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Margaret D. Jacobs

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, [mjacob3@unl.edu](mailto:mjacobs3@unl.edu)

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Resistance to Rescue: The Indians of Bahapki and Mrs. Annie E. K. Bidwell

MARGARET D. JACOBS

Like a zoom lens on a camera, Margaret Jacobs gives us a close-up view of one example of the “civilizing” interaction between Euro-American and American Indian women described by Wendy Wall. Annie Bidwell, whose story is told here, was an exemplar of the nineteenth-century Euro-American female humanitarian reform impulse. She worked diligently to introduce Christianity and domesticity to the Maidu and Bahapki Indians who lived and worked for her husband at Rancho Chico, paying special attention to the women and children. Bidwell had no doubt that her insistence on acculturation was in their best interests. But from the perspective of the Indians, she was a destroyer. Insofar as they could, they resisted her efforts to change their religion, their child-rearing practices, and their family relationships. Margaret Jacobs successfully “reads through” Bidwell’s own writings to document the ways in which the Indians Bidwell was trying to “rescue” instead subverted and quietly resisted her efforts.

Jacobs’s success in showing us both sides of this interaction changes our understanding of Annie Bidwell. Jacobs does not dispute or disparage Bidwell’s humanitarian concern, but by looking at the Indian side of the story, she does clearly show that Bidwell was less effective than she thought. Because Margaret Jacobs begins without assumptions of cultural superiority, she is able to show us how very complex Bidwell’s humanitarian “rescue effort” really was.

In the early 1890s, a group of California Indians who lived in a small village on General John Bidwell’s ranch in Chico, California, designed and carried out a Fourth of July parade. In an article in *Overland Monthly*, the general’s wife, Annie Bidwell, described this event. Leading the procession was a wagon bearing the Goddess of Liberty, portrayed by thirteen-year-old Maggie Lafonso, daughter of Holi Lafonso, headman of the Rancho Chico Indians, and Amanda Wilson, Annie Bidwell’s personal maid. Wagons full of other Rancho Chico Indians as well as visiting Indians followed behind the Goddess of Liberty. According to Annie Bidwell, “The brass band, and the marshals on horseback presented a picture never to be forgotten. These very marshals were little unclad savages when my husband first saw them,—now

[they were] decorated with silk sashes sent to them by prominent gentlemen of Chico.” On seeing this procession, Annie Bidwell, who had labored for more than twenty years to bring these Indians the gospel and civilization, confessed, “This is worth a lifetime of work.”²¹

At the end of their parade through town, the Rancho Chico Indians and their visitors retired to a grove where they carried out a program of “prayer, music by band, hymns, patriotic songs, recitations by the children, reading of Declaration of Independence, and an oration by Mr. Dick Phillips, one of the middle-aged men. “In addition to the parade and the patriotic exercises,” all day a wonderful exhibit of Indian curios was displayed in the Chapel,” and “a foot race with a silver watch from a Chico jeweler for prize, closed the day’s sport.” The Indians culminated the celebration with an Indian dance in their Dance House that night. But lest her readers think that the Rancho Chico Indians had reverted to heathenism after their day of civility, Annie Bidwell assured them that one of the men explained the dance as an event “to show the old and the new, and the new is better.”²²

From the time she first arrived on Rancho Chico in 1868, Annie Bidwell endeavored to “civilize,” Americanize, and Christianize the Indians who labored for her husband. Believing that women represented the key to changing the morals, upbringing, and culture of the Indians, she particularly targeted Indian women in her efforts. From her recounting of these Fourth of July events, it appears that Annie Bidwell had, indeed, triumphed. What better indication that Annie Bidwell had succeeded in her efforts than to show a group of Indians organizing and carrying out their own Fourth of July parade? What event could have provided a better symbol of their adoption of American culture and its rituals? And with a thirteen-year-old Indian girl portraying the Goddess of Liberty, it appeared as if Annie Bidwell had, indeed, brought Indian women “up” to white, middle-class Christian standards.

In keeping with this interpretation, historians have lauded Annie Bidwell’s humanitarian efforts to bring civilization and progress to the Rancho Chico Indians. Valerie Mathes concludes that “Annie Bidwell provided a unique example of what personal endeavor and private philanthropy could accomplish in encouraging an Indian village to seek a place in the mainstream of American life.”²³ Lamenting the loss of their culture but expressing her approval of the Bidwells’ humanitarianism, Dorothy Hill remarks that “had it not been for the Bidwells’ interest, the Indians of Chico Rancheria would have experienced a more abrupt, painful, but inevitable change in their lifestyle.”²⁴

Such a reading leaves unexamined the nature of the interaction between Annie Bidwell and the Indians at Rancho Chico. It fails to examine why Annie Bidwell felt it necessary to undermine native culture and replace it with her own notions of civilization. Hill’s and Mathes’s interpretations also neglect the ingenious ways in which the Rancho Chico Indians, like other Native Americans, managed to sustain vital aspects of their culture and identity through adaptation and accommodation. In this essay, I aim to place Annie

Bidwell in the context of late-nineteenth-century middle-class women's reform movements and to recover the many ways in which Indian women and men at Rancho Chico challenged Annie Bidwell's attempts at acculturation. Such events as the Fourth of July parade illuminate how the Rancho Chico Indians manipulated and appropriated the icons of American acculturation as a means to preserve their culture.

Annie Bidwell came to California by virtue of her marriage to California pioneer John Bidwell, who first ventured west as a member of the Wilkes Expedition in 1841.⁵ The land known as Rancho Chico that John Bidwell eventually acquired lay within the territory of the Northwestern Maidu group in the Sacramento Valley of northeastern California.⁶ According to Bidwell, he first encountered the Maidu Indians who lived at a village known as Mechoopda in 1847 when he came to survey Rancho Chico and other ranches in northern California.⁷ In 1848, Bidwell found gold on the Middle Fork of the Feather River. Faced with a shortage of labor, Bidwell claims he "had to use Indians" to help him clear brush and to mine gold. While Bidwell paid his laborers with beads and clothes, he reportedly mined one hundred thousand dollars worth of gold dust.⁸

In just two years after the discovery of gold, the white population in California increased by more than a hundred thousand. The population of the Sacramento Valley alone surged from a few hundred to twenty or thirty thousand. The pressure the new white miners put on the land had devastating consequences for northern California natives. As they killed deer, duck, rabbit, and other game, the miners deprived Indians of their customary diet. In addition, they upset natural habitats with their mining operations and introduced livestock that devoured the plants, roots, grasses, seeds, and acorns upon which the Indians relied.⁹ Before the gold rush, Indians in California numbered about 150,000; by the 1850s, they had suffered an 80 percent decrease in population to 30,000.¹⁰

In addition to destroying the natural habitat of northern California Indians, incoming miners and settlers also dispossessed them of their land. Those miners who did not find their fortunes in the mines sought to make their living as farmers on plots of land they simply claimed as squatters.¹¹ Though Bidwell had made a fortune in mining, in 1849 he decided to abandon the industry in favor of purchasing Rancho Chico, a Mexican land grant of more than twenty-two thousand acres that encompassed the Mechoopda village of Maidu Indians.¹² As he had relied on Indians to labor in his surveying and mining operations, Bidwell again turned to Indians to work on Rancho Chico. Because of the encroachments of foreigners on Indian land, John Bidwell found California Indians with few other options for survival but laboring on ranchos.

As whites seized all the most fertile land and robbed the Indians of their customary hunting and gathering grounds, northern California Indians had to either live on nonproductive land or become agricultural laborers or house servants for their invaders.¹³ To stave off hunger, some Indians resorted to livestock raiding on white ranches. Whites retaliated with violence, even against Indians who had not taken part in raiding.¹⁴

Faced with such violence, Indians who lived and worked on John Bidwell's Rancho Chico gained a rare measure of peace and protection. According to Rancho Chico resident Henry Azbill, Bidwell "had a little more concern for the Indian people living on his land," and "to the Indian people who were at that time suffering the many atrocities by the incoming whites, Bidwell did produce some sort of protection for the people living on his place. He saw to it that what he called renegade whites would not bother them, that they had a home of their own, and in this way, they were somewhat protected."¹⁵ In exchange for this protection, Bidwell gained a source of cheap labor to develop his land.

In 1863, conflicts between whites and Indians in Butte County reached their peak when a posse of 500 white men sought to kill or remove every Indian from Butte County, rounding up 461 Indians to be driven to the Round Valley Reservation.¹⁶ As early as February 1864, some Indians left Round Valley and returned to their homes. Some sought refuge at Bidwell's ranch. Representatives from nine other Maidu villages, as well as members of the Yana, Pit River, Nome Lacki, Wintu, and Wailacki tribes, came to reside and work at Rancho Chico, composing the largest nonreservation Indian community in the United States. Though this village had once been called Mechoopda, the older Maidu people came to call this reconstituted community Bahapki, a Maidu word meaning unsifted or mixed, to reflect the combination of cultures it sheltered. Though they had to labor for Bidwell and were often cut off from their ancestral lands, the Indians at Bahapki gained protection and an opportunity to re-create a village, mixing elements from all of their cultures.¹⁷

Until 1868, when, during his tenure as a U.S. congressman, John Bidwell married Annie Ellicott Kennedy, a member of a prominent Washington, D.C., family, the Indians at Bahapki experienced few efforts to acculturate them to white society. As an adherent to the dominant middle-class ideology of the time that associated men's sphere with business and public affairs and women's realm with religion, morality, and the home, John Bidwell seems to have left much of the job of "civilizing" and Christianizing the Rancho Chico Indians up to his new wife.¹⁸

When Annie Bidwell arrived at Rancho Chico in 1868, her upbringing had already preconditioned her to believe that it was her Christian and female duty to work for the "uplift" of the "little unclad savages" she found on her husband's ranch. An ardent Presbyterian, a loyal member of the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), and a devout follower of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), Annie Kennedy emerged from a tradition of middle-class Christian women's reform that sought to instill women's perceived moral superiority into the mainstream of American society.¹⁹ Like other women from this tradition, she held deep religious, evangelical convictions. In fact, before she consented to marry General Bidwell in 1868, Kennedy wrote him of her concern that he should be not only a Christian, but a Presbyterian instead of a Methodist.²⁰ The creation and maintenance of a Christian home composed a key component of the women's moral superiority tradition from which Annie Kennedy came. Though middle-class



Annie E. K. Bidwell. (Courtesy Bidwell Mansion State Historic Park and Special Collections, Merriam Library, California State University, Chico.)

white women were not supposed to invade the male sphere of business and electoral politics, they could exert power within their homes.²¹ Apparently, both the general and Annie Kennedy subscribed to this notion, as the general proclaimed, “Annie must be the sole ruler of the domestic circle—she must rule supreme there.”²²

Yet Annie Bidwell and many other middle-class women did venture out of their prescribed sphere in the home, creating a place for themselves in the “public sphere” based on women’s identification with morality. Mrs. Bidwell²³ and other middle-class reforming women did not reject their roles as wives and mothers but sought instead to extend “female” values of piety, purity, and the Christian home into the public realm. Rather than challenging male power head-on, these women focused instead on strengthening female moral authority by rescuing women they perceived to be victims.²⁴ In the late nineteenth century, as reformers increasingly posed assimilation as the key to the so-called Indian problem, women found key roles to play in the campaign to assimilate Native American women.²⁵

Mrs. Bidwell’s first successful attempt to make contact with Indian women and introduce them to her notions of women’s domesticity came seven

years after she first arrived at Rancho Chico. Having spent “years of fruitless attempts to become acquainted” with the Indians at Bahapki village, she was not successful until one day when she borrowed a plan from mission work in eastern cities “of giving clothing to those who would make it, provided they would come to the mission school; so by taking the cotton goods to the village and holding it up in a way to excite their curiosity and retain their interest; and by gestures and words, I made them understand that if they would come up to the Mansion (as our home was called), I would show them how to make clothing which they could have for the making. “To Mrs. Bidwell’s “great joy, the following morning about seven women and a few children appeared, and from that moment we were friends.”²⁶ Evidently, many of the women became quite skilled in Mrs. Bidwell’s form of sewing and produced many articles of clothing in the style of which the Bidwells approved.

Hoping to provoke another transformation in the way the Indians lived, Mrs. Bidwell stressed the importance of living in wooden rather than earthen houses. Although she marveled at her first sight of the Indians’ earthen-dome dwellings at Bahapki, Mrs. Bidwell took great pleasure when the Indians moved their village in the early 1870s and replaced all but three of their customary homes with wooden houses.²⁷ In connection with her favorable impression of Indians who built wooden homes, Mrs. Bidwell took pride in Indian women who adopted the middle-class American concern for their homes. On the death of Bahapki Indian Nopanny, the daughter of the headman Luckyan and wife of Billy Preacher, Mrs. Bidwell praised Nopanny as a “devoted wife and excellent I housekeeper,” whose home was one she always exhibited to visitors.²⁸

Not only did Mrs. Bidwell seek to effect outer, material changes in the Indians’ clothing and housing, she also tried to transform the Indians’ interior souls and minds. Her sewing lessons provided merely a cover for her deeper intentions; once she had ensnared the Indian women in her sewing classes, she began her attempts to teach them and their children English and to convert them to Christianity as well. According to Mrs. Bidwell, “[T]he first half hour [of her classes] was given to devotional exercises; the next, to reading with the women and girls, and the rest of the morning to sewing while the boys had lessons in the rudiments of English.”²⁹ To encourage the Christianization of the Indians, in the late 1870s the Bidwells built a small church for the Indians in their village and later erected a larger one on their own grounds outside the village; eventually they moved this church to the village and enlarged it with a tower and belfry.³⁰

In connection with her Christianizing efforts, Mrs. Bidwell desired that the Indians give up their sacred ceremonies and observances. She particularly disapproved of the Bahapki Indians’ burial and mourning ceremonies at which they “wailed” for several days and nights and cast beads, baskets, skins, feather belts, and ornaments into the grave alongside the body. To Mrs. Bidwell, not only were the mourning practices a symbol of the Indians’ hea-

thensness, but their tradition of burying the dead with valuable objects represented resistance to a culture that prized material accumulation. According to Mrs. Bidwell, her efforts to convince the Indians at Bahapki to abandon their burial practices soon paid off. She asserts that in 1876, only a year after she had started her school, "one of the men . . . said he was going to the white man's God, and he wished to be buried like a white man. He wished our carpenter to make the casket, and ever since caskets have been supplied to all the Indians with the exception of two or three who wished to buy their own."³¹

Predictably, another major point of contention between Mrs. Bidwell and the Indians at Bahapki developed over the Indians' dances. As with Indian burial practices, Mrs. Bidwell opposed the Indian dances for two reasons: they did not conform to Christian religion, and they did not fit with the Indians' new lifestyle as wage laborers on her husband's property. According to her, "The argument I presented against the Indian dance was, that when they had a creek to spring into after the dance, it was a benefit to them, purifying their bodies; but now that they had to sit in the cold wind, it gave them colds and pneumonia. Also that they danced to excess and over-tired their bodies so that the next day they were not in condition of good work."³²

As Mrs. Bidwell cultivated Christianity while trying to root out the old native ways, she claimed that the Indians at Bahapki gradually gave up their traditional dances. According to Henry Azbill, who grew up in Bahapki, headman Holi Lafonso, under pressure from Mrs. Bidwell, agreed to abandon the old dances but requested that the Indians be allowed to conduct one last complete dance cycle in 1906–07. Lafonso began the cycle in the spring of 1906 with the Acorn or Aki Dance, but before the cycle could be continued and completed, he died that fall. Keeping with their tradition, in February 1907, after the death of their headman, the Indians tore down the Dance House.³³ Thus, in 1907, Mrs. Bidwell could write; confidently, "All of these customs have passed away altogether with the Indian Dance, which was a sacred institution."³⁴

In Mrs. Bidwell's ardent efforts to enforce Christianity and white American ways at Bahapki, she focused on Indian women. Like most white Protestant women reformers of her time, Mrs. Bidwell believed that Native American men degraded their women. Ethnologists and reformers alike mistook northern California Indian bride-price customs as a form of slavery or prostitution and ignored the complex divisions of labor that accorded native California women status for their agricultural work. Based partly on what they perceived to be the ill and inappropriate treatment of Indian women, they assigned native Californians to the "lowest level of civilization."³⁵ Entrenched in their own middle-class culture in which white women did not engage in hard physical labor, reformers and researchers assumed that the culture from which they came held women in higher esteem than the Native American cultures they observed.

During her initial interactions with the Indians at Bahapki, Mrs. Bidwell shared this view of Indian women as the degraded slaves of their men. In ac-

cordance with her own Victorian gender norms, she never thought it proper to teach men, “especially Indians whom, I thought had less regard for woman than white men.”³⁶ Given this view of Indian women as the drudges of Indian men, Mrs. Bidwell attempted to rescue Indian women from a “heathen” and “uncivilized” life.

Mrs. Bidwell’s proselytizing efforts toward women profoundly affected gender relations between Nopanny and Billy Preacher and between Amanda Wilson and her first husband, Holi Lafonso. Mrs. Bidwell described Nopanny as a “remarkable woman. She learned readily to read and sew and was my counselor from the beginning of the mission until her death. We were devoted friends.” In contrast to her husband, Billy Preacher, who continued his traditional role in the village as the *kuksu*, or Dance Society instructor, Nopanny Preacher became one of Mrs. Bidwell’s disciples in Christianity. Nopanny’s conversion generated conflict between her and Billy. The Indian woman evidently asked Mrs. Bidwell for a Bible for her home and kept it wrapped in flannel on her mantle. When Billy disapproved, Nopanny returned the Bible to Mrs. Bidwell, saying, “My husband doesn’t believe that Book and I can’t keep it.” Nopanny mysteriously departed to Sacramento in December of 1881, apparently separating from her husband for some length of time.³⁷

Mrs. Bidwell interfered in the domestic disputes rather than in the religious beliefs of Amanda and Holi Lafonso. Though some accounts call Amanda the widow of Holi, Amanda’s granddaughter, Thelma Wilson, claims that Amanda and Holi divorced because of Mrs. Bidwell’s intervention. Thelma Wilson explains that her grandmother’s first marriage

was an unhappy marriage, and she never really told us the details of what happened, but evidently her husband [Holi Lafonso] was most unkind toward her, and I would imagine that that’d probably [be] putting it gently. And so the older woman [Mrs. Bidwell] said to her why we can’t let this go on, it’s an impossible situation. . . . And of course in those days it wasn’t easy just to say, well, all right I’m going to leave you, I can’t take this any longer. There has to be somebody to help.³⁸

Mrs. Bidwell was the “somebody” who helped Amanda separate from Holi Lafonso and remarry Santa Wilson. As the adopted son of a white family, a bookkeeper, and the eventual minister of the Bidwell’s Indian church, Santa Wilson clearly appeared to Mrs. Bidwell as a more suitable mate for a Christian woman than the headman Lafonso.³⁹ Although Mrs. Bidwell offered Indian women like Amanda Wilson support and protection when faced with male abuse, her intentions went beyond simple assistance in times of distress. Like her sewing classes, Mrs. Bidwell’s efforts to rescue women and convert them to her view of womanhood were part of her larger effort to bring Indians into civilization.

Mrs. Bidwell also intervened in the customary socialization process of the Indians at Bahapki by requiring Indian children to attend her school and church. According to Mrs. Bidwell, many younger Indians accepted bap-



Maggie Lafonso. (Courtesy Dorothy Hill Collection and Special Collections, Merriam Library, California State University, Chico.)

tism and other aspects of Christianity that their parents would not. On the question of baptism, Mrs. Bidwell remarked that “the old Indians have been so determined [not to be baptized] that I have not urged them,” but “with the younger Indians this is not so.”⁴⁰ By intervening early in the socialization of children, Mrs. Bidwell seems to have succeeded in gaining at least a few converts to Christianity. Some of Mrs. Bidwell’s students—namely Maggie, Elmer, and Genevieve Lafonso and Burney Wilson—appear to have become committed and zealous Christians. Maggie Lafonso, daughter of headman Holi Lafonso and Amanda Wilson, became the Sunday School teacher at the Indian church in the village until her early death in 1909. Elmer Lafonso, Maggie’s brother, made his name as an accomplished hymn singer and traveled around the West in an attempt to spread the gospel to other Indians. Elmer’s wife, Genevieve Lafonso, also became an instructor in the Bahapki church and school. Burney Wilson, son of Amanda and Santa Wilson and half-brother to the Lafonsos, tried to pursue a career as a minister.⁴¹

In the process of attempting to convert younger Indians to Christianity, Mrs. Bidwell appears to have created a division in the Bahapki village between old Indians and young. For example, Burney Wilson wrote Mrs. Bidwell of the conflict with his parents over his attendance at a boarding

school in Oregon: “As you know by this time that I left home (while my folks didn’t want me to) the latter part of October.”⁴² These generational conflicts played out not just between individual children and their parents but also in the village as a whole. In 1907, Maggie Lafonso wrote to tell Mrs. Bidwell about the Indians’ conflict over the burning ceremony that they conducted each year in honor of their dead. “The Burning is a question which is not yet settled upon. Wish to consult with you on your return home. The young people of the village are trying to banish all Old ways. We have so far great hopes.”⁴³

In 1907, generational conflicts seem to have led to the destruction of the Dance House. After headman Holi Lafonso’s death, the Indians at Bahapki debated whether to tear down the old Dance House and rebuild a new one, according to tradition, or to retain the old one. Apparently, some members of the Bahapki village considered retaining the old house, despite tradition, because no one knew how to dress the center pole.⁴⁴ Other sources conclude that older Bahapki Indians feared that the younger Indians would not sustain the Dance Society or rebuild the house and so were reluctant to tear it down. Evidently, in 1907, an adolescent boy decided the issue by riding a horse over the building, breaking the domed roof as well the horse’s legs. To some older Indians, this incident proved that the younger people lacked the proper respect toward and desire to continue the Indian dances. Therefore, one Bahapki Indian, George Barber, sold his dance costume to museum collector Stewart Culin on Culin’s collecting expedition through northern California in 1907.⁴⁵

Though Mrs. Bidwell presented her interactions with the Indians at Bahapki as subtle and gently persuasive, she and the general actually instituted more coercive measures to control the behavior of the Indians. In his “Proclamation of Rules Made for Rancho Chico Indians” in 1885, General Bidwell asserted that he would allow the Indians to live on his premises as long as they abided by certain conditions. These conditions included that “they drink no whiskey or other liquor”; “that all must be temperate, industrious, and good”; “that all Indians—men, women, and children—must (unless in case of sickness) attend church every Sunday when there is church”; and “that parents must send their children to school when old enough, keep them clean, and teach them to be polite.” Thus, though presented as a voluntary choice for the Indians at Bahapki, Mrs. Bidwell’s classes and church services were actually mandatory. Not only did the Bidwells require church and school attendance, but they also prohibited the Indians from working off Rancho Chico. General Bidwell proclaimed, “If they go away and work elsewhere, they lose the right to live here; for this place must not be a harbor for tramps or idle or otherwise not useful people.”⁴⁶

Using such pressures, it would appear that by the early 1890s, and certainly by 1907, Mrs. Bidwell had accomplished many of her aims. In her mind, or at least according to her writings, the Indians at Bahapki had not only willingly adopted the clothes and wooden houses she promoted, but they had also cheerfully abandoned their old ways in favor of Christianity and middle-class norms of domesticity. But appearances can be deceiving. In order to survive physical-

ly, the Indians at Bahapki accommodated to the interests of, and ultimately became dependent upon, the Bidwells. Yet in order to survive culturally and spiritually, they resisted Mrs. Bidwell's civilizing mission in overt as well as subtle ways. Their need for both physical and cultural survival confronted the Bahapki Indians with a dilemma: If they resisted Mrs. Bidwell's efforts, they risked their physical survival as a village. But if they accommodated completely to Mrs. Bidwell's mission, they could lose their cultural identity.

Each individual Indian coped with this dilemma in a different way; no one seems to have accomplished total resistance to Mrs. Bidwell nor to have submitted to total accommodation. When faced with the external, material changes the Bidwells offered to them—the adoption of new material goods and training in sewing and reading—some of the Indians at Bahapki seem to have readily accepted some of these innovations. Though Mrs. Bidwell believed their acceptance of these external changes primed them for adopting deeper internal and religious changes, the Indians at Bahapki did not believe that their selective adoption of certain white material goods and skills meant total acceptance of all white ways. When confronted with the “internal” changes Mrs. Bidwell and her husband sought—abandoning their own religious ways for Christianity—the Bahapki Indians developed a range of strategies for negotiating this assault on their culture.

In some cases, they engaged in outright defiance. The Bidwells tolerated mild infractions of their rules. For example, despite the Bidwells' efforts to ensure that all children attend school, the records from Mrs. Bidwell's industrial school are full of absences of children who had gone off to dances in neighboring Indian communities. And although the Bidwells required the Bahapki Indians to attend church, Mrs. Bidwell's native preachers and teachers would often lament the poor attendance at church.⁴⁷

But the Bidwells did not tolerate more serious forms of outright defiance. Even if desperate, Indians who left Rancho Chico in the 1880s and 1890s in search of other employment could expect to be kicked off Rancho Chico.⁴⁸ The Bidwells also threatened with eviction Indians who carried out their traditional dances on the premises. In a series of letters to the secretary of the interior in 1914, Bahapki Indian William Conway asked the U.S. government to buy the Rancho Chico Indians a home in Chico. Apparently the secretary of the interior wrote back to Conway to question why he couldn't work out some arrangement with Mrs. Bidwell. Conway replied that as

far as Mrs. Annie E. K. Bidwell good Friend ship to the Indians is true: I have nothing to say about Mrs. Annie E. K. Bidwell . . . that isn't the question. The question is we have no homes. I will mention why we have no homes. 30th of last December 1913, the Indians gave a social dance: Indians only. Mrs. Bidwell came to the village and told the Indians to get off of her Property: and said this is my Property. We had no Place to go so we still remain where we are now, we might get kick off at any time. This is why I ask this government for assistance: were we

are now located we have no title. We have lived were we are now ever cence 1890.⁴⁹

This passage reveals three important elements of the interaction between Mrs. Bidwell and the Indians who resided at Bahapki. First, if Conway's depiction of this incident is accurate, despite Mrs. Bidwell's claims to the contrary, the Indians had not given up their dances even though they no longer had a Dance House. Secondly, Mrs. Bidwell's representation of herself as "gently" persuading the Indians to come to Christianity and "never interfering" in their ways does not square with Indian accounts. Thirdly, this incident further reveals the debilitating dependence the Indians felt on Mrs. Bidwell. Without title to their own land and the ability to make their own living, the Indians at Bahapki remained dependent on Mrs. Bidwell's good graces. If they defied her openly, they risked, at least, falling out of favor, and at most, their entire village. Thus, this strategy of maintaining cultural integrity through outright defiance could be dangerous.

The Bahapki Indians therefore developed other more subtle and less risky means to preserve their cultural identity in the face of Mrs. Bidwell's pressures. For one, the Indians at Bahapki made sense of and adopted some of the customs Mrs. Bidwell tried to foist on them by accepting them on their own terms. For example, Billy Preacher's eventual acceptance of Christianity came only after he had received a vision that he should do so. Receiving, interpreting, and acting on visions was an integral part of the religion of the Indians at Bahapki. Nopanny, Billy's wife, told Mrs. Bidwell that "My husband died and went to God and God showed him that Book and told him it was His Book, and he must believe it."⁵⁰ Thus, Billy Preacher may have accepted Christianity, but he did so on his own terms and via his customary means.

Similarly, when the Bidwells built a church in the Bahapki village, the Indians believed it to be a result of their own visions. As the Indian Tokeeno lay dying in his home, his cousin Nopanny insisted that he be transferred to her home for a Christian service. Nopanny refused to pray in Tokeeno's house because Tokeeno's wife was a "non-believer." As Mrs. Bidwell led the Indians in prayer for Tokeeno in Nopanny's home, Tokeeno made a miraculous recovery. Nopanny then told Mrs. Bidwell that "My cousin says he died and went to God and the good lady prayed and God sent him back to see that church house built, and we want that church house. " As a converted Christian, Nopanny may have had ulterior motives in seeing a church house built. Yet her cousin and she legitimated the construction of a church house through traditional Indian spiritual means—a process of visions. In this instance, Mrs. Bidwell accepted the Indians' interpretation of events and the legitimacy of interpreting visions to reveal proper actions. Mrs. Bidwell insisted that the church be built the day after this momentous event, for she felt that "God did send [Tokeeno] to force us to do our duty."⁵¹

Even those young Indians who appeared to have wholeheartedly adopted Christianity and American ways did so on their own terms and for their own

purposes. Elmer Lafonso, for example, used his training in Christianity and hymn singing as a platform from which to launch a vaudeville career. A San Francisco reviewer commented that in addition to his repertoire of Italian operatic arias and popular songs, Elmer Lafonso also “has secured a quiver full of Indian songs, mainly by Charles Cadran, based on the tribal music of Indians.” The reviewer noted that Lafonso believed that Indian music could enrich American musical literature. Thus, Elmer Lafonso, the supposedly Christianized Indian who had abandoned his culture, actually had hopes of acting as a kind of missionary, introducing native cultural elements, albeit popularized ones, into the American mainstream.⁵²

Elmer’s sister, Maggie Lafonso, used her Christian training as a base from which to join Indian efforts to challenge white attitudes and policies toward Indians. Before Maggie died in 1909 at the age of twenty-five, she participated as the only woman in the second annual Zayante Indian conference in 1907 in Mount Hermon, California. Though sponsored by the Northern California Indian Association (NCIA) in order to further the training of young Indians to “uplift” other Indians, the Indians at the conference used the occasion to draw up a list of grievances and policy recommendations. Nineteen Indian men from around northern California and Maggie Lafonso signed a declaration petitioning the state and federal government for land, for protection from liquor traffic, for education, for field physicians, and for legal protection. In her letters to Mrs. Bidwell, Maggie always characterized her Christian commitment as a tool to help her people.⁵³

Burney Wilson, too, viewed his Christian mission as an effort to challenge white beliefs about Indians. During his college career, Burney was “called on a mission of the Gospel” many times, because he thought that he “may be of some good in telling of Our Indian Problem.” As the only Indian student at Park College in Missouri, Burney felt a special responsibility to prove his worth as an Indian.⁵⁴ In essence, these three young Indians negotiated a place for themselves as ambassadors from Bahapki to American culture. Though Mrs. Bidwell and other whites may have seen the Lafonso siblings and Burney Wilson as examples of Indians who had assimilated successfully, these Indians may have defined themselves instead as mediators between two cultures.⁵⁵

In the same way that young Indians made their own uses of the Christian schooling that Mrs. Bidwell provided them, Indian women also interpreted Mrs. Bidwell’s domestic teachings and prescribed gender roles in their own manner. Even though Nopanny converted to Christianity, she maintained her faith in the power of visions and revelations. In the case of Amanda Wilson, though she may have accepted Mrs. Bidwell’s protection from the cruelty of her first husband, Holi Lafonso, she nevertheless retained her own view of women’s roles. For example, unlike white women in the Presbyterian Church who sat passively through the sermon of a male minister, Amanda Wilson felt no inhibition about standing up in church and delivering her own sermon

while her second husband, Santa Wilson, led the services.⁵⁶ Other researchers have found evidence that Amanda Wilson, as the second in rank in the women's Dance Society, attended the Christian church irregularly and still practiced her native religion.⁵⁷ Thus, though Nopanny Preacher and Amanda Wilson may have accepted some of her teachings and assistance, this did not mean that they agreed to all of the conditions Mrs. Bidwell thought accompanied such an acceptance. Rather, they selectively responded to her advances.

In addition to adopting certain aspects of Mrs. Bidwell's offerings on their own terms in order to maintain their cultural integrity, the Indians at Bahapki also practiced a strategy of attempting to define their encounter with Mrs. Bidwell as a two-way rather than a one-way process. For example, according to Mrs. Bidwell, "After the Indians of my mission learned to speak English, I was invited by the women to attend an Indian dance, which I promised to do."⁵⁸ This act of sharing an aspect of their culture with Mrs. Bidwell after she had given the Indians knowledge of her own culture provides evidence that Indian women may have imagined their interaction with Bidwell, at least at first, as a cultural exchange. In this, the women at Bahapki may have challenged central aspects of Mrs. Bidwell's ideology. For example, the Indian women's invitation to their dance created conflict between the Bidwells over women's proper roles. When Mrs. Bidwell reported her promise to attend the Indian dance to the general, he replied that it was not a suitable place for her to go. But Mrs. Bidwell defied the general's wishes and attended anyway, albeit with her pastor and some other guests to chaperone her.⁵⁹

Mrs. Bidwell's sustained interaction with the Indians at Bahapki caused her to question gender roles within white society on other occasions as well. For instance, when a group of Bahapki Indians supposedly insisted that she run a church service for them, Mrs. Bidwell agonized over her dilemma. Should she take on an improper role for a woman, that of a minister, and thus give the Indians the wrong idea about how Christian men and women should behave, or should she honor their request because it would bring these Indians closer to God? After God spoke to her, Mrs. Bidwell eventually decided "that it was a question between God and myself and not what others thought, so with many tears, I took charge of the little church. I have often wept all the way from my home to the little church because of my insufficiency and because I did not think it was proper that I, a woman, should teach men, especially Indians whom, I thought had less regard for woman than white men."⁶⁰

Not only did Mrs. Bidwell's experiences on Rancho Chico cause her to challenge her own gender role in American society, but her almost daily contact with the Indians led her to abandon her belief that Indian men "had less regard for woman than white men." Because of her experience in performing church services for both Indian men and women at Bahapki, Mrs. Bidwell concluded, "So ignorant are we . . . the men have stood by me to such an extent as to be the marvel of those who attend the service."⁶¹

In other instances, although Mrs. Bidwell did not envision her encounter with the Indians as a reciprocal process, she may have subconsciously adopted Indian cultural elements into her own culture. Like the Indians who gave special meaning to their dreams and visions, Mrs. Bidwell too learned to respect and utilize this aspect of Indian spirituality, revealing that God “has helped me on similar lines, without which I would have done [the Indians] a great wrong in rebuking as error what I believed was divine guidance.”⁶² Thus the Indian strategy of trying to define their interaction with Mrs. Bidwell as a cultural exchange had its advantages. In the process of learning about Bahapki culture, Mrs. Bidwell began to question some of her dearly held assumptions about both her own gender roles and those of the Indians. She also learned to respect certain elements of Indian culture and religion, even to the point of utilizing visions in her own life.⁶³ Yet this strategy was also unpredictable: revealing Indian culture to Mrs. Bidwell could produce either greater empathy and understanding on her part or it could serve to underscore her determination to transform the Indians into “civilized” Americans.

Thus, the Indians at Bahapki came to rely on another strategy to cope with Mrs. Bidwell’s acculturation efforts. Rather than reject outright Mrs. Bidwell’s new rituals and ceremonies, the Indians at Bahapki seem to have, at times, accepted the outer forms of the rituals Mrs. Bidwell offered them while finding an inner meaning that conformed more closely to their own religion. For instance, though Mrs. Bidwell had provided caskets for all the funerals of Indians since 1876, it is not apparent that the Bahapki Indians really used them, at least in the way she intended. Upon the death of Mrs. Nunco, Mrs. Bidwell went to town to get a coffin, but when she returned to Bahapki, the grave was not yet finished. According to Mrs. Bidwell, “The Indians feared I would take cold so insisted on my not remaining but having services before burial, promising to say the Lord’s prayer at grace.” Before leaving, Mrs. Bidwell noted that Mrs. Nunco was dressed Indian style for her burial.⁶⁴ Although we cannot be sure, it appears that the Indians might have hustled Mrs. Bidwell out of Bahapki so that they could perform the burial in their own manner. By outwardly placating Mrs. Bidwell, the Indians may have been able to circumvent some of Mrs. Bidwell’s proscriptions.

Some of the Indians at Bahapki may have also used this strategy to continue their traditional dances. Henry Azbill notes that the Indians at Bahapki performed a dance around the time of the winter solstice called the To To to pay homage to the Earth Mother. Eventually, Azbill states, “We termed it Christmas Dance because it comes about that time of the year . . . on the 21st or 22nd of December. In order to get certain people off our backs because we were doing ‘heathen’ things, and this sort of thing, we just said, ‘Well this is a Christmas Dance.’”⁶⁵ Azbill’s statement is crucial because it clearly shows that the Indians at Bahapki self-consciously manipulated the cultural icons of white Americans to suit their own purposes.

This brings us back to the Fourth of July parade Mrs. Bidwell described as an example of how far the “little unclad savages” had come on their journey to civilization. A more careful reading of Mrs. Bidwell’s account of the event brings out some peculiarities. When the procession was ready to start, Mrs. Bidwell noted, the Goddess of Liberty was nowhere to be found. When she finally found the thirteen-year-old Maggie Lafonso standing in her doorway, Mrs. Bidwell asked her why she was not in her place. To Maggie’s question as to whether all the people were in the wagon yet, Mrs. Bidwell answered in the affirmative. Hearing that, Maggie said, “I am waiting to be taken.” “Just then her father, the Chief [Lafonso] in marshal’s garb, arrived,” Mrs. Bidwell explained, “and the maiden Maggie stepped off with a grace, dignity, and maturity of manner bewildering to me.”⁶⁶ The Indians—resident and visiting—paraded through town and gathered with their “white friends” in a grove near their village. There Mrs. Bidwell and the other white guests waited impatiently for nearly an hour for the Fourth of July exercises to begin. Again, the Goddess of Liberty was missing, and the exercises could not go on without her. According to Mrs. Bidwell, “investigation disclosed Maggie still seated on her throne, embowered in trees,—attendants, horses, all gone!” When asked why she would not come down, Maggie replied, “I am waiting to be taken down.” Eventually Maggie’s uncle approached and “conducted her from her pinnacle to the grand stand, and seated her by her father.”⁶⁷ Thus, though the Indians engaged in an American Fourth of July parade, they did so in an unusual manner that bewildered even as it pleased Mrs. Bidwell.

In this case, the Indians at Bahapki may have used the Fourth of July in order to conduct a puberty ceremony for thirteen-year-old Maggie Lafonso. It is revealing to compare Mrs. Bidwell’s account of the Goddess of Liberty’s odd behavior with an account of a puberty ceremony among the Wintu—one of the tribes represented at Bahapki—by early ethnologist Stephen Powers. Powers observed that “when a girl arrives at maturity, about the age of twelve or fourteen, her village friends celebrate the event with a dance in her honor . . . to which all the surrounding villages are invited.” For three days the girl isolates herself, after which

The invited tribes now begin to arrive and the dance comes on. As each village or deputation from it arrive on the summit of a hill overlooking the scene, they form in line, two or three abreast or in single file, then dance down the hill and around the village, crooning strange, weird chants. When all the deputations are collected, . . . they unite in a grand dance, passing around the village in solid marching order. . . . In conclusion of the ceremonies the chief takes the maiden by the hand and together they dance down the line, while the company sing songs improvised for the occasion.⁶⁸

Gone from Mrs. Bidwell’s account are the songs and “croonings” of Powers’ rendering, and instead of dancing in procession, the Indians at Bahapki rode in wagons or on horseback or marched as members of the brass band.

And from Mrs. Bidwell's account, we cannot know whether Maggie secluded herself for days before the event. Mrs. Bidwell would not have been privy to such information. Yet the overall picture of the event—Maggie's age, her seclusion before the procession and the exercises, the need for the chief (her father) or her uncle to escort her to the events, the procession itself, and the dance held later that evening—closely parallels Stephen Powers's account. Given that the village of Bahapki included an "unsifted" mixture of Indians from many northern California tribes, it is possible that the Indians there may have developed new customs, mixing the symbols and practices of each other's rites together. And given the pressure Mrs. Bidwell exerted on them to conform to Christian and American ways, it would not be surprising that the Indians devised a means to utilize the Fourth of July for their own purposes, as they did with Christmas.⁶⁹

Thus, faced with Mrs. Bidwell's desire that they become acculturated to white Protestant middle-class American norms, the Indians at Bahapki did not just passively submit to her civilizing mission. Though they may have accepted new skills and adopted material innovations such as wooden houses, the Bahapki Indians nevertheless worked in a number of ways to preserve the heart of their culture. When they could not avoid Mrs. Bidwell or openly defy her, they developed more subtle means to preserve their cultural integrity—adopting aspects of what Mrs. Bidwell offered on their own terms and for their own purposes, defining their interaction with Mrs. Bidwell as a reciprocal rather than a one-way process, and, finally, appearing to accept the rituals of Mrs. Bidwell's culture while attaching a different meaning to them. The Indians adapted their culture both to superficially satisfy Mrs. Bidwell's desire that they acculturate and to fulfill their own needs to maintain cultural identity and affiliation.

After Mrs. Bidwell's death in 1918, the Indians who had lived at Bahapki continued their struggle for cultural integrity and for title to their original land. Mrs. Bidwell bequeathed plots of land to thirty-two Indians, yet because of legal complications, the Indians who had resided at Rancho Chico ended up as wards of the government.⁷⁰ In 1957, the federal government terminated the tribal status of the Indians at Bahapki and other Maidu in the state, supposedly signaling the full integration of Native Americans into the mainstream of American society. Yet again we see that the Indians at Bahapki managed to maintain some degree of cultural integrity. For example, despite the dissolution of the village at Bahapki, the Indians who remained in Chico maintained their Indian burial grounds.⁷¹ And through the memories of Bahapki residents, particularly Henry Azbill, the sacred dances that the Bahapki Indians once performed live on. Until his death in 1973, Azbill worked to preserve Maidu culture by teaching both Indians and non-Indians to make dance regalia. This passing on of old ways to the younger generation through the oral tradition allowed for a revival of Maidu dances.⁷²

Thus, despite nearly 50 years of Mrs. Bidwell's efforts to "civilize" them, and despite close to 150 years of gradual dispossession and termination at the

hands of American society and government, important elements of Bahapki and Maidu culture have survived. This would not have been possible if, as historians have long accepted, Mrs. Bidwell had succeeded in her efforts to wipe out Bahapki customs and identity. Today's revivals pay tribute to the adaptability and innovation of the Indians at Bahapki and to the power of oral tradition.

Notes

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1. Annie Ellicott Kennedy Bidwell, "The Mechoopdas, or Rancho Chico Indians," *Overland Monthly* 27, 2d series (February 1896): 208–209.

2. *Ibid.*, 209–210.

3. Valerie Sherer Mathes, "Indian Philandropy in California: Annie Bidwell and the Mechoopda Indians," *Arizona and the West* 25 (Summer 1983): 166.

4. Dorothy J. Hill, *The Indians of Chico Rancheria* (Sacramento: California Department of Parks and Recreation, 1978), 88.

5. *Ibid.*, 10.

6. For more on Maidu culture prior to contact with Europeans, see Henry Azbill, "They Call Us Conkow," in the pamphlet "Koyo'ngkauwi: We Live in the Open Country" (Davis, Calif.: Hehaka Sapa College, DQ University Indian Education Workshop, Summer 1972); Henry Azbill, "How Death Came to the People," *Indian Historian* 2, no. 2 (Summer 1969): 13–14, 29; Henry Azbill, "World Maker," *Indian Historian* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1969): 20; Annie Bidwell, "Description of Sweat-House Ceremonies," part 1, carton 2, Bidwell papers, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley (hereafter BP, BL); Hill, *Indians of Chico Rancheria*; Marie Potts, *The Northern Maidu* (Happy Camp, Calif.: Naturegraph Publishers, 1977); Richard Simpson, *Ooti: A Maidu Legacy* (Millbrae, Calif.: Celestial Arts, 1977); interview with Thelma Wilson, "A Mechoopda Descendant Relates Her Story," 1972, Northeastern California Oral History Project, California State University, Chico (hereafter NCOHP, CSU); interview with Henry Azbill by Dorothy Hill, undated, NCOHP, CSU.

7. For a comprehensive discussion of the Spanish and Mexican settlement of California, see Douglas Monroy, *Thrown among Strangers: The Making of Mexican Culture in Frontier California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). Also see Antonia Castañeda, "Comparative Frontiers: The Migration of Women to Alta California and New Zealand," in *Western Women: Their Land, Their Lives*, ed. Lillian Schlissel, Vicki L. Ruiz, and Janice Monk (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 283–300. Regarding California Indians during this period, see Albert Hurtado, *Indian Sur-*

vival on the California Frontier (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988); Jack Forbes, *Native Americans of California and Nevada* (Happy Camp, Calif.: Naturegraph Publishers, 1982); Hill, *Indians of Chico Rancheria*; and Potts, *Northern Maidu*.

8. Annie Bidwell, "California Indians," 1891, box 32, Annie Bidwell Collection, California State Library, Sacramento (hereafter ABC, CSL), 1. This collection includes an interview with her husband, John. See also Hill, *Indians of Chico Rancheria*, 15, and Donald Jewell, *Indians of the Feather River: Tales and Legends of the Concow Maidu of California* (Menlo Park, Calif.: Ballena Press, 1987), 75. Hill estimates that Bidwell used about twenty Indians to work his mining claim between 1848 and 1849. Jewell claims that Bidwell employed up to three hundred Indians on his mining operation.

9. Hill, *Indians of Chico Rancheria*, 18, 19. See also Azbill, "They Call Us Conkow," 11.

10. Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, 1.

11. Monroy, *Thrown among Strangers*, 180.

12. Anne H. Currie, "Bidwell Rancheria," *California Historical Society Quarterly* 36 (December 1957): 314. According to an article by C. C. Parry in the *Overland Monthly* [11, no. 66, 2d series, (June, 1888): 563], Bidwell's "own personally selected [Mexican land] grant in the lower bottom lands of the Sacramento proved unprofitable" so that after he made a sizable sum of money from his mining operation, Bidwell bought another land grant. Bidwell then faced "tedious legal obstructions" before he could own Rancho Chico outright, but eventually his land claim "was confirmed by the courts in the possession of John Bidwell." An article in the *Chico Record* of 14 April 1935 states that Bidwell did not receive a patent on his land until 1860. Unfortunately, we don't know more about whether Bidwell obtained this grant through unscrupulous means, as so many American settlers did after the Mexican-American War.

13. Forbes, *Native Americans* 79, and Potts, *Northern Maidu*, 8.

14. Hill, *Indians of Chico Rancheria*, 9. In 1851 and 1852, California politicians and the federal government hoped to solve these conflicts by negotiating eighteen treaties with California Indians that would have set aside reservation lands. However, the Senate never ratified the treaties and instead hid them away in Washington, D.C., vaults for about fifty years. For a discussion of the failed treaties of 1851 and 1852, see Hill, *Indians of Chico Rancheria*; Currie, "Bidwell Rancheria"; Forbes, *Native Americans*; and Hurtado, *Indian Survival*.

15. Azbill, "They Call Us Conkow," 7.

16. Hill, *Indians of Chico Rancheria*, 41. See also interview with Thelma Wilson, NCOHP, CSU, 2-4.

17. Henry Azbill, "Bahapki," *Indian Historian* 4, no.1 (Spring 1971): 57, and Azbill, "They Call Us Conkow," 7. See also Hill, *Indians of Chico Rancheria*, x.

18. Henry Azbill, "Maidu Indians of California: A Historical Note," *Indian Historian* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1971): 21; Will Green, "John Bidwell—A Character Study," *Out West* 19, no. 6 (December 1903): 625-34; Hill, *Indians of Chico Rancheria*; Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, 129-31; and Jewell, *Indians of the Feather River*, 78.

19. For an excellent discussion of Protestant home missionary society women and "women's moral superiority," see Peggy Pascoe's *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

20. Letter from Annie Ellicott Kennedy to John Bidwell, 22 August 1867, part I, box 1, BP, BL.

21. Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue*, 33-37.

22. Letter from John Bidwell to John Reynolds Kennedy, 3 April 1868, part 1, box 1, BP, BL.

23. I have chosen to refer to Annie Ellicott Kennedy Bidwell as Mrs. Bidwell throughout the remainder of the article because this is how the Bahapki Indians referred to her. As this essay is concerned with examining the interaction between Bidwell and the Indians, by using the Indians' title for her, we gain insight into the nature of the relationship between the Bahapki Indians and Annie Bidwell.

24. Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue*, 33–34.

25. On assimilation, see Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The U.S. Government and the American Indians*, vol. 2 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984); Sandra L. Cadwalader and Vine Deloria Jr., eds., *The Aggressions of Civilization: Federal Indian Policy since the 1880s* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984); Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1984); and Robert Winston Mardock, *The Reformers and the American Indian* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1971). On white woman's role in Indian reform, see Helen Bannan, "'True Womanhood' on the Reservation: Field Matrons in the U.S. Indian Service," Southwest Institute for Research on Women, Working Paper #18 (Tucson: Women's Studies, 1984); Lisa Emmrich, "'To Respect and Love and Seek the Ways of White Women': Field Matrons, the Office of Indian Affairs, and Civilization Policy, 1890–1938" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 1987); Valerie Mathes, "Nineteenth Century Women and Reform: The Women's National Indian Association," *American Indian Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (1990): 1–18; and Helen M. Wanken, "'Woman's Sphere' and Indian Reform: The Women's National Indian Association, 1879–1901" (Ph.D. dissertation, Marquette University, 1981).

26. Annie Bidwell, untitled, undated speech, circa 1907, part 1, carton 2, BP, BL, 4. Dorothy Hill has estimated this speech to be from the year 1905, but I place it in 1907 because in it Bidwell remarks that the Indians' dances and burial practices have passed away. The Indians did not stop their dances (publicly) until 1907. Also Bidwell remarks that she has been in association with the Indians for thirty-two years, which, dated from the opening of her school in 1875, would place this speech in 1907.

27. A. Bidwell, circa 1907 speech, BP, BL 5–6.

28. Newspaper clipping, box 32, ABC, CSL.

29. A. Bidwell, circa 1907 speech, BP, BL 5.

30. A. Bidwell, "The Mechoopdas," 208.

31. A. Bidwell, circa 1907 speech, BP, BL 6, 8–9, 13.

32. *Ibid.*, 12. Other accounts corroborate Bidwell's disdain for Indian dances. For example, see interview with Frieda Petersen Knotts by Dorothy Hill, 21 March 1974, NCOHP, CSU, 15.

33. Azbill, "They Call Us Conkow," 9.

34. A. Bidwell, circa 1907 speech, BP, BL 9.

35. For example, see Stephen Powers, "Tribes of California," *Contributions to North American Ethnology* 3 (1877): 270, and Sherburne Cook, "The American Invasion, 1848–1870," *Ibero Americana* 23 (1943): 81, reprinted in Sherburne Cook, *The Conflict between the California Indian and White Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 335. In the late nineteenth century, white women missionaries and moral reformers believed that women in all non-Christian societies led lives of drudgery and depravity. See David D. Smits, "The 'Squaw Drudge': A Prime Index of Savagism," *Ethnohistory* 29, no. 4 (1982): 281–306; Bannan, "'True Womanhood,'" 3; Em-

merich, “To Respect and Love,” 13–14, 18–19, 166–67; Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue*, 51–68; Joan Jacobs Brumberg, “Zenanas and Girlless Villages: The Ethnology of American Evangelical Women, 1870–1910,” *Journal of American History* 69, no.2 (September 1982): 347–71; Barbara Welter, “She Hath Done What She Could: Protestant Women’s Missionary Careers in the the 19th Century,” *American Quarterly* 30 (Winter 1978): 630–31; Marjorie King, “Exporting Femininity, not Feminism: Nineteenth-Century U.S. Missionary Women’s Efforts to Emancipate Chinese Women,” in *Women’s Work for Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia*, ed. Leslie Flemming (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1989), 118–20.

36. A. Bidwell, circa 1907 speech, BP, BL 21.

37. *Ibid.*, 17–19; letter from Nopanny Preacher to Annie Bidwell, n.d., box 32, ABC, CSL; letter from Nopanny [Loppenny] Preacher, Sacramento, to Annie Bidwell, 20 December 1881, folder 19, box 78, ABC, CSL.

38. Interview with Thelma Wilson, NCOHP, CSU, 7.

39. *Ibid.*, 2–8.

40. A. Bidwell, circa 1907 speech, BP, BL 20.

41. Letter from Elmer Lafonso, Chico, to Mrs. Bidwell, 16 November 1900, gives an account of Maggie Lafonso’s teaching Sunday school, folder 37, box 77, ABC, CSL; letters from Elmer Lafonso, Pasadena, Calif., to Annie Bidwell, 26 and 29 June 1909, folders 38 and 29, box 77, and from Laguna, N.M., 20 February 1913, folder 50, box 77, ABC, CSL; letter from Burney Wilson, Estes Park, Colo., to Annie Bidwell, 19 June 1913, folder 22, box 81, ABC, CSL.

42. Letter from Burney Wilson, Chemawa, Ore., to Annie Bidwell, 20 November 1910, folder 15, box 81, ABC, CSL.

43. Letter from Maggie Lafonso, Chico, Calif., to Annie Bidwell, Petaluma, Calif., 14 October 1907, folder 11, box 78, ABC, CSL.

44. Cora Du Bois, “The 1870 Ghost Dance,” *Anthropological Records* 3, no. 1 (1939): 75; information from conversation between Du Bois and informant Charlie Warthon. Warthon does not mention Lafonso’s death but instead says that Lafonso ordered the people to tear down the Dance House because it had a leak.

45. Presentation by Brian Bibby and Craig Bates, “The Mikchopdo Legacy,” at the Objects of Myth and Memory Symposium, Oakland Museum, Oakland, Calif., 29 February 1992.

46. John Bidwell, “Proclamation of Rules Made for Rancho Chico Indians,” 21 June 1885, part 1, carton 2, BP BL, 2, 3.

47. For example, see entries for 4 January 1876 in Record of Indian School, and undated entry in April, “No school, Indians having gone to Colfax for a dance,” in Record of Indian School, 1875–1880, both in box 32, ABC, CSL; also see letter from Maggie Lafonso to Annie Bidwell, 14 April 1903, folder 4, box 78, ABC, CSL.

48. See letter from Nopanny Preacher to Annie Bidwell, 12 June 1887, folder 64, box 78, ABC, CSL. By 1905, the Bidwells appear to have loosened this restriction. See letter from Maggie Lafonso to Annie Bidwell, 15 August 1905, folder 10, box 78, ABC, CSL, for reference to Indians going off the ranch to work, and interview with Thelma Wilson, NCOHP, CSL.

49. Letters from William Conway, Chico, Calif., to Secretary of the Interior, 27 February 1914, 23 May 1914, and 29 May 1914, file no.23841-14, Roseburg, Ore., 310, Record Group (RG) 75, National Archives (hereafter NA). I am extremely grateful to Steven Crum for sharing this set of letters from William Conway to the secretary of the interior with me. The Department of the Interior never granted Conway’s request.

50. A. Bidwell, circa 1907 speech, BP, BL, 18.

51. *Ibid.*, 16–17. For a discussion of how metis women were motivated to marry Anglo fur trappers by a process of visions, see Jacqueline Peterson, “Women Dreaming: The Reliopsychology of Indian-White Marriage and the Rise of Metis Culture,” in *Western Women*, 49–68.

52. Letters from Elmer Lafonso to Annie Bidwell, 26 August 1910, folder 41, box 77, and 21 March 1912, folder 48, box 77, ABC, CSL; “Indian Melodies to Help Music World,” *San Francisco Call*, 28 May 1911, in box 31, ABC, CSL.

53. “Real Needs of our Red Brethren” reprint of article from *San Jose (Calif) Mercury*, 24 July 1907, box 31, ABC, CSL; see letters from Maggie Lafonso, Capitola, Calif., to Annie Bidwell, 6 and 8 April 1905, folders 7 and 8, box 78, ABC, CSL.

54. Letter from Burney Wilson, Wichita, Kan., to Annie Bidwell, 9 March 1914, folder 23, box 81, and letter from Burney Wilson, Parkville, Mo., to Annie Bidwell, 12 December 1916, box 32, ABC, CSL.

55. For more on Native Americans who acted as cultural mediators, see Margaret Connell Szasz, ed., *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994).

56. Interview with Thelma Wilson, NCOHP, CSU, 8.

57. Bates and Bibby, “Mikchopdo Legacy.”

58. A. Bidwell, circa 1907 speech, BP, BL, 9; also interview with Frieda Petersen Knotts by Phyllis Knotts, 1978, NCOHP, CSU, 14.

59. A. Bidwell, circa 1907 speech, BP, BL, 9–10.

60. *Ibid.*, 21.

61. *Ibid.*

62. *Ibid.*, 14.

63. For a fascinating discussion of other instances of “transculturation” in which white women in Navajoland acculturated in varying degrees to Navajo culture, see Helen Bannan, “Newcomers to Navajoland: Transculturation in the Memoirs of Anglo Women, 1900–1945,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 59 (April 1984): 165–86.

64. Diary of Annie Bidwell, 22 December 1890, ABC, CSL.

65. Azbill, “They Call us Conkow,” 16.

66. A. Bidwell, “The Mechoopdas,” 208.

67. *Ibid.*, 209.

68. Powers, “Tribes of California,” 235–36.

69. At least one other Indian tribe also used Fourth of July celebrations as a cover for their girls’ puberty ceremonies. In her book *Living Life’s Circle: Mescalero Apache Cosmology* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), Claire Farrer asserts that at the turn of the century, when the government allowed them only one public gathering a year, the Apaches combined parades and patriotic exercises every Fourth of July with their own girls’ puberty ceremonials (133–34).

70. See Currie, “Bidwell Rancheria,” for an in-depth discussion of how this occurred.

71. Interview with Thelma Wilson, NCOHP, CSU, 21–22, and interview with Frieda Petersen Knotts, 1978, NCOHP, CSU 14.

72. Bates and Bibby, “Mikchopdo Legacy,” and Potts, *Northern Maidu*, 33.