

LAND OF SUFFERING: THE LIVED CIVIL WAR EXPERIENCE OF INDIGENOUS
WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

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The Civil War in popular historiography has been interpreted through endless lenses and perspectives. However, the role of Indigenous peoples within the Civil War has remained neglected and consequently, incomplete. Additionally, the lived experiences of Native women have been overshadowed by a rhetoric of militaristic operations which have placed men at the forefront of these events..

The purpose of this thesis is twofold. First, utilizing brief oral histories from their descendants, I will create a narrative of three Indigenous Women: “Grandmother,” Archagowe, and Larney Scott. Representing the Diné or Navajo, Dakota, as well as Muscogee (Creek), these narratives give perspective to these women’s experiences during the Civil War and their fierce resilience within their unimaginable suffering. Secondly, this thesis seeks to restore agency to women that have otherwise been perceived as merely victims of the time period. This thesis seeks to illustrate the strength, courage, and calculated decision-making prevalent in these women’s lives. Contrary to popular historiography, these women were not passive victims, but active participants in the preservation of their communities. Their voices are needed to understand fully the complete American experience.

KEY WORDS: Indigenous Women, Civil War, Women’s history, Diné, Navajo, Dakota, Muscogee.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to fully acknowledge the individuals who provided these oral histories as interviews to be archived and remembered. Found within archives and anthologies and collected as written interviews, these sources have been fascinating to read. Without the recorded memories of Yasdesbah Silversmith, Wicahpewastewin, and James Scott, this project would be impossible, and these narratives lost. Though I have done my best create a realistic narrative, I realize it will never do justice to the actual events and sacred remembrances of their family members. I thank them sincerely.

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

It is one of my chief concerns as the author of this thesis that terminology utilized throughout the text is accurate and acceptable both to tribal communities as well as historical scholarship. Consequently, when referring to tribal affiliation or the Indigenous tribes themselves, every effort will be made to use words associated with Native language, and not Western nomenclature. For instance, the word Navajo, which was forced upon the tribe by Spanish settlers based on their geography, will be used interchangeably with the word Diné (Navajo) which in the Navajo language means “the people.” Following this pattern, I will use the word Dakota more regularly than Sioux, another word constructed by Western influence. Over recent years, the word Creek has been replaced by Muscogee (Creek) by the tribal nation itself. Consequently, I will use the word Muscogee (Creek) as often as possible, reserving the term Creek only when necessitated by historical context. It is my hope that the use of such terms will serve as a reminder of the rich traditions, languages and subsistence patterns that were thriving before the rise of Western settlement, as well as acknowledge Native peoples’ preferred methods of self-identification.

Throughout this thesis the need will arise to refer to Native peoples. In these cases, and as recommended by the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, preference will be given to words such as Indigenous peoples, Indigenous Americans, Native peoples, as well as Indigenous Americans. It is my hope that such efforts will demonstrate the reality and vitality of civilization that was present before the arrival of Europeans and continues strongly to this day.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

In 1930, a young man named Edward Curtis found himself in the southern deserts of New Mexico and Arizona. There, the young photographer was commissioned with capturing details of Indigenous peoples' lives and culture, which according to many, was on the verge of ultimate disappearance. In one of his most famous photos, Curtis details a long and disappearing line of Navajo warriors riding their horses into a fading sunset. For many, this image symbolized the ultimate assimilation of Navajo heritage into that of modern-American culture. "The thought this picture was meant to convey," Curtis observed, "was the Indians as a race already shorn of their rival strength and stripped of their primitive dress, are passing into the darkness of an unknown future."¹

Sadly, this perception of Indigenous life was projected onto traditional historiography as well as American opinion for centuries. One historian asserted that prior to the late 20th century, Indigenous studies were viewed as a "component of frontier history courses in which Indians, like geological barriers, severe climatic conditions, and wild animals were obstacles to the Euro-American settlement."² Within this narrative, Civil War scholarship has discounted the contributions and lived experiences of Indigenous peoples while ignoring the land grabs, faulty negotiations, and forced removals prevalent during the era. While recent historiographical efforts have sought to orient the experiences of different tribes within a Civil War context, accessible records of

1. Edward S. Curtis, *The North American Indian* (Portfolio I, Plate no. 1, 1907).

2. R. David Edmunds, "New Visions, Old Stories: The Emergence of a New Indian History" *OAH Magazine of History* 9, no. 4 (Summer 1995): 3.

treaties, negotiations, councils and warfare have created a rhetoric that promotes the roles and experiences of men during the Civil War conflict. Consequently, the stories of women and their reactions to wartime and governmental violence are often glossed over with a few sentences or paragraphs that attest to their involvement within the time period itself. Additionally, historians often explain the lived experiences of these women by simply summarizing what happened to them during the war, instead of seeking to understand the complex avenues of action taken by these women to protect themselves, and their families.

My argument within this thesis is twofold. First, I argue that the stories of Indigenous women, which have largely been ignored by traditional scholarship, must be included at the historiographical table. Secondly, I contend that Indigenous women did not just react to their circumstances, but made conscious and calculated decisions in the movement, survival and care of their families and communities. To defend this argument, I found it crucial to utilize the oral accounts of their children and grandchildren, along with reliable secondary data to better understand the lived experience of these women.

The use of oral histories within this thesis is vital in understanding not only lived experiences, but the way in which such experiences are remembered. In *Tangled Memories*, Marita Sturken states that memory is “a field [of] cultural negotiation through which different stories vie for a place in history.”³ Consequently, written and recorded memories have a corner on the historical market because of the ease with which they are accessed and understood. Not surprisingly, narratives of enslaved peoples and Native

3. Maria Sturgeon, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1.

peoples have not been imbedded into collective historical memory because of the lack of formal written sources.

To investigate these narratives, I will study the lived experiences of three Indigenous women through the recorded oral histories of their children or grandchildren. The first chapter chronicles the story of a Navajo woman we know only as “Grandmother,” whose granddaughter’s oral history details her journey to and sufferings in the government camp of Bosque Redondo. Chapter two details the life of Archagowe, a young Sioux mother who survived as a refugee throughout the brutal Dakota War. Last, and with only a few pages of narrative from her son, we will explore the life of Larney Scott, who fled to Kansas with other Loyal Muscogee (Creeks) during the advent of the Civil War. She never returned home.

Acknowledging the complex historiography of these events proves vital in understanding this thesis. Prior to the 1960’s, nationalist historiographical trends placed Indigenous history within the confines of Western settlement and politics. These viewpoints ignored tribes and groups that for millennia before European colonialism, operated profitable and effective subsistence patterns based on land utilization. For instance, in *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and their World*, Robbie Ethridge highlights the methods by which early historiography places American Indigenous studies within the confines of archaeology instead of history, because of the lack of written sources that would complement a more history-based approach.⁴ In 1919, historian Annie Heloise Abel wrote a book entitled *The American Indian as a Participant*

4. Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 2.

in the Civil War.⁵ Though Abel's narrative proved necessary in establishing a framework of Indigenous History, her work interpreted the experiences of Native peoples through easily accessible sources such as records from the Indian Department, correspondences between political leaders, and other "official records." Consequently, such work, and work surrounding this era, painted a deficient picture of the complete American experience.

In the mid 20th century, historians began work in what came to be known as "New Indian History." As American cultural movements of the era challenged traditionally held historical views, scholarship made strides in expanding historical narratives with voices that had previously been ignored. Gradually, Indigenous Americans, as well as people of color and women, became players on a nationalistic stage, reframing a history that in many ways, had been written without them. Works such as Alvin M. Joseph Jr.'s *America in 1492* combats contemporary historiography by calling attention to the millions of people who called the continent home for centuries before Western arrival.⁶ Throughout the latter half of the 20th century, prominent anthropologist Henry F. Dobyns published works analyzing the actual population trends of Indigenous peoples prior to the arrival of Columbus and afterwards. His works such as "Puebloan Historic Demographic Trends" attempts to understand the world of Native peoples in antiquity, creating context where popular historiography had remained silent.⁷ Other historians such as Gregory

5. Annie Heloise Abel, *The American Indian as Participant in the Civil War* (University of Michigan: Scholarly Press, 2006).

6. Alvin M. Joseph Jr., *America in 1492: The World of the Indian Peoples Before the Arrival of Columbus* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 6.

7. Henry F. Dobyns, "Puebloan Historic Demographic Trends," *Ethnohistory* 49, no.

Evans Dowd created works such as, “The French King Wakes Up in Detroit” which acknowledged the complex arenas of political negotiation and influence present within early warfare between Indigenous peoples and the Western world.⁸ Throughout the end of the 20th century, these scholars opened new avenues of historical research which historians hoped would “enrich the multivocality of American history and widen our perspectives.”⁹

Within this “New Indian” narrative, historians of Civil War memory have extended their horizons into the experiences of Indigenous peoples during the Civil War. *In Between Two Fires*, by Laurence M. Hauptman, documents the role that Native peoples played in the warfare of both the Union and the Confederacy.¹⁰ More recently, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Indian Territory* by Bradley R. Clampitt explores the experiences of Native peoples fighting in the North and South, as well as that of their families.¹¹ Though Clampitt does address the lives of women within some of the chapters, these occurrences are largely dedicated to the study of women who lived out the Civil War near their places of residence, not those who were actually forced from their homelands. Additionally, Clampitt utilizes sources to understand Indigenous women

1 (Winter 2002).

8. Gregory Evans Dowd, “The French King Wakes Up in Detroit: ‘Pontiac’s War’ in Rumor and History,” *Ethnohistory* 37 (Summer 1990).

9. Edmunds, “New Visions,” 6- 8.

10. Laurence M. Hauptman, *Between Two Fires: American Indians in the Civil War* (Free Press, 1996).

11. Bradley R. Clampitt, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Indian Territory* (University of Nebraska Press, 2015).

in the Confederate South and is therefore limited from including Indigenous women from other parts of the country.

David Blight's *Race and Reunion* furthers this narrative by detailing three visions of memory centered around the Civil War. Blight contends that to unify a country seemingly ravaged by war, Americans combined reconciliationist narratives of the North and white-supremacist views of South to create a society that discounted the views and memories of black Americans whose memories were emancipationist based. This decision created a "united" North and South while suppressing the voices and experiences of people of color in the name of national solidarity. David Blight's work documents the historical damage of such viewpoints, as well as the harrowing societal impacts associated with a fragmented national memory.¹²

Though many applauded Blight's monograph, at least one historian saw it as incomplete. In "Lest we remember: Civil War Memory and Commemoration among the Five Tribes," Jeff Fortney asserts that Blight ignores the lived experiences of Indigenous Americans within his three narratives of national memory. Conversely, he demonstrates the ways in which American, and particularly Southern ideologies have forced collective memory on Native peoples over time. For example, when a statue was erected to Cherokee General Stand Watie, one of the great war generals of the Confederacy, the accompanying biographical information available to the public asserted that the majority of Indigenous Americans were Confederates and sought to protect state's rights and other issues central to Confederate dogma.¹³ Such attempts ignored the diversity of beliefs and

¹² David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

experiences within the lives of Native peoples across the country. The uniting of reconciliationist and white-supremacist viewpoints refutes the views of Indigenous peoples who, like people of color, never had the opportunity be “united” with modern America. Consequently, the role of Indigenous peoples within the paradigm of lived memory has been skewed and necessitates attention from scholars.

This combination of “New Indian History” and Civil War studies has provided a place for Indigenous history to take a significant role in historiographical conversation. However, there are still improvements to be made. In a 1996 article “Voices, Interpretations, and the ‘New Indian History,’” historian Devon A. Mihesuah takes issue with aspects of ‘New Indian History’ by highlighting the fact that many recent historical writings still focus on multiple viewpoints that ignore the perspectives of Native peoples. By ignoring the cultural context and oral histories that may have been kept and preserved by tribal groups, historians may misrepresent histories that are unique to the Native experience. Mihesuah takes note that many works that have received awards and attention from the scholarly community do little to reveal the true experience of Native peoples. For instance, in Ramon Gutierrez’s *When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away*, Mihesuah notes that Gutierrez did not utilize any actual Pueblo accounts. Additionally, his manuscript was never reviewed by any tribal council or group. For Mihesuah, historians have repeated this pattern of scholarship over the years, resulting in inaccurate accounts of the past. To fully understand and implement the perspectives of Indigenous peoples, true historical research must be coupled with oral histories, as well

13. Jeff Fortney, “Lest We Remember: Civil War Memory and Commemoration among the Five Tribes” *American Indian Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (2012): 538-540.

as tribal consultation.

This concern is also echoed in Christine DeLucia's 2020 article, "Continuing the Intervention: Past, Present and Future Pathways for Native." In this roundtable discussion, DeLucia responds to criticism regarding her own work in utilizing tribal communities, oral traditions, and cultural understandings to recreate historical scholarship. Sadly, some historians have found fault with her work, treating these Native oral traditions and explanations, as "fantasies."¹⁴ In response to such attacks, DeLucia cites current research revealing that "the present is always, inextricably, in conversation with the past, and... modes of knowledge keeping and historical expression serve multiple purposes."¹⁵ To fully understand past events and patterns, relationships with Native tribes and their present reality prove absolutely necessary in creating histories that properly serve the past, as well as the present.

This thesis is situated at the intersection of two historiographies that in many ways have in many ways been ignored throughout the decades. Scholarship over the years has done little to understand not only Indigenous women's experiences during the Civil War, but their dramatic role in the story as it is seldom told. This thesis seeks to revisit these limited oral accounts in an effort to portray these women as prominent actors on a historical stage of conflict and decisions. By understanding the role of Indigenous women in the Civil War, we are able to better understand American experiences outside

14. Christine M. DeLucia, "Continuing the Intervention: Past, Present, and Future Pathways for Native Studies and Early American History," *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 2 (April 2020): 529.

15. DeLucia, "Continuing the Intervention," 529.

of the traditional paradigm of North and South, and in essence, make better attempts at understanding our shared history.

As reflected above, the limits of this paper are embedded in the historiography itself. While I have utilized oral histories from the descendants of these women, as well as several secondary sources that were written by tribal members, I have not had the opportunity to consult tribal leaders, or Native peoples. This of course is due to the limited time associated with the project itself. Additionally, as a non-Indigenous person, I do not pretend to understand the complex and beautiful traditions that influenced or have been influenced by the events documented in this thesis. The purpose of this project is not to create a finite definition of what happened to these Native peoples, or to narrow the lived experience of all Native women into the story of one individual. Rather, it is my hope that my attempt to understand the lived experience of these Native women will pay homage to their active role throughout history, as well as create a space where their experiences can be read, remembered, and revered. Though incomplete in terms of cultural understanding, this thesis gives the outline of a dialogue that can be filled in by more adept historians, as well as current tribal nations. My hope is that this research will serve as a springboard for other historians in discovering the lived experiences of these women and other Indigenous American women and place them within mainstream American historiography.

CHAPTER II

Grandmother: Arizona Territory 1864-1868

The American Civil War lives in national memory as individual moments. Just the words Gettysburg, slavery, emancipation, Lincoln, Lee, South and North conjure up images and events central to the bloodiest war ever fought in the history of the United States. The sweeping hills of Pennsylvania and the deep green summers of the South stand vibrant in our perceived memory of a war that “had a greater impact on American society and the polity than any other event in the country’s history.”¹⁶ While these sentiments are essential in recording and memorializing past events, this chapter will demonstrate that story they tell is in many ways incomplete.

Nearly two thousand miles away, nestled between the nation of Mexico and what was then California territory, the American Southwest has its own memories of the war. The consequences of civil warfare were just as impactful in the lives of the Native peoples living in this corner of the country as they were to Americans living further east. As a result of tension over land and resources, as well as the unrelenting tide of Manifest Destiny, over 10,000 Navajos were marched 327 miles to what they remember as *Hwéeldi* or in Navajo, “land of suffering.” Their lived Civil War experience is vital in understanding the full impact of the war on the entire country. It is a story that needs to be told, not only to embody the full spectrum of the Civil War, but to give voice to a people whose perspectives have been continually obscured throughout the centuries.

This chapter tells the story of the Civil War through the narrative of a Navajo

16. James M. McPherson, “Out of War, a new Nation,” *Prologue Magazine* 42, no 1. (Spring 2010).

woman we know only as “Grandmother” from nine pages of narrative left by her granddaughter. Her account provides firsthand details of the journey for her, and her family. While the history of civil warfare in the Southwest focuses on men’s perspectives through treaties, battles, and councils, this chapter flips this narrative on its head, by not only chronicling the lived experience of Grandmother, but highlighting the role that Navajo woman played in the survival of their families, clans, and people during this time period. Grandmother’s account deserves a place within the chronicles of history, to understand not just the experiences of women, or Indigenous peoples, but an understanding of the complete American experience.

This narrative will be created using an oral history of Grandmother provided by her granddaughter. In 1973, ninety-year-old Yasdesbah Silversmith was still herding sheep near her home in Lukachukau, Arizona when she was interviewed under the direction of Ruth Roessel, Director of the Navajo Studies program at the Navajo Community College. In six pages, Yasdesbah documents her grandmother’s story from two generations after the events, as they were related to her for decades. The purpose of the interview: preserve oral traditions which had been passed on to Yasdesbah by her ancestors before her. *Navajo Stories of the Long Walk Period* records in detail the oral histories presented by the older generation of Navajos, as they remembered the stories that their grandparents passed on from “The Long Walk.” At first glance, some may see oral histories as an unconventional method for seeking to understand and recreate events from nearly two centuries ago. Admittedly, such stories, due to the fact that they have been passed on by word of mouth, may bear factual and sentimental variations from events in actuality. However, in a historiography that for decades has been focused on

census records, military correspondences, and the journals and writings of generals, missionaries, and early white settlers, there is a momentous lack of personal and experiential details only available in events that are recounted by those who lived them. These oral histories provide the world with a tangible vision of Indigenous perspective that are necessary in understanding the robust theatre of the American Southwest during the Civil War Period.

Historiography

In many cases historiographical understandings have been clouded by erroneous conclusions regarding the role of Indigenous peoples within the history of the United States itself. In *Diné Perspective: Revitalizing and Reclaiming Navajo Thought*, Lloyd L. Lee explores how the ways in which traditional historiography “has portrayed indigenous populations within “a narrative of cultural pluralism and inclusion that suggested Diné (Navajo) acceptance of American sovereignty with little resistance.”¹⁷ Consequently, American cultural myth views the The Long Walk of the Navajo as just another event on a linear line of “progression” which brought Navajos ““an improved knowledge of agriculture and vocational trades, better methods of construction hogans in which they lived and an appreciation of wages.”¹⁸ This plurality does nothing to acknowledge the complex subsistence patterns that were already present and successful before the Navajo imprisonment at Bosque Redondo, the cultural, emotional, and physical loss during that time of suffering, and the negative cultural impacts of that ill-

17. Lloyd L. Lee, *Diné Perspectives: Revitalizing and Reclaiming Navajo Thought* (Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 76.

18. Lee, *Diné Perspectives*, 76.

fated Long Walk to *Hwéeldi*.

For decades, the history of the Navajo has been written by scholars who have focused their scholarship on non-indigenous sources. Between the 1930's and the 1970's, historian Frank Reeve published multiple articles in the *New Mexico Historical Review*, documenting at length the history of the American Southwest. Though sympathetic to the plight of Indigenous peoples throughout the region, Reeves derives most of his sources from governmental correspondences, in many ways negating the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples.¹⁹ In 1956, Ruth M. Underhill wrote *The Navajos*, a sweeping overview of Diné (Navajo) life and history. Though this piece of scholarship provides needed access into a world that was being ignored, her work utilized Western sources to interpret the experiences of the Diné (Navajo). Additionally, her explanation of Fort Sumner criticizes the methods of assimilation instead of condemning the practice as a whole.²⁰ Additionally, the experience of women is overshadowed by male Navajo leaders such as Manuelito and Barboncito, leaving women's voices absent from the historical record.

The field of US history underwent massive changes during the 1960's as historians across differing fields drew inspiration from the voices of peoples who had been traditionally ignored. Numerous scholars commenced in researching the lived experiences of Native peoples, resulting in a burgeoning field of Indigenous studies. In 1997, Donald L. Fixico edited a work comprised of articles regarding Indigenous history

19. Frank D. Reeve, "Federal Indian Policy in New Mexico 1858-1880, II." *New Mexico Historical Review* 13, no. 1 (1938).

20. Ruth M. Underhill, *The Navajos* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1956,) 127.

as a field. In chapter three, “The Historiography of American Indian and Other Western Women” Glenda Riley documents the changing historiographical trends of women in Western American history. For Riley, the final decades of the 20th century highlighted not just the experiences and livelihood of women, but in addition, their unique contributions to the societies in which they lived. Riley projects that this pattern will morph into interpretive studies, as scholars become more and more interested in the lived experiences of these women, based upon their own writings and historical voices.²¹

In 2001, Raymond Friday wrote *The Book of the Navajo*, in which he utilized traditional creation myths to understand the Navajo, as well as the internment at Bosque Redondo. Though his work was sensitive to the perspectives and traditions of the Diné (Navajo), historian Jennifer Nez Denetdale stated that this type of writing does “not counter or refute assumptions that, as a warlike and aggressive people, Navajos required subjugation by the U.S. military.”²² In *Reclaiming Diné History*, Nez Denetdale creates a study of her own great-grandmother Juanita who was the wife of prominent Navajo leader of the Long Walk Era, Manuelito. By utilizing oral histories, interviews, photos and other archaeological data Nez Denetdale place Juanita within a paradigm of successful, powerful women who bridged the horrific gap between the 19th and 20th century. In so doing, these sources assist society in understanding the incredible ways in which Juanita played a powerful influence in politics, speaking, and caring for her people

21. Donald L. Fixico, *Rethinking American Indian History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997,) 43.

22. Jennifer Nez Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History: The Legacies of Navajo Chief Manuelito and Juanita* (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 29.

amidst times of pain and suffering.²³ In 2019, Megan Kate Nelson published the Pulitzer Prize winning book, *The Three Cornered War*. In this work, Nelson takes a multiple-narrative approach to understand the dynamics of the American Civil War in the Southwest. In so doing, she seeks to understand the lives of women, including Juanita, to create a complete picture of the Civil War as a whole.

This chapter, in an effort to complement the studies of Nez Denetdale and Nelson seeks to use limited primary sources from *Stories from the Long Walk*, to create brief narrative accounts of *individual* women's experience during the long walk. In utilizing secondary sources to understand Grandmother's upbringing and life, it is my hope that I can provide a narrative of Indigenous women that assists us in understanding the Civil War as well as the lived experiences of Indigenous women.

The Civil War

In July of 1861, Confederate forces, led by Lieutenant Colonel John R. Baylor invaded the Territory of New Mexico, paving the way for General Henry Hopkins Sibley to slip through the El Paso trail. The defeat of Union forces at Valverde and consequent occupation of Santa Fe was the only time that a Union capital city was placed under Southern occupation.

This brief Confederate excursion was short lived. In the spring of 1861, General James Henry Carleton, brigadier general of the 1st California Volunteer Infantry Regiment, began a Union advance into the Southwest territories. Delayed by incessant rain and flooding, the troops finally arrived in the Southern territories while General

23. Nez Denetdale, *Reclaiming*.

Edward Canby's armies, though temporarily defeated, concentrated efforts on burning and destroying Confederate wagons and storehouses, leaving their enemies frighteningly vulnerable to the extremes of the desert environment. The defeat of Sibley at the Battle of Glorietta Pass necessitated the gradual retreat of the Confederate armies back to Mesilla, and finally over the western border of Texas. These campaigns left the Southwest largely in the hands of the Union army.

The Southwest theatre, though often underrepresented within historical scholarship, was a direct extension of Republican perspectives on the future of the American continent as a whole. The Republican Party, leaned heavily on ideals of an empire built upon free labor and consequently envisioned the occupations of the American Southwest as a catalyst to the passage of the Homestead Act and eventual construction of the Transcontinental Railroad. The Homestead Act, promising any free man that was not opposed to the Union access to one hundred and sixty acres of land not only opened opportunity for an empire of "free labor" but additionally, the beginning of an empire connected by the railroad itself. Ironically, it was the Native Peoples of the Southwest, who had occupied the region for millennia, that stood in the way. Consequently, this empire of free labor necessitated wresting "control of the West's lands from Native peoples and from hispanos who could not prove their ownership."²⁴

To substantiate the spreading ideology behind Manifest Destiny as well as the distant rumble of the Industrial Revolution, land even as far as the Southwest became a hotbed of contention. When prospectors discovered gold and other minerals in the San

24. Megan Kate Nelson, *The Three-Cornered War: The Union, the Confederacy, and Native Peoples in the Fight for the West* (New York: Scribner, 2020), 148.

Francisco Mountains around 1863, the United States government viewed the forced removal and re-education of Native civilizations as necessary to meet their economic and political goals. This, coupled with the endless torrents of attacks between Mexicans, Utes, and other native tribes led Kit Carson and General Carleton himself to institute methods of Indian removal specifically to the prairies of Bosque Redondo. This plan created a direct attack on the Diné (Navajo) people, their traditions, and livelihoods.

The Diné

The story of the Diné (Navajo) encompasses the very traditions and beliefs that are woven into the very fibers of everyday life. These stories were told by family members across generations and connected them as well as their land. The Diné (Navajo) tell of the Spirit people, their migration through a series of different worlds, and the experiences they had with the Holy People, or the deities of creation. The Holy People gathered an ear of white and yellow corn, as well as a feather each of white and yellow Eagles, and wrapping them in buckskin, created the first man and woman.²⁵ The Diné (Navajo) were introduced to four mountains, the holy borders of their land, upon entering the Glittering World. Sis Naajinl, to the east, Tsoodzil, to the south Dook'o'ooshíd, to the west, and Dine Nitsaa to the north. These, “were the four sacred mountains that mark[ed] the traditional boundaries of Diné Bikéyah.”²⁶

Entrance into the Glittering World also paved the path for the birth of Changing Woman, one of the most beloved deities of Navajo tradition. She was found, not born, on

25. Paul G. Zolbrod, *Diné Bahane': The Navajo Creation Story* (University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 50. (Ebook version)

26. Peter Iverson, *Diné: A History of Navajos* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 11.

the peak of Gobernador Knob, and cared for by the Holy People. She reached full maturity as a woman in only twelve days, and the Holy People performed the very first Kinaaldá, or puberty ceremony for her.²⁷ This ceremony extended to and became a sacred tradition for young Diné Navajo women and their families for centuries. Changing Woman's twin sons courageously journeyed to and fought against the monsters of the early days, and "their exploits and heroic deeds set order, balance and harmony in the world." Consequently, these stories of a mother and her sons, set into motion the understood behaviors and standards typical of Navajo life.²⁸ The rich clan system that is so cherished in Diné (Navajo) society was created by Changing Woman herself. "She rubbed the skin from her breast, her back, and from under arms to create Kiiya'áanii (Towering House) Honágháhnii (One Walks Around You), Tódich'í'ni (Bitter Water), and Hashtłishnii (Mud) clans."²⁹ This feminine deity, and her twin monster slayers, demonstrated the rich cultural and feminine history related to the Diné (Navajo) people. This type of clan matriarchy is evident in the roles of women within Navajo society and their relationship to the community as a whole. Consider the words of Changing Woman to her suitor, and future husband Jóhonna'éei the Sun: "Remember as different as we are, you and I, we are of one spirit. As dissimilar as we are, you and I, we are of equal worth. As unlike as you and I are, there must always be solidarity between the two of us. Unlike each other as you and I are, there can be no harmony in the universe as long as there is no

27. Iverson, *Diné*, 11.

28. Iverson, *Diné*, 12.

29. Iverson, *Diné*, 12.

harmony between us.”³⁰ The story of Changing Woman in many ways, was a story of the people, and how they should live and interact as individuals, families and clans.

Throughout Grandmother’s life, and especially during the cold winter months when weather kept the family inside of their warm hogans, her mother and father, grandparents, and aunts and uncles most likely recounted the creation stories to her in her youth. The stories and traditions held meaning for her, especially as she became a participant in the cherished ceremonies. Grandmother’s first menstrual cycle would have led to her own Kinaaldá ceremony, just like Changing Woman. For each of the four days, Grandmother would awaken, be molded by her family members, and run her personal race. On the east side of the hogan, family members would work together to dig a large hole, usually about three feet in diameter, into which clan members and family would bring supplies to bake large corn cake. Cooked underground, the final day of the ceremony would terminate in the sharing of the food itself. Scholar Ruth Roessel stated that:

The Kinaaldá ceremony was a unifying force in Navajo life, and, as are all Navajo ceremonies, it served a dual function, not only as a blessing and preparation for the individual girl and her new role as a Navajo woman, but also it was an integrating and reinforcing function in Navajo sooty in general.³¹

Though Grandmother’s ceremony may have been different as a result of the general trepidation of what came to be known as “The Fearing Time” there is no doubt that the ceremony of food, family and fertility provided needed connection of these

30. Paul G. Zolbrod, *Diné Bahane’: The Navajo Creation Story* (University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 275.

31. Ruth Roessel, *Women in Navajo Society* (Rough Rock: Navajo Resource Center, 1981), 82.

sustaining influences into everyday life.

Grandmother was most likely married within a few years of her Kinaaldá, possibly around the age of fourteen or fifteen. It is very possible that Grandmother did not know who her husband was but relied on her family to make a good decision for her, and consequently the clan as a whole. Traditionally, the groom's family would arrive at the home of the prospective bride to begin bargaining, many times through livestock, or other possessions. Once the arrangements had been settled, the traditional marriage ceremony could commence. The bride and groom would enter their hogan at night, accompanied by close family members. The medicine man performing the ceremony would oversee the washing of their hands. Next, a bowl of corn mush, surrounded by corn pollen would be consumed by the pair. The beauty of the ceremony once again, connected food and subsistence, with family, and tradition. Additionally, "not only is the event joining two families, but it also is joining at least four clans so that it becomes a reinforcing and revitalizing aspect of Navajo life."³² The tense circumstances surrounding her marriage must have placed some limits on the ceremony. Regardless, the newlywed couple would in most cases, begin their home life near that of the wife's family, supporting the matrilineal system already in place.

Gender Roles

Grandmother's first days as a new wife were in many ways a continuation of what life was before the sacred ceremony. Alongside her husband, as well as the women family members who surrounded her, Grandmother would have attended to her duties of

32. Roessel, *Women in Navajo Society*, 57.

survival and tradition. The deep currents of sustenance practiced by the Diné (Navajo) and appropriated by the Holy People, provided a rhythm of life that for centuries had produced bounty and prosperity for the Navajos. What differed for Grandmother, was relying on these traditions and fulfilling them during a time of immense change.

Traditional gender roles embodied the deep need for all members of society to contribute for the improvement of the community as a whole. Men were generally responsible for needs further from the traditional dwelling places. For instance, construction of homes, field work, hunting, and caring for livestock dominated their world. Alternatively, women cared for children, prepared food, wove clothing and blankets as well as cared for the sheep that were so vital to their survival and identity. Though³³ roles in many ways seemed separated, they were in fact deeply connected. While men were often tasked with the act of hunting, “Women were generally the ones who slaughtered, skinned, and butchered livestock. Through their act of killing sheep and goats and spilling their blood, they nurtured kin in ways both tangible and symbolic.”³⁴ Consequently, the role of Navajo women constituted not just a major necessity in the success of the family and clan but contained connecting symbolism as well.

These customs of course extended to shepherding. To the Diné (Navajo), shepherding was much more than a past time, food, or resource: it was a way of life. Consequently, in her work, *Dreaming of Sheep*, Marsha L. Weisiger delineates the complex role of sheep herding and the autonomy it granted to any in the tribe who proved

33. Iverson, *Diné*, 12.

34. Marsha Weisiger, *Dreaming of Sheep in Navajo Country* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), 85-86.

ready and willing to embark in the work of sheep herding and care. For instance, many responsible young children, some as young as nine-years-old, were given up to thirty sheep to care for as they saw fit.³⁵ Such traditions tied mothers, daughters, and families together in a matrilineal society that utilized sheep as a resource for meat, textiles, and dairy. Such populations of sheep only became limited due to controlling New Deal legislation decades later.³⁶

Grandmother's life prior to her imprisonment must have revolved around the seasons of the Southwest. Springtime would consist of "lambing" or assisting ewes and their young in the birthing process across the landscape. Potentially hundreds of ewes and lambs would need to be cared for, likely a day-and-night responsibility during that season. Additionally, the shearing of sheep, which would have been an exhausting, yet lucrative enterprise also impeded upon the first months of the year. In the spring, seeds that had been protected and held safe in underground caches during winter's ravages would be removed and prepared for planting. Plants such as corn, wild celery, onions and carrots would prove vital to their sustainment during the months to come.³⁷ Carefully, they would plant the new seeds across the intended landscape with both men and women participating in the process. As a man would place holes in the ground with a stick, his wife would follow behind placing the precious corn kernels in the ground, singing sacred

35. Weisiger, *Dreaming*, 79-80.

36. Weisinger, *Dreaming*, xvi.

37. Roessel, *Women in Navajo Society*, 101.

songs to bless the inchoate seedling.³⁸ This shared expression of planting exemplified “the close relationship that some of the women still have with their growing crops and with their identification with the Holy People in carrying out the tasks and functions necessary to grow corn and other plants.”³⁹ In the summer months, women tenderly cared for the growing crops as they weeded and protected their precious food source. It is possible that Grandmother, like many Navajo women, would have built small dwellings near the actual crops to protect them from pests during the last months of ripening. Additionally,⁴⁰ she would have harvested corn pollen to assist in the upcoming ceremonies.

Months of caring for the corn would have resulted in a large harvest and a time of plenty. After being picked, corn could be roasted, to dry and preserve it for use during times of scarcity. Alternately, the kernels could be cut from the stalks, ground by heavy stones while kneeling, wrapped in the corn husks and cooked until firmed into a type of corn tamale. Melons would be dried as well during this time, to create stores of food to last through the winter.

For Grandmother, fall and winter would have involved the gathering of berries, which combined with corn mush would result in Tsiitchin,⁴¹ a type of porridge. During this time, Grandmother was most likely involved in hunting as well. Though primarily

38. Roessel, *Women in Navajo Society*, 105.

39. Roessel, *Women in Navajo Society*, 105.

40. Roessel, *Women in Navajo Society*, 103.

41. Roessel, *Women in Navajo Society*, 106.

performed by the men, both men and women would work together to prepare, jerk, and preserve the meat for use. The tanning of hides and buskins also necessitated the help of the women.

As winter fell across Diné Bikeyah, the retreat into the hogans would have been a time to share traditional stories as the anticipation for springtime grew. Women used yarn produced from the shearing to weave the “long-lasting, watertight blankest for which Navajos were renowned.”⁴² Such blankets provided shelter, warmth, clothing, and opportunities for trade.

The Fearing Time

We meet grandmother at White Clay Spring, a small settlement on the western border of modern Arizona. By this time, Grandmother had become a mother herself to a boy that was now about five years old. Around a campfire with soft glowing embers the Navajo women were roasting corn, most likely for winter preservation. In an instant voices became screams as a group of Utes descended on the small band, scattering them throughout the area. In an act of sheer panic, Grandmother grabbed her son, rushed to the deep brush and crouched low for what must have been an eternity, as hot bullets spiraled just inches over her head. As the sound of distant gunshots mellowed, Grandmother carried her son on her back through a wake of attack victims, including a young baby, until she found Grandfather.⁴³

42. Mary Kate Nelson, *The Three-Cornered War: The Union, the Confederacy, and Native Peoples in the Fight for the West* (Scribner, 2020), 48.

43. Ruth Roessel, *Navajo Stories of the Long Walk Period* (Chinle: Navajo Community College Press, 1973), 117.

The days preceding the Long Walk were known to the Navajo simply as the Fearing Time. For decades, limited resources had increased tensions between the Navajo, Utes, Mexicans, and other neighboring tribes. The need for sheep and additional resources within the theatre of the American Southwest resulted in violent outbursts as differing groups fought over supplies and materials. This type of environment escalated into the kidnapping of women and children, splitting families and devastating societal systems across the region. As the United States government sought to moderate the chaos of the region, Native leaders and government officials signed treaties such as Doniphan's Treaty of 1846, to deescalate the tensions and slave trade which had become prevalent in the region.⁴⁴ However, these attempts proved inefficient in governing the region, and did little to control it. Tensions worsened as the United States government continued to encroach upon sacred Navajo land. The construction of Fort Defiance, in 1851, built within the area of the four holy mountains, proved agitating to the Diné (Navajo) and was seen as a threat to the very fiber of their land and survival. Though the Navajos attempted a siege in 1860, the pressure of New Mexican Military groups as well as other neighboring tribes proved too great to remove Western influence from the area.⁴⁵ The invasion and its accompanying violence was now more than suffocating, it had become life-threatening.

This account is most likely just one of dozens of experiences encountered by young Grandmother as she began her life as a married woman. Grandmother had heard

44. Nelson, *The Three-Cornered War*, 44-45.

45. Nelson, *Three-Cornered War*, 46.

the tales or was perhaps even acquainted with young women who had been taken from their homeland as slaves during “The Fearing Time.” The story of the grandmother of Chahadineli Nebally, as recounted in yet another oral history from *Navajo Stories of the Long Walk* recounts the horrific account of a woman, who never went to Bosque Redondo, yet experienced a completely different type of imprisonment during this era. She, along with a five-year-old boy, was kidnapped and taken by Mexican settlers to a New Mexico territory situated near the Rio Grande. Here, she began work as a domestic servant for the wife of one of her captors. Pregnant, and yearning to return to Diné Bideyah, Nebally’s grandmother escaped the settlement with the help of her captor’s wife. Nebally’s grandmother began the long journey home, facing starvation, wild animals, and exhaustion. After the loss of her baby on the trail she finally returned home to her land and people. Accounts such as these demonstrate not only the tenacity of the Navajo women, but their ability to survive treacherous circumstances to return home. The boy with whom she was kidnapped, never returned.⁴⁶

Though the Civil War left Fort Defiance vacant for some time, and the heat of contention seemed to cool momentarily, it proved to simply be the calm before the storm. In 1862, Kit Carson, under the command of General Carelton began campaigns to subjugate the Navajo people in an effort to gain economic and physical control of the area, as well as pave the way for advancements such as the Homestead Act and the Transcontinental Railroad. Carson declared that “all Indian men of the that tribe are to be

46. Ruth Roessel, *Navajo Stories of the Long Walk Period* (Tsaile: Navajo Community College Press, 1973), 57-74.

killed whenever and wherever you can find them”⁴⁷ Eventually any survivors would be met by the motives of the United States government: “War first. Then relocation. And then, ultimately, civilization.” This⁴⁸ type of precedent led Kit Carson and his men on a scorched earth scheme throughout the Diné (Navajo) homeland. Though locating the Navajos proved difficult, Carson’s burning of empty villages, resulted in a fear among the people. It was at the beautiful rusted red caverns of Canyon de Chelly, that Carson threatened the Navajos:

You must come in and go to the Bosque Redondo or we will pursue and destroy you. We will not make peace with you on any other terms. You have deceived us too often and robbed and murdered our people too long - to trust you again at large in your own country. This war shall be pursued against you if takes years, now that we have begun until you cease to exist or move. There can be no other talk on the subject.⁴⁹

Slowly, streams of Navajos, facing hunger and lack of shelter as a result of hiding began to trickle in to Fort Defiance, ultimately confronted perhaps one of their worst fears: loss of their land. It is hard to say when Grandmother, her husband, and young son came to Fort Defiance, or how they arrived at the decision to leave their beloved Diné Bikéyah. Some, like Navajo leader Manuelito and his family, hid out in the mountains of Colorado Chiquito for nearly two years before finally surrendering to the Kit Carson. Whether grandmother and her family were one of the first, or some that had fought out time against the enemy, they most likely arrived tired, hungry but with some of their

47. Nelson, *Three-Cornered War*, 155.

48. Nelson, *Three-Cornered War*, 156.

49. Nelson, *Three-Cornered War*, 192.

sheep in tow.⁵⁰ The nine mile walk from White Clay Springs to Fort Defiance, would have only been a portion of the walk that they would endure over the coming weeks. Surely the hope that their hunger would be lessened was met by disappointment. Rations issued included bacon, wheat flour, and coffee, all of which were staples with which the Navajos were extremely unfamiliar. Consequently, the use of coffee beans as legumes, or the boiling of bacon, left the food not just detestable, but in many ways, inedible. Sickesses like dysentery spread throughout camp.

Grandmother's severe disappointment must have set in at this point. Upon surrender, in some ways, things were worse than they had ever been. The inability to feed certain foods to her son, coupled with the stress of the unknown was most likely suffocating. In addition to herding the sheep, caring for the children, food preparation with very few resources, and now, caring for the sick and dying within her new community, Fort Defiance was surely no relief to the Diné (Navajo). Like other Navajo women, the caring of the sheep must have represented a sense of independence to Grandmother. The shearing of sheep, the milking of ewes, and occasional butchering of mutton must have relieved her family in some way of the misery of Fort Defiance.⁵¹

At the start of 1864, Kit Carson commissioned the long walk to Fort Sumner, nearly 327 miles away. The journey lasted nearly eighteen days, and the long line of Navajos left as prisoners from their own land. Rations were meager, clothing scarce, and moral, anything but high. Grandmother most likely packed their meager possessions and

50. Nelson, *Three-Cornered War*, 190.

51. Nelson, *Three-Cornered War*, 219.

she, grandfather, and their young son, surrounded by community members, began the long trek with nothing but perhaps their sheep beside them. The horrors of The Long Walk were not of course limited to the physical brutality, but the emotional fear as well as well. Tired and succumbed by fatigue, Grandmother had heard tell of women giving birth, or people who were too weak to go on, shot or left for dead amidst the unbearable walk across the desert.⁵² When family or community members tried to help, they were threatened in the same way and forced to move on. The same child that Grandmother whisked away from the embers at the time of the Ute attack, likely never walked far from his mother, avoiding the soldiers who held their lives at mercy. The walk to Fort Sumner in many ways, seems unimaginable. Grandmother, grandfather, and their young son most likely made the journey together, trying desperately to care for their straggling sheep, and seeking to provide for them as well as themselves during the walk. Nearly two hundred Navajos died during the many marches that occurred from 1844-1866, and 10,000 Navajos were forcibly removed from their homeland. When Grandmother and her family were on the trail is hard to know, but it is safe to say that whether it was dealing with the blazing ninety-degree heat or shivering in the lows that could reach well below freezing, the Diné (Navajo), stripped of their natural resources and traditions, were already in a land of suffering.

52. Roessel, *Navajo Stories*, 31-31.

Bosque Redondo

It would have been difficult to identify the arrival at Fort Sumner as one of relief or despair. Once counted at the fort the Navajos were marched slightly north along a winding road that led them to their new dwelling place of rolling prairie:⁵³ Bosque Redondo. The cruel march and the anxious gaze of the Diné (Navajo) must have reflected the barren land that was only meant to shelter a fraction of the amount of people that government officials had assigned to the region.

Work must have commenced immediately. If they arrived in spring, Grandmother and her husband would have, under mandate, begun the planting of corn. Each morning, a giant bell rung to wake the Navajos to their duties in the fields. “They were sent to plow the land, plant seeds and dig out acequias,” or irrigation canals.⁵⁴ For three years, the Navajo walked the fields, and grandmother and her husband likely prayed and sang over the seeds they buried in the earth. Grandmother most likely tended the plants as her husband hunted, dug, collected scarce firewood or did anything to provide sustenance to his young family. As harvest approached, she kept near as she could to the plants, weeding, gathering, at times, even sleeping near them to protect them from animal attacks. But each year, despite her care, disaster struck. The first two years, cutworms ravaged the plants and the last year, devastating drought took what was left.⁵⁵ The loss of crops, so often associated with and seen through the eyes of the men that were there, was

53. Nelson, *Three-Cornered War*, 218.

54. Roessel, *Women in Navajo Society*, 218.

55. Roessel, *Women in Navajo Society*, 218.

a loss felt keenly by young Grandmother. One can imagine her, or other woman walking the rotting fields, searching for any form of edible, or plantable corn.

Small dugouts replaced the hogans that the Diné (Navajo) had used as their habitations for centuries. Due to the lack of wood and lumber, men and most likely women, dug large holes in the scorched desert earth, patching roofs made of mud and grass and topping them with animal skins.⁵⁶ It was in this pit that grandmother, at some point during her interment at Bosque Redondo, gave birth to her second child, a daughter. As the pains became more frequent grandmother, accompanied by women of her community, most likely warmed rocks by the fire, placing them beneath her abdomen to alleviate the birthing pains.⁵⁷ Whether the dirt of the ground was muddy or dry, hot or cold, the child came into existence, and Grandmother must have wondered the fate of the young girl who was born into Hweeldi, the land of suffering.

Regular rations of flour and beef proved insufficient to adequately feed the momentous amount of people at Bosque Redondo. Consequently, survival depended on constant searching for food. At one point, Grandfather happened upon an old hogan that had been abandoned. Stuck between the posts, he found a piece of horse meat, full of sores. “Even though the meat was full of sores,” stated Grandfather “we boiled it and ate it. We thought it was going to kill us right away, but I am still living today.”⁵⁸ Grandmother was likely the one that prepared the meat, boiling the putrid piece of flesh

56. Roessel, *Women in Navajo Society*, 221.

57. Roessel, *Navajo Stories*, 71.

58. Roessel, *Navajo Stories*, 122.

over an open fire, anxious with worry over the implications of consuming such food, but at the same time, watching her children consistently hungry.

It was Grandmother who learned the ways of using new foods to adjust to their life. Though flour, beef, and coffee must have over time become a part of their diet, hunting provided supplemental nutrition needed to survive. Grandfather asserted that, “We ate just about all the birds there were, also bears and porcupines. Crows were about the only bird that couldn’t be eaten. Some people tried it, but they said the meat was so bitter they couldn’t swallow it.”⁵⁹ It was Grandmother, more likely than not, who plucked the strange birds, and skinned the porcupines and bears. She assisted in butchering the meat and distributed it to her family and people.

It is hard to imagine the exact moment when a mother, alongside her husband decided the risks of escape outweighed those of staying in a state of perpetual catastrophe. They were probably not the first nor the last to attempt escape, but one of the fortunate whose escape brought them home. On a dark evening, possibly one with little moonlight, Grandmother carrying her new baby, along with her son, husband and a man named Hastiin Háhołahí, headed west. Tragedy struck early as Grandfather received a fatal stab by a cactus needle leaving his foot in extreme pain. Additionally, the baby girl received a blow to the eye by passing tree branches, resulting in eye damage that would accompany her for the rest of her life.⁶⁰

Grandfather’s foot soon became infected with pus, greatly impeding his journey.

59. Roessel, *Navajo Stories*, 122.

60. Roessel, *Navajo Stories*, 120.

Suddenly, the group found themselves within shooting range of an elk. Grandfather told Grandmother “if I shoot one, I want someone to run over and get the elk’s arms (front legs) between his horns so he can’t get up and run off.”⁶¹ As soon as the shot rang out, Grandmother laid her baby girl on the ground, ran toward the elk, and did exactly as requested. She likely assisted in the butchering of the animal, especially considering the physical condition of her husband. Finally, after days of thirst, hunger, and injuries, Grandmother and her family returned home.

Return

In June of 1868, the Treaty of Bosque Redondo was signed. After years of talks, visiting generals, and uncertainty, the message of the Navajo had always been the same; they wanted to return home. Almost immediately, Diné (Navajo) men, women and children embarked on their journey to return to Diné Bikeyah, the beloved land between their four sacred mountains. Though under certain restrictions and the impelling of their children to attend public government schools, the Navajos had returned home.

Grandmother’s story lived on through generations, as evidenced by the account given by her granddaughter. Her tenacity in the face of hopelessness, and her calculated actions in providing for her family are a just one example of the ways in which Diné (Navajo) women experienced the years of the American Civil War.

61. Roessel, *Navajo Stories*, 120.

CHAPTER III

Archagowe: Minnesota Territory 1862

In the summer of 1862, a massacre unlike any other devastated the face of the United States. Chronologically situated within the years of the American Civil War, the accounts, narratives, and memories of the atrocities of the Dakota War in Minnesota are at times overlooked, and at worst forgotten. A country ravaged by the bloodiest war in its history seemed in many ways to pay little mind to the news of the Minnesota Territory. Faulty treaties, broken promises, starvation, and an influx of white settlers all came to a head during that fateful summer, resulting in one of the bloodiest massacres in American history.

The story of the Dakota (Sioux) and the United States government is much more complex than may be reflected in most historiographical contexts. The pressure leading up to these events had been mounting for decades, even centuries. Consequently, the violence of the experience, as well as the political and diplomatic nature of the conflict, resulted in a history that often ignores the experiences and contributions of Dakota (Sioux) women. Records of councils, tribal meetings, signed treaties and wartime atrocity dominate the narratives of the Dakota War, ignoring other vital players at hand. While men Indigenous warriors, chiefs, and U.S. generals are viewed as the protagonists of this story, the accounts of women within this narrative remain in many ways obsolete. The purpose of this chapter is to combat a historiography that places these women in a passive role amidst the crisis. Conversely, I hope to document the lived experience of one woman, as well as her calculated decisions and actions that led to the survival of her family and community.

The account of Archagowe comes to us through the words of her then eight-year-old daughter, Wicahpewastewin, or Good Star Woman. Over seventy years later, Wicahpewastewin tells the story of her family and their Civil War experiences in vibrant detail. As the nine-page narrative unfolds, it becomes apparent that history and traditional scholarship has, in many ways, obscured the stories of the Dakota (Sioux) women who lived through the conflict. Fortunately, with such primary source documents, as well as secondary data that assists us in understanding her experiences, Archagowe is able to stand as an individual, amidst the chaotic backdrop of a people in crisis. What follows is her story.

Historiographical Overview

Historians have made various attempts to interpret the Dakota War throughout the past century. Initially, prevalent historical accounts provided by white settlers and leaders dominated American perceptions of the massacre. In 1863, Harriet E. Bishop, who was a popular writer, educator and activist published *Dakota War Whoop*, which documented the rise of the events of the Dakota War from a completely Western perspective. Shockingly, the preface includes a letter from Governor Stephen Miller who not only served in the Dakota War but oversaw the execution of 38 convicted Dakota (Sioux). He praises Bishop's work stating, "I take pleasure in commending [this work] to the public, as a faithful and authentic history of the terrible events connected with the outbreak of the Sioux Indians."⁶² Bishop's work ignores the agonizing suffering as well as the unique perspective of the Dakota (Sioux) themselves, many of whom had no desire to be part of

62. Harriet E. Bishop, *Dakota War Whoop: or, Indian Massacres and War in Minnesota, of 1862- '3* (Auburn: WM. J. Moses' Press, 1864), Preface.

the conflict. Bishop even goes so far as to dedicate the book to Governor Henry Hasting Sibley, whose controversial actions toward the Dakota (Sioux) in many ways led to the violent outbreak itself. In the same way, Charles S. Bryant and Abel B. Murch's *A History of the Great massacre by the Sioux Indians In Minnesota* provided a biased and incomplete record of the radical conflict.⁶³ In particular, the experiences of Dakota (Sioux) women and children appear lost in these narratives, as the visions of white settlers and politicians were given overwhelming preference in the historical research.

In a world of pernicious attacks on their people's history, early Dakota (Sioux) scholars detailed their experiences after the Dakota War, seeking to orient their distinctive experiences and belief systems within the past. For instance, in *My People the Sioux*, Standing Bear Luther details the ways in which traditional customs and patterns were prevalent in his childhood, despite the onslaught of assimilationist policies and actions of the US government throughout the era.⁶⁴ In 1902, Charles A. Eastman published *Indian Boyhood*, which narrates the beauty and simplicity of a childhood steeped in tradition and nature.⁶⁵ Only four at the time of the Dakota War, Eastman recalls his flight with his extended family to British Columbia, the treacherous crossing of the Missouri River, the travails in snow and the absence of food. Additionally in *Black Elk Speaks*, Black Elk recounts an upbringing steeped in tradition, and even documents

63. Charles S. Bryant, A.M., and Abel B. Much, *A History of the Great Massacre by the Sioux Indians in Minnesota, Including the Personal Narratives of many who Escaped* (Saint Peter, E. Wainwright & Son Publishers, 1872).

64. Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975).

65. Charles Alexander Eastman, *Indian Boyhood* (Gryphon Books, 1971).

his first buffalo hunt. Though he does not relate memories of the Dakota War, Black Elk recounts his experience as a young boy and the Battle of a Hundred Slain, or Fetterman Fight.⁶⁶ All of these works contradict broad historiographical currents of the time that not only ignored the experiences of Indigenous Americans but saw their customs and very identity on the brink of societal disappearance.

These memoirs and their respective authors gave voice to thousands of Native peoples, whose perspectives had been obscured by traditional scholarship for centuries. Indigenous Dakota (Sioux) were portrayed as instigators of violence, needing of “civilization,” and deserving of the horrendous imprisonments they were made to endure. However, with the coming of a new age of historians, other works have sought to recreate and re-tell the stories of the Native Dakota (Sioux). For instance, “Decolonizing the 1862 Death Marches” by Waziyatawin Angela Wilson contradicts historiography that has relied solely upon white settlers and government leaders for historical accuracy. In *Dakota in Exile* Linda M. Clemmons utilizes Native sources to understand the aftermath of the Dakota War, as well as the horrific experiences of men, women in children, within the prison camps of Minnesota, Iowa, and South Dakota. In her work she focuses on the unity of the Dakota (Sioux) even referring to kinship ties as “a form of resistance.”⁶⁷ The use of oral history has brought vitality and energy to the field and has been utilized by many historians to produce more accurate representations of their people. In *Remember This!*, historian and Dakota (Sioux) tribal member interviews her adopted Grandfather

66. John G. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks: The Complete Edition* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2014).

67. Linda M. Clemmons, *Dakota in Exile: The Untold Stories of Captives in the Aftermath of the U.S. – Dakota War* (University of Iowa Press, 2019), 56.

regarding his experiences and remembrances within the tribal community. This book provides a powerful example of the necessity of oral histories in the field of Indigenous studies.⁶⁸

The historiographical contribution of this chapter lies in its attempt to narrate the lived experience of an individual Dakota (Sioux) women. While other works have studied aspects of the historical events, my approach will seek to understand Archagowe's pre-war and war experience, as well as the tragic aftermath of the Dakota War. By doing so, I hope to restore agency to women whose voices have been ignored throughout scholarly research, and attest to Archagowe's bravery during a time of tremendous change and unrest for her family and people.

Before the Arrival of US Government

The word Sioux is in reality a French name given to encompass the Indigenous nations of the north-central United States. These settlers utilized the word Nadouesioux, meaning "snake", and therefore, "enemy" in native Ojibwe to describe the contemporary Indigenous nations. In reality, the true name for these tribal nations is Očhéthi Šakówin which translated, signifies "Seven Council Fires."⁶⁹ Consequently, the term "Dakota" includes the four eastern tribes, the "Mdewakantons, Sissetons, Wahetons, and Wahpekutes." For centuries, these people inhabited the northern reaches of Minnesota, as well as parts of Wisconsin and Canada. Though differing in geography, the traditions and

68. Wzaiyatawin Angela Wilson, *Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives* (University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

69. Pekka Hämäläinen, *Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), ix.

experiences of these people epitomize a group who has fought against the tide of nationalism and colonialism for centuries.

The creation stories of the Dakota (Sioux) people differ between various tribes and clans. For instance, the most popular understanding is based upon legends of a people who sailed from the east into the peninsulas of the Great Lakes, settling as the Sioux. Other clans share legends of ancestors who came through caves from the middle of the earth, or the icy north. Regardless, it can be inferred that the Sioux people saw the land that they had found as one rich in resources, sufficient to provide for their ancestors as well as themselves.⁷⁰

The transitory nature of villages and nomadic tepees paint a vibrant picture of Sioux determination to provide sustenance for their families. Rich, deciduous forests coupled with cold winters, as well as nearby prairie, created a rich vitality of resources that provided for the Dakota (Sioux) for centuries. For instance, the temperament of the north central United States lent itself to wild rice cultivation, the primary carbohydrate of the early Dakota (Sioux) diet. Additionally, rich forests provided a wealth of big game such as deer and moose, as well as smaller animals such as turtles and fish.

These resources encouraged a type of nomadic behavior to maximize the availability of natural resources. For instance, wild rice cultivation in the spring would require the creation of camps near wet areas where such plants flourished. It was the women who, often two at a time, entered canoes and carefully navigated the thick blades of grass growing several inches out of the water. The women would bend the over-sized

70. Guy Gibbon, *The Sioux: The Dakota and Lakota Nations* (Malden: Library of Congress, 2003), 18.

balls into their canoes and carefully shake the small rice grains free, returning the precious cargo to the shore to be dried and consumed or preserved. Additionally, it was the women, while the men were participating in hunting, that were responsible for maple sweetener cultivation. During the months of lingering freeze and impending spring, women would set up camps where they would collect maple sap and boil it down into the grainy sugar that was utilized as a sweetener and meat seasoning.

Summer planting lodges were centered around the cultivation of corn and other crops which were often the responsibility of the women. While men and boys at this point embarked on hunting, women, like the Navajo, would care for and cultivate their crops. Time away from husbands and other men within their communities demonstrated the deep capability and camaraderie prevalent among the women of Dakota (Sioux) society.

Archargowe's ancestors would have lived a life as described above. Though she herself was born during a time of great unrest for her people, she likely would have been familiar with these patterns of nourishment. The cultivation and gathering of foodstuffs to support family would have sustained them and their people throughout generations. However, in addition to the already transitory lifestyle, changes were coming to the Dakota (Sioux) that would devastate not only their land and resources, but the very fiber of their lives.

French and US Entrance

Archargowe belonged to the Mdewakanton tribe within the Dakota (Sioux) community. The Mdewakanton constituted a large tribe with its people spanning the lands between Wabash, St. Paul and the Mississippi River. The word Mdewakanton is a

mixture of the word *mde*, meaning lake and *waken*, which means spirit.⁷¹ Generosity proved an overwhelmingly important attribute to tribes within the tribal nation. When Dakota War leader Little Crow was asked questions regarding his feathers, he simply gave one to the questioner. “To deny anything to a person was literally a sin, and when traders did so, they were viewed as being evil people.”⁷² This especially extended to levels of kinship. Anthropologist Ella Deloria stated that “the ultimate aim of Dakota (Sioux) life, stripped of accessories, was quite simple: one must obey kinship rules; one must be a good relative...in the last analysis every other consideration was secondary - property personal ambition, glory, good times, life itself.”⁷³

Some of the first travelers with whom the Dakota (Sioux) made contact were the French traders and trappers who, as a result of treaties with neighboring tribes, entered the land of the Dakota (Sioux) during the seventeenth century. In stark contrast to settlers, colonizers, or missionaries, the French trappers constituted a group of people that in many ways, had little interest in land ownership. They came to the land of the Dakota (Sioux) not out a need to stay, colonize, or change the environment but rather benefit from it, and in theory, return home.⁷⁴ However, the stunning landscape as well as the Dakota (Sioux) society, led many trappers to marry Indian women and adopt life in the new world. George Simpson, a company governor, write this to his superior,

71. Gary Clayton Anderson, *Massacre in Minnesota: The Dakota War of 1862, the Most Violent Ethnic Conflict in American History* (University of Oklahoma Press), 6.

72. Anderson, *Massacre*, 14.

73. Clemmons, *Dakota in Exile*, 56.

74. Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), xi-xii.

You are aware Sirs, that by remaining in the Indian country such a length of time, the Customs and habits we imbibe are so different to those of the Civilized world, add to which the attachment most people form to it, that it will be almost impossible for me to return to my native Country. Therefore, I humbly beg that you will take my Case into Consideration and trust that...you will allow me to be retained in the service.⁷⁵

Consequently, French blood ran in the veins and cultural lives of many Dakota (Sioux), including that of Archowage's husband, who was Franco-Dakota (Sioux).

The coming of French trappers to the region heavily impacted the Dakota (Sioux) nation as a whole. Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, vast transitions swept through the societal landscape of the Sioux. Deadly diseases from incoming fort traders and white settlers, the movement of many of the Dakota (Sioux) to the Midwest, the colder-than-normal winters that impacted the abundance of wildlife, and the constant encroachment of neighboring tribes, all created vacuums of power, and arenas of loss. One historian has asserted that "these examples illustrate once again that there never was an unchanging, primeval Sioux way of life."⁷⁶ The constant flux of Native affairs must have been reflected in the life of young Archowage whose family, not only observed these tumultuous times, but became a part of them.

The troubles with land, resources and their shortages had been problematic for decades, and leaders from both the Sioux nation and the United States attempted to resolve the conflicts on multiple occasions. In 1837, the Sioux made one of their first treaties in which they ceded land to the US government. Secretary of War Joel Poinsett

75. Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), xii.

76. Gibbon, *The Sioux*, 45.

offered the Sioux one million dollars for the land, with the agreement that yearly annuities from the lump sum would come in the form of cash distributions to the people.⁷⁷ Because the federal government's main goal was to assimilate Indigenous peoples into American life, missionaries and other civic leaders began the re-education of children, conversion of Christianity, as well as acclimation to Western agricultural practices. Consequently, the Dakota (Sioux) began to rely upon the government for subsistence. All this was combined with an influx of white settlers, anxious to grab fertile land, while ignoring the vast agricultural practices already in place by the native Dakota (Sioux).

The Beginnings of Warfare

After a series of frustrating talks between Sioux and US leaders in 1852, Little Crow, and other branches of the Sioux met with territorial leadership. After long altercations, the Mdewakanton sold additional land for a price equaling a modern equivalent of \$1,410,000. Unfortunately, territorial Governor Alexander Ramsey, and fellow government official Henry Sibley, arranged the agreement in such a way that slipped much of the financial allowances into their own pockets. This, combined with the long wait to have the actions ratified in the US Congress left the majority of disbursements in the hands of bureaucrats, and relocation expenses far from the hands of the Dakota (Sioux). As multitudes of white settlers poured into the newly acquired land, one government leader stated, "Let the people go onto the purchased country in thousands if they will...never in any case, will the land revert to the possession of the

77. Anderson, *Massacre in Minnesota*, 19.

Indian.”⁷⁸ Dakota (Sioux) nations were forced to give up their ways of traditional hunting, gathering and cultivation, and instead embrace Western ideologies of agriculture and lifestyle. This type of reeducation, as well as attempted assimilation sought to create a single-note American society, free from Indigenous customs and traditions.

Rather predictably, government agencies rewarded Native peoples who adjusted their lifestyles and customs to Western ideology. For instance, men who adjusted their long hairstyles to the shorter ones of white settlers, were often rewarded with livestock and tools.⁷⁹ This extended to the favoring of Natives who rejected their own traditions, forcing material wealth into the hands of those who were assimilating and in essence, erasing traditional Sioux culture and society. After decades of such behavior, the Mdewakantons near Rice Creek became severely agitated after decades of neglect from the federal government.

It was in this world that young Archagowe most likely married and began her family. Her husband, Hapi Wakandisapa or Black Lightning, was of mixed ancestry as a Franco-Dakota (Sioux). Though little is known of their early years together, it can be assumed that the family, as well as their community were in the process of complex cultural and economic integration. Likely, both husband and wife sought out the best land available, and utilizing available agricultural practices, adjusted as best they could to constant flux of change within their tribe and territory. From her daughter Wicahpewastewin’s account, we know that at the time of the Dakota War, Archagowe

78. Anderson, *Massacre in Minnesota*, 29.

79. Anderson, *Massacre in Minnesota*, 68.

had three daughters, the oldest of which was eight.

As settlers moved in, promised annuities became scarce as they fell consistently into the hands of corrupt government officials. Additionally, traders consistently intercepted annuity payments, by taking first what individual Dakota (Sioux) families owed them by credit. Consequently, this circle of financial chaos resulted in a continual cycle of credit and payment. When concerns were brought up, the spokesmen of the council, Andre Myrick simply stated, “as far as I am concerned, let them eat grass.”⁸⁰ By the early 1860’s the corruption and financial manipulation had become institutionalized. Though it was often the men who waited in line to receive whatever resources they could garner from the government, it was likely the women, who were the direct recipients of the resources and foodstuffs available. They were the ones that prepared the very limited array of food for their families and were directly involved in the process of managing whatever resources were available. As they became accustomed to more traditional Western food instead of the native plants of the region, the stress of the situation must have been worsened by a change in traditional diet. While the tensions preceding the Dakota War are often viewed through the lens of tribal men and leaders, many women such as Archagowe, were the ones who took the limited resources, and somehow carved out a living for their individual families despite burning inconsistency and frightening limitations. During such times, reports from the Upper Indian Agency detailed reports of women gathering *tipsinna* or wild turnips. Additionally, women tried to eat marsh grass,

80. Anderson, *Massacre in Minnesota*, 68.

an edible, though sickly plant that led to an increase of deaths.⁸¹ Whether in line to receive annuities or in abandoned fields gathering scraps of food, the lack of resources for the Sioux, and perhaps even Archargowe, was becoming unbearable.

The Massacre

In 1862, Archargowe and her family were living near a trade post with her husband's sister. This sister-in-law "had raised more corn than she needed,"⁸² and had invited the young family of at least five to stay with her. Through such a simple sentence, we learn that it is very likely that at some point, Archargowe and her family had lost their crop or food resources, most likely due to delayed annuities. Though only eight at the time, her daughter, Wicahpewastewin still remembered in vivid detail the beginning of what came to be known as the Massacre in Minnesota. Her perspective allows insight into the lives of the "friendly Indians" who were unexpectedly caught up in the violence.

Early one morning Archargowe suggested that she and her daughter Wicahpewastewin leave the house to collect needed wood. Wicahpewastewin recalls her mother stating, "I'll go and get some wood, and in the afternoon, we will pick our corn." As the pair turned, they heard gunshots just four to five miles away. "Hurry," Archargowe gasped, "The Chippewa must be here." As they ran back to the camp, the mother and daughter were met by a Sioux native riding into the camp, who was so frightened he could barely tell them the alarming news: "The Sioux are killing the

81. Anderson, *Massacre in Minnesota*, 77.

82. Frances Densmore, "A Sioux Woman's Account of the Uprising in Minnesota," (Typescript, Frances Densmore Papers, Division of Libraries and Archives, Minnesota Historical Society, 1934), 5.

whites.”⁸³ The world around the trading post awoke to the terrifying news, leaving the adults in a frenzy as “the children wakened and began to cry.”⁸⁴ What followed was a terrifying ordeal for nearly everyone living in the Minnesota territory. Volumes have been written regarding diplomacy, attacks, escape and the intense violence, yet it is women like Archargowe who are often forgotten within the story itself. Distant shots, rumors of violence, and pure chaos must have enveloped Archargowe’s experience as she sought to comfort her own frightened daughters.

Tribal leaders, led by Little Crow, reacted with anger, and violence to the years of injustice and exploitation with gunshots and bloodshed. The spark of the entire war began with four young men, who left one of the reservations late at night. As young men in the group accused each other of cowardice, several felt the need to prove individual dominance. The young men approached a settler’s home and invited him outside to speak of selling a firearm. Once removed from the cabin, the Indian youths turned on all four settlers, and shot them.⁸⁵ As word spread of the atrocity, leader Little Crow was swayed to lead the assault against the white settlers and remove them from their ancestral land. What followed resulted in the death of over three hundred and fifty settlers, the capture of over hundreds more, the execution of over thirty Sioux warriors, and the forced removal of 1,658 Dakota (Sioux) Natives.

As violence erupted across the territory, settlers, as well as “friendly” Dakota

83. Densmore, “A Sioux Woman’s Account”, 5.

84. Densmore, “A Sioux Woman’s Account”, 5.

85. Anderson, Massacre in Minnesota, 82.

(Sioux) found themselves in a state of sheer panic. Many Dakota (Sioux) gathered at nearby Camp Release. Though not clear from the record, it is likely that Archargowe was among this group as she and her family sought safety from the onslaught of confusion and bloodshed. As they arrived with other beleaguered refugees, Archargowe found herself with Natives directly involved in the killing, fearful captives, as well as peaceful Dakota (Sioux) like herself whose livelihood was crumbling with each passing hour. The variety of narratives from Camp Release demonstrate the deep diversity of people who made Camp Release their home over the next weeks. In speaking of the camp, one historian asserted that “all these narratives show the wrenching divisiveness that developed among the Dakotas (Sioux) over the issues of war, captives and plunder.”⁸⁶ As Henry Sibley’s troops began to advance upon the remaining attacking Natives, the schism between the two groups stiffened. As men began to create a battle offensive, friendly Natives, reeled in the perplexity of the panicked situation.

Though mentioned in the memories of Wicahpewastewin, the true complexity of these circumstances are difficult to ascertain from historical memory. Though we know very little of what was occurring in the life of Archargowe at the time, other sources lend awareness into what her life may have looked like near Camp Release. One such source is Sarah Wakefield’s *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees* which chronicles her time as a prisoner of the Sioux near Camp Release. Sarah’s experiences highlight the range of violence and compassion evident among the broad range of Sioux natives, as well as her experience of friendship with the Dakota (Sioux) among which she lived. In her account

86. Gary Clayton Anderson, *Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988), 69.

Sarah, documents the role of Chaska, a Sioux warrior who, though involved in the actual battles, took Sarah as well as her four-year-old son and newborn daughter under his personal protection. Though constantly in danger of being killed by more extremist Dakota (Sioux) warriors, her account details the ways in which Chaska, his entire family, as well as other Dakota (Sioux) women cared for Sarah and presumably, other captives.

Sarah recalls the Native women who mended her wounded feet, and provided her food such as beef, coffee and fried bread. She speaks of the Dakota women who hid her repeatedly from hostile Dakota (Sioux) or cared for her own children while she was concealing herself outside of the camp. After Sibley's soldiers finally arrived outside of camp Chaska accompanied her to Camp Release, where she found the soldiers' camp, in many ways, less desirable than the Sioux one. "My children never knew what it was to be hungry in the Indian camp, for food was plenty, and that which was good...I really thought my children would be made sick by the Indians, for they were continually feeding them."⁸⁷

Sarah Wakefield's treatment in the camp stands in stark contrast to the imprisonment of Chaska. Despite Sarah's best attempts to free him of conviction, Chaska was taken prisoner, after the surrender of Camp Release, along with other men thought to be involved in the massacre. Despite Sarah's efforts to free him, Chaska was executed alongside 38 other Dakota (Sioux) warriors on December 26, 1862.

Though told through the eyes of a white settler, Sarah Wakefield's story extends some description to what Archagowe may have experienced near Camp Release during

87. Sarah F. Wakefield, *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees: A Narrative of Indian Captivity* (University of Oklahoma Press), 113.

those fateful few weeks. It is possible that Archowage and her family may have even cared for white captives, while at the same time navigating a maze of Dakota (Sioux) and American violence. Archowage, as did Sarah, may have visited brothers, her father or other family members who, after the surrender at Fort Release, would have been imprisoned with “twenty Indians all fastened together by their feet.”⁸⁸ Archowage’s temporary teepee may have housed Dakota (Sioux) warriors fighting in the war, as well as captive settlers, who despite the complexity of the war, were to be treated in the traditional Dakota (Sioux) ways of generosity.

It was at Camp Release, where Archargowe and her family were perhaps in closest proximity to fighting then they had ever been. Wichapewastewin vividly recalls that the “friendly Sioux” “put the women and children in one or two wigwams, and [dug] a trench in the middle so they could crouch in that and be below the line of fire.”⁸⁹ It is likely that Archargowe, huddled with her children and perhaps even her husband, waited in horror as gunshots and screams flew around them. At some point within the confusion, certain Sioux decided to take matters into their own hands and reach out the government officials in an act of surrender. Wichapewastewin herself mentions the letter sent and the rider who carried it. Through some miracle the rider delivered the message and returned in one piece. It was then that the message was related: at the arrival of the United States Army, the friendly Sioux were to “wave a white flag and “point their guns down toward

88. Wakefield, *Six Weeks*, 118.

89. Densmore, “A Sioux Woman’s Account,” 6.

the ground.”⁹⁰

Upon their surrender, nearly three hundred men were taken prisoner, marched to the Mankato prison, and tried for murder. The rest, including women and children were surrounded, and taken to Fort Snelling. Though the US soldiers brought wagons, it appears that Archagowe’s husband Hepi Warkandisapa was concerned for the safety of his children and arranged to have them near him during the long evacuation.

Accordingly, he attached a horse to a travois then covered his three daughters in buffalo hides, most likely walking the over one-hundred-mile-long journey. As the United States Army escorted them through forests and towns, local settlers hit, beat, and at times, even killed the Natives during their exhausting journey. Wicahpewastewin watched as “her father was struck once and almost knocked down.”⁹¹ Settler, with axes, sticks and other weapons, proved a frightening adversary to the peacekeeping Natives simply seeking protection under the government. At nights, Wicahpewastewin recalled sleeping in a circle surrounded by the wagons, and soldiers. The anger and violence of the settlers was so great that one Dakota (Sioux) man was beaten to death. His family swiftly buried him under where they had built their fire to ascertain that none of the white settlers found his body.⁹² The fact that Archagowe’s husband was present with them on the long walk to Fort Snelling, shows that he was indeed an anomaly among the Dakota (Sioux). The vast majority of the Dakota (Sioux) men were now captives, and by some stroke of fortune,

90. Densmore, “A Sioux Woman’s Account,” 7.

91. Densmore, “A Sioux Woman’s Account,” 7.

92. Densmore, “A Sioux Woman’s Account,” 7.

Archargowe was able to march into the unknown with her husband.

Aftermath and Imprisonment

Fort Snelling occupied only three to four acres of land and yet, was meant to accommodate two hundred teepees. Though a high fence was constructed around the camp, local settlers were still able to steal horses and oxen from the newly arrived refugees. Wicahpewastewin's only mention of food was that of crackers for the young and bread for the old.⁹³ Consequently, the unbearably cramped living quarters resulted in a measles outbreak that took the life of many. The disease, which is characterized by high fevers, inflammation, and terrible coughing would have been a horrific ordeal for any family, but especially one within a make-shift prison camp. Wicahpewastewin recounts those conditions worsened in the camp with as many as twenty to fifty individuals dying per day. With the magnitude and severity of death in the camp, mass graves were dug to lay the deceased bodies to rest. As the characteristic red rash may have spread over her children's bodies, Archargowe must have felt in many ways, helpless against a disease in a situation over which she had no control. After weeks of exhaustive care, and perhaps even contracting the disease herself, one of Archargowe's younger daughters, succumbed to the disease and passed away. Dakota (Sioux) beliefs of the afterlife focused not only on the departed's spirit, but additionally, the departed's body. Covering the body in red dye, or providing food to assist in the afterlife, the Dakota (Sioux) sought to prepare their loved one for their journey through into the next world. One Dakota (Sioux) woman described the events after death as a journey, in which, upon

93. Anderson, *Through Dakota Eye*, 264.

reaching a river, a Dakota (Sioux) spirit woman would ascertain that the traveling spirit had a sufficient amount of red paint upon the body. Without such identification, the traveling spirit would wander for eternity.⁹⁴ Wichahpewastewin's account is silent as to what extent the family practiced traditional Dakota (Sioux) ceremonies. Regardless, young Archowage's despair must have been worsened by the inability to care for her family, even in the event of their passing.

The massive separation of Dakota (Sioux) families and clans during this time period cannot be understated. While Archowage and her family remained in Fort Snelling, the imprisoned Dakota (Sioux) were sent by riverboat to Davenport, Iowa. As the steamboat, *The Favorite* paddled past Fort Snelling, throngs of Native women and their dependents rushed to the banks of the river, to catch any glimpse of their fathers, brothers, uncles, and friends. At the Fort, forty-nine of the innocent Natives were unloaded, no doubt creating a scene of happiness, amidst the terror of loss.⁹⁵ Whether Archowage's experience was one of anguish, or reunion, the record is silent. Regardless, the complexity of the experience, reflected in individual experiences and mass trauma, must have been completely, and utterly, exhausting.

As conditions in Fort Snelling worsened, government leaders established Crow Creek within present day South Dakota. Though relatively little is written in Wichahpewastewin's narrative, Archowage and her small family were sent by steamboat to Hannibal, where they were loaded onto boxcars. Additionally, the increasing hostility

94. Anderson, *Massacre in Minnesota*, 5.

95. Anderson, *Massacre in Minnesota*, 276-277.

of Minnesota settlers as the band traveled downriver became life-threatening. On such journeys, people on the boat, or settlers themselves physically and verbally abused the people in exile. Archargowe, with the lack of proper food, must have been desperate during these times. In addition to searching for food, some of the gawking settlers would purchase “souvenirs” from the exiled Dakota (Sioux). *The Semi-Weekly Wisconsin* published that ““strings of beads sold from a dollar to two and a half, according to their beauty and cupidity of the owner. Small bark sacks brought three dollars, and neatly braided matting was sold a at a dollar a yard.”” This of course, according to one historian “neglected to acknowledge that these tourists were undoubtedly the same ones who adamantly demanded the Dakota (Sioux) families’ removal from Minnesota and the execution of their husbands, sons, fathers and brothers.”⁹⁶ Often, the journey from Hannibal to St. Joseph, Missouri aboard boxcars is glossed over in historical reading. The fact that these Dakota (Sioux) men, women and children were transported by boxcar, tells of the inhumane way in which the refugees were sent to their destination. Boxcars, though traditionally utilized for freight, also carried animals during the late 19th century. The entry into such cars was via sliding doors, that once fully shut, greatly reduced ventilation. This type of treatment extends beyond the realms of segregation, as these peoples were forced into the same situations as livestock. This type of transportation, combined with the uncertainty of stops, as well as food subsistence would have left Archargowe, as well as the rest of her community in peril.

In May of 1863, and after enduring the terrible journey with her children and

96. Linda M. Clemmons, *Dakota in Exile: The Untold Stories of Captives in the Aftermath of the U.S.-Dakota War* (University of Iowa Press, 2019), 43-44.

husband, Archagowe and her family arrived in St. Joseph, Missouri and were transported by steamboat up the Missouri River to Crow Creek near present-day Chamberlain, South Dakota (Sioux). According to Superintendent Benjamin Thompson, the man who oversaw the forced removal, “white people will never desire this country, and therefore, it is just the place for Indians.”⁹⁷ Unfortunately, poor leadership had once again struck at the new Dakota (Sioux) reservation. Thompson proved an ill-prepared leader in providing for the needs to the incoming Dakota (Sioux). Errors in off-loaded supplies at different points along the river accounted for nearly \$40,000 of losses in necessary resources.⁹⁸ Because certain agents over-estimated the growth of crops, sufficient rations were not instated. Additionally, the lumber necessary to construct the large fence separating the Dakota (Sioux) from the government agency, as well as agency buildings themselves left few resources for the Dakota (Sioux) to construct their own shelters. This left the Dakota (Sioux) ““in some slab shanties covered with earth, which [they] have made for themselves.”⁹⁹ At times weather and flooding could destroy these abodes, leaving women like Archagowe without shelter and resorting to dilapidated tents provided from government resources.¹⁰⁰

Initially, government officials provided only sixteen cattle to last the Dakota (Sioux) through the fall. Additionally, the scanty provisions of “heavy salted pork, [and]

97. Clemmons, *Dakota in Exile*, 46.

98. Anderson, *Massacre in Minnesota*, 277-279.

99. Clemmons, *Dakota in Exile*, 46-47.

100. Clemmons, *Dakota in Exile*, 46.

a little dried corn”¹⁰¹ proved insufficient in providing for the Dakota (Sioux). Thompson’s theory that the barren landscape would provide fertile fields of crops was gravely erroneous. Food quickly became a scarce and cottonwood soup was an unbelievable excuse for a ration. “Workers constructed a large tank of cottonwood boards, which they filled with water, flour, and a small piece of pork and heated overnight.”¹⁰² The lack of food, clothing and essential resources in an area of the country where temperatures could reach well below freezing, was surely devastating, but likely unimaginable with families. Wicahpewastewin recalls not only the lack of food, but appropriate clothing as well. She stated that:

The Indians were mostly naked. They wound burlap around their legs to keep warm. Many of the women had to wear burlap gotten from the soldiers, and nobody had any sleeves in their garments.¹⁰³

By October, the Dakota (Sioux) were starving, and by 1864, “more than 600 hundred children had died from starvation and illness.”¹⁰⁴ Superintendent Balcombe, who eventually replaced Thompson, refused to meet the basic human needs of the Dakota (Sioux). It is said that he slaughtered cattle, giving the heads and intestines to the Dakota (Sioux) prisoners, while taking the rest for himself and his family. The remainder of the cattle he had butchered and frozen during the winter. By spring the meat had become

101. Anderson, *Massacre in Minnesota*, 279.

102. Clemmons, *Dakota in Exile*, 51.

103. Densmore, “A Sioux Woman’s Account,” 9.

104. Clemmons, *Dakota in Exile*, 49.

infected and was only then provided to the Dakota (Sioux).¹⁰⁵ The severity of the situation by this point led some women to gather government cattle or spare feed from the animals.¹⁰⁶ At times women left the camp to go hunting or gather whatever berries they could find. Some women even organized and successfully executed a buffalo hunt. Additionally, women traveled to nearby Camp Abercrombie for employment in domestic services as well as manual labor. Though for many this work provided elements of independence, it was also an avenue for abuse towards vulnerable Dakota (Sioux) women. Despite their poverty, they sent food and supplies to their loved ones imprisoned in Davenport.¹⁰⁷

Archagowe, along with other women in the camp, found ways to survive the imprisonment of Crow Creek. Her husband Hepi Wakandisapa somehow began work as a blacksmith. Little is said of how his trading was procured, let alone customers and resources to pay for his services. Yet, his career advanced enough that he took the name Joseph Blacksmith. Archowage likely adjusted her training and skills in an effort to provide for her family the best way that she could. Wicahpewastewin's account ends at Camp Crow, with no information as to the continued journey of Archagowe. Wicahpewastewin eventually married and had children, and at the time of her interview, was living with them in Red Wing, Minnesota. Her English name by that time carried a

105. Clemmons, *Dakota in Exile*, 50.

106. Clemmons, *Dakota in Exile*, 51.

107. Clemmons, *Dakota in Exile*, 40-61.

heavy remembrance of her childhood, and her time in Crow Creek: Dorine Blacksmith.¹⁰⁸

Conclusion

Archogowe's life, like many of the Indigenous women of America, often remains on the sidelines. In the case of the Dakota War, her life is covered not only by treaties, talks and violence which were traditionally associated with men, but additionally by an American Civil War. Her story is one of not just survival or victimization, but of strength and tenacity.

108. Densmore, "A Sioux Woman's Account," 1.

CHAPTER IV

Larney Scott: Oklahoma Territory 1861

In the fall of 1861, thousands of Native peoples left their homeland for the second time in less than fifty years. These refugees were comprised mainly of Muscogee (Creeks), but included an amalgam of Indigenous tribes, as well as enslaved peoples seeking freedom in the north. Only a few decades before, and under the jurisdiction of the US government, thousands of Native peoples from the Southern United States were forcibly removed from their sacred homelands to the Indian territories of Oklahoma. Just years later, the great schism of the American Civil War forced the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Seminole and Muscogee (Muscogee) nations to choose between the Union and the Confederacy. Though most of these tribes stayed within the confines of Confederate loyalty, the influential and elderly leader, Opothle Yohola, led his band of “loyal Creeks” into Kansas with the hope of Union protection and provision. The journey resulted in neither.

This travail, known as The Great Flight North, The Second Trail of Tears, or even the Trail of Blood on Ice represents not only another chapter of Indigenous suffering but an ironic tragedy. While most accounts of Indigenous removal created conflict between the US government and the tribes themselves, the division of Union and Confederacy divided Indigenous peoples, creating conflict between families, friends and tribes. As has become a pattern within popular historiography, the stories of these exploits and their consequences have overwhelmingly revolved around language of warfare, treaties and male leadership. Consequently, the narratives of women who made the hazardous journey to Kansas remain overwhelmingly absent from current scholarship.

To combat this historiography, this chapter focuses on a woman name Larney Scott, who, as a young mother, made the journey north with her husband, and two young children. Though no birth certificate is available it is likely her childhood fell within a time period of great unrest for the Muscogee (Creek) people. Larney was likely born around the era of forced removal known tragically as the Trail of Tears, and perhaps was even born in the original homeland of the Muscogee (Creek). Consequently, her upbringing, though conflicted between times of turmoil and tradition, must have reflected some of the basic tenants of Muscogee (Creek) life. Due to her family's allegiance to Opothle Yohola, she was likely a member of the Muscogee (Creek) but also, could have belonged to one of the Five Indigenous Nations involved in the Trail of Tears. Though the full details of her life will never be known precisely, the purpose of this thesis is to recreate what this experience through her eyes as well as other women who took part in the great flight north.

By acknowledging Larney's unique experience, we are also able to understand the pivotal and important role she must have played in the life of her family and community. Her experience is provided by her son, James Scott, who in 1937, related his remembrances of the event as a ten-year-old boy. Scott is necessary in understanding the complex ripples of the Civil War, the disastrous effect it had upon the Native people of the Southeast and the unique and powerful role that Larney played in the survival and well-being of her family.

Historiography

Historiographical information regarding the Great Flight North is in many ways, incomplete. In her work, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World*, Robbie Ethridge documents the ways in which Indigenous studies have been relegated to the realm of anthropology. Because of a lack of written records, a focus on artifacts, archaeological studies and linguistics has limited the history of Indigenous peoples to the confines of the Natural History exhibits of museums or the introductory chapters of textbooks. Ethridge asserts that this type of scholarly behavior isolates individuals from written history and speaks to the necessity of utilizing oral histories to give historical context and depth to traditional scholarship, as written sources from Native peoples are often non-existent. The purpose of this chapter then, is to engage with the limited written sources available to give Indigenous women a voice within popular scholarship. To place those sources in context, an understanding of the historiography of the mass evacuation of thousands of Native peoples proves relevant.¹⁰⁹

The story of The Second Trail of Tears is difficult to trace throughout the historic record. In truth, the terrifying event and the appalling sojourn in Kansas is the topic of only a few monographs and articles. Within a historiography that venerates the Civil War through its geographic, political, and societal impacts, it is a tragedy that the story of the “Loyal Creeks” is overlooked. A 1902 article in *History of Wilson County, Kansas* includes a brief article on the “Loyal Indian Refugees.” Compiled by writers including Lew Wallace Duncan and John Gilmore, this record outlines elements of Muscogee

109. Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 2-3.

(Creek) suffering along the Verdigris River near Fort Row. Gilmore's brief summary recounts awful conditions, as well data on the number of Natives and respective tribes present in the camp. However, his account, like most historiographical trends of the era, placed the confines of the Indigenous experience within ideals of Western expansion and colonialism. The blatant use of vocabulary based upon supposed inferiority, as well as assimilationist ideology is prevalent in this article, as it was throughout early 20th century scholarship.¹¹⁰

Additional monographs have surfaced in the last decades, detailing in greater depth the tragedy of the long march north. In 2000 Lela J. McBride's monograph entitled *Opothleyaholo and the Loyal Musckogee*, utilizes contemporary newspapers, governmental and military documents as well as interviews to recreate a historic picture of the march north. Her work proves comprehensive, yet in most instances, utilizes governmental sources to relate the Muscogee (Creek) story. As a result, and especially at the end of the work, McBride focuses largely on of the lives of military commanders and superintendents, rather than the Native peoples themselves. In contrast, Mary Jane Ward's *When the Wolf Came: The Civil War and the Indian Territory* constitutes a comprehensive explanation of the events and utilizes interviews with Native peoples to do so. Though this work proves thorough in its analysis of sources and events, this accurate overview overlooks the lived experiences of individual Natives within the war.

Combining these conflicting historiographies, my thesis will utilize a brief oral

110. Lew Wallace Duncan, T.F. Rager, John S. Gilmore, *History of Neosho and Wilson Counties Kansas: Containng Sketches of Our Pioneers, Revealing Their Trails and hardships in Planting Civilization in These Counties, Biographies of Their Worthy Successors and Portraits of Prominent People of the Counties, Past and Present* (Fort Scott: Monitor Printing Co., 1902), 890-893.

history of Larney's son, James Scott, to explore the flight of the Muscogee (Creek) not just on historiographical level, but an individual one. By exploring the life of one woman, we are able to utilize her experience to understand the historical chronicle as a whole.

Muscogee (Creek) Customs and Traditions

For the Muscogee (Creek), the universe itself was comprised of three areas: The Present World, the Upper World, and the Under World. Hisagita misi, or "Master of Breath" was the creator of the world and instructed the Muscogee (Creek) of their purpose of balance upon the earth. For the Creek, the Upper World was the home of Hisgita misa and the origin of all things beautiful, pure, and orderly. In contrast, the Under World comprised the essence of chaos and filth. In such ways, the Creek saw themselves as executors of equilibrium, in a never-ending search to balance death with life, man with woman, and hunger with plenty.¹¹¹ The word Muskogee is possibly derived from the Algonkian word for "swamp or wet ground" and many parallels are drawn between the importance of water to Creek homesteading, lifestyle and spirituality.¹¹² Traditionally, many Muscogee (Creek) "went to water," or bathed daily to cleanse themselves physically and spiritually.¹¹³ This of course, demonstrates yet another example of the ideal of balance so necessary to Muscogee (Creek) life and sustenance.

The Muscogee (Creek) inhabited what is now the Southeast United States. Because of the confluence of several rivers in the South, fishing and hunting game

111. Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and their World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 229-231.

112. Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 32.

113. Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 33.

became a prolific part of the lived experience of the Native peoples. Fishing, traditionally performed by the women, proved a vital part of the existence of the Muscogee (Creek) and other Indigenous nations of the area. Additionally, the rich waters and forests proved a rich and lush environment in which the Muscogee (Creek) could make their living. The richness of the Southern landscape was recorded by William Bartram, a naturalist who described Muscogee (Creek) native land as “one vast flat grassy Savannah... [with] Cane meadows, intersected or variously scrolled over with narrow forests and groves.”¹¹⁴

Gender roles and the responsibilities within tribes and clans reflected survival, as well as characterizations designated by the holy people. For nearby Cherokees, “The first woman was Selu, the word Cherokees use for corn and the corn spirit” Consequently, “being a woman was intrinsically linked to growing corn”,¹¹⁵ The feminizing of farming and the masculinizing of hunting in some ways, reflected the societal structures so prominent throughout Muscogee (Creek) history. While hunting in some ways reflected the individual action of pursuing or tracking animals, farming, as reflected in traditional matrilineal clan hierarchy proved a communal and family event. For example, during the yearly Green Corn Festival, Native peoples would destroy surplus corn, thus evening the societal playing field and barricading economic structures from creating winners and losers within the community.¹¹⁶ Women’s contributions were much more than physical, they held the tribe and family together.

114. Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 36.

115. Theda Purdue, *Mixed Blood Indians: Racial Construction in the Early South* (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 2003), 63.

116. Purdue, *Mixed Blood*, 61.

This type of community role was evidenced in the deep clan hierarchy of matriarchy. While male chiefs and leaders generally represented the people in times of treaty, trade and war, it was the women who created genealogical structures of influence. When a woman married, she and her new husband lived nearby her family, and their children were constantly surrounded by their mother's mother, grandmother, sisters, aunts, uncles and brothers. Men in many ways reflected vastly different societal construction than that of contemporary Western society. While a mother and her extended family raised the children and cared for their needs, the father legally had little influence or decision-making power in the life of his own children¹¹⁷ Without the biological father as the director of his children, maternal uncles would fill a vacuum of influence between their nephews and nieces. Larney may have experienced the depth of matriarchal society throughout her childhood and likely, was surrounded by her mother's relatives. This type of community provided children an understanding of their complex roles within the subsistence patterns of tribal nations.

Structural community was scaffolded and supported by the weather and the seasons. Muscogee (Creek) men, and women especially, understood the sustainability of their homeland and treated it as such to preserve resources for not only their clan and tribe, but family and children to come. Throughout the day, and in addition to assisting with butchering meat and performing agricultural responsibilities, Muscogee (Creek) women consistently burned a low fire, allowing them to provide food for their children

117. Purdue, *Mixed Blood*, 35.

and families whenever necessary.¹¹⁸ White settlers adopted the foodways of the Muscogee (Creek) Natives. “Corn was a staple, supplemented by sweet potatoes, squashes . . . melons and peas.”¹¹⁹ Swidden plots of land allowed old plots to continue to grow at the mercy of Mother Nature, thus preparing and cleansing the land for further planting.

Women traditionally gathered the firewood, but in so doing, usually gathered wood from trees that had already died, creating subsistence patterns, and the opening of the forest floor.¹²⁰ Because they understood the ecosystems of their area, the Muscogee (Creek) would even set fires occasionally, to revitalize the land and bring new animals to the area to be harvested as game as well as herbs, berries and nuts necessary for their survival. Additionally, Creek women would gather acorns and hickory nuts which proved a vital resource for their subsistence. Not only were these small oak seeds utilized as a means of fuel, but additionally, could be boiled in large amounts, creating a greasy residue at the top of the water that could then be utilized as an oil for cooking methods and further food preparation.¹²¹

In many instances, men’s responsibilities were characterized within the realms of “hunting, trading, war and with the increase in stock raising, livestock herding.”¹²² This,

118. Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 56.

119. Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 56.

120. Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 56.

121. Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 61-62.

122. Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 99.

in addition to fall and winter hunting seasons, created a world in which mothers, adolescent women, and the elderly managed the village affairs during the long absences of the men. In the summer, men resumed practices of repairing and working while women tended their agricultural resources during the day. In the afternoon, they gathered together to sew, as well as make baskets, pottery and other materials needed for survival. Additionally, “they shared child-rearing tasks, sought comfort with one another, and consulted with each other on almost everything.”¹²³ These systems worked for the Creek and surrounding tribes and were passed on throughout the generations. Despite the vicissitudes of Larney’s childhood, Larney’s mother, as well as her maternal uncles, aunts, grandparents, and cousins may have made efforts to teach such subsistence patterns to her throughout her life.

Times of Change

These complex systems of food and subsistence were disrupted by the influx of traders, explorers, farmers and planters who began to trickle into the Southeast between the 18th and 19th centuries. The genesis of trade, as well as the need to confer with the US government, agitated delicate subsistence patterns, and in some ways, created what for Larney may have been a completely different childhood and upbringing than fifty years earlier. The changing relationships in trade created new and different subsistence roles for the Indigenous peoples themselves. While farming and hunting still played out at the forefront of livelihood, many of the hunting, gathering and planting resulted not only in subsistence, but trade patterns with the new population of white settlers arriving in the

123. Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 99.

area. Additionally, government leaders sought land ownership by land cessions such as the 1796 Treaty of Colerian, as well as the 1802 Treaty of For Wilkinson. These gradual land grabs were coupled with numerous churches and organization that sought to propagate the popular view of the time: Assimilation. Such schools taught English and Christianity, seeking what many in Washington and throughout the country desired, the disappearance of Indigenous culture and land ownership.

In some instances, white settlers even began to become part of the Native clans. Many white men, whether government liaisons, settlers, or traders, married Indigenous women. While these wives provided companionship and access to food and shelter, they also assisted their husbands in understanding and benefitting from Muscogee (Creek) culture. They served as translators, traders, and adroit negotiators and businesswomen. However, such benefits were limited. Because of the matrilineal nature of the situation, Creek women consistently derived power, resources and comforts from their husband in the advancement of not only their children, but their families and communities as a whole.

One historian has asserted that “for southern Indians, human beings fell into two camps relatives, who belonged within the community, and enemies, who did not.”¹²⁴ This vast acceptance is documented in many accounts in which captive women and children, traders and trappers, and even African slaves, were incorporated in society, as individuals. The Muscogee (Creek) saw these tribal members “literally [become] Cherokee and Creek respectively because they became relatives.” Consequently, the

124. Purdue, *Mixed Blood*, 9.

Native peoples “expected them to remain permanently in the community with their new kin.”¹²⁵ This acceptance of numerous peoples and traditions created a society of diversity in terms of race, language and profession. This was likely the type of world that young Larney grew up in.

Larney’s actual name offers us clues, yet no definite conclusions regarding her heritage. Her last name, Scott, seems a clear derivative of the influx of Scottish settlers in the area, and with the commonality of intermarriages between white men and Indigenous women, some might assume that Larney’s father may have been European. Though such nomenclature suggests that Larney’s family was of mixed Scottish-Muscogee (Creek) ancestry, such identification could be incorrect. During this era of forced assimilation, teachers in Western schools, which many of the Indigenous children attended, would assign English names to the children. Whether of mixed ancestry, or from schooling or church, it is evident that Larney, in some way, had experienced the Western cultural attempts to assimilate her and her people to the cultural and political expectations of the US government.¹²⁶

Larney’s name and traditions suggest that her childhood represented a chain to the past practices of her ancestors and an unknown future based around US treaties, forced removal and compelled assimilation. Whether she continued these native practices into adulthood or was even raised in closer proximity to Western society, we do not know. However, her preferences and opinions must have been strong enough to follow Opothle

125. Purdue, *Mixed Blood*, 10.

126. Purdue, *Mixed Blood*, 92-93.

Yahola along with her husband and young family on the great flight northward.

Trail of Tears

Contention in the South escalated as American Indian relations continued to come to a head. While leaders offered treaties and settlers encroached upon land, Natives continued to feel threatened. Outbursts from Native tribes, and consequent harming or even killing of white settlers occurred within the paradigm of balance so central to Muscogee-(Creek) tradition. For instance, if a man from one Creek clan took the life of another, the offended clan would demand the life of the first man. Whether intentional or by accident, such crimes upset the balance of the Creek universe, demanding that the offender's life be taken in an effort to restore such harmony. For the Muscogee (Creek), the white settlers and US government, this balance became a deadly circle of violence, creating tension between all groups in the early 19th century. For the Muscogee (Creek), the draconian threats and broken promises of US leadership proved worthy of revenge and in many cases, resulted in catastrophe.¹²⁷

Over time, the federal government approached Muscogee (Creek) leaders with proposals of relocation and the supposed land purchasing. Though the main leadership of Creeks refused stating "we [have] no land to sell,"¹²⁸ William McIntosh and several other Muscogee (Creek) leaders signed the Treaty of Indian Springs in 1825, without the full permission of the Creek Council, consequently ceding massive amounts of Creek homeland to the government. In an outrage Opothle Yahola along with the majority of

127. Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 215-238.

128. Mary Jane Warde, *When the Wolf Came: The Civil War and the Indian Territory* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2013), 14.

Creek leadership, trapped McIntosh in his house, and, after removing the women and children, executed him and his accomplices. By 1832, the remaining Creek leaders ceded the rest of their land to the US government. Though the documents gave the Native peoples five years to remove completely, white settlers harassed the remaining Creek, in some case necessitating immediate evacuation.

Sources document the Muscogee (Creek) Trail of Tears as a flight of confusion, peril and want. Many left their homes in the face of intense persecution, and consequently, were unable to bring the needed supplies with them. At the arrival of the Arkansas River Valley, few of the promised supplies or resources guaranteed by the federal government had been delivered. Between the fatigue of the journey, and the difficulty in establishing food systems, many of the children and elderly died during these years. In fact, at least one historian estimates that the population of the Creek decreased by 40%.¹²⁹ The fact that Larney survived during this time period is truly remarkable.

The Union and the Confederacy

Over the next decades, sectional tensions continued to escalate. Hardly resettled from forced evacuations, the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, Creek and Cherokee once again were forced into theaters of negotiation, treaty, alliances and decisions. Though the Union and the Confederacy preferred the cooperation from these five Indigenous Nations, it was the South that needed it most. For the Confederacy, Indian land provided prime area for passages to the Gulf of Mexico, and even the Pacific Ocean. Though Indigenous ideologies cannot be summarized nor combined within one framework, it seemed that the

129. Warde, *Wolf*, 24-25

majority of Native peoples residing within the Confederacy favored the South. Not only were their homelands located deep within the Confederacy, but some Natives, who themselves owned slaves, favored a government that would allow them to continue their economic interests. Many had invested cash into Southern state governments and viewed the sufferings of relocation as venality of the federal government, not that of individual states.¹³⁰

As the majority of the Five Nations leaned toward supporting the Confederacy, the Muscogee (Creek) were in a state of danger. Government officials had not made annuity payments consistently, resulting in a loss of trust in the federal government. However, many Muscogee (Creek), including Opothle Yahola saw, “the thought of a tribe going back on its word given in good faith in a treaty such as they had with the United States was for a time not to be entertained.”¹³¹ Opothle Yahola and his followers insisted upon neutrality in a war that not only created division, but demanded it.

In addition to the political complications of the Civil War, poor weather and drought caused physical difficulties as well. Written statistics from Kansas asserted that “less than an inch of rain and no snow fell from September 1859 through October 1860.”

¹³² Because of the lack of moisture and sub-par harvests, demand increased, creating spikes in pricing, forcing many of the Native peoples to eat little but wild winter

130. Warde, *Wolf*, 44,

131. Warde, *Wolf*, 52-53.

132. Warde, *Wolf*, 61.

greens.¹³³ As word of the war intensified, non-Natives left the Oklahoma territory, as well as others who resisted war activity. James Scott gives us brief insight into the experience of his family. “The talk and the many ruthless raids and destroying of homes by the McIntosh Creeks convinced me that there was discord. This destruction was heaped on the Muskogees who were remaining loyal to Opothle Yahola.”¹³⁴ This brief sentence would lead us to infer not only the secondary violence caused by the Civil War, but the fact that these Natives were already losing home and property to violent forces. Once the millers left, grain prices once again rose, forcing Native women to utilize their own hand mills. By this point, Larney had married, and as a young mother, may have continued some of the traditional practices of subsistence farming and gathering. Though we cannot be sure of whether her husband hunted, worked within the township, or was a farmer himself it seems that Larney may have searched frantically for anything edible for her and her young children. It is possible that Larney was a nursing mother at this time, if so, the food she sought out for her children was just as necessary to her as it was to them.

Throughout 1861, nearly three thousand followers congregated with Opothle Yohola near present day Boley, Oklahoma. While most of these congregants were Muscogee (Creek), this band included individuals from neutral Choctaws, Chickasaws, Cherokees and Seminoles, as well as neighboring tribes from the Oklahoma territory.¹³⁵

133. Warde, *Wolf*, 69.

134. James Scott, *The Flight of Opuithli Yahoia's Muskogees: An Interview with James Scott, Greenleaf Town (Tulsa), Okemah, Oklahoma* (Indian- Pioneer Papers Collection, The University of Oklahoma, Western History Collections), 78.

135. Warde, *Wolf*, 66.

In addition, Opothle Yahola invited any who wished to remain neutral within the camp, even promising freedom to enslaved peoples who joined them. Opothle Yahola sought relief and assurance from the Union, but he received little response from Washington. Though a letter from Lincoln eventually arrived it offered neither protection nor reassurance in terms of their plight. During this time of fear and confusion, Larney and her young family likely began preparations to join Yahola and the “Loyal Creeks”. What occupied her mind as she and her children prepared to follow Opothle Yahola is absent from historical memory. Likely, growing up in the age and era that she did, Larney simply had a cautious hope for a better situation for her children and family.

Eventually, Opothle Yahola made the decision to leave Confederate lands in hopes of protection in Kansas. Plans were made to evacuate. The elderly leader called all to meet near the Arkansas River, and groups began to arrive. In the end, historians estimate that 9,000 people took the journey north with him. In preparation for the flight northward, thousands of Native and enslaved peoples left the corn in their fields and the sweet potatoes in their ground as they left their homes, in search of Union protection.¹³⁶ Preparation was hasty, and many ran out of time to acquire the preferred provisions for the journey. James Scott, who was assigned to gather cattle at the young age of nine or ten stated that “I wondered at the vast amount of cattle being killed and the meat being dried, the pork being cooked down and all the numerous preparations.”¹³⁷ The severity of the situation is evidenced in Scotts own words, “ I was given the task to help drive the

136. Warde, *Wolf*, 69.

137. James Scott, *The Flight*, 78-79.

cattle, but I relinquished my job over to the older boys.”¹³⁸ The responsibility heaped on the young boy, must have been a reflection of the severity of the situation as Larney made swift preparations for the journey of her family. It is likely that Larney, while caring for her family, would have prepared food and butchered the cattle, in a panicked effort to prepare for yet another journey of removal. As his people embarked on their journey, Opothle Yahola ordered a fan formation, which, while preventing pursuing forces from perceiving numbers and direction, must have left Larney in a somewhat vulnerable situation.¹³⁹ The idea of “parallel lines” must have left some extremely isolated in a journey out of what had previously been their promised homeland. The Confederate Troops that followed them comprised a series of Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek regiments, mostly under command of the McIntosh family, as well as a mounted Texas division.¹⁴⁰

The group began a massive evacuation of the territory. Though expeditious, the similarity of the situation to the Trail of Tears just decades earlier, must have been haunting. As the group reached the Arkansas River, men, women and children crossed the cold water successfully. James Scott recalls that “The constant treading of the cattle, wagons, and horses made the going up-grade slippery...this required a lot of time to cross.”¹⁴¹ The fact that this event remained so vividly in his memory may offer a glimpse into the slippery treacherous crossing of his mother, and young sister. The muddy nature

138. James Scott, *The Flight*, 79.

139. White, *Now the Wolf*, 27.

140. Warde, *Wolf*, 72.

141. James Scott, *The Flight*, 80.

of the Arkansas River itself, coupled with other heavy animals was likely an exhausting event for anyone, let alone a mother of an infant. Once they had reached the other side, Opothle Yahola saw no Union forces to assist them in their evacuation. The time had come to continue onward, alone.

Confederate forces engaged in three battles against the evacuating band. The first, The Battle of Round Mountain, occurred when Confederate forces closed in on the Muscogee (Creek) camps. Initially, Southern forces approached a large camp only to find it abandoned. At the same time, Opothle Yahola's forces lit fire to the prairie, and ambushed the surprised regiment. The strategy pushed back Confederate forces, opening a window of retreat for the women and children who had been assigned to march ahead. Even James Scott recalls that "our women, children, and some of the men were sent on with the wagons, teams, and cattle."¹⁴² At this first battle, it is possible that Larney's husband stayed with the infantry, as he was young and presumably in good health. Whether Larney assisted in driving a wagon, or simply carried her young daughter is unknown. In speaking of this first battle, Creek writer James Roane Gregory asserted that, "a small band of Creeks had taught Gen. Cooper on the Cimmaron [sic] what they could do in a night fight, causing him to retreat."¹⁴³ Despite the success, Confederate forces obtained, "flour, sugar, coffee, and salt-as well as twelve wagons, a buggy, many cattle, and horses."¹⁴⁴ In a war in which the defenders were simply trying to escape, the

142. James Scott, *The Flight*, 80.

143. Warde, *Wolf*, 73.

144. Warde, *Wolf*, 73.

casualties were deep. Until December, Opothle Yahola and the other non-combatants found brief refuge near what is now Cleveland, Oklahoma. Here they built defenses and prepared for the rest of their journey.¹⁴⁵

On December 9th, Confederate forces again sought to ambush the Muscogee (Creek). Contrary to modern warfare, these battles were often fought in hand-hand combat¹⁴⁶, likely between neighboring tribal members or even family. During this battle of Chutso Talasah, the women and children were once again sent ahead. When Opothle Yahola's army had stalled the Confederate forces long enough, they abandoned the battlefield to reunite with family. Exhausted from the prior engagements, the Muscogee (Creek) were scattered during the final Battle of Achustenalah. Once again Confederate forces met with the loyal Muscogee (Creek) and scattered them. General McIntosh of the Confederacy stated that "We had captured 160 women and children, 20 negroes, 30 wagons, 70 yoke of oxen, about 500 Indian horses, several hundred head of cattle, 100 sheep and a great quantity of property of much value to the enemy."¹⁴⁷

By this point, the physical battles, loss of supplies, and sheer emotional trauma of the event proved destructive. Larney, who had survived the Trail of Tears as a child and evaded capture or death during the march north, would have been exhausted. Slowly, Opothle Yahola's people had no choice but to continue their trek across the Great Plains into what was supposed to be a safe haven: Kansas. As blizzard winds accumulated, the

145. Warde, *Wolf*, 74.

146. Warde, *Wolf*, 64.

147. Warde, *Wolf*, 82.

Confederate forces, along with the allied Natives, turned back to winter quarters, leaving the “loyal Creeks” to the onslaught of violent weather and scarcity. For some, the great blizzard proved a gift from the Gods. Though unimaginably cold, the blowing snow obscured the tracks of the Muscogee (Creek) as well as their encampments, allowing a quick escape north.¹⁴⁸

The suffering of the Muscogee (Creek) during this trek to Kansas is unimaginable. With limited supplies, many continued onward without shoes and adequate clothing. Women gave birth in the freezing cold weather, perhaps under wagons or wherever they could find shelter. Food sources became scarce leading the group to eat any livestock available, at times even boiling the leather of their clothes and boots.¹⁴⁹ Frostbite, illness, and additional maladies overtook the people, leaving the survivors to wrap the deceased and leave them above frozen ground, An estimated 9,000 Muscogee (Creek) embarked upon the journey to Kansas. 2,000 lost their lives. James Scott recalls that:

we faced many hardships, we were often without food, the children cried from weariness and the cold, we fled and left our wagons with much needed provisions, clothing and other necessities, many of our friends, loved ones perished from the sickness, and we all suffered from the cold.¹⁵⁰

Years later, another Native woman stated that:

148. Christine Schultz White and Benton Ray White, *Now the Wolf has Come: The Creek Nation in the Civil War*. (Texas A&M University Press, 1996), 136.

149. White, *Now the Wolf*, 131.

150. James Scott, *The Flight*, 80-81.

The legs, arm, toes or fingers of some of the Indians were lost by being frozen and they would have to be amputated in the best manner possible. Many of the Indians walked barefooted in the sleet and snow although some tried to give protection to their feet by scantily wrapping them in clothes.¹⁵¹

Conditions by this time were desperate. At this point her shoes were battered or perhaps even gone, and her clothing likely did nothing to protect from the cold. She likely assisted in butchering the horses, finding scraps of food to eat, and attempting to start fires to maintain warmth and cook what little resources she and her husband could find. As her son stated, she witnessed the death of friends and family, mourned with what energy she had, and yet, had to leave them behind. She did this likely while carrying an infant and providing for a young eight-year-old boy. While names like McIntosh, Opothle Yahola and others survive the accounts of history, Larney's story is one of fierce resilience, yet remains absent from American memory.

Fort Row

In January of 1862, Opothle Yahola and his people began to arrive at the border of Kansas encamping themselves near Camp Row. To their horror, the entire expanse was empty, and clearly, oblivious to the needs and sacrifices of the Loyal Creeks. Nearby governments made panicked attempts to provide for the Creeks, but the sheer amount of people made it nearly impossible to feed and clothe all of them sufficiently. Organized into impoverished refugee camps, the people were forced to live on small quantities of flour, rotten bacon, and disintegrating blankets and clothing, as nearby bureaucrats and

151. Lindy Scott, *An Interview of Lindy Scott, ag 67, Thlopthlocco town (Tulsa), Okemah* (Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma), 128.

soldier enjoyed supplies that should have been dispatched to the Native peoples.¹⁵² It was at this time that U.S. Army Surgeon A.B Cambell, was assigned with recording the situation of the Muscogee (Creek) in the area. When Cambell arrived, the suffering that he viewed was nearly inconceivable. He stated,

Their only protection from the snow, upon which they lie is prairie grass, and from the wind and weather scraps and rags stretched upon switches; some of them had personal clothing: most had but shreds and rags, which did not conceal their nakedness, and I saw several ranging in age from three to fifteen years, without onethread upon their bodies.¹⁵³

Over time, the Chicago commission sent small quantities of quilts, socks, pantaloons, undershirts, pillows and pillowcases. Cambell was tasked with handing them out. Arriving and viewing the sheer number of refugees, Cambell walked about the camp, seeking to find those who were most desperate. Once he had done so, hundreds of the refugees surrounded him, searching for any leftover resources for themselves. The lack of clothing and shelter was only part of the catastrophe, as the people arriving at the camp were exhausted and starving, so much so that consuming the food provided at the camp itself would make them ill. This, combined with the sheer number of dead horses that necessitated removal before the spread of additional disease only added to the immense anguish. After only one month over 240 Creeks passed away.¹⁵⁴ The unimaginable suffering must have left Larney and her family desperate for any kind of

152. Christine Shultz White, *Now the Wolf has Come: the Creek nation in the Civil War* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1996), 150-151.

153. Leila J. McBride, *Opothleyaholo and the Loyal Muskogee: Their Flight to Kansas in the Civil War* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers., 2000), 176.

154. Lela J. McBride, *Opothleyaholo and the Loyal Muskogee: Their Flight to Kansas in the Civil War* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers., 2000), 170.

assistance.

Surprisingly, amidst the unimaginable suffering and the weakening of physical and emotional strength, the resiliency of the Muscogee (Creek) proved resolute. Opothle Yahola, as well as men in the wretched camp, reached out to Abraham Lincoln, requesting the opportunity to reclaim their lands while defeating the Confederacy. They stated in the letter that:

Our people have suffered a great deal. They have been driven from their homes in the dead of winter when the earth was clothed with white. Many of them have frozen to death. All of them have lost all they possessed. There are now 6,000 women and children in Southwest Kansas without tents but scantily clothed and exposed to all the horrors of a severe winter.¹⁵⁵

The Muscogee (Creek) leadership requested the command of General Lane, attesting that together they would, “sweep the rebels before them like a terrible fire on the dry prairie.”¹⁵⁶ As they waited for military leaders to organize the command of the Muscogee (Creek) Army, local administration decided to move the whole company to the Neosho River, near LeRoy, Kansas.¹⁵⁷ Eventually, leaders organized the Indian Home Guard which, under the command of US generals marched deep into the South to recover their territory. The second regiment under the command of Colonel John Ritchie suffered corruption within the military leadership which necessitated the retreat of forces just before they reached the Union border. Angry, the Native soldiers returned home, only to

155. McBride, Opothleyaholo, 178.

156. McBride, Opothleyaholo, 178.

157. McBride, Opothleyaholo, 184.

find their families still suffering in the same position that they had left them.¹⁵⁸ Though James Scott recalls that while in Leroy “food and clothing [were given to the Indians by the government every Saturday,” it would seem that in many ways, the Native women and children who were left behind, were in many ways left to their own devices. ,¹⁵⁹

Though scholarship regarding the Indian home guard remains scant, history has done little to recognize the situation of women within the camp itself, who, without the support of their husbands, likely resorted to whatever means possible to provide for themselves and their families. Since James Scott referred to “we” throughout the experience in LeRoy, we can assume that Larney accompanied her children, likely without her husband, and cared for them while they were interned there. It is likely that Leroy, Kansas was the last time that Larney was forcibly removed. Surviving two Trails of Tears, unspeakable pain and suffering, and the most violent war in US history, James Scott relates that, “my mother never returned from this trip but was buried in Kansas.” The flight was so intense that James Scott even recounts that “my father died after his return to this country.”¹⁶⁰

Conclusion

When Muscogee (Creek) refugees were finally able to return to their homeland at the end of the war, what was remained shocked them:

At the close of the war [Muscogee] families were again gathered together only to find their farms desolate, their homes burned, their fences destroyed, their fields

158. McBride, Opothleyaholo, 192-202.

159. James Scott, *The Flight*, 81.

160. James Scott, 79-80.

overrun with weeds, their church and school buildings even burned.¹⁶¹

Larney's incredible journey on not only the Trail of Tears, but the Trail of Blood on Ice, is the account of a woman whose story has been forgotten from historical memory. Though her name and experience is absent from traditional historiography, the role of survival and resilience that she played for her family and people should be remembered and recorded among Civil War and American scholarship. Larney represents thousands of women, who walked, prepared food, were captured, cared for children and even died on the perilous journey. Americans remember the Civil War in binary terms: Union and Confederacy. It is vital that the war itself is remembered for the impact it had on every American experience, especially that of women like Larney.

161. McBride, Opothleyaholo, 192-202.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion

It wasn't until February of 1969 that the first job listing for a professor of "American Indian" history was published in the *American Historical Association Newsletter*.¹⁶² This lag of historical appreciation and consequent scholarship is a true tragedy for US society. Unfortunately, this endemic is not specific to the world of academia, but in some ways starts within a paradigm of inadequate education regarding our shared history within the public school system. Much as described by Robbie Ethridge, the field of Indigenous studies is often discussed as a "precursor" to American history. As a teacher of Utah Studies less than a decade ago, I witnessed firsthand curricula that observed Native peoples within an "introductory unit" before their ultimate disappearance through an onslaught of Western settlers, governments, and politics. This type of education does little to honor our truest sense of the past, and nothing to understand the role Indigenous peoples played in our shared American experience.

As a society we are intrigued by stories of warfare. The drama of violence, the schism of societies and the stories of "heroics" fascinate us. Consequently, the overall impacts of warfare prove intriguing and even magnetizing to us, especially within a historical context. Sadly, our national narrative of the Civil War has given overwhelming preference to sources that ignore the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples. Traditional scholarship has utilized such rhetoric to see Indigenous peoples as mere witnesses to the American story, or in other words, vanished from this society as well. These perspectives

162. R. David Edmunds, "New Visions, Old Stories: The Emergence of a New Indian History" *OAH Magazine of History* 9, no. 4 (Summer 1995): 3.

do little to document the calculated attempts of Native peoples to combat Western encroachment, their fight against assimilationist policies, and the way in which they held onto a culture despite the massive storm of political, geographical and cultural oppression. In many ways, historians seek to understand history through elements of periodization. By defining American History within the terms of popular wars and movements, we neglect stories and narratives of peoples whose lives made up the entirety of the American experience. Though recent scholarship has made strides in understanding the role of Native peoples and leaders during the years of the Civil War, little work has been done to acknowledge the story of Indigenous women during a time of national turmoil and beyond. These women's stories, and their calculated actions during this era, prove vital in understanding a war that tore at the very fabric of our national existence.

Additionally, even monographs that have made efforts to understand the perspectives of Native peoples, are often limited to correspondences within the Indian foreign affairs department, correspondences between Indian superintendents, and records of tribal negotiations. Additionally, these types of resources, do not allow a place for women who in many ways were absent from these outward manifestations of governmental decision making. It has become clear to me throughout the research, that "Grandmother" from the Diné (Navajo) tribe, Archagowe from the Dakota (Sioux), and Larney Scott from the Muscogee (Creek), were just as much a part of the Civil War as were the generals, soldiers and other peoples whose faces remain on Civil War textbooks and publications. It is only through oral histories and Native sources that we can come to see the lived experience of these Indigenous women. Their care for their families, and their support of their tribal leaders in negotiations proved not just helpful, but necessary

in the preservation of their people.

In “Currents in North American historiography” Ned Blackhawk, a Western Shoshone scholar, explores the opening ceremonies of the Vancouver British Columbia Olympics in 2010. Characteristic of other ceremonies that would follow, and in contrast to traditional cultural ceremonies, the Native peoples of British Columbia played a part in the opening ceremony. While tribal leaders sat with other heads of state, members of the First Nations tribal communities welcomed the parade of nation with traditional dances. Daniel M. Cobb asserted that, “Instead of casting Native peoples as tragic heroes who valiantly resisted, succumbed and vanished...the message and Vancouver spoke of survival and the connoting vitality of indigenous cultures in the present.”¹⁶³ Though this anecdote seeks to combat ideologies reflected in Edward Curtis’s “Vanishing Race” photograph, the journey into the recognition, remembrance and respect of the traditions and rich history of Native peoples within this country is far from complete. It is my hope that the presence and perspectives of Native peoples can become more prominent within American society as well as historical research. It is only in this way, that we can truly write, remember and understand our shared national history and identity.

¹⁶³ Ned Blackhawk. “Currents in North American historiography.” *Western Historical Quarterly* 42, no.3 (2011), 320.

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