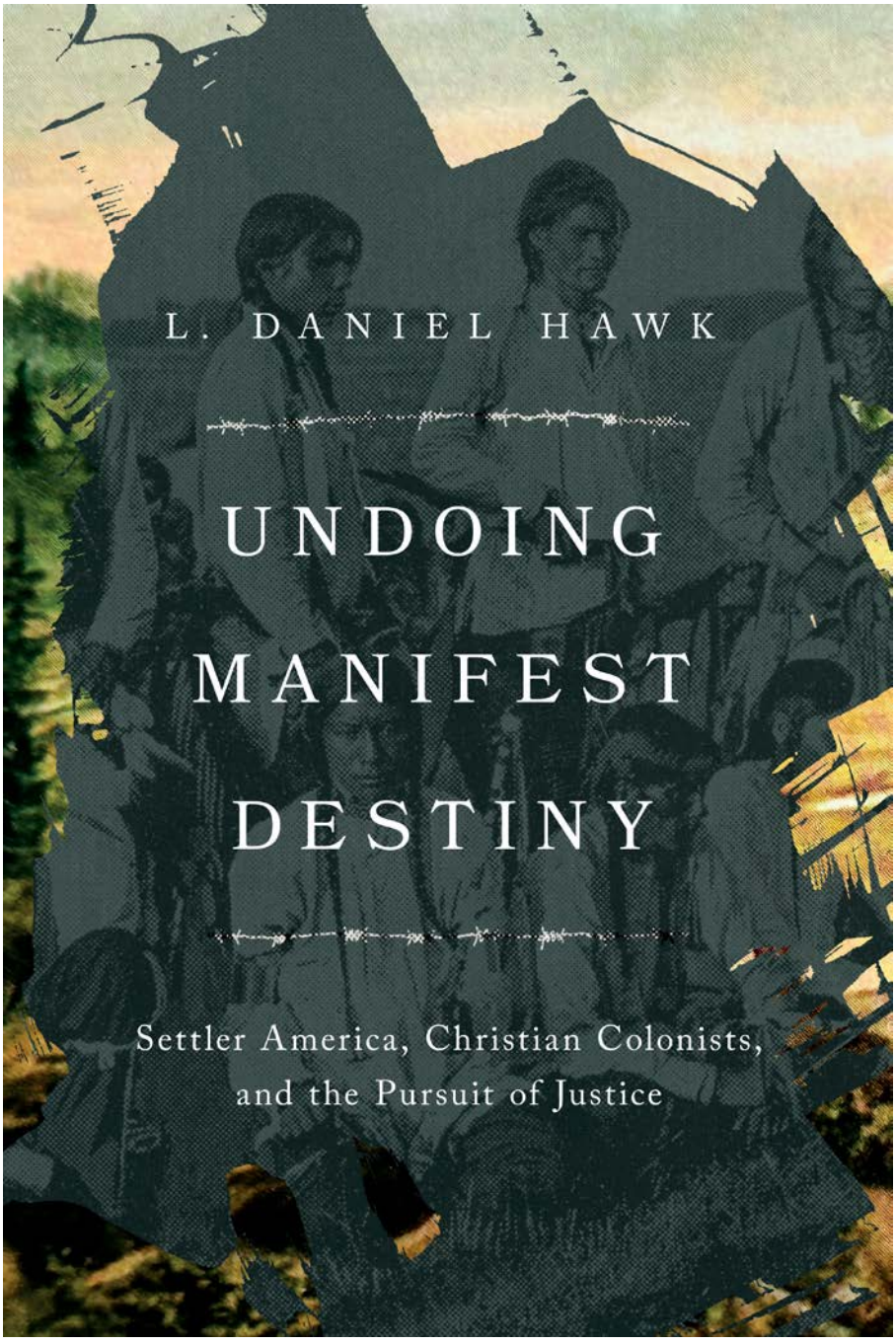

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Taken from *Undoing Manifest Destiny* by L. Daniel Hawk

Published by InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL
www.ivpress.com

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THE INDIAN MAID OF FORT BALL

Voted, that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; voted, that the earth is given to the Saints; voted, that we are the Saints.

Milford, Connecticut, town meeting, 1640

On the west bank of the Sandusky River, the Indian maid keeps watch over the city of Tiffin, Ohio. She stands atop a granite pedestal, with a serene countenance and one arm folded at the waist. A blanket is draped over her left shoulder and falls over her arm. Her pose and raiment evoke the statuary of ancient Greece and Rome, the classical civilizations that inspired the Founding Fathers of the United States. A plaque on the pedestal contains a bas-relief that depicts the maid giving water to a settler. Above the relief is an inscription: "This Indian maid keeps ceaseless watch where red men and sturdy pioneers drank from a spring, whose sparkling waters flowed within the stockade of old Fort Ball."

Tiffin citizen Meschech Frost donated the funds for the statue, which was unveiled on October 11, 1926. Frost was the embodiment of the American dream. He worked his way up from humble beginnings to become a successful entrepreneur and real-estate developer. Frost is remembered for bringing several industries to Tiffin, including the Sterling Grinding Wheel Company, the Beatty Glass Company, Brewer Pottery, and the National Machinery Company, which he reorganized, managed, and eventually purchased. Under his leadership, National Machinery introduced significant innovations that led to the rapid expansion of the factory and contributed to the prosperity of the city. A generous philanthropist, Frost also has the distinction of building the town's first electric street railway.

The citizens of Tiffin thus unveiled the statue of the Indian maid amid the energy and optimism that fueled the prosperity of Tiffin during the early twentieth century. The unveiling took place during the 102nd year since the city's recognition and its designation as the seat of Seneca County. Sadly, Frost was not present for the ceremony, having died four years before. The city nonetheless expressed its admiration and gratitude by renaming the street next to the statue Frost Parkway.[1]

The statue commemorates a young, unnamed woman who assisted a detachment of US soldiers during the early days of the War of 1812. American general William Hull had recently surrendered Detroit to the British, along with a force of twenty-five hundred soldiers, leaving Ohio open to invasion. To prepare for that eventuality, General William Henry Harrison ordered the construction of three forts along the Sandusky River for the purpose of establishing a supply line for the defense of the Lake Erie coastline. Fort Ball, the southernmost of the three forts, was to serve as a supply depot. When soldiers arrived to construct the fort, they encountered a young Seneca woman. She showed them the location of a spring that could be enclosed within a stockade, therefore providing the fort with a protected water supply in the event of a siege.

Why did the citizens of Tiffin choose to celebrate their prosperity by erecting a statue of an Indigenous woman? Why not the city's namesake, Edward Tiffin, the first governor of Ohio? Or one of the early pioneer families? Why an anonymous Indigenous woman who probably lived in a Seneca town a few miles downstream, a town that has not existed for almost two hundred years? Why mark the city's dynamic growth by erecting the statue of an Indigenous woman to watch over the city? In short, why did the citizens of Tiffin commemorate the city's origins with a nostalgic account of a time when "red men and sturdy pioneers" shared the land together?

Ohio Hawks and the Settler Story

My forebears were part of an immigrant wave that settled Seneca County in the 1830s, not long after the Senecas left the last of their lands in Ohio. My

[1] "Meschech Frost," Find a Grave, www.findagrave.com/memorial/6069859/meshech-frost; "History," National Machinery, www.nationalmachinery.com/history.

great-great-grandfather, Ludwig Hack, migrated from the German kingdom of Baden-Württemberg to the United States about ten years earlier. Our family doesn't remember much about him, aside from the fact that he was a blacksmith, and we don't know why he decided to emigrate. His journey may have been precipitated by antiquated inheritance laws, which had so divided estates among heirs that many no longer possessed enough land to sustain themselves. Or he may have been drawn by the freedoms enjoyed by the citizens of the United States. Or he may simply have been captured by a spirit of adventure.

Whatever the reason, Ludwig entered the United States through the port of Philadelphia in the early 1820s, settled in Lehigh County, Pennsylvania, married a young woman named Eva Ferber, and began to raise a family that would eventually number nine children. In the early 1830s, the family migrated to Seneca County, Ohio, and took up farming. There have been Hawks in the county ever since. (The change of spelling occurred, so the story goes, when a clerk heard German "Hack" but wrote English "Hawk" on a property deed.)

Present-day Tiffin is a city of approximately twenty thousand. My formative years there were shaped by the cadences of small-town America: attending church and youth group every Sunday, camping with my fellow Boy Scouts, attending sports events on the weekend, and playing saxophone in the Tiffin Columbian High School Marching Band. (Only the second and third activities were my choice. My parents were devoted Christians, and my father was the director of the high school marching band.) My education included the formation of the values of integrity, truthfulness, honesty, perseverance, and fairness, and more fundamentally, love for God and country. These values were exemplified by William Harvey Gibson, whose statue stands in front of the county courthouse. Gibson, Tiffin's most illustrious son, was a renowned orator during the latter half of the nineteenth century and well-known for declaring that the two most important things in life are piety and patriotism.

I also learned values from the TV westerns of the 1960s and from the version of the American story they presented. The Westerns reiterated seemingly inexhaustible variations on stock themes. Courageous pioneers overcame hostile savages and made a home for themselves in a new land

by hard work and sheer determination. Indians attacked wagon trains and isolated settlers. Righteous gunslingers outgunned lawless villains, delivered hapless citizens, and brought order to a lawless land. Disputes were often settled at the point of a gun. Looking back, I am amazed at how often gun violence was sanctioned and celebrated in the Westerns. The Westerns taught me that American violence is righteous violence. Violence brings order. Violence was thus necessary to tame the land and to impose law and order.

I don't recall thinking much about the people who lived in Seneca County before my ancestors arrived. It never occurred to me to wonder why we White people live in the land and the Senecas do not. In the world of my childhood, Indians were characters from the past, gone and largely forgotten, save for presentations about Indian lore at the local library, a portrait in the Seneca County museum depicting the death-by-torture of Colonel William Crawford at the hands of murderous Delawares, and campfire tales about an Indian ghost named Oscar, who roamed the countryside on weekend nights, looking for young campers to terrorize.

Indians populated my imagination but not the place I called home. The stories that shaped my formative years were stories about people like me—who looked like me, thought like me, and shared my values and experiences. The history that I learned in the classroom was likewise populated by people like me. That history shaped my sense of who I am and how I was expected to live as a citizen of the United States, an exceptional nation and a beacon of freedom, opportunity, and progress.

In the landscape of my youth, the Indian maid represented the nostalgic tropes of Tiffin's origin story, harking back to a time when "red men and sturdy pioneers" together enjoyed the nourishing resources of the land: the red man destined to vanish into the mists of history and the sturdy pioneers destined to transform a forest wilderness into fields of corn and soybeans as well as factories that manufactured glass and machine parts. In her classical bearing and toga-like dress, the Indian maid looks more like a Roman goddess than an Indigenous woman. In a sense, she symbolizes the land, not as it once was but as it has been remade in the image of a pioneer people. The maid plays a brief but pivotal role in Tiffin's story, helping the first settlers and then vanishing from the scene, along with her people.

The Seneca of Sandusky

Before I go further, I should explain some of the terms I am using and why I use them. I employ the term *settlers* as shorthand for White Christian settlers, that is, for European colonists and their descendants. Adopting a comprehensive term for the original peoples of the land is difficult because, as Thomas King observes, "There has never been a good collective noun because there never was a collective to begin with."[2] I have chosen to employ the term *Indigenous*, mainly as a way of highlighting the connection between the colonial program of the United States and the experience of colonized peoples around the world. I will, however, use the term *Indian* sometimes when I want specifically to accentuate the colonial perspective. When referencing specific tribes or nations, I've sought to employ the community's preferred name. In some cases, this is attested by wide use in contemporary discourse (for example, Lakota, Lenape, Haudenosaunee). When multiple names are well-attested, I adopt the name that appears on the nation's website. In a related sense, I try to use the terms *nation*, *tribe*, and *band* as the community designates itself, while employing a general preference for *nation*.

Now back to the story of the Ohio Senecas and settlers.

Bands of Seneca began migrating to Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) land in the Ohio Country beginning in the 1740s.[3] Their aim was to escape the frontier violence that their kindred and other Indigenous nations experienced as a consequence of colonial expansion. The first bands settled near the Ohio River in what is now southeastern Ohio. Over the next few decades, the Senecas were joined by a larger number of Cayugas, along with a small number of Mohawks and Onondagas.[4] Ohio settlers called them Mingos, a pejorative meaning "treacherous."

Settler violence, however, stalked the Senecas. The most notorious instance involved a respected Cayuga leader named Tachnechdorus, who was

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[2]Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (University of Minnesota Press, 2012), xiii.

[3]The Ohio Country was a colonial-era name for the land between the Ohio River and Lake Erie, and west of the Appalachian Mountains.

[4]The website of the Seneca-Cayuga nation also lists Conestogas, Eries, and Wyandots among those who joined the Senecas in Ohio. See the history posted on the tribal website at https://sctribe.com/history/.

known to the colonists as Chief Logan.[5] Tachnechdorus was a respected advocate for peace during and after the French and Indian War, which raged from 1754 to 1763. On October 10, 1774, a number of his family and friends were murdered by a group of Virginia settlers at Yellow Creek, near present-day Steubenville, Ohio. Accounts of what happened vary, but most agree on the following details. The Virginians invited a group of approximately twelve Senecas to join them at their camp and offered them whiskey. At some point, the settlers challenged the Senecas to a shooting match. After the Seneca men fired their guns, however, several colonists arose from hiding places and shot most of them dead on the spot. The Virginians pursued the survivors and killed all but one of them. The dead included Tachnechdorus's wife and pregnant sister. The settlers strung the young woman up by her wrists, cut the unborn child from her body, and scalped her. The lone survivor was her daughter, who had been carried on her mother's cradle board.

Tachnechdorus sought revenge, resisted pleas to refrain, and dispatched war parties to raid settlements in western Pennsylvania, joining Shawnees who were defending their lands from Virginia settlers (a conflict commonly known as Lord Dunsmore's War). After a climactic battle at Point Pleasant in present-day West Virginia, the Shawnees sued for peace and ceded their land south of the Ohio River. In return, they received a promise that Virginia would not settle Shawnee land to the north. Tachnechdorus refused to attend the treaty negotiations but sent a response to the council.

Thomas Jefferson later published the following transcript of the speech in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*:

> I appeal to any white man to say, if ever he entered Logan's cabin hungry, and he gave him not meat; if ever he came cold and naked, and he clothed him not. During the course of the last long and bloody war, Logan remained idle in his cabin, an advocate for peace. Such was my love for the whites, that my countrymen pointed as they passed, and said, Logan is the friend of white men. I had even thought to have lived with you, but for the injuries of one man. Col. Cresap, the last spring, in cold blood, and unprovoked,

[5]Logan's Cayuga name is uncertain. Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country* (Harvard University Press, 2001), and Colin G. Calloway, *The Indian World of George Washington* (Oxford University, 2008), refer to Logan as "Tachnechdorus." "Tahgahjute" is also a strong possibility. See Thomas McElwain, "Then I Thought I Must Kill Too," in *Native American Speakers of the Easter Woodlands*, ed. Barbara Alice Mann (Greenwood, 2001), 83-106.

> murdered all the relations of Logan, not sparing even my women and children. There runs not a drop of my blood in the veins of any living creature. This called on me for revenge. I have sought it. I have killed many. I have fully glutted my vengeance. For my country, I rejoice at the beams of peace. But do not harbor a thought that mine is the joy of fear. Logan never felt fear. He will not turn on his heel to save his life. Who is there to mourn for Logan? Not one.[6]

Jefferson praised the speech as equal in eloquence to any work of European oratory, prompting other editors to reprint the speech hundreds of times under the title "Logan's Lament."[7]

Questions have been raised, however, about the accuracy of Jefferson's transcript, beginning with the fact that the speech attributes the atrocity to Michael Cresap, a notorious Indian hater, rather than to Daniel Greathouse, who was the likely ringleader of the Virginians. Furthermore, rhetorical analysis of the speech suggests that it more closely conforms to the structure, vocabulary, and content of English rhetoric than to the conventions of Iroquoian oratory.[8] Whether an exact transcript or not, Jefferson's version went viral in part because it reflected an image of the Indian constructed by the settler imagination, just as the Indian Maid does for the present-day citizens of Tiffin.

By 1760, most of the Senecas had moved north and established towns along the Sandusky River, where they became known as the Senecas of Sandusky.[9] Along with other Ohio nations, they defended their land during the Revolutionary War, as well as in the conflicts that ensued when the newly constituted United States claimed the Ohio Country and began to settle it. The wars came to an end with the defeat of a coalition of tribes at Fallen Timbers in 1794 and the subsequent Treaty of Greenville in 1795. The treaty ceded all but the northwest quadrant of Ohio to the United States. The Seneca towns lay north of the treaty line and thus remained on unceded territory.

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[6]"Logan's Lament," American Rhetoric, www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/nativeamericans/chieflogan.htm.

[7]Carol Eastman, "The Indian Censures the White Man: 'Indian Eloquence' and American Reading Audiences in the Early Republic," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 65, no. 3 (2008): 535-36.

[8]McElwain, "Then I Thought," 117-20.

[9]By this time, Cayugas constituted the largest group within the communities.

The War of 1812 brought renewed conflict. While most of the Ohio tribes sided with the British during the war, the towns along the Sandusky River adopted a neutral stance, although some individuals assisted the United States. The war was precipitated in part by a smoldering dispute over possession of the Ohio Country. Although the British relinquished their claim to the Ohio Country at the Treaty of Paris in 1783, they nevertheless continued to provide covert assistance to the Indigenous nations who resisted American expansion into the area. The Treaty of Ghent, which formally ended the War of 1812, put a stop to that assistance. In the treaty, Great Britain again agreed to relinquish all claims to the Northwest Territory (encompassing all land north of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi), and the United States agreed to end hostilities with the Indigenous peoples and to restore "all possessions, rights, and privileges, which they may have enjoyed or been entitled to" before the war.[10]

The end of British support left the Indigenous peoples of the Old Northwest without an effective counterbalance to American power. Shortly after the treaty was ratified, the US government launched a vigorous effort to acquire more Indian land for settlement, propelled by what one historian has called an "inordinate demand for lands . . . fueled by an explosive spirit of nationalism."[11] Between the end of the War of 1812 and the inauguration of President Andrew Jackson in 1829, the US government made thirty-nine treaties with twenty-four tribes and bands in the Northwest Territory and areas just west of the Mississippi. Almost all of them entailed cessions of Indigenous land.

The federal government coveted the parts of Ohio still in Indigenous hands as settlers flooded into the state. In 1800, shortly before statehood (1803), the White population of Ohio stood at 45,000. By 1820, that number had grown to more than 581,000, and by 1830 to 938,000. The rapid expansion of settlers into Ohio generated considerable pressure on the federal government to acquire the remaining Indigenous land.

[10]"Treaty of Ghent (1814)," National Archives, accessed March 25, 2025, www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/treaty-of-ghent.

[11]Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Treaties: The History of a Political Anomaly* (University of California Press, 1994), 135.

In 1814, General William Henry Harrison and Indian agent Lewis Cass negotiated "a treaty of peace and friendship" with the Senecas of Sandusky and other nations. The Indigenous parties agreed to acknowledge themselves under the protection of the United States, and the United States, in turn, affirmed the boundaries established by prior treaties. Another treaty followed in 1815, which required all tribes Ohio tribes to accept the terms of the Treaty of Greenville, a treaty that reserved the northwest quadrant of Ohio for the Indigenous nations. Under pressure from federal authorities, Indigenous representatives agreed to the terms of a third treaty in 1817 at Fort Meigs. The treaty required the six Ohio nations to sell almost all of their remaining lands in Ohio—more than 4.5 million acres—in return for annuities and compensation for damages suffered by those groups that had assisted the United States during the War of 1812.[12]

The last treaty, supplemented by a fourth in 1818, established small reservations for the remaining Ohio tribes. Two were established for the Senecas, the first of thirty thousand acres along the Sandusky River and the second of ten thousand acres near Lewiston. The federal government viewed the reservations as places where the Indigenous peoples could learn American agricultural practices, make progress toward civilization, and eventually assimilate into the mainstream of the new nation.

To many in the government, the Senecas demonstrated the efficacy of the policy to assimilate Indigenous people into the new nation. A visitor to the Sandusky reservation in 1827 noted, "The men were well dressed, with their rifles strapped across their shoulders and their wagons drawn by fine oxen, and were living in comfortable houses with sash windows and shingled roofs."[13] The reality, however, was more complex, as the Senecas adopted some of the practices of civilization but struggled to preserve their traditions and ceremonies. Especially troublesome were harangues by Methodist preachers, who regularly entered the reservation uninvited, intent on converting tribal members to the Christian God.

The immigrants who established settlements near the reservation did not share the government's outlook. For the most part, they had little love for

[12]Transcripts for all four treaties can be accessed online at the Tribal Treaties Database, https://treaties.okstate.edu/treaties/.

[13]Mary Stockwell, *The Other Trail of Tears: The Removal of the Ohio Indians* (Westholme, 2014), 183.

the Senecas and wanted them gone. Tensions flared. Settlers stole and killed the Senecas' horses, hogs, and cattle. They passed through the reservation at will. Although the sale of alcohol to Indians was prohibited by law, liquor merchants ringed the reservation, and local officials turned a blind eye to whiskey sales to young Seneca men and women. Unscrupulous merchants replaced Indian agents as trading partners, jacking up prices. Settlers depleted the game in the Senecas' hunting grounds.

In 1819, Indian agent John Johnston appealed for a subagent to provide protection for the Senecas, arguing that the "character of the Government of the U.S. requires that they should not be left thus exposed to the inroads of the wicked and abandoned portion of our species."[14] President James Monroe granted the appeal and appointed James Montgomery, a Methodist missionary, for the task. The appointment followed the adoption of the Civilization Fund Act, which Congress passed earlier that year. The legislation enlisted missionaries, church leaders, and "capable persons of good moral character" to "introduce the habits and arts of civilization" to Indigenous communities located near frontier settlements.[15]

Montgomery investigated the depredations, kept a record of them, and petitioned the government for compensation for lost and vandalized property. He was able to recover only a fraction. The situation so deteriorated by 1824 that Tall Man, the principle leader of the Senecas, along with fourteen other leaders, appealed directly to President Monroe for help, writing, "Our hearts are often made sick. . . . Whitemen passing through our Land often say this land is too good for Indians—We fear that we will soon be driven from this country unless you help us."[16]

By 1829, the situation had become intolerable. Seneca leaders reluctantly petitioned the federal government for land west of the Mississippi in exchange for their Ohio reservations. The administration of newly elected president Andrew Jackson was all too happy to comply. Jackson had made Indian removal a central plank of his presidential campaign. He subsequently appointed James Gardiner, a former senator and ambitious office

[14]Quoted in John P. Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 124.
[15]"29. Civilization Fund Act March 3, 181," in *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, 3rd ed., ed. Francis Paul Prucha (University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 33.
[16]Quoted in Bowes, *Land Too Good*, 124.

seeker, as special commissioner to the Ohio Indians, and directed him to negotiate a treaty with the Senecas. About the same time, and unaware of the Senecas' petition, a group of seventy-eight Seneca County settlers sent their own petition to Jackson, demanding that the Senecas "be removed to a country better adapted to their habits of life."[17]

The treaty Gardiner negotiated was signed at Little Sandusky in 1831. In exchange for the forty thousand acres the Senecas occupied in Ohio, the US government granted the tribe sixty-seven thousand acres adjoining a previously established Cherokee reservation west of the Mississippi. The US also agreed, among other things, to defray the expenses of removal from Ohio, advance $6,000 to cover the funds needed to establish farms and build homes, and provide one hundred rifles, four hundred blankets, and an assortment of plows, hoes, and axes.[18]

The Senecas were the second group to sell their lands and migrate west of the Mississippi after the passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1831 (a band of Choctaws being the first). The federal government was eager to make their removal as positive an experience as possible, as an inducement to nations who resisted removal. Jackson appointed another office seeker, John McElvain, to oversee the removal. The journey, however, was a tragic fiasco from the beginning. The Senecas did not trust McElvain, and most declared that they would not make the trek under his leadership. McElvain, in turn, did not trust Henry Brish, the subagent assigned to the Senecas. A plan to travel by canal and steamboat had to be modified when most of the Senecas refused to travel by water. This necessitated dividing the people into two groups. About a third of the tribe took the journey by water, but the rest joined those who were driving the community's horses and livestock by an overland route. Neither group departed until late fall.

A harsh winter slammed into the Senecas. The roads became impassable for the land party, which eventually could make only about five miles a day. The group ran out of provisions near present-day Muncie, Indiana. Distemper killed eighteen horses. Four people died, including two children. Some among the group refused to go any farther. Others returned to Ohio.

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[17]Stockwell, *Other Trail of Tears*, 201.

[18]"Treaty with the Seneca, 1831," Tribal Treaties Database, https://treaties.okstate.edu/treaties/treaty-with-the-seneca-1831-0325.

Those traveling by steamboat fared no better. With removal costs mounting, Brish sold the best of the Senecas' horses to buy provisions, breaking a promise that he would not do so. Winter conditions grew so severe upon the group's arrival in St. Louis that the travelers could go no farther. They pitched camp eight miles outside the city, while Brish remained in St. Louis to secure provisions. When he rejoined them, the group resumed their westward trek but could go no more than forty-five miles. They pitched camp again near the town of Troy. By this point, several were dying, and many others were frostbitten and sick. Then measles broke out among the children. To make matters worse, McElvain never sent the blankets and rifles promised by the treaty.

After securing more provisions for the water group in Missouri, Brish traveled back across the Mississippi in search of the land party. He found them near Muncie and stayed with them for the rest of the winter. In May, the group resumed its journey, with six of its number near death and another sixteen so ill that they had to be transported in wagons. By the time the two groups met up at the land reserved for them in Oklahoma, on July 4, 1832, at least thirty Senecas had died, and many more had suffered serious illnesses. In a final indignity, the tribe learned that the land the government promised them had already been given to the Cherokees. The situation required yet another treaty, which resulted in an exchange of the sixty-seven thousand acres promised to the Senecas for sixty thousand acres adjacent to the Missouri border.

In a report to William Clark, the region's superintendent of Indian Affairs, Brish wrote, "I charge myself with cruelty in forcing these unfortunate people on, at a time when a few days delay might have prevented some deaths, and rendered the sickness of others more light, and have to regret this part of my duty."[19] Clark, however, had a different take. He wrote that the Seneca had "been more ungovernable, by far, than any others of this superintendency, and certainly, by their own misconduct at times, very much increased the real difficulties which occurred in their removal."[20] This was the same William Clark who, along with Meriwether Lewis, had been the beneficiary of Indigenous hospitality and assistance when the Corps of

[19]James H. O'Donnell III, *Ohio's First Peoples* (Ohio University Press, 2000), 124.
[20]Bowes, *Land Too Good*, 130.

Discovery explored the Louisiana Purchase in 1804–1805. Appointed superintendent in St. Louis in 1822, Clark subsequently played a key role in dispossessing the peoples within his district from their ancestral lands.

Why was it necessary to remove the Senecas from their Sandusky reservation? How did their land become the rightful possession of the present citizens of Tiffin? Early historians of Seneca County had answers. One wrote:

> The dignity which poets and untraveled persons ascribe to the red man vanished the moment the European appeared. From this time he lost all the noble qualities of the child of nature, and measured his evil doings by his opportunities. . . . With the few exceptions [the Seneca] were animated monuments of moral deformity and physical decay, growing weaker and weaker, dying in their young days with a curse for the white race lingering on their lips. Only a short time and their history will alone remain to acquaint the future with their existence; the traveler will never find the camp of Ohio's Red pioneers. . . . May we not hope that before they pass these children of nature may learn from the past; may arrive at a high state of civilization and then come among us to realize the barbarous condition of their fathers, and conceive the littleness of their tribal glories?[21]

Then there is this even darker turn, from the pen of another Seneca County historian:

> For more than a century [the Seneca] had been in contact with the white race, in peace and in war; and instead of deriving the benefit which naturally ought to have followed, from this intimacy, they deteriorated to more abject barbarism still, and dwindled down to a handful of dirty, stupid, superstitious, worthless rabble. Had not this county once been their home, and been named after them, nobody would care to read or learn anything about them.[22]

Why are there no Senecas in the county that bears their name? Because they did not adapt to the "high state of civilization" White settlers brought to the land. Behind this explanation lurks the myth of Manifest Destiny, the conviction that, whether by Providence or the inexorable tide of human development, the Anglo-Saxon race was destined to overspread the continent and to establish a higher and purer form of European civilization for the benefit

[21]Michael A. Leeson, *History of Seneca County, Ohio* (Chicago, 1886), 217.
[22]A. J. Baughman, *History of Seneca County Ohio* (Lewis, 1911), 1:33.

of all humanity. The conquest of the Indigenous nations and the occupation of their lands opened the necessary arena for this higher civilization to develop its salient virtues of freedom, prosperity, and progress.

In the eyes of the county historians, the Senecas were barbaric, stupid, and worthless. Their presence in the land impeded the progress of civilization and an unfolding destiny. Their inability to adapt therefore justified their dispossession. Civilization could not flourish until these primitive occupants had been removed from the land.

As the historians tell the tale, the Senecas had every opportunity to become part of the civilization the White race was developing in the New World. Yet they refused to do so. Instead of "deriving any benefit which naturally ought to have followed" from their contact with the White race, they clung to their barbaric ways and became even more barbaric. They therefore became "animated objects of deformity and decay," growing weaker and weaker, until one day they vanished altogether. In this sentiment, the historians echoed that of Oliver Wendell Holmes, who wrote, "(The Indian's) instincts lead to his extermination, too often the sad solution of the problem of his relation to the white race. . . . So, the red-crayon sketch is rubbed out, and the canvas is ready for a picture of manhood a little more like God's own image."[23]

In the eyes of the settler historians, the Senecas' futile resistance to the advance of civilization sealed their doom, a fate that settler society could only lament with sympathy and nostalgia. One could only hope that those who remained would "learn from their past" and realize the "littleness of their tribal glories" before it was too late. The historians' assumption, of course, was that it *was* too late. Were Seneca County not named for them, "nobody would care to read or learn anything about them"; nobody, that is, among the descendants of settlers who occupy the land the Seneca once inhabited.

The accounts of the Seneca County historians represent local iterations of a national narrative that had become well established by the end of the nineteenth century. No one articulated this narrative with more panache and enthusiasm than Theodore Roosevelt, whose multivolume *The Winning of the West* constitutes both a celebration and a defense of US colonial

[23]Quoted in Sonia Reid, "A 'Bracketed Year' Approach to American Literary History: What Can We Learn?," *Pacific Coast Philology* 28, no. 1 (1993): 47.

conquest and dispossession.[24] American national mythology casts Roosevelt as the epitome of the energetic, can-do spirit the nation prizes. Teddy is a larger-than-life figure, an American icon, who exemplifies optimism, perseverance, initiative, achievement, self-reliance, and above all *winning*. The mythic Roosevelt is a man of the people with a broad grin and a fondness for exclaiming "Bully!" This is the courageous leader of men who led his Roughriders to victory at San Juan Hill, Puerto Rico, during the Spanish-American War. He is the visionary president who preserved the West's breathtaking landscapes for future generations and laid the groundwork for the rise of the United States as a global power.

The Winning of the West, however, reveals a Roosevelt of less noble sentiments. Convinced of the transcendent destiny of the United States, Roosevelt writes, "The conquest and settlement by the whites of the Indian lands was necessary to the greatness of the (white) race and to the well-being of civilized mankind." Indeed, "it was all-important that [the land] should be won, for the benefit of civilization and in the interests of mankind."[25] Roosevelt regarded Indians as a selfish people who impeded the advance of civilization. He therefore had little patience with those who challenged the American myth or the righteousness of its conduct.

> It is indeed a warped, perverse, and silly morality which would forbid a course of conquest that has turned whole continents into the seats of mighty and flourishing civilized nations. All men of sane and wholesome thought must dismiss with impatient contempt the plea that these continents should be reserved for the use of scattered savage tribes, whose life was but a few degrees less meaningless, squalid, and ferocious than that of the wild beasts with whom they held joint ownership.[26]

The United States, Roosevelt writes, acquired its land fairly and justly by treaties that had more than compensated the Indians for the loss of their homelands.

> In these treaties we have been more than just to the Indians; we have been abundantly generous, for we have paid them many times what they were

[24]Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West*, 6 vols. (New York, 1889–1896).
[25]Roosevelt, *Winning of the West*, 6:388, 3:44.
[26]Roosevelt, *Winning of the West*, 3:45.

> entitled to; many times what we would have paid any civilized people whose claim was as vague and shadowy as theirs. . . . No other conquering and colonizing nation has ever treated the original savage owners of the soil with such generosity as has the United States.[27]

Roosevelt's narrative expresses an unquestioned belief in the superiority of the White race and an unveiled disdain for Indians. This is the Roosevelt who famously riffed on the well-known quip that "the only good Indian is a dead Indian" by declaiming, "I don't go so far as to think that the only good Indians are dead Indians, but I believe nine out of every ten are. And I shouldn't like to inquire too closely into the case of the tenth."[28] Roosevelt believed that "the English-speaking race" was "the mightiest race on which the sun has ever shone" and declared that the pioneers who forged the path westward had "accomplished a task of great 'race-importance' in killing off the Indians, a weaker and inferior race."[29]

Roosevelt justified settler violence by asserting that "the most ultimately righteous of all wars is a war with savages."[30] The Sand Creek massacre—during which the US military killed more than one hundred peaceful Cheyenne—"in spite of certain most objectionable details, was on the whole as righteous and beneficial a deed as ever took place on the frontier."[31] And Logan's famous lament? "A strangely pathetic recital of his wrongs, and a fierce and exulting justification of the vengeance he had taken."[32] Even the conservation initiatives that many consider Roosevelt's greatest legacy are not untarnished. Roosevelt vigorously pursued the privatization of reservation lands and confiscated eighty-six million acres of those lands for the newly formed National Forest Service, leading one biographer to remark, "The rise of conservation dovetailed with a national closeout sale on the Indians' landed heritage."[33]

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[27]Roosevelt, *Winning of the West*, 1:42.

[28]Quoted in Wolfgang Mieder, "'The Only Good Indian Is a Dead Indian': History and Meaning of a Proverbial Stereotype," *The Journal of American Folklore* 106 (1993): 45-46.

[29]Quoted in Thomas G. Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 76.

[30]Roosevelt, *Winning of the West*, 3:45.

[31]Theodore Roosevelt, ed., *The Works of Theodore Roosevelt* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), 8:157.

[32]Roosevelt, *Winning of the West*, 1:237.

[33]Char Miller, "Play, Work, and Politics: The Remarkable Partnership of Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot," in *Theodore Roosevelt, Naturalist in the Arena* (University of Nebraska Press, 2020), 115.

Taken as a whole, *The Winning of the West* articulates the themes that configure the American settler narrative, the well-known contours of which may be summarized as follows. Colonial forefathers established a nation "conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."[34] Beginning in Jamestown and Plymouth, the nation's Anglo-Saxon forebears transplanted a purified form of European civilization onto the soil of a New World and, propelled by an inexorable destiny, steadily pushed westward and tamed a trackless wilderness. The destiny of the new nation was manifest by the unstoppable advance of its civilization, the settlement and development of the land, the vibrancy of the nation's ideals, and the progressive impulse of innovation. Inspired by a democratic vision and dedicated to the values of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, an immigrant people established a new nation that would light the path of all nations.[35]

Settler Narratives and Settler Structures

Setting the historians' account against the backdrop of settler interactions with the Seneca of Sandusky hints at what has been suppressed, silenced, and embellished by the American settler narrative. The history that formed me as a child exalts hardy pioneers, lauds their exemplary virtues, and revels in the achievements of the great and exceptional nation they founded on the continent. As illustrated by the county historians' accounts, the settler narrative depicts the land's Indigenous people as primitive and violent, and it expresses a feigned sympathy for their disappearance. In so doing, however, the narrative masks memories of settler perfidy, violence, intimidation, land theft, and Indian hating. Above all, the narrative justifies a settler system constructed by White settlers for the benefit of White settlers.

The colonization of what became the United States did not follow the typical script of European colonialism. Beginning in the fifteenth century, European powers sought to expand their domains and enrich their coffers by discovering and dominating non-Christian lands and populations for the purpose of exploiting their labor and extracting their lands' resources. To

[34]Abraham Lincoln, "The Gettysburg Address" (November 19, 1863), Abraham Lincoln Online, www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm.

[35]For an introduction to and elaboration of the settler narrative, see Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (Hill and Wang, 1995).

facilitate these objectives, colonial powers constructed structures configured by unequal relationships that were designed to maintain colonial power and control. When the Indigenous population of a colony broke free and regained their polities, the colonizers left, and the systems were dismantled in whole or in part. This was largely the case in formerly colonized nations as diverse as India, Indonesia, and Zaire.

In a small number of instances, however, the object of colonial desire was the land itself. In these cases, colonists traveled to a newly discovered land with the intention of taking it, settling it, and transforming it into a source of productivity and profit.[36] The settler-colonial mode of domination thus developed along a different trajectory. Settler colonists were—and are—less interested in exploiting Indigenous labor than in erasing Indigenous presence, which impeded and complicated their ownership and development of the land. Settler modes of domination persist over time because settler colonists end up taking over, and they never leave.[37] As exemplified by settler nations such as the United States, Australia, and Canada, "invasion is a structure, not an event."[38]

Settler colonists thus destroy in order to replace. That is, they seek to eliminate Indigenous societies so that they can replace them with a new colonial society on the land they have taken. In a seminal essay on the topic, Patrick Wolfe speaks of the process of erasure as the "logic of elimination" and describes its implementation along three trajectories: physical displacement (forced removal), cultural erasure (cultural annihilation and assimilation), and legal and political marginalization (legal subjugation and the stripping away of rights and autonomy). By these means, he argues, settler regimes aim to eliminate Indigenous occupants of the land in order to replace them with the settler population.[39]

As in other forms of colonialism, settler societies develop structures designed to maintain unequal relationships, configured by "the organizing

[36]Lorenzo Veracini, "Introducing Settler Colonial Studies," *Settler Colonial Studies* 1, no. 1 (2011): 1-12, https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2011.10648799.

[37]Veracini, "Introducing Settler Colonial Studies." See also, by the same author, "Settler Colonialism," in *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism*, ed. I. Ness and Z. Cope (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 1-6.

[38]Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 388, https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240.

[39]Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism," 388.

grammar of race."[40] The grammar renders colonizer and colonized identities in opposing terms. The settlers, for example, cast Indigenous communities as primitive, lawless, and indolent, and colonizing peoples as advanced, law abiding, and industrious. A related binary typically dismisses Indigenous title to the land, framing it in terms of Indigenous "occupancy" over against settler "dominion."[41]

An original displacement and the unequal relationship between colonizer and colonized thus constitute the two basic elements of settler colonial societies.[42] These elements are reproduced over time and eventually become invisible, as do the Indigenous people themselves. Indigenous invisibility enables the settler society to maintain the fiction that it has resolved the contradictions generated by its seizure of Indigenous land. The settler-colonial state, in short, "forever proclaims its passing, but it never goes away."[43]

The settler structure persists in large part because it is masked by a narrative that justifies the settlers' occupation of the land and their displacement of its Indigenous peoples. The narrative renders settler regimes innocent of land theft, abuse, and violence and cloaks settler domination, past and present, with a myth of innocence. By asserting the legitimacy of the colonial project, the settler narrative deflects challenges to entrenched settler supremacy and the system of unequal relationships that supports it. And by silencing other voices and experiences, the settler narrative presents itself as the one, true, and correct account of the nation's identity. Dominion over the indigenous peoples and dominion over the narrative thus go hand in hand.

A Settler Reckoning

Today the American settler narrative is under assault. Its proponents are no longer able to suppress silenced voices, which articulate opposing narratives, remember episodes of mendacity and violence, and expose the settler narrative's mechanisms of denial. The truth proclaimed by the settler narrative,

[40]Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism," 387.
[41]Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism," 390.
[42]Lorenzo Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 9. For an elaboration of the diverse ways that settler structures exist in the present, see 68-94 as well as Veracini, "Containment, Elimination, Settler Colonialism," *Arena* 51/52 (2018): 18-39.
[43]Veracini, *Settler Colonial Present*, 38.

in other words, is presently being contested by truths spoken by communities that have been on the receiving end of settler domination.[44] The voicing of these contrary narratives, in turn, exposes the unjust and unequal structure the settler narrative legitimizes.

These alternate narratives often indict Christian complicity in the colonial project.[45] Christian theologians constructed the ideological infrastructure that rendered colonization and dispossession as a divinely ordained mandate. Christian religious leaders cast the theft of Indigenous land as expansions of Christendom and as victories of Christian light over pagan darkness. Christian potentates claimed Indigenous lands in the name of God. Christian settlers committed atrocities against Indigenous people who occupied land they wanted. Christian leaders endorsed military operations to exterminate and remove resistant peoples. Christian missionary and educational programs demonized Indigenous cultures and attempted to erase Indigenous identities in warped attempts to civilize and Christianize Indigenous people. Christian settlers of European origin and descent, in short, participated with colonial powers in the construction, implementation, and perpetuation of colonial structures, and benefited by them. The whole operation was and is configured, in the American settler mind, by a conflation of Christianity and Euro-American civilization so thorough as to be inseparable.

I have written this book because I believe that settler Christians like myself have an obligation to dismantle the sinful structure that our Christian forebears established and that persists to the present day. The colonial structure, along with the narrative that justifies it, continues to aid and abet a system of unequal relations among the citizens of the United States. Dismantling that structure, I urge, constitutes an essential practice for the

[44]See particularly Steven T. Newcomb, *Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery* (Fulcrum, 2008), as well as Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Beacon, 2014); David Treuer, *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the Present* (Riverhead, 2019).

[45]For example, George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Fortress, 1993); Randy S. Woodley and Bo C. Sanders, *Decolonizing Evangelicalism: An 11:59 P.M. Conversation* (Cascade, 2020); Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery* (InterVarsity Press, 2019); and King, *Inconvenient Indian*. See also Robert P. Jones, *The Hidden Roots of White Supremacy: And the Path to a Shared American Future* (Simon & Schuster, 2023).

pursuit of justice, the ministry of reconciliation, and the creation of a society that seeks the well-being of all members.

But how to start? How do settler Christians like me, and perhaps you as well, face our "complicity in narratives of ongoing colonization and aim at their undoing"?[46] The act of exposure I will undertake stands on the premise that the essential, first step must entail uncovering and rejecting the settler narrative's denials and fictions of innocence—thus revealing the settler structure as illegitimate. *The work of dismantling the settler structure and its legacy must, in short, begin by demystifying the American settler narrative.*

The task is not for the timid. The atrocity perpetrated against the family of Tachnecdorus is but one of a litany of offenses that the settler narrative covers over. The mechanisms of settler denial are powerful and deeply ingrained in the American psyche. The narrative I relate in this book will likely be painful, disturbing, and destabilizing. What you read may provoke horror and disbelief. I want to encourage you, nonetheless, that this is profoundly important work. Demystifying the settler narrative constitutes an indispensable starting point for bringing about "a recognition of the historical continuity of the logic of elimination" and thus of the ways its program of erasure influences settler thinking and commitments today.[47]

Unmasking the Settler Narrative

I will begin, in the following chapter, by exploring the two arguments that European powers employed to cast the colonial program as a divinely ordained mission: the doctrine of discovery, which held that a Christian power had the right to take newly discovered non-Christian lands and to subjugate those who inhabited them; and the creation mandate, which asserted that Christian powers had a right, if not an obligation, to subdue and develop Indigenous land. Chapters three through six then identify the processes that, according to Wolfe, characterize the logic of elimination, with the addition of a fourth process: legal marginalization (the seizure of land through treaties, legislation, and executive orders), the use of mass violence, which is my addition (settler violence on the frontier and violence by settler

[46]Richard Davis, "Settler Colonialism," Political Theology Network, July 19, 2022, https://politicaltheology.com/author/richard-a-davis/.

[47]Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology* (Cassell, 1999), 212.

military forces), displacement (the forced removal of Indigenous peoples from their lands), and cultural erasure (programs to civilize and Christianize the Indian).

Chapter seven examines settler America's construction of mythic types and tropes, by which White settler America articulated its identity and that of the Indian. Chapter eight argues that the book of Joshua and the American narrative of Manifest Destiny share a common script that can generate Christian conversation as they are read in conversation with each other. Chapter nine lifts up manifestations of the settler structure in the present day and concludes with proposals for demystifying the narrative that supports it.

I begin each chapter with a vignette set in Ohio, as I have done in this chapter. I do so for three reasons. First, I want to emphasize the importance of excavating the history of settler/Indigenous interactions in your particular location: which people inhabited the land before settlement, how they were dispossessed, and how local histories depict them and justify their erasure. Second, Ohio serves as an apt place to introduce the threads of the narrative, because the state constituted the West at the time the United States was constituted as a nation; Ohio therefore is the site of many precedents that rippled westward as the nation expanded. That said, I do not begin with Ohio because what happened in the state is exceptional. Quite the opposite. I begin with Ohio not because Ohio is *unique* but because it is *typical*. The practices of erasure and dispossession that characterize the Ohio narrative are replicated, in myriad forms, in localities throughout the United States.

I write primarily to the descendants of White settlers—people who, like me, enjoy a position of privilege in the settler structure—although I will be pleased if other readers also find this study helpful. My privilege within the settler structure is augmented by my roles as a seminary professor and an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church. I write with the conviction that the pursuit of peace and justice is central to Christian mission in the world.

I argue that both settler and Indigenous people need healing from the warped thinking and practice that emanates from the settler structure and that manifests today in gun violence, toxic racism, a rapacious commodity culture, and a host of other maladies. I do not indict myself or others of my

settler kin for the sins of the past. It is not my intention to blame and shame. We cannot be held accountable for what happened in the past. But we do bear responsibility, as I maintain above, for rejecting the enunciations of our colonial past in the present day, dismantling settler supremacy, and, specific to our task, exposing the mechanisms of denial that justify it.

The scope and scale of this project do not allow a comprehensive, exhaustive, or unbiased account of settler history. I seek mainly to trace the implementation of the logic of elimination by relating representative incidents and policies. I do so with the hope that readers will be prompted to excavate the settler stories of their own place and to expose the justifying fictions that mask them. I also limit the study to the forty-eight contiguous states and do not address many of the most egregious instances of violence and land theft, such as the California genocide and the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy. Finally, I will not, for the most part, include the stories of the many settler individuals and groups who challenged and condemned colonial policies throughout history. My focus is directed squarely toward exposure. I will, however, conclude by pointing to contemporary efforts, on the part of Christian bodies, to undo the damaging narrative of Manifest Destiny.

I write, live, and teach in Ashland, Ohio, in an area of Ohio that has been home to various Indigenous peoples, including the Erie Nation and bands of Lenni Lenape, Senecas, and Wyandottes. Ashland County's most prominent Indian story has to do with Greentown, a predominantly Delaware town of about 150 dwellings that existed in the southern part of the county in the early 1800s. The residents of the town sided with the United States when the War of 1812 broke out. The local military, however, feared that they would defect to the British and sent a detachment of regulars to move them east to an area controlled by US forces. The inhabitants of Greentown refused. Too small to remove them forcibly, the federal force enlisted the aid of John Copus, a local pastor trusted by the townsfolk. Copus persuaded the residents to leave, with the promise that their possessions would be inventoried, their homes would be protected, and their departure would be temporary. The residents had not gone far, however, when Ohio militia rushed into the town, plundered the homes, and burned the town to the ground. Greentown was never resettled.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What draws you to this book? What do you hope to learn through it?
2. Which peoples inhabited your present location at the time of settlement?
3. What is their story?
4. What has influenced the way you view Indigenous Americans? Have your perceptions changed? If so, what precipitated the change?
5. Do you believe that some aspects of the settler narrative—as recounted by Roosevelt and the Seneca County historians—have an element of truth?
6. Do you think that, broadly speaking, the structures of US society and government, for all their flaws, facilitate equitable relations?
7. Are efforts to demystify the settler narrative expressions of justice or of an unbiblical ideology?

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