Introduction

Miss Mary McKee was 73 years old in 1911, and one of only a few Wyandot speakers on the Anderdon reserve in southwestern Ontario. In June of that year, she told anthropologist Marius Barbeau a number of stories, one of which summarized the relationship between Euro-Americans and Indians. She told the story in English. "In the beginning the white man came to speak to the Indian, who was sitting on the end of a log. 'Sit over!' said the white man. So the Indian allowed the stranger to sit on the log. But the other fellow kept on pushing him and repeating, 'Sit over! Sit over!' until the Indian found himself at the other end of the log. And then the white man said, 'Now all this log is mine!'" It was at once an uncomplicated, brief, and powerful narrative.[1]

What also strikes me about Mary McKee's story is how it contrasts with the documents I have spent hours reading over the past decade. Take, for example, a letter written in April 1850 by six Shawnee men. Charles Fish, Paschal Fish, James Captain, John Fish, Crane, and William Rogers wrote to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Orlando Brown from their homes south of the Kansas River just west of the Missouri border. Their seven-page missive detailed a number of complaints against the Methodists living and working on their reserve. Among other misdeeds, the missionaries had bribed and corrupted members of the Shawnee Council and neglected the children who attended their manual labor school. "The truth cannot be concealed," the six Shawnees proclaimed, "they [the Methodists] have departed from their legitimate office and have become 'money changers.'" But this accusation did not complete the list of grievances. The missionaries had also sided with proslavery forces in the recent split

[1] C. M. Barbeau, *Huron and Wyandot Mythology, with an appendix containing earlier published records* (Ottawa, 1915), xi, 287.

of the Methodist Episcopal Church. They then proceeded to harass those Shawnees who supported the antislavery Methodists and would not allow a northern preacher on the reserve. Charles Fish and his partners had a simple question for Commissioner Brown: "Shall we who live on free soil enjoy less liberty than the citizens of a slave state?"[2]

In some respects, it is not fair to compare McKee's story and the Shawnee letter. They come from different contexts and serve divergent purposes. One was a brief tale – McKee even told Barbeau that it was a saying, implying that "sit over" was a punch line to a cruel joke. The Shawnee letter, on the other hand, was written for a specific audience and was not intended for public consumption. Yet, the juxtaposition of these native voices and perspectives helps illuminate neglected aspects of the removal and postremoval experiences of eastern Indians. McKee's tale has a clear moral: white greed forced Indians from their land until they lived on a small fraction of their former territory. The visual imagery of McKee's Indian moving farther and farther down the log applies neatly to removal, where expansion and American policy forced tens of thousands of eastern Indians to relocate west of the Mississippi River. The 1850 letter, however, has a much more complicated context that involves not only a contest for power between two Shawnee factions, but also a national conflict over slavery and expansion in the western territories. More important, the letter and its contents present a more nuanced perspective of the relationship between Americans and Indians during the removal and postremoval era. Mary McKee's story provides the broad brushstrokes of a recognizable tale. The Shawnee letter opens a window into an unfamiliar story that is framed by familiar events – Indian actors whose lives were intertwined with the seminal events of American expansion in the nineteenth century.

Multilayered relationships in eastern Kansas influenced those six Shawnee men. An internal power struggle with a faction of Ohio Shawnees partially explains the written attack against the Methodists. But the choice of words is also telling. Charles Fish and his compatriots charged the missionaries with abandoning their religious principles and becoming "money changers." The very use of the phrase, perhaps a reference to the men Jesus threw out of the temple in a familiar Biblical event, highlights the background of at least two of the Shawnees. Both Charles and his brother Paschal attended mission schools in their youth, and while Charles translated for missionaries in the 1840s, Paschal often preached

[2] Shawnee Indians to Orlando Brown, April 22, 1850, OIA-LR, roll 303.

at the services. Finally, in their references to slavery these men displayed a clear understanding of past legislation and contemporary politics. They knew the Missouri Compromise prohibited slavery in their region and wanted it known that both missionaries and Shawnee leaders were in direct violation of that legislation.

The presence of the Shawnees in Kansas as well as their active engagement with Christianity and contemporary political issues were not anomalies. Shawnees and their Indian neighbors in the Great Lakes region did not simply vanish in the mid-nineteenth century. Their histories continued after notable events like the War of 1812, the Black Hawk War, and the Potawatomi Trail of Death. Military defeat and the Indian Removal Act served as points of transition, not as benchmarks of their demise. In short, the Mississippi River was not a contemporary version of the River Styx, with the ferryman collecting annuities as the Indians' payment for a one-way trip to the West. Indeed, the letter sent by six Shawnee men to Commissioner Brown in 1850 is only one thread from a diverse tapestry.[3]

But the thousands of native men, women, and children who left their homes and crossed the Mississippi were more than survivors. Not surprisingly, and as evidenced by the words of the Fish brothers and their colleagues, eastern Indians in the West had a very active interest in the events and people who influenced their lives. Midcentury disputes over slavery were viewed from a national perspective and through local contexts among the Wyandots and Shawnees. In their respective councils, Delawares and Potawatomis debated the difficulties associated with land ownership in the West and negotiated around the demands of railroads. They were American Indians who did not live in isolation from events that comprise the narrative of American history.

Exiles and Pioneers focuses on Shawnees, Delawares, Wyandots, and Potawatomis during a period of American expansion and evolving federal policy. It has at its foundation a simple premise – the history of these Indian communities in the nineteenth century encompasses a contest over

[3] One can find the story of Black Hawk in a number of sources. One place to start is Donald Jackson (Ed.), *Black Hawk: An Autobiography* (Urbana, IL, 1964). Within the context of Great Lakes history, a helpful summary of the conflict is in Helen Hornbeck Tanner (Ed.), *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman, OK, 1987), 151–154. A more recent account is Kerry A. Trask, *Black Hawk: The Battle for the Heart of America* (New York, 2006). For reports on the Potawatomi Trail of Death, see Irving McKee, *The Trail of Death: Letters of Benjamin Marie Petit* (Indianapolis, 1941); "Journal of an Emigrating Party of Pottawattomie Indians, 1838," *Indiana Magazine of History, XXI*(December 1925): 315–336. The events of the Trail are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 of this book.

geographic and political place. Negotiations over and resistance to removal as well as the later struggles over land in Kansas decided the physical location of American Indians in the United States. But removal from the Great Lakes and subsequent relocations from Kansas tell only part of the history. In the 1850s and 1860s, the western expansion of the United States, through the creation of territories and states, made the standing of Indians in American politics an important element of policy discussions and diplomatic negotiations. Here, in the course of debates over allotment and citizenship, Indians as well as federal and state officials battled over the political status of native communities and individuals. Were they to become the citizen farmers once promoted by Thomas Jefferson or would they continue to exist as tribal communities separated from the American populace? Was it even that simple a proposition?

The federal government did not dominate the battle for physical space. In fact, during the removal era and the decades that followed, the enforcement of federal Indian policies remained ineffective. But such shortcomings proved a double-edged sword to eastern Indians. Although the absence of federal authority allowed for the persistence of native autonomy, it also provided traders, settlers, speculators, and local officials countless opportunities to promote their agendas at the expense of both federal policies and Indian interests. As a result, local power struggles rivaled and often exceeded federal legislation in importance. Rather than being a demonstration of the federal government's strength, therefore, the history of Indian removal and postremoval encompasses the prolonged battle for influence on both sides of the Mississippi River. From the late 1700s onward, Indian residents of the trans-Mississippi West exploited the weaknesses in U.S. Indian policy to maintain a measure of autonomy even as they suffered from the inability and unwillingness of the American government to protect Indian welfare.

From the early 1850s to the late 1860s, negotiations for Indian lands west of the Mississippi introduced allotment, discussed Indian citizenship, and resulted in near complete dispossession. Removal cast the Indians as exiles, a population that needed to move beyond the boundaries of the established nation until they could assume a place in American society. Yet, relocation also made the eastern Indians pioneers. On the prairie grasslands and along the thinly wooded waterways west of the Missouri state line, eastern Indians broke ground and struggled to adapt to a new environment. With the organization of Kansas Territory and Kansas' subsequent statehood, these border Indian communities faced both a

choice and a challenge. The choice was clearly defined. They could leave lands they had only recently settled and move south to Indian Territory, or they could take their land in severalty and attempt to coexist with the white men and women who quickly populated the region. The challenge was more intricate. Having made their decision, Shawnees, Wyandots, Delawares, and Potawatomis had to struggle with the consequences. Internal power struggles often placed members of those four communities in opposition in debates over their future in the West. Meanwhile, the interference of state and federal officials further complicated the choice between citizenship and relocation as well as its consequences. But it was the pervasive dispossession in 1860s Kansas that provided the most significant obstacle and highlighted the underlying problem. In the end, the combination of those internal and external obstacles usually made the choice between relocation and citizenship irrelevant.

This process of Indian exile in the 1850s and 1860s built on the legacies and policies of the seven previous decades. Powerful and intrusive forces of American expansion transformed the lives of eastern Indians in the nineteenth century, and in the end, the Shawnees, Delawares, Wyandots, and Potawatomis lost most of their struggles over geography. Successive periods of land loss and relocation left most with small reserves, hundreds of miles from where they had lived decades earlier. Even the property rights granted by allotment provided little protection from settlers and speculators, and few Indians who sought to live as equals beside their Kansas neighbors met success. White pioneers populated Kansas before, during, and after the Civil War and Indians were once again cast as exiles. But native communities persisted. Although the struggles surrounding allotment and citizenship advanced dispossession in Kansas, that same process created the political structures and legal relationships that grounded the existence of numerous Shawnee, Delaware, Wyandot, and Potawatomi polities in the decades that followed.

The origins of this argument, and this book for that matter, are rooted in most of the usual places – graduate student naiveté, prior scholarship, archival research, conference presentations, classroom discussions, and continuous revisions. An article written by David Edmunds supplied the initial inspiration. By looking at the Potawatomis as pioneers in a different version of the western frontier, Edmunds highlighted a neglected period of movement, encounter, and experience. As eastern Indians confronted life in the West, they had new challenges before them, ones comparable to those faced by the European and American emigrants so prominent in

this country's national narrative. My appreciation for the western movements of eastern Indians was further enhanced by comments I received one Sunday morning years ago at a conference in Tucson. As an attentive crowd of three early risers looked on, Peter Iverson delivered a thoughtful and thought-provoking critique of my presentation on Indian removal in the Great Lakes. In one of his most helpful comments, Dr. Iverson described Indian history as "a map in motion," an idea that directed my attention to the larger context of Indian removal. Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending on one's perspective, my argument is also infused with a dash of conceit nurtured by numerous graduate seminars in which I had learned to dissect assigned readings. Bolstered by intellectual pride, I set aside more than five hundred pages of complexity and nuance to take issue with a single sentence from Richard White's influential study, *The Middle Ground*. I focused my indignation on page 523, where "the Americans arrived and dictated," once the British left the *pays d'en haut* after the War of 1812. Although I no longer see this phrase as a call to arms, it makes sense that my first chapter begins with Tenskwatawa's stories, drawn from the same source White used in the conclusion of his work. The words within this book are, in some respects, a conversation with these three phrases and, therefore, reflect the responses I have crafted over the past several years to the conclusions that these scholars and others have drawn from them.[4]

But this study does more than converse with the work of three historians. *Exiles and Pioneers* aims to rescue the Shawnees, Delawares, Wyandots, and Potawatomis from the periphery of several prevailing narratives. The War of 1812 most often serves as the endpoint for discussions of Indian activity in the southern Great Lakes region. Rather than retreating to the margins of history after the end of the War of 1812, however, Indians from the Old Northwest remained vital participants in the territorial expansion and policy development of the American state in the mid-nineteenth century. Autonomous migrations and ongoing diplomatic relations provide pictures of native networks that did not disappear. This narrative extension of Great Lakes Indian history subsequently opens the door to another perspective on the removal era. Images of the Cherokees on the Trail of Tears have epitomized both the removal experience and

[4] R. David Edmunds, "Indians as Pioneers: Potawatomis on the Frontier," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma, 65*(Winter 1987–1988), 340–353; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (New York, 1991), 523.

the final defeat of Indians residing east of the Mississippi. But although numerous parallels exist between events in the Southeast and Great Lakes, the Cherokee experience is not necessarily representative of removal among the Shawnees, Delawares, Wyandots, and Potawatomis. Finally, slavery conflicts, American settlement, and railroad promotion have usually assumed center stage in the histories of both Kansas and the United States. Yet, struggles over slavery and the organization of Kansas Territory as well as enlistments in the Union Army likewise illustrate experiences that Indians shared with an expanding American nation.[5]

Those interested in the political, commercial, and social interactions between Indians and Europeans during the colonial era have primarily focused on events in the Ohio Valley. Drawn by the vibrant and violent episodes of the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution, historians focus on native confederacies and alliances with British, French, and American governments. The figures of Pontiac and Tecumseh have achieved particular notoriety because of their prominence in the resistance to colonization and external authorities. Such studies, intent on developments in the eighteenth century, have often pushed forward into the nineteenth century only because the War of 1812 serves as a tidy ending for the varied attempts of eastern Indians to battle Euro-American expansion between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River. Recent works have illustrated the complexities of these interactions more substantially than those in the past. Few can now question the fact that Indians throughout the Great Lakes region in the eighteenth century lived with an understanding of and an ability to influence imperial diplomacy. But even those histories that have brought greater sophistication to this narrative have used the year 1815 as a grand conclusion. The American

[5] Only Grant Foreman has broadly examined the removal and postremoval history of eastern Indians from the Southeast and the Great Lakes. See his *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Tribes of Civilized Indians* (Norman, OK, 1932); *Advancing the Frontier, 1830–1860* (Norman, OK, 1933); *The Last Trek of the Indians* (Chicago, 1946). A number of other scholars have focused their efforts on Cherokee removal and the following list is only a sample of that larger historiography. See Thurman Wilkins, *Cherokee Tragedy: The Ridge Family and the Decimation of a People* (Norman, OK, 1988); William L. Anderson (Ed.), *Cherokee Removal: Before and After* (Athens, GA, 1991); Theda Perdue and Michael Green (Eds.), *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents* (New York, 1995); John Ehle, *Trail of Tears: The Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation* (New York, 1997); Vicki Rozema, *Voices From the Trail of Tears* (Winston-Salem, NC, 2003). Even the examinations of removal policy primarily discuss the Cherokees and other southeastern Indians. The most notable examples include: Ronald N. Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Norman, OK, 2002); Anthony F. C. Wallace, *The Long, Bitter Trail: Andrew Jackson and the Indians* (New York, 1993).

victory in that conflict serves as the beginning of the end, the death knell for the native presence.[6]

Individual tribal histories have only partially corrected this shortcoming. Acknowledgments of physical and cultural persistence, rejections of a simple accommodation or resistance modality, and recognition of individual and tribal agency have strengthened the historiography in general. However, although most histories follow the tribal experience after the War of 1812, the emphasis remains on events of earlier time periods. Certain groups have received extensive attention while others have remained a part of the supporting cast. The Shawnees serve as the model for the Old Northwest. Numerous books have focused on Tecumseh, Tenskwatawa, and the Shawnee-driven confederacy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Once Tecumseh dies and Tenskwatawa loses authority, however, the Shawnees appear to vanish. Their role in the narrative comes to a decisive end. Although a recent study by Steve Warren provides a much-needed analysis of Shawnee political developments through 1870, his work and its chronology remain the exception rather than the norm.[7]

[6] For histories focused on struggles of the eighteenth century, see Randolph C. Downes, *Council Fires on the Upper Ohio: A Narrative of Indian Affairs in the Upper Ohio Valley until 1795* (Pittsburgh, 1940); Michael McConnell, *A Country Between: The Upper Ohio Valley and Its Peoples, 1724–1774* (Lincoln, NE, 1992); Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (New York, 1995). For works that illustrate my latter point, see Colin G. Calloway, *Crown and Calumet: British-Indian Relations, 1783–1815* (Norman, 1987); White, *The Middle Ground*; Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Struggle for Unity, 1745–1815* (Baltimore, 1992). Other works that highlight the complicated nature of relationships in the region during this period include Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673–1800* (New York, 1997); R. David Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet* (Lincoln, NE, 1983); Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst, 2001); Patrick Griffin, "Reconsidering the Ideological Origins of Indian Removal: The Case of the Big Bottom 'Massacre,'" in Andrew R. L. Cayton and Stuart D. Hobbs (Eds.), *The Center of a Great Empire: The Ohio Country in the Early Republic* (Athens, OH, 2005), 11–35.

[7] The historiographies encompassing the histories of the Cherokee, Iroquois, and Sioux Indians are the best examples of this trend. Tribal histories consulted for this project include: C. A. Weslager, *The Delaware Indian Westward Migration: With the Texts of Two Manuscripts (1821–1822) Responding to General Lewis Cass's Inquiries About Lenape Culture and Language* (Wallingford, PA, 1978); C. A. Weslager, *The Delaware Indians: A History* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1972); James A. Clifton, *The Prairie People: Continuity and Change in Potawatomi Indian Culture 1665–1965* (Lawrence, 1977); R. David Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire* (Norman, 1978); Robert Emmett Smith, Jr., "The Wyandot Indians, 1843–1876" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1973). Histories on the Shawnee Indians are largely based in their experience up to the War of 1812. See Jerry E. Clark, *The Shawnee* (Lexington, 1993); R. David Edmunds, *The*

This emphasis on the Old Northwest and the military confederacies in the Ohio Valley has also created a misleading chronology. The seemingly instinctive narrative shift from the defeat of Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa to the Cherokee struggles against Georgia implies that removal only followed military defeat and was an imposition of the federal government through legislation. It is here that Iverson's description of the "map in motion" fits so well. Shawnees, Delawares, Potawatomis, and Wyandots were only four of the many native communities who migrated into, out of, and within the Great Lakes region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And although analytical concepts, such as the middle ground, have highlighted intricate aspects of diplomacy, warfare, and coexistence, the maps that accompany such sophisticated arguments capture only a moment in time. Even the *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, a work that performs a tremendous service to scholars of the titular region, presents freeze-framed locations of Indian settlements in different eras. A single map cannot adequately capture the relocations of individuals, families, and bands as they moved in response to the seasons, their relationship with each other, or their need to be closer to or farther from Euro-American settlements. Most important, this historical map in motion provides a broader chronological context for discussions of removal.[8]

The military defeats of the 1810s and the Indian Removal Act of 1830 did not spark migrations in otherwise sedentary native populations, a point illustrated by the experiences of Shawnees and Delawares in the decades prior to the passage of removal legislation. As of the late eighteenth century, the Shawnee population included some of the most well-traveled native communities on the entire continent. Former Shawnee villages could be found throughout the eastern United States from north to south. The Lenni Lenape, or Delaware Indians as English colonists called them, were also late arrivals to the Ohio Valley, having first encountered Europeans along the Atlantic Coast. Prior to taking up residence along the White River in Indiana in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the main Delaware villages had gradually moved west

Shawnee Prophet (Lincoln, 1983); John Sugden, *Blue Jacket: Warrior of the Shawnees* (Lincoln, 2000). Two exceptions (beyond Warren) to this trend are neither recent nor comprehensive. See Grant Harrington, *The Shawnees in Kansas* (Kansas City, KS, 1937); Henry Harvey, *History of the Shawnee Indians, From the Year 1681 to 1854, Inclusive* (New York, reprinted in 1971). As noted, Steve Warren's work marks an important step in the right direction. See his *The Shawnees and Their Neighbors, 1795–1870* (Urbana, 2005).

[8] Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*.

through Pennsylvania, retreating in response to the advance of colonial settlement. Shawnees and Delawares also made some of the most substantial migrations west of the Mississippi in the years prior to removal legislation. Indeed, by 1830, the majority of Shawnees lived west of that river.[9]

At its foundation, Indian removal is a narrative about power and geographic relocation. Although the changing power relations of this historical era cannot be ignored and are difficult to dispute, an examination of movement provides a new perspective. Only by analyzing this larger history will a new understanding emerge regarding the continuities and discontinuities in westward relocations and power relations. The first two chapters treat removal within that expansive context. In Chapter 1, competing visions and uses of the Mississippi River from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century offer insights into both colonial rivalries and the nature of Indian migrations. From the 1760s to the 1820s the Spanish, British, and Americans fought to define the Mississippi River as a political boundary and tried to control the movements of peoples in the region. Despite these efforts, both Shawnees and Delawares consistently viewed the Mississippi as a corridor while simultaneously depending on networks of kinship and commerce to support their departures from the conflict-ridden Ohio Valley. Chapter 2 analyzes the enactment of Indian removal through the experiences of multiple Potawatomi bands from the southern Great Lakes as well as the relocation of a multiethnic emigrant party from Wisconsin Territory. After the passage of the Indian Removal Act, U.S. treaty commissioners made every effort to obtain Indian lands and arrange for the relocation of the Potawatomis and their neighbors from the region. But the dispersed nature of federal authority allowed for both the manipulation of the process by local officials and traders and the continuation of native kinship networks that still supported Indian movements.

Removal to the western territories instigated changes in the eastern Indians' way of life. The journey had displaced them from familiar lands

[9] James H. Howard, *Shawnee!: The Ceremonialism of a Native Indian Tribe and Its Cultural Background* (Athens, OH, 1981), 6–16; Vernon Kinietz and Erminie W. Voegelin (Eds.), *Shawnese Traditions: C. C. Trowbridge's Account* (Ann Arbor, June 1939), 55–57, 60–63; Charles Callender, "Shawnee," in William C. Sturtevant (Ed.), *Handbook of North American Indians* (17 volumes, Washington, DC, 1978), XV, 630–631; Jerry Eugene Clark, "Shawnee Indian Migration: A System Analysis" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1974); Dark Rain Thom, *Kohkumthena's Grandchildren: The Shawnee* (Indianapolis, 1994), 235–246; Ives Goddard, "Delaware," in Sturtevant, *Handbook of North American Indians*, XV, 213–239; Weslager, *The Delaware Indian Westward Migration*.