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Settler Histories of Place: Frances Slocum and Miami Dispossession

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Nancy Hewitt

Frances Slocum has become the most famous Miami Indian woman in history, which is surprising because she was born to a white Quaker family. This project traces the formation of her captivity narrative as she is transformed into a figure of local history in two distinct places: Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania where she was captured and Peru, Indiana where she lived and was buried.

Settler Histories of Place examines the periods in which her narrative gains popularity and finds that her story circulates most widely at moments when there are broader movements to take control of Miami Indian lands in Indiana. How storytellers describe her racial identity shapes how she is imagined as a historical figure of settler and native history. What details are included or omitted shapes how the violence of settling the United States is imagined. Narratives about Frances Slocum are used in two particular regions as key historical stories of place. These stories use racial descriptions to naturalize a settler sense of belonging, normalizing settler claims to land inhabited by the Miami. Accounting for Miami perspectives of Frances Slocum disrupts settler narratives of Miami absence and reveals the cultural logics of public history in a settler-context.

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While my formal intellectual home is Women's and Gender Studies, this dissertation led me into the wonderful world of Native American and Indigenous Studies – a field not formally represented at any educational institution where I

have studied. In 2008 when I attended the conference “Native American and Indigenous Studies: Who Are We? Where Are We Going?” in Athens, Georgia, I had no idea that it was the beginning of a new direction in my work. I want to thank the Native Studies scholars who provided me with direction and support when they barely knew me. Thank you Lisa Brooks, Qwo-li Driskill, Mishuana Goeman, Malea Powell, and Mark Rifkin. Your patient conversations and small acts of support, like clapping enthusiastically after conference presentations, are appreciated more than you may realize.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	vi
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Omitting:	
Native Woman in Settler Memory	20
Chapter 2: Capturing:	
Frances as the Lost Sister	66
Chapter 3: Figuring:	
Place and Locale in Nationalist History	108
Chapter 4: Erasing:	
Settler-Histories of Dispossession	138
Conclusion	200
Bibliography	205

Introduction

If you walked into the Luzerne County Historical Museum in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania during the summer of 2013, you might be surprised by the number of paintings of people and places in Indiana. Local museums often feature stories about families and businesses in the immediate area, but the first floor exhibit of this small museum in Pennsylvania is filled with George Winter's paintings of Indiana. George Winter never lived in Pennsylvania, but he had the pleasure of painting a portrait of the most famous woman in Wilkes-Barre's history – Frances Slocum. Today, the main exhibit at this museum is filled with the images he created on a single visit to her home, Deaf Man's Village, near Peru, Indiana. The second floor exhibit features items that belonged to her – a pair of moccasins, a ribbon shirt, and a finger-woven belt are displayed alongside the story that connects her life in Indiana to this place, where she was captured.

In 1778 Lenni Lenape Indians raided the Slocum home in Wilkes-Barre and kidnapped Frances Slocum when she was just five years old. As an adult she married a Miami Indian man, who later became a chief. After he passed away and nearly sixty years after her capture, she reconnected with her biological family. It is a remarkable story that is now commemorated in Pennsylvania through numerous parks, trails, and landmarks associated with the events of her capture. The presence of the portraits from Indiana in this Pennsylvania local history museum speaks to the circuits of exchange that developed between these two places through Frances Slocum's life story.

This dissertation traces the development of her life stories from the period in which she lived to the present. Her story was first popularized as a captivity narrative when she reunited with her biological siblings in 1837. After her death in 1847, her story continued to circulate as a historical curiosity and gained recognition as a dramatic local tale in two particular regions, around Wilkes-Barre, where she was captured and Peru, where she lived and was buried. At the turn of the twentieth century, her story regained popularity in a wave of nationalist projects, that inspired several memorials and books in her honor. As the most famous historical female figure in these two regions, stories about her shape how these places and the people who live there are imagined.

My interest in Frances Slocum is rooted in the role she plays in Indiana as a prominent figure of Miami Indian history. Her story is often taught in public schools as the only American Indian from the state named in the curriculum, which is surprising since she was born to a white Quaker family. Much like Pennsylvania, Indiana is dotted with schools and parks named after her. In both places Frances Slocum is a key historical figure and widely celebrated in state and women's history. Why did she become such an iconic figure in these places, how is she remembered and memorialized, and by whom?

Using an interdisciplinary indigenous feminist approach to power and knowledge production, I follow the development of life stories about Frances Slocum to reveal the political work they perform as origin narratives of localized settler communities. Drawing on these scholarly approaches, I analyze how these stories are produced and consumed as historical narratives of place. I pay particular

attention to how Slocum's identity is narrated in order to establish the colonial-racial boundaries of who belongs where and why.

Thematically, this work explores the localized practices that evolve from the interplay among historic knowledge, place, and race in the United States. How is historic knowledge produced in these stories, about whom and for whom? What can be learned about the production of historic knowledge and place-identity through a case that is distinct in connecting two regions? How do racial descriptions of Frances Slocum as white or Miami shape the meaning of these stories in these places? What does the development of these stories over time reveal about the role of history in settler society?

Methods and Methodologies

To explore these questions requires the use of a variety of disciplinary practices and sources, most notably archival research, genealogical research, interviews, observations (especially of public history programming), and close textual analysis. During the course of this research I visited large archival institutions such as the Newberry Library of Chicago, the Philadelphia Library Company, and state institutions such as the Indiana State Library, Indiana State Historical Society, and Pennsylvania State Historical Society. Regional archives and museums came to play a far more extensive role in my research than I could have expected when I began. This work draws heavily on the collections in the Luzerne County Archives and Museum in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania and a number of regional historical societies in Indiana, including the Miami County Archives and

Museum, Wabash County Archives and Museum, and Tippecanoe County Archives. The smaller archives that I visited include the North Manchester Historical Society Archives, the Manchester College Archives, the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma archives, and the archives of the Miami Nation of Indiana.

I also gained access to a variety of private collections through social networks and genealogical research. I am particularly grateful to the research conducted in the private collection of Dennis McClurg of Fort Wayne, Indiana. The way I connected with McClurg speaks to how I navigated genealogical significance in my research more broadly. He is a thoughtful and dedicated genealogist and his documentation of the relationship of Martha Una McClurg, his mother, with Chief Clarence Godfroy for the book *Miami Indian Stories* is a valuable source on Miami history and storytelling. I met Dennis after locating a number of archival materials on his mother, including her will, which he had never seen. I began with newspaper clippings about her death and then looked for her heirs locally in the phone book. Next I tried online genealogical boards for the McClurg's and soon learned that his brother went to high school with my mother. This combination of social networking with formal genealogical research and my own family connections characterizes how I navigated the relationships between historical texts and the living communities invested in them. Throughout my research I used genealogical research to track family papers as they entered formal institutions and to locate the living communities most strongly connected to the published texts in my work.

Historical research is often exempted by or fast-tracked by Internal Review Boards on Research Ethics, but I question the benefit these exemptions have on the

quality and integrity of historical research. How history is told and commodified effects living communities, especially family members attached to historical projects. The 2010 bestseller, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* explores the biomedical ethics of continuing to use cells from the cervix of Lacks, who died in 1951 of cervical cancer, even though neither she nor her family ever knew that doctors collected cells from her body.¹ Robust discussions followed on the ethical responsibilities of current researchers to the living Lacks family. This case and the discussions it spurred serve as useful starting ground for thinking about the ethical responsibilities of humanities and social science scholars to living communities with stakes in their research, particularly populations that are already considered at risk for exploitation or those subject to abuses by past researchers.

Standard IRB policies only apply to research on human subjects, and thus historians are exempt when their subjects are no longer living. My research speaks to the continued power historical narratives have on living populations and my use of genealogy as a method has proven a valuable source for tracking history and understanding the affinity many individuals have to the histories of their ancestors and the art and texts that they produced. Some scholars fear that the IRB will function as a gate-keeper for the sort of research that they are allowed to pursue. Thus there is a concern that IRB-like processes for evaluating the ethics of research will harm historical inquiry or at least dissuade scholars from working on already marginalized histories. I too was concerned about how IRB regulations would limit my research when I began. Instead, I found the process a useful reflection on who

¹ Rebecca Skloot, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, (New York: Broadway Books, 2011.)

might be vulnerable in my research, which resonated with my feminist commitment to pay special attention to those who are rendered systemically vulnerable in hetero-patriarchal societies.

The opposition to the ethics-review process is tied to the friction humanities scholars face when filling out paperwork that was clearly designed for medical and scientific research, written as a litigious response to past abuses. The crucial part of this exercise for historians is to pause and think carefully about what living individuals might be potentially harmed or have stakes in their research. My experience reaching out to living persons invested in the stories of Frances Slocum proved incredibly enriching to my research. While there are other ways to reflect on who has a stake in the research we do, it seems crucial that ethical reflection on research methods be normalized outside the sciences. The IRB process is one way of achieving this goal, but a separate process designed by humanities scholars might be even more fruitful.

After receiving IRB approval, I conducted interviews with eight people connected to the ongoing production of Frances Slocum stories. These are people who publicly perform stories about Frances Slocum, are regionally known as authorities about her, and have in some way chosen to be a public voice about local history. I included Miami Indians both related and not related to her as well as individuals who perform public story tellings about her. I asked the interviewees to tell me who Frances Slocum was and followed up with a series of questions about the significance of these stories in the present. Each of the interviews lasted forty-five to eighty minutes. How individuals told her story strongly reflected where they

lived and which books about Frances Slocum they perceived as most legitimate. The responses about contemporary significance revealed the strong racial attachments individuals have to Frances Slocum's body, which is imagined in different ways and imparts distinct moral messages.

Additionally, I filmed five public history events marketed as stories of Frances Slocum. Each was free and open to the public and performed on public lands, such as the Frances Slocum State Park in Wyoming, Pennsylvania. These recordings allowed me to engage issues I observed during the course of my research that were difficult to document. For instance, how people talked about Frances Slocum in casual conversations differed greatly depending on place. While published texts, even pamphlets on local history, tend to articulate common features of the Frances Slocum story that are quite consistent, residents in Pennsylvania and Indiana talked about her as an embodied female in ways that varied significantly. These differences are not nearly as clear in the textual materials as in public events, which thus became important sources for tracing such distinctions.

Interdisciplinarity, Feminist Epistemology, and History

Most of the methods that I used are fairly common in historical research, but my approach to the research, how I asked questions and questioned the sources, mark this as an interdisciplinary feminist project – one rooted in personal political commitments and informed by feminist analysis of power and knowledge production. My formal training is in interdisciplinary women's and gender studies and feminist epistemology, which means that my work is deeply indebted to the

long discussions about the power dynamics of knowledge production that have developed in these fields. Those discussions are further enhanced by my experiences with indigenous studies scholarship and scholars.

Training in interdisciplinary feminist studies is distinct from theorizing about the kinds of interdisciplinary work that takes place within traditional disciplines. Most often when someone uses the term interdisciplinary they are referring to work that somehow transgresses disciplinary boundaries, which can occasionally be as simple as citing sources or texts from another academic field. In this way, many interdisciplinary fields have emerged at points of convergence between disciplines. For instance cognitive anthropology, which studies cultural knowledge embedded in language, is a field formed by linguists, anthropologists, and cognitive psychologists.

Some women's and gender studies doctoral programs have adopted this model of interdisciplinarity – one that imagines women's and gender studies as a convergence between feminist studies and traditional disciplines. For example University of Michigan offers only joint Women's and Gender Studies doctoral degrees that require students to choose English, History, Psychology, or Sociology as a disciplinary home. The formal relationship between Women's and Gender Studies and traditional disciplines at Michigan is present in less explicit ways in many other graduate programs, in which students are urged to identify a disciplinary home without formalizing the relationship through a joint degree.

In other cases, feminist scholars imagine Women's and Gender Studies as an intellectual space where interdisciplinarity is explored as a site for research outside

of traditional disciplines, that is, outside the hetero-patriarchal norms feminist scholars critique the disciplines for sustaining.² Senior feminist scholars like Robyn Wiegman, Liz Grosz, and others encourage doctoral students to follow their research beyond disciplinary boundaries and standardized subjects. Rather than positing women, gender, sexuality, or feminism as the subject of research, this approach might be better understood from the perspective proposed by Alison Jaggar--that "feminist research is distinguished by its commitment to producing knowledge useful in opposing the many varieties of gender injustice."³ This definition centralizes feminist political commitments rather than any particular subject, method, or approach.

Interdisciplinary Women's and Gender Studies is grounded in the assumption that all forms of knowledge production are imbued with power, which normalize the interlocking systems of oppression that feminist activists and scholars seek to disrupt. bell hooks argues that feminism is about "eradicating the cultural basis of group oppression, (that) our own analysis would require an exploration of all aspects of women's political reality. This would mean that race and class oppression would be recognized as feminist issues with as much relevance as sexism."⁴ Feminist research is thus grounded in political commitments to

² This is particularly true at Rutgers and a handful of other WGS graduate programs. Still many WGS PhD programs require or encourage doctoral candidates to declare a disciplinary home.

³ Alison Jaggar, "The Project of Feminist Methodology," *Just Methods: An Interdisciplinary Feminist Reader* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2014) x.

⁴ bell hooks, "Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression," *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, (South End Press, 1984.)

understand the many varieties of gendered oppression. In this sense, my study is a thoroughly interdisciplinary feminist project.

My work is also informed by my experiences and community knowledge as a member of the Miami Nation of Indiana. My use of Miami language and cultural knowledge in this analysis is related to Paula Gunn Allen's use of what she calls a "native feminist approach," but this phrase is slightly misleading.⁵ When Allen distinguishes between a western, feminist, and Native feminist reading of *Yellow Woman*, she does not draw on generic Native knowledges. She uses tribally specific knowledge to read the texts based on exchanges with relatives. Thus, I read Allen's methodology as tribally specific, grounded in interpersonal exchanges with Native people and interpretations of tribal stories. I conceive of my own reading as an interdisciplinary Miami-feminist approach, which also draws on the insights of Native American and Indigenous Studies more broadly. My Miami, feminist, and anti-racist political commitments do not line up neatly or predictably, and I often feel pulled in competing directions.

Like many native feminist scholars, particularly Jennifer Nez Denetdale (Diné/Navajo), Renya Ramirez (Winnebago) and Audra Simpson (Mohawk), my research engages family histories. Frances Slocum is my fifth-great (or great-great-great-great-great) grandmother. This is not as exceptional a status as it might seem. Although there have been many texts over the years that cite some individual as the last lineal descendant of Frances Slocum, the majority of Miami Indians in Indiana are her lineal descendants.

⁵ Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon, 1992).

This familial connection definitely benefited the research that I did among the Miami in the sense that people were more likely to trust me, especially once they knew who my grandmother and great-grandmother were. This was particularly significant in allowing me access to the Miami Nation of Indiana's tribal archives because researchers have not been granted access since the mid 1990s.⁶ Even with my familial connections, I was monitored the entire time that I was in the tribal archives.

In other cases, being Miami made me suspect. In my research in Pennsylvania, I learned quickly that there was a common fear that native researchers came to the sources with some ulterior motive. The fear was never made explicit, but it seemed to focus on compensation of some sort, or alternately demands to return Indian relics. However, being a descendant of Frances Slocum was warmly received in Pennsylvania where Nativeness is not associated with Slocum's body.

The combination of Miami language and cultural knowledge and an interdisciplinary feminist approach means that it unlikely that another scholar would develop this project, and certainly not in the same way. It would not be impossible to pursue a study of Frances Slocum, but it would require additional labor if a non-Miami researcher wanted to include tribal materials and knowledge. Maria Lugones and Elizabeth Spellman argue that it is only through meaningful

⁶ In the 1990s a researcher was paid to help organize the Miami Nation archives. Later items from the tribal archives were donated to museums by this individual. The tribal archives have been closed to researchers since then. There is still much resentment and mistrust of researchers at the tribal offices. Though I was able to do some research in the archives, I do not expect the Miami Nation tribal archives to be available to researchers for a long time.

friendships that enough trust is built between people of different cultural backgrounds that understanding can truly take place.⁷ Eva Marie Garroute (Cherokee) speaks similarly about non-native scholars engaging native communities and insists that there must be a willingness to give freely to the native community in ways that are not only about an exchange for knowledge. There must be a stronger relationship of trust built, which takes a long time, usually years, to build.⁸

Throughout this dissertation I wrestle with questions about the production of history from an interdisciplinary Miami-feminist perspective. I never set out to engage with history as a field so closely, but questions about constructions of the past continued to appear as the research and writing unfolded. There is no escaping history when thinking about constructions of indigeneity because of the way that concept is tethered to understandings of the past. Still, rather than pursue a historical imaginary, seek to understand a historic world, or analyze change over time, this project is rooted firmly in present-day Miami land and identity politics.⁹

⁷ Maria C. Lugones and Elizabeth V. Spelman. "Have We Got a Theory for You! Feminist Theory, Cultural Imperialism and the Demand for 'The Woman's Voice'." Maria Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling and Loving Perception." *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions*. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003.)

⁸ Eva Marie Garroute. *Real Indians: Identity and Survival of Native America*. (University of California Press, 2003.)

⁹ Susan Sleeper-Smith and James Joseph Buss have both recently engaged Frances Slocum within broader historical arguments about change over time. There are also scholars like Camilla Townsend who develop robust historical biographies based on incredibly limited sources, such as her work on *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma* (Hill and Wang, 2005,) and *Malintzen's Choices: An Indian Woman in the Conquest of Mexico* (University of New Mexico Press, 2006.) Certainly a skilled historian such as Townsend would be able to write a historical biography of Frances Slocum, but I never had any interest in exploring the life of Frances Slocum in that way. My study, however, focuses as much on the present as the past.

In some ways this project serves as a long historical note of how we reach the contemporary situation of the Miami.

This dissertation is politically invested in understanding how colonial relations are maintained and sustained over time. Such a goal returns us to feminist postmodernist political questions about how social change happens given the embodied nature of human subjectivities.

Colonial-isms and Dreams of Decolonization

The content and politics of my work make it easy to align my scholarship with decolonialism. Rosa-Linda Fregoso describes my project as “decolonizing the archives.”¹⁰ It is true that I have been influenced by the work of Chicana feminist scholars on decolonialism and the power of the decolonial imaginary, but I tend to resist this term for my own work.¹¹ My resistance is based in the normative power such labels possess. As Eve Tuck (Aleut) and Wayne K. Yang so powerfully articulate in their article “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” decolonizing and the decolonial have become trendy terms used to refer to a wide variety of political projects that are often disconnected from both the intellectual Chicana feminist tradition in which the term was first theorized and the indigenous land politics in which recent calls for decolonialization are based.¹²

¹⁰ Rosa-Linda Fregoso, “Brief response to ‘Indigeneity and the colonial work of the archives,’” *Settler Colonial Studies* (Vol. 1, 2015.)

¹¹ Emma Perez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*. (Indiana University Press, 1999.) Maria Lugones, “Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System.” *Hypatia*. Vol 22, No. 1, (Winter 2007) 186-209.

¹² Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang. “Decolonization is not a Metaphor.” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, & Society*. Vol. 1, No. 1, 2012, 1-40.

Indeed common uses of “decolonial” and “decolonizing” in academic programming seem to be replicating the over-extended usages of terms such as “queer” and “critical.” These terms are taken up by a wide variety of political educators and scholars because of the transformative potential they seem to possess. Unintentionally, that transformative potential leads such concepts to be cited so widely that they risk losing their political power. Marilyn Frye pointed out in similar fashion that when “oppression” comes to mean any kind of discomfort we lose the language for talking about the substantial systemic subjugation of certain classes of people.¹³ ‘Queering the classroom’ becomes ‘decolonizing the classroom’, and no substantial pedagogical changes are required. Decolonialization is such a difficult concept to articulate in a settler society that it needs to keep its heft. My work is about resisting colonial knowledge production and the relation of those processes to Native land dispossession, but it is less clear that my work promotes a decolonial vision or provides tools for decolonization. My hesitancy to claim these terms is rooted in an uncertainty that this project can carry out the political vision to which that concept aspires.

Resisting the language of decolonialism is a bit odd at this particular moment when there is such a rush to claim it more broadly. Yet I feel more comfortable embracing the influence of post-colonial feminism, which is often viewed unfavorably within Native and Indigenous Studies because of the temporal suggestion that colonialism is something that happened in the past. Like decolonialism, post-colonialism has an intellectual genealogy with a different ethnic

¹³ Marilyn Frye, *The Politics of Reality* (Trumansburg, NY: The Crossing Press, 1983).

geography than the US indigenous feminism with which I identify. Rooted in South Asian critiques of the nation-state of India as a British colonial construct, post-colonial feminism is more often aligned with transnational and Asian feminisms. Feminist scholars Ruth Frankenberg and Lata Mani argue that temporal readings of “post” – as in post-colonial, post-racial, post-feminist--are idealistic articulations of the anxiety these terms raise in the American imaginary. Thus, post-colonial may be better understood as a study of the anxiety that looms in all instantiations of the colonial.¹⁴

My work pushes even stronger connections between US indigenous feminism and South Asian post-colonial feminism by resisting essentialist articulations of Native women. In the oft cited article by Annette Jaimes Guerrero, "American Indian Women: At the Center of Indigenous Resistance in North America," and Susan Moller Okin's "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?," Native Feminism is posited as an oxymoron because “real” Natives cannot be feminist.¹⁵ Despite the nominal inclusions of Native authors, usually only one at a time, in feminist anthologies on race, Native women are still posited as racial-cultural others in U.S. feminist scholarship. As Kēhaulani Kauanui and Andrea Smith write, “the scholarly and activist public tends to oversimplify Native women activists' theories about feminism, the struggle against sexism both within Native communities and the

¹⁴ Ruth Frankenberg and Lata Mani, “Crosscurrent, Crosstalk: Race, ‘Post-coloniality’ and the Politics of Location.” *Cultural Studies*, Vol 7, No. 2, 1993. 292-310.

¹⁵ Mishuana R. Goeman and Jennifer Nez Denetdale. “Native Feminisms: Legacies, Interventions, and Indigenous Sovereignties.” *Wicazo Sa Review*, vol. 24, Nov. 2, Fall 2009, 9-13. Renya Ramirez, “Race, Tribal Nation, and Gender: a Native Feminist Approach to Belonging.” *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*. Vol. 7, No. 2, 2007, 22-40. Lisa Kahaleole Hall, “Navigating Our Own ‘Sea of Islands’: Remapping Space for Hawaiian Women and Indigenous Feminism.” *Wicazo Sa Review*, Vol. 24, No. 2, Fall 2009, 15-38.

society at large.”¹⁶ This dynamic is reflected in the work of feminist literary scholar, Rey Chow, who shows clearly the ways in which native scholars get trapped into performing notions of native-ness as perceived by western outsiders; but she focuses on diasporic populations rather than American Indians.¹⁷ Too often U.S. Native women scholars are pushed to represent their ethnic otherness as outside the capitalist-market of academic scholarship precisely because it is as an other that ethnic scholars function as informant-scholars.¹⁸ A post-colonial feminist stance both recognizes and allows native scholars to overcome such challenges.

This dissertation was conceptualized as well in relation to the work of Uma Narayan who urges feminists to uncover the origin of social differences in order to denaturalize them. It began as an effort to understand the origin of the many, but often similar, stories about Frances Slocum. This led to an analysis of Miami subjectivity, which was influenced by Lila Abu-Luhgod and Saba Mahmood, who push us to rethink the assumed alignment of ethnic, religious, and gendered subjectivities. These post-colonial feminist understandings of history and subjectivity enrich my work on US based indigenous feminisms in multiple ways.

Following this line of thought, I am invested in thinking through the post-colonial condition that shapes contemporary Miami identity and land politics. Some Native scholars posit decolonialism as a returning to practices and knowledges that

¹⁶ Andrea Smith and J. Kēhaulani Kauanui. “Native Feminisms Engage American Studies.” *American Quarterly*. Vol. 60, No. 2, June 2008. P241.

¹⁷ Rey Chow. *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Interventions in Contemporary Cultural Studies*. Indiana University Press, 1993. Chow uses the term “native” to refer to ethnic-geographic origins in the contexts of diaspora studies, rather than as a term for U.S. American Indians.

¹⁸ Rey Chow. *In the Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory, and Comparative Work*. Duke University Press, 2006.

predate European colonization of the Americas. But there is no returning to this point. My emphasis on the post-colonial condition of the Miami highlights the real impact colonization has on Miami ways of living in and knowing the world and each other. Post-colonial feminist scholar Gayatri Spivak develops Michel Foucault's term "epistemic violence" to name the irreversible impact colonialism has on knowing and ordering the world. Since the Miami of Indiana remained on their homelands as the settler nation of the United States developed around them, the epistemic violence inflicted on the Miami is particularly significant. Thus, rather than imagine a returning to a pre-colonial situation, my use of post-colonial phenomenology reaches towards Eve Tuck's call for a decolonial imaginary based on indigenous futurity – towards imagining a world in which indigenous peoples not only survive, but thrive.¹⁹

Since the Miami live in a U.S. settler-colonial context, land is crucial to imagining a thriving future. Whereas post-colonial feminist theories are rooted in the nation of India after formal British withdrawal, Miami land is still occupied by the United States and there are no foreseeable plans to return governance and land to the Miami Nation. Scholars of settler-colonialism, such as Patrick Wolfe, Mark Rifkin and Lorenzo Veracini, push us to think specifically about the situation of indigenous peoples in settler states, including the processes that naturalize settling and the common sense that justifies the violence of dispossession.²⁰

¹⁹ Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill. "Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections Between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy." *Feminist Formations*, Vol. 25, Iss 1, Spring 2013, 8-34.

²⁰ Mark Rifkin, *Settler Common Sense: Queerness and Everyday Colonialism in the American Renaissance*. University of Minnesota Press, 2014. Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A*

In her study of white surfer culture in Australia, Aileen Moreton Robinson (Goenpul) invites indigenous scholars to turn their gaze toward the settler-colonial powers that shape their lives as indigenous peoples, and describe what they see.²¹ This dissertation may be best understood as contributing to Miami experiences of U.S. settler colonialism. Inspired by this confluence of decolonial, post-colonial, and settler-colonial thought, this study traces how the Miami are imagined in settler culture through the dominant figure of Frances Slocum. It is a story about how settler imaginaries shape how history is written, the uses of women in the service of the settler-state, and how Miami imaginaries challenge those histories and with what consequences over time.

The dissertation unfolds in four chapters spanning the life of Frances Slocum, the circulation of stories about her, and their impact in the present. Chapter 1 explores the importance of the fact that what we have left of Slocum's life story has been primarily produced through the settler perspective of her white family and created as a story of loss. This chapter focuses on the forms in which her story is told, exhibited and popularized. Chapter 2 then traces how her story was crafted in the 1830's as a captivity narrative. This was a moment when the politics of the genre were shifting away from tales of spiritual trial towards anti-Indian propaganda to justify the violent removal of Indians east of the Mississippi. The popularity of

Theoretical Overview. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* (2006) 387-409.

²¹ Aileen Moreton-Robinson. "Bodies That Matter: Performing White Possession on the Beach." *American Indian Culture And Research Journal* 35, no. 4 (2011): 57-72

captivity narratives fueled interest in Frances Slocum, yet she did not fit the standard tale of capture, suffering and redemption since she chose to remain a Miami Indian even when she had the chance to return to settler society.

Chapter 3 focuses on the turn of the twentieth century when Frances Slocum became a prominent historical figure. In this period her story was transformed as part of a broader movement of remembering and memorializing early America at the same time that the field of history was being professionalized. Importantly, her story fractured in this period, varying in its telling and its significance according to place. Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania and Peru, Indiana were both important sites for Slocum and her story, but they had distinct settler histories that cast the narrative and its meaning in specific ways. Chapter 4 then analyzes how Frances Slocum is remembered and archived, which shapes how the Miami are imagined and imagine themselves. The brief conclusion notes that the Miami did not choose Frances Slocum as their representative. That she has come to dominate how the history of the Miami Nation of Indiana is taught is rooted in the uses of history in settler societies. Looking at the currency of Frances Slocum over these centuries provides a long-view of how epistemic violence works.

Chapter 1

Omitting: a Native Woman in Settler Memory

Walking through the double glass doors of the Miami County Museum in Peru, Indiana is like stepping back in time. Some of the display cases may be older than their contents. The back half of the first floor exhibit displays the Indian relics. Miami County is named for the Miami Indians, and Peru has been the tribal headquarters for 150 years. Yet the Indian exhibit is not focused on the Miami. The collection contains diverse items from all over North America. Iroquois raised-bead work, eastern Cherokee designs, Arapaho boots, and items from the Pacific Northwest rest side by side unlabeled.¹ Without delineation of tribe or place of origin, this exhibit reproduces the general sense of “Indianness” that pervades U.S. imaginaries of the Native. The beads and other materials displayed represent pieces that were made after trade with Europeans had been well established.² Only a few of the items can be attributed to the Native peoples of the Lower Great Lakes.

Frances Slocum (1773-1847), the most famous Miami historical figure in the region, is the one local character who stands out of the generic cultural morass expressed by large quantities of leather and beads. The object of numerous portraits and figurines, Slocum is the only Miami named in the exhibit. The quantity of archival materials about her housed at the museum reflects her popularity as well. There are nearly six feet of folders related to

¹ Since I began this research, the museum has had a major capital funding campaign that has led to expanded and completely re-organized first floor displays and major changes in staff, including a new Director of Curation and a new Archivist. Thus, the description here was true when I began my research in 2009, but it no longer reflects how the Miami are represented in the Miami County Historical Museum.

² In the newly renovated exhibit there are far fewer Native American items; however, the items that are present better represent materials and designs of Great Lakes Native communities.

her, which suggests (misleadingly) that there is plenty of information about her life.³

Instead, these folders include large sections on the pageants performed in her name in the 1910s-30s, the Frances Slocum cemetery, related community debates from the 1950s about flooding the land where she lived after Miami removal, and the reservoir named in her honor. These issues are attached to her name, but they have little to do with her life, focusing instead on events and places from the early to mid-twentieth century.

Scattered throughout these archival folders are handwritten and occasional mimeographed accounts of Slocum's life story as told by local residents. These are personal accounts in the sense that they are clearly significant to the storytellers. They express an appreciation for the preservation of history and a fear that some important knowledge might be lost. There is an intriguing sense of anxiety in the way these stories have been recorded for the county archives, but their content is less interesting because they are all nearly the same. The accounts echo each other so closely that reading them is like looking down a hall of mirrors and encountering reflections of reflections as far as you can see. For those who have read published works on Slocum's life, it is easy to tell which books the residents grew up reading. This personalized reproduction of published texts is characteristic of the documentation on Frances Slocum. Many people feel an affinity with her story and tell it in their own voice. However, the published books about her life have so strongly shaped how her story is imagined that nearly all "personal" accounts of her life in

³ Like the changes in the museum exhibit, recent changes have taken place in the archives at the Miami County Historical Museum as well. Many of the folders that were lumped under "Frances Slocum" are now labeled "Miami Indians" or "Centennial Celebrations."

the archives resemble one of these books. This personalized reproduction of texts is a feature I observed at all the archival institutions I visited.⁴

This chapter considers the epistemological politics of Frances Slocum's life story, the competing claims of historical truth that are attached to the narratives available today, and the effects of variations among these accounts. Three eras of her life story are central to these accounts. The first involves the five years (1773-1778) that she lived with her biological family and the genealogical information passed down about her. The second focuses on her life among the Lenape (roughly 1778-1800) through a mediated interview that was recorded with her in 1839. The third highlights her life among the Miami, which draws on first person accounts through the journals of her biological nieces as well as traditional Miami stories about her. Information on each of these periods are preserved through particular history-making practices, such as the organization of an archive or the translation of an interview, that consistently center a white settler perspective and obfuscate native accounts, even her own.

Interrogating the politics of how the Slocum story has been preserved requires attention to a wide range of research materials and archives; and the published texts produced require substantial contextualization. This chapter primarily analyzes the most widely-circulated books about Frances Slocum because there is such a strong correlation between these particular texts and the personal accounts found in the hallway of mirrors

⁴ This research incorporated a wide variety of types of archives from state and regional institutions to tribal and private collections: research libraries such as the Newberry Library in Chicago and the Library Company of Philadelphia; state institutions such as the Indiana State Library and Indiana State archives, University of Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania State Historical archives; regional institutions such as the Miami, Wabash, Allen, and Tippecanoe Historical Societies in Indiana and the Luzerne County and Pennsylvania Genealogical archives; both the Miami Nation of Indiana tribal archives and those of the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma; and finally private family collections related to the most influential authors on the Frances Slocum stories.

that stretches across archival institutions and regions. Together these books provide the most complete collection of information available on Frances Slocum today. The chart below provides key information about these books and their authors, each produced in decidedly different contexts.⁵

Table 1.1 Most Influential Book-length Texts on Frances Slocum.

Author	Text	Date	Intended audience	Circulation	Credibility
John Todd	Lost Sister of Wyoming	1842	Christian young adults	Widely circulated as a captivity narrative and morality tale. Numerous printings until mid-20 th c.	Most commonly cited Slocum text by captivity narrative <i>literature scholars</i> .
John Meginness	Biography of Frances Slocum	1891	Adults interested in history, American Indians, and captivity narratives	Most widely circulated text, a well-researched history and biography. Numerous Printings across the 20 th c.	Most commonly cited Slocum text by <i>historical scholars</i> interested in captivity narratives. Considered today as the most accurate historical text.
Martha Bennett Phelps	Frances Slocum: the Lost Sister of Wyoming	1905	Self-published for family members and regional historians	2 printings, with limited circulation, primarily available around Pennsylvania.	Cited on occasion, but not seen as an authoritative text, most popular among regional history enthusiasts.

These three books benefit from the publishing process: the careful research and reflection of the authors, a desire to tell the whole story, the keen eye of editors, and the demands of

⁵ John Todd, *The Lost Sister of Wyoming*, 1842. Reprint (New York: Garland Publishing, 1975). John Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 1891. Reprint (New York: Arno Press, 1974). Martha Bennett Phelps, *Frances Slocum: The Lost Sister of Wyoming*, 1905. Reprint (New York: Vail-Ballou Company, 1916).

publishers to put together a book that will attract an audience. Shorter documents, like the pamphlets, letters, and sermons found in the archives, are generally limited to particular topics or time periods. Yet even the full-length studies have serious caveats. Just as the archives are dominated by folders on events significantly removed from Slocum's life, so too are many chapters in these books. For instance in Todd's 160 page book, *The Lost Sister of Wyoming*, which focuses specifically on her captivity narrative, Frances Slocum and the Slocum family do not appear until page 90. These books may be better understood, then, as attempts to know about specific aspects of her life rather than comprehensive sources of knowledge.

Though she gained fame under the name "Frances Slocum," the woman who inspired these stories lived most of her life by the name Mahkoonsahkwa.⁶ When referring to how her life story is used to create public memory or lore, I use the name "Frances Slocum." However, when referring to the historical experiences of the person whose life inspires these stories, I use the name she would have been known by at that stage in her life: little Frances when she was a young girl, Weletawash when she lived as a Lenape, and

⁶ Mahkoonsahkwa has numerous spellings and interpretations, and each of them mark a historically situated claim to authenticity on the part of the author. Maconaquah is the most popular spelling, but among Miami linguistic scholars, such as Wes Leonard and Scott Shoemaker, this is believed to be an Anglicized pronunciation of the name, not reflecting the oral tradition. My spelling of Mahkoonsahkwa stems from a recent linguistic revitalization of Myaamia (Miami) language studies, which is based on the work on Algonquin linguist David Costa and furthered by a series of Myaamia language revitalization programs co-sponsored by the Miami Nation of Indiana and the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma. Rather than claim my spelling as the most authentic, I mean to point out the politics of authenticity that encompass the spelling and interpretation of all native words and that these words are not static, how they are spelled and understood is constantly evolving. Such linguistic evolution should be expected in all living languages. At the 2012 Native American and Indigenous Studies Conference in Uncasville, Connecticut I gave a talk titled "Drumming up Conflict: Challenging Gender Roles, Strengthening Tradition" on how I navigate feminist interpretations of traditional language practices as a tribal language educator.

Mahkoonsahkwa when she lived as a Miami.⁷ Although it might be easier and clearer to employ one name throughout, the shifting names highlight how she identified herself in specific periods of her life. It also punctuates the idea that the stories of “Frances Slocum,” the popular historical figure, are in many ways distinct from the experiences of the woman on whose life they is based.



“The Bereaved Family”⁸

The majority of stories about Slocum assume the narrative positionality of the grieving family left behind after her capture. Nearly all accounts begin with how the Slocums came to settle in Wilkes-Barre, which is now considered northeastern, Pennsylvania, though it was then the far western frontier of the British colonies. Frances was born in 1773, the seventh of nine children of Jonathan Slocum and Ruth Tripp Slocum. Both parents trace their lineage back to early Quaker families who arrived in the colony of Rhode Island from England in the seventeenth century.

The choice of Frances’ parents to move to the western frontier ensnared them in a number of dangerous historical forces. The town of Wilkes-Barre was initially established in the 1750’s, but disbanded because of ongoing tension with the Indians who lived there, mainly Lenni-Lenape, who are also known as the Delaware Indians. When Anglo-

⁷ Lenni Lenape and Miami are both Algonquin communities and used similar naming practices. The Algonquin formed a large subset of woodland Indians that inhabited much of what is now northeastern United States. Although the Lenape and Miami had distinctive languages and cultures, these societies also shared many characteristics. In both, it was and is common for members to use different names at various points in their lives. Thus, it is quite possible that Mahkoonsahkwa went by several other names during her lifetime, but these names have not been recorded. Additionally, I use the Lenape name “Weletawash” because that is what I found in the texts in my research, but in consulting with Nanticoke Lenape leaders that still live in the region, such as Pastor John Norwood, it seems more likely that her name would have been “Sheletawash,” which better reflects Lenape naming practices. John Norwood, email to author, February 26, 2013.

⁸ This subsection title and others are borrowed from the chapter titles of John Todd’s book, which strongly influenced the structure of all future versions of Slocum’s life story.

Americans attempted to settle the Wyoming valley, where Wilkes-Barre is located, a second time in the late 1760's it was part of a growing competition for expanding colonial territory.⁹ Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania all hoped to incorporate this area under their domain. Jonathan Slocum took advantage of an offer by Rhode Island for tools and land in exchange for settling the region. He spent considerable time in the valley establishing his land claim before bringing his family west with him in 1773.

The territory was clearly contested, and there is no doubt that Slocum would have known that the Lenape were also trying to defend this region from the Shawnee who had been pushed out of their homelands by Euro-Americans to the North and East.¹⁰ The Lenape-Shawnee conflict was further fueled by efforts of the Iroquois to consolidate power by bringing more and more Indian bands into their confederacy.¹¹ This, Iroquois leaders hoped, would give them greater power in negotiating with the British.¹² Thus the Lenni-Lenape who inhabited the valley were not only defending their land but also fighting to maintain their sovereignty. Almost every story about Frances claims that the Slocums were not afraid of these swirling conflicts because they were Quakers, known for their support of Indian rights and their stance against war and violence.

⁹ Paul B. Moyer, *Wild Yankees: the Struggle for Independence along Pennsylvania's Revolutionary Frontier* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).

¹⁰ This project covers a broad geographic area and period, and thus there are many waves of settling by various ethnic and national populations. I use Euro-American here because there were a wide variety of European settlements along the Atlantic coast pushing indigenous communities further west out of their homelands. Rather than functioning as a homogenously white settler community, Euro-Americans were competing against each other for Native land. I use the terms Anglo-American and French-American later when I am referring to a specific wave of settling when such terms are appropriate. All of these terms stand in contrast to various Native American nations migrating and settling on new lands due to their conflicts with various Euro-American settlements.

¹¹ David L. Preston, *The Texture of Contact: European and Indian Settler Communities on the Frontiers of Iroquoia, 1667-1783* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

¹² Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell, eds, *Beyond the Covenant Chain: the Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600-1800* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).

In the spring of 1773, soon after Frances' birth, the Slocum family, including Jonathan, his wife Ruth, her father Mr. Tripp, and the seven Slocum children moved to Wilkes-Barre. By fall of 1778, the Slocums—including two more children born in Wilkes-Barre - were living in a two-story wooden home on their three-acre lot, nearly half a mile from the closest fort. Jonathan Slocum and his father-in-law also rented and cultivated farmland some distance from their homestead.

On July 3, 1778, the Revolutionary War spilled into Wyoming Valley. "The Battle of Wyoming" is also called the "Wyoming Massacre" because over three hundred residents in favor of independence were killed by British loyalists and their Iroquois allies.¹³ The battle heightened already tense relations between settlers and local Indians, even though the Lenape were not involved in the battle, and it intensified inter-tribal conflicts as well among the Lenape, Shawnee, and Iroquois.¹⁴

It was several months later before these conflicts erupted at the Slocum home. On the morning of November 2, Slocum and Tripp were working their rented fields, leaving Mrs. Slocum at home with nine children. There were also two neighbor boys, the Kingsleys, at the house that morning, whose father had been killed in the Wyoming Massacre. The eldest boy wore his father's soldier jacket as he and his brother sharpened a knife on the stone in front of the Slocum's house. An arrow pierced the eldest brother's chest, the first sign of the raid. The children scattered, some running for the fort and others hiding in brush. When the Lenni Lenape raiding party entered the home they captured the youngest Kingsley boy, Wareham; the youngest Slocum daughter, Frances; and her brother Ebenezer

¹³ Horace Hollister, *History of Lackawanna Valley* (Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1885).

¹⁴ George Peck, *Wyoming: its history, stirring incidents, and romantic adventures* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1858).

who had a permanent injury to his foot. They took flour, sugar, and some other goods before slinging the children over their shoulders and leaving.

Though rarely mentioned in most stories about Frances Slocum, a few of the published accounts of her life mention that “a black servant girl” was also taken.¹⁵ Her almost total disappearance in the archives and the vagueness surrounding who she was does not diminish the likelihood that she was captured alongside the white children among whom she lived. In a footnote in *Frances Slocum: the Lost Sister of Wyoming*, Martha Bennet Phelps states that “[t]his girl was afterward a servant in the family of the Tory, John Butler.”¹⁶ But there are no clues as to how she comes to this conclusion. Nor is it clear what relation this “servant girl” had to the Slocum household. Was she performing day labor or living in as a servant or, less likely given Quaker testimonies, a slave? Was she part of a larger black community in the Wyoming Valley in the 1770s, or an isolated laborer with no one to tell her story?

The erasure of this black girl highlights a point made by Patrick Wolfe in his work on comparative colonial practices: African Americans experienced colonization in the Americas in ways that were clearly distinct from Native Americans.¹⁷ Wolfe posits that the colonization of *African bodies* and *Native land* required different sorts of colonial relationships and systems of representation to maintain these related but distinct colonial orders. While Native presence in these stories provides a justification for the establishment of settler law and order in the Wyoming Valley, the black bodies who labored to make settlement possible disappear. In the stories of Frances Slocum the issue

¹⁵ Neither her name nor age is mentioned in any materials I have found.

¹⁶ Phelps, *Frances Slocum*, 96.

¹⁷ J. Kehaulani Kauanui and Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism Then and Now,” (interview) *Politica & Società* 2 (2012): 235-258.

of whether it was two, three, or four children captured appears to be irrelevant; the only thing that seems to matter is that one white girl, imagined as innocent and defenseless, was taken from her loving, Quaker family.

As the Indians began to leave with the children, Frances' terrified mother came out of hiding.¹⁸ She left her youngest child, an infant of only seven months, lying in the grass under a bush, while she pleaded with the raiders to let Ebenezer go. He had a "club foot" and would not be able to keep up with them. Conceding to the problem or just anxious to depart, they released the boy and left with Wareham, Frances, and the unnamed black girl. When Slocum and Tripp returned, they organized a search party.

Two months later Jonathan Slocum was killed in another raid on his home. In their grief, family members clung to hope of finding Frances. They searched for her at trading posts where prisoners were being exchanged; they offered cash rewards. Two years later Wareham was released as part of a prisoner exchange, but he brought no word of Frances. For decades, women who had been captured by Indians as children would come to the Slocum house, hoping to find their own families. John Meginness closely researched the efforts of the Slocum brothers to locate their lost sister. He was convinced that they were always just a step behind the Indians, who were working feverishly to hide Frances from them.¹⁹

¹⁸ There are a lot of Slocums at play in these stories, and so I use titles like Mr. and Mrs. here for the pragmatic purpose of clarification.

¹⁹ Many of these texts suggest that the Lenape worshiped Frances for her hair, skin tone, and other white features, but this is more likely a reflection of how settler authors imagined Indian perceptions of whiteness.

This is the point where Frances Slocum's story diverges significantly from other captivity narratives.²⁰ Most eighteenth century narratives were based on first person accounts that followed the captive into a frightful, exotic world of Indians. Though Slocum's capture took place in 1778, the story of her experience was not crafted until the late 1830's, when the politics of the genre was changing rapidly as both fictional and historical captivity narratives dominated popular literature. By then, captivity narratives were being wielded as propaganda to justify the removal of Native peoples from their land and highlight political tensions between the British and the United States.²¹ John Todd crafted the captivity narrative of Frances Slocum during this period based on the writings and experiences of the Slocum family, not Frances. Todd interviewed Slocum relatives sixty-one years after the capture to write his story for a popular audience of Christian young adults, as an illustration of "what man is when under the light of the Gospel and what he is without it."²²

Rather than highlighting the young girl's capture, the Slocum stories emphasize the loss and grief of family members who did not know what happened to their youngest sister. The narrative explores the nagging uncertainty, the guilt and despair that descends over her family, and the grief that never seems complete. It is a story about the painful consequences of being a settler and realizing that Quaker beliefs of non-violence cannot protect you when your livelihood depends on the violent dispossession of others.

²⁰ How Slocum's narrative relates to the broader literature on captivity narratives is discussed more thoroughly in the following chapter.

²¹ June Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

²² Todd, *The Lost Sister of Wyoming*, 160.

Drawing on the sentimentality of loss, Todd and Meginness note that Frances' mother Ruth was consumed with the fact that her daughter was not wearing her new shoes when she was captured. She wanted to keep them new so that they would last through the winter. After the raid, her mother worried endlessly that she would have to walk long distances in the woods, maybe through the winter, without any shoes. Imagining what life was like for Frances by extrapolating from the way settlers treated Indian captives, Ruth could not have rested easy. Female Indians captured by settlers were treated like servants, slaves, and chattel. Captivity narrative scholars often point out that although white women captured by Indians dominate the literature, far more Indian women were captured by Anglo-Americans, and they were generally treated far worse, in part because sexual violence was far more common among Anglo-American than Indian captors.²³ The settler understanding of a captive woman's life is what her mother could not forget. The shoes symbolized all of the fears she had for her daughter, but they were also all she had left to remember her by. Still, in the process of narrating Frances' capture for a broader public, the potential violence Ruth likely imagined is watered down, limited to her footwear: if her mother had only let her wear her shoes, at least then she would not be barefoot.

The stories about Frances Slocum are shaped from the very beginning by the perspective of her biological family as settlers on the frontier, and what was included or omitted significantly shaped their political message. For instance, the three full-length books provide explanations for Frances' capture that are regularly left out of newspapers, pamphlets, and oral accounts of the captivity. Almost all accounts emphasize that Jonathan

²³ Namias, 5-7; Strong, 20; Derounian-Stodola and Levernier's study points out that the most gruesomely violent accounts of white captives among Indians were based in the 1870-1880's, a much later date.

Slocum did not fear Indian violence because he was a Quaker and did not participate in settler raids on Indian villages or other overt acts of inter-personal violence. However, Todd, Meginness, and Phelps note that earlier in the summer of Frances' capture, Giles Slocum, the eldest brother, guided a raiding party to a Lenape village that was then burnt down, killing many Lenape children and families in their homes.²⁴ This episode locates Frances' capture within the broader context of regional violence and allows scholars to consider Lenape practices of retribution, adoption, and mourning. Miami American studies scholar Scott Shoemaker argues that "Frances was adopted into a Delaware family to cure sickness associated with a mother mourning the recent deaths of her eleven children as prescribed by Delaware and Miami medicine people."²⁵ Without the knowledge of Giles' role in the raid on the Lenape village, the acts of the Indians seem senseless and brutal. His actions may not justify Frances' capture, but it provides an explanation, a sensibility for the attack. When Giles' actions are omitted, the story highlights only Indian brutality and settler suffering without any room for understanding the intense pressures the Lenni-Lenape were negotiating as they sought to defend their land, their sovereignty, and the reproduction of their community.²⁶

The issue of inclusions and exclusions has shaped the archive of Frances Slocum from the beginning. Imagined as all the materials and stories, both institutional and cultural, that make up what we know about her life today, this archive has been forged

²⁴ Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 20-21.

²⁵ Scott Shoemaker, "Trickster Skins: Narratives of Landscape, Representation, and the Miami Nation" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Minnesota, American Studies, 2011): 210.

²⁶ Native Feminist scholars such as Lisa J. Udel argue that non-biological notions of mothering are central to understanding how Native communities resist colonization through a wide variety of reproductive practices, including adoption. Lisa J. Udel, "Revision and Resistance: the Politics of Native Women's Motherwork" *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (2001.)

largely by the Slocum family. The earliest accounts, like Todd's, were based on Slocum family papers, journals, and interviews. The title of this section, which is a chapter title from Todd's book, makes clear who is the subject of his narrative – "the bereaved family," not "the lost sister." Every generation of Slocums in the nineteenth century gave interviews about their "lost sister" and published their own booklets about her life story.²⁷ Her capture became a central narrative in how the family articulated their own American experiences and sense of belonging. Yet the repetitive emphasis on her role as sister obfuscates her much longer relationships in Lenape and Miami families – as daughter, wife, and mother.

Though Slocums began their American lives as average settlers, they became a proud and affluent family of Pennsylvania. Their homes are preserved as historical sites and their detailed lineage is preserved in several large genealogical books.²⁸ Across the twentieth century, a core group of Slocum relatives have circulated genealogical newsletters, maintained family files at big and small libraries, and organized reunions that replicate regional conferences of scholars, with panels on family history.

One version of this genealogical community that was particularly active from the 1980s to the early 2000s was called "The Frances Slocum Register," which was a newsletter sent out to an extended network of relatives. Through the register "Slocums" shared vignettes of family history, news of births and deaths, and organized occasional family reunions with a strong history focus. None of Mahkoonsahkwa's lineal descendants, her

²⁷ Including Charles Elihu Slocum, *History of Frances Slocum the Captive: a civilized heredity vs. a savage, and later barbarous environment* (Defiance, OH: self-published, 1908) and Caleb Earl Wright, *Frances Slocum: the lost sister; a poem* (Wilkes-Barre, PA: Robert Baur & Son Publishers, 1889).

²⁸ The most widely available is Charles Elihu Slocum, *A Short History of the Slocums, Slocumbs, and Slocombs of America: genealogical and biographical* (Syracuse: New York: self published, 1882).

grandchildren or their descendants, were included in this community even after their identities were known because they are Miami Indians, not Slocums. Thus, once again, the archive is closely aligned with the experience and perspective of the Slocums, which is disconnected from Mahkoonsahkwa and her Miami family.

Much of the knowledge about the first five years of Frances's life and ancestry has been carefully preserved in institutional archives. This material includes interviews and correspondence with Slocum family members. The details appear in a wide variety of accounts of Frances's capture, including regional history books, plays, and contemporary public history events. Her siblings provided first-person accounts of the capture sixty years after it occurred. By then, the prominence of the family meant that their genealogies had been carefully preserved both personally and publicly; some had even been published. Each replication of the details imbues them with more historical weight and a sense of reliability. Yet little of what is known about the figure of Frances Slocum is truly reliable.



“Her Own History”

The stories of what happened to Frances after her capture by the Lenape are far more varied and clouded in the uncertainties of memory and translation. Today we have only a few vignettes of the seventy years she lived among the Lenape and Miami. These brief accounts of her most significant life events stem from a single interview arranged by her brother, Joseph, sixty-one years after her capture, in the fall of 1839. While this interview is one of the richest sources available, the mediation involved in preserving this document in print has severely limited our access to her voice. What even constitutes a “Native voice” in nineteenth century literature is highly contested. Most women's captivity

narratives and Native American autobiographies were transcribed and significantly edited by a third party for print, and those that were not have until recently been treated as not authentic enough to count – based on the hegemonic assumption that women and Indians did not write. My interest in claims to Frances Slocum’s voice is a response to the common practice of attributing quotes in English to her based on the 1839 interview, without problematizing the mediated nature of the text, which is not limited to the fact that she did not speak English.²⁹

After the surprise of finally locating Frances and discovering that she was living as Mahkoonsahkwa, the widow of Chief Šiipaakana, among the Miami, the Slocums attempted to record her life story. The interview constitutes the primary source on her life within Lenape and Miami communities, and transcriptions of the interview appear in nearly all book-length projects on her though no original transcripts have been located. In the two most authoritative books, the interview appears as Todd’s chapter eight³⁰ and Meginness’ chapter five.³¹ Both men introduce the interview as taking place during the first visit between the elderly Slocum siblings and their long lost sister, in late September of 1837. Meginness writes:

At length the day arrived, and true to her promise, Frances, accompanied by her son-in-law and two daughters, came riding in single file, on their Indian ponies, and presented themselves before the door of the new hotel in Peru. It was a strange looking cavalcade. They were decked in gay barbaric apparel, as was the Indian custom when an important meeting was to take place, and

²⁹ To be clear, both public and academic scholars regularly base their work on quotes from this interview such as “Why should I go and be a fish out of the water?” There are numerous places where Frances is affiliated with “nature” such as fish, trees, flowers, and so on. Rather than read this as evidence of how she saw the world *as an Indian*, this racialized language of nature is more likely a result of how the Anglo-American translators and editors produced their account of her nativeness.

³⁰ Todd, *The Lost Sister of Wyoming*, 131-144.

³¹ Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 61-73.

attracted the attention of the residents of the town. It was true they were accustomed to see parties of Indians, as hundreds lived in this section of the State, but the movement on this occasion indicated that something unusual was going on, and the town was all astir.³²

The Slocums had arranged for a formal interview with an interpreter, which was to be transcribed for posterity. The translator was necessary because the elder Mahkoonsahkwa no longer spoke English. She explained in Myaamia, the traditional Miami language, that “[m]y adopted father could talk English, and so could I as long as he lived. It has now been a long time since I forgot it all.”³³ Still, since the Miami living around Peru, Indiana spoke Myaamia, French, and English in varying degrees, she could likely understand more English than she could speak.

Early on in the interview, Mahkoonsahkwa describes the first nights of her capture:

I can well remember the day when the Delaware Indians came suddenly to our house. I remember that they killed and scalped a man near the door, taking the scalp with them. They then pushed the boy through the door; he came to me and we both went and hid under the staircase. They went up stairs and rifled the house, though I cannot remember what they took, except some loaf sugar and some bundles. I remember that they took me and the boy on their backs through the bushes. I believe the rest of the family had fled, except my mother.

They carried us a long way, as it seemed to me, to a cave, where they had left their blankets and travelling things. It was over the mountain and a long way down on the other side. Here they stopped while it was yet light, and there we staid (sic) all night. I can remember nothing about that night, except that I was very tired, and lay down on the ground and cried till I was asleep. The next day we set out and traveled many days in the woods before we came to a village of Indians. When we stopped at night, the Indians would cut down a few boughs of hemlock on which to sleep, and then make up a great fire of logs at the feet, which lasted all night. When they cooked any

³² Meginnes, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 61-62.

³³ Phelps, *Frances Slocum*, 100.

thing, they stuck a stick in it, and held it to the fire as long as they chose. They drank at the brooks and springs, and for me they made a little cup of white-birch bark, out of which I drank. I can only remember that they staid several days at this first village, but where it was, I have no recollection.

After they had been here some days, very early one morning, two of the same Indians took a horse, and placed the boy and me upon it, and again set out on their journey.³⁴

This passage is based on an interview transcript shared with Todd by the Slocum family when he was researching his book in 1840. It focuses on events immediately following her capture and what some scholars might consider ethnographic details of life among the Delaware – they slept on hemlock, cooked with sticks, and made cups out of birch bark. These are the sort of details about Indian life that were so central to the popularity of captivity narratives. While Meginness’ book, published fifty years after Todd’s, is considered more historically accurate, his account of this interview is nearly a verbatim reprint of Todd’s.

Intriguingly, Phelps’ 1905 book on Frances Slocum includes a crucial sentence left out of both the Todd and Meginness versions:

I can only remember that they stayed several days at the first village, but where it was I have no recollection. *The Indians were very kind to me; when they had anything to eat, I always had the best, and when I was tired, they carried me in their arms.* After they had been there some days, very early one morning two of the same Indians took a horse and placed the boy and me upon it, and again set out on the journey.³⁵

Like Giles’ possible role in provoking the raid on the Slocum home, the omission of this sentence significantly recasts Mahkoonsahkwa’s description of her Indian captors. The statement that “the Indians were very kind to me” early in the interview shifts the

³⁴ Todd, *Lost Sister of Wyoming*, 132-133; Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 64-65.

³⁵ Phelps, *Frances Slocum*, 97-98.

emphasis from the memories of a terrified child to the story of a frightened girl who is comforted by her captors. It thus transforms the larger narrative from one about fear and uncertainty to a tale of care and nurturance—“whenever they had anything to eat, I always had the best.”

Both texts claim to simply reprint the transcript of Mahkoonsahkwa’s own version of her story, and the texts are identical in many respects. Yet, there are signs of editorial intervention. For instance, the authors divide the paragraphs differently, suggesting that the original transcript did not have clear paragraph divisions. More significantly, Todd, at least, moved beyond editing for readability and chose to omit the sentence in which Mahkoonsahkwa recalls being treated kindly by the Delaware. Meginnes reproduced this omission, though he may have been unaware of Todd’s editing.

While Todd’s book was intended for a popular audience and widely circulated nationally and even internationally, Phelps paid to have her book published.³⁶ In the preface she explains that this is her attempt to set the record straight after reading other accounts, including both Todd’s and Meginness’, which she and her family members believe misrepresent Mahkoonsahkwa’s life. And yet Todd and Meginness’ texts remain the most commonly cited by scholars and continued to be reprinted throughout the twentieth century. Mostly likely there were several copies of the transcribed interview made at the time, and Phelps’ work drew on a copy of the transcription passed down in her family. Todd’s work was also based on Slocum papers, but he had a stronger reason to edit them for his particular purposes. My impression is that Meginness took Todd’s publication as the only surviving source.

³⁶ Todd’s book was republished in London and Germany as well as by several of U.S. based publishers.

Figuring out which text most accurately reflects the original interview is tricky, and it is clear that small deviations can significantly impact the kind of story it tells. My attempt to retell this story is shaped by a desire to make explicit the choices involved in discerning what is believable (or not).³⁷ When it comes to the sentence omitted by Todd and Meginness, it is clear that this choice—whether made by Todd and simply duplicated by Meginness or made by both--involves a significant intervention. Even though their two books are considered the most authoritative texts, Phelps' narrative probably best represents the original sentiment. She was perhaps freer to include a positive sentiment about the Lenape in her self-published family history, since unlike Todd, she was not seeking commercial success. Moreover, she was writing in the early 1900s, when Midwesterners took a more nostalgic view of Indian history and character, rooted in popular beliefs of Indian extinction.³⁸

Although Phelps' text appears more reliable in this instance, it is much more difficult to claim that her version of the interview is any less edited than Todd's. It appears that Phelps edited out part of the interview that designates which Lenape family adopted Frances and the role of Tuck Horse, her captor, in this process.³⁹

³⁷ Interdisciplinary analysis is sometimes misread within disciplinary norms for not following the logic of disciplinary knowledge production. The way to push against such readings is to be as clear as possible about how decisions are being made, especially in moments like this where I am critiquing the most authoritative texts and highlighting a marginal text as potentially more accurate.

³⁸ Shari M. Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

³⁹ This passage suggests that young Frances remained with Tuck Horse for at least one year, which raises further questions about his role as her care-taker and why he specifically may have captured her or been asked to capture her. The Frances Slocum stories generally assume hetero-patriarchal notions of gendered labor, but this is a moment to reflect on how the Lenape man, Tuck Horse, may have been more than a raiding Indian warrior. He may have also played the far more complex role of caring for a young frightened girl in order to bring her into a Lenape family. Tuck Horse's nurturing labor in service of the reproduction of the Lenape society is left implicit.

In the interview, Mahkoonsahkwa's interpreter reported, "Early one morning this Tuck Horse came and took me, and dressed my hair in the Indian way, and then painted my face and skin. He then dressed me in beautiful wampum beads, and made me look, as I thought, very fine. I was much pleased with the beautiful wampum."⁴⁰ The Phelps text goes on to say that "We then lived on a hill not far from a river. I was now adopted by Tuck Horse and his wife, in the place of a daughter they had lost a short time before, and they gave me her name, We-let-a-wash. It was now the fall of the year, for chestnuts had come."⁴¹ Given the function of adoption as a means of repopulating a community devastated by violence, this passage could be read as a clear explanation for Tuck Horse's abduction of Frances. He lost his children in war and replaced them through ritualistic adoption of a child of the enemy, a fairly common practice.

Yet Todd includes much more detail and suggests that Tuck Horse was not her adoptive father:

We then lived on a hill, and I remember (Tuck Horse) took me by the hand and led me down to the river side to a house where lived an old man and woman. They had once several children, but now they were all gone – either killed in battle, or having died very young. When the Indians thus lose all their children they often adopt some new child as their own, and treat it in all respects like their own. This is the reason why they so often carry away the children of white people. I was brought to these old people to have them adopt me, if they would. They seemed unwilling at first, but after Tuck Horse had talked with them awhile, they agreed to it, and this was my home. They gave me the name of We-let-a-wash, which was the name of their youngest child whom they had lately buried. It had now got to be the fall of the year 1779, for chestnuts had come.⁴²

⁴⁰ Todd, *The Lost Sister*, 134; Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 65; Phelps, *Frances Slocum*, 98.

⁴¹ Phelps, *Frances Slocum*, 98.

⁴² Todd, *The Lost Sister*, 134-135; Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 65-66.

The details and explanations in Todd's text lends it a sense of credibility, which suggests that Phelps may have purposefully omitted or amended part of the interview. Alternatively, the added detail in Todd's transcript could be read as explanatory background information that he thought his young readers would appreciate.⁴³ For instance, he may have included the year 1779 in order to provide an interpretation of the significance of Mahkoonsahkwa's comment about the chestnuts, which signals the passing of a full year. All of these transcripts appear to be edited at the publication stage, though for different reasons. Although they all want to represent the life story of Frances Slocum in an accurate way, the different choices they made in editing the transcript resulted from their awareness of distinct audiences and interpretations.

These variations change the story in significant ways as they shape the readers' understanding of the purpose of Slocum's capture, her experience among Indians, and the identity of the family that raised her. And yet, the discussion so far only considers revisions that occurred after there was a transcript of the interview to be edited. It is possible that the conditions of the interview had an even greater impact on its content than the edits that took place in the publishing process.

Both Meginness and Todd describe how hesitant Mahkoonsahkwa was to participate in the interview. Todd writes that "[s]he was especially cautious, when she saw them produce writing materials in order to note it down."⁴⁴ Meginness adds that "preparations were made to take down in writing her Indian history. To

⁴³ For more information on historic accounts of Lenape adoption ceremonies see Frank G. Speck's *The Tutelo Spirit Adoption Ceremony: reclothing the living in the name of the dead* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1942).

⁴⁴ Todd, *The Lost Sister*, 131.

this she seemed to have some aversion, until the reasons for it were fully explained by Mr. Miller, the interpreter, when she consented.”⁴⁵ We are left to imagine the sources of her anxiety and the reasons she eventually consented to the recorded interview.

Meginness and other scholars often suggest that Mahkoonsahkwa was superstitious and afraid that the transcribed record would take away her soul. Such explanations are commonly used to explain Native resistance to imperial desires to record and display them and the objects they used in their daily lives. Although some native communities articulate their resistance in spiritual rhetoric, the blanket interpretation of native resistance as superstition is embedded in a settler-colonial logic that cannot or will not attempt to understand Indian actions. Such imperial common sense renders Native choices, especially those of Native women, nonsensical. In addition to any cultural taboos around the written word, Mahkoonsahkwa had reasons to be suspicious of this interview – she knew that white men should not be trusted.

During the initial visit with her biological siblings in 1837, Mahkoonsahkwa was still fairly skeptical of the Slocums’s intentions. Meginness says that she was “not free from suspicion that there was some plan in operation to take her away or rob her of what she possessed.”⁴⁶ Her resistance was likely part of a web of anxieties about the intent of the Slocums, the discomfort of being in the settler town of Peru, and a mistrust of “white men” more generally.

Meginness argues that Mahkoonsahkwa’s deep mistrust of white men, especially Anglo-American settlers, was shaped by the Moravian “slaughterhouses” in Ohio. There

⁴⁵ Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 63.

⁴⁶ Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 79.

ninety-six Christian Indians, including men, women, and children, were locked in two houses and brutally massacred with wooden mallets on March 8, 1782.⁴⁷ Meginness claims that this particular massacre “made a profound impression on the mind” of Mahkoonsahkwa and “afterwards (she) taught her children to beware of the teachings of white missionaries, reminding them of the perfidy of the whites at the Moravian town; that they would murder them.”⁴⁸ Claiming that Indians were fearful of having their soul stolen by images or written words was often used by settler-colonialists to cover up the very real reasons that Indians mistrusted them.

In addition to the structural reasons for Mahkoonsahkwa’s aversion to the interview, her suspicions may have been heightened by her previous experience with the local leaders who the Slocum family involved in the process. Meginness identifies the interpreter as James T. Miller, who the Slocums were told to seek out for guidance when they arrived to town.⁴⁹ Miller was raised by George W. Ewing, a local businessman who made a fortune from exploiting Miami land dispossession treaties. Although it is rarely mentioned in books on Frances Slocum, Stewart Rafert, author of the most comprehensive Miami history to date, *The Miami Indians of Indiana: A Persistent Peoples 1654-1994*, traces the role of Miller and his adoptive father in the exploitation of Miami land treaties with the U.S. from 1823 to 1848.⁵⁰ Miller and the Ewing family made a living by running up debt on

⁴⁷ Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 80.

⁴⁸ Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 80.

⁴⁹ The Slocums received this advice from George Ewing, the Indian trader whose letter allowed the Slocum’s to “find” their sister in the first place. Ewing’s significance in the larger tale is discussed further in chapter 2.

⁵⁰ Stewart Rafert, *The Miami Indians of Indiana: A Persistent Peoples 1654-1994* (Indiana Historical Society Press, 1996): 83-112. For an example of Miller’s role in these exploitations: “In the summer of 1840 the Ewings purchased sixty to eighty-five thousand dollars in goods for the Miami store at Peru. Four company clerks, led by James Miller and George Hunt, all speaking the Miami language,

Miami families and then taking control of treaty land as payment. If Miller was the translator at the interview, which seems likely, then Mahkoonsahkwa's reluctance could be as much about his untrustworthiness as any suspicions about her Slocum siblings. The newly-discovered "captive" clearly had many reasons to be concerned about the purpose and potential uses of her interview, and those concerns certainly shaped how she responded to questions.

Todd and Meginness concur that Miller served as the translator for the interview that took place in September 1837. Phelps, however, suggests a different circumstance altogether, which is better supported by corresponding newspaper evidence from the period. Although providing a nearly identical transcript, Phelps claims that the interview took place two years later on October 1, 1839 during a visit by Mahkoonsahkwa's biological nieces, Harriet Slocum, seventeen years old, and her twenty-eight year old married sister Hannah Bennett. Bennett writes, "It was not till this visit that the lost sister could be prevailed upon to relate, through the interpreter, as much of her history as she could remember. She had related some of it on the brother's former visit, but with her nieces she seemed more inclined to reminiscences."⁵¹ Not only does this call into question when and where the interview took place--in 1837 in Peru with her brothers or in 1839 in her home with her nieces--but it also calls into question who served as the translator.

sold goods at a marked price, usually about 100 percent over New York prices. The Miami bought cloth, blankets, shawls, silk handkerchiefs, and ribbons. By November 1840 the Ewings held bills of credit on the tribe for \$113,230.30. This indebtedness was the key to getting a new treaty. As William G. Ewing bragged later, "The only means to succeed was by a large profuse and general indebtedness of the tribe, made by the knowledge and concurrence of many officers of the Indian Department." (Rafert, 99).

⁵¹ Phelps, *Frances Slocum*, 95.

Phelps' eighth chapter provides an excerpt of her Aunt Harriet E. Slocum's diary, in which she writes:

During the morning a man came to purchase a steer, and brought a colored man as interpreter; the colored man served so well that father kept him, as Mr. Miller had left us the night before. Our aunt was more free in her communications through him, and gave us many circumstances in her story which she had not previously given.⁵²

The "colored man" in this passage appears to be a servant, but several Miami tribal historians/story-tellers believe this man is the father of George Slussman, a black-Miami man who remained in Indiana after removal of much of the tribe in 1848.⁵³ George Slussman was known to have a Miami mother and a Black father who lived among the Miami somewhere near Mahkoonsahkwa's and Chief Godfroy's homes.⁵⁴ The description of him as a servant likely has more to do with how the Slocum nieces perceived him than his actual role in Miami society. Elsewhere in the journal, Harriet writes that she is confused because Mahkoonsahkwa paid a black servant during her visit, and not only pays him for his work, but pays him well.⁵⁵ Hannah failed to recognize that racial identities functioned differently among Miami than in settler-society, in part because the latter was dependent on racialized labor. In contrast, belonging among the Miami functioned through relational responsibilities to each other in a system that did not fit with the racialized colonial order that stratified Anglo-American society at the time. To this day George Slussman is identified by Miami as an example that Miami-ness was not and is not a racial category.

This is one way contemporary Miami use history to both conjure the past and critique the

⁵² Phelps, *Frances Slocum*, 86.

⁵³ John Dunnagan, personal correspondence with author, July 2, 2011.

⁵⁴ This is further supported through the Congressional amendments of the Wabash Treaty of 1840, which names Slussman as associated with the Godfroy property and exempt from removal.

⁵⁵ Harriet Slocum Journal. Luzerne County Historical Society.

present, particularly the racialization of Nativeness and the ways such racial logics were used to justify settler dispossession of Miami land.

While it is clear that Miller regularly served as a translator for the Slocum family, the interview that serves as the basis for the three major books on Frances's life may have been made possible by replacing Miller with Slussman as the translator. Mahkoonsahkwa may have finally consented to the interview because there was a translator present whom she trusted enough to speak for her. The absence of this black Miami translator in the Todd and Megginness books echoes the omission of other key black figures in their texts. Either way, whoever served as the translator significantly shaped how questions from the Slocums were translated into Myaamia and how Mahkoonsahkwa's responses were translated into English.

Translating between Myaamia and English is significantly different than translating between English and French or Spanish, which share common grammatical features. Myaamia is an Algonquin language, which is known for its complex verb-object/subject relations. Single words or names in Myaamia can express complete scenes or relations that are not easily expressed in English. Thus the translation back and forth from Slocum family members to the translator to Mahkoonsahkwa and back through the translator was enormously complex. Moreover, we are not sure who transcribed the interview. There were many moments in which ideas and expressions could be lost or seriously misunderstood in the process, long before Todd, Megginness, and Phelps made their editorial decisions.

The veracity of Mahkoonsahkwa's "own account" is further complicated by issues of memory. She was sixty-four years old when she reconnected with her biological family and

told them her life story. There are signs that she did not keep track of years well. For instance, all three of these texts quote her as saying that: “my family and another Delaware family removed to Fort Wayne. I don’t know where the other Indians went. This was now our home, and I suppose we lived here as many as twenty-six or thirty years. I was there long after I was full grown, and I was there at the time of Harmer’s (sic) defeat.”⁵⁶

“Harmer’s defeat” indicates a battle that took place in 1790 when the town went by the Miami name Ke-ki-ong-a. She would have only been seventeen years old at the time, not the nearly thirty years that she remembers. This fits with an observation made by George Ewing in a letter to Jonathan Slocum: “As to the age of this female, I think she herself is mistaken and that she is not so old as she imagines herself to be.”⁵⁷

The interview with Mahkoonsahkwa is an amazing resource that allows us a glimpse of her life among the Lenape, but it is also far from a first person account of “her own history.” The longest published account is only five pages, and it is clear that this is an edited excerpt of a translated interview. It focuses on a straight forward chronicle of events instead of more in-depth experiences or interpretations. Thus, with few exceptions other than the line added by Phelps, there is no sense of how the elderly Mahkoonsahkwa thought about her capture as a child or her life among the Indians.



⁵⁶ Todd, *The Lost Sister*, 137; Phelps, *Frances Slocum*, 100.

⁵⁷ Letter from George W. Ewing to Jonathan J. Slocum, Logansport, IN, August 26, 1837. Reprinted in Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 45.

“Speculations Regarding the Wanderings of Frances While in Captivity”⁵⁸

Meginness opens his sixth chapter with a reflection on the interview: "If the account of her wanderings while in captivity for more than half a century, as simply related by herself through an interpreter, is intensely interesting, how much more thrilling would it be if we could have the story in detail? But of course this can never be."⁵⁹ Meginness spent more time and effort tracking down the original sources on Frances Slocum than anyone, and he too doubts that the archives have anything new left to offer. The broader archives on Frances Slocum, composed of all the sources that might tell us something about her life, provide a far richer account of her life with her biological family than with the Lenape and Miami Indians. The narrative of her biological family and her capture are repeated over and over in the archives in a way that produces a strong sense of reliability. Her life among the Lenape and Miami is told in far more fractured and ephemeral ways. Although the majority of the knowledge that we have of her life among the Indians was circulated along with accounts of her childhood in Wilkes-Barre, the material was recorded and preserved differently.

The minimal information and major variations in the stories about Weletawash/Mahkoonsahkwa's life among the Lenape and Miami conjure a sense of uncertainty. Whereas we know the names of her biological parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and siblings along with their life trajectories, there is almost no certainty about the names, identities, or life-paths of her adoptive Lenape parents or her Miami family. The names and events of her Indian life were not as clearly recorded, and the contradictory accounts of

⁵⁸ Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 74.

⁵⁹ Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 74.

figures and events call into question the validity of the few details we do have of the central sixty years of her life.⁶⁰

These accounts include stories that Frances told to her Slocum relatives from memory after they reunited and that the Slocum family found significant enough to preserve in writing and pass along to authors like Todd. Without doubt there are many interesting and significant tales that she never told her biological family and others that they heard but did not preserve in writing and more that were lost through Todd's editing process and his failure to return the family's original documents. Thus we are now largely dependent on written archives that contain varying details, details that call into question many claims made the writers who most fully narrated her life.

We do know that from 1778 to roughly 1790, the Lenni-Lenape were under intensive pressure in eastern Pennsylvania.⁶¹ Some Lenape, such as the Nanticoke, settled in Delaware, New Jersey, and eastern Pennsylvania and still live there today.⁶² But others continued to push or be pushed westward. The Miami had a long history of trading relationships with the Lenape and there are numerous old shared words, such as *papikwani* and *wiipica*.⁶³ These terms were part of a language system that proceeded what is studied as the "traditional" languages of the Lenape and the Miami around the time of European contact. Thus communication and trade relations between the two nations were established long before the language systems used at that contact.

⁶⁰ There are no birth, marriage, or death records for Mahkoonsahkwa's children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren because such records were not kept by the Miami or on them until they were categorized as U.S. citizens in 1920 under the tribal reorganization act.

⁶¹ C.A. Weslager, *The Delaware Indians: A History*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1972).

⁶² C.A. Weslager, *The Nanticoke Indians – Past and Present*, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1983).

⁶³ Scott Shoemaker, email to author, June 18, 2010.

Around 1780 the Miami chiefs invited many Lenape to come and live in their territory. Although numerous Lenape families accepted the invitation, they seem to have maintained a distinct identity. This is evidenced in traditional narratives within Lenape communities about living in Miami territory for several generations before rejoining other Lenape communities, either in their homelands on the east coast or on reserves west of the Mississippi River. Mahkoonsahkwa also describes her Lenape family living with another Lenape family in Miami territory, at Ke-ki-ong-a, suggesting that this affiliation distinguished her in the region. Yet the invitation itself suggests there was a long and close relation between the two nations. The Miami used the word *waapanahkia*, which means grandfather, for the Lenape.⁶⁴ Relationships between native nations were often coded in such familial language, which articulates the sense of authority and responsibility native communities felt for each other. It guided social obligations between communities and among individuals in those communities.

Some time after her adoption, presumably ten to twenty years later, Weletawash married a Lenape man. From interviews with Miami leaders in the 1830's it seems that it was common for Miami women in the 1790s and early 1800's to marry in their twenties. We know that Weletawash was living in a predominantly Miami society in Ke-ki-ong-a at the time of Harmar's defeat in 1790 and that she came to be seen as a grown woman during the period in which her family lived there. Other than this, we know very little about when or why they moved, what sort of trade or sustenance practices they maintained, or when

⁶⁴ David J. Costa, "Miami-Illinois Tribe Names," in John Nichols, ed., *Papers of the Thirty-first Algonquian Conference* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 2000,) 39.

she was married. Yet, many published accounts of Frances Slocum mention her Lenape husband.

Todd's text quotes Mahkoonsahkwa as recollecting that "I was married to a Delaware. He afterwards left me and the country and went west of the Mississippi. The Delawares and the Miami were then all living together."⁶⁵ Phelps' text adds a bit more to the story:

I was married to a Delaware by the name of 'Little Turtle.' He went to the wars and did not come back. I would not go with him. My old mother stayed here, and I chose to stay with her. My adopted father could talk English, and so could I as long as he lived. It has now been a long time since I forgot it all. The Delawares and the Miamis were then all living together.'⁶⁶

Like Todd's account, Phelps' is posited as a direct quote from the interview transcript, but here the Delaware husband has a name, his travels are linked to the historical context of war with the United States, and Mahkoonsahkwa articulates a choice to remain with her adoptive Lenape family rather than her husband.

Phelps' version seems more credible in part because it provides more specific details. Mentioning that her adoptive father could speak English does not connect with any other aspects of the story to suggest that it was added later for some particular purpose; instead it reads like someone telling a story from memory, with seemingly unrelated details emerging along the way. And again, there are reasons why Todd may have edited some of these details out of his story. Since Little Turtle is not a character in his version and there is no other information about him, removing his name simplifies a narrative intended for a young audience and fits with common practice at the time of referring to native peoples as

⁶⁵ Todd, *The Lost Sister*, 138.

⁶⁶ Phelps, *Frances Slocum*, 100.

simply Indian men and women, without particular names or even national/tribal identities. Similarly, Todd may have been encouraged or inspired by common gender narratives of the time to remove any suggestion of Weletawash actively choosing the direction of her life by not following her husband. In the broader literature on Native communities in this region during Todd's time, women were often present and actively involved in events, but their role as decision makers was not usually mentioned in English-language accounts of those events.

Meginness' text continues to follow Todd's here, but Meginness includes a footnote that seems to contradict Phelps's claim: "The statement by some writers that her first husband was Little Turtle is incorrect. This celebrated chief was born a few miles north-east of Fort Wayne in 1747. His mother was a Mohican woman. On the death of his father he became chief of the Miamis. He died at Fort Wayne July 24, 1812, and was succeeded by Pe-che-wa..."⁶⁷ Meginness' claim that Weletawash did not marry Chief Little Turtle is correct. Chief Little Turtle, also known as Mishikinakwa, is a famous Miami historical figure who lived near Kekionga. He and Frances Slocum are the two most famous historical figures among the Miami today, and it is certain that the two were never married. However, it is possible that Weletawash's Lenape husband was called Little Turtle as well, and that Meginness' rejection of this claim was based on a misunderstanding.

It is also possible that "Little Turtle" circulated widely as the name of a Miami chief and that a Slocum relative less familiar with Miami structures assumed that Frances's chief-husband was the famous Chief Little Turtle. In the end, the archives do not provide any way to verify her first husband's name or identity. Recent authors tend to employ the

⁶⁷ Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 67.

name Little Turtle for her first husband, but such details may be more about fostering a sense of authenticity by including Indian-sounding names than about accurately representing what we can know.

Although the major printed accounts of Weletawash's husband differ, this is one of the occasions where these texts only hint at the wider variations that exist in the oral traditions and in less popular print materials on Frances Slocum. Chief Clarence Godfroy's *Miami Indian Stories*, first published in 1961, is an incredibly influential source of historical and cultural authority among the Miami of Indiana today.⁶⁸ He characterizes Weletawash's marriage and its dissolution as more violent than more popular texts suggest:

One day a young Delaware warrior asked Frances's foster father if he could marry Frances. The request was granted but this marriage did not last long as the warrior was very mean to Frances. The foster father of the white girl told the warrior to be kind to his daughter but the Indian couldn't seem to change his ways. One day the Delaware husband left home and never returned. This was the end of the unhappy marriage of the Delaware warrior and the captive white girl.⁶⁹

Here Godfroy offers a sense of why Weletawash may have preferred to live with her parents instead of her husband.

More recently a member of the Miami Nation of Indiana who is also a Civil War re-enactor, Michael Thompson, published his own version of her life story, which better

⁶⁸ Despite Godfroy's name as author, the editor of the book was Martha Una McClurg, who produced it as a continuation of her work for an M.A. in folklore at Indiana University. Thus this text is heavily mediated through her recording, transcribing, editing, and revising. Also, Godfroy made a living performing his native identity for white audiences – thus much of the language of this text should be interpreted as how white people saw/ wanted to see Indians, rather than how Indians saw themselves.

⁶⁹ Chief Clarence Godfroy, *Miami Indian Stories* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Press, 1961) 101.

reflects oral traditions that continue to circulate.⁷⁰ In these stories Weletawash's Lenape parents, especially her father, are upset by how she is treated by her new husband. Her father warns him to treat her well.⁷¹ Thompson posits Tuck Horse as her adoptive father and characterizes the marriage as "abusive and disrespectful."⁷² In Thompson's narrative Weletawash returned home to live with her adoptive parents until Little Turtle pleads with Tuck Horse: "With the sanction of 'Tuck Horse,' (sic) she again went off with him. However, 'Little Turtle' did not honor his promise, and Frances again returned to her parents. When 'Little Turtle' attempted to retrieve Frances a second time, 'Tuck Horse' would have none of it and drove him away. Frances never heard from her husband again after that. She came to believe that he had been killed in battle."⁷³ Thompson's text comes the closest to representing the regional oral traditions familiar to members of the Miami of Indiana, including myself, but even he plays down the violence.

In the stories that I heard growing up Miami, the violence of her first marriage was highlighted. Her first husband was portrayed as incredibly abusive and beat her. Her father would not stand for it and warned the husband that such treatment would not be tolerated. A couple weeks later he invited his son-in-law to go hunting, but the husband never returned. The message is always unstated yet clear – the adoptive father killed the husband for beating Weletawash.

⁷⁰ Michael Thompson. *Little Bear Woman* (Self-printed and bound, 2008.)

⁷¹ Thompson claims that this was an arranged marriage, and that Weletawash was forced into it. I have never seen any other such reference. The idea that it was an arranged marriage may come from popular notions of a progressive history in which women are imagined to have always been treated worse in the past than the present.

⁷² Thompson, *Little Bear Woman*, 8.

⁷³ Thompson, *Little Bear Woman*, 8.

Again there is no way to verify such claims in the archives, but the oral tradition carries a lot of weight in this case for several reasons. First, in order for an oral tradition to be sustained in an era of print culture, the community that maintains the oral account must attribute a great deal of value to it. Secondly, print culture coincides with a patriarchal paradigm in which violence against women and their resistance to that violence is commonly erased. The majority of the authors telling Frances Slocum's story are male, and they may have felt uncomfortable with this account of domestic abuse or felt the story tarnished their feminine hero. Within a patriarchal system women are blamed and shamed for the violence they endure. Even Phelps downplays this story of violence. She likely shared concerns about how the story might reflect on Frances' femininity or moral character. After all leaving one's husband was not encouraged by Euro-American culture at the turn of the twentieth century when Phelps' book was published. Or perhaps Phelps simply thought it was too graphic for younger relatives who she hoped would read her work. Interestingly, Meginness supports the Miami oral tradition in his chapter subtitled "speculations regarding the wanderings of Frances while in captivity." He writes

There is a tradition still extant among the Miamis that her Delaware husband did not treat her well, whereupon her foster parents drove him off. She says that he went west with his people, but she refused to accompany him, preferring to remain with the old man and woman who had adopted and raised her. The tradition regarding his departure is believed to be founded on fact.⁷⁴

Still, we have very few details to ground specific claims about Weletewash's life from roughly 1790 to 1830.⁷⁵ There are almost no clues to suggest how long she was

⁷⁴ Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 78.

⁷⁵ Meginness did an incredible amount of research trying to trace her travels and reconstruct her life during this period. He ended up finding two references to "Frances Slocum" in ledgers loosely

married to her first husband or how long it was before she met her second husband. Some authors make a great fuss out of the romantic courtship between her and her Miami husband, Shepakana, while others hardly mention it at all. Although details of this courtship vary significantly, Meginness' account captures many of the common features:

The Miamis, of Indiana, have a romantic tradition as to how her last marriage came about. It is to the effect that somewhere in Central Ohio, while her parents were floating down a river in a canoe, and she was riding a horse on the shore, she discovered an Indian lying in the path and suffering from a wound which he had probably received in some skirmish with the whites. She dismounted and dressed his wounds, and when her parents came up they took him to their canoe and carried him to the point of their destination. There they cared for him until his wound was healed. He remained with them for some time and kept them well supplied with game, as he was a good hunter. At last, thinking that he had done enough to 'pay for his doctor bill,' as the tradition goes, he proposed to leave them and pass on. They would not hear to his departure, but insisted on his remaining with them, proposing, as an inducement, that they would give him their daughter in marriage. He did so, and became the husband of Frances. That this union proved a congenial and happy one there is no reason to doubt.⁷⁶

Some versions of this story claim that he had crawled into a rotted-out log to die and that she found him moaning in pain. She pulled him out, somewhat against his will, and forced him to live by caring for him.

While Meginness describes the marriage as more of an economic exchange, other accounts draw on the language of true love, and there is even a historic novel on their

affiliated with the Slocum family's searches for their lost sister. He then speculates that she moved great distances frequently in order to explain how she appears in these two hard to explain places, but I believe that he is mistaken. For one reason, I doubt that she continued to go by the name "Frances Slocum" for decades after her capture, and that it is more likely that these references are to some other person. Secondly, Meginness must stretch various aspects of the story in order to explain her appearances in these two places. The simplest explanation rings more true to me – these are false leads.

⁷⁶ Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 79.

romance published in 1997 by James Alexander Thom, *The Red Heart*.⁷⁷ Since there is no account of this courtship in the interview transcript, there is virtually no basis on which to evaluate the accuracy of any of these stories. This is an aspect of her life story that speaks more clearly to the period in which the stories are published and the imagined audiences than the archival evidence.

The most intimate details of Mahkoonsahkwa's life as a Miami Indian come from the journals of her biological nieces Hannah (Slocum) Bennett and Harriet Slocum. Hannah and Harriet accompanied their father Joseph (1776-1855) to visit their famous aunt in September and October of 1839. Portions of their journals were printed in the books published by John Meginness (1891) and Hannah's daughter, Martha Bennett Phelps (1898). At the time of the visit Hannah and Harriet were 17 and 28 years old respectively. Their expectations of Indian life were shaped by popular captivity narratives circulating in the mid-Atlantic region during the 1830's, which emphasized Indian-white differences. In contrast to the obscure accounts of the sixty years that she lived among the Lenape and Miami Indians, Hannah and Harriet's journals provide concrete, first-person accounts of Mahkoonsahkwa and her home.

Upon meeting Mahkoonsahkwa, Hannah saw an elderly woman whose body showed signs of the life she had lived yet how well she had fared throughout. She did not feel a need to posit her body as appearing essentially white or Native, but instead records how Mahkoonsahkwa's presence struck her at that first meeting:

She is of small stature, not very much bent, had her hair clubbed and tied with worsted ferret; her hair is somewhat gray; her eyes a brilliant bright chestnut, clear and sprightly for her age; her face is very much wrinkled and

⁷⁷ James Alexander Thom, *The Red Heart* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1997.)

weather-beaten. She has a scar on her left cheek received at an Indian dance; her skin is not as dark as you would expect from her age and constant exposure; her teeth are remarkably good.⁷⁸

She combines physical description with expectations of how elderly bodies bend and darken. And the entry incorporates stories of scars and spinning ferret fur apparently learned through conversations held throughout the day.

Yet historian Jim Buss argues, “Hannah and Harriet eagerly recognized signs of whiteness rather than indigeneity.”⁷⁹ He claims that Harriet’s description pulls our attention to “the subject of family resemblances. Our aunt looked at us earnestly, passed her hand down our cheeks, stopping the motion at the posterior point of her lower jaw. There is an unusual fullness and prominence at that point of the Slocum face.”⁸⁰ By drawing a correlation between Mahkoonsahkwa’s jaw line and “the Slocum face,” Harriet emphasizes the whiteness of Mahkoonsahkwa’s body, as a biological reproduction of the Slocum line. By focusing on the publication of the niece’s journals rather than their initial writing, Buss reads such descriptions as “recasting” the indigenous figure of Mahkoonsahkwa, whom he calls Young Bear, as essentially white.⁸¹

Rather than read an intentional production of a historical (and familial) figure in Hannah and Harriet’s journals, I read these texts as semi-private descriptions and observations of their visit with Mahkoonsahkwa and her family. They entered her home

⁷⁸ Hannah Bennet, “Visit of Her Nieces,” in *Frances Slocum: Lost Sister of Wyoming*, ed. Martha Bennett Phelps, (Wilkes-Barre, 1916).

⁷⁹ James Buss, *Winning the West with Words*, (University of Oklahoma Press): 151. This is not to say that there is one “right” way to read this text – there is certainly usefulness in tracking when these texts came to be valuable as published material and how they circulated at that time. My point here is that reading them from the perspective of when they were produced and when they were published create different modes of analysis.

⁸⁰ Harriet Slocum, “Harriet E. Slocum’s Diary” in *Frances Slocum: the Lost Sister of Wyoming*, ed. Martha Bennett Phelps, (Wilkes-Barre, 1905): 84.

⁸¹ Buss, *Winning the West with Words*, 153.

knowing that she was a biological relative but that she lived the life of an Indian. There are numerous moments where the nieces attempt to reconcile what they observe with their expectation of white domesticity and how they imagine Indian life.

Mahkoonsahkwa's home consisted of a compound with one larger log cabin, an attached smaller cabin, a small bark hut, a stable, and a corn crib huddled together on the bank of the Mississinewa River about eight miles outside of Peru.⁸² This compound was called Deaf Man's Village after Mahkoonsahkwa's late husband who was rendered deaf in battle.⁸³ The surrounding 640 acres legally belonged to Mahkoonsahkwa's daughters after their possession was confirmed and guaranteed by the U.S. Congress in the form of a deed just six months earlier, in March 1839.

Although Hannah initially describes the home in the diminutive term "double hut," she is amazed at the signs of wealth she finds there.⁸⁴ She writes, "The interior of her lodge seemed well supplied with all the necessities, if not with luxuries. They had six beds, principally composed of blankets and other goods folded together; one room contained the cooking utensils, the other the table and dishes; they spread a cloth on their table and gave us a very comfortable meal of fried venison, tea, and shortcake."⁸⁵ She goes on to catalogue signs of prosperity, which include a looking-glass, seven saddles, at least fifty horses, a hundred hogs, and seventeen cattle as well as geese and chickens all enclosed by a fence. She is particularly struck by the ornaments on the women's dresses that "are richly

⁸² Cooke and Ramadhyani, *Indians and a Changing Frontier: the Art of George Winter* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society with the Tippecanoe County Historical Association) 113.

⁸³ "Village" was a term used by the Miami for a wide variety of residential spaces. Harriet says that Mahkoonsahkwa and her family referred to Peru as "White Man's Village." (Phelps, *Frances Slocum*, 90)

⁸⁴ Bennet, "Visit of Her Nieces," 75.

⁸⁵ Bennet, "Visit of Her Nieces," 75-76.

embroidered with silver brooches; seven and eight rows of brooches as closely as they can be put together. They have many silver earrings. My aunt had seven pairs in her ears; her daughters perhaps a dozen apiece.”⁸⁶ The familiar signs of prosperity in Deaf Man’s Village were noteworthy because Hannah associates things such as clothed tables, fenced livestock, and jewelry with civilization – not with the Indian hut she was visiting.

Harriet provides a slightly more intimate view; especially in the details she records about their meals. In addition to what they ate, she describes how they prepped the table and the earnestness with which they sought to please their white visitors. Harriet writes,

They spread the table with a cotton cloth, and wiped the dishes, as they took them from the cupboard, with a clean cloth. They prepared an excellent dinner of fried venison, potatoes, shortcake and coffee. Their cups and saucers were small, and they put three or four tablespoonfuls of maple sugar in a cup. We told them that we were not accustomed to so much sugar. They seemed very anxious to please and would ask, ‘Is that right?’ The elder daughter waited on the table, while our aunt sat with us. After dinner they washed the dishes, replaced them on the shelves, and then swept the floor. We were surprised by these evidences of civilization.⁸⁷

The passage is striking in part for its description of daily practices in Mahkoonsahkwa’s home – the wiping of dishes as they are placed on the table, the division of labor, the ritual of cleaning up after dinner. These are not the details Anglo-American travelers commonly recorded about encounters with Indians, and it certainly does not reflect the image of Indians produced through captivity narratives. Such domestic details were rarely, if ever, prioritized by male anthropologists and authors, the majority of those who were writing about Indian life at this time. Hannah thus offers a rare glimpse into Miami domesticity.

⁸⁶ Bennet, “Visit of Her Nieces,” 76.

⁸⁷ Slocum, “Harriet E. Slocum’s Diary,” 85.

Still, what this scene reveals about Mahkoonsahkwa and Miami domesticity is contested. Historian Susan Sleeper-Smith interprets the commonalities between Miami and settler domestic practices as “ingenious ‘white’ strategies that many villages devised to prevent removal.”⁸⁸ For Sleeper-Smith the appearance and performance of whiteness was crucial for the Miami at a time when “Indians found themselves increasingly defined as the uncivilized, racialized other, and skin color took precedence of ‘civilized’ behaviors.”⁸⁹ To resist this racialization, she argues that villages, such as the family compound at Deaf Man’s Village, established spokesmen “who resembled their white emigrant neighbors.”⁹⁰ In doing so, many native communities became invisible in the sense that they did not stand out as uncivilized racial others. Thus, the name of the chapter where Sleeper-Smith discusses Frances Slocum is titled “Hiding in Plain View,” to suggest that the Miami were stealthily subverting colonial removal by hiding or passing as white.

Sleeper-Smith’s argument about Miami whiteness is heralded by some as drawing attention to the agency of American Indians in resisting removal and highlighting the persistence of Indians in the Lower Great Lakes. Her work has helped bring attention to the need for more scholarship on the Native communities that remained on their homelands east of the Mississippi River. However, the attention given to whiteness and civilization among the Miami could also be read as reasserting a settler-colonial value system, which interprets signs of civilization or whiteness as essentially not-indian.

In the journals of Harriet and Hannah as well as Sleeper-Smith’s work, the most significant feature of Frances Slocum’s home is the accumulated “evidences of civilization.”

⁸⁸ Sleeper-Smith, 139.

⁸⁹ Sleeper-Smith, 116.

⁹⁰ Sleeper-Smith, 116.

Hannah Bennett and Harriet Slocum describe the mundane details of Mahkoonsahkwa's home precisely because they are perceived as proof of civility, an exception to the expectations of Indianness. In all three texts, non-Miami authors interpret practices taking place in Miami homes as essentially not-Miami. The nieces attach these practices to notions of civilization and Sleeper-Smith draws more heavily on the racial rhetoric of whiteness. They each assume a colonial binary that posits white-civilized-settlers in opposition to dark-Indian-others.

Rather than read Miami practices along a spectrum of Indian-White behaviors, the commonalities between settler and Miami domestic practices speak strongly to the settler-colonial experience of the Miami as they were colonized while remaining on their homelands. Patrick Wolfe argues that *Indian* is a useful concept in the United States to the extent that it discredits original claims to land. He argues, "[W]e cannot simply say that settler colonialism or genocide have been targeted at particular races, since a race cannot be taken as given. It is made in the targeting."⁹¹ He thus explains that Nativeness is not simply a set of characteristics associated with indigenous peoples, but that the concept of the native and its cultural attachments are produced through a settler logic that undermines indigenous claims to territory. In this framework the co-existence of Miami and settler domestic practices at Deaf Man's Village speaks to the process of settler-colonialism, which was well under way before the formal removal of the Miami. The settler logic must posit the Miami as whitened or civilized in order to claim Miami land in the absence of "real Indians."

⁹¹ Patrick Wolfe, "Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native" *Journal of Genocide Research* (2006), 8(4), 388.

Sleeper-Smith attaches white behaviors to the ability of the Miami to remain on their homelands in Indiana and in so doing ladens them with the responsibility of meeting the unattainable expectations of the settler vision of real Indians. There is a tension in the way that she both applauds and blames the Miami for the relationship between whiteness and U.S. tribal status. She suggests that Miami futurity is dependent on U.S. federal recognition. She writes:

Although we may applaud the ingenious ‘white’ strategies that many villages devised to prevent removal, we should also be cognizant of the long-range impact of these behaviors. Indian villages on the Old Northwest frontier being forced to hide in ‘plain view’ doomed subsequent generations to invisibility. The Mississinewa Valley Miami thwarted antebellum removal, but, by the end of the century, they paid a high price for that resistance when the federal government revoked their tribal status.

She goes on to describe the loss of federal recognition as a “disaster” that “devastated” the Miami. (140) While these claims express her sympathy for these Indians, they also suggest that the Miami lost federal recognition because they were not Indian enough. Wolfe’s work repeatedly shows that “the primary motive for elimination is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.) but access to territory.”⁹² When a settler-nation wants to take control of land, racial demise is the justification, not the cause.

What aligns the settler assumptions of Hannah and Harriet writing in 1839 with the twenty-first century scholarship of Sleeper-Smith and Buss is that they all assume the absolute otherness of that which is categorized as “Native.” They assume a settler commonsense. Although Sleeper-Smith and Buss might argue that their scholarship is doing the exact opposite by drawing attention to cultural encounters and practices, they

⁹² Wolfe, “Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native,” 388. Parenthetical comments in original.

consistently mark practices of “civility” with Anglo-American culture and reserve “indianness” for the most exotic practices. While their work complicates narratives of native demise or extinction, such analysis remains complicit in a settler view of history.

Even though the meaning and historical significance of the nieces’ passages are contested, the concreteness of the details and their creation as part of semi-private travel journals leave little reason to question the accuracy of the descriptions. These first person accounts can be regarded as historical evidence, much like the accounts of little Frances’ capture, which were also provided by the Slocum family. These two short periods of her life, her capture and her visit with Hannah and Harriet, provide the most detailed first-person accounts available, and yet, Mahkoonsahkwa’s voice is nearly absent in both. The concreteness of the information known about these moments stand in stark contrast to the vague and often uncertain information recorded about the sixty years that the “captive” lived among the Lenape and Miami, completely isolated from her birth family. The disparity in the quality of information on her life is not simply a result of the Slocums having access to the machinations of the press, it is also about the role of such historical narratives in U.S. settler colonialism. Within a literary framework Mark Rifkin writes that images of Indians “serve as textual traces of quotidian ways that the dynamics of settler occupation operate as the phenomenological background, against which Indigenous survival registers as anomaly,” which is to say that the settler common sense through which these historical narratives have been produced are always already focused on settler society. Indian life and experiences only register as an anomaly to Anglo-American settler history, even when that history is of a Native woman.



Conclusion

Today Frances Slocum remains a popular Indian historical figure and the most famous Miami woman. Her story is often posited as a first-person captivity narrative, but what is known of her life experiences is significantly shaped by the perspectives and editing of her white siblings and their families. Mahkoonsahkwa's perspective and that of her lineal descendants is harder to parse out of the materials available today. The contemporary Slocum archive has been produced and preserved by historical institutions that maintain settler-colonial epistemes.

Rather than simply critique this 'history of the powerful', it is important to analyze the epistemological practices that make writing anti-colonial histories so challenging. To suggest that this is a result of "bad historical practice" or "lazy historians" is unfair to the research of authors like John Todd and John Meginness. More importantly, such critiques sidestep the more important epistemological point – that historical practice itself is central to settler-colonialism. It is through well-regarded history-making practices, such as standing by the most well-regarded publications, that Native accounts of Slocum's life are rendered less reliable than those produced by and about her white relatives. The account of her capture is written entirely from the perspective of her biological family who experience her capture as a violent loss in their lives. This leads the Slocums to perceive Mahkoonsahkwa's adult life as a continuation of that capture. While little Frances must certainly have experienced her capture as violent and traumatic, it is clear that she did not experience adult life as a Lenape and Miami woman as one of entrapment. The vast majority of the archive of Frances Slocum preserves her natal family's experience of the

violence and loss incurred through settling. Thus even as this life story is lauded as Miami Indian history, it should be better understood as a narrative of settler-colonialism.

The significance of perspective shapes nearly every detail of Slocum/Mahkoonsahkwa's story. How the variations affect the meaning of this historical narrative is most clearly shown through the impact of small omissions and changes. Omitting the role of Giles in instigating the Lenape raid posits Indians as cruel and unpredictably violent, while simultaneously insisting on the innocent victimhood of frontier families like the Slocums. Using the excerpted interview with Mahkoonsahkwa as a first-person account of captivity obfuscates the numerous levels of mediation involved and the incredibly limited scope of that text. When that text is quoted as verbatim thoughts of Mahkoonsahkwa, the fact that all the questions were being asked by her brothers is forgotten. Even here, the Slocum family is shaping the narrative.

In the last ten years of her life there were clearly opportunities for Mahkoonsahkwa and her family to speak with journalists and authors, to provide their own account of the famed captive. The only attempt to do so that has survived is the interview analyzed above. Thus, the most personal account available today of Mahkoonsahkwa's personhood and home are the journals of Hannah and Harriet, her biological nieces who recorded settler-colonial shock at how civilized the Miami were.

One result of these narratives being written from a white settler-colonial perspective is the repeated absence of Black figures and the obfuscation of settler violence toward Indians. Violence runs just under the surface throughout this story: the Lenape families burned in their homes, the sexual assault of Native women captured by pioneers, the slaughter of Christian Indians at the Morovian Village, the domestic violence

Weletawash endured in her first marriage. And these are only the accounts that survived the various translations and editorial practices. As Meginness writes, “how much more thrilling would it be if we could have the story in detail? But of course this can never be.”

Chapter 2

Capturing: Frances as the Lost Sister

The story we have today about Frances Slocum took shape between 1837 and 1842, at a moment when the politics of captivity narratives were changing rapidly alongside transformations in U.S. Indian policies. This chapter delves into the production of the earliest accounts of her life story, which circulated while she was alive. Although her story continued to evolve through the nineteenth and twentieth century, the basic plot and characters were formed at this time.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, captivity narratives were often first-person accounts from an adult who had been captured and then later released.¹ These narratives were generally transcribed and edited by a second person, but written as if from the perspective of the captive. They included details of the “exotic” habits of the captors, who were most often Indians, and extended discussions of the experience of being captive. That experience was often posited as a religious trial that ends with redemption and a return to settler society. As literary scholar Andrea Tinneymeyer concludes: “On its surface, the captivity narrative seems quite predictable; girl gets captured, taken away by dark-skinned heathens, rescued by her own ingenuity or a white-skinned hero, and happily returned to her community.”²

¹ Kathryn Zabell Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levernier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550-1900* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993).

² Tinneymeyer, *Identity Politics of the Captivity Narrative after 1848* (University of Nebraska Press), xvi.

The characteristics that mark captivity narratives are as much about the publishing process as they are about being captured. In order for a narrative to be published, the person had to be old enough to retain her knowledge of English and lucky enough to return to settler society, where she could tell her story to a publisher. June Namias explains how this “penitent Puritan narrative later became more formulaic.”³ Editors and publishers shaped stories to fulfill readers’ expectation even when the captive’s experience spoke to other themes. Narratives of captives who did not return to settler society were rare and sensational.

By the 1820’s captivity narratives were among the most widely read stories in the nation, and fictionalized accounts of captivity were increasingly popular. For instance, James Fenimore Cooper published *Last of the Mohicans*, the most widely read fictionalized captivity narrative in the world, in 1826.⁴ By the 1830’s, the publication of captivity narratives was a booming business, and the story of Frances Slocum emerged at the height of this popularity.

The sensationalized interest in the Slocum story benefited from the proximity between Wilkes-Barre, where Frances was captured, and Lancaster,, a hub of captivity narrative publishing just one hundred miles south.⁵ In addition to being a tale of a local captive who had not returned to “society,” this story also included a reunion between the captive and her family sixty years later! It was sensational, dramatic, and widely circulated.

³ Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (University of North Carolina Press, 1993) 22.

⁴ James Fenimore Cooper, *Last of the Mohicans: a narrative of 1757* (H.C. Carey, 1826.)

⁵ The other main publishing hub was Boston, from which most of the New England captivity narratives were published.

Frances Slocum's narrative is often compared to those of Mary Jemison and Eunice Williams because all three women had the opportunity to leave their lives among the Indians, but did not.⁶ Jemison and Williams have been more thoroughly studied by scholars because they better represent the qualities of the genre, as first person accounts of capture, and they reflect the more "classic" features of captivity narratives of the eighteenth century.⁷ As noted earlier, the Slocum story is even more heavily mediated than most captivity narratives, and emerges in the 1830's alongside the fictionalization and politicization of the genre.

Slocum's life story does not fit easily alongside other captivity narratives of women. Anthropologist Pauline Turner Strong points out that Euro-Americans captured far more American Indians than the reverse; and of the Euro-Americans captured, the vast majority were men. Yet the genre of captivity narratives is dominated by white women captured by Indians.⁸ Literary scholar, Michelle Burnham suggests that this story line was more popular because tales of women "posed more danger of subversion (of gendered and national identities) than those of men."⁹ Derounian-Stodola and Levernier argue that female captivity narratives are, at their core, about the dissolution of the frontier family.¹⁰ That theme is echoed throughout scholarship on the genre and parsed in fine detail in Namias' study, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier*. By far the

⁶ Derounian-Stodola and Levernier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative*, 161-162.

⁷ One of the most popular studies of a captivity narrative is John Demos' account of Mary Jemison - *The Unredeemed Captive* (New York: Knopf, 1994).

⁸ Pauline Turner Strong, *Captive Selves, Captivating Others* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999).

⁹ Michelle Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchange in American Literature, 1682-1861* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997).

¹⁰ Derounian-Stodola and Levernier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative*, 113.

most cited scholar on the gender dynamics of captivity narratives Namias develops an analysis of three female captive-types: the Survivor, the Amazonian, and the Frail Flower. These types describe the ways adult women responded to the conditions of their capture and the violence surrounding it. Although Slocum is an adult when her story emerges, she was a child when captured and there is no rich description of how she dealt with, or was dealt with, but her captors. Thus Slocum's story rarely includes the sort of information through which captivity narratives about women are grouped and analyzed.

Slocum is often mentioned alongside Williams and Jemison, but her story is not studied in the same way. For instance Namias mentions Slocum as a captive who assimilated to Indian culture, but includes a full chapter on Jemison. Jemison's story includes the sort of substantiative details that are used to characterize captivity narratives about assimilated female captives, including her reactions to captivity as an adult woman. Slocum's narrative cannot be analyzed in the same way in part because the story is told from a third person account, but also because her age when she was captured does not fit neatly within the analytic frameworks of women's captivity narratives.

Captivity narrative scholars are rarely interested in Frances Slocum because her life story does not offer the ethnographic and plot details that are central to their work. Yet the Slocum story circulated widely at the time of its emergence and remained popular in Pennsylvania and Indiana for more than a century and half afterward so it is important to contextualize it within the popularity and politics of captivity narratives at the time. While eighteenth century captivity narratives

focused on the personal experience of those being captured and their observations on the strange practices of cultural others, nineteenth century narratives took on broader nationalist rhetoric, emphasizing U.S. colonial and racial orders.

Derounian-Stodola and Levernier note that the War of 1812 “rekindles interest in anti-British captivity narratives” in which Indians are often affiliated with the British foe.¹¹ Captivity narratives reflect shifts in national policy in other ways as well. In 1824 the Bureau of Indian Affairs was established as a part of the U.S. War Department, and in 1830 the Indian Removal Act required that all Indians be located west of the Mississippi River. These transformations in U.S. policy brought greater attention to captivity narratives east of the Mississippi River as examples of the threat Indians posed to the growth of the United States.

In the 1830’s captivity literature, including fully fictionalized stories and those based on historic events, takes on more aggressive racial rhetoric that demonizes Indians and posits settlers as innocent victims of native violence. Even toned down versions reflect a growing embrace of Manifest Destiny.¹² For instance, “(b)y describing Indians as lazy, captivity writers reinforced the white racist notion that Indians were unworthy of the lands they inhabited because they lacked the industry needed to develop them.”¹³ Tinnemeyer cautions against reading them as simple propaganda, arguing that “no nation is ever homogenous in thought and desire at any given time; no time period can be treated monolithically. The captivity narrative, as a genre fashioned to imperial purpose, serves as a dynamic register for

¹¹ Derounian-Stodola and Levernier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative*, chronology.

¹² Mark Rifkin, *Manifesting America: The Imperial Construction of U.S. National Space* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.)

¹³ Derounian-Stodola and Levernier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative*, 64.

national dissonance, for resistance against Manifest Destiny, and for cautionary tales of unchecked territorial expansion and genocide.”¹⁴ Nevertheless, what is compelling about the scholarship on these narratives is that even if the tales involve a variety of moral lessons, they continually recenter settler experience. Namias writes, “if anything, they give us ethnographic data about the mentality and claimed experiences of Indian-white interactions, seen through the eyes of Euro-Americans. That mentality was shaped by anxieties based on fear of potential Indian violence and family loss.”¹⁵ Frances Slocum’s narrative offers a perfect example, having been made public through interviews with her biological brothers, creating a story that is seen primarily through their eyes.

Newspapers and the Making of News

The earliest stories of Frances Slocum relied on the growing publication and distribution of newspapers. In addition to the wide circulation of articles about her life story in the late 1830’s, there would not have been a story at all without the publication of a letter in the *Lancaster Intelligencer* in 1837 that alerted the Slocum siblings to the possibility of their sister’s survival among the Miami.

The contents of that fateful letter take us back to January 1835. George Ewing was travelling through Miami territory along the Mississinewa River and asked for shelter for the night at Deaf Man’s Village. Mahkoonsahkwa knew Ewing because he was a prominent Indian trader based in Logansport, Indiana, just fifteen miles west. His business had many facets, which included purchasing Indian relics

¹⁴ Tinnemeyer, *Identity Politics of the Captivity Narrative after 1848*, xiii.

¹⁵ Namias, *White Captives*, 272.

and selling them in east coast collector markets. But overtime his greatest wealth came from giving credit to Miami individuals based on US treaty negotiations, charging high interest rates, and then collecting and selling Miami land in payment for the debts accrued. To succeed in this venture, Ewing learned to speak Myaamia and was well known to most prominent Miami families.

The winter of 1835 had been hard on Mahkoonsahkwa. She had fallen sick and was not getting better. After her daughters had gone to bed, she stayed up and talked with Ewing. Fearing she would not survive the winter, she told him she had a secret. Making him promise not to tell anyone until after she died, Mahkoonsahkwa told him that she was born to a white Quaker family on the Susquehanna River back east, was captured when she was young, and had lived with the Indians ever since. They talked for a long time; Ewing was amazed by what he learned and asked numerous questions to try and figure out where she was from.

Despite his promise, almost immediately after returning home to Logansport, Ewing told his mother what he had learned. She insisted that he could not keep this story to himself: what if her family was still looking for her? So on January 20, 1835 he wrote to the postmaster of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, which is located near the Susquehanna River and was well-known as a center for publishing captivity narratives. He included all the details he could think of that might help locate her surviving family. The postmaster who received the letter, Mary Dickson, also owned the *Lancaster Intelligencer*. But having become lost on her desk, the letter did not re-emerge until two years later, just after Dickson sold the newspaper. Somehow the

letter was given to journalist and publisher John W. Forney who immediately published in the *Lancaster Intelligencer*.

In August, 1837, older readers of the *Intelligencer* must have been surprised to see a reference to an event that seemed lost in the mists of time. But there it was, a man by the name of George Ewing writing that “I have thought that from this letter you might cause something to be inserted in the newspapers of your country that might possibly catch the eye of some of the descendants of the Slocum family.”¹⁶ To help identify the family, he included specific details about Frances’ father and the day of the capture: “She says her father’s name was Slocum; that he was a Quaker, rather small in stature, and wore a large brimmed hat; was of sandy hair and light complexion and much freckled; that he lived about half a mile from a town where there was a fort; that they lived in a wooden house of two stories high, and had a spring near the house.”¹⁷ The Wyoming Valley along the Susquehanna had changed dramatically between the day of that capture and the letter’s publication. No longer was Wilkes-Barre a frontier town outside of official colonial territory. Now it was part of the state of Pennsylvania. While many residents who survived the settling of the region remained, most who saw Ewing’s letter likely read it with the nostalgia and wonderment of those who had not experienced the direct loss of family members.

The news spread quickly once the letter was published. Articles about the newly-discovered captive circulated across the United States and over the Atlantic as the story was repeatedly reprinted and summarized from paper to paper. It was

¹⁶ Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 40.

¹⁷ Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 39.

common practice at the time for publishers to copy entire articles or parts of articles from other newspapers. Sometimes the authors were included, but most often not. Sometimes reprints mentioned where the article was taken from, and other times no contextualizing information was included. Ewing's letter was reprinted all over the county, including in the *Peru Forester* of Indiana, just nine miles down the road from where Mahkoonsahkwa lived.

Within two weeks of its original publication in Lancaster, the surviving Slocum family, including Joseph and Mary of Wilkes-Barre, had read the letter, contacted their brother Isaac in Ohio, and all three had set out for Peru to find their "lost" sister. Even as they set out on their journey, the story of Frances Slocum spread through circuits then common to newspaper publishing. According to John Meginness, for instance, this particular issue received wide circulation as a "large extra edition of the paper containing some temperance documents, and these were sent to the clergyman generally through that part of the State." As such Reverend Samuel Bowman of Wilkes-Barre received this issue and passed it along to the Slocum family whom he knew well.¹⁸

Meanwhile John and Mary traveled westward from Pennsylvania while Isaac journeyed to Indiana from nearby Ohio. Isaac could not wait for his brother and sister. Fifty-nine years had passed since the raid on his home when Mary had saved him from being captured alongside Frances. The idea that she might be living just nine miles from where he waited was too much. He made arrangements to have James T. Miller, Ewing's adopted son, accompany him to Deaf Man's Village and

¹⁸ Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 42.

translate for him. George Ewing had planned to introduce the Slocum family to the Miami elder woman, but he happened to be in New York on business when the siblings arrived.

Isaac's visit

The newspaper account of Isaac's visit to meet Mahkoonsahkwa is the first printed version of the captivity narrative of Frances Slocum, written by an unnamed local journalist. It was published in the *Peru Forester* in September 28 1837, just before Joseph and Mary arrived. The article was titled "Frances Slocum – or the Indian Captive," and it was based on a conversation with Isaac after he returned from meeting Mahkoonsahkwa for the first time. From the beginning, the woman at the center of the story is posited as a captive and assigned her English name.

The opening paragraph exemplifies the new racial politics of captivity narratives, justifying as it does the military removal of Indians west of the Mississippi:

In the year 1777 and '78 it will be remembered, the Delaware Indians along the banks of the Susquehanna in the State of Pennsylvania, were very annoying to the white inhabitants, and that frequent massacres and tortures were the results of their hostile movements; but the length of time, which has elapsed, since those numerous depredations were committed, has, measurably, erased the horrors of such scenes of carnage from the memories of the present inhabitants of the beautiful Village of Wilkes-Barre.¹⁹

¹⁹ "Frances Slocum – or the Indian Captive," *Peru Forester*. (newspaper) September 28, 1837. Paragraph 1.

In addition to the various synonyms wielded to highlight the violence of Indians, the paragraph ends with a reminder of how much better life is for “white inhabitants” now that the Indians are gone. To reinforce this point, the article continues: “In the year 1777, there resided within the present limits of that town, a respectable gentleman, whose names (sic) was Jonathan Slocum.” The three-column article describes the peacefulness and respectability of the Slocum home and then the ruthlessness of the raid and capture, fulfilling the formulaic opening of a captivity narrative.

The crux of the article, however, focused on how Isaac could know that this was his sister after sixty years in captivity. Over the years several released captives had come to the Slocum home hoping to find their family, and each time the Slocums were certain that it was not their sister. This time the Slocums were far more hopeful because of the details included in Ewing’s letter, and as Isaac rode to Deaf Man’s Village with James Miller, he

remarked to his guide, that if the woman (Frances) was really his sister, he would recognize her by a sear upon the fore finger of her left hand, caused by a blow from a hammer upon an anvil, while at play with her brother before she was taken captive, but knew not in what other way, he should be able to convince either her or himself, of the relationship which subsisted between them.²⁰

Upon their arrival, Miller entered the house first to tell Mahkoonsahkwa who he was travelling with and why. The elderly woman allowed Isaac into her home, but she was not welcoming. The journalist reports that “(t)hen grasping her hand, he drew

²⁰ “Frances Slocum – or the Indian Captive,” *Peru Forester*. (newspaper) September 28, 1837. Paragraph 10.

it towards the light, and beheld the scar! The identical sear, which he had described. He was then satisfied; but Frances was still unwilling to believe.”

Mahkoonsahkwa was more reluctant in part because she had identified as an Indian for so long. In Ewing’s letter he explained that she never revealed her childhood origins before “fearing that her kindred would come and force her away.”²¹ Isaac asked her to relay what she remembered of the day of her capture through the translator: “she related the same story which her brother had told him on their way; and finally, before they separated, Frances was satisfied to acknowledge Isaac, to be her own brother.”²² The article ends by explaining that Joseph and Mary Slocum are on their way to Peru to meet the elder Miami woman for themselves. This first account of Frances/ Mahkoonsahkwa’s lifestory, was repeatedly republished, nationally and internationally, forging a new captivity narrative.

When newspaper articles were reprinted from elsewhere, they were regularly edited to fit the available space. One aspect of the original article was often edited out of reprinted versions and, as a result, also fell out of the larger Slocum Story. That section read as follows: “the hearts of the parents became as it were, gladdened with the consciousness that their darling child had ceased to exist, and that the Spirit of Frances had sped to an endless immortality.”²³ Later the reporter exclaims, “But Frances was not DEAD! Although her ‘GHOST’ had,

²¹ Meginess, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 40.

²² “Frances Slocum – or the Indian Captive,” *Peru Forester*. (newspaper) September 28, 1837. Paragraph 10.

²³ “Frances Slocum – or the Indian Captive,” *Peru Forester*. (newspaper) September 28, 1837. Paragraph 4.

apparently, risen up to confirm the fears of her weeping relatives. She yet lives!"²⁴

This is the only article that suggests that the Slocum family believed that Frances was dead and found some peace in that idea. Nonetheless, the majority of later articles emphasize their ceaseless search for her.

After this initial meeting, Isaac returned to Peru to await the arrival of his siblings Joseph and Mary from Wilkes-Barre. Joseph's granddaughter, Martha Bennett Phelps, published an account of their visit as passed down in her family. As discussed in the first chapter, her book was strongly influenced by Todd and Meginness' books as well. Phelps wrote that "after hard journeying, most of the way over horrible roads, through a new country, the brother and sister arrived. For persons in advanced life, they had almost performed miracles of endurance; they were fatigued."²⁵ She explored how Joseph might have felt as they approached Deaf Man's Village:

As they drew near, they became silent. To Joseph there was an expectation – the fulfillment of hopes which had been cherished for sixty years; his heart was full – would Frances be glad to see him? Would she have any recollections of him? He wished to take her to his heart and home, but would she return to the home of her kindred? At length they reached a large log-house... 'O God!' cried Joseph, 'is that my sister?' The brothers walked the floor with emotions too deep and over-whelming for utterance. On being told who they were, she received them with great reserve, coolness, and indifference. While

²⁴ "Frances Slocum – or the Indian Captive," *Peru Forester*. (newspaper) September 28, 1837. Paragraph 7.

²⁵ Phelps, *Frances Slocum*, 54-55. I cite Phelps here because this account is based on how Joseph passed down the stories within his family, but I could easily cite any of the books on Slocum for this kind of material. As mentioned in the first chapter, these accounts are all very similar.

they walked the room in tears, not a feature of her countenance moved; she evinced no emotion.²⁶

While newspaper accounts describe the reunion in one or two paragraphs, booklength accounts often include long descriptions of this visit and Mahkoonsahkwa's seeming disinterest to the visitors. Phelps continues, "the Indian queen went about her affairs, apparently with as much indifference as though nothing of interest had happened... they observed their sister seated on the floor, at work at a deerskin, which was nearly ready for use."²⁷ Mahkoonsahkwa was a skilled craftswoman. She may have been keeping herself busy while trying to make sense of the reunion, and her skepticism. Phelps added that she was "not free from suspicion that there was some plan in operation to take her away or to get her lands. Mr. Fulwiler (who may have authored the initial newspaper article) informed Mr. Meginness that the scene of this meeting was the saddest, most pathetic, and painful he had ever witnessed during his long life of seventy-eight years, and he became so deeply impressed that he was compelled to leave the room."²⁸

The next day Mahkoonsahkwa and her Miami family agreed to meet with the Slocums in Peru. The siblings agreed even though it was Sunday. As Quakers they would not normally take such meetings on the Lord's Day, but "the newly found sister was a heathen and did not know when Sunday came."²⁹ They gathered in a room at the inn where the Slocums were staying. Phelps describes the scene:

²⁶ Phelps, *Frances Slocum*, 56-57.

²⁷ Phelps, *Frances Slocum*, 58-59.

²⁸ Phelps, *Frances Slocum*, 57-58, parenthesis added.

²⁹ Phelps, *Frances Slocum*, 61.

Before any intimacy could be entered upon, the strangers must receive formal pledge of friendship from the Indians. On being all assembled, the eldest daughter brought in a clean white cloth, carefully rolled up, and laid it on the table, and then, through the interpreter, arose and solemnly presented it as a pledge of their confidence and friendship. It contained the hind quarter of a deer, which they had probably just hunted and killed for this very purpose. The brothers and sister then arose and as solemnly received it as a token of friendship and kindness. But still (the Indians) were not satisfied till the civilized sister had formally taken possession of the cloth and its contents. They then seemed at ease, and from that moment gave their new friends their confidence. The ceremony was beautiful and impressive, and was recognized by them as the seal of faith.³⁰

Indeed, this meeting marked the beginning of a relationship between Mahkoonsahkwa and her biological siblings that continued the rest of her life. Over the next ten years, the Slocums came to Peru to visit Mahkoonsahkwa on a regular basis, and journalists who they spoke with on their travels published the remarkable story each time.

The conversations the Slocum family had with fellow travelers and with journalists after visiting their sister in Indiana became the basis of nearly all the articles published on her captivity. The Slocums did not publish their own accounts in the 1830s or 40s, but each of the stories published were based on first-person conversations with a Slocum family member from back east. Several were written while the Slocums were still in Peru. The journalists writing from Peru could have consulted with Mahkoonsahkwa's family or other Miami who knew her because Peru was the primary trading center for the Miami living in this region. However,

³⁰ Phelps, *Frances Slocum*, 60.

the newspapers accounts that dominated the headlines focused on encounters with the Slocum family. I have never found a newspaper account from this period that has even mentioned an attempt to incorporate a Miami perspective of these events. Instead, the articles were written by white settlers, catering to a settler audience.³¹

“A Lost Sister”

Over the next ten years, various Slocum family members came to visit Mahkoonsahkwa and her daughters on a nearly annual basis, usually around October. Each time new articles circulated in newspapers in Indiana and Pennsylvania, sometimes announcing their visit before they even arrived. These articles continued to center a white male audience and authorship, even when published in African American newspapers, like *The Colored American* in Philadelphia.

The consistency of the white point of view serves as a reminder that these articles were almost always reprinted without adjustments for location or audience. For instance, the accounts of Frances Slocum in *The Colored American* included the same colonial racial rhetoric found elsewhere. That article, entitled “A Lost Sister – Remarkable History,” was written by an unnamed journalist in Philadelphia just before Joseph set out with his daughters, Hannah and Harriet, to meet their aunt for

³¹ I use “white settlers” here rather than French-, Anglo-, or Euro-American because by the late 1830s the contest for this region has moved beyond the competing French and Anglo claims to this region (that Sleeper-Smith documents so well) and has now become dominated by a broader narrative of U.S. expansion, articulated through the racial-colonial rhetoric of Manifest Destiny. In the newspaper articles from this time, “white” is a common term used in opposition to “Indian.” Thus, it seems that whiteness is a stronger boundary marker than “english-speaking” in this period because by now English is the dominate trade language.

the first time in October 1839. The title emphasizes her relation to her white relatives and the article ends with the line, “And there they left her and hers, wild and darkened heathens, though sprung from a pious race.” Arika Easley Houser’s historical study of the representation of American Indians in African American newspapers explores how and why papers like *The Colored American* covered American Indian news.³² She argues that to some extent they saw U.S. American Indian policies as foreshadowing their own situation. While coalition building did not necessarily occur, there was a sense that both communities were in similar relationships to the United States and its white dominance. In this context, the use of a phrase like “a pious race” to refer to Anglo-Americans simply reflects the colonial racial order in which everyone in the U.S. lived. But it might also suggest that free blacks in Philadelphia, who had created a range of churches, schools and other community institutions by the 1830s, sought to distance themselves from American Indians who were increasingly cast in debates over their removal as heathens and brutes.

This same article places men as the subjects and actors of the story despite the title of the “Lost Sister.” The journalist explains, “As the boys grew up and became men, they were very anxious to know the fate of their little fair haired sister. They wrote letters, they sent inquiries, they made journeys through all the west and into the Canadas.” Frances’ capture served as the catalyst for their actions. Later when telling how her identity is finally revealed, Ewing becomes the discoverer: “In

³² Arika Easley-Houser, “‘The Indian image in the Black mind’: representing Native Americans in antebellum African American public culture.” (Ph.D diss, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, 2014.)

the course of the evening, he notices that the hair of the woman is light, and her skin, under her dress, is also white.” It is Ewing’s close observations of Mahkoonsahkwa’s body and “her skin, under her dress” that supposedly leads to the remarkable reunion.

While it is clear that this article was written in Philadelphia and published in a local African American newspaper, the identity of the author is uncertain. This particular article circulated widely, and versions of it were printed throughout the United States. Along the east coast there were common circuits of travel that allowed a fairly predictable series of re-printings, and this was one of the articles that traveled along that circuit.

Travel and publication patterns on the frontier were less predictable and rapidly changing. The *Indiana Journal* of Indianapolis, the largest circulatory of the region, reprinted most stories about Frances Slocum that came from the east as well as many smaller stories that never gained a larger audience. For instance, while the nieces, Hannah and Harriet were in Peru, a series of one-paragraph stories were printed. Some of them were reprints from the *Peru Forester* and others were accounts from travelers who had been in the city at the same time. On Friday, October 11, 1839, a paragraph labeled “Frances Slocum” was sandwiched between two longer stories about a headmaster killed after inappropriately threatening students and a man who was “cheated” out of pike when a local dared him to put a dog tail in the jaws of the fish. The fish chomped down and the dog ran away with the fish.

The paragraph on Slocum begins “The history of this individual is probably as well known to our readers as it is to ourselves,” which speaks to the frequency of Slocum stories now in print. Then it provides a brief sketch of her capture and how she came to live in Indiana for the uninitiated. The point of this particular story is to describe “her appearance the other day on horseback dressed in full Indian costume, riding Indian file with her relations through town.” This short piece thus sets the scene of Mahkoonsahkwa coming to Peru to meet Hannah and Harriet for a formal interview that was recorded and transcribed on October 1st. Mahkoonsahkwa, her daughters, and many Miami visited Peru on a regular basis since it was the center of local trade. Yet, the image of them riding through town in “full Indian costume” is so spectacular that it makes news in the state capital. The excitement surrounding this scene suggests that, although Miami were seen in Peru on a daily basis, they were rarely dressed in full Indian costume, an act so exceptional that it made news.

The visit of Hannah and Harriet in 1839 is one of the most productive Slocum visits made to Mahkoonsahkwa. In addition to the transcribed interview and the journals of the nieces, there were numerous newspaper articles related to their visit. It was at this time that their father, Joseph, commissioned George Winter to paint a portrait of his sister, which became *the portrait* of Frances Slocum.

George Winter, the Indian artist

The only visual first-person image come to us by the hand of George Winter (1809-1876), through his sketches, watercolors, and journals. Winter was born in Portsea, England in 1809 to a merchant who traded in fine arts. In addition to his

formal education in English and French, he studied with artists who stayed with his father on occasion.³³ In 1830 his family moved to the United States, where George was accepted to the newly founded National Academy of Design in New York City. There he formally studied portraiture, and after five years in New York, joined the rest of his family in Cincinnati, Ohio in the summer of 1835. There he became enamored with the idea and imagery of Indians. Two years later, he moved to the frontier town of Logansport, Indiana “to preserve from obliteration the likenesses, habits and customs of some at least, of the unfortunate race of red men whom I have seen and known personally, and who alas! are fast fading away from earthly existence without the natural sympathy for their sad and inevitable extinction.”³⁴ While Winter’s curiosity about Indians was rooted in a common narrative of “inevitable extinction,” he more accurately depicted native life in this region than did his more famous contemporaries, like George Catlin or Karl Bodner.

Winter is known for his detailed and colorful portraits of the Pottowatomie and Miami Indians in Indiana, completed between 1837 and 1871, but his most famous work consists of the sketches and paintings that came from his brief one-night stay at Deaf Man’s Village in October of 1839. Joseph Slocum commissioned Winter to paint a portrait of his sister through John Green, a friend of the artist whom Slocum met in Peru.³⁵ On receiving the commission, Winter reports in his

³³ Kitty Dye. *Meet George Winter: Pioneer Artist, Journalist, Entrepreneur*. (Port Clinton, Ohio: LeClere Publishing Company, 2001,) 43-69. Dye is a librarian and self-proclaimed “freelance writer of historical material.” Her work is sold in county and state historical society gift shops, and it is geared towards a young adult audience.

³⁴ Cable G. Ball, ed., *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter*, (Chicago: Lakeside Press, R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company, 1948), 152.

³⁵ Ball, *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter*, 153.

journal: "Being deeply interested in Indian people, it was no common gratification that I felt in securing so romantic an object, to place among my many sketches of the aboriginal people in my possession."³⁶ And he treated the sketches that he drew of Mahkoonsahkwa, her family, and her home as treasures, his greatest claim to fame. American Studies scholar and Miami artist, Scott Shoemaker argues that it is "(t)hrough these representations, Winter became the 'expert observer' of the Miami of this time period and assumed the role as their spokesman in the Euro-American historical record."³⁷ Today, Winter's sketches and paintings have become the predominate visual representation of Indiana Indians and the model on which all future visual representations of Mahkoonsahkwa were based. His attention to the color and design of clothing significantly shaped how Native fashion of the region and period are imagined. The way contemporary Miamis portray "traditional" Miami clothing is closely aligned with these sketches because of the combination of the significance of the removal period and the detail of Winter's sketches.³⁸

Despite the significance of Winter's work in how Mahkoonsahkwa and the Miami were imagined in later years, during his lifetime his aboriginal work was perceived as not Indian enough because it did not reflect how Indians were being

³⁶ Ball, *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter*, 154.

³⁷ Scott Shoemaker. "Trickster Skins: Narratives of Landscape, Representation, and the Miami Nation." (dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2011) 96.

³⁸ While the "historical trapping" of Indians often refers to how non-Natives imagine Indians as living in the past, this is another important way that Native communities get trapped in particular historical imaginaries. In this case "traditional Miami clothing" is practically synonymous with Winter's descriptions and sketches of Miami fashion produced from 1837-39. This is particularly striking because it was a tumultuous period of rapidly changing fashion as a massive influx of settlers and Euro-American trade flooded the region in the wake of land dispossession treaties. The fashion in Winter's sketches represents how Miami were using the sudden excess of materials that were previously rare or unseen and would not have been "traditional" just ten years before.

portrayed in east coast art markets and print media. Susan Sleeper Smith, a historian who revived academic interest in Frances Slocum with a chapter in [give title of book here], situates Winter with George Catlin and George Bird King, artists who based their paintings on models paid to dress up like Plains Indians in studios in New York City.³⁹ Compared to the overly-performative portraits Catlin famously produced, Winter's Indians seemed too similar to settlers to be widely-consumable as images of aboriginal-others. Shoemaker, on the other hand, locates Winter among other Great Lakes Indian artists who painted the Miami, like Henry Hamilton (c. 1778) and James Otto Lewis (c. 1826). He points out that most of the Indian portraiture of this period focused on chiefs and was executed in regional art studios or at treaty signings, as a visual representation of who participated in the treaty process.⁴⁰ Shoemaker is particularly interested in how Winter represents the Miami within a distinctly Indiana-Miami landscape as opposed to a generic landscape painted from a studio setting. In addition to the representation of Miami land, I believe that moving through myaamianki (the place of the Miami) led Winter to more thoroughly engage and draw Native women as opposed to the male-chiefs of Hamilton and Lewis.

In the late twentieth century, Winter's entire aboriginal portfolio became widely appreciated, but it was mainly his images of Mahkoonsahkwa and Deaf Man's Village that circulated widely in his lifetime. As mentioned earlier, the entirety of this collection is based on a series of sketches drawn from an overnight stay at Deaf Man's Village at the behest of Mahkoonsahkwa's brother, Joseph. In 1871, thirty-

³⁹ Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 125.

⁴⁰ Shoemaker, "Trickster Skins," 78-85.

two years after this visit, Winter put together a collection that included reflections on the visit, excerpts from his travel journal, and three watercolor paintings. While Winter's initial attempt to publish this "journal" failed, it was eventually published by the Indiana State and Tippecanoe County historical societies in 1948 as *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter, 1837-1839*. Kitty Dye tells the intriguing story through which a mass collection of Winter's work was saved from destruction in 1933 and given to the Tippecanoe County Historical Association, which helped to make the publication of the collection possible.⁴¹ A deconstructed version of Winter's "Journal of a Visit to Deaf Man's Village, 1839" was published in 1993 alongside more extensive sketches and notes as *Indians and a Changing Frontier: the Art of George Winter*.⁴² While the complete collection of Winter's travel journals and sketches are available at the Tippecanoe County historical archives, the popularity of the Deaf Man's Village material allowed it to be published in book form.⁴³

Reading the text of Winter's journal alongside the paintings and sketches allows for a dual analysis of the production and consumption of these representations. The journal is filled with architectural, ornamental, and cultural details that are incredibly valuable to ethno-historians. Most importantly for this

⁴¹ Dye, *Maconaquah's Story*, 15-39.

⁴² Sarah E. Cooke and Rachel B. Ramahyani, eds. *Indians and a Changing Frontier: the Art of George Winter*, (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society and Tippecanoe County Historical Association, 1993).

⁴³ I spent four days at the Tippecanoe archives, and while I found other fascinating materials on the Miami, I did not find materials related to Mahkoonsahwkwa that were not already published elsewhere. From what I can tell, some scholars using these materials prefer to cite archival sources even when they are accessing the material through books. I, however, cite the book whose editors provided access to these materials.

study, the combination of the visual and textual allows for a more robust consideration of the settler standpoint from which Winter produced these materials. Although the book includes passages from his original travel journal, the final text of the journal and two of the paintings were produced long after the initial visit. The only piece that was circulated widely during Mahkoonsahkwa's lifetime is the formal portrait. The production of this portrait is especially significant because it is the only image he had permission to produce. The group portrait of Mahkoonsahkwa with her daughters and the landscape of Deaf Man's Village were sketched against the explicit wishes of Mahkoonsahkwa and were not completed until some time between 1863 and 1871.⁴⁴ Yet they remain important historical sources.

The Portrait

Joseph Slocum commissioned the portrait of his sister while on the 1839 visit with his daughters, Hannah and Harriet. They expected Winter to come to Deaf Man's Village immediately and perform his initial sketches in their presence, but he did not arrive until soon after they left for Pennsylvania. After learning of the Slocums' departure, Winter wrote about his overwhelming excitement and his deep concern about visiting Deaf Man's Village alone.

[I] was not sanguine of success in securing the likeness, being unattended by the relatives... as I was aware that the Miamis were exceedingly superstitious in regard to having their likenesses transferred to the canvas. The idea of seeing the home of the Captive and seeing, too, the object who was surrounded by so many romantic

⁴⁴ Cooke and Ramadhayani, 115-119.

circumstances, and who was exciting so much interest in the public mind – I soon determined upon the trip.⁴⁵

He arrived at Deaf Man's Village late in the day on the wrong side of the Mississinewa River without a translator and unable to speak Myaamia. The Miami in this region spoke a mix of Myaamia, English, and French, but each to varying degrees depending on their role in trade. When he arrived, none of the three women present spoke English, at least not well enough to converse with him; but nothing could prevent him from acquiring "the object" of such romantic circumstances.

Winter's only way to converse with Mahkoonsahkwa was through an interpreter. He remembers that a

"white man who had ferried me across the river could speak but a little in the Miami language. It was to a Negro that I was under obligation to express my purposes of the visit to the 'Captive.' This man of 'color' had identified himself with the Miamis. He had married a squaw and spoke fluently the tongue of that people. He was a general mechanic in the settlement. At the time I arrived at the village he was engaged in rebuilding a lath and plaster chimney for Frances Slocum."⁴⁶

This was likely George Slussman, the black-Miami who interpreted for Hannah and Harriet. Shoemaker points out that Winter did not apparently find "a man of African-American ancestry living among, married to, and speaking the language of the Miami remotely equivalent in romanticism as a woman of European ancestry who had done the same."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ball, *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter*, 159.

⁴⁶ Ball, *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter*, 168.

⁴⁷ Shoemaker, "Trickster Skins," 108.

Through the interpreter, Winter and Mahkoonsahkwa discussed the proposed portrait. Winter describes the conversation as such: “The Captive woman remarked, ‘that her brother Joseph wished her resemblance and expected me at Peru. It was for his gratification that she had promised to submit to its being done. She had no desire herself to have it done. The Miamis saw no good in it. But she promised her brother and she would not break her word with him.’”⁴⁸ Throughout the Journal, Winter regularly refers to Mahkoonsahkwa as the Captive, capitalizing on the popularity of her story as a captivity narrative.

By the end of this conversation, Winter and Mahkoonsahkwa decided to stage the portrait in the morning and then turned to dinner. Winter described the meal in detail and enjoyed a sense that these Indians must imagine him as a strange wonder. He repeatedly muses that they must see him as a medicine man. Kiihkinehkišwa, Mahkoonsahkwa’s eldest daughter prepared dinner. Winter remarks that she “was very gracious to me, and I could but feel that they regarded me as a friend of Joseph Slocum.”⁴⁹ Winter’s initial anxiety that he might be turned away if appearing on his own subsided as he realized that Mahkoonsahkwa and her daughters viewed their relationship with him as an extension of their friendship with Joseph. As he recorded in his journal:

Some consideration towards me was shown, owing perhaps to my peculiar purpose which no doubt was to the aboriginal mind, tinged with a mysterious character of the medicine man. To the cultivated mind the power of the pencil in the hands of genius is not its mysterious aspect. It is no wonder that the aboriginal mind, unused to the observation of artistic pursuits and results, might naturally

⁴⁸ Ball, *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter*, 168-169.

⁴⁹ Ball, *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter*, 169.

attach mysterious merits to the power of transferring the mimic face upon a smooth surface. I was aware that the Miami people had a superstitious feeling in regard to being portrayed.⁵⁰

Here Winter juxtaposes his own “genius” with the “aboriginal mind,” as incapable of comprehending “artistic pursuits,” and consistently attributes their resistance to being drawn as due to “superstitious feeling(s).” As discussed in the first chapter, “superstition” is often how Frances Slocum’s resistance to settler requests was interpreted, in place of addressing the many reasons why the Miami would perceive Anglo-Americans as untrustworthy given their experiences with them.

Winter’s understanding of the superstition at Deaf Man’s Village focused on how he believed they perceived him - as an exceptional white visitor who must have magical powers. This view is deeply embedded in a colonial racial logic that assumes that all people admire and desire proximity to Whiteness. In one of the more fantastical passages, he has “no doubt” that they view him as some sort of fire-spirit:

The young paupooses had ever been watchful of my movements – and no doubt they were interested in the presence of a mysterious white man. Preparatory to lighting my cigar I struck a Lucifer match upon the sole of my boot to ignite it. This, though a simple act, yet excited the greatest wonderment among the children of Kick-ke-se-qua and her sister. They ran away in amazement at so great a wonder. They thought, no doubt, I was made up of very combustible material. So great a mystery as bringing forth fire from the sole of the foot – the childish inference might have been that I was a great flame hidden by the closeting of the human form, and needed but the puncture of a little stick (the match) to bring forth the mysterious flame.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Ball, *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter*, 169-170. Parenthetical comment is part of the original text. Kick-ke-se-qua is his Anglicized version of Kiihkinehkišiwā.

⁵¹ Ball, *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter*, 170-171.

That first night, Winter was consumed with fanciful and romantic notions surrounding the significance of his presence at the home of the famed Captive. In the morning, these fantasies were extinguished.

When Winter first woke up he continued to marvel at his situation, but he soon noticed that none of the women were around even though they had gone to bed hours after him. He began to wander around the property making note of the vantage points for drawing the setting, but “My pleasant rambles were soon and unexpectantly brought to an end by the approach of the Negro interpreter who was seeking me. He informed me (in our language) that the ‘old woman’ had changed her mind, and would not consent to sit to me for her portrait. She thought that it was not right, as none of her relatives were present.”⁵² His shock soon turned to anger. The interpreter led him to her and facilitated their conversation. Winter argued that “if she did not sit now for me, that I should return home immediately, and would not come back to the village again; and that the friends would be disappointed, for they would never have another opportunity of obtaining her likeness again. They, too, would believe that she had ‘broken her word’ to them.”⁵³ Mahkoonsahkwa decided to sit for the promised portrait, but it was now clear to everyone that neither his presence nor his talents were welcome at Deaf Man’s Village.

Mahkoonsahkwa sat on a split bottom chair inside her house in front of the arched hearth of her kitchen. She wore a red ruffled blouse with large yellow

⁵² Ball, *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter*, 175.

⁵³ Ball, *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter*, 176.

flowers on it and a black petticoat skirt over her ribbonwork winged leggings. Her daughter placed a black shawl over her shoulders. Winter writes that she “was a patient sitter and wholly abandoned herself to my professional requirements.”⁵⁴ He took two hours to sketch Mahkoonsahkwa then took these sketches back to his studio in Logansport to complete the painting. In the portrait, the arched hearth and chair disappear into a harsh black background, and her shirt is drawn as a solid dark red. These reds and blacks better reflect the shading of more famous Indian portrait artists than the colorful outdoor scenes that dominate Winter’s aboriginal portfolio. He shipped the portrait to Joseph in Pennsylvania, and this became the definitive image of Frances Slocum. Versions of it appeared in newspapers, books, and pamphlets, and it is the image on which all future artistic renditions of the elder woman are based.

⁵⁴ Ball, *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter*, 178.



In Winter's journal he describes in detail what he sees at Deaf Man's Village. the text complementing his paintings and sketches. When writing about the process of producing the portrait, he describes how he saw the old woman. This passage offers the most thorough first person account of Mahkoonsahkwa's appearance and

complicates later racial descriptions of her as obviously Indian or white. Here he relates her appearance to both her Indian and Anglo-American families:

Frances Slocum's face bore the marks of deep-seated lines. The muscles of her cheeks were like corded rises, and her forehead ran in almost right-angular lines. There was indication of no unwanted cares upon her countenance beyond time's influence which peculiarly marks the decline of life. She bore the impress of old age, without its extreme feebleness. Her hair which was evidently of dark brown color was now frosted. Though bearing some resemblance to her family, yet her cheek bones seemed to bear the Indian characteristic in that particular –face broad, nose somewhat bulby (sic), mouth perhaps indicating some degree of severity. In her ears she wore some few 'ear bobs.' That Captive suggested the idea of her being a half-breed Pottawattamie. She was low in stature, being about five feet in height.⁵⁵

This description helps us see Winter's portrait of her anew. People often mention how angry she appears, and I attributed that interpretation to her furrowed forehead. In this passage Winter particularly describes the "deep-seated lines" and "corded rises" of her face. To a portrait artist these features are difficult to portray, which is likely why he mentions them in his journal. In the portrait, we thus see an artist's anxiety to best portray a difficult subject. There is a tendency when trying to "get it right" to overwork a particularly difficult spot, bringing more attention to that which the artist wants to appear natural, especially when he already believed that he was painting the most important portrait of his life.

This portrait draws interest from scholars interested in the famous captive and those focused on the artist. Shoemaker argues that art historians tend to fall

⁵⁵ Ball, *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter*, 177. Notice that in this passage her hair is described as brown. This is the most thorough first description of her body, and "brown" hair could be read somewhat racially ambiguous here. This

into a discussion of the (in)authenticity of Winter's images of Indians. Taking a critical indigenous perspective, Shoemaker is more interested in "how 'authenticity', has been bound to his work as the 'real' and the stories the *subjects* of the artist tell us about this." Shoemaker brings together an artist's eye and a distinctly Miami perspective in his treatment of Winter's work. This particular interdisciplinary approach asks the viewers to listen to what Mahkoonsahkwa and her daughters might be telling us in this work. In focusing our attention and imagination on the Miami subjects of the paintings, Shoemaker sees resistance.

Sleeper-Smith uses her analysis of this painting as a cornerstone of her argument that the Miami developed "ingenious ways of constructing whiteness" to allow them to remain on the Indiana frontier after removal. Sleeper-Smith's key example is Frances Slocum whom she posits as an Indian "hiding in plain view." She argues that during this time period "Mo-con-no-quah (transformed) into a subservient white woman, and George Winter provided the visually creative evidence of that transformation."⁵⁶ Sleeper-Smith supports this argument through a comparison between the portrait of Slocum, which she reads as a whitened image, and the group portrait with her daughters, which featured "colorful Indian garments."⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 137. Here I moved Sleeper-Smith's verb "transformed" from earlier in the sentence in order to fit grammatically, but it reflects her word choice.

⁵⁷ Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 138.



The group portrait features Mahkoonsahkwa sitting center in a chair with a daughter on each side of her. To her right stands Oonsaahšinihkwa in a red ruffled shirt with a white shawl tied around her neck, larger silver earrings, and a black blanket pulled around her. To her left Kiihkinehkišiwa stands with her back turned, a large black blanket pulled around her and showing the wooden “bow” in her hair, while the ruffles of a red shirt appear around her neck. Sleeper-Smith sees this as

Winter's "Indian" portrayal of Frances Slocum and compares this scene to the individual portrait in order to describe how the artist collaborated in the visual transformation of Slocum into a "subservient white woman." There is an assumption underlying her text that the group portrait depicts the family as they are posed in life for the formal portrait whereas the single portrait was more purposely shaped by the Winter's choices. She writes:

The portrait for the Slocum family depicted a somber, solitary woman with a lined, weathered face that suggested a long, harsh life. Winter included neither her daughters nor her vivid clothing. Her multicolored calico blouse became a muted red. There was no visual reference to Frances' colorful leggings or her bare feet, for that was unnecessary in an upper body portrait.⁵⁸

Sleeper-Smith sees an obvious shift between Indianness and whiteness in these paintings because she believes that these paintings are evidence of her larger historical argument that the Miami Indians, including Mahkoonsahkwa, were performing whiteness as a political strategy to remain in Indiana.⁵⁹ Sleeper-Smith is the most authoritative scholar to write about Frances Slocum in recent years and has helped to renew interest in her as a historical figure. Yet, in her analysis Slocum is not a subject of inquiry to be understood, she is just an example of how Indians of the Great Lakes were whitened.

⁵⁸ Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 138.

⁵⁹ Sleeper-Smith argues that the Miami were strategically performing such whiteness themselves and says that "Although we may applaud the ingenious 'white' strategies that many villages devised to prevent removal, we should also be cognizant of the long-range impact of these behaviors." (139) This sentence suggests that Indian villages were enacting white strategies, but her primary example is her reading of how Winter represented Slocum in this portrait. So, the slippage between whether her argument is about the Miami choosing white performances or the Miami being represented as white reflects a tension in her text.

The difference between Shoemaker and Sleeper-Smiths' approaches highlight how political commitment and the scope of research questions shape Native object/subject representation. Shoemaker raises questions, without certain answers, about Miami experiences of Winter and his artwork. As an artist Shoemaker draws on the Winter journals and sketches for inspiration in his visual work while also complicating Winter's self-aggrandizing accounts of the Miami in his scholarship. He approaches Winter's paintings with a sense of curiosity about what we can learn from our Miami relatives through the medium of Winter's work. Sleeper-Smith, as a historian of American Indians, is more focused on supporting her larger argument that the Indians who remained in Indiana were strategically whitened, which leads her to suggest that the Miami were "hiding in plain view" on the frontier. While both of these scholars read Winter's paintings, the differences in purpose, scope, positionality, disciplinary and generational assumptions mean that their projects are incredibly distinctive. Her work is far more widely circulated and treated authoritatively than Shoemaker's.⁶⁰ Her book is regularly taught in graduate American Indian history courses here at Rutgers, in part because it makes such compelling, clear argument about the whitening of American Indians in the Great Lakes. Yet the argument may be evidence, instead, that a settler approach to scholarship continues to reify whiteness and settler-belonging while rendering Native Americans as two-dimensional objects even when the field is American

⁶⁰ This is simply a matter of fact in the sense that Sleeper-Smith's book was published in 2001 and is still in print. Shoemaker's work is an unpublished dissertation that has not yet found an academic publisher. My emphasis here is on the circulation and consumption of ideas about Mahkoonsahkwa and the Miami at this time, not the publication side.

Indian Studies. My intent here is to bring attention to the relationship between how research questions are asked and how Native subjectivity is imagined.

The focus of Sleeper-Smith's project is the whitening of Indians in the Lower Great Lakes. Within that scope Frances Slocum becomes a fascinating snapshot of the overlapping qualities of Indianness and whiteness at a particular historical moment. Slocum is not the object of inquiry; she is a simple example. Thus Sleeper-Smith has no need to interrogate the production of race in Winter's paintings or other Frances Slocum materials. The description of the transformation from Indian to white is the only reason for her investigation of this specific material.⁶¹ The point that I want to make here is about how knowledge/power is produced in relation to the political framework of the project: 1) Sleeper-Smith's approach produces a clear narrative of Indian whitening without addressing Miami experience and explicit intent⁶² and 2) the focus on showing Frances Slocum's "construction of whiteness" precludes an analysis of the production of these paintings, which significantly complicates her argument. By attempting to understand Miami experience through these paintings, Shoemaker invites his readers into a Miami perspective of the 1830's based on Winter's work. Sleeper-Smith's focus on making her argument that the Miami strategically whitened themselves in order to hide in plain view, leads her to offer Winter's portraits of Slocum as objects of evidence. My point is that if

⁶¹ I want to be clear here - if I were carrying out Sleeper-Smith's project, I would not feel any need to interrogate these portraits further. She had no reason to take up Slocum as her subject because her project is about widespread whitening across the Lower Great Lakes. What I am interested in is how the Miami, and in this case Frances Slocum, are inevitably represented as objects rather than subjects, AND it is this sort of project that produces clear "historical knowledge" and circulates widely.

⁶² Throughout her work, Miami intent to be whitened is suggested, but never shown.

Sleeper-Smith had treated the figure of Frances Slocum or her portraits as sites of inquiry, she likely would have come to a different conclusion. Within the context of the larger story of Frances Slocum, it seems strange that the key evidence that the Miami strategically whitened themselves is a woman born to a white family who married into Miami society. The evidence that she uses to show the “construction of whiteness” is her own reading of portraits that do not contextualize the production of the paintings.

The original painting was produced as a formally commissioned portrait, to become a family heirloom, and the group portrait was based on sketches made “by stealth” and completed thirty years later in hopes of publishing a book about the famous Captive. Where Sleeper-Smith sees Winter’s efforts to whiten Slocum, I see him abiding by norms of Indian portraiture for a white client, including the blank background and the dark reds and blacks, reminiscent of George Carlton’s famous aboriginal paintings. Looking closely at how Slocum is figured in these two portraits, the most significance difference that stands out to me is that she seems slightly heavier in the group portrait. I have a hard time identifying anything about the Slocum images that appear racially different, and I am uncertain as well whether the inclusion of yellow flowers on her shirt should signify white femininity or “colorful Indian garments.”⁶³ What clearly racializes the group portrait is the inclusion of her two darker daughters, one standing with her back to the artist, which is jarring.

⁶³ Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 138.

Anyone who writes about the portrait of Slocum and her daughters addresses to some extent why Oonsaahšinihkwa's back is featured. It is often suggested that this is how she posed for the painting, superstitiously refusing to be drawn from the front. From Winter's journals it is clear that she refused to be drawn, but not that she posed backwards.⁶⁴ The daughters never stood for this portrait and both refused to be drawn, consistently. The composition was conceived of three decades later based on sketches from that day. Winter explains that Kiihkinehkišiwā's "physique is brought back strongly in remembrance through the medium of a sketch that I made of her at the village, by stealth."⁶⁵ Thus Winter bases the group portrait on the sketches that he made of Mahkoonsahkwa and Kiihkinehkišiwā. He never had the chance to complete a sketch of Oonsaahšinihkwa, which may be a very practical reason why she is drawn from behind.

Any comparisons between these portraits should take into account the time periods in which they were produced. The formal portrait was produced in the 1830's and helped to cement her life story as a captivity narrative. The group portrait, conceived and executed sometime between 1867 and 1871, reflects the legacy of captivity narratives in the American imaginary at that time. The images of

⁶⁴ The readings that suggest this is how Oonsaahšinihkwa posed, including Sleeper-Smith's, cite a journal passage in which Winter describes how Oonsaahšinihkwa upon seeing the sketch of her mother "turned away from it abruptly." My interest in how the portrait regularly is posited as a visual depiction of her "turning away" even though that turning away happened after the sketch would have been made is based on how I see small details slip and stick in various forms as the Slocum stories evolve over time. The changes the develop in the story are often times based on details of an earlier that are re-arranged and take on different meaning in the story.

⁶⁵ Ball, *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter*, 193.

her Miami daughters and her home are used to flesh out a broader visual account of the famous Captive. Winter had hoped to collect far more sketches of Deaf Man's Village and its inhabitants, "for enriching my portfolio," but upon finishing the two-hour sketch of Mahkoonsahkwa, he "could but feel as by intuition that my absence would be hailed as a joyous relief to the family."⁶⁶

Mahkoonsahkwa and her daughters thought that he was finally going to leave, but as he walked toward the edge of their clearing he stopped at one of his previously chosen points from which he planned to draw the property. He claims that no sooner had he raised his pencil that the three women and their children gathered on the back porch talking, clearly unhappy with his action. Winter explains that they most likely feared that he was "a 'man-i-tou' of evil, and my devilry was about to bring upon them some fearful calamity."⁶⁷ Winter ignored their displeasure as long as he could, choosing to focus on what would constitute the best picture:

I worked away rapidly at my sketch, securing the important points of the interesting scene before me. At last the Captive woman advanced toward me. She appeared to the greatest advantage in the picturesque effect, as the open light of day lit up her venerable figure. She addressed me in the Miami language, which was not comprehensible to me; but her manner of gesticulation was so striking and clear, that it would have been dullness of intellect that could not have understood the desired communication of the wish. I knew by an intuition that there were objections to my proceeding with the sketch. I still worked away, affecting not to comprehend her desires. At last she said in English very emphatically, 'no good, no good!' My portfolio I turned downwards, and appealingly gazed at her. She signified by a nod, and a pleasant smile that she was

⁶⁶ Ball, *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter*, 178, 179.

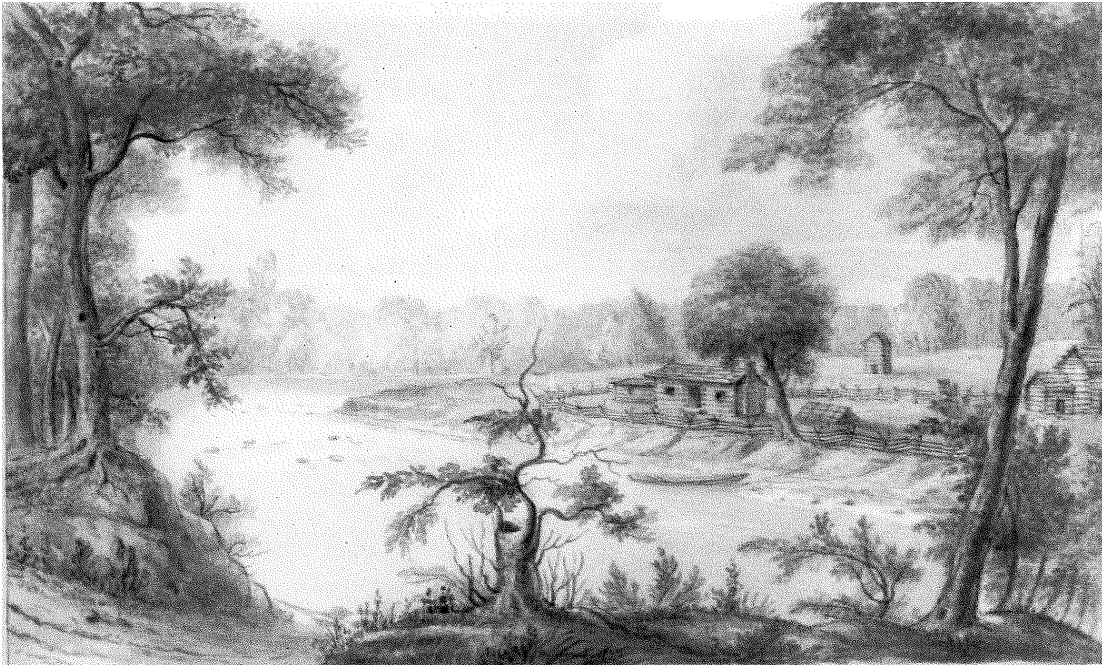
⁶⁷ Ball, *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter*, 179.

gratified. On returning to the cabin with the Captive, all the family excepting Kick-ke-se-qua had disappeared. She, however, exclaimed disturbedly, 'No good! No good house!' My immediate departure was soon decided upon, my operations of the pencil not being held in favor and not wishing to inflict further perturbation of their superstitious minds. To make a good exit was a desideratum. The farewell was short.⁶⁸

Still, Winter was determined to gather his sketches. He paddled across the Mississinewa River and turned to bow in farewell. From his own account he then "disappeared from their sight, in the dark shade of the heavy timbered forest. Under the advantage of my seclusion and being decidedly master of the situation, I made a sketch of the pleasant river view, including the classic village which abounded in such touching concentration of interest. I could but linger and drink into a fullness the scene so deeply impressed upon my mind. I felt enriched with 'treasures' of the highest value in historic interest, and happily retraced my way through the 'dim lit' aboriginal forest."⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Ball, *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter*, 180.

⁶⁹ Ball, *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter*, 180.



What I continue to wrestle with in reading and thinking about Winter's work is the juxtaposition between his grandiose appreciation of Deaf Man's Village as "of the highest value in historic interest" and his repeated diminishment of the desires of Mahkoonsahkwa and her family. This dynamic is addressed in Mark Rifkin's recent work *Settler Common Sense: Queerness and Everyday Colonialism in the American Renaissance* in which he posits settler common sense as a field of knowledge production in which Indians objects are always peripheral to settler subjects. Nativeness serves as a placeholder in relation to which settlers identify themselves as American. Rifkin's work focuses on literary analysis, but his theorization of common sense can easily expand into the broader field of meaning-making. As Winter sketched and painted the scenes at Deaf Man's Village, he was clearly aware of a larger historical significance for Mahkoonsahkwa and her home as attached to a captivity narrative. He had studied portraiture, and he sought to represent "his indian objects" as best he could. For Winter, his sketches were an

attempt to preserve that which was inevitably extinct, and he was proud of how well his sketch of Mahkoonsahkwa represented her. Yet, his view of her was always already shaped by his knowledge of her life story as a captivity narrative, as if she were a character of a book to be read about rather than engaged.

Conclusion

The representations of Frances Slocum produced and circulated in the 1830's laid the foundation for all future textual and visual accounts of her life. Her story emerged alongside the shifting politicization of captivity narratives. In this period the United States is establishing a national identity on the global stage as a new and expanding nation built by European immigrant-settlers. The continued presence of the Miami in this region meant that whiteness/Indianness were becoming the most significant boundary marker in the region, as opposed to the previous emphasis on French/English settlers. Thus the story of Slocum developed in this period is embedded within a colonial anxiety of race of U.S. national belonging.

At the end of nearly every newspaper story and even in Winter's journal, the author explains how desperately the Slocums hoped that their lost sister would return "home" with them. A great deal is made of the fact that she consistently refused. She had no desire to leave her Miami family or land. The idea of a white Quaker family losing their youngest daughter to Indian captivity and then "finding" her again nearly sixty-years later made Frances Slocum a national story of hope, filled with the "romantic adventure" that Winter found so captivating. But her repeated refusal to return to her white family still needed to be explained.

Chapter 3

Figuring: Place and Locale in Nationalist History

On March 9, 1847 at her home, Deaf Man's Village, Mahkoonsahkwa passed away. She had been ill for quite some time, and she died surrounded by her family. After interviewing those who were there, biographer John Meginness wrote that "(s)he realized that the end was near, was resigned and happy, and welcomed the approach of death. She refused all medical aid, declaring that as her people were gone she wished to live no longer."¹ Peter Bondy, her son-in-law told Meginness that "she died peacefully and calmly with her head resting on his arm, in the presence of her daughters and friends." Among those friends was her nephew, George Slocum, a Baptist minister who moved to Peru the year before as a missionary among the Miami.

Mahkoonsahkwa was buried alongside her husband and two sons in the family burial ground at Deaf Man's Village, what came to be known as the Bundy property, a variation on Peter Bondy's name. A white flag was raised over the grave as she had requested. The graves in this cemetery had simple markers of sticks and stones. It was a family cemetery on private land. In the coming generations, more formal gravestones became common among the Miami, and marble markers were erected for the graves of son-in-law Brouilliet and daughter Oonsaahšinihkwa when they passed away. Examples of these modern stones can be seen at various Miami

¹ Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 137.

burial grounds like the beautiful Godfroy cemetery at the Old Indian School House.²

But Mahkoonsahkwa's grave remained largely unmarked, as noted by Meginness

after he visited the site in 1889 with her grandson Judson Bundy:

After searching for a few minutes, and carefully noting the headstone of his mother's grave, he selected a depressed spot, and brushing away the tangled mass of grass and brambles, sorrowfully said: 'Here is grandmother's grave!' Although she had been dead for more than forty years, and her history conceded to stand alone in strangeness of circumstance and detail, not a memorial stone, however plain or humble, has been reared to mark her quiet resting place!³

Generations of settlers used their concern for the proper care of her burial site as justification to manage Miami lands and places for them, even though

Mahkoonsahkwa, a wealthy woman, was buried according to the tradition of her time and people.

Through the 1890s the tale of Frances Slocum shifted from a narrative focused on captivity into a story of place in which the locations memorialized highlighted settler claims of belonging. As a story of place, the newer versions of Slocum's life became a story about land, especially Indian land that had been claimed by white settlers in Pennsylvania in the 1740s and was still being

² Much more could be said about the placement and arrangement of Miami cemeteries. About every other year, the Miami Nation language committee (on which I sit) organizes a tour of Miami cemeteries. It is a powerful and moving experience. The difference between the traditional Miami cemeteries and those that were relocated through state programs is shocking to anyone who witnesses it. This is significant here because the cemetery at Deaf Man's Village was an important family cemetery to a powerful Miami family. Its relocation between 1955 and 1964 was a major event for the Miami and in the shaping of the historical significance of Frances Slocum. I mention the cemetery at the Old Indian School House because it is one of the most publicly visited traditional Miami cemeteries, and it is regularly targeted for vandalism, especially just prior to Halloween every year. My family's gravestones have been targeted by this anti-Indian vandalism. Managing the vandalism and destruction of family cemeteries is part of the every day labor of being Miami.

³ Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 141.

demanding by white settlers in Indiana a century and a half later. This is not to say that the captivity narrative of Slocum disappeared; it continues to circulate today. However, in the 1890s a series of book projects and a monument built in her honor created a concentrated energy around memorializing Frances Slocum as an important historical figure of settler history.

It is not a coincidence that these moments of remembering Frances Slocum, correspond with efforts to gain control over Miami lands. In Jean O'Brien's work on the historical rhetoric of "firsting and lasting" in New England, she shows how settler communities used memorials to the "last of the Indians" as a means to claim native land as settler property.⁴ In her second chapter titled "Replacing: Historical Practices Argue that Non-Indians Have Supplanted Indians" she focuses clearly on how memorials to Indian-figures and the placement of Indian figures in memorials more generally "conveys a deep estrangement of Indians from this place and history."⁵ A memorial marks the permanent past-ness of someone or some event. O'Brien argues that complimentary writing and historical practices worked together to produce a "pervasive and persuasive" narrative of Indian extinction.⁶ It is through this sense of Indian absence that settlers asserted their right to the land.

In tracing the evolution of the story of Frances Slocum, it is clear that it goes through waves of popularity with events and publications related to her memory appearing in clusters. Significantly, those clusters correspond with major efforts by settlers to take control of Miami lands. The who, how, and why of Miami land

⁴ Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2010.)

⁵ O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, 104.

⁶ O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, 202.

dispossession varies greatly, but with each effort there is a substantial rise in the circulation and consumption of Frances Slocum as a politically-charged historical figure.

This chapter looks at the transformation of Frances Slocum from the subject of a captivity narrative into a broader historical figure tied to particular peoples and places. Her story never takes on the nationalist work of Native women like Pocahontas or Sacajawea. However, Slocum becomes attached to local-nationalist narratives of place, what Coll Thrush calls place-stories.⁷ In both the place where she was captured and the place where she was buried, Slocum is memorialized as an early settler among the Indians and a primary historical figure through which contemporary residents identify, which attaches her to the broader work on place-identity, how people identify themselves as belonging in a particular place.⁸ I argue that it is in the 1890s that Frances Slocum becomes a historical figure of place through which Indian absence is memorialized and settler notions of belonging are celebrated.

⁷ Coll Thrush. *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009.) I use the passive voice “Slocum becomes attached” because she does not attach herself to narratives of place, and I have a hard time viewing the authors and actors who memorialize her as choosing to do certain political work with the figure of Slocum. Most of these authors seem to imagine themselves as just retelling history. This sense of history as a simple retelling is part of what I am unsettling in this work, the practices through which history is made in local and academic contexts. When I use an active voice to attribute the production of affective attachments to particular people, then it seems like I am blaming or shaming a particular person, which I do not intend to do. Instead, my interest is in the accumulation of attachments to Frances Slocum that produce broader social imaginaries that naturalize settler belonging in the United States. I have not yet figured out how to articulate this clearly and concisely in active voice, and I still worry that the passive voice does not imply the relations well either.

⁸ Harold M. Proshansky, Abbe K. Fabian and Robert Kaminoff, “Place-identity: Physical World Socialization of the Self,” (*Journal of Environmental Psychology*, No. 3, 1983, 57-83.)

To bridge the discussions of the 1840s and 1890s I briefly explore how her story evolved in this time period. Then I show how the research of John Meginness fostered a series of connections that built energy around reviving the figure of Frances Slocum in the 1890s. By the turn of the twentieth century Frances Slocum is memorialized with a monument at her gravesite. Through a series of publications and a community-wide memorialization, Frances Slocum was transformed into a key historical figure of place.

Passing On

The land where Mahkoonsahkwa lived and died was deeded to her daughters, Oonsaahšinihkwa and Kiihkinehkišiwa, in a Congressional amendment to the 1838 treaty that gave key Miami families large tracts of land in exchange for the last of their commonly held reserve.⁹ Deaf Man's Village was held by the two daughters as "tenants in common." Kiihkinehkišiwa, also known as Nancy, was married to Brouilliet, but they never had any children or heirs. Oonsaahšinihkwa, whose English name was Jane Bondy, had twelve children by five men. She was best known as the wife of Peter Bondy because they remained married until she passed away on January 25, 1877, and their seven children were known by his English name. This is why the descendants of Frances Slocum are known as the "Bundy"

⁹ For the best current account of the Miami land treaties and the gritty details see Stewart Rafert's *The Miami Indians of Indiana, a Persistent People, 1654-1994*. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1996.) Crucially, before 1818 all the Miami land was communally held, after 1818 land began to be legally organized into various forms, some of it being held by the Miami Nation at large, and other lands being held communally by Miami families. After 1838, what was left to the Miami in the treaties was deeded to individual Miami people, usually the patriarch of the family. In this case, the patriarch had already passed away in 1833.

family or clan today.¹⁰ The Miami who remained in Indiana after formal removal in spring of 1846 did so through a series of treaties, amendments, and congressional acts that gave particular Miamis individual *ownership* of land to be tax-free in perpetuity *and* access to *treaty payments*, called annuities, to be made in Fort Wayne, Indiana. It was the combination of the tax-free land and continued payments that allowed the Miami to survive in post-removal Indiana.

There are many speculations as to why this land was deeded to Oonsaahšinihkwa and Kiihkinehkišiwā instead of the famous matriarch, but regardless of the initial justifications, there were clear legal benefits for the daughters. Missionary George Slocum moved his family to Reserve, Indiana (known later as Peoria) in 1846 to live near his aunt and to teach the Miami “the importance of industry and frugality.”¹¹ Meginness reports that when George settled near her, Mahkoonsahkwa “went through the form of adoption according to the tribal laws, as she understood no other, and she kept her contract of adoption as long as she lived.”¹² After her passing, George sought to claim his portion of her inheritance as her adopted son. For six years, he insisted on a legal right to her land, which was

¹⁰ Around the turn of the 20th century “Bondy” became “Bundy,” and the family is known as the Bundys today. The clan system in place among the Miami at the turn of the 19th century was practically obliterated by the 1830s, in part due to the hetero-patriarchal norms demanded by the family-centered treaty deeds of 1816-1842. By the end of this time period, the Miami identify and are identified by their family affiliation (as opposed to clan,) which clearly assumed an Anglo-based hetero-patriarchal model. In the 20th century the Miami use family designations interchangeably with clan designations, though Miami linguists like Wes Leonard, Scott Shoemaker, and George Ironstrack have put some effort into recovering clan knowledge systems through linguistic study. All contemporary Miami linguistic studies are greatly influenced by the work of linguist David Costa, who wrote his dissertation “The Miami-Illinois Language” (UC Berkley) on recovering Myaamia language practices in 1994.

¹¹ Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 145.

¹² Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 153.

never granted by the courts because the land was never in the name of either Mahkoonsahkwa or Frances Slocum.

Just four days after Mahkoonsahkwa passed away, her eldest daughter Kiihkinehkišiwā, who was already ill, died as well.¹³ Her husband, Brouilliet continued to live at Deaf Man's Village until his death on June 17, 1867. Full ownership of the property was then left to Oonsaahšinihkwa and her children. George Slocum, believing he had been cheated out of his land, took the Myaamia language skills that he developed in Reserve and moved with his family to Kansas to minister to the Miami now living there. However, his daughters and grandsons continued to seek legal compensation into the 1880s for the land they believed was due him as the adopted son of Frances Slocum.

Becoming History

In addition to family battles over land, the announcements of Mahkoonsahwa's death inspired new interest in her captivity narrative. But gradually the accounts of Frances Slocum appeared more as historical tales related to the distinct places where she had lived. Newspapers stories about her death, beginning in Peru and Wilkes-Barre, followed the pattern established by the Slocum reunion, and were then reprinted as they spread throughout the United States. But as newspaper stories about Slocum appeared less regularly between the 1850s and the 1880s, they were also framed in new ways, as historical tales rather than

¹³ In the books and newspaper articles, the daughter's death is often described as a response to mourning her mother, but it seems more likely that they caught a common virus or other shared illness.

captivity narratives. For instance on October 23, 1887, a story appeared in the *St. Louis Daily Globe Democrat* titled “The Lost Sister. The abduction of Frances Slocum by the Delaware Indians. Her Subsequent Discovery After a Residence of Sixty Years Among the Tribes – A Pathetic Story.” On one hand, this account is unremarkable, being very much like the hundreds that had been printed before. But this one was written explicitly for the *St. Louis Daily Globe* with no justification for why the story was being told at this time or in this place. It reflects the shift during this period from Slocum’s story as that of a living captive to a tale of a deceased historical figure that could pop up just about anywhere at any time.

By the 1880s both newspapers and regional histories were becoming more professional. What this meant for newspaper accounts of Frances Slocum is that authors’ names were regularly included with articles, and when articles were republished from elsewhere the source, location, and original author were more likely to be included. It thus became easier to track the circulation of distinct accounts of Frances Slocum. At the same time, more elaborate dialogue between Frances Slocum and her siblings appears in these articles, which is unlikely to reflect actual conversations given the language barriers involved and the time that had passed since any such conversations took place. These articles are rarely presented as first-person accounts, however, and thus side-step thorny issues like translators and who was present at particular times and places. They focus instead on the broader interest generated by a good story about Frances Slocum, the Captive, and the amazing fact that she was finally found by her brothers.

This shift is reflected in how the capture of Frances Slocum appears in regional history books written after her death. Beginning with George Peck's *Wyoming: its history, stirring incidents, and romantic adventures*, published in 1858, the story of Frances Slocum is presented as a key historical narrative in the area around Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Poems and songs are written about her and publicly performed at community events. By the 1880's historical societies and "pioneer clubs" were becoming common. While these groups could take many forms, they were generally organized by wealthy community leaders who took a special interest in local history. The organizers gathered large private collections of historical materials, published newsletters and books on regional history, and held regular meetings in which elderly pioneers gathered to share their stories about settling the region.

The story of Frances Slocum benefited from the increasing energy spent on recording and preserving historical narratives across the United States. While there continued to be special interest in her narrative around Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania and Peru, Indiana, her story gained a wider audience as an emotional tale of loss and recovery on the American frontier. In this context, dialogue and details were created to enhance the original captivity narrative and bring it to life for different audiences and generations.

In the 1880's, however, the professionalization of regional histories raised further interest in documenting the historical experiences of Frances Slocum. This led to a push toward gathering and analyzing historical evidence and inspired John Meginness (1827-1899) to undertake an "exhaustive biography" of Frances Slocum

in October 1889. It was published just over a year later in December 1890.¹⁴ That book, *Biography of Frances Slocum, the Lost Sister of Wyoming: a Complete Narrative of her Captivity and Wanderings among the Indians*, becomes the most widely circulated and authoritative account of Slocum's life. Just like the original newspaper stories became the basis of her captivity narrative, Meginness' text soon became the basis for all historical claims about her life.

Meginness was born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in 1827 near the height of the captivity narrative publishing boom there. Two decades later, during the U.S.-Mexico War, he served as a clerk for Company D of the Fifth U.S. infantry. In Mexico City at the National Palace he began his writing career, witnessing the first of five three million dollar payments made by the United States to Mexico for California. When he returned from the war, he became the editor of the *Jersey Shore Republican* weekly. During his long career as an editor and journalist, he became particularly interested in preserving the pioneer history of Pennsylvania.

In the fall of 1889 he visited some friends in Logansport, Indiana, and asked about seeing Slocum's grave while he was in the area. Meginness had been fascinated by her story when he first read it forty years earlier, when he was just a boy and accounts of her death circulated widely. He encountered one of Mahkoonsahkwa's grandsons at Deaf Man's Village who took him to her grave. Meginness says that he "seemed to entertain almost a holy reverence for the spot,

¹⁴ Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, "To the Reader."

and spoke in the most affectionate terms of his grandmother, whom he had never seen.”¹⁵

As noted earlier, Meginness’ *Biography of Frances Slocum* is the most thoroughly researched and historically authoritative account of the famous captive. To this day, it is the text that historians interested in either her captivity narrative or her life as a Miami use as their primary source. Meginness made the decision to undertake this project while in Logansport, and then spent much of his trip gathering materials. When he returned east, he went to Wilkes-Barre to continue his research. Amazingly, the project—researching, writing, and publishing took just over one year. Still, his desire for an “exhaustive” and “exact” account of Slocum’s life is symptomatic of the larger trends in regional history in the late 1880s.

To meet the new standards of professional historians, Meginness spent a great deal of time conversing with the Slocum family and reading what was left of their family papers.¹⁶ In order to trace the Captive’s travels, he spent an inordinate amount of time attempting to physically follow Mahkoonsahkwa’s description of her first night in captivity. In his book he laments that the cave’s “exact location has never been positively known, and never will be.”¹⁷ Despite such disappointments,

¹⁵ Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, “To the Reader.”

¹⁶ The majority of the Slocum family papers, including numerous letters and journals, were lent to author John Todd when he was writing his book in 1840. He promised to return all the materials and never did. Nearly every Slocum who published a book about Frances Slocum makes it clear that this is a long held resentment. In 2005, the unnamed editor/author of the “Slocum Register Addendum” writes “We’re still hoping (the Todd materials) were not destroyed, but are hiding away in a Todd descendant’s attic, or among museum papers somewhere... they may show up yet!” (Slocum folder, Miami County Historical Society) For my part I tracked down the living descendants of John Todd using genealogical message boards and located all the formally archived family papers that I could identify, and alas no sign of the Slocum materials were found.

¹⁷ Meginness, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 74.

Meginness' quest to account for Mahkoonsahkwa's travels with the Indians led him to read closely the journals of traders and military leaders active in major trading centers in the 1780s and 1790s where little Frances might have passed.

While Meginness' attention to detail and thoroughness is commendable, there are points in his book where he begins to overreach, particularly once he became convinced that the Slocum brothers were always just one small step behind the Indians.¹⁸ He also believed that the Indians worshipped Frances for her white skin and red hair and thus were not willing to give her back like they did Wareham Kingsley, the boy captured alongside her. Meginness' belief in the special value of Frances among the Indians is rooted in a white supremacist ideology that assumes all people seek proximity and affiliation with whiteness. If the Lenape and Miami were making an extraordinary effort to hide Frances, as Meginness proposes, it was probably because she was now a family member – not from a heathen's worship of whiteness.

The value of Meginness' book, despite its ideological flaws, is the inclusion of citations and specific references to other historical and literary texts on Slocum. This is one of the key features that mark his biography as more authoritative than others, written as it was in the early stages of creating citational norms for professional historians. In mapping the variations in the life stories of Slocum, Meginness' references helped to show how and where certain versions of the story

¹⁸ At one point he accuses a General of having lied to the Slocum brothers about seeing Frances Slocum because Meginness found a reference to Slocum in his journal just one week before. This seems unlikely because 1) she would not have gone by the name Frances Slocum at this time period; she would have been thoroughly acculturated among the Lenape, and 2) I doubt that this white U.S. General would purposefully hide a white woman living among the Indians from her white brothers.

came together or diverged. Still, his citations are neither thorough nor consistent. There are long passages quoted from other books without clear reference, even though the reference is likely to be mentioned explicitly somewhere in his book. This was still a common journalistic practice, even though the norms were changing at the time.¹⁹

The research Meginness did while writing his book is significant to the larger story of the rise of Frances Slocum as a historical figure, not just because he wrote the most authoritative text on her life, but also because he reconnected the Slocum family and got them talking about their famed relative. Meginness travelled and corresponded with Slocum family members who were spread across the United States and pushed them to get the story straight by corresponding with each other. Through this process, he forged a network of people who had a stake in her life story and in developing a shared version of it.

When Meginness' book was published for three dollars a copy in December 1890, it sold out within weeks. It did not meet the bestseller criteria of 625,000 copies, but two more runs of it were printed in 1891. Four more runs were printed by 1900, and it continued to be printed every generation up until 1991. Today it is widely available through libraries and freely accessible online via google books.²⁰

¹⁹ Throughout the research on print and oral accounts, borrowing the language and structure of the story was common. However, in a 1910 article in the *Washington Post* titled "History Repeats Itself – Remarkable Similarity of Two Accounts of Frances Slocum's Life," the author prints two versions of her story side by side, line by line, which nearly match up. He muses that "great minds run in the same channel," though there is a vague sense that he is accusing the journalist of copying the story.

²⁰ On the title page of the copy that I bought used online for \$17.00 in 2009 are handwritten notes from the previous owners, all of which are distant relatives of Frances' parents in some way. The most recent owner's last name is Tripp, and he explains that he is an 11th

An 1891 review of the book in the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, reads:

Hon. Horace P. Biddle, of Logansport, Indiana, contributes a chapter of recollections of Frances Slocum, and among the official documents given are a copy of the treaty with the Miami Indians, in 1838, the petition of the captive to Congress, in 1845, and the will of her youngest daughter. The book is printed on heavy paper and illustrated with portraits of Frances Slocum, her eldest daughter, two sons-in-law, and youngest living descendent, besides several other members of her family. In pathos, strangeness of detail, and mystery, the story of Frances Slocum stands almost alone in Indian history.²¹

The documentation provided by Meginness connected strongly with the broader push of formalizing American History as a field of inquiry while the “pathos” of his story reflects the swell of public investment in memorializing historical figures, including Indians.²²

In Memorial

In the 1890's, a wave of public and private projects memorialized notable Americans through the dedication of land and monuments. The establishment of the U.S. National Park system in the 1870's is often attributed to the efforts of George Caitlin, the famed Indian artist, and authors James Fenimore Cooper and

generation descendant of Isaac Tripp, Frances Slocum's maternal grandfather. I never expected this project to have so many genealogical components, but the more I learned about the texts on Frances Slocum, the more I learned about the larger Slocum family.

²¹ “Back Material.” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*. (15:1, 1891,) 122.

²² The majority of these memorials were for specific white men or fallen U.S. soldiers, but east of the Mississippi memorials to other American Indian figures were beginning to appear as well. For instance 1902 is when Sacajawea became popularized as what Chris Finley calls a “Universal Mother of Conquest.” See Chris Finley's “Violence, Genocide, and Captivity: Exploring Cultural Representations of Sacajawea as a Universal Mother of Conquest.” *American Indian Cultures and Research Journal*. 35:4, 2011. 191-208.

Henry David Thoreau, both of whom wrote about Indian captivity.²³ Nearly all the earliest national parks are centered on “Indian ruins” owned by the federal government after the dispossession of Native peoples: Yosemite, Case Grande Ruin, Montezuma Castle, Papago Saguero. Then in the 1890’s the U.S. government set up a series of legal processes for demarking federal land as national parks and for funding national monuments, which could be read as part of a larger movement toward solidifying a U.S. identity on the global stage. This movement was mimicked at state and county levels through cooperative projects between state legislatures and wealthy businessmen. Thus, the popularity of Meginness’ book and the networking he did among the Slocums are both shaped by and contribute to the rising interest in the public memorialization of historical figures both locally and nationally.

Not surprisingly, Frances Slocum’s life story was incorporated into this process. In the spring of 1899, Peru resident and lawyer James T. Stutesman visited the Bundy family cemetery to see the grave of the famous woman. He “found the grave of Frances Slocum, sunken, overgrown with grass and weeds and unmarked.”²⁴ Meginness included a footnote in his book ten years earlier that it “was recently decided by the descendants, children, and grandchildren, of Hon. Joseph Slocum, brother of Frances, to erect a suitable monument over her grave. This will be done in the spring of 1891, and the long delayed tribute to her memory

²³ James Fenimore Cooper, *Last of the Mohicans*. Henry David Thoreau, “A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers,” in *American Voices, American Lives*, ed. Wayne Franklin (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997), 127.

²⁴ “James F. Stutesman United the Slocums 16 Years Ago.” (unnamed Peru newspaper clipping c. 1916, published as a report on the Indiana Centennial Celebrations in August) from the folder “Slocum Monument” at the Wabash County Historical Society.

will be an accomplished fact.”²⁵ For whatever reason, the monument did not take form until Stutesman helped to mobilize the network of Slocums invested in memorializing their famous relative.

Their work came to fruition on Thursday, May 17, 1900 when the monument was unveiled as part of a day of events memorializing Frances Slocum. Reports claim that “hundreds” or “thousands” of people made their way by foot, horse, or buggy to Deaf Man’s Village, two miles from Peoria and nine miles from Peru, to witness the unveiling. *The Logansport Journal* even claims that 10,000 people were present in the Bondy cemetery that day, though this is unlikely.²⁶ The formal ceremonies began at noon and included a long series of poems, speeches, and addresses related to the history of Frances Slocum. Those who spoke included Arthur Gaylord Slocum, President of Kalamazoo College, Dr. Charles E. Slocum, and Gabriel Godfroy, a well-known Miami spokesperson. Though it is unclear how many people were present, this was a formative event in the region that shaped how residents viewed the history of their place and the significance of Frances Slocum in that history.

The monument that was unveiled was “made of white bronze, or in other words, pure zinc, and was cast into form.”²⁷ The base of the monument is square forming four panels, each with an arched face in the shape of a simple headstone, leading up to an ornate sculptured top. It was designed to appear like carved stone, but better able to withstand the elements. The *Peru Republican* reported, “It is said

²⁵ Meginess, *Biography of Frances Slocum*, 141.

²⁶ “Monument Unveiled.” *Logansport Journal*. May 18, 1900

²⁷ “Frances Slocum Monument – White Rose of the Miami Now Has Fine Memorial.” *Peru Republican*. Friday, May 25, 1900. Wabash County Historical Society. Paragraph 13.

to be the least destructible of all known materials. The monument is not large, but perfect in form, every part harmonizing in such a way as to produce upon the mind and heart the effect of a beautiful poem.”²⁸ Just as reading a poem is a subjective experience, the monument may produce varying affective responses. While it is certainly the grandest monument in any Miami cemetery in Indiana, it is also somewhat plain.

The four panels of the monument provide a narrative of Slocum’s life. The east face reads “Frances Slocum, a child of English descent, was born in Warwick, R.I., March 4th, 1773, was carried into captivity from her father’s house at Wilkes Barre, Penn., Nov. 2nd, 1778 by Delaware Indians, soon after the Wyoming Massacre. Her brothers gave persistent search, but did not find her until Sept. 21, 1837.” The text was written by the grandchildren of her brothers, Joseph and Isaac Slocum, and emphasized her life story as a captivity narrative. Moving clockwise, the southern face serves as a memorial to her husband and daughters: “‘She-po-con-ah,’ a Miami Indian chief, husband of Frances Slocum, - ‘Ma-con-a-quah’ Died here in 1833 at an advanced age. Their adult children were: ‘Ke-ke-nok-esh-wah’, wife of the Rev. Jean Baptist Brouillette. Died March 13th, 1847, aged 47 years, leaving no children. ‘O-zah-shin-quah,’ or Jane, wife of Rev. Peter Bondy, died Jan. 25th, 1877, aged 62 years, leaving a husband and nine children.”

The north and west sides reinforce the rhetoric of captivity. The northern panel reads: “When inclined by a published letter describing an aged white woman in the Miami Indian village here, two brothers and a sister visited this place, they

²⁸ “Frances Slocum Monument – White Rose of the Miami Now Has Fine Memorial.” *Peru Republican*. Friday, May 25, 1900. Wabash County Historical Society. Paragraph 13.

identified her. She lived near here, about 32 years with the Indian name 'Ma-con-a-quah.' She died on this Ridge. March 9th, 1847, and was given a Christian burial."

The carved claims "She lived near here" and "She died on this Ridge" root the monument in a particular relationship to land and place-story, highlighting the significance of this woman to this particular place.²⁹ This passage also clearly names her race as "white" and makes it clear that she was given a Christian burial. Interestingly enough some of the newspapers from when she died suggest that the initial burial at her home predominantly followed Miami customs, while her brother Isaac arranged to have a Christian service for her in Defiance, Ohio where he lived.

The western face sums up the memorial narrative of her life story as one about Frances Slocum, not 'Ma-con-a-quah'. It reads, "Frances Slocum became a stranger to her mother tongue. She became a stranger to her brethren, and an alien to her mother's children, through her captivity. (see Psalms LXIX. 8)" The creation and location of this monument to Frances Slocum on Miami land came to visually and rhetorically dominate how the place was imagined – as the prior home of the white woman, tragically captured by Indians. It became a clear marker of racial significance – not as land deeded to the Miami through nation-to-nation treaty negotiations, but as a place to remember the violence Indians inflicted on white settlers.

²⁹ This language is significant in part because the monument was relocated to Wabash County in 1964, when Deaf Man's Village was flooded to make way for the Frances Slocum Reservoir and Frances Slocum Recreational Area. The monument was placed on the edge of the Frances Slocum Recreational Area in what was then named the Frances Slocum Cemetery. The Indiana State Parks maintained the cemetery until the late 1980's when control of the cemetery was given to the Miami Nation of Indiana.

Bearing the Costs

To commission this monument, Stutesman raised \$700 by mobilizing the network of Slocums that Meginness had primed into a memorial committee. This committee was made up of well-educated Slocum family members across the Midwest. Their locations speak to the migration of the family from Wilkes-Barre as their businesses followed westward expansion: “Elliot T. Slocum, chairman, Detroit, Mich., Dr. Charles E. Slocum, secretary, Defiance, Ohio; Mrs. Mary Slocum Murphy, treasurer, Converse, Ind., George Slocum Bennett, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.; Joseph Slocum Ghahoon, Philadelphia, Pa.; Mrs. Elizabeth Slocum Rogers, Philadelphia, Pa., Frank Slocum, Minneapolis, Minn.; Frank L. Slocum, Ph. D. Pittsburgh, Pa.; Frank Slocum Litzenberger, Middletown, Ind.; Levi D. Slocum, Carbondale, Pa.; Joseph W. Slocum, Scranton, Pa.; Joseph A. Kennedy, Converse, Ind.; James F. Stutesman, Peru, Ind.”³⁰ One thing is clear from this list: when Stutesman imagined the members of Frances Slocum’s family, he only thought of her white relatives. This list of committee members was included in nearly all the newspaper reports on the monument.

Stutesman’s narrow vision was all the more evident because Mahkoonsahkwa’s grandchildren still lived in her cabin, right next to the cemetery in which she was buried. Indeed, nearly all of her direct lineal descendants lived within twenty miles of Peru. To organize the Slocum family at the exclusion of the Miami descendants must have been intentional because it was far more complicated than gathering her Miami descendants who owned the largest trading post in Peru and treated Peru as their tribal headquarters.

³⁰ “James F. Stutesman United the Slocum 16 Years Ago.”

Though Miami descendants were not named in newspaper reports as part of the committee, they were involved to some extent – after all the monument was erected at the site of Deaf Man’s Village, which was then owned by Mahkoonsahkwa’s grandson, Camilus Bundy. On the day the monument was revealed, the committee held a meeting in the cabin adjacent to the cemetery, mentioned in newspaper reports as the home of Judson C. Bundy, Camilus’ brother.³¹ At the meeting Miami descendants who lived there and the extended Slocum family privately shared stories passed down about Mahkoonsahkwa. The details of this meeting are not recorded, but it seems clear that this was a significant exchange of ideas between the Miami and Slocum relatives. Later in the day Judson’s daughters, Victoria Bundy and Mable Ray Bundy, assisted in the formal unveiling ceremony.³² The *Logansport Journal* reported that “In addition to the whites present, there were a number of Miami Indians, who were greatly interested in the proceedings.”³³ While the memorial ceremony was clearly geared towards a white, non-Miami audience, the Miami presence seems to loom in the reports.

It is interesting that all of the papers name Judson Bundy and his daughters, but do not name Camilus Bundy, who owned the land, or Gabriel Godfroy, who owned the Miami Trading Post in Peru, making him one of the most public faces of

³¹ Legally the land was in Camilus’ name, and it was foreclosed on by the Aetna Life Insurance Company in 1921 in order to pay for back taxes that Camilus and other Miami maintained they did not owe. The treaty deeds stipulate that the land would be “tax-free in perpetuity.”

³² “James F. Stutesman United the Slocum 16 Years Ago.” In the 1910s and ‘20s, Mable Ray became known regionally for playing the role of “Ma-con-a-quah” in the Miami Indian Company’s pageants based on her life story. Many newspaper accounts from that period describe her beauty at length.

³³ “Monument Unveiled.” *Logansport Journal*. May 18, 1900.

the Miami. Camilus and Gabriel were close friends and two of the most outspoken Miami political voices of the day. Their absence in the reporting on the monument is noteworthy because they frequently appeared in newspapers at the time, and they made efforts to control how Frances Slocum was used as a public Miami figure. Their political investment in the figure of Frances Slocum stemmed from the confluence of anti-Indian taxation policies unfolding in the 1890s and racial imaginaries of Native-ness. The land deeded to the Miami in the 1840s was tax-free because they were part of treaty negotiations between the nation of the Miami and the United States. In the 1880s and 90s Native-ness is increasingly imaged as an extinct racial-historical otherness. Indiana State officials challenge the tax-free status of Miami land on the grounds that no more Indians exist in the state, and thus there cannot be any Indian land left tax-free.

The taxation policies that Camilus and Gabriel fought unsuccessfully meant that as the Frances Slocum monument was being erected, legal measures were being taken to evict Camilus and Mahkoonsahkwa's other lineal descendants from their land, Deaf Man's Village. The lands deeded to the Miami through treaties were not structured the way communal reservations west of the Mississippi were in this era. After 1838 Miami individuals held land titles in fee simple title without taxation. The treaty stipulated that the land could not be sold without permission of the President of the United States.³⁴ If the land was sold, it would no longer be tax-free. The tax-free status is stipulated for Miami Indian owners of the land only. Scott Shoemaker shows that this policy evaporated in 1897 "when the Bureau of Indian

³⁴ State L VII 189 Treaty with the Miami, 1838.

Affairs suddenly terminated the relationship between the Indiana Miami and the United States through an administrative memo.”³⁵ Assistant U.S. Attorney General Willis Van Devanter references the last disbursement of annuity payments in 1881 as effectively ending a nation-to-nation relationship between the U.S and the Miami.

Indiana State officials then retroactively interpreted Devanter’s memo as stating that the Miami ceased to exist in 1881, and in 1897 began charging the Miami sixteen years of back-taxes. The Miami did not have the money to pay such taxes and never expected to. Shoemaker’s work follows Gabriel Godfroy’s efforts to fight this taxation by consistently refusing to accept the claim that the Miami were extinct. Godfroy publicized his political arguments through public performances of Nativeness in Wild West shows and at fairs. He then referenced his performances in Wild West shows as legal evidence of Miami persistence in Indiana to fight the back-taxes. Shoemaker explains that in 1901 “the court ruled that Godfroy was not an Indian. Despite receiving a freeze on taxation for ten years in 1905, his descendants would continue the battle for the next seventy years.”³⁶ What Shoemaker makes clear is that in the 1890’s Indiana state officials took control over the remaining Miami land by arguing that the Miami were no longer Indian enough to hold Indian treaty lands.

Camilus, who owned and lived in the cabin where the Slocum family met to share stories of their famed relative, was facing tax bills that he had no chance of paying. Eventually Camilus became so concerned about losing his land that he took to sleeping in the cemetery next to his grandmother’s monument. For a period of

³⁵ Shoemaker, “Trickster Skins,” 178.

³⁶ Shoemaker, “Trickster Skins,” 180.

time he began charging visitors ten cents to see the monument in order to raise funds for the back-taxes.³⁷ When the Aetna Life Insurance Company finally foreclosed on his property in 1921, sheriff deputies physically carried him out of the Bundy cemetery, the precise place on the property that he refused to concede.

For the Miami, this period was completely devastating economically and socially. In the early 1890s most Miami families remained attached in some way to the treaty lands for the goods they offered – a place to build a home, grow food, acquire fresh water and trees for lumber, fish and hunt, and enjoy the social goods of living near family support systems. By the end of the decade, however, the vast majority of the Miami had to relocate and find ways to pay for goods that they had been promised would be free for perpetuity. Furthermore, the support systems that they would have normally relied on – other families, other lands – were also under attack, leaving the Miami Nation in crisis.

Over the next decade the Miami sold off just about everything they owned and cherished as they tried to survive. On June 12, 1907, a headline in the *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette* read: “Relics of the White Rose - Heirs of Frances Slocum purchase Godfroy Collection.”³⁸ Gabriel Godfroy’s second wife was Oonsaahšinihkwa’s daughter, Mahkoonsahkwa’s granddaughter. Through her, Gabriel came to possess many of Mahkoonsahkwa’s personal items, including clothing and moccasins. When asked to speak at a celebration at the Battle of Tippecanoe Battleground, Godfroy explained, “I have sold the relics of Frances

³⁷ Shoemaker, “Trickster Skins,” 209.

³⁸ “Relics of the White Rose - Heirs of Frances Slocum purchase Godfroy Collection.” *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*. June 12, 1907.

Slocum for three hundred dollars and they have gone to Wilkes Barre, Penn., and Detroit Mich. I had to have the money. . . .”³⁹ Godfroy was fortunate because he had something to sell, and items related to Frances Slocum sold at much higher rates than Miami relics in general. For this reason the descendants of Mahkoonsahkwa made it through this rough period far better than most Miami.⁴⁰ As the headline made clear the “heirs” of Frances Slocum were the Slocums, rather than Miami relatives, like Godfroy or Camilus.

New Opportunities

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the extended Slocum family was energized by the popularity of their famous relative, the wide circulation of Meginness’ book, and their participation in erecting the Frances Slocum Memorial in Peru. This series of events focused their attention on their affiliation with the famed Captive and their responsibility in maintaining her memory. To this end several members of the extended family published books about the life of their (once again) famous relative.

In 1905 Martha Bennett Phelps published *Frances Slocum, the Lost Sister of Wyoming* with Knickerbocker Press of New York City. It was a beautifully made

³⁹ Gabriel Godfroy. “Address by Chief Gabriel Godfroy” June 16, 1907. Godfroy Family Genealogical Folder. Miami County Historical Society.

⁴⁰ Stewart Rafert observes that the Bundys remained tribal leaders throughout the 20th century, I think that this is in part due to the higher class status enjoyed by the Bundys – all direct descendants of Mahkoonsahkwa – who were better able to survive land-loss via taxation because they could sell what they owned at much higher prices than other Miami. Thus it should not be surprising that Scott Shoemaker and I, the only Miami Nation of Indiana PhDs, and Erin Dunnagan Oliver, the only Miami lawyer, we are all descendants of Mahkoonsahkwa as well. The analysis of race, class, and tribal leadership among the Miami could be a useful study for thinking about postcolonial power structures.

book covered in red cloth embossed with a gold leaf sketch of Deaf Man's Village on the front cover and matching gold edging on the pages. The preface opens:

"It is with a feeling of great reluctance that I commence this sad tale of woe and sorrow which befell an ancestor of my mother in Revolutionary times... My only apology is that so many of my mother's family have gone to the great beyond... the last tie is broken connecting us with those who personally knew and appreciated the long-lost Frances. I find myself almost alone among those who have heard her story from our grandfather."

In this way Phelps sets up her account of Frances Slocum as a sad, familial story, being written to create a permanent connection to that past.

Phelps pays homage to three previously published books, those of George Peck, the historian of Wyoming Valley; John Todd, who wrote the first captivity narrative of Slocum in 1841; and John Meginness. Of Todd's book Phelps writes that "the family were much disappointed in his work" and then in the next paragraph she proclaims, "To Mr. Meginness we owe much valuable research."⁴¹ To articulate the significance of her own work among these more famous authors, she notes, "I have tried to give the tender personal traditions, on which as children we were nourished, so that our children and grandchildren may hear the story as told by their ancestors."⁴² Phelps clearly values the documentation that Meginness found in his research, and she includes many of the letters that he published. As discussed in the first chapter, there are differences between the stories, but the structure and major content are fairly consistent.

⁴¹ Phelps, *Frances Slocum*, vi-vii.

⁴² Phelps, *Frances Slocum*, vii.

As a keepsake, Phelps' book includes several color portraits, drawings of Mahkoonsahkwa's personal belongings, and memorial information updated with each edition. For instance in the 1915 edition, Appendix I describes the 1907 establishment of the Frances Slocum Playground in Wilkes-Barre at the site of the home from which she was captured. Photos of the playground and the memorial plaque are included. The narrative is simple. It reads in full: "Frances Slocum Ma-con-a-quah was captured near this spot by Delaware Indians November 2, 1778."⁴³ This becomes the first formal memorial site to Frances Slocum in Pennsylvania, and it establishes the scope of her narrative there. These touches and the personal voice of a woman writing about her family history distinguished her book from Meginness' though she did not necessarily present entirely new material.

While Meginness' text remained in circulation as a historical authority, Phelps' account held an affective quality of familial proximity that made it valuable to those interested in regional history. In some ways, the Phelps book was valued like an oral history – certainly it was shaped by other sources and constructed for its author's purposes, but it harnesses a sense of authenticity that seems as valuable in some ways as the historical research of Meginness. The 1915 edition appears to be the last printing, but its beauty as a book has lead many libraries to preserve it in their collections even in regions where Slocum is less well-known.

Dr. Charles Elihu Slocum followed his cousin's publication with his own three years later in 1908, titled *History of Frances Slocum, the Captive, a Civilized Heredity vs. a Savage, and Later Barbarous, Environment*. It seems fair to say that Dr. Slocum

⁴³ Phelps, *Frances Slocum*, 169.

considered himself a better candidate for writing the famous family story and sought to treat this work like an academic treatise. In case one questioned his qualifications, the front piece declares his titles: “Charles Elihu Slocum, M.D., Ph.D., LL. D. Member of the American Historical Association; the New England Historic Genealogic Society; the Old Colony Historical Society; the Old Northwest Genealogical Society; the Maumee Valley Pioneer and Historical Association, etc.” With Dr. Slocum’s interest in history and genealogy, it is not surprising that he also wrote *History of the Slocums, Slocumbs, and Slocombs of America, Their Alliances and Descendants in the Female Lines, etc.* in two volumes.⁴⁴

Where Meginness provided thorough research into the life of Frances Slocum and Phelps offered a personalized story, Slocum attempted to situate his ancestor in the broader scholarship on race and environment. Informed by captivity narratives coming out of the Southwest in the 1880’s which were based on far more violent captivity experiences than what was known in Frances’ lifetime, Slocum claims that “all captives (Indians) could not readily or prospectively make other use of, were immediately or torturously put to death, and often eaten by the captors.”⁴⁵ Reflecting on the influence of heredity vs. environment, he continues, “Children were oftener kept for prospective assimilation into their tribal family than adult captives, those deciding their fate having observed the more ready, and permanent, molding of character by early environment.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Charles E. Slocum. *History of the Slocums, Slocumbs, and Slocombs of America, Their Alliances and Descendants in the Female Lines, etc.* (Defiance, OH: published by author, 1908) Vol. 1 and Vol. 2.

⁴⁵ Slocum, *History of the Slocums*, 7.

⁴⁶ Slocum, *History of the Slocums*, 7.

Based on the life story of the Lost Sister, Dr. Slocum proposed that the influence of Frances' whiteness was so strong that it helped to civilize the Indians that came into contact with her. He explains that "a delicate, timid, female child rudely transferred from a quiet family in the Society of Friends to a savage environment among hideous strangers in time of war, and her influence there being such as to appeal to and call forth the most kindly nature and protective care of the savages for the preservation of her life... and the betterment of the lives of her (Indian) associates."⁴⁷ Regardless of the time he spent among the Miami in Indiana at the unveiling of the memorial, Dr. Slocum maintains a colonial-racial narrative of the "savages" among whom Frances spent the majority of her life. Yet despite Charles Slocum's racist rhetoric, his interest in "savages" led him to document Mahkoonsahkwa's Miami family in more detail than any of the other Slocum narratives.

Slocum clearly thought that he was writing the most significant account of the captivity to date, particularly with his focus on the socializing impact of captivity. Yet his book was never as widely circulated as he would have liked. This could have been due in part to the innovative spelling he expected would soon transform publication norms in the United States. He justified his choices in a footnote: "korektd spelng her adopted iz found in the publikashons ov The Filolojikal Sosiety ov London, and The Amerikan Filolojikal Asosiashon. Many more necessary korekshons, and simplifikashonz, await the wiz formulashon ov afu

⁴⁷ Slocum, *History of the Slocums*, 7.

fonetik markings.” (sic)⁴⁸ Clearly such “wiz formulashon” did not attract a wide audience of readers. Still, even though Dr. Slocum’s work did not circulate as widely as Meginness’ or Phelps’, it continued to inspire and motivate the wider network of Slocum family historians. At the end of his book he records a variety of historical programs with which he is involved, including his role in establishing the Frances Slocum Playground in Wilkes-Barre in 1907 and as treasurer of the Frances Slocum Monument Fund. He even published how much money each individual donor gave to the fund.

In addition to these large book projects, there were numerous poems and songs written about “the Lost Sister” by Slocum relatives between 1890 and 1910. While the memorializing of Frances Slocum around the turn of the century seemed to be happening to or around the Miami at the time, the extended network of Slocums became active agents in the production and circulation of her stories. Through their efforts they raised a wider appreciation for her life story as a regional historical figure.

Conclusion

After Mahkoonsahkwa’s death in 1847, accounts of her life shifted from a story about captivity to a historical narrative. In the 1890’s trends in the professionalization and popular support for regional histories created fertile ground in which her story grew. In Meginness’ hands, her story is transformed from newspaper sensationalism into a documented account of her life. A textual study

⁴⁸ Slocum, *History of the Slocums*, 7.

might conclude that this text served as the culmination of her tale in that no book has been written about Frances Slocum since that is more thorough or authoritative. Yet, the larger story of Frances Slocum continues in the popular consumption of the narrative as a story about place.

By 1910 there are numerous memorials to Frances Slocum in Wyoming Valley, Pennsylvania and Miami County, Indiana. There are parks, schools, and banks named after her. The work the Slocum family did to celebrate the remarkable story of their relative provided opportunities for these larger communities to celebrate settler history through the figure of Slocum. It is in this period that she becomes a figure of place in addition to being an Indian captive.

While this was a formative period for the historical figure of Frances Slocum as well as the broader Slocum family, Mahkoonsahkwa's descendants faced new challenges as their land was being claimed through both anti-Indian taxation policies and as a site of settler history. Until this period the Miami had not publicized Frances Slocum as a Miami historical figure. But suddenly facing mass land loss at the height of public interest in Slocum, the Miami Nation of Indiana, too, adopted her as their public face and figure.

Chapter 4

Erasing: Settler-Histories of Dispossession

In a public school in Indiana, a nine year old Miami Indian girl listens to a state history lesson. Today she learns about the first-peoples of the state: how the Irish came to the U.S. for better opportunities than they had in Europe. They worked under brutal, dangerous conditions digging canals across the swamplands of the lower Great Lakes to make the land more accessible by boat and ready for agricultural and industrial development. She learns that it is through their labor, their sacrifices, that this region became inhabitable.

As a Miami Indian, a descendent of some of the few indigenous peoples who were not massacred through the process of Anglo-Americans settling this region, she knows that the story is more complicated. She raises her hand, ‘What about the Indians’¹ Her teacher explains, ‘They moved west of the Mississippi River’ The girl responds with a hint of frustration in her voice, ‘But not all of them moved. What about the Indians that are still here?’ ‘There are no more Indians here. They all moved west’. She rebuffs with all the indignation of a nine-year old who knows that she is right and the adult is wrong, ‘But that’s not true! Niila Myaamia! I am Miami, and I am still here.’ ‘You are disrupting class!’

¹ In this account no names, pseudonyms, or personally identifying information are used because this story was not collected as part of formal research. This story and others like it emerged from a group conversation at the saakaciweeyankwi Miami language camp in the summer of 2011 as a reflection on contemporary Miami identity. The purpose of the conversation was to provide a space for youth to talk and think about contemporary Miami identity. The term “indian” here is used throughout to reference the indigenous peoples of the U.S. While that term has fallen out of fashion in academia, it remains widely used among Native American populations and the materials with which I work.

'But the Miami are still here! You're wrong'. The teacher sends the girl to the principal's office.

She did disrupt the lesson. In addition to the flow of conversation that the teacher had expected, the student unsettled the larger narrative of pioneer history that the lesson imparts, which justifies settler belonging through the labor of immigrants and renders indigenous peoples absent. By speaking 'I am Miami' she brings her body under scrutiny. Her light brown hair and fair skin complicate popular notions of how Native Americans appear racially. Just her existence as a Native girl in Indiana in the 21st century troubles U.S. nationalist narratives of Indian removal.

The principal calls her mother because this is not the first time that she has disrupted class. This time she is being suspended for three days. Her mother is angry. She cannot afford childcare or taking off work, and it is now illegal for children her age to stay home alone. There simply are no resources to absorb the costs of suspension. The principal explains that such outbursts cannot be tolerated. The mother protests, 'What can't be tolerated? That a nine year old knows history better than the teacher? The teacher telling her that the Miami don't exist? That we are not Miami? Is the problem that she is telling the truth about history or that she is Miami?'

The principal suspends the girl. The mother gives the principal an extended lesson on Miami history. For the mother, this is just another example of 'white bullshit' – she's been at this for a while now. But this experience is seared into the memory of the young girl. Ten years later she tells me this story when I ask a group of Miami youth, 'What does it mean to be Miami today?' As she relates this tale, her voice rises in pitch and quivers.

Although she has developed a defensive approach to talking about these issues, trying desperately to show no emotion, tears well up in her eyes.

I heard other stories like this one from participants at the annual summer language camp called *saakaciweeyankwi*, which I help organize for the Miami Nation of Indians of Indiana. For me, this is a story about why history matters. For Native peoples, like the Miami, history is more than interesting stories about the past. Historical narratives produce the premises on which we understand the world and our place in it. Indigenous peoples are regularly taught histories that preclude their ways of life and even existence. It should not be surprising that they become suspicious of history itself.

The youth that I work with at camp think about histories far more than most U.S. children because they consistently encounter histories that insist that their families do not exist, or are at best false. At tribal events, like camp, and within their families they learn histories in which the Miami are cheated, massacred, and forcibly removed from their homelands. They learn how rare and important it is that we remain on our homelands in Indiana – as the keeper of our stories and this place. In school and popular media they receive contradictory messages about history and Nativeness. Many Miami struggle to build a coherent sense of the past and of themselves out of these conflicting perspectives. Much of Native American fiction features Native youth wrestling with these contradictory narratives of identity and nationhood, which speaks to the broader experience of U.S. settler-colonialism.

The Miami Nation of Indians remains on their homelands in what is now considered the state of Indiana in the United States. Settler colonial histories obfuscate their continued presence. I argue that the absence of indigenous histories in public history institutions,

such as archives, function to complete the erasure of indigenous peoples not carried out through the physical violence of settling. Then I propose marking epistemic erasures as a tactic of rendering the machinations of settler colonialism visible.

The Political Stakes of Popular History

This chapter is grounded in the political stakes of popular history for the Miami, which became clearer the more I paid attention to how Frances Slocum is figured differently in relation to place. In both Pennsylvania and Indiana, Frances Slocum has become a central historical figure of those places. Her story is wrapped in those place-identities through the historical narratives of that place, particularly those consistently reproduced through public history programs.

We can map variations in the structure and racial content of the stories about Slocum's life that are told in Wilkes-Barre and Peru, and these differences reflect the distinct conditions that existed when Anglo-Americans initially settled each region.² How this story is told shapes how these places are imagined in the present and thus provides a sense of who belongs there. Scholars such as Lisa Brooks, J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, Lorenzo Veracini, and Patrick Wolfe analyze the interwoven practices of settler colonialism. Here I am particularly interested in the dual processes of land dispossession and indigenous erasure.³ By highlighting the variations in how the Slocum tale is told in two distinct

² Here there is a significance of Anglo-American settlers as opposed to Euro-American settlers is that there was a long history of French trading communities in Indiana that preceeding Anglo-American settlements. This story is attached to the Anglo-settlers in these two regions.

³ Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism Then and Now," interview by J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, *Politica & Società*. (2/2012) 235-258. Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). The linking of these processes is alluded to in these texts; however, more explicit discussions have emerged at conferences such as the Native American and

regions, we can trace the uneven epistemic work of indigenous erasure through history. I argue that settler-colonial societies in which indigenous people are still present rely more heavily on local history to produce epistemic erasures of Native people not completed by the initial violence of land dispossession.

First I will describe how Slocum is figured through public history in Pennsylvania, and then contrast this with historical imagery popular in Indiana. The Slocum story - which is primarily popular only in these two places - offers a rare opportunity to compare how a common historical narrative is shaped by the place where it is told.⁴ Yet despite variations in these historical accounts, common functions of settler-colonialism emerge. The figure of Slocum is used to justify indigenous land dispossession and explain Native absence in both regions. The political work of these stories, to justify settler belonging and right to land, is maintained through public historical institutions. By highlighting these dual processes of indigenous erasure and land dispossession, we can begin to develop tactics for illuminating the absence and erasure of indigenous histories in public settler colonial archives.

As a member of the Miami Nation of Indiana, I draw on common knowledge among the Miami community. But I also utilize interviews with public historians, participant observation of public history programs, such as a walking tour, and archival research.⁵

Indigenous Studies Conference in Saskatoon, June 2012 and the Sawyer Seminar on Race, Place, and Space in the Americas at the Center for Race and Ethnicity at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, 2012-2013.

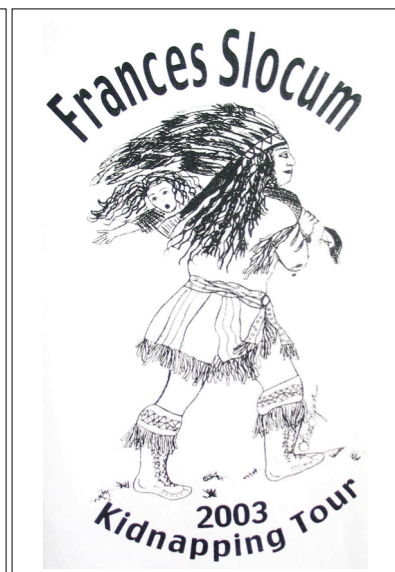
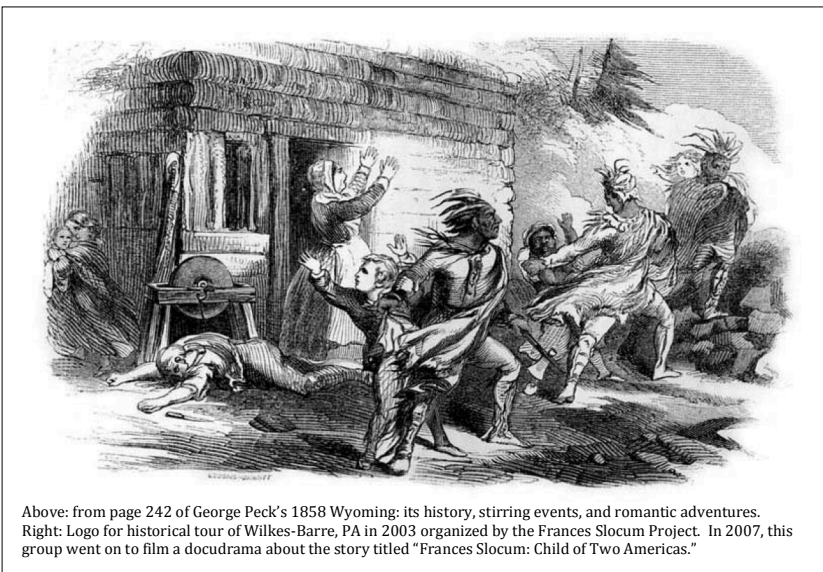
⁴ While most comparative settler-colonial projects focus on conditions in two settler nation states, this project looks more carefully at the significance of regionality, shifting the focus from the nation to the formation of place and place-identity in a single settler regime.

⁵ The archival work draws on collections at fifteen institutions, including research libraries like the Newberry Library of Chicago, state and county historic societies in Pennsylvania and Indiana, tribal archives in Indiana and Oklahoma, as well as private collections.

Thus like many indigenous scholars, I work back and forth across Native and 'academic' sources.

An Innocent Abducted

In Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania and the Wyoming Valley in which it is located, Frances Slocum is a well-known historical figure who highlights the experience of the earliest white settlers to this region. Her story is taught in public schools and many children visit sites related to her life story, including a playground and a state park named after her. Here she is imagined as a young girl, around five years old with long red or blond curly hair. She wears a dress. She is most often pictured thrown over the shoulder of an Indian man as he carries her away from her mother who is kneeling, crying. Young Frances reaches out her hand toward her mother, her mouth is open. She is imagined as screaming for her mother's help. In Pennsylvania this is the most memorable image of Frances Slocum.



Countless local artists replicate the scene of Slocum's abduction and the Frances Slocum 2003 Kidnapping Tour used it on their t-shirts and pamphlets advertising the public history tour.⁶ This driving tour begins at the Frances Slocum playground at the corner of Scott Street and North Pennsylvania Avenue, near the location of her childhood home in 1778. Another key location of the tour is the overhang on the Frances Slocum Trail in the Frances Slocum State Park in nearby Wyoming.

On the official Frances Slocum State Park tour, led by the park's Environmental Education Specialist, Kathy Kelchner, participants are asked to step inside the indented curve under the overhang and to pretend that they are young Frances who has just been carried away from her family by Indians. Kelchner, explains, "Right where you are standing, according to the old history books, this is supposedly where they stopped that first night with Frances."⁷ She imagines out loud how the Indians might have layered tree branches and furs to make a bed on the rock. Then she pauses for emphasis, 'and a legend in the Slocum family says that Frances heard her father's voice when the search party came through the woods'. Then Kelchner lowers her voice to build tension, 'And when she moved to call out, one of the Indians held up a big knife.' She raises her hand as if holding a knife against someone's neck, 'and the Indian said, 'No. Me. Kill''. The audience gasps.

⁶ "Frances Slocum 2003 Kidnapping Tour" (pamphlet), Luzerne County Historical Society, Frances Slocum folder 1.

⁷ Kathy Kelchner, "Frances Slocum Trail tour", recorded by author, Frances Slocum State Park, Wyoming, PA, October, 2009. The wavering language in this story reflects the relationships the park has to this overhang. The park claims to be named after Frances Slocum because this is where she spent her first night in captivity; however, there is no historical or archeological evidence for this claim. The historical marker in front of the overhang simply says "historic site," without any further explanation. Kelchner explains that an archeological study of the overhang in the 1980's revealed that Indians used this overhang as a temporary shelter. She does not mention historical period or tribal affinity of those "Indians."

In this region, the capture of Frances Slocum has become a story about the sacrifices and courage of all the pioneers who settled this valley, and the threat Indians posed to innocent girls and families. Public storytellers use Slocum's capture to conjure a sense of the fear and hardship that white pioneers endured on the frontier. The Slocum family moved here in 1773 just after Frances was born in Rhode Island. Her father, Jonathan Slocum, had spent the previous fifteen years preparing for this move. The town of Wilkes-Barre was initially settled in 1752, but the settlement was abandoned due to violent conflicts with the Lenni Lenape (Delaware) Indians who lived in the valley. The town was re-settled in 1769 by a wave of pioneers from the colonies of Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania. Colonial administrators urged residents to settle this particular region by supplying tools, commodities, and wagons. Each of these colonies hoped to claim their territory through the presence of their subjects.⁸

The Wyoming Valley was desirable because it followed the Susquehanna River, which provided abundant water to cultivate the fertile land. At the same time, it was surrounded by mountain ranges that made it easily defensible. But for these same reasons the valley was already inhabited by Lenni Lenape Indians, who had lived here for at least several generations. In the 1770's the Shawnee Indians, too, began encroaching on the valley as they were pushed out of homelands further north by colonists and the growing power of the Iroquois Confederacy. The Iroquois sought to incorporate both the Shawnee and the Lenni Lenape into their ranks.⁹ Violent skirmishes between and among various

⁸ Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania each offered goods to their residence for settling this territory. Jonathan Slocum, Frances' father, received a covered wagon and tools from the British colonial government of Rhode Island, but later he served on a citizen's council for the state of Connecticut.

⁹ John Todd, *The Lost Sister of the Wyoming*, (North Hampton, MA: J.H. Butler, 1841) 41-46.

Anglo-settler parties and Native nations spoke to the growing pressure to claim control of this valuable region.

Although the figure of Frances Slocum represents the tensions that existed in the 1770's, the image of her as a young girl thrown over the shoulder of an Indian was not produced until nearly sixty years later amidst the shift towards anti-Indian politics in white women's captivity narratives in the 1830s. June Namias argues that the policy of Indian removal was justified in part by popular images of Natives as violent heathens whose ways of life were incompatible with the progress of civilization.¹⁰

The figuration of Frances Slocum was also shaped by contemporary racial politics in Pennsylvania. By the 1830s, most of the indigenous peoples of the region had been massacred, slowly pushed westward, or forcibly removed. By the time the Slocum story was published, popular images in the dominant culture ensured readers that Natives were completely absent from the region. At the same time, the struggles of early settlers were coated in nostalgia.¹¹ This sense of Native absence allowed for the circulation of caricatures of indigenous 'savagery', even though they did not reflect the experiences many settlers had with Indians on the frontier just decades prior. For instance, many versions of Frances' capture emphasize the strong trade relations her father had developed with the Lenape. But by the 1830s, popular imagery of violent Indians fueled notions of indigenous

¹⁰ June Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.)

¹¹ Michelle Burnham, *Captivity & Sentiment: Cultural Exchange in American Literature, 1682-1861*, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997.)

otherness and white supremacy, which helped to legitimize the extreme measures the U.S. government used to remove those Indians still living east of the Mississippi River.¹²

The figure of Frances Slocum - a young girl thrown over the shoulder of an Indian screaming for help as she reaches for her mother - illustrates the highly politicized racial-gendered logic that justified the massacre and removal of Native Americans through the imagined threat they posed to the defenseless white female body. The mobilization of Slocum's captivity narrative as a story about the Wyoming Valley and the struggle of the settlers who inhabit it, rendered it a key historical narrative in this region. Thus it is this figure that was preserved in the archives and public history programming of Luzerne County in the following decades, and now centuries.

Between 2008 and 2011 I met with Kathy Kelchner four times. I attended three of her public tours on Frances Slocum, including one where she dressed up in historically appropriate clothing to tell the story of Slocum's capture from the imagined perspective of a neighbor woman. Kelchner seems to truly enjoy her job and local history. In 2011 I interviewed Kelchner to talk with her more about her interest in the Slocum story and how she views the significance of the story in public history. I asked what she thought the message of the Slocum story is for contemporary audiences. She said, 'It goes to show that history just keeps repeating itself. Back then it was Indians, and now it is all these immigrants'. This response draws a correlation between how Indians are imagined as dangerous others in Slocum's captivity narrative with contemporary anxieties about the potential dangers that some white Americans imagine that dark skinned immigrants pose. At the time of the interview there was a surge of political discourse in U.S. media outlets

¹² Jennifer Nez Denetdale, *The Long Walk: The Forced Navajo Exile*, (New York: Chealsea House Publishers, 2008.)

about the U.S.-Mexican border and worries that ethnic studies classes do not properly represent a White history of the United States. So, this comment could be understood as an attempt to connect our discussion to news of the day. However, the correlation between eighteenth-century American Indians and twenty-first century immigrants as threats to this place naturalizes Wilkes-Barre as a place that is inherently white, a place that is threatened by the presence of people of color. Thus even as the historical figure of Frances Slocum remains fixed over time, the political issues with which she resonates change.

Legal scholar, Sherene H. Razack, describes these changing rhetorical projects as stages of white settler society.¹³ Her work draws a continuous line between early anti-indian policies, such as U.S. forced removal, and contemporary fears of immigrants, tracing these developments as part of the progression of building a white settler-colonial society. Although the race policies and official politics of Pennsylvania have changed dramatically since the time of Frances' capture, the story is repeated generation after generation as the crucial historical event of this place. It is a narrative that insists on the childhood innocence of Frances and the cruelty of unnamed Indians.

As the central historical narrative of Wilkes-Barre, the Slocum capture continues to shape how the city is imagined in racially contentious terms. The 2000 census revealed Wilkes-Barre as one of the whitest cities in the U.S.: nearly 97 percent of residents identified as Caucasian. This is particularly surprising because Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic more generally is a much more diverse region. Almost all the other towns with such an overwhelmingly white population are in Minnesota and the Dakotas, the most racially homogenous region of the U.S. The whiteness of Wilkes-Barre cannot be explained

¹³ Sheren H. Razack, *Race, Pace, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society*, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002.)

simply by class segregation either; it is a beautifully old, but run-down town, with signs of poverty and ruin throughout the city. Despite massive social changes, however, the town continues to be perceived as a white community.

The 'White' Miami Widow

In Indiana as well, the story of Frances Slocum is used to narrate the experience of early Anglo-settlers.¹⁴ She is posited as one of the first settlers in the region, and the story of her interaction with the Indians is used to legitimize settler land ownership and belonging. But here she is an old woman, sitting in a chair in a log cabin. She has dark leathery skin and dark grey hair. She wears a red ruffled shirt, which was fashionable among local Indians in the 1830's. Trade silver earrings hang above her shoulders. Her skirt and leggings are winged with beautiful Miami ribbonwork that she stitched herself. They match the ribbonwork on her moccasins. Here she is a powerful and wealthy widow of a Miami Indian chief.

¹⁴ The national origin and language of the settlers is important here because French fur traders had been in this region for at least one hundred years prior to this period. This is not a story about first contact, it is an origin story about the contemporary English speaking community there.



Much like the Wyoming River Valley, this region is dotted with places named in her honor – the Frances Slocum Recreation Area, the Frances Slocum Indian cemetery, a chain of banks, and the Maconaquah Elementary School.¹⁵ Maconaquah is how her Miami Indian name is most often written here, and there are a number of parks and trails honoring this name as well.¹⁶ Rather than a tale of captivity, here it is a story of removal. Kidnapped by unspecified Indians at a young age, Frances is presented as having been raised as an ‘Indian princess’ who eventually married a Miami chief. Sixty years after her capture, her biological siblings found her living as his widow. Her husband and sons had already passed

¹⁵ The Frances Slocum Banks have now closed down, but there is still bank merchandise that lingers in the region – coffee cups, pens, calendars, etc. The Frances Slocum Bank is still part of the cultural memory in that region.

¹⁶ In footnote 2 I explain how she is known by many names, most of which have several spellings. ‘Maconaquah’ or ‘Ma-con-a-quah’ is how her Miami name is most often spelled, but this should be understood as an Anglicized version of her name. Contemporary Myaamia language scholars, such as Scott Shoemaker, use ‘Makoonsahkwa’ to better reflect a Myaamia-based pronunciation, but it should be noted that many Great Lakes Indian names were translated significantly different by French and English traders.

away, and the Miami were in the midst of negotiating treaties that would involve mass land dispossession and forced migration from Indiana to Kansas, west of the Mississippi River.¹⁷

Rachel J. Lapp and Anita K. Stalter, authors of the 2007 biographical reader *More Than Petticoats: Remarkable Indiana Women*, usefully articulate how the story of Frances Slocum is commonly mobilized as a narrative of Miami removal in Indiana:

In 1840 the Miamis were made to give up their land in northern Indiana and move west; the U.S. government gave the Indian group five years to comply. Frances did not want to move and asked her white brothers for advice. They encouraged her to appeal to Congress as a white woman, not as an Indian. In January 1845 Frances asked the U.S. government for special consideration so she did not have to relocate like the other Miamis, arguing that she and her offspring should be allowed to continue to live on a section of land granted to them in an 1838 treaty. Congressmen from both Indiana and Pennsylvania, the state from which she had been abducted, supported her petition, and the U.S. Congress granted her request.¹⁸

In this account, and many others like it, the Miami are ‘made to give up their land’ and Frances Slocum remains on her land ‘as a white woman’. The racial rhetoric suggests that all Miami were removed from the state of Indiana during this period; the only Indian left was Frances Slocum, who was phenotypically white. This widely taught version of Indiana state history normalizes a white settler sense of belonging by suggesting that there were no

¹⁷ 1832 is often cited as beginning of “the removal period” American Indian history because the official policy of the U.S. at this time is that no American Indians could remain east of the Mississippi River. The Miami did not sign a removal treaty until 1840, but even then the U.S. government had a hard time finding a contractor who could carry out the task. In November of 1846, about half of the Miami were removed from Indiana to Kansas by boat. When the Slocum family reconnected with their sister, her husband and sons had already died. There are no clues as to how old her sons were when they died. They may have been infants or small children.

¹⁸ Rachel J. Lapp and Anita K. Stalter. *More Than Petticoats: Remarkable Indiana Women*. Guildford, Connecticut: The Globe Pequot Press. 2007. 12.

more Indians present when the state was formed.¹⁹ This story thus weaves together land dispossession and indigenous absence as dual processes – the territory that becomes the state of Indiana, named “Indian Territory,” is understood as available for settling because it is imagined as an uninhabited place, a place in which Indians have fled in expectation of the arrival of settlers.

The elderly figuration of Frances Slocum was first produced in 1916 by Peru resident Claude Y. Andrews, who wrote a play based on her life story to represent Miami County’s contribution to the Indiana Centennial. The Indian pageant was titled ‘Ma-con-a-quah – White Rose of the Miamis’, a term commonly mis-attributed as her Miami name. ‘Mahkoonsewka’ better reflects a Myaamia pronunciation and conjures the image of a young female bear. Initially, the play was scheduled over two weekends, but it was so popular that it continued to be performed every week for three months over the summer of 1916, and then continued annually over the next thirteen years. The popularity of this event inspired related pageants on Slocum’s life, including a program organized and performed by the Miami Indians that continued until 1933.²⁰

¹⁹ This is how Frances Slocum is produced as a historical figure in Indiana, and it is this account of Slocum that inspires Susan Sleeper-Smith’s argument that the Miami remained in Indiana by “hiding in plain view” as white settlers.

²⁰ While most scholars focus on the Claude Andrews’ pageant, which was written and performed primarily by non-Miami’s. There were a variety of pageants that appeared in its wake including Maconaquah pageants written and performed by members of the Miami Nation of Indiana. For more on Miami performances see Scott Shoemaker’s work “Trickster Skins: Narratives of Landscape, Representation, and the Miami Nation.” (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 2011) 184-215. Other regional groups interested in Indiana history also developed performances, for example, Otho Winger, the President of Manchester College in North Manchester, Indiana, took a particular interest in the Frances Slocum. Winger published numerous versions of his book on Frances Slocum and wrote and performed in plays based on her life story at the college. Otho Winger, *The Lost Sister Among the Miamis*, (Elgin, Illinois: Elgin Press, 1936;) -- *The Frances Slocum Trail*, (North Manchester, Indiana: News-Journal, 1961;)

The Indiana State Historical Commissioner who conceptualized the original county celebrations could not have been more pleased with Claude's work and helped circulate the narrative as an important part of the state's history. In the Report of Indiana Centennial Celebrations he wrote:

It was primarily an Indian pageant, and to the writer's mind was the best and most vivid portrayal of this period of our history given in the State. (The commissioner) will never forget the deep impression made upon him by the scene portraying the departure of the Indians for new and distant homes. Single file, out of the dark they came and into the dusk they went – a long, long line which seemed to have no end. A veritable nation passed into the dim unknown, making way for the ruthless demands of Progress.²¹

This report was circulated across the state and soon led to accounts of the 'White Rose of the Miami' being repeated in state histories as the standard narrative of how Indiana transitioned from 'Indian Territory' to the white settler state of Indiana.

Just as the captivity narrative of Slocum emerged in Wilkes-Barre at a moment when Pennsylvania statehood seemed settled, the 'White Rose of the Miami' was popularized through a celebration of the founding of the state. Although every storyteller and historian uses his or her own language to tell this tale, the climax of the story is consistent: the treaty forced the Indians to leave while Frances Slocum stayed behind. Part of the usefulness of this narrative is that it allows the storyteller to quickly move between the period of Indian Territory and that of white settler development, without addressing the violence of land dispossession. It ignores as well the fact that nearly half of the Miami legally remained in the state after removal. In her work on New England historical rhetoric, Jean O'Brien shows how settlers posited themselves as the rightful inhabitants of New England through

²¹ Harlow Lindley, editor, *The Indiana Centennial 1916: a record of the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of Indiana's admission to statehood*, (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1919,) 207.

narratives of ‘firsting and lasting’, in which settlers are described as the first inhabitants, discoverers, and actors in the region, while the indigenous persons present are each described as the last of their kind.²² In Indiana, Slocum serves both roles as the first of the Anglo-American pioneers and last of the Indians. It has become a powerful rhetorical tool that allows storytellers to avoid addressing Indian-Settler relations by suggesting that when the first Anglo-settlers arrived the Indians just disappeared.

The political power of the Miami that allowed many of them to remain in the state after formal removal is rarely addressed in popular history. Ethno-historian Stewart Rafert shows that when the state of Indiana was established in 1816, the U.S. government acknowledged that the vast majority of the territory was lawfully controlled by the Miami (see map below).²³ Between 1816 and 1840, the Miami Nation signed 18 treaties that ceded the vast majority of their land base. Though this was certainly a difficult time for the Miami, Rafert argues that the chiefs were strategic treaty negotiators who only agreed to ‘a price that bordered on the grotesque’.²⁴ The only way that the U.S. government could secure a removal treaty was to guarantee that the tribal leadership, those who were signing the treaty, could remain in Indiana.²⁵

²² Jean M. O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

²³ Stewart Rafert, *The Miami Indians of Indiana: a Persistent People, 1654-1994*. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 1996.)

²⁴ Rafert, 92.

²⁵ This process was not just about geography and the sheer force to migrate an unwilling population. Indian Commissioner Allen Hamilton argued that the most efficient way to remove the Miami was by withholding annuity payments due from previous treaties. Thus, the Miami who remained in Indiana were guaranteed land and continued annuity payment delivery in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Allen Hamilton and Father Julian Benoit to Commissioner of Indian Affairs William Medill, 31 August, 1846, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, roll 418, frames 63-64.

Miami Treaty Concessions
after the formation of Indiana in 1816
1817-1840

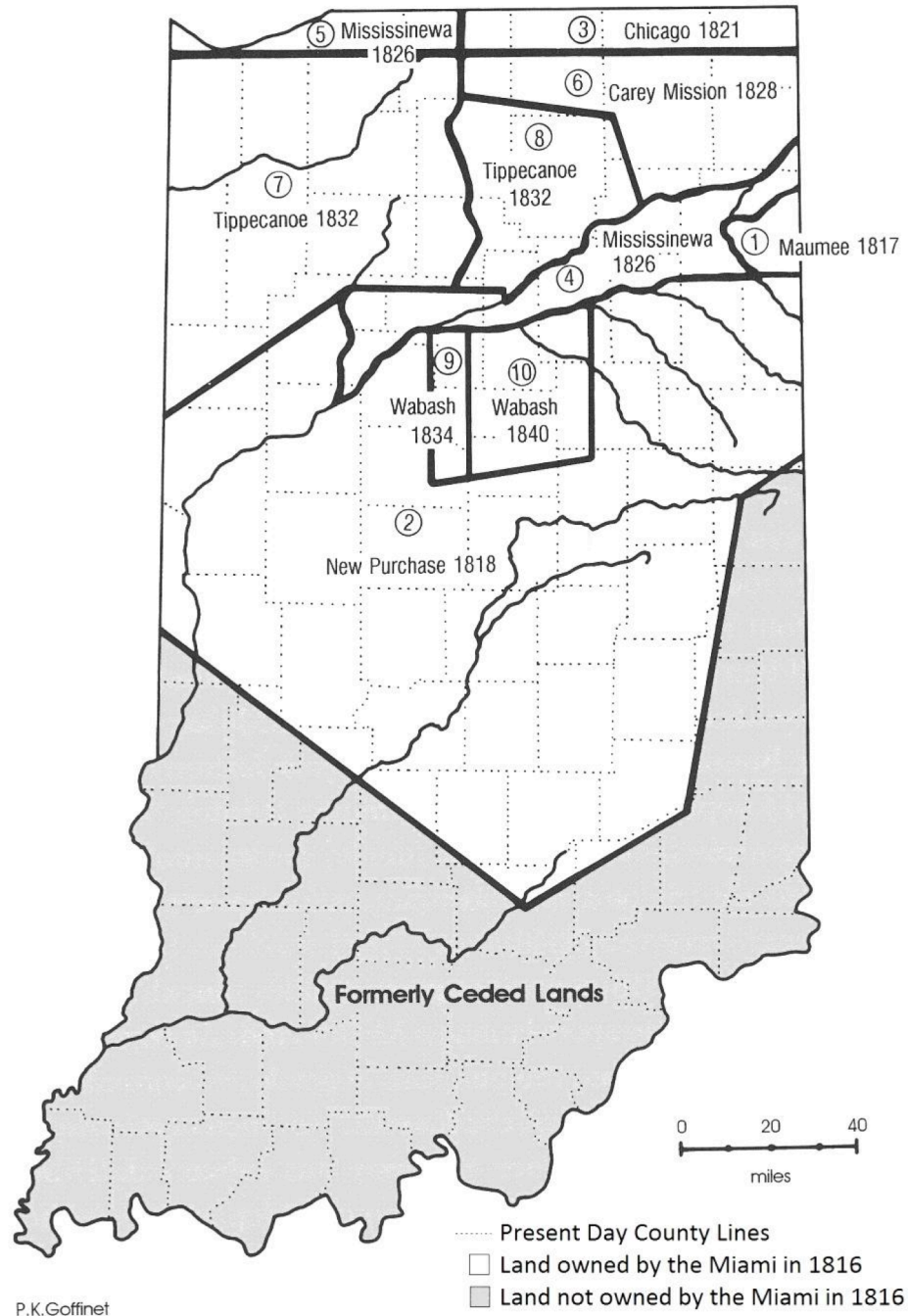


Image amended from p82 of Stewart Rafert's *The Miami Indians of Indiana: A Persistent People, 1654-1994*. The grey area is the only region of the state did not legally belong to the Miami in 1816. The dates refer to treaties in which the marked region was conceded by the Miami to the U.S. Government.

The 1840 removal treaty thus allowed Chief Richardville's family to remain on the land deeded to them in the 1838 treaty, but who counted as part of the family was not finalized. Over the next several years three more Miami families were deeded permanent land titles in Indiana, and the number of those who were included in these families multiplied rapidly as the Miami negotiated to retain control over their own membership rolls in the Treaty of 1838.²⁶

Like most Miami families at the time, Frances Slocum and her children were using every means at their disposal to gain an exemption from removal. As Lapp and Stalter note, Slocum's brothers petitioned their elected representatives to work on her behalf. On March 3, 1845 joint resolution H.R. 68, sponsored by Pennsylvania Representative Bidlack, was passed, which ensured that Frances Slocum, her children and children's children could remain in Indiana. Both the 1838 Treaty (written before the involvement of the extended Slocum family) and the joint resolution of 1845 place the land titles in the name of Slocum's daughters rather than the matriarch, which may have been a way of sidestepping the thorny political issue of whether Slocum was legally a Miami Indian or a white U.S. citizen. Historian Linda Kerber among others has shown that white women were not deeded land in this way in the mid-nineteenth century and that white married women were regularly prevented from owning land under paternalistic state and federal laws.²⁷

However, the H.R. 68 resolution that guaranteed that Mahkoonsahkwa and her family would remain in Indiana worked through treaty payments rather than land designations. The Miami had already learned that the 'permanent reserves' negotiated

²⁶ Rafert, 97-98.

²⁷ Linda K. Kerber. "The Paradox of Women's Citizenship in the Early Republic: The Case of Martin vs. Massachusetts, 1805." *American Historical Review*. 97 (1992): 349-78.

during treaties were likely temporary, and the Miami delegation who traveled to Kansas to survey the new reserve lands there did not produce favorable reports. Thus it is during this time that some Miami families escaped removal by moving away from the region prior to removal enforcement.²⁸ The Congressional document guaranteeing Mahkoonsahkwa and her descendants a livelihood in Indiana reads:

the joint resolution provides for the payment in Indiana of the annuities due this family, instead of requiring them to receive payment with the nation in the emigrant territory west of the Mississippi river. The reasons assigned are, that former treaties have made similar provisions in favor of other families of this nation; that lands have been by treaty reserved to them in Indiana, to the personal enjoyment of which they have a right that cannot be embarrassed by requiring them to go west of the Mississippi for their annuities.²⁹

Allowing Frances Slocum (Mahkoonsahkwa) and her Miami family to collect treaty payments in Fort Wayne, Indiana was a better guarantee of permanency than land deeds.³⁰ Many historians continue to posit that Frances Slocum remained in Indiana because she was white, but Congressional documents such as H.R. 68 quoted above always contextualize this decision as a simple extension of conditions already given to other Miami families. None of these provisions were unique to Frances Slocum. Her family was being

²⁸ Though the removal treaty was signed in 1840, the contract to carry out removal was sold and resold to five militias before being carried out by the Ewing brothers in 1846. During those six years, most Miami families sought better options than removal to Kansas. Some of those who did not secure exemptions through Congressional Amendments, were added to exempt families by “adoption” and other moved on before the contract was finally carried out.

²⁹ “Committee on Indian Affairs Report on the joint resolution for the benefit of Frances and her children and grandchildren, of the Miami tribe of Indians.” Printed on February 21, 1845. Senate Papers. 28th Congress, 2nd Session. 122. U.S. National Archives & Records Administration.

³⁰ Though Mahkoonsahkwa was referred to by her Miami name in earlier treaty negotiations and annuity payment receipt books, in these Congressional hearings she is named “Frances Slocum.”

added to a much larger list of other Miami families already exempted from removal. Frances Slocum maintained a colonial relationship with the U.S. government as a Miami woman through the removal process, even after the political involvement of her white brothers. While Slocum and her supporters drew on the popularity of her story in books and newspapers to make her case, her political struggle with the U.S. government was tied to her legal identity as Miami.

The popular claim that Frances Slocum remained in Indiana as a white woman clearly erases her power as a Miami widow and obfuscates the continued presence of the Miami Nation in Indiana. While it is possible to imagine other figurations of Slocum that complicate how racial, national and indigenous identities functioned in this period, the version that has been preserved and maintained in Indiana depends on a binary racial logic to erase the continued Native presence and reinforce a white settler imaginary of place. Similarly, the figure of Frances Slocum archived and displayed in public history institutions in Indiana is of an old woman who ‘appears’ to be an Indian though she is ‘really white’.

Although Slocum is associated with the Miami Indians and the Indian history of Indiana more broadly, she is archived as a white woman. She can be located in state, county, and research archives in folders marked ‘S’ for Slocum. This is a name that she did not use in her lifetime and one that she could not even recall for the vast majority of her life. In each of those folders, scattered across the Midwest, there is a family tree of descendants that trace her relatives into the twenty-first century. It includes authors such as Martha Bennett Phelps, Caleb Wright, and Charles Elihu Slocum who published books

about their famous relative.³¹ The names of her direct lineal descendants, who are Miami, are more difficult to locate. It is the whiteness of the white rose that is preserved as public history.

Despite the many cubic square feet dedicated to her in these archives, there are few details of her life or her relationships. There is no information about the grandchildren who she lived with when she was ‘found’ by her biological family. The Anglicized version of her Miami name, Maconaquah, may or may not be included, and Miami linguistic accounts of her name are almost entirely absent. There is hardly any information about the amazing legal battle that she waged to remain on the land deeded to her in 1838 – or that this was a shared struggle among large numbers of Miami rather than a strategy pursued by her white siblings. No details of her husband or sons are present. Slocum is the only Miami woman, and often times the only Miami at all, to be featured in these archives, and her Miami life is rendered absent.

While the historical figure of Slocum is heralded in Indiana as a famous Indian, the way her story circulates through public history obscures Miami history and experiences. If instead, this story and its popularity is read as settler history then its function as normalizing white belonging in Indiana becomes more clearly apparent. Rather than read the Slocum story as American Indian history, I read it as a document of settler history. It is a narrative of Indian absence in the state that uses Slocum’s presence to assert that all Indians left the state and that Slocum herself was ‘really white’. Rather than articulating

³¹ Martha Bennett Phelps (grand niece of F. Slocum), *Frances Slocum: The Lost Sister of Wyoming*. (Binghamton: Vail-Ballou Company, 1906.) Caleb Earl Wright (second cousin of F. Slocum), *Frances Slocum: the Lost Sister, a poem*. Wilkes-Barre, PA: Robert Baur & Son, 1889.) Charles Elihu Slocum (grand nephew of F. Slocum), *History of Frances Slocum the Captive: a Civilized Heredity vs. a Savage, and later Barbarous, Environment*, (Defiance, OH: self-published, 1908.)

the conditions and processes through which half of the Miami were removed to Kansas and the other half remained on tax-free land in Indiana, the Slocum stories reinforce a colonial racial imaginary in which land ownership and belonging are attached to whiteness.

Archival and Popular Erasures

The figures of Slocum in Pennsylvania and Indiana initially seem distinct. In the Wyoming Valley she is a young, obviously white girl ruthlessly stolen by Indians. This imagery is used to justify colonial violence and lay claim to that region as white settler territory in the name of civilized progress. In Indiana she is an old woman with dark leathery skin wearing Indian garb and trade silver. Despite the age and racial differences in how she is imagined, her story performs similar work in both places. These historical narratives are settler histories used to erase an indigenous presence and justify land dispossession in the name of statehood.

The differences between the stories speak to the varied strategies and uneven processes through which settler-colonialism emerges within the nation-state. In Pennsylvania the story is simple, short, and to the point. This is in part because when it was written in the 1830's the violence against indigenous peoples in the region had been so severe that they were largely displaced or dead. The historical figure of Slocum serves as a justification of that process. In Indiana the Slocum figure plays a more complex role because land dispossession seems cruel in the continued presence of indigenous peoples who live and survive off that land. The logic or commonsense-ness of land dispossession assumes indigenous absence so in cases like Indiana, where that absence is not carried out

completely through massacre or removal, regional histories of place perform the work of erasure.

The role of public archives and popular histories in the erasure of indigenous peoples points to a divergence between settler-colonial theorizing of archives and the broader scholarship on coloniality and the colonial power of archives. Archival theory is concerned with the cultural and epistemological limits of the archive – their constructedness and the methodological strategies one can use to analyze whatever is in the archive despite those limits. Many fascinating histories of marginalized peoples have been constructed by reading against the grain – looking for traces of the least powerful within the papers of the wealthy and the state. More recently Ann Laura Stoler has argued for reading along the archival grain – following the logic of the archive in order to discover what the content, organization, and structure of the archive can tell us about the colonial powers that maintain them.³² This approach reflects a much broader concern in postcolonial and diaspora studies that Native scholars are too often trapped by a methodological imperative to study their own communities as a non-native scholar would.³³ Indigenous scholars, such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Aileen Moreton-Robinson, complicate this discussion by thinking through the positionality of the indigenous scholar.

³² Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.)

³³ Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism*. (New York: Routledge, 1997,) et al. Far from being a new intervention, this is a dynamic that has been clearly articulated in feminist cultural studies for over twenty years. The fact that the critique still holds speaks to the persistence of policing the research of racialized, exoticized bodies in the U.S.

Moreton-Robinson suggests that indigenous scholars turn their gaze away from their own communities and fix their sights on the settler colonial societies in which they live.³⁴

My study of the historical figuration of Frances Slocum is a critical Miami approach to the production of settler history.³⁵ Reading and mapping out these stories as settler histories reveals a number of ways in which settler-colonial archives function differently than the colonial archives studied by Stoler et al. First, a Miami reading of these stories highlights the dearth of knowledge about the Miami and their history embedded in the narrative. That 'the white rose of the Miami' is regularly posited as a translation of the Anglicized 'Ma-con-a-quah' exhibits a complete lack of awareness of Miami language and thought-concepts. Settler colonial histories often exhibit a willful ignorance of the peoples that the history is supposed to be about. Second, an awareness of when Indian figures are named (or not) allows us to map the variations in the stories and highlights the ways that Frances Slocum is figured differently depending on place: a young girl among unnamed Indians in Pennsylvania and a wrongly named widow left behind after Indian removal in Indiana. Settler colonial histories are thus closely aligned with a sense of place even if the logics of these histories are embedded in different narratives of place.

While settler-colonial nations like the United States certainly maintain bureaucratic archives of imperial projects very similar to those described by Stoler, they also maintain

³⁴ Aileen Moreton-Robinson. "Bodies That Matter: Performing White Possession on the Beach." *American Indian Culture And Research Journal* 35, no. 4 (2011): 57-72.

³⁵ I say Miami, rather than indigenous, because while there are many indigenous approaches to history, mine is rooted in Miami stories and understandings of the world. This idea prioritizes tribally-specific knowledge embedded in Paula Gunn Allen's notion of a Native Feminist reading, which I see as being about tribal knowledge rather than a more abstract notion of "indigenous" knowledge, which risks collapsing diverse epistemes and cultures into an ambiguous western "alternative." Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon, 1992).

local archives, which are more closely tied to the particular settler-colonial context. Regional archives, such as local, county, or state historical societies, clearly intend to maintain the history of their particular locale. This proximity of 'here-ness' stands in contrast to the structured communications Stoler observes as letters and reports travel between the metropole and the colony, over 'there'. Such public and historical renderings of place, wherever the institutions might be located, can articulate a beginning, a discovery, what O'Brien calls *firsting*.³⁶ These museums and archives preserve the stories of the first 'inhabitants', 'towns', 'churches', 'schools', 'men of industry'. Grand claims are made possible through a willful insistence that the most recent conquest defines which people count, resulting in a refusal to acknowledge the histories of those who lived in a place before that moment settling. Settler-colonial societies depend on historical institutions to maintain an epistemic framework that justifies ongoing settler occupation through the constant re-articulation of their histories and the erasure of indigenous histories.

Resisting Erasure

How Indigenous histories are written, circulated, and so often erased is deeply troubling to Indigenous communities. These narratives shape how Native people are imagined and imagine themselves. Drawing on a term used by Michel Foucault, Gayatri Spivak calls this power epistemic violence because of the harm it inflicts on colonized peoples. Like the young Miami girl suspended for disrupting the teaching of white settler history, these narratives produce internal and social conflict for Native individuals. Though I was never suspended, I too was forced to leave history class and sit in the hall almost

³⁶ Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

every year when Native history was taught in secondary school. I made an intentional choice between speaking up and being formally disciplined or silently listening to a teacher insist that no more Natives exist in the eastern United States, which was its own, potentially more painful, form of being disciplined.

In addition to the social burden these histories place on native peoples, there are the formal, legalistic burdens that Courtney Rivard articulates so well. She shows how Native communities negotiating with the United States are forced to ‘prove’ their existence through a settler-colonial institutional structure of ‘legitimate history’. Much like the Pointe-au-Chien and Biloxi-Chitimacha Confederation of Muskogees, the Miami are appealing the Tribal Reorganization Act designation, which changed the Miami from a sovereign nation into a collection of federally recognized adult American Indians. This means that the Miami are recognized by the U.S. federal government individually as American Indians once they turn eighteen, but they are not currently recognized as a Native Nation.³⁷ The Miami remain in a grey area of U.S. federal recognition policy that does not neatly fit within the binary categories of ‘federally recognized’ or not.³⁸ Nations

³⁷ In a practical sense, this means that the Miami do not have access to Indian Health Services and other government services made available to tribal nations, but we have BIA payroll numbers and many of us were named in the recent Cobell class action suit.

³⁸ The social and legal burdens of white-settler history on the Miami are most clearly felt in everyday interactions between the Miami Nation and local, state, and NGO entities in Indiana. As the largest Native community in Indiana, local organizations often consult with the Miami Nation of Indiana when designing programming, choosing language for historical signs, gathering information on native plant species, and the like. These formal relations consist of an individual at the organization deciding that a Native community should be consulted and then deciding who will count as a proper Native representative. These individual decisions are shaped by how that person imagines the Native history of the state. The Miami Nation of Indiana tribal office regularly receives inquiries from such individuals trying to find a proper way to ask whether we are “real Indians” or not. When someone has been taught that there are no more Indians in Indiana and then tasked with reaching out to living Indians populations there, they are often unsure of how to proceed. They have already been prompted socially to perceive any claims to Indian-ness as inauthentic. Their task is further complicated by the fact that the Miami Nation of Indiana are not federally recognized

existing within these grey areas of U.S. law are understudied, in part because of their ambiguous status and the difficulties that causes in terms of documentation.

When I talk about the problem of Native absence in the archives and public history – how Frances Slocum is archived as a white woman and her Native life is simply overlooked – I am often confronted by scholars who believe that thinking about absence is a futile approach to history. It is true that stories cannot be told without subjects, plots, and details. There must be content – some text or material to be observed and analyzed. Indigenous and other scholars of color are urged to read between the lines, against the grain, along the grain – to construct (hi)stories out of whatever is present in the archives and museums. These are certainly useful tactics for working with the scraps of indigenous history left in the wake of settler-colonialism. I use these approaches throughout my own work. However, absences also demand to be theorized. The absence of indigenous histories is as central to the violence of settler colonialism as is the absence of indigenous bodies.

The most productive and action-oriented conversations about archival absences are taking place with and among archivists, often the most overlooked scholars in academia. I regularly meet brilliant archivists who are concerned with the accessibility of materials related to marginalized communities. They articulate a democratic notion of archival accessibility and think thoughtfully about how to amend their daily practices to make their holdings more accessible. They wrestle with the conceptions of power that Foucault, Derrida, and Spivak develop, trying to figure out ways to respond to the power imbalances

and they have no sense of what that might mean politically or legally because Indian history is so minimally taught in the first place.

they see in their archives. What can be done when there are no materials on a subject to be logged, nothing to be known?

Last year, I faced a situation that reinforced my commitment to thinking about absences in the historical record and points to a possible response to these absences. At saakaciweeyankwi, the annual Myaamia language camp in Indiana, a non-Miami man showed up one evening to speak with elders. He hoped to learn more about the history of the land where his wilderness preserve is located. After some conversation we figured out that he wanted some tidbits to put on signs around the property with Miami names for landmarks and maybe something about the Miami who lived there. After those of us who run the camp discussed our response, we told him that there is no doubt that Miami people lived on that land. Unfortunately, there are no Myaamia names for those landmarks because the Miami were either forced to migrate west of the Mississippi River or they were massacred. Either way, those particular place names were lost along with the names of the people who kept them. I sincerely suggested that he put that on a sign.

The destruction and obfuscation of indigenous knowledge is part of the violence of colonialism and should be treated as such. The Miami who participated in that conversation pooled our historical knowledge of treaties, geography, genealogies, and language to come to the conclusion that those place names no longer exist and to understand, at least in part, why. It may not be the kind of story he was looking for. It may not be easily catalogued, but it is not nothing. As a Miami scholar I consider what we learned that night important, and a historical sign with that information would be valuable as a marker of the violence of settler colonialism. It would provide a physical space to acknowledge and possibly mourn that which is lost in the process of settling.

So what might be the consequences of marking epistemic violence in institutional archives? What might it look like? In the case of the archives of Frances Slocum, it could be something as simple as a sheet of paper that says: 'In addition to her two daughters, she had two sons. Their names, birthdates, and deaths are not known. This is in part because the earliest records of the Miami were only kept by the U.S. government to keep track of treaty payments. There are virtually no records of individual Miami before that period. There are no birth or death records of the Miami until the 1920's when they came to be considered U.S. citizens'. As it is now, her sons are so rarely mentioned that few people realize she had children other than the two daughters referenced in her captivity narrative. Having a sheet of paper that acknowledges them and makes that information easily available to whoever looks through the file is not a difficult task. It prevents scholar after scholar from having to 'discover' her two sons, and it provides a sense to all readers about why this information is not available – pointing to the historical practices of record keeping on the Miami. We might also include information on sources that could provide further documentation. Maybe there are treaty records somewhere that mentions one or both of the boys. At the very least we can share the knowledge that it is a waste of time to look for birth and death records for Miami people in the nineteenth century.

I want to add this sort of information to the Miami County Historical Society records so that it is there not only when scholars search for sources but also when my relatives go to the archives to learn more about their ancestors. As a formally educated tribal member, I want to make research on the Miami easier for those who are not formally trained. The research that I do should be usefully accessible to the community as a whole. In addition, I want to highlight, more than I do now, the erasures that have occurred because of archival

and history-making processes. For instance, the fact that there is little to be known about her sons is barely a footnote in my writing at this point since its relevance seems incredibly localized at first. For biographers of Frances Slocum, the erasure of her sons seems to misrepresent her life in a basic way. Their deaths can be an opening to think more specifically about Miami experiences: were there broader social or environmental reasons why her two sons died young while both of her daughters lived into adulthood? If her sons were alive at removal, would it have changed how the land was deeded to her family? When thinking about the weight of colonial history, their absence becomes an event in which to think through what all was lost in this moment.

Marking absences in the archives runs the risk of reinforcing the settler fantasy that community archives are democratically accessible and representative, and that including tidbits on Natives and other marginalized people is sufficient.³⁹ Such efforts at inclusion mirror the landowner who wanted to post a few names and anecdotes on the land that whites once confiscated from the Miami and he now owns. Yet it is important here to differentiate, as Chela Sandoval does in *Methodology of the Oppressed*, between strategy and tactic.⁴⁰ Strategy is a larger plan to carry out certain goals. Strategies often seek to reconcile idealized notions of the world with normative practices. Sandoval points to the history of colonial powers coopting and undermining the strategies of the oppressed. Thus she encourages us to think more about tactics - individual actions whose meaning and purpose may change due to context, time, or intent. Tactics are not idealistic; they are

³⁹ Though written with a different context in mind, Sara Ahmed's *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012) provides a rich analysis of the political work "inclusion" performs.

⁴⁰ Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.) 59-62.

actions of guerillas that feel like they do not have better choices available to them. The kinds of markers that I am suggesting could easily become a cooptive strategy for including Native history and knowledge in the archive, which would miss the point. But it could also disrupt the expectation of the archive as a collection of knowledge of the past, drawing attention to the power of archiving as knowledge producing.

I want to continue to think about marking absences in the archive as a tactic of revealing the epistemic violence of settler colonialism and about what forms such markers might take. The obfuscation and denigration of indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing the world are crucial to the on-going project of settler-colonialism. Making the violence of epistemic erasures apparent provides a moment to acknowledge, teach, protest, and mourn that which is lost – the histories, the languages, the families, the knowledges of this world. It contains the possibility of raising the consciousness in the broader community about the burden and practices of settling. It is something, and something should be done.

Conclusion

It is strange that a white woman captured by Indians in the eighteenth century has come to be the most famous Miami Indian, too often the only one recognized and named individually. Today the Miami are ambivalent about the popularity of Frances Slocum and the ways she is presented in public histories and memorials. The tribal office receives regular inquiries from public school teachers who want to include more about her in their classrooms. Until 2010 the Slocum story was the only aspect of Great Lakes Native American history included in Indiana State curriculum. For better or worse, she is the Miami entry into public history, and the Miami want their history known. However, this is easier for me to say because as a lineal descendant of Frances Slocum, I was raised on her story in a way that does not resonate with other Miami families.

At saakaciweeyankwi, our summer language camp, I and the other organizers regularly facilitate a lesson called ceeki eeweemakiki – all our relations. In this lesson we teach the terms for talking about our immediate family and our extended family – including relatives who have passed on. We teach that there are seven Miami families that remain in Indiana, and we tell stories about the figures for which each of these families are named. After each ancestor story, the youth raise their hands if they are related to that person in order to show how we are all interrelated. When we get to Šiipaakanaki, also known as the Bundy's, or the descendants of Deaf Man or awl, we talk about Frances Slocum, Mahkoonsahkwa, his wife. Almost every camper proudly raises her hand as a relative, but not quite all.

The first time we taught this lesson, I was surprised at the tears from children who are not relatives of Mahkoonsahkwa. They feel cheated, like they are not quite Miami enough because so many individuals can claim her. By fourth grade they learn in school that Frances Slocum is synonymous with the Miami. On a practical level, the reason why so many living Miami are related to Frances Slocum is because her grandchildren and great-grandchildren had a lot of children of their own. My great-grandmother, Ladema, had eighteen kids. So I have a lot of Miami relatives. Because the Miami continued to marry each other, the seven families are interconnected in numerous ways over many generations. At the same time, claiming Frances Slocum is not simply a matter of genealogy. Pride in claiming her is also about the fame she has garnered among non-Miami people, the primary member of the nation that is actively discussed and honored in the wider society. There are coloring books, poems, and stories about her to read to young Miami. We all have many Miami ancestors, but she is the one we learn most about even within our families.

Among most Miami families, at least the more involved ones that I connect with through language curriculum work, there is some resentment about the attention that Frances Slocum receives as *the* iconic figure among the Miami. Not surprisingly, this resentment can be much stronger and louder in families that are not lineal descendants. Several years ago, one family petitioned the tribal council to have her remains removed from the Frances Slocum Cemetery under the logic that the cemetery is intended for Miami individuals, and Frances Slocum is white. But the cemetery includes many non-Miami spouses, and no one is suggesting they should

be removed. Thus the anger that led to this petition may be better understood as related to the fact that the name of the cemetery celebrates a woman associated with whiteness. Why is it that this Miami resting place is called the Frances Slocum Cemetery? The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, not the Miami Nation, named it. Like so many other aspects of public knowledge about the nation, it was defined by the settler-state and then attributed to the Miami.

In this study I followed the life, stories, and legacies of Frances Slocum using interdisciplinary Miami-feminist methodologies that focus on who benefits from the knowledge circulated about this woman. Despite the numerous books and biographies written about her, the woman at the center of it all almost disappears. She is more like a ghost, a vague outline of a woman, than a robust subject through which to see the world. The stories of Frances Slocum are better understood as narratives of settling – about the loss of a sister amid the violence of the frontier, of claiming lands on which American Indians remain, of erasing the presence of the Miami through colonial racial discourses of indigeneity. Frances Slocum becomes yet another woman through whom the violence of settler nation-building is justified.

The use of Native women in narratives of U.S. expansion have focused primarily on figures connected to national stories, such as Pocahontas or Sacajawea, while stories about Frances Slocum are often read as benign stories of local interest. Scholarship on nation-building and settler-colonialism is also often focused on the national. This study reconsiders scales of nationalism – the ways in which nationalist rhetoric and practices are carried through state, county, and local projects, particularly through public history. The stories told about Frances Slocum

work to shape narratives of who belongs on this land. In this telling, it is clear that regional history is not benign. It is, instead, another vehicle by which we naturalize who belongs where.

As a Miami educator, who seeks to get Native language and history into more Miami homes, what is most disheartening to me is the power that public historical narratives have on how individuals view their Miami-ness. By following the development of Frances Slocum, it becomes clear that non-Miami actors instigate her popularity. Only after she becomes a hegemonic figure of local settler society do the Miami begin to use her for their own political purposes. At the same time, the transformation of Frances Slocum into a Miami historical figure shows how epistemic violence functions over generations in a settler society, that is, how settler colonialism continues to colonize indigenous subjects for centuries. The idea that there is an authentic Miami take on Frances Slocum is the settler fantasy of a wholly other – an outside to which one might escape. It is a stance that seeks affinity with Nativeness, a desire to recuperate Native knowledges, but it is rooted in a refusal to acknowledge the irreversible violence of settler epistemes. The epistemic violence of settler-colonialism needs further accounting. This project introduces a small piece of that work.

The repeated mobilization of the figure of Frances Slocum at moments of Miami land dispossession emphasizes the settler-context, in which history has a particular purpose to naturalize settler belonging in particular places. Though land and place can be incredibly different concepts, here they converge. When the Miami lost their land, their loss was not only property, it was also their place in the world.

They lost the land-places through which they identified and on which they survived. It is not a coincidence that the historical figure through which the settler communities of Wilkes-Barre and Peru narrate their origins is also the figure that was used to justify the dispossession of Native lands. They are two sides of one coin. Every place in the United States that has a story of first settlers also has a story of the violent dispossession of that land from Natives. Dispossession stories are just told less frequently. The place where you sit as you read this has a story of dispossession. What histories do you know of that place? What are the stories told there in place of the story of dispossession?

Despite her popularity, Frances Slocum is an uncomfortable historical figure for Miami and non-Miami peoples. As a Miami figure her whiteness brings attention to racial anxieties over who counts as an indigenous person in the United States. Some refuse to acknowledge Frances Slocum as a Miami figure at all since it is through claims about her whiteness and Miamianness that colonial-racial orders articulate and delimit who counts as Native today. But many whites are also uncomfortable that a white woman, even if captured as a girl, chose to remain a Miami and raise her children and their children and children's children in the Miami Nation. And some understand that Native dispossession is bound up with her memorialization by settlers and their descendants. The racial ideologies that underpin these ambivalences are tied to the particular places in which her life is presented as public history. In these places her story is one way of justifying who belongs in that place, who has blood on their hands, and who deserves the protection of the settler-state.

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