” articles.

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47 Seger similarly describes going to “war” with his Cheyenne students in Early Days Among the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians (1934); at one point, Seger gives them a “sound drubbing” to make them comply with his orders (49). Bent’s daughter, Julia, attended Carlisle. His son, George, attended Haskell Institute. Bent’s association with/knowledge of Euro-American boarding schools thus extended beyond his childhood experiences.
Bent’s reunification with the Southern Cheyennes drives Part One of “Forty Years,” which condenses the first nineteen years of his life into just one paragraph. This approach allows Bent to more quickly jump into his early adult life among his mother’s tribe.\footnote{To compare, Bent dedicates twenty-four pages across Parts One, Three, Four, Five, and Six (i.e. a period from 1862 to 1876) to his early Southern Cheyenne adulthood.} Part One begins:

**My Early Life.**

My mother was Owl Woman of the Southern Cheyenne tribe and my father was Colonel William Bent, fur-trader and Indian-agent, the owner of Bent’s Fort on the Arkansas River, about one hundred miles southeast of Denver. Most of my boyhood was spent at the fort on the Arkansas but in 1854 I went to Missouri to attend school, where my half-brother Charley, younger than I, also came to be educated. When the war broke out, Charley and I joined the Confederate force commanded by General Sterling Price; but before we had seen very much service we boys were captured by the Union troops. Soon after this we were paroled and went up the Arkansas, where shortly afterward we joined the Southern Cheyennes.\footnote{This paragraph’s content closely follows Bent’s February 26, 1906, letter to Hyde. Bent must also have supplied this information in an earlier letter (so far, I have not located it) since it postdates Part One’s publication.}

Bent stresses his Southern Cheyenne identity from the outset by listing his mother before his father (unlike Zitkala-Ša, Bent acknowledges his Euro-American parent).\footnote{To compare, Bent dedicates twenty-four pages across Parts One, Three, Four, Five, and Six (i.e. a period from 1862 to 1876) to his early Southern Cheyenne adulthood.} He also brushes over details about his Euro-American experiences, such as studying at three Missouri institutions (in Westport and St. Louis) and participating in Civil War battles across multiple states. Bent’s breakneck narrative pace slows after rejoining the Southern Cheyennes. The next section,
“Causes of the Indian War,” begins: “For some time after Charley and I came home the Indians were at peace; there were rumors of war afloat and plenty of ‘Indian scares,’ but nothing really occurred” (3). Bent continues, “Some men in Colorado talked about ‘Rebel Plots,’ called me a ‘Rebel Emissary,’ and said that the hostile Sioux had held a war-council with the Cheyennes and Arapahoes, in the Republican River Country, east of Denver, and there induced these two tribes to consent to an uprising, which was to begin as soon as grass was up next spring” (3). Such meandering syntax and profuse exposition (compared to the simpler sentences of “My Early Life”) underscores Bent’s literal and literary affiliation with the Southern Cheyennes.

*Life of George Bent’s* opening emphasis on Southern Cheyenne history likewise helps Bent project a coherent tribal identity. In a move that recalls Geronimo’s initial historical focus in *Geronimo: His Own Story* (1906), *Life*’s first chapter (“My People, the Cheyennes”) explains, “Our old people say that the Cheyennes were formerly a part of the Cree tribe and that we separated from the Cree’s long ago and wandered off toward the south and west. The oldest people now living say that the earliest home of the Cheyennes was on the shore of great lakes in the far north” (4). Bent does not introduce his birth or siblings until Chapter Four. When Bent does finally discuss his childhood in Chapter Five (“Conflict on the Upper Arkansas”), he provides only a few more details than in “Forty Years.” Bent shares that “[w]hile these events

50 Eric Waggoner explains that “[t]he narrative arc of *Geronimo* commences . . . with the formation of the earth,” after which “Geronimo outlines ‘subdivisions of the Apache tribe’; only after that community-centered narrowing—three chapters into the text, in Barrett’s arrangement—does Geronimo begin where a western autobiography would open on the first page, with the story of his boyhood (‘I was born . . . ’)” (74). This approach, according to Waggoner, “presents [Geronimo] as tribally connected in an elemental way” (74). Incidentally, the *Frontier* editors include a picture of Geronimo (whom Bent does not discuss) in Part Three of “Forty Years” (6).
were taking place in the Indian country, we children were living at Westport, now Kansas City” (110). By the end of the next page, George and Charley have already returned to the Great Plains, whose appearance and demographics have vastly altered since their childhood. Bent says:

late in the fall [1862] I f
ound myself on the Upper Arkansas again, after nearly ten years’ absence. I found everything in the Upper Country greatly changed, since I had left in 1853. At that time there had been very few whites in all that region, and practically all of these had been engaged in the Indian trade and fur business. The country did not even have a name in those days. It was spoken of vaguely as ‘the Upper Country,’ ‘the Upper Arkansas,’ or ‘the mountains.’ Now, in 1862, it was Colorado Territory and had an organized government and some thirty thousand whites, mostly men. (111)

Bent’s observations link a personal transformational moment (i.e. returning home and entering adulthood) with a concurrent historical/literary Plains Indian “transitional” period (Wong 116). According to Wong, “Native Americans and Euro-Americans clashed and negotiated historically” in the nineteenth century while also “interact[ing] textually within the pages of transitional autobiography” (116). Emphasizing this “transitional” period in “Forty Years” and Life—rather than documenting his removal and education—casts Bent as a fully integrated tribal member who observes, participates in, and later records pivotal Southern Cheyenne experiences.

To cement his status as a both a literal and a literary Southern Cheyenne figure, Bent often folds his individuality into a communal identity, particularly when discussing soldier-
societies and skirmishes. He notes in Part Three, for example, that “I belonged to the ‘Bone-scrapper’ or ‘Crooked-lance’ Society, to which Roman Nose and Young-man-afraid-of-his-horses also belonged”—both prominent Plains Indian warriors. This affiliation allowed Bent to join the “warriors of all the ‘soldier-societies’” in events like the “big shield-dance” of May 1864, during which “[w]e danced about a big fire in the center of the Cheyenne camp.” After this dance, Bent writes that “we raided in small parties, south toward the Platte, but we kept our best war-ponies in camp, to get them in good trim.” Such a soldier-society lens supplements Bent’s visual record of belonging among the Southern Cheyennes. A sketch of Bent (see Figure 18 below) appears with images of heroes like Brave Bear, Lean Bear, Red Lance, and White Bird in the *Dog Soldier Ledgerbook* (1864-1869), thus affirming Bent’s intimate ties to warrior culture.

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51 This tribally specific coherence contrasts with the pan-Indian identities Charles Eastman and Zitkala-Ša developed, especially given their participation in the Society of American Indians. Tadeusz Lewandowski notes in *Red Bird, Red Power* (2016) that the Society of American Indians (SAI) “allowed Zitkala-Ša to reemerge into the vanguard of Indian activism as a community center organizer, as SAI secretary-treasurer, and as writer and editor for the *American Indian Magazine (AIM)*” (13). Lewandowski continues, “In 1926, Zitkala-Ša and her husband founded the national Council of American Indians (NCAI). The organization eventually represented numerous nations, including the Sioux, Apache, Cheyenne, Ute, Navajo, and Pueblo, in efforts to . . . create an inclusive, intertribal political movement that could achieve democratic sovereignty within the United States” (14).

52 As Laird and Colleen Cometsevah (Southern Cheyenne) stress in their foreword to *Cheyenne Dog Soldiers: A Ledgerbook History of Coups and Combat* (1997), “These drawings represent real people and real events. The warrior-artists who drew these images intended them to be a record of the coups and combats that characterized this period of unprecedented warfare against traditional enemies as well as the white newcomers who now invaded our homeland” (ix).
To reflect his role as a well-affiliated Dog Soldier, Bent often stresses collective actions rather than individual efforts. A vivid example of this phenomenon occurs in “Some Fights in Summertime, 1864” (Part One of “Forty Years”), when the Southern Cheyennes save the Sioux:

In August I was with a big village of Cheyennes and Sioux, on Republican River, near the southwestern corner of Nebraska. One day our men were nearly all out hunting. One party of about twenty Sioux had gone up a small stream which there flows into the Republican; so when we heard firing in that direction we of course supposed these Sioux were running buffalo. Then Hawk, a Cheyenne man, came over a hill, riding his pony as hard as it could run, and signaling with his hands that soldiers were running the Sioux.

About fifty of us seized bridles and blankets and ran for ponies. As soon as we were all mounted we charged over the hill and came in sight of the Sioux all scattered out, with the soldiers following them in small detachments. The soldiers saw us coming
and quickly bunched together . . . It was too hot a place for such a body of troops, and they at once began to retreat. We rode after them, but could not catch them. (4)

Although Bent helps chase the Euro-American soldiers away, he only uses one “I” in the entire episode. In contrast, seven plural personal pronouns occur: “we” (five), “us” (two), and “our” (one). Readers thus have a clearer sense of the warriors’ exploits than of Bent’s personal actions, including whether he killed or wounded any of his opponents. In fact, Bent only ever claims responsibility for acts that he alone—as an English-literate Southern Cheyenne warrior—can contribute, including writing a letter for Black Kettle in Part One (Bent explains that “the Cheyennes and Spotted Tail’s Sioux . . . held a council and had me write the following letter to Indian-agent Colley”) and reading stolen mail in Part Three (“[t]he Indians brought me [a soldier’s] saddle-bags, in which there was a letter addressed to the commander at Ft. Laramie. The letter said the troops were being attacked by a thousand warriors”) (5). Rather than isolating him from the Southern Cheyennes in “Forty Years,” then, Bent’s Euro-American education becomes a strategic military tool—ultimately highlighting Bent’s central role as a warrior-writer.

The “communal self” that Bent projects in “Forty Years” sharply differs from the more complicated vantages that Eastman and Zitkala-Ša occupy. Eastman, for one, often negotiates insider/outsider views in Indian Boyhood and From the Deep Woods to Civilization. As Wong explains, “Like other indigenous people trying to live biculturally, Eastman faced the difficult

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53 When annotating his typed transcriptions of Bent’s letters, Hyde kept an eye out for Bent’s individuality; when Bent recounts a story of an 1864 fight from Wolf Chief, for instance, Hyde writes “Here Bent speaks as himself” to distinguish Bent from the communal pronouns previously included in the letter (March 26, 1906, DPL).

54 A possible strategy to avoid censure from an already hostile white readership.
task of trying to translate Indian life for non-Indians” (143). Wong continues, his “double vision is part anthropological observer (he describes many Sioux customs and ‘superstitions’) and part Santee Sioux participant” (144). When characterizing the Santee Sioux in Indian Boyhood, Eastman notes that “they easily forgot the bitter experiences of the winter before. Little preparation was made for the future. They are children of Nature, and occasionally she whips them . . . yet they are forgetful” (17). Eastman’s observer-participant status further colors the memorable last paragraph of Deep Woods: Eastman declares, “I am an Indian . . . so long as I live, I am an American” (195). This statement encompasses—and seems to accept—his identity’s multiple registers. As Warrior explains, “In this declaration, [Eastman] embodies the fundamental tensions and seeming contradictions that he and others of his era experienced” (116). Zitkala-Ša also vividly recalls tensions and contradictions by returning to school after visiting the Yankton Sioux reservation; she feels as if there is “no place for me. I was neither a wee girl nor a tall one; neither a wild Indian nor a tame one. This deplorable situation was the effect of my brief course in the East” (“School Days” 97). Subsequent works even more deeply highlight Zitkala-Ša’s complicated position. At the end of “An Indian Teacher Among Indians” (1900), Zitkala-Ša leaves the boarding-school system because she feels like “a cold bare pole . . . planted in a strange earth” (112). Despite later asserting in “Why I Am a Pagan” (1902) that “I prefer to [Christian] dogma my excursions into the natural gardens,” Zitkala-Ša became Catholic in 1910 (Lewandowski 13). Tadeusz Lewandowski characterizes Zitkala-Ša’s complex writings in Red Bird, Red Power (2016) as “intermittent expressions of liminality, Victorian moral control, and conciliatory gestures to white discourses” that simultaneously project a “sustained ideology of Native self-determination” (15). They reflect, in other words, a many-sided cultural position whose inherent tensions have been dramatically reduced—even omitted—in Bent’s life.
writing.

Narratively projecting a coherent tribal identity in “Forty Years” elides Bent’s more complex racial and cultural status.55 For their part, Halaas and Masich reductively portray Bent by claiming that he was “Caught Between the Worlds of the Indian and the White Man” (their biography’s subtitle) and “Lost in a New World.” Hardorff similarly claims that “George Bent lived in the middle of two conflicting cultures and constantly had to balance Indian with white,” a common move by Euro-American scholars (356). As Lisa Brooks (Abenaki) points out in The Common Pot (2008), “Literary critics frequently portray early Native American writers either as individuals caught between two worlds or as subjects who, even as they defied the colonial world, struggled to exist within it.” Walter Hixson, in contrast to Halaas and Masich, asserts that Bent and his siblings “evolved hybrid personae as they drifted between both the Indian and American worlds” (121).56 Hixson’s “drifted” implies a spectrum of possibilities rather than a limited binary—a fluid assessment that more richly captures Bent’s ambiguity as he expressed it in his written work. In Part One, for instance, Bent reveals that in a fight near Fort Larned,

55 Holly L. Baumgartner writes in “De-Assimilation as the Need to Tell: Native American Writers, Bakhtin, and Autobiography” (2006) that the “stages of [the acculturation process] include euphoria, nostalgia, anomie, and alienation, before the subject becomes acculturated/assimilated. For Native writers, in order to de-assimilate, they may need to enact a countermovement, experiencing or re-experiencing the stages away from acculturation” (134). Baumgartner continues, “Thus, autobiography sometimes highlights these stages as part of the de-assimilation process” (134). I hesitate to suggest that Bent de-assimilates; rather, projecting his Native identity does not remove the bi-cultural impact of going to boarding school. Later in life, he wears Euro-American suits and lives in a framed-in home, for instance. Rather than seeing Bent as “assimilated” or in the process of “de-assimilating” in “Forty Years,” I see Bent as choosing what identity to project and when . . . a multivalent register rather than an either/or.

56 The Mexican border was just south of Bent’s Old Fort on the Arkansas River (present-day southern Colorado) when George was a child. William (his father) enslaved several African Americans, perhaps contributing to George’s alignment with the Confederates. These contexts crucially expand Hixson’s “Indian and American” binary.
Kansas, “a young Mexican captive who was fighting on our side was killed by the soldiers, who mistook him for me. So they reported that they had ‘killed George Bent’” (5). In another fight, Colonel Plumb “says that the Indians were led by a white man, ‘supposed to be Bill Comstock, formerly of Fort Laramie” (Life 204).57 Bent muses, “I suppose that I was the man he meant, but I was dressed and painted just like the warriors” (204). Alternatively, then, Euro-American soldiers perceived Bent to be Southern Cheyenne, Mexican, and Euro-American.

Bent’s racial liminality is visually (if not narratively) evident in the Frontier, which includes just one personal image despite Bent’s desire to incorporate several pictures of family and acquaintances.58 Captioned as “[t]he writer of the Bent articles, George Bent, and his wife, 

57 In his obituary for Bent, Hyde shares that in the Julesburg raid (1865), “George Bent found a cavalry major’s uniform in the express office . . . He wore this uniform in several fights up north the following summer,” likely offering another source of confusion for Euro-American soldiers (5).

58 While much of what Bent intended to write can be categorized as a first-person “history,” Bent’s letters frequently mention including family photographs in the “Book” (Faller 74). Bent’s attention to these photographs proves that he envisioned a personal/familial and historical/tribal final project. In his March 9, 1905, letter, for example, Bent writes, “I have photographs of myself, wife and eldest daughter. They are scattered around in our family, but when I get them I will send them to you, as you may want to put them in the book” (DPL). His November 30, 1905, letter continues to emphasize family: “My niece at Atchison Kas has best Photograph of Myself and My Wife. [?] was taken 37 years ago. I will get this in few days and send it [?] for you to copy as she wants it back soon as we are through with it” (DPL). In his December 11, 1905, letter (the same month the third installment of “Forty Years” appeared), Bent further describes this picture, including his desire for it to appear in the Frontier (DPL). He states:

She had Elk Teeth dress on in this picture. her Indian name. “Mo-he-hy-vah” meaning ‘Mag. pie’. send copy of this photo to Frontier Magazine so they can put in the Magazine. I will send you more of photos soon as my daughter goes to Darlington Agency. all Indian pictures so can put them in Book.

After all of the Frontier articles were published, Bent writes Hyde: “I have some photographs of squaw putting up lodge and taking it down. putting up Indian [?] Just as same as they used to long ago. Mary [Bent’s daughter] has these in her trunk and will get them when she gets back home” (April 17, 1906, Yale). Despite Bent’s wish to publish photographs of his family—including pictures of female relatives—the final versions of “Forty Years” and Life predominantly focus on male Plains Indian experiences. They also feature few personal pictures; Parts One, Two, Three, and Five of “Forty Years” have no pictures, and Part Four includes images of figures that Bent does not discuss, including Geronimo. Life only includes copies of the maps that Bent generated with Hyde, sketches of Bent’s Old Fort, the George Bent and Magpie picture from the Frontier, and a handful of other non-personal images.
Magpie,” the full-page photograph ran in Part Six (the final installment) of “Forty Years”:

![Image of George Bent and Magpie](image)

**Figure 19.** George Bent and Magpie. *Image courtesy of History Colorado.*

This picture depicts Bent not as he was when he wrote the *Frontier* articles (a man in his sixties; see Figure 20), but as he appeared in 1867. While Magpie wears a traditional elk-tooth dress that has “been in her family for 200 years, handed down from mother to daughter,” Bent wears a suit and beaded moccasins (Hyde 1928, HC). Acquiring this outfit allegedly coincided with an important cross-cultural event: the Medicine-Lodge Council, which produced treaties between the United States and Kiowa, Comanche, Plains Apache, Southern Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes. As Hyde claims in a note about the *Frontier* picture, “Bent certainly had no citizen’s
clothes in 1865-1866; but he must have gotten a new outfit when he was made official interpreter during the Medicine Lodge council” (HC).\textsuperscript{59} This image thus represents Bent’s dynamic role as an Anglo-Cheyenne cultural broker—a status that underlies his approach to conversing, writing, and publishing Southern Cheyenne experiences in English. Despite downplaying his Euro-American education, employing the language of “assimilation” helps Bent project racial and cultural coherence in a transitional period and region. By avoiding personal contradictions, then, “Forty Years” establishes a Plains Indian record more overtly focused on aligning its narrator with warrior culture than exploring settler-colonial intrusions on his identity.

\textsuperscript{59} This could simply be an assumption Hyde made, but since Bent was living with/fighting on behalf of the Southern Cheyennes from 1862-1867, it is possible that he did, indeed, acquire his suit at the Medicine Lodge Council.
PART THREE: CONVERSING THE SETTLER-COLONIAL FRONTIER

“By Indian Campfires”: Settler-Colonial Views and Commodified Native Identities

George Bent’s “Forty Years with the Cheyennes,” which exceeds a mere “corrective” narrative and historical role, is a major anomaly in The Frontier: A Journal of Early Days and Their Thrilling Events. Previously envisioned as the Garden of the Gods Magazine in May 1902 and then briefly reconceived as the Frontier Monthly in April 1903, the Frontier (April 1904-
November 1906) almost exclusively appealed to Euro-American settler-writers. Bent, in fact, was the only Native author published in the Frontier. To cast a wide net for “clever writers” (and their readers/subscribers), the editors requested submissions from “Arkansas, Colorado, the Indian Territory, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota or Wyoming” (i.e. states derived from the 1801 Louisiana Purchase) (August 1904, March 1906). In addition to providing a platform for both male and

60 The Frontier’s appearance fluctuated over time. From April 1904 to December 1905, the magazine was 6 inches by 9 inches. Initially printed on heavier, glossier paper (and generally running between 30 and 40 pages long, including several pages of advertisements . . . much shorter than either the Garden of the Gods Magazine and the Frontier Monthly), the Frontier’s quality began declining with the December 1905 issue (i.e. the first time it was printed on coarser, thinner paper). In this same issue (i.e. halfway through Bent’s “Forty Years” articles), the Frontier grew to 9 inches by 12 inches. The Frontier editors provide the following explanation for the dramatic change in size: “Many of our readers are elderly persons and we believe the larger type will enable them to read with greater comfort. We desire to publish an illustrated magazine and the size as it heretofore existed was illy suited to illustration. We therefore hope that the change will please you” (December 1905).

61 The Frontier attempted to appeal to a wide audience, including children. For instance, in the August 1904 issue, the editors promise “one fine Parker Brothers’ double-barrelled, hammerless shot gun” to the “boy sending us the greatest number of subscriptions above 50 before October 1” and a “solid gold watch and chain” to the girl who achieves the same feat. In September 1904, the Frontier announced that Eddie Fishback won a “pony and trappings” as well as $10 for reaching the “100 mark first” when selling “paid yearly subscriptions to the FRONTIER” (38). On the back cover on the June 1905 issue, the Frontier solicits information on “[h]ow to secure more literary talent. How to increase our circulation. How to improve our Magazine. How many real readers we have” by promising to give away “[a] $65.00 Coaster – Brake Iroquois Bicycle. A $40.00 Stevens Shot Gun. A $10.00 Cash Prize, and A $5.00 Cash prize.” And in the February 1906 issue (which published Part Five of “Forty Years”), the editors offer:

To send THE FRONTIER one year to any boy or girl under fifteen years of age who will send us the correct answer to the following problem, and remit thirty cents, or, instead of remitting thirty cents will secure one subscription to THE FRONTIER from another and remit the fifty cents collected therefor [sic], with the correct solution:

“I sold a horse for $120; if I had sold him for 10 per cent. less than I did sell him, I would have lost 8 per cent more than I did lose. What did I pay for the horse?” (19)

The numerous contests that the Frontier sponsored begs the question of why Bent did not receive payment for the “Forty Years” articles; he laments in his April 12, 1906, letter to Hyde that “I guess the Frontier has gone back on us,” and on April 17, 1906, he writes, “I can see why they don’t want to pay for what they have got of us” (DPL, Yale). Halaas and Masich observe that the “magazine had only a small circulation in Colorado Springs and the Rocky Mountain West, and no one was surprised when it suddenly folded shortly after the Bent articles appeared” (338). While the Frontier’s declining paper quality supports a narrative of financial difficulty, offering a free
female settler-writers, the *Frontier* ambitiously sought to create a “complete register of all Louisiana Purchase territory pioneers” and to “get in touch with every historical society in the country” (January 1906, 2). From their humble “log” office in Colorado Springs, then, the *Frontier* editors envisioned a broad turn-of-the-century literary network dedicated to settler lore.

This network both nostalgically preserved white settler stories and promoted ongoing colonial views—including prejudiced attitudes toward American Indians. On the first page of their inaugural issue (April 1904), for instance, the editors proclaim: “The FRONTIER MAGAZINE begins a new era of life with this issue, a stronger and more zealous attempt to carry out the ideals long ago conceived for the advancement of the new and little developed resources of the Great West—in the wisest, most far seeing and most entertaining manner possible” (1). To realize this “more zealous” endeavor, the *Frontier* published polemic stories like James B. Thompson’s “Some Red-Skin Reminiscences” (December 1905) and “A Big Injun Pow-Wow” (February 1906-April 1906) alongside Bent’s “Forty Years” (Parts Three and Six). Albert U. Mayfield’s “On the Plains of Colorado,” which recalls the days “when redskins were as thick as buffalo,” also coincided with Part Three of “Forty Years” (24). The *Frontier* editors accompanied such racially charged perspectives with “Frontier Notes” and advertisements that delimited American Indians. The April 1904 issue, for example, lists the perceived successes of subscription to children as recently as February 1906 (and cash prizes, material items, and gold in previous years) seems to indicate that the *Frontier* could have offered Bent at least a token payment for his “Forty Years” articles. The *Frontier Monthly*’s May 1903 cover visually conveys this nostalgic interest. A sign on the back of a covered wagon proclaims that the *Frontier Monthly* encompasses “The Old West and the New.” Incidentally, a girl peeks out at the viewer from the back of the wagon and a little dog follows behind—an image strongly reminiscent of Garth Williams’s quintessential cover for Laura Ingalls Wilder’s *Little House on the Prairie* later in the twentieth century.
Native assimilation (it also extols the U.S. West as a land of “[o]pportunity for men of grit and pluck” and calls Montana Representative Dixon’s plan to build a “barbed wire fence” to keep “the Chinese from crossing our northern border” a “great scheme”). The Frontier editors explain that:

The enrollment of pupils last year in the Indian schools was nearly 29,000, and the employees increased from 221 in 1877 to almost 3,000. The Indians have under cultivation 25 per cent more land than in 1890. The white man’s dress is worn by 143,974; 62,616 speak the English language, and 26,629 live in dwelling houses instead of tepees or wigwams. (327)63

These facts (presented in the passive voice) highlight stark social, cultural, and agricultural contrasts for Native peoples. They also conveniently omit white settler culture’s role in ongoing trauma, appropriation, and displacement—including marketing the spoils of colonization. For instance, at the end of the April 1904 issue, an advertisement for artifacts “Direct From the Ruins” appears. It states: “You wish genuine specimens showing the skilful workmanship of America’s pre-historic people as evidenced in the implements, ornaments and utensils. The most exacting may select satisfactory specimens from our collections.” As a twentieth-century periodical, then, the Frontier promoted colonial views by reducing American Indians to assimilationist statistics, referring to them in racially charged terms, and vividly commodifying their cultural productions.

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63 The Frontier’s tone is at times flippant; it is possible the editors simply made these figures up, though including them (regardless of their accuracy) points toward Euro-American investment/interest in ongoing assimilation efforts.
The *Frontier’s* advertisements for “Forty Years with the Cheyennes” similarly commercialize Bent’s Native identity. A full-page publication notice for “Forty Years” first appeared on the back cover of the September 1905 issue (coincidentally, an illustration of an American Indian warrior wearing a large feathered headdress ran on this issue’s front cover). “Forty Years” was the only text to receive such hype; the *Frontier* usually saved its back cover for paid advertisements (like Zodenta Tooth Soap). The full “Forty Years” advertisement reads:

*From the Indian’s Standpoint*

*By George Bent, Pioneer and Scout*  

Beginning with the October *Frontier*, we will publish an interesting history of early days in the West from the Indian’s standpoint.

We have read the other side of the story. Let us see what the red man has to say about it.

These articles were written beside the Indian Camp-Fire. Written by one who witnessed the scenes described. Written without color or varnish by the white man’s

64 The advertisement was subsequently reprinted/tweaked accordingly in the October 1905 and November 1905 issues as Part One and Part Two appeared. These additional advertisements ran inside the front cover rather than on the back cover, however. The *Frontier* recycled the image of this warrior in the February 1905 and May 1906 issues.  
65 Bent never was a scout (though his brother, Robert, was forced to lead Chivington to Black Kettle’s camp prior to the Sand Creek Massacre); Halaas and Masich write that Bent and a friend once encountered a newspaper editor who “effused about their role as old-time frontiersmen and government scouts” (306). They explain that “George—who always enjoyed a good story—did not set him straight. Bent had only served the government as an interpreter, never as an army scout” (306). Identifying Bent as a scout in the *Frontier* thus aligns him with Euro-American assumptions about his nineteenth-century identity. The *Frontier’s* advertisement is also the only published instance of Bent being called a “pioneer.” His Euro-American father is more typically described as an early Colorado pioneer, though Halaas and Masich write of William Bent that “[a]lthough he was the first permanent white settler in Colorado Territory, he had never legally owned any land. . . . Even on his Purgatoire ranch he was nothing more than a squatter” (267). Misidentifying George Bent as a pioneer thus aligns him with Euro-American settler history.
brush.

Wars between Indian tribes and between white and red men. Wars to the death.

Habits, legends, customs and real life of the men of the plains.

BEGINNING WITH OCTOBER FRONTIER

Rampant sentence fragments in the advertisement’s second half (such as “Wars to the death”) dramatize violent acts in Bent’s “ Forty Years,” and claiming that his articles were “[w]ritten without color or varnish by the white man’s brush” elides Hyde’s editorial role; in fact, Parts One, Three, Four, Five, and Six of “Forty Years” acknowledge Hyde as the editor (albeit in smaller, Romanized font; Bent’s name appears in all capitals), and Parts Two through Six list him as the copyright holder as well. The September 1905 advertisement is further remarkable because it invokes an essentialized scene very similar to George Bird Grinnell’s setting in By Cheyenne Campfires (1926), which relates Southern and Northern Cheyenne “oral literature” (v). Grinnell “collected” these stories from unacknowledged Native sources like Bent (v). Grinnell claims, “Told at night to a group of young and old sitting in the half light about the flickering lodge-fire the stories compel the interest and hold the attention of all the listeners” (v). Emphasizing the “Indian Camp-Fire” and “flickering lodge-fire” creates an oral-textual landscape infused with a primitive or mysterious aura.

Commodifying and/or reimagining Bent’s Nativeness in “Forty Years” overlooks the colonially influenced reality that Bent (and other American Indians) experienced at the turn of the last century. According to Hardorff, “By 1885 George Bent and his older brother, Robert, had cleared a farm near Darlington Agency [present-day Oklahoma] and planted large fields of corn. George had built a model home, surrounded by a picket fence and containing five rooms, a bathroom with a tub, and equipped with the latest ‘heating apparatus’” (355). This modern house
represents a very different scene than the one projected in the *Frontier*’s advertisement. Like Two Moons’ 1897 Montana farmstead, Bent’s home in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (seen in Figure 21) is a more intricate blend of cultures, lifestyles, and eras than the *Frontier* editors admit.

![Figure 21. The Bent Ranch. Image courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society.](image)

Instead, the *Frontier* dismisses American Indians as incapable of achieving Euro-American cultural standards. Although the editors recognize “The White Man’s Wrong” in July 1906, noting that “[w]e of the fair skin . . . have but a very imperfectly formed idea of the real character of the enemy of our ancestors,” they go on to assert that the “Indian, to us, was and is a savage and a villain” (15, emphasis added). A second, even more racially charged, editorial from this issue casts Euro-American progress and American Indian backwardness as intrinsic. Titled “Oklahoma,” the editorial is highly relevant to Bent as a 1906 Indian Territory/Oklahoma writer:

A little before 3 o’clock p. m., on June 16th [1906], the president of the United States
signed his name as the final act of making a state of the Oklahoma and Indian Territories. Thus, the wilderness, little by little, goes through the initial, intermediate and final stages of civilized dominion. Thus race succeeds race, new actors take the place of those who have grown decrepit . . . Like farm tenants, one race moves off and another moves on. No, that is not the exact truth—the former occupant is killed off by the succeeding tenant. Is it not a wonderful spectacle that is being enacted before our eyes? Is it not remarkable that we, one of the principal actors in the play are scarcely aware of it? (6)

This passage’s passive voice strategically recalls Manifest Destiny; the settler-colonists seem to simply let “civilized dominion” run its course. Such inevitability, traced through “initial, intermediate and final stages,” nods toward Frederick Jackson Turner’s “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893). Turner similarly notes that “the frontier is the outer edge of the wave—the meeting point between savagery and civilization,” and later references John Mason Peck’s “three classes” of settlers that “like the waves of the ocean, have rolled one after the other” (20). Peck’s passive voice, like the Frontier’s, casts colonialism as a fated act. In a damning shift, however, the Frontier editors allege that the “savage . . . living on the border line between savagery and civilization, may imitate—may ape his neighbor’s modes of life, but to a very limited degree” (6-7). Since it ran only four months after Bent’s “Forty Years” appeared, this editorial begs serious questions about why the Frontier published a Native writer like Bent.

66 Peck continues, “First comes the pioneer . . . The next class of emigrants purchase the lands, add field to field, clear out the roads, throw rough bridges over the streams . . . Another wave rolls on. The men of capital and enterprise come” (19-20).
Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris ask similar questions when introducing Zitkala-Ša in *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings* (2003). Like Bent, Zitkala-Ša serialized her semi-autobiographical stories (“Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” “The School Days of an Indian Girl,” and “An Indian Teacher Among Indians”) in an Anglo-centric periodical that also published works depicting Native Americans as “evil and devilish ‘savages’” (xxxiii-iv). Davidson and Norris conclude that “Americans were fascinated by Native Americans, and may not have worried all that much about the reliability, accuracy, racism, or even skill of popular authors bent on reproducing racial stereotypes” (xxxiii-iv). They further speculate that “the Atlantic Monthly editors [may have] deemed her and her material exotic, and of interest to their readers” (xxxiii-iv). Davidson’s and Norris’s deductions apply to Bent’s work. In the Frontier’s ongoing (and eventually futile) attempt to boost subscription rates, publishing Bent likely catered to readers curious for “what the red man has to say.” Bent’s deft interplay with the Frontier’s tone and content, especially in light of its prejudiced views and images, is supremely fascinating.

*“Read the Bent Articles”: Staking a Claim for Plains Indian Survivance*

Although the Frontier describes “Forty Years with the Cheyennes” as a mere corrective record (noting on its October 1905 cover that Bent “correct[s] many errors. Beginning with this Number”), I assert that Bent’s articles more profoundly stake a claim for Native survivance. In this way, Bent carefully caters to non-Native readers, who craved “thrilling” stories, as well as American Indian readers, who valued fair “accounts” (Bent tells Hyde in his April 17, 1906, letter that “people down here wanted more Frontier Magazines. of this month they think our accounts in it were good”) (Yale). Gerald Vizenor defines survivance in “Aesthetics of Survivance: Literary Theory and Practice” (2008) as “an active sense of presence over absence,
deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories, not a mere reaction” (1). Vizenor goes on to describe “survivance stories” like Bent’s as “renunciations of dominance, detractions, obtrusions, the unbearable sentiments of tragedy, and the legacy of victimry” (1). By consistently concentrating on “presence over absence,” acknowledging (but refusing to be defined by) tragedies like the Sand Creek Massacre, and emphasizing the continued activity of Plains Indian survivors in Oklahoma, Bent adeptly turns “thrilling” narratives of frontier settlement into frankly (and sometimes humorously) narrated stories that express Plains Indian survivance.

Cultivating “presence over absence” in “Forty Years” involves drawing on (and then undercutting) settler-colonial landmarks—a strategy that ultimately emphasizes Native primacy. For instance, Bent orients readers by referencing Denver, a settler city, at the beginning of Part One: he writes that his father owned “Bent’s Fort on the Arkansas River, about one hundred miles southeast of Denver” (3). Bent continues to use Denver as a frame of reference, describing “the Republican River Country” as “east of Denver,” and noting that “Colonel Chivington [stopped] all travel down the Arkansas from Denver” before the Sand Creek Massacre (3, 6). As Part One ends, however, Bent disrupts Denver’s colonial rootedness. His final paragraph reads:

My brother, Charley, and another young half-breed, Jack Smith, were captured by the troops, and I was reported killed. Jack Smith was shot in cold blood by one of the Colorado ‘Hundred-days’-men’ . . . This young Jack Smith is said to have struck the first ‘pay-dirt’ ever found in Colorado. He panned-out two dollars and a quarter’s worth of dust in one day on the site of Denver. This was in the same summer that Denver town-site was laid out; there were no houses there then. (7)

Bent’s closing lines unexpectedly redirect readers from the Sand Creek Massacre’s horror (which
does not surface again until Part Three) to a time—not so long ago—when “there were no houses” in the area. Stripping Denver to a mere “site” where Jack Smith is still “young” and the Sand Creek Massacre has not occurred, I argue, resists a narrative of tragic erasure perpetrated by figures like Chivington. It also affirms Native presence in this regionally significant location.

Portraying Colony, Indian Territory, as a cultural/conversational Plains Indians hub in “Forty Years” (versus a site of tribal displacement) also helps establish “presence over absence.” Famous chiefs and warriors like Two Moons, Black Elk, and Brave Bear, among others, frequently come and go “down here” to share stories among friends and family. At times, “down here” almost becomes a refrain; in Part Four, the phrase occurs four times on one page. In addition to stressing survival (“Black Elk . . . still lives”) and mobility (Two Moons “came down here”), repeatedly calling attention to Colony’s southern location establishes its central role in the “continuance of stories” among twentieth-century Plains Indians (Vizenor 1). In Part Four, for instance, Bent writes that “Black Elk, a Cheyenne who still lives down here, told me he had a pony shot under him” (5). Two paragraphs later, Bent states, “I once had a talk with a Sioux who came down here on a visit and he told me the Sioux whipped Cole” (5). Again, Bent writes, “In November 1904, Two Moons of the Northern Cheyennes came down here to visit his old friends among the Southern Cheyennes and Dog Soldiers . . . and while the old chief was down here last winter I got his account of the Fetterman fight” (5). In Bent’s autobiographical writing, Colony is thus dynamic and persistent—a key destination for cultivating Native dialogue about nineteenth-century events.

Bent further promotes survivance in “Forty Years” by exceeding “mere reaction” when
challenging non-Native records (Vizenor 1). This strategy, which allows Bent to interject humor, offers readers (both Native and non-Native) a triumphant Plains Indian narrative that deeply contrasts with tragic accounts circulated by Euro-American writers like Washington Irving, William Cullen Bryant, Catharine Maria Sedwick, James Fenimore Cooper, and Hamlin Garland. Even when well-intentioned, such figures portray Native peoples in a vanishing condition. In *The Westward March of American Settlement* (1927), for instance, Garland writes, “In the story of the furious struggle . . . between the rear guard of retreating red hunters and the advance guard of white civilization we witness a war which was as inevitable as it was merciless and far-reaching” (15, emphasis added). Plains Indians in “Forty Years,” in contrast, rarely “retreat.” Bent himself survives three death reports, and in Part Three, he corrects Euro-American records of the “First Fight at Julesburg,” noting that “[t]he officer . . . reported he had killed ‘sixty’ Indians during his charge. The truth is not an Indian was killed during the whole fight” (3). Part Three ends by mocking Colonel Moonlight’s defeat at the Powder River. To escape Bent and the Southern Cheyennes, Colonel Moonlight “set[s] fire to part of his wagons” and retreats “back to . . . where he had camped the night before” (7). Bent proudly concludes:

During all the time we were attacking him Moonlight blazed away at us with a howitzer.

The only Indian killed during the entire engagement was killed by a piece of shell fired from this gun. This man’s name was White Stone, a very old man. He was sitting

67 Bent joins Eastman in responding to non-Native exaggerations of Native losses (which help support a narrative of “Vanishing Indians”); Eastman writes in *Indian Boyhood* that “[n]o doubt these soldiers reported at the fort that they had been attacked by a large party of Indians, and I dare say some promotions rewarded their tale of a brave defense! However, the facts are just as I have stated them” (245).
smoking his pipe, away off behind a hill, no where near the fight, when this shell, which had been aimed at the warriors charging about Moonlight’s men, came over the hill and put an end to the old man’s smoke. (7)

Bent’s cheeky tone in this passage (dwelling on White Stone’s accidental death “no where near the fight” to show how badly Moonlight mishandled the howitzer) is unusual compared to his predominately reserved writing style. Faller, in fact, contends that “there’s not much personal detail in [Life of George Bent] nor much of a sense of an individual personality” (74). I qualify Faller’s argument by asserting that Bent’s personal reactions—which, indeed, are rarely expressed in “Forty Years”—most frequently surface when counteracting misleading white military records. In an even clearer instance of personality + survivance within Life, Bent writes:68

On January 10 [1864] General Curtis, commanding the department, reports by wire that Captain O’Brien “repulsed” the Indians and “drove them south,” and that fifteen soldiers and thirty-five Indians were killed. This makes me smile. The Indians drove O’Brien and his men pell-mell into their stockade and they did not show their noses outside again that day. (174, emphasis added)

Overall, Bent significantly turns the tables on Euro-American narratives about American Indian “retreat” by driving white soldiers “pell-mell” throughout “Forty Years” and Life. In doing so, Bent displays his irreverent personality in the face of often extreme non-Native violence. Bent,

68 A play on Malea Powell’s phrasing in “Rhetorics of Survivance: How American Indians Use Writing” (2002). Powell paraphrases Vizenor’s definition of “survivance” as “survival + resistance” (400).
who refuses to let narratives of defeat and/or displacement define his work, instead establishes a
dynamic physical and literary presence for Plains Indians in the early twentieth-century *Frontier*.

“*But, to return to Moonlight and his expedition . . .*”: The Significance of Digressive Storytelling

In addition to staking a claim for Native survivance, George Bent’s “Forty Years with the
Cheyennes” reorients non-Native readers by incorporating a unique conversational approach:
digression. While previous scholars have dismissed Bent’s digressions—Halaas and Masich, for
one, criticize them, noting that Bent’s letters “would begin a story, digress without warning, then
return to it”—I argue that Bent’s digressive moments crucially inform non-Native readers about
Native narrative traditions and how they are situated in regard to customs, legends, and place-
names (336). Such deviations are particularly visible when they interrupt intense action
sequences. For instance, Bent pauses when describing the Southern Cheyennes’ preparations to
fight Colonel Moonlight in Part Three, explaining that:

> For four or five days we were encamped on the site where Ft. Phil Kearney was built the
next year. This was near Crazy Woman’s Fork. The usual story about this stream, that it
was named because of an old insane squaw who used to live there all alone, is not true.
The stream was named in this way: Many years ago a village of Sioux and Northern
Cheyennes were encamped on this stream and a war-party made up of men from both
tribes went out after the Crows. When they came back with Crow scalps many big scalp-
dances were held and during the dances a great many young women eloped with young
men. On this account the stream was called Foolish Woman or Crazy Woman.⁶⁹

But, to return to Moonlight and his expedition . . . (6)

This historical-geographic interlude stresses Plains Indian primacy and informs non-Native readers about the intertribal events that inspired the creek’s name. Even in the heat of the action, then, Bent is willing to privilege information about Native “geography and spatiality” (Brooks xxii). Like Lisa Brooks—who places “as much emphasis on ‘where events occurred as on the nature and consequence of the events themselves”—Bent literally grounds his non-Native readers in Plains Indian spatial histories (xviii). Educating his non-Native readers in this manner allows Bent to address misconceptions/assumptions that might otherwise neglect the rich cultural history behind Native place-names like Crazy Woman Fork.

Bent’s informational tangents similarly drive the ending of “Forty Years.” Part Six opens with tragedy: it relates “Custer’s Fight on the Washita,” the 1868 massacre in which Black Kettle, who had survived Sand Creek, was killed.⁷⁰ Bent concludes, however, with Plains Indian triumph over Custer at the Battle of the Greasy Grass. Although he did not personally fight in this infamous Montana Territory battle, Bent shares that he “secured accounts of the fighting up north in 1876 from several Indians,” including Brave Bear and Two Moons (6). In contrast to

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⁶⁹ Bent’s October 3, 1905, letter to Hyde (which is where this information comes from) is similarly digressive about sharing the story of Crazy Woman’s Fork. Bent abruptly writes in the middle of his letter, “I will give you the history of Crazy Woman or Foolish Woman’s Fork” (HC). He later notes that “[w]hites have different names . . . from the Indians,” another reason Bent felt compelled to provide digressive-corrective Plains Indian histories (HC).

⁷⁰ Bent wrote a short letter to Colonel Tappan to report the incident on September 27, 1969. The full letter reads, “I am very sorry to say to you that Black Kettle and his wife were both killed at Battle of Washita. It is all mistake about Black Kettle’s wife being taken Prisoner. It was also mistake about his Sister being taken Prisoner. Black Kettle has no Sister. I was at Camp Supply and saw all those that were taken Prisoner at Washita” (HC).
Garland, who only writes about Two Moons’ actions during “General Custer’s Last Fight,” Bent blends actions with education. In other words, Bent’s version of “Custer’s battle” interrupts more linear fight sequences (“When Brave Bear arrived he saw the Indians riding all around the troops and shooting at them. There was much smoke and dust”) to inform readers about relevant Plains Indian beliefs and practices, such as how “to avoid bad luck brought on by getting blood on you” and how warriors secured “shields” and “medicine-lances” (7). Bent thus uses the Battle of the Greasy Grass—a topic that greatly interested (and thus engaged) non-Native readers—to instruct them on “actions in Native life [that] are neither primarily oral nor even linguistic” (Warrior xxix). Overall, Bent’s educational digressions offered non-Native readers (who were unaware at best, and racist at worst) a humanizing glimpse into Southern Cheyenne life and culture.

Bent’s most significant narrative digression in “Forty Years” invokes oral rather than geographic or cultural traditions, however. Part Two, which is the only installment of “Forty Years” with its own title, falls between the Sand Creek Massacre (Part One) and its aftermath (Part Three). “Battles Beyond the Border” contains two Southern Cheyenne stories: “The Battle of the Medicine Arrows” and “Touching Sky and His Coat-of-Mail.”71 These stories provide the clearest proof that “Forty Years” is not merely a “corrective” text, but instead a significant intertribal and Native/non-Native collaborative work deeply invested in historical and literary

71 The “border” itself is ambiguous. Part Two’s title could indicate the nineteenth-century border/frontier between the United States and Indian Territory, or it could refer to a figurative/temporal border (i.e. recounting events beyond the boundaries of linear time, which the rest of the “Forty Years” articles generally follow).
survivance. “Medicine Arrows” and “Touching Sky” also overtly engage Part Two of “Forty Years” with Native storytelling traditions, an interest Eastman and Zitkala-Ša share. In Indian Boyhood, for instance, Eastman recounts the centrality of “myths” and “deeds” in Sioux families:

Very early, the Indian boy assumed the task of preserving and transmitting the legends of his ancestors and his race. Almost every evening a myth, or a true story of some deed done in the past, was narrated by one of the parents or grandparents, while the boy listened with parted lips and glistening eyes. On the following evening, he was usually required to repeat it. If he was not an apt scholar, he struggled long with his task; but, as a rule, the Indian boy is a good listener and has a good memory, so that the stories were tolerably well mastered. (51)

Zitkala-Ša also values storytelling, writing in “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” that “I loved best the evening meal, for that was the time old legends were told” (71). Zitkala-Ša waits impatiently for the meal to end, “wishing all the time that they would begin the stories I loved best . . . Soothing my impatience, my mother said aloud, ‘My little daughter is anxious to hear your legends’” (72). These legends, which Zitkala-Ša further explores in Old Indian Legends (1901) and American Indian Stories (1920), as does Eastman in Red Hunters and Animal People (1904), Old Indian Days (1907), and Wigwam Evenings: Sioux Folk Tales Retold (1909) (among others), entertain, teach, preserve cultural and familial ties, and forge new community connections.

Read together, George Bent’s “The Battle of the Medicine Arrows” and “Touching Sky and His Coat-of-Mail” stories intertwine past and present as well as personal and tribal concerns: both stories relate early nineteenth-century Plains Indian events that share past- and present-day ties with Bent. This strategy more deeply associates Bent and his family with Plains Indian
oration and demonstrates that Native storytelling is an ongoing and/or adaptive process. Of the
two legends, “Medicine Arrows” speaks most broadly to Southern and Northern Cheyenne
storytelling traditions; versions of this story, in fact, frequently appear in texts about the
Cheyenne oral tradition. In Sweet Medicine: The Continuing Role of the Sacred Arrows, the Sun
Dance, and the Sacred Buffalo Hat in Northern Cheyenne History (Volume 1, 1998), for
instance, Peter J. Powell writes that the Sacred Arrows “were, and for conservative Cheyennes
still are, the supreme symbols and sources of male power. Through Mahuts [the Sacred Arrows],
the All Father gives the Cheyenne men power over other men as well as power over the animals”
(xxiii). 72 Grinnell’s By Cheyenne Campfires similarly privileges the Sacred Arrows; they arise in
the first story, “The Medicine Arrows and the Sacred Hat,” as well as “Sweet Medicine and the
Arrows” and “A Medicine Man’s Arrows.” Grinnell writes, “The medicine arrows were brought
to the Tsistsistas by Sweet Medicine . . . The arrows were in charge of a special man, who, when
he supposed he was about to die, handed them over to be cared for by some man of his family . . .
The arrow keepers were men of wisdom and of power, and were respected advisers in the tribal
affairs” (3). Finally, John Stands In Timber and Margo Liberty address the Medicine Arrows in
Cheyenne Memories; Stands In Timber writes that “[e]verything was smooth if the Keeper lived
quietly and prayed all the time and the people followed his instructions . . . If a member of the
tribe drew the blood of another member, one of the chiefs had to renew the Sacred Arrows—
obody but a chief” (87). Such attention to the Sacred Arrows links Bent with important

72 Though a Euro-American writer, Powell does—in contrast to figures like Grinnell—provide a brief biography
about each of his Cheyenne sources at the beginning of Sweet Medicine.
Northern and Southern Cheyenne storytelling traditions in “Forty Years.”

In contrast to Powell’s and Grinnell’s accounts, however, which occur in the deep past, but similar to Stands In Timber’s, which relates the Sacred Arrows’ nineteenth- and twentieth-century history, Bent’s “Medicine Arrows” tale occurs in the 1830s. This more recent setting reveals an evolving oral tradition that crucially supports Bent’s attention to survivance. Bent starts:

On a summer day, over a half century ago, the Cheyennes broke camp and moved to war. At that time the frontier was still east of the Missouri, Illinois was considered a part of the Far West and no emigrant wagons had yet crossed the plains to Oregon; for this was the Year-of-the-Shooting-Stars and the Moon-when-the-Wild-Cherries-Get-Ripe—the year 1833 and the month of August. All the oldest Cheyenne men remember this year, on account of the November night, made light as day by the myriads of shooting-stars flashing through the heavens, when amid screaming women and children and howling dogs the warriors mounted their fleet ponies and rode madly about on the prairie singing their death-songs, for all believed the world was coming to its end that night. (3)

This opening, which predates Bent’s birth, blends markers of Southern Cheyenne memory (“the Year-of-the-Shooting Stars”) with non-Native calendars (“the year 1833 and the month of August”). It is also carefully attuned to settler-colonial boundaries; Bent strategically invokes “Illinois” and the “emigrant wagons” to define a time and space without them. Further, Bent’s “Medicine Arrows” introduction vividly describes a celestial event that also reckons “the great national catastrophes and victories” of the Sioux—further associating Bent’s “Forty Years” with
turn-of-the-century Plains Indian memories (Eastman 115). Overall, then, interjecting Part Two between the Sand Creek Massacre in Parts One and Three privileges Plains Indian storytelling traditions and deemphasizes “inevitable” settler-colonial chronologies.

Although “The Battle of the Medicine Arrows” and “Touching Sky and His Coat-of-Mail” initially seem independent of Bent’s overall autobiographical arc, both stories tie Bent to the Southern Cheyennes, thus aligning him with nineteenth-century Plains Indian history. While Bent does not remind readers in “Medicine Arrows” of his grandfather’s status, White Thunder was the Southern Cheyenne Arrow Keeper in the 1830s, or the setting of this story (Life of George Bent makes this connection clearer). “Medicine Arrows” tells how the Southern Cheyennes lost their four medicine-arrows under White Thunder’s tenure, which “would act as a sort of magic shield and protect everyone riding behind them,” in a battle with the Pawnee (3). Bent writes that this loss was “a great blow to the Cheyennes. These four arrows were the most priceless objects owned by the tribe; they played the most important part in the tribal religious ceremonies and were firmly believed to bring good luck—two of them, the ‘Buffalo arrows,’ having power over hunting while the other two, the ‘Man arrows,’ or war-arrows, brought good luck to the warriors in battle” (4). The Pawnees later return one arrow, and the Sioux recover another for the Cheyennes while “storm[ing] another Pawnee village on the Platte” (4). Bent

73 In Indian Boyhood, Eastman recalls a similar story from Smoky Day. Eastman writes that “Smoky Day was widely known among us as a preserver of history and legend . . . For instance, there was the year when so many stars fell from the sky, with the number of years since it happened cut into the wood. Another recorded the appearance of a comet” (15).

74 As Bent notes in the expanded version of this battle, his grandfather was the Arrow Keeper at the time the arrows were lost, “and in this Pawnee fight my grandfather turned over the arrows to a medicine man named Bull, who took them into the fight” (and who ultimately lost them) (50).
concludes by noting that “[t]o make up the sacred or lucky number of four, two new arrows were made and these four arrows are still carefully kept by the Cheyennes, down here in Oklahoma” (4). This line is significant for several reasons. First, it emphasizes continuity in the face of defeat. Two new Medicine Arrows replace the two held by the Pawnee, and together, these four “sacred or lucky” objects survive a more recent adversary: non-Native settlers. Emphasizing that the Arrows are “still carefully kept . . . down here” further links the past—the Year-of-the-Shooting-Stars—with Bent’s present. The arrows, as well as Bent’s tribal memories, persevere.

“Touching Sky and His Coat-of-Mail” reveals an even more personal connection between Bent and Southern Cheyenne history. In “Touching Sky,” Mexicans trade a Spanish coat-of-mail to the Arapahos, who in turn lose it to the Southern Cheyennes; in this same battle, Bent’s “grandfather (my mother’s father, a full-blood Cheyenne) was killed” (4). In a later conflict with the Shawnees, the warrior Touching Sky wears the coat-of-mail under a “scarlet blanket” to draw enemy fire, leading the Sioux and Cheyenne to victory (5). After the battle, the coat-of-mail is lost, and “[n]o one seems to know what became of the coat-of-mail after that” (5). Bent continues, “It was known to all the Indians as the ‘Iron Shirt,’ and one of Touching Sky’s brothers, still living down here in Oklahoma is named Iron Shirt after this famous old coat of Spanish mail” (5). The second legend that Bent includes in “Forty Years” thus significantly

75 John Stands In Timber shows that the Arrows, unfortunately, did not stay in Oklahoma. He writes that the “last Keeper in Oklahoma got old and sick and wanted to give them up, but no one else could be found. At last he transferred them without authority to a Northerner, Fred Last Bull, and they were moved to Montana. The Oklahoma leaders were angry with the Northern leaders because the Arrows were moved up there, but they could not return them to the Keeper who had given them away, and Last Bull did not want to give them up” (87).
references the present by writing “down here” (i.e. Colony). Passing down the name “Iron Shirt” preserves a link to the past—one based on lineage rather than inheritance of a material object. By digressively relating “Touching Sky” and “Medicine Arrows” in “Forty Years with the Cheyennes,” Bent demonstrates not only a personal connection to landmark moments in the recent history of his people, but also a cultural investment in ongoing and presently developing oral traditions. In what might otherwise appear to be an article-length interlude or digression, then, Part Two crucially argues for continuity, survivance, and cultural heritage—profound work that challenges, educates, and affirms the perspectives of diverse readers of Bent’s “Forty Years with the Cheyennes.”

CONCLUSION

George Bent’s “Forty Years with the Cheyennes” articles intimately link past and present, personal and tribal, Native and non-Native, warrior and writer, action and education. In contrast to the dismissive, reductive, and/or prejudiced narratives circulated by Euro-American figures like George Hyde, Hamlin Garland, William H. Ryus, and the Frontier editors (and more recently by Bent-Hyde scholars), “Forty Years” offers an invaluable, though little-studied, portrait of a writer who carefully listens to and speaks about intertribal and non-Native experiences, memories, and desires. As such, “Forty Years” casts Bent as one of the “active agents in history, innovators of new ways, of Indian ways, of thinking and being and speaking and authoring in this world created by colonial contact” (Womack 6). As a Southern Cheyenne autobiographical vanguard, Bent refuses to provide “Forty Years” with closure. The final lines of Part Six instead explain how the Sioux and Cheyenne identify Major Reno and Captain Benteen (who failed to relieve Custer’s troops during the Battle of the Greasy Grass). Bent writes that:
the Indians remained here, fighting Reno and Benteen, until Terry’s troops came in sight; then they broke camp and moved away. They call Reno and Benteen’s forces the ‘soldiers with the pack-mules’ because Benteen had charge of Custer’s packs. The Northern Cheyennes call Sheridan Three Stars, because he had three stars on his shoulder-straps. (8)

The phrase “shoulder-straps” marks the end of George Bent’s autobiography. There is no nod toward the author, no takeaway, no overarching conclusion—a stylistic contrast with the “My Early Life” passage that formally introduces readers to Bent in Part One. Instead, “Forty Years with the Cheyennes” ends in the midst of actions (“broke camp and moved away”) and explanations (the “Northern Cheyennes call Sheridan Three Stars”). In a sense, then, the end of Bent’s text is suspended: forever about to continue, forever emphasizing the present (“They call” and the “Northern Cheyennes call”), forever cognizant of a tumultuous and traumatic past. In this way, Bent not only entertains his non-Native audiences by offering them never-before published Native accounts of intense fights like the Battle of the Greasy Grass, but he also increases their awareness of and/or sensitivity to the reactions and cultural practices of the Southern Cheyenne.

As a conversational text that engages with both Native and non-Native subjects, “Forty Years with the Cheyennes” ultimately becomes the story of a writer who found identity through a vocal community. Bent’s narrative both resists and restores, providing invaluable insight into a turn-of-the-century U.S. West vividly wrestling with its history, literary legacy, and imagery. This effort, Bent shows, can conflate legend and preservation with autobiographical truth. In an article from the *Ponca City Daily Courier (Ponca City, Okla.*) on June 25, 1906 (three months after the last of Bent’s “Forty Years” articles appeared), questions arise about Bent’s ongoing
role in sparking non-Indian interest in Southern Cheyenne culture and lore.\textsuperscript{76}

FOUND INDIAN PARCHMENT. Newspaper Man Makes Lucky Find in Some Old Documents.

Watonga, Okla., June 25.—A local newspaper man at this place made a very lucky find the other day by accidently running onto an old Indian history. The details are written out on old parchment paper and proved to be an accurate history of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians. It gives an account of their religious rites and beliefs along with the traditions of the tribe. It deals freely with the tribal government for over one hundred years and is very extensive in covering the relations with the United States government. Many important fights with troops and a description of the burying grounds where some officers were interred are among the things. It was originally written in Indian language and has been translated by George Bent, an old time Indian scout and plainsman.

The affairs of several other Indian tribes who have been affiliated with the Cheyennes and Arapahoes is dealt with in the history.

Among the things dealt with is the history of the sacred arrows, that were stolen by the Pawnee Indians and secured only recently by the Cheyennes by exchanging several hundred ponies.

The translation will be put in shape and published in some newspaper or magazine.

\textsuperscript{76} This article was subsequently reprinted in newspapers as far away as Indiana.
The content described in this “Indian parchment” aligns exactly with the content of both “Forty Years with the Cheyennes” and Life of George Bent. Identifying Bent as “an old time Indian scout and plainsman” also closely recalls the Frontier’s inaccurate byline of Bent as a “Scout and Pioneer.” Did George Bent write this text? If so, was it promotional for “Forty Years”? If not, did he use it as a source? What became of the parchment and translation? Regardless of the answers, which are impossible to discern now (the location of the parchment, if it existed, is now unknown; the translation was never published), the Ponca City Daily Courier article stresses Bent’s multicultural role as a listener, speaker, and translator—a “living book” (like Smoky Day) of Southern Cheyenne history.77 As Bent’s “roughest” (and, crucially, earliest) autobiographical effort, “Forty Years with the Cheyennes” vividly articulates Native survivance and significantly offers intertribal oral traditions and conversations as an alternative to erosive Frontier discourse.

77 Hardorff describes Bent as being “blessed with a marvelous memory” and says he “was a walking encyclopedia of Great Plains history” (355).
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“So Live, So Grow, So Improve”: Cultivating Roots in From Slavery to Affluence

Robert and Daisy Anderson’s From Slavery to Affluence (1927, 1967, 1986, 1995, and 1997) signals the U.S. West as a diversely occupied region whose self-narrating authors both participate in settler culture and contest racial boundaries. From Slavery to Affluence spans 154 years of African American history: Robert Ball Anderson was born on a Kentucky plantation in 1843, and Daisy Graham Anderson, his wife (born in 1900), published the final edition of their joint autobiography in 1997. When they married in 1922, Robert Anderson was a 79-year-old wealthy Nebraska rancher and Daisy Anderson was a 21-year-old impoverished Arkansas teacher. Archives have preserved Robert Anderson’s homesteading success (see Figure 22, which outlines his roughly 2,000-acre Nebraska ranch). His turn-of-the-century literary endeavors—including his unique collaborative authorship with Daisy Anderson—however, have received less scholarly attention.

1 Daisy Anderson acknowledges in interviews that she did not initially love Robert Anderson; the marriage allowed her to escape extreme poverty in Arkansas. For his part, Robert Anderson gained a companion and chronicler.

2 I am the first to categorize From Slavery to Affluence as a collaborative autobiography; typically, scholars and journalists attribute the text to either Robert Anderson (the sole subject of the 1927 edition, which does not list an author) or Daisy Anderson (who republished From Slavery to Affluence and eventually claimed authorship over it). Identifying From Slavery to Affluence as both Robert and Daisy Anderson’s text fully recognizes their joint labor.
This chapter contextualizes *From Slavery to Affluence* as a settler-colonial production, exploring how both black men *and* black women occupied and narrated the U.S. West. The Andersons’ personal settlement experiences, which vary widely in tone (Robert Anderson embodies postbellum optimism and Daisy Anderson exposes the racism of the post-
Reconstruction Nadir), reveal an evolving narrative of rural black presence in the U.S. West. In particular, Daisy Anderson’s voice—obscured in 1927—emerges in the 1960s. After moving to Nebraska in 1922, Daisy Anderson recorded her husband’s oral testimony; her notes became the 1927 *From Slavery to Affluence* (which then became Part One of the 1967, 1986, 1995, and 1997 editions). The 1927 *From Slavery to Affluence* exclusively focuses on Robert Anderson, including his as-told-to memories as a formerly enslaved man in the antebellum South (Chapters 1-5). Chapter Six relates his adventures as an “Indian” fighter (with the 125th U.S. Colored Infantry), and Chapter Seven records his efforts as a homesteader in the postbellum West (44). *From Slavery to Affluence*’s post-1927 editions, however, centralize Daisy Anderson’s agency; not only does she appear as *From Slavery to Affluence*’s author from 1967 onward, but she added Part Two (in 1967) and Part Three (in 1986), which establish her as a “permanent settler” (80).

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3 My focus on individual homesteaders (versus members of communities such as Nicodemus, Kansas, and DeWitty, Nebraska) enriches our understanding of settler-authors who fall outside the more widely recorded experience of living in all-black towns. I am indebted to Dan Moos, who notes that “western outsiders” like Robert Anderson “often embraced the terms of official culture, especially with reference to the American West, to situate themselves within national culture. By embracing the mythologies of the West, they sought to claim that geographic space as devoid of racial injustices” (80). Moos also notes that “Anderson combined the genres of slave narrative and pioneer success story” (80-1). I agree with Moos’s assessments. My attention to *From Slavery to Affluence* diverges from Moos’s by 1) more fully contextualizing Robert Anderson’s as-told-to narrative within “pioneer” storytelling traditions (including his exaggeration of “Indian” fights) and 2) recovering Daisy Anderson’s understudied autobiographical contributions.

4 Robert Anderson was illiterate; he shares that after his first Nebraska homestead failed in 1881, “I went to Kansas . . . I was then thirty eight years old, and could not even write my own name. I went to school for three months that winter. That is all the schooling I have ever had” (51). Three years of farm labor followed Anderson’s schooling—a hands-on education that supplied both the funds and the knowledge he needed to establish a successful Nebraska ranch. Darold D. Wax speculates that Hemingford, Nebraska, community members helped Daisy Anderson write the 1927 *From Slavery to Affluence*; since records (letters and/or manuscript drafts) do not survive, it is impossible to trace such editorial involvement. In *From Slavery to Affluence*, Robert Anderson only acknowledges his wife’s help.

5 Throughout its various editions, the page numbers for Robert Anderson’s as-told-to story in *From Slavery to Affluence* remain the same. Likewise, Daisy Anderson’s 1967 additions maintain the same pagination in the 1986, 1995, and 1997 editions. In general, I refer to the 1927 edition when quoting from Robert Anderson’s portion of the narrative; I refer to the appropriate editions (depending on context) when analyzing Daisy Anderson’s contributions.
Though omitted in early “pioneer” histories (and marginalized well into the twentieth century), black settlers like Robert and Daisy Anderson were “undeniably present” in contested U.S. Western spaces (Gardner 12).

Robert and Daisy Anderson’s accounts of Native displacement and settler permanence fundamentally challenge settler-colonial theory’s omission of minority figures. Settler-colonial scholarship typically focuses on European and white settlers. Margaret Jacobs, for instance, explains that “settler colonialism [is] a type of European expansion” in *White Mother to a Dark Race* (2009) (2), and Lorenzo Veracini solely focuses on “settler colonizing Europeans” in *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (2010) (97).

Although such theorists largely overlook minority figures, numerous scholars of African American history and literature (without directly invoking settler-colonial theory) have explored the efforts of black U.S. Western settlers. Eric Gardner, for instance, analyzes “black struggles for identity formation . . . in specific locations . . . that have fallen off of our maps of early black culture,” though he omits black settlers of the Mountain West and Great Plains (13). In *Southern Seed, Northern Soil* (1999), Stephen A. Vincent challenges the idea that the “sturdy pioneers of the frontier era . . . were entirely of European descent” by discussing two black Indiana communities (xi). And texts

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6 John Stokes Holley similarly explores “unexpected” African Americans in the U.S. West, identifying them as “invisible people.” In *The Invisible People of the Pikes Peak Region: An Afro-American Chronicle* (1990), Holley includes biographical profiles as well as a “Chronology of Notable Events” that re-vision the history of Colorado Springs through African American accomplishments and milestones—thus vividly reclaiming an “invisible” record.

7 For his part, Walter L. Hixson addresses both the “Negro problem” and the “Indian problem” in *American Settler Colonialism* (2013), asserting that “Americans needed to clear geographic space for white men and their families to the exclusion of Hispanics, Indians, and African-Americans” (2013). Hixson casts African Americans a barrier to white settlement instead of acknowledging black settlers as dynamic contributors to settler-colonial endeavors.
like Nell Irvin Painter’s *Exodusters* (1977) address 1870s African American settlement in Kansas, though Painter more overtly builds a historical (rather than autobiographical) record.\(^8\) This chapter thus links settler-colonial, life-writing, and African American studies, contextualizing the Andersons’ settlement efforts (both physical and literary) within a broader narrative of U.S. Western Manifest Destiny.\(^9\)

Overall, analyzing Robert and Daisy Anderson’s *From Slavery to Affluence* involves unpacking a series of interrelated erasures; as Quintard Taylor asserts, “we must pursue the significance of the black presence in the West beyond simply locating African Americans on the scene” (21). First, the Andersons’ “permanent” presence in the U.S. West (celebrated in *From Slavery to Affluence*) was deeply predicated on Native absence; beyond documenting Robert Anderson’s role in “correlling [sic] the Indians on their reservation,” *From Slavery to Affluence* largely neglects American Indians (44). Second, Robert and Daisy Anderson’s autobiography (which they self-published on the presses of the *Hemingford Ledger*, a local newspaper, in 1927; this list is not exhaustive. Other notable texts about black settlers (which I do not otherwise reference in this chapter) include Quintard Taylor’s *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990* (1998), Quintard Taylor and Shirley Ann Wilson Moore’s *African American Women Confront the West, 1600-2000* (2003), Tiya Miles and Sharon P. Holland’s *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country* (2006), Tiya Miles’s *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (2015), and Charlotte Hinger’s *Nicodemus: Post-Reconstruction Politics and Racial Justice in Western Kansas* (2016).

Robert Anderson shares experiences with the Exodusters, which makes research about them invaluable for contextualizing his efforts. However, Anderson’s immigration to the U.S. West largely predates the main Exoduster movement (which occurred in the late 1870s), and though he lived in both Nebraska and Kansas at different points in his life, he did not settle in an Exoduster community. As such, I concentrate on exploring Anderson’s identity as a black settler whose life story shares details with, but ultimately does not fall under the precise label of, an Exoduster. Justin Leroy’s “Black History in Occupied Territory: On the Entanglements of Slavery and Settler Colonialism” (2016) “argues that since the nineteenth century, US colonial projects have relied upon a simultaneous logic of anti-blackness and settlement.” Leroy’s dual interests in anti-blackness and settler colonialism do not lead him to fully consider the role of African American settlers within colonial projects; his article focuses only on enslavement.
Daisy Anderson printed all subsequent editions via the *Steamboat Pilot*, a Steamboat Springs, Colorado, newspaper) complicates white-authored literary and historical records, which often overlooked and/or misrepresented African American settlers. Finally, Daisy Anderson’s post-1927 editions of *From Slavery to Affluence* combat the erasure of black women in the U.S. West; Glenda Riley asserts that “Western black women still suffer from an unfortunate case of near-invisibility in the historical record” (161). By establishing both literal (agricultural) and literary roots in contested ground, the Andersons simultaneously diversify mainstream stories of U.S. Western settlement and contribute to the ongoing dispossession of Native peoples. From optimism to bitterness, erasure to visibility, the Deep South to the “Wild” West, Robert and Daisy Anderson’s *From Slavery to Affluence* offers a multifaceted and evolving portrait of African American achievement that demands close attention to settler culture’s many racial and gendered erasures.

This chapter is broken into two parts. In the first, I analyze Robert Anderson’s 1927 narrative alongside contemporaneous white-authored Nebraska settlement accounts. Such an approach reveals that Robert Anderson strategically defined himself as a “permanent settler” (rather than just an exceptional “ex-slave,” as white neighbors saw him) who embedded himself in Nebraskan lore through his military service and agricultural efforts (80). Publishing *From Slavery to Affluence*—which glorifies his postbellum “Indian” fighting and homesteading adventures while deemphasizing his memories of enslavement—allowed Robert Anderson to redefine his local legacy and shape twentieth-century public discourse about racial equality in the U.S. West. The second part recovers Daisy Anderson’s post-1927 autobiographical additions, which more overtly confront racism, assert her authorial agency, and establish her as a “permanent settler” of Nebraska and Colorado on her own terms (80). Overall, Robert and Daisy
Anderson prove that U.S. Western settlement is an ongoing social, environmental, and autobiographical process. Locally published, regionally distributed, and nationally (and even internationally) significant, From Slavery to Affluence shows that “unexpected” literature is perhaps some of the richest for tackling—and further exposing—the U.S. West’s persistent racial and gendered gaps.

PART ONE: CONTEXTUALIZING ROBERT ANDERSON’S ORIGINAL NARRATIVE

“Respected Neighbor”: On the Periphery of White Settlement Narratives

Self-publishing From Slavery to Affluence in 1927 (with Daisy Anderson’s help) allowed Robert Anderson to cast himself as a U.S. Western settler who—through hard work and agricultural savvy—had established regional roots as deep as those of his white neighbors. Anderson thus critically supplemented early white-authored “pioneer” chronicles, which often ignored or downplayed African American settlers.10 The few turn-of-the-century Nebraska texts that do mention black settlers often misrepresent them. Anna N. Phillips and Vilma D. Ball’s History of Box Butte County, Nebraska, from Dinosaurs to Streamlines, and of its Permanent Settlements from 1886 to 1938 (1939), for example, mentions only Robert Anderson; no other

10 The Nebraska Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution’s Collection of Nebraska Pioneer Reminiscences (1916), for instance (which opens by asserting, “Reminiscence, recollection, personal experience—simple, true stories—this is the foundation of History”), does not feature any stories from black settlers. J. Sterling Morton and Albert Watkins’s History of Nebraska: From the Earliest Explorations of the Trans-Mississippi Region (1918) addresses territorial debates about slavery, but also omits African Americans—an erasure shared by A.B. Wood’s Pioneer Tales of the Nebraska Panhandle (1938).
African American settlers appear. At the time, though, Anderson, “was not the only black man living in Box Butte County” (Wax 177). According to Darold D. Wax, “The county’s black population in 1910 was 55 . . . By 1920, 173 blacks lived in the county” (177). In the process of making him selectively visible, Phillips and Ball misrepresent Anderson’s identity. They explain:

West of Hemingford lived Charlie Davison, Brown, Turner, Phillips, Wilmot, Schaeffer, Beaumont, Ike Woods, Ben and Leslie Price (now the Roy Reynolds farm), Tom Green, Louis Leavitt, Charles Taylor, Shimek, Logan, Metlin, Ike Nicholl, Sauerwine, Bion Reynolds, and Robert Anderson, respected neighbor, colored and formerly a slave, not knowing his name or his age. He adopted the name of the family that raised him. (163)

In this list of early settlers, Phillips and Ball stress Anderson’s difference (“colored and formerly a slave”) and distort his self-awareness. Anderson knew his name and birthdate. He also chose to change his name to reflect his family’s lineage—not his master’s ownership. At the outset of From Slavery to Affluence, Anderson shares, “I was born in Green County Kentucky, March 1, 1843” (3). Anderson later clarifies that although he was named after Colonel Robert Ball (“because I became, very early in life, a favorite of the master, I was named Robert Ball after him”), he and his siblings began using their father’s surname after the Civil War; Anderson’s

Incidentally, History of Box Butte County—like From Slavery to Affluence—was printed on the Hemingford Ledger’s presses (which likely contributed to Robert Anderson’s inclusion in Phillips and Ball’s volume). Anderson’s December 4, 1930, Hemingford Ledger obituary similarly highlights his supposed exceptionality (despite the presence of other black settlers in the region), noting that “Mr. Anderson has been a resident of the Hemingford community since 1884, when he homesteaded 14 miles north of town and although there have been few of his own race in this section, he won and retained . . . the respect and friendship of his neighbors and friends in this community.”
father was Bill Anderson, a formerly enslaved man on a nearby plantation (4). Robert Anderson’s name change thus reflects his postbellum agency—not ignorance or adoption.

Finally, Phillips and Ball’s 1939 text relegates Anderson to the periphery of white settlement history by placing him last on their list of Hemingford settlers (he was actually one of the first). Overall, then, white-authored chronicles like Phillips and Ball’s circulated an incomplete record of early black Nebraska settlers—an erasure that Anderson’s narrative in From Slavery to Affluence crucially complicates.

Such literary marginalization reflected a wider pattern of discrimination in the U.S. West; Anderson’s white neighbors always remained attuned to his racial difference—even when seemingly accepting him. In a 1966 interview with the Nebraska State Historical Society, for instance, Harry O. Wildy (a longtime white Hemingford resident) recalls that Anderson “always carried the flag on Independence Day Celebration. That was his job. Visitors were always...

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12 Robert Anderson enlisted in the 125th U.S. Colored Infantry as Robert Ball (i.e. before he began using his father’s surname). Interestingly, Darold D. Wax—who has published the most comprehensive studies of Anderson to date—persists in referring to Anderson by the name he was given (Ball) rather than the name he chose (Anderson).
13 Robert Anderson arrived in the area in 1884—two years before Hemingford, Nebraska, was founded. He does receive a more extended write-up in Edna Clark’s commemorative Hemingford, Nebraska, 1886-1986 (1986); incidentally, Hemingford’s centennial year is when Daisy Anderson published her third edition of From Slavery to Affluence. Clark again invokes Anderson’s supposed exceptionality, noting that “[t]he Hemingford Centennial Book would not be complete without the story of Robert ‘Bob’ Anderson . . . Although there have been few of his race in this area, he won and retained the respect and friendship of his neighbors” (84).
14 White society’s perception of his racial difference made Robert Anderson mindful as well. In his 1966 interview with Nelson, Wildy shares that “[y]ou couldn’t help but like him. There was one time he drove out to a neighbor’s ranch. He arrived about noon . . . The woman prepared the meal and ‘Uncle Bob’ (everyone called him ‘Uncle Bob’) sat down to eat, the woman then sat down and Anderson got up. She asked why and he replied: ‘I respect the white folks.’ The woman told him to sit back down, she was going to eat with him.” Wildy continues, “He was a member of the old M. E. Church and he would come in and sit on a bench if any others sat down on the same bench he got up - - until folks gave him to understand that they wanted him to sit down with them.” Following a statement like “You couldn’t help but like him” with an anecdote about Anderson’s racial difference implies that Anderson’s deference was a key feature of his likeability—an attitude that exposes white Hemingford residents’ pervasive marginalization and prejudice.
amazed. They would say ‘what’s a n****r doin’ carrin’ the flag.’ But townsfolk thought rather
highly of him and he always carried the flag.”15 While he defends Anderson’s role as a
flagbearer, Wildy notably does not contest the racially charged term that visitors used to describe
Anderson. Wax confirms that white Hemingford-area citizens generally “liked Anderson, but the
underside of the community’s perception of Negroes in general was evidenced in the residue of
terminology that outlasted him and bespoke seamier attitudes. Thus his ranch later was referred
to by some as ‘the n****r place’” (180).16 White Hemingford residents also paternalistically
referred to Anderson as “Uncle Bob”—even in advertisements for From Slavery to Affluence
(Wax 180). Hemingford’s tolerance of Robert Anderson did not extend to other African
Americans—including Daisy Anderson. Wax shares that after the Andersons married, the
Hemingford hotel “refused to serve Mrs. Anderson” (182).17 Wax also explains that “[b]lacks
passing through Hemingford . . . were viewed [with] suspicion by unfriendly whites” (179).
Brent M. S. Campney addresses such limited acceptance in This is Not Dixie: Racist Violence in
Kansas, 1861-1927 (2015), commenting that

[u]nlike their urban kin, rural whites usually lived among much smaller, more vulnerable
black populations. Consequently, they could readily expel their black neighbors, thereby

15 “N****r” is spelled out in the original. Here and throughout the chapter, I will depict this word in this manner.
16 Wax further explains that “Hemingford-area whites often referred to the black rancher as ‘Uncle Bob’” and as
“‘Zip Coon,’” charged monikers that refused to grant Anderson full agency (“Robert Ball Anderson” 180). As Wax
notes, “‘Uncle’ and ‘aunt’ . . . as applied to blacks, were holdovers from slavery days . . . Mr., Mrs., and Miss, terms
of respect, were reserved for whites and not loosely employed when referring to blacks” (180).
17 In his interview with Nelson, Wildy also dismisses Daisy Anderson, sharing, “Then he (Anderson) went back
home to Kentucky and why he ever married that young woman . . .” Wildy thus questions Robert Anderson’s
spousal choice.
creating and preserving all-white sundown towns, a name that originated with the signs posted at the edge of some of these municipalities and emblazoned with the blunt warning: “N****r, Don’t Let the Sun Go Down on You in ___.” (34)

Campney also notes that despite identifying themselves as all white, “many towns . . . allowed one black household as an exception” (34-5). White Hemingford’s tolerance of Robert Anderson—but physical and narrative exclusion of other African Americans—contextualizes From Slavery to Affluence. Denied literary agency, Anderson circulated his own narrative in a bid for acceptance.

Such responses to black presence are also evidenced in more widely published white-authored Nebraska settler literature. Willa Cather’s acclaimed O Pioneers! (1913), for instance, entirely omits African Americans. The sole black character in My Ántonia (1918) is Blind d’Arnault, whom Cather describes with a string of racial stereotypes: “[h]is yellow face was lifted in the light, with a show of white teeth . . . He had the Negro head, too; almost no head at all; nothing behind the ears but folds of neck under close-clipped wool” (160). Significantly,

18 Glenda Riley likewise shares that “[e]ven in Grinnell [Iowa], a liberal abolitionist town, a violent mob protested the arrival of four black male workers in 1860” (163). In the 1800s, some “Free Staters”—abolitionists who founded Lawrence to help prevent Kansas Territory from becoming a slave state—opposed living near African Americans. 19 It is worth noting that—in addition to a plethora of scholarly articles and books—contemporary archival and public recovery efforts have produced a rich (and growing) record of letters, newspaper articles, accounts, maps, images, and artifacts associated with black settlement. In April 2016, the Nebraska State Historical Society installed a marker for the all-black town of DeWitty (later called Audacious), thus giving visibility to the efforts of early black homesteaders.

20 Keith Wilhite traces evolving interpretations of Blind d’Arnault in a recent article, including Lisa Marie Lucenti’s assertion that “[a]s a figure who ‘will remember,’ Blind d’Arnault threatens the national and cultural urge to erase the violent history of slavery from memory” (278). Expanding such “memory” to settler culture—which was (and still is) in force—provides a critical new lens for understanding Blind d’Arnault’s role within Willa Cather’s narrative.
Cather depicts d’Arnault as a transient figure—not a permanent settler like the Burden family. Once d’Arnault moves on, Red Cloud, Nebraska, will be an all-white community again. Such widespread marginalization helped foster an Anglo-centric Nebraska settlement narrative that persisted into the 1980s (and beyond, given the 1990s film adaptations of *O Pioneers!* and *My Ántonia*). For example, Edna Clark’s commemorative *Hemingford, Nebraska* (1986) only mentions one black settler: Robert Anderson. In “Black Homesteaders: Settling the North Loup Valley” (1988), Jon Farrar anticipates disbelief when introducing his subject: “The image [of settlement] begins to take form and then you feed in one last bit of information—all these settlers were blacks, not Germans, or Irish, or Czechs, or Swedes, or Poles . . . These were black settlers . . . In Nebraska? In Nebraska’s Sandhills ranch country? Incongruous. Implausible” (40). In the very act of recovery, then, Farrar invokes a rhetoric of erasure. Contemporary settler-colonial scholarship’s non-inclusion of minority settlers is perhaps an extension of such earlier omissions. *From Slavery to Affluence*, which firmly roots its authors in settler culture, thus crucially diversifies our understanding of turn-of-the-century settler storytelling in the U.S. West.

“I Once Was in Bondage . . .”: Acknowledging Enslavement, Transitioning to Landownership

*From Slavery to Affluence* is unique among early Nebraska settler chronicles in that it details Robert Anderson’s homesteading efforts and his experiences as a formerly enslaved man. Combining two literary traditions (i.e. settler and slave narratives) allowed Anderson to control the tone and trajectory of his life story; though two-thirds of *From Slavery to Affluence* focuses on Anderson’s enslavement, Anderson often visually and textually reminds readers that he
desired to construct a more optimistic account. Chapters 1-5 concentrate on Anderson’s enslaved childhood, including food, clothing, music, living quarters, religious practices, and pastimes that he experienced. Anderson also—in keeping with readers’ expectations—describes punishments he survived as a teenager, a topic he prefers not to discuss. Anderson’s readerly awareness is most visible in Chapter Five, which begins: “You would ask if I had been whipped. Indeed I have. My entire body is covered with scars from punishments, so that when I am undressed my body looks like a board that is full of knots” (35). Anderson’s informal “You” (his narrative’s only direct address) is unclear—did he anticipate a question from the reader? Was he responding to Daisy Anderson, his wife and recorder? Regardless, Anderson’s “You” reveals that he knew his audience expected to encounter such a traumatic moment. As Saidiya V. Hartman explains with reference to Douglass, the “passage through the blood-stained gate is an inaugural moment in the formation of the enslaved . . . the terrible spectacle dramatizes the origin of the subject and demonstrates that to be a slave is to be under the brutal power and

\[\text{\textsuperscript{21}}\text{My tabulation of Anderson’s balance between slave and settler narrative traditions differs slightly from Dan Moos’s; Moos writes that “[t]hough Anderson spent the majority of his life as a westerner, fully 70 percent of Anderson’s memoirs relates his experiences as a slave” (93-4). Of From Slavery to Affluence’s seven chapters, the first five describe Anderson’s experiences as a formerly enslaved man. Chapter Six transitions to the end of the Civil War and Anderson’s soldiering, and Chapter Seven relates his homesteading. While only two chapters describe Anderson’s postbellum experiences, they are some of the longest in the book (Chapter Seven, at eleven pages, is the longest single chapter); together, Chapters Six and Seven represent 16 pages, or nearly a third of Anderson’s narrative, while Chapters One through Five represent 38 pages (or just over two-thirds of Robert Anderson’s autobiography).\text{\textsuperscript{22}}\text{Olney identifies such features as representative of slave narratives. He writes, for instance, that such narratives often include a “description of the amounts and kinds of food and clothing given to slaves, the work required of them, the pattern of a day, a week, a year,” etc. (50). Douglass and Washington include similar accounts in their narratives. For more detail on slavery and post-slavery narratives, see works such as William Andrews’s The Slave Narrative After Slavery (2011), Charles T. Davis’s and Henry Louis Gates, Jr.’s The Slave’s Narrative (1985), and Audrey A. Fisch’s The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative (2007), among others.}
authority of another” (3). In Anderson’s worst beating (a “brutal” event that almost kills him), his mistress whips him until he is “a solid mass of cuts and bruises, and blood was running all over the floor” (37). She then rubs ground pepper and pours salt water “into the gashes cut by the whip” and leaves him for dead (37). Anderson shares, “It was a long time before those salt-pepper soaked sores healed over. The sore in my mind has not entirely healed yet” (39).

Anderson’s antebellum injury thus haunts his postbellum account of success and liberation; *From Slavery to Affluence* conveys literal and literary wounding—a textual scar.

Anderson’s punishment was a graphic, and thus defining, feature of *From Slavery to Affluence*. White editors referenced Anderson’s scars when locally advertising his “little book”; more recent writers and scholars have similarly focused on Anderson’s physical body when referencing his autobiographical work. Hartman contextualizes such violent (re)circulation in *Scenes of Subjection* (1997), noting the “ease with which such scenes are usually reiterated, the casualness with which they are circulated, and the consequences of this routine display of the slave’s ravaged body” (3). Such circulation, according to Hartman, “often . . . immure[s] us to pain by virtue of [its] familiarity” (3). The *Hemingford Ledger*’s June 1927 advertisement

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23 It is worth noting that Anderson ultimately fights back against additional punishments. When his mistress asks him to take his coat off on a cold day and he refuses, she strikes him with a “rawhide” (39). At that point, “I lost control of myself and the fight started” (39). Anderson continues, “I caught the whip and jerked it from her hand. I was so mad I did not know what I was doing, or I would not have had the courage to do what I did. I used that whip on her, exerting all my strength. I chased her around the room as she tried to get away from me and call help. I had given her a pretty severe trouncing when she got the door open and ran out into the yard, calling for help” (39-40). To Anderson’s surprise, he is not punished or sold (despite his mistress’s requests), though he is “transferred to the fields” (40). Douglass similarly refuses to be punished by Mr. Covey and resolves “to fight” (1214). He also avoids punishment.

24 Douglass similarly notes that “[m]y feet have been so cracked with the frost, that the pen with which I am writing might be laid in the gashes” (1194).
(headlined with a typo, “Memoris of an Ex-Slave,” revealing a lack of editorial care), for
instance, casually addresses Anderson’s “body.” It reads:

Robert Anderson, well known colored man, an old home steader, has prepared a little
book, his memoirs, telling some thing of his life and condition in slavery, and his efforts
to get on top. He has been punished until his body is like a board full of knots. He ran
away from the Plantation and joined the Union army when he was twenty one, served two
years and eight months. As he states in one part of his story, “a slave at the age of twenty
one, broke at the age of forty five, I am now a rich man, at least rich enough for my own
needs.” The little book is ready for sale, and a number of them have already been sold.
Any one desiring a copy can get it from Uncle Bob or his wife, or at the Ledger Office.
The supply is limited. Get yours now before they are all gone.

This advertisement draws on Anderson’s description in *From Slavery to Affluence* (i.e. “my body
looks like a board that is full of knots”) without using quotation marks—a potential error or
oversight (given the properly punctuated quotation later in the advertisement) that appropriates
Anderson’s text. The Ledger’s advertisement also paternalistically calls Robert Anderson “Uncle
Bob” (and does not specifically name Daisy Anderson, who crucially recorded her husband’s
testimony).25 As the advertisement shows, then, *From Slavery to Affluence* circulated (in part)
among white Hemingford readers and advertisers who were more carefully attuned to

25 It is possible that either Robert or Daisy Anderson wrote the advertisement, though the tone (such as calling
Robert Anderson a “colored man” and the author of a “little book”—language he does not use in *From Slavery to
Affluence*)—seems to suggest a third party as the author (presumably white).
sensationalism than to empathy. Later articles similarly highlight Anderson’s whipping; his December 4, 1930, Ledger obituary vividly describes Anderson’s antebellum injuries, writing that his mistress “climaxed the affair with rubbing red pepper into the wounds and then bathing them with salt water. Until the day he was killed [in a car wreck] his body bore the marks of this assault.” Arlynn Nellhaus’s “Memoirs of Courage” (1970) and Rudi Williams’s “Widow of Ex-Slave, Soldier Fights for Better Race Relations” (1997), among others, likewise recount Anderson’s beating. In this way, Anderson’s readers continue to extricate his physical body from his autobiography. Repeating his beating—out of all the scenes in his narrative—risks making a spectacle of Anderson’s pain and distracting from the chiefly optimistic trajectory that he wished to circulate.

Although he knew that his physical body, alongside his oral testimony, offered an intense story of enslavement, Anderson preferred to discuss his postbellum success in From Slavery to Affluence. Anderson’s attention to social uplift resonates with Booker T. Washington’s Up from Slavery (1901). At the end of Chapter Five (after recounting his punishment and survival), for

26 It is worth noting that since the Andersons self-published this text, any proceeds would likely benefit them. Almost one third of the advertisement is devoted to selling the text (and the other 2/3 provides details about Anderson’s life).
27 Though Robert Anderson was 87, he did not die of old age; rather, he died in a car wreck when returning from a trip to Lincoln, Nebraska, with Daisy Anderson and her brother (who was driving) on November 30, 1930.
28 Incidentally, Washington included the U.S. West on his speaking tour while Robert Anderson lived in Nebraska. According to John Stokes Holley, “On Sunday January 28, 1900, Dr. Booker T. Washington, the famed head of Tuskegee Institute, made two public appearances in Colorado Springs” (54). In Colorado Springs, according to Holley, “Washington told his audience the race problem was a deep one, but that he believed the real way to save the colored man was to teach him to make himself useful; to teach him to use his hands and his brains; to teach him industry, thrift, perseverance and the fear of God, and that then he would make a citizen of whom the United States could be proud” (55). Washington’s 1900 speech thus closely mirrors ideas expressed in his 1895 “Atlanta Exposition Address.”
instance, Anderson speaks for formerly enslaved persons: “Yes, we have been punished, many times, but we, who have been thru those cruel days of slavery, and are now free men, do not like to think of that part of our lives. We would much rather think of the bright spots” (40-1). Visual evidence supports Anderson’s sentiments. Like many other slavery and post-slavery narratives, *From Slavery to Affluence* includes “an engraved portrait or photograph of the subject of the narrative” and “illustrations before, in the middle of, or after the narrative itself” (Olney 49).

Anderson’s photographs (some of which he took himself) remind readers of his homesteading success—even in passages about slavery. Anderson’s frontispiece, for example, tactically depicts him wearing a three-piece suit (complete with a tie clip and handkerchief)—not the utilitarian suspenders, boots, and button-up shirt that he wears when pictured at his Hemingford ranch (See Figures 23 and 25).

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29 Anderson ultimately leaves the plantation amicably. He explains, “Finally I went to my old master and talked it over with him. At first he was angry, then he told me I would have to decide for myself what I wanted to do, and that if I wanted to go, for me to go” (43). Anderson continues, “As I turned to leave him, he made the remark, ‘Remember, Robert, you can stay on the plantation just as long as you want to.’ I did. I stayed just as long as I wanted to. I stayed just long enough to tell my brother and sisters goodbye, and to say farewell to my plantation friends” (43).

30 In addition to visual elements, *From Slavery to Affluence* demonstrates several of Olney’s other “distinguishing mark[s]” that—at the very least—align his story with slave narrative traditions, and—at most—might indicate his (or his wife’s or another editor’s) familiarity with Washington’s *Up From Slavery* (1901). Washington’s title, for instance, like *From Slavery to Affluence*, invokes progress. Chapter One of Anderson’s narrative begins, “I was born in Green County Kentucky, March 1, 1843, but a short distance from the little postoffice of Haskingsville, eight miles from Greensburg the county seat. The earliest impressions that I can now recall, are of the slave quarters on the old plantation. This was where the slaves had their cabins . . .” (3). Washington’s opening in *Up From Slavery* similarly reads: “I was born a slave on a plantation in Franklin County, Virginia . . . I was born near a cross-roads post-office called Hale’s Ford, and the year was 1858 or 1859 . . . The earliest impressions I can now recall are of the plantation and the slave quarters—the latter being the part of the plantation where the slaves had their cabins” (1). Later, both Anderson and Washington describe their excruciating experiences with clothing—a memory that Douglass shares.

31 The ranch picture appears after page 54 (near the end of his narrative). It is one of the few images that corresponds with the content of *From Slavery to Affluence*’s text; it appears when Anderson is describing how he built his “soddie.”
Anderson’s frontispiece—aside from highlighting his material wealth through fashion (versus livestock, as in Figure 25)—represents a key turn from observed subject to active agent; in his frontispiece, Anderson gazes just off center. His expression is at once amiable and piercing. The viewers seem to be the subject of Anderson’s gaze, unsettling their assumed role as observers. In addition to reinforcing Anderson’s financial success and autobiographical-visual agency, the frontispiece (verso)—when paired with From Slavery to Affluence’s introduction (recto)—reminds readers of Anderson’s social uplift. Anderson proclaims, “I once was in bondage . . . But now I am a free man, a citizen of the United States, a property owner, and boss of my own ranch” (1). While he acknowledges his enslaved past (from his title onward), Anderson
nevertheless consistently reminds his readers that he wants settler culture—not enslavement—to define him.\textsuperscript{32}

Six other strategically placed photographs in \textit{From Slavery to Affluence} reinforce Anderson’s accomplishments as a Nebraska homesteader while undercutting the oppression he experienced in the antebellum South. Half of Anderson’s photographs—including his life in Hemingford—anachronistically appear in chapters that discuss Anderson’s former enslavement. A photograph captioned “Bird’s Eye View of the Anderson Home,” for one, appears at the beginning of Chapter Six, or when Anderson is still enslaved. “Bird’s Eye View” previews Anderson’s homesteading success (which he does not discuss until Chapter Seven), reminding readers that even though he is enslaved at this point in the story, Anderson later succeeds on his own terms.\textsuperscript{33} Only two images, in contrast, depict Kentucky, thus privileging a visual record of Anderson’s postbellum Nebraska life. They also significantly cast Anderson as a chronicler of slavery’s disintegration. The first Kentucky photograph (which appears in Chapter One), shows the dilapidated Ball plantation house (the kitchen where his sister worked has entirely collapsed), and the second (in Chapter Two) reveals the Greensburg courthouse that Colonel Ball built from

\textsuperscript{32} Overall, Anderson’s story seems to recall Nell Irving Painter’s observation that “[t]hus, by 1865, when the vast majority of Southern slaves received their freedom, many had already gained a first hold on literacy, seen service in the Union Army, and earned a little cash—enough to shape ideas about the meaning of freedom. More than anything, freedom meant being for oneself, individually and collectively, no longer the creature of another’s will” (5).

\textsuperscript{33} The need for a “Bird’s Eye View” to capture the entire ranch in one frame, in fact, speaks to Anderson’s wealth; the foreground shows Anderson standing in front of at least 15 horses and a herd of cows. More cows, corrals, several barns, Anderson’s home, an orchard, and a windmill occupy the background—all reinforcing Anderson’s achievements.
1802-1804. Anderson took both pictures himself in the 1910s. Photographing Colonel Ball’s ruins—and then including those images at the outset of From Slavery to Affluence—visually foregrounds the end of slavery. Anderson’s Kentucky photographs also strongly reinforce his postbellum economic and narrative agency; as a financially successful homesteader, Anderson chose to buy a camera, travel to Kentucky, photograph traumatic sites, develop the film, and then deliberately arrange those images in his narrative. From Slavery to Affluence is thus a “mixed production” whose visual and textual elements undercut oppression; while Colonel Ball’s plantation visually declines, Anderson’s postbellum Nebraska ranch thrives and grows (Olney 49).

From Chapter Six onward, From Slavery to Affluence celebrates Anderson’s postbellum efforts to settle the U.S. West, a narrative redirection (away from the trauma of enslavement) that harnesses optimism as a rhetorical and social strategy. Other postbellum slave narratives demonstrate a similar approach. According to Deborah E. McDowell, “If the [antebellum] fugitive slave narrative had underlined slavery’s horrors iconicized in ‘bullwhips and iron chains and auction blocks, and slave coffles and empty stomachs and broken hearts,’ post-bellum narratives . . . were dedicated to the ‘proposition that something positive, something sustaining, could be gleaned from that past’” (151). McDowell traces this tonal shift to Up from Slavery,

34 This courthouse is now “[o]ne of the oldest public buildings still standing in Kentucky,” according to a Kentucky Department of Highways commemorative plaque that stands outside the courthouse. Wax reveals that “[w]hen over 70, [Robert Anderson] visited the old Ball plantation in Kentucky, where he had spent his early life as a slave. Camera in hand, he trudged about the place photographing the remains of the Ball house, then in an advanced stage of disrepair. He had not been back since 1867” (“Robert Ball Anderson” 172). To take these photographs, Anderson likely used a camera like the Eastman Kodak Company’s Brownie, which cost $1.00 (~$25.00 today) and was widely available.
which “signaled a ‘new wave of revisionism in post-bellum Afro-American literature,’ insofar as representations of slavery were concerned. No longer needing to denounce slavery to white America, turn-of-the-century narrators cast slavery in pragmatic perspective” (155). In such a “pragmatic” vein, Anderson’s narrative concludes: “I belong to the black race and am not ashamed of it . . . I have had some might [sic] good times, and have enjoyed life immensely. I have found that happiness and enjoyment is where we make it” (59). Despite documented discrimination against him in Hemingford, Nebraska, Anderson also asserts, “I have friends all over the United States, and cannot help but feel that every one in Box Butte County, and western Nebraska, regardless of color, is my friend and I am proud of it” (58). Finally, Anderson shares with his readers, “After all is said and done, I find that there is no greater rule for making and holding friends, for happiness and contentment and real enjoyment of life, than in doing unto others as I would like them to do unto me” (59). Anderson’s didactic closing gently reminds readers (of all races) how to pursue better twentieth-century relationships. Anderson and Booker T. Washington share this strategy. Washington introduces his “Atlanta Exposition Address” in *Up from Slavery* by noting: “As I remember it now, the thing that was uppermost in my mind was the desire to say something that would cement the friendship of the races and bring about hearty cooperation between them” (127). Surrounding his account of antebellum trauma with postbellum optimism helped Anderson anticipate a more cohesive future for black and white citizens of the U.S. West.

“The Indians Began to Give Their Yells”: Propagating U.S. Western Myths

If, like Booker T. Washington, Robert Anderson envisioned greater unity between whites and blacks in the early 1900s, he did not extend the same sentiments to Native tribes. Instead,
From Slavery to Affluence glorifies Anderson’s role in 1860s altercations (or prospective altercations) with American Indians, ultimately aligning his narrative with colonialist tropes. As Dan Moos explains, “Western narratives of adventurous mountain men, self-sufficient pioneers . . . (as well as . . . savage Indians) provided the building blocks for a story of American exceptionalism and bolstered the immanence of a distinctly masculinist American Manifest Destiny” (2). Incidentally, Anderson encountered “masculinist” narratives and settler culture when enslaved by Colonel Ball. In Chapter Three, Anderson shares, “When the early settlers began pushing westward, [Colonel Ball] came among the early settlers and located in Kentucky. He . . . took part in a number of Indian Wars or Indian uprisings before the Indians were driven out of Kentucky” (17). Displacing Native tribes, including the Shawnee, Chickasaw, and Cherokee, helped Colonel Ball occupy (and reconfigure) that space with a plantation. Anderson continues:

Some times, when we were alone, the old Colonel used to tell me of those early days. At one time . . . he showed me a little old log cabin which was once occupied by the trappers and hunters of early days. Here five men had made their home for over a year, and Daniel Boone had visited that cabin a number of times. In one of the Indian raids, three of the five men were killed, and the others so badly wounded they left at the first opportunity. The place had been vacant for years and had partly fallen in when I saw it. (17)

35 Leroy similarly notes that “slavery and settler colonialism share deep and overlapping histories. What insights might emerge from thinking of settler colonialism as a logic of indigenous erasure that has sustained its coherence partly through the language of anti-blackness?” Such a question provides fertile ground for further inquiry.
In other words, Colonel Ball impressed on Robert Anderson from a young age that American Indians were enemies—a foundational (even mythical, given folk hero Daniel Boone) threat to early non-Native settlement. Colonel Ball also cast American Indians as members of a retreating race. The early records of Native presence in Kentucky that Anderson sees, including the cabin where the frontiersmen made their last stand, were disintegrating by his lifetime (i.e. early 1840s).

*From Slavery to Affluence* reveals that Anderson carried Colonel Ball’s lesson on Old Northwest settler culture into his service as a 125th U.S. Colored Infantryman, which he joined right after leaving Colonel Ball’s plantation in the Civil War’s closing months. One of the key ways that Anderson claims a place within foundational (white) settler culture, in fact, is by glorifying conflicts with American Indians—an approach that elides Anderson’s more tedious reality as a colored infantryman. In Chapter Six, Anderson shares that “[m]y company was ordered to Kansas” after the Civil War ended “and became a part of the army that correled [sic] the Indians on their reservation in what was known as Indian Territory” (44). While he does not...

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36 At least two accounts about black settlers in the U.S. West similarly establish their subjects’ place within white settler history—but they do so by claiming to be “white” rather than black. Helen Rezatto shares that Sarah Campbell (African American), the first non-Native woman in the Black Hills, asserted in the 1800s that she was “the only white woman that ever saw the Black Hills” and was an “old frontiersman” (185-6). Rezatto quotes Seth Galvin, who knew Campbell, as speculating that “[s]he was not very literate, and the term ‘white’ was the only one she knew. She meant ‘civilized’” (187-8). And in “John Taylor—Slave-Born Colorado Pioneer” (1941), D. B. McGue quotes John Taylor as sharing, “Yes, suh—yes, suh, I wuz de fust white man to settle in de Pine ribber vally ob sou’wes’rn Colorado” (161). McGue describes his reaction to hearing Taylor: “My eyes bugged out like biscuits. The first speaker was a black man. A short, chunky block of glistening black” (161). Sarah Campbell and John Taylor—rather than representing inaccuracies or ignorance (as Galvin suggests)—challenged restrictive racial boundaries. They overtly aligned themselves with “white” (i.e. colonizing) culture, a strategy that white settlers found difficult to understand.

37 It is worth noting that Robert Anderson did not identify himself as a “Buffalo Soldier.” I avoid calling him one in this chapter primarily because the designation seems to have originally indicated the African American cavalry units
name tribes in *From Slavery to Affluence* (instead reducing Native peoples to homogenous enemies), Anderson likely encountered Apaches and Comanches. In one episode, Anderson recalls, “I remember when we were on our trip across the prairie . . . to Fort Bliss, Texas, we had been out about a month when we ran into a bunch of Indians. We had a regiment with us, and the officers said the Indians out numbered [sic] us ten to one” (45). After three days of anticipation, the 125th U.S. Colored Infantry repelled a morning attack; no deaths occurred on either side (46).

Shortly after, though, Robert Anderson describes an even more harrowing account. He explains that on “the way [to Fort Albuquerque] we had to go thru a pass called Hell Gate, or Devil’s Gap. When we reached that place I thot [sic] my time had come sure . . . We were about half way thru that gap when the Indians began to give their yells” (46). Anderson’s fear influences his expectations; without understanding what the Native warriors’ “yells” might mean, he anticipates an attack. Anderson thus manifests Glenda Riley’s observation that “anxiety” made non-Native travelers in the nineteenth-century West “so apprehensive that they were incapable of dealing effectively with the native populations they encountered . . . many ‘uprisings’ and ‘massacres’ were little more than the work of people’s overactive imaginations”

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that formed after the Civil War with the purpose of going to the U.S. West (rather than infantry units formed during the Civil War). Research about the “Buffalo Soldiers,” however, is helpful for understanding his experiences. In *Life of George Bent* (1968), George Bent recalls encountering black troops on the Great Plains. Bent writes in “The Death of Roman Nose” (Chapter Eleven) that a “force of Negro cavalry” helped “save General Forsyth’s life” in an 1868 altercation with the Plains Indians (305). Shortly after, a “party of Cheyenne men . . . discovered the two troops of Negro cavalry near the Beaver [River] and at once returned to the Indian camp with the news” (309). The Southern Cheyenne warriors mobilize, and the “Negro cavalymen were forced over the steep bank into the creek, and the officer in command had a narrow escape for his life, his saddle slipping off as his horse took the jump” (310).
Indeed, Anderson reveals that “the Indians did not attack us,” but “[w]hen we entered the gap we could see bodies lying all around in the woods where the Indians had held up other wagon trains and massacred the people” (46-7). Such imagery, which supports a narrative of Native aggression, seems to validate Anderson’s fear; imminent danger tinges his story of Western military service.

Anderson, however, might have more overtly engaged with mythmaking in Chapter Six than autobiographical truth; the only documented reference to an 1866 massacre at “Hell Gate” occurs in *From Slavery to Affluence.* At the very least, wholly concentrating on “Indian” fights in Chapter Six creates a disproportionate portrait of Anderson’s infantry duties. Quintard Taylor asserts, for instance, that “‘Indian fighting’ was only a small measure of the role of black soldiers in the West. Military records . . . reveal that buffalo soldiers fought in proportionately fewer engagements with indigenous warriors than white soldiers” (55). Infantrymen—who, unlike

39 Riley’s comment specifically contextualizes white women’s experiences; I argue that her viewpoint is highly relevant for understanding other non-Native experiences on contested grounds. Russell K. Brown, for instance, reveals that troops in the 125th U.S. Colored Infantry were nervous about going West; he writes that the “purpose of sending black soldiers to the Southwest was to replace white volunteer troops who were leaving the service . . . Men who did not wish to go to the far West had been deserting the regiment ever since they learned of their distant mission” (7).

40 Brown notes several altercations between African American and Native forces in “The Last Civil War Volunteers: The 125th U.S. Colored Infantry in New Mexico, 1866-1867” (2014), but does not mention a massacre at either “Devil’s Gap” or “Hell Gate.” Neither does Monroe Lee Billington. In fact, the only documented altercation that overlaps with Robert Anderson’s service in Billington’s *New Mexico’s Buffalo Soldiers, 1866-1900* (1991) occurs when “about twenty Indians” attack the 125th U.S. Colored Infantry close to Fort Bayard in 1867 (7). The cavalry—not the infantry—then pursued the unnamed “Indians.” All other documented attacks involving the 125th U.S. Colored Infantry postdate Anderson’s service; he was mustered out of service at Jefferson City, Missouri, in October 1867.

41 Lisa Bier points toward several alternative examples of cross-cultural contact (i.e. not strictly violent encounters) in *American Indian and African American People, Communities, and Interactions: An Annotated Bibliography* (2004). One is the case of Isaiah Dorman (profiled by Robert J. Ege in “Braves of All Colors: The Story of Isaiah Dorman, Killed at the Little Big Horn”), an African American interpreter who was killed by the Sioux at the Battle
cavalrymen, could not pursue Native forces—saw even less combat. According to Monroe Lee Billington, “the major task of the infantrymen was to maintain and guard military forts . . . While cavalrymen expended most of their efforts fighting Indians, infantrymen devoted their attention to necessary but mundane day-to-day activities” (57). Such duties, Billington continues, included “erect[ing] new buildings and repair[ing] old ones; serv[ing] as carpenters, plasterers, painters, and bricklayers,” among other tasks (58). Russell K. Brown further reveals that “as has traditionally been the case in the Army, soldiers of the 125th spent much of their time in garrison on post construction and maintenance activities” (10). Other than noting the drudgery of walking over three thousand miles across the West and Southwest (“I hiked on foot over thirty-two hundred miles. My regiment traveled across the country on foot . . . and our [white] officers riding horseback”), Anderson entirely overlooks his military life’s tedious aspects in From Slavery to Affluence (44). Omitting such details—and instead focusing on his dramatic “Indian” encounters (including massacres that might or might not have happened)—glorifies Anderson’s military service and overtly aligns him with settler narratives that subjugate and/or erase Native peoples.  

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of the Greasy Grass [Little Bighorn]; he was married to a Santee Sioux woman. Another is the story of John Taylor (written by D. B. McGue)—a formerly enslaved man from Kentucky (like Anderson) who was sent to “Colorado and Arizona to fight the Indians,” then joined the Chiricahua Apaches before settling with the Utes (162). He took several American Indian women as brides. A third is the story of Frank Grouard, who married a Sioux woman and served as a scout.

42 In emphasizing his role in “correlling” American Indians—a narrative that propagates white colonialist mythology (and occludes alternative, non-violent narratives)—Robert Anderson embodies what James Leiker calls a “frustrating irony” of U.S. Western racial relations (25). Leiker explains that “black males” like Anderson, “themselves victims of white prejudice, voluntarily aided the subjugation of Native peoples for the benefit of Anglo expansion” (25). Cornel Pewewardy likewise notes in “A View of the Buffalo Soldiers through Indigenous Eyes” (1997) that “[e]ssentially, the U.S. government was using one group of oppressed people to disenfranchise another
“The Big Question Was How to Get the Trees”: Agricultural Colonialism in the U.S. West

From Slavery to Affluence’s narrative arc closes in Chapter Seven by recounting Anderson’s labors—and eventual accomplishments—as a Nebraska homesteader. Anderson’s self-directed cultivation (rather than the coerced agricultural work of slavery) occurred within a broader context of agricultural colonialism. Anderson’s decision to become his “own master” through landownership, in fact, arose during his military service (and is thus intimately tied to Native dispossession) (Painter 6). Anderson states that the “idea of owning my own land and being independent had been given me while I was still in the army . . . It is to that determination, formed when a soldier, that I owe my independence today” (51). Anderson’s desire for “being independent” resonated with many formerly enslaved persons—particularly black men.

According to Michael K. Johnson, “[a]lthough property ownership is an important component of masculine identity in general, such ownership has particular resonance for a descendent of slaves” (72). “Free” land in states such as Kansas, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Colorado (or group of marginalized people”) (50). Pewewardy continues, “From an uncritical Afrocentric perspective, the Buffalo Soldiers may seem glorious and honorable, but, from an indigenous, tribal-centered perspective, the Buffalo Soldiers do not deserve to be glorified as warriors” (52). Robert Anderson thus exposes complex racialized legacies in the U.S. West.

43 Anderson’s dream of landownership differs from Douglass’s and Washington’s goals, ultimately showing a path to citizenship and self-development through property ownership rather than formal education. Washington writes that “[f]rom the time that I can remember having any thoughts about anything, I recall that I had an intense longing to learn to read. I determined, when quite a small child, that, if I accomplished nothing else in life, I would in some way get enough education to enable me to read common books and newspapers” (16). Douglass likewise shares, “I lived in Master Hugh’s family about seven years. During this time, I succeeded in learning to read and write. In accomplishing this, I was compelled to resort to various stratagems” (1198). Robert Anderson never learned to read.

44 Vincent shares as well that “[l]andownership, for small but significant numbers of African Americans, provided a means of circumventing . . . oppression and discrimination” (xvi). In the U.S. West, agriculture and U.S. military history intertwined; John F. Freeman, for one, traces “the settlement story of the High Plains” to the U.S. Army’s
the region set aside for Indian Territory in 1834) offered formerly enslaved persons like Anderson a chance to become landowners; Mikal Brotnov Eckstrom and Richard Edwards explain that the “Homestead Act of 1862 seemed to provide a pathway” to ownership for black settlers, and the “Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the Fourteenth Amendment (1868) clarified that Blacks were citizens and therefore eligible to homestead” (297). Such economic and geographic potential drew thousands of black homesteaders—swelling the ranks of non-Native settlers on previously contested lands.46

Robert Anderson helped environmentally conquer the U.S. West by establishing his Hemingford, Nebraska, homestead via the 1873 Timber Culture Act, which required would-be homesteaders to plant “not less than twenty-seven hundred trees . . . on each acre” (“Timber Culture Act” 379).47 Anderson acknowledges the 1873 Timber Culture Act’s central purpose in earliest “civilizing” efforts (vii). He explains, “With the establishment of trading outposts on the High Plains in the 1820s and 1830s, efforts certainly were made . . . to grow vegetables—for example, at Bent’s Fort on the Arkansas River, Lupton’s Fort on the South Platte, and Fort William (later renamed Fort Laramie) on the North Platte” (10).

Since the Southern Homestead Act had been repealed in 1876, aspiring black homesteaders had to move westward. In Kansas alone—according to the Kansas State Historical Society—over 42,000 African Americans had arrived by 1880 (“Exodusters”). By 1919, according to Farrar, Nebraska had 17,153 black residents (15). Only a few, like the Andersons, lived on farms; Farrar writes, “in 1890, “there were 114 black families farming in Nebraska. By 1900 only 77 remained and of those only 47 owned their farms. By 1930 the number of black farms . . . had fallen to 41” (15).

Anderson had made two previous unsuccessful homesteading attempts. He saved infantry pay to make his first land purchase; Anderson shares that “while in Davenport [Iowa] I bought a piece of land with this money. I had not seen the land until after I had bought it . . . After I had bought it, I went to see it, and instead of the fine farming land the real estate man had represented it to be, it was all rough land that was no good at all for farming” (49). Anderson resells this land at a loss, then launches another homestead—an effort that suffers from additional catastrophes: “One year the grasshoppers came and ate up everything. Then came four years of drouth when everything burned up. Money was scarce and practically every one was in the same condition I was” (50). Returning to Nebraska after his three-year tenure as a farm worker necessitated a different homesteading strategy; Wax shares that “Anderson had exhausted his homestead rights in Butler County. Now, he took up a tree claim under the provisions of the Timber Culture Act” (166). Anderson thus become part of a vast experiment intended to both change the climate and encourage settlement.
From Slavery to Affluence, sharing that “the government experts were trying to turn the open prairie into a forest” (52). The prevailing theory behind the Act was that a Great Plains forest would cool and moisten the climate, making regions like western Nebraska more desirable for additional settlement and agriculture (Emmons 7). Trees would also provide valuable lumber for fuel and infrastructure. This climate-driven initiative was racially charged, reflecting a desire to make what historian David M. Emmons calls the “last [interior] frontier” more habitable for non-Native settlers (6). According to Emmons, explorers like Zebulon Pike had condemned the Great Plains (including Nebraska) “as a great and uninhabitable desert, doomed to remain forever the home of the ‘wandering and uncivilized aborigines of the country’” (6). Emmons memorably quips, “This desert had to be conquered,” and trees were “the ideal weapon of conquest” (9). In Emmonns’s view, then, trees were both tools and symbols of permanent settlement in the U.S. West. By establishing his own Nebraska timber claim in 1884, Anderson exemplified settler culture.

Robert Anderson’s commentary on the 1873 Timber Culture Act (which was repealed in 1891) reveals his intimate knowledge of—and thus embeddedness within—the Nebraska

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48 Freeman reveals the gravity of tree planting to early settlers. He writes that “[b]y an act of 1873, the state legislature provided that any person who willfully and maliciously injured or destroyed any trees, valued at thirty-five dollars or more, on the property of another was subject to imprisonment in the penitentiary, hard labor for no less than one year or more than ten years, and liable for double damages to the injured party. In Nebraska, state historian Everett Dick observed, one could plead self-defense for shooting someone and get away with it, ‘but no such subterfuge could be claimed by a tree mutilator’” (19). Like Emmons, Freeman asserts overall, “If one had to choose a single activity to represent the advent of permanent human settlement on the High Plains, it would be tree planting” (13).

49 David Wishart explains that “at a minimum, 10,000 Pawnee, 2,000 Omaha, 900 Ponca, and 1,000 Otoe-Missouria” lived in eastern Nebraska in 1800, but only “1,203 Omaha and 229 Ponca remained in their homelands” in 1900 (xiii).
landscape. In *From Slavery to Affluence*, Anderson explains: “I suppose the idea [behind the Act] was good, but the ones who conceived it did not know anything about the soil or the requirements to make such a forest grow. Had they been more sparing of the trees . . . the results would have been far better” (52). Simply finding enough trees, according to Anderson, was a “big question” (52). He collected some from “Pine Ridge, about fifteen miles away,” others from settlers who ordered from nurseries, and still more by working for other timber-claim homesteaders (52). Anderson’s efforts were mostly in vain: he notes that “the greater part of the tree claims were failures, so far as the trees were concerned” (52). Although most trees died (his apple trees, however, survived until at least the 1960s; see Figure 24), Anderson did not perceive their failure as a permanent setback. Without a forest on his claim, he “had plenty of land,” and he diligently studied how to best cultivate it (56). Anderson explains, “I learned that the soil would raise anything if properly cared for. I learned how to tend the soil to get the best results. I planted a few fruit trees, some shrubery [sic], gooseberries, raspberries, blackberries, grapes, apples and plums, and found they would grow with a little extra care” (56-7). Although he acknowledges some agricultural failures in *From Slavery to Affluence*’s final chapter, Anderson more significantly chronicles his growing awareness of—and adaptability to—the land, a literal and literary rooting.
Anderson’s responsiveness to the Nebraska landscape contributed to his social status—bringing him a lasting legacy that defined him as more than merely a unique African American settler within Hemingford, Nebraska. Wildy recalls in his 1966 interview, for instance, that “when I first came to Hemingford, 1903, I was 16 years old and I worked in a grocery store. I remember in the fall Anderson would drive his team in and the back of his wagon was full of apples, mush-mellon, strawberries. The women would come out and pick out what they wanted right out of the wagon and pay him. We had to take what was left for groceries!” Wax also explains that in “1912 the local newspaper reported that his ‘green apples, pears, cherries, currants, gooseberries and plums [were] all in fine growth and some [were] ripening’” (171). Wax continues, “Frequently [Anderson] encouraged friends to drop by his ranch and pick excess
fruit or vegetables. Some families made all-day outings to the Anderson ranch, where they ate fruit and carried away more in baskets . . . ‘His bushes are overloaded,’ the *Hemingford Journal* reported” (171). Anderson was thus a generous community member whose agricultural prowess supported the survival of other settlers (including white homesteaders). His legacy reflects social uplift, financial success, *and* fellowship; Anderson modeled the positive relationships he wished to see.

Overall, Robert Anderson’s homesteading efforts—which he first envisioned as an infantryman—deeply rooted him in the U.S. West’s settlement history (as did his exaggerated accounts of “Indian” fights). As *From Slavery to Affluence* visually and textually reiterates, Anderson *belonged* in the U.S. West. In this regard, Anderson’s Nebraska dwellings perhaps most vividly reflect his embeddedness within Nebraska’s contested landscape. When describing the process of building a “soddie” in *From Slavery to Affluence*, Anderson shares, “The grass on the prairie was largely what is known as black root or ‘n****r wool.’ The roots of this grass matted itself thru the sod so that the sod held together very strongly. This sod was what we used to build our sod houses in the early homestead days” (53). Anderson thus harnesses the landscape—conflated with African American bodies—to deepen his claim to regional rootedness; like the tough Nebraska sod, and despite social and environmental challenges, Anderson persevered. His “soddie” (in the background) with log additions (to the left) appears in the photograph below.  

50 The log cabin was moved in 1991 to Dobby’s Frontier Town near Alliance, Nebraska, and is available for tours.
In the early 1900s, Anderson replaced his “soddie” (though the wood cabin survived) with a modern frame house—a structure that reflected his burgeoning wealth (he had amassed over 2,000 acres by 1920) as well as his ongoing connection to the Nebraska landscape. Wax writes that the “main floor [of the new house] consisted of four rooms and a pantry, the upstairs four bedrooms, each with a closet . . . A wide porch ran around two sides of the house. In an unfinished basement a cement tank was constructed for storing water, which Anderson planned to pump to trees and shrubs” (173). Robert Anderson’s modern home was therefore specially equipped to care for an arid landscape (through the basement’s cement tank) and overlook it (via the wraparound porch).

Such an intense commitment to—and trajectory toward—horticultural savvy and regional embeddedness ultimately reflects Robert Anderson’s exhortation at the outset of *From Slavery to Affluence* that his formerly enslaved readers “so live, so grow, so improve” (2). Like Booker T.
Washington before him, who saw as much “dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem,” Anderson linked self-directed cultivation with both personal and social uplift (128). Unlike Washington, Anderson located such potential in the U.S. West (Washington encouraged his listeners of the “Atlanta Exposition Address” to “cast down your bucket” in the South) (128). For Anderson, “growing” involved establishing roots in communities and landscapes—an expansion (both upward and downward as well as from side to side) that gave motion and/or direction to “life.” “Improving” conflated agricultural cultivation with social uplift; “improving” the landscape (from a settler’s perspective) involved replacing the native sod with domesticated crops. “Improving” society, for Anderson, meant modeling the type of goodwill that he wished to see. Overall, then, Anderson’s narrative in *From Slavery to Affluence* grounds (literally and metaphorically) its success story—and its readerly morals—in the process of Western settlement and cultivation, envisioning a more positive future for African Americans in this contested space.

**PART TWO: RECOVERING DAISY ANDERSON’S EDITIONS AND ADDITIONS**

*“Have You No Shame?”: Introducing Daisy Anderson in 1967*

While the 1927 *From Slavery to Affluence* centralizes Robert Anderson’s memories, the 1967, 1986, 1995, and 1997 editions crucially supplement a gendered gap in his “masculinist”

51 Positing landownership/regional knowledge as an alternative means to uplift complicates foundational scholarship of African American literature; Henry Louis Gates, Jr. asserts, for instance, that “[i]n literacy lay true freedom for the black slave” (Gates 1). William Andrews likewise argues, “During the evolution of this tradition, autobiographers demonstrate through a variety of rhetorical means that they regard the writing of autobiography as in some ways uniquely self-liberating, the final, climactic act in the drama of their lifelong quests for freedom” (xi).
narrative by recognizing—and even privileging—Daisy Anderson’s agency and presence.52

Despite her integral role as Robert Anderson’s chronicler, just one paragraph (out of 59 pages) in the first edition references Daisy Anderson. Robert Anderson explains at the end of his narrative:

On one of my visits to the south, I began to feel lonesome, and wanted a companion . . . I chose as this companion, Miss Daisy Graham, of Forest City, Arkansas. We were married March 19, 1922, and I brought her back to Nebraska with me. She was a school teacher among my own people, and it is due to her ability to write down my recollections as they come to me, that I am enabled to give you some thing of my past life. (57)

This passage (perhaps unintentionally) omits Daisy Anderson’s free will; from his perspective, Robert Anderson “chose” her and “brought her back.” Such an approach disregards that Daisy Anderson also chose him and—of her own volition—traveled with him to the U.S. West, ultimately escaping poverty in the South. Aside from this brief passage (which doubles as an explanation of From Slavery to Affluence’s inception), Robert Anderson does not allude to his wife’s own struggles, accomplishments, or memories in the U.S. West. He also omits her from

52 In addition to supplementing an incomplete record of black women’s U.S. Western experiences, Daisy Anderson’s republishing efforts allowed her to maintain authorial control over the text and establish financial stability. In 1966, Richard E. Booker asked Vance Nelson to make inquiries into Robert Anderson’s writing; in a September 9, 1966, letter to Booker, Nelson shares, “The Hemingford ledger [sic] published a book written by Anderson in 1929. The title was From Slavery to Affluence [sic]. Is this what you intend to reprint? If not, some further investigation may produce a copy of this book.” Daisy Anderson likely learned of Booker’s interest in reprinting From Slavery to Affluence after a Hemingford Ledger publisher contacted her; Amber Ningen reveals that Nelson talked to “Arnold Kuhn, past publisher of the Hemingford Ledger.” Ningen then shares, “Kuhn encouraged Daisy to have an addendum to a book written by her husband published at the Steamboat Springs paper in Colorado, where she lived at the time.” Republishing From Slavery to Affluence (preempting Booker, a white historian) allowed Daisy Anderson to profit from the text. In her autobiographical essay “Have You No Shame?,” Daisy Anderson explains: “I have written a story before [1927] and had it copyrighted. It paid off so why not try again” (79). And Nellhaus shares that Daisy Anderson was “fixed financially for life” as of 1970 from both “[b]ook sales and now fees from the television show.”
the 1927 *From Slavery to Affluence*’s visual record (though he includes four photographs of himself).

Daisy Anderson corrects such reductions and erasures in all subsequent *From Slavery to Affluence* editions, which she self-published on the presses of the *Steamboat Pilot* (by the 1960s, she had settled in Steamboat Springs, Colorado).53 Significantly, all post-1927 editions list Daisy Anderson as the author. Their covers read: “*From Slavery to Affluence, Memoirs of Robert Anderson, Ex-Slave* by Daisy Anderson.”54 Daisy Anderson also expanded *From Slavery to Affluence* three times. In 1967, she added “Have You No Shame?,” an autobiographical essay, as well as eleven photographs. Two of the new pictures feature Daisy Anderson (including one of her and Robert Anderson honeymooning in Colorado Springs in 1922), seven reveal her extended family, and two portray updates to the Hemingford ranch. “Have You No Shame?”—in an interesting turn—neglects her husband. It instead focuses on Daisy Anderson’s childhood as well as her life after he died; Anderson refused to let the story of her marriage to a much older man define her. In 1986, Daisy Anderson added Part Three, which included another autobiographical essay (“Into Every Life Some Rain Must Fall”), two original poems (“Don’t Quit” and [“I Shall Pass This Way But Once”]), two more photographs (of her Steamboat Springs farm), and three letters from white scholars and educators. Finally, in 1997, Anderson included two more documents: a 1995 letter from Colorado Governor Roy Romer and a

53 Daisy Anderson lost the Hemingford, Nebraska, ranch in 1934 (i.e. the Great Depression). Impoverished, she moved to South Dakota (location and date unspecified) before joining her sister and nieces in Steamboat Springs in 1937.

54 The 1927 edition’s cover simply reads: *From Slavery to Affluence, Memoirs of Robert Anderson, Ex-Slave.*
“Certificate of Appreciation” for National Nursing Home Week.\textsuperscript{55} Altogether, Daisy Anderson’s artifacts both confront racial inequality \textit{and} embed black women as vibrant narrators, settlers, and cultivators in the U.S. West.

Daisy Anderson’s post-1927 additions and Robert Anderson’s original 1927 narrative significantly diverge when relating their experiences as “permanent settler[s]” among white neighbors. Daisy Anderson, in fact, saw her 1967 essay “Have You No Shame?” as updating her husband’s 1927 optimistic story, noting that “the only way to understand [her bitterness] is to read the book called ‘From Slavery to Affluence’ which is Part One, and Part Two which is called ‘Do You Have No Shame?’” (62). “Have You No Shame?” begins with the following condemnation: “I wipe the tears from my eyes in sorrow for you and your teachings . . . The whole world is looking at what Americans are doing and have done to their very own. SHAME ON YOU, especially the ones that do what they are doing” (61). In his brief description of “Have You No Shame?,” Moos calls Daisy Anderson’s opening “a damnation of white America,” then notes that she “admonishes” her white readers; he does not give similar attention to how Daisy Anderson portrays her life story in her essay (86).\textsuperscript{56} Daisy Anderson introduces herself, noting,

\footnotesize

55 By 1997, \textit{From Slavery to Affluence} was 92 pages long (the pagination stops at 90—the last letter and certificate are unnumbered). Altogether, then, Daisy Anderson added 33 pages to her husband’s original 59-page narrative.

56 A 2012 Amazon.com review titled “It’s All In the Attitude!” (with a username “avid reader”) similarly focuses on Daisy Anderson’s heated rhetoric without exploring the personal story that she shares. The review says of Robert Anderson that “[h]is success came because he chose to have a positive attitude and not let ANYTHING get or keep him down. He never looked for someone to blame if he had a setback, he forged ahead.” Of Daisy Anderson, “avid reader” notes, she “had a whole different attitude. Hers was more a life of feeling that someone was out to do her harm and looking for someone to blame for any misfortunes that came her way.” The review does not mention slavery or racism, instead ascribing the tonal differences between Robert and Daisy Anderson’s accounts merely to “attitude.”
“I am Daisy Anderson Leonard . . . Ingredients of my personality are built in, in an independent way of thinking, an infallible nose of shame and prejudice on any level” (61). Anderson’s essay is thus carefully attuned to the ongoing racism of the nadir. Dickson D. Bruce, Jr. addresses literature of this period (post-Reconstruction until roughly 1920), writing that the “story of worsening conditions is important to tell . . . In their works, black writers directly confronted the conditions of an increasingly racist society in everything from their choice of subjects to the . . . the kinds of moods they tried to portray” (4). Pivoting from her husband’s positive tone in Part One to her social censure in “Have You No Shame?” helped Daisy Anderson highlight how “there have been many changes in the last 100 years, but there is room for more” (66). By the mid-1960s, society was not “better” for black settlers and citizens in the ways Robert Anderson had imagined at the end of his 1927 narrative.

Blending social commentary and personal detail in “Have You No Shame?” (a strategy seen from the essay’s outset) leads to a disjointed style that vividly reinforces Daisy Anderson’s mixed impressions of and experiences with the U.S. West. Moos notes that “her chronology is often so jumbled it is difficult to tell if she is relating incidents from her life in Nebraska or her present home in Steamboat Springs, Colorado” (86). Indeed, Anderson often introduces new subjects and events without transitions. After sharing in one paragraph that her “parents

57 I am unsure why she identifies herself as “Leonard” in 1967; Daisy Anderson never remarried. In subsequent editions, she is simply “Daisy Anderson.”
58 Key context for Daisy Anderson’s perspective in “Have You No Shame?” is that this essay appeared at the end of the Civil Rights Movement (1954-1968)—a decade of great hope and tension. On September 3, 1957, for instance, the “Little Rock Nine” tried to enter Arkansas’s Central High School (Daisy and Robert Anderson met in Arkansas). The situation eventually required intervention from President Eisenhower. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968, or a year after Daisy Anderson republished From Slavery to Affluence for the first time.
withstood many acts of abuse,” for example, Daisy Anderson jumps to how she went hungry in Nebraska (after Robert Anderson died in 1930), then breaks from her overall narrative to comment: “I find myself terribly disturbed about the attitude of the people in general. They place such borderlines for my people” (69). Such a shift—though narratively jarring—reveals that Daisy Anderson saw the past and present (her own, her parents’, and her husband’s) as connected. In other words, the racism that her husband and parents experienced in the Deep South presaged the discrimination that Daisy Anderson faced in the twentieth-century U.S. West.

“Have You No Shame?” is not—and could not possibly be—a linear story of social uplift. Daisy Anderson’s reality, and therefore her essay’s chronology, reflects the fear and fracture that racism triggered throughout the 1900s.

Re-aligning her jumbled details in “Have You No Shame?” reveals that Daisy Anderson was deeply attuned to the parallels between her more recent struggles with racism and Robert Anderson’s earlier experiences with enslavement. In the end, Daisy Anderson subtly reenacts Robert Anderson’s “slavery to affluence” arc in “Have You No Shame?” from a black woman’s perspective, showing that history—instead of fulfilling Robert Anderson’s turn-of-the-century optimism—had repeated itself or stagnated. For instance, Daisy Anderson declares in “Have You No Shame?” that “[w]hen I came along we were still slaves. Do you know that I believe our people are still slaves?” (i.e. the 1960s) (66). Anderson also asserts that although “the government . . . so called — Freed them,” her parents, who were sharecroppers, “had nothing” (63). Jon Farrar provides context for such a statement, noting that “[m]any blacks were sharecroppers after the war, no more than defacto slaves to those who owned the land” (12). Along with her seven younger siblings, Anderson helped their father with hard labor in the South, including “making railroad ties” and “cotton pickin’” (64, 65). As her family struggled without
government support (Anderson notes that “Presidents, Governors and County officials . . . helped the Indians,” but the “Negroes were always left out”), they also faced physical threats from racist groups like the “K. K. K. (Ku Klux Klan)”—an iteration of the systemic violence that Robert Anderson experienced in the 1800s at the hands of his mistress (63, 65). Finally, like her husband, who recalls in Chapter One that he was forced “to carry the food from the kitchen to the table” as an enslaved child (a position that allowed him to eat the “bits of nicknacks” left on the plates), Daisy Anderson recalls helping a local white family “set the table for their meals” as a girl (9, 67). One day, the white grandmother
told me, Daisy I have poured your milk. This is what she did. Each member drank a different kind of milk. One drank buttermilk, one drank sweet milk, one drank clabbered milk. Each one left some milk in their glass. The Grandmother would pour what was left from 2 of the glasses into the third glass and this was the glass she told me she had poured for me. I couldn’t drink it, as I had always been taught not to drink from another’s glass. I had been watching her, but she didn’t know it. (68)

Daisy and Robert Anderson’s parallel memories of servitude to white families (separated by 60 years) in the “Deep South” (Daisy Anderson grew up in Tennessee) show how little had changed by the twentieth century. In addition to condemnation, frustration thus deeply informs Daisy Anderson’s tone in “Have You No Shame?”

Daisy Anderson goes on to assert in “Have You No Shame?” that the U.S. West—which initially seemed to offer “freedom from Jim Crow laws, poverty, and acts of terrorism regularly visited upon freedpeople”—was likewise fraught with racially charged perspectives (Eckstrom 297). In doing so, Anderson aligns “Have You No Shame?” with Johnson’s observation that some black writers “us[ed] their experiences of continuing racial prejudice in the American West
to critique and contest the myth of an egalitarian and exceptional West”—a contrast to her husband, who affirms “masculinist” myths (11). Daisy Anderson recalls, for instance, that a “colored lady in Nebraska” who had “settled there with her husband in the homestead days” desired to attend a church service (74). When the “colored lady” arrived in town, “The ushers wouldn’t let her go inside, so she decided if they would let her sit on the steps of the Church, she would be happy to listen to the Minister. This is what the ushers did, they came on the outside and asked her to move on” (73-4). In addition to recording the presence of another African American woman in rural Nebraska, Daisy Anderson’s memory illustrates racism’s pervasiveness and persistence. Anderson significantly pairs this earlier anecdote (i.e. from 1920-1930s Nebraska) with her more recent 1960s experiences in Colorado; like the Nebraska “colored lady,” Daisy Anderson struggled to find acceptance at churches in Steamboat Springs. She explains, “Today a lot of people give me a dirty look” when she attends church, “and doy [sic] you know some families will sit in each other’s laps, before they will sit by me” (73). Anderson’s experience—shared with other black women in the U.S. West—undercuts the idea that the region provided equality for all settlers. Still, Daisy Anderson does reveal a subtle hopeful streak that recalls her husband’s optimism. At the end of “Have You No Shame?” she

59 As a side note, Holley reveals that “Shirley Graham, who gained fame as an author of biographies, as playwright, composer, stage director, and as the second wife of the noted civil rights pioneer Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, was a resident of Colorado Springs in the years 1913 and 1914” (97). While there, Graham “had the humiliating experience of being rejected for membership by the local Young Women’s Christian Association because of her color, and reported that her first published article was a paper she wrote for her high school class describing the incident, the paper being accepted for publication as an editorial by the daily afternoon newspaper and creating a stir in the community” (97).
writes, “This will all be corrected some day. No one will care what color the other person is” (71). Her perspective undermines the view that “Have You No Shame?” is an exclusively “bitter” text; Anderson’s essay ends not with a condemnation (as it opens), but with an invitation: “This valley has been called Strawberry Park and I added the Beautiful to it. Come see it, my sign will be seen at many places” (80). Anderson’s essay—despite revealing her frustration with inequality—closes by describing the social progress that she hoped to see: open dialogue, acknowledged history, and greater empathy (at least between white and black citizens).

“I Am a Permanent Settler”: Laying Down Roots in the U.S. West

Along with racial inequality, Daisy Anderson uniquely explores settler permanence in “Have You No Shame?” In doing so, she stakes a profound claim for regional belonging in the U.S. West (a “sign” announces her presence) (80). Anderson reveals on the first page of “Have You No Shame?” that “[f]orty-five years ago, I left the Deep South and established my home permanently in Nebraska” (61). She reiterates on the next page that the Hemingford ranch was her “permanent home,” though after she lost it in the Great Depression, she moved farther west to become a “permanent settler” of Steamboat Springs (62, 80). There, according to Robert McG. Thomas, Jr., Anderson “eventually acquir[ed] a 10-acre farm in nearby Strawberry Park, where she raised geese and chickens, [and] kept a garden,” thus reenacting her husband’s agricultural success on a smaller scale. Reiterating her “permanent” presence in the U.S. West—and writing/publishing from her successful Strawberry Park farm—proves that settlement and farmsteading were not strictly “masculinist” endeavors; both black men and black women continuously occupied contested U.S. Western spaces. Daisy Anderson’s survival account in “Have You No Shame?,” like her husband’s before her (Robert Anderson “had cotton tail rabbit
and jack rabbit, prairie chicken and grouse to help out in my food supply” when he moved to Nebraska), underscores regional embeddedness—Anderson became familiar with the land she occupied (54). When describing her arrival in Colorado (with Mae, her sister), Anderson writes:

we didn’t have a gun so we had to figure out how to get some meat, such as snow shoe or jack rabbits. One evening we were sitting and talking about how to do this. Someone spoke up and said try this method and see if it works. The Indians did it. The rabbits had a trail where they would go under the fence or through the fence, depending on the depth of the snow. We made a loop with a string or rope, (whichever we had) and hung the rope over the wire with the loop directly in the trail. It worked, next morning there was a large rabbit tied up in the loop. (72)

Unlike Robert Anderson, who maintains cultural and narrative distance in From Slavery to Affluence (“Indians” are always enemies in his story), Daisy Anderson and her family establish regional rootedness by adopting “Indian” survival techniques. Doing so at once appropriates Native culture and reinforces Native absence; Daisy Anderson and her family, as permanent

60 This survival—revealed in her 1997 interview with Rudi Williams—involved hard labor. Daisy Anderson explains that after she arrived by bus in Colorado, she joined a crew of “29 white men.” Anderson recalls that “I didn’t allow no man to do more than me at common labor—picking potatoes, digging ditches . . . I was trying to beat the men at what they were doing.” She concludes, “I wouldn’t act like a man again if I had it to live over . . . I’d be like a woman.”

61 This statement is the second of Daisy Anderson’s references to American Indians in “Have You No Shame?” In the first, she declares, “May I state here that my Great Grandmother was a full-blooded Indian squaw. Her husband was white. This was my mother’s grandmother” (66). Other than noting that “Presidents, Governors and County officials . . . helped the Indians,” she does not otherwise explore her mixed-race identity or reflect on Native displacement (63).
settlers (along with their white neighbors), supplanted the Crow and Cheyenne who historically occupied Colorado’s Rocky Mountains. This dual displacement and appropriation recalls Alan Lawson’s observation that “in settler cultures, mimicry is a necessary and unavoidable part of the repertoire of the settler . . . The typical settler narrative, then, has a doubled objective: the suppression or effacement of the indigene, and the concomitant indigenization of the settler” (1215). As part of this “indigenization,” Daisy Anderson shares in “Have You No Shame?” that her family’s diet expanded to include “bear cabbage, dandelions, wild carrots, wild turnips, greens, wild mustard, and many many more wild berries and vegetables” (72). Emphasizing “wild” products underscores Daisy Anderson’s regional know-how, self-sufficiency, and “native” roots.

Daisy Anderson’s regional embeddedness and horticultural prowess—reminiscent of her husband’s—came to distinguish her legacy as a “permanent” Colorado settler. Carla Jones writes in “Daisy of Strawberry Park” (1976), for example, that after Daisy Anderson moved to Steamboat Springs with her sister, she “built some cabins to rent out. Many of the guests who came to the cabins and restaurant wanted something to do and to see the area around Steamboat. So Daisy and Mae became two of the four licensed women fishing guides in Colorado” (5; see Figure 26).62

62 Jones’s article also reveals that, like Robert Anderson (who shares at the end of From Slavery to Affluence that “I have traveled in almost every state in the Union, and in Cuba and Mexico, and may take a few more trips before my time comes”) (58), Daisy Anderson decided to travel: “The traveling bug hit Daisy in 1972 and so it was Daisy traveled to Ireland visiting all 26 counties. The following year she took a tour of the Holy Land. The tour included Greece, Israel, Italy and Spain. ‘The people everywhere on the tour were very kind and polite,’ remarks Daisy” (6).
A 1979 interview with Mari Jo Hoaglund and Tara Grillo further highlights Daisy Anderson’s intimate knowledge of Colorado flora. In lengthy passages, for instance, Anderson describes where, when, and how to harvest local fruits like chokecherries, serviceberries, and “Buffaloberries.” Regarding “Buffaloberries,” Anderson shares that “[t]here’s a special way to pick them . . . They just grow around the trees, and they are very delicate little things. If you shake the bush they fall on the cloth, and then you only have to put them in the pail . . . It’s too
bad that the only place you can get them is way up on top of Buffalo Pass” (39). Daisy Anderson’s knowledge (which involves tracking the progress of unripe chokecherries and advising listeners how to pick “Buffaloberries”) allows her to project a deep environmental connection to Colorado.

In addition to affirming that black women could survive and establish their own farms in the U.S. West, Daisy Anderson’s settlement narrative thread in “Have You No Shame?” challenges those who questioned her regional belonging. Anderson’s white neighbors could not seem to fathom her presence (as a black woman) in Steamboat Springs—she is, to quote Gardner, in an “unexpected” place (12). Anderson explains in “Have You No Shame?,” for instance, that “[m]y experience that I have encountered since I came here, is someone would talk to me. First they would ask, where are you from? Why did you come here, or stop here?” (71). Anderson has “many reasons” to live in Steamboat Springs, several of which probably resonated with her white neighbors (and thus seem less “unexpected”), “Such as, it’s a beautiful spot, or where I came from, we had nothing left after having bought our food and shelter” (71). When asked whether she is lonely as one of the few black residents, Anderson responds, “one doesn’t have to live among his own color to be happy” (71). Overall, then, one of Anderson’s key goals

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63 Daisy Anderson, like her husband, also shared her garden’s bounty with her community. According to Hoaglund and Grillo, “Daisy Anderson’s garden is the envy of many who live in Steamboat” (40). They then quote Anderson as asserting, “anything that comes up year after year we have on this acreage. Most of it multiplies and when we get more than we want we pass it on to other people or they come and purchase it for a small price” (40).

Johnson shares that Era Bell Thompson (a turn-of-the-century African American North Dakota settler) uses a similar cataloging technique—thus rooting herself in the U.S. Western landscape through her environmental knowledge—in American Daughter (1946). As Johnson states, “Thompson’s descriptions often take the form of a catalog of the flora and fauna of the prairie that emphasizes a naturalist’s eye for detail and a poet’s sensibility” (79).
in “Have You No Shame?”—along with exposing racism and presenting her previously omitted life story—is to affirm her presence in settler culture: “I have stated before I have been here in this little valley ever since I came to Colorado,” she closes. “I am a permanent settler” (80).

Anderson’s regional belonging in “Have You No Shame?” connects with her sense of national identity: “When I offer this book for sale, it will have more than one deep meaning,” she writes. “It will represent to me a knock on someone’s door, and ask whoever answers, do you have any work? . . . It will mean that I want to be self supporting. It will mean that I still have hope. That I will be included in this United States of America” (79). While her husband saw homesteading as a path to citizenship, Daisy Anderson viewed the act of republishing his narrative—and adding her own story—as “self-liberating” (Andrews xi). Daisy Anderson’s autobiographical efforts in the 1967 *From Slavery to Affluence* look to the past (her subjugated childhood), the present (her marginalized residency in Colorado), and the future (“I will be included in this United States”) (my emphasis). Such a technique links social and economic “freedom” with regional belonging.

**1986 Onward: Reflections on a Fluctuating Century**

Daisy Anderson’s subsequent editions and additions (from 1986 onward) serve two additional purposes. First, by including photographs, poems, letters and certificates, they push *From Slavery to Affluence* even closer to what James Olney identifies as a “mixed production” (i.e. a text that includes “any or all of the following: an engraved portrait or photograph of the subject . . . poems appended; illustrations . . . letters to and from the narrator . . . certificates”) (49). Second, they update readers on Anderson’s post-Civil Rights Movement accolades and perspectives, further embedding her within the U.S. West. For instance, the 1986 edition adds a new short autobiographical essay: “Into Every Life Some Rain Must Fall.” This work, in which
Anderson envisions the rest of her life in Colorado (she writes, “There is no place that I have been that is as inviting to me to spend the rest of my life as here at this place—beautiful trails, Buffalo Pass, Elk River Valley”), reveals a more optimistic tone (84). Anderson explains, “it was very hard for me when I came here . . . Most of the people here were very bitter toward blacks. Now, over the period of time that I have been here, most of the people . . . are very kind and warm” (81). She further shares that when “I came here, different people had to be careful as to let their neighbors or others know what they did for me and . . . also how they felt toward blacks locating in this beautiful valley” (81). “Into Every Life Some Rain Must Fall” thus acts as an addendum to “Have You No Shame?” Its positive rhetoric—especially when paired with her critical 1967 essay—preserves a record of shifting race relations in the United States, including their effect on Anderson.

The two poems that Daisy Anderson introduces in the 1986 edition (which appear at the end of “Into Every Life Some Rain Must Fall”) reinforce her more optimistic approach and commemorate the persistence that underlies both From Slavery to Affluence and “Have You No Shame?” Despite financial, environmental, and social hazards, both Robert and Daisy Anderson succeeded in establishing homesteads and farmsteads in the U.S. West. The first poem in this vein is titled “Don’t Quit.” Its opening lines allude to the challenges that Daisy Anderson faced in the 1930s (when she lost the Hemingford ranch and became a Colorado settler):

When things go wrong as they sometimes will,
When the road you are traveling seems all up hill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high
And you want to smile but you’d rather sigh
When care is pressing you down
Rest if you want, but don’t quit. (82)

Interestingly, the only line that does not rhyme in the whole poem (which is 19 lines of various lengths; no stanzas) is “quit.” Such a poetic “stumble” does not prevent new couplets from immediately forming in its wake, reinforcing the poem’s central message of persistence. [“I’ll Do the Best I Can”] is a similar poem that Daisy Anderson originally printed on a bookmark and sold. It promotes teamwork and community support: “I shall pass this way but once / I’ll do the best I can, / By being a useful servant / To my fellowman” (83). Such togetherness represents an index of change since “Have You No Shame?” As Frances Smith Foster points out in Written by Herself: Literary Production by African American Women, 1746-1892 (1993), “It is important to our understanding of their times and their testimonies to note that for each of these women, literature was but one of the tools they employed to bring into being the new world order they envisioned” (179). For Daisy Anderson, republishing From Slavery to Affluence and composing socially conscious poetry helped establish both regional belonging and a “new world order” that sought to include, rather than marginalize, black settlers.

Along with a new essay and two poems, the 1986 From Slavery to Affluence features three letters that reveal From Slavery to Affluence’s burgeoning influence on twentieth-century social and historical discourse (both regionally and nationally). They also record Daisy Anderson’s professional activities since moving to Colorado. The first letter that Daisy Anderson

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64 Daisy Anderson autographed this poem in an edition of From Slavery to Affluence purchased by Judy Gasseling, a Chadron State College student who completed a research project on the Anderson Homestead on May 24, 1991. This project is housed in the History Nebraska archives as part of the Anderson Collection.
includes is from Jack A. Schlaefle and is dated February 6, 1968; it thanks Anderson “for appearing with Dr. Milligan on the KRMA-TV DIALOGUES IN LIMBO series” (86). It also acknowledges Anderson’s proposal to promote From Slavery to Affluence; Schlaefle writes, “Re your inquiry concerning information which I sent to the Public Broadcast Laboratory, I sent a brief proposal idea concerning your book entitled ‘Enslavement [sic] to Affluence’ and ‘Have You No Shame’” (86). Daisy Anderson’s idea, which would have paired attention to her husband’s 1927 as-told-to narrative with her 1967 autobiographical essay in a television broadcast, did not come to fruition, though she did later appear in other programs, including “Black Frontier” on KUON-TV, University of Nebraska Television (Wax 191). A second letter (dated August 18, 1969) from Thomas Nenneman, an elementary education consultant, shows growing curricular interest in From Slavery to Affluence. Nenneman requests Daisy Anderson’s permission to use quotations from Robert Anderson in a statewide unit on the “Negro Homesteader.”65 The final letter in the 1986 edition (dated April 16, 1968; Anderson arranged the letters out of order) is from Abbot Fay, an assistant professor of history at Western State College of Colorado. Fay asks Daisy Anderson to share her “own views in regard to inter-racial friendship and problems in regard to this as observed by you” at an upcoming campus event (Fay doubly emphasizes that he desires her perspectives—not merely her husband’s views). Fay also gives Daisy Anderson a

65 Nenneman addressed his letter to the editor of the Steamboat Pilot (the local newspaper that printed From Slavery to Affluence from 1967 onward)—not to Daisy Anderson, the author and copyright holder. He also presumed the reader’s gender by addressing his letter “Dear sir.” Although his letter landed in Daisy Anderson’s hands (and eventually in From Slavery to Affluence), Nenneman’s assumptions reveal an ongoing pattern of obscuring her agency.
chance to sell her new edition of *From Slavery to Affluence* (1967), noting, “I’m sure there would be no objection to your sale of your book or poem. I will also arrange for you to meet the manager of the college bookstore and leave some copies with him for sale” (89). Such an event, then, significantly placed Daisy Anderson at the center of conversations about race relations in the U.S. West, casting her as both a commentator and an autobiographical chronicler.

Together, these three letters further point toward the increased circulation (via television programs, campus lectures, and assigned readings) of *From Slavery to Affluence*—and even more particularly of black women’s experiences in the U.S. West. Such increased demand likely drove Daisy Anderson to republish *From Slavery to Affluence* in 1995 (which is unchanged from the 1986 edition) as well as in 1997. The 1997 edition introduces two more documents (printed at the back of the book): a May 20, 1995, letter from Colorado Governor Ray Romer (in which he thanks Daisy Anderson for her “willingness to speak on this issue and to preserve your impressions of this historical time for future generations through your poetry and your book”) and a “Certificate of Appreciation . . . in Honor of National Nursing Home Week, May 14–20, 1995,” which recognizes her as a “School Teacher, Author, Publisher and Poet, Promoting the good in all people and seeing the value of each individual. A loving wife and the last living widow of a Civil War Veteran.” Additional honors that Anderson received in the 1990s (but did not mention in *From Slavery to Affluence*) include earning the “Martin Luther King Jr. Humanitarian Award in 1992,” “meet[ing] the pope during his visit to Denver in 1993,” and receiving the “Golden Poet Award” from the International Society of Poets in 1990 (Williams). Thomas further shares that Anderson “presented President Clinton with a copy of her book” and “made it her life’s mission to work for racial harmony and keep the memory of her husband alive.” Altogether, Daisy Anderson’s recognition from the 1960s onward—and especially in the
1990s—is a far cry from the marginalization that her husband experienced in 1910s Nebraska. Regionally, nationally, and internationally promoting *From Slavery to Affluence* (which was popularly recognized as “her book” by the 1990s) ensured that both Andersons’ experiences, though never available on the mass market, would continue to commemorate black history and achievement. In the archive of African American experiences of the U.S. West, Daisy Anderson’s multimedia additions to *From Slavery to Affluence* indicate increased visibility, interest, and reverence. They also highlight the drive to tell one’s story—to make visible what mainstream white culture denies.

**CONCLUSION**

Robert and Daisy Anderson’s *From Slavery to Affluence* offers a diverse story of U.S. Western settlement that casts African American soldiers, homesteaders, ranchers, teachers, fishing guides, and writers as active agents in regional settlement narratives. As an evolving portrait of personal accomplishment in the U.S. West, *From Slavery to Affluence* embeds its authors within geographic and textual landscapes as “unexpected”—but “undeniably present”—residents whose lives spanned 154 years of history. As Arlynn Nellhaus explains in “Memoirs of Courage” (1970),

> From slavery to the black civil rights movement, Daisy Anderson Leonard’s life indirectly and directly touches on several chapters of American history. Through her years as the young wife of an ex-slave and later as a long-time resident of Steamboat Springs, Colo., she offers insight into pre-Civil War days, the opening of the West, the Depression, and current efforts to make ‘justice for all’ a reality in this country. 

Recovering a text like the Andersons’ *From Slavery to Affluence* is crucial, according to Shirley
Ann Wilson Moore and Quintard Taylor, because “the voices of women and people of color . . . complete the mosaic of experience formed through encounters of diverse peoples and cultures in this region” (3). Though it attends less carefully to the experiences of Native tribes and instead participates in narrative and geographic displacement, *From Slavery to Affluence* does disrupt early Anglo-centric settlement records that largely omitted the efforts of African Americans. In turn, future settler-colonial studies of the U.S. West must attend more carefully to racial diversity.

Daisy Anderson’s death in 1998 did not mark the end of *From Slavery to Affluence*’s autobiographical history; her story—and the nineteenth-century stories she inherited from her husband—continue to evolve. While Daisy and Robert Anderson never had children (and she never remarried), Daisy Anderson did raise her nieces in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Aside from a brief note that explains, “When Mae passed, I took the guardianship for the girls. It was not an easy job,” she does not describe parenting Rita Anne and Mary Loretta. Her only allusion to doing so is a brief description of how Rita’s classmates snubbed her at graduation (no one shakes Rita’s hand after the ceremony, and they later refuse to come to her graduation party). Anderson writes, “how cruel people can be when they put a borderline on races. I was my niece’s guardian before graduation” (70). Otherwise, Parts Two and Three of *From Slavery to Affluence* concentrate on Daisy Anderson’s own accomplishments, memories, and observations as a Nebraska and Colorado settler; like Robert Anderson before her, Daisy Anderson is most

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66 Daisy Anderson includes pictures of both nieces in the 1967 *From Slavery to Affluence* (and in all subsequent editions).
interested in narrating her own story—largely omitting the role that others played (even when significant) in shaping it.

It turns out that Rita Anne Williams played an unsung role in the life of *From Slavery to Affluence*. The 1986 edition lists the authors as “Daisy Anderson or Rita Williams Brown” (all other post-1927 editions solely list Daisy Anderson as the author). Williams’s part in helping author the 1986 edition is unclear (minor editorial changes appear in “Have You No Shame?,” so perhaps Williams was responsible for those). Williams did recently publish her own memoir, however, thus continuing her family’s autobiographical tradition. In *If the Creek Don’t Rise: My Life Out West with the Last Black Widow of the Civil War* (2007), Williams (like Robert and Daisy Anderson before her) intertwines fundamental questions of racism, gendered storytelling, and regional belonging. Williams writes, “I was still in sentimental love with the West, the romance of cowboy and horse, all those symbols of ennobled loneliness. And my secret sorrow would always be that I hadn’t been able to make that life work for me” (6). Williams’s book, unlike the Andersons’, privileges black women’s perspectives from the outset. It also seems haunted by the past. In a 2008 interview with Mike McCollum, Williams shares that “[t]he conversations and concerns and perspectives that I lived with at home [Steamboat Springs] were all influenced by people looking at America in the 1800s.” McCollum also quotes Williams as saying, “There is just no place on the national consciousness that there were black Westerners, pioneers and cowboys . . . My people really accomplished extraordinary things, and when we look at Strawberry Park today, nobody would have known of that existence.” From antebellum to contemporary reflections, Williams and the Anderson family are embedded in the U.S. West’s settlement history—an “unexpected” but persistent force with a compelling (and continuing) narrative of social uplift, racial and gendered visibility, and regional rootedness.
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“Show What a Girl Can Do”: White Feminist Discourse in the U.S. West

Alice Bower Gossage, a Dakota Territory diarist, author, “typo,” and newspaper editor, deeply intertwined feminist and settler ideologies, re-visioning the U.S. West as a socially progressive space (at least for white women).¹ In language that often recalls Margaret Fuller’s *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), Gossage’s earliest texts, including her diary (1878-1882) and semi-autobiographical novel *Azalia; or, A Brave Girl’s Ambition* (1879), argue for gender equality amid a backdrop of newspaper offices—not Western vistas.² Neglecting her Dakota Territory setting differentiates Gossage’s early texts from other regional narratives, including those circulated by more widely known figures like Laura Ingalls Wilder.³ Paula M.

¹ In this chapter, I am particularly indebted to Margaret Jacobs’s scholarship in *White Mother to a Dark Race* (2009), in which she asserts, “if we are to fully comprehend settler histories, the central role that gender played in settler colonies must be addressed . . . inclusions of white women in the popular and academic settler narratives of the American West and Australia have reinforced, not challenged, settler colonial narratives” (9). As an additional note, the facet of Alice Gossage’s feminism that I address in this chapter (which is more overtly tied to complicating personal and professional gender norms) falls within a context of first-wave feminism, which began with figures like Margaret Fuller and events like the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention. Although Gossage did not specifically identify herself as a feminist, her support for the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, suffrage, and equal rights (the focus of this chapter) signals her as what we would now identify as a first-wave feminist.

“Typo” is short for “typographer,” or a newspaper worker who sets type (also known as a “compositor”). Even from a young age, Gossage was so dedicated to pursuing this line of work that she named her cow “Typo.” In her March 5, 1882, diary entry, Gossage both boasts that she “set about nine thousand” pieces of type on a long article (for which she receives a compliment from the editor) and remarks that “Typo has a beautiful calf.”

² This chapter concentrates on books that Alice Gossage either published herself, contributed to, or helped publish (in her capacity as editor and manager of the *Rapid City Daily Journal*). This chapter does not analyze Gossage’s columns in the *Rapid City Daily Journal*. According to her nephew Maxwell Van Nuys, “In about 1900, Alice began writing a daily column covering local affairs, her own activities, and reviews of books, all signed with her byline, ‘A. G.’ . . . Her columns carried such titles as ‘Tales of the Hills,’ ‘City Topics,’ ‘Little Journeys to the Country,’ ‘Hanging Curtains,’ ‘Books and Things,’ and ‘Seen and Heard in Rapid City by A. G.’,” underscoring Gossage’s embeddedness in the Black Hills region (277). I also do not explore Gossage’s editorship of the *White Ribbon Journal*, a publication of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Mildred Raymond Collett’s 1983 thesis addresses Gossage’s role as the *White Ribbon Journal*’s editor. Gossage’s books, in contrast to her newspaper columns and *White Ribbon Journal* editorship, have not received critical attention, and are thus this chapter’s focus.

³ A relevant text that postdates my chapter’s focus is Edith Eudora Kohl’s *Land of the Burnt Thigh* (1938), which records how sisters Edith Eudora Ammons and Ida Mary homesteaded near the Lower Brule Indian Reservation in present-day South Dakota. Like Gossage, Kohl (née Ammons) became a newspaperwoman to earn extra money.
Nelson explains in a recent article that “Wilder’s pioneering was physical and geographical, not cultural or transgressive,” and Wilder’s writing affirms “mostly separate spheres and the special role of women as mothers and homemakers” (179). 4 Wilder, Nelson concludes, was thus not a “feminist pioneer” (179). In contrast, Gossage’s early work reveals “transgressive” women who choose “ambition” over “love” (delaying relationships to pursue careers), escape household drudgery by pursuing jobs out West, and demand respect from patriarchal coworkers. Overall, Gossage’s diary and Azalia reject the “domestic fantasy” of settling the West (as theorized by Annette Kolodny), instead offering an alternative narrative in which white women become independent professionals who crucially shape the region’s literary landscape (Nelson 179).

4 Kohl writes, “I didn’t know as much about running a newspaper as a hog knows about Sunday . . . while a woman had more independence here than in any other part of the world, she was expected to contribute as much as a man . . . the person who wasn’t willing to try anything once wasn’t equipped to be a settler” (38). Kohl, unlike Gossage, thus saw her newspaper work and her settlement/homesteading efforts as intimately connected.

Pioneer mothers are often memorialized and romanticized. Consider Denver’s Pioneer Monument (in which the only female statue on the fountain is specifically a “pioneer mother”) as well as the twelve Madonna of the Trail statues installed from Maryland to California (including one in Lexington, Missouri, along the Missouri River). It is worth noting that Alice Gossage did not want to become a mother; she and her husband decided early in their relationship to not have children. For a fuller discussion of how the Gossages defied social norms in this regard, see Paula M. Nelson’s introduction to Sunshine Always (see pages 10-12 in particular).

5 Kolodny, for instance, shares in The Land Before Her (1984) that “[a]voiding for a time male assertions of a rediscovered Eden, women claimed the frontiers as a potential sanctuary for an idealized domesticity. Massive exploitation and alteration of the continent do not seem to have been part of women’s fantasies. They dreamed, more modestly, of locating a home and a familial human community within a cultivated garden” (xiii). Gossage, who rejected “idealized domesticity,” advocated for women pursuing careers; she did not dream of “locating a home” in the U.S. West. She also reveled in sublime natural settings, finding little fulfillment in a “cultivated garden” (her husband, thought Gossage would be content tending flowers when they first married). Gossage’s life and literary productions thus fall outside Kolodny’s foundational reading of women’s experiences and desires in the U.S. West.

Cathryn Halverson likewise explores women who challenge Kolodny’s “domestic fantasy” in Maverick Autobiographies (2004); while I am indebted to Halverson’s alternative reading of women in U.S. Western spaces, my chapter more specifically contextualizes Gossage’s life and work within settler culture. Also, Gossage, unlike Halverson’s subjects, initially neglected her Western setting, and she more specifically advocated for feminist ideals.
grounded her feminist ideology in Black Hills regional discourse (including environmental
writing)—helps expose the process of settler-colonial narration in the U.S. West. Gossage’s
earliest texts almost entirely omit American Indians; her diary and Azalia envision a realm of
gender equality divorced from contemporaneous race relations and settler histories. Shifting
toward recognizably Western subjects and settings in 1915 and 1920 as a permanent Black Hills
settler makes her continued omission of Native peoples even more striking; Gossage’s three
nonfiction articles in *Holiday Greetings from Rapid City, South Dakota, Gateway to the Richest
Hundred Miles Square on the Face of the Earth* (1915 and 1920) largely overlook Native history
and culture.\(^6\) They also appear alongside writings that soften the region’s recent history of
colonial violence. Such omissions and revisions are particularly striking since Gossage lived near
two major Dakota Territory reservations in her lifetime: the Yankton Indian Reservation (she
lived nearby from 1870-1882; Zitkala-Ša was born there in 1876), and the Pine Ridge Indian
Reservation (Gossage was a Black Hills resident from 1882-1929), site of the Wounded Knee
Massacre in 1890. Furthermore, in the 1915 *Holiday Greetings*, which Gossage co-edited, two of
the three articles that *do* acknowledge Native presence, including an autobiographical sketch by
Chauncey Yellow Robe (Sicangu Lakota), do not appear in the 1920 *Holiday Greetings*. This
erasure resulted in an almost exclusively Euro-American portrait of post-1876 Black Hills life
and culture. Such revisions (under Gossage’s tenure) reflect Alan Lawson’s observation that the

\(^6\) Hereafter, I will refer to this text as *Holiday Greetings* or *Holiday Greetings from Rapid City*. The only holiday-
themed aspect of this text is the title and a sketch of a pine bough with red ribbon on the cover; the title seems to
focus more on the time of year that the text was released (and its potential to be used as a gift) than on the content.
“process of ‘settlement’ is always a project of both displacement and replacement. Prior owner-occupiers and prior figurations of space must be evacuated to make way for the settler and to conceal the actuality of violence” (1216). By “evacuating” Yankton Dakota, Sicangu Lakota, and Oglala Lakota Sioux from her personal and public writings, Gossage is ultimately a feminist-colonist; she both participates in settler culture and argues for white women’s rights (including their potential to become writers and editors) in the U.S. West.

Fellow colonist Laura Ingalls Wilder is a helpful point of entry for understanding Alice Gossage’s evolving literary career, particularly given recent debates over Wilder’s settler rhetoric.7 Wilder and Gossage share similar stories. Gossage (née Bower) was born near Lodi, Wisconsin, in 1861.8 In 1870, one year after the Ingalls family left Wisconsin to settle Indian Territory (present-day Kansas), the Bower family traveled to Dakota Territory (present-day Vermillion, which was established in 1877). By 1879, when the Yankton Dakota Herald serialized Azalia, both Gossage and Wilder lived in Dakota Territory.9 Gossage, who never wrote about her family’s covered wagon journey (or at least not in a text that survives), was determined to become a newspaperwoman, a desire shared—and fulfilled—by Carrie Ingalls Swanzey

7 Readers and scholars continue to debate Laura Ingalls Wilder’s settler rhetoric, for instance. Kat Chow shares in a recent article that a “division of the American Library Association voted unanimously [on June 23, 2018] to strip Laura Ingalls Wilder’s name from a major children’s literature award over concerns about how the author referred to Native Americans and blacks.” Two oft-cited passages in Little House on the Prairie that helped inform the American Library Association’s and Association for Library Service to Children’s (ALSC) decision include “there were no people. Only Indians lived there” and “the only good Indian is a dead Indian” (Chow).
8 Alice Bower changed her name to Alice Bower Gossage after marrying Joseph Gossage in 1882. She published Azalia under her maiden name. For consistency in this chapter, however, I will refer to Alice Bower as Alice Gossage. In instances where I discuss both Alice and Joseph Gossage, I will provide their full names for clarity.
9 Ingalls lived near De Smet while Gossage lived in Vermillion. Neither woman mentions the other in her writing. Despite her later proximity to Swanzey in the Black Hills, there is also not evidence that Swanzey and Gossage met.
Wilder’s younger sister). After working as a teenage entry-level “typo” in eastern Dakota Territory, Alice Gossage accomplished her dream of advancing her newspaper career in western Dakota Territory: she married Joseph Gossage, founder of the present-day Rapid City Journal, and moved with him to the Black Hills in 1882. The Sioux had ceded the Black Hills only six years earlier (1876). From 1882 onward, Gossage’s feminist ideology became intertwined with “Western” landscape features. Her continued advocacy for women’s agency in the “turbulent [sic]” Black Hills—and her ongoing omission of “Indian issues”—offers a narrative of settler culture in which regional histories are modified to “make way” for white female professionals. Overall, Gossage’s writing blends practical strategies for self-improvement with vivid examples of white women’s success in the U.S. West. Such an approach crucially disrupts Victorian gender roles by encouraging readers to privilege their ambitions and seek (only if they desire to do so) fulfilling romantic relationships.

In this chapter, I explore Alice Gossage’s complex legacy as a Dakota Territory writer, editor, and settler whose feminist advocacy, embedded as it is in settler culture, has not yet received the critical attention it deserves. Azalia, for instance, is obscure today (it was only ever

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10 Although Gossage never wrote about her covered wagon journey, Laura Bower Van Nuys, Gossage’s youngest sister, did. Disney adapted Van Nuys’s The Family Band (1961) into a movie in 1968: The One and Only, Genuine, Original Family Band. Lesley Ann Warren played Gossage. Like Gossage, Swanzey worked on newspapers in both eastern Dakota Territory and the Black Hills. The first surviving entry (June 4, 1878) in Gossage’s diary, written when she was sixteen, asserts, “To be a good woman is my aim, also a good newspaperess and journalist.” Despite her father’s reluctance, Gossage began setting type for the Vermillion Standard and the Dakota Republican in 1877. Holiday Greetings, in fact, includes advertisements for white female chiropractors. Photographs also show white women camping, swimming, and firing a gun, and several articles address women’s civic roles (including a librarian) and clubs, thus variously incorporating women in the “place-story” of Rapid City and the Black Hills. 11 Until recently, Alice Gossage’s papers have been privately held by the Van Nuys family. They generously donated transcriptions of Gossage’s diary and letters to the South Dakota State Historical Society in 2018.
locally published). Paula M. Nelson’s *Sunshine Always: The Courtship Letters of Alice Bower and Joseph Gossage of Dakota Territory* (2006) mentions Azalia in passing; Mildred Raymond Collett’s 1983 thesis (“Alice Bower Gossage, Frontier editor, on Woman Suffrage, Prohibition and Women’s Rights”) omits it entirely. Furthermore, Gossage—despite decades of service to the *Rapid City Daily Journal* (1887-1929)—is omitted from every modern study of female editors and newspaperwomen in the U.S. West, highlighting the ongoing need to recover and contextualize turn-of-the-century women’s professional accomplishments. I also crucially complicate Gossage’s feminist vision in this chapter by highlighting what Amy S. Fatzinger identifies as the types of “Native texts and perspectives” (as well as material and visual artifacts) that appeared alongside her environmental writing—especially Yellow Robe’s sketch in the 1915 *Holiday Greetings* (Fatzinger, “Amid”). Overall, Gossage’s feminism did not extend to all women; in particular, she neglects American Indian and African American women’s experiences in the U.S. West. As both a white feminist advocate and a permanent settler, then, Gossage’s

Unfortunately, the originals have been lost, and it appears that not all of the Gossages’ letters were transcribed (i.e. their correspondence after getting married is missing). When typographical errors arise in the transcriptions, then, it is impossible to know whether they were introduced or originally Alice Gossage’s. Regardless, I preserve them. Nelson explains, Gossage’s “suspicion of male motives made its way into a long story or novella, entitled ‘Azalia; or, A Brave Girl’s Ambition’ . . . “Semiautobiographical, the story follows the career of a young typesetter in a man’s world” (7). Robert F. Karolevitz does note in *With a Shirt Tail Full of Type: The Story of Newspapering in South Dakota* (1982) that Gossage’s “literary piece, titled ‘Azalea,’ [sic] appeared serially in the *Yankton Herald,*” but does not otherwise explain or summarize her novel (50-51).

life and work is a dynamic touchstone for broader conversations about regional race and gender relations.

This chapter first treats Gossage’s pre-1882 writing, then turns to her post-1882 writing, ultimately tracing her literary progression as a feminist-colonist narrator. The first part situates Gossage’s early Dakota Territory texts alongside other white women’s regional productions, illuminating both her Native omissions and her resistance to patriarchal silencing. I then turn to Gossage’s diary and Azalia; or, A Brave Girl’s Ambition, recovering her early advocacy of women’s rights. Here I draw in particular on the precedent of Fuller’s Woman in the Nineteenth Century, tracing the two journalist’s feminist affinity in light of Gossage’s documented admiration for Fuller. The second part concentrates on Gossage’s contributions to Holiday Greetings (1915 and 1920), contextualizing her nature writing within a larger context of colonial rhetoric. Overall, Alice Gossage’s 1800s and 1900s Dakota Territory texts help expose the process of narrating contested U.S. Western spaces, proving that white female settlers (historically silenced by their male counterparts) were deeply invested in shaping their region’s turn-of-the-century “place-story.”

PART ONE: ALICE GOSSAGE’S EARLY WRITING

“The Indian Service is Strange”: Omission and Tourism in White Women’s Regional Texts

Azalia; or, A Brave Girl’s Ambition (1879), Alice Gossage’s first book, presents an

convention in Switzerland, Gossage describes traveling through the American South. She notes, “I saw Rastus and Mandy on their way, but at the rate they were traveling I do not think they could make over a five-mile limit” (48).
Anglo-centric feminist portrait of 1870s Dakota Territory. The Yankton Dakota Herald published Azalia in seven installments: Chapters One and Two appeared on August 23, 1879, and Chapters Twelve through Fourteen (the novel’s conclusion) ran on October 4, 1879. Gossage was only eighteen. Prior to non-Native settlement, the Yankton townsite (a neighboring city to present-day Vermillion, Gossage’s home) belonged to the Yankton Sioux, who ceded the land in 1858 and relocated to the newly created Yankton Sioux Reservation. Despite her status as a Dakota Territory settler—and although she closely draws on her experiences as a “typo” at the Vermillion Standard and Dakota Republican—Gossage’s never once references the region’s settler culture or American Indians in Azalia. As a real-life “typo” deeply invested in local news, Gossage was likely well-informed about “Indian affairs” despite her silence; the front page of the December 4, 1879, Vermillion Republican, for instance, features a lengthy report from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs on how far the “Indians’ have “advance[d] in civilization.” Gossage’s proximity to the Yankton Indian Reservation (as a Vermillion resident and Yankton visitor) also likely meant she was cognizant of contemporary American Indian affairs. And yet, Gossage only mentions American Indians twice in her diary. On July 1, 1880, Gossage writes,

16 Azalia’s omission of American Indians, though surprising compared to other autobiographical and semi-autobiographical accounts by white female settlers (including Wilder)—and particularly when accompanied by Gossage’s silence in her diary—is not unprecedented. The Dakota Herald frequently serialized local fiction with a range of settings; Gossage’s first fiancé, Major Harry MacNamara, circulated several fictional works, including Rambles in Turkey: Being a Series of Papers Read Before the Eminently Respectable Hopper-Grass Club (1877), The Belle of Windemere; or, The Fortunes of a Factory Girl (1877), and Hanibal the Bondman; or, A Wife’s Unswerving Devotion, a Startling Story of the North and South in the Days of American Slavery (1878), among others—all texts that are divorced from their Dakota Territory setting despite exclusively circulating among that audience. Gossage’s Azalia is more in line with Linda W. Slaughter’s The Portfolio of a Western Postmaster (1878), a semi-autobiographical account about Slaughter’s life as a local postmaster that was also serialized in the Dakota Herald. Gossage was thus not alone in using her own professional experience as fictional fodder in local literature.
“The boat came in this morning but there were some soldiers and Indians going up and I did not want to go on that boat. Now, I do not want it thought I was afraid but it is best to be careful” (2). Two days later, Gossage notes, “I arrived in Yankton Agency Friday evening. The Indian service is strange,” a dismissive remark that she does not otherwise contextualize (3). Such omission reveals Gossage’s early reluctance to acknowledge Native peoples either textually or in person.

Gossage’s narrative erasures in her diary and Azalia seem unusual when considered alongside autobiographical and semi-autobiographical works by other white female settler-writers—several of whom she personally knew. Estelline Bennett’s Old Deadwood Days (1928), Annie D. Tallent’s The Black Hills, or, The Last Hunting Ground of the Dakotahs (1899), Laura Ingalls Wilder’s Little House on the Prairie (1935), and L. Louise Elliot’s Six Weeks on Horseback through Yellowstone Park (1913) reveal an intense and often highly problematic fascination with Native history and culture. Amy S. Fatzinger notes in a recent article that Wilder, for one, “looks forward to seeing a ‘papoose’ or a Native person not much younger than herself” in Little House on the Prairie (“Amid” 192). Fatzinger identifies Wilder’s “desire to encounter American Indians” as a “surprising [plot] element,” though Bennett’s, Tallent’s, and

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17 Two other passing references to American Indians—solely used to describe herself—occur in Gossage’s early writings. When relating how her family escaped 1881 floodwaters, Gossage’s diary (April 3, 1881) states, “Father had to tow the boat along the track wading in water two feet deep. At last we crossed and with a glad Indian yell I seized the pole and helped get the boat the rest of the way.” And when describing herself to Joseph Gossage in a June 26, 1881, letter, Alice Gossage shares, “My eyes are sort of blue-gray and my hair is the most common color in the world – brown, straight as an Indian’s but not as coarse.” Gossage thus drew upon stock characteristics.

18 This list is by no means comprehensive. Gossage personally knew Bennett and Elliott, temporally overlapped with Tallent and Wilder, read Fuller, and published Elliott; I have selected them for this study due to their connection to Gossage. Additional women’s narratives can be found in editor Sally Roesch Wagner’s six-volume Daughters of Dakota series (1989-1993). Of particular interest to this chapter is Volume 3 (Stories of Friendship Between Settlers and the Dakota Indians) as well as Volume 6 (Stories from the Black Hills).
Elliot’s texts prove that such anticipation is common in white women’s Dakota Territory narratives (“Amid” 192). Bennett, for one, recalls a thriving multicultural landscape in early Deadwood. Gossage and Bennett became friends in Yankton before the Bennett family moved to the Black Hills in 1877.19 In an excerpt that shows childhood naivété, Bennett states:

At the other end of Main street [Deadwood, Dakota Territory], the Indians who used to come from the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations to attend United States court pitched their tepees and received their guests. . . . On one of these visits a hospitable group of squaws insisted that I join their dance and we shuffled and hopped around the fire to the wailing music one of them made on a queer little instrument, and we were just as chummy and happy as though we spoke the same language and our forefathers had not believed that the West was too small for two races. We had come so far in the late nineteenth century as to believe that Deadwood Gulch was wide enough for as many races as could find it. My squaw friends couldn’t speak any more English than Mrs. Wing Tsue could, but between the little Oriental in her dim, stuffy, scented rooms, and the Indian squaws in their wind-swept, fire-lit tepees with the stars shining in, there was a distance greater than the length of all the Main streets in America linked together. (31-2)

Bennett’s rosy assessment of 1870s Dakota Territory race relations (shaped by her privileged

19 Alice Gossage tells Joseph Gossage in an October 9, 1881, letter that “I am a great admirer of Judge Bennett and have considerable of an acquaintance with his wife and family. I have his youngest daughter’s photograph—given me by herself of her own accord with a request for mine. I spent nearly a week at their house in Yankton two years ago.” She also records in a November 24, 1878, diary entry, “I do think Esteline [sic] Bennett is a perfect lady and only ten years old. She is so well informed for one her age.”
status as the white daughter of a federal judge) overlooks sometimes shocking local violence against persons of color, including an 1876 episode (referenced in the 2004 HBO series *Deadwood*) in which an unnamed “Mexican” man rode into town waving a severed head (the “Mexican” had allegedly tried and failed to remove an American Indian’s scalp for a bounty). The “Mexican” was, in turn, murdered that night (Brown 102). While Bennett might not have known about such events as a young settler (she was around five years old when the Bennett family moved to Deadwood), she composed *Old Deadwood Days* as an adult in Chicago.

Constructing a pleasant narrative of Deadwood’s settlement—including “hospitable” interactions with Sioux women—presents the U.S. West as a realm of cross-cultural interactions (a stark difference from Gossage’s Anglocentric focus) and omits the region’s legacy of settler violence.

Tallent and Elliot—like Bennett—anticipated American Indian encounters during their travels in the U.S. West; considering Gossage’s Dakota Territory writing in light of their work helps highlight her omissions. Tallent was an illegal Black Hills gold-seeker in 1874 and Elliot was a 1913 tourist and Lander, Wyoming, resident. Their narratives’ polemic rhetoric reflects a broader settler-colonial pattern of describing Native peoples in a “vanishing” or “fallen” state, thus justifying colonial efforts. Tallent is regionally significant as the “first white woman to

20 The “Indian head” then fell into the “possession of a saloon keeper,” who puts it in his cellar (103). *Deadwood* includes this detail in Season 1, when Al Swearingen (proprietor of the Gem Theater) carries it around in a box and addresses it as “Chief.” Incidentally, this is one of the few instances in which an American Indian is included in the series, which otherwise primarily focuses on non-Native characters—a twenty-first-century narrative erasure.

21 Jacobs notes that “[s]ettler colonial narratives, where they do acknowledge conflicts with indigenous peoples, often present the demise of indigenous peoples as inevitable” (6).
enter the Black Hills” (Sanders 20). Coincidentally, the Gordon Party, which consisted of twenty-eight members (Tallent was the only woman), also included Laura Ingalls Wilder’s uncle, Tom Quiner. As Tom Quiner acknowledges, the Gordon Party violated the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty, which barred non-Native settlement in the Black Hills, then part of the Great Sioux Reservation. A trespasser on Sioux land, Tallent “expected to find Indians galore in the Hills, skulking behind the bushes and trees, and I now recall how I magnified every bush and shrub along the top of the ridges, into the tufted heads of so many redskins, peering over the crests of the hills at our train” (56). Tallent’s anticipation as she illegally entered this Native space skewed her senses—her fear prompted her to “see” nonexistent Sioux warriors. Tallent’s *The Black Hills* thus records how both real and imagined Native encounters shaped her early experiences with

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22 Tallent, like Wilder, has faced contemporary criticism for her polemic rhetoric against American Indians; in a 2013 article, Peggy Sanders protests removing Tallent’s name from public awards and institutions, writing, “In 1954 the South Dakota Education Association formed the Annie D. Tallent Club to honor the state’s women educators . . . The club name was changed to Honored Women Educators in 1993 when Annie’s book fell into disfavor because she had written things like, ‘They [Indians] rarely took the provisions of their victims, and indeed they had no need to, as those graceless wards of the government were amply provided with rations’” (21). Likewise, “In 1950 Rapid City opened the Annie Tallent Elementary School, but 40 years later a vocal minority forced the board to change the school’s name. Fortunately, such attempts to obliterate Annie Tallent from history have not succeeded” (21).

23 In *These Happy Golden Years* (1843), Ingalls describes Quiner’s story of entering the Black Hills. Though Quiner mentions that a woman was present, he does not otherwise discuss Tallent. When Ma and Pa express outrage that Quiner and the other Gordon Party members were arrested for illegally entering the Black Hills and driven out (their stockade was also burned; it has since been rebuilt as a tourist site), he responds, according to Wilder, it “was Indian country . . . Strictly speaking, we had no right to be there” (109). Quiner’s loss reminds Ma of her own: “To this day I think of the house we had to leave in Indian Territory. Just when Charles had got glass windows into it” (110).
Dakota Territory.\textsuperscript{24}

Forty years later, L. Louise Elliott likewise expected to encounter American Indians in U.S. Western spaces, though from the less risky vantage of a twentieth-century tourist. Like Tallent (who came to the Black Hills to mine gold), Elliott rejected a “domestic fantasy” of occupying the U.S. West; she instead sought to explore its sublime natural features. Elliott recorded her Yellowstone journey in letters and a diary, then adapted those personal texts (as Gossage did with \textit{Azalia}) into the semi-autobiographical \textit{Six Weeks on Horseback through Yellowstone Park}. The Gossages published \textit{Six Weeks} on the presses of the \textit{Rapid City Daily Journal}; Alice Gossage, who was running the \textit{Journal} at that time, likely oversaw the project. In \textit{Six Weeks}, Elliott, who expected to see American Indians in Wyoming, complains, “The ride over the [Shoshone] Reservation was most disappointing. I had expected to see it literally dotted with Indian tepees and huts. Instead it was one long stretch of sage brush and sandy soil, as lonely a tract of land as I ever care to see. We passed but one Indian and saw no tepee until we drew near the Agency” (33). Elliott desired to see a landscaped filled with Shoshone peoples. Elliott later shares, “Much is said and written about Uncle Sam’s unjust treatment of the poor Indian . . . if you could see the lazy, filthy fellows in their tepees, as I have, when they might be cultivating the fertile soil Uncle Sam has given them, you’d feel quite as disgusted with them as I am” (37). Elliott’s racist judgment fails to acknowledge American Indians as dispossessed

\textsuperscript{24} For additional context on Native and non-Native encounters, see Laura Mielke’s \textit{Moving Encounters: Sympathy and the Indian Question in Antebellum Literature} (2008) and Renée L. Bergland’s \textit{The National Uncanny: Indian Ghosts and American Subjects} (2000).
original inhabitants of the lands she crosses. Fuller provides context for such a view in *Summer on the Lakes*, her Great Lakes travel narrative, noting, “I have spoken of the hatred felt by the white man for the Indian: with white women it seems to amount to disgust, to loathing” (113). Despite such self-awareness, Fuller privileges Mrs. Grant’s (Euro-American) theory about Native gender relations over Mrs. Schoolcraft’s (Ojibwa) personal observations as a Native woman (113). As Bennett, Tallent, Elliott, and Fuller show, white women frequently engaged with Native presence in the U.S. West, even seeking out American Indians. Gossage, who was both a first-wave and second-wave settler in the 1800s, thus starkly differs from other white female writers by defining her early Western experiences solely through feminist discourse, not through exploring the landscape or its diverse inhabitants.

“Venture to Approach Them Timidly”: A Woman’s Voice in a Man’s West

While her polemical rhetoric against American Indians is often difficult to read, Annie Tallent’s *The Black Hills* does expose a key problem for women in the turn-of-the-century U.S. West: being heard in a patriarchal society. Gossage’s *Azalia*, likewise set in the 1870s, engages with this issue by centralizing women’s professional aspirations and demanding respect from otherwise dismissive men—ultimately equalizing (at least in fiction) nineteenth-century gender relations. The Gordon Party men often silenced and/or excluded Tallent from group decisions, minimizing her agency. Nevertheless, Tallent wielded great narrative and colonial power. Not only did she draw on her experience as a storyteller to become a locally prominent Black Hills author (publishing *The Black Hills* in 1899), but her status as a woman significantly identified the Gordon Party as settlers. When Sioux riders approach, the Gordon Party men hide Tallent in a covered wagon because “the presence of a woman might lead the Indians to suspect that the
party contemplated a longer stay within their domain than would be agreeable to them” (54). Tallent is thus a key, though underappreciated, member of the otherwise all-male Gordon Party.

Being minimized and/or disregarded due to gender is a recurrent theme in Tallent’s account of her westward travel. For instance, when describing a “council” that the men call to confront homesick members who wish to return to the United States, Tallent parenthetically notes, “(I was never admitted to their conferences)” (40). In another episode on their Black Hills journey, Tallent worries that the Gordon Party men are wasting ammunition in target practice. Although she wants to intervene, Tallent fears their dismissal. She writes, “At times I was strongly tempted to expostulate with them on their thoughtless waste of ammunition, but I quickly controlled that inclination, concluding that, perhaps, they knew their own business – at least they might think they did and take occasion to remind me of that fact” (23). True to Tallent’s fears, the “boys” are “irreverent” when she does finally “venture to approach them timidly one day when I thought them uncommonly reckless” (23). The men’s response haunts Tallent; to appease the Sioux riders later in *The Black Hills* (while Tallent hides in the covered wagon), the Gordon Party men share supplies. From her hiding place, Tallent observes, “I felt much uneasiness on seeing the liberality with which the boys were doling out their precious stock of provisions to the graceless savages. In truth, I could scarcely refrain from uttering a warning cry . . . but I remembered the ammunition episode in the early part of the journey, and heroically closed my lips” (54-5). The Gordon Party men thus force Tallent to exercise restraint that they seem to lack (although she eventually reveals all as the narrator and primary subject of *The Black Hills*). At least initially, then, the U.S. West represented oppressive silence for Tallent.

As a white Dakota Territory woman, Alice Gossage faced similar patriarchal barriers; while Tallent had to suppress her voice as an 1870s female settler (she “timidly” approaches the
men), Gossage’s diary, personal correspondence, and novel, *Azalia*, boldly assert women’s views. Gossage was proud of her ability to infiltrate male-dominated spheres. In her November 30, 1881, letter to future fiancé Joseph Gossage, for instance, Alice Gossage boasts: “There is not much about a country newspaper office that I don’t have a pretty good idea of from washing the roller and rolling to making up the forms & writing locals.” Though impressed by her abilities (he originally intended to hire her to set type on the *Black Hills Weekly Journal* in Rapid City, then fell in love with her), Joseph Gossage balked at the thought of his fiancé working. His February 12, 1882, letter asserts, “Dear Alice, I would say that I preferred that you would never work again in a printing office, you have had hard enough of a time and I want you to take life easy while I live, I am strong enough to work for us both and I would prefer to help you.”

Joseph Gossage also shares that his “pride and ambition” are offended by her labors. Alice Gossage pushed back; in her March 5, 1882, letter, which is omitted in the collection *Sunshine Always* (an erasure that creates a more optimistic narrative of the Gossages’ courtship), she boldly declares:

> I am proud I can lay claim to the term printer. I am proud that I have followed the business as long as I have. Through it I have been independent. One of the happiest moments of my life, Dear Joe, was when a certain editor in whose employ I worked for a time told me he was so glad to know there were women who could work at what was generally supposed a man’s work.

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25 According to David Miller, “In the years from the beginning in 1878, his newspaper grew from the Black Hills Weekly Journal to the 1886 Rapid City Daily Journal” (63).
Gossage also reminds her fiancé: “You know, Dear Joe, you would never have heard of me, ever, if I had not learned to set type. It has strengthened my character and made me a better woman I think – I know.”

Although Alice Gossage initially acquiesced to her husband’s wishes and remained at home after moving to Rapid City, her diary reveals her deep unhappiness at doing so. On November 3, 1883 (her last entry), Gossage writes, “the awful feeling of being alone in a strange land still comes over me at times . . . The house gets so lonely . . . I long to work for Joe, but I don’t know whether I am appreciated or not. I wish I had enough of an income to feed and clothe me always . . . It is an awful thought to think all my life I’ve got to live on what some one gives me.” Gossage’s isolation was short-lived. After her husband fell ill in 1887, Alice Gossage assumed management of the Journal—leading to a longstanding Black Hills journalism career.

Though Alice Gossage realized her professional dream of becoming a newspaper editor and writer (goals also shared by her title character, Azalia), Joseph Gossage continued to claim public credit for his wife’s efforts—indicating an ongoing need to recognize (and contextualize) women’s literary contributions in the U.S. West. Maxwell Van Nuys, Alice Gossage’s nephew,

26 Gossage cites similar reasons for women being allowed to work in her 1905 speech “Woman’s Work in Journalism.” Gossage explains:

The mooted question of losing one’s feminine graces by contact with the world comes in here. Of course some traits that have for ages been considered feminine may be modified, but if so they are the better for it. For instance, they are not so afraid of the dark, a mouse has lost its terrors, a shower does not keep them at home on account of their hats, for they have hats the rain cannot spoil . . . Some time is given to inner development instead of all to outward adornment. . . . In appearance they are even more attractive for there is a color to the cheek and a brightness in the eye which was not so well known in the days of the fainting heroines of our grandmothers’ time. Waists are not as wasplike, nor feet as small, but digestion is better.

27 David Dary explains in Red Blood & Black Ink (1998) that “[s]cattered and incomplete records suggest that more than four hundred women were actively engaged with their husbands in newspaper work in the West between 1854 and 1900 . . . It was not unusual for a wife to take over the operation of a paper when her husband became ill or died” (245).
writes in his afterword to *Sunshine Always* that “[f]rom 1898 and for eight years, editors were not hired and, except for short trips elsewhere in the state, Alice put out, either with scissors or pen, every line of copy in the *Journal*. During this time, she wrote the editorials, prepared from five to several columns of matter daily, read the proofs, and superintended all the various departments” (277). Jesse Brown and A. M. Willard acknowledge her herculean efforts in *Black Hills Trails* (published by the *Rapid City Journal Company* in 1924), noting that to “Mrs. Alice Gossage . . . fell the task of superintending the printing of this book and at the same time keeping the big newspaper office of the Rapid City Journal in full swing.” Nevertheless, Gossage’s husband received primary recognition for the *Journal*; Mildred Raymond Collett shares that despite Gossage’s “34 years of editorship and management, only Joseph Gossage’s “name . . . appear[ed] on the masthead as publisher and proprietor” (Collett 16). And in the 1920 *Holiday Greetings from Rapid City*, Alice Gossage’s photograph (captioned as a mere “Associate”) is half the size of her husband’s (captioned as the *Journal’s* “Owner and Publisher”) (Figure 27).28

28 The captions also erase Alice Gossage’s name by patriarchally identifying her as “Mrs. Jos. B. Gossage.”
Alice Gossage’s ongoing need to defend her right to work—and receive recognition—for her labors recalls Ellen Gruber Garvey’s assertion that “[t]he work of many women editors . . . has remained largely invisible, in spite of the fact that the project of ‘recovering’ women authors that began in the 1970s has extended to identifying women editors” (xi). Throughout her life, Gossage remained attuned to the difficulties women faced in entering male-dominated industries, especially in the U.S. West; in a 1905 speech to the South Dakota Press Association on “Woman’s Work in Journalism” (in which she looks to Margaret Fuller), Gossage explains, “It
requires a great deal to be an editor . . . but it takes infinitely more to be a woman editor.” The idealized gender relations outlined in Azalia in 1879 thus intimately shaped how Gossage encountered patriarchal culture—and pursued professional opportunities—in the Black Hills as a permanent settler.

“Show What a Girl Can Do”: Negotiating Love and Ambition

Alice Gossage’s semi-autobiographical Azalia; or, A Brave Girl’s Ambition (1879) is ultimately not a love story, although it concludes with Azalia’s marriage to fellow literati and newspaperman Harry Gilroy. Instead, Azalia does the important (and socially transgressive) work of centralizing white women’s career aspirations. Azalia thus seeks to reassure Dakota

29 Gossage mentions Margaret Fuller first in a paragraph-long catalogue of women who have succeeded in journalism since European settlement of North America, thus disrupting the notion that women do not work in newspapers. In this regard, Gossage also shares, “yet in the opening years of the twentieth century there are many who look surprised at the woman reporter at the Rapid City depot as they arrive or depart on the Northwestern, one young man having been heard to say, ‘This is the town where they have a woman editor of a daily paper.’”

30 A June 10, 1951, Rapid City Journal article titled “Alice Gossage Planned to Write Book—In Way, She Did” envisions a different sort of narrative for Gossage’s “book.” This article asserts that Gossage “was determined to learn to write a book . . . To put down in undying print a chronical [sic] of struggle and achievement.” The author envisions “the year 1876 and adventure was in everyone’s blood. The Black Hills had produced free gold and the stream of wagons traveling the perilous trail towards the new gold strike was filled with men eager to be where gold was easy to come by.” After painting this vivid scene, the author asserts: “Alice Gossage never wrote the book but her deeds will go down in history as no ‘best seller’ ever could.” Not only does the article erroneously report that Alice Gossage never wrote a book (she, in fact, wrote two, though the second has been lost), but it also misconstrues the nature of her book’s focus: Azalia relates a professional/social—not an 1876 Black Hills frontier—“struggle.”

31 Gossage’s childhood informed her views about women’s professional development. In her December 7, 1880, diary entry, Gossage laments: “I can almost say I never want to marry for I don’t feel able to perform the duties of a married woman. It seems to me there is nothing to repay them for all they have to bear.” Gossage further reveals the sharp toll of motherhood—and simply being a Victorian woman—in her October 9, 1881, letter to Joseph Gossage:

Mother’s health has been broken down by too much hard work but even then she can’t stop. I think a woman’s work is awful. Three meals a day and dishes to wash three times. Sew every minute you can get time—hold a baby and either wash or scrub. Always be good natured and look tidy and sweet. It makes me boil over with indignation.
Territory readers (and, perhaps, even Gossage herself) that women can “bravely” defy gender norms and achieve both fulfilling careers and romantic relationships. The plot follows Gossage’s own life: Azalia is about a white teenage woman who, like Gossage, joins a Dakota Territory newspaper office as a “typo,” or a worker setting type. Azalia, like Alice Gossage, excels in her position (their first names imply a strong degree of semi-autobiographical slippage, as does the name “Harry Gilroy”; at the time, Gossage was dating a newspaperman named Major Harry MacNamara. Incidentally, MacNamara helped orchestrate Azalia’s publication, just as Harry Gilroy helps Azalia publish her first text), and is determined to become a regionally significant author. For both Azalia and Gossage, achieving this goal involves intensely struggling between love and ambition. Gossage first debates love and ambition in her October 27, 1878, diary entry:

My heart aches so. And why? I really don’t know. I wonder if there is any such thing as real true love or is it all in books? I know my heart is as warm as anyone’s and it feels so dead. Ambition! Will I ever get what I desire? Perhaps, I suppose I shall have to choose between love and ambition and I wonder which will come out victorious?

On November 12, 1878, Gossage, who is lonely (several of her friends have begun dating), consoles herself by writing, “if I fell in love with someone I would want to get married and then where would my ambitions be? Ambition! spur me on. Do not let me get easy-going even if life might be easier now.” As a young woman who witnessed her mother’s suffering as a Dakota

Gossage recognized that her alternative career—i.e. pursuing a newspaper career—was still hard. In her March 5, 1880, diary entry, Gossage writes, “About five o’clock Dr. Burdick bought [sic] in a long article on the University and that had to go up before I left. Well, I had to work after the lamps were lit & I tell you, old Journal, I was tired.”
Territory homemaker, Gossage both desired a romantic relationship and feared—given Victorian gender expectations—that pursuing such “love” would mean the end of her career aspirations.  

Gossage’s personal dilemma about “love and ambition” manifests itself as Azalia’s central conflict. After learning early in the novel that her first beau has married a rich woman, Azalia informs her mother that “[m]y ambitions will henceforth be my idols. It is love or ambition with all of us. I choose ambition. Ambition means to me the gaining of fame, fortune, and therefore will constitute my happiness. You may think I do not mean what I say, but I am terribly in earnest. I will bury my affections, only as they are” (30 Aug. 1879). Few characters understand Azalia’s choice. Despite entreaties from other women, including her mother, Clara Porter (a fellow “typo” at the Flying Eagle), and Mrs. Hoxley (Azalia’s host), Azalia delays pursuing another romantic relationship until she has achieved a successful career as a newspaperwoman. By the novel’s end, Azalia has secured a “post as one of the editorial staff on the Advertiser,” “written much for other journals,” and won “laurels that even she did not expect” for her literary endeavors—awards that leave her financially independent (4 Oct. 1879). When Harry and Azalia reunite at the end of the novel (a year after she refuses his love), Harry asks, “[H]ave you changed your opinion entirely in regard to which would naturally come first,

32 Gossage recognized that Victorian men had the luxury of not facing such dilemmas between love and ambition, and that men were also encouraged to pursue their own interests from an early age. Garvey likewise shares that “[m]ale editors, publishers, and advertising workers of the nineteenth century often wrote about their childhood experiences creating a homemade amateur newspaper on a hand press and using the hand press for job printing, setting their feet on the path of publishing. . . . Magazine and newspaper advertisements for hand presses were specifically aimed at boys, promoting the notion that only boys’ careers could start off this way” (xvi).

33 Because Azalia’s serialized text always appeared on the first page of the Dakota Herald, I parenthetically cite the work by issue date throughout this chapter.
or should come first, love or the gratifying of one’s ambitions?” Azalia replies, “the experience of everyone is different. In my own case I wished my ambition gratified first and after that had been done to a certain extent, I might want love” (4 Oct. 1879). Azalia is thus confident in her choice to delay marriage. Gossage further affirms Azalia’s decision in Chapter Fourteen, writing, Azalia “knew now that she was right in her former resolves. If she had married him some time before she would always have felt that perhaps she might have been better off if she had waited” (4 Oct. 1879). Azalia’s happiness normalizes a “brave” choice like pursuing a career before marriage.

Debates about such “ambitious” aims most vividly arise in Azalia in dialogue between Gossage’s title character and her more traditionally minded associates (especially women)—an argumentative strategy that Gossage shares with Fuller. For instance, a female speaker in Fuller’s Woman in the Nineteenth Century memorably engages with a hypothetical indignant husband. When the husband asserts that his wife “is happy enough as she is. She has more leisure than I have, every means of improvement, every indulgence,” Fuller’s speaker counters, “Have you asked her whether she was satisfied with these indulgences?” (18). In this scenario, the man

34 Gossage was intimately aware when writing Azalia of hurdles Victorian women faced in pursuing non-domestic careers. She, for one, struggled to secure her father’s approval to work for the Vermillion Standard; he only granted his consent when one of Gossage’s friends agreed to work with her. While, as Garvey reveals, “[e]ditorial work itself occupied an interesting transitional role for late-nineteenth-century middle-class unmarried women, who were beginning to find it possible to work for wages without losing class standing and who were beginning to think of embarking on careers,” other nineteenth-century figures believed that women should not work in newspapers (xiv). Karen Roggenkamp, for instance, shares that Edward Bok stated that “[a] girl cannot live the free-and-easy atmosphere of the local room or do the work required a reporter without undergoing a decline in the innate qualities of womanliness or suffering in health” (5). Gossage’s Azalia—as well as her own work—was thus transgressive.

35 Although Gossage does not specifically mention reading Woman in the Nineteenth Century, her documentation of Fuller in “Woman’s Work in Journalism” reveals her awareness of the feminist-journalist.
(voicing society) poses traditional views that the speaker (representing Fuller) counteracts—a socially active dialogue meant to sway readers in favor of gender equality. Azalia similarly uses conversations to attempt to convince women (both Gossage’s characters and her real-life Dakota Territory readers) that they deserve the same professional opportunities as men. One particularly important exchange—the longest conversational episode in all of Azalia—involves Azalia’s friend Clara. When Azalia asks Clara, “What are your aims for the future?” Clara seems perplexed (“What are my aims! what do you mean?”). Azalia clarifies, “what do you wish to be: model housekeeper, poetess, compositor for the rest of your life, dressmaker or what?” Clara confesses that she once wanted to “write for the paper or write books,” then voices her support for traditional gender roles, including a “woman could not take care of her house and family as well if her mind was partly taken up with other things I don’t think” and “don’t this extra work—this writing, speaking, and all such public work tend to make women coarse and unrefined?” Azalia counters Clara’s concerns, including Clara’s worry that Victorian men will not want to marry ambitious women: she replies, “If all a man wants is a servant he had better hire one and be done with it, or at least marry some one who aspires to nothing higher than a stove or a washboard . . . A true man will see more to admire, to my way of thinking, in a smart, intelligent woman, than silly, flirting girls of the period” (6 Sept. 1879). Gossage thus uses fictional dialogue as an argumentative technique to outline an idealistic society in which Victorian women feel empowered to pursue “higher and different aspirations.”

Despite Azalia’s persuasiveness, Clara chooses “love” over “ambition,” and her “broken heart” triggers a consumptive attack that kills her—a dramatic plot shift that warns Gossage’s readers against adhering to Clara’s traditional ideology. Azalia unsuccessfully tries to motivate her dying friend: “Clara,” she urges, “Do nerve up and throw off this lethargy and get well.
Think what will be said. Everyone will say you died because Bertheld Knox threw you over for that Hampton girl. Come, you mustn’t give in” (13 Sept. 1879). When Clara refuses even Berthold’s request to live (Clara says, “No! Berthold, it is better that I go to another world to live. I am happy now, far happier than if I was to live”), Azalia’s mourning period is brief: Gossage writes, “Azalia felt that her best friend in N--- had gone, but her neglected duties kept her busy, and consequently she had little time to magnify the loss she had sustained” (13 Sept. 1879). In a story that exalts female ambition, there is no room for sentimental heartbreak. Karren Roggenkamp addresses sentimentality in *Sympathy, Madness, and Crime: How Four Nineteenth-Century Journalists Made the Newspaper Women’s Business* (2016), noting that women “deployed a rhetoric of sympathy to excavate professional space within a masculinized landscape” (5). Roggenkamp continues, “Countless emotion-laden novels and stories urged their readers to bear witness to scenes of suffering and to respond by identifying with the sufferers, who were often quite different from themselves” (7). In killing Clara, Gossage goes beyond eliciting sympathy to argue that female readers should not feel sorry for Clara (or—more practically—sacrifice their careers), and instead remain true to pursuing their own ambitions.⁶

Azalia even more urgently defends women’s rights (perhaps in response to Clara’s death) in her next conversation with a female character—an exchange in which Azalia references “readings” that espouse traditional roles (likely revealing Gossage’s own reading habits). In a novel otherwise characterized by short paragraphs (a product of narrow newspaper columns),

⁶ To drive this point home, Gossage also kills off Azalia’s mother, who made the mistake of marrying a drunkard.
Azalia’s reply to her female host’s inquiry about why she “declines gentleman company so much” stands out as the novel’s longest monologue—it takes up over half a column. Among other points, Azalia argues that while society encourages men to live beyond their “affections” (or pursue professional success beyond the home), it unfairly limits women to domestic spheres:

I have read that woman lives in her affections; that her heart is her home. That may be so to a certain extent, but why has a woman so much more heart than a man? You never heard of a man living in his affections. No, I think not. Rather he lives in his business, has high aspirations and here in the United States hopes of the presidential chair. In the same article from which I quoted the above, I read that ‘it was man’s duty to provide for the dear ones—wife and children—that constitute his home, woman’s duty to adorn that home with beauty, grace and comfort.’ She is to stay quietly at home and think of the love she bears to him—her husband. Never mind how much she gets in return. She must bring up their children in the way they should go; the boys to have the same great aspirations which the father had, the girls to look beautiful and captivate some fine gentleman of a man and then spend her life in holding up his hands and smoothing his path for him, regardless of the thorns which prick her hands—which, by the way, must be kept white and smooth. (20 Sept. 1879)

Gossage’s rhetoric in this passage invokes Fuller’s *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, in which a hypothetical husband argues that he is the “head” of the family while his wife is the “heart” (19). A wife’s status as the “heart,” according to patriarchal ideology, means she should not want to “step beyond the sphere of her sex,” nor should she wish to make her husband “unhappy” (19). Azalia challenges the idea that women should be limited to supportive or nurturing roles (literally confining them to the home, or the “sphere of her sex”). She continues:
I am taking the extreme side, Mrs. Hoxley, but there is truth in what I say. The lovely fascinating ladies must have no ambition outside of home; she is not expected to be a fine scholar. What does she want of fame for? Is not her ambitions as much to her as a man’s is to him? Why did the Lord put them in her mind if they were not to be gratified? In another article I read that ‘it was preposterous to think of such a thing as equality of intellect between the sexes.’ . . . it grinds me to think that we women, no matter what our ambitions are, cannot achieve what we wish, because we have not the brain; because we have not the intellectual capacities needed to accomplish what we long to do. No! . . . It’s perfect nonsense! Look at the number of women who have proven what woman can accomplish. (20 Sept. 1879)

Azalia’s assertions again invoke Fuller, whose female speaker in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* boldly informs the disgruntled husband that “you are not the head of your wife. God has given her a mind of her own.” Invoking such foundational feminist discourse—which defends women’s intelligence, independence, and capability—positions *Azalia* as a model for female agency in Dakota Territory. Articulate and driven, Azalia refuses to let traditional roles limit her.

“My Name is Miss Moulton”: Modeling Refusal and Privileging Assent in Azalia

A second key aspect of Gossage’s feminist advocacy in *Azalia* (in addition to encouraging women to pursue careers outside the home) involves normalizing a woman’s right to grant or withhold consent. Fuller points toward the importance of consent in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*: “‘Consent’—you! it is not consent from you that is in question, it is assent from your wife” (18). Gossage’s attention to consent helps explain *Azalia*’s first chapter, which features male conversation (an unusual occurrence; in fourteen chapters, only one other brief
exchange exclusively occurs between men). *Azalia* opens with Rodman Harris and Berthold Knox, two male “typos” at the *Flying Eagle*, discussing Azalia: “But say, Rod, I thought I saw a new face in the composing room. Got a new typo?” (23 Aug. 1879). Berthold desires to know whether or not she is pretty—a shallow interest that ultimately makes him an unfit suitor for Azalia. In response to his inquiry, Rodman gruffly explains, “I ain’t the one to be put down by a girl,” and then tells Berthold that Azalia ignored him when he called her by her first name.

Rodman continues, “Just at noon as she passed my case she stopped and said, ‘Mr. Harris, my name is *Miss* Moulton. Whenever you wish anything address me by that title and I shall be most happy to accommodate you to anything in my power,’ and just sailed out with her nose up. Cool, wasn’t it?” (23 Aug. 1879). Despite his attitude, Rodman acquiesces to Azalia and drops the presumed familiarity. Berthold, however, takes Azalia’s resolve as a challenge and decides to woo her, sight unseen:

The day after the conversation between Mr. Knox and Rod. Harris, the former commenced his campaign in the direction of Azalia Moulton. He anticipated her wishes and paid her well directed compliments which she received as Rod. said she would, with a “cold thanks, and an elevation of the nose.” He was astounded. He was more than astounded. He was furious. He could not understand it. She, a girl, and not appreciate *his* attentions. He resolved to try all the harder to win a smile from her, but failed ignominiously. It is true she often smiled but not at his glances. If he knew how she scoffed at them to herself; how she laughed at his compliments he would have been more furious than ever. (30 Aug. 1879)

Azalia’s refusal eventually discourages Berthold’s unwelcome advances. It also underscores Azalia’s professionalism; though Berthold perceives her as a flirtatious prospect, Azalia wishes
to be treated like a formal colleague. Gossage, in fact, wished to prove that men and women could work together, giving women more career opportunities. In “Women’s Work in Journalism,” she asserts, “I believe that men and women are better for meeting and mingling everywhere in everyday life. It is true that it may dissolve the glamour, but that had better be dissolved before marriage, for more . . . glamour is not what the world needs.” By enforcing her wish to be addressed (and treated) by her coworkers as “Miss Moulton,” Azalia helps prove that women were capable workers who deserved respectful treatment in male-dominated industries.

Azalia’s professional relationship with—and eventual romantic interest in—writer and newspaperman Harry Gilroy provides Azalia’s most significant study in consent and respect. Harry and Azalia cross paths because Azalia—out of all of the “typos” at the Flying Eagle—most accurately sets type for Harry’s newest story. He desires to meet the “compositor” who “so accurately [set up] my manuscript” (6 Sept. 1879). Like Berthold, Harry initially privileges Azalia’s appearance over her prowess as a “typo.” Surprised to meet a female “typo,” he shares:

“Really, Miss Moulton, it does one good to find a composing room brightened by such a face as yours. I wish there were more that would undertake to make other offices pleasant.”

She took no notice of this implied compliment, but replied, nonchalantly:

“I did not enter a printing office with that end in view but with one entirely different.”

“And may I ask what that end was which induced you to soil your hands with dirty type,” he enquired quickly.

“Certainly,” she said, “you may ask, but it does not follow that I will reward your inquisitiveness by informing you.” (6 Sept. 1879)
Azalia refuses (or refracts) Harry’s gaze by reminding him that she is a professional who has aspirations (the details of which she withholds). Until he learns to value her intelligence and literary abilities over her appearance, Harry is not a suitable partner for Azalia. Such a sentiment closely mirrors Gossage’s personal beliefs about how Victorian men should view and appreciate women—particularly her fiancé. In her March 5, 1882, letter to Joseph Gossage (the same one in which she defends her right to work after he says his “pride” is wounded), Alice Gossage states:

I am no pretty doll to be dressed up and put in the parlor to be admired. I like the parlor well enough and I like the clothes and I like to have things done for me but not as they would be done for a helpless, useless baby. I like the kisses & caresses and the love but not that love born from admiration of beauty but rather the love that springs from a knowledge and appreciation of character and earnest thought.

Gossage further declares in the same letter that she does not want to be a “bauble but a sharer in whatever your lot may be,” and asserts that a wife “should be equal” to her husband. In this way, Gossage vividly recalls Fuller’s description of Miranda’s relationship with her “father” in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, in which “he addressed her not as a plaything, but as a living mind” (27). Miranda’s “father” was “a man who cherished no sentimental reverence for woman, but a firm belief in the equality of the sexes” (27). Azalia (and Gossage), like “Miranda,” desires to be valued by Harry Gilroy for her intellect—not a “sentimental reverence” for female beauty.

After Azalia rebuffs his “sentimental” compliments, Harry begins developing a deeper (i.e. intellectual) interest in her. Their subsequent exchanges—including Azalia’s initial refusal to share her writing with him—continue to privilege Azalia’s comfort and readiness (a lesson that Harry gradually learns). When Harry and Azalia meet at a local party, for instance, he asks:

“Would you mind letting me see some that you have written?” he asked quickly.
“I never have let anyone know that I have ever written anything except Clara Porter, much less showing any of my poor scribbled stuff,” she replied.

“Your poor scribbled stuff,” he said mockingly. “Ah, yes! I expect so. But, really I would like to see some. I have no doubt but that it is of a superior cast than any other. It certainly is if it is like the writer.” (13 Sept. 1879)

Azalia, distracted by other guests (and perhaps rebuffed by his “mocking” tone), does not answer his question at the party. Later, though, Harry broaches the subject again while walking Azalia home—one of the few times a scene in Azalia takes place outside. Harry prompts: “By the way, you did not promise me that I might see your literary productions. I might be of considerable help to you. What say you?” Azalia frankly responds: “Mr. Gilroy . . . I will have to think about it. When I am ready to show them to you I will. Until then, wait” (13 Sept. 1879). Although Azalia desperately desires a literary career, she only accepts Harry’s offer on her own terms. She holds out until Chapter Seven, when she tells Harry, “I am ready now to let you see some of my literary efforts and if you will kindly take the trouble to read and express your exact and truthful opinion as a critic on them I will be much obliged” (13 Sept. 1879). Although Gossage does not specify the content of Azalia’s story, it seems to resemble Gossage’s own writing: it involves “many of [Azalia’s] ideas in regard to woman’s work, man’s duty to woman and vice versa” (20 Sept. 1879). Part of this duty, which again invokes Margaret Fuller, involves fostering a

37 In a second instance of art imitating life, Alice and Joseph Gossage discuss reading Rev. Edward Payson Roe’s A Day of Fate (1880), a romance between newspaper workers. Joseph Gossage first mentions the book in his February 12, 1882, letter, and then urges her to read it on February 16, 1882: “If you have If you have not read it, do read it. It is about an editorial writer – a good love story . . . I, too, met my ‘Day of Fate’ the Saturday I first met you.” On
mutually fulfilling partnership.

Harry’s greatest lesson in consent comes near the end of the novel when Azalia chooses to pursue her career as an author and newspaperwoman over marrying him (at least for the time being). In Chapter Eleven, Harry exclaims, “My darling! My Azalia! I love you. Is my love returned? Give me hope. Don’t bring up anything, but tell me that you love me” (27 Sept. 1879). Harry’s demanding tone steamrolls any potential dissent, revealing that he does yet not fully respect Azalia’s needs. Her refusal shows that her goals do not yet align with his romantic desires: she tells Harry, “I have not gained what I expect to, yet I have done well for my age, I think . . . The conflict has been between love and ambition . . . If I married you I must give up all my cherished dreams of education, etc. I would soon grow discontented” (27 Sept. 1879). In the year that passes before Azalia and Harry meet again, Azalia achieves all of the professional success she hoped for. Gossage writes that “soon the chance of promotion occurred and she was appointed editor-in-chief of a department of the weekly paper . . . Much of it was written by herself, and the remainder by the prominent literary people of the immediate vicinity” (27 Sept. 1879). Azalia’s success outshines that of other newspapermen: “She has written much for other journals and is valued as a correspondent by the editors of those papers above many of their gentleman correspondents” (4 Oct. 1879). Harry Gilroy’s patience for—and pride in—Azalia’s

February 26, 1882, Alice Gossage responds, “I am about half through and like it very much. I think if you had asked me what I thought of it six months ago, I would have said the love part was overdrawn, but now I saw it is not. I never believed in ‘book love’ but lately I think there is a love so fine, so ennobling that none but those who strive to be pure and noble can attain to it. I think the better we are the better our love can be . . . You inspire me to act myself and when I am myself I am best.” She concludes, “I hope our lives may be such that we will realize that ‘book love’ is not overdrawn but that we may live our lives in such a way that our very love may exalt us.” Interestingly, Alice Gossage does not mention Azalia in her letters to Joseph Gossage—also a newspaper romance.
accomplishments finally prepares him to be a good partner; when Azalia accepts his proposal, she is confident that Harry will continue to support her professional endeavors. Gossage writes,

We leave Azalia a happy wife. She still writes for some of the leading papers. She superintends her household affairs but has help to do the heavy and hard work. She keeps her music up.

Her husband’s sanctum is her own. Together they write and together will go through life—a help to each other. (4 Oct. 1879)

This outcome recalls Fuller, who argues, “The sexes should not only correspond to and appreciate one another, but prophesy to one another. . . . Two persons love in one another the future good which they aid one another to unfold” (33). Gender equality (especially the promise that Azalia and Harry will work “together” in life) thus deeply defines Azalia’s happy ending.

While Azalia vividly articulates Gossage’s feminist vision (and helped gratify her authorial ambitions), Gossage ultimately had mixed feelings about her first publication. She writes in her diary on January 5, 1880, “Perhaps I’ve made a mistake in trying to be a writer or anything but a drudge. They [her family] don’t give me credit for what I do.” Publishing Azalia in a small Dakota Territory newspaper did not bring Gossage widespread recognition (her story has since been confined to the archive), nor did its idealistic vision free her from the “drudgery” of daily life. However, by May 17, 1880, Gossage was more optimistic, writing, “I went to the Herald office to get, if possible, the numbers of that paper containing my story. I saw Mr. Taylor and he found me all but one number . . . He asked me if I ever wrote any more. I told him not much for there didn’t seem to be much use in it. He said he hoped I would favor them with whatever I did write. How happy that made me. I will finish my story now as soon as I can.” Gossage’s thirst for encouragement—and her renewed dedication to writing—after publishing
Azalia recalls her character, Clara’s, admission, “I never had any encouragement and so I gave [a writing career] up entirely. Its [sic] too much trouble.” Gossage’s early life and writing—most vividly seen in her diary and Azalia—thus crucially reinforce the idea that women deserved access to fulfilling careers and relationships as well as social and familial encouragement, a perspective Gossage closely shared with Fuller. Overall, reconceiving Dakota Territory newspaper offices as a social and professional frontier (versus rooting her writing in recognizable landscape features) allowed Gossage to articulate a distinctly feminist vision—one that narrates the U.S. West on her own terms.

PART TWO: ALICE GOSSAGE GOES (FARTHER) WEST

“Hurrah for the Hills”: Becoming a Regional Writer

Alice Gossage, whose early writings embody feminist ideology while largely omitting their Dakota Territory context, veered toward regional subjects after 1882 (when she moved to Rapid City). This shift had everything to do with her pursuit of a profession and a marriage that fulfilled the vision of Azalia. Gossage’s evolution also helps reveal the settler contexts of her feminism. Namely, Gossage’s post-1882 attention to Black Hills scenery (a region the Sioux were forced to cede only six years before she arrived) participates in the colonialist discourse that Mary McAleer Balkun and Susan C. Imbarrato describe, wherein women are “both agents and objects of empire, [who] simultaneously shaped and unsettled the ‘course of expansionism’ wherever these processes were attempted” (2). Amy Wink sees further correlations between U.S. Western women’s nature writing and colonialism: “Thus, by describing the landscape before her, a woman claims ownership through language and asserts her influence on the landscape” (9). Finally, Annette Kolodny shares in her foundational text The Land Before Her (1984) that “[l]ike
their husbands and fathers, women too shared in the economic motives behind emigration; and like the men, women also dreamed of transforming the wilderness” (xii). She continues, “Each woman, after all, wanted to interest her reader in becoming more than just a reader: she wanted to encourage others to follow her own journey and to become, themselves, settlers in the new prairie west” (99). Through environmental articles in a promotional text like *Holiday Greetings from Rapid City* (1915 and 1920), Gossage helped claim the Black Hills’ flora, fauna, and “turbulent [sic]” natural features for Euro-American settlers—an effort that eventually contributed to the erasure of Native voices in the process.

Gossage’s interest in relocating to Rapid City was, at first, solely professional—a view consistent with *Azalia*, which explores women’s access to interior spaces like offices and copy rooms rather than their interactions with Dakota Territory landscape features. Major Harry MacNamara, who helped Gossage publish *Azalia* in 1879 and got engaged to her the same year, told Rapid City newspaperman H. M. Maguire about Gossage’s prowess as a typesetter. Maguire was intrigued, and immediately offered Gossage work with the *Black Hills Weekly Journal*, which Joseph Gossage had founded in 1878. Alice Gossage’s November 3, 1879, diary entry expresses her excitement: “Oh, how nice it would be to go there . . . I will go in the Spring I think . . . In the past year I have had success in my literary labors such as I did not think possible a year ago.” By February 22, 1880, Gossage’s plans seemed sure: she wrote, “Hurrah for Rapid City. I heard from Mr. Maguire and also from Mr. Gossage. I am to get there as near the first of April as possible . . . I will have a disagreeable ride from Pierre to Rapid City but what others can stand I can stand. I will board with Mr. Maguire’s family. Glory Hallelujah! Hurrah for the
Days later, however, Maguire’s wife died, leaving Gossage without a female chaperone (though a feminist writer and thinker, Gossage was still subject to some Victorian conventions). Gossage laments, “Of course I cannot go to Rapid City now. Never in my life have I felt so bad as I do tonight. All my hopes and dreams crushed to the ground. No work – no money – no help in writing” (February 26, 1880). Gossage (who, in her disappointment, expresses only passing sympathy for the Maguires) linked Rapid City with economic and literary growth; she appears uninterested in exploring the region’s natural features.

Corresponding with—and eventually marrying—Joseph Gossage after Mrs. Maguire’s death allowed Alice Gossage, Azalia-like, to fulfill her dream of a U.S. Western newspaper career. While her desire to move to Rapid City predated her relationship with Joseph Gossage, the newspaperman’s enthusiasm for the Black Hills helped Alice Gossage perceive the U.S. West as both a land of professional opportunity and a scenic space (for Euro-American settlers, at least). On August 11, 1881, for instance, Joseph Gossage wrote, “I love to roam over and through the mountains and parks of these hills. I never grow tired of them. I am in love with them more and more every day.” He accompanied such letters with non-alphabetic photographs and mineral specimens to further convince Alice Gossage of the Black Hills’ beauty—a multimedia approach that later defined Holiday Greetings, which the Gossages co-edited.

Several natural features described in Joseph Gossage’s early letters—and which he paired with black-and-white photographs—became subjects in Alice Gossage’s 1915 and 1920 Holiday

38 Gossage’s anticipation of a “disagreeable ride” is one of her few early references to Dakota Territory travel—an overland journey that she sees as an unpleasant means to a professional end.
Greetings nature articles, especially Rapid Canyon. Joseph Gossage’s July 5, 1881, letter states,

I today mail you two views – one of Rapid City in 1879. You can see that we are situated in a park, with the high hills all around us. The picture is a poor piece of work – and as we cannot get a good photographer here we have to be content with it. . . .

The other view is of Rapid Creek – six miles above town. It is a dark and gloomy spot – as the rocks on each side of the creek is hundreds of feet high. It is call[ed] dark canyon as the sun never shines in the canyon, and as you go through a cold chill comes over a person. Along Rapid Creek are some of the finest views to be seen in the Hills and as fast as I can get hold of them – I will send you copies of them, as I know you will appreciate views of this kind.

Alice Gossage’s 1881 response to Joseph Gossage’s description (and her later treatment of Rapid Creek in Holiday Greetings) reveals her burgeoning interest in the region’s natural—versus its strictly professional—features. In her July 16, 1881, reply, Alice Gossage writes, “Many thanks for the views and the same for any more that you may choose to send. I would like to see Dark Canyon. Rapid City is larger than I thought.” Alice Gossage fulfilled her desire to see “Dark Canyon” after moving to Rapid City, and in her 1920 Holiday Greetings article “Picturesque Rapid Canyon,” she explores the space on her own terms. Gossage writes, “The road winds through deep cuts of solid rock, then passes out into the open with towering hills on one side, and the beautiful Rapid River on the other. Not a hundredth part of the praise has been given to the river that it deserves . . . it is a turbulent [sic], wild and angry stream, rushing along in the hope of finding some place where fewer rocks will impede its course and it will have a smoother bed” (26). In such a passage, Gossage establishes herself as an active local resident who is intimately familiar with the Black Hills—not merely a passive recipient of her husband’s knowledge; to
quote Amy Wink, Alice Gossage “claims ownership” over natural features “through language,” guiding her readers through contested U.S. Western spaces like Rapid Creek (9).

Alice Gossage further embedded herself in the Black Hills—and became a purveyor of the area’s settlement history—by saving the mineral specimens that Joseph Gossage mailed her during their courtship. 39 The Gossages later used these specimens to build their fireplace in Rapid City (pictured in Figures 28 and 29; note that Alice’s and Joseph’s portraits are perched on the mantle in the first image). 40 This hearth (both then and now) represents an archive of post-1876 Black Hills mineral extraction that only Alice Gossage and her husband could “read” (only Joseph and Alice knew the original location of, and thus the story behind, each specimen in the fireplace). Through Joseph, then, Alice Gossage became an authority on—and joint owner of artifacts from—Black Hills mining efforts. Incorporating the specimens into their home (a structure symbolizing permanent residence in the region) reveals that the Gossages naturalized, even celebrated, extractive settlement efforts; the Gossages repurposed the products of the 1876 gold rush, which dispossessed the Sioux of the Black Hills, as a decorative (yet functional) household item.

39 On August 11, 1881 (before they met in person), Joseph Gossage writes, “While out on this trip I secured some fine free gold specimens of rock from the different mines. I enclose you in this letter a very small specimen—but as it is the best for all that—I thought I would send it to you.” And on September 18, 1881, “I have procured some handsome gold quartz specimens which I have mailed to you so you can keep them for me until I come down to see you. They are really valuable . . . I have labeled each piece from the mine they are out of so you can see for yourself.”
40 Though their home was demolished in 1972 for the Rapid City Public Library, the Gossage’s specimen-rich fireplace was preserved. It is currently stored at the Rapid City Parks & Recreation office in Halley Park (Figure 3).
Figure 28. Rose Bower in the Gossage Home (1960s). Image courtesy of Dr. Frank Van Nuys.

After her husband’s death in 1927, Alice Gossage continued to circulate stories about the “handsome” specimens in her fireplace, thus establishing herself as a regionally significant historian and storyteller. A 1927 Los Angeles Examiner article, for instance, explains, “Nobody knows the Black Hills as [Gossage] knows them, all the townspeople say.” Later in the article, which describes how Alice Gossage hosted First Lady Grace Coolidge for a party (President Calvin Coolidge and his wife vacationed in the Black Hills in 1927), Gossage notes, “Almost all the mines in the Black Hills, operating or closed, are represented in my fireplace. That’s one from ‘The Holy Terror.’ A woman found it. Her husband named it, and when they asked him why, he said he felt it was his duty to give his wife the credit.” Highlighting a woman’s contributions to Black Hills mining history (even tongue in cheek) for the U.S. President’s wife reveals Gossage’s ongoing attention to white Dakota Territory women’s professional efforts. Alice Gossage, as both the owner and “reader” of the hearth, intertwines the region’s geological and social history.

“Any Town in the Territory May Well Feel Proud”: Promoting the Black Hills

Sharing her Rapid City hearth with Grace Coolidge (and thus the nation via the Los Angeles Examiner article) helped Alice Gossage visually and textually promote the Black Hills. Such an effort had long distinguished the Gossages’ literary efforts, and was intimately linked with encouraging additional Euro-American settlement. For instance, on October 2, 1881, Joseph Gossage informed Alice Gossage that “I expect to get out an illustrated edition the first of the coming year . . . It will be a showing any town in the territory may well feel proud of.” He further specifies on January 5, 1882, that he wants this “illustrated edition” to “do some good in turning the tide of immigration towards Rapid City.” His desire reflects a broader U.S. Western
print culture tradition of promoting settlement; David Dary explains that to “attract new settlers an editor had to rely on exaggeration. Many did so without hesitation, since the success of their newspapers depended on the growth of their towns” (79). Early promotional efforts in the Rapid City Daily Journal embodied editorial-colonial earnestness. “Our Resources” a January 20, 1882, article, for example, proclaims that the “enormous sum of $34,000,000 has been produced in gold alone” since the Black Hills were settled, then links reading the Journal with mining success: “the proper method of treating the ores [has] been discovered and published in the Daily and Weekly Journal. Now is the time to subscribe.” After affirming that “[t]here are yet lands open to settlement,” “Our Resources” again promotes the Journal, noting, “The Daily Journal Job Printing Department is the largest and most complete establishment in the Black Hills country. The office is supplied with . . . the largest stock and best assortment of material to do all kinds of printing.” This article intertwines the Black Hills’ literary growth (through the Journal’s circulation) with its geographic development (through settlement and mining references)—an approach even more vividly seen in the Gossages’ co-edited Holiday Greetings from Rapid City.

Holiday Greetings from Rapid City, which the Gossages released in 1915 and then revised and republished in 1920, is a compilation of poems, photographs, stories, advertisements, and articles intended to encourage further Euro-American settlement efforts. In addition to co-editing Holiday Greetings, Alice Gossage contributed three articles—“Flowers and Fruits of the Black Hills” (1915), “Picturesque Rapid Canyon” (1920), and “The Story of Black Hills Gold Jewelry” (1920)—thus participating in this publication’s effort to create new “place-stories” in a contested space. James Joseph Buss summarizes Coll Thrush’s “place-stories” in Winning the West with Words (2011), a theory that parallels Alan Lawson’s 2001 treatment of settler narration. Thrush writes,
lace-stories . . . do more than simply recount the past; they constitute a process whereby communities past and present impart meaning on spaces by fashioning their creation stories. These stories have powerful interpretive consequences as they are used to extend colonial projects and verbally marginalize indigenous peoples, casting them as people of the past rather than the present. (8)

In the case of *Holiday Greetings* (1915 and 1920), a new “place-story” emerges by lauding Euro-Americans (including white women’s environmental knowledge) while downplaying, and even removing, Native narratives. Settler rhetoric infuses Alice Gossage’s 1915 article “Flowers and Fruits of the Black Hills,” for one, while also casting Gossage as an expert on Black Hills flora (despite her status as a regional transplant). When listing Black Hills flowers, Gossage notes, “At this time the ever present dandelion is to be seen wherever civilization has made its advent and cultivated the ground, the pretty little yellow torment not being indigenous to the soil, though on an expanse of green there is nothing more striking. It was introduced in Rapid City by a thrifty woman who desired spring greens to remind her of her eastern home” (130). In the vein of Euro-American writers such as William Cullen Bryant (who references the colonizing bee in “The Prairies”) and Emily Dickinson (“To make a prairie”), then, Gossage envisions the dandelion as a colonizer. Despite not being “indigenous to the soil,” the flower is now “seen everywhere.” Gossage views this invasive behavior in a positive light: she calls the flower “pretty” and “striking,” and hails the woman who brought it to Rapid City as “thrifty.” Gossage thus creates a “place-story” of the Black Hills that encourages—and even overtly celebrates—new settlement.

Gossage further contributes to a pleasant “place-story” of Euro-American settlement in “Flowers and Fruits of the Black Hills” by praising the native “wild pease” for its resilience to white colonizers, especially destructive children. Gossage’s effort to diminish colonial violence
(and thus create a positive “place-story”) parallels similar moments of historical revision in *Holiday Greetings*—particularly the 1920 edition’s “South Dakota Chronology.” She explains:

> The wild pease are masses of yellow and cover many a neglected and unsightly spot. The little ones gather buttercups and little white blossoms they call wax flowers. These flowers might almost be called half domesticated for they do not disappear before the advance of the white man as the shyer blossoms do. They smile up from the roadside and seem to joyfully greet the tiny fingers that will destroy them in a short half hour. (130)

In Gossage’s colonially infused narrative, the flowers “smile” despite their destruction by “the white man,” and even persevere for future exploitation (the owners of the “tiny fingers” will grow into future adults and settlers). Such a perspective softens the violence inherent in colonization, a characteristic most notably shared in *Holiday Greetings* by “South Dakota Chronology.” The Anglocentric timeline traces the dispersal of Native lands, including 1858, when the “Yankton Indians made [a] treaty relinquishing title to lands between Big Sioux and Missouri” (allowing Alice Gossage and her family to settle near Vermillion), and 1876, which saw the “Black Hills relinquished by Indians. All agency Sioux dismounted and disarmed” (54-55). These losses accelerate after the turn of the century, when there is an “unprecedented rush of homesteaders. One hundred and six thousand persons apply for right to enter lands” on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in 1904 (56). Such losses seem to occur peacefully (a retreat of the “shyer blossoms,” to quote Gossage’s article). When the timeline does reference violence, it often does so passively or in rhetoric that elides Euro-American complicity. The traumatic events of 1890, for instance, include “[o]pening of a portion of Great Sioux reservation between White and Cheyenne rivers. Messiah war. Sitting Bull killed. *Battle of Wounded Knee*” (56, my emphasis). Gossage’s seemingly innocuous “Fruits and Flowers of the Black Hills,” alongside
texts like “South Dakota Chronology,” thus posits an agreeable “story” of non-Native settlement in the Black Hills.

“A Very Beautiful and Imposing Appearance”: Negotiating the Rapid City Indian School

A particularly intriguing fixture of Holiday Greetings’s “place-story” is the Rapid City Indian School. Of the three articles that address Native presence in the 1915 edition (“Romance Amalgamates Lives of White Adventurer and Sioux” and “Yellow Robe, Grand Nephew of Sitting Bull, Tells of His Boyhood Days with Sioux” are the other two), only the Rapid City Indian School entry survives into 1920. Although their content is largely the same, the 1915 and 1920 articles possess different titles: the 1915 version is called “Bridging Chasm Between Savage Sioux and Culture,” while the 1920 article is “The United States Indian School Located at Rapid City.”41 “Bridging Chasm” points toward the school’s assimilationist—and racially charged—purpose, while the 1920 title more innocuously indicates its location, thus softening the school’s mission and tone. Both versions describe the school as “beautiful and imposing,” a seemingly contradictory assessment that both acknowledges its institutionalism (and Native presence) and reinvents it as a “beautiful” regional feature. As co-editor of and contributor to a text that sheds its Native content, Gossage represents how “European American women’s interest in Indian history was driven by personal and cultural agendas—more than mutual empathy or pity” (Rhea xii). In Holiday Greetings, such an “agenda” involved praising the Rapid

41 The 1920 version adds a brief note acknowledging Native service in World War I; otherwise, it is unchanged.
City Indian School, noting that “[t]he system of education as carried on here is highly beneficial in bringing the Indian students in contact with the students of the public schools, and thus fitting these young people to take their places in the great citizen body of the state” (69). It continues, “The Federal government is doing wonderful work in providing such excellent opportunity for these young people to secure training to fit them for good and useful lives . . . Visitors to Rapid City should not fail to go to the Indian School and see its large body of students at work in the schoolroom and the industrial departments” (48-51). *Holiday Greetings* thus casts the Rapid City Indian School as a tourist attraction while omitting the perspectives of Native students.42

This narrative revision is further reinforced in the 1920 edition of *Holiday Greetings*, which removes Chauncey Yellow Robe’s (Sicangu Lakota) 1915 autobiographical account. Such a gap in the 1920 edition is significant because “Yellow Robe, Grand Nephew of Sitting Bull, Tells of His Boyhood Days with Sioux” provides a complicated portrait of the boarding school system; omitting Yellow Robe’s account in 1920 thus eliminated the only critical view of Euro-American institutions included in the original *Holiday Greetings*. Yellow Robe attended Carlisle

42 Scott Riney’s *The Rapid City Indian School, 1898-1933* (1999) provides some of this missing context. Riney shares that the Rapid City Indian School, founded in 1898, “was one of the smaller off-reservation schools . . . Rapid City had an enrollment of 232 in 1909, drawn almost entirely from the Pine Ridge, Rosebud, and Cheyenne River Agencies” (13). Carlisle, in comparison, “had an enrollment of 1,063. The BIA’s other major school, the Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas, enrolled 849” (14). In contrast to the earliest Indian schools, “The Rapid City Indian School was in country the people of the reservations . . . knew well. If they had not actually traveled near the Black Hills (Rapid City was within the historic territories of the Crows, Lakotas, and Cheyennes), the climate, altitude, and vegetation were still familiar” (Riney 41). This made the school more convenient for Native families, including those who, as Riney explains, used the school “[i]n times of family crisis” as a “child care provider of last resort” (37). Despite its proximity and “wonderful” description in *Holiday Greetings*, the school severely traumatized some students. Riney explains that “[c]ombined with the assimilationist agendas of BIA educators, the skewed child-adult ratios produced a rigid, unforgiving environment” (139). Further, “the bounds of permissible behavior were narrow, to the point that normal childhood activities became expressions of deviance” (141). Riney details several reports of students dying or sustaining injuries when trying to leave—incidents omitted from the Gossages’ optimistic text.
Indian School from 1883 until 1895, when he graduated with honors. He subsequently became an industrial teacher (1907-1911) and disciplinarian (1913-1915) at the Rapid City Indian School, and also served as a founding member of the Society of American Indians (along with Zitkala-Ša and Charles Eastman). Although Yellow Robe ultimately depicts his education favorably (“During my school days in Carlisle I was under the fatherly care of General R. H. Pratt, L. L. D., the founder of Carlisle and the composer of my life ‘From Savagery into Civilization.’ Today I owe him all that I am.”)—and while he stayed in the boarding-school system after returning West—he does recall initial trauma upon arriving at Carlisle (an experience Zitkala-Ša and Charles Eastman also share). Yellow Robe explains in Holiday Greetings that:

I spent my boyhood days with my people on the great plains until I was fifteen years of age. My dreams for glory in the Indian world vanished from my vision. I was given to General R. H. Pratt to take me with him to school in the far east against my own wishes. On the way to the east I wore my full Indian costume, long hair, feathers, blanket, leggings, moccasins and painted face, not knowing a word of English, nor having seen a book or a school house before. After my arrival at Carlisle, my photograph was taken for curiosity sake and then I was stripped of my native costume; they cut my long hair and put me in a bath tub of warm water with plenty of soap. And thus I began the first process

43 It is unclear whether Yellow Robe here references a particular text that Pratt helped him write (titled “From Savagery to Civilization,” thus mirroring Eastman’s From the Deep Woods to Civilization), or whether he means that Pratt was simply instrumental in introducing him to “civilization,” or changing the course of his life’s story. If Pratt and Yellow Robe did collaborate on a text called “From Savagery to Civilization,” I have not yet located it.
of civilization. I was dressed in a new suit of civilized clothes, which was so
uncomfortable to my nature and also the new and strange environment was breaking me
in spirit. Never have I experienced such home sickness before or after as I did then. How
many times I have watched the western sky and cried within my broken heart wishing to
see my father and mother again and be free on the plains. (72)

_Holiday Greetings_ includes a cropped version of Yellow Robe’s “full Indian costume”
photograph on the first page of the article; in it, he gazes directly at the camera (see Figure 30).
Yellow Robe’s pre-Carlisle picture is paired with a post-Carlisle photograph in Figure 30, a
compilation from the University of South Dakota archives; the pre-Carlisle photograph is the
same one included in _Holiday Greetings_ (though in _Holiday Greetings_, the background is purely
white). Yellow Robe’s expression is hard to place—when cropped, he appears more reticent.

![Figure 30. Chauncey Yellow Robe. Image courtesy of the University of South Dakota.](image)

Yellow Robe’s body language in the full photograph—not included in _Holiday Greetings_—
conveys more of the emotions that his autobiographical sketch describes, including apprehension and confusion ("not knowing a word of English") (see Figure 31). Yellow Robe sits in front of a dark background (lightened within *Holiday Greetings*), into which he almost seems to disappear.

![Figure 31. Chauncey Yellow Robe Before Entering Carlisle. Image courtesy of the University of South Dakota.](image)

Like his visual record, Yellow Robe’s *Holiday Greetings* text tells a fuller story when considered alongside his boarding school records; Yellow Robe’s *Holiday Greetings* article is, in part, a compilation of autobiographical writings derived from his Carlisle Indian Industrial School file (now digitized). For instance, the passage quoted above appears in a “Record of Graduates and Returned Students” form (no date) that Yellow Robe submitted to the “United
States Indian School, Carlisle.” The quoted passage is Yellow Robe’s longest response on the form, and it answers Question 12: “Tell me anything else of interest connected with your life.” The question is open-ended, and, in the context of the rest of the form, seems to invite a response about his post-Carlisle life. Yellow Robe, instead, shares the moment he was “taken away to the far east.” He ends by asserting, despite his experience, “To educate the Indian is not a disgrace to the American civilization.” While Yellow Robe shared his trauma at being forced to attend boarding school—an intensely personal experience—he refuses to share other intimate details of his life when he felt they were too personal. For instance, Question 8 asks, “Do you have money in the bank?” and Yellow Robe writes “yes,” but declines to clarify “How much?” In response to Questions 5-8 (“Do you own your home?,” “What kind of a house is it? Number of rooms?” and “How much property do you possess?”), Yellow Robe pencils in a note: “I prefer not to answer these questions as they seem rather personal.” While it is unclear who assembled the Holiday Greetings article (even if Yellow Robe did not compile it, he certainly was the author of its individual components), his responses on the “Record of Graduates and Returned Students” form reveal his urgency in informing Euro-American authority figures about his nineteenth-century trauma. Though taken against his will as a child, as an adult, Yellow Robe only revealed details about his life on his own terms—including in the Gossages’ 1915 Holiday Greetings, ultimately

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44 Though it is not known whether Alice Gossage and Chauncey Yellow Robe ever met, their literary legacies intersect on the pages of the Rapid City Daily Journal (as well as in the pages of Holiday Greetings). The article “Alice Gossage Planned to Write Book—In Way, She Did” and the “Yellow Robe Famous for Indian Work” appear side by side. Gossage and Yellow Robe also both met Calvin and Grace Coolidge when they visited the Black Hills.
complicating its “place-story.”

The 1920 edition of Holiday Greetings, however, largely overlooks Native presence in its narrative of the Black Hills, revealing a process of settler-colonial narrative erasure under the Gossages’ tenure. In fact, Alice Gossage’s “Picturesque Rapid Canyon” article replaces Albert F. Welles’s (Euro-American) “Romance Amalgamates Lives of White Adventurer and Sioux” story in the 1920 edition (both Welles’s and Gossage’s articles start on page 25, immediately following a scientific report on the Black Hills’ climate). Welles’s story primarily focuses on Benjamin Tibbitts (alternatively spelled “Tibbetts”), who trades “horses and cattle . . . for Wah-tela,” a Sioux woman (25). The article speculates that the white Tibbitts does so to be close to Wah-tela’s daughter, “a beautiful Indian girl called Alice . . . a former consort known far and wide on the eastern slopes of the Rockies” (25-6). Tibbitts eventually marries a Sioux woman named Emily who is closer to his age, and helps facilitate Alice’s marriage to George White, “a clerk in the commissary department at the reservation” (27). Alice has a baby boy five months after marrying White, and “Indians, whites, and in fact, everyone” speculate that Tibbitts is the father (other promiscuous white men populate the story as well) (27). White abandons Alice, and Tibbitts takes her in again. Despite Emily’s hatred of Alice’s son, the boy “grew up on the reservation, went to the government Indian school, married, and also became prosperous” (27). The article’s focus on the court case dividing Tibbitts’ estate among his heirs distracts readers from the Native women’s peripheral suffering: Alice (and her mother before her) is traded among white men who desire her beauty, then abandon her. Including such an article alongside “Fruits and Flowers of the Black Hills” in the 1915 Holiday Greetings highlights the ways in which Alice Gossage’s awareness of the U.S. West’s opportunities for women’s personal and/or professional development, while progressive for its time, was fundamentally limited; not all
Western women, especially these two Alices, had a chance to realize the same agency.

CONCLUSION

Alice Gossage’s life and labor prompt larger discussions about white women’s physical and narrative occupation of the U.S. West. Her early feminist vision reconceived Dakota Territory as a space of professional opportunities; indeed, her own move to the Black Hills in 1882 empowered her, Azalia-like, to achieve her literary dreams. The caption for Figure 32 highlights Gossage’s success: “In the Days of Alice Gossage, Rapid City, SD” (notably, not “In the Days of Joseph Gossage”). This caption at once links Gossage with local print culture (the Journal), a physical structure (the Journal’s clapboard office), a locale (Rapid City), and an era in time (Gossage contributed to and/or managed the Rapid City Daily Journal from 1887-1929).
However, Gossage’s feminist endeavors—and, later, her regional embeddedness—reflect settler ideologies that both privileged Euro-American “place-stories” and marginalized (and sometimes even completely removed) Native presence. Situating Gossage’s feminist vision within a context of Yankton, Lakota, and Dakota Sioux dispossession crucially complicates our understanding of settler discourse in the U.S. West. Gossage’s status as a feminist-colonist, in fact, was more complex than the gaps (and removals) in her writing would suggest. For instance, the 1927 *Los Angeles Examiner* story about her specimen-filled fireplace also describes another notable feature of Gossage’s mantle: “The fireplace started the conversational ball rolling—the fireplace and the big old clock over it, a clock brought to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in 1879 and
given to Mrs. Gossage and her late husband, Joseph Gossage.” The article does not specify who the clock’s original owner was, nor when the Gossages received it as a gift. Nevertheless, the “big old clock” links Alice Gossage’s hearth and the reservation (just as the specimens link her home with all of the Black Hills’ mines). And in 1903 (13 years after the Wounded Knee Massacre), Gossage traveled to Pine Ridge to meet Chief Red Cloud, who was ill. Of the experience, Gossage writes, “We had camped over night about two miles from the agency in order to be on hand early in the morning . . . a sight of the poor old chief was one which I never will forget. The oldest Indian that comes here looks young beside him. Thin, wrinkled, blind and deaf, suffering with a burning fever he looked as though he had only a few hours to live.” Gossage’s memory of Red Cloud’s suffering defines her contribution to his 1909 Rapid City Daily Journal obituary. Such a reflection proves that Gossage’s diary, Azalia, and Holiday Greetings articles, despite their omissions and settler-colonial revisions, all circulated in historically Native spaces—thus challenging her sense of Euro-American primacy and agency.

In situating Gossage’s feminist vision within a context of settler dispossession, then, I do not re-consign her to oblivion, but instead help pinpoint her role within a larger process of U.S. Western narration. She was a feminist and a settler. Previous testaments to Gossage’s legacy fall short of capturing these dual ideologies. O. W. Coursey’s 1925 “Alice R. Gossage” article (published in Who’s Who in South Dakota), for instance, describes Gossage as a teacher, newspaperwoman, wife, philanthropist, church worker, and homemaker, thus re-ascribing her to

45 The date 1879 is probably a misprint; the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation was not founded until 1889.
several traditional gender roles (and downplaying her settler identity). A plaque on Gossage’s sundial in Halley Park, Rapid City, also omits her feminist vision, though it does point toward her participation in settler culture: “Dedicated to the Memory of Alice Gossage, Pioneer, Newspaper Woman, Humanitarian, Friend, 1861-1929.” The sundial and plaque were once mounted on a concrete memorial (see Figure 33) that stood “on the highest point in Rapid City, west of West Boulevard”—a prominent location that overlooks both downtown Rapid City and the vast plains to the east (where the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is located) (Van Nuys 279).

Figure 33. Original Concrete Alice Gossage Memorial (Sky Line Drive). Image courtesy of the Minnilusa Historical Association.

This memorial was later pushed down the mountain to make way for TV towers; the sundial and plaque were preserved, and later installed in an unassuming brick structure next to a parking lot (the Gossage fireplace is currently in storage at a park building on the same site) (Figure 34).
Such a memorial, in any form, establishes Gossage’s permanent presence in the contested Black Hills (which also features even grander memorials to Euro-Americans, including Mt. Rushmore). Rebuilding Gossage’s memorial as a simple brick structure while unceremoniously discarding the original, however, does reveal her fading regional imprint. Overall, Gossage is perhaps best read in light of recent assessments of Laura Ingalls Wilder. In response to the American Library Association’s decision to remove Wilder’s name from their children’s book award, Fatzinger asserts that “most could agree that [Wilder’s] books raise useful questions about best practices for talking with children about racism in America, and that such discussions about Native topics should include Native texts or perspectives.” Alice Gossage’s “feminist pioneer” legacy similarly
invokes inquiries about how (and whose) “place-stories” circulate in settler culture—and invites further attention to the Dakota Territory histories and subjects she omits.
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Appendices

The following appendices contain a variety of archival images and letters as well as contemporary photographs of relevant locations. Collectively, these materials help illuminate the remarkable lives and settings of *Rough Form’s* diverse subjects as well as their family members and associates—including elided figures. For instance, the appendices to the Jotham Meeker and Alice Gossage chapters feature several contextual images of “Tauy” Jones and Chauncey Yellow Robe, thus significantly amending Meeker’s and Gossage’s written records with visual, spatial, and material evidence of Native agency and survivance. Further, when paired with the pictures included in the George Bent chapter, the second appendix represents the first time that images of Bent’s entire immediate family have been published together, thus honoring Bent’s vision for his autobiographical writings. Overall, these three appendices participate in *Rough Form’s* mission of expanding archives and linking alphabetic, material, visual, and spatial literacies, offering a multiformal approach to traditional textual analysis.
Figure 35. Lewis King Headstone. Lewis King (alternatively spelled “Louis”) was Jotham Meeker’s interpreter at the Ottawa Baptist Mission. He eventually converted to Christianity—a performative experience Meeker recorded in his diary. Image courtesy of Matt Bristow.
Figure 36. John Tecumseh “Tauy” Jones Headstone and Church Outline. The Meekers’ grave appears near the brush pile in the background. A line of white stones marks the western wall of the church. “Tauy” Jones and his wife are buried near what was once the church’s entrance. Image courtesy of Matt Bristow.

Figure 37. Present Site of the Meeker Farmstead and Print Office (2019). Image courtesy of Matt Bristow.
Figure 38. Entrance to the Ottawa Baptist Mission Site and Burial Ground. Image courtesy of Matt Bristow.

Figure 39. “Tauxy” Jones Wood Sculpture. Near the Franklin County Courthouse. Image courtesy of Matt Bristow.
Figure 40. John Tecumseh “Tauy” Jones. Image courtesy of the Franklin County Historical Society.
Figure 41. “Tauty” Jones Mansion. Located northeast of Ottawa, Kansas. Jones both hosted and corresponded with John Brown during “Bleeding Kansas.” Image courtesy of the Franklin County Historical Society.
Figure 42. George Bent Letter to George Hyde (Page 1). Image courtesy of History Colorado.
Figure 43. George Bent Letter to George Hyde (Page 2). Image courtesy of History Colorado.
Figure 44. George Bent Letter to George Hyde (Page 3). Image courtesy of History Colorado.
Figure 45. W. H. Ryus Letter to George Bent. Note the “Big” Raven correction and the Kit Carson portrait in the letterhead; both images appear in Ryus’s book. Image courtesy of History Colorado.
Figure 46. Bent’s Old Fort (1911 sketch by William Boggs). Image courtesy of History Colorado.
Figure 47. Little Raven and William Bent. Image courtesy of History Colorado.
Figure 48. Robert Bent (George Bent’s Brother). Image courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society.
Figure 49. Charley Bent (George Bent’s Brother). Image courtesy of History Colorado.
Figure 50. Mary Bent (George Bent’s Sister). Image courtesy of History Colorado.
Figure 51. General Hugh Scott with Three Native Women: Mrs. Big Heart, Mrs. Ed Guerrier [George Bent’s Sister], and Mrs. George Bent [Standing Out Woman] Outside Wood Structure, 1927. Image courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.
Figure 52. George Bent’s Wife. Possibly Standing Out Woman. Image courtesy of the Denver Public Library.
Figure 53. Julia Bent at Carlisle. George Bent’s daughter kneels on the left. Image courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

Figure 54. George Bent’s Children. Image courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.
Figure 55. Alfred White of New York Hearing the Story of the Ghost Dance. *George Bent and his wife sit on the left and Jonathan Seger sits second from the right. Image courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society.*
Figure 56. Chiefs Oklahoma City, I.T., 1889. George Bent stands fourth from the right. Image courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society.
Figure 57. Lexington, Missouri (Civil War Battlefield). George Bent fought his first Civil War battle here. Note the slight trench (dug for defensive purposes) halfway up the hill. Image courtesy of Kevin Brown.

Figure 58. Lexington, Missouri (Civil War Battlefield). Image courtesy of Kevin Brown.
Figure 59. Pea Ridge, Arkansas (Civil War Battlefield). George Bent fought his second Civil War battle here. Image courtesy of Jennifer Brown.

Figure 60. Pea Ridge, Arkansas (Civil War Battlefield). Photo courtesy of Jennifer Brown.
Figure 61. Chief Chauncey Yellow Robe and Lillie Springer at Their Wedding in 1906. Image courtesy of the University of South Dakota.
Figure 62. Rosebud Yellow Robe in 1927. Rosebud Yellow Robe was Chauncey Yellow Robe’s daughter. The back of the photograph reads: “Rosebud Yellow Robe . . . as she appeared when she presented a Sioux war bonnet to President Calvin Coolidge in S. Dak. in 1927.” President Coolidge and Alice Gossage also met during his 1927 vacation in the Black Hills. Image courtesy of the University of South Dakota.