

“LIVING BEYOND THE SKY”:  
THE LONG REMOVALS OF  
THE WYANDOT INDIANS, 1816-1894.

By

SHELDON YEAKLEY

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Oklahoma Christian University

Edmond, Oklahoma

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Thesis Approved:

Dr. Douglas Miller

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Thesis Adviser

Dr. Richard J. Boles

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Dr. Mathew Schauer

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis began in my childhood. Summer breaks, Christmas vacations, and the Fourth of July were all spent driving northward from Texas towards the green hills of northeastern Oklahoma. Situated less than a mile from the Missouri border lay a beautiful piece of farmland my family called home. Growing up it was an immense playground filled with trees to climb, rocks to skip, and old things to excavate. My grandfather – Lee Rand Smith filled every night with stories of life on the farm during the Great Depression or his time in the Army. Occasionally he told stories about his affectionately termed “Uncle” Ike. Ike was a Wyandot man descended from Isaiah Walker the first owner of the farm.

In 1935, my grandfather’s grandfather, an itinerant Methodist minister, H.J. Rand purchased a section of land from a family of Wyandot Indians who had been on this property since 1872. In that year Isaiah Walker built a house, barn, and bunkhouse on a slice of land that would in 1888 become his families’ allotted section. After the economic distress of the 1930s those Walker’s remaining on the property needed the money from the land’s sale. While the property changed owners, H.J. Rand let Ike remain on the farm, living in the bunkhouse.

Therefore, the impetus and personal side of this thesis was my own interest

in researching and explaining the origins of my family's farm and those who built it. The story of how the Walkers and their fellow Wyandot arrived in Indian Territory fascinated me, and it is their account which I have attempted to present within these pages.

This thesis would not be possible without the help of various people and organizations. My fellow graduate students at Oklahoma State University have provided consistent and fair critiques of this work in its various rough stages. My advising professors, Dr. Miller, Dr. Boles, and Dr. Schauer, each had a significant hand in shaping how this project advanced and in my development as a scholar. Much of the research presented in this thesis was gathered at archives thanks to the generous travel funds awarded to me by Oklahoma State University's History Department. I would like to thank the Kansas City Public Library and their curating staff in the William E. Connelly Collection, the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Library staff and their collection of James B. Finley Papers. I would also like to thank the Wyandotte Nation for providing access to several key maps and documents online. Finally, without support from my family, especially my wife Megan, this thesis would not have been possible and for that I am eternally grateful.

Name: SHELDON YEAKLEY

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Title of Study: "LIVING BEYOND THE SKY": THE LONG REMOVALS OF THE WYANDOT INDIANS, 1816-1894.

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Abstract: In 1816, the Wyandot Indians lived and claimed title to much of the contested Ohio country. By 1894, after a series of removals, they resided in northeastern Indian Territory on a reservation of twenty-thousand acres. The long and repeated process of this forced migration and dispossession reshapes the historical understanding of Indian Removal alongside several key components of Native American history from Indian slave-holding, citizenship, to identity.

The Wyandot's first removal from Ohio to Kansas Territory reflects the coercive tactics the U.S. used to force Indian land cessions. The Wyandot were not unique in the forced nature of their removal, but the presence of an influential Methodist mission both characterized the intra-tribal debate, which the Wyandot held over the prospects of removal, and shaped the opinions of prominent U.S. officials. After removing to Kansas Territory, the Wyandot entered a land bordering a slave society. Interestingly, within three years a select few prominent Wyandot began practicing and promoting slavery. In the decades leading up to the Civil War, the Wyandot like the U.S., engaged in a public and heated debate over the value and morality of slavery. Splitting their church along pro-South and pro-North lines the Wyandot became active members in the national and regional political conflict of Bleeding Kansas. Finally, in 1867 the Wyandot signed their last removal treaty which transplanted them to their current lands in Oklahoma. This treaty, and its predecessor in 1855, are intriguing and unique examples of the legalistic removal of Indian rights. Reshaping the historiographical portrayal of Native American land-holding and citizenship, some Wyandot in 1855 had been granted individual allotments and U.S. citizenship. In 1867, this was revoked, proving that for the U.S. assimilation was not the end goal, rather it was removal.

Wyandot removals are a unique history which shares elements with all Indian Removals. The overarching presence of the U.S.'s intention to remove the Wyandot of their lands and rights is undeniable. What remains is an unbroken history of Wyandot active participation in their own historical circumstances and the consistent practice of Wyandot sovereignty.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Wyandot history begins with a woman falling through a hole in the sky. She landed on the backs of two swans.<sup>1</sup> All the animals swimming or flying above the vast surface of water took pity on this woman who would not survive on the water. The Big Turtle called on the great divers to retrieve earth from the depths to build land for the woman. After many had failed, the least likely of all, the Toad, succeeded. Immediately Little Turtle took the earth from Toad and spread it over Big Turtle's back and formed an island. That island is where the people lived. It is where they live today.

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<sup>1</sup> A note on terminology: Historians have referred to this nation by multiple names. There are broadly: Huron, Wendat, Wyandot, Wyandott, and Wyandotte. The Huron is an umbrella term originating with the French and it would be anachronistic to label the Wyandot as wholly Huron, despite the fact that their cemetery in Kansas City, Kansas is the Huron cemetery. Wendat were the direct ancestors to who I refer to as the Wyandot, but this would again be potentially too antiquated a term. Wyandot is the name I have chosen to use throughout this master's thesis as it was the spelling most commonly used throughout much of the nineteenth-century and Wyandott and Wyandotte were originally variations on this spelling. However, the nation that resides in northeast Oklahoma is spelled Wyandotte, and after their move to Oklahoma this spelling remains consistent. I have kept the spelling as Wyandot for the sake of consistency within this paper. Furthermore, it is this spelling that the specialists in this historical field use.

This paraphrased account of the origins of the Wyandot people reflects not only their beliefs and traditions, but it also echoes their history on the island.<sup>2</sup> The Wyandot underwent a lengthy and repetitious processes of removal. Continually they faced martial conflicts, disease, cultural assaults, and religious attacks. All these factors combined to force the Wyandot through the hole in the sky. Departing one world for the next, the Wyandot went on to rebuild new islands in Ohio, Kansas, and Oklahoma. Indian Removal was a hole opened at the base of the Indian world. Once undone it pulled the Wyandot through and left them to make new worlds on the back of the Big Turtle.

Wyandot Indian Removal is a long and complicated history. Warfare and disease drove them from the northeastern Great Lakes to the southern shores of Lake Erie in the eighteenth-century. Once there, they faced continual pressure from Euro-American encroachment. By 1816 removal west of the Mississippi was a central thread of all talks with the United States. Yet, Ohio was still their land on Big Turtle's back. While coerced, the Wyandot directed their removal on their own terms. After arriving in Kansas Territory, they built a new world for themselves on the gateway to the plains. This nation was not uniform, however. Individual members held a variety of opinions about how their world in Kansas should look. Some promoted and practiced slavery, while others fought against it. Following the turmoil of the Missouri – Kansas theater of the Civil War, pressure from American settlement again threatened the Wyandot with removal. This time they established a reservation in northeastern Indian Territory on land

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<sup>2</sup> B.N.O. Walker, "Creation Myths" *Huron and Wyandot Mythology*, ed. C.M. Barbeau (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1915), 37. – Barbeau lists Walker and his mother as the principal "informant" for this first creation account.

originally allotted to the Seneca. Removal, in all its forms, forced the Wyandot to learn how to “live beyond the sky.”<sup>3</sup>

One scholar of Wyandot removals described them as “one of the most traveled Indian tribes in the history of the North American continent.”<sup>4</sup> The story of the Wyandot in North America is the story of removals. A long diaspora repeatedly drove them across the country. For the Wyandot, this was not a singular instance. Rather, a multiplicity of removals, in various forms, occurred over their history. In fact, after the arrival of non-native peoples, Native American history has been consistently colored by removals. While the Iroquois initiated the long century of Wyandot displacement, Euro-American colonialism underpinned this first migration and directly caused future removals. The Wyandot went through three main removals, of which the first consisted of several smaller relocations. This thesis will focus on the last two in which the Wyandot removed from Ohio to Kansas and from Kansas to Oklahoma. While it is a fair estimation to claim that the Wyandot were one of the “most traveled” of the Native peoples of North America they were not alone in suffering a long and repeated system of successive relocations, removals, and forced land cessions. The colonial pursuits of Euro-American settlers created a process of removal that occurred not in a single instance but extended throughout American history.

The Wyandot were active participants in this history. In Ohio, the Wyandot were one of many Native nations who participated in the century-long contest for the rich

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<sup>3</sup> B.N.O. Walker, “Creation Myths,” 37.

<sup>4</sup> Robert E. Smith, “Keepers of the Council Fire: A Brief History of the Wyandot Indians”, *Social Science Department* (Joplin: Missouri Southern State College, 1974), 1. Also see Kathryn M. Labelle, *Dispersed but not Destroyed: A History of the Seventeenth-Century Wendat People* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014).

Ohio-River Valley. Indian tribes of the East were forced westward in the face of European colonization spawning numerous wars between native nations. The Wyandot, among their Ohio neighbors, were caught in a game of geopolitical chess in which they had not chosen to play, but they were players, nevertheless. However, they were not pawns. The Wyandot and their neighbors successfully resisted Euro-American infiltration through military and diplomatic efforts.<sup>5</sup>

By 1816, after several major wars and nearly continuous conflict with Euro-American forces, the military might of the Wyandot had decreased to such an extent that alone they posed little threat to American migration. But they still rejected, and delayed, the United States' removal attempts. This era of Wyandot history was dominated not by war-parties and intricate tribal alliances, but by reservation life and peaceful, if contentious, negotiations. By 1823 the Wyandot Methodist mission was one of the most important institutions within the Grand reservation. Upper Sandusky, Ohio, became an example of the perceived success of assimilation through religious conversion. Missionaries such as Jonathan Stewart and James B. Finley counted as many as one half of the Wyandot living in and around Upper Sandusky as a part of their church prior to Wyandot removal west of the Mississippi. Of any single factor, this religious divide was the line separating pro and anti-removal advocates within the intra-tribal debate over removal.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Gregory E. Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (New York: ACLS History E-Book Project, 2005).

And Charles B. Medina, and Melissa Rinehart, *Contested Territories: Native Americans and Non-Natives in the Lower Great Lakes, 1700-1850* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> For Mission history in Ohio and Upper Sandusky see -, Lori J. Dagg, "The Mission Complex: Economic Development, 'Civilization,' and Empire in the Early Republic." *Journal of the Early Republic* 36, no. 3 (Fall 2016), 467- 491. Martin W. Walsh, "The "Heathen Party": Methodist Observation of the Ohio Wyandot." *American Indian Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1992): 189-211. Paul A. Westrick, "The Race to

Negotiating Indian Removal was the major political event of the region from 1816 until 1842. During this time, as throughout their history, neighboring Indigenous peoples influenced the Wyandot. The removals of the Seneca and Delaware left the Wyandot with a keen sense of how removal could go wrong, so within every negotiation with the United States, the Wyandot's leaders remained united on their desire to dictate the terms of any treaty. Yet, the United States fully utilized coercive tactics, found in many removal narratives, to dislodge the Wyandot from their land in Ohio. At first, Indian agent James B. Gardiner negotiated a series of treaties ceding small groupings of acreage signed by individual members of the nation. In the late 1830s and first years of the 1840s, Gardiner's strategies escalated into more sinister acts. Signatures on full removal treaties were gathered by any means Gardiner found necessary – drunken men, children, persons with disabilities were targets of his men. Finally, a series of murders shrouded in mystery convinced most of the Wyandot that their life in Ohio was untenable.<sup>7</sup>

Arriving in Kansas Territory in 1844, the Wyandot began the process of settling a new land on the edge of the Kansas-Missouri borderland. They removed next to a slave-society. By 1847, three years after their removal from Ohio, wealthy Wyandot such as William Walker Jr. and Francis Hicks began to practice chattel slavery. Subsequently the Wyandot entered another heated debate, no longer over the issues of removal directly, but over the morality and legality of slavery. This debate split the Wyandot politically and

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Assimilate: The Wyandot Indians In White Ohio”, *Northwest Ohio History*, 75, no. 2 (March 2004): 122-148. Henry W. Bowden, *American Indians and Christian Missions: Studies in Cultural Conflict*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

On James B. Finley - Charles C. Cole, *Lion of the Forest: James B. Finley, Frontier Reformer* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> For general history of Wyandot removal from Ohio see - John P. Bowes, *Exiles and Pioneers: Indians in the Trans-Mississippi West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

religiously. They became active participants in the United States' political debate on both partisan sides.

However, slavery was not the only concern of the Wyandot in Kansas.<sup>8</sup> Many Wyandot, such as William Walker Jr. and Abelard Guthrie, had become successful and regionally prominent businessmen. Their exploitation of the capitalist economy not only defies the stereotypical depiction of Native American peoples, but it adds to the wealth of early Kansas history. Prominent Wyandot were involved in a multi-tribal effort to introduce Kansas as a state within the union on the condition that Congress designated Wyandotte, Kansas, as the seat of the eminent trans-continental railroad. Despite the failure of this economic and political venture, the Wyandot were influential in the formation of statehood in 1861, and the exponential growth of Kansas City, Kansas.<sup>9</sup>

After the U.S. proposed removal yet again, Wyandot identity became the central battleground. In 1855 the Wyandot signed a treaty which stipulated that any member who chose to relinquish all tribal rights and become a United States citizen would be granted an allotment of land to hold in private ownership in Kansas Territory. For those who accepted this offer, their very identity was challenged. The complicated question of what defined true Indigeneity, would not be answered easily as the Wyandot were again subjected to removal from their Kansas Territory.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> William E. Connelly, ed. *The Provisional Government of Nebraska Territory and the Journals of William Walker, Provisional Governor of Nebraska Territory* (Lincoln: State Journal Company, 1899).

<sup>9</sup> Connelly, *The Provisional Government of Nebraska Territory and the Journals of William Walker, Provisional Governor of Nebraska Territory*.

<sup>10</sup> "Treaty with the Wyandot, 1855," *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties Volume II*, ed. Charles J. Kappler (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1904), 677.

Despite removal, the Wyandot remained active participants in national events as the Civil War carried momentous change for the Wyandot. From 1860 to 1865, alongside with all peoples living within the United States, they were subjected to the disastrous effects of disease, displacement, and death this conflict brought. Kansas City, Kansas, became a nationally important urban center near the western edge of the military contests. Here the Wyandot suffered through and took part in Bleeding Kansas prior to the outbreak of war. Missouri and eastern Kansas was the site of prolonged and often overlooked campaigns which often spilled over into Indian Country. Guerilla warfare consistently displaced Wyandot from their homes while the major Battle of Westport in 1864 brought the full force of the war to the Wyandot's doorsteps. After the conclusion of the war, in much the same fashion as in 1816, the United States took the opportunity to negotiate the removal of the Wyandot from their lands. After the treaty of 1855, the terms of this accord were uniquely complicated. The legal recognition of Wyandot citizenship and land ownership resulted in a unique negotiation which led to the U.S.'s reorganization of their rights to land and citizenship in 1867.

In 1867 the Wyandot signed their final removal treaty.<sup>11</sup> This act granted them land, to be held in common, in an area previously held by the Seneca in northeastern Indian Territory. This land is where the Wyandotte reside today. In the wake of the treaty of 1867, the Wyandot reestablished themselves as a tribally recognized nation with the consent of the U.S. This interesting reversal led to a unique process – the re-affirmation of native identity and sovereignty after its perceived destruction. Many of those who in

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<sup>11</sup> . "Treaty with the Seneca, Mixed Seneca and Shawnee, Quapaw, Etc., 1867" *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties Vol. II.*, 960.

1855 had on paper signed away their rights and privileges as Wyandot citizens to become American citizens, requested to be placed back on the tribal rolls as Wyandot persons, joining their nation in its move south to Indian Territory.<sup>12</sup> The treaties of 1855 and 1867 also break from the traditional narrative of allotment history as the U.S. government first set aside Wyandot land as individual property, then in 1867 reorganized their Indian Territory lands as communal.

The Rolls of 1870 indicate that a large percentage of those who had signed in 1855 accepted the opportunity to re-enroll. Again, removal forced the Wyandot to create a new world for themselves on a new land. Affirming their identity through the reacceptance of former tribal members only helped to solidify the nation on its move. By 1894 the Wyandotte had established their reservation in what would become the state of Oklahoma and they remain an active part of the history of this land.

This brief sketch of the trajectory of Wyandot removals from 1816 to 1894 provides a window into the layout of this thesis. Chapter I will analyze their time in Ohio. This study will dive deeply into the political negotiations of removal and how the religious presence of a influential Methodist mission influenced debates. Chapter II focuses on the Wyandot's time in Kansas. This chapter centers on a major gap in the historiography of the Wyandot and Native American history as it highlights the Wyandot involvement in chattel slavery. Finally, Chapter III traces their post-war years in Kansas, focusing on the challenges to Wyandot citizenship and their final removal south to Indian

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<sup>12</sup> Wyandotte tribal rolls, 1870. U.S. Microfilm M234, RG75, Roll 951, Frames 0208-0249, ed. by Charles Garrad. Washington D.C.: Library of Congress. - Available at [www.Wyandotte-Nation.org](http://www.Wyandotte-Nation.org)



Territory. This seventy-eight-years-long narrative is crucial to revising and filling in the gaps left in the historical record.

Historiography on the Wyandot and their removals began early in the nineteenth-century as prominent American scholars shared intimate contact with the nation. Reverend James B. Finley, Methodist missionary to the Wyandot, published several written accounts of their time in Ohio. As a crucial primary source, his accounts have shaped how Wyandot history has been written since his first publication in 1840.<sup>13</sup> Within this narrative, Finley championed his own success at converting peoples of the Wyandot nation and their progress towards his assimilationist goal. However, Finley also emphasized explanations for why he failed to prevent their removal. Namely, alcoholism and the continual presence of traditional beliefs and practices, in his view, prevented his success in assimilating the Wyandot into American society in Ohio.

Addressing the Wyandot in Kansas Territory, late nineteenth-century amateur historian William E. Connelly collected and commentated on a variety of crucial sources.<sup>14</sup> The primary subject of Connelly's interest was the influential politician, businessman, and prolific author – William Walker Jr. Walker's extensive writing, and the relative lack of other Wyandot's firsthand accounts, forced Connelly and all future historians to rely heavily on Walker's experiences and contend with his individual biases. As an amateur historian Connelly did not properly address Walker's bias and reports his diaries and letters without critical examination. Connelly's largest historiographical

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<sup>13</sup> James B. Finley Papers. Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Library, Fremont, Ohio. and Finley, James B. *History of the Wyandott Mission, at the Upper Sandusky, Ohio* (Cincinnati: J.F. Wright and L. Swormstedt, 1840).

<sup>14</sup> Connelly, *The Provisional Government of Nebraska Territory and The Journals of William Walker, Provisional Governor of Nebraska Territory*.

contribution, besides providing the collection which houses a majority of primary documents associated with the Wyandot in Kansas, was his unashamed presentation of the Wyandot's involvement in slavery. Perhaps due to the historical context in which he wrote, the 1890s, presenting the history of a pro-slavery Native American may not have seemed controversial to his audience. However, Connelly over-emphasized pro-slavery's hold in Wyandot politics as a whole and relied on Walker's commentary without analyzing fully the works of Lucy B. Armstrong or other Wyandot abolitionists.

The final early scholar who worked intimately with the Wyandot during or directly after their removal was Canadian professional anthropologist, Marius Barbeau.<sup>15</sup> After studying anthropology, archeology, and ethnology at Oxford, Barbeau received a commission from the Canadian government to survey the Wendat and Huron peoples of Canada. While this anthropological study initially covered only Canadian Wyandot, Barbeau traveled to Ottawa county, Oklahoma in 1915 to interview several prominent Wyandot. Largely concerned with their folk-narratives, religious, and cultural histories, his focus was less on their removal history. However, his account helped publish important primary documents from that generation and their descendants who had gone through removal. These three writers form the foundation for academic inquiry into the Wyandot. From Barbeau's work until the 1970s, Wyandot history and removal was

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<sup>15</sup> Marius, Barbeau, *Huron and Wyandot Mythology with an appendix containing earlier publish records* (Geological Survey: Canada, 1915). –This was one of his first studies in a long career. Marius Barbeau was a very influential scholar and early academic anthropologist who published numerous books and articles. He was instrumental in establishing the field of anthropology in Canada. Despite his renown as a scholar there has been some critique of his work especially regarding his selection of sources. While there is reasonable concern with the use of Barbeau's account for its anthropological interpretation, for the purposes of this Thesis I only quote sections crediting Wyandot sources. Furthermore, the writings of B.N.O. Walker outside of this publication present similar accounts of the Wyandot creation story and folklore.

sectioned into small publications or grouped and paired under broad studies of Oklahoma, Kansas, and Ohio Indians.

Few scholars of the modern era have focused primarily on the Wyandot alone. Robert E. Smith in 1974 published an influential article entitled “Keepers of the Council Fire” in which he analyzes Wyandot removal.<sup>16</sup> Specific studies after Smith have largely addressed all Ohio Indians together. Both Mary Stockwell and John P. Bowes have published significant works on this front.<sup>17</sup> Bowes especially has made the crucial case that northern Indian removal has not been sufficiently covered. While each of these scholars offer chapters and sections dealing with the Wyandot, there remains no book-length academic monograph on the removal of the Wyandot from Ohio through Oklahoma.

Wyandot history involves more than removal, and any study of their time in Ohio, Kansas, and Oklahoma must contend with several gaps in topical historiographical sub-fields. First, the Wyandot involvement in slavery contradicts the traditional bent of Native American slaveholding studies which almost exclusively analyze southern tribes. Christina Snyder, Tiya Miles, Claudio Saunt and other prominent historians have succeeded at illuminating the broader narrative of Indian slave-holding but their works do not fully acknowledge the extent and importance of northern slaveholding Indians.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Robert E. Smith, “The Wyandot Exploring Expedition Of 1839.” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 55, no. 3 (1977): 282-292.

<sup>17</sup> John P. Bowes, *Exiles and Pioneers: Indians in the Trans-Mississippi West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). \_\_\_\_\_, *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017). And Mary Stockwell, *The Other Trail of Tears: The Removal of the Ohio Indians* (Yardley: Westholme Publishing, 2014).

<sup>18</sup> For Indians and Slavery see Tiya Miles, *Ties the Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). And Claudio Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family* (New York:

Historians of Bleeding Kansas and the origins of that state must also contend with a Wyandot narrative that is too often missing from the traditional depiction of the political turmoil leading into the Civil War. Kristen Oertel has made the most recent and best attempt at incorporating the Native American population of Kansas into this volatile history, but she does not fully acknowledge the role that Wyandot and Indian slaveholding played in the area. In general, the historiography of Indian Removal, Indian slaveholding, and Kansas-Missouri borderlands is incomplete without the addition of the Wyandot narrative found here.

Native American history is often centered on the land. Place, specific to each Native nation, held great significance to the Indigenous peoples of North America. What makes the land itself specifically important to the history of the Wyandot and other North American Indians is twofold. First, the land is a central aspect of Wyandot culture. The prominent creation of their origin story is not the people, animals, or ocean, but it is the land placed on the Big Turtles back. Second, land and its control, is the central aim of the colonizing empires the Wyandot faced. British and American settlers consistently vied for Wyandot territory in order to advance their commercial and colonial interests. The Wyandot consistently held territory which multiple European nations desired. During

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Oxford University Press, 2005). For Race during Bleeding Kansas see Kristen Tegtmeier Oertel, *Bleeding Borders: Race, Gender, and Violence in Pre-Civil War Kansas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009). One of the more recent works - Tiya Miles, *The Dawn of Detroit: A Chronicle of Slavery and Freedom in the City of the Straits* (New York: The New Press, 2017). – In this work Miles focuses less on Indian slaveholding but does illuminate that slavery was not merely a Southern institution. As will be discussed in Ch. 2, In this work Miles does reference a black village on the Wyandot reservation which presents an image of a racially integrated image of the Wyandot in Ohio. For this see also – Sakina M. Hughes, “The Community Became an Almost Civilized and Christian One: John Stewart’s Mission to the Wyandots and Religious Colonialism as African American Racial Uplift,” *NAIS: Journal of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association* 3,1 (2016): 24-45.

British rule of the colonies the Wyandot and other Ohio Indians successfully used British and French commercial and military interests to delay and dispel uncontrolled white-settlement. After the war of 1812, the Wyandot and Ohio Indian faced a single source of colonizing effort – the U.S. Therefore, it was no mistake soon after the U.S. gained its independence that the Wyandot faced a growing threat of removal.

Indian removal at its simplest is a story of the forced migration of peoples. Yet, those people in this particular study dictated and defined how, when, and why removal occurred. A study of Indian removal which did not focus on the peoples themselves, Indigenous and non-native, would be incomplete. This is not a story that can be boiled down to census data, miles traveled, acres exchanged or destroyed. Removal is the story of the peoples who were forced west of the Mississippi. The fact that the Wyandot only held six to seven-hundred members at the time of their removal does not diminish the cost incurred and should not dissuade the telling of this history.

These two factors, the land and its peoples, combine to create the circumstance by which removal can be historicized, but it is nevertheless an incomplete picture. Removal is still living history. The circumstances of where many Native American nations continue to live, a long-lasting result of removal, dictate that this history cannot be forgotten. Wyandot removal can be successfully investigated, in part, through the lens of the peoples involved and the land upon which they resided. Looking for answers in these two places is a convenient tool, but it carries special meaning for histories of removal. The land is the battleground of this history, but the peoples involved dictated how that battle was fought. From the beginning this territory held significance, but it was the Wyandot who allotted immutable and personified meaning to this world beyond the sky.

## CHAPTER II

### “NO POWER WILL COMPEL”<sup>19</sup>: WYANDOT INDIANS IN OHIO AND REMOVAL, 1816-1844.

In many ways the Mississippi is an arbitrary but convenient frontier line. The Louisiana purchase opened new territories for the expansion and settlement of American and Native peoples. The tendency for American politicians to suggest segregating the country into white and Indian parts existed well before this expansion, but afterward the consistent cry was for all Indians to reside west of the Mississippi. In part, the Mississippi was a climate line as well. William Walker Jr. complained of the lack of timber and water in the country that he and his compatriots scouted in the 1830s.<sup>20</sup> The reserve in Ohio that the Wyandot occupied was well-watered and was prime agriculturally producing land. This fact was not unknown to would-be white settlers.

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<sup>19</sup> Letter from Lewis Cass to James B. Finely March 22, 1826, J.B. Finely Collection, Rutherford B. Hayes Memorial Library, Fremont, Ohio.

<sup>20</sup> Robert E. Smith, “The Wyandot Exploring Expedition Of 1839.” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 55, no. 3 (1977), 282.

Therefore, American expansion into the Ohio region was motivated by a multiplicity of reasons. First, ideals of racial hierarchy limited American perceptions of Native American potential. The debate was not just over whether Indians were equal, but whether or not they could advance on the ladder of civilization to meet the white populace. Racially motivated ideals of segregation, and the proper place for Indigenous peoples led many to support removal-oriented policies. Second, the economic potential of the region motivated American settlement. Situated at the base of the Great Lakes, this land held distinct mercantile and agricultural potential. Finally, the region held symbolic meaning for the burgeoning nation. By the end of the War of 1812, the former British colonists had through successive generations fought three international wars motivated in part by the control of the Ohio Valley. The Seven Years War, the American Revolution, and the War of 1812, all threw this country into political turmoil. Indian led resistance and armed conflict dominated the region almost perpetually. Final and full control of the Ohio was a veritable obsession for the political thinkers of the era. What lay in-between the young United States and total control was the collection of original inhabitants. A product of settler colonialism the United States created an internal colony as they felt Native peoples wasted Ohio's vast resources.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, the land itself shaped the terms and conditions of Ohio Indian removal. The imagined and real division of the Mississippi funneled American settlement and military concern north and west. Ohio's potential and political meaning ignited the fires of public debate. Despite opposition from Native peoples and their allies, President

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<sup>21</sup> For Settler Colonial context see – Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8,4 (December 2006): 387-409.

Andrew Jackson signed into law a mandate from the highest levels of the United States Government to remove all Native Americans east of the Mississippi.

While Ohio's land was centrally important to how removal took place, why and when it happened was in part due to the peoples involved. American expansion took place largely because of a vast increase in population and the perceived ease of access to cheap or free land usually located on the western borderlands of the nation. Wyandot's land constriction and eventual removal was in part due to their lack of population growth and legal ownership, in a western sense, of the land that Americans wished to settle. An incomplete picture and an over-simplification, it is still important to remember that removal occurred because of American's desire for Indian land.<sup>22</sup>

Wyandot society possessed unique characteristics which helped characterize the build-up to their removal. Wyandot culture held a central element of adoption. Many of the members of this nation were not born to it. They had adopted a variety of other Native peoples and Euro-Americans. Therefore, the Wyandot nation, by the time of their removal, was a cosmopolitan people with a variety of ethnically and nationally mixed people.<sup>23</sup> In part this led to the American perception that somehow the Wyandot were "Civilized Indians." The high amount of "white blood" within the nation paired with the relatively high population of Christian Wyandot led many to suggest that they did not need to be removed westward and could be fully enmeshed into white-society. Of course,

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<sup>22</sup> Daniel K. Richter, *Trade, Land, Power: The Struggle for Eastern North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 7. – Richter presents a model of Indian-Anglo interaction which broadly supports the one I depict here. He states, "They [Euro-Americans] forcibly injecting land into the equation – not, certainly, for the first time in North American history, but on an unprecedented continental scale that came to dominate everything else."

<sup>23</sup> In an 1894 census by the U.S. government the account of the Wyandot asserted that no person of full Wyandot descent remained. United States Census Office, "Report on Indians Taxed and Indian Not Taxed in the United States." (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894), 245.



this perception was unsuccessful at deterring removal sentiments and the Wyandot removed in 1844. However, this perception did change the tone of the negotiations between the Wyandot and the United States. Principally, the Wyandot negotiated, and in part dictated, the terms of their removal. In many ways the divisions between the Wyandot themselves were a more important factor to the question of whether they would remove than any division between the Wyandot and the white population of Ohio.

The Louisiana purchase gave the United States the land surplus needed, and more importantly gave the United States land that was perceived as less valuable. Additionally, the Wyandot found themselves without any geopolitical distractions or allies. Active British and French settlement attempts had never fully materialized in this specific part of Ohio as the French often sought merely economic and military alliances with the Wyandot and the British after the Proclamation of 1763 actively dissuaded colonial settlement in Ohio. European martial involvement in the region had essentially halted in the years after the War of 1812. More importantly, Native American military potential had recently proven insufficient to resist United States encroachment. While their military success was not as lopsided nor as inevitable as historians have previously characterized, the reality in Ohio after the Treaty of Greenville and War of 1812, was that of United States military predominance. However, because of the presence of a longstanding mission, their relatively small numbers, and the perception that the Wyandot had civilized, this removal was not inevitable. It was coerced by discrete tactics employed by Indian agent negotiators, and it was decided by a significant number of pro-removal Wyandot who would eventually win the heated intra-tribal debate over

removal.<sup>24</sup> The circumstances of their situation in Ohio dictated this removal, and these circumstances also shaped the history of the Wyandot in Kansas.

This portion of Wyandot history exemplifies the nature of the land and the meaning the Wyandot gave it and the meaning the land gave the Wyandot as they resisted successfully over three decades of removal coercion and negotiations. The Wyandot continually remade the world in which they lived to contend with the influx of an often-hostile American population. This history reflects how Indigenous peoples were active participants in their own history, influencing their world and the outcomes of the challenges they faced. Fully aware of this potential, the Wyandot were not surprised by the 1830 Indian Removal Act, Indian Agent's persistent and sometimes illegal acts to coerce their land cession, or the United States' eventual success at forcing the Wyandot to leave their Ohio homes for Kansas Territory. While they were present actors within their own history, it is disingenuous to discuss the Wyandot as a unified apolitical bloc. The threat of removal and the Methodist mission intimately divided the nation into political coalitions.<sup>25</sup> Individuals varied in their opinions on the benefits or costs of removal and conversion. However, to discuss divisions within an Indigenous nation is not to suggest that they were not unified. The Wyandot remained and continue to remain a sovereign nation of Indigenous peoples in the face of a century of divisive questions. In short, the Wyandot were politically active in the long process of negotiating a removal

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<sup>24</sup> Bowes, *Land too Good for Indians*. - Provides the best secondary account for the nefarious tactics the U.S. agents used to force the signage of Wyandot removal.

<sup>25</sup> Shannon Bontrager, "From a Nation of Drunkards, We Have Become a Sober People: The Wyandot Experience in the Ohio Valley during the Early Republic." *Journal of the Early Republic* 32, no. 4 (2012): 603-632. - this is the best secondary work on the political and especially religious divisions that the Wyandot held. Between-The-Logs is featured heavily alongside Reverend James B. Finley to the expense of crucial figures John Stewart, and Wyandot leaders John Hicks and William Walker.

that was not inevitable, that was politically dividing, and that was coerced. They exercised power within removal.

Historians have treated Indian removal with varying approaches and interpretations. Many have focused on the removal story of the Cherokee and Choctaw of the American Southeast in the early years of the 1830s. However, Native American removals were not all the same, and do not all fit within a standard narrative. Historian John P. Bowes in *Land too Good for Indians* (2016) and *Exiles and Pioneers* (2007), examines the story of northern Native American removals and argues that very point.<sup>26</sup> Mary Stockwell further points to the complexity of Ohio Indian removal as these tribes attempted to navigate the rapidly shifting policies, society, and economic pressures of their time in Ohio.<sup>27</sup> In *Red Brethren* (2010), David J. Silverman proves that despite accommodations in religious and economic practices, the New England communities of Stockbridge and Brotherton were still subjected to the pressures of removal.<sup>28</sup>

These historians have pointed to the complexity, the variance in narrative, and the problems of race in the removals of Native Americans. However, the power the Wyandot exerted to delay and negotiate their own removal made their story unique and one that had remained not completely told. At multiple points throughout the decades leading up to their 1844 removal, the Wyandot leaders resisted pressures from within their own

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<sup>26</sup> John P. Bowes, *Land Too Good For Indians: Northern Indian Removal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017).

<sup>27</sup> Mary Stockwell, *The Other Trail of Tears: The Removal of the Ohio Indians* (Yardley, PA: Westholme, 2014).

<sup>28</sup> David J. Silverman, *Red Brethren: The Brothertown and Stockbridge Indians and the Problem of Race in America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

tribe, the United States government, and eventually the Methodist church in their decision to relocate when they did.

### Fighting for Ohio, Conflicts and Treaties 1795-1818

Just outside Toledo, Ohio across the street from a shopping mall which bears the same name, stands a memorial to the Battle of Fallen Timbers. This battle was the culmination of what has been termed the Northwest Indian War. General Anthony Wayne, on August 20, 1794, succeeded in defeating a combined Native force and was able to force the settlement negotiations at the Treaty of Greenville. In many ways this was the last battle of an unknown front in the American Revolution. Historian Gary Nash emphasized this front in his work, claiming that American victory was anything but inevitable.<sup>29</sup> It was one of the last major military efforts of the Wyandot to resist the oncoming assault from the newly formed Anglo-nation. While the result was not inevitable, after the defeat at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, the power dynamics of the region began to slowly tilt. It was a turning point, but Ohio was still Indian country.

What stands out in the language of this treaty is the prevailing treatment of the Native forces as formidable. Article II of the treaty states that all prisoners held “among the Indians, shall be delivered up in ninety days . . . and ten chiefs of the said tribes shall remain at Greenville as hostages, until the delivery of the prisoners.”<sup>30</sup> This suggests that the United States’ forces lacked sufficient power in the region to command the release of these prisoners without some kind of insurance. Furthermore, this article points

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<sup>29</sup> Gary B. Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

<sup>30</sup> “Treaty with the Wyandot Etc. 1795”, *Indian affairs laws and Treaties, Vol. II.*, 39.

to the largely successful campaign this multi-national force had against the American assault. Enough prisoners were taken that it would take as many as ninety days for the Native peoples of the region to gather and return them to the agreed upon site at Greenville. This article alone suggests that the Wyandot and their compatriots were anything but fully defeated. In prominent Wyandot chief and war-leader Tarhe's address after the Treaty of Greenville he stated that, "You now see that we have buried the hatchet. We still see blood around, and in order to clear away all grief, we now wipe away the blood from around you." Tarhe's address portrays a vast assembly of Indian allies who had commanded "fifteen fires."<sup>31</sup> This group was still strong militarily, but they were battle-weary as the toll of a century of conflict had resulted in a war-torn territory.

Wyandot power is an elusive subject. By the era of removal, Wyandot military and economic might did not rival U.S. or fellow Indian nations, but they remained a dominant political force within this region. This is best explained by their role as Keepers of the Council Fire. This symbolic and politically relevant position placed the Wyandot at the center of a region of interrelated Indian nations. Intimate ties to the Chippewa, Ottawa, and Pottawatomie began in the eighteenth-century, while after arriving in Ohio, the Delaware, Shawnee and Miami all were added to the ranks of this multi-national council. As a political and cultural center for the Ohio region, the Wyandot exerted significant power well beyond the weight of their population and territory.

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<sup>31</sup> Tarhe "Greenville Address: Address of Tarhe, Grand Sachem of the Wyandot Tribe to the Assemblage of at the Treaty of Greenville." July 22, 1795. Tr. Isaac Zane. <https://www.wyandotte-nation.org/culture/history/general-history/tarhe%E2%80%99s-greenville-address/>.

While it is accurate to state that the United States won the Northwest Indian War or the Ohio Indian War, it would be false to assume that they had been able to establish and claim the entirety of the Ohio country. In fact, within the Treaty of Greenville, the United States ceded all “claims to all other Indian lands northward of the river Ohio, eastward of the Mississippi, and westward and southward of the Great Lakes.”<sup>32</sup> Legally, the United States had won a small southeastern section of the Ohio Country leaving more than half of this territory in Indian control. While American intentions may never have been to leave this country in native hands in perpetuity, in 1795 they lacked the military might to continue the war and seize control of this land.

However, the Treaty of Greenville was the cornerstone on which the United States built the negotiated and coerced path to Ohio Indian removal. Power in the Ohio region shifted after the U.S. gained a foothold through this treaty. In purely quantitative terms, the white population of Ohio grew exponentially while Native populations were in decline. By 1832, the Wyandot nation had shrunk from thousands of members in the eighteenth-century to little more than seven-hundred.<sup>33</sup>

The War of 1812 again plunged the region into turmoil, with a similar outcome. A powerful multi-national force of Native Americans faced and ceded to the United States after a series of conflicts. It was no mistake that in 1816 after the conclusion of the war, that representatives from the War Department approached the Wyandot about voluntary removal west of the Mississippi. The Wyandot had not been major participants in the conflict, but they were important diplomatic figures in the area. The United states hoped

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<sup>32</sup> “Treaty with the Wyandot Etc., 1795” *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties Vol. II.*, 39.

<sup>33</sup> Nathan Bangs, *An Authentic History of the Missions Under the Care of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1832), 79.

to capitalize on this victory by claiming as much Indian land as possible in order to fully make use of their symbolic control of Ohio. From 1816 until 1844, Wyandot history was preoccupied with two major movements, which affected not only their corner of North America but also the entirety of the nation: Indian removal west of the Mississippi and Methodism's foray into Native American missions.

In 1816, acting Secretary of War George Graham and Governor of the Michigan territory Lewis Cass asked the Wyandot to consider leaving their Ohio Valley lands for re-settlement along the White River of Arkansas-Missouri. From this point on, the Wyandot nation knew that the potential for removal existed. This knowledge did not unify the nation behind a singular opinion regarding re-settlement. Additionally, the United States Government did not present this treaty as forced removal. The Wyandot nation had a choice. At this time the Indian Removal Act had yet to be signed, military resistance in this region was still boiling under the surface, and many Wyandot looked to a long future in Ohio. Delegates from across the tribe met with and discussed the potential move, yet none could convince the others. Leading the opponents of removal was William Walker Sr. An influential leader named Tarhe was the principal chief at the time, but soon John Hicks replaced him. Hicks became the primary proponent of removal during his time as chief. The talks in 1816 ended abruptly when an imposter writing under the name of Lewis Cass tried to intimidate the Wyandot into leaving.<sup>34</sup> The actions of this impersonator temporarily severed diplomatic negotiations, but there were multiple

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<sup>34</sup> Bowes, *Land too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal*, 121.

times throughout the decades leading up to the eventual removal in 1844 when the Wyandot negotiated and signed treaties.

This first rejection did not deter the federal government's attempts at removal, or at the very least partial land cession. Indian Agent, John Johnston continued negotiations with the Wyandot, despite the reluctance and resistance that William Walker Sr. orchestrated. However, after the death of prominent chief Tarhe, the power structure of the Wyandot tribe was in slight disarray. While Walker Sr. opposed removal, Johnston and Cass were able to find more amicable leaders, such as Hicks, and they negotiated the sale of their land between Lake Erie and the northern shore of the Sandusky river. The Wyandot representatives signed the treaty on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September 1817. Lewis Cass and Duncan McArthur represented the federal government at the signing, which took place on the shores of Lake Erie.<sup>35</sup> This negotiation and treaty of 1817 set a precedent for much of the coming decades. The federal government negotiated and signed deals with various factions within the Wyandot tribe. Furthermore, this double-dealing proved that the Wyandot did not have a single opinion on the issues of land sales and removal. While they did not negotiate full removal for some time – removal's successful negotiation was the result of significant inner debate and discussion between the opposing parties of the Wyandot.<sup>36</sup>

In 1818 the Wyandot, along with Seneca and Delaware representatives, traveled to Washington D.C. to re-negotiate the treaty of 1817. This delegation had in its ranks the principal dissenter to 1817's negotiations, William Walker Sr. They traveled in secret

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<sup>35</sup> Treaties with Several Tribes 1817. *American State Papers* 8, *Indian Affairs* Vol. 2, 127-148.



despite Johnston's close surveillance. Arriving in Washington, they were able to re-negotiate the egregious terms of 1817. One of the primary aims was to nullify provisions of the 1817 treaty which re-defined Indian land ownership. Eighty years prior to the Dawes Severalty Act, the treaty of 1817 would have reapportioned Wyandot land into individual, privately owned allotments. Instead, Walker and his company were able to rectify this action and demanded Indian ownership still be communal. The treaty states that the land previously granted shall not be individually allotted but instead "shall be held by them in the same manner as Indian reservations have been heretofore held."<sup>37</sup> At this same negotiation in 1818, Cass propositioned removal again. The Wyandot greeted these talks with vehemence as Walker Sr., the chief opponent to removal, led the delegation to Washington D.C.

The treaties of 1817 and 1818 provide a crucial insight into the workings of the Wyandot nation and the negotiations with the United States government. They were in part amicable to the proposition of white removal efforts, and at the same time powerful enough in their position to rectify earlier negotiations seen as harmful. Additionally, the tribe did not act as a singular unit. Varying camps and leaders within the nation acted in their own unique ways as the Wyandot tribe faced the proposition of removal west of the Mississippi.

"Subjects of Gospel Grace,"<sup>38</sup> The Wyandot and Methodism 1818-1829

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<sup>37</sup> Treaties with Several Tribes 1818. *American State Papers 8, Indian Affairs vol. 2*, 164-180.

<sup>38</sup> "Letter to Wyandot" February 19, 1825. Methodist Union Church. James B. Finley Papers, Hayes Memorial Library, Fremont, Ohio.

Amidst the beginning talks between Federal Indian Agents and Wyandot leaders, a Virginian by the name of John Stewart arrived at Upper Sandusky. Stewart was a free-born African-American of Powhatan County, Virginia. Raised a Baptist, his biographer Mitchell accounts of his early years as a sinner stereotypically susceptible to alcohol.<sup>39</sup> After the age of twenty-one Stewart left Virginia for Ohio. There, Stewart claimed to have received a revelation from God, telling him to leave his home and preach the good news in the northwest. Fearfully, he began his pilgrimage by preaching to several other tribes before settling in with the Wyandot.<sup>40</sup>

The Methodist church did not sponsor this mission effort directly, nor did they know of Stewart's plan. In fact, John Stewart did not have certification to preach for the Methodist church.<sup>41</sup> An African American and non-institutional preacher appealed to the Wyandot people as Stewarts mission incorporated a significant number of the Wyandot and grew into a permanent institution of Ohio Wyandot life. The Catholic and Quaker mission efforts had failed to sustain a longstanding presence, and their leading bodies had withdrawn support soon after beginning.

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<sup>39</sup> Both Native peoples and African Americans were subjected to racist portrayals of their fondness for Alcohol. This is readily seen in James B. Finley's accounts of the Wyandot, and in Mitchell's biography of Stewart. For secondary sources that deal with this issue for the Wyandot and Stewart see Shannon Bontrager, "From A Nation of drunkards, We Have Become a Sober People': The Wyandot Experience in the Ohio Valley During the Early Republic." *Journal of the Early Republic* 32, (Winter 2012): 603-632.

<sup>40</sup> Joseph Mitchell, *Missionary Pioneer: A Brief Memoir of the Life Labours, and Death of John Stewart, (Man of Colour) Founder, Under God of the Mission Among the Wyandotts at Upper Sandusky, Ohio* (New York: J.C. Totten, 1827), 15. – This source is certainly contemporary to Stewart's life, but how much of this narrative is based on reality is uncertain. However, for this work I have only utilized it to provide information on Stewart's life, not to prove the success of his missionary efforts. Furthermore, by analyzing the text itself it is clear that Stewart was convinced of his own calling. Mitchell in every instance of referring to Stewarts revelatory call to mission work uses language like – "a voice (as he thought) said to him" or "He still fancied he heard." This proves that the author had some disbelief in God actually conversing with Stewart, but that Stewart so fervently insisted this occurred that Mitchell included it in Stewart's biography.

<sup>41</sup>Joseph Mitchell, 19.

John Stewart's entry into the Wyandot nation may be in part due to the increasing pressures of white settlers encroaching upon Wyandot lands, and because of his unique characteristics as an African American.<sup>42</sup> As a black man Stewart shared the similarity of minority status with the Wyandot. In his first interactions with the Wyandot, he was brought to the home of William Walker Sr. Walker initially assumed Stewart was a runaway slave, but after sufficient convincing, Walker allowed Stewart to begin his mission at Upper Sandusky. Interestingly Stewart's primary translator and first convert was another black man living among the Wyandot named Johnathan Pointer.<sup>43</sup> Very soon after Stewart's arrival, his mission became a central piece of the religious and political lives of the Wyandot. Stewart's long-lasting effect on the Wyandot he ministered too, is evidenced by Wyandot Methodist minister and spiritual leader - Squire Grey Eyes' final invocation in 1843 to the Ohio Wyandot. His closing words were the same as "the dying words of Brother Stewart: 'Be Faithful.'"<sup>44</sup>

Simultaneous to Stewart's arrival, in 1819, Indian agent Johnston reported an increase in violence and disputes between Americans and the Wyandot, Seneca, and Delaware of Ohio. In an era of growing violence, the Seneca and Delaware looked westward toward escape, but some of the Wyandot, through John Stewart and later

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<sup>42</sup> Neal, Salisbury, "Embracing Ambiguity: Native Peoples and Christianity in Seventeenth-Century North America" *Ethnohistory* 50, 2 (Spring 2003), 247-259. – Conversion is a difficult matter to prove, and certainly Wyandot people traversed into Methodism in order to utilize it for their own purposes. However, the length and Wyandot-initiated manner by which they continued their Methodist mission throughout removal, proves that Stewart's efforts greatly influenced Wyandot religious practices, lasting beyond his death and the Wyandot's time in Ohio.

<sup>43</sup> Mitchell, 19.

<sup>44</sup> Squire Grey Eyes, "Farewell: The Wyandot's Last Church Service in Ohio".

Reverend James B. Finley, sought to use conversion to retract the advancing threat of removal.<sup>45</sup>

The missionary efforts of John Stewart created an opportunity for the subsequent work of Reverend James B. Finley. Arriving in 1821 to replace the ailing Stewart, Finley represented the institutional Methodist church. With Finley came money. Donations from the Methodist missionary societies and government grants all helped to build infrastructural institutions for the Wyandot community. He built schools, churches, and a saw mill at or near Upper Sandusky. Finley and the Methodist did not support removal, and their converts did not either. Removal as a choice for the Wyandot people remained in their minds, but Finley made it obvious that he wanted the Wyandot to stay in Ohio. He wrote on July 2, 1822, after spending a year at Upper Sandusky, that the Natives and white converts were all a part of the same “spiritual family.”<sup>46</sup> For this family’s survival, he sought to move the Wyandot people closer to white civilization. In this effort, he tried to assimilate Wyandot converts.

To aid in the Wyandot nation’s path toward white civilization, Finley sought to induce Jeffersonian agricultural ideals into his converts. In one of his first reports to the

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<sup>45</sup> An interesting extension of Guyatt Nicholas, “The Outskirts of Our Happiness’: Race and the Lure of Colonization in the Early Republic” *The Journal of American History* 95,4 (March, 2009), 986-1011. Stewart’s presence was extensively reported enthusiastically in Methodist circles. His mission exceeded in importance because it was a black man preaching to Indians, however unlike within Guyatt’s portrayal of benevolent colonization, many of the mission societies on the east-coast never wished to remove the Wyandot, perhaps because the Wyandot’s Ohio location already provided the sense of separateness.

<sup>46</sup>James B. Finley, “Report to the Bishops and members of the Ohio annual conference, 1822.” James B. Finley papers, Hayes memorial library, Fremont, Ohio. “Indian Missions,” *The Methodist Magazine*, November 1, 1822, <https://search-proquest-com.argo.library.okstate.edu/americanperiodicals/docview/136463302/3169C72802EF40DCPQ/1?accountid=4117>. – This Issue featured an extract of a letter sent to the magazine from Rev. James B. Finley. In it he discusses the early works of his mission in Upper Sandusky, and glowingly reviews his own efforts and their success. While exaggeration may have been used by Finely in this circumstance, it is reasonable to believe that he did in fact consider the “red man”, whites, and colored peoples all a part of the same spiritual family; that is if they had converted to Methodism.

Ohio conference, he stated that “considerable attention has been paid by the natives to agriculture this season. I think in every sense their improvements on their farms exceed any former season that I have witnessed.”<sup>47</sup> Americans at this time often believed that Native peoples did not practice agriculture and were solely nomadic hunters, however, the Wyandot had practiced seasonal farming well before the presence of Europeans.<sup>48</sup> Reframing the Wyandot as budding agriculturalists both helped Finley paint a favorable picture of his success to his funders, but it also aided in his arguments against removal.

Finley and Stewart’s missionary efforts succeeded in establishing a permanent institution in Wyandot life. The ambiguity of conversion and the ability of the Wyandot to utilize Methodism and Christianity for their own purposes is without question. The capital and institutional aide offered by the presence of the Methodist mission was surely a key to its entrance and initial longevity. But this does not fully explain the Wyandot’s involvement in Methodism. Without looking to the quantitative evidence provided by Finley for the purposes of fundraising, it is still clear that his and Stewart’s efforts inspired an important facet of Wyandot life as the Wyandot continued to actively practice Methodism in Kansas and then Indian Territory. Methodism did not replace or supplant the Wyandot’s own cultural practices, but it remained a consistent presence throughout their era of removal.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> James B. Finley, “Report to the Bishops and members of the Ohio annual conference, 1822.” James B. Finley papers, Hayes memorial library, Fremont, Ohio.

<sup>48</sup> For secondary source on Native American agriculture see especially chapter two of Collin G. Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count: The West Before Lewis and Clark* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003). – the best evidence for American’s perception of the Wyandot’s lack of agriculture is James B. Finley’s call for the implementation of male farming as a part of his assimilationist mission.

<sup>49</sup> Many scholars have complicated the idea of conversion regarding Native American Nations. See Neal Salisbury, “Embracing Ambiguity”; David Silverman, *Red Brethren*; Linford D. Fisher, “Native Americans, Conversion, and Christian Practice in Colonial New England, 1640-1730.” *Harvard Theological Review* 102,1 (2009):101-124.; Nicholas Guyatt, “The Outskirts of Our Happiness”: Race and

By 1822, of the seven hundred people in the Wyandot nation, converts to Methodism “now number 230” with “13 who have lately come forward.”<sup>50</sup> These converts rejected some of their longest held cultural practices. Chief Between-The-Logs was one of the first and most influential of the Wyandot’s converts to Methodism. He said in an address to his people that “He [Finley] told us that the white and the red men were all great sinners and how the Great God came down and died for us.”<sup>51</sup> This source was incentivized to highlight the success of the mission, but the fact that Between-The-Logs and his fellow Wyandot Methodists continued in their faith well after their removal suggests that Methodism had become a central institution of Wyandot life.

Reverend Finley preached a message of racial and social unity under the same God, but also in practice sought to assimilate them into white culture. In his appeal, Between-The-Logs called on his fellow Wyandot to convert to Methodism and change their ways. He made this plea stating, “Before, we shaved and painted our heads, and put jewels in our ears and our noses . . . Now we have thrown them all away.”<sup>52</sup> Methodist conversion demanded more than just baptism, or abstinence from other religious practices; it also altered the lifestyle of the Wyandot. Clothing, demeanor, language, and

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the Lure of Colonization in the Early Republic.” *The Journal of American History* 95,4 (March 2009): 986-1011.

<sup>50</sup> Nathan Bangs, *An Authentic History of the Missions Under the Care of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1832). 79

<sup>51</sup> “The Converted Indian Chiefs” *Zion’s Herald*, August 9, 1826. <https://search-proquest-com.argo.library.okstate.edu/americanperiodicals/docview/127265574/abstract/3169C72802EF40DCPQ/3?accountid=4117>. – Sermon published in the *Zion Herald*. this source can be assumed to have been slanted in favor of the missionary efforts made by Finley, but the authorship of Between-The-Logs seems to be original and can best be ascertained.

<sup>52</sup> “The Converted Indian Chiefs” *Zion’s Herald*, August 9, 1826.

An interesting study which describes a similar process is Joel Martin, “Almost White: The Ambivalent Promise of Christian Missions Among the Cherokees” *Religion and the Creation of Race and Ethnicity* (Ed. Craig R. Prentiss New York: New York University Press, 2003). The physical markers of civilization clothing and body-use was a marquee aspect of the mission-system’s attempt to re-shape Native peoples.

occupation all shifted in this conversion. Between-The-Logs argued that the observer could see the change Methodism had made in his life through the physical appearance of his neat and orderly cabin, not bark-lodge, his lack of strong drink, and the agriculture-based provider role he assumed for his family.<sup>53</sup> To the Protestant reader this description of lifestyle seemed idyllic. This was no mistake. Finely had intentionally made his mission about instilling white Protestant values into the Wyandot he oversaw.

Racial identity in the 1820s was in a state of flux. Specific to this historical circumstance it is clear that Finley and his fellow Methodists at least in part depicted race in terms of assimilation and religion. In 1825, he referenced off hand the “blooded Wyandott whether Indians or whites”; a division based upon individual Wyandot’s conversion.<sup>54</sup> This reference combined with his several denotations of “heathen” and Christian parties within the Wyandot relay an interesting view of racial identity. Finley and his compatriots obviously believed the Wyandot could achieve salvation as this was the crucial aspect of identity to them. However, racist attitudes towards Indians as a group prevailed.

Reverend Finely established institutions at Upper Sandusky in which agriculture and education correlated with Protestant ideals of American living. One of the first buildings Finley received funding for was the school. In 1821 the Methodist Ohio Conference distributed funds for this building and educational materials. In its first year,

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<sup>53</sup> “The Converted Indian Chiefs” *Zion’s Herald*, August 9, 1826.

<sup>54</sup> James B. Finley, “Letter to James Garrett” May 2, 1825. James B. Finley Papers, Hayes Memorial Library, Fremont, Ohio. – Finley seems here to suggest in an isolated letter that at this time he mentally divided the Wyandot into those who had converted and those who had not. This is not surprising, but he seems to reserve the “Indian” moniker for those who had not converted, and references those who had as “white.”

the school attracted upwards of sixty students, according to the report filed to the United States Congress.<sup>55</sup> The ability of Finley to gather monetary funds for the Grand reservation and his mission gave his preaching added legitimacy.

The increase in the institutions the Methodist mission offered correlated with the rise in converts and change in the very lifestyles of the Methodist Wyandot. In addition to building a school to educate the children of Upper Sandusky, as white children were across the Eastern United States, Finley built a saw mill. After its construction the Wyandot people began to build structures in the same manner as white settlers of the region. They built hewed-log houses with boards cut and milled at Finley's saw mill. The converts replaced their old bark-lodge styled homes for this new Euro-American construction. In addition to the white-styled homes, some people began to work in the same manner as white settlers. Farming in the Euro-American fashion, the Wyandot converts gave up their traditionally long hunting trips.<sup>56</sup> However, those who had not converted continued to live in contrast to the converts. Much of their sustenance continued to be gathered along cyclical hunting trips across the vast Ohio River Valley.

Finley believed, as many white Americans did, that the Wyandot could become American citizens if they assimilated to white culture.<sup>57</sup> In their charge "to the chiefs the speakers and all our coloured brethren" the preachers of Chillicothe, sponsors of the

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<sup>55</sup> "Progress of the society of United Brethren in Propagating the Gospel among the Indians. December 10," 17<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d sess., 1822, S. Doc. 189, *American State Papers Vol 2*, 372-391.

<sup>56</sup> Bangs, 78.

<sup>57</sup> This claim is best supported by Lewis Cass's claim, that "no power will compel" the Wyandot to remove if they continue on their path to "civilization." Cass was a staunch supporter of removal, and he alongside the various Methodist funders and supporters of the mission, sincerely seemed to feel that the Wyandot need not remove due to their perceived assimilation. – Letter from Lewis Cass to James B. Finely March 22, 1826, J.B. Finely Collection



Wyandot mission, state that they should “let no foolish feasting and dancing be done.”<sup>58</sup> Assimilation and conversion were the goals of the missionaries. Many of the Wyandot nation were descendants of both white and Native ancestors. While they lived on the Grand Reservation, some had received a European-style education. William Walker Sr., for example, served as an interpreter and sub-agent for the Office of Indian Affairs at the time that Finley arrived. Additionally, the small number and reduced size of the reservation made adoption into larger white society seem plausible to a minority of observers like Finley.

He feared that removal would threaten the success of his missionary efforts and the converts would return to “heathenism” if he was not able to continue his efforts at Upper Sandusky. In a letter dated 1826, almost a decade prior to their actual removal, Finley stated that he “would suffer death before they leave their present place.”<sup>59</sup> While Finley held a position that would suffer if removal was carried out, his opposition to removal was not an aberration. Resistance to removal originated from Indigenous and American sources, just as pro-removal sentiments existed within both sides.

Converts to Methodism shared the opposition to removal that Finley did, while those Wyandot who remained traditionalists in their religious beliefs considered removal as an escape. The converts of the mission seemed to feel a kinship to the white Methodists, especially those of the Ohio Conference. It seems that Finley wished to preserve his mission in Ohio and the Wyandot-converts desired to remain both in their own homes and saw Methodism as a means to this end. In 1826 several of the notable

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<sup>58</sup> R.R. Roberts “Letter to Wyandot” August 16, 1820. James B. Finley Collection, Hayes Memorial Library, Fremont, Ohio.

<sup>59</sup> James B. Finley. Letter dated 1826. James B. Finley Papers. Hayes Memorial Library, Fremont, Ohio.

converts such as Between-The-Logs and Mononqua spoke at an annual gathering in New York City. Furthermore, Finley's alteration of their very livelihood meant that the Wyandot had established permanent roots in Upper Sandusky. Farms, houses, barns, the saw mill, and the cleared fields all represented labor that, if removal occurred, the Wyandot would abandon. However, those who had not converted blamed white society for the vice that plagued Upper Sandusky, alcohol. Once described as a "nation of drunkards", the Wyandot people themselves lamented the effects of alcohol.<sup>60</sup> The stereotype of Indian alcoholics became a political tool in the debate over removals. The non-converts blamed white influence for this evil. The solution for them was to escape west. This divided opinion in the Wyandot nation continued to exist up until the eventual removal in 1844.

The choice to accept and follow the teaching of Finley was not attributable to his powers of persuasion alone. Rather, the conversion to Methodism by many Wyandot was often due to the influence of fellow Wyandot. Between-The-Logs and Mononqua both address their fellow natives with language which varied from that of Finley. They did not appeal as much to the eternal salvation Finley offered in Methodism. Instead, they asked their fellow Wyandot to change their lifestyles. In this language of self-reform, it is crucial to acknowledge the presence of self-preservation. As Shannon Bontrager asserts, Finley's missionary effort was not merely motivated by the nominal conversion of the Wyandot, but his primary goal was to restructure Wyandot dress, practices and culture to

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<sup>60</sup> Shannon Bontrager, "From A Nation of drunkards, We Have Become a Sober People": The Wyandot Experience in the Ohio Valley During the Early Republic." *Journal of the Early Republic* 32, (Winter 2012): 603. – In this article Bontrager provides an interesting analysis of how the Wyandots debate over anti/pro removal, conversion, and alcoholism formed as a result of a unique borderland which individual Wyandot navigated. Within this article Bontrager cites Finley's *History*, page 376 as the source of a quote from an unnamed Wyandot chief who stated, "from a nation of drunkards we have become a sober people."

Americanize them. Finley characterized the two parties as those who “dress up and painted” and those like Between-The-Logs who had given up alcohol, body painting, and dancing.<sup>61</sup>

Many in the anti-removal faction of the Wyandot had converted to Methodism. It would be historically inaccurate to claim that this conversion was merely for the purpose of avoiding removal, but certainly they were aware of a growing public perception that they were assimilated Indians. From the missionary society in Philadelphia the Wyandot were praised directly for “having been considered a savage and barbarous race” but after conversion “have been made the subjects of gospel grace.”<sup>62</sup> In this same year, Lewis Cass, perpetual proponent of removal up to this point, suggested in a letter to James B. Finley that “a very few years longer of improvement would place the Wyandot in a situation from which no one would wish to see them removed.”<sup>63</sup> Anti-removal sentiments from eastern Protestants and high ranking politicians was certainly the support that the anti-removal Wyandot hoped for. While conversion to Methodism as a political ploy would be an unfair assessment, its political benefits are undeniable. It presented the hardest of removal advocates, Cass, with enough evidence of “civilization” that even he considered the prospect of removal potentially harmful as undoubtedly the Wyandot’s central place within the region politically and culturally made them a valuable example

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<sup>61</sup> Bontrager, 619. – also see Joel Martin’s, “Almost White” for insight into a similar instance for the Cherokee.

<sup>62</sup>“Letter to Wyandot” February 19, 1825. Methodist Union Church. James B. Finley Papers, Hayes Memorial Library, Fremont Ohio.

<sup>63</sup> Lewis Cass, “Letter to James B. Finley” March 25, 1825. James B. Finley Papers, Hayes Memorial Library, Fremont, Ohio.

for assimilationist. This fact gave the Wyandot significant agency in delaying, defining, removal and conversion.

Removal was not inevitable. The value of analyzing the mission's effect goes beyond Methodism's importance to Wyandot religious history. Through conversion, assimilation, or the Wyandot's own savvy utilization of American institutions, they were very close to avoiding this fate. However, the changing tides of national opinion effected the outcomes of Wyandot history and their removal. While this opportunity did not last, this history does contradict the traditional inevitable narrative historians have painted of Indian removal.

Throughout the 1820s Finley and the Methodist mission grew in number. The federal government sent a total of five-hundred dollars to Finley annually for use as school funds. The Wyandot nation received a total of 1,950 dollars annually.<sup>64</sup> Finley brought in one – quarter of the standard allotted money for improvements such as the school. This infrastructural improvement of the Upper Sandusky community appealed to the local Wyandot. Despite this success, the federal government did not believe that the Wyandot could fully assimilate. In a report to Congress, the fact that “the Wyandots . . . at Upper Sandusky . . . have under the superintendence of the society of friends, made considerable advances in civilization” did not remain hidden. Rather, the opinion that it was “impossible, with their customs, that they should exist as independent communities

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<sup>64</sup> “Accounts of superintendents and agents for Indian Affairs. Communicated to the House of Representatives, February 9, 1823,” 17<sup>th</sup> Cong. 2d sess., HR Doc. 194, *American State Papers*, Vol. 2, 398-408.

in the midst of civilized society.”<sup>65</sup> Assimilation was the stated goal of the United States government, and James B. Finley.

“Consent of the Indians,” The Wyandot Removal from Ohio<sup>66</sup>

In 1829 the close neighbors of the Wyandot, the Delaware and Seneca people, chose to leave Ohio. On August 3, 1829, Captain Pipe and several Delaware signed a treaty which relinquished their claim on all their Ohio lands. They purchased lands along the Missouri border in the Kansas-Nebraska Territory. Soon after the Seneca peoples of the Upper Sandusky signed a treaty in 1831, after two years of their petitioning the federal government for removal. They negotiated for lands in Northeastern Oklahoma near the Cherokee. The federal government executed the Seneca removal poorly. A lack of provisions and preparation for the journey claimed the lives of many Seneca.<sup>67</sup> These removals affected how and when the Wyandot chose to leave their Ohio home nearly fourteen years after their neighbors and friends.<sup>68</sup>

While the Wyandot influenced the timing and manner of their removal the U.S.’s insincere tactics coerced some Wyandot into ceding portions of their tribal land. Throughout their removals the Wyandot sought to exercise their ability to determine their own fate. Lewis Cass stated that “there is nothing compulsory on the Indians. If they choose to make an arrangement under it, they can go. If not they can stay.”<sup>69</sup> Despite Cass’s repeated involvement in urging the removal of a multitude of Native peoples, he

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<sup>65</sup> “Progress Made in civilizing the Indians. Communicated to the House of Representatives, January 17, 1820,” 16<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1s sess., HR Doc. 162, *American State Papers, Vol.2*, 200-201.

<sup>66</sup> Lewis Cass, “Letter to James B. Finley” March 22, 1826. Hayes Memorial Library, Fremont, Ohio.

<sup>67</sup> Bowes, *Land too Good for Indians*, 131.

<sup>68</sup> “Treaty with the Delaware 1829,” *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. 2*, 303.

<sup>69</sup> Lewis Cass, “Letter to James B. Finley” March 22, 1825. James B. Finley Paper, Hayes Memorial Library, Fremont, Ohio.

acknowledged the choice the Wyandot faced. While he, and many of his time, glossed over the threats posed by American settlement to the Wyandot as a coercive factor, the fact remained that in part the Wyandot held the power to influence the terms of their removal.

In 1832, the Wyandot had again begun talks with the Indian agency to discuss removal westward. Chief John Hicks led the group of those communicating with sub-agent James B. Gardiner, the same sub-agent who had negotiated the removal of the Delaware and Seneca nations. The negotiations failed after a Wyandot exploratory mission contacted the Seneca. They told this Wyandot party of the horrors experienced on their two-year trek to Indian Territory. Additionally, the expedition found the white settlers of Missouri to act the same as the oppressive whites of Ohio. This report opened the door for Walker and the Methodist bloc to again refuse and stall removal negotiations.<sup>70</sup>

Later, in 1832, the United States again propositioned the Wyandot to remove west of the Mississippi. This time a small faction agreed to terms that partially splintered the Wyandot nation. The signatories of the 1832 treaty originated from the Big Springs section of the Grand reservation that the Methodist mission had not influenced extensively. This group of Wyandot wished to escape white encroachment on Big Springs and join their relatives in Canada. Sensing the previous reluctance of their fellow Wyandot of Upper Sandusky, the Big Springs group sought out Indian Agent James B. Gardiner on their own. Within the treaty's own language, it states that they have

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<sup>70</sup> Bowes, *Land too Good for Indians*, 133.

“separated themselves from the Wyandot at Upper Sandusky.”<sup>71</sup> The Big Springs treaty of 1832 ceded upwards of 16,000 acres of their Ohio lands, but in return they did not desire the lands west of the Mississippi. Due to the tragic removal reports from the Seneca and Delaware, this band of Wyandot chose Canada as their destination.

The Treaty of Big Springs displayed the tribal divisions, and the agency of the Wyandot people during their removal. Walker and the Upper Sandusky Wyandot had worked to refuse the treaty propositioned in the same year, but Walker did not rule the Wyandot unanimously. Additionally, the faction that had signed away their land in Ohio did so out of their own desire. In the language of the treaty they felt that “whilst they remain in their present situation in the State of Ohio, in the vicinity of a white population . . . they cannot prosper and be happy.”<sup>72</sup> They wrote to Gardiner and made this proposition themselves, rather than being the subject to Gardiner’s influence. Because of this fissure in the Wyandot nation and the role that Gardiner played in that treaty, Gardiner’s presence tainted future negotiations. Walker and those who wished to stay in Ohio were able to use this incident as motive for refusal to the overtures Gardiner made through the rest of the decade. In a report from the Methodist mission the author observes that the “Wyandot mission has been somewhat agitated . . . with the spirit of removal west of the Mississippi, which has in some measure checked the progress.”<sup>73</sup> With the threat of impending removal, the division within the tribe was clear to this observer.

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<sup>71</sup> “Treaty with the Wyandot 1832,” *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. 2*, 340.

<sup>72</sup> “Treaty with the Wyandot 1832,” *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties Vol. II.*, 340.

<sup>73</sup> “Methodist Missions: Aboriginal Missions in the United States and Territories” *The Religious Intelligencer*. May 26, 1832.

In 1835, Governor of Ohio, Robert Lucas, tried to remove the Wyandot in a new way, through state seizure of the Wyandot lands. Despite a federal ruling in the *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832) case stating that all tribal lands were presided over by the federal government, not the states, Lucas continued in his pursuit of state control. In fact, Lucas was quoted as saying “that the territory contained within the constitutional limits of Ohio, formed an integral part of the state, of which no power on earth had a right to dispossess her.”<sup>74</sup> All white parties believed going into a special session of the Ohio Legislature that the state jurisdiction would pass as Lucas desired, and undoubtedly the Wyandot would sign a treaty under such circumstances. However, to the surprise of Lucas and even the agent the Wyandot sent to plead their case, the Ohio congress refused to ignore federal law in such a way.<sup>75</sup>

Dismayed, Governor Lucas and the white enterprises decided not to give up on Wyandot removal, and in 1836 they received word from William Walker Jr., then a prominent leader of the Wyandot, along with John Barnette and Peacock, that the Wyandot were ready to negotiate again. However, the Wyandot were able to negotiate the treaty of 1836 on their own terms. Rather than cede all their Ohio lands, or subject themselves to removal, the Wyandot chose instead to sell part of their land. The Wyandot sold a tract of land at 38,000 acres.<sup>76</sup> This was not the removal some advocates hoped for. The money from this sale of land was appointed to supply, furnish, and repair the permanent institutions Finley set up in Upper Sandusky. This aspect of the treaty speaks

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<sup>74</sup> “Legislature of Ohio: Governor’s Message. A Bill Special Message. Communicated by the Governor to both houses on Thursday, the 18<sup>th</sup> instant.” *Niles Weekly Register* (1814-1837) Vol. 48, 1240 (June 27, 1835), 299.

<sup>76</sup> “Treaty with the Wyandot 1836,” *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. II*, 460.



to the continued sense of permanence with which the Wyandot treated their lands within Ohio.

In 1837, the federal government again attempted to convince the Wyandot to leave their Ohio lands; this time they attempted to force the matter. Joseph McCutcheon and Henry Brish represented the federal government. In the figures of Warpole, Standing Stone, and others they found the Wyandot ready for removal. While this group of the Wyandot desired to leave, and even petitioned President Martin van Buren in 1838 for removal. The majority William Walker Jr. represented did not agree. McCutcheon and Brish resorted to forcing signatures, either by having ineligible signatories sign, minors sign, or drunk men sign. These tactics did not go unnoticed, and Walker filed a complaint to the agency resulting in the removal of McCutcheon and Brish from these negotiations.<sup>77</sup> John M. Armstrong reinforces this account in his letter to his fiancé Lucy Biglow, saying “Col. Bresh & McCutchen[sic] two men as destitute of honourable principle as ever were permitted breathe, are commissioned to effect a treaty with the Wyandotts. . . They had represented the department that a large portion of the Wyandots were in favor of emigrating. A gross misrepresentation.” Armstrong describes their tactics for obtaining signatures as “they get them drunk and then obtain their names” or even to “obtain numbers” Brish and McCutcheon would “put down women and children and individuals who had been dead these ten years.”<sup>78</sup>

Warpole and his compatriots may not have succeeded in convincing their fellow Wyandot to accept removal, but the event surrounding the proposed treaty of 1837-8

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<sup>77</sup> Bowes, *Land too Good for Indians*, 133 .

<sup>78</sup> John M. Armstrong. “Letter to Lucy Biglow” *Resisting Removal* August 29, 1837, <https://www.wyandotte-nation.org/culture/history/general-history/resisting-removal/>.

forced the Wyandot to examine the possibility further. In 1839, the council appointed several men to explore and report on a section of western United States. There they found in the Delaware nation a people willing and able to sell a part of their Kansas lands to the Wyandot. The Delaware had been the long-time neighbors of the Wyandot in the Ohio region. After it became clear that the U.S. government would fail to assign lands to the Wyandot, the Delaware opened their doors.

The murder of three prominent Wyandot, on a hunting expedition in 1840 helped to usher in the final phase of Wyandot removal as the Wyandot people became convinced, they would no longer be able to stay in Ohio. Squire Grey Eyes final address to the Ohio Wyandot, he cited “our recently murdered Summundewat” in his eulogy of their time in Ohio.<sup>79</sup> In 1841, negotiations began, this time with the familiar Indian agent John Johnston in control. The Wyandot did not rush into signing this treaty. Instead, learning from the tragic accounts of the Delaware and Seneca, they ensured that the treaty included provisions that would allow them the proper time to prepare for the journey and the proper payment for their lands. Francis Hicks and other principal chiefs of the Wyandot signed the treaty in 1842, ceding 114,000 acres in Ohio in exchange for 148,000 acres west of the Mississippi.<sup>80</sup> One of the most important articles of the treaty was its allowance of two years for the Wyandot to make use of their Ohio lands in preparation for their departure. Through 1843, and 1844, the Wyandot began their long journey south in waves - finally settling on the Missouri border of the Kansas-Nebraska Territory.

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<sup>79</sup> Squire Grey Eyes. “The Wyandot’s Last Ohio Church Service: July 9, 1843” *Farewell*. <https://www.wyandotte-nation.org/culture/history/general-history/farewell-beloved-land/>.

<sup>80</sup> “Treaty with the Wyandot, 1842,” *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. II, 534*.

The Wyandot removal story proved the amount of control that the tribe exerted in negotiations and shows the diversity of opinion within their own tribe as they dealt with the influence of Methodism. The Wyandot even initiated negotiations of removal and land cessions. Various factions desired differing things from removal. Warpole was long an advocate for removal before its actual occurrence, while the Walkers remained the stronghold of defiance to removal. The Methodist mission had helped to establish permanent institutions for the Wyandot in and around Upper Sandusky, further encouraging resistance to removal. The Wyandot were the last tribe to leave Ohio. Up to this point the Wyandot's experience parallels that of the most commonly told removal narrative of the Cherokee. An arduous process of negotiations violence and resistance colored the initial U.S. led removal. Yet, this was not the last removal of the Wyandot. They, alongside many of their other Ohio neighbors would contend with both a legacy and a future of removal.

## CHAPTER III

### “CONDEMNATION AND MERCY”: WYANDOT INDIANS AND SLAVERY IN KANSAS TERRITORY, 1844-1860.

After arrival in Kansas Territory, the Wyandot found themselves strangers in a strange land. Falling through a hole in the sky, they were forced to build a new world on the Turtle’s back. This time in Kansas they had come with old friends. In the 1840s Kansas Territory was Indian country. The Wyandot had purchased their reservation land from the Delaware, they bordered the Shawnee, Potawatomie, and multiple Native nations. In Kansas, they renewed their relationship with these nations and reestablished themselves again as the Keepers of the Council Fire, however, this was still new country. Situated on the intersection of the Missouri and Kansas rivers within miles of the state of Missouri, the Wyandot lived on an entirely new borderland. On the frontier of slavery, they were soon preoccupied with the practice as proponents, practitioners and, as active opponents. Individual Wyandot influenced how their world would look, slave or free.

This history was again dictated by the land, its people, and the historical circumstance they found themselves within. The Missouri River's east-west path cuts a clear line across the northern plains of North America. As white-Americans designed and executed their manifest destinies, this geographical denotation was a natural choice as symbol, guide, and destination. Its importance economically was indisputable. The land the Wyandot purchased would become some of the most valuable real-estate for the westward progress of white-settlers. On the surface the significance of this geography meant that the Wyandot had removed from valuable white-sought land in Ohio to valuable white-sought land in Kansas. However, that reading lacks the acknowledgement that the Wyandot had in part chosen their own destination. With economic and capitalistic foresight, the scouting party and voting council members made the best of their removal by seeking the most valuable and available land west of the Mississippi. Ultimately their choice of lands would back-fire. Not expecting to be coerced into removal by the United States a second time, the treaty of 1855 would again send the Wyandot into legal and political turmoil as debates over removal reignited. By 1867 a large percentage of the Wyandot were again forced to remove from the economically and strategically important land they occupied in Kansas Territory to a smaller allotment in Indian Territory.

Wyandot life in Kansas and their removal from this territory is better defined by the people involved than their removal from Ohio. Wyandot identity, unity, and political allegiance were challenged. Individual Wyandot held the choice first to cede their Wyandot citizenship in 1855. Then in 1867, removal to Indian Territory presented Wyandot people with a choice to remove or to remain in Kansas City, Kansas. During

their time in Kansas, the Wyandot were soon affected by the peoples that neighbored them. To the east lay Missouri – a slave society and plantation economy. And to the west lay the expansive Great Plains and Indian Country. Some Shawnee had already adopted black slaves at the time of Wyandot arrival. The choice to support, practice, or discourage slavery was the defining debate of their time in Kansas Territory. This debate was shaped by the individual cast of characters within the Wyandot nation, but it also was influenced by the white residents of Missouri and the fellow Indian residence of Kansas Territory.

Finally, the historical contexts of this region upon Wyandot arrival dictated both the challenges that they faced and the approaches the Wyandot made to solve them. Tearing apart the United States as a whole, the slavery debate thoroughly infiltrated Wyandot political and social lives. Some exploited this system for economic gain, while others preached from moral and religious high ground against its practice. The division of the Methodist Church nationally also affected the Wyandot as they divided their church into a pro-slavery and an anti-slavery congregation. American migration did not cease leading up to Bleeding Kansas. In fact, it reached record numbers. The Wyandot were heavily involved on both sides of this political fight to shape the future of this region and the nation. Last, the Wyandot were aware of the economic trends of this era. The importance of where the transcontinental railroad would originate was consistently on the minds of the political elites of this region. The Wyandot in turn attempted to take an allied group of Native peoples to form the Kansas Territory into a fully recognized U. S. state in order to secure the placement of the railroad in Wyandotte, Kansas. Historical circumstance created the opportunity for the Wyandot to become urban planners, capitalists, and slaveowners in the span of a handful of years. In short, the land, its

people, and the events of this era all shaped how the Wyandot were forced down the long path of multiple removals.

### A New World in Kansas-Territory

William Walker Jr. was born in Michigan territory in 1800. The first half of his life was spent in and around the Great Lakes region of North America. He was an educated man. He read voraciously, and was fluent in English, Latin, French, as well as a variety of Native American languages. Walker's father was a white American adopted into the Wyandot nation after his abduction early in his lifetime. He and his son both served as interpreters and negotiators for the Wyandot in their dealings with the U.S. government. William Walker Jr. was religious. He converted to Methodism sometime in his twenties, and read widely on issues of faith, once swearing that he was convinced that "Mahomet was a prophet."<sup>81</sup> During his early forties he and other members of the Wyandot nation negotiated their removal from their homelands in Ohio. Walker Jr. led the exploratory party west of the Mississippi to examine what lands were available. From 1842 through 1843, he helped lead his people southwest to what is today Kansas City, Kansas. Three years after his arrival, William Walker Jr. purchased a black-slave, saying, "Now Dorcas, you have a good and kind master."<sup>82</sup>

In 1844, Kansas Territory was Indian Country. Much of what is today the state of Kansas was the site of a rarely discussed removal. Indian removal did not only happen to

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<sup>81</sup> William Walker Jr. May 30, 1846 Entry in William Walker Jr.'s personal diary, William Walker Papers, William E. Connelly Collection, Kansas City, KS. – A majority of the primary sources this chapter originate from the William E. Connelly Collection. Connelly collected many documents pertaining to Wyandot history under the umbrella of the William Walker papers. Connelly was a local amateur historian who worked in the later nineteenth century. He personally consulted with William Walker Jr. prior to his death, and with the Walker family and other prominent Wyandots.

<sup>82</sup> William Walker Jr., January 1, 1847.

the Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek, Seminole, and Chickasaw in the South. Rather, Native peoples from north of the Ohio River, including the Wyandot, removed to territories west of the Mississippi in response to a variety of factors, including the encroachment of a hostile American population. In Kansas Territory momentous cultural and political events influenced the Wyandot, but they in turn affected change in their own community and at a national level. This community was not an isolated Indian population. Instead, the Wyandot were instrumental in the founding of Kansas City as a budding metropolis, and Kansas as a state. The Wyandot participated in and shaped the growing conflicts of this region. Complicating the traditional image of northern Indians, some Wyandot practiced chattel slavery.<sup>83</sup> The Wyandot, like much of the country, heatedly debated the morality and purpose of race-based slavery, eventually splitting their Methodist church. As a people they were not merely objects of the cultural and political debates of the era. Rather, the Wyandot played crucial roles in influencing political debates of the time, even going so far as to have William Walker Jr. nominated and elected as the disputed first provisional governor of the Kansas – Nebraska territory. He supported views on slavery and politics traditionally described as characteristically white and Southern. Yet, he was a Northern man, an American, and a Wyandot.

The history the Wyandot who removed to Kansas is still underrepresented in scholarly writing. Only in the last decade have historians such as John P. Bowes begun to

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<sup>83</sup> While a study specifically studying Wyandot slaveholding practices prior to their removal has yet to be found, they lived in a greater Indigenous society that practiced a form of slavery more akin to member replacement. These slaves would often be adopted into the family of their indigenous masters and were themselves indigenous people. Therefore, the race-based, chattel slavery some Wyandot participated in after their removal to Kansas Territory is unprecedented in their history. For a study that examines this Great Lakes society and its Indigenous slave practices see Brett, Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).



examine northern Indian removal as a unique history. Mary Stockwell has published several monographs on the Wyandot and Ohio Indians, which lead up to the series of removals in the 1830s and 1840s, but few scholars beyond Bowes have traced Ohio removals past the 1840s. While an entire chapter of his book *Exiles and Pioneers* (2007) is dedicated to covering William Walker Jr., the issue of slavery receives little attention. Slave-holding Indians is by no means a new topic. Scholars such as Tiya Miles have explored the controversial subject and have made great strides in analyzing race-relations between black and Native American, but her focus ignores northern Indians. Christina Snyder is another example of how this field continues to have a southern bias, as she explores the “American South” exclusively. While in Kansas, the Wyandot participated in the contentious debates over slavery. Historian Kristen Tegtmeier Oertel has highlighted the unique role Indians played in Bleeding Kansas; however, she does not narrow in on Wyandots’ opinions on slavery and does not contend with the struggles of identity this practice created. Her explanation of Indian-held slaves is a system of white-supremacy. This approach is logical, but it is certainly complicated by the examination of how the Wyandot debated slavery from within Indian country.<sup>84</sup>

While specialists of Wyandot history have not focused on cases of pro-slavery Wyandot, broader historians of Indian slaveholding have often used the Wyandot as

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<sup>84</sup> For Wyandots and other Ohio Indians during their removal see Mary Stockwell, *The Other Trail of Tears: The Removal of the Ohio Indians*, (Yardley: Westholme Publishing, 2014); And John P. Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017). For Northern Indians and their removal to Kansas-territory see John P. Bowes, *Exiles and Pioneers: Indians in the Trans-Mississippi West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). For Indians and Slavery see Tiya Miles, *Ties the Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). and Snyder, Christina. *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). For Race during Bleeding Kansas see Kristen Tegtmeier Oertel, *Bleeding Borders: Race, Gender, and Violence in Pre-Civil War Kansas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009).

examples for anti-slavery. Historian Christina Snyder, in her book *Great Crossing* (2017), briefly characterizes the Wyandot as opposed to slavery stating that “Northern Indians” were non-compliant with fugitive slave laws and unaffiliated with “African American Slavery.” The Wyandot specifically, she states, treated slavery as wholly unappealing as “they had little experience with African American slavery: their economies did not depend on it; their leaders did not practice it; their laws did not speak to it. In fact, several Wyandot leaders spoke out against the enslavement of African Americans, denouncing it as a foreign practice that violated their cultural sensibilities.”<sup>85</sup> Some Wyandot were wholly opposed to slavery. Lucy B. Armstrong, whom Snyder paraphrases in the above statement, felt as if slavery was incongruent with Indian identity. However, there remains an unexplored side of the Wyandot in Kansas as undoubtedly the Wyandot had experience as *both* anti-slavery advocates and slaveholders.

In 1842 a contingent of the Wyandot nation signed away their lands in Upper Sandusky, Ohio in exchange for lands in then Kansas Territory. By 1842 the Wyandot had already been significantly reduced in number and were scattered across a wide geographical area. A small number had moved to Canada, where there remains a recognized contingent of the Wyandot. Others had sold their lands or amalgamated into other indigenous nations or white society. The nation that traveled to Kansas was therefore merely a portion of what could be called the Wyandot.<sup>86</sup> Arriving in Kansas

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<sup>85</sup> Christina Snyder, *Great Crossing: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in the Age of Jackson*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 211.

<sup>86</sup> See Stockwell, *Ohio Trail of Tears*, and Bowes, *Land too Good for Indians*.

Territory the Wyandot soon became intimately involved in the political affairs of the area – principally the debate over slavery.<sup>87</sup>

Slavery: “May God in his infinite mercy forgive me.”<sup>88</sup>

The Wyandot soon became powerful actors in the Kansas-Missouri borderland, as the site of their removal placed them at the gateway into the burgeoning territory. But they were still new arrivals. The cultural heritage and social practices the Wyandot held in these first years after removal were all transplanted from their time in the northern United States. It is in this context that their racial practices are so intriguing. Why would a northern tribe so recently removed have some members adopt and practice race-based-slavery? While slavery had existed in the northern territories, the economic and political support of this institution was not as prevalent as Missouri. How quickly some Wyandot adopted slavery is troubled even further by their history in Ohio. In his diary entry in 1846, two years after his arrival in Kansas, William Walker Jr. states that the “Negro Question came up, the Council denied that any law prohibiting our negroes from emigrating to this country was passed.”<sup>89</sup> This reference to “Our negroes” is confusing because no indication exists that any Wyandot held slaves in Ohio. The closest they came to what could be labeled a form of slavery that northern tribes practiced was more a form of bondage and member replacement during times of war.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, Wyandot time in Ohio reflects a system of peaceful coexistence with black people within their territory. Both free and/or runaway slaves, had lived alongside the Wyandot on their reservation in

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<sup>87</sup> Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians*, 144.

<sup>88</sup> William Walker Jr., January 1, 1847 Entry in William Walker Jr.’s personal diary, William Walker Papers, William E. Connelly Collection, Kansas City, KS.

<sup>89</sup> William Walker Jr., March 31, 1846.

<sup>90</sup> Snyder, *Great Crossing*, 211.

Ohio. In fact, the first effective missionary to the Wyandot people was an African American man named John Stewart. His success with the Wyandot was so profound that he was granted special permission to preach by the Methodist Church and was a pioneer in their missionary efforts. John Stewart was one of the greatest influences on William Walker Jr. in his conversion.

This point is an interesting contradiction to one of the major subplots of slavery. In this case Christianity not only preceded the adoption of slavery but was introduced to the Wyandot population by a black man of the same race as the slaves that Walker later purchased. Religion and slavery became the primary contention between individual Wyandot during this period, and the two were inextricably tied for them. For all their history with slavery, the debate over this issue was framed in religious terms. This makes their history of conversion in Ohio by a free-black man incongruent with the decisions of Walker and other Wyandot slaveholders.

While in Upper Sandusky, the Wyandot co-existed with a small but notable population of free blacks. Both the school and the mission church that was built in Upper Sandusky were integrated. The presence of John Stewart would have been enough to suggest that the Wyandot had allowed black participation in their religious ceremonies, but the fact that they also utilized vital resources for the education of black children is telling.<sup>91</sup> The narrative of the Wyandot in Ohio is consistently one of harmonious race-relations with free-blacks. Their reservation and mission were a picture of diversity for

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<sup>91</sup> See biographical account of John Stewart, free-black missionary whose religious meetings were necessarily integrated. Rev. N.B.C. Love, *John Stewart, Missionary to the Wyandot* (New York: The Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1861). Also see - Finley, James B. *History of the Wyandott Mission, at the Upper Sandusky, Ohio* (Cincinnati: J.F. Wright and L. Swormstedt, 1840). On account of missionary school serving both Wyandot and black children.

this time, but what complicates this image is what happened very soon after their removal.

On New Year's Day 1847, less than three years after arriving in Kansas Territory, William Walker Jr. purchased a black slave for \$380 from the deceased estate of Missourian John Gipson.<sup>92</sup> Walker stated, "In Harrisonville I this day bought at public sale a female slave about 32 years of age named 'Dorcas.' If I have erred in this act, may God in his infinite mercy forgive me, though I feel condemnation for the act. I shall endeavor to come up to what was said by the auctioneer who sold her, who said when it was announced that I was the purchaser, 'Now Dorcas, you have a good and kind master.'" <sup>93</sup>

It is obvious that Walker felt significant trepidation. It is also evident that much of this reservation is derived from his religious conviction. He was unsure of the morality of this decision, but only to a point. He was dedicated enough to this choice to walk or ride the forty plus miles from his home in Wyandotte, Kansas to Harrisonville, Missouri. This trepidation also did not prevent him from later in this year writing to a man named "James Dunwoods" to make "him an offer for his slave Ben."<sup>94</sup> Here Walker at least attempted to purchase another black slave. He later references "our negro boy, Henry" in 1852.<sup>95</sup> Whether or not Henry was a slave, or free-black worker is unknown. This reference to Ben and Henry speaks to the system of slavery within the Wyandot's local

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<sup>92</sup> William Walker Jr., January 1, 1847.

<sup>93</sup> William Walker Jr., January 1, 1847.

<sup>94</sup> William Walker Jr., February 25, 1847.

<sup>95</sup> William Walker Jr., April 7, 1852.

area. Within three years of arrival, Walker had become an active participant in the slave trade of the Missouri-Kansas borderland.

Walker's motivation was multifaceted. Economically he stood to gain from the exploitive slave-labor. Only a small number of Wyandot held the capital necessary to enter this trade. Dorcas cost Walker a hefty fee at over three-hundred dollars. Yet, this is not the whole story. On the surface at least, Walker seemed eager to adopt white institutions. After all he was a Methodist, a member of the Masonic Lodge, a slave owner, and a one-time United States Government employee. But this does not fully explain why he purchased Dorcas. While his motivation cannot be known with any certainty, place surely played a major role. Walker not only lived on the edge of white society, but he lived in a society near other Indian slave-holders, notably the Shawnee. Individually, he stood to gain economically and socially, but his location on the borderland created the opportunity for this choice.<sup>96</sup> It is important to note that Walker is an outlier. Most of the Wyandot did not own slaves and many voiced opposition to those who did, but it is also clear that Walker was not an aberration. While not the norm, a significant number of his fellow Wyandot supported the institution of racial slavery.<sup>97</sup> This support contradicts the historiographical characterization of the Wyandot, whether or not these pro-slavery Wyandot ever owned slaves.

William Walker Jr. was not the only Wyandot, or Kansas-Territory Indian, to hold slaves. The best source to prove this is Walker's references to other slaves in the territory

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<sup>96</sup> Bowes, *Exiles and Pioneers*. -see chapter 5 on Shawnee slaveholding.

<sup>97</sup> Walker and all other accounts of the 1848 church split place the central dividing line between these two organizations as pro/anti slavery. Therefore, enough Wyandot supported slavery to fill the pews of a separate church and to swing the council vote of 1848 in favor of M.E. South.

and his notation of their masters. In his diary, Walker makes several entries that could easily have described life in the Antebellum South. During a cholera outbreak in 1851, which claimed the lives of numerous Wyandot, Walker cites the death of a “Mrs. Cheaut Eau’s negro, Waller.”<sup>98</sup> In December of 1852, the day after Christmas, Walker states that “old Connecticut (Walker’s cow) was found by our niggers.”<sup>99</sup> Walker alludes to aiding in assisting in capturing a fugitive slave who “absconded from his master in Platte City (MO).”<sup>100</sup> Then Walker cites a time when he required the assistance of another man’s slave as he “got Mr. Perry’s black boy, Elijah to drive.”<sup>101</sup> That same year Walker cited an instance in which “F.A.H.’s negro ran away . . . he and John Lynch gone in pursuit of him.”<sup>102</sup> It is reasonable to assume that F.A.H. is F.A. Hicks, another prominent Wyandot whom Walker later lists as being in favor of the Methodist Church South.<sup>103</sup> In sum, Walker describes throughout the late 1840s and early 1850s an area with access to slavery and a variety of elites engaged in this practice. The exact numbers of slave-holding Wyandot is unclear, but what is certain is that there was a “wealthy slave-holding class.”<sup>104</sup>

Walker’s descriptors of slaves in the Kansas-Missouri borderland is telling. In multiple instances he references runaway “negroes.”<sup>105</sup> There is very little institutional

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<sup>98</sup> William Walker Jr., August 4, 1851.

<sup>99</sup> William Walker Jr., December 26, 1852.

<sup>100</sup> William Walker Jr., February 29, 1848.

<sup>101</sup> William Walker Jr., April 19, 1848.

<sup>102</sup> William Walker Jr., January 28, 1848.

<sup>103</sup> What is also interesting about this man is that Walker previously cited a F.A. Hicks as visiting to talk about Abolition. It seems that Walker, and/or other factors were convincing enough to sway his opinion in favor of slavery as at the very least he is listed as being pro-M.E. South, and as this entry indicates may have owned slaves.

<sup>104</sup> William E. Connelly note on M.E. Church in in William Walker Jr.’s personal diary, William Walker Papers, William E. Connelly Collection, Kansas City, KS.

<sup>105</sup> Kristen Epps, *Slavery on the Periphery*. – She describes how the borderlands region held a small-scale, hyper-mobile slave system that was particularly susceptible to runaways.

evidence of how the practice of slavery was carried out in Wyandot country. There were no slave codes for Kansas-Territory as slavery technically was not legal at the time. The Wyandot council similarly did not publish any document on the treatment of slaves. William Walker Jr. and other sources describing the practice of slavery in Kansas did not reference any instance of whipping or punishments of any kind dealt to his slaves. However, this does not negate the fact that these few Wyandot held slaves and that slavery and violent coercion were inextricably intertwined. The evidence of slave resistance through escape is undeniable, meaning that these individual slaves in Kansas found their situation unbearable. Some Wyandot held similar racist views as the neighboring southern society, as can be seen in a piece of a poem by William Walker Jr.:

“Niggur Shambo runawy,  
Didn’t come back till Saturday.”<sup>106</sup>

Whether meant as a short verse to a song, or merely a rhyme he composed and felt worthy of notation in poetic stanzas, what is telling is that this verse appears on the same day as the entry about F.A.H.’s runaway “negro.”

Wyandot views of slavery were anything but uniform. During the intense debate over the eventual church split, prominent Wyandot J. M. Armstrong wrote a Preamble and Resolution to the Southern Methodist Convention. In this document he outlines several points he felt have been falsely asserted about the Wyandot. The very first resolution states – “Resolved, that the report that the Wyandotts are a set of abolitionists

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<sup>106</sup> William Walker Jr., January 28, 1848.



we regard as slanderous and without foundation in truth.”<sup>107</sup> It is clear by this document that John. M. Armstrong held no allegiance to abolition at this time. It is also clear that his defense is based on rumors or viable dissention from within the Wyandot community that had made it back to the Southern Convention. This group of Northern Indians held beliefs about slavery and race that defied conventional categorization. William Walker Jr. in 1847 acted upon his pro-slavery inclinations and purchased a slave. John M. Armstrong one year later attempted to stifle any rumor that the entirety of the Wyandot held pro-North sentiments despite his vote in 1848 to remain with the Northern Methodists.

It would be easy to assume that Armstrong and those he represents were strictly pro-slavery, but they voiced a hybridized political stance in this same document that contradicts both strictly southern or northern stances. Later in his list of resolutions Armstrong states,

4<sup>th</sup> That we believe that the question of slavery ought to be left to the people themselves. 5<sup>th</sup> Slavery in the abstract [paper torn] as morally wrong and a [paper torn] laws of God, yet we believe that it may exist, so modified by circumstances as to be not only justifiable but that immediate [sic]immanicipation would be morally wrong. 6<sup>th</sup> That we believe that territory already free from slavery ought to remain so.<sup>108</sup>

Armstrong’s fourth resolution is nothing short of an argument for popular sovereignty as he asserts that the people themselves should define their community’s slavery stance. An assertion that predated an official articulation by Stephen A. Douglas, whose Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 would contribute to the outbreak of war. In the fifth resolution

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<sup>107</sup> J.M. Armstrong “Address to the Indian Mission Conference: Preamble and Resolutions, 1848” William Walker Papers, William E. Connelly Collection, Kansas City, KS.

<sup>108</sup> J.M. Armstrong “Address to the Indian Mission Conference: Preamble and Resolutions, 1848”

Armstrong, echoes the religious doubts that William Walker Jr. did in 1847. While Armstrong was most likely asserting that slavery was morally wrong, he did take a firm stance that abolition would be in equal terms, “morally wrong.”<sup>109</sup> Then in the sixth resolution Armstrong takes a decidedly Free-Soiler stance by asserting that free-territories should remain so. At this time that meant Kansas. This stance would have been in direct contrast to that of William Walker Jr. who went on to support the pro-slavery contingent during Bleeding Kansas.

Therefore, this resolution complicates the understanding of Wyandot politics and their relationship to slavery. In one-page Armstrong and those he represented profess their loyalty to a Southern Democratic institution, propose a proto-Northern Democratic solution to the slavery issues, and assert a Republican Free-Soiler stance. This cosmopolitan outlook on the country’s most pressing issue belies simplification. The Wyandot were not wholly abolitionist. Neither were they unanimously pro-slavery; individual members held unique and politically relevant views. These opinions were also not limited to just the Wyandot. In this document Armstrong represented the Wyandot, “the Delaware, Shawnee, and others.”<sup>110</sup> Wyandotte, Kansas was still Indian Country.<sup>111</sup> All of these tribes at least in part held the complex and diverse political views voiced by Armstrong in this resolution.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> J.M. Armstrong “Address to the Indian Mission Conference: Preamble and Resolutions, 1848”

<sup>110</sup> J.M. Armstrong “Address to the Indian Mission Conference: Preamble and Resolutions, 1848”

<sup>111</sup> Bowes, *Exiles and Pioneers*. – He goes into some depth on Shawnee slaveholding and briefly acknowledges Walker’s participation see chapter 5.

<sup>112</sup> A classic depiction of the political descent into Civil War Michael S. Green, *Politics and America in Crisis: The Coming of the Civil War* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010). Also see Eric Foner. *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

The Wyandot's politically and religiously motivated discussion of slavery reached beyond the Wyandot's intra-tribal debate. Rev. James Wheeler, a critic of Wyandot removal from Upper Sandusky, directly communicated to William Walker Jr. about his purchase of Dorcas. Here he resolutely condemned this act as an "unfeeling crime."<sup>113</sup> In fact, Wheeler alludes to a broader movement of the Wyandot who "commenced a crusade against abolitionism."<sup>114</sup> However, writing only five months after Walker had purchased Dorcas, setting off the controversy of slavery within Wyandotte, Kansas, Wheeler noted a change in sentiment among this contingent. He stated that many realized "that the law of MO. Compelled none of the people to buy slaves; even if it did, it would help ease none, for we were not citizens of MO, but lived in a nation where slave laws and slavery has no being."<sup>115</sup> Wheeler's account of the Wyandot political nuances re-characterizes this debate in several ways as they were reluctant to adhere to any stance that embraced a concept they deemed abolition, while also they appeared deeply concerned with slavery's legal status in their state. Therefore, Wheeler represented the larger white-American community as though they were fully aware of and commented on the Wyandot's involvements in slavery.

The history of the Wyandot involvement with slavery cannot be told without the history of their removal. Wheeler's letter made it clear that the legal definition of slavery in Missouri played significant role in how the Wyandot reacted to the institution. The Wyandot likely did not practice chattel-slavery in Ohio and could not have if they wanted to. In their new homes along the Missouri border, slavery suddenly became an option for

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<sup>113</sup> Letter from James Wheeler, May 7, 1847. William Walker Papers, William E. Connelly Collection, Kansas City, KS.

<sup>114</sup> Letter from James Wheeler, May 7, 1847.

<sup>115</sup> Letter from James Wheeler, May 7, 1847.

the wealthy and prominent land holders like Walker. What is unclear is the role of the surrounding influences on the Wyandot.<sup>116</sup> Wheeler's statement seems to insinuate that in the early years of settlement some contingent of Wyandot thought that they were subject to Missouri law, and that as Missouri held slavery to be legal, they were "compelled" to allow race-based slavery in their territory.<sup>117</sup> It is safe to assume that William Walker Jr., who was party to negotiations and the legal determination of the Wyandot's status in Kansas Territory, would not have felt compelled by Missouri law to purchase his slaves nor to allow its presence in Indian Country. Additionally, Wyandot who espoused anti-slavery sentiments realized this distinction as Lucy B. Armstrong states "we reside west of the state of Missouri where the compromise act forever excludes slavery."<sup>118</sup> However, the fact that at least some portion of the Wyandot held this assumption is evidence to the effect of removal and the cultural and political confusion it brought. The exact legal parameters of their removal treaty were more than likely unknown to most of the Wyandot.<sup>119</sup> Placed so close to the Missouri border it is reasonable to assume that the legal barrier between Indian country and Missouri remained opaque to many residents. Slavery was not an accidental outcome of removal's confusion. But this cultural displacement certainly had an effect on the willingness of some to initially accept a minority's involvement in slavery.

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<sup>116</sup> See Epps, *Slavery on the Periphery*. And Oertel, *Bleeding Borders*. For analysis of borderland region.

<sup>117</sup> Letter from James Wheeler, May 7, 1847, William Walker Papers.

<sup>118</sup> Lucy B. Armstrong. Letter to Unknown, January 10, 1849. Lucy B. Armstrong Papers. Kansas Historical Society, Lawrence.

<sup>119</sup> Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians*. – Bowes goes into significant detail on the process of negotiating removal. In several instances a small number of Wyandot were convinced to sign a treaty which affected the entire nation, often without the full deliberation of the council or the consent of the entirety of the people.

The negotiated removal of the Wyandot nation transplanted them from a society without slaves to a borderland with a slave society. The census of 1850 clearly denotes the wide disparity between locations the Wyandot entered. In Wyandot, Ohio the 1850 census denotes a racial make-up of 11,145 whites and 49 free-blacks. While in Jackson County, Missouri, the demographics of a similarly sized location are in stark contrast with 10,990 whites, 41 free-blacks and 2,969 slaves. The Wyandot went from a location wholly absent of slavery with only a 0.4% black population to bordering-Missouri which had 21% slave population. One in five people the Wyandot would have encountered in their frequent trips to and from Missouri would have been black-slaves. The Wyandot existed on a borderland between Indian country and a slave society.<sup>120</sup>

Yet, it would be misleading to assume that the Wyandot were at all coerced into practicing slavery by their proximity to a slave-state. The Wyandot continued to live in Indian country. The county that they established was clearly and legally separate from Missouri law. Walker and the others of the slave holding class certainly would have known this distinction, but they brought slaves into Kansas Territory anyway. Whether for economic gain or social prestige, these legally independent Wyandot purchased black slaves and brought them into Indian country.

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<sup>120</sup> US Census Bureau, *The Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*. J.D. B. DeBow Superintendent of the United States Census, (Washington D.C.: Robert Armstrong Public Printer, 1853). – Wyandot, Ohio is the county that contained the Grand reservation and the community that the Wyandot established there, Upper Sandusky. Jackson County, Missouri is the adjacent county to Wyandotte, Kansas.

-The term slave society as I use it within this thesis originates with Ira Berlin's influential work *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). Using Berlin's definition and the statistical data presented within this thesis it is clear that the Wyandot moved from a location in the north, which had never acculturated into a slave society, to the borderland with a slave society. Southeastern Missouri's economic production was heavily influenced the institution of slavery.

Class distinctions among the Wyandot were not readily perceivable in their recorded time in Ohio, but during the legal transition to their Kansas lands, the United States established the capital foundation for the slave holding elites. Under Article 14 of the 1842 Treaty with the Wyandot the “United States agree to grant by patent in fee-simple to each of the following-named persons, and their heirs all of whom are Wyandotts by blood or adoption, one section of land of six hundred and forty acres . . . viz: Silas Armstrong, John M. Armstrong, Mathew R. Walker, William Walker, Joel Walker, George J. Clark, John T. Walker, James Rankin, Isaiah Walker.” And an additional section to “the following chiefs and councilors: Francis A. Hicks Doctor Grey Eyes, Warpole, John Hicks.” In addition to the supplemental and significantly larger grants of land to these select members, William Walker and Joel Walker received “the sum of two hundred and fifty dollars” and to John M. Armstrong “the sum of one hundred and fifty dollars for services rendered as interpreters.” Finally, for property damaged in the war of 1812 the Walker family received “the sum of three thousand dollars.”<sup>121</sup>

The reasoning behind the additional payments and allotments is shrouded in mystery. Undoubtedly, the Walker’s as some of the principal negotiators with the United States for this treaty would have been easy targets for greasing the wheels of removal. Furthermore, the various other names listed as recipients of larger land allotments were key political and religious leaders within the nation. Upon arrival to Kansas Territory, the Armstrongs, Clarks, Walkers, and Rankins were all significantly more financially prosperous than their fellow citizens. While not all practiced slavery after reaping the

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<sup>121</sup> “Treaty with the Wyandot, 1842” *Indian Affairs” Laws and Treaties Vol. II., 504.*

benefits of this treaty, this extraneous money and land was the seed for the adoption of slavery by the Wyandot.

Wyandot territory was not a slave society. The numbers of slaves they held between the years of 1847 and 1860 is not wholly determinable, but it was miniscule compared to the thousands held mere miles to the east. One estimate in 1849 by Lucy B. Armstrong puts the number of slaves at twenty, but this number invariably changed over the 1850s.<sup>122</sup> This small number does not diminish the importance of the fact that some Wyandot held slaves. In his diary Walker details the numbers he counts among the pro-south party in a vote held by the Wyandot council on the issue of church affiliation. On September 1, 1848 he named “Silas Armstrong, W. Walker, M.R. Walker, J.D. Brown, F.A. Hicks, David Young, and others” as constituting the pro-South party. While he counted “J.M. Armstrong, G.I. Clark, and Esqr. Gray Eyes” as pro-North.<sup>123</sup> This election, which was set to determine the Wyandot stance on siding with the pro-slavery Southern Methodist church or remaining with the Northern Methodists, swung in favor of the South proving the substantial numbers of slavery’s supporters among the Wyandot in 1848.

The presence of slaves in Kansas, and slave-holding northern Indians in the territories re-define historians’ understandings of this era. Slave-holding Indians were not solely from the South.<sup>124</sup> Kansas’s contentious debate over the legality and practice of

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<sup>122</sup> Lucy B. Armstrong. Letter to Unknown, January 10, 1849.

<sup>123</sup> William Walker Jr., September 1, 1848.

<sup>124</sup> Bowes, *Exiles and Pioneers*. – shows that a number of tribes outside of the Wyandot, primarily the Shawnee, were slaveholders. Furthermore, a vast majority of secondary sources focus on southern tribes slaveholding practices. These include Strum, Circe. *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002., Miles, Tiya. *Ties the Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press,

owning slaves was not discussed solely by whites. Dorcas was the first slave recorded to be purchased and transported into Kansas-territory by a Wyandot Indian; her story, while slim in historical record, is of great importance in illuminating the complexities of the pre-war Kansas-Missouri borderland.

The election held on September 1, 1848 to determine the Wyandot's religious affiliation had significant implications outside of its racial connotation. In many ways this church schism was more important and frequently discussed than Walker or any elite Wyandot's physical slave-holding. The church's split played a crucial role in the history of the Wyandot and that of Antebellum America. The Wyandot's experience proves that they were not isolated members of a reservation society sheltered from the winds of change. Instead, like their encounter with slavery, they were subject to and helped navigate the major events of the time including the great split between Northern and Southern Methodist churches.

Schism: "Religious dissention in full fruiting"<sup>125</sup>

The Wyandot had a history with Methodism that predated their removal to Kansas Territory. In 1817 the first Methodist missionary, an African American man named John Stewart, made his way west to minister to Indigenous peoples. His efforts were viewed as a substantial success as the Methodist mission became a permanent institutional fixture of Wyandot life. Rev. James B. Finley took over Stewart's mission in the early 1820s. In rapid succession Finley listed roughly half of the Wyandot population in Upper Sandusky

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2005)., Haliburton, R. *Red Over Black: Black Slavery Among the Cherokee Indian* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977). To name only a few.

<sup>125</sup> William Walker Jr., April 19, 1848.



as members of his church. He then established a school, church, and grist-mill. Finley was against removal as he saw significant progress in his missionary efforts in Ohio. However, life in Ohio for the majority of Wyandot did not last.<sup>126</sup>

In Ohio, the principal opponent to Methodist-Christianity was the Wyandot's own traditional religious practitioners. While Finley noted the continued existence of tribal feasts and dances he spent much more time writing about the successes he and his compatriots orchestrated in Ohio.<sup>127</sup> While it is necessary to incorporate a level of ambiguity when addressing the Wyandot's 'conversion', it is clear that by 1844 the principal religious divisions among the Wyandot were not between traditional Wyandot beliefs and Christianity but were between the North and South factions of the Methodist schism.<sup>128</sup> In what is today Kansas City, Kansas the Wyandot established a Methodist church whose structure remains to this day. Their congregation arrived in Kansas-territory formally united. Yet in the short years after 1844 the divisions along the issue of slavery and church alliance became paramount. By September 1, 1848, only four years after first establishing the community that would become Kansas City, Kansas, the pro-slavery faction of the Wyandot voted to re-align with the M.E. Church South, thereby splitting the Wyandot church north and south as a majority of the Wyandot continued to worship in the original north-affiliated church they had established in 1844.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Bowes, *Land too Good for Indians*; and Charles C. Cole, *Lion of the Forest: James B. Finley, Frontier Reformer* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1994).

<sup>127</sup> James B. Finley, *History of the Wyandott Mission, at the Upper Sandusky, Ohio*.

<sup>128</sup> Salisbury, *Embracing Ambiguity*.

<sup>129</sup> William Walker Jr., September 1, 1848.

Historians have noted this church-split as a major event in Wyandot history in Kansas but have offered few sufficient explanations.<sup>130</sup> There has been a tendency in this history to downplay the role of slavery in the Wyandot and broader Indigenous society of Kansas. While not a wide-spread practice, the opinions on slavery served to divide members of the same community as well as unify Indians and whites over a common issue. William E. Connelly, document compiler and local historian of Kansas City, Kansas maintained that “slave-holding” was “foreign to every Wyandot custom and repugnant to the Wyandot mind.”<sup>131</sup> However, he even acknowledged that attitudes on slavery split the church as he states later on that “the more wealthy slave-holding class went with the church, south, but a majority of the people always remained in the M.E. Church.”<sup>132</sup> Connelly here attributed slave-holding and religious dissenters as a class-issue. This analysis is partially accurate. As with white slave societies of the Antebellum South, slave ownership was almost exclusively an elite practice. However, that does not necessarily translate to universal abolitionist sympathy among non-elites. What is more likely is that William Walker Jr. and the prominent Wyandot he listed as his compatriot supporters of the southern church were joined in sympathy by at least a small number of unlisted Wyandot. However, a majority of the Wyandot continued in their original

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<sup>130</sup> For the most comprehensive analysis on Wyandot church split see Norwood, Frederick A. “Strangers in a Strange Land: Removal of the Wyandot Indians.” *Methodist History* 13, no. 3 (April 1975): 45-60. *America: History & Life*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 6, 2017), 12. – Norwood places the cause for this church split on the overarching split between North and South conventions. He does not actively examine how the Wyandot’s own participation in the institution of slavery contributed to this split. He also claims that after the vote in 1844, the Wyandot were thereafter wholly aligned with M.E. church South which is not accurate.

<sup>131</sup> William E. Connelly note on Entry 174 in William Walker Jr.’s personal diary, William Walker Papers, William E. Connelly Collection, Kansas City, KS.

<sup>132</sup> William E. Connelly note on Entry 174.

northern-affiliated church.<sup>133</sup> Therefore, the split in the Wyandot church is due to more complex reasons than merely class-division.<sup>134</sup>

The Wyandot church did not split overnight; instead the divisions that grew between those who would leave and those who would stay ruminated for four years before erupting in the September 1, 1848 vote. As early as May 8, 1846 Walker was having intense personal debates with other members of the Wyandot nation. F.A. Hicks came to Walker's house with the explicit purpose of discussing "church matters, abolition, politics etc."<sup>135</sup> From the beginning, the slavery question was intermingled consistently with that of religion and politics. Wealthy Wyandot like Walker, Hicks, and Armstrong held varied views not defined by their class. Much like the United States at this time, the Wyandot were divided by the political, religious, and social issues of the day. The debate over slavery infected all parts of the Wyandot's personal and public lives.

The church split functionally separated the Wyandot into two parties: those in favor of slavery and the right to hold slaves, and those who opposed. The religious rhetoric of the Methodist church schism was paired with the political contention of the day – slavery.<sup>136</sup> It would be too simplistic to define the oppositional party as abolitionist, but those were the descriptors used by Walker. In counting election results for the Wyandot national council, he denotes certain members such as G.I. Clark as

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<sup>133</sup> Lucy B. Armstrong. Letter to Unknown, January 10, 1849.

<sup>134</sup> Connelly, note on Walker Diary, May 8, 1846.

<sup>135</sup> William Walker Jr., May 8, 1846.

<sup>136</sup> See - Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). – for the influence of religious rhetoric on the political battles leading to Civil War.

“abolitionist.”<sup>137</sup> In practice, Walker's notation appears like any election ballot, denoting the party affiliation of the candidate next to their name. What is unique is that Walker only identified this affiliation if the candidate was an abolitionist. In his mind this certainly was a detractor, however this does not mean that Walker rejected Clark or Hicks as harshly as the South rejected the North's abolitionists. There was no Civil War among the Wyandot, but there were political and religious divisions.<sup>138</sup>

To a large degree the religious message that the Wyandot heard on Sundays was out of their direct control. The extensive religious marketplace of modern-day America had not yet emerged on the Missouri-Kansas borderland. While the Wyandot exercised some freedom in their decision to form two Methodist churches, choice beyond that was extremely limited. The individual preachers that were assigned by the Methodist conference for either church could hold different political views than the members of his congregation. This system seems to have contributed to the religious turmoil of the later 1840s and 1850s for the Wyandot people as members of each side, North and South, wrote to their conventions requesting different preachers. Complaining of one such assignment Walker states that “Mr. James Garvey, the preacher sent by the Ohio annual Conference” intended to “preach Abolitionism.”<sup>139</sup> Still connected to the Ohio Conference that the Wyandot had become members of in Upper Sandusky Ohio, Garvey and the other preachers for the North-affiliated church during these years carried with them northern political persuasions. It is notable that Garvey arrived only three months

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<sup>137</sup> William Walker Jr., August 17, 1849.

<sup>138</sup> William E. Connelly, *Provisional Government of Nebraska Territory*. – references Walker's negative opinion of secession. Abelard Guthrie is also cited to have sided with the Union. Individual members of the Wyandot nation may have fought on both sides, but there is stronger evidence for active involvement on the Union side.

<sup>139</sup> William Walker Jr., December 1, 1848.

after the Wyandot voted to ally with the Methodist Church South, yet Walker continued to actively participate in the ongoing actions of the church he and others had separated from. While the pro-South members were a minority, their numbers were significant enough to sway a council vote and to populate the pews with enough members to warrant the convention in Louisville to send a minister. The original Methodist church they established continued to be the primary seat of religious influence for the Wyandot despite the efforts of the pro-slavery party.

Tensions did not plateau after the September 1, 1848 vote. Rather, they continued to boil in the growing climate of division in early 1850s Kansas. On its fourth anniversary Walker ranted on the continued march of “preachers of the Northern Methodist church prowling around on this frontier” as “the most contemptible, hypocritical, canting set of fellows that ever-disgraced Christianity.”<sup>140</sup> As Walker’s rhetoric increased in hatred so too did the political climate of Wyandotte, Kansas. The Wyandot lived on a borderland. Missouri, a slave state, held one of its largest population centers just across the river. As what has now been termed Bleeding Kansas erupted, the Wyandot were at the epicenter of a political earthquake. They were active participants in the political turmoil of this time and just as they had undergone religious divisions over the issue of slavery, in the 1850s they also actively participated in the divisive political fight over pro/anti-slavery status of Kansas Territory.

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<sup>140</sup> William Walker Jr., September 1, 1852.

Bleeding Kansas: “I long to be with them in the contests with the infernal abolitionists”<sup>141</sup>

The 1850s was fraught with violence and geographically-determined political tension in Wyandot territory. In many ways the Wyandot’s territory at the intersection of the Kansas and Missouri rivers was the territory’s gateway and the Wyandot were the gatekeepers. The rapid influx of political radicals merely exacerbated the seeds of dissention already planted in the 1840s. This turmoil divided the Wyandot along political, class and racial lines. Therefore, it is of no surprise that the Wyandot not only participated in the political actions of this era but were also principal actors on this stage.<sup>142</sup> The actions of John Brown and his counterparts may have commanded headlines, and dominate textbooks, but this land was still Indian country.<sup>143</sup> The Wyandot helped determine the outcome of Bleeding Kansas and were a small but important part in the history of how the United States entered the Civil War.

Wyandot politics was anything but united. Walker and his party, largely consisting of the elite Wyandot, matched political wits with those he termed abolitionists like C.I. Clark and John M. Armstrong. This political battle extended beyond tribal politics. Walker entered the national stage of politics as a contested first provisional governor of Kansas-Nebraska territory in 1853.<sup>144</sup> Walker was an ardent Democrat in

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<sup>141</sup>Moses Camden, Letter to William Walker October 15, 1855. William Walker Papers, William E. Connelly Collection, Kansas City, KS.

<sup>142</sup> Oertel, *Bleeding Borders*, - she alludes to the crucial importance of Indian involvement in Bleeding Kansas throughout her work.

<sup>143</sup> Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty! Fifth Brief Edition*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2017), 386. – In this textbook used by Oklahoma State University and many other colleges and universities across the nation, Foner’s discussion of Bleeding Kansas makes no mention of Indian people of any nation and their land and political actions leading up to the Civil War.

<sup>144</sup> “Preamble and Resolutions on the Provisional Government of Nebraska Territory” ed. By William E. Connelly. *Provisional Government of Nebraska Territory*, (Lincoln: State Journal Company, 1899).

favor of slavery and was supported by the pro-slavery factions of Missouri politics, but Armstrong and other Wyandot held vastly different ideas. John M. Armstrong spoke against the pro-slavery party, and his sister Lucy B. Armstrong expressed a keen disgust of all Wyandot slave-holders.<sup>145</sup> It would be inaccurate to claim that the Wyandot as a group held any singular political ideology as members on both sides expressed complex and varied opinions influenced by the atmosphere of Bleeding Kansas.

William Walker Jr. was actively involved in bringing in the so-called Border Ruffians. In at least one instance in 1855, he held correspondence with a W.F. Moses, who stated in a letter addressed to Walker that he is ready to hang the abolitionists in Kansas “higher than [sic]hayman.”<sup>146</sup> Moses thanked Walker for the opening of his home to his compatriots as he regretted not being able to come due to an illness. Moses expressed deep remorse that he could not “be with them in the contests with the infernal abolitionists”<sup>147</sup> Walker welcomed and assisted the pro-slavery party in their effort to incorporate Kansas and Nebraska as slave states. Other Wyandot responded differently.

While divided on the issue of slavery within the territory it seems that the Wyandot were united in their desire to incorporate Kansas-Nebraska territory into the United States. In many regards this was motivated by business. The Wyandot, and the surrounding local tribes saw the economic opportunity in being owners of the real-estate upon which the gateway to the west and the railroad-hub for the proposed trans-

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<sup>145</sup> Lucy B. Armstrong. Letter to Unknown, January 10, 1849. Lucy B. Armstrong Papers. Kansas Historical Society, Lawrence. And J.M. Armstrong “Address to the Indian Mission Conference: Preamble and Resolutions, 1848” William Walker Papers, William E. Connelly Collection, Kansas City, KS.

<sup>146</sup> Moses Camden, Letter to William Walker October 15, 1855. William Walker Papers, William E. Connelly Collection, Kansas City, KS. – this is a biblical reference to the story of Ester (Ester 7:10), in which King Xerxes hangs Haman for his proposed plan to eradicate the Jews, Ester’s people.

<sup>147</sup> Moses Camden, Letter to William Walker October 15, 1855.

continental project lay. While northerners hoped for the railroad to span from Chicago or Council Bluffs, Iowa, many Missouri politicians pushed for Kansas City. Walker and the Wyandot understood this would be improbable if Kansas Territory remained Indian country. Economic motivations, therefore, explain many of the Wyandot's political actions on the national level during the 1850s. Their plan to capitalize on this economic opportunity was to elect a provisional government that incorporated Kansas and Nebraska under a single territory open to white-settlement. The proposed provisional government of 1853 held members of both the pro and anti-slavery factions within the Wyandot. The failure of this plan subsequently led to a controversial and unique treaty in 1855. This treaty redefined Wyandot identity further dividing this nation.<sup>148</sup>

To encourage the railroads development and placement as well as to sponsor economic growth in their territory, the Wyandot and other Kansas tribes proposed that the Nebraska territory be incorporated and recognized as an official U.S. territory in 1853. Without any pretext of being anything other than a ploy for the railroads, their provisional government's preamble and resolutions explicitly detailed several instructions on "the plan for the construction of a railroad to connect the Mississippi Valley and Pacific Ocean."<sup>149</sup> However, they carefully included language which did not surrender Indian land-ownership stating, "that while we earnestly desire to see this territory organized, and become home of the white man, we as earnestly disclaim all intention or desire to infringe upon the rights of the Indians holding lands."<sup>150</sup> Cognizant of the potential benefits of being the railroad gateway to the west, the Wyandot united a

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<sup>148</sup> See map in Figure 1.

<sup>149</sup> "Preamble and Resolutions on the Provisional Government of Nebraska Territory" ed. By William E. Connelly. *Provisional Government of Nebraska Territory*, (Lincoln: State Journal Company, 1899), 45.

<sup>150</sup> Connelly, "Preamble and Resolutions on the Provisional Government of Nebraska Territory.", 46.



coalition of like-minded nations to cosign this plan, but they did not desire assimilation, and were painfully aware of what white infringement could do. While Walker and other wealthy Wyandot participated in historically white-institutions, within the language of this proposal, these nations consistently protected their right to property and sovereignty, measures Walker approved. These resolutions named Walker Governor, and C.I. Clark, earlier denoted as abolitionist by Walker, as secretary. This proposal reached Washington and was subsequently rejected, but not without debate.

The 1853 plan had supporters largely from the moderate and southern parties who favored Kansas City as the starting point for the railroad.<sup>151</sup> While this plan failed, it proves that the Wyandot were at the center of a national debate over territorial incorporation and railroad expansion. Traditional histories of Bleeding Kansas have failed to realize the importance of Kansas-Nebraska being Indian country and the role the Indians played in its contentious history.<sup>152</sup> Despite the economic importance of the railroad and this territory's legal status, the true issue for Bleeding Kansas was slavery, and on this issue, they were not unified.

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<sup>151</sup> John P. Bowes, *Exiles and Pioneers*, 178. – Bowes provides the most in depth or the scarce secondary sources which delve into the proposal of 1853. While Bowes goes into more depth than I do here, the principal source of reference is still Connelly's transcription of the "Preamble and Resolutions on the Provisional Government of Nebraska Territory"

<sup>152</sup> Traditional histories of Bleeding Kansas include David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-186*. (New York: Harper Colophon, 1976). and Bruce Levine, *Half Slave and Half Free: The Roots of the Civil War*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005). – in each of these, the political divisions between North and South remain the principal focus but mentions of Native Americans in Bleeding Kansas are omitted. Oertel, Kristen Tegtmeier. *Bleeding Borders: Race, Gender, and Violence in Pre-Civil War Kansas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009). – Her historiographical section within the Introduction displays how traditional histories have ignored this factor in Bleeding Kansas. Oertel does an excellent job incorporating Indians into this narrative. This paper examines in more depth the Wyandot specifically, and focuses more on Indian slave-holding than Oertel does.

Slavery was not practiced by whites alone. The fact that some Indians held black slaves can no longer be challenged. Yet, Indian slaveholding remains a controversial issue.<sup>153</sup> Lucy B. Armstrong and others called into question the Indianness of those who practiced slavery. Its infection into their society was blamed on Euro-American influence or on the tainted blood of its practitioners. William Walker Jr. was a prime candidate for these attacks as his father was a white American, adopted by the Wyandot in the late eighteenth-century. However, men like Walker clung to their identity as Wyandot despite these attacks.<sup>154</sup>

Lucy B. Armstrong voiced this sentiment in 1849. She stated in a letter pleading for a Northern Methodist missionary, that slavery has had “a very bad affect upon the *real* Indian.”<sup>155</sup> She and those of her political affiliation felt as if slavery was antithetical to every tenet of Wyandot custom. Walker, Hicks and any other slave-holding Wyandot were explained away as being not truly Wyandot. The mixed-blood nature of several of the elite families made this argument especially stinging. Yet, at this stage in their history, very few of the Wyandot families remained purely of Wyandot ancestry. Furthermore, this rebuttal to slavery is especially complicated by the fact that Lucy’s own relative Silas Armstrong was a principal ally to Walker in his pro-slavery faction. This

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<sup>153</sup> This controversy can be seen in Tiya Mile’s Introduction to *Ties that Bind*, xiv. Here she accounts of how “in the view of many,” Doll’s life was “an unspeakable thing.” Even while publicly speaking “a respected Indian Elder ... impressed on me her strong desire that I cease speaking about this subject,”(xv). This controversy goes beyond research suppression. Chad Smith’s administration of the Cherokee nation saw the rekindling of controversial debate over the admission of Freedmen listed on the Dawes Rolls. See – Frank Morris. “Cherokee Tribe Faces Decision on Freedmen.” *NPR: Morning Edition*. (February 21, 2007). And Jim Myers, “Ex-Chief: Cherokee Reviving Racism” *Tulsa World* September 29, 2007.

<sup>154</sup> Walker was an avid amateur Native American historian publishing multiple articles and histories on the Wyandot people and his family’s role within this nation. While his attempts at entering U.S. politics were largely unsuccessful, he remained an active participant in the tribal council prior to and after the 1855 treaty. Many of his descendant including Isiah Walker continued to maintain their tribal identity and would receive allotments from the U.S. government in Oklahoma in the 1870s.

<sup>155</sup> Lucy B. Armstrong. Letter to Unknown, January 10, 1849.

conflict over identity played out on the national stage as some Wyandot made the transition to United States citizenship.

In 1855 six Wyandot - Tauromee, Silas Armstrong, George I. Clark, Joel Walker, and Mathew Mudeater - signed a treaty with the United States government which gave any Wyandot who chose the option to forego their rights and privileges as members of the Wyandot nation, accept an allotment of land from the tribal reserve, and be entered as an United States citizen.<sup>156</sup> It is no coincidence that this treaty was negotiated and signed only a year after the Kansas-Nebraska act opened up settlement of Kansas Territory to whites officially. The borders between white and Indian country were quickly blurring. The Walker brothers, and the other proponents of the 1853 treaty anticipated this rapid influx of settlement but perhaps underestimated the intense effect it would have upon their sovereignty. This decision was not met with approval in all Wyandot circles. The relinquishment of tribal land, nationality, and political allegiance pitted the Wyandot with a difficult choice between identities as Wyandot or American.

This treaty effectively divided the Wyandot into two camps, those who would sign and relinquish their rights in exchange for sole ownership of an allotment and citizenship, and those who maintained their tribal affiliation. In a sense this treaty is the continuation of the removal process that began prior to 1842. Continually and repeatedly Euro-American treaties were signed promising the Wyandot sovereignty on their lands in perpetuity, and repeatedly these treaties were violated, renegotiated, or ignored. This was

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<sup>156</sup> “Treaty with the Wyandot 1855” *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. II.*, 677. – It is of significant note that this treaty proposed a system of land assignment extraordinarily similar to the 1887 Dawes Act. This proves that the allotment was a concept long in the making and was not initiated in 1887, rather the United States already had a history of breaking apart communally shared land.

not the final treaty negotiated by the Wyandot, but it highlights an end of a unified legal identity. Already multiple times removed from their land, some were removed from being legally Wyandot.<sup>157</sup>

It would be a mistake to color this treaty as solely a white creation. Walker and other Wyandot had in 1853 “warmly favored white occupation” in the territory.<sup>158</sup> This sentiment was carried on through the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and was in part a motivating factor for this 1855 treaty. Without the sale of land to white owners within the Wyandot reserve, Kansas City, Kansas would certainly not have urbanized at the pace it did during the latter half of the nineteenth-century. Additionally, the treaty of 1855 was a precursor to the second half of the 1850s for the Wyandot. Since the 1840s, they had been involved in the debate over slavery and its legality/morality. After 1855, some Wyandot were now legal U.S. citizens and increasingly new residents of Wyandot country were white Americans. Therefore, this treaty effectively Americanized Wyandot country despite the resistance of those who maintained their Wyandot identity.

In the later 1850s the contentious debate of slavery and its political effect continued to boil. William Walker Jr. made a speech on the eve of the Civil War denouncing any thought of secession but still pledging his vote to a Democratic candidate.<sup>159</sup> Connelly asserts that Walker freed his slaves sometime prior to the beginning of the Civil War, ending his and the Wyandot’s involvement in that institution. However, despite the Wyandot’s short history with slavery, constituting only twelve

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<sup>157</sup> Bowes, *Land too Good for Indians*. And Stockwell, *Ohio Trail of Tears*.

<sup>158</sup> William Walker Jr. “Notes on the early history of Nebraska” in William E. Connelly. *Provisional Government of Nebraska Territory*, 58.

<sup>159</sup> Undated Political Speech. William Walker Papers, William E. Connelly Collection, Kansas City, KS.

years, it was a defining characteristic for this generation of Wyandot. They participated in and were influenced by the surrounding culture and are crucial to any history of Bleeding Kansas.

“A low muttering thunder”<sup>160</sup>

The historical record is often silent regarding individual slaves. Dorcas is no exception. The only mentions of her name are in her owner’s diary and the bill of sale at Harrisonville’s auction. How she felt, likely in 1859, when she was freed is unknown. By this time, she would have been forty-four. Connelly asserts from oral histories he collected that she had married, potentially another Kansas slave, or even the mysterious Ben that Walker attempts to buy. What is certain is the importance of the history she represents. Dorcas was a slave, illegally brought into Kansas Territory by a Wyandot owner. She was not alone. In addition to those Wyandot who bought slaves, Shawnee elites also openly practiced race-based slavery in Kansas-territory in the decades prior to the Civil War.<sup>161</sup> Dorcas’s life proves that Indian peoples, peoples who did not originate from the South, could become a society with slaves. Her life also proves that the site of Wyandot removal held immense significance. If the Wyandot were not removed to the Kansas-Missouri borderland, then it is likely true that no Wyandot would have held black-slaves. While living in a borderland with a slave-society influenced the Wyandot, they still lived in Indian country. The Wyandot participated dynamically in the political,

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<sup>160</sup> Undated Political Speech. – This quote is Walker characterizing the coming Civil War. This would have been within a year of his release of Dorcas. Walker, ever an astute political observer, saw the winds of change at the eve of this conflict and while remaining a democrat, he was staunchly against secession. He was able to see before many, perhaps because of his involvement with Bleeding Kansas, that the coming conflict would be extraordinarily bloody and contentious.

<sup>161</sup> Bowes, *Exiles and Pioneers*. – see chapter 5.

religious, and social issues of the era, not uniformly, but as possessors of unique and varied opinions.

Today, William Walker Jr. lies in an unmarked grave in the Huron Indian Cemetery. Wyandotte county still bears the marks of Indian Country. Wyandot names plaster the public places and historical sites as a permanent reminder of what was Native land. This history does not merely dictate the diversity of who owned slaves or the active and varied political participation of Native peoples. Rather, it displays a living history. The street signs, unmarked graves, and museums are the fragmented evidence of removal's devastating process.

## CHAPTER IV

### PIONEERING INDIANS: THE WYANDOT'S NEW WORLD IN INDIAN TERRITORY, CITIZENSHIP, AND ALLOTMENT, 1860-1894.

In 1860, the United States entered into the momentous conflict of the Civil War. Divided over the issue of slavery the South attempted to remove themselves from the Union. The Wyandot were a part of this nation in crisis. They had been and continued to be active participants in national politics. They held a heated inner-debate over the morality and legitimacy of slavery. Much like the rest of the country, on the eve of the Civil War, the Wyandot had undergone a decade of division and disruption, yet the Civil War was a unifying force for the Wyandot. Amateur historian William E. Connelly reported in 1899 that William Walker Jr. thoroughly disapproved of secession despite his Democrat affiliations.<sup>162</sup> The turmoil that the Civil War wrought on the Wyandot community displaced many, and refugee Wyandot took shelter among those left unscathed as Wyandot identity mattered more than political affiliation.

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<sup>162</sup> William E. Connelly, *Provisional Government of Nebraska Territory*, 13.

In the aftermath of the war, the Wyandot signed their final removal treaty in 1867. This treaty reestablished Wyandot citizenship for those who had signed the treaty of 1855. Yet this removal still required the Wyandot to form a new community in Indian Territory. New homes, schools, churches, entire communities were built by these pioneering Indians.

The historiography of the Wyandot from 1860 to 1900 is slim. A small nation in numbers, they were too late to arrive in Indian Territory to be covered by the extensive studies of the Cherokee, Choctaw, Seminole, Chickasaw, and Creek. Additionally, their removal from Kansas was not a dramatic forced removal. Prominent historians of the Wyandot and Ohio Indians like John P. Bowes and Mary Stockwell end their accounts in Kansas and allude to the ensuing transition to Indian Territory.<sup>163</sup>

However, an examination of this era reveals several interesting accounts that challenge the extant historiography on key subjects of Native American history. First, the treaties of 1855 and 1867 defy the traditional histories of the Dawes Act and its effects. Beginning with Angie Debo and carrying through recent scholarship, the Dawes Act is often portrayed as the result of a linear progression of liberal attacks on communal land-ownership. For the Wyandot this was not the case. Additionally, the Wyandot history with U.S. citizenship further complicates the traditional narrative which ignores Indian-U.S. citizenship until the twentieth-century.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Bowes, *Exiles and Pioneers* and Stockwell *The Other Trail of Tears*.

<sup>164</sup> Debo, Angie. *And Still the Water Runs: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940). – also see Jason Edward Black, *American Indians and the Rhetoric of Removal and Allotment* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2015)., Janet A. McDonnell, *The Dispossession of the American Indian, 1887 – 1934* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1991)., Joseph C. Genetin-Pilawa, *Crooked Paths to Allotment: The Fight Over Federal Indian Policy after the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012). Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to*



The Wyandot's experience in the Civil War echoes narratives from across the country. Some Wyandot served in the armed forces, and while the majority did not, the war was still a disruptive force.<sup>165</sup> Kansas City, Kansas, and the surrounding areas was the location of an often brutal, and little discussed theater of the Civil War. The Battle of Westport, October 23, 1864, was waged mere miles away in Kansas City, Missouri. This engagement involved upwards of 30,000 men. While major engagements like The Battle of Westport surely effected the Wyandot, the truly disruptive force within this period was the guerilla warfare being waged in the Kansas-Missouri borderland between North and South. Percy Ladd Walker, in his recollection of the period tells of his family taking in displaced Wyandot Tauroma, who "was forced to leave his home" after "Bushwhackers, led by Hopkins, raided the Lost Creek Valley, broke open trunks of wampum and scattered it."<sup>166</sup> The Wyandot's complicated Indian legal status did not exempt them from involvement in the Civil War, nor did it shield them from its attacks. Living in a borderland, the war's violence was never far away.<sup>167</sup>

Yet some Wyandot remained relatively unscathed. Percy Ladd Walker, who accounted for taking in a displaced Wyandot also claimed that "We lived comfortably during this time and had plenty of money, sold our apples from our large orchard for

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*Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001). The history of the Wyandot prove that the "Pessimistic" vision of Indian's assimilation potential may have roots prior to 1900. Complicating Hoxie's influential work, the Wyandot's narrative case places a pessimistic progression in the middle of the century rather than culminating in 1900 after the failure of the Dawe's Act.

<sup>165</sup> Tracking down individual Wyandot who served, and on which side is a difficult task that should be looked into with more sincerity, but most accounts from this time speak not to martial experiences but to the domestic disruptions the war brought. For that reason, the war itself will only be discussed as an external force on the daily lives of the Wyandot citizens not directly involved in the fighting.

<sup>166</sup> Percy Ladd Walker. *WPA Indian-Pioneer History Interview*, vol. S-149. Nannie Lee Burns, May 12, 1937.

<sup>167</sup> A secondary account which includes minor references to the Wyandot's experience in the Civil War is - Able, Annie Heloise. *The American Indian In the Civil War, 1862-1865* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

\$3.00 per bushel. Our only privation was the lack of coffee.”<sup>168</sup> For many Wyandot, like many Americans, this conflict was disruptive, but for a select few Wyandot, like a select few Americans, the war was profitable. The Walker family had already built a tradition of enterprise and utilization of the capitalist economy. Percy was merely the latest to exploit this system. His capitalization of the high demand for food produce in the area is a sharp example of how Indigenous people often intimately understood and utilized capitalism even in times of economic turmoil.

In the wake of the War of 1812, the U.S. first attempted to negotiate the removal of the Wyandot nation. Two years after the conclusion of the Civil War, the Wyandot and the U.S. negotiated a final official removal treaty which granted the Wyandot their current lands in Indian Territory, present-day Oklahoma. This removal cannot be separated from the events of the Civil War. For the Wyandot the economic motivation was obvious. Many had become displaced from the lands and homes they had built on the Kansas-Missouri borderland. The site of both continual guerilla warfare and large-scale pitched battles, many of their homes, business, and fields were destroyed. Therefore, the Wyandot wished to build a new home on new lands in Indian Territory. The U.S. wished to remove those Wyandot who had accepted U.S. citizenship from their civil rights.

The Civil War created another environment ripe for removal. But the Wyandot coopted and utilized it for their own purposes in order to reunify their nation, redefine their citizenship, and form a new world in Indian Territory. Addressing why the U.S. would renege on a crucial assimilationist victory in 1855, proves that there was no linear

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<sup>168</sup> Percy Ladd Walker. *WPA Indian-Pioneer History Interview*, vol. S-149. Nannie Lee Burns, May 12, 1937.

path to the destruction of communal land-ownership or U.S citizenship. Furthermore, the Wyandot's power within their removal to Indian territory translated to their own perception that they were Indian pioneers to a new land filled with promise and opportunity.<sup>169</sup> After arrival in Indian Country, the U.S. continued to subject the Wyandot to colonialism's forces. The Dawes Act split Wyandot land into allotments, not for the first time, but for the second time in fifty-years. This final official removal proves that assimilation's success was a moving goalpost, and that Indian people could pioneer through removal.

“To begin anew a tribal existence”: The Treaty of 1867, Wyandot Citizenship, Legal Precedence and Land-Ownership<sup>170</sup>

The American Civil War untethered the Wyandot's world and set it once again afloat in the sky. The economic environment of Kansas City, Kansas determined the conditions for another removal. In the preamble for their final removal treaty, the Wyandot were said to have “been driven from their reservations early in the late war, and suffered greatly for several years.”<sup>171</sup> Therefore, the American Civil War created the desperate economic and political conditions necessary to force the Wyandot to negotiate

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<sup>169</sup> The term pioneers in reference to American Indians originated with R. David Edmunds, “Indians As Pioneers: Potawatomis on the Frontier.” *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 65 (Winter 1987-1988). – For my research this term fits as in this era the Wyandot described their removal journey to Indian Territory in terms similar to a pioneering venture. This contrasts their previous removal to Kansas Territory, and is likely due to two reasons. One, their removal to Indian Territory lacked the overt coercive tactics and violence of 1842. Two, those who left for Indian Territory did so in hopes of a better economic situation.

<sup>170</sup> “Treaty with The Seneca, Mixed Seneca and Shawnee, Quapaw, Etc., 1867.” *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties Vol. II*, 960.

<sup>171</sup> “Treaty with The Seneca, Mixed Seneca and Shawnee, Quapaw, Etc.,” 1867.” *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties Vol. II*, 960.

another removal treaty. Removed by war, the Wyandot returned to a new world: one that they helped begin, but one commandeered by white-Americans. Kansas achieved statehood in the early years of the war. By 1865, the territory had seen the brutalities of conflict and the mass-influx of a white-population. However, this was as much the Wyandot's land as it was the state of Kansas. Many Wyandot had become United States citizens, rightful and lawful owners of their prairie metropole. After the controversial treaty of 1855, the removal negotiations of 1867 centered as much on the Wyandot's citizenship and national sovereignty as it did on white-American's desire for the valuable land upon which the Wyandot and Wyandot-Americans resided.<sup>172</sup>

In 1867 the U.S. government deviated from a long-standing and continuing pattern. Within this treaty the U.S. acknowledged not only the Wyandot's right to citizenship and self-determination, but that their previous attempt to destroy this tribal organization translated to "just claims against the government" for the Wyandot people.<sup>173</sup> This language was not an acknowledgement of the government's role in dispossessing native lands, nor was it regret for the turmoil caused by the treaty of 1855. Rather, this treaty bears the sentiments of paternalism. Looking back, this treaty states that "although taking lands in severalty" the Wyandot "have sold said lands, and are still poor."<sup>174</sup> It went on to assert that those who had signed away their tribal rights in favor of

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<sup>172</sup> There is an interesting gap in the historiography of this topic as most secondary sources on American Indian – U.S. citizenship do not begin their coverage until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As most monographs on Citizenship and Allotment as topics deal with multiple nations, or treat Native Americans ubiquitously, they overlook nations such as the Wyandot. A recent example of this is Black, Jason Edward. *American Indians and the Rhetoric of Removal and Allotment*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2015.

<sup>173</sup> "Treaty with The Seneca, Mixed Seneca and Shawnee, Quapaw, Etc., 1867.," *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties Vol. II*, 960.

<sup>174</sup> "Treaty with The Seneca, Mixed Seneca and Shawnee, Quapaw, Etc., 1867.," 960.

U.S. citizenship, were still “unfitted for the responsibilities of citizenship.”<sup>175</sup>

Determining the perceived poor mass of native peoples unfit to maintain their legal right to U.S. citizenship, the government agents under Lewis V. Bogy, underwent a stark change from 1855. When the Wyandot possessed valuable territory, the U.S. depicted them as fit for citizenship. A decade, and a major war, later the Wyandot were no longer fit. Clearly, racialized views of citizenship played a major role. If the U.S. had legitimately recognized the Wyandot signees as rightful citizens, this treaty would not have needed to address those Wyandot who had become Wyandot-Americans. Instead, the U.S. continued to perceive the Wyandot, and native peoples in general, as inferior. This treaty proves that for native peoples, citizenship was not immutable.

The authors of this treaty did delve, briefly, into why the Wyandot had not been officially recognized as U.S. citizens. It stated that these signees had “not been compelled to become citizens but have remained without clearly recognized organization.”<sup>176</sup> This vague assertion that, they had not been “compelled” is intriguing. One possible explanation is their tax-status. The U.S. separated Indians taxed and not taxed later in the nineteenth-century. After their removal in 1867, government documents label the Wyandotte nation as taxed. Whether the lack of taxes paid by Wyandot-Americans from 1855-1867 disqualified them from formal recognition of citizenship is unknown. What is clear is that these agents felt as if the Wyandot-Americans had not acted on their U.S. citizenship. Much like the imagined frontier line separated the self-perceived white and civilized population of America from its Indigenous inhabitants, so too did the imagined

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<sup>175</sup>“Treaty with The Seneca, Mixed Seneca and Shawnee, Quapaw, Etc., 1867.”, 960.

<sup>176</sup> “Treaty with The Seneca, Mixed Seneca and Shawnee, Quapaw, Etc., 1867.”, 960.

standard of citizenship exclude Native peoples. Ironically, the Wyandot had since their time in Ohio, “organized” under a constitution modeled on the United States, but the underlying issue was not the Wyandot’s civic practices but was the racially motivated disenfranchisement of an Indian people.

Article XIII of the treaty of 1867 highlights the paradoxes of American colonialism. In one article the U.S. affirms tribal sovereignty, while also asserting a systemized vision of racial potential. Unique in tribal law, this treaty affirms the Wyandotte’s ability to define their own tribal make-up and identity. In recognition of the treaty of 1855 and its effect on Wyandot identity, this article states “that no one who has heretofore consented to become a citizen ... shall be allowed to become members of the tribe, except by the free consent of the tribe after its new organization.”<sup>177</sup> This statement recognizes the controversial outcomes of the treaty of 1855. Many Wyandot had divided over the issue of slavery. Lucy B. Armstrong fervently critiqued all those Wyandot who had in her mind abandoned their traditional ways. Self-determining who is able to call themselves a citizen of a nation is a fundamental right of sovereignty; however, the U.S. quickly slighted this affirmation. The final phrases of this article deemed it within the rights of the U.S. to force any “such party, through poverty or incapacity, unfit to continue in the exercise of the responsibilities of citizenship of the United States” back into the citizenry of the Wyandot.<sup>178</sup> Therefore, the nominal choice granted to the Wyandot, in who their nation would consist of, was meaningless. They could refuse only those persons the U.S. allowed them to reject. In a scene of colonial human extraction,

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<sup>177</sup> “Treaty with The Seneca, Mixed Seneca and Shawnee, Quapaw, Etc., 1867.” *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties Vol. II*, 960.

<sup>178</sup> “Treaty with The Seneca, Mixed Seneca and Shawnee, Quapaw, Etc., 1867.” *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties Vol. II*, 960.

the U.S. on paper preserved only the economically prosperous Wyandot-Americans, while casting the disenfranchised to the periphery.

The barometer of citizenship used in 1867 to exclude the Wyandot became the legal precedent by which the U.S. denied citizenship and dignity to a host of Indigenous peoples. In the influential case of *Elk v. Wilkins*, the Opinion of the Court cites the progression of Wyandot citizenship as proof that entrance into the U.S. body politic would not be granted as “no one can become a citizen of a nation without its consent.”<sup>179</sup> While the legal right to U.S. citizenship, granted under the Fourteenth-Amendment, allowed for the naturalization of foreign-born persons. The Wyandot were in this regard considered a separate nation. Within the *Elk v. Wilkins* opinion, the court described Indian nations as “alien and dependent.”<sup>180</sup> This legal language dates to the influential case of *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, within which American Indians became classified as domestic dependents. Therefore, the Supreme Court in 1884, using the legal precedent of the treaty with the Wyandot in 1867, concluded “that a member of an Indian tribe” cannot “at will be alternately a citizen of the United States and a member of the tribe” even if the desire of that individual was to cease all tribal affiliation and live solely under U.S. nationality and allegiance.<sup>181</sup> Wyandot legal precedent translated into barring American Indians from naturalization.

Trailing the totality of U.S. legal dealings with the Wyandot is the continuous state of contradiction. The legal misrepresentation perpetuated by the U.S. was highlighted in the Wyandot’s citizenship question. In 1855, the Wyandot signatories held

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<sup>179</sup> *Elk v. Wilkins*, 112 U.S. 94 (United States Supreme Court, 1884), 104

<sup>180</sup> *Elk v. Wilkins*, 112 U.S. 94 (United States Supreme Court, 1884), 100.

<sup>181</sup> *Elk v. Wilkins*, 112 U.S. 94 (United States Supreme Court, 1884), 103.

the undisputable right to U.S. citizenship. Even by the standards outlined in *Elk v. Wilkins*, they held this authentic right as they did not possess dual citizenship but had sworn away all their rights and privileges as Wyandot citizens. Furthermore, within *Elk v. Wilkins*, the court used the treaty of 1867 to prove that a nation must consent to the naturalization of new citizens; however, this treaty also undermines the precedent of consent. The U.S., under the language of the treaty of 1867, could force any signee of 1855, back onto the tribal rolls if these government agents determined such Wyandot unfit. This is the real legal precedent taken from the Wyandot treaty of 1867 and applied to *Elk v. Wilkins* and other Indian law cases. The result of *Elk v. Wilkins* was the denial of U.S. citizenship, and the result of the treaty of 1867 was the denial of Indian sovereignty and consent.

While the dispossession of Indian land continued well after 1867, the removal of Indian rights through legal cases emerged in full-force in the second half of the nineteenth-century. Through the unique classification of Indigenous peoples as domestic dependents, the U.S. racialized and categorically disenfranchised this population. As a uniquely defined and racially demeaned group Indian peoples were subjected to a racist character-test. In 1867 the Wyandot were once again removed. Not only were they again migrants destined for lands nearly 180 miles to the south, but they were once again removed from their legal standing. The treaty of 1867 and how the U.S. used it as legal precedent in *Elk v. Wilkins*, proved that it was not the legal semantics that determined the outcomes of this act, but it was the Indigeneity of the Wyandot.

The Wyandot's treaties of 1855 and 1867 defy the classic historical portrayal of Indian land-holding and the U.S.'s attempt to force individual ownership. Scholars have



classically depicted the Dawes Act of 1887 as the initiation for the destruction of Indian land-holding through allotment in severalty. Yet, this is not accurate, at least not for all Indian nations. The Wyandot, and other Ohio Indians received their land in Kansas as allotted sections through the treaty of 1855.<sup>182</sup> The maps seen in figures 1 and 2 depict a unique comparison. The map of Wyandot allotments in 1888 looks structurally the same as in 1855. Here the U.S. split Wyandot' lands, by which signees would receive individual parcels. In 1867 the U.S. retreated from their tradition of separating Wyandot land into individual allotments. This treaty stated that their Indian Territory lands was "to be owned by the said Wyandottes in common."<sup>183</sup> Therefore, ending communal land ownership was not the U.S.'s end goal, as by 1855 the Wyandot largely practiced individual ownership. Rather, this history proves that the U.S.'s end goal was removal.

A common interpretation many scholars hold is that American liberals sought to use the Dawes Act to assimilate the Indians through the destruction of lands held in common. The underpinning land-hunger behind this law has been extensively studied and verified. The Wyandot's narrative does not disprove either of these portrayals. What this history demonstrates is that the U.S.'s assault on lands held in common stretched well before the 1880s, and that this history was not a linear progression.<sup>184</sup> Rather, the Wyandot had adopted individual ownership in Kansas. Many Wyandot had attained the level of assimilation that was the stated goal of contemporary liberal Americans, through the signing of the treaty of 1855. After swearing away their tribal rights and citizenship and adopting U.S. citizenship, the U.S. still considered the Wyandot "unfitted" for

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<sup>182</sup> See Figure 1 & 2.

<sup>183</sup> "Treaty with The Seneca, Mixed Seneca and Shawnee, Quapaw, Etc., 1867." *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties Vol. II*, 963.

<sup>184</sup> See – Genetin-Pilawa, *Crooked Paths to Allotment*.

acceptance into their society. Therefore, assimilation, for the Wyandot, was a process without an end. The legal progression of Wyandot citizenship and rights under U.S. law proves that no amount of conciliation on the part of the Wyandot would sufficiently appease a society and government built on the colonial principles of removal and hierarchy of racism.

Classification is a classic sign of a colonial society. In 1870, in late fulfillment of the directive placed in the treaty of 1867, the Wyandot's Indian agent completed a tribal roll establishing the names, economic capability and standing of every enrolled and re-enrolled tribal member. This document illuminates several key points about Wyandot identity, citizenship, and the U.S. government's perception of indigenous people. The most striking classification listed for each Wyandot, including the children counted, is their economic condition. The majority are listed as "destitute," totaling 305 of the 521 Wyandot.<sup>185</sup> The other category listed is "moderate," totaling 206.<sup>186</sup> Certainly this word choice was no mistake. Only two Wyandot were listed as something different than moderate or destitute. Russel and Elizabeth Garrett were listed as "easy."<sup>187</sup> Even well-off Wyandot are listed as possessing a moderate level of wealth. William Walker Jr., a slave holder and prominent businessman for the region received this demarcation. While the economic turmoil of the Civil War certainly disrupted the Wyandot's economic lives, to classify most of this nation as destitute speaks more to the agent's perception of Indians than to the reality of their situation.

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<sup>185</sup> Roll of 1870, Office Superintendent of Indian Affairs. M234, RG75, Roll 951. Viewable at - <https://www.wyandotte-nation.org/culture/history/historic-rolls/roll-1870/>.

<sup>186</sup> OSIA, roll 951.

<sup>187</sup> OSIA, roll 951. – there was no listed means of calculation or rationale behind the categories of Destitute, Moderate, and Easy.

Wyandot poverty, while exaggerated, was not the most significant source of the government's stereotyping. Several of Wyandot appear on the Roll of 1870 listed as "Incompetent."<sup>188</sup> What means or measure these agents used to determine the Wyandot's ability to provide for themselves is unknown.<sup>189</sup> More than likely this determination resided solely within the responsibility of the agents presiding over this tribal roll. This fact explains why the Wyandot were listed at such high rates of incompetency and poverty. Destitute and incompetent Wyandots were those persons the authors of the treaty of 1867 had in mind when they ensured the U.S.'s right to deny the continued citizenship of such members that were deemed "unfitted." Therefore, this roll's purpose was not merely to provide a record of those Wyandot wishing to re-enroll as citizens of that nation, but to justify the exclusion of any Wyandot who wished to remain a U.S. citizen.<sup>190</sup>

In several instances A.C. Fanshaw, the city clerk tasked with writing this roll, adds addendums aimed at explaining the citizenship qualities of specific Wyandot. Besides listing such persons as Louisa Adkins as "Orphan and Incompetent," the agents added details for people such as Issac W. Brown stating, "Made choice to become a citizen, finds it impossible to live as such, has been cheated out of his property ... should have been placed on incompetent list."<sup>191</sup> For others, the agents assessed their success as

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<sup>188</sup> OSIA, roll 951.

<sup>189</sup> Under the Burke Act of 1906 - 25 U.S. Code 349. "Patents in Fee to Allottees, 1906" Charles Kappler, *Indian Affairs Laws and Treaties, Vol. 4.* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913.). - The law affirms protection under U.S. law for those Native Americans who chose allotments, if they were "competent and capable of managing his or her affairs." This subjective definition would have been akin to that used for the Wyandot in 1870.

<sup>190</sup> OSIA, roll 951. -There is by this document only one account of a Wyandot wishing to remain a U.S. citizen. Abelard Guthrie.

<sup>191</sup> OSIA, roll 951.

U.S. citizens. Of Richard Clark, son of George I. Clark, the agents stated that he “has not succeeded well as a citizen.”<sup>192</sup> Another, detractor for U.S. citizenship in the eyes of the Indian agents was the language skills of many Wyandot. In several instances, such as that of Isaac P. Driver, he is listed as “blind and speaks no english.”<sup>193</sup> In each of these instances, the inclusion of these details would be superfluous to any standard census, but as grounds for the potential denial of U.S. citizenship these details would have been valuable.

Wyandot identity and citizenship went through significant challenges from 1855 through 1870. Families contained members of both camps, those who had signed and those who had refused. This document also gives a glimpse into the Wyandot’s perception of the choice posed in 1855. Multiple entries read like that of Winfield S. Armstrong whose “father made choice to become a citizen,” yet “Winfield never wished to become a citizen.”<sup>194</sup> This phrase, or some version, appears in multiple instances. Thomas Mannuncue asserted that he “without his knowledge or consent was placed upon the citizen list.”<sup>195</sup> These entries show that some Wyandot regretted their U.S. citizenship, and that it was a tribally unpopular choice. Others who could not deny their motives behind the signing of 1855 merely entered their desire to be placed on the tribal roll despite their history. In the case of the Guthrie family, Nancy who was the “wife of Abelard Guthrie, who made the choice to become a citizen, but Nancy and her children wish to retain their tribal relation and have their names placed on the list.”<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> OSIA, roll 951. -Richard Clark, would not have had much time to have “succeeded” as a U.S. citizen. In 1870 he is listed at only 18 years old, which would place him at 3 years of age at the signing of 1855.

<sup>193</sup> OSIA, roll 951.

<sup>194</sup> OSIA, roll 951.

<sup>195</sup> OSIA, roll 951.

<sup>196</sup> OSIA, roll 951.

Interestingly, Abelard Guthrie made clear that he “declares his intention to remain as such” – a U.S. citizen. Whether Abelard maintained this designation is unknown, but his family’s desire to enroll as Wyandot members displays the complex nature of citizenship. Furthermore, it was the mother, Nancy, who determined the citizenship of the rest of her family. This fact demonstrates the power of Wyandot traditions despite the intense process of removal throughout the nineteenth-century as their matrilineal practice determined the outcome for the Guthries.

Those who opposed the signing of the 1855 treaty made this stance clear in the agent’s notes. Many like Sallie Halfjohn merely stated, “Never made choice to become a citizen.”<sup>197</sup> While others like Henry Long strongly assert that they “Never consented to become a citizen, opposed to the treaty of 1855.”<sup>198</sup> William Walker Jr., influential proponent to the treaty of 1855, had become disillusioned enough with the benefits of U.S. citizenship to state his wish “to resume his tribal relations and have his name placed on the tribal list.”<sup>199</sup> Like Walker, many of those who had negotiated and fought for this treaty, had in fifteen years altered their opinions. Wyandot identity, for many, superseded U.S. citizenship.

Despite the limited nature of the Wyandot’s consent to re-adopt signees, this process was met with little resistance. The Wyandot used the Roll of 1870 for their own purposes of citizenship just as the Indian agents did. Clearly, the Indian agent’s meticulous notation of the mental and economic circumstances alongside their opinion of how signees had performed as U.S. citizen, purposely painted a picture of a nation unfit

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<sup>197</sup> OSIA, roll 951.

<sup>198</sup> OSIA, roll 951.

<sup>199</sup> OSIA, roll 951.

for U.S. incorporation. This did not dissuade the Wyandot from inserting their own meaning into this Roll. Individual Wyandot utilized this chance to declare publicly their political allegiances, national identity and citizenship. By asserting not only that they had not signed the treaty of 1855 but that they opposed this act, many Wyandot claimed an unbroken history of citizenship and an ownership of Wyandot identity. Those who had signed in 1855 and wished to return to the Wyandot, often sought to explain why the choice was invalid. Again, these Wyandot sought to maintain the image of their Wyandot citizenship as uninterrupted and authentic. The U.S. wanted to distance themselves from the interlude of Wyandot-American citizenship, and so too did many Wyandot. For all the legal contradictions and inequities present in the treaty of 1867 and the racist motives in exclusion - reincorporation aligned with the Wyandot's political desire for national recognition and tribal unity under Wyandot citizenship. It would be inaccurate to claim that the Wyandot dictated the legal progression from their removal treaty of 1842 through their final removal treaty of 1867, but it would also be inaccurate to claim that they did not exercise power throughout these circumstances. As a people they created their own definitions of citizenship, and despite the effects of removal, continued to act as a sovereign nation.

“Born in Old Wyandotte.”<sup>200</sup>: Generation of removal, pioneers to Indian Territory

By 1870 the Wyandot resided across the U.S. and Canada. Many had already moved to Indian Territory, leaving Kansas during the political turmoil of the 1850s, military conflicts of the Civil War or economic devastation in its aftermath. Some had

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<sup>200</sup> B.N.O. Walker, “A Personal Sketch: Bertrand Nicholas Oliver Walker” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 6,1 (March 1928), 1.

stayed in Kansas, and a smaller number had migrated north to their relative's homes in Canada.<sup>201</sup> The several generations of Wyandot who lived through the nineteenth-century underwent two major displacements in a century of disorder. It is ironic that B.N.O. Walker asserts that his birthplace, Kansas City, Kansas, was "Old Wyandotte."<sup>202</sup> The Wyandot were only officially designated lands in Kansas for twenty-five years, from 1842-1867. Many Wyandot, like William Walker Jr. refused to remove from their homes in Kansa City, just as some had remained in Ohio, Michigan, or travelled to Canada. Removal was a continuous process, but it did not have contiguous effects. It separated family and friends from each other and from their land. The final removal to Indian Territory was not the last effect of removal's process, nor was it the last effort by the U.S. to dispossess the Wyandot of their lands and rights. Rather, this removal was the final arbitrary removal by treaty for the Wyandot.

The Wyandot's removal to Indian Territory was unique. It was their second U.S.-initiated removal, but it was not forced in the same manner as their first removal in 1842. Perhaps due to the Wyandot's participation and influence in the region, or to low levels of population, the U.S. after the treaty of 1867 seemed to be in no hurry to remove the Wyandot from their Kansas lands. By B.N.O. Walker's accounts his family removed to Indian Territory in 1874, a full seven years after the removal treaty.<sup>203</sup> Importantly, the roll of 1870 took place only four years prior. Isaiah Walker, B.N.O's father, had

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<sup>201</sup> There remains still a recognized nation of Wyandot in Canada. They are called the Wyandot of Anderdon Nation. A symbol of the Wyandot's vast travels and peopling across the continent, in August the 27<sup>th</sup> of 1999 the Wyandot of Oklahoma, Kansas and Canada signed a joint resolution forming The Wendat Confederacy of peoples. Available at [http://www.wyandotofanderdon.com/wp/?page\\_id=101](http://www.wyandotofanderdon.com/wp/?page_id=101).

<sup>202</sup> B.N.O. Walker, "A Personal Sketch: Bertrand Nicholas Oliver Walker" *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 6,1 (March 1928), 1.

<sup>203</sup> B.N.O. Walker, "A Personal Sketch: Bertrand Nicholas Oliver Walker" *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 6,1 (March 1928).

requested reenrollment at that time, so his access to land in Indian Territory was dependent upon his reincorporation into the nation in 1870. Yet, there remains no evidence of official harassment directed towards the Wyandot to coerce them to reside in total in Indian Territory. William Walker Jr. and many other Wyandot lived the rest of their lives in Kansas City.

The Treaty of 1867 provided no time constraints on the Wyandot to remove to Indian Territory. The Wyandot's treaty of 1842 provided them two years to make this migration. Other Indigenous nations received even less time. Unlike in 1842, the white population of Kansas did not seem to as overtly oppose the Wyandot's presence. Violence was not reported; no mysterious murders occurred as was done in Ohio. Additionally, the U.S.'s agents did not utilize coercive tactics to force signatures or support for the treaty. Yet, this was still removal.

In the late 1860s and early 1870s the Wyandot became pioneers. As pioneers the Wyandot were not colonizers of an empty world. The New World the Wyandot made in Indian Territory was created internally. They owned the opportunity to reestablish their economic and cultural lives in a location that was not new or devoid of people and culture, but in a place they would and now call home. Removed and displaced the Wyandot possessed an opportunity which they capitalized on – a fresh start in Indian country. Their accounts read like those of many who set out west in the nineteenth-century. William Long reports arriving at a “new home site” where his father built “a large log house of one room, a shed and an attic.”<sup>204</sup> Jared Silas Dawson described having

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<sup>204</sup> William Long, WPA *Indian-Pioneer History Interviews*, vol. 109. Nannie Lee Burns, Sept. 17, 1937.



only a “fire-place for heat” living in a “small one-room log house.”<sup>205</sup> John Bland’s narrative reads almost identically to that of an Oregon-trailer. He states, “In November of 1872, six covered wagons left their Kansas homes for the promised home in the Indian Country ... South of Ottawa in the Wyandotte Country near the river, he built his family a home. The house was a single room of hewed logs, twenty foot square.”<sup>206</sup> This move was, in some regards, more akin to voluntary white migrations than to the Indian removals of the 1830s and 1840s. In large part, economic forces motivated the Wyandot. Furthermore, they looked to this new land with hope for a new life. Despite the Wyandot utilization of this treaty as an economic, social, and political opportunity this act was still Indian Removal. Clearly the U.S. negotiated the treaty of 1867 in order to remove the rights and privileges of those Wyandot who had become U.S. citizens. Therefore, this instance proves that Indian Removal was not uniform, was not always forced, and could be utilized for the purposes of the Indians being removed. Looking southward for their manifested destiny, the Wyandot who left Kansas hoped to make a new world.

The Wyandot under the treaty of 1867 were granted lands apportioned from the existing reservation of the Seneca. The Shawnee, Quapaw and Delaware were all close neighbors. The old Ohio Indians had gone from controlling millions of acres on the southern shores of the Great Lakes to the Great Plains, to the far northeastern corner of Indian Territory bordering Missouri, Kansas and Arkansas. In the 1894 Report on Indians Taxed, the Indian agents describe the lands the Wyandot possessed as being the best watered of any of the Indian Territory reservations.<sup>207</sup> The Wyandot were situated

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<sup>205</sup> Jared Silas Dawson, *WPA Indian-Pioneer History Interviews*, vol. S-149. Nannie Lee Burns, July 1, 1937.

<sup>206</sup> John Bland, *WPA Indian-Pioneer History Interviews*, vol. 015. Nannie Lee Burns, August 11, 1937.

<sup>207</sup> Report on Indians Taxed, 1894.

alongside the parallel running of the Neosho and Spring Rivers. Many lakes, springs, and creeks crisscross the hilly terrain. These lands were well-timbered, a unique feature for Indian Territory and present-day Oklahoma. Therefore, as a destination for removal, this land was ideal. The Wyandot held longstanding and fruitful relationships with their immediate neighbors, held connections to the urban center of Kansas City, and now possessed land with excellent agricultural potential.

The WPA interviews with several members of the Wyandot's removal generation share several common narratives. A central theme running throughout these memories is the ubiquity of the sentiment that "our early life was similar to that of others trying to make and build a home in the new country."<sup>208</sup> These Wyandot felt like pioneers. While the lands their families occupied was opened through treaty, that did not dissuade them from equating their experience to American westward progression.

Another common experience occurred in their early lives. Almost all account of life on the Wyandotte reserve include reference to "two Mission Schools here, both established by the Friends or Quakers."<sup>209</sup> By Long's account the Quakers received "\$169.00 per head" and after constant complaints about the quantity of food served to the children the Government was forced to intervene.<sup>210</sup> Jared Silas Dawson also reports "very poor clothing, food, and quarters" but saw the teachers as "strict" but "were good to us."<sup>211</sup> Dawson also accounts for the government's takeover of the school in 1883. For

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<sup>208</sup> William Long, *WPA Indian-Pioneer History Interviews*, vol. 109. Nannie Lee Burns, Sept. 17, 1937. – see also John Bland's phrase the "Promised home". Located in all the WPA interviews were phrases akin to these. Mentioning in optimistic tones the prospect of their new world in Indian Territory.

<sup>209</sup> William Long, *WPA Indian-Pioneer History Interviews*, vol. 109. Nannie Lee Burns, Sept. 17, 1937.

<sup>210</sup> William Long, *WPA Indian-Pioneer History Interviews*, vol. 109. Nannie Lee Burns, Sept. 17, 1937.

<sup>211</sup> Jared Silas Dawson, *WPA Indian-Pioneer History Interviews*, vol. S-149. Nannie Lee Burns, July 1, 1937.

most Wyandot children this was the only schooling they would receive. Dawson reports progressing through the eleventh grade, while Long was sent to the Carlisle Indian School. The education of the Wyandot in this school held many of the same features as Carlisle and other thoroughly studied institutions. The children were not allowed to leave their quarters and school to visit home except for “each six weeks and to stay from Friday to Sunday.”<sup>212</sup> Unlike Carlisle and other more renowned Indian boarding schools, these Quaker schools were located within the community, so this policy was clearly motivated not by logistical complexities but by the desire of the school to segregate and isolate these children from their families and culture.<sup>213</sup>

After their time in the Quaker school almost all these men became involved in agriculture. The generation of Wyandot who were adults at the time of their migration to Indian Territory seemed primarily concerned with farming. Dawson recalls clearing fields with his father, Percy Ladd Walker “made money raising wheat,” and William Long “raised most of what we ate, at first little but corn, beans and pumpkins.”<sup>214</sup> The generation raised in Indian Territory became swept up in the cattle-frenzy of the 1870s and 1880s. Dawson accounts for “ten years that I was in the saddle” while Bland “had a

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<sup>212</sup> Jared Silas Dawson, WPA *Indian-Pioneer History Interviews*, vol. S-149. Nannie Lee Burns, July 1, 1937.

<sup>213</sup> For Indian Boarding schools see - Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009). And Katanski, Amelia V. *Learning to Write “Indian”: The Boarding-School Experience and American Indian Literature* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press). Brenda J. Child. *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

<sup>214</sup> William Long, WPA *Indian-Pioneer History Interviews*, vol. 109. Nannie Lee Burns, Sept. 17, 1937. And Percy Ladd Walker, WPA *Indian-Pioneer History Interview*, vol. S-149. Nannie Lee Burns, May 12, 1937.

desire to be a cowboy and went to the mountains of Colorado in 1887.”<sup>215</sup> Dawson even went on to recall an instance in which his family allegedly served Jesse James dinner during the outlaw’s extensive travels.<sup>216</sup>

These accounts relay an image of the Wyandot as active participants in western life in the late nineteenth century. Life in Indian Territory for the Wyandot was not isolated from the national trends, celebrities, and life. Not only was this not a narrative of cowboys vs. Indians, the Wyandot in Indian Territory were often inspired to become cowboys. After the economic devastation of the Civil War, the Wyandot used their removal of 1867 to begin new lives as active agriculturalists and pioneers.

In 1887 the Dawes Act restructured Wyandot lands as independently held allotments. Unlike the traditional historical narrative of this law and its passage, the Wyandot land held in severalty was not novel. Their treaty with the U.S. government in 1855 sectioned their Kansas City domain in the same manner as their Indian Territory allotments. Therefore, the destruction of the Wyandot’s communal land ownership was a significant removal, but it was not the result of a linearly progressing vision of Indian assimilation. A vestige of the narrative of Indian disappearance, many historians continue to portray the Dawes Act as the culminating defeat of tribal land ownership. A final dispossession. After this removal, the twentieth-century entered such final measures as U.S. citizenship and tribal termination. The Dawes Act was a form of removal, a function

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<sup>215</sup> Jared Silas Dawson, *WPA Indian-Pioneer History Interviews*, vol. S-149. Nannie Lee Burns, July 1, 1937. And John Bland, *WPA Indian-Pioneer History Interviews*, vol. 015. Nannie Lee Burns, August 11, 1937.

<sup>216</sup> Indians as cowboys is a subject that has already been covered see – Peter Iverson, *When Indian Became Cowboys: Native Peoples and Cattle Ranching in the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997). Iverson’s assertions align with what I claim here. That Indian people in the face of removal Indian peoples were a part of a larger world, one that they adapted to and successfully operated within.

of the long and continual process. But this act was not an inevitable destruction of communal land-ownership, nor did it and future measure end Indian sovereignty in North America.

The Wyandot intimately knew and practiced private land transactions long before, during, and after the Dawes Act. One of the fallacies of this Act's history is the assumption that Indian people either held ignorant or contemptible views towards private land ownership. The Wyandot's history dispels this notion. In their first official removal treaty, in 1842, the Wyandot were assigned lands west of the Mississippi. Within this treaty the U.S. granted to the "aforesaid Wyandott Nation a tract of land west of the Mississippi River" on lands "owned by the United States, now set apart, or may be set apart for Indian use, and not already assigned to any other tribe or nation."<sup>217</sup> This did not happen. The U.S. failed to properly assign the Wyandot their new lands, as such, the Wyandot council purchased lands already occupied by the Delaware. This purchase was a savvy tactic. The Wyandot's chosen land in Kansas was well-placed for the economic development of the nation. However, while this land was held in common, the Wyandot at this early date had already exercised a nation-wide private land transaction. This trend continued, first at the tribal level then at the individual. As has already been discussed, the treaty of 1855 set up individual allotments at the request and negotiated terms of the Wyandot signees.<sup>218</sup> In 1867 the Wyandot's Indian territory land was set aside as held-in-common giving a twenty-one-year respite from allotment until the Dawes Act of 1887.

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<sup>217</sup> "Treaty with the Wyandot, 1842," *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. II*, 534.

<sup>218</sup> See Figure 2.

While on the surface the treaty of 1867 seems to break the trend of the Wyandot's involvement in private land ownership, many of the accounts from this time treat the communal nature of their Indian Territory allotments as arbitrary. Jared Silas Dawson accounts of how his father "bought a cabin in the forks of the Neosho and Spring River."<sup>219</sup> William Long also references his father "choosing" his "new home site."<sup>220</sup> The Wyandot in Indian Territory often treated the land in much the same way as individual allotments. There are two possible explanations for this. One, it seems as if by this time treating land as individually possessed had become the norm. If not before the treaty of 1855, certainly after it. Much of the land in Kansas was already sectioned off prior to the passage of the treaty of 1855. The second explanation is the scattered and delayed arrival of the Wyandot. Many had already arrived in Indian Territory prior to the passage of 1867, and many still arrived significantly later in the 1870s. Therefore, while the land in Indian Territory was legally recognized as being held in common, in practice this was not the case.

This fact reshapes the history of the Dawes Act.<sup>221</sup> Certainly it was an Act motivated by liberalism but one that resulted in dispossession and oppression. Additionally, it influenced the total acreage held by the Wyandot and all North American

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<sup>219</sup> Jared Silas Dawson, *WPA Indian-Pioneer History Interviews*, vol. S-149. Nannie Lee Burns, July 1, 1937.

<sup>220</sup> William Long, *WPA Indian-Pioneer History Interviews*, vol. 109. Nannie Lee Burns, Sept. 17, 1937.

<sup>221</sup> Historians beginning with Angie Debo point to the Dawes Act as a form of dispossession, but most do not go back far enough to reckon with the history of communal land destruction prior to the passage of the Dawes Act. For Dawes Act see - Angie Debo, *And Still the Water Runs: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940). Emil Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation: The Nez Percés, Jicarilla Apache and the Dawes Act* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002). And Joseph C. Genetin-Pilawa, *Crooked Paths to Allotment: The Fight Over Federal Indian Policy after the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012). Janet A. McDonnell, *The Dispossession of the American Indian, 1887 – 1934* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1991)., Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

Indian nations. But it was not a clear linear break from communal land ownership to private ownership. In the case of the Wyandot they had already adopted private ownership. This also reshapes the direction of the power of treaty law. Many histories of removal treaties grant the language of the treaty immense weight on historical outcomes. In many instances this holds true, but not always. The U.S. recognized system of Wyandot land ownership seemed to have little actual effect on the Wyandot's perception of land. Wyandot's power to internally define their own practices and identity remained an unbroken part of their sovereignty despite removal.

By 1894 the Wyandot had established a new world in Indian Territory. The local church offered Quaker and Methodist services, they had established a presence in the small towns and cities across northeastern Indian Territory, and many had become moderately successful agriculturalists. However, the effects of a century of removals are starkly evident. Upon their removal in 1842, they numbered close to 700 members. The census of 1890, upon which the report of 1894 was based, accounted for a total of 288 Wyandot persons in Indian territory.<sup>222</sup> This decrease is not explained by the population who chose to remain in Kansas City. They numbered only 23.<sup>223</sup> Rather, the repeated displacements, social and economic turmoil caused by the continued process of removal across the nineteenth-century exacted a steep toll upon these generations. Staggeringly, the Wyandot across a half a century lost upwards of 65% of their population.

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<sup>222</sup> United States Census Office, "Report on Indians Taxed and Indian Not Taxed in the United States." Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894., 98. – It is important to note that the number 700 is based on the estimate of James B. Finley, and that a true calculation does not exist. However, Finley had no motivation to exaggerate and his account is the best source for this information.

<sup>223</sup> United States Census Office, "Report on Indians Taxed and Indian Not Taxed in the United States." Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894., 424.

The population decrease due to disease and displacement was also paired with a staggering loss in land. At the beginning of the century, the Wyandot held not just a significant amount of acreage, but most of several current states. They claimed the northern half of Ohio and southern half of Michigan. Millions of acres were nominally and realistically within theirs and their Indian neighbor's control. While they often shared this land with many other Indigenous nations, it was still their sovereign state. In 1842, after years of partial land cessions, the Wyandot removed to a reserve of 148,000 acres in Kansas Territory. While significantly less acreage, it was an ideal site for economic development. However, the Civil War disrupted and displaced the Wyandot again, culminating in the final removal treaty of 1867 by which the Wyandot were granted 20,000 acres. Just from Kansas to Indian territory the Wyandot incurred an 86% decrease in land-holding. The Wyandot's landholdings at the end of the nineteenth-century compared with the beginning are miniscule.

In the face of the genocidal process of removal the Wyandot survived and continue to live and operate as a sovereign nation. By 1890 the Wyandot held 21,406 acres in Indian Territory, and while the government's report states that "there is not one pure-blood Wyandotte now living at this agency," Wyandot culture and citizenship survived. This same report contains references to the "corn dance."<sup>224</sup> Despite the long process of Wyandot removals, they preserved their culture, language, identity, and citizenship.

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<sup>224</sup> United States Census Office, "Report on Indians Taxed and Indian Not Taxed in the United States." Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894., 245, 247.



Removal to Indian Territory is a significant chapter in the narrative of the Wyandot, but it is not the only instance of removal. Rather, the Wyandot underwent a long and continuous process of dispossession stretching from before 1816 and extending beyond 1894. Throughout removal they were recipients and active members of their history. The Wyandot capitalized on the opportunity to relocate after the devastation of the Civil War and seized the chance to reunify Wyandot identity in the wake of the treaty of 1855. The Wyandot remain part of a broader history of native nations who were also the recipients and actors within the history of Indian Removal. The nations are joined by a shared history of dispossession and forced relocation. However, each story is unique. The Wyandot were not coerced into journeying to Indian Territory. Their forced removal occurred earlier in their history. Rather, the Wyandot's removal to Indian territory was symptomatic of a broader system of continual removal. This system was the process by which the Wyandot were forced to remake new worlds beyond the sky.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION: MEANING BEYOND THE SKY

“They should have been flying on to their northern home.”<sup>225</sup>

B.N.O. Walker (1915)

It is fitting that B.N.O. Walker’s account – “The Fox and the Raccoon” - told of how the old fox heads northward with the geese, leaving his garden patch in this southern land to his young nephew. The direction of Wyandot removals had always been more southward than westward, their ancestral home lay thousands of miles to the north, a reminder that came every year with the migration of the geese. The Wyandot had made a new home, a new world in Indian Territory, but the temptation to tie a bark-rope around

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<sup>225</sup> B.N.O. Walker, “The Fox and the Raccoon” Excerpt from Barbeau, 358. – In this story the old Fox flies off northward tied to several geese leaving instructions to his nephew to “take care of my garden patch.”

the feet of the geese and fly northward may have been there for those who had journeyed so far across the continent.

There is no easily derived meaning from this history of Wyandot removals. It is anachronistic to press this narrative into a single form, but it is the prerogative of the historian to gesture towards the grains of truth found in this crucially important narrative. The first takeaway should be its complexity. This history's sometimes paradoxical and ironic defiance of simplistic characterization contradicts the traditional written account of this people's journey. This Wyandot narrative does not play out the stereotyped characterizations of declension, conformity, and monolithic unity. They were above all active participants in their world. This meant that they were in turn effected by regional, national, and international historical circumstances. The inner-debate over the possibility of removal alongside the religious questions they held in their Ohio years proves that this was a nation of dynamic people. People that could, perhaps with genuine sincerity, convert to Christianity preached from the mouth of a free-black man. People that could weigh the benefits of removal, and not just resistance. Their history in Kansas proves that some Wyandot could become slave-owners while some could become abolitionists. Leading up to Oklahoma, they proved that Indigeneity and Wyandot citizenship were internally, and not externally, defined and the efforts of white-Americans to limit their very identity would not succeed.

Above all, the land and its peoples defined this history, and these two factors give this narrative meaning. This land holds a special place for the Wyandot. It was formed for them on the Big Turtle's back. However, the land's importance goes beyond internal cultural significance. Externally, the imagined spaces on the map of North America

defined Wyandot removal. Who controlled what territory mattered to both the Wyandot and Euro-Americans. Ohio's rich agriculture and Kansas's urban centers created high demand for American settlement. These peoples are the second half of this equation. The continual existence of an arbitrary division between the Wyandot and the U.S. defined this history. Their removal was not inevitable in the face of this settlement but a process of othering; a culture of expansion dictated that this was a distinct threat. It was this people and the land they occupied which give this narrative its meaning, its place, and its characters.

Taking into account this history, it becomes clear that Indian removal was a structure, not just an event.<sup>226</sup> This process did not begin with the Indian Removal Act of 1830. The Wyandot contended with U.S. threats of removal as early as 1816. And prior to that date, Euro-American initiated events forced the Iroquois into an offensive which led the Wyandot world into turmoil. Removal did not end after their first coerced journey west of the Mississippi. Instead, they were subjected to another series of negotiations aimed at limiting their tribal identity and capturing the land possessed by the Wyandot for American settlement. Despite the repeated and continual nature of this process of removal, the Wyandot persevered. Their maintenance and active assertion of sovereignty prove that removal was both not inevitable nor always successful.

Dispossession characterized Indian removals, but it was not a ubiquitous outcome. Additionally, removal was also not always a formally recognized institution. Certainly, in the 1830s, before and after, the U.S. government overtly attempted and often

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<sup>226</sup> See Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native"

succeeded at dispossessing Native peoples of their lands, but that was not always the case. Many of those negotiating with the Wyandot in Ohio saw them as assimilated and ready to adopt U.S. citizenship. In 1855, the U.S. was more concerned with reshaping Wyandot identity into their own mold than with capturing their land. The Wyandot, like the other Ohio Indians, underwent multiple removals which both set them apart from other North American Indigenous communities and joined their narrative with those of a multitude of Native peoples. The Wyandot were both latecomers to removal and precursors of what legal actions would arise in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century. They were one of the last nations removed from east of the Mississippi, but one of the first to be offered private land-ownership and U.S. citizenship. Despite a long-era of removal the consistent underpinning of this unique narrative is that the Wyandot's self-determined sovereignty holds an unbroken history.

The worlds the Wyandot constructed each time removal forced them to live beyond the sky have left an indelible mark on this continent. Removal is a living history with effects stretching into the present. The long nineteenth-century was removal's principal era, but it remained a consistent and active force throughout all American history. Wyandot power and sovereignty within and despite of removal's negative effects is a consistent and resounding fact, but removal's tragic consequences should never be forgotten. Addressing the Wyandot on their final gathering in Ohio, Squire Grey Eyes somberly said that "It remains only for me to say farewell. Yes, it is indeed farewell. No more shall we engage in the solemn feast, or the feast of rejoicing. No more shall Sandusky's plains and forests echo to the voice of song and praise. No more shall we

assemble in our Temple to sing the sacred songs and hear the story of the Cross. *Here our dead are buried.* We have placed fresh flowers upon their graves for the last time.”<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Squire Grey Eyes, “Farewell: The Wyandot’s Last Ohio Church Service” July 9, 1843. – Italicized emphasis added.

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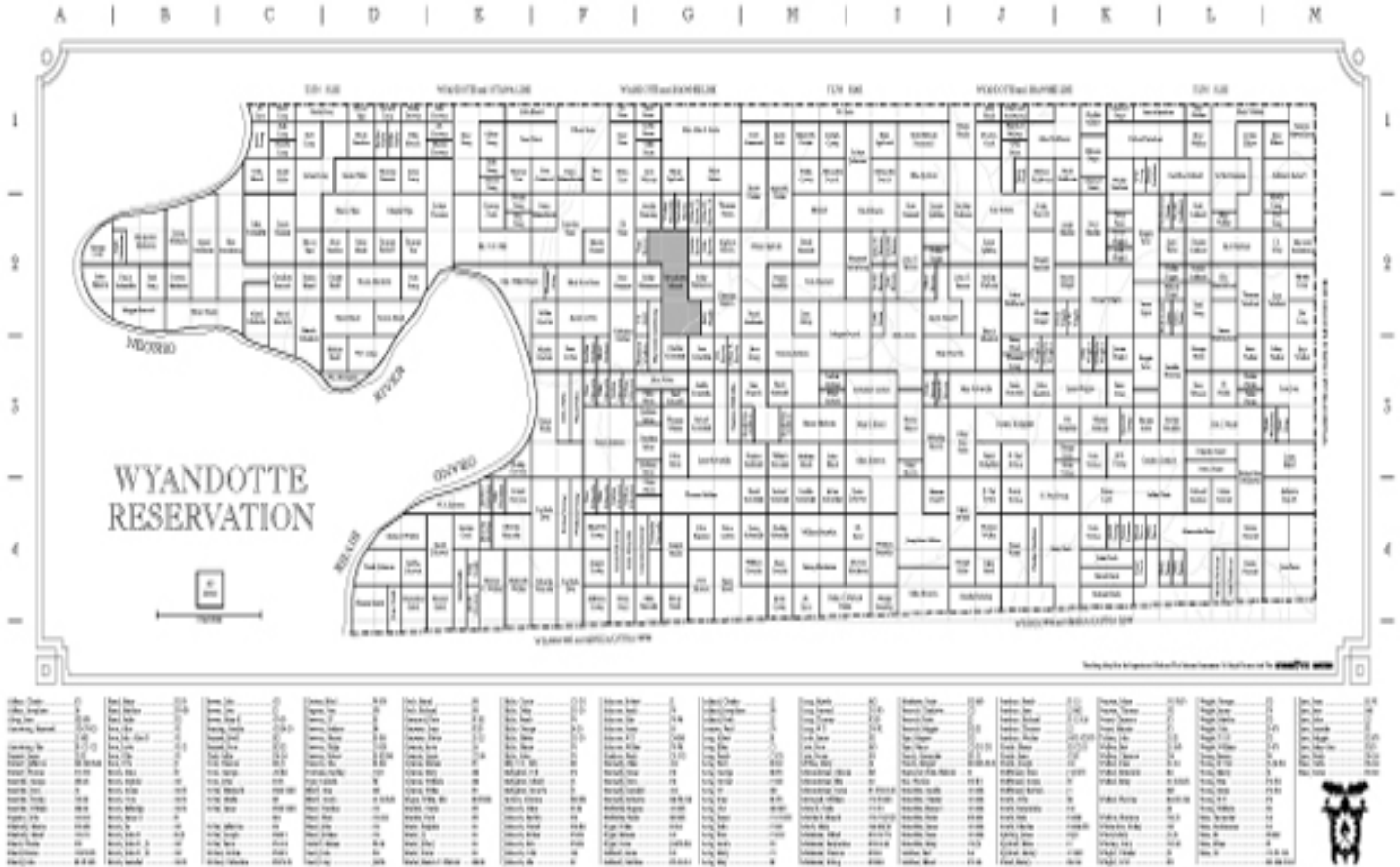
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Figure 2. Allotments of 1888



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VITA

Sheldon Yeakley

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: "LIVING BEYOND THE SKY": THE LONG REMOVALS OF THE WYANDOT INDIANS, 1816-1894.

Major Field: United States History

**Education:**

Completed the requirements for the Master of Arts in United States History at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2019.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in History at Oklahoma Christian University, Edmond, Oklahoma in 2016.

**Academic Awards**

Department of History Graduate Research Paper Award, Oklahoma State University, 2019.

Homer L. Knight Graduate Award, Oklahoma State University, 2017.

Townsend Memorial Award for Outstanding Graduate Paper, Oklahoma State University, 2017.

Summer Research Travel Award, Oklahoma State University, 2017.

**Conference Presentations**

"Condemnation and Mercy: Wyandot Indians and Slavery, 1844-1860,"

Missouri Valley History Conference in Omaha, Nebraska, 2019.

"To begin anew a tribal existence," Oklahoma State University Colloquium, 2019.

**Teaching Experience**

Teaching Assistant, Oklahoma State University 2017, 2018.