



# Little Brother to Dartmouth Thetford Academy, Colonialism, and Dispossession in New England

MAURICE S. CRANDALL

---

## *Introduction*

THE Dartmouth College charter of December 13, 1769 famously reads:

KNOW YE, THEREFORE that We, considering the premises and being willing to encourage the laudable and charitable design of spreading Christian knowledge among the savages of our American wilderness, and also that the best means of education be established in our province of New Hampshire, for the benefit of said province, do, of our special grace, certain knowledge and mere motion, by and with the advice of our counsel for said province, by these presents, will, ordain, grant and constitute that there be a college erected in our said province of New Hampshire by the name of Dartmouth College, for the education and instruction of youth of the Indian tribes in this land in reading, writing, and all parts of learning which shall appear necessary and expedient for civilizing and christianizing children of pagans, as well as in all liberal arts and sciences, and also of English youth and any others.<sup>1</sup>

The weathervane that sat atop the tower of Baker-Berry Library until the summer of 2020<sup>2</sup> celebrated this element of the

<sup>1</sup>Dartmouth College Charter, December 13, 1769, <https://www.dartmouth.edu/library/rauner/dartmouth/dc-charter.html>, accessed July 29, 2021.

<sup>2</sup>Native American students and allies had complained for years about the weather vane, and it was quietly removed with a public announcement after the fact during the historic summer of social justice protest. See Dartmouth College press

school's history: a white man, seated on a tree stump in front of a lone pine tree, pointing in exhortation at an Indian smoking a pipe seated on the ground below him. A white teacher spreads Christian knowledge among the savages of the wilderness.

The institution's connection to the education of Native peoples—and their dispossession—is long and fraught. It really began in December 1743 during the Great Awakening, when Samson Occom, a Mohegan convert to Christianity at sixteen, came to study at Congregational minister Eleazar Wheelock's school in Lebanon, Connecticut. Occom stayed for four years, living in Wheelock's home for much of that time. As historian Margaret Connell-Szasz has explained, Occom made “astounding progress in the 1740s” in his education, and inspired Wheelock to establish Moor's Charity School in December 1754. Wheelock was under the “growing conviction that all Indian youth could achieve a level of education sufficient to employ them as instructors to other Indian youth.”<sup>3</sup> Wheelock took in both Indian and white students—including Indian girls—hoping to train them to become Christian missionaries and schoolmasters.<sup>4</sup> In 1765, at the suggestion of evangelist George Whitefield, Wheelock sent Occom, by then an ordained Presbyterian minister and accomplished orator, to England and Scotland to raise money for a college which could expand Moor's Charity School's mission. Occom, who was the living embodiment of what such a college could accomplish, was a hit. He delivered more than three hundred sermons, raised £9,497 in England and £2,529 in Scotland—the largest amount collected through direct solicitation by any American

---

release, “Dartmouth Removes Baker Tower Weather Vane,” June 25, 2020, <https://home.dartmouth.edu/news/2020/06/dartmouth-removes-baker-tower-weather-vane>, accessed July 29, 2021.

<sup>3</sup>Margaret Connell Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607–1783* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 194–99.

<sup>4</sup>Between 1761 and 1769, Moor's School enrolled some sixteen Indian girls, about one fourth of the school's enrollment. Wheelock intended for the girls to marry the Indian boys and do their domestic labor in the missionary field. Connell Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies*, 221.

institution during the entire colonial era—and gained the support of William Legge, the Earl of Dartmouth.<sup>5</sup>

It is a powerful origin story, one that has enshrined Dartmouth in the history of Indian education in the United States. At the same time it obscures a number of important facts. For example, Eleazar Wheelock quickly tired of Indian education, focusing more on white students. Only three Native Americans graduated from the college before 1800.<sup>6</sup> Also, Samson Occom never set foot on the Dartmouth College campus, and he was deeply resentful of the way Wheelock spent the money he had worked so hard to raise during his tour of England and Scotland. He wrote to Wheelock on July 24, 1771, “Your having So many white Scholars and So few or no Indians Scholars [at Dartmouth], gives me great Discouragement.”<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, while Wheelock wrote to General Jeffrey Amherst (the same Amherst of smallpox blanket infamy) and to the Marquess of Lothian in 1763, proposing a tract of land “conveniently Situate[d] in the Heart of the Indian Country be granted” for the purpose of an “Indian School—That the School be an Academy for all parts of useful Learning, part of it a College for the Education of Missionaries School Masters, Interpreters &c, and part of it a School for reading and writing &c.,”<sup>8</sup> the venture required the dispossession of Abenaki peoples whose homeland included this portion of the Connecticut River Valley. Ultimately, Dartmouth’s efforts to educate Native American

<sup>5</sup>Colin Calloway, *The Indian History of an American Institution: Native Americans at Dartmouth* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2010), 16, 18.

<sup>6</sup>Calloway, *The Indian History of an American Institution*, 22–23, 198.

<sup>7</sup>Samson Occom, letter, to Eleazar Wheelock, 1771 July 24. *The Occom Circle*, <https://collections.dartmouth.edu/occom/html/diplomatic/771424-diplomatic.html>, accessed August 28, 2021. He further wrote, “I verily thought once that your Institution was Intended Purely for the poor Indians with this thought I Cheerfully Ventur’d my Body & Soul, left my Country my poor Young Family all my Friends and Relations, to Sail over the Boisterous Seas to England, to help forward your School, Hoping, that it may be a lasting Benefet to my poor Tawnee Brethren, with this View I went a Volunteer – I was quite willing to become a Gazing stock, Yea Even a Laughing stock, in Strange Countries to Promote your Cause . . . now I am afraid, we Shall be Deem’d as Liars and Deceivers in Europe, unless you gather Indians quickly to your College, in great Numbers and not to have So many Whites in [the school].”

<sup>8</sup>Wheelock, quoted in Calloway, *The Indian History of an American Institution*, 15–16.

students in large numbers during its first two hundred years were an abject failure. The college's thirteenth president, John G. Kemeny (1970–1981), is credited with a dramatic “transformation.” Supervising Dartmouth's shift to coeducation in 1972, he also made it “more proactive in recruiting and retaining minority students and revived its founding commitment to provide education for Native Americans.”<sup>9</sup> This narrative shift has turned failure to triumph, and Dartmouth can now proudly tout the fact that since 1970, it has graduated over 1,100 Native American students<sup>10</sup> and is known internationally for its many Indigenous-centered initiatives. Focusing on Dartmouth's triumphs, transformations, and “unique” character, while downplaying its many failings, results in a story of net gain; here is an institution that, despite its shortcomings, has finally “made good” on its promise.

Clearly, such a narrative is problematic, and many pages could be dedicated to exposing its shortcomings and outright deceptions. But in the context of the landmark Land-Grab Universities report by Robert Lee and Tristan Ahtone (Kiowa), published by *High Country News* in 2020, which shows the shocking degree to which stolen Native American land is the basis for the land-grant university system,<sup>11</sup> the present essay challenges the public and scholarly focus on colleges and universities as well as Indian residential schools as the most obvious and important agents of colonialism and Indigenous dispossession. By only scrutinizing institutions such as Dartmouth, or the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, we run the risk of overlooking the crucial roles played by educational institutions other than colleges, universities, and residential schools in colonialism and the dispossession of Native peoples. As historian Christine M. DeLucia wrote in *Memory Lands: King*

<sup>9</sup>“John G. Kemeny,” Dartmouth College Office of the President, <https://president.dartmouth.edu/people/john-g-kemeny>, accessed August 28, 2021.

<sup>10</sup>Dartmouth College Department of Native American and Indigenous Studies Website, <https://native-american.dartmouth.edu/undergraduate>, accessed August 28, 2021.

<sup>11</sup><https://www.hcn.org/issues/52.4/indigenous-affairs-education-land-grab-universities>, accessed August 1, 2021.

*Philip's War and the Place of Violence in the Northeast*, certain spaces have been deemed significant and “sites of memory” while others—“‘minor’ yet critical sites”—are “treated as marginal, eventually pushed to the sides of historical and geographical consciousness by the majority of New Englanders and scholars.”<sup>12</sup> With this in mind, I focus on Thetford Academy, a rural Vermont preparatory school located in the town of Thetford, just across the Connecticut River and ten short miles north of Dartmouth College. Unknown to nearly everyone, besides those who have attended the school, it has been completely overshadowed by the famous college. But this “little brother to Dartmouth”<sup>13</sup> is shockingly complicit in colonialism and dispossession. In fact, the school and its alumni have been direct agents in colonial processes as much or more than institutions of higher education many times larger. Similar to DeLucia’s work in *Memory Lands*, my essay “probes unrecognized locales that illuminate vernacular geographies of remembrance, mourning, protest, and regeneration.” DeLucia’s exploration of numerous landscapes and stories connected to King Philip’s War uncovered many “willfully forgotten contours of early America that still weigh so heavily on the present.”<sup>14</sup> I propose to do the same with Thetford Academy. To accomplish this, I focus on the history of the school, including its establishment on stolen Abenaki lands and expansionist-minded curriculum, and the actions of several of its famous alumni, trustees, and faculty, including Justin Morrill, “father” of the federal land-grant university system, and the Worcester family of *Worcester v. Georgia* fame. By doing so, we begin to recognize and acknowledge the complicity of educational institutions, even small, progressive, beloved town schools, in propping up systems of colonialism and dispossession that reverberate to the present.

<sup>12</sup>Christine M. DeLucia, *Memory Lands: King Philip’s War and the Place of Violence in the Northeast* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 1–2.

<sup>13</sup>The reference is to the Indigenous game of lacrosse and its relationship to war, its “elder brother.”

<sup>14</sup>DeLucia, *Memory Lands*, 2–4.

### *History of Thetford Academy*

The town of Thetford received its charter from King George III as part of the Province of New Hampshire in 1761. The town grew steadily so that by the War of 1812 it had a population of around 1,900 people.<sup>15</sup> A Congregational church, built in 1787, served as the center of town activities, hosting sermons, debates, discussions, town meetings, and elections for town and state officers. By 1818, the Thetford church had become one of the largest and most influential in the state of Vermont. A common school was in operation by the 1790s indicating education was on the mind of many of the town's influential early residents. In fact, Thetford had offered Eleazar Wheelock two thousand acres of land if he would build Dartmouth College there instead of across the river in Hanover.<sup>16</sup> Among early leaders the Congregational minister and theologian Asa Burton looms large over the history of the town and Thetford Academy. Burton, who graduated from Dartmouth College in 1777, felt he had a special calling among the youth and focused many of his sermons on the importance of good schools and education. He directed one such sermon at the youth in 1818, the year before Thetford Academy opened, stressing three key points: knowledge in the head; grace in the heart; and the best period to gain them (during one's youth).<sup>17</sup>

Burton served as one of the first trustees of Kimball Union Academy, a secondary school for young men who intended to enter the clergy, that opened in Meriden, New Hampshire, just twenty-five miles from Thetford, in 1815. Inspired by Kimball Union, Burton and other influential Thetfordians opened an academy of their own in 1819, with Burton as the first president of the board of trustees.<sup>18</sup> Thetford Academy was one of a growing number of private secondary schools that offered

<sup>15</sup>Mary B. Slade, *Thetford Academy's First Century* (Thetford, VT: Thetford Academy Historical Committee, 1956), 1; Kermit Wallace Cook, "A History of Thetford Academy, 1819-1895" (MA thesis, Boston University, 1950), 1.

<sup>16</sup>Slade, *Thetford's First Century*, 7-8.

<sup>17</sup>Slade, *Thetford's First Century*, 4-5, 29.

<sup>18</sup>Slade, *Thetford's First Century*, 25, 29.

classical instruction common to the era but also catered to sponsors and the needs of individual communities.<sup>19</sup> From its earliest days Thetford was infused with a strong missionary character. Students attended two services on Sundays, as well as morning and evening prayers. Unfortunately, a fire in 1843 destroyed nearly all of Thetford Academy's earliest records but much can still be gleaned from various sources about the character of the school during its first decades.<sup>20</sup> For example, the school regularly published catalogs, which were essentially advertisements intended to attract students. They touted the school's curriculum and culture as well as the opportunities available to students there. The 1848–49 catalog celebrated the school's great location, "free from noise and bustle and business excitement, and every temptation to idleness and dissipation." It also listed the various textbooks used for instruction, with the Bible first on that list. Discipline was strict, the catalog stating, "*And it may be distinctly understood that no one can retain his connection with the school, who, after suitable admonitions, shall persevere in a course of immorality.*"<sup>21</sup>

Coupled with the religious nature of the school was the reform-minded philosophy of nineteenth-century New England. Thetford was coeducational from its founding, and seemed to support women's rights. Chauncey Nye, who attended in the early 1850s, wrote in his journal of attending the school's lyceum on numerous occasions. In his entry for May 20, 1850, he noted that the lyceum "Resolved that women should be permitted to have equal privileges with men political and social."<sup>22</sup> The cultural environment of Thetford Academy also seemed to reflect abolitionist sentiments. Nye recorded having attended "religious exercises," in which the minister used Acts from the New Testament as his scriptural basis,

<sup>19</sup>Connell Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies*, 37.

<sup>20</sup>Slade, *Thetford's First Century*, 83, 99.

<sup>21</sup>Thetford Academy, *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Thetford Academy, at Thetford. VT., for the Academic Year 1848–9* (Concord, NH: Press of Asa McFarland, 1848), 16, 19, 20, italics in the original.

<sup>22</sup>Chauncey Nye Journal, May 20, 1850. Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH.

“directing most of his discourse against the Fugitive Slave Law. Taking the ground that human law is null and void when it clashes with divine law.”<sup>23</sup> Thetford also had Black students during the nineteenth century. The reform spirit ran strong, as Nye recorded many meetings dedicated to temperance, and one interesting lyceum discussion in which it was “Resolved that Northern States should cede [*sic*] from the Southern.”<sup>24</sup>

While the school’s nineteenth century curriculum did not contain references related directly to Native peoples, Native American affairs and the “Indian problem” were clearly on the minds of those at Thetford Academy. For example, at an evening of “Original Rhetorical Exercises” on November 15, 1853, a student, Charles L. Allen, delivered an oration titled, “The wrongs of the red man [*sic*].”<sup>25</sup> The content of the oration is not recorded, but, given the school’s missionary nature, it is not difficult to imagine that it called on those within hearing to take up the cause of converting the “heathen” Indians.<sup>26</sup> The trend continued throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. At the commencement exercises on 1896, D.T. Barrett’s oration, “Lo, the Poor Indian” was “a recital of the natural virtues of the Red Man, the injustice and duplicity of the Whites in dealing with him, the establishment of the Indian commission, twenty-five years ago by President Grant, and the rapid progress in the arts of peace and civilization made by those who have had opportunities since that time.”<sup>27</sup> Wesley M. Hunt at the 1906 commencement

<sup>23</sup>Chauncey Nye Journal, December 6, 1850.

<sup>24</sup>Chauncey Nye Journal, May 18, 1850. The school catalog of 1882–83 touted its lyceum, which, “Under the supervision of the teachers, affords an opportunity for debates, and the discussions are generally spirited and profitable.” *Catalogue of the Officers, Instructors and Pupils of Thetford Academy and Boarding School, Thetford, Vt., 1882–83* (Bradford, VT: Opinion Steam Printing House, 1883), 14.

<sup>25</sup>“Original Rhetorical Exercises at Thetford Academy, Tuesday Evening, November 15, 1853” (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth Press, 1853).

<sup>26</sup>Orations given at the graduating exercises of the same year included “The Missionary Enterprise,” “Who shall have a statue? [*sic*]” and “The Christian Church—its past—its future [*sic*].” *Thetford Academy. Exercises of the Graduating Class, 1853* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth Press, 1853).

<sup>27</sup>“Thetford Academy,” *Vermont Watchman* (Montpelier, VT), June 3, 1896.



delivered a talk titled “Aspect of the Education of the Indians and Negroes in the United States.”<sup>28</sup> Such concerns extended beyond the continental United States as it built its global empire after the Spanish-American War. At the commencement exercises in 1900, Grace Bean Ellis spoke on “Our Duty Towards the Philipinos [*sic*].”<sup>29</sup> What is clear from the available sources and remembrances is that Thetford Academy was the picture of “progressive,” “enlightened,” and “reformist” education in the nineteenth century; but this marriage of reform and missionary zeal had a darker side, one directly connected to colonialism and Indigenous dispossession, and that was most clearly manifested in the actions of its influential alumni.

### *Thetford Academy, Colonialism, and Dispossession*

What is striking about the narratives constructed about Thetford Academy and Dartmouth College is their failure to acknowledge that they exist because of Abenaki dispossession. I found scant mention of the area’s Indigenous peoples in any of the published sources. Histories of the town of Thetford begin with its chartering in 1761, and Abenaki peoples are absent. As Colin Calloway has correctly pointed out, Vermonters simply do not think of their state as “Indian country,” even though the Abenaki homeland covers a large portion of the northeastern United States and southern Quebec.<sup>30</sup> Much like Thetford Academy, Vermont sees itself and its history as progressive, peaceful, and at the cutting edge of important reform movements. But such an image belies the state’s incredibly violent history. Whites who came to Vermont at the beginning of the seventeenth century turned the Green Mountain frontier into a “war zone,” a place of conflict where Abenakis, Haudenosaunees, French, English, and later, Americans, all battled

<sup>28</sup>“Eighty-Seventh Commencement of Thetford Academy, Thetford, Vermont, Wednesday, May 23, 1906.”

<sup>29</sup>“Commencement, Thetford Academy, Congregational Church, Thetford, Vermont, May 23, 1900.”

<sup>30</sup>Colin G. Calloway, *The Western Abenakis of Vermont, 1600–1800: War, Migration, and the Survival of an Indian People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), xv.

for control.<sup>31</sup> Even as recently as the 1930s, Vermont pursued an aggressive eugenics policy that led to marriage restrictions and sterilizations that disproportionately affected Native Americans, a legacy with which the state has only recently begun to grapple.<sup>32</sup>

The eighteenth century was an exceptionally violent time for Abenakis. Roswell Tenney Smith (1825–1901), who grew up in Hanover and spent time in Thetford, recalled the violence of the eighteenth century: “Fifty or sixty years ago people were living who had witnessed Indian atrocities and had trembled for themselves and their families.” He interviewed individuals who had “fought the savages,” with one elderly woman recalling how she would “lay in her bed, in mortal fear, lest the detachment of the Indians which came down the Connecticut, should cross the river . . . for she could see the lights of their encampments in her bed.”<sup>33</sup> A party of Mohawks and Abenakis had raided and burned the town of Royalton, a short twenty miles west of Thetford, on October 16, 1780. Ethan and Ira Allen, perhaps Vermont’s most beloved sons and leaders of the Green Mountain Boys, spent a lifetime killing and dispossessing Abenakis in the state.<sup>34</sup> To survive the upheavals and chaos of Abenaki-white relations, Abenakis in Vermont moved frequently and kept low profiles. For example, to escape the violence of the American Revolution, many Abenakis relocated to relative safety in Canada. As a result, the perception is that Abenakis in Vermont “disappeared” by 1800.<sup>35</sup> The reality is that many Cowasucks, the band of Abenakis who inhabit the Connecticut River Valley around Thetford and Hanover, have remained in the area despite histories written by the colonizers that have left them out. Historical narratives of Thetford and Thetford Academy exclude this violence and dispossession and

<sup>31</sup> Calloway, *The Western Abenakis of Vermont*, 19.

<sup>32</sup> See “Vermont Eugenics: A Documentary History,” <http://www.uvm.edu/~eugenics/>, accessed November 6, 2021.

<sup>33</sup> Roswell Tenney Smith, “Reminiscences of a Childhood in Hanover Center,” letter, no date. Rauner Special Collections Library.

<sup>34</sup> Calloway, *The Western Abenakis of Vermont*, 225–30.

<sup>35</sup> Calloway, *The Western Abenakis of Vermont*, 23–24, 224, 234–35.

fail to acknowledge that the town and its beloved institution exist only because of violence perpetrated against Abenakis. The disappearance of Abenakis from Thetford and Vermont history conforms to Vermont's idyllic image.<sup>36</sup> The tradition of willfully forgetting violence toward Indigenous peoples runs so deep in New England that DeLucia referred to it as "a region still invested in a strong self-image of historical innocence."<sup>37</sup>

Aside from the disappearing of Abenakis from Vermont's history, there exists a similar historical amnesia about Indian education in the Connecticut River Valley. While Dartmouth's connection to Indian education is widely known, there was a feeder network of secondary schools where Native American children, deemed "unprepared" for matriculation at Dartmouth, were sent for preparation. These included Kimball Union and Thetford. Even within Dartmouth College, Moor's Charity School continued to operate into the 1850s where "unprepared" Native students were enrolled in preparation for Dartmouth College proper. There was also the Agriculture College at Dartmouth that enrolled several Native students.<sup>38</sup> Dakota physician and Indian activist Charles Eastman (Ohiyesa), who graduated from Dartmouth in 1887, attended Kimball Union in the early 1880s, affectionately referring to it as "the little ancient institution at which I completed my preparation for college," where he "absorbed much knowledge of the New Englander and his peculiarities."<sup>39</sup> Complete enrollment

<sup>36</sup>On writing Indians out of New England history, see White Earth Ojibwe scholar Jean O'Brien's *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

<sup>37</sup>DeLucia, *Memory Lands*, 3–4.

<sup>38</sup>Calloway has compiled a list of Native American students who attended Moor's Charity School and Dartmouth College. Included on that list are those who attended Thetford Academy and Kimball Union Academy before enrolling at Dartmouth. Calloway, *The Indian History of an American Institution*, Appendices 1 and 2. Not included on the list are those students who attended Thetford and Kimball Union but never enrolled at Dartmouth. Unable to complete such a list due to the inaccessibility of such records, I am certain that there were Native American students at both schools who, for whatever reason, never enrolled at Dartmouth. Some may have intended to but were unable, while others never planned to attend the college.

<sup>39</sup>Charles Eastman (Ohiyesa), *From the Deep Woods to Civilization: Chapters in the Autobiography of an Indian* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1916), 66–67.

records for Thetford Academy's first decades are incomplete at best, but at least a handful of Native American students attended the school during that time. Thetford historian Mary B. Slade wrote, "It is not generally recalled that young Indians were occasionally prepared in Thetford for Dartmouth." The most famous of these was Maris Bryant Pierce (Seneca), who appears in the 1835 Catalog. But, "There were probably others, since students were listed from Canada, and many have been St. Francis Indians [Abenakis from the Odenak First Nation of Quebec], some of whom were known to have been in Dartmouth."<sup>40</sup>

Maris Bryant Pierce (Ha-dya-no-doh or "Swift Runner") was born on the Allegany Reservation in 1811, at a time when Haudenosaunee peoples were under constant pressures to negotiate treaties to cede their lands. These treaty negotiations, like the one leading to the Treaty of Big Tree in 1797, which created eleven Seneca reservations, including Allegany, were fraught with bribery, lies, intimidation, and whiskey. Pierce's family later relocated to the Buffalo Creek Reservation, which became a haven for Senecas, Cayugas, Onondagas, and Tuscaroras.<sup>41</sup> As Tuscarora historian Alyssa Mt. Pleasant has explained, the years of Pierce's childhood were characterized by intense debates within the Haudenosaunee community at Buffalo Creek over Christianity and education. Quakers had made inroads there, and some Seneca youths had been educated in Quaker schools, including Pierce. Farmer's Brother, a Seneca leader, expressed dismay that while at the Quaker school his grandson had acquired all of the worst elements of white society, such as drinking, gambling, and frequenting brothels. While Haudenosaunees agreed to allow Baptists to construct a building at Buffalo Creek for a schoolhouse and public

<sup>40</sup>Slade, *Thetford's First Century*, 75.

<sup>41</sup>H.A. Vernon, "Maris Bryant Pierce: The Making of a Seneca Leader," in Ray Wilson and L. G. Moses, eds., *Indian Lives: Essays on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Native American Leaders* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985), 20–21.

worship in 1803, they did so in the hopes that it would help them avoid future deception and dispossession.<sup>42</sup>

Pierce attended Quaker primary schools, and then a succession of preparatory academies. He spent time in Rochester where he converted to Presbyterianism. Before enrolling at Dartmouth, he was a student at Thetford Academy. Pierce's accomplishments while at Dartmouth are noteworthy. Inspectors from the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, which funded Bryant's education at Dartmouth, met with Pierce and a handful of other Native students there. They found Pierce "remarkable," with "prominent and bold" features. As a "chief," he had "been required to act a conspicuous part in the present exigencies and trying situation of his people."<sup>43</sup> While still a student at Dartmouth, Pierce had been called upon to assist in negotiating the infamous Buffalo Creek Treaty of 1838, whereby a minority of Seneca chiefs gave up 114,869 acres of land at about 17.58 cents per acre.<sup>44</sup> While Pierce was a signatory to the treaty, he immediately began speaking out against it, arguing that Senecas could be civilized, and that forcing them West was not better for their "progress."<sup>45</sup> Pierce spoke publicly on a number of occasions about the injustice being done to his people and even traveled

<sup>42</sup>Alyssa Mt. Pleasant, "Guiding Principles: Guswenta and the Debate over Formal Schooling at Buffalo Creek, 1800–1811," in *Indian Subjects: Hemispheric Perspectives on the History of Indigenous Education*, ed. Brenda J. Child and Brian Klopotek (Santa Fe, NM: SAR Press, 2014), 120–22.

<sup>43</sup>John Tawse and George Lyon, *Report to the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, of a Visit to America, by Their Appointment: In Reference to the Fund Under Their Charge for the Education of Native Indians* (Edinburgh, SCT: Printed for the Society by W. Whyte & Co., 1839), 12–13.

<sup>44</sup>Vernon, "Maris Bryant Pierce," 26.

<sup>45</sup>Daniel F. Littlefield, "'They Ought to Enjoy the Home of Their Fathers': The Treaty of 1838, Seneca Intellectuals, and Literary Genius," in Helen Jaskoski, ed., *Early Native American Writing: New Critical Essays* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 90. The SSPCK inspectors, who traveled to Buffalo Creek after visiting Dartmouth, agreed with Pierce's assessment: "surprised" by the Senecas, "as we did not expect to meet with a state of such high comparative civilization," they were "still much inferior to the Whites, [but] they have been making great and satisfactory progress." They had cultivated fields, barns and houses, an inn kept by an "Indian chief," a small church "which is well attended," and they were "peculiarly well fitted for receiving and benefiting by the instructions of suitably educated teachers of their own people who might be sent among them, and for the preparing of whom Moore's School seems to

to Washington, D.C. in 1839 as one of four Senecas chosen to represent their people in dealings with the federal government.<sup>46</sup> Pierce's most famous speech, delivered in Buffalo in 1838, was reprinted and saw wide circulation. In his address he referred to Cherokee Chief John Ross, a "scholar, a patriot, an honest and honorable man" who stood up to the "powers that be." Still, the fact that he and his people were Indians condemned them to be driven from their homes to "'Terra incognita' beyond the Mississippi." He also described the condition of his own people, and why removal would be folly. They had made such progress; why cut it short and start over in the West? More important, "The right and possession of our lands is undisputed," and, "The graves of our fathers and mothers and kin are here, and about them still cling our affections and memories." It was their sacred homeland, and they had everything they needed for "improvement" at Buffalo Creek, so "surely there is not inducement for moving."<sup>47</sup>

Given that Pierce engaged in such crucial activism for Senecas and other Haudenosaunees while a student at Dartmouth, it is easy to overlook his time at Thetford Academy. Very little of the documentary record relating to his time in Thetford remains, but there are clues to what must have been an important time in his development. For one thing, he entered the school in his twenties, much older than most of the other students. Already educated and articulate, he must have excelled in the rhetorical exercises that characterized the classical education offered at the school. Furthermore, the school surely made a strong impression on him, as he sent his son, Edward Wright Pierce, to Thetford Academy in the 1860s. He wrote to Edward on November 6, 1863, "I will say that you must be governed by your Teachers; they will do what is right, I

---

be well adapted." Tawse and Lyon, *Report to the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, of a Visit to America*, 27–28.

<sup>46</sup>Littlefield, "They Ought to Enjoy the Home of Their Fathers," 91.

<sup>47</sup>Maris Bryant Pierce, *Address on the Present Condition and Prospects of the Aboriginal Inhabitants of North America, with Particular Reference to the Seneca Nation* (Buffalo, NY: Steele's Press, 1838), 8–10.

have great confidence in their good judgment.” He also stated, “Thetford is a good place,” and encouraged his son with these words: “I think you have a great chance to learn, I wish I had such a chance now[.] I would improve it to the best of my ability.”<sup>48</sup> Edward appears in the school catalog for 1864, with his hometown listed as Versailles, NY (the Cataraugus Reservation). That same catalog stated that students must follow the guidelines of a “sober, industrious and enlightened religious community,” and that the school’s governing was “mild and generous, but firm and decided.”<sup>49</sup> That the school accepted Native American pupils as early as the 1830s made it unique for its time. That one of those students was an important tribal leader, diplomat, and intellectual—who sent his son to study there as well—is all the more noteworthy. Teachers, administrators, and trustees at Thetford Academy must have viewed themselves as the picture of progressive education. They had no idea the damage their alumni would do.

Without a doubt, Thetford Academy’s most (in)famous alumnus is Justin Smith Morrill. Morrill was born in the nearby town of Strafford in 1810. Strafford’s Upper Village, where Morrill’s family resided, had around twenty houses, two stores, a tavern, a doctor’s office, a lawyer, a town meeting house, and various mechanics’ shops. The son of a blacksmith, Morrill first attended the local school before attending Thetford Academy at fourteen. He attended the school for a single term in 1825, and his formal education ended the next year.<sup>50</sup> Morrill became a successful merchant but dedicated much of his free time to study. He recalled, “In my early boyhood at Strafford pretty much all the books I could there find were read.” He spent many evenings “devoted to study or to general reading” by “a

<sup>48</sup>“M.B. Pierce to Son, 1863 November 6.” Maris B. Pierce Papers, Mss. Boog, Box 1 Folder 5, Buffalo History Museum Research Library, <https://nyheritage.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/VTP005/id/1009/rec/1>, accessed July 1, 2021. Edward went on to attend Dartmouth, although he did not graduate.

<sup>49</sup>*Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Thetford Academy, Thetford, VT., for the Academical Year 1864* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth Press, 1864), 8, 14.

<sup>50</sup>James Barrett, “Early Life of Justin S. Morrill,” *The Vermonter* 2.4 (November, 1896): 62.

tallow candle,” and “began to buy books as soon as I was able to pay for them.” According to a biographer, “any leisure time that was left he devoted to cultivating and indulging a fondness for the studious reading of good books in literature and science, as well as the current newspapers and periodicals. His reading was student-like, done for the improvement of his mind by the discipline, for furnishing it with stores of useful knowledge, and cultivating it into scholarly tastes and character.”<sup>51</sup>

Some have attributed Morrill’s inspiration for the Land-Grant College Act, what his biographer calls “Morrill’s Monument,” partly to his own insecurities at having no college education. A display board at the Justin Smith Morrill Homestead State Historic Site in Strafford states, “Inspired in large part by his own lack of a formal higher education, he envisioned that these colleges would teach courses in science, agriculture, and engineering in addition to the traditional classics curriculum formerly offered only to clergymen, teachers, physicians, and lawyers.”<sup>52</sup> This was certainly part of his motivation, but his time at Thetford Academy, while brief, deeply influenced Morrill, as it in many ways inspired the model for educational expansion at the expense of Indigenous peoples. Morrill’s roommate at Thetford Academy was Edmund Otis Hovey. Hovey, who graduated from Thetford Academy, became a missionary to the West and one of the founders of Wabash College in Indiana in 1832.<sup>53</sup> Hovey labored as a missionary in Vermont and Quebec, and graduated from Andover Seminary in 1831. He was inspired by a speech at his seminary graduation urging his class to build a college in the Mississippi Valley. Gathering on a chilly November 21, 1832, Hovey and the other Wabash College founders knelt in the snow and dedicated the grounds to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost for a Presbyterian college. At that time, Crawfordsville was a frontier town, and there were fears that the Sauk chief Black Hawk would cross

<sup>51</sup>Morrill, quoted in Barrett, “Early Life of Justin S. Morrill,” 65, 66.

<sup>52</sup>“Morrill’s Vision: Education for the Masses,” Justin Smith Morrill Homestead State Historic Site, Strafford, Vermont.

<sup>53</sup>Slade, *Thetford’s First Century*, 50, 54.



the Wabash River and attack it. According to a celebratory institutional history, the settlers in this new college town “carried on their persons the scars of the War of 1812, or of Indian fighting; men and women alike had suffered hardships along the trails leading to this little settlement that seemed almost swallowed up by primeval forest.”<sup>54</sup>

Hovey’s close friend and brother-in-law, Charles White, was the stepson of Thetford Academy founder Asa Burton and served as associate pastor of Thetford’s Congregational church. White most certainly would have attended Thetford Academy had it been in operation during his preparatory school years—he entered Dartmouth College in 1817.<sup>55</sup> White did serve as one of Thetford Academy’s trustees and carried its zeal to Wabash College, becoming its second president in 1841. White wrote several works, including his 1853 *Essays in Literature and Ethics*. One chapter, titled “Western Colleges,” connects easily to Morrill’s vision of land grant institutions and the ways they would enrich an expanding United States. He asserted, “Colleges at the west are capable of being active and large contributors to a superior and Christian civilization.” Such institutions would lead to “large enterprises,” “original improvements,” and the knowledge of “how to appropriate to the uses of society the great powers of nature, the lights of science, and the results of invention.” They would also result in railroad production and canal building. The West would “eventually possess sources of wealth and aggrandizement which will turn hither the eyes of other nations as well as concentrate here the grand vitalities, and developments, and energies of our own country.” In their mission, “western colleges will have subjected to their influence materials and elements of incalculable capabilities, and assisted to establish a power such as has rarely risen up in our world.” His vision ever was linked to western expansion, and did not include Indigenous peoples, or any people he deemed inferior: “The dull and stupid nations, adherent

<sup>54</sup>James Insley Osborne and Theodore Gregory Gronert, *Wabash College: The First Hundred Years, 1832–1932* (Crawfordsville, IN: R. E. Banta, 1932), 2, 4, 9.

<sup>55</sup>Osborne and Gronert, *Wabash College*, 54.

tenaciously to the spot where they were born, stereotyped into the iron form of foregone generations, make no impression on mankind.”<sup>56</sup> It is not difficult to connect Morrill’s ideology of the expansion of higher education in the West at the expense of Native peoples to Hovey, White, and Thetford Academy. All three were products of, or closely associated with, the school. While there, they were indoctrinated in the imperative to bring civilization and Christianity to the West. Hovey founded a college on land conquered by the US in a violent war of conquest against Tecumseh’s confederacy. White presided over that college and produced works articulating the mission of such institutions as essential to US expansion. And Morrill codified this ideology through the Morrill Act, which gave Indigneous land to states and territories in order to establish the endowments that would fund these new institutions of higher education.

Digging deeper, one finds in Thetford a growing web of connections to episodes of Indigenous dispossession and colonialism. These connections are typically negative but can also yield mixed results. Take, for example, the Worcester family. In 1847, Dr. Ezra C. Worcester came to Thetford, becoming a “main-spring of the school for about forty years,” and served as chemistry teacher, school physician, and trustee.<sup>57</sup> The Worcester family would become a fixture at Thetford Academy and in the town of Thetford, which is not at all unusual for a prominent family in a small community. But the Worcesters were no ordinary family. Ezra’s brother, Samuel Austin Worcester, who, instead of remaining in his Vermont birthplace, became a missionary to the Cherokees in the Southeast, and eventually relocated with them to Indian Territory after the infamous *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832) decision, when he supported the Cherokee’s right to remain in their homelands and a sovereign existence. Samuel Worcester’s work with Elias Boudinot at the *Cherokee Phoenix* is well known. He also established the first printing press in Indian Territory at the Park Hill Mission in

<sup>56</sup>Osborne and Gronert, *Wabash College*, 200, 202, 225, 437.

<sup>57</sup>Slade, *Thetford’s First Century*, 114, 120.

1837 and published the *Cherokee Phoenix* and vast quantities of missionary materials until his death in 1859.<sup>58</sup>

Samuel Worcester had seven children and sent them back to New England for their education. Probably his most famous child was Ann Eliza Worcester Robertson, who, after showing an aptitude for languages while at St. Johnsbury Academy in Vermont, became an expert in the Muskogee language. She worked among the Muskogee Creek people as a missionary and educator for five decades, translating the New Testament into Muskogee, as well as a large number of hymns, tracts, vocabulary studies, and articles for various venues, including the Bureau of American Ethnology. She received an honorary doctorate from the University of Wooster (now the College of Wooster), and was made a professor emeritus at Henry Kendall College.<sup>59</sup> Her youngest sibling, Mary Eleanor Worcester Williams, was also sent east for her education, and attended Thetford Academy. She appears in the 1856 catalog, with her hometown listed as Park Hill, Cherokee Nation.<sup>60</sup> Her first husband died, but she remarried to Mason Fitch Williams, a Princeton graduate who was a physician to Muskogee Creeks and a minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Muskogee. While Mary Eleanor worked outside of the spotlight, she and her husband were part of influential Muskogee Creek and white circles for decades. When the First Presbyterian Church celebrated its thirty-fifth anniversary in 1910, the *Muskogee-Times Democrat* reported that of its thirteen original members, only Mary Eleanor was still alive. These first members included whites and prominent Creeks. When she died in 1919,

<sup>58</sup>Elizabeth Ross, "The Worcester Press," #12487, Indian Pioneer Collection, University of Oklahoma Libraries Western History Collections, Norman, Oklahoma, <http://digital.libraries.ou.edu/cdm/ref/collection/indianpp/id/6208>, accessed August 16, 2021.

<sup>59</sup>Hope Holway, "Ann Eliza Worcester Robertson as a Linguist," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 37, 1 (1959); J. Fox Worcester, revised by Sarah Alice Worcester, *The Descendants of Rev. William Worcester, with a Brief Notice of the Connecticut Wooster Family* (1856 rept. Boston: Hudson Printing Co., 1914), 115–16.

<sup>60</sup>*Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Thetford Academy, at Thetford, Vt., for the Academical Year 1856* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth Press, 1856), 16.

the *Muskogee-Times Democrat* called her a “Pioneer Muskogee Woman” and an “old-time resident of Muskogee.”<sup>61</sup>

But again, there is a darker side the work of individuals like the Worcesters. While the missionary zeal of Burton, Hovey, and White inspired men like Maris Pierce and Justin Morrill in earlier decades, generations of Thetford Academy graduates in the second half of the nineteenth century received their indoctrination through members of the Worcester family, whose names appear on the faculty lists of the course catalogs for decades. In 1855, Samuel Worcester wrote to his son, John, who was embarking on his education in the East, “I have always earnestly wished that none of my children should go from home to New England for an education, without going in the character of friends of Christ.”<sup>62</sup> He wanted his children to be educated Christian converts who would then go out and evangelize the world. His brother, Ezra, and other Worcesters would see to it that Thetford Academy students would do the same during the second half of the nineteenth century. A prime example of this is John B. Sanborn, who grew up in Epsom, New Hampshire and recalled having no life ambition other than taking over the family homestead. At age sixteen, this changed, and he determined to study law. He studied at Thetford Academy, and then attended Dartmouth for a single term. He served in the Civil War, was breveted major general, and “commanded the District of Minnesota from the time the regular troops were moved East in May, 1861, to April, 1862, without any trouble

<sup>61</sup>“35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Presbyterian Church,” *Muskogee-Times Democrat*, April 16, 1910; “Mrs. Williams’ Body to Rest in Quiet Greenhill,” *Muskogee Times-Democrat*, July 3, 1919. It is important to note that even though Easterners such as the Worcesters were acting as agents of colonialism, whether intentional or not, Muskogee Creeks, much like Maris Pierce, embraced education as a tool to fight against colonialism and dispossession. See Rowan Faye Steineker, “‘Fully Equal to That of Any Children’: Experimental Creek Education in the Antebellum Era,” *History of Education Quarterly* 56 (2016): 273–300.

<sup>62</sup>Samuel Austin Worcester, 1798–1859 to John Orr Worcester, January 24, 1855, 3826.2881-1. Samuel Austin Worcester Manuscript Collection. Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma. <https://collections.gilcrease.org/object/38262881-1>, accessed August 12, 2021.

or loss from the Indians, who soon broke out after I left" (referring to the Dakota War of 1862).<sup>63</sup>

While not directly involved in the Dakota War,<sup>64</sup> Sanborn was called into action against Comanches, Kiowas, Cheyennes, Arapahos, and Apaches in the summer of 1865. He found them "entirely reliable and honorable in all negotiations looking to a settlement of difficulties, doing as they agreed and all they agreed, and protecting all messengers and persons sent to them upon that business," but in the same breath he justified the killing of women, children, and the elderly, as it was "absolutely necessary if you would fight them at all to attack their villages. Their costume and dress is such that our soldiers cannot as a rule, especially in the excitement of battle, distinguish between the sexes, and hence in an attack upon a village all sexes and generally all ages suffer indiscriminately." In the fall of 1865, he was one of the commissioners, along with Kit Carson and William Bent, who met with the tribes at the mouth of the Little Arkansas River. He recounted his involvement in "the establishment of the freedom of the slaves of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Creek and Seminole tribes of Indians, and the adoption of some plan under which these freedmen could be protected and enjoy their freedom in the Indian Territory." He had "no difficulty whatever . . . in securing absolute freedom and every right" for the Creek and Seminole freedmen, but with Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Cherokees, the work was much more difficult.<sup>65</sup>

Sanborn served as an Indian Peace Commissioner to tribal nations in the West again in 1867–68, and his public statements after that experience reflect the "enlightened" thinking of a Thetford Academy alumnus. Such an ideology could

<sup>63</sup>John B. Sanborn, "Upon His Branch of the Family, and Personal Accounts," in *Sanborn Family in the United States and Brief Sketch of the Life of John B. Sanborn, with Speeches and Addresses* (St. Paul, MN: H.M. Smyth Printing Co., 1887), 51–55.

<sup>64</sup>The Dakota War of 1862 resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Dakotas and whites, including many noncombatants, and the largest mass execution in the history of the United States when President Abraham Lincoln approved the hangings of thirty-eight Dakota men at Mankato, Minnesota on December 26, 1862.

<sup>65</sup>John B. Sanborn, "Upon His Branch of the Family," 70–73.

simultaneously allow the enrollment of women and people of color and embrace of reform movements while training students to be agents of dispossession on land violently stolen from Abenakis. It also rationalized the disappearing of Native peoples in the United States more broadly. Referring to the genocide and demographic disasters experienced by Native peoples, Sanborn stated:

It is a matter of great doubt in my mind, if the number of Indians in our country has diminished since its occupation by the whites, to any such extent as is popularly believed. Tribes have disappeared, but the individuals, under other names and nations, have survived. Changes and transformations of nations have taken place without the destruction of individuals. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that the three hundred thousand Indians in the United States to-day, not including those of Alaska, approximate closely in numbers to their ancestors of preceding generations.<sup>66</sup>

He also justified the Washita Massacre by stating that Cheyennes had “killed a large number of officers and soldiers,” and praised Sheridan for the “first vigorous winter campaign that has ever been attempted on the plains,” in which the army “struck a village of Cheyennes after tedious marching and great suffering, and inflicted upon them a severe loss.”<sup>67</sup> He concluded that Native peoples were doomed; “no spring-time shall renew their fading glory, and no future know their fame.”<sup>68</sup> Such was the product of Thetford Academy, a soldier of righteousness who would subdue Native peoples in the West through violent conquest.

With Hovey, Morrill, and the Worcestersters as his intellectual forbearers, another Thetford Academy graduate and Civil War veteran, John Eaton, sought to “uplift” people of color, and bring the missionary imperatives of Thetford Academy to fruition both in the United States and abroad. Eaton was

<sup>66</sup>“Address Delivered before the Young Men’s Christian Association at Winona, January 1869, on Indians and Our Indian Relations, By John B. Sanborn, Late Indian Peace Commissioner,” in *Sanborn Family*, 25–26.

<sup>67</sup>“Address Delivered before the YMCA,” 27.

<sup>68</sup>“Address Delivered before the YMCA,” 44.

born in Sutton, New Hampshire in 1829 and graduated from Thetford Academy and then Dartmouth College before studying theology at Andover Seminary. He was ordained in 1861 and became the chaplain of the Twenty-Seventh Ohio Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War. His unit at Shiloh was with Grant who put Eaton in charge of the escaped slaves who streamed into the Union camp as Grant's forces ascended the Tennessee River. Commissioned a brigadier general, Eaton's work expanded to include the Freedmen's Bureau. After he resigned from the Freedmen's Bureau, he settled in Memphis, serving as a newspaper editor and state superintendent of public instruction for Tennessee from 1867 to 1870 where he established a centralized system of free schools, including ones for African Americans.<sup>69</sup>

His old friend, President Ulysses S. Grant, appointed Eaton federal commissioner of education in 1870. He served in this role until 1886. While the Bureau of Education did not oversee Indian education, Richard Pratt, the founder of Carlisle Indian Industrial School and father of the federal Indian boarding school system, which sought to "kill the Indian and save the man" through assimilative education, solicited Eaton's support in the late 1870s, which he enthusiastically gave. Pratt wrote that Eaton was one of those who "took an active interest and thereafter as long as they lived were influential friends to what I undertook in Indian education."<sup>70</sup> Eaton was also president of Marietta College (Ohio) and Westminster College (Utah), vice president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, president of the American Association of Social Science, president of the National Congress of Education, and president of the American Society of Religious Education.<sup>71</sup> In January 1899, after the Spanish-American War, Eaton was sent to Puerto Rico to oversee education where he had three

<sup>69</sup>Frank B. Williams, "John Eaton, Jr., Editor, Politician, and School Administrator, 1865-1870," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 10 (1951): 291-93.

<sup>70</sup>Richard Henry Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom: Four Decades with the American Indian, 1867-1904*, ed. Robert M. Utley (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 187-88.

<sup>71</sup>"Death of Gen. Eaton," *The Evening Star* (Washington, DC), February 9, 1906.

successive roles: superintendent of schools, director of public instruction, and chief of the bureau of education, which was created in February 1899. As historian José-Manuel Navarro points out, Eaton brought a “wealth of expertise in working with free blacks in the South and in the administration and development of Education in the United States.” Eaton and his colleagues had three models for education in Puerto Rico: Hampton, Tuskegee, and the Carlisle.<sup>72</sup>

Historian Solsiree del Moral asserts that Eaton’s selection reflected the federal government’s practices during the late nineteenth century “regarding nonwhite peoples, education, and state building, practices that he exported to and replicated in the colonies.” Eaton’s skills in “managing” freed Blacks on their path to citizenship via education was relevant to how the US would manage Puerto Ricans newly “liberated” from Spain. “Under the tutelage of US officials [such as Eaton], colonial subjects could transition from the innocence and ignorance that characterized the island’s uncivilized savagery, imagined to be particularly devastating among the nonelite. Puerto Ricans could gain literacy, English-language skills, and the ability to comprehend their rights and responsibilities to the US empire.” Eaton’s tenure lasted only six months because of his poor health, but he oversaw the creation of a coeducational, free, graded public school system.<sup>73</sup> While school enrollment in Puerto Rico went from 30,000 to 150,000 between 1901 and 1917, Eaton’s policies and those of his immediate successors mandated English as the language of instruction in high schools, and at certain periods in primary schools as well (this policy was somewhat fluid). School names were Americanized, and American holidays were made part of the calendar.<sup>74</sup> Educational efforts aimed at African Americans, Native

<sup>72</sup>José-Manuel Navarro, *Creating Tropical Yankees: Social Science Textbooks and U. S. Ideological Control in Puerto Rico, 1898–1908* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 44, 115.

<sup>73</sup>Solsiree del Moral, *Negotiating Empire: The Cultural Politics of Schools in Puerto Rico, 1898–1952* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 49, 52–53.

<sup>74</sup>César J. Ayala and Rafael Barnabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History Since 1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 78.



Americans, and Puerto Ricans literally bled into each other as students from Puerto Rico were sent to Carlisle, Hampton, and Tuskegee. Eaton reported in early 1900 that Pratt had even sent him a set of “sloid [*sic*] models,” a system of manual training including woodcarving and other skilled machine work that originated in Sweden, demonstrating a continued relationship between the two men in educational matters.<sup>75</sup> The commissioners who followed Eaton, Martin G. Brumbaugh and Samuel McCune Lindsay, participated in the Lake Mohonk conferences, where those working with Puerto Rican, Black, and Native American students could “converse with others who were also working with colonial subjects in the US empire—specifically, Native Americans, Hawaiians, and Filipinos—and who were also creating policy.”<sup>76</sup>

### *Conclusion*

John Eaton was certainly not the last of Thetford Academy alumni to play an active part in the conquest, subjugation, and education of BIPOC peoples around the world. Similarly, the list of individuals I have highlighted in this essay is not meant to be exhaustive, only representative. As the school has entered its third century of existence, it has shifted its attention away from religious and missionary education. While still a private school, through an agreement with Vermont it serves as the public secondary school (grades 7–12) for the town of Thetford and neighboring towns that do not have their own secondary schools. It is also no longer a boarding school. Even with these changes, Thetford Academy is quick to celebrate its famous alumni and progressive history. A 2019 advertisement for a new head of school reads, “Thetford Academy has had a progressive approach to education ever since its founding. The school admitted young women from the very start . . . [and] also admitted students of color before the Civil War.” It praises its “illustrious alumni” Justin Morrill, who sponsored the 1862

<sup>75</sup>Navarro, *Creating Tropical Yankees*, 125.

<sup>76</sup>Del Moral, *Negotiating Empire*, 56.

Land Grant College Act.<sup>77</sup> Vermont House Concurrent Resolution 52 (2019) celebrates the academy's bicentennial, referring to the "unusually progressive decision for the early 19<sup>th</sup> century" of allowing female students, and "Thetford Academy's most illustrious 19<sup>th</sup>-century alumni," Justin Morrill, "the author of the 1862 Morrill Land-Grant College Act."<sup>78</sup>

There is no mention anywhere of Thetford Academy's links to colonialism and Indigenous dispossession, or the school's harmful educational practices. Matthew 7:20—the Bible was the cornerstone of the curriculum at Thetford Academy for decades—reads, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."<sup>79</sup> Historically, many of Thetford Academy's "fruits"—its establishment on Abenaki land, curriculum, alumni, and their actions—have been destructive for Indigenous and other people of color in the United States and abroad. This demonstrates that even "progressive" and "reformist" institutions can do great damage, and this is not limited to colleges and universities, such as the school's better-known sibling institution, Dartmouth College. Still, each school day at 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. I dutifully drop off and pick up three of my own children at the school. As a Native American tribal citizen, I appreciate how the school seeks to foster an inclusive environment that encourages intellectual inquiry. I have been a visitor to classrooms several times and presented on Native American history and culture to students and faculty. But by acknowledging its place in the difficult history explored above, Thetford Academy can serve as an example of coming to terms with the place of secondary schooling in colonialism. Sites such as Thetford Academy are essentially monuments to the history and ideals of the communities that established them. As Christine M. DeLucia points out, such "monuments are rarely interesting in themselves. What is

<sup>77</sup>Head of School Opening Announcement, <http://www.thetfordacademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Thetford-Academy-Head-of-School-ad-WITH-PHOTOS.pdf>, accessed June 28, 2021.

<sup>78</sup>H.C.R. 52 (2019), State of Vermont House of Representatives, <https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2020/Docs/RESOLUTN/HCR052/HCR052%20As%20Introduced.pdf>, accessed July 8, 2021.

<sup>79</sup>Matt. 7:20 (KJV).

significant is the web of relationships that surround them,” and the negotiations and discussions that keep them “unfinished” and their “meanings in flux.”<sup>80</sup> Ultimately, this essay is an invitation for all communities, large and small, to investigate and acknowledge the complicity of their beloved town schools and institutions in the history of colonialism and dispossession, to be open to the unfinished, and often painful, nature of their meanings and importance.

<sup>80</sup>DeLucia, *Memory Lands*, 326.

Maurice S. Crandall is a citizen of the Yavapai-Apache Nation of Camp Verde, Arizona. He is assistant professor of Native American and Indigenous Studies at Dartmouth College. His multi-award-winning book, *THESE PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A REPUBLIC: INDIGENOUS ELECTORATES IN THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDERLANDS, 1598–1912*, was published in 2019.