

MARK TWAIN'S AMBIVALENCE TOWARD THE "TENNESSEE LAND"  
AND HIS PIONEER ROOTS IN KENTUCKY:  
THE SAVAGE "OTHER" AND THE "SIVILIZED" ORDER

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study addresses two interrelated questions on Mark Twain and Native Americans from a historicist perspective. The first is why Mark Twain came to abhor the infamous “Tennessee land” that his father, John Marshall Clemens, left to the Clemens heirs. For the first time in Twain studies, the study confirms Twain’s claim that the land, mostly in Fentress County, exceeded 75,000 acres; a search of land grant records, property transfers, lawsuits, and tax records in the Fentress Register of Deeds Office, the National Archives in Atlanta, and the Tennessee State Library Archives in Nashville places the acreage closer to 93,000. The study also documents how Twain’s father used a “shell game” to circumvent the statutory limit of five thousand acres per land grant per individual. Twain came to loathe the legacy because its remote location in the Cumberland Plateau made it nearly impossible to exploit commercially, leaving Twain with the resulting tax burden.

Secondly, the study identifies the root cause of Twain’s persistent antipathy toward Native Americans, a hostility that long has puzzled scholars, as the participation of Twain’s ancestors in the late eighteenth-century preemption of Native American lands in central Kentucky, preceding his father’s acquisition of the “Tennessee land” in the early nineteenth-century. The study confirms from multiple sources that Twain’s mother repeatedly told her children about a Cherokee attack in which Twain’s great-great grandfather was fatally ambushed and Twain’s great-grandmother, entrapped in a cabin, was rescued by Twain’s future great-grandfather. Combined with the context that European Americans did not understand the limited validity of their land “purchases”

from Native Americans, Twain's mother's harrowing stories of frontier violence left Twain with an enduring image that Native Americans, despite defending their land, were treacherously prone to randomly attack white settlers. Twain justifies the transcontinental spread of white hegemony as just another instance of territorial conquest such as Native Americans themselves had repeatedly perpetrated on each other, and therefore morally inconsequential. Twain's position is consistent with his eventual belief that land ownership in Tennessee was an inconsequential quirk in his family's fortunes that, in his family's case, should be abandoned.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....	xii
LIST OF ACRONYMS.....	xiii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II: “VAST POSSESSIONS” IN THE “PINERIES”: HOW MARK TWAIN’S FATHER ACQUIRED THE TENNESSEE LAND.....	23
The Land’s Influences on Twain’s Life and Work.....	28
John Marshall’s Piecemeal Acquisition Process: Not the Way Twain Tells It.....	30
Tennessee’s Land-Claiming Process and John Marshall’s Role as “Locator”.....	36
1830: Tennessee Land Grants Suddenly Become Easily Available.....	41
The Initial Claimants for John Marshall’s Land Grants Usually Were His Friends and Relatives from Adair County, Kentucky.....	45
Possible “Stretchers” in John Marshall’s Land Claims Resemble Those of His Son’s Literary Characters.....	52
A Two-Tier Process of John Marshall Facilitating Original Entry-Making and Later Acquiring the Grant Tracts from a Second Set of Surrogates.....	56
Economic and Political Currents Delay the Grants’ Issuance.....	61
The Delayed Issuance of the Grants Also May Be Connected to Indian Removal, and Their Issuance May Be a Result of Removal.....	62
John Marshall’s Second Set of Surrogates, the Actual Grant Recipients, Were Mostly His Friends and Relatives from Northeast Missouri.....	68
John Marshall’s Survey Markers on Mineral-Rich Grant Tract Lead to Its Legal Expansion by the State Supreme Court to Nearly Eight Square Miles.....	78
What Scholars Mean by the Term, “The Tennessee Land,” Compared to What John Marshall Meant and What Twain Meant at Different Times.....	80
Family Relationship between Polk’s Wife and Twain’s Step-Grandmother May Have Led to Polk’s Signatures on John Marshall’s Surrogate Grants.....	82
The Importance of Family Ties in the Frontier and Antebellum South and Upper South.....	88



## TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

### CHAPTER II, *continued*

Was the Future US President Aware of John Marshall’s Apparent “Shell Game”?.....	93
---	----

### CHAPTER III: TWAIN AND THE TENNESSEE LAND: THE BURDEN OF TRUST

BETRAYED THROUGH REVERSAL AND DEFERMENT.....	96
--	----

Twain’s Ambivalence about His Father’s Mental Acuity.....	107
---	-----

John Marshall’s Acumen Far Outpaced Orion’s, in Twain’s Opinion:

The Grape-Growing Deal that Orion Vetoed.....	109
---	-----

The Land as a Potential Cornucopia, or Even as the Basis for an African American University.....	114
---	-----

Was the Tennessee Land Actually Rich in Mineral Wealth?.....	121
--	-----

The Land’s Limited Potential for Agricultural Production.....	127
---	-----

1901: Some of John Marshall’s Predictions Come True—Too Late for His Heirs.....	130
--	-----

The Greater Value of Mental Acuity than Real Estate, in Twain’s Eyes, Leading to His Parody of Longfellow’s <i>Song of Hiawatha</i> .....	132
--	-----

Twain’s Modest Proposal: Limiting Land Ownership, but Making Copyright Protection Permanent.....	143
---	-----

The Mutability of Land Ownership in <i>Roughing It</i> and <i>Life on the Mississippi</i> .....	148
---	-----

Taking Literary Privilege to Court, and Calculating the Literary Value of Land in Dollars.....	152
---	-----

Land Speculation Leads to Death in <i>Pudd’nhead Wilson</i> and Slavery Represents a Reverse Trust for Its Victims in <i>Huckleberry Finn</i> .....	159
--	-----

Twain’s Response to the Mental Acuity Evidenced by the Expansion of Grant 6402 and John Marshall’s Use of the Family Connection to Polk.....	162
---	-----

“Hope Deferred” Produces a Reverse Trust and Land that Should Simply Be Given Away, Twain Concludes.....	167
---	-----

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

CHAPTER IV: THE BLOOD OF TWAIN’S ANCESTORS ON THE LAND AND ON HIS MIND: AN ORAL INHERITANCE OF ANTIPATHY.....	169
Native Americans as “Invaders” instead of “Original Occupants”.....	179
Twain’s Ancestors Were Leading “Indian Fighters”.....	182
A Legacy of “Justified” Genocide.....	185
Native Americans Attacked Twain’s Direct-Line Ancestors.....	187
The Inherent Appeal of the “Massacre” Story to Young Twain.....	192
Young Twain’s Possible Direct Encounter with Grandmother Jane.....	196
An Accumulation of Fatalities.....	197
The “Heroic Rescuer”: Twain’s Great Grandfather, “Indian Fighter”.....	201
The Participation of Twain and His Ancestors in the “Extinction” Trope.....	204
The Chain of Oral Transmission of the “Massacre” Story to Young Twain.....	211
The Enduring Impact of the “Massacre” Story among Twain’s Later Influences.....	215
Critical Recognition of the Ancestral Violence Factor Grows.....	218
Jane Clemens’s Theatrical Role-Modeling for Twain’s Antipathy toward Native Americans.....	223
Protecting Women and Children against Random Violence.....	226
Twain Biographers Have Connected “Massacre” Legacy to the Threat of Rape.....	232
Twain Sought Out Textual Affirmation of His Inherited Image of Native Americans as Rapist/Abductors.....	236
Native Americans as Agents of the Random Violence of God.....	241
Abduction: A Cultural Threat to Patriarchy.....	243
Influenced by the “Massacre” Oral History, Twain Projects the Old Testament God onto Native Americans of the Nineteenth Century.....	245

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

CHAPTER V: TWAIN AND LAND TAKEN FROM OTHERS: THE DEFENSE OF INEVITABLE CONQUEST.....	255
Random Ambush in <i>Roughing It</i> and “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians”.....	267
Misdirected Revenge, a Component of Random Ambush, as Contemplated by Twain’s Only Major Native American Character, Injun Joe.....	274
The Subtext of Land Dispossession by Deceit Followed by Violence.....	277
Random Ambush Minus Any Memory of Causation: The Grangerfords vs. the Shepherdsons.....	281
Arthur’s Knights as Guerrilla “White Indians” in <i>A Connecticut Yankee</i> .....	287
The Comanches as a Yardstick to Measure the Failings of France.....	291
No Guilt for, but Justification of, Land Dispossession.....	297
Refuting Pervasive Claims that Twain’s Antipathy Noticeably Moderated.....	302
Further Critical Use of “Selective Evidence” to Demonstrate Purported Softening of Twain’s Antipathy.....	311
Twain’s “Final Solution” May Not Have Been a Mere “Modest Proposal”.....	319
Hypothesized “Racial Pattern” Ignores Twain’s Oral Legacy.....	320
Unsupported or Insufficiently Supported Hypotheses about Twain’s (Lack of) Reaction to Wounded Knee.....	325
A Problem with Reading Sympathy for Aborigines and Maoris as Sympathy for Native Americans.....	329
The Subtext of Twain’s Defense of Inevitable Conquest Remains Eurocentric.....	335
Twain’s Late-Career, Partial Admission of White Culpability for Land Confiscation Is Limited by the Impartiality of “Consequences”.....	339
WORKS CITED.....	345
NOTES.....	374

## LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1, Grants Chart showing the Clemens land acquisition process, 1826-1841.....	32
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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

The following acronyms are used in this study for persons, sources, and titles.

All works not identified by author are by Mark Twain.

AMT.....*Autobiography of Mark Twain*

CSVH.....*Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven*

CY.....*A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*

FTE.....*Following the Equator*

GA.....*The Gilded Age: A Tale of To-Day*, by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner

HF.....*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

“HTAI”..... “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians”

JLC.....Jane Lampton Clemens

JMC.....John Marshall Clemens

LE.....*Letters from the Earth*

MS.....*The Mysterious Stranger and Other Stories*

MTA.....*Mark Twain's Autobiography*, edited by Albert Bigelow Paine

MTAI, *Mark Twain among the Indians and Other Indigenous Peoples*, by Kerry Driscoll

MTPO.....Mark Twain Project Online

“NRM”.....”The Noble Red Man”

PW.....*Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*

RI.....*Roughing It*

SLC.....Samuel Langhorne Clemens

SNO.....*Sketches New & Old*

TS.....*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Two questions about Mark Twain that have generated critical interest in recent years are the exact size and nature of the “Tennessee land”<sup>1</sup> that Twain’s father, John Marshall Clemens, left to his heirs, and why Twain came to abhor that legacy—and secondly, why Twain intermittently but persistently expressed potent antipathy toward Native Americans throughout his life and writings. The present study examines both questions, seemingly unrelated at first, and it discovers that the answers are inextricably entwined in a web of cause and effect. John Marshall did not obtain his land directly from Native Americans; with the exception of a few small parcels he purchased from private individuals or received from the commonwealth of Kentucky, the land passed through the hands of the state of Tennessee before it was granted to Twain’s father and his father’s surrogates who handed the land to John Marshall for nominal sums. Ownership of the Tennessee land traces directly back, through questionable treaties between European Americans and Cherokees, to Native Americans, but Twain did not appear to feel any guilt about its history of *de facto* confiscation from Native Americans. Instead, Twain ridiculed their popular image as the Noble Red Man and sought to replace it with his view of Native Americans as dirty, savage Others who could be trusted only to betray and attack any white people they pretended to befriend. The position that Twain ultimately took in regard to Native Americans serves to justify his father’s land acquisitions in a “sideways” manner that he may not have consciously applied to the Tennessee land legacy, which mostly was no longer in the Clemens family’s hands by the late 1890s. Twain took this position by issuing, in *Following the Equator* (1897), a

sweeping, universal defense of European usurpations of Native land in the Americas and elsewhere.

In *Following*, Twain's final travel narrative, he attempts to justify European Americans' nearly completed, continent-spanning theft of Native American lands by arguing that the theft was justified by pre-Columbian and colonial-era conquests by Native Americans of each other's land, and that their conquests were part of a universal pattern: "No tribe, howsoever insignificant, and no nation, howsoever mighty, occupies a foot of land that was not stolen," Twain writes (*FTE* 2: 298). As Helen Harris summarizes, "Twain's ultimate concession that the land was stolen [from the Native Americans] was glossed over by an implied justification for the act and a denial that the property rightly belonged to the Indians anyway" (502). Twain was speaking in the context of lampooning Britain's conveyance of its then-colony Madagascar to France, but his universalizing rationalization serves to justify the land preemptions of John Marshall Clemens, a plethora of Twain's maternal ancestors, and all the European Americans confiscators of Native American territory over the centuries. Very possibly influencing Twain's rationalization was the fact that many of the confiscators were his readers who regularly purchased his books and read them in their homes on the land to which they owed their titles by preemption, either directly or indirectly.

Dismissing the seriousness of Native American land claims, Twain writes, "every acre of ground in the continent had [already] been stolen and restolen five hundred times" by "the Indian tribes" (*FTE* 2: 298-99). Thus, implicitly but not explicitly, Twain argues no sin was committed by such land preemptors as John Marshall Clemens or a plethora of Twain's maternal ancestors because conquest is a universally prevailing and therefore

inevitable practice. Call it Twain's defense of inevitable conquest, as the present study does. Twain even uses the specific idiom "not a sin" to describe Britain's earlier seizure of Madagascar from France (*FTE* 2: 298). Twain "reduced the theft of [Native American land] to something hardly more serious than the finding of buried treasure," Harris asserts. "However cynically, Twain was pleading that 'everybody was doing it'" (502). In Kerry Driscoll's recent book-length study *Mark Twain among the Indians and Other Indigenous Peoples* (2018), researched and written during roughly the same period as the present dissertation, she likewise suggests that Twain's description of inevitable conquest as a "law of custom" taking precedence over all other laws (*FTE* 2: 299) "rationalizes [away ...] any overt acknowledgement of national guilt" (*MTAI* 350).

In these current times of reckoning with the United States' racial history of slavery, land theft, oppressive systems of laws and customs, and genocide, this line of inquiry into the attitudes Twain expressed could not be more relevant. In addition to reparations being proposed or offered to African Americans for their ancestors' unpaid or underpaid labor (Coates, Wright), Native Americans also are seeking reparations for their land rights and past cultural and literal genocide, as Sam Levin describes in his recent *Guardian* article, "'This Is All Stolen Land': Native Americans Want More than California's Apology." Last summer, the United States Supreme Court ruled that about half of Oklahoma falls within the reservation of the Muscogee or Creek Nation, giving legal jurisdiction there to the tribe or the federal government rather than the state (Wamsley). The ruling relates to criminal prosecutions, not land ownership, but it may be a step toward recognizing Native American land rights as superseding subsequent



white land titles, a recognition that Twain's defense of inevitable conquest apparently seeks to forestall.

In one late-career sketch that can be interpreted as Twain partially opening his eyes to the validity of Native American land rights, his dialogic essay "The Dervish and the Offensive Stranger" (1902/1923), Twain acknowledges the adverse effects suffered by Native Americans from white settlement. However, he argues that the harms are balanced by giving "to the plodding poor and the landless of Europe farms and breathing space and plenty and happiness" ("Dervish" 312). In this sketch, more closely examined at the end of this introduction and in Chapter Five, Twain adds an "exculpatory philosophical framework" (Driscoll, *MTAI* 12), or a further rationalization supplementing his defense of inevitable conquest: he asserts that no actions anywhere, regardless of the doers' intentions, can ever have guaranteed good or bad consequences, but instead the results will be either good or bad, unpredictably and "in equal measure" ("Dervish" 312).

For the two and a half decades after John Marshall's untimely death in 1847, when Twain was only 11½ years old, Twain tried to help his eldest brother Orion Clemens sell the Tennessee land. But Orion's inability to do so led Twain to apply the same sort of assessment to it that he later applied to white seizures of Native American land: that ownership of land is only temporary, in the long run, so if it becomes a bother, it should simply be relinquished. Why pay the taxes on it? That question especially plagued Twain because, as a successful author and touring lecturer, he was the only Clemens family member possessing the wherewithal to pay the taxes. In letters to his siblings and mother, Twain vehemently voiced his complaint that the land was draining their attention away from more productive efforts and matters. But in addition, Twain

held land ownership in no reverence, especially compared to literary rights. As the product of his own mental acuity, a personal characteristic that Twain valorized in himself and others, his own literary rights held intrinsic value, but land was just land. If Twain's father's acquisition of it demonstrated John Marshall's mental acuity, Twain appreciated that attribute in his father. But Twain also spoke of the Tennessee land as "our father's well intended folly" (SLC to Orion, 1 Aug. 1870, "Letters," *MTPO*) because, in the late nineteenth century, the land was still too remote for his heirs to exploit commercially. Ironically, after the land had passed completely out of the family's hands through tax sales and purchases by a variety of buyers, John Marshall's claim that some of the Tennessee land was rich in coal turned out to be lucratively valid.

Specifically, the land is mostly located in Fentress County in the rugged terrain of the Cumberland Plateau, on the far eastern side of Middle Tennessee. Twain repeatedly reports the total acreage at 75,000 and sometimes expands that total to "100,000" or "above 100,000" (*GA* 1: 7, *AMT* 1: 61, 206, 208, 209), but until the present study, no total even approximately close to that figure had been confirmed by Twain scholars and biographers, who were repeatedly misled by the relative paucity of land grants and registered land titles in John Marshall's name. Yet, tracing the origins of land titles registered to other buyers led the present study's search back to land grants acquired by Twain's father from other recipients for nominal sums, and John Marshall himself arranged the original claims for most of these grants as their registered "locator." Chapter Two demonstrates how John Marshall set up this complicated "shell game" to acquire the land grants from the state of Tennessee. First, Twain's father apparently persuaded friends and relatives from his hometown of Columbia, Kentucky, to file the

original claims for the land tracts from 1826 through 1830, and then he rounded up a second set of friends and relatives from northeast Missouri to actually receive the grants when they were signed by Tennessee Gov. James K. Polk in 1839, four years after the Clemenses migrated west in time for Twain to be born in Missouri in 1835.

John Marshall evidently set up this two-stage scheme to evade Tennessee's statutory limit of five thousand acres per recipient of each land grant with the eventual goal of acquiring all the land grants himself through bills of sale that he did not always record, officially, right away—and then he suddenly died. When his heirs sold tracts or portions of tracts to various buyers, the new titles were registered in the new buyers' names, with the only mention of Twain's father appearing in the fine print documenting the land's chain of custody. By taking this previously overlooked or disregarded evidence into account, the present study's search of land grant records, property transfers, lawsuits, and tax records in the Fentress Register of Deeds Office, the National Archives in Atlanta, and the Tennessee State Library Archives in Nashville places the Tennessee land's acreage closer to 93,000 than to Twain's frequently quoted 75,000.

Not even Orion, repeatedly trying to sell it all, could find all the acreage that his father claimed the land comprised according to Twain's recollections. Most early Twain biographers didn't try to ascertain the full extent of John Marshall's land legacy, simply relying on Twain's own words to describe its size and location. The earliest to make an independent effort to verify or ascertain the facts about the land, Dixon Wecter, writing in 1952, estimated 70,000 acres (31). Another early title-searcher, writing in 1970, casts doubt about the legacy measuring anywhere close to that acreage but does not cite specific numbers (Ensor 21-22, n. 8). More recent inquiries into the land records should

be more convincing because of their currency, but even the inquiries conducted by Lawrence Howe, who devotes part of a chapter of his 2017 book to the topic of the Tennessee land, falls far short of finding Twain's 75,000 to "above 100,000" acres. In the chapter, containing his latest published research, Howe identifies "25,823.9 acres + 4 lots" in John Marshall's legacy ("Narrating" 27). Recognizing Twain's biases and unreliability as a narrator, Howe wisely rejects simply relying on Twain's characterization of Orion as too bumbling to sell the land. But Howe thereby grants credence to Orion's overly pessimistic estimates of the legacy's extent when, in contrast, the evidence of Orion's repeatedly botched land deals gives credence to Twain's view that Orion was bungling the land's sale.

True, John Marshall did leave many of his out-of-state purchases of grant tracts unrecorded, perhaps out of a lingering fear of having his massive grant acquisition scheme discovered and challenged, and then he died suddenly, further obscuring the land's chain of evidence of ownership. But it is a misconception to interpret Orion as selling land that never belonged to the Clemens heirs when, instead, those deeds of sale provide documentary evidence in their texts that the land did belong to the heirs after all, with their explicit descriptions of the land's entry-claiming history and its sale to John Marshall by the intermediate grant holders. The one source that must be disallowed when conducting an "independent" verification of Twain's estimates about the land's acreage is the author himself, but since the documentary evidence adds up to 92,988½ acres of support for his claims, Chapter Two concludes that Twain's final estimates can reasonably be construed as verified. The chapter also presents further evidence about exactly how Twain's father obtained the land, noting that Gov. Polk signed the grants

constituting the bulk of the Tennessee land the year after Indian Removal was completed by the forced march of Cherokees west to present-day Oklahoma in 1838, generally known as the Trail of Tears, and that John Marshall also had a familial connection to Polk. The governor who became the eleventh United States president in 1845 had two brothers-in-law among his closest political advisers who both were first cousins to “Aunt Polly” Lampton, stepmother of Twain’s mother Jane Lampton Clemens.

Still, since the Tennessee land was both real and abundant, the question remains: why did Twain come to loathe it? Chapter Three delves into the reasons, considering both Twain’s rage at Orion’s incompetence at extracting a profit from it and Twain’s ambivalent response to his father’s acquisition of it in the first place. As noted above, Twain dubs the Tennessee land “our father’s well intended folly” but also asserts it was chock-full of mineral wealth, first in the thinly fictionalized collaboration with Charles Dudley Warner, *The Gilded Age: A Tale of To-Day* (1873), and then in the text of his *Autobiography* (2010-15). Chapter Three reviews the veracity of these claims, false in the case of iron and copper, but the Grant 6402 tract did hold a coal seam five feet thick (Duke). However, that coal couldn’t be mined due to the lack of transportation to haul it to market, and oil production on another grant tract wouldn’t begin until the twenty-first century (“Young Oil Discovers,” “Young Oil Hits”), so capital-investing buyers proved difficult to locate in the late nineteenth. Accounts other than Twain’s also differ on the fertility of Fentress County, but large portions of it are not prime, easily marketable commercial cropland. Thus, Chapter Three discusses in depth how John Marshall’s legacy placed burdensome responsibilities on his heirs such as paying taxes on the land

rather than granting them substantial rewards, in addition to the unrealistic expectations of imminent wealth that Twain laments.

The psychological and literary result for Twain was that he praises his father's mental acuity in perceiving hidden minerals in the land he craftily acquired—at the same time Twain bemoans the successfully hidden legacy's hidden costs for its heirs. Chapter Three elaborates that in addition to the contradictory stances that Twain explicitly states in both *The Gilded Age* and *Autobiography*, his ambivalent response to the legacy can be seen in *Roughing It* (1871), *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894), and the two previously mentioned humorous sketches from the 1870s. Building on Howe's observation about "Twain's tendency to conflate real property with literary product" ("Real Property" 7), Chapter Three argues that far from merely conflating real and fictional terrain, Twain places fiction on a pedestal far above real estate as part of his high valuation of mental acuity: he repeatedly disparages or satirizes the sanctity of private ownership of real estate, especially in comparison to the mental acuity required to write fiction. Longer or eternal copyright terms are among Twain's goals other than entertaining his readers for profit; but ridiculing the perpetual ownership of land is among his tactics, an evident vestige of his ambivalent response to his father's land legacy.

As Chapter Three describes, in a deposition Twain gave to attorneys in a federal lawsuit about the land, he even contends that there is an ineffable distinction between something that is "literarily" true and "sworn testimony" about the land (SLC deposition, 7 June 1909, *Fentress Land Co. vs. Gernt*). Thus, Chapter Three necessarily returns to the topic of John Marshall's apparent circumvention of Tennessee laws regulating land

grants, whether Twain was conscious of his father's evasion of the letter of the law, and how Twain personally regarded such evasion. In particular, Chapter Three considers whether Twain regarded his father's machinations as admirable or regrettable—as demonstrating commendable mental acuity and business acumen, or as too intelligently surpassing the bounds of civilized behavior—if, of course, Twain even realized the maneuvering his father had committed to obtain the Tennessee land.

Chapters Two and Three also review the social acceptability of John Marshall's evasion of the letter of the land law. Even if John Marshall did tell “some stretchers” while making his original claims for land grants by “locating” them in the names of other individuals, the public and the state government itself may have cast a winking eye on such egregious land acquisitions by enterprising speculators, no matter how the law books read. Evidence for this supposition may be found in Twain's first published short story, “The Dandy Frightening the Squatter” (1852), the history of Tennessee and the nation, and the grant claims for which John Marshall served as “locator”: both the state and the entire nation continued to relentlessly acquire Native American lands and to displace Native American populations, while John Marshall did, indeed, get away with acquiring about 88,000 acres more than the letter of the law allowed him to acquire under the authority of the 1830 *Acts*. This history suggests that any “stretching” John Marshall may have committed to help place Tennessee land under European American title instead of Native American ownership was consistent with the goals and values of European American hegemony that viewed preempting Native American land as morally and legally justified by the objectification of indigenous peoples as “savage” (Pearce 66-67). However, the international “law” justifying and regulating colonialism dates back to

Emer de Vattel's *Law of Nations* (1758) and in some senses, John Marshall's primarily speculative acquisitions defy Vattel's doctrine that farmers can claim the lands of hunters and gatherers because they are underused and therefore legally vacant (Vattel 37-38).

Focusing on Twain's most significant reaction to his entire family's acquisitions of land in the Upper South from the mid-eighteenth century into John Marshall's early nineteenth-century land grants, Chapter Four describes the role Twain's ancestors played in the preemption of land in the face of resistance from its Native American owners in the Upper South, beginning in far eastern Tennessee in the colonial era and then moving into central Kentucky during the Revolution, finally ending with a genocidal attack in 1794 on Nickajack, a Cherokee stronghold near present-day Chattanooga. At least four (or five by Orion's count) of Twain's ancestors on his mother Jane's side lost their lives in frontier violence between European and Native Americans, including three in a single-day ambush on the ancestors' settlement in the central Kentucky wilds, Montgomery's Station near present-day Stanford.<sup>2</sup>

Chapter Four documents that Twain learned this cultural and family history from his storytelling mother and possibly from his great-grandmother (also Jane) who directly experienced it. As Kerry Driscoll also asserts (*MTAI* 20-23), Twain's persistent antipathy toward Native Americans can be traced to his mother Jane's transmission to her children of the oral history of frontier violence against Twain's own ancestors, for which she detested all Native Americans. Ultimately, the violence was about land; Twain's forebears migrated to the Upper South in the first place to preempt land that they believed had been legitimately purchased from specific Cherokees, although Chapter Four describes the flaws in the sale's legitimacy that set the stage for Native American



resistance to it. Twain's ambivalence toward his father's acquisition of the Tennessee land and his family's participation in the preemption of the Upper South are both part of the same continent-wide and centuries-spanning movement to establish European American hegemony that left the otherwise progressively tolerant Twain generally hostile to Native Americans, even calling in print for their "extermination," as Chapter Four describes.

Admittedly, Jane Lampton Clemens's narrative legacy of frontier violence was only indirectly connected to the Tennessee land because many years before John Marshall Clemens practiced a "shell game" to acquire it, the resisting Cherokees were defeated and pacified and ceded eastern Middle Tennessee by treaty. As a result, Twain's father did not risk being shot in the head when he stepped out his front door at dawn in Fentress County, the way Jane's great grandfather was ambushed at Montgomery's Station half a century earlier (Collins 406-7). Yet the link between these contrasting circumstances, other than genealogy, is that Twain's father no longer had to fear the Cherokees because Twain's mother's ancestors did have to fear them. This link is the foundational aspect underlying Twain's antipathetic attitudes toward both Native Americans and the Tennessee land, Chapter Four asserts. Twain felt antipathy toward the land's original owners because of the blood they spilled defending it, and he hated John Marshall's land legacy because after the Clemenses couldn't realize a quick, substantial profit from it, they also couldn't get rid of the tax burden that the land imposed without virtually giving it away. Twain ends up applying the same rationalization to both his stances: as noted above, he argues in *Following the Equator* that all the land on Earth has repeatedly changed hands by conquest, so colonialism and land confiscation are,

basically, mere forces of human nature and therefore forgivable (2: 298). Similarly, since Twain argues for the extreme transience of land possession, his logic also is consistent when eventually he urges his brother to relinquish the Tennessee land for a pittance (SLC to Orion, 1 Aug. 1870, “Letters,” *MTPO*) without a second thought about his father’s great effort to obtain it, or about his father’s hopes for enriching his posterity without them having to seriously employ their own mental acuity.

The European American ethos enabling land preemption and westward expansion also featured a predominant supporting trope among European American settlers, poets, and writers including William Cullen Bryant and Twain that Chapter Four explores: the inevitable “extinction” of Native Americans, leaving their land free for the taking in the name of “sivilization,” as Huck Finn would spell it. Even James Fenimore Cooper, whose image of the “noble savage” Twain scorned, promoted this “extinction” trope via the title and concept of his *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826).<sup>3</sup> The influence on Twain of the prevailing land preemption ethos, its supporting “extinction” trope, and later, two specific indigenous-phobic guidebooks to the Great Plains authored by Col. Richard Irving Dodge in 1877 and 1882 combined with the oral history of the Montgomery’s Station attack can be seen throughout Twain’s unfinished story fragment “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians” (1884); in his early journalistic hoax “A Bloody Massacre near Carson” (1863); in an 1867 *Alta California* letter and “The Facts Concerning the Recent Resignation” (also 1867); in Twain’s *Galaxy* magazine essay “The Noble Red Man” (1870); in a fictional wife’s abduction and murder in “The Californian’s Tale” (1893); and in Twain’s description, in his posthumously published

*Letters from the Earth* (1909/1962), of alleged Sioux atrocities against a white family in Minnesota in 1862.

In particular, claims or implications of the Native American rape of white women in all but three of these texts resonate with the peril of women being abducted by Native Americans, the same way some of the Montgomery's Station settlers were abducted (but quickly rescued). In "The Noble Red Man," the rape of settler wives and torture-murder of their husbands in front of those wives "marks the inception of a pattern in which Indians are depicted as demonic sexual predators intent upon the destruction of white womanhood," Driscoll points out (*MTAI* 10). Even though Twain never directly wrote about the Montgomery's Station attack, Chapter Four suggests that Twain viewed rape as the most odious type of Native American violence against European Americans and that he used even the potential for rape that the Montgomery's Station abductees faced to support his antipathetic evaluations of Native Americans in print. This literary strategy was Twain's variant of the captivity narratives popular with the European American reading public, but Driscoll also asserts that it stems from the trauma his great-grandmother suffered at Montgomery's Station, handed down to Twain's mother and then, in the form of his mother's tales of frontier terror, to her famous son (*MTAI* 22).

Chapter Five begins by exploring further parallels between Twain's fiction and the Montgomery's Station attack not involving rape but indeed involving ambush and escape from abduction. These include Huck Finn's escape from Pap's cabin by faking his own murder with evidence that parallels an ambush-style attack by Native Americans (*HF* 45), as well as treacherous ambushes in the Grangerford-Shepherdson feud (*HF* 127, 129-30), and a Gosiute attack on a stagecoach in *Roughing It* (1: 133).

Chapter Five also suggests that Twain portrays not only the potential for rape in his writings as evidence supporting his hostility to Native Americans but also the apparent randomness of their attacks on settlers. It is randomness or misdirected revenge, at least, that Twain similarly portrays in the Gosiute ambush in *Roughing It*; in Injun Joe's plotting against the Widow Douglas in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) because her late husband (not her) had him publicly whipped (*TS* 236); in the unexpected slaughter of the Mills family in "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians" ("HTAI" 116); and in the Hebrew massacre of Midianites in the Old Testament as described in *Letters from the Earth*, the text in which Twain compares the genocidal Hebrews with the Sioux who attacked the Minnesota white family in 1862 (*LE* 46-55). Chapter Five further points out that a damning feature of the Sioux attack, according to Twain's narrator Satan, is its resemblance to God ordering the Hebrews to "proclaim peace" to the Midianites and then to attack and "save alive nothing that breatheth" (Deut. 20: 13 and 16, qtd. in *LE* 48). At issue is the Midianites' land. Twain condemns the sweeping brutality of the Old Testament massacre, of course, but he heaps special scorn on its duplicity that parallels the Montgomery's Station attack—he doesn't specifically say so, but Driscoll does (*MTAI* 357). Twain's European American ancestors believed that despite land speculator Richard "Carolina Dick" Henderson having paid £10,000 to the Cherokees for central Kentucky, the Cherokees randomly attacked the settlers anyway (although in fact the chiefs who sold the land had no authority to do so nor did they really understand the concept of exclusive land ownership). Twain portrays similar Native American duplicity in the stagecoach ambush and the Mills family massacre, Chapter Five suggests.

Such a comparison with Native Americans to any group Twain wants to denigrate is a trend that can be seen throughout his writing career as well, Chapter Five quotes Helen Harris as asserting—especially the “white Indians” feasting around King Arthur’s Round Table in *A Connecticut Yankee*, the novel which Harris describes as “[t]he classic instance [...] of Mark Twain’s use of the Indian as a stereotype of savage squalor” (500). Another example of Twain’s use of this derogatory metaphor, as Driscoll points out (““Man Factories”” 10), is Twain’s comparative essay “The French and the Comanches,” a deleted chapter of *A Tramp Abroad* (1879) later published in *Letters from the Earth* (*LE* [181]). Again, the supreme offense of the French whom Twain lambastes in this sketch is their surprise attack that the nation’s Catholics launched on its Protestants in the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre (*LE* 185) in the treacherous manner that otherwise Twain ascribes to Native Americans. Yet despite the collectively massive evidence that, as biographer Ron Powers writes, “Mark Twain would virtually never find a kind word about Indians” (*Dangerous* 40), over the past half century numerous Twain scholars have been perceiving some moderation in his persistent antipathy toward Native Americans, “through the selective use of evidence,” as Driscoll puts it (*MTAI* 5).

The second part of Chapter Five examines these claims of moderation. In almost every text that critics have cited as evidence of Twain’s antipathy softening, however, critics have ignored contextual factors and intertextual contradictions that diminish the significance of Twain’s kinder-sounding statements. Driscoll convincingly cites a few unpublished notes and marginalia of Twain’s, some proposed-but-omitted padding for *Following the Equator*, and a single newspaper interview Twain gave in 1907 to suggest that Twain did recognize the parallels between the global mistreatment of indigenous

peoples and the mistreatment of Native Americans.<sup>4</sup> However, in general Twain did not publish opinions or descriptions favorable to Native Americans, while he also continued writing antipathetically about them and sometimes published his antagonistic texts. In particular, he never expressed an opinion in print or private correspondence about the Wounded Knee massacre in December 1890. Thus, Driscoll also cautions that “the reasons for his silence are ultimately unknowable” (*MTAI* 347) and speculates that at the root, Twain’s mother’s stories of the Montgomery’s Station attack had instilled “horrors” in Twain that were “deeply implanted in his memory” (*MTAI* 357).

Chapter Five concludes by closely reading the Twain text that comes nearest to acknowledging the Native American dispossession and genocide caused by the preemption of their lands and the resulting frontier violence. In “The Dervish and the Offensive Stranger,” as noted above, Twain admits the devastation that the encroachments of European Americans had wrought, but he retrenches to the European American ethos valorizing land confiscation as “settlement” and its concomitant “extinction” trope—his rationalization similar to his inevitability of conquest for all lands and their serial changing of hands. After the Offensive Stranger advises the Dervish that all actions have both good and bad results, divided fifty-fifty for some unexplained reason, the Stranger further confides that providing living space for land-hungry European American settlers was the good result even though “the original owners of the soil” were “robbed,” “beggared,” and “exterminated”—the inevitable “evil result.” It was the Native Americans’ tough luck, so to speak, that Columbus’s discovery of the new world happily resulted in bestowing farms upon “the plodding poor and the landless of Europe” (“Dervish” 312). Emer de Vattel would have approved of this rationalized

outcome, and thus, after Twain gives voice to the steep and long-lasting consequences of the European Americans' hegemony project, Twain casually dismisses those consequences as the inevitable results of a mysterious universal law that proclaims for every winner, there must be an equal loser, and vice versa.

If the dramatic storytelling voice of Twain's mother can still be detected, seven years after "Dervish," in his story of the Minnesota family attack in *Letters from the Earth*, the legal or illegal maneuvers for claiming land that Twain's father executed so skillfully can be discerned in Twain's lawyerly defense of inevitable conquest in *Following the Equator*. However, Twain's claim in "Dervish" that the availability of allegedly vacant land for settlement by European Americans balances "in equal measure" the dispossession and genocide of Native Americans (312) strongly demonstrates the influence of the prevailing mass ethos of "Injuns" as Others, along with his need to keep selling books in that culture. No doubt it also reflects his evolving theological, philosophical, and spiritual beliefs, but following Helen Harris (504), the present study suspects Twain would have been cutting his own financial throat if he had challenged European American preemption of Native American territory and the resulting deeds granting title to that land. In addition, arguably he was disinclined to champion such a challenge in any case due to his mother's oral history of frontier violence against his ancestors. Perhaps his mother's gruesome stories of frontier violence against his ancestors were still making mischief in the great author's mind, Chapter Five suggests. Or equally possibly, perhaps he simply was unwilling to publicly acknowledge any possible comparison between European and United States mistreatment of, and theft from, indigenous peoples.

Either way, in *Following the Equator*, Twain probably is simply defending inevitable conquest as a fact of the world, as he sees it, rather than casting a positive moral judgment on it. However, as previously noted, Twain also faced certain practical economic and political realities. Contesting the legitimacy of conquest would have called into question white ownership in the United States of land and titles on which the ink was still drying as Twain wrote in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth. As Harris suggests, “To admit that a wrong had been done to the Indian and to define and correct that wrong would have required a concession few men could grant” (504). That concession, presumably, would have been white renunciation of their stolen land by recognizing the primacy of Native American prior ownership, which generally had been pronounced “extinguished” by the white governments and courts. Almost nowhere west of the Appalachians did white titles to formerly Native American land significantly exceed a century’s duration, while title searches frequently extended back through most of the nineteenth century and into the eighteenth to be used in litigation concerning the proper title to land. Some of those title searches and legal battles even concerned the Clemens heirs’ Tennessee land. As Harris continues in the same paragraph, “To continue to hold the land and its riches and affirm that such action was justified required an unrelenting indictment of the Indian as unworthy of his country and therefore deserving to be dispossessed” (504). Although Twain eventually eschewed and detested his family’s claims to the Tennessee land, his continuous need to sell books to the often-landholding European American public gave him a commercial motive to complement his philosophical musings about man’s inhumanity to man and the resulting



thefts of other peoples' land. That motive was his practical need to uphold the legitimacy of white titles to formerly Native American land.

Yes, Twain dared to use the sanctity of private ownership of land as a satiric foil to contrast with the limited protection of intellectual property rights, and he could seek to cast off his father's burdensome land legacy with almost the same degree of casualness, nevertheless always asserting that his father had wisely identified riches that could have been exploited if circumstances were different and Orion were more competent. But no, Twain was not fool enough to challenge the legitimacy of land titles that to this day millions of American individuals, corporations, governments, and institutions rely on for legal reassurance that they possess their homes, farms, factories, offices, mines, wells, forests, and more. The land claims of all these entities were even fresher in Twain's time; some were even being developed as he lived and wrote. No indeed, Twain could not feasibly challenge their legitimacy, even as he decried imperialism and land confiscation outside the United States and championed the rights of oppressed peoples other than Native Americans, even within United States borders.

Notably, African Americans drew his sympathy—and their ancestors had stood by the side of Twain's ancestors and other settlers throughout the Upper South to suffer from Native American "enemy" attacks together with the whites, placing them in the different category of "friend" although Other. European Americans began bringing African Americans, often enslaved, to Kentucky as early as the mid-eighteenth century "to clear dense forests, plant and harvest crops, construct forts, and build the plantation infrastructure," historian Dwayne Mack writes (310). Therefore, Native Americans perceived these black servants and slaves as part of the whole European American land

theft enterprise and included blacks as targets of guerrilla violence. For instance, an enslaved man, name unrecorded, was fatally shot along with his master, Twain's great-great grandfather William Montgomery, Sr., at dawn as they stepped out of the one-room log cabin they shared with the rest of Montgomery's family in 1781 (Collins 406) in the Montgomery's Station attack that Jane Lampton Clemens so vividly recounted to her children. The number of enslaved African Americans brought to the Kentucky frontier or born in the commonwealth by 1790, nine years after the Montgomery's Station attack, had burgeoned to a United States Census count "recording 11,830 slaves [...] making up 18 percent of the state population," according to Mack (310). African Americans' unequal but perpetual daily contact with European Americans persisted in the culture Twain's parents and Twain himself were raised in. Twain's father owned and traded, or unsuccessfully tried to trade, African Americans as well as the Tennessee land at various points in his life (Scharnhorst 4, 15-19).

Partly because of this societal and family history of side-by-side white and black endangerment and existence, fostering familiarity despite the cruelty and exploitation of slavery, and partly due to other factors such as the strong abolitionist views of Twain's wife and parents-in-law or Orion's appointment by anti-slavery President Lincoln as the territorial secretary of Nevada, Twain evolved from coming of age in a slave state. He ended up feeling and expressing strong sympathy with African Americans, critics and biographers overwhelmingly acknowledge, despite his persistent antipathy toward America's other, indigenous Others. Thus, John Marshall's famous son could envision repaying African Americans for their centuries of subjugation, even imagining the sale of the Tennessee land to finance a school for their benefit in *The Gilded Age* (2: 135-37)—

but not to benefit Native Americans, the land's original owners, whose exploitation by Indian agents is winkingly satirized instead (*GA* 2: 45).

In the end, the scheme in Twain and Warner's novel to sell the land to the federal government falls through, anyway, so designating any of the proceeds for Native Americans would have been just another broken promise, just like the land legacy turned into a broken promise for Twain and the Clemens heirs. However, the land itself really existed, all 92,988½ acres of it, as Chapter Two will document in greater detail.

## CHAPTER II: “VAST POSSESSIONS” IN THE “PINERIES”: HOW MARK TWAIN’S FATHER ACQUIRED THE TENNESSEE LAND

Perhaps the most widely noted of Twain’s legacies from his ancestors is his family’s Tennessee real estate inheritance. The Tennessee land plays a pivotal role in the plot of *The Gilded Age: A Tale of To-Day* (1873), and Twain’s biographers have chronicled the family’s repeatedly frustrated efforts to sell the land for a fortune. In *Mark Twain’s Autobiography* (1924), recently reissued in a differently edited form as *Autobiography of Mark Twain* (2010-15),

<sup>1</sup> Twain blames the land for imposing “the heavy curse of prospective wealth” on himself and his siblings (*AMT* 1: 61). He asserts that said “prospective wealth” diverted the Clemens heirs from productively seeking their fortunes, even though in Twain’s case, the “heavy curse” demonstrably did not distract him from both earning and losing fortunes mostly unrelated to the Tennessee land.

Scholars have interpreted the real estate legacy’s influence on Twain numerous other ways as well. In her 2001 dissertation at the University of California-Santa Cruz, *Homicidal Economics in Mark Twain: Legacies of American Theft*, Catherine Marie Carlstroem partially glosses the “heavy curse” of the Tennessee land as representing Twain’s awareness and acceptance of European American guilt for the theft of land from Native Americans (11), an argument that the present study will refute. Writing in 2003, Twain biographer Fred Kaplan interprets the Tennessee land from a viewpoint closer to Twain’s own expressed thoughts and experience. Kaplan writes that the legacy became, “especially” for Twain among his father’s heirs, “a bitter joke, a psychological albatross,

and an unheeded reminder of the destructiveness of unrealistic and uncontrollable dreams of wealth” (9).

Twain’s earliest book-length biographer Albert Bigelow Paine, writing in 1912, set the tone for the future interpretation of Twain’s perspective on the Clemens heirs’ real estate legacy: “The words ‘Tennessee land,’ with their golden promise, became his earliest remembered syllables. He grew to detest them in time, for they came to mean mockery” (1: 23-24). Much more recently, in two texts from 2011 and 2017,<sup>2</sup> Roosevelt University’s Lawrence Howe views Twain’s land legacy from a somewhat different slant than either Carlstroem’s or Paine and Kaplan’s. Howe notes that Twain claims in his *Autobiography* (AMT 1: 209) to have profited from the Tennessee land indirectly, through coauthoring *The Gilded Age* and its stage adaptation, and Howe suggests that Twain’s claim signifies his mental equation of physical *terra firma* and fictional terrain. “Twain’s tendency to conflate real property with literary product is significant here,” Howe writes, “the first notes of a refrain that will echo later in his life” (“Real Property” 7).

In addition to imposing “the heavy curse of prospective wealth” on himself and his family, the Tennessee land burdened Twain for a number of reasons, perhaps the most significant being that he could not control its disposition. Following the custom of the times, Twain’s mother Jane Lampton Clemens, Twain himself, and his surviving siblings—Orion Clemens, Henry Clemens, and Pamela Moffett—designated and empowered Orion (Webster 16) as the eldest son of his father, John Marshall Clemens, to sell the Tennessee land in the years following John Marshall’s early death at age 48 on March 24, 1847 (Fred Kaplan 32). The Clemens heirs formalized their designation of

Orion as their leading land heir on October 3, 1857, in Fentress Deed H1821, a document that transferred title to the majority of the Tennessee land tracts from all of John Marshall's heirs, including Twain, to Orion. Twain, busy at the time learning to become a Mississippi River steamboat pilot,<sup>3</sup> acquiesced in his elder brother's antebellum assumption of *de facto* primogeniture. However, Twain later became infuriated when, due to ethical considerations, Orion repeatedly blocked sales of the Tennessee land that Twain had arranged. Invoking the *noblesse oblige* that accompanies the privilege of primogeniture, Twain raged to Orion's wife Mollie in an 1866 letter, "He [Orion] has got a duty to perform by us—will he perform it?" (SLC to Mary E. Clemens, 22 May 1866, "Letters," *MTPO*).

As a consequence of Orion's balkiness, by 1870 Twain declared, in a letter advising Orion to push for a sale instead of holding out for higher prices or reserving mineral rights:

I prefer that you telegraph the amount of money you want [to cover the expenses of any sale], so that you need ~~not write me~~ never mention that land again to me by letter. I will never read another letter, from *anybody*, that mentions it. You cannot form even a faint idea of how ~~I~~ malignantly I hate that vile subject. (SLC to Orion, 1 Aug. 1870, *MTPO*; cross-outs included)

"~~I~~ malignantly I"—Twain's mid-sentence amplification visibly builds a temple of first-person ego pillars around an adverb for emotion springing straight from the id; he hates; he excommunicates; the "vile" subject of the Tennessee land is so repugnant that the extra expense and business-like brevity of telegraphy is requested to avoid staining the

epistolary sanctity of an actual letter. Lest his point be missed, Twain concludes his letter, “I am sorry, if these conditions seem hard, for this is the last time I will ever have anything to do with the care, protection, or sale of ~~the~~ that doubly & trebly hated & accursed land.” The primal, almost puerile vehemence of such glimpses convincingly conveys Twain’s emotions regarding the Tennessee land that he, as a younger son, inherited only in name and the right to a share in the proceeds thereof.

Twain “affectionately” concludes his outburst at his brother, “Yrs affly, Sam.” Yet rather than constituting Twain’s actual object of chronic hatred, the land may have served as Twain’s projection of his frustration and his sibling rivalry, not totally suppressed, toward his ineffectual senior brother. In Twain’s eyes Orion dawdled endlessly on a project that the successful author, who also considered himself an adept businessman, viewed as a task that should have been shouldered and successfully completed long before 1870. Twain also was impatient with Orion for not having sold the land because taxes had to be paid on it, for which the family frequently tapped the successful author for funds (editors’ n. 1, SLC to Orion, 1 Aug. 1870, “Letters,” *MTPO*). Twain urged Orion in the August 1870 letter to hurry up and disburden the Clemens heirs of the legacy that Twain clearly viewed as a white elephant and an albatross:

The family ~~has~~ have been bled for 40 years to keep that cursed land on their hands & perpetuate our father’s well intended folly in buying it. I washed my hands of it 5 years ago, & I never will have anything more to do with its care or its sale. I have always contended that the family were too poor to keep a luxury like that worthless land, but I never expected to convince them of it. If any stupid fool will give 2,000 for it, do let him

have it—shift the curse to his shoulders. (SLC to Orion, 1 Aug. 1870,  
 “Letters,” *MTPO*)

With the phrase “well intended,” Twain dutifully honors his father by mitigating John Marshall’s “folly in buying” the land by ascribing good intentions to him. But ironically, Twain overlooks the cultural commonplace that such intentions often place their practitioners on the road to hell, although in a later, 1902 sketch Twain emphasizes the “evil results” that any action inevitably brings in equal proportion to good results, regardless of the doers’ intentions (“Dervish” 310-12). Despite exonerating his father with his mitigating “well intended” phrase, when in this letter Twain attributes a “curse” to the Tennessee land that could be transmitted through its sale, Twain foreshadows his later repeated descriptions in the *Autobiography* of the “heavy curse of prospective wealth” (*AMT* 1: 61) that he believed the land imposed on the Clemens heirs.

Aside from Twain’s repeated renunciation of the value of the land in his post-Civil War letters to Orion, his repeated descriptions in the *Autobiography* of the “heavy curse” created by the land underscore its significance. Twain blames the Tennessee land in the opening sentences of his earliest draft of the *Autobiography* in 1870 (*AMT* 1: 7, headnote on 61) for imposing “the heavy curse of prospective wealth” on himself and his siblings. Thus, the land occupies the place of primacy in Twain’s account of his own life and the forces that shaped his life experiences and personality. He places similar seminal significance on the land when he returns to the topic early in the primary text of the *Autobiography*, written in Vienna in 1897-98 (*AMT* 1: 12-13):

I shall have occasion to mention this land again, now and then, as I go  
 along, for it influenced our life in one way or another during more than a



generation. Whenever things grew dark it rose and put out its hopeful Sellers hand and cheered us up, and said “Do not be afraid—trust in me—wait.” It kept us hoping and hoping, during forty years, and forsook us at last. It put our energies to sleep and made visionaries of us—dreamers, and indolent. We were always going to be rich next year—no occasion to work. It is good to begin life poor; it is good to begin life rich—these are wholesome; but to begin it *prospectively* rich! The man who has not experienced it cannot imagine the curse of it. (*AMT* 1: 209)

Given the extreme emphasis that Twain places on the Tennessee land—his stated belief in its constant negative influence on himself and his family, and the intensity of the feelings he expresses about the land—its actual size and nature deserve to be thoroughly and accurately assessed, a task that will be addressed in the remainder of this chapter.

### **The Land’s Influences on Twain’s Life and Work**

In particular, determining the Tennessee land’s size and nature is crucial to evaluating Twain’s psychological and literary response to the land—whether the land actually existed in the quantity that Twain described, whether it truly held the promise of potential value that his father saw in it, and whether his father’s questionable, possibly extra-legal method of acquisition influenced Twain’s primarily negative feelings about the Clemens land legacy. Twain’s literary response to the land can be observed most directly in *The Gilded Age* and his *Autobiography*, and more indirectly in *Roughing It* (1871), *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* (1889), *Pudd’nhead Wilson* (1894), and two

humorous sketches from the 1870s, Twain's 1870 *Hiawatha* parody "A Memory" and his 1875 "Petition Concerning Copyright" (*SNO* 208-9). However, the land's influence on Twain also can be clearly seen through its intersection with the sociopolitical dialectic about the protean boundaries between "civilized" and "savage," a dialectic in which Twain engaged even more ambivalently than his nation and culture did. This dialectic of ambivalence is a foundational subtext of *Huckleberry Finn* that surfaces most saliently in Huck's book-ending decision to "light out for the Territory ahead of the rest" to avoid being "sivilized" by Aunt Sally or anyone else (*HF* 296). Similarly, a parallel dialectic of ambivalence (Pugh 83) significantly informs Hank Morgan's ultimately doomed attempt to remold medieval England through technology in *A Connecticut Yankee*, an attempt that proves unsustainable against the barbaric forces of the feudal, false "civilization" of Arthurian times.

Twain's pioneer ancestors and even his immediate progenitors maintained a constant pattern dating back to the thirteen colonies exactly opposite to Huck's stated intentions, but directly in accord with those of Hank: they lit out for the territories "ahead of the rest," or at least right in the vanguard, not to avoid civilization but in its name, equating their personal financial betterment with the expansion and establishment of European American cultural, political, and economic hegemony. Fentress County in the remote, pine-forested mountains of eastern Middle Tennessee was a lingering remnant of the frontier when Twain's parents first arrived there around 1826 (Loving 13), however tame the Tennessee frontier had become since warfare with Native Americans over Tennessee and Kentucky land came to an end roughly three decades earlier (Watson 1: 17-18, Hoig 88). As John Marshall Clemens devoted himself to acquiring the Tennessee

land over the years following 1826, he and Jane bestirred themselves to “sivilize” the newly created county with such niceties as plastering the interior walls of their initial frame house on a city lot in Jamestown, the newly established county seat (Paine 1: 6, Lauber, *Making* 10). Yet their son’s countercultural literary creation, Huckleberry, habitually flees such impositions of propriety and challenges conventional conceptions of property acquisition and ownership, considering these cultural norms from his own divergent perspective.

### **John Marshall’s Piecemeal Acquisition Process: Not the Way Twain Tells It**

John Marshall’s method of acquiring the Tennessee land also differed significantly from Twain’s description of the acquisition process, a divergence that is revealed by examination of available legal and historical records. Specifically, Twain wrote the following description “about 1870,” as his first *Autobiography* editor Albert Bigelow Paine glosses the date of composition (*MTA* 1: 3) and the 2010-15 *Autobiography* affirms (*AMT* 1: headnote on 61):

The monster tract of land which our family own in Tennessee was purchased by my father a little over forty years ago. He bought the enormous area of seventy-five thousand acres at one purchase. The entire lot must have cost him somewhere in the neighborhood of four hundred dollars. This was a good deal of money to pass over at one payment in those days—at least it was so considered away up there in the pineries and the “Knobs” of the Cumberland Mountains of Fentress County, East Tennessee. When my father paid down that great sum, and turned and

stood in the courthouse door of Jamestown, and looked abroad over his vast possessions, he said: “Whatever befalls me, my heirs are secure; I shall not live to see these acres turn to silver and gold, but my children will.” (*AMT* 1: 61)

Twain’s description of John Marshall’s acquisition of the Tennessee land is seriously flawed in several ways, although kernels of truth can be seen in it as well. The “enormous area” of land can be documented to exceed 75,000 acres by at least 17,000 acres, although tracing John Marshall’s somewhat circuitous acquisition process is necessary to document the final figure.

However, 75,000 acres were not acquired “at one purchase” or for the lump sum of \$400, by any means, as the records of the diverse titles to multiple tracts acquired over longer than a decade demonstrate. “[A] little over forty years ago” in 1870 would have been 1830, when John Marshall did, indeed, initiate his acquisition of “vast possessions” in Fentress and neighboring counties. Prior to 1830, from 1826-29, John Marshall and various associates entered claims for sixteen tracts comprising 2,458 acres that eventually became part of the Clemens land legacy during three initial periods of claiming activity. Then in 1830, John Marshall and his associates claimed seventeen tracts comprising 59,600 acres in a fourth period of claiming activity. As Howe phrases it, “the story of John Clemens staking his one vast claim at the courthouse in Jamestown, turning to gaze upon the expansive holdings of his estate of 75[,000] or 100,000 acres, and then pondering his magnanimous gesture toward his children is a rather extravagant fiction” (“Real Property” 5). Twain exercised particularly egregious poetic license by suggesting these possessions were all visible from the “courthouse door,” since none could actually

be seen from that vantage point except for a few city lots. Many of John Marshall's claims were located miles away from Jamestown, obscured from even long-distance visibility by intervening mountains (see fig. 1).

Fentress County Entry Numbers	Entries Made By and <u>Acreage</u>	Tenn. Grants for Same Tracts	Tenn. Grantees and <u>Acreage</u>	Stated Authority for Each Tenn. Grant	Granting Governors	Location / "On Waters Of...."
233 (7/22/26)	WJRsons, WMcG <u>200</u>	5465 (8/11/37)	JMC <u>200</u>	Act of GA 12/3/25	Newton Cannon	Buffalo Cove / RCC
237 (7/28/26)	JMC, Alex M <u>245</u>	502 (4/3/28)	JMC, Alex M. <u>245</u>	"By virtue of entry"	Sam Houston	CumbMt / RCC
238 (7/28/26)	JMC, Han, Alex <u>73</u>	2100 (6/1/31)	JMC, Han, Alex <u>73</u>	Act of GA 12/3/25	William Carroll	RCC / Crooked Ck
239 (7/23/26)	JMC, Hannibal <u>190</u>	499 (4/3/28)	JMC, Hannibal <u>190</u>	"By virtue of entry"	Sam Houston	CumbMt / RCC
277 (3/11/27)	Han, McB, JMC <u>300</u>	6403 (10/11/38)	J A Quarles <u>300</u>	Act of GA 12/3/25	N Cannon-J K Polk	CumbMt / RCC
320 (11/22/27)	Orion <u>200</u> <sup>OR</sup>	6408 (10/11/38)	J A Quarles <u>200</u>	Act of GA 12/3/25	N Cannon-J K Polk	Mill Creek
321 (11/22/27)	JMC <u>100</u>	6404 (10/11/38)	JMC <u>100</u>	Act of GA 12/3/25	N Cannon-J K Polk	Yellow Creek
322 (11/23/27)	JMC <u>50</u>	2099 (6/1/31)	JMC <u>50</u>	Act of GA 12/3/25	William Carroll	RCC / Crooked Ck
324 (11/23/27)	JMC, Alex M <u>200</u>	6400 (10/11/38)	J A Quarles <u>200</u>	Act of GA 12/3/25	N Cannon-J K Polk	White Oak Creek
325 (11/22/27)	JMC, Alex M <u>200</u>	6406 (10/11/38)	J A Quarles <u>200</u>	Act of GA 12/3/25	N Cannon-J K Polk	Mill Ck / path to CTK
326 (11/24/27)	Orion <u>100</u> <sup>OR</sup>	6409 (10/11/38)	Orion <u>100</u>	Act of GA 11/24/29	N Cannon-J K Polk	Crooked Creek
392 (1/1/29)	JMC <u>100</u>	6405 (10/11/38)	JMC <u>100</u>	Act of GA 12/3/25	N Cannon-J K Polk	Obey-Clear Fk divide
393 (1/1/29)	JMC <u>100</u>	6407 (10/11/38)	JMC <u>100</u>	Act of GA 12/3/25 <sup>1</sup>	N Cannon-J K Polk	Mill Creek
394 (1/2/29)	JMC <u>50</u>	6410 (10/11/38)	JMC <u>50</u>	Act of GA 12/3/25	N Cannon-J K Polk	CumbMt / Clear Fk
399 (1/7/29)	JMC <u>50</u>	Not found@TSLA	Not found@TSLA	Not found@TSLA	Not found@TSLA	Yellow Creek
401 (1/1/29)	JMC <u>300</u>	6401 (10/11/38)	JMC <u>300</u>	Act of GA 12/3/25	N Cannon-J K Polk	White Oak Creek
449 (2/10/30)	JMC <u>1k</u>	6415 (10/11/38)	JMC <u>1k</u>	Act of GA 1/9/30	N Cannon-J K Polk	White Oak Creek
450 (2/10/30)	JMC <u>1k</u>	6414 (10/11/38)	JMC <u>1k</u>	Act of GA 1/9/30	N Cannon-J K Polk	White Oak Creek
451 (2/11/30)	JMC <u>400</u>	8684 (11/30/41)	JMC <u>1.5k</u>	Act of GA 1/9/30	James C Jones	RCC / minus AlbMill
465 (3/5/30)	A Pitman <u>5k</u> <sup>LOC</sup>	6418 (10/11/38)	J S Pease <u>5k</u>	Act of GA 1/9/30	N Cannon-J K Polk	Crooked Creek
470 (3/10/30)	L Stinson, JMC <u>1k</u> <sup>LOC</sup>	Not found@TSLA	Not found@TSLA	Not found@TSLA	Not found@TSLA	Buffalo Cove
478 (3/12/30)	Cyrus Walker <u>5k</u>	6422 (10/11/38)	J A Quarles <u>5k</u>	Act of GA 1/9/30	N Cannon-J K Polk	Clear Fk/North Tpk
495 (3/26/30)	Hannibal <u>1k</u>	6413 (10/11/38)	Henry Thomas <u>1k</u>	Act of GA 1/9/30	N Cannon-J K Polk	RCC / minus AlbMill
496 (3/26/30)	Daniel Trabue <u>5k</u> <sup>LOC</sup>	6420 (10/11/38)	John Kerr <u>5k</u>	Act of GA 1/9/30	N Cannon-J K Polk	WO Ck / Crooked Ck
498 (3/29/30)	Jos G Walker <u>5k</u> <sup>LOC</sup>	6417 (10/11/38)	Hugh Meredith <u>5k</u>	Act of GA 1/9/30	N Cannon-J K Polk	Crooked Ck/Clear Fk
506 (3/31/30)	Alex M <u>5k</u> <sup>LOC</sup>	6398 (10/9/39)	Henry Thomas <u>5k</u>	Act of GA 1/9/30	N Cannon-J K Polk	WO Ck / Obey R
508 (4/1/30)	E N Robertson <u>5k</u> <sup>LOC</sup>	6419 (10/11/38)	G W Kerr <u>5k</u>	Act of GA 1/9/30	N Cannon-J K Polk	Crooked Creek
509 (4/6/30)	William Cheek <u>5k</u> <sup>LOC</sup>	6411 (10/11/38)	James C Jr <u>5k</u>	Act of GA 1/9/30	N Cannon-J K Polk	Wolf R / Piles Tpk
510 (4/7/30)	N W Williams <u>5k</u> <sup>LOC</sup>	6399 (10/11/38)	JMC, N W Wms <u>5k</u>	Act of GA 1/9/30	N Cannon-J K Polk	Clear Fk / & MorgCo
511 (4/8/30)	JMC, RWilliams <u>5k</u> <sup>LOC</sup>	6416 (10/11/38)	Hugh Meredith <u>5k</u>	Act of GA 1/9/30	N Cannon-J K Polk	Clear Fk / & MorgCo
512 (4/8/30)	T W Williams <u>5k</u> <sup>LOC</sup>	6421 (10/11/38)	J A Quarles <u>5k</u>	Act of GA 1/9/30	N Cannon-J K Polk	Clear Fork/illegible R
520 (4/23/30)	JMC <u>200</u>	6412 (10/11/38)	JMC <u>200</u>	Act of GA 1/9/30	N Cannon-J K Polk	RCC @ Quarles claim
547 (10/18/30)	Lam, OC, BQuar <u>5k</u> <sup>LOC</sup>	6402 (10/11/38)	James C Jr <u>5k</u>	Act of GA 1/9/30	N Cannon-J K Polk	East Fork of Obey R

Figure 1, Grants Chart showing the Clemens land acquisition process, 1826-1841

#### LEGEND

**TSLA** = Tennessee State Library Archives. **Act of GA** = Act of General Assembly. **J K Polk** = James K. Polk.

**UNDER Entries Made By and Acreage:** OR = "Located" by Orion Clemens. LOC = "Located" by John Marshall Clemens. WJRsons = William B. Richardson, John H. Richardson. WMcG = William McGee. JMC = John Marshall Clemens. Alex M or only Alex = Alexander Montgomery. Han = Hannibal Clemens. McB = John McBeath. Orion or OC = Orion Clemens. A Pitman = Asa Pitman. L Stinson = Lewis Stinson. Jos G Walker = Joseph G. Walker. E N Robertson = E. N. Robertson. N W Williams = Nathaniel Washington Williams? RWilliams = Robert Williams? T W Williams = Timothy W. H. Williams? Lam = James A. H. Lampton. BQuar = Benjamin Quarles.

**UNDER Tenn. Grantees and Acreage:** Same initials, abbreviations, and names, plus J A Quarles = John A. Quarles; J. S. Pease = Joseph S. Pease?; G W Kerr = George W. Kerr; and James C Jr = James Clemens, Jr.

**UNDER Location / "On Waters Of....":** Ck = Creek. R = River. Tpk = Turnpike. RCC = Rock Castle Creek. CumbMt = Cumberland Mountain. W O Ck = White Oak Creek. AlbMill = Albertson's Mill. MorgCo = Morgan County.

Primarily in the spring of 1830, John Marshall did participate in claiming nearly 60,000 acres in seventeen separate tracts that eventually became part of his Tennessee land legacy, but the vast majority of those claims were made in other individuals' names and were officially awarded to still other individuals in grants issued in 1839, but dated October 11, 1838. These "1838" grants stated in their texts that they were being awarded by Gov. Newton Cannon, but they were signed by Gov. James K. Polk, the future eleventh US president. Despite bearing the date October 11, 1838, the grants could not have been signed by Polk until after he had defeated Cannon for the governorship in a statewide election held in August 1839. Thus, it can be said that the "1838" grants were jointly issued by Cannon and Polk.

By 1839, John Marshall had already acquired or finished acquiring his smaller grant tracts, and in 1840-41, he acquired the remainder of his holdings from the other individuals who officially were awarded the "1838" grants. Altogether, John Marshall's land grants totaled 62,108 acres at his death in 1847, or 62,384 acres<sup>4</sup> counting an additional 276 acres remaining from his other land acquisitions and sales in Fentress County. In addition, a survey performed shortly before the Civil War, over ten years after John Marshall's death, expanded Grant 6402, originally described in the grant text as comprising 5,000 acres, to approximately 35,604½ acres. The additional 30,604½ acres expanded John Marshall's total legacy to about 92,988½ acres.

Thus, the acquisition narrative for John Marshall's nearly 93,000-acre legacy that is documented by extant historical and legal records differs significantly from Twain's version of a single enormous purchase for a single sum. However, the total acreage documented by the records essentially confirms Twain's claims about the enormity of the

land legacy by exceeding Twain's most frequently quoted estimate of the total acreage, 75,000 acres, by almost 18,000 acres. In other words, extant historical and legal records indicate that John Marshall left his heirs a vast quantity of land, in the neighborhood of many tens of thousands of acres, confirming that the total acreage of the Tennessee land was worthy of the emphasis that Twain and his father both placed on the Clemens land legacy, even though the land's potential monetary value could not be harvested during Twain's lifetime due to the land's location in rugged, remote, inaccessible terrain.

Twain repeatedly states the figure "seventy-five thousand" as the total acreage of the Tennessee land in his *Autobiography* (*AMT* 1: 61, 206, 209). Likewise, Squire Hawkins, the character representing John Marshall in the roman à clef Twain coauthored with Charles Dudley Warner, *The Gilded Age*, also informs the assembled Hawkins family that he has bought "Seventy-five Thousand Acres of Land in this county" (*GA* 1: 7). Yet twice Twain footnotes his acreage total in the *Autobiography* with the claim that the acreage actually was "100,000" or "above 100,000" (*AMT* 1: 206, 208). Twain's repeated insistence on such larger totals as "above 100,000" provides important primary evidence for the total probable extent of the Clemens heirs' land holdings since their documentable acreage totaling nearly 93,000 falls only about 7,000 acres short of Twain's highest estimate.

John Marshall's other acquisitions of land in Fentress County were insignificant compared with the ultimate total of 92,712½ acres that Twain's father directly obtained as grants from the state of Tennessee from 1826-41, or that he obtained, in the early 1840s, from other individuals who received state grants during that sixteen-year period. John Marshall's other acquisitions included about 771 acres with titles derived from older

grants to other individuals made prior to 1826; titles from Tennessee grants that John Marshall played no part in claiming; or titles from grants to other individuals issued in Fentress County, Tennessee, by the Commonwealth of Kentucky under the terms of the Tennessee Compact of 1820. The latter was an agreement between the two neighboring states that established Walker's Line, surveyed by Dr. Thomas Walker in 1779-80, as the state line between Kentucky and Tennessee east of the Tennessee River; it remains the state line today (Samuel Cole Williams). Kentucky directly granted a single forty-acre tract on the Wolf River in Fentress County to John Marshall either on June 27, 1833, according to Kentucky records, or on July 7, 1834, according to Tennessee records (Jillson 1: 903; Fentress Deed A207).<sup>5</sup>

John Marshall had resold 535 of the above 811 acres, selling 771 acres plus his forty-acre grant from Kentucky, by the time he moved his family westward from Fentress County in the late spring of 1835 in time for Samuel Langhorne Clemens to be born in Florida, Missouri, on November 30. After deducting these sales of various tracts that John Marshall obtained from sources other than from Tennessee grants that he had played a part in obtaining, John Marshall and his heirs were left still possessing 276 acres—previously mentioned—to be included in his eventual 92,988½-acre Tennessee land legacy.

Excluding the above 811 miscellaneous acres that John Marshall purchased from other individuals and mostly sold before migrating to Missouri, Twain's father acquired all his considerable acreage by receiving grants directly from the state of Tennessee, or by later obtaining post-1825 grants that the state awarded to other individuals, although these "grants" carried varying initial purchase prices paid to the state rather than coming



entirely without cost as the word “grant” might seem to imply. Very frequently, John Marshall played a role in the initial claiming of grants that eventually were issued to other individuals, but that he later obtained. He engaged in four relatively distinct periods of claiming activity, in 1826, 1827, 1829, and 1830. During the first, second, and fourth periods (1826, 1827, and 1830) John Marshall almost invariably claimed tracts in collaboration with partners, or on behalf of other individuals by serving as their claim “locator,” although during the third period, 1829, he entered his claims without any partners. The advantages of claiming land jointly with partners are not clear, but two are possible. Twain’s father was a practicing lawyer, among other occupations, and claiming tracts jointly may have helped evade the state’s limits on land grants to any single individual—initially set at 640 acres per claimant but expanded in 1830 to 5,000 acres. John Marshall’s partners also may have served a promissory role to pay the state for the tracts, similar to the partners co-signing a loan for him.

### **Tennessee’s Land-Claiming Process and John Marshall’s Role as “Locator”**

In antebellum Tennessee, individuals seeking land grants from the state first made preliminary claims called land entries. These entries were recorded in the “entry taker’s book” in the office of the register of deeds in each county. A “locator” was listed for each entry in the book, in the signature position, and the entries were described by the “locator” and numbered. Before being entered into the book, a tract did not have to be physically surveyed. However, Tennessee land laws required that an on-the-ground, actual physical survey had to be performed and recorded by the county surveyor before an entry could be formally granted by the state.

Simply entering a claim for a tract did not convey ownership to a claimant or claimants, although it gave the claimant or claimants legal priority for receiving that claim. Dating back to the days when Tennessee was still designated as the western territory of North Carolina, but continuing into John Marshall's land-claiming era, claims became grants in a process described by Irene Griffey:

A grant was the certificate that actually passed title from the government to the individual. The secretary of state made out all grants for the signature of the governor. When the governor signed the grant, title passed from the government to the individual. After the governor signed the grant, it was then countersigned by the secretary of state and recorded in a grant book kept in his office for that purpose. (20-21)

Thus, the claims made by John Marshall and his associates in 1826-30 did not immediately gain him title to the Tennessee land. His confirming state grants were issued a varying number of years later, mostly in 1839 but dated October 11, 1838, and often in the names of other individuals from whom John Marshall subsequently acquired the tracts in question. Again, this procedure presents the appearance of a "shell game" to evade the 5,000-acre limit on grants per individual, although other explanations may be possible as well.

John Marshall's first claiming period occurred in July 1826, probably at the time he and his young family moved east to Jamestown from the less isolated Jackson County seat, Gainesboro, Tennessee. John Marshall claimed three tracts that July, all "on the waters of Rock Castle Creek" or nearby "on Cumberland Mountain," ranging in size from 73 to 245 acres (Fentress Entries 237, 238, and 239). In each case John Marshall had at

least one partner. Thus, it would seem that later his direct heirs should not have been able to claim full ownership of the land. However, in each case, the Clemens heirs sold the land in 1907 to the Fentress Land Co., apparently an entity consisting of themselves (Paine 1: 6; Fentress Deed F2-17), possibly to erase any lingering claims by John Marshall's partners or their heirs, among other conceivable reasons.

John Marshall's land-claiming partners in July 1826 twice included his brother Hannibal,<sup>6</sup> an uncanny coincidence in the sense that Twain later grew up in and immortalized Hannibal, Missouri, as the "St. Petersburg" of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Huckleberry Finn*. John Marshall's other land-claiming partner in July 1826 was Alexander Montgomery,<sup>7</sup> who may have been either a close or distant cousin on Jane's side of the family.<sup>8</sup> The land claims entered with Montgomery, with Hannibal, or with both men by John Marshall that July later were ratified or confirmed by two separate state grants signed by Tennessee Gov. Sam Houston<sup>9</sup> and another grant signed by Gov. William Carroll.<sup>10</sup>

A fourth claim, entered on July 22, 1826, constitutes the first Fentress land entry that ended up being granted in John Marshall's name, although the 200-acre tract in "Buffalo Cove" in the Rock Castle Creek watershed actually was claimed that July 22 by William B. Richardson, John H. Richardson, and William McGee. All three claimants were prominent Fentress citizens and served at times as county officials.<sup>11</sup> "John M. Clements" is listed as the assignee of the three original claimants (Grant 5465) in the eventual confirming state grant of the tract to John Marshall, issued on August 11, 1837, by Gov. Cannon, eleven years after the original claimants filed their entry. This prolonged transaction typifies the acquisition process for many of John Marshall's

parcels of Tennessee land. The first claims were made by John Marshall and partners or even by entirely different claimants, although usually John Marshall served as “locator” for each tract. The confirming state grants then were issued either to John Marshall directly or to a second set of claimants who had been “assigned” the claims of the first set. However, the tracts eventually ended up in John Marshall’s hands, either when the confirming state grants were issued or through his deals with other grantees that later were recorded in Fentress County deed books and court rulings, sometimes years after the deals were made in Missouri in the early 1840s.<sup>12</sup>

The second spate of claims that ended up in John Marshall’s legacy consisted of six made in November 1827, including two by John Marshall alone, two by John Marshall in partnership with Alexander Montgomery, and two that allegedly were entered by Orion when he was only two years old.<sup>13</sup> Orion also was listed as the “locator” of these two claims, at age two.<sup>14</sup> Like the claims of 1826, these 1827 claims were for relatively small tracts, ranging from fifty to two hundred acres. The 1827 claims also show John Marshall and his fellow claimants branching out to other sections of the county than the Rock Castle Creek area, such as “the waters of” Mill, Yellow, Crooked, and White Oak creeks—a diversity of locations that continues the historical acquisition narrative’s contradiction of Twain’s description of the Tennessee land as generally visible from the Fentress courthouse door.

Like those of 1826, all but one of the 1827 claims were made under Tennessee’s 1825 land claims act, according to the confirming state grants that were almost all dated “1838” by Cannon and Polk through those governors’ previously described joint issuance process.<sup>15</sup> A third set consisted of early claims that John Marshall made in the first week

of 1829 following a thirteen-month land-claiming hiatus for Twain's future father. Like those in the first two sets, all five claims made in 1829 were for small tracts ranging from fifty to one hundred acres in diverse locations in Fentress County except for a single, slightly larger tract of three hundred acres; once again, the authority that John Marshall cited for his entries was the 1825 land claims act.<sup>16</sup> John Marshall's 1829 claims totaled 700 acres, out of which he was awarded 650 acres in confirming state grants.

The fourth set of claims that became the Clemens land legacy—claims made in February through April of 1830, plus one later entry made in October 1830—generally consisted of much larger tracts than those claimed in 1826-29. The 1830 claims included eleven 5,000-acre tracts, and only two claims were for less than 1,000 acres. Up to this point, John Marshall could hardly have been called a land baron. A total of sixteen claims, or slightly fewer than half the eventual total of thirty-three entries comprising the Tennessee land, had been made before 1830 in John Marshall's name—with and without partners—or in the names of other claimants whose tracts would eventually constitute parts of the Clemens legacy through assignments of entry, through confirming state grants to John Marshall or Orion, or through later acquisition by John Marshall. None of these early claims in the first three sets exceeded 300 acres; in fact, as previously described, all together the first sixteen claims totaled only 2,458 acres.

Yet John Marshall's limited holdings were about to expand exponentially due to the passage by the 18<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Nashville on January 9, 1830, of Chapters 84, 85 and 87 of the *Acts [...] of Tennessee, 1829* (henceforward referred to as the 1830 *Acts*). Chapter 85 limited the claiming of new tracts under its provisions in the region including Fentress County to 5,000 acres per individual, even if those acres were not

contiguous (1830 *Acts* 114). That might have imposed a limitation on John Marshall's expanding barony, but as noted earlier, he apparently found a way around the limitation that will be explained in greater detail below. Furthermore, the 1830 laws made the claiming of new tracts well worth the best efforts of John Marshall Clemens, attorney-at-law, to take shrewd if not actually dishonest advantage of the new statutory provisions, since the new laws suddenly made such land acquisitions radically affordable and potentially lucrative.

### **1830: Tennessee Land Grants Suddenly Become Easily Available**

The reason for the sudden easy availability of the land was a drastic price cut. Up to this point under the 1823 and 1825 laws repealed by the new acts, entry takers in the counties where land was claimed had charged claimants 12½ cents per entry and one cent per acre. The confirming land grants to John Marshall—with or without partners—and grants later acquired by John Marshall specifically cited the 1825 law as his claiming authority twelve times,<sup>17</sup> not counting the two grants simply awarded “by virtue of entry,” or without citing a specific law, during the right time period for them to have been based on the 1825 law (Grants 499 and 502). A 5,000-acre tract would have cost a claimant \$50 plus the entry taker's 12½ cents under this 1825 law, except no one could claim 5,000 acres at a time. The 1823 law had already set the following limitation: “It shall not be lawful for any person, directly or indirectly, to enter a greater quantity of land than six hundred and forty acres” (Chap. 49, Sec. 24 in Henry Whitney 314).

However, for new claims made in 1830 or later, Chapter 85 superseded the earlier laws that set the penny-per-acre price and the 640-acre limit: “SEC. 2. *Be it enacted*, That

all laws and parts of laws requiring the enterer to pay to the entry taker one cent per acre, be and the same are hereby repealed...” The new law also set the fees of entry takers at a maximum of 25 cents for any claim (1830 *Acts* 114). Thus, suddenly the state of Tennessee was virtually giving vast tracts of land away to any and all claimants who could pay relatively nominal sums for these tracts; a 5,000-acre tract that had previously cost roughly \$50 could now be obtained for a quarter dollar.

Support for this interpretation of Chapter 85 can be found in the 1833 report of a legislative committee whose purview included the value and sale of public lands in Tennessee. The report states that the primary valuable “public land” in East Tennessee was still in the hands of the Cherokees and would yield funds to state coffers “so soon as the Indian title is extinguished,” while all other land in the state—except tracts for which the federal government was still receiving the proceeds in West Tennessee—was being sold at no cost per acre: “The other public lands to which the State has a title, are appropriated without the payment of any consideration” (“Constitution of 1834” 234). These non-western lands, by definition, included remaining tracts in the eastern Middle Tennessee region that includes Fentress County.

Of course, direct evidence is lacking that the 1830 price cut was applied to the sixteen grants issued under its auspices that became the bulk of the Clemens land legacy.<sup>18</sup> All sixteen grants based on claims entered in 1830 lack any mention whatsoever of a purchase price. However, that very omission constitutes circumstantial evidence that no purchase price was charged, in contrast to the specific mention of a penny-per-acre price mentioned in all but two of the fifteen state grants for claims in the Clemens land legacy that predated the 1830 *Acts*.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, even a mere fifty-acre tract claimed by John Marshall or his family and associates in 1826, 1827, or 1829 in his first three sets of claims cost him or them approximately fifty cents. But by 1830 he could claim one hundred times more than fifty acres for less than half the earlier cost of those fifty acres. Still, the fly in the ointment was the statutory limit on how much land a single individual could claim under Section 1 of Chapter 85: “*Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Tennessee*, That it shall and may be lawful for any person or persons to enter and obtain grants for any quantity of land *not exceeding five thousand acres*, north and east of the Congressional reservation line, and north of the Tennessee river” (latter emphasis added). The new law opened up the eastern parts of Middle Tennessee including Fentress and neighboring counties, a substantial section of the state where large tracts remained unclaimed, to expanded European American settlement and hegemony. However, John Marshall’s prospects to partake extensively in the newly authorized land opening were greatly improved by a loophole established under Chapter 84 whereby he could greatly exceed the 5,000-acre limit set by Chapter 85.

The Chapter 84 loophole awarded title to portions of land-grant claims to the “locators” of those claims according to whatever contract the “locator” had made with the claimant. Furthermore, no actual written contract was required to give the officially registered “locator” an interest in the land. Chapter 84 provided that

...if no particular contract was made, then on proof that the locator had located the said [land] warrant, had the same surveyed and granted according to the custom of locators, also shewing [sic] by respectable testimony what was the customary part allowed to locators at the time said



warrant was located, the court shall without further proof, decree to said locator his locative interest in said land. (1830 *Acts* 114)

Even better for “locators,” an oral contract could be claimed and the aforementioned procedure, liberal as it was to “locators,” could be entirely circumvented to create even more locator-friendly terms. Section 2 of Chapter 84 provided that “all parol [word-of-mouth] contracts for locating any land warrant or warrants shall be as good and effectual as if the same had been reduced to writing” (114). The advantages of this low standard of proof seem obvious for “locators” seeking to make land claims.

John Marshall took direct advantage of the 1830 *Acts* and their Chapter 85 by claiming 2,600 acres in four separate tracts for himself without any partners, as well as half-interests in two separate tracts totaling 1,000 acres and 5,000 acres, respectively.<sup>20</sup> In this way, he technically exceeded the 5,000-acre claim limit for individuals by 600 to 3,600 acres, depending on how joint ownership was defined by any officials or courts interpreting the claim limit, and none of them appeared to be enforcing the claim limit strictly. Either way joint ownership was defined, John Marshall exceeded the 5,000-acre limit. He also took apparent advantage of the lenient “locator” provisions stated in Chapter 84 of the new laws by registering as “locator” on nine 5,000-acre claims made in other individuals’ names,<sup>21</sup> and by also registering as “locator” of 5,000 acres he claimed in partnership with “R. Williams” (Fentress Entry 511).

However, no evidence points to John Marshall directly benefiting from his status as the “locator” of these ten 5,000-acre tracts by receiving only a portion of each of them, an outcome that the provisions of Chapter 84 might suggest. Rather than mere portions, John Marshall managed to acquire the entirety of each of these tracts, or 50,000 acres

altogether, although he did not do so in a single purchase as Twain's description of the Tennessee land in the *Autobiography* implies. Yet speculation about the veracity and validity of certain of the 5,000-acre entries that John Marshall "located" for other claimants is difficult to avoid. Made either in the names of out-of-county or out-of-state relatives and acquaintances (including minor children) or by persons whose identities cannot otherwise be definitively traced, but who did not reside in Fentress County in 1830, these 5,000-acre claims invite consideration about whether the unidentified claimants existed at all: whether in fact John Marshall simply invented some of these individuals or repeatedly recorded claims for himself in the names of friends and relatives as their "locator," possibly without the purported claimants' knowledge.

**The Initial Claimants for John Marshall's Land Grants Usually Were His Friends and Relatives from Adair County, Kentucky**

The other claimants of 5,000-acre tracts "located" by John Marshall included Orion, Jane's nephew Benjamin Quarles, her previously mentioned putative cousin Alexander Montgomery, and her younger half-brother James A. H. Lampton, not to be confused with her first cousin James J. Lampton, the model for Col. Sellers in *The Gilded Age*.<sup>22</sup> None of the other claimants of 5,000-acre tracts except Orion and Hannibal resided in Fentress County in 1830, US Census records indicate (York).<sup>23</sup> It also seems unlikely that the Census somehow failed to count the others, since none of the 1830 claimants were listed by the Census as Fentress residents a decade later in 1840, either (York).<sup>24</sup>

Others among the 1830 land claimants not clearly or closely related to the Clemenses shared the family's Kentucky roots in Adair County and its county seat, Columbia, Kentucky. In fact, some of these claimants probably or definitely still resided in Adair, including Jane's relative by marriage Cyrus Walker—a Columbia attorney who married Jane's cousin Flora Montgomery (Varble 37)—and Cyrus's younger brother Joseph Gilmore Walker, who was admitted to the Adair County bar at the same County Court meeting in November 1822 when John Marshall was admitted to the Adair bar (Adair Minutes Book D 326). The 1830 Census shows both a Cyrus Walker and two Joseph Walkers living in Adair (Rubarts), and both a Cyrus and a Joseph G. Walker claimed 5,000-acre tracts in Fentress County in March, 1830, that eventually became part of Twain's accursed Tennessee land (Fentress Entries 470 and 498). In 1816, Cyrus wrote and co-witnessed the will of renowned "Indian fighter" William Casey (Adair Will Book B 235) who, as the husband of Jane Montgomery Casey, was Twain's great-grandfather. Later, stories about William and Jane's frontier experiences in south central Kentucky played a shaping role in Twain's lifelong antipathy toward Native Americans, the present study will contend, in general agreement with Kerry Driscoll's *Mark Twain among the Indians* (2018).

Returning to Cyrus Walker, in short, he was a hometown peer of John Marshall and Jane Lampton as well as her relative by marriage. Twain's father may even have clerked for Cyrus while studying for the bar, since Fred Kaplan writes, "The lawyer under whom John Marshall clerked was her [Jane's] cousin" (8). In addition, Cyrus apparently interacted with Jane, prior to her marriage to John Marshall, as a member of Columbia's young social set himself.<sup>25</sup> Thus, it seems clear that John Marshall and Jane

had family, social, and professional connections back in Kentucky with Cyrus Walker, whose own name appears as “locator” on an 1830 claim for 5,000 acres in Fentress that ended up in the Clemenses’ Tennessee land legacy after John Marshall later acquired it from Jane’s brother-in-law John A. Quarles in Missouri, in 1841.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, “Joseph G.” was the only Walker who listed John Marshall as “locator” for a 5,000-acre Fentress tract; Joseph claimed it on March 29, 1830 (Fentress Entry 498). However, if the Walkers were genuinely involved in claiming Fentress land, they were interested as outside speculators who probably were enabled by John Marshall, rather than as potential Fentress residents. On the other hand, they may have claimed the land as surrogates for John Marshall in his ultimately successful circumvention of the 5,000-acre claiming limit for any individual.

Like John Marshall’s other fellow land claimants in 1830, the Walkers, a “Daniel Trabue” was living in Columbia that year, according to the US Census as indexed by Don W. Rubarts. On March 26, 1830, Daniel Trabue, Jr., claimed 5,000 acres in Fentress County “located,” once again, by John Marshall (Fentress Entry 496). Either this Trabue or his father may have been the 1830 Columbia resident counted by the Census. The elder Trabue was noteworthy as a Daniel Boone-era frontiersman, a veteran of the Battle of Yorktown, and an early settler and public official in Adair County, serving on the first County Court in 1802 and co-founding the town of Columbia.<sup>27</sup> The status that Trabue carried as a founding pioneer and veteran of the “Indian wars” would have extended to his son as well, in the form of respect for the family name and Trabue’s repeated service in political office. John Marshall’s choice of Daniel Trabue, Jr., as a grant-claiming

partner signifies Twain's father's mental acuity, a character trait which his son valorized, as well as John Marshall's political and interpersonal skills.

Further confirming John Marshall's reliance on recruiting claimants from "back home" in Kentucky to front for him in seeking 5,000-acre land grants in Tennessee, no Trabues were listed in the US Census as residing in 1830 in Fentress County (York). To the contrary, their presence was still very evident back in Adair County, where Trabue's house on Columbia's Jamestown Street is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and a state historic marker there says that in addition to serving in public office, Trabue (1760-1840) operated a "grist mill, inn, and retail store" and fought the Native Americans "at Logan's Fort, Boonesborough, and [...] under Anthony Wayne" (Kolbenschlag and Kolbenschlag). There can be no real doubt that the Daniel Trabue for whom John Marshall "located" a Fentress land entry originated in Adair County, and the "Jr." following Trabue's surname in his entry implies he was the son of the early Adair settler, public official and businessman. A "Daniel Trabue" not identified as senior or junior married Jane Paxton in Adair County in June, 1822 (Adair Index to Marriages 2-6, No. 528), roughly a year before John Marshall married Jane Lampton,<sup>28</sup> and the elder Daniel penned the manuscript of a frontier memoir, *Westward into Kentucky*, in 1827 that provides the earliest available account of the Native American attack on Twain's ancestors at Montgomery's Station, Kentucky, in 1781 (Trabue 198, n. 74).

Tying up more connections between Adair County, Kentucky, and John Marshall's set of land claims in Tennessee is the fact that both Trabue and his son were members of the "first Fire Company organized and established in the Town of Columbia, February 1822" (Gunn). The list of members brings all the connections together: the fire

company was headed by Lewis Lampton, who was Jane's uncle and the father of James J. Lampton—Col. Sellers in *The Gilded Age*—and fifth on the membership list was “John M. Clemens.” The list also included Cyrus Walker and an Asa Pitman (Gunn); on March 5, 1830, an “A. Pitman” claimed a 5,000-acre Fentress tract “located” by John Marshall (Fentress Entry 465).

William Cheek, who claimed 5,000 acres in Fentress County and listed John Marshall as his entry's “locator” on April 6, 1830 (Fentress Entry 509), also cannot be found in the 1830 US Census in Fentress (York), a fact that is not surprising: William Cheek “produced legal license and was admitted to practice law, July 1828” in Columbia, Kentucky (Watson 1: 81).<sup>29</sup> However, no Cheek was listed in the 1830 US Census in Adair County, either, and only a “Henery” Cheek numbering three sons in their 20s, among ten or eleven Cheek children, was listed in the 1820 Census for Adair (Rubarts). Despite this missing piece of evidence regarding William Cheek's whereabouts in 1830, it appears that Cheek, Trabue, and both Cyrus and Joseph G. Walker all were absentee claimants whose land entries in Fentress County probably were initiated on their behalf by John Marshall.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, given the tender age of James A. H. Lampton in 1830 and his non-residence in Fentress County, it seems probable that John Marshall was the true initiator and active party when James A. H., probably six years old, claimed a 5,000-acre tract on October 18, 1830, in the county (Fentress Entry 547) in partnership with Orion, who by then was five years old, and Benjamin Quarles, who was only 4½ years old. Benjamin's parents, Jane's younger sister Patsy and her husband John A. Quarles, were living in Overton County, Tennessee, between Jackson and Fentress counties, when the future

Confederate general's aide Benjamin was born on May 6, 1826 (Selby 14), but the Quarleses and their ten children migrated in early 1834 to Florida, Missouri (Fred Kaplan 10). In any case, they were not Fentress residents in 1830 (York), and John Quarles famously enticed John Marshall and his own family to migrate to Missouri in 1835 (Lauber, *Making* 10). Either despite or due to the non-residence status of the Quarleses and James A. H., John Marshall served as "locator" for James Lampton, Benjamin Quarles, and Orion's three-way, 5,000-acre grant claim in Fentress, just as John Marshall did for nine other 5,000-acre claimants in 1830.

It was John Marshall's final grant claim entry for himself or anyone else in Tennessee. However, a set of land entries that John Marshall "located" in early 1830 for claimants whose recorded identities were limited to their first initials and surnames raises further questions about veracity and validity of certain of these 5,000-acre entries. The use of only first initials instead of full first names was a fairly common practice in documents ranging from legal texts to bylines of the nineteenth century, and first initials can frequently be found in the Fentress County Entry Taker's Book. However, John Marshall's use of only first initials in some of the Fentress entries that he "located" makes tracing the identities of the claimants relatively tenuous, especially those with surnames such as "Williams" that parallel "Smith" and "Jones" in their generic nature. Claimants of 5,000 acres apiece, E. N. Robertson, N. W. Williams, T. W. Williams, and R. Williams<sup>31</sup> each cannot be found in the 1830 US Census for Fentress County (York, 1830). All of these claims are supported, in the Fentress Entry Taker's Book, by John Marshall's services as "locator" (Fentress Entries 465 and 508-12).<sup>32</sup>

If in fact John Marshall did enter claims that he allegedly “located” for individuals without their knowledge or whose identities he fabricated in some manner,<sup>33</sup> he would not have been alone in practicing such subterfuge. In fact, he was in “good” or at least high-level company. Historian Richard Kluger reports that as the lands west of the Appalachians opened up for white settlement following the Revolutionary War, “[t]o get around statutory limits on any given individual’s purchase allotment, shady operators used fictitious names or deceased persons as stand-ins for title-holders of record” (188), and holders of forged land warrants included Tennessee’s earliest governors. One such “shady” land speculator was William C. Blount, whom President Washington appointed as the first governor of the Southwest Territory after North Carolina ceded its western lands that comprise the present-day state of Tennessee. Blount, “one of the most notorious North Carolina speculators [...] held forged warrants for 100,000 acres,” Kluger adds (212). John “Nollichucky Jack” Sevier, Tennessee’s first governor after statehood, was accused by rising young politician and military officer Andrew Jackson of having “forged 165 warrants for 640 acres each,” according to Middle Tennessee State University historian Robert E. Corlew. Yet ultimately, the forged warrants apparently fell in the category of those socially-acceptable “stretchers” that, according to Huck Finn, everyone except the most respectable tells: “Although there were some irregularities in Sevier’s conduct, the people apparently condoned them and ignored the remainder of Jackson’s charges,” Corlew continues (134). Thus, “irregularities” such as those that the two Johns—Sevier and Clemens—may both have indulged in were common practice in Tennessee at the same time they were decidedly illegal.



### **Possible “Stretchers” in John Marshall’s Land Claims Resemble Those of His Son’s Literary Characters**

One wonders whether John Marshall had a fictitious partner named “Williams” who helped him claim grants the same way his son Twain, a pseudonymous author, crossed two oceans with a bumptious but entirely fictional alter-ego named “Brown”—invented by Twain in Nevada Territory—during Twain’s early travel narratives about Hawaii, southern Europe and the Holy Land that resulted in *The Innocents Abroad* (1869) and *Roughing It* (1871).<sup>34</sup> Neither residing in the county where a land-grant claim was entered nor entering the claim under a full first name were required by Tennessee law. However, obeying the 5,000-acre limit was required, and being an actual person or the true individual named in the claim is implied by longstanding judicial precedent, common law, and common sense.

The documentary evidence points to John Marshall (and possible cohorts) seeking to evade or “stretch” the statutory limit of 5,000 acres per individual of nearly free land; the questionable identity and double entries of claimants who allegedly relied on John Marshall as their grant “locator” suggests outright fraud but does not prove it. Yet such circumvention of laws regarding the public land was common at both state and federal levels. Settlers simply “squatted” on land they coveted and eventually were offered “preemption” rights by the government to purchase the tracts they illegally possessed (Feller 126-31).

A parallel to the common acceptance of questionable claim-staking in the early nineteenth century can be seen in Twain’s writing when Huckleberry Finn, in Twain’s

eponymous tome, famously observes that he has “never seen anybody but lied” except the respectable women in the St. Petersburg of *Tom Sawyer*, the preceding novel that Huck describes as “mostly a true book; with some stretchers, as I said before” (*HF* 13). As John Marshall and his putative land-claiming partners may have been, Huck is particularly adept at presenting himself under pseudonyms (*HF* 108, 117, 229), although during his reconnaissance masquerade as a girl to the home of Judith Loftus, his deception is discovered and he is forced to conceal himself under a second, equally fallacious pseudonym and social identity (*HF* 67-72). This sequence of deception also parallels the increasingly complicated fabrications that replace Huck’s initial lie about his “white” father on the raft when Huck lets slave hunters surmise that his fictitious father has smallpox (*HF* 111-13), as well as Huck’s sequential use of alternate fabricated identities in the “raft episode” (*HF* 107-9). Arguably, Twain presents Huck’s deceptions (both psychological and direct) to the reader as evidence of his clever, quick wit that rescues him from many a scrape, implying an endorsement of functional deceit that may exceed the demands of pure realism. Similar cleverness is employed by other Twain characters such as Tom Sawyer, who famously tricks his friends with psychology into whitewashing a fence (*TS* 14-19), and Hank Morgan, who saves himself from being burned at the stake by improbably knowing the date of an eclipse in Arthurian antiquity (*CY* 39-50). In light of the “shell games” with land claims that Twain’s father apparently played, the question arises: did John Marshall’s land acquisition chicanery influence his famous son’s literary work?

The answer is that John Marshall’s “shell games” probably didn’t directly influence Twain because the famous author probably wasn’t aware of them. Firstly,

Twain's wildly inaccurate description of his father's land acquisition process, quoted earlier in this chapter (*AMT* 1: 61), indicates he wasn't aware of the details or was unconcerned with reporting the exact facts, preferring "imaginative invention and the human drama," as Kerry Driscoll quotes Edgar M. Branch and Robert H. Hirst as observing (*MTAI* 14). Secondly, Orion was the primary Clemens family representative who attempted to sell the Tennessee land and Twain never visited Fentress County himself; therefore, Twain may have been as deceived by his father's acquisition strategies as other people were, at least during his most productive years as a creative writer. Yet appreciation of the mental acuity that facilitates successful, functional "stretchers" appears to be one of Twain's strongest values that may indeed have been passed down to him from his father and thereby, indirectly, influenced his strongest literary work.

Evidence for this hypothesis can be seen in the almost uncanny way that Huck's sequential identities parallel the two differing sets of claimants who held entries and—nine years later—grants for many tracts in the Tennessee land legacy that John Marshall "located" roughly a decade before he acquired the tracts. Twain's Huck takes pains, moreover, to identify himself to Judith Loftus under the generic surname "Williams" (*HF* 69) which is, coincidentally or not, the same as the surnames of three land claimants for whom Twain's father "located" 5,000-acre tracts. Huck derives his morals from his Pap about foraging for his dinners by "borrowing" produce from farm fields and chickens from henhouses (*HF* 75), suggesting that in such passages that seemingly endorse deception and petty theft, Twain may be subconsciously commenting on the morality of his own father's land acquisitions.

However, in contrast to the evasion and deception that John Marshall probably engaged in to acquire the Tennessee land, Twain's father is described elsewhere as a man of stern morality and as possessing a strong conscience, a reputation that must also be taken into account when considering the possibility that he committed outright land fraud. Evidence supporting John Marshall's reputation for stern morality and possessing a strong conscience abounds. For instance, Albert Bigelow Paine asserts that despite failing to thrive in Fentress County, John Marshall "did not retreat from his moral and intellectual standards, or lose the respect of that shiftless community" (1: 8). Several chapters later, Paine eulogizes Twain's father as "a moralist, an upright man honored by all" who unfortunately "had never been a financier" and therefore kept failing at business (1: 73). Other Twain biographers have echoed this appraisal. For instance, Ron Powers describes John Marshall as "the proud idealist and frustrated intellectual whose honor code was exploited by lesser, stupider men" when he "stood behind bad loans, paid his debts, forgave his creditors, and thus remained poor for most of his life" (*A Life* 40).<sup>35</sup>

The explanation for the paradox that John Marshall's reputation for probity poses may be that the government was not an individual and therefore not subject in his mind to the same honor code that obligated him to individuals; in fact, the previously described cultural ethos seemed to hold that everyone owned the "public" land until an individual grabbed his "share," *laissez-faire*. In addition, if any of the original claimants of the entries that John Marshall "located" were invented—or if John Marshall entered claims in relatives' or cohorts' names so he could eventually acquire those grant tracts—other eventual grantees may have been complicit or became complicit in the deception as well, because almost without exception different individuals than the original claimants ended

up receiving the 5,000-acre tracts in the confirming state grants dated “1838.” They did so by accepting assignments of the entries made by the original claimants.

### **A Two-Tier Process of John Marshall Facilitating Original Entry-Making and Later Acquiring the Grant Tracts from a Second Set of Surrogates**

The assignments to new grantees from the original claimants are documented because in each case in which individuals other than the original claimants ended up as the grantees—with only a single exception—the grant text states that the grantee is the assignee of the original claimants.<sup>36</sup> Every introductory paragraph of these 5,000-acre grants names the individuals who made the original 1830 claims in the Fentress Entry Taker’s Book and states the original Fentress entry numbers to clearly identify the original claimants who assigned their rights to the eventual grantees. However, in no case do the grant texts explain how, when, or where these assignments were made.

Thus, if any original claims were fabricated or made without the original claimant’s knowledge, their assignments to a later grantee also could easily have been forged. In that case, of course, the original claimants would not have been complicit in evasion of the 5,000-acre limit on land grants to individuals, but the grantees still might have been complicit with Twain’s father in evading the limit on his behalf. Alternately, a claim could have legitimately been entered by an individual but then falsely assigned to a later grantee without the original claimant ever learning the eventual outcome of his land entry. However, at least the grantees who gained possession of the 1830 claims in the grants dated “1838” can be documented in a number of ways as actually existing. This documentation includes litigation over ownership of the tracts involving the grantees’

heirs and the Clemens heirs, and notarized title transfers from the grantees to John Marshall.

Twain's father did not wait long, only slightly more than a year, to obtain possession of the largest grants in the eventual Tennessee land legacy after these "1838" grants were finally issued in 1839. He quickly commenced the process of acquiring them, almost entirely from grantees residing in Missouri, although he transferred the grants into his own name much more slowly, when he did so at all. In Tennessee, both a constitutional convention and gubernatorial election numbered among a host of factors that probably slowed the grant-issuing process, and during this time the first set of claimants assigned their land entries to the eventual grantees. Now the task that remained for John Marshall was contacting the eventual grantees and arranging to acquire their newly granted tracts. However, these grantees should not have been too difficult for John Marshall to find because he very probably conducted other business with the grantees on a regular basis, and in other cases he was related to them.

Due to the paucity of surviving correspondence by Twain's father, details about his acquisition deals are scanty except for those that can be discerned in the documents that eventually recorded these deals, often a decade or longer after the deals were struck. The motivations of the grant recipients for selling their grant tracts to John Marshall may have varied, as the records show that often a nominal dollar was the only purchase price the grantees received. Other records are more opaque, indicating that some grantees who sold 5,000-acre tracts to John Marshall did so for an unspecified "valuable consideration." The simplest explanation for this vagueness may be that buyers who did not acknowledge a purchase price paid a lower deed tax. Yet the price may actually have

been only a dollar or intangible considerations because the grant recipients were simply cooperating with John Marshall in his attempt to evade the 5,000-acre limit per individual. As noted above, an evident trend was that very few of these grantees were the original land entry claimants for whom John Marshall initially “located” the tracts in his eventual land legacy. Instead, John Marshall relied on two sets of intermediate land holders in his successful quest to acquire the Tennessee land.

The first set consisted of the friends, relatives, colleagues, and acquaintances whose names were the basis of Fentress entries for eleven almost-free 5,000-acre tracts mostly “located” by John Marshall for the claimants in 1830. As previously noted, John Marshall had known most of these people in Adair County, Kentucky, although some of them cannot be positively identified beyond their first initials and surnames. The second set of intermediate land holders also consisted of friends, relatives, colleagues, and acquaintances, but almost none of them derived from the first set, and most of them were to be found in northeast Missouri.

In each case, a member of the first set assigned his claim to a Fentress County land entry—sometimes overlapping into Overton, Morgan, or Scott counties—to a member of the second set, who then received the actual state grant for the land in 1839 but dated as “1838.” After the grants were issued, John Marshall circulated to each of the grantees in the second set and acquired their grant tracts. The sequence of ownership transfers can be schematized in the following manner:

“Location” by JMC → Fentress entries made by Set One (1830) →  
 Set One assigns entries to Set Two → grants issued to Set Two (1839) →  
 JMC acquires grants from Set Two (1840-41) ↔ that he originally  
 “located”

Almost all members of these sets of intermediate land holders can be documented as having significant connections with John Marshall.

It is possible to deny the significance of the intermediate land holders’ connections with John Marshall, to point out that their existence is to be expected in a group of land holders defined by the terms of this inquiry regarding the Clemens land legacy as “the individuals who held land that John Marshall eventually acquired.” In other words, any argument for the exceptionality of the interpersonal connections involving the Tennessee land would be circular, because of course John Marshall knew the men with whom he did business. Yet the circumstances are circular as well. First John Marshall “located” the land—or was connected to the land in other ways, such as having served as the claimant’s law clerk—for claimants who made the original Fentress entries. Then those claimants assigned those same land tracts, apparently acquired through the agency of John Marshall, to another set of individuals who, once again, were all connected with John Marshall and happened to live conveniently near to him in northeast Missouri. The common thread is John Marshall’s original “location” of the land tracts.

If he had “located” one set of tracts in Tennessee for one set of claimants previously associated with him, and then bought grant tracts in Tennessee from a second set of claimants whom he mostly met in Missouri or emigrated to that state with—and if



the grant tracts he acquired had nothing to do with the tracts he “located”—that might merely prove that John Marshall evidenced a strong interest in acquiring Tennessee land, a strong interest that he indulged twice, most successfully the second time. However, the land entries that John Marshall originally “located” for others in 1830 did indeed become the state grants that he acquired from a second set of individuals in 1840-41, almost as if John Marshall had planned all along to shepherd more than 55,000 acres of land grants through two sets of intermediate land holders and into his own possession.

The truth is that we cannot possibly know whether John Marshall initially conceived of such a two-stage process of, in effect, laundering grant titles so that he could acquire more than 55,000 acres of land—actually 59,600, counting direct grants to John Marshall and Hannibal and the 5,000 acres that Cyrus Walker initially “located” for himself—in evasion of Tennessee’s statutory limit of 5,000 acres of grant land per individual (1830 *Acts* 114). Fentress Deed H1821, from the year 1857, in essence confirms John Marshall’s method of acquisition in its opening paragraph, which transfers ownership to Orion of “several tracts of land [...] described in Grants from the State of Tennessee to said John M. Clemens *and other persons of whom he purchased* and which Grants are numbered as follows” (emphasis added). John Marshall probably believed he could accomplish his same goal of massive land acquisition<sup>37</sup> with his initial, single set of land entry claimants—from whom he later expected to acquire the tracts once the grants confirming the initial entries had finally been issued—and then complications arose.

### **Economic and Political Currents Delay the Grants' Issuance**

The complications that delayed the issuance of the grants that would eventually become John Marshall's land might have included the national financial panics of 1834 and 1837, the 1834 writing of a new Tennessee constitution, and the 1835 election of the state's first Whig governor, Newt Cannon—in other words, numerous socioeconomic and political occurrences probably delayed the issuance of the grants. The mercantile and industrial wing of the national Whig Party opposed the cheap sale of public lands on the grounds that it might induce a labor shortage in the Northeast, inflate wages, and depopulate the East, diminishing the political power of the eastern states (Feller 41, 81; Kluger 289). However, the national party's views on public lands may not have mattered much to Cannon, a late-joining, reluctant Whig Party member (Atkins; Harkins 372-74). Jacksonian Democrats such as William Carroll—governor during the first five years after John Marshall and his associates made their 5,000-acre claims in 1830—favored the cheap or actually free dispensation of public land.

However, Tennessee's first US president Andrew Jackson, who served during the first six years following the 1830 land claims, adamantly opposed the acquisition of public land by speculators instead of actual settlers, and 5,000 acres probably comprised a larger tract than a single family could farm using nineteenth-century technology in rugged mountain terrain, even if the farm relied on slave labor. The federal government, under both Jackson's and other administrations, attempted to audit its own conveyance of public land in states where federal land was for sale, to avoid land sales to speculators engaging in fraud (Oberly 77-80). Perhaps a similar attempt was made by the Tennessee

state government regarding the sale of its land to speculators,<sup>38</sup> thereby delaying the issuance of grants, although the present study found no direct evidence of such an attempt other than the 5,000-acre limit itself and the nine-year delay in the issuance of the largest claims in the Clemens land legacy. If screening against speculators was conducted by state grant issuers, however, they obviously did not catch John Marshall's expansive claims, partly due to his use of the second set of intermediate land holders.

**The Delayed Issuance of the Grants Also May Be Connected to Indian Removal, and Their Issuance May Be a Result of Removal**

A final complication with enduring implications for Twain's work that probably helped first to delay and then to expedite the issuance of the largest grants in the Clemens land legacy was the resistance of the Cherokee Nation to Indian Removal. This massive land seizure project was not accomplished until the Trail of Tears in 1838, before the land grants that eventually became John Marshall's were issued, even though Native American title to all Fentress County land had already been officially "extinguished" (the term of the day) by treaties concluded decades earlier. James K. Polk or "Young Hickory" (Bergeron 89), the governor who actually signed the grants to claimants who passed their new Tennessee land on to John Marshall, was a strong supporter of Indian Removal, as was his mentor Andrew Jackson, "Old Hickory," the original proposer of Removal (Corlew 152). The official "extinction" of all Native American claims to Tennessee that Removal engineered may have cleared the way for accelerated distribution of public lands in Tennessee, even including John Marshall's set of claimants

whose grants gave them tracts in a part of the state, Fentress County, where the Cherokee had long since relinquished their claims.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, John Marshall's eventual receipt of the 1838-39 grants may be strongly correlated to this single contextual factor of the times: the forward momentum of Indian Removal in the face of Native American resistance. To reinforce and reify European American preemption of all Native American land in the state, John Marshall's claims and grants did not have to be for the immediate "settlement" of the land. His claims and grants simply had to constitute a competing and presumed superior status of ownership, should Native Americans attempt a bid for justice via European American courts or politics. Grants awarded to claimants including John Marshall, motivated by the avaricious urges of land speculation, served this "claiming" function as effectively as would grants to settlers in the Jeffersonian ideal of the agrarian citizen-soldier and Renaissance man establishing "civilized" dominion over the flocks and fields rudely wrested from the "savage" Native Americans. These original inhabitants could be effectively fenced into seemingly remote territories west of the Mississippi as they were textually fenced out of ownership of cell after cell of land parcels east of the great river that would play such a large role in Twain's own life and writings. The claims and grants everywhere in Tennessee, not just in the southeast corner where the effect of Indian Removal was most direct, essentially gave Native Americans notice: "No trespassing—this land has white owners."

If possible, of course, the state sought to benefit from the sale of public land. Acreage that it was able to sell, including the districts in southeast Tennessee where the Cherokees were dispossessed by Indian Removal, sold for "prices ranging from \$7.50 to

a low of one cent per acre,” according to Corlew. “Some of the revenue—about \$150,000—was used during the 1830s for internal improvements, and the remainder became part of the common school fund of the state” (157-58). By 1830, however, the sudden drastic cut in the price of land that John Marshall took steep advantage of on behalf of his heirs suggests a new urgency to the seizing, legally claiming, and bordering by whites of the remaining public acres privately “owned” by neither Native American nations nor European American individuals.

A very real legal and political threat to white hegemony over any still-unclaimed public land in Tennessee did exist: Cherokee Chief John Ross remained steadfastly opposed to the Treaty of New Echota after Indian Removal, so he lobbied in Congress (McLoughlin 28)—and pleaded with successive presidents to have the treaty renegotiated. After President John Tyler appointed John C. Spencer as his Secretary of War, whose responsibilities included relations with Native Americans, “Spencer apparently persuaded Tyler that for him to make a new treaty with Ross on the grounds that the Treaty of New Echota was fraudulent might cause ceaseless other tribes to press for renegotiating old treaties” (McLoughlin 32). Although the Cherokees lacked the political muscle to pull off such a grand assertion of sociopolitical and economic justice—Native Americans could not vote, and other non-whites were still held in chattel slavery in the United States—Spencer’s concern laid bare the underlying link between Indian Removal and the apparent rush to get all public land in Tennessee locked up under private title beginning in 1830, so no Native American nations could somehow press their own collective claims to it. What if the Treaty of Hopewell were renegotiated? Or the Treaty of Tellico? The dangers of mutable texts, so often changed by whites to betray

Native Americans rather than the other way around, loomed contextually. If Congress succumbed to the persistent lobbying of Chief Ross and restored Native American land rights, would the “savages” soon be back among European Americans, lurking with tomahawks around farmhouses, committing “massacres,” and competing with white hunters for the deer harvest?

The necessity for virtually giving acreage away to accomplish a preemptive staking of white claims may also be explained by the probable hypothesis that the “best” land had already been taken, naturally enough; and what remained to be done was parceling out the pieces that wouldn’t sell, otherwise. Evidence for this hypothesis can be seen in the earlier reduction of far higher land prices to which Tennessee agreed under the Compact of 1806 that attempted to sort out all the competing governmental jurisdictions over the sale of land in the state. “Tennessee was not to sell land for less than the national minimal land price (then two dollars per acre),” Corlew reports, but various factors including legislators’ sympathy for squatters, the multiplicity of North Carolina land warrants in Tennessee for Revolutionary War veterans, and the Panic of 1819 soon resulted in the legislature dropping the price of land to 12½ cents per acre (Corlew 156-57). The price of public land in Tennessee simply kept plummeting, in other words, decreasing from an official rate of two dollars per acre in 1806 to a mere penny per acre twenty-four years later. Thus, the sudden cut in the state of Tennessee’s price for the Clemens legacy land and equivalent terrain quite plausibly may have represented an increasing imperative to get even the “less desirable” land secured under surveyors’ descriptions and in European American deed books, rather than a mere

bowing to the pressure of white land hunger and the ever-present greed of the land speculator.

As previously noted, only a bare minimum of John Marshall's correspondence has been preserved, so we can only surmise his opinions about Indian Removal. However, Indian Removal clearly benefited his "Tennessee land" claims. In addition to the sense that this chapter has already suggested, that Removal established permanent closure against Native American title rights in the state, Indian Removal made John Marshall's real estate claims possible because the concurrent land-grant price cuts made such claims affordable for speculators at John Marshall's financial level. In addition, the chronological parallels are almost uncanny:

- As previously mentioned, the passage in Nashville of laws such as Chapters 84, 85, and 87 of the 1830 *Acts* that slashed the price of land grants and made them available at 5,000 acres per individual was followed five months later, in Washington, by President Jackson's signing of the Indian Removal Act in May 1830 (Corlew 152). John Marshall responded to the Tennessee legislation by claiming or "locating" over 60,000 acres in Fentress and neighboring counties;
- When the Cherokees in general declined to obey the Indian Removal Act on their own volition, federal agents met with about three percent of the Cherokee population and signed a removal treaty with them at New Echota, Georgia, in December 1835 (Breyer 38) immediately following the spring and summer that John and Jane Clemens also removed west of the Mississippi and that their son Samuel, incidentally, was conceived;

- Cherokees and other Southeastern Native Americans were involuntarily removed west of the Mississippi in 1838 in the forced marches and water passages collectively known as the Trail of Tears, and a large group of these migrants were passing through Nashville during the same October 1838 (Hoig, map 170) that the largest state grants constituting the Clemens land legacy were dated by governors Cannon and Polk.

Possible clues to John Marshall's opinion about Indian Removal include his status as a "stout Whig" (Budd 2) and a colonist of sorts from Kentucky, while the Cherokee cause attracted sympathy from such prominent Whigs in Congress as Jackson's repeated presidential opponent Henry Clay of Kentucky and Daniel Webster of Massachusetts ("Trail of Tears," Breyer 33-34)—not to mention Ralph Waldo Emerson, who publicly denounced Democratic President Van Buren in an attempt to thwart Indian Removal (McLoughlin 2). Thus, it is possible that John Marshall Clemens would have opposed Indian Removal in solidarity with the views of national and Kentucky Whig Party leaders. However, his views on dispossessing the Cherokees also may have been influenced by both his Whig and Democratic compatriots in Tennessee since the principal leaders of both parties in the state strongly supported Indian Removal. Of course, Jane Lampton Clemens's vehement antipathy toward Native Americans may have been the predominant influence on John Marshall's attitude toward Indian Removal, rather than the attitudes surrounding him while the couple still resided in Tennessee. The salient point is that if John Marshall agreed with Removal, he agreed with both the governors, Cannon and Polk, who successively had the power to award the largest grants in what



became the Clemens “Tennessee land” legacy. Such agreement could not have hurt John Marshall’s chances for confirmation of his grant claims under the 1830 *Acts*.<sup>40</sup>

Cumulatively considered, the evidence points toward a strong degree of correlation between Indian Removal and the Clemens family’s receipt of their “Tennessee land”—John Marshall’s subsequent actions suggest that he, at least in this instance, seized the opportunity to capitalize on the current of events by acquiring relatively vast quantities of land for relatively small sums. Even if he had been averse to Indian Removal, he easily might have missed its subtle but implicit underlying connection to the sudden offering by the state of Tennessee of large tracts to buyers at almost no cost. He certainly was not averse to acquiring the land itself.

**John Marshall’s Second Set of Surrogates, the Actual Grant Recipients, Were Mostly His Friends and Relatives from Northeast Missouri**

How Twain’s father went about seizing the new opportunity meant acquiring a whole second set of grant claimants for reasons that, once again, we can only surmise. The simplest explanation of why John Marshall persuaded his first set of intermediate land holders to assign their Fentress land entries to a second set of claimants is that he decided to move to Missouri in 1835 before any Tennessee governor got around to issuing the grants in question.<sup>41</sup> Twain’s father probably reasoned that the grant tracts would be easier to acquire if their new owners, the second set of claimants, were close at hand to him, once the grants finally were issued—plus, the out-of-state claimants would not be easily recognized as surrogate recipients for John Marshall. Yet Twain’s father probably did not facilitate most of the assignments of land claims to his second set of

intermediate land holders while selling the Clemens home place in Fentress County and moving to Florida, Missouri, in the late spring of 1835, although his family's journey included a stop in Adair County, Kentucky, home of the majority of his first set of grant claimants (Varble 119). John Marshall probably was not yet acquainted in 1835 with most of the members of his second set, who resided in northeast Missouri. Instead, he may have obtained the assignments when he made a return trip to Fentress County in 1838: according to the texts of the subsequent grants, all the 1830 land entries that became John Marshall's legacy were surveyed in September, 1838, so that the grants could be awarded, an issuance that finally occurred after the 1839 gubernatorial election.

John Marshall may have initiated those surveys, as the circumstantial evidence of his presence back in Fentress might indicate,<sup>42</sup> or the surveys may have been part of a general drive by the county surveyor to bring the county's surveying of claims up to date to meet a statutory deadline for him to do so.<sup>43</sup> However, it is not clearly known whether John Marshall also returned to solidify deals that he may have made when the eleven 5,000-acre claims that ended up in his legacy were first entered in 1830.<sup>44</sup> Few of the claimants, if any, still lived in Fentress, if they ever had lived there. Nevertheless, John Marshall easily may have stopped *en route* to Jamestown in such locations as Adair County, Kentucky, or Gainesboro, Tennessee; perhaps he obtained the assignments from his first to his second set of intermediate land holders by making such stops during his 1838 return to Fentress.

Yet an important question of motivation is left unanswered by primarily surmising that John Marshall developed a second set of claimants so he could conveniently locate them in Missouri—a second set of claimants to hold his Tennessee

land until John Marshall could acquire it from them without his name being connected to more than eleven times the legal acreage limit. Specifically, this hermeneutic “second set” theory, appealingly simple and probable, leaves wide open the question of what incentives John Marshall applied to persuade either the first or second set of intermediate land holders to play their roles in the compilation of “vast possessions” in the “pineries” for John Marshall’s heirs, rather than for their own heirs.

There is a certain incongruity to the Adair County, Kentucky, ties of many of the initial claimants in Fentress County, but at least Fentress was only two or three counties to the southeast of Adair. Fentress was in Tennessee, a different state, to be sure, but it was nearly a neighboring county, roughly seventy miles away from Columbia, Kentucky. However, a greater incongruity can be seen in the ties of the second set of claimants to the eventual Tennessee land—the actual grant recipients from whom John Marshall obtained the land. In contrast to the relative proximity linking Adair and Fentress counties, it was a comparatively long distance from St. Louis or Hannibal to Fentress, then as now roughly five hundred miles from northern Missouri to Jamestown, without any railroads serving the landlocked Fentress County in the 1830s and for decades afterward. Yet despite the distance to and isolation of Fentress, out of the six grantees from whom John Marshall acquired 5,000-acre Fentress grant tracts, three were St. Louis merchants or professional men; one was a doctor from the village of Florida and town of Hannibal, Missouri; one may have been a Florida-area pastor; and one was John Marshall’s farmer-and-merchant brother-in-law, John A. Quarles. Only the latter had the same Tennessee connections as John Marshall, Quarles having lived in Overton County

(Selby 14) due west of Fentress, before he moved to Florida, Missouri, ahead of John Marshall and Jane.

The likeliness seems slim that numerous prosperous St. Louis businessmen would agree on their own that remote Fentress County land offered them a lucrative out-of-state investment bonanza, even at almost-free prices. They evidently were steered somehow to notice the land, or assignments for the initial land entries were brought to them in particular. The man who ultimately benefited as the eventual acquirer of the grant tracts is the prime candidate to have served as the assignments' vector, to borrow a term from epidemiology; thus, John Marshall's guiding hand can be seen in the entire chain of land claims, assignments, grants, and conveyances.

However, none of this conjecture answers the question of what benefits accrued to the grant recipients for their involvement in John Marshall's land-acquisition scheme. Perhaps they simply received satisfaction from doing a favor at no or low cost for friend and customer John Marshall, who bought his supplies from St. Louis wholesalers for the general stores he started in Florida and Hannibal (Fred Kaplan 15). They may not have thought of themselves as the actual recipients of Tennessee land grants at all; instead, they may have seen their names on the grants as a legal formality through which they were helping John Marshall negotiate his way. Of course, John Marshall's purchases of merchandise left him owing his wholesalers, not the other way around, so he should have been the one performing favors; but perhaps John Marshall's creditors reasoned that if they helped him make some money off his Tennessee land, he would be able to pay his creditors in Missouri.<sup>45</sup>

Aside from St. Louis commercial connections, the second set of intermediate land holders mostly consisted of relatives and close acquaintances of John Marshall. One of these categories overlapped: John Marshall's second cousin, James Clemens, Jr., was a wealthy St. Louis professional man—by several accounts, a lawyer like John Marshall was, except considerably more successful—and he also shared blood ties with John Marshall to their mutual paternal great grandfather.<sup>46</sup> Even more than John Marshall's creditors felt moved to collaborate with him, the other members of his second set of intermediate land holders such as James, Jr., may have felt either the obligation of kinship or the motivation of friendship to help Twain's father accumulate his "vast possessions" of Fentress County "pineries." Apparently, any distance implied by "second" was superseded by the closeness of the "cousin" relationship between James, Jr., and his fellow migrant west from Kentucky and Tennessee, John Marshall; that is, a cousin is a cousin regardless of degree. Not only did James, Jr., serve as an intermediate land holder to help Twain's father acquire his Tennessee land legacy. The wealthy cousin in the metropolis provided the funds to help his country merchant and jurist peer temporarily break free from financial difficulties on repeated occasions, and then he purchased the residence now renowned as the Mark Twain Boyhood Home in Hannibal and allowed the Clemens family to live there after John Marshall's death in 1847.<sup>47</sup>

James Clemens, Jr., was only the first, or was only among the first, to help John Marshall in his acquisition of Tennessee land from the second set of intermediate land holders. Actually, on the same day that James, Jr., conveyed two grant tracts totaling 10,000 acres to Twain's father<sup>48</sup>—October 23, 1840—Henry Thomas also signed over two grant tracts totaling 6,000 acres to John Marshall.<sup>49</sup> Both transactions occurred in St.

Louis, and each seller was paid a nominal dollar. Thus, in a single day John Marshall acquired 16,000 of the acres that he and Hannibal originally “located” for friends and relatives, including Orion, in his first set of intermediate land holders.<sup>50</sup> Significantly, John Marshall acquired all 16,000 acres in Missouri rather than in Tennessee, largely out of the sight of any Tennessee officials keeping watch against the excessive acquisition of public lands by individual speculators.

Thomas was probably a church organizer and pastor in Monroe County, Missouri, the site of Florida, Missouri, where Twain was born and raised until the age of four. Thomas also may have moved to Hannibal around the time John Marshall moved there in 1839.<sup>51</sup> In the eventual Fentress County deed recording Thomas’s conveyance of his grant tracts to Twain’s father, Thomas is listed as a resident of Marion County, Missouri, where Hannibal is located; the deed also lists John Marshall as a Marion resident (Fentress Deed H1851).<sup>52</sup> The reason for the nominal nature—even in 1840 dollars—of the purchase price is not given in the deed. Thomas may have owed Twain’s father a debt for credit at the stores John Marshall operated in Florida and Hannibal, or he may have been performing a favor for Twain’s father as the Clemens family pastor.<sup>53</sup>

Less than a month later, John Marshall turned to one of his probable mercantile connections in St. Louis, John Kerr, and acquired Kerr’s grant tract that John Marshall had originally “located” for Daniel Trabue, Jr., in 1830. John Kerr sold John Marshall the 5,000-acre tract on November 18, 1840,<sup>54</sup> but no purchase price can be located in any documents. The location of this transaction is not recorded, but it can safely be assumed to have taken place in Missouri, probably in St. Louis. John Marshall bought goods for his stores on credit from St. Louis merchant “James Kerr,” and in 1841 he transferred

title to his quarter of a city block in Hannibal to this same Kerr as payment for the debt (Scharnhorst 14-15), although no such connection can be documented between John Marshall and any “John Kerr,” other than John Marshall’s purchase of Tennessee land from a Kerr by that name. However, a “John Kerr” was a prominent St. Louis financier and hotelier (Lossos).<sup>55</sup> Sometime prior to his death in 1847, John Marshall also purchased a second 5,000-acre tract from George W. Kerr, another member of the same extended St. Louis family to which John Kerr belonged.<sup>56</sup> These acquisitions from the Kerrs brought John Marshall’s acquisitions in Missouri of Tennessee land up to 26,000 acres.

Over half a year later—on June 21, 1841—John Marshall again relied on a family connection when he acquired 10,900 grant-tract acres in Tennessee from his brother-in-law John A. Quarles, “in consideration of the Sum of One dollar to him in hand paid” (Fentress Deed I-158), in another transaction that transpired in northeast Missouri before it later was recorded in Fentress County.<sup>57</sup> The Quarles-Clemens connection repeatedly led to crucial consequences for Twain and literature. Not only was Quarles the kinsman who enticed John Marshall and Jane to relocate to Missouri in the first place, but also, Twain as a child spent his summers on the Quarles farm, an environment that he describes lyrically as “a heavenly place for a boy” and that he claims to have used as a model for the Phelps farm in *Huckleberry Finn* (AMT 1: 210). Young Sammy Clemens also met and idolized one of the models for Jim in *Huckleberry Finn* at his uncle’s small plantation, a storytelling patriarch among the slaves who was known as Uncle Dan’l.<sup>58</sup> “It was on the farm that I got my strong liking for his race and my appreciation of his

race and many of its fine qualities,” Twain writes decades later, adding, “The black face is as welcome to me now as it was then” (*AMT* 1: 212).

In agreeing to sell Tennessee grant tracts to John Marshall, Quarles may have simply decided to focus his fortunes on his new life in Missouri by relinquishing land in Tennessee that seemed too far away to market successfully. Quarles also may have traded his Tennessee grant holdings to John Marshall to settle any financial entanglements with his brother-in-law remaining from their partnership in a Florida, Missouri, store, a partnership that may have ended acrimoniously.<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, Quarles may have agreed in advance to serve as an intermediate land holder for John Marshall as Twain’s father maneuvered to acquire more than the limit of 5,000 acres in Tennessee land grants. In any event, John Marshall’s acquisition of the six tracts<sup>60</sup> from Quarles—five of which he or Orion had originally “located” in 1827-30—brought John Marshall’s acquisitions in Missouri of Tennessee land to 36,900 acres.

Sometime during the same years, 1840-41, John Marshall acquired 5,000 acres<sup>61</sup> from the Clemens family physician in Missouri, Hugh Meredith,<sup>62</sup> a deep-voiced ex-sailor whose family Twain describes in detail in the *Autobiography* and in his sketch “Villagers of 1841-43” (Blair 26). Dr. Meredith was John Marshall’s partner in promoting civic causes in both the village of Florida and the town of Hannibal (Blair 359). With other partners, they co-founded the predecessor to today’s Hannibal Public Library: “The books were kept in Dr. Meredith’s office in a building at the corner of Main and Bird Streets,” according to the library website (“History of the Library”). Dr. Meredith also conducted the autopsy of Twain’s father that young Sammy infamously and perhaps traumatically observed through a keyhole (Powers, *A Life* 43). As a local



physician, Meredith would also have repeatedly interacted with John Marshall in the latter's service as the coroner in Hannibal (Fred Kaplan 14). It was a role that occasioned the presence of a murdered corpse in John Marshall's office that young Twain stumbled upon one night when, afraid to return home after playing hooky from school, he started to spend the night in his father's office, as Twain vividly recalls in *The Innocents Abroad* (175-77).

Meredith's "medical partner" Dr. Thomas Jefferson Chowning stood in for Meredith to deliver baby Sam prematurely on November 30, 1835; however, Meredith served as the family's general practitioner throughout Twain's childhood (Varble 123-24). Indeed, the Clemens family being under the care of, and interacting with the family of, Dr. Meredith made such an impression on Twain that he mentions the physician in three widely-separated places in the 2010-15 *Autobiography* (*AMT* 1: 188-89, 215, 453-54), rivaling the three widely-separated mentions of the Tennessee land in the same Twain text (*AMT* 1: 61-63, 206, 208-9).<sup>63</sup>

Considerable evidence suggests that Dr. Meredith also sold John Marshall a second 5,000-acre tract (Grant 6416) at some point, probably also 1840-41. Perhaps the most convincing supporting fact is Orion's sale of the entire tract for \$200 to Abner Phillips—a Fentress County surveyor who was the Clemens heirs' real estate agent in Fentress—and Pemberton Gatewood on June 28, 1858, affirming in legal boilerplate that he would "forever" defend his right to transfer title to the tract, demonstrating his belief that he owned it when he sold it (Fentress Deed J29).<sup>64</sup> John Marshall's 1840-41 purchase of the grant tract would have brought his acquisitions in Missouri of Tennessee land to 46,900 acres. When calculating the total size of John Marshall's Tennessee land

legacy, these 46,900 should be augmented by fifteen state grants totaling 10,108 acres that John Marshall was issued directly or in partnership with Hannibal, Alexander Montgomery, or N. W. Williams—as well as 100 acres that Orion was granted in his own name in 1839, but dated “1838.” That would bring the total size of the legacy to 57,108 acres, but an additional 5,000-acre tract granted in 1839, dated “1838” (Grant 6418) should be included in the legacy because the Clemens heirs successfully claimed this additional tract until three years after Twain’s death in 1910.

No available evidence indicates that this final grant tract was not acquired in Missouri like most of the large tracts John Marshall acquired from recipients of the “1838” grant tracts. John Marshall may have believed he already owned the tract or could claim it in Tennessee; the purchase papers that would document his acquisition may have been lost; or John Marshall never owned or acquired the tract except for any share that was his as its “Locator” for Asa Pitman, one of his Adair County peers (Gunn). The tract was awarded to J. S. Pease, “afsignee of A. Pitman” (Grant 6418), in “1838.” Yet the Clemens heirs considered it their property<sup>65</sup> and sold portions of it at least three times before unspecified parties, presumably Pease’s heirs, claimed in 1913 that Pitman and John Marshall had assigned their entry for the tract to Pease in September, 1838, and that John Marshall never reacquired it (Fentress Deed K2-167). However, he probably intended to confer only temporary rather than perpetual ownership to Pease who, like John Marshall’s other intermediate land holders, apparently was a St. Louis merchant.<sup>66</sup> Most likely, John Marshall prearranged for Pease to later sell the 5,000-acre tract back to John Marshall, the tract’s original “locator,” the same as John Marshall’s other intermediate land holders did for Twain’s father. Although no evidence has been located

indicating that such a transfer back to John Marshall actually occurred, the Clemens heirs behaved as if they believed Twain's father had reacquired the grant tract.<sup>67</sup> The family's evident belief that they owned the Grant 6418 tract and their legally recorded sales of portions convincingly justify the tract's inclusion in the land legacy, bringing its total size to 62,108 acres.

Thus, as stated earlier, John Marshall's Tennessee land holdings totaled 62,384 acres at his death in 1847, counting 276 acres in Fentress County that Twain's father acquired by various means other than land grants and grant-tract purchases. Large portions of this legacy were obtained through apparent evasion of state land grant laws, although technically it may not have been illegal for a single individual to buy more than 5,000 acres of grant tracts from other individuals who had already received the grants in their own names. Additionally, four intermediate land holders from whom John Marshall acquired his largest grant tracts—Thomas, Meredith, Quarles, and James Clemens, Jr.—received more than 5,000 acres apiece directly from the issuing governors, as did John Marshall himself. Thus, in John Marshall's defense, it might have been the practice, if not the law, in the culture of the antebellum Southwest and Upper South to stretch grant acquisition limits.

### **John Marshall's Survey Markers on Mineral-Rich Grant Tract Lead to Its Legal Expansion by the State Supreme Court to Nearly Eight Square Miles**

The question of whether John Marshall premeditated the creation of two sets of intermediate land holders so he could acquire his vast Tennessee lands also is complicated by the previously mentioned survey, performed more than ten years after

John Marshall's death, that expanded Grant 6402 from 5,000 acres to 35,604½, and thereby expanded John Marshall's legacy to about 92,988½ acres. The circumstances of this expansion strongly suggest that John Marshall intended it to occur, thereby lending support for the premeditation of John Marshall's other land-acquisition maneuvers as well.

Specifically, the validity of the Grant 6402 expansion was confirmed by a Tennessee Supreme Court ruling in 1898 on the grounds that Grant 6402 was "special" (Supreme Court Minutes 288-89, affirming *Duffield vs. Spence*). "Special" was a legal term essentially meaning that the claimed size of the grant tract was inconsistent with its boundary markers and that in such cases, the boundary markers would apply and enlarge or diminish the tract. It is impossible to imagine that John Marshall, a lawyer who habitually dealt with land claims and who claimed land himself, could have believed the boundary markers of the Grant 6402 tract—some of which are located approximately twelve miles apart—outlined a tract of only 5,000 acres. At 640 acres to the square mile, 5,000 acres measure about 7.8 square miles, or about 2.8 miles per side if the tract is roughly square, an egregiously shorter distance than twelve miles. Thus, it is evident that "locator" John Marshall embedded far-distant boundary markers within his topographic description of the tract in his minor relatives' original claim for Grant 6402 —Fentress Entry 547—that destined the tract to expand exponentially.<sup>68</sup>

Yet the expansion of Grant 6402 did not take place until about eleven years after John Marshall's death in 1847, raising the question of whether acreage that was added to John Marshall's estate after he had already bequeathed it can be considered part of the Tennessee land upon which the Clemens heirs' hopes were, in Twain's opinion,

misleadingly fastened. The answer seemingly depends on which sets of tracts are examined, at what point in history, and what criteria are employed to determine a particular tract's inclusion or exclusion in the Tennessee land legacy.

### **What Scholars Mean by the Term, “The Tennessee Land,” Compared to What John Marshall Meant and What Twain Meant at Different Times**

Put simply, what point in time should be selected for evaluating the size of “the Tennessee land”? By that catchphrase, did Twain and his family mean the amount of land John Marshall actually bequeathed to them on his deathbed in 1847? Or did they mean the amount of land he believed he had available to bequeath? Or thirdly, did they mean the amount of land that eventually became available to them to sell once the Grant 6402 tract had been re-evaluated to comprise over 35,600 acres? Combining the second and third scenarios, I am postulating that John Marshall knew that the Grant 6402 tract was really much larger than the 5,000 acres that he originally claimed it measured. Secure in this knowledge, did he casually include it with the more than 60,000 acres in the tracts for which he already held grant-certified acreages when he described the Tennessee land to his own family as comprising 75,000 acres—when actually the total was nearly 93,000?

A fourth alternative is that John Marshall could have believed in 1847 that he held 75,000 Tennessee acres—or, in fact, over 86,000—without any phenomenal expansion of the Grant 6402 tract. The reason was an additional 25,000-acre holding consisting of five 5,000-acre tracts that were seized from John Marshall for a total of \$23.10 in taxes for the year 1845 by Fentress Sheriff Wilson L. Wright and sold at the courthouse door “on the

first Monday in July, 1846” (Fentress Deed G1516). This of course was not the sort of view from the courthouse door in Jamestown that Twain quoted his father as describing in the *Autobiography* when he “looked abroad over his vast possessions” (*AMT* 1: 61). Still, John Marshall may never have learned of the loss. Together with the 62,384 acres he probably knew or believed he possessed by 1846, these 25,000 acres would have brought the size of the Tennessee land up to 87,384 acres without the Grant 6402 tract expanding. News of the July 1846 tax sale might not have reached Hannibal, Missouri, in the seven months prior to John Marshall’s death there in March 1847, so he may never have learned he no longer owned these 25,000 acres and would still have believed his total holdings exceeded 87,000 acres. By comparison, 75,000 acres would have constituted a conservative estimate.

Likewise, the tax sale may never have come to Twain’s notice, since he was only 10½ years old and living in Hannibal when it occurred, and later, as previously mentioned, Orion handled most of the family’s efforts to sell the Tennessee land. If John Marshall said 75,000 acres was the land’s total size, either on his deathbed or throughout Twain’s preadolescent years, 75,000 is the figure that probably would have stuck in Twain’s mind for his later reminiscing or fictionalizing. Of course, John Marshall may have mentioned any smaller or merely different figure, but while Twain was writing the first fragment of his *Autobiography* in 1870 or collaborating on *The Gilded Age* in early 1873 (*AMT* 1: headnote on 61, Loving 201), his memory of how much land his father had acquired could have been augmented in his mental calculations by the actual increase in the size of Grant 6402 from 5,000 acres to over 35,600 *circa* 1859. Yet the records themselves of the 25,000 acres lost to taxes in 1846, riddled with contradictions and

acreages scantily defined, suggest that John Marshall probably never possessed those 25,000 acres at all, and may not have actually claimed them. If he did claim the 25,000 acres, he did so in his own name in blatant violation of the 5,000-acre individual limit.<sup>69</sup>

An intriguing fifth possibility exists. John Marshall may have believed that he possessed more than 60,000 acres through the thirty-three grants that this chapter has discussed, plus the 25,000 acres that were seized for back taxes in 1846—plus he may have known that the boundaries of the Grant 6402 tract had to be much larger than the 5,000 acres he claimed in the grant text. In that event, John Marshall went to his grave believing he had left his long-suffering family a magnificent life insurance policy: roughly 120,000 acres of mineral-prone Tennessee hill country, or 187½ square miles surely good for something. Such a hypothesis might explain Twain's repeated footnotes in the *Autobiography* that the Tennessee land measured around "100,000" acres rather than 7,000 or 25,000 shies of 100,000 acres, or any lesser total. Twain's footnote estimations, combined with other ambivalent protestations of the hated land's intrinsic worth, in some ways vindicate his father's "well intended folly."

### **Family Relationship between Polk's Wife and Twain's Step-Grandmother May Have Led to Polk's Signatures on John Marshall's Surrogate Grants**

As to why Gov. Polk placed his signature in 1839 on the twenty-five grants totaling 60,950 acres in the Clemens land legacy that Gov. Cannon had drawn up but did not sign in 1838, one final hypothesis is suggested by online genealogical records and a well-annotated collection of Polk's letters: the newly elected governor could have been fulfilling a familial obligation. The genealogical and epistolary evidence indicates that

Polk's brother-in-law Dr. John Brown Hays of Columbia, Tennessee, where Polk resided with his wife the former Sarah Childress of Murfreesboro, Tennessee (Seigenthaler 25-26), was first cousin to Mary Margaret "Aunt Polly" Hays Lampton, stepmother of Twain's mother Jane Lampton Clemens. Furthermore, Polk had a second brother-in-law, James Hays Walker, Sr., who also was Dr. Hays's first cousin as the son of Dr. Hays's aunt Mary Hays Walker.<sup>70</sup>

Thus, two of Polk's brothers-in-law were first cousins not only to each other but to John Marshall's mother-in-law "Aunt Polly" throughout John Marshall's marriage to Jane. The literary significance of Twain's step-grandmother's name will not be lost on any Twain scholars, although Aunt Polly was a common enough name for a parent's sister in Tom Sawyer's day. The double "in-law" first cousinship between Polk and John Marshall, rather than direct blood kinship, might make the possible impact of their family ties on John Marshall's land grant claims appear somewhat tenuous. But if every link in a chain is strong, it still bears weight. Like the multiple steps and individuals in John Marshall's grant acquisition process itself, the significance of every link in his "shirt-tail" kinship with Polk is supported by substantial evidence.

First, there is the prominent role that Dr. Hays, his brothers, and Polk's other brothers-in-law played in Polk's personal, business, and political lives. A physician in Columbia, Tennessee, Dr. Hays was the husband of Ophelia Clarissa Polk Hays, Polk's younger sister by sixteen years (Weaver et al. 4: 169, n. 2). Every successful politician has his or her "machine," or at least an inner coterie. Polk was an ardent Andrew Jackson supporter (Seigenthaler 38-42, Leonard 10), but he had his own organization, too. Brothers-in-law were key political organizers and operatives for Polk, whether they were



Dr. Hays, James Walker, Sr., or Dr. Silas William Caldwell, a third brother-in-law of Polk's eldest sisters. In addition, Polk's reliance on his brothers-in-law through his wife Sarah in a crucial Middle Tennessee political stronghold further demonstrates their value to and influence on him, as Polk biographer Charles Grier Sellers, Jr., writes: "Sarah's brother John Childress and her brother-in-law Doctor William Rucker [...] served as Polk's political agents in Rutherford County" (248).

All three husbands of Polk's eldest sisters kept watchful eyes on Polk's West Tennessee plantation near Somerville for him during his fourteen years in Washington, DC, serving in Congress prior to his election as Tennessee governor in 1839, as well as during Polk's later residence in the White House from 1845-49. As noted above, 1838 was the year when twenty-five land grants were drawn up for John Marshall and his intermediate land holders. James Walker, Sr., appears in Polk's correspondence as a sender, recipient, or subject of discussion seventy-one times during 1837-38. Dr. Hays appears eighteen times. Dr. Caldwell, Polk's partner and manager at his plantation, appears fifteen times, frequently with cotton crop yields (in bales) or slave issues (runaways and sales), but also with political advice and support (Weaver et al. vol. 4, throughout). Likewise Walker's letters are often political, addressing the constitutionality of the National Bank among other Jacksonian issues; Walker's own lucrative contract to carry the US mail from Nashville to Natchez by stagecoach; or matters of petty patronage such as asking Polk as speaker of the House to locate or create a duplicate copy of an individual veteran's discharge certificate so the veteran could draw a pension. The latter is a very common sort of request in Polk's correspondence, not even requiring the sender to be a family intimate such as a brother-in-law, or the favor

seeker to offer any explicit quid pro quo. Thus it should not seem too far-fetched, by comparison, that when he became governor in 1839, Polk would sign a set of grants for land that, until that time, had not been eagerly claimed, performing a favor for a double first cousin of his inner family and political circle.

Seven years earlier, in 1832, Dr. Hays in particular drew Polk's attention and support when the doctor's wife Ophelia, the future governor/president's younger sister and "a high-tempered twenty-year-old who drove her family to distraction—quarreled fiercely with her thirty-year-old domestic slave Silvy" (Dusinberre 80). Writing to Polk a year later, in 1833, to object to Silvy's purchase by their widowed mother, a purchase that brought the temporarily banished Silvy back into the Polk home, Ophelia admits, "I own that my temper at any time is not as even as many persons, but still it is as it is" (Weaver et al. 4: 172). Indeed, Ophelia's "tantrums were endangering her marriage, and James [Polk] was continually being called in to untangle unpleasant situations," Sellers writes. "Ophelia was so clearly to blame that her own family sided against her, one of the brothers-in-law hoping that Doctor Hays could be persuaded 'to lock her up and conquer her by force if nothing else will do'" (185).

Polk's reliance on Dr. Hays to help him cope with his difficult sister is only one strong reason that Dr. Hays could easily and casually have received the favor of getting John Marshall's set of land grants signed by the new governor in 1839, however. As previously suggested, politics was an equally major unifying element of the circle of brothers-in-law that Polk closely relied on. When Polk and Walker financially backed the establishment of the *Tennessee Democrat* newspaper in Columbia to support Martin Van Buren for president in 1836, "most of the editorials were written by Walker and

Andrew [C.] Hays, a longtime Polk supporter who had been rewarded with the town postmastership” (Sellers 281; Andrew C. Hays as postmaster, Weaver et al. 4: 169, n. 2).<sup>71</sup> Although he was not another of Polk’s brothers-in-law, Andrew C. Hays was another first cousin of Dr. Hays and James Walker, Sr. (Weaver et al. 4: 45, n. 1). Therefore he, too, was “Aunt Polly” Hays Lampton’s first cousin, tying the Hays family together in kinship with the Polks in yet another way.

The Hays, Polk, and Caldwell brothers-in-law were compatible age mates with similar circumstances and interests: professional men who practiced medicine or law, ran cotton and corn plantations powered by slave labor, and speculated on land and traded slaves on the side. They all considered themselves southern gentlemen, as did John Marshall Clemens with less money to buck up his status. Polk was Sam Polk’s eldest son, therefore his successor as family patriarch. He also was the powerful state and national politician who led the family political and business cohort, even though he was the youngest of the three brothers-in-law and cousins, trailing Walker by three years and Dr. Hays by one. Performing minor favors for each other and their kinfolks must have been a routine element of their lifelong mutual and multi-faceted relationships.

The second strong link in the kinship chain connecting Polk and John Marshall’s mother-in-law “Aunt Polly” Hays Lampton is the sense of family obligation and duty that pervaded the Upper South among even quite distant relatives, let alone double first cousins. The favors that James Clemens, Jr., performed for John Marshall alive and for his survivors after his death, whether through a sense of obligation or charity, were performed for his second cousin, not his first, as this chapter has documented. Nevertheless, a cousin was a cousin, and the favors were substantial. In the case of the

Hays family members, the genealogical record establishing their double first cousin relationship is clear: Dr. John Brown Hays, James Walker, Sr., and Polly Lampton each were grandchildren of Andrew Hays of Rockbridge County, Virginia.

Ophelia Polk Hays's husband Dr. John Brown Hays was a middle son of John Hays, eldest son of Andrew and his first wife Prudence Campbell Hays.<sup>72</sup> James Walker, Sr., was the eldest son of Mary Hays Walker, only daughter of Andrew and his second wife Margaret Stephenson Hays, and therefore half-sister to Dr. John Brown Hays's father John Hays. Mary married Joseph Walker; their son, James Walker, Sr., married Jane Maria Polk, the eldest sister of James K. Polk. "Aunt Polly" was the daughter of John Hays's younger half-brother Dr. Charles Hays, another son of Andrew and Margaret Stephenson Hays, and Charles' second wife Mary Campbell Walker. Thus Polly, too, was Andrew Hays's grandchild like Polk's brothers-in-law both were. Approximately a century later, in 1942, Ben Robertson describes "a reunion of all the kinfolks" in his family on Chauga Creek in Georgia:

During the morning we would sit in the shade of the trees and our cousin Unity and our Great-Aunt Narcissa and our cousin Ella would begin at the beginning of time, long before the Revolution, and trace the kinfolks from then until the moment of that reunion. They would tell us who had married whom, who had gone where, and what had happened. (277)

Raised and living in the same culture about one hundred years earlier, Aunt Polly is unlikely to have forgotten similar details like who the grandchildren of Andrew Hays were or that two of them were married to sisters of the speaker of the US House of Representatives, a close ally of the war hero president of the United States, and beginning

in 1839, governor of Tennessee. She plausibly might have believed a small favor might have been in order for her financially struggling young son-in-law who was still reeling from the financial panics of 1832 and 1837.

### **The Importance of Family Ties in the Frontier and Antebellum South and Upper South**

Both of Polly's parents died in Adair County, Kentucky, in 1810 and 1811, respectively. The plentitude of close relatives residing in Adair seems to be another common thread in the Hays and Walker kinship ties that came to also extend into James K. Polk's close family.<sup>73</sup> Maintaining close contact with, and mutually supporting, relatives who remained behind was a consistent nineteenth-century cultural pattern as European American families moved ever westward, or in this case southward to Tennessee. As Charles David Gear notes in *Why Texans Fought in the Civil War*:

Family ties produced the strongest bonds between people in the South during the nineteenth century. Though family members moved far away to Texas, the bonds never weakened. When the war broke out, a major concern for Texans was the protection of their families. These similarities influenced Texans and other Southerners to fight for the Confederacy.

(166)

Enduring, long-distance familial obligations were a major reason Texans volunteered to fight and possibly die in the Civil War, in other words, Gear points out: "They fought for the Confederacy and for Texas, but they had a more immediate desire to defend their extended family back east" (81). This motivation for volunteering was especially strong

among Texans from the Upper South, Gear suggests, describing how one Confederate officer “emphasized his men’s desire to defend a specific region of the Confederacy, the upper South—especially Kentucky and Tennessee—the area where most of them had been born and where their extended families lived” (95).

Long before 1838, the Polk, Hays, Lampton, Walker, and Clemens ancestors had each made a similar move not to Texas but from Virginia and North Carolina or, in more recent years, from East Tennessee and southern Kentucky. Many of them went on to populate northeast Missouri, which became known as “Little Dixie,” or southeast Iowa, often basing their chosen destinations on whether they opposed or practiced slavery. They left relatives behind in almost every instance, but typically maintained strong connections with them. Polk, for one, established a new plantation in the Mississippi Delta (Dusinberre 14) but did not move to Mississippi, a relocation that was indeed made by yet another of Polks’ brothers-in-law’s cousins Andrew Hays, “a distinguished lawyer of Nashville,” as online genealogist Edie Gale Hays describes him.

Again and again, Gear describes the strong pull of the families left behind on the South’s westward migrants and how that pull prompted the migrants to risk laying down their lives in battle. For instance, Gear writes, “The greatest attribute of Southern culture that remained very strong in Texans was the importance of family and extended kinship ties. Family was an important motivation for Texans to fight in the Civil War” (40). Later he explains, “The desire to fight alongside and protect family and friends was another motivating force for men joining units slated to fight east of the Mississippi. Men tended to join Confederate units with other family members, especially if the

recruiting officer was kin. Others were concerned about family and friends they had left behind” (80).

Evidently, the mutual need for mutual help from extended family members in the Upper South was typical of patterns throughout the entire South, as Gear suggests that it went beyond the sharing of labor and capital:

Familial ties in the South were arguably the strongest in North America and second only to the Highland Scots of the past[.... Kinfolk] could even depend on one another for power, either economic through collective resources or political or physical because of their numbers. Kinship groups could even expand their influence and power through marriage to other groups. (36-38)

Discussing a different region of the South with divergent demographics, Sarah Russell nonetheless pinpoints a recurrence of the southern tradition of doing favors for in-laws and their relatives by noting the tradition’s pragmatic side: “Just as their kinship ties provided them with political and commercial networks,” she writes, “intermarriage also provided tangible material benefits for Anglo American and French Louisianian men” (419). The earliest Polk settlers themselves are specifically described in one book-length study as practicing this sort of interdependence, which presumably would have included in-laws in their networks, as Joan E. Cashin writes: “Men in the Polk family of Tennessee and North Carolina also enlisted each other in their various planting ventures, as did the men in the Whitfield family of Alabama, Mississippi, and North Carolina” (34).

The importance of nourishing deep ancestral roots was emphasized in antebellum times by aggressive slavery apologist George Fitzhugh, who writes, “Those who have the

most ties, like the ancient oak, that has been putting forth [r]oots for centuries, are the men to cling to and defend their country” (274). Likewise, the tradition of gaining social mobility by marrying “up” and becoming an influential in-law traces its roots throughout the South to before the American Revolution, according to historian Charles S. Sydnor:

Thomas Jefferson’s father improved his position by marrying Jane Randolph, a daughter of one of the largest and most powerful families in Virginia. John Marshall’s marriage [meaning that of the chief justice, not Mark Twain’s father] to Mary Willis Ambler, daughter of Jaquelin Ambler, brought him influential connections. (276)

Given the heavy emphasis placed on family ties and obligations in nineteenth-century European American culture, the double first cousin connection between Polk’s brothers-in-law and John Marshall’s mother-in-law could, all by itself, explain Polk’s signatures on the grants in the Clemens land legacy, absent all the other possibilities previously discussed, and in the face of John Marshall’s previously noted status as a “stout Whig” (Budd 2) whose land grants were signed by a Tennessee and national Democratic leader. The improbability of that occurrence cries for an alternate explanation, and the double first cousin connection provides one that complements the previously described European American imperative to get previously Native American lands securely placed under white title and hegemony.

Moreover, this Columbia to Columbia connection (Tennessee to Kentucky; Polk to Hays to Lampton to Clemens) is strengthened by one further factor: the names of the claimants on the original Fentress Entry 547 for the 5,000-acre Grant 6402 that eventually expanded by survey and litigation to over 35,600 acres. Those claimants, of



course, were Orion, Benjamin Quarles, and James A. H. Lampton—a first cousin once-removed in the grant-signing governor’s own family. Even his middle initials stood for Andrew Hays after the paternal grandfather of Dr. John Brown Hays, James Walker, Sr., and Polly Lampton. Meanwhile, James A. H. Lampton and his parents Benjamin and “Aunt Polly” Lampton migrated to northeast Missouri with the Clemens and Quarles families, and he stayed in close enough contact with Twain’s father to loan him \$747 to help John Marshall purchase of a quarter of a city block in Hannibal in 1839 (Fred Kaplan 14).

Andrew remained a prevalent name in the Hays family, appearing repeatedly in every generation after the grandfather’s and in the specific generation that included Polk’s brothers-in-law and their cousins. Thus, even though Grant 6402 (based partly on James A. H. Lampton’s original claim at the probable age of ten in Fentress Entry 547) was only one of twenty-five grants that Polk signed for John Marshall, the Hays family member therein could hardly have escaped the governor’s notice. Also, although nowhere in Polk’s published letters are John Marshall Clemens or his land grants mentioned (Weaver et al., throughout), it seems highly probable that Twain’s father paid a visit to Polk or to his Hays cousins during his return visit to Tennessee in the fall of 1838 and lobbied for Polk’s eventual signature on the grants after the election. Finally, there might have been a political risk to Polk’s reputation from signing a 5,000-acre land grant that included the son of the cousin of two of his brothers-in-laws among the original claimants, a risk that might have at least given Polk pause. Scurrilous allegations were commonplace in nineteenth-century newspapers, but even now in the twenty-first

century, a Tennessee governor's signature on such a document would provide grist for the mill for investigative reporters at Tennessee's daily newspapers or television stations.

The Hays connection to the grants also might have been somewhat obscured because the actual Grant 6402 was not awarded to James A. H. Lampton, Orion, and Benjamin Quarles; they are merely listed as the original entry makers in the grant's text. As described earlier, Grant 6402 went to James Clemens, Jr., the wealthy St. Louis merchant who was John Marshall's second cousin, in the apparent "shell game" to conceal the land acquisition spree that Twain's father had embarked upon. Only nine of the twenty-five grants that Polk signed bore John Marshall's name on them as a sole grantee or partner in the grant, and most of those nine were for smaller tracts. Only Grant 6399 was for 5,000 acres, and it went jointly to John Marshall and "N. W. Williams." Overall, the land that Polk granted directly to John Marshall or to him with a partner totaled only 7,850 acres.

### **Was the Future US President Aware of John Marshall's Apparent "Shell Game"?**

Here the question of "what did he know and when did he know it?" shifts from the amount of acreage John Marshall believed was in the land legacy he passed down in 1847 to the degree of complicity Gov. Polk himself might have had in 1839 in John Marshall's evasion of Tennessee's 5,000-acre limit on receiving land grants. Did Polk know the grants he was signing were mostly going to dummy recipients who would promptly transfer title to Twain's father? In particular, did Polk know that the boundaries of Grant 6402 described a tract far larger than 5,000 acres—actually over seven times that size?

The answer to the Grant 6402 question is quite likely “yes, he knew.” According to the late Nashville *Tennessean* editor and Polk biographer John Seigenthaler, the governor’s father Sam Polk was “a land surveyor like his father; the land agent for vast properties owned in Tennessee by the University of North Carolina; and a substantial landowner in his own right” (21). As a boy, Polk “accompanied his father on surveying trips, tending the horses and preparing meals,” and then as a young Middle Tennessee lawyer, his “early practice included land disputes,” Seigenthaler reports (25). If Polk read the texts of the grants he signed, the governor should have spotted major discrepancies in the boundaries of Grant 6402.

Additionally, it is possible to judge whether Polk would have condoned John Marshall’s “shell game” from an ethical standpoint, if in fact Polk was aware of the scam, by the governor’s own behavior later, as president. During the Mexican-American War, which Congress and the nation were hotly debating due to the war’s potential to expand slavery into newly acquired territories, Polk quietly bought six young slaves, ages twelve through seventeen, for nearly \$3,000, William Dusing writes in *Slavemaster President*:

The president had discussed his plans with his brother-in-law John Childress in March 1846, and he soon spelled out the legal niceties: ‘You can take the title in your own name and make a quit-claim conveyance without warranty to me.’ That summer Childress employed Polk’s cousin Robert Campbell as Polk’s agent, and five days after the House of Representatives adopted the Wilmot Proviso [which, if it had passed the

Senate, would have banned slavery in any formerly Mexican territories]

Polk reminded Childress of the injunction to secrecy. (18)

The president made two more block purchases of a total of nine slaves, ages ten through twenty, for nearly \$5,000 in 1847 and 1849, each time insisting on strict secrecy to avoid influencing his political reputation (19-20). Acquiring property under an agent's or assumed name, and then assuming title for a nominal dollar the same way that Judge Thatcher acquires Huck's \$6,000 treasure for a single dollar to protect the fortune from Pap in *Huckleberry Finn* (28-29), is exactly the "shell game" John Marshall played with intermediate land holders to acquire his Tennessee land legacy. It appears to be the same game that President Polk played to acquire slaves on the sly, except Campbell's quit-claim deed to him for slave Jane, "about 12," does not even mention a nominal dollar (Dusinberre 20, fig. 1.2).

If John Marshall's "shirt-tail" kinship to the future president prompted Polk to sign the grants, in addition to Polk's other possible motivators, exploiting that kinship tie nevertheless demonstrated a high degree of mental acuity and perspicacity on John Marshall's part—as did setting up his elaborate "shell game" in the first place. John Marshall's scheme has even misled or fooled every Twain scholar who has investigated the "Tennessee land" up to the present study—but by Twain's final decade, the land's size if not its manner of acquisition surely had not evaded Twain himself when he wrote the legacy's actual acreage was "100,000" or "above 100,000" (*AMT* 1: 206, 208).

### CHAPTER III: TWAIN AND THE TENNESSEE LAND: THE BURDEN OF TRUST BETRAYED THROUGH REVERSAL AND DEFERMENT

“Hoping that the Tennessee land is now in Hell, please pay the enclosed bill,” begins an 1875 letter from Mark Twain to his elder brother Orion (1 Mar. 1875, “Letters,” *MTPO*). Twain’s opening sentence epitomizes the attitude he came to hold about the land. As noted in Chapter Two, Twain ultimately believed the land had imposed “the heavy curse of prospective wealth” (*AMT* 1: 61) on himself and his siblings, and then left him personally powerless to sell the land and remove the curse, since that duty devolved on Orion as the eldest Clemens brother. Soon after Twain’s sojourn in Nevada and California during the Civil War, while both brothers were still out West, Twain tried to help Orion sell the land, arranging a deal that might or might not have succeeded, but that Twain expected would succeed. When Orion vetoed the deal, Twain bitterly and repeatedly renounced making any effort to help sell the land, although occasionally he offered Orion irritated advice about selling it. On other occasions Twain angrily ordered Orion to never mention the Tennessee land to him again.

Twain’s emphatic disavowal of the land seems overwrought, especially since the land never served as more than an annoying but minor nuisance to him. Twain’s narrow brushes with bankruptcy at the *fin de siècle* were not caused in any way by the Tennessee land. Admittedly, the persistent need to pay the taxes on the land served as a burden perennially imposed on Twain by his family, especially in the decades immediately following the Civil War. Yet the tax bills required paltry expenditures compared to the large sums Twain was earning through his writing and lecturing, and compared to the

equally large sums Twain was spending on maintaining his lifestyle and investing in inventions and publishing.<sup>1</sup> For instance, in 1872, taxes amounting to only \$23.39 were assessed on “Clemens, Orion,” in Fentress County, in addition to a mere \$2.25 assessed on the “Clemens, John Jr. Hrs.” (Hatfield). Three years earlier, according to the Mark Twain Project Online, “[o]n 28 January 1869 Jane Clemens noted that she ‘paid Ten, Taxes \$17,50 for Sam and me’ and on 8 March 1869 she recorded an additional payment of \$7.35 for ‘Tenn land’” (SLC to Pamela A. Moffett, 23 June 1869, n. 8, “Letters,” *MTPO*). In 1875, the taxes on the Tennessee land were somewhat higher, totaling \$100.37 on over 30,000 acres assessed in the Clemens heirs’ names (Hatfield), although from the evidence of other land ownership records, the tax records available for the year are incomplete or not all the Tennessee land was assessed and taxed.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, only six years later, Twain’s living expenses amounted to the 1875 Fentress County tax bill multiplied by a thousand: “[d]uring 1881 he spent about \$100,000 in all,” according to Justin Kaplan (235).

Tennessee tax bills cannot have helped Twain balance his books, but they only amounted to the proverbial drop in the bucket for him. Adding to the financial nuisance that the land represented to Twain, he was plagued by Orion’s repeated requests for funds to travel to Fentress County and attend to the land by securing its titles and trying to sell it (Powers, *A Life* 285-86). Again, while burdensome, these travel requests only augmented Orion’s need for more substantial support of himself and his wife Mollie than Orion could earn himself, support that Twain regularly provided whether it included trips to Tennessee or not (Loving 354). The taxes and travel expenses would have been

irksome to Twain, but they probably did not constitute a life-burdening “curse” all by themselves.

Instead, these costs must have represented the unhappy circumstance behind the Tennessee land that John Marshall Clemens left his heirs a sort of reverse trust, to coin a term, since it required further investment until it could mature and yield its “prospective wealth.” Normally a trust is a sum of money or set of investments that generates interest or profit for its beneficiaries while retaining its principal until it eventually matures and is dissolved through disbursement. And the Tennessee land was a kind of trust, although it was not formally organized as such; John Marshall died intestate. However, unlike normal trusts, the Clemens land legacy acted as a reverse trust. The legacy required its beneficiaries to keep investing the proceeds of their own earnings until the real property could be liquidated into cash through its sale.

The Tennessee land was a reverse trust because it also was a time capsule that could not be opened productively until the necessary technology arrived in Fentress County: transportation in the form of a railroad spur through and into the mountains, a spur that was not built until 1900 or later (Ansley and Bell 132, Smith 8, Duke). That transformation of acreage into fortune could not happen quickly enough to benefit the Clemens heirs because the land’s remote location made it impossible to harvest the rich lodes of mineral wealth that lurked beneath certain portions of the legacy, as Twain asserts his father correctly suspected. According to Twain’s account, his father fully understood the delayed gratification implicit in the cobbled-together estate he left his heirs, since he allegedly assured himself and his heirs, “Whatever befalls me, my heirs are secure; I shall not live to see these acres turn to silver and gold, but my children will”

(*AMT* 1: 61). Likewise, a sense that the Tennessee land fortune might take years to ripen was implicit in John Marshall's message when, as Twain writes, "My father's dying charge was, 'Cling to the land and wait; let nothing beguile it away from you'" (*AMT* 1: 206). The same requirement that his heirs be patient was explicit in John Marshall's statement, again as paraphrased by Twain: "He had always said that the land would not become valuable in his time, but that it would be a commodious provision for his children some day" (*AMT* 1: 206).

Of course, John Marshall did not expect or intend to die when he did in 1847, less than two years before his fiftieth birthday. He no doubt expected to continue directly supporting his family, hoping for better fortunes than he had previously experienced. Although he had pinned his hopes on winning a well-compensated judgeship in a pending Missouri election, John Marshall died virtually bankrupt: "[T]he Clemens family was penniless," Twain bluntly declares (*AMT* 1: 451). The only valuable inheritance Twain's father left the family consisted of his recorded deeds to the Tennessee land and unrecorded purchases of the land. Yet his bereft family undoubtedly might have preferred a prompter-paying life insurance policy than John Marshall's mere promise of the eventual bounty represented by the Tennessee land. The family understandably endeavored to sell it almost as soon as John Marshall left them widowed or fatherless, and thereby lacking a primary breadwinner. As Twain's great nephew Sam Webster describes the situation, "Mark Twain in *The Gilded Age* [1873] gives the impression that the family was always hanging onto the land. It was the other way: the land was always hanging onto them. They were always trying to get rid of it" (10).



Being saddled with a reverse trust was manifestly unfortunate for all the Clemens heirs, but especially for Twain since he was the successful sibling and therefore bore the financial costs of retaining and attempting to sell the remote real estate. Although the funds he was called to pay went to fend off the government rather than to serve as development capital for mining, Twain's situation regarding the Tennessee land was similar to his ownership of mining stock during his Nevada days, as described in *Roughing It*. The trick with mining stock was to re-sell it as soon as possible for a higher price before an assessment could be levied on shareholders to pay mining costs (*RI* 1: 209, Loving 82). Alternately, since assessments were difficult to enforce, impecunious shareholders could simply ignore them and discard their stock: "The claims we had been paying assessments on were entirely worthless, and we threw them away," Twain recalls. "The Board [of directors] were living on the 'assessments'" (*RI* 1: 243). However, shareholders who failed to pay assessments would then lose their stock: "A failure to meet such assessments resulted in the sale at auction of one's shares, as the Clemens brothers knew from personal experience" (SLC to Orion, 11 June 1874, n. 2, "Letters," *MTPO*). Unless a speculator lucked into possession of an actual bonanza lode such as the Comstock (Fred Kaplan 93), any profit in mining stock was to be made by buying low—often Twain was given free stock to praise a particular mine in the press—and selling that hyped stock high, prior to any assessments (Fred Kaplan 110). This strategy, in part, may explain Twain's reaching the point of urging Orion to get rid of the Tennessee land at any price, as described in Chapter Two: "If any stupid fool will give 2,000 for it, do let him have it—shift the curse to his shoulders" (SLC to Orion, 1 Aug. 1870, "Letters," *MTPO*).

The same letter to Orion emphasizes the way the family had been burdened with a reverse trust, as well as the reason the trust was a burden and to what a significant degree it played a burdensome role, when Twain labels it “a luxury” to keep that “worthless ground” that “the family were too poor to afford.” Twain also notes the insufferable duration of the reverse trust as he complains in the same letter that the Clemens heirs “have been bled for 40 years to keep that cursed land,” a concern to which he returns in the *Autobiography*: “It influenced our life in one way or another during more than a generation,” he writes, tellingly (*AMT* 1: 209). The perpetuation of the reverse trust for “more than a generation” appears to be a significant element in Twain’s loathing for the Tennessee land. The endless delay betrayed his father’s pledge that “my *children* will [...] live to see these acres turn to silver and gold” (*AMT* 1: 61, emphasis added). Instead, the time lag meant that not John Marshall’s children but only his grandchildren or great grandchildren might be enriched by the land, and even that enrichment did not actually happen to any truly significant extent.

Twain’s apparent belief that his father fully understood the delayed gratification implicit in the Tennessee land for his heirs is reinforced by his use of the land in *The Gilded Age* in the statements about the land by Squire Si Hawkins, the character who portrays Judge Clemens. In the first chapter of the novel, a chapter primarily penned by Twain without his co-author Warner (Leisy 445-46), the squire boasts to his wife Nancy that he has “Seventy-five Thousand Acres of Land in this county.” Hawkins adds in a whisper that “the whole tract would not sell for over a third of a cent an acre now” but someday its price could grow to \$1,000 per acre for the children to inherit. “You and I

might not see that day,” he warns Nancy, who represents Twain’s mother Jane Lampton Clemens, “but *they’ll* see it” (*GA* 1: 7).

Two pages later, repeatedly employing the emphatic negative adverb “never,” Hawkins stresses his certainty that fortune will not come from the Tennessee land in the near future, during his own lifetime, but that it will indeed become available to the succeeding generation, his own children: “*We’ll* never see the day, Nancy—never in this world—never, never, never, child. We’ve got to drag along, drag along, and eat crusts in toil and poverty, all hopeless and forlorn—but *they’ll* ride in coaches, Nancy!” Hawkins goes on to reveal his—and his author’s—expectations that the land would not stop at generating mere modest wealth, but would yield the kind of fortunes amassed by immensely successful nineteenth-century capitalists John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie, future friends of Twain’s.<sup>3</sup> “They’ll live like the princes of the earth; they’ll be courted and worshiped; their names will be known from ocean to ocean!” Hawkins predicts for his progeny (*GA* 1: 9).

In succeeding chapters, Hawkins continues to proclaim the futility of expecting a prompt harvest of wealth from the Tennessee land, even as he emphasizes its immense potential to eventually provide richly for his heirs. Spurred on by this reliance, Hawkins adopts two orphans en route to Missouri and assures his wife that he “wouldn’t be afraid to adopt a thousand children if I wanted to, for there’s that Tennessee Land, you know—enough to make an army of them rich. A whole army, Nancy!” Then Hawkins simultaneously returns to the theme of delayed gratification from the land while continuing to emphasize the lucrative nature of the legacy he has created:

You and I will never see the day, but these little chaps will! One of these days it will be ‘the rich Miss Emily Hawkins—and the wealthy Miss Laura Van Brunt Hawkins—and the Hon. George Washington Hawkins, millionaire—and Gov. Henry Clay Hawkins, millionaire!’ That’s the way the world will word it! Don’t let’s ever fret over the children, Nancy—never in the world. They’re all right, Nancy, there’s oceans and oceans of money in that land—mark my words! (*GA* 1: 42)

A telling point in this speech by Si Hawkins, who by this chapter has graduated from “Squire” to “Judge” in popular parlance like his real-life model John Marshall, is Hawkins’s repeated use of the metaphor “ocean” to describe both the extent of his heirs’ incipient renown and worth. Given its form, the prospective wealth might more properly be described by dry-land measurements or by “tons” of extracted minerals.

The landlocked Hawkins seizes upon the more abstract term “oceans,” boundless quantities comparable to the unbounded exclamations that Twain heard employed by his “mother’s favorite cousin, James Andrew Hays Lampton,” the model for Col. Sellers in *The Gilded Age* (*AMT* 1: 206), to describe any of his frequent money-making schemes that simply could not fail—but usually did. According to Twain, Lampton’s faith in the land’s potential value remained constant and fervent: he “always said of that land—and said it with blazing enthusiasm, too—‘There’s millions in it—millions!’” (*AMT* 1: 206). Although Sellers is a separate character in the novel, Hawkins mirrors the real-life version of Sellers when Hawkins foresees “ocean to ocean [...] oceans” of fame and fortune for his heirs. On his deathbed, Hawkins (like the real-life John Marshall) also urges his gathered-around family, “Never lose sight of the Tennessee land! Be wary.

There is wealth stored up for you there—wealth that is boundless!” (*GA* 1: 91).

Unsurprisingly, scholars have detected a touch of Sellers’s excessive optimism and faith in infinity in John Marshall and in Twain himself.

How Twain felt about a father professing to bequeath a fortune to his own children that could not actually be enjoyed until his grandchildren’s generation, at the very earliest, may be surmised from his testimony in 1906 before Congress in support of a bill to extend copyright protection to an author’s lifetime and fifty years:

I think [the extended protection] would satisfy any author, because it will take care of his children. Let the grandchildren take care of themselves.

‘Sufficient unto the day.’ That would satisfy me very well. That would take care of my daughters, and after that I am not particular. (US

Congress 116, qtd. in Madsen 56)

As will be seen, Twain’s appreciation for inherited wealth had its limits, but he steadfastly believed intellectual property rights deserved as much protection as the ownership of land or other private property. In fact, Twain believed copyright protection should be perpetual, but he compromised by supporting protection for only his succeeding generation, excluding his grandchildren’s generation (Madsen 57). His congressional testimony provides a telling glimpse of the effect of Twain’s own experience of the Tennessee land as a reverse trust requiring immediate gratification to be deferred in favor of later generations.

However, worse than the duration and cost of the reverse trust represented by the Tennessee land was the way the very existence of the “prospective wealth” of the land distracted the Clemens heirs for “more than a generation,” in Twain’s opinion, extending

“its hopeful Sellers hand” and keeping the heirs “hoping and hoping, during forty years,” only to be forsaken “at last” in 1887 (*AMT* 1: 209). “Forty years” was the time period that, according to Twain, it took for Orion to sell the last parcels of the land, although Twain adds, “possibly it [the final sale] was earlier” than 1887 (*AMT* 1: 208). However, not all the land is recorded in Fentress County documents as having been sold by that year. In fact, twenty years later, when Twain and the other remaining Clemens heirs transferred twenty-seven grant tracts in 1907 to the Fentress Land Co., a New York corporation apparently consisting of themselves, about 46,108 acres can be calculated as remaining in the Tennessee land (Fentress Deed F2-17). Despite this anomaly, Twain’s use of the period “forty years” quite plausibly could also have been a rhetorical reference to the forty years that the Hebrews wandered in the wilderness following their deliverance from slavery in Egypt, implying that in a sense the Tennessee land enslaved the Clemens heirs by dominating their hopes, dreams, and endeavors.

The four decades that Twain mentions also was long enough for at least one generation and in some cases two generations to mature, as the time span encompassed the life and death at age ten of Orion and Mollie’s only daughter Jennie, the births of his sister Pamela’s two children and three of her five grandchildren, and the births of all four of Twain and Livy’s own children, including the short-lived Langdon Clemens who died at age two (“Clemens and Langdon”). Twain’s bitterness over the ambition-draining effect of the “prospective wealth” represented by the Tennessee land is similarly suggested in the following paragraph from an early portion of the *Autobiography* penned around 1870 (*AMT* 1: headnote on 61), twenty-three years after his father’s 1847 death:

We straightway turned our waiting eyes upon Tennessee. Through all our wanderings and all our ups and downs for thirty years they have still gazed thitherward, over intervening continents and seas, and at this very day they are yet looking toward the same fixed point, with the hope of old habit and a faith that rises and falls, but never dies [...] My brother borrowed five hundred dollars and bought a worthless weekly newspaper, believing, as we all did, that it was not worth while to go at anything in serious earnest until the land was disposed of and we could embark intelligently in something. (*AMT* 1: 63)

Twain exaggerates the time span of the Clemens heirs' delayed gratification for rhetorical effect, but even twenty-three years must have seemed like thirty to the Clemens heirs eking out a living while simultaneously trying to maintain their social status.

The Clemenses claimed at least two lines of English gentry among their ancestors (Fred Kaplan 6-7, Loving 12), and forty, thirty, or even twenty-three years constituted a considerably longer time span than the family expected to live without reaping a fortune suitable for gentry from their land legacy, or without otherwise making a fortune by means unrelated to the legacy. By 1887, after all, forty years after John Marshall's death, his eldest son Orion was sixty-two years old, and should have been at least self-sufficient. Instead, by 1875 Twain had placed Orion and Mollie on a *de facto* pension provided from Twain's literary earnings (SLC to Jane Lampton Clemens and Pamela A. Moffett, 25 Apr. 1875, "Letters," *MTPO*).<sup>4</sup> A similar concern about the distraction resulting from a "curse" can be seen in *Roughing It*, in which one of the discoverers of an ore vein in

which “[l]umps of virgin gold were as thick [...] as raisins in a slice of fruit cake” gives a certain “Whiteman” a map to the vein:

... and thus transferred the *curse* to that gentleman—for when I had my one accidental glimpse of Mr. W. in Esmerelda he had been hunting for the lost mine, in hunger and thirst, poverty and sickness, for twelve or thirteen years. (*RI* 1: 254, emphasis added)

Twain does not use his later, complete phrase, the “heavy curse of prospective wealth,” for Whiteman’s “curse,” but the full phrase is implied by the consequences of the treasure map to Whiteman: his fruitless obsession with the lost mine could have been spent in more productive projects that could have allowed him to avoid life-threatening material deprivation, even if he did not become affluent.<sup>5</sup> The “curse” even appears to be contagious in this text, because Twain’s partner Higbie’s pursuit of the same lost Whiteman vein causes him to ignore and lose a bonanza silver strike that he was supposed to be holding and working with his partner, Twain (*RI* 1: 284). The distraction of “prospective wealth” worked against the prevailing ethos in nineteenth-century America that any industrious man could rise in society by dint of his own efforts and abilities, an ethos that Twain himself protests against in such works as his sketch “The Late Benjamin Franklin” (*SNO* 188-92), but also an ethos that Twain embraces enthusiastically by valorizing inventors and mental acuity.

### **Twain’s Ambivalence about His Father’s Mental Acuity**

Within Twain’s valorization of mental acuity lies the reason and root cause for his loathing of the Tennessee land that goes beyond its nature as a reverse trust: its purchase



simply was not too smart. First the land was acquired by his father, whom Twain liked to view as a mentally acute professional on the verge of success who was repeatedly knocked down by circumstances beyond his control such as national financial crises and a particularly unscrupulous fellow land speculator in Hannibal, Missouri, for whom John Marshall “did the friendly office of ‘going security’” by co-signing a note (*AMT* 1: 62-63). Given the Tennessee land’s maintenance cost for its inheritors, John Marshall’s acquisition of the land did not seem mentally acute to Twain. Yet he defends his father’s purchase, despite labeling it as John Marshall’s “well intended folly” (SLC to Orion, 1 Aug. 1870, “Letters,” *MTPO*). Twain justifies, in depth, his father’s judgment in suspecting the land held hidden mineral deposits. Twain details his father’s prescience both in the *Autobiography* and in *The Gilded Age*’s use of Squire Hawkins to portray John Marshall, although as will be seen, Twain varies the degree of his father’s awareness of the coal in the land.

Thus, Twain renders a psychologically mixed verdict in the *Autobiography* with his simultaneous assertions that his father, with extraordinary mental acuity, had identified this land as bearing a potential bonanza lode and that his father had foolishly acquired land too remote to exploit. Continuing and expanding the problem of the elder Clemens men’s apparent affliction with dim-wittedness as land speculators, for forty years after John Marshall’s death Orion demonstrated how seriously he lacked mental acuity by mishandling the sale of the land—mishandling that Twain never seems to admit was unavoidable, since the per-mile capital requirements for exploitation technology such as rail spurs and mountain cuts loomed prohibitively high. Twain seemingly considers every reason or excuse that could absolve his father of lacking business acumen, but

Twain overlooks comparable explanations for Orion's difficulties with marketing the Tennessee land, since the barriers to selling the land apparently were, indeed, augmented by Orion's general incompetence. Twain's response to his sibling's failed endeavors seems almost vindictive at times, while his response to his father's original purchase more closely approaches vindication. Twain sees Orion's fumbling as chronic, part and parcel with an alleged proclivity to change his political and religious beliefs on a daily basis but clinging to a temperance position to the jeopardy, first, of his nomination for secretary of state in Nevada as the state was being admitted to the Union in 1864 (Fred Kaplan 114, Loving 95), and then rendering impossible the deal Twain had struck to sell the Tennessee land for possible settlement by East European immigrant vintners.

**John Marshall's Acumen Far Outpaced Orion's, in Twain's Opinion: The Grape-Growing Deal that Orion Vetoed**

The first time Orion's moral compunctions stymied a possible sale of the Tennessee land reified Twain's already-formed image of his elder brother as incompetent due to Orion's lack of pragmatism. Teetotaling Orion reportedly stood in the way of consummating a deal that would have sold the Tennessee land for \$200,000 to prospectively serve as wine vineyards. From Twain's correspondence shortly following Orion's interference in the deal that Twain had brokered, there can be little doubt that Orion indeed refused to consent to the deal. Yet there is good reason to doubt some of the details of the deal Twain claims that he had struck, and that Orion blocked.

Without any doubt, Orion blocked the deal for some reason or other, and his turn to temperance seems entirely plausible as his reason for resisting a sale for grape-growing

purposes. At the very least, Twain blames “Orion’s religious scruples” in his first direct letter to Mollie, pointedly not addressed to Orion, following Orion’s decision (SLC to Mary E. Clemens, 22 May 1866, “Letters,” *MTPO*). Twain does not explicitly describe Orion as objecting to the sale due to Twain’s buyer’s grape-growing scheme, yet what “religious scruples” could possibly have blocked this sale other than temperance? On the other hand, Twain’s next letter from Honolulu, addressed to Jane and Pamela this time, simply blames Orion for blocking the deal without revealing Orion’s alleged motives or “religious scruples.” Perhaps bowing to Victorian sensibilities about discussing religion or alcohol with women, or possibly fearing that if his kinswomen knew Orion’s reasons they might have taken his side despite their hunger for the land’s “prospective wealth,” Twain angrily but unrevealingly informs his mother and sister that “I tried to sell [... the Tennessee land] once & he broke up the trade,” therefore when Orion “wrote me to go home & sell the Tenn. land,” Twain “wrote him to go to thunder & take care of it himself” (SLC to Jane Lampton Clemens and Pamela A. Moffett, 21 June 1866, “Letters,” *MTPO*).

These are the only two surviving letters by Twain immediately following the blocked deal that serve as corroboration for numerous biographical accounts of Orion obstructing the sale due to his temperance beliefs. The basic narrative that serves as the framework for these accounts begins with Twain’s preliminary letter in late 1865 to Orion about Herman Camp, the land sale agent initially recruited by Twain who became a potential buyer and grape promulgator, and the narrative ends forty years later with an autobiographical dictation in which Twain recalls two reasons of principle that Orion allegedly cited for Orion’s obstruction of the deal. One scruple was indeed temperance,

and the other was Orion's concern for Camp's potential land buyers, "foreigners from grape-growing and wine-making districts in Europe,"<sup>6</sup> who would actually grow the grapes. Obviously, there is a large time gap in this narrative between the actual blocked deal and Twain's twentieth-century recollection of its details, in his final decade of life:

The temperance virtue was temporarily upon him [Orion] in strong force, and he wrote and said that he would not be a party to debauching the country with wine. Also he said how could he know whether Mr. Camp was going to deal fairly and honestly with those poor people from Europe or not?—and so, without waiting to find out, he quashed the whole trade, and there it fell, never to be brought to life again. The land, from being suddenly worth two hundred thousand dollars, became as suddenly worth what it was before—nothing, and taxes to pay. (*MTA* 2: 320-21)

This is not to say Twain's account in 1906, above, is not entirely accurate. It well may be the literal truth. However, Twain delivered it at a time when he could no longer hurt Orion's feelings by telling it publicly, since Orion died on December 11, 1897 (*AMT* 1: 655, "Clemens and Langdon"). On the other hand, Orion was no longer around to contradict his famous brother, either.

Twain's memory of the blocked land deal is only presented from his viewpoint and not from Orion's, Camp's, or that of any objective outsider. Thus, Twain's 1906 recollection of Orion's obstruction of the sale cannot help being tainted by his extreme antipathy for the Tennessee land, and by his general vision of Orion as incompetent due to seven decades of life experience as Orion's younger brother. The effect would have been circular: whatever Orion did to render the land deal with Camp impossible would

have reinforced Twain's image of his elder brother as incompetent, and Twain's perception of Orion as incompetent would have reinforced his memory of Orion as the breaker of the deal. Normally Twain would have simply classified Orion as his bitter enemy as he did other formerly close associates who crossed him; however, Orion was family, after all, and Twain never came to believe Orion had cheated him in any way, a trespass that invariably proved a fatal error for Twain's formerly friendly foes (Powers, *A Life* 408). Instead, Twain focused on the incompetence that he viewed Orion's idealism as representing. Still, as Andrew Hoffman observes, "The details of the offer by Herman Camp and the reasons for Orion's rejection of it depend on Clemens' much later recollection of the events" (520-21).

Reasons for doubting the details of the deal include Twain's claims of its certainty and its price. Reasons for granting the deal considerable credibility include the success of other, similar projects involving the cultivation of wine grapes, sometimes by European immigrants well-versed in the art, in Fentress County and other locations on the Cumberland Plateau.<sup>7</sup> Yet those successes do not guarantee that Twain and Camp's scheme would have succeeded. Twain claims that Camp had sold \$270,000 worth of Nevada mining stock in New York in 1865; however, silver mines and wine vineyards are considerably different commodities to market. The terms for selling the Tennessee land to Camp that Twain describes in 1906 were, "He agreed to buy our Tennessee land for two hundred thousand dollars, pay a part of the amount in cash and give long notes for the rest. His scheme was to import foreigners [...] settle them on the land, and turn it into a wine-growing country" (qtd. in SLC to Orion and Mary E. Clemens, 13 Dec. 1865, n. 2, "Letters," *MTPO*). In other words, even by Twain's later account, Twain had not

actually arranged to sell the land for \$200,000.<sup>8</sup> He had arranged to sell it for an unspecified “part” of that grand sum and then grant credit on the balance on the possibility that Camp could actually resell the Tennessee land.

Even though John Marshall’s acumen may have outstripped Orion’s, from Twain’s point of view, Twain’s father still created a reverse trust or a reversal of trust that betrayed the Clemens heirs in multiple ways that Twain describes ambivalently in both *The Gilded Age* and his *Autobiography*. There was his father’s bequest of the endlessly needy Tennessee land, absorbing more financial and emotional resources from everyone concerned than it was worth. As his father’s “well intended folly,” to Twain it blatantly advertised John Marshall’s failure to see the fatal flaws in his scheme to provide security to his family and to maintain, as Bernard DeVoto suggests (13), the Clemens heirs’ assumed status as gentry. As a mirage of fabulous fortune leading the Clemens heirs astray in their lives, the land legacy proved inadequate to perform the duty culturally entrusted to a nineteenth-century father to set his children on a prospectively prosperous path. Twain must have felt the psychic resentment common to child survivors whose parent leaves them bereft by dying. Compounding that offense, John Marshall left young Twain with an elder brother who ineffectively played the role of father figure to him in his teen-age years and then repeatedly blocked or botched the sale of the Tennessee land. At the same time, Orion failed to prosper on his own due to his own lack of mental acuity. Twain outwardly refuses to acknowledge the similarity between his father’s and his brother’s usual lack of business acumen—or his own frequent lack of it himself. However, Twain’s vehement rejection of any role in Orion’s marketing of the Tennessee land suggests deep resentment of their father’s commercial incompetence,

passed down to Orion, dating back to Twain's boyhood, literally whitewashed and idealized in *Tom Sawyer*—a boyhood in which Twain's family repeatedly feared and finally faced the evicting sheriff's knock. John Marshall provided the male genes, the environment of Orion's youth, and the Tennessee land legacy to start Orion on his track of mental and business deficiency, and Twain tersely admits his father's heir-burdening land purchase constituted "folly" on his father's part, even if "well intended."

### **The Land as a Potential Cornucopia, or Even as the Basis for a World-Improving University**

To compensate for the mistake that Twain cannot avoid acknowledging his father committed, Twain protests too much, perhaps, in his celebration of the riches that John Marshall presciently suspected the Tennessee land contained. Nor is Twain entirely consistent in his statements of what his father knew about the land's coal in particular, and when he knew it. In the first chapter of *The Gilded Age*, John Marshall's fictional avatar Squire Hawkins confides to Jane's avatar Nancy that the 75,000 acres of Tennessee land that he has purchased are replete with resources, specifically including coal. For humorous effect, Twain has Hawkins describe his neighbors' ignorance of the combustible nature of coal: "*There's whole worlds of it on this land!* You know that black stuff that crops out of the bank of the branch? well, that's it. You've taken it for rocks; so has everybody here; and they've built little dams and such things with it" (*GA* 1: 8). In fact, one neighbor's ignorance is so complete that he starts to use coal to build a chimney for his house, and Hawkins tells his wife:

“Nancy, I expect I turned white as a sheet! Why, it might have caught fire and told everything. I showed him it was too crumbly. Then he was going to build it of copper ore—splendid yellow forty-per-cent ore! There’s fortunes upon fortunes of copper ore on our land! It scared me to death, the idea of this fool starting a smelting furnace in his house without knowing it, and getting his dull eyes opened. And then he was going to build it of *iron* ore! There’s mountains of iron ore here, Nancy—whole mountains of it. I wouldn’t take any chances. I just stuck by him—I haunted him—I never let him alone until he built it of mud and sticks like all the rest of the chimneys in this dismal country” (*GA* 1: 9)

Yet in the *Autobiography*, Twain suggests a lesser level of mineralogical awareness on John Marshall’s part. Twain suggests that after John Marshall finished describing the Tennessee land’s potential resources, “he could have added with like truth, that there were inexhaustible mines of coal on the land, but the chances are that he knew very little about the article, for the innocent Tennesseans [sic] were not accustomed to digging in the earth for their fuel” (*AMT* 1: 62).

In fact, at least some Tennesseans were fully aware of coal in the Fentress area as early as three years after Twain’s father’s death in 1847, since local historian Jason Duke reports that “[m]ining had been conducted as early as 1850 in Fentress County, but the lack of suitable transportation to markets kept mining from commercializing until after 1900.” Like the evidence of early fossil-fuel awareness represented by the 1850 mining, Orion’s 1859 sale of 10,000 acres of the Grant 6402 tract to Elias Watson in Keokuk, Iowa, for \$25,000, could only be explained by Orion and Watson’s mutual belief that the



acreage held extremely valuable mineral resources, probably coal or oil (Fentress Deed K47 version 1).

However, Tennesseans' actual awareness of the coal's presence is not the point so much as Twain's ambiguous representation of his own father's knowledge. The divergence in Twain's reports about what his father knew about the land's coal and when he knew it reflects Twain's ambivalence about whether John Marshall's acquisition of the Tennessee land constituted folly or brilliance. In *The Gilded Age* version, nominally a work of fiction in which Twain admittedly may have been exercising literary license, Twain's father is depicted as substantially better informed, mineralogically, than the Fentress County chimney-builder with his "dull eyes" (*GA* 1: 9). Yet in the *Autobiography*, John Marshall is lumped in with other Tennesseans "innocent" about the combustible virtues of coal, not any more prescient or mentally acute about fossil fuels than his Fentress neighbors. Indeed, Twain asserts later in the *Autobiography* that "[t]he land contained all these riches; and also oil, but my father did not know that, and of course in those early days he would have cared nothing about it if he had known it" (*AMT* 1: 206). Yet Twain goes on to imply in the next sentence that because his father foresaw vast mineral wealth emanating from the Tennessee land, even if he could not foresee its exact form, John Marshall exhibited both prescience and mental acuity to a remarkable degree: "The oil was not discovered until about 1895. I wish I owned a couple of acres of the land now. In which case I would not be writing Autobiographies for a living" (*AMT* 1: 206).

Twain's assessment of his father's claims about the land's resources—that "[e]verything my father said about the capabilities of the land was perfectly true"—

covers a wide range of potential sources of wealth. His assertion that John Marshall could have claimed the land held vast coal reserves of coal, if only he and other “innocent Tennesseans” had known coal was flammable (*AMT* 1: 62), is only the beginning. By asserting that “[e]verything” in John Marshall’s claims “was perfectly true” (*AMT* 1: 61-62), Twain also vouches for the complete veracity of his father’s other claims for the land, including its forest resources, its allegedly fertile farmland, and its prospects for grape cultivation and winemaking. Twain’s assertion likewise endorses his father’s prophecy that the growing population of the United States would create great demand for habitable land such as John Marshall had acquired in Fentress County. Additionally, Twain himself prophesies that a railroad line from Cincinnati to Knoxville “could not help but pass through” Fentress (*AMT* 1: 62); instead, when the line eventually was built, it took a more direct route considerably east of Fentress.

In *The Gilded Age*, Twain also demonstrates his belief in the value of the Tennessee land, if only the capital and transportation were available to exploit its resources, when he and his coauthor Warner have Congress consider purchasing the land for use as an African American college in the novel, Twain’s first. The whole extended episode is treated as an attempted swindle, but that does not mean Squire Hawkins, or the John Marshall figure he represents, necessarily was incorrect when he claimed to have discovered lucrative mineral resources and other tremendous potential in the land. The use of public land by governments to establish various schools, colleges, and universities was hardly unusual in the nineteenth century; they are known to this day as “land grant colleges.” What transforms the purchase of the Tennessee land for a school into a swindle is not any absence of potential value in the land; it’s the question asked by Rep.

Buckstone when he presents the Tennessee land bill to Congress: “It might be asked why the government should buy this land, when it had millions of acres, more than the railroad companies desired, which it might devote to this purpose?” (*GA* 2: 136-37) The fact that it was becoming customary to grant public land to found schools signifies the possibility of finding resources to develop that land after the grants were finalized, through charitable private donations; and schools were not subject to taxation, eliminating the danger of the grants turning into reverse trusts for their beneficiaries. John T. Wilder, the former Union general who eventually acquired the Grant 6402 tract, did use a portion of his profits from mining the coal to found a college for African Americans in east Tennessee, decades after *The Gilded Age* was published. Yet the question within the novel remained: what made the Tennessee land worth purchasing, when the government already owned so much land it could have granted instead?

Twain and Warner have Rep. Buckstone claim all sorts of resources with great monetary potential or special educational value make the Tennessee land especially suited for their proposed school: “There was no place for the location of such a school like the Knobs of East Tennessee.” Allied with Sellers, the Hawkins family, and their home-state solon, Sen. Dilworthy, Buckstone orates to the US House of Representatives about the proposed Knobs Industrial University:

This was to be a school of mining, of engineering, of the working of metals, of chemistry, zoology, botany, manufactures, agriculture, in short of all the complicated industries that make a state great [...] The hills abounded in metals of all sorts, iron in all its combinations, copper, bismuth, gold and silver in small quantities, platinum he

believed, tin, aluminum; it was covered with forests and strange plants; in the woods were found the coon, the opossum, the fox, the deer and many other animals who roamed in the domain of natural history; coal existed in enormous quantity and no doubt oil; it was such a place for the practice of agricultural experiments that any student who had been successful there would have an easy task in any other portion of the country. (*GA* 2: 137)

The task with this passage is separating the grain from the chaff, the honestly asserted fact from the hyperbole: the extent to which Twain sincerely believed in the marvels of the Tennessee land that, after all, was actually non-fictional acreage, and the extent to which Twain and Warner are parodying a Gilded Age senator's pitch to his legislative body, replete with all his rhetorical "stretchers."

Evidence for the latter is provided when the senator goes on to describe the reluctance of Washington Hawkins, the Orion figure, "to sell any part of the land at any price." Buckstone proceeds to observe that "this reluctance was justifiable when one considers how constantly and how greatly the property was rising in value" (*GA* 2: 135), a fallacious claim if intended to describe the real Tennessee land that also contradicts the tax bill for the fictional Tennessee land that Washington receives and destroys near the conclusion of *The Gilded Age*: "The bill was for one hundred and eighty dollars—something more than twice the market value of the land, perhaps" (*GA* 2: 308). On the other hand, the moral purpose with which Buckstone imbues his sales pitch has a genuine basis in the post-Civil War sentiments of many European Americans. Twain actively supported education for African American freedmen, and he would have sincerely

seconded Buckstone's rhetorical question asserting the nation's moral responsibility for their welfare: "We had made them free. Should we leave them ignorant?" (*GA* 2: 136)

The swindle represented by the land, then, in Twain and Warner's novel is not so much that it is worthless as that its value, both inherently from its resources and on the real estate market, is rhetorically inflated. Is this merely a reflection of human nature, hardly worth noting except as an amusing artifact from Twain's comic repertoire of sociopolitical commentary? As Huck Finn phrases it, "That is nothing. I never seen anybody but lied, one time or another" (*HF* 13). No, the swindle is that its sponsors will personally benefit from it far more in the immediate period after the land's sale than any African American students will, and that the proposal's primary sponsor, Dilworthy, is a hypocrite who hides behind piety while bribing his way into being reelected. The Hawkins heirs who accompany Sellers to the nation's capital also gain social status from the land, just as John Marshall hoped his heirs would, according to DeVoto (13). For example, the swindlers plant rumors at Laura Hawkins's first society supper in Washington identifying her as "of a distinguished Washington family [...] very rich and a great landed heiress." Even worse, the proposed purpose of the land is sanctimoniously exploited; Laura's "whole heart" is said to be "devoted to the accomplishment of a great and noble enterprise—none other than the sacrificing of her landed estate to the uplifting of the down-trodden negro" (*GA* 2: 7).

In this passage and others in *The Gilded Age*, Twain's irony is razor-sharp; he already sees the land as a shimmering mirage deceiving the heirs into squandering their lives pursuing it. It is his voice we hear, not Orion's, after the Tennessee land deal falls through, when Washington Hawkins laments to Sellers, "I have chased it [the Tennessee

land fortune] years and years as children chase butterflies. We might all have been prosperous now; we might all have been happy,” if only the heirs had “accepted our poverty at first” and pursued more productive paths. Then Twain, still speaking through Washington’s voice, reveals his true conflicted feelings about his father and his father’s legacy:

Instead of that [productive effort], we have suffered more than the damned themselves suffer! I loved my father, and I honor his memory and recognize his good intentions; but I grieve for his mistaken ideas of conferring happiness upon his children. (*GA* 2: 306)

Concluding Washington’s impassioned speech to Sellers, Twain could not be more explicit about what he would later describe as “the heavy curse of prospective wealth” than having Washington vow to engage in “good solid work” to make a new start in life, and that furthermore, “I’ll leave *my* children no Tennessee Land!” (*GA* 2: 307).

Ultimately, Washington lets the land be sold for overdue taxes, “tearing the tax bill to bits and watching the breeze waft them away” before he declares, “The spell is broken, and the life-long curse is ended [...] Let us go” (*GA* 2: 309). This passage is the first time, but not the last, that Twain simply writes into oblivion the Tennessee land that he considers a “life-long curse” burdening his family and especially plaguing Orion-Washington.

### **Was the Tennessee Land Actually Rich in Mineral Wealth?**

Twain’s apparent belief that the Tennessee land’s resources are real does “honor his [father’s] memory and recognize his good intentions” while failing to turn a

blind eye to the trap that Twain believes the land represents for his family. Yet despite Twain's claim to the contrary in his *Autobiography*, not everything his father said "about the capabilities of the land was perfectly true." In his attempt to indicate and vindicate his father's mental acuity, represented by perception of the land's potential value, Twain exaggerates the land's mineral resources—with the exception of the coal and oil, both of which really were present in the land (Duke, "Young Oil Discovers," "Young Oil Hits"). As previously stated, Twain equivocates on the crucial question of John Marshall's knowledge of the coal's presence: he implies in *The Gilded Age* that his father knew about the coal because Squire Hawkins knows about it in the novel, while he doubts in the *Autobiography* that his father had any such knowledge. Mineral wealth would have been the most lucrative of the land's potential resources, and Twain's insistent attempts to credit his father with knowing about it underline the extent to which Twain works to cast his father in the role of mentally acute investor who at least intended to provide for his heirs:

[...] with the very kindest intentions in the world toward us, he laid the heavy curse of prospective wealth upon our shoulders. He went to his grave in the full belief that he had done us a kindness. It was a woful [sic] mistake, but fortunately he never knew it. (*AMT* 1: 61)

In this assertion, followed by Twain's avowals that his father was correct in knowing the land's worth, Twain wields his famous sense of irony: the "heavy burden of prospective wealth" was real wealth, not a chimera. However, the family's hope of actually obtaining it was indeed chimerical. Ultimately, Twain's father did his family a wrong by being right about the land's potential, an irony that Twain may have penned into his memoir

without even consciously realizing its paradox: by emphasizing his father's mental acuity in perceiving the land's potential resources, Twain excuses the lack of mental acuity his father demonstrated by setting up the Tennessee land as a financially-demanding reverse trust for his heirs.

The extent to which Twain exaggerates the land's mineral resources can be seen, firstly, in his endorsement of his father's report of iron in the land, a report that sounds as if it could have been written by Congressman Buckstone. Specifically, according to Twain, his father "further said: 'Iron ore is abundant in this tract, and there are other minerals [...]'"*(AMT 1: 61)*, and in *The Gilded Age*, as previously noted, John Marshall's avatar Squire Hawkins feels compelled to prevent his neighbor from building a chimney with iron ore (*GA 1: 9*). Yet iron ore is either minimally present in Fentress County or is present only in quantities or settings that make it commercially unfeasible to mine. At least, no histories or studies have indicated the presence at any time of any iron mines or furnaces in Fentress County. Local historian and attorney Albert Ross Hogue of Jamestown merely mentions iron a single time in his *History of Fentress County, Tennessee*: "the county is rich in coal, and has some iron, oil and gas" (7). A reference work published in 1854 indicates why Twain's father might have presumed his Tennessee land held significant seams of iron, even if he did not possess actual proof that it did. Although statistics in the text list iron production totals in Tennessee for 1850, three years after John Marshall's death, the text indicates that the state's iron industry also had attained a multi-ton level of production ten years earlier in 1840, two years after John Marshall made an extended visit to Fentress County. "The production of pig iron in this state is given by the Census for 1850 to be 30,420 tons, showing it to be one of the



most important iron-producing states in the Union,” J. D. Whitney writes in his reference text (475), adding, “Tennessee was, in 1840, the third iron-producing state in the Union; but [...] she is now probably the fifth in rank” (476).

The problem is that the iron apparently was not present in Fentress County in mineable quantities or quality. Tennessee’s iron ore was reported in 1913 to be “[c]oextensive with the coal region in the northern part of the State” (Burchard 13). However, the iron ore under the Cumberland Plateau, a geological region extending across the eastern two-thirds of Fentress at the plateau’s western edge, cannot be found at the plateau’s western edge. Instead, ore consisting up to 56 percent iron was mined from outcroppings along the eastern edges of the plateau along the Sequatchie and Tennessee river valleys, running from southwest to northeast, from Chattanooga to Cumberland Gap. Thus, iron mines, blast furnaces, and coke ovens flourished considerably to the east of Fentress County throughout the second half of the nineteenth century—as well as elsewhere in Tennessee, but not in Fentress (Burchard 16-17, Ashley, inset preceding 7, 32). Furthermore, except for the iron vein that emerges on the eastern edge of the Cumberland Plateau, the ore in the coal fields including Fentress only consists of “clay ironstone nodules [...] usually not of high grade” (Ashley 32). But hearing his father’s words through the distance of time, in addition to Twain’s physical distance from Tennessee, might have been prompted Twain to remember iron among the resources his father claimed were possessed by the Tennessee land, since in 1907, while Twain was finishing the *Autobiography*, Tennessee ranked eighth among the nation’s iron-mining states, producing “nearly 1,000,000 tons” (Ashley 31).

Twain's fictional iron may not be credibly founded in the mineralogy of Tennessee, but even less credible is his implication that rich veins of copper permeated his father's Tennessee land, as Twain implies in *The Gilded Age* through Squire Hawkins's claim that the 40 percent ore would have turned his neighbor's chimney into a smelter and revealed the valuable metal's presence (*GA* 1: 9), or as Rep. Buckstone proclaims copper's presence in the land to Congress in a lengthy list of probable mineral resources waiting in the land (*GA* 2: 137). Again, *The Gilded Age* is nominally fiction, and Twain does not have his father directly claim copper ore in the Tennessee land in the later-penned *Autobiography*; only iron "and other minerals" (*AMT* 1: 61). Thus, Twain retreats to merely implying his father's prescience of either copper or "other" lucrative minerals in the land, but a significant copper find elsewhere in the state may have influenced Twain's decision to have Squire Hawkins discover copper in *The Gilded Age*. Why does Hawkins not stay and mine the copper in the novel? A possible answer is that because the novel is a roman à clef, staying and mining were not the actions actually taken by the Clemens family on whom the Hawkins family is based, for the simple reason that no mineable copper actually exists on the Tennessee land.

Tennessee has lucrative copper deposits in, all right, but they are concentrated in Polk County, "in the extreme southeastern corner of the state," and no copper mines are to be found in Fentress County or its neighboring counties (Ashley 30). The Polk County copper is found underneath an iron ore seam, however, so if John Marshall believed there was iron ore on his Tennessee property, he might have assumed that copper accompanied the iron. If there had actually been "splendid yellow forty-per-cent ore" on Squire Hawkins's 75,000 acres, as the squire boasts, it would have been well worth his while to

stay put, mine the copper, and immediately harvest the “fortunes upon fortunes of copper ore on our land” (*GA* 1: 9), rather than migrating with his family to Missouri. On average, the lucrative ore from Polk County assayed either 20 to 25 percent copper ore (J. D. Whitney 323) or only 10 percent copper ore, effectively yielding only 31.4 pounds of metal copper per ton (Ashley 30), depending on which reference work is to be believed. However, one of the first loads of ore hauled out of Polk County by mule in 1847 averaged 32.5 percent copper (Maher 1). The relevant point is that by comparison with actual copper discoveries in Tennessee, a “forty-per-cent” copper lode would have been valuable indeed.

That year, 1847, in which serious production of copper began in Tennessee, in Polk County, also was the year that Twain’s father died. However, rumors of the copper’s existence were already in the air during John Marshall’s lifetime. The discovery of gold in the creek gravel of the copper region in 1827, when John Marshall was just beginning to buy and claim Tennessee land, may have added impetus to the push for Indian Removal, geologist Stuart W. Maher suggests; and continued prospecting for gold led to the discovery of copper in Polk County in 1843 (Maher 1-2). Certainly, by the time Twain and Warner co-wrote *The Gilded Age* in the late 1860s, they might have heard about Tennessee’s copper and its potential to fulfill the expectations of fabulous fortunes that the Tennessee land promised. “As early as 1855 a million dollars’ worth of ore was shipped,” geologist George H. Ashley reports (30), and between 1831 and 1963, nearly \$203 million worth of copper was produced in Tennessee (Maher 10). Col. Sellers was correct in declaring “There’s millions in it!” in reference to Tennessee land, even if

Twain or his father were wrong in believing the millions could be made in Fentress County—not from copper, anyway.

On the matter of coal and oil, of course, Twain and his ambiguously prescient father were quite correct about the millions, although no Clemens heirs earned anything more than a few thousand dollars from the land, which they sold before any significant mineral extraction began. Coal and oil are the only resources from the land that were potentially phenomenally lucrative, however. Of the other resources for which Twain described his father praising the Tennessee land, their value was a relative matter; it was valuable if the landholder could be content merely to possess a place to live and the means to grow or make his or her own living, perhaps at a healthy profit, but not to become a millionaire thereby. Alternatively, the value of the resources might be considered negligible, as it would have been considered by the social-climbing Twain, unless it amounted to millions of dollars.

### **The Land's Limited Potential for Agricultural Production**

Many of the methods of harvesting the land's resources, such as raising wheat or potatoes or refining pine resin into tar, would have mostly fallen into the basic subsistence category of potential profits. Yet Twain quotes John Marshall as rhapsodizing about "thousands of acres of the finest yellow pine timber in America" from which "[t]here is no end to the tar, pitch and turpentine which these vast pineries will yield" (*AMT* 1: 61-62). Twain affirmed the land's tar and turpentine potential with his subsequent assertion that "[e]verything my father said about the capabilities of the land was perfectly true" (*AMT* 1: 62), thereby also affirming John Marshall's boast on the

same page of “grazing lands, corn lands, wheat lands, potato lands, there are all species of timber—there is everything in and on this great tract of land that can make land valuable.” Perhaps as a jab at Orion, Twain includes the statement, attributed like the other resource claims to Twain and Orion’s mutual father, “This is a natural wine district, too; there are no vines elsewhere in America, cultivated or otherwise, that yield such grapes as grow wild here.” By quoting John Marshall’s assessment of the land’s grapes, Twain can be seen as proclaiming to his brother that Twain was factually correct and that Orion was disrespectful to their father’s mental acumen when Orion refused to let Twain sell the Tennessee land for grape cultivation and winemaking purposes. In fact, Twain and his father were both right and wrong about the land’s suitability for grapes.

Numerous vineyards now produce grapes throughout the Cumberland Plateau, but as the author of the present study knows from personal experience, the “fox grapes” and “possum grapes” that grow naturally in the plateau are prone to carrying wild yeast that turn the grape juice into vinegar instead of wine if they are harvested and processed.

Twain and his father were reiterating undisputed facts in describing Fentress County as the home of pine forests that were being cut for timber and tar. “At that time, the mountain people were engaged in shipping tar, turpentine and rosin, and paid little attention to farming,” Hogue writes of early days in the Wolf River valley in northern Fentress (*History of Fentress* 6), where John Marshall bought the double cabin, connected by a dogtrot, in which he and Jane began raising Twain’s older siblings. Yet no tar-boilers were amassing fortunes on the scale of Rockefeller and Carnegie. The fertility of the Tennessee land, meanwhile, is still a matter of dispute, but again, no farmers were becoming millionaires by propagating potatoes.

Indeed, much of Fentress County consisted of land that may have had to be given away to attract any claimants, in the way that its nearly-free prices attracted John Marshall to claim 5,000-acre land entries in 1830. Large sections of the county would later be described as undesirable as farmland, although Hogue would disagree, probably thinking of the county's "usually fertile" soil "without the use of fertilizers [...]" especially true of the valleys" (*History of Fentress* 5). Of course, in general the valleys or fertile bottomlands had already been claimed before the state of Tennessee reduced its land prices in 1830.

Hogue also describes a Cumberland Plateau farmer in Fentress harvesting bountiful crops per acre—and Hogue lists the bushels per acre—of watermelons, onions, corn and "fine Irish potatoes" in 1912 and 1913 (*History of Fentress* 5). Likewise, Twain's great-nephew Sam Webster calls the Clemens land legacy "75,000 acres of nice virgin soil which unfortunately remained virgin for a good many years, although it had everything" (Webster 10). However, Hogue and Webster's claims may simply represent hometown or family boosterism, since in her 1942 study *The Tennessee Yeoman*, Blanche Henry Clark writes:

Counties in this subregion [the Cumberland Plateau], such as Fentress, are extremely unproductive, oftentimes barely enough for home consumption being raised. Areas of unimproved land are so numerous that stock raising formed an important part of the life of the early agriculturalists. (Clark 23)

So much for the "corn lands, wheat lands, potato lands" in the Clemens legacy (*AMT* 1: 62): clearly, if the Tennessee land bore value, that value was not grounded in the land's agricultural potential. To this day, much of the county's terrain is steeply mountainous

and heavily wooded, financially undesirable except for logging, wildlife conservation, and ecotourism. In an age when fertile farmland was the most sought-after, “[t]he land Clemens bought [...] could grow nothing more than potatoes,” Hoffman writes (3).

Clark goes on to describe a comparative study of Tennessee land values between 1839 and 1859; Fentress, the county with the lowest land value at 94 cents per acre in 1839, actually saw its values go down a decade later, to 43 cents an acre in 1849. Fentress land prices rose again by 1859, to 86 cents an acre; but that average price was still more than a dollar per acre behind Johnson County with the second-lowest land values in the study. By way of comparison, land in Davidson County, where Nashville is located, sold for \$10.87 an acre in 1839, and by 1859, the price per acre had risen to \$48.50 in Davidson (Clark 59: Table 11). Reiterating that the soil in Fentress was “very barren and unproductive,” Clark adds that the county’s agricultural worthlessness was compounded by being “isolated from markets and without adequate transportation facilities” (Clark 59).

### **1901: Some of John Marshall’s Predictions Come True—Too Late for His Heirs**

As previously stated, that lack of transportation also prevented the early development of the county’s coal reserves, the “inexhaustible mines of coal” that Twain claimed were “on the land” (*AMT* 1: 62). Thus, in the years 1830-41, the era when Twain’s father acquired the majority of his Tennessee land, the value of mineral rights in some of the tracts was far from evident. By the end of the century, possession of the most coal-rich tract, Grant 6402, home of the Wilder Seam measuring five feet thick in places (Duke) was being contested before the Tennessee Supreme Court in *Duffield vs.*

*Spence*, vindicating John Marshall's apparent prescience about the coal. However, seven decades would have to pass after Twain's father made his initial claim for Grant 6402 in the name of three young relatives including Orion (Fentress Entry 547) before anyone invested the capital into railroads to haul the county's potential mineral riches to market. The coming of the railroads began as early as 1900, according to oral history collected by Fran Ansley and Brenda Bell about the Wilder Mine: "The railroad come through here in 1900 [...] I stood in the door watching them lay that track" (132). Jason Duke reports, "Trains that ran as early as 1901 brought mail and other goods from Nashville into the previously unreachable areas of Overton and Fentress Counties." Angela Smith writes that "[b]y 1903 the first railroad car was ready to ship coal out of Wilder" on a spur of the Tennessee Central Railroad, which had only completed the first Nashville-to-Knoxville line the previous year "because the rough terrain made it expensive to build" (8). The lucrative new mine at Wilder was soon opened by the Fentress Coal and Coke Co. that was one of the defendants in the Clemens heirs' 1907-11 lawsuit over land rights in the area (*Fentress Land Co. vs. Gernt*). By the 1930s, roughly 1,500 people resided in Wilder, the "company town" wholly owned by Fentress Coal and Coke. They subsisted on their earnings from mining the abundant coal or providing support services (Smith 8). The mine also became the site of a bitter United Mine Workers strike in the early 1930s commemorated in iconic folk songs by Hedy West and others, and Wilder was a significant producer of coal during both world wars before the mine finally began "playing out in the 1950s" (Duke). Apparently, the significant reserves of coal in the Grant 6402 tract were not as "inexhaustible" as Twain claimed, although they were as copiously present in John Marshall's day as Twain hints his father suspected.



In sum, Twain agreed with both his father's estimate of the Tennessee land's size and with his father's appraisal of the land's potential resources, yet he thought of his family's inheritance of the land from John Marshall as a "heavy curse," and he mostly declined any involvement in selling the land. Of course, since Twain is the source of his father's estimate of the land size, saying that Twain agreed with that estimate is equivalent to saying Twain agreed with his own memory—but the land records support or exceed Twain's estimate. Meanwhile, the value of the resources did not live up to John Marshall's predictions for them except for the lucrative resource that John Marshall may or may not have recognized—the coal—depending on which Twain text is consulted, *The Gilded Age* or the *Autobiography*. In effect, Twain completely confirms that his father left the family vast property of great value, if only the Clemens heirs had the resources to retain, release, and obtain that value for themselves, and Twain inflates the value of some if not all of the land's resources, since the coal in particular was truly worth "millions." Yet Twain persists in calling the inheritance a "curse" and in urging Orion to sell it for a good price or for virtually nothing—but to sell it, no matter what, and remove the "curse" from the family.

**The Greater Value of Mental Acuity than Real Estate, in Twain's Eyes, Leading to His Parody of Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha***

Not only did the Clemens heirs lack the financial resources to pay the taxes on the land or to develop it themselves—especially since no railroad served Fentress County—Twain continued to see Orion as blocking his own use of mental acuity to sell the land to other potential developers, and he believed Orion did not possess the mental acuity to

successfully market the land himself. In this sense Twain's valorization of mental acuity, in which a superior mind could take full advantage of the emerging technology of the nineteenth century and its associated entrepreneurship, ran in parallel with the European American justification for seizing lands from the Native Americans, a parallelism that might have ironically undercut the validity of the Clemens heirs' claim to the Tennessee land in Twain's mind, if not in the Tennessee legal system. The parallelism between Twain's valorization of mental acuity and the cultural justification for seizing Native American lands can be seen in their mutual requirement that resources actually be put to use rather than linger around, claimed but unused.

As a descendant of pioneers who settled lands in Kentucky that Native Americans persisted in defending violently, as an heir of lands originally purchased under duress from Native Americans in Tennessee, and as a participant during his own early career in the westward movement of European Americans into Nevada and California, Twain did not dissent from the mainstream of European American thought that relied on Emer de Vattel's *Law of Nations* (1758). True, in *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) Twain calls LaSalle's claiming of the Mississippi River valley the planting of "the first confiscation cross [...] on the banks of the great river" (*LM* 15), but his remarks seem to stem more from his anti-Catholicism and Francophobia than from any prescient postcolonial consciousness (Harrington and Jenn 19, 25, 123-24). Vattel's doctrine, the mainstream ideology, holds that since a hunting and gathering lifestyle does not use land as completely or productively as an agricultural lifestyle, the lands of hunters and gatherers are legally vacant and could be claimed and occupied by farmers who would "civilize" them (Vattel 37-38). A similar doctrine holding that Native American lands were

“technically *vacuum domicilium*” and therefore subject to settlement was expressed in 1629 by John Winthrop, the first governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, who inquired, “Why then should we stand starving here for places of habitation [...] and in the mean time suffer whole countries [...] to lie waste without any improvement?” (Pearce 21). Inherently violating Vattel’s doctrine, John Marshall had claimed land entries from the state of Tennessee, but he had not arranged for them to be “improved” through exploitation of their resources, and neither had his heirs. Instead, Twain believed, the land legacy had led the Clemens heirs, especially Orion, to fail to substantially improve their own fortunes in some other manner—except for Twain himself, of course. The land was a tangent, a distraction, and the appropriate action for the heirs to take, in Twain’s view, was to divest themselves of this “curse.” Implicit in this line of thought, suggested but not actually stated by Twain, is the concept that like the lives and fortunes of the Clemens heirs themselves, the Tennessee land’s vast resources were being wasted by Orion’s ineffectual efforts to sell the land—and therefore were not worth defending and retaining.

Twain’s ambivalence about the land—his labeling of it as “doubly and trebly cursed” in a letter to Orion despite asserting in the *Autobiography* that “[e]verything my father said about the capabilities of the land was perfectly true”—suggests that Twain viewed his father’s original action of claiming the land as a foolish error mitigated not by the sanctity of the claiming process and legal holding of the land, but by the prescience and mental acuity that John Marshall demonstrated by recognizing the land’s potential resources. Twain’s ambivalence to the Tennessee land is consistent with his frequently noted disdain, at least in some of his works, for hereditary titles and the associated

justification for the ownership of vast lands by virtue of an aristocrat's accident of birth. In *A Connecticut Yankee*, for instance, Hank Morgan ridicules the retention of a noble title by a man whose ancestor, four generations earlier, obtained it by building a brewery (CY 245). In *The Gilded Age*, Twain and Warner likewise ridicule the tendency of Americans to ape the British gentry by preceding their names with courtesy titles: "Mr. Riley, still bearing the legislative 'Hon.' attached to his name (for titles never die in America, although we *do* take a republican pride in poking fun at such trifles) sailed for Europe" (GA 2: 19-20). As a younger son lacking control of the Tennessee land's disposition but tantalized by its lucrative potential, Twain naturally might have been less appreciative of the inheritance of land than other members of his culture. Yet two short, relatively early works by Twain—"A Memory" (1870), which parodies Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha* (1855), and Twain's satirical "Petition Concerning Copyright" (1875)—suggest an exceptionally strong disregard of his culture's near-worship of private property ownership or, at the very least, these two sketches indicate Twain's unusual willingness to jest about this foundational norm of European American culture.

Twain's iconoclasm in this regard is remarkable due to the fact that, drawing on ideological roots that continued to hold sway throughout the nineteenth century, European American cultural norms made the desire to own private property a hallmark of being "civilized" rather than "savage" like the Native Americans. For instance, Roy Harvey Pearce, in his cross-disciplinary study *Savagism and Civilization* (1953-65), quotes George Washington's Secretary of War Henry Knox as iterating the "private property" standard of civilization: "All [...] that an Indian would need to be on his way to

civilization was, in the words of the Secretary of War in 1789, ‘a love for exclusive property’” (Pearce 68). Of course, in addition to the “private property” standard, European Americans with Vattel’s doctrine in mind also believed Native Americans had to become farmers in order to be considered “civilized,” blindly ignoring the fact that the lifestyle of eastern Native Americans “was as much agrarian as hunting” (Pearce 66-67).<sup>9</sup> These two criteria for achieving civilization, “love for exclusive property” and agrarianism, complement each other, but the preeminence of the former can be explained by the threat to “civilization” represented by the presence of cultures on the boundaries of European American hegemony that did not acknowledge private property ownership in their political, social, and economic systems.<sup>10</sup>

The preeminence of the “private property” standard that Twain significantly mocked but that his culture held holy—“quasi-metaphysical faith in private property,” as Pearce phrases it (91)—can be seen in the European American insistence on removing the Cherokees from their lands in northern Georgia, southeastern Tennessee, and portions of Alabama and North Carolina in the 1830s. By the time they were removed, the Cherokees had already transformed into “patently an agrarian people [...] on their way to learning and literacy” (Pearce 64). Yet despite considerable European American sympathy for the Cherokees’ plight, the Jackson and Van Buren administrations persisted in removing them westward. The Cherokees had evolved into agrarianism, or more accurately, they had retained their existing agrarianism and expanded it. However, they had not developed the tradition of individual ownership of land. Although they individually owned houses—even mansions—and other buildings, livestock, and even African American slaves, individual Cherokees were only free to cultivate any particular

piece of land in the Cherokee nation on a limited basis, and subsequently that land was open for other Cherokees to use at their pleasure. This practice was especially strong when these Native Americans still lived in the East “in communal town settlements with common gardens [and] granaries” (McLoughlin 70). However, it continued to apply in the West where ordinary Cherokees, barely subsisting on the available resources of the Indian Territory, nevertheless survived due to the lack of a need to buy property or pay off mortgages on land: “[c]ommon ownership of the land enabled them to move about at will; it was an essential source of hope and perseverance” (McLoughlin 69-70). In combination with a formal, written, democratic constitution adopted in 1828 (Hoig 132) that asserted tribal sovereignty in defiance of European American hegemony, the Cherokee social and legal structure not only challenged the authority of the United States and individual states, but also offered an alternative to the private ownership of land. By retaining their traditional custom of holding their tribal lands in common, the Cherokees unintentionally exacerbated the clamor for their own removal so that European Americans could confiscate tribal land to apportion privately.

Over and over, Pearce quotes European Americans and their Europeans predecessors finding fault with the Native Americans’ lack of a concept of land ownership, except in the form of tribal territories. As early as the mid-eighteenth century, Scottish moral philosopher Adam Ferguson declared in his study based heavily on the reports of travelers to North America, “Of Rude Nations Prior to the Establishment of Property,” that Native Americans were “hunters and fishers who have little or no sense of property ownership” (qtd. in Pearce 84). Likewise, Ferguson’s peer William Robertson opined in his *History of America* (1777) that Native American cultures were

retarded by “the exigencies of crude, isolated living [...] by hunting; so he has little or no sense of property or wealth” (qtd. in Pearce 87). The “private property” standard for attaining civilized status persisted through the end of the nineteenth century and beyond. For instance, Pearce points to James Hall’s 1835 consideration of the plight of Native Americans, “The chain of causes by which the condition of the unhappy race must, if at all, be ameliorated will be this: first, *personal security*, by the entire abolition of war among them; secondly, *permanent habitations*, and thirdly, *notions of property*” (qtd. in Pearce 72-73). Eventually, two years after the publication of *Huckleberry Finn*, “[i]n 1887, with the Dawes Act, tribal lands were distributed among individual Indians, according to civilized notions of land tenure” (Pearce 242).

Thus, it is significant that Twain chose to parody *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855) because the Native American subjects of Longfellow’s popular epic were strongly associated in the reading public’s mind with their lack of individual land property, while Twain parodies the poem by inserting the formal phrases of a warranty deed, a document that legally reifies individual ownership of a particular piece of property, into the poem’s particular folk-style meter. Hiawatha was a “noble Indian” similar to such white-friendly Native American characters as Chingachgook and Uncas in James Fenimore Cooper’s Leatherstocking novels—“noble,” but vanishing; doomed to extinction (Pearce 192-93, 209). Twain despised the “noble Indian” stereotype throughout his lifetime and attacks it in his novel fragment *Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians* (1885), in which a chastened Tom Sawyer, discovering the murder on a westward wagon trail of a European American family by Native Americans, confesses to Huck Finn that he had foolishly believed in the “Injuns” of “Cooper’s novels,” but believes in them no more (“HTAI”

109). Thus, Twain would have borne no great respect for the hero of Longfellow's opus, or for Hiawatha's people. When Twain published his sketch, in an August 1870 humor column in the *Galaxy*, he had not yet published any of his few late-career reconsiderations of Native Americans and in general was given to heaping scorn and contempt upon them. He clearly feels free in "A Memory" to completely alter and thus disrespect the text of *Hiawatha* itself. Yet he is concerned, in the sketch, that he will arouse the ire of his father by penning his parody.

The question brought to mind by Twain's fear of his father's wrath is why he thinks his father would be angry. Twain directly credits his father's predicted ire to Twain's own irritating irascibility and to a pun upon the word "deed": he believes his father expects a paean to the heroic "deed" of Twain's semi-fictional sibling in saving a Texas couple's life, for which the couple gave the sibling "a handsome property in a town in the North," while Twain instead creates found poetry from an existing text: the written "deed" for the property. "I took the stupid 'Warranty Deed' itself and chopped it into Hiawathian blank verse, without altering or leaving out three words," Twain explains, and "The Story of a Gallant Deed" is the result, beginning, "THIS INDENTURE, made the tenth / Day of November, in the year / Of our Lord one thousand eight / Hundred six-and-fifty" ("A Memory"). Twain is forced to flee his father's intemperate flinging of a boot jack and "other missiles" in his direction. Again, the question is the cause of his father's ire.

In the sketch, while Twain claims his father expects a paean to his sibling's heroism, his father actually holds the written deed and opines, "here were a subject worthier than the traditions of these Indians [...] in this very deed." Then Twain's father



specifically elaborates: “There is more poetry, more romance, more sublimity, more splendid imagery hidden away in that homely document than could be found in all the traditions of all the savages that live.” Twain also begins the sketch by asserting that *Hiawatha* is the only poem his father ever loved “in all the long half century that he lived.” Thus a possible reason his father becomes irate is that he hates to hear his favorite poem abused, but that reason does not square with his father’s praise of the poetry and its “splendid imagery” that he perceives the warranty deed embodies far more significantly than *Hiawatha* does. Perhaps Twain’s tongue is in cheek when he calls *Hiawatha* his father’s only favorite poem; humor is Twain’s rhetorical purpose in the sketch. Yet if Twain’s assertion of his father’s partiality for the poem is to be taken at all seriously, his father’s valorization of private land ownership appears all the greater. In any case, Twain’s father’s statement serves to specifically reify the private possession of property above the battlefield heroics in the section of the poem Twain specifically quotes, Canto IX (1: 74-83).

True, Twain seems to have selected a section that sounds almost ludicrous outside the context of the poem’s narrative, featuring injunctions by Nokomis to her son Hiawatha and his friends such as “Take your war-club, Puggawaugun, / And your mittens, Minjekahwan” (1: 75) that he has heard his father read aloud “with the same inflectionless judicial frigidity with which he always read his charge to the jury, or administered an oath to a witness.” In this passage, Twain definitively establishes that his father was humorless. However, his father’s failure to grasp Longfellow’s lyricism and to comprehend the fun that Twain pokes at the poem does not seem to be the issue, since Twain’s father also dismisses the significance of the poem’s lofty sentiments when

compared to the legal description of the ownership of a piece of land. The inescapable conclusion is that when Twain the persona responds by disrespecting the solemnity of the registration of land ownership, Twain the son is disrespecting his father himself, although indirectly and perhaps subconsciously. Indeed, Twain presents his parody of *Hiawatha* as only the latest instance of Twain disturbing what he describes as “a sort of armed neutrality” between himself and his father “when I was a boy” because “[m]y father and I were always on the most distant terms.” In Twain’s sketch, he has previously provoked his father to break this truce by jumping off a stable roof, giving tobacco to an elephant (presumably at a visiting circus), and elaborately cursing while pretending to be asleep. Similarly, in Twain’s simultaneous parody of *Hiawatha* and legal language regarding land, Twain may not intend to antagonize his father, but that is indeed the result. In the context of Twain’s actual life, Twain is antagonizing a father who placed his entire hope for his family’s preservation on the purchase and possession of 75,000 acres of Tennessee land.

Further evidence that Twain’s sketch parodies his father’s foolish faith in land ownership, as Twain sees it, can be found in the particular section of Longfellow’s poem that Twain quotes. In Canto IX, Hiawatha traverses the western waters to kill the evil magician-warrior who slew the father of Nokomis. “Avenge my father’s murder!” Nokomis implores Hiawatha, after inventorying the arrows, war-club, and mittens he will need to accomplish this task (1: 75). Twain reverses this indirect Oedipal theme in the original poem, erasing Hiawatha’s revenge for father-killing and replacing it by challenging his own father’s closely-treasured belief in his culture’s basic legal and economic systems, simultaneously enacting a scene of sibling rivalry by ignoring his

half-brother's heroic action that allegedly obtained the land described in the warranty deed. The original poem specifically abjures private ownership of even the spoils of war, while Twain's parody places an entire superseding text over the poem's celebration of Native American communalism, albeit a celebration imperfectly expressed by a European American rather than Native American poet. The salient point is that Twain is poking fun at both the poem's romantic idylls and their "civilized" legalistic replacement. In the poem, upon returning from taking revenge upon the evil magician-warrior, Hiawatha obeys his culture's communal ethic: "But the wealth of Megissogwan, / All the trophies of the battle, / He divided with his people, / Shared it equally among them" (1: 83). Twain's parody overlays Longfellow's celebration of this noble but doomed ethic—doomed just as nineteenth-century European Americans believed Native Americans faced certain extinction—with a legal description that, like all private, European American claims to land ownership, ultimately would have derived from the extinction of tribal claims to American land.

Ultimately, Twain's parody does not appear to be criticizing shabby treatment of Native Americans, but Twain does appear to be poking fun at *Hiawatha*, or perhaps at its author, and at legalistic land language. His act of erasure-by-replacement of Longfellow's valorization of "noble" prehistoric Native American culture, with its concomitant communalism, might seem to speak in support of private land ownership, but in fact Twain specifically overlays the most pompous phrases of the poem with the pomp and ceremonial phrases of the warranty deed, thereby equating the two texts and suggesting that both texts are proper objects of ridicule. Twain's work at times shows strong sympathy for Native American communalism and for its associated hunting and

gathering lifestyle, especially in *Huckleberry Finn*, so it is the ennobling of Native Americans in general and private land ownership in particular that Twain targets in his parody. It is but one step from there to criticizing John Marshall's land acquisition in Fentress County as a "well intended folly."

Likewise, Twain's emphasis in "A Memory" on his father's outraged response to the parody should not be overlooked. It seems valid to read Oedipal overtones in the sketch, even though this short work of fiction is only semi-autobiographical. Admittedly, Longfellow wrote and published his epic more than eight years after John Marshall Clemens's death in 1847, so Twain's father could not have ever read or heard *Hiawatha*, much less developed an affinity for the poem. Likewise, Twain had no half-brother named "Orrin," and his real older brother Orion came to hold land through inheritance, not heroism. Yet other aspects of the sketch ring true: his father's abbreviated life span, austerity, testy relationship with young Twain, and valorization of land ownership. In the context of Twain's pattern of vehemently rejecting the Tennessee land, the accurate details in "A Memory" suggest a substantial emotional core in the sketch supporting its anti-paternal iconoclasm regarding land, although perhaps Twain is simply rummaging in his life experience for details necessary to construct a complex pun.

### **Twain's Modest Proposal: Limiting Land Ownership, but Making Copyright Protection Permanent**

The second of the two Twain sketches from the 1870s that especially demonstrate his counter-cultural predilections regarding the sanctity of land ownership is his "Petition Concerning Copyright." Twain published this second brief text in *Sketches, New and Old*

(1875) to advocate for longer or lifelong copyrights for the authors of texts, thirty-one years before he actually testified before a congressional committee about the issue.

Framed as a petition to Congress, Twain's sketch seemingly imitates Jonathan Swift and his "Modest Proposal" by proposing that since "the right of property in the literary result of a citizen's intellectual labor is restricted to forty-two years" (*SNO* 209), the ownership of real estate ought to be limited to the same term. Just as Swift uses the seemingly unthinkable proposal of deliberately raising Irish infants for the English to feed upon as a metaphor for exploitive colonial policies that the British otherwise found quite palatable, Twain crosses a similar boundary of taboo by seeming to question the sanctity of private ownership of landed property in perpetuity if the ownership of products of the mind is not granted similar perpetual protection.

Twain further buttresses his supposedly satirical petition with a serious ethical argument that his proposal is based on the guarantee of "equal rights" in the US Constitution, "backed by the Declaration of Independence" (*SNO* 208). In other words, Twain is basing his appeal on a then-recent addition to the Constitution, the Fourteenth Amendment, that had only been ratified seven years earlier, in 1868. Such an appeal was consistent with Twain's ardent Republicanism in the 1870s that can be seen in Twain's fervent response to the speechmaking at a reunion of Gen. Grant's Army of the Tennessee, where William Dean Howells viewed Twain's enthusiasm for the antislavery goals of the Civil War as "more Catholic than the Pope," to borrow the metaphor employed by Sherwood Cummings (451). Howells himself writes that Twain was "the most desouthernized Southerner I ever knew" (35). The Radical Republicans' Reconstruction policies relied, for their legality, on the Fourteenth Amendment and its

mandate, “nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws” (“14<sup>th</sup> Amendment”). To support his appeal based on sentiments newly popular in his time, Twain also notes their venerability: that “equal rights” also are guaranteed among his nation’s founding ideals. Thus Twain, under cover of satire, is rolling out the heavy artillery of idealism in a fight he takes very seriously.

The Mark Twain Project glosses a letter that Twain penned to one congressman that “Clemens’s effort to stop the pirated *Gilded Age* play evidently inspired him to compose the enclosed ironic appeal” (SLC to Samuel S. Cox, 8 Feb. 1875, n. 1, “Letters,” *MTPO*). Outwitting literary pirates, both domestic and foreign, became something of an obsession for Twain, for good reason: the era’s lack of international copyright meant inexpensive pirated copies of an author’s books could be imported to undersell his or her copyrighted volumes, losing the author profits from domestic sales in addition to non-existent royalties on the pirates’ sales. Beginning with the publication of *Life on the Mississippi*, Twain habitually traveled to Canada to be present on British soil when the English edition of came out ahead of the American edition: “He bitterly resented the unauthorized publication of his work—barefaced theft, he considered it” (Lauber, *Inventions* 99-100). Twain took a similar view of the limited term of domestic copyrights: according to Annelise K. Madsen, “he held the federal government responsible” (56) for its ineffectuality at protecting the products of an author’s mental acuity. Thus Twain’s “Petition” draws from a deep well of emotion strong enough to provoke him to propose a reversal of his culture’s reverence for and reification of the perpetual ownership of private property.

Twain's primary passion motivating his satirical "Petition" is the protection of an author's work, to be sure, traceable to his own economic interests and to his valorization of mental acuity. Yet Twain's willingness to even consider committing the effrontery of disrespecting perpetual property rights suggests he lacked any deep respect for those rights to begin with. At the very least, his satirical sense was alert to which property right comparable to an author's rights would most seriously shock his readers if he proposed limiting its term to the length of a copyright: "Whereas, Forty-two years seems an exceedingly just & righteous term, & a sufficiently long one for the retention of property," Twain dead-pans in his "Petition," concluding by urging that "fair & equal treatment may be meted out to all citizens, by the restriction of rights in all property, *real estate included*, to the beneficent term of forty-two years" (*SNO* 209, emphasis added).

Tellingly, a "paragraph not added to the petition" (*SNO* 209) reveals Twain's belief in his own mental acuity as made evident by his own writing: his concern is not for the average writer, for whom the existing copyright protection seems adequate to Twain, but for authors whose works endure longer than copyright protection for themselves or their heirs. Twain does not directly cast himself into the role of a great writer in his "paragraph not added," but his 1906 congressional testimony does discuss the effect of limited copyright protection on himself and his family, so even in the "paragraph not added" he clearly sees himself as one of the authors who are the targets of limited protection, i.e., only the best authors. In the "paragraph," he writes:

The charming absurdity of restricting property-rights in books to forty-two years sticks prominently out in the fact that hardly any man's books ever live forty-two years, or even the half of it; & so, for the sake of getting a

shabby advantage of the heirs of about one Scott or Burns or Milton in a hundred years, the law makers of the “Great” Republic are content to leave that pitiable poor little pilfering edict upon the statute books. (*SNO* 209)

By appearing in print directly after his attempt to shock his readers by questioning the sanctity of inherited property rights, this postscript to Twain’s “Petition” has the effect of ranking the protection of extreme mental acuity, in the form of literary genius, above all other forms of property, including mundane literary property as well as real estate.

Land, the latter form of property, was especially vested in the nineteenth century with the symbols of inherited wealth to legitimize its unearned transmission from owner to heirs, as is exemplified by the typical language found in many of the grants and deeds that recorded John Marshall’s acquisition of the Tennessee land. For instance, Grant 6407, which actually was issued in Orion’s name, states that governors Cannon and Polk awarded a particular hundred acres in Fentress County “[w]ith the hereditaments and appurtenances to have and to hold the said tract or parcel of land to the Said Orion Clemens and his heirs forever.” The examples of usage for the word “hereditament” in the *Oxford English Dictionary* mostly derive from medieval contexts similar to those Twain derides and mocks in *A Connecticut Yankee*; none are dated later than 1859. The *OED* quotes Macaulay as asserting, in 1855, the undemocratic truth that “[t]he representation of Westmoreland was almost as much one of the hereditaments of the Lowther family as Lowther Hall.” An 1844 usage cited by the *OED* emphasizes the “natural hereditament” from father to son. The wording of Grant 6407, “to have and to hold,” equates the terminology of land ownership in perpetuity with traditional European



American marriage vows; however, the word “forever” grants the land conveyance even greater endurance than “till death do us part.” This comparability of terms between acquiring a parcel of land or a spouse’s hand might be expected in light of Annette Kolodny’s assertion, in her influential monograph *The Lay of the Land* (1975), that “the central metaphor of American pastoral experience” is “the metaphor of the land as woman” (54). Yet Twain, as demonstrated by his *Hiawatha* parody and “Petition Concerning Copyright,” did not view the owning and bequeathing of land with the same degree of respect that he demonstrated in his personal life with his wife Livy and, literarily, in his loathing of seduction in *The Gilded Age* and elsewhere.

### **The Mutability of Land Ownership in *Roughing It* and *Life on the Mississippi***

Twain exhibits a similarly cavalier attitude toward the sanctity of private property in his chapter in *Roughing It* (1871) that describes a “practical joke” involving land ownership that the locals in a western community pull on the newly-appointed United States attorney, “General Buncombe,” who “considered himself a lawyer of parts” (*RI* 1: 234). A “client” comes to him with the sad story that an adjoining ranch has slid down the mountainside and literally buried his own tract, and now the invading ranch’s owner is having the gall to claim he still owns the terrain on top of the client’s ranch. To make matters worse, the town is siding with the invading slider, a state of community opinion that Twain portrays as exceptionally opposing the usual cultural norms. Buncombe eagerly and confidently agrees to go to court on his client’s behalf, unaware that it is a kangaroo court and everyone is on the joke except himself (*RI* 1: 234-40). Although Buncombe prevails in eliciting favorable testimony from almost every witness and orates

eloquently, the judge has the effrontery to set aside his client's sacred property rights in the name of an authority even more sacred, namely God:

If Heaven has chosen to favor the defendant Morgan [...] and if Heaven, dissatisfied with the position now of the Morgan ranch upon the mountainside, has chosen to remove it to a position more advantageous for its owner, it ill becomes us, insects as we are, to question the legality of the act [...] the sacrilegious hands and brains and tongues of men must not meddle.” (*RI* 1: 239-40)

The mock judge goes on to rule that Buncombe's client “has been deprived of his ranch by the visitation of God! And from this decision there is no appeal” (*RI* 1: 240). This early, 1871 form of fatalism in Twain, although delivered within a satire centered on a hoax, persisted into his later years. It also stands as an early expression by Twain of the inevitability of conquests by one people of land from another people, as Twain would later put the matter in *Following the Equator* (1897): “No tribe, howsoever insignificant, and no nation, howsoever mighty, occupies a foot of land that was not stolen” (*FTE* 2: 298).

In the *Roughing It* version of inevitable conquest, the rancher whose tract is overlaid by another describes how the land itself seemed to be invading his: when he “looked up that hill it was just like the whole world was a-ripping and a-tearing down that mountainside—splinters and cordwood, thunder and lightning [...] rocks as big as a house jumping 'bout a thousand feet high and busting into ten million pieces.” Yet the intruding rancher has the nerve to ask the original landholder “why I didn't *stay and hold possession!*” (*RI* 1: 236). The entire episode suggests Twain's consciousness that land

ownership, as a human institution, is far from immutable, and that in addition to human designations, ownership is subject to divine intervention in the form all sorts of chance and happenstance. Furthermore, Twain views this mutability as comic, a fit subject for joking about, rather than as a threat to the structure of civilization.

Twain reiterates this theme in *Life on the Mississippi*, wherein he takes a steamboat down the river he has not traveled since before the Civil War, and gets laughed at for asking to go ashore at Napoleon, Arkansas—a formerly thriving river town that has been entirely washed away. This time he portrays the vulnerability of human claims to land as a curiosity bordering on the sublime: “Yes, it was an astonishing thing to see the Mississippi rolling between unpeopled shores and straight over the spot where I used to see a good big self-complacent town twenty years ago” (*LM* 284-86). Yet for Twain, sublimity leads back into his particular brand of irreverent comedy. The inundation of Napoleon prompts him to begin his next chapter with the tale of an island left in limbo due to the river’s frequent shifts of course: “When the state of Arkansas was chartered, she controlled ‘to the center of the river’—a most unstable line. The state of Mississippi claimed ‘to the channel’—another shifty and unstable line” (*LM* 287). A shift of the river’s course leaves the island outside of either definition, but Twain minimizes the necessity for precise accuracy in describing exactly how the river accomplished its shift, instead emphasizing the shift’s significance as a humorous flouter of territory possession:

Whether I have got the details right or wrong, this *fact* remains: that here is this big and exceedingly valuable island of four thousand acres, thrust out in the cold, and belonging to neither the one state nor the other; paying taxes to neither, owing allegiance to neither. (*LM* 287)

In this passage, Twain anthropomorphizes the land; the “island” itself pays no taxes, owes no fealty, and presumably, bows to no authority. Only in his final sentence does Twain remember the land’s possessor. “One man owns the whole island, and of right is ‘the man without a country,’” Twain concludes (*LM* 287), but he never addresses how a man can own any land without a government to register and reify the title. Nor does this anarchic circumstance alarm Twain; he presents it as a humorous curiosity.

Besides describing such acts of God that circumvent the laws and institutions of society, Twain asserts that acts of an author can override societal designations that reify the private and perpetual possession of property. For instance, in his *Autobiography*, he claims to have moved the Quarles farm where he spent the summers of his youth to serve as the model for the Phelps farm in Arkansas in *Huckleberry Finn*:

It was all of six hundred miles, but it was no trouble, it was not a very large farm; five hundred acres, perhaps, but I could have done it if it had been twice as large. And as for the morality of it, I cared nothing for that; I would move a state if the exigencies of literature required it. (*AMT* 1: 210)

Twain proclaims in this passage that a successful author, as both an inventor of stories and an extreme employer of mental acuity, is vested with peremptory eminent domain over real terrain founded on virtually divine authority since “the exigencies of literature” supersede the undefined “morality of it.” Twain’s dry quip vests private property with quasi-religious status since teleporting a whole plantation might somehow constitute a “moral” transgression. It also scoffs at the very same notion it suggests.

## **Taking Literary Privilege to Court, and Calculating the Literary Value of Land in Dollars**

Twain even asserts literary privilege over the significance of actual property possession in a 1909 deposition he was required to make in the lawsuit *Fentress Land Co. vs. Gernt*, although a bit of explanation is necessary to clarify the context of Twain's assertion. In *Gernt*, the Clemens heirs claimed to have located 4,000 valuable coal-bearing acres not included in earlier sales to buyers because the Fentress-Overton county line had been moved during intervening years after Twain's father located the land. The moved county line may have meant the original boundaries of the coal-rich Grant 6402 tract extended into Overton County outside of Fentress, beyond the newer county line, in a process reminiscent of the Mississippi River's previously-described shifts of course. In his deposition, Twain is questioned about writing that in 1887 or earlier, Orion traded the last 10,000 acres of the Tennessee land "for a house and lot in the town of Corry, in the oil regions of Pennsylvania," adding that "[a]bout 1894 he sold this property for \$250. That ended the Tennessee Land" (*AMT* 1: 208). Although no such trade can be documented through Fentress County records,<sup>11</sup> and regardless of the fact that over 46,000 acres may have remained in the Tennessee land legacy by as late as 1907, Twain wishfully writes the legacy entirely out of any lingering twentieth-century existence in his *Autobiography*.

Twain's assertion of literary privilege occurs in his deposition after the defendants in *Gernt* naturally sought to hold Twain to his claim that Orion's final land swap "ended the Tennessee land," a claim that Twain had published in *The North American Review*

and two Sunday supplements,<sup>12</sup> even though his *Autobiography* had not yet appeared in book form. In response, Twain advances a theory that literary truth is somehow different from other truth, although by its title he presents his *Autobiography* as a work of non-fiction, i.e., truth:

In answer to the 13<sup>th</sup> interrogatory he says, “Yes, *literarily*, they [the statements in the *Autobiography*] are true, that is to say they are a product of my impressions—recollections. As sworn testimony they are not worth anything; they are literature.” (SLC deposition, 7 June 1909, *Fentress Land Co. vs. Gernt*, emphasis added)

Thus, apparently, Twain believed that if a brilliant author could create a text that amuses his readers and conveys the essence of an important truth—in this case, the unbearable burden that Twain believed “prospective wealth” represented—then its factual details are irrelevant. As “sworn testimony” these details “are not worth anything,” but “literarily” they convey valuable truth.

Further evidence that Twain valued mental acuity over the ownership of inherited land can be seen in an additional claim in the same paragraph of his *Autobiography*. Twain writes that “[i]f any penny of cash ever came out of my father’s wise investment [the Tennessee land]” other than the \$250 Orion allegedly earned in 1894 from his unconfirmed trade in 1887 or earlier, “I have no recollection of it.” However, on further reflection, Twain claims that he personally earned a tenth of a million dollars<sup>13</sup> from writing about the land:

It furnished me a field for Sellers and a book. Out of my half of the book I got \$15,000 or \$20,000; out of the play I got \$75,000 or \$80,000—just

about a dollar an acre. It is curious: I was not alive when my father made the investment, therefore he was not intending any partiality; yet I was the only member of the family that ever profited by it. (*AMT* 1: 209)

Twain significantly calls his father's acquisition of the land a "wise investment" in the same paragraph that he claims the Clemens heirs had "managed it all away except 10,000 acres, and gotten nothing to remember the sales by," certainly not evidence that the investment was "wise." Twain's use of this adjective also stands in contrast to his otherwise persistent labeling of the land's acquisition as "well intended folly" and of the land itself as "doubly and trebly cursed."

In this passage, Twain's ambivalence could not be more evident. He still desires to honor his father by acknowledging John Marshall's acumen regarding the land's resources, but at the same time, he downplays the Clemens heirs' actual profits from the land, disregarding the relatively modest sums that Orion acquired through land sales. Those sums, totaling nearly \$37,000, were in fact sizeable, if the Clemens heirs actually received them; they could be considered insignificant only if the heirs had been hoping for and expecting to receive massive fortunes instead of lesser sums, the fortunes of millionaires, as Squire Hawkins's hyperbole in *The Gilded Age* suggests (*GA* 1: 7, 9, 42). Yet despite the sales of land that Orion accomplished, Twain categorically denies that the Clemens heirs acquired any sums at all other than Orion's final \$250. As if this indulgence of sibling rivalry were not enough, Twain goes on to suggest that his father, with a prescience bordering on the supernatural, had somehow selected him prior to his conception and birth—and thus not his brother—to benefit from the land's potential as a literary resource. Twain claims to have earned his paternal "partiality," which he

ambiguously disclaims, through his literary genius that John Marshall could not possibly have predicted would turn him, as an adult, into one of the world's most acclaimed and frequently quoted authors in the English language. Twain tacitly acknowledges the improbability of his father possessing such prescience, about both the Tennessee land and the impending fame of Samuel Langhorne Clemens; nevertheless, Twain makes the claim that his father somehow possessed this prescience.

Thus, Lawrence Howe may not go far enough when he suggests that Twain's claim to have been the only major financial beneficiary of the Tennessee land exemplifies his "tendency to conflate real property with literary product" ("Real Property" 7). Given land as material that could be exploited in any number of ways, Twain does make use of that land through his mental acuity, simultaneously depicting its use by a character with the mental acuity to base an attempted appropriation of federal funds on a proposed congressional purchase of the Tennessee land from the Hawkins family to build a school for African Americans to enhance their use of mental acuity. True, Twain's claim to have used the land to create Col. Sellers is a stretch, because elsewhere he identifies his "mother's favorite cousin" James A. H. Lampton as his model for Sellers. However, the land does serve as a character of sorts in *The Gilded Age*, or at least as a very significant if passive prop used by Sellers with noticeable mental acuity, even though intervening events in the novel inevitably doom Sellers's schemes to profit from the land.

As demonstrated by his claim to have benefitted handsomely from writing about the land while turning his eyes from the profits that Orion earned for the Clemens heirs, Twain clearly valued the creation of fiction significantly above the inheritance and ownership of real estate, as opposed to merely conflating land and literature. Also, as



previously suggested, Twain valued mental acumen that shunned land speculation because he had witnessed and personally experienced the effects of a previous generation's mistakes in such speculation. Like an alcoholic's son who becomes a teetotaler in response to his paternal genetics and example, Twain may have spurned the "heavy curse" of seeking to turn the Tennessee tracts into treasure as a burden his father had offered him but that he was wise enough to refuse, an albatross legacy something like John Marshall's constant tinkering with and investing in perpetual-motion machines. Orion's Prohibitionism seems a possible clue to alcoholic tendencies in his father that John Marshall controlled by becoming a teetotaler himself: as a country storekeeper in Tennessee, according to Ron Powers, John Marshall noticed that "he was taking to the whisky" that farmers tended to pay their bills with, "so in 1831 he swore off drink forever and moved again" (*Dangerous* 36). Twain watched his elder brother, like their mutual father, forswear the use of alcohol while spending much of his later life trying to wring Mammon out of the mountains of eastern Middle Tennessee, as well as tinkering the odd moment and dollar away on perpetual motion machines. Fred Kaplan observes that Twain apparently followed his father to a certain degree by constantly investing in inventions: "His father's failed Tennessee land speculation may have influenced his compulsion, although he noticeably never invested in land, but there seems a direct line of connection between John Marshall's interest in tinkering and Twain's fascination with inventions" (365). Twain demonstrably valued the mental acuity that produces inventions, tempered with restraining wisdom and consideration for others as the civilized ideal. However, after observing his father's and brother's examples, wasting

life pursuing the “heavy curse of prospective wealth” where no prospects could be realized must have seemed to Twain a form of mental aberration rather than acuity.

In particular, fixation on the “prospective wealth” of the Tennessee land may have seemed un-modern, inherently medieval, and therefore not mentally acute to Twain, whose multiple fictionalizations of himself include the inventive and daring Hank Morgan, the Connecticut Yankee, who brings industrial civilization and Enlightenment ideals to medieval England. An erstwhile silver prospector in the Far West, as he chronicles in *Roughing It*, Twain is not averse to staking claims to mineral discoveries, yet in the book he knowingly describes their pitfalls: the capital and labor necessary to actually operate a profitable silver mine (*RI* 1: 244-51). Twain also expresses an acute awareness in *Roughing It* of the situationally variable nature of land possession: claims compete or overlap; one local law mandates that they must be physically “worked with pick and spade” at least one day during the first ten days after they are “located,” a requirement that Twain claims to have flubbed at a bonanza lode that his prospecting partner Higbie discovered, as previously mentioned (*RI* 1: 274-75, 279, 287); and if one ranch slides down a mountainside and overtops another tract, ownership of the resulting palimpsest conceivably could be contested in court, as Twain humorously describes in his “General Buncombe” chapter (*RI* 1: 234-40).

As a consequence of such caution-inducing awareness of the pitfalls of speculation in land and its potential minerals, Twain categorizes them as unprofitable and therefore a form of anachronistic trap. Even mineral discoveries rank above land speculation: Twain’s immediate response to believing he had struck it rich among the minerals of the West is to declare his intention to “sell my share of the Tennessee land

and tender the proceeds to the widows' and orphans' fund" (*RI* 1: 209), ranking the land's value as only a relative pittance worth donating to charity. Yet significantly, Twain must still believe the land holds value—why else would he believe that it could be sold for a valuable contribution to charity? Why would he believe that he could sell it at all, or that his friends could do it for him? Despite his own brother's usually unsuccessful attempts at selling the land in parcels, Twain claims he has instructed his friend in letters to sell it for him and then make the charitable donation (*RI* 1: 209). Recalling what he felt during this early prospecting in Nevada stage, Twain ambiguously sees the land as both valuable and worthless, easily sold and impossible to sell, but he never really changes his mind about its ultimately seductive, siren-like nature. Spurning any reliance on the Tennessee land as the nineteenth-century industrial and technological revolution raged around him, Twain instead spent his own life and money investing in inventions and literary texts.

If Twain really valorized mental acuity as considerable evidence suggests, he plausibly could have dismissed his father's acquisition of the Tennessee land and *de facto* establishment of a reverse trust for his heirs as not mentally acute. Yet aside from perceiving a silver lining in his father's recognition of mineral riches in the Tennessee land, Twain also might have lauded his father for not his actual acquisition but his manner of acquiring the Tennessee land, a process that decidedly exhibited mental acumen. As described in Chapter Two, this process involved the use of two sets of intermediate landholders to claim tracts and receive grants for those tracts, all of which John Marshall eventually acquired from his surrogates in apparent evasion of Tennessee land-grant laws.

The fact that Twain does not indicate knowledge of this process could be attributed to a masking of his knowledge of it. More likely, he actually was unaware of his father's acquisition process, possibly because he took little interest in land acquisition that he believed unwise, exhibiting a circularity of cause and effect, to be sure. Strong evidence that Twain did not know how his father acquired the land can be seen in his inaccurate descriptions of its acquisition as a single parcel for a lump sum. Even in his review of the land's disposition in the *Autobiography*, Twain's description of the land's acquisition sixty years prior to what he erroneously describes as its final disposition in 1887 by the Clemens heirs, forty years after John Marshall's death in 1847, places the date of John Marshall's claiming of the land as 1827, when John Marshall had only begun making claims in the hundreds of acres. In 1830, he located his five-thousand-acre claims; in 1839, he and his surrogates were awarded their grants; and in the early 1840s, John Marshall acquired them all from his intermediate landholders. Twain's account, "that vast plot of Tennessee land was held by my father twenty years—intact" until John Marshall's death in 1847 (*AMT* 1: 208), agrees with none of the three actual dates for significant stages of his father's land acquisition.

**Land Speculation Leads to Death in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and Slavery Represents a Reverse Trust for Its Victims in *Huckleberry Finn***

Despite Twain's apparently limited understanding of how his father acquired the Tennessee land, Twain makes it clear in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894) that land speculation could literally be a lethal "curse" to those who engaged in it, as opposed to only afflicting the heirs to a reverse trust in real estate. Of course, dying for a chance to get rich in real

estate does not seem mentally acute at all. When the John Marshall figure in *Pudd'nhead*, Percy Driscoll, somehow dies from land deals gone bad (*PW* 35), Twain implicitly invokes the untimely death of his own father, whose undying belief in the Tennessee land's potential is his final utterance to his family in both *The Gilded Age* and the *Autobiography* (*GA* 1: 91-92, *AMT* 1: 206). In fact, Squire Hawkins stops breathing in the middle of the word "Tennessee," assuring his family that although his life is about to be "over [...] you are—safe. Safe. The Ten—" (*GA* 1: 92).

Strikingly, even though Twain had no apparent comprehensive understanding of his father's land acquisition process and dates, the perils of land speculation are intermingled with specific dates in 1830 for the births, identity switch, and fingerprinting of babies Tom and Chambers in *Pudd'nhead*. Twain's choice of year for these foundational events in the novel could easily have been random, but at least one of the events is tied to land speculation. And it's possible that as a child, Twain heard his father refer to claiming the Tennessee land in 1830, given John Marshall's obsession with the land, together with Twain's claim in *The Gilded Age* that Squire Hawkins had "papers" proving his possession of it (*GA* 1: 91). In *Pudd'nhead*, Percy Driscoll gives his mulatto housekeeper Roxy "no trouble" in October, 1830, about switching Tom and Chambers as babies "for one of his speculations was in jeopardy." Before long, "the fate of the speculation became so dubious that Mr. Percy went away with his brother the Judge, to see what could be done about it. It was a land speculation, as usual, and it had gotten complicated with a lawsuit" (*PW* 24).

Ultimately, Driscoll's degree of devotion to land speculation decrees his demise, without reference to intervening microbes, hypothermia, or any other apparent medical

factor such as ended the real life of John Marshall in 1847. Twain explains: “Percy Driscoll had worn himself out in trying to save his great speculative landed estate, and had died without succeeding. He was hardly in his grave before the boom collapsed and left his hitherto envied young devil of an heir a pauper” (*PW* 35). The lesson in *Pudd’nhead* is clear: the trouble begins at 1830, to rephrase Twain’s debut lecture poster (Hoffman 113), and its name is land speculation, bearer of the “heavy curse of prospective wealth.” Twain employs similar motifs in *Huckleberry Finn* when he portrays Jim, first, losing all his money through speculation after, as he confides to Huck, “I ben rich wunst.” Again, in a case that may only constitute eerie coincidence, Jim invests five dollars in a bank being set up by a “one-laigged” fellow slave, who promises he will pay Jim “thirty-five at de en’ er de year” (*HF* 57-58)—in other words, exactly the same five-to-thirty-five ratio that the Clemens heirs’ Grant 6402 tract grew by survey from 5,000 acres to 35,000. In Jim’s case, he trades his future earnings for a drift raft to resell and, after a complicated set of IOUs is exchanged, soon learns “de bank’s busted” so “dey didn’ none uv us git no money” (*HF* 58). In the Clemens heirs’ case, a tract obtained through the complicated use of intermediate landholders is actually expanded but not without question until the Tennessee Supreme Court, eventually, will settle the case in 1898. The heirs sell off the land in complicated pieces, but with uncertain collections of the prices, neither for the vast fortunes their father promised them, nor in handsome compensation for the immense wealth in mineable coal held by the ground; in other words, like Jim, none of the heirs reaped the profits they felt they had been promised.

Also to the point of a literary parallel with Twain's own life experiences, in this passage the story of Jim's unproductive speculation leads directly to Jim's conclusion that he embodies a reverse trust himself, as both the trust's capital and its paradoxically restricted "beneficiary." As Jim tells Huck, "I's rich now, come to look at it. I owns myself, and I's wuth eight hund'd dollars. I wisht I had the money, I wouldn't want no more" (*HF* 58). As may be self-evident, the fugitive Jim's "value" ironically derives only from his price as a slave, and Jim himself will never collect that price, but rather will pay it through punishment or re-enslavement if he is captured. Jim does not speculate in land, and his speculation and subsequent incarnation as a reverse trust are not linked by cause and effect, but the consecutive narration suggests a psychological linkage between speculation and reverse trusts in the author's mind.

### **Twain's Response to the Mental Acuity Evidenced by the Expansion of Grant 6402 and John Marshall's Use of the Family Connection to Polk**

The possibility still remains dubious that Twain knew about his father's land acquisition process and obscured it due to its disreputable but successful evasion of Tennessee's 5,000-acre limit on land grants to any individual. First of all, there is the evidence that Twain did not know the particulars of the process, any more than various scholars or possibly even Orion uncovered John Marshall's use of intermediate landholders to complete his evasive acquisition of land grants. However, Twain's earliest writing also suggests that Twain shared the general tolerance for the "preemption" of public lands, popularly known as "squatting." Thus, his distaste was for speculating in land unproductively, not in evasively acquiring land *per se*. In "The Dandy Frightening

the Squatter” (1852), Twain’s very first humorous sketch published in the East (Powers 55-56, Loving 38), long before “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” took the nation by storm in 1865 (Powers 152-55, Loving 129-30), Twain makes fun of an eastern dandy who tries to show off for the ladies by drawing his pistols on a Missouri squatter—only to find himself shoved rudely into the Mississippi River by the native son. Perhaps Twain dubs his victor a “squatter” merely to designate him as a rough-hewn westerner, but his use of the term suggests that “squatting” on a farmstead was not entirely socially unacceptable, even if it was not the conduct of the moneyed classes. Twain’s father’s land speculation was not a form of settling or inhabiting the land, to be sure, but it resembled “squatting” by claiming land illegally, through intermediate landholders, until John Marshall’s possession of the land could be made legal.

It is difficult to believe, however, that Twain remained unaware, to the end of his days, of the deception implanted in Grant 6402 and the boundaries of tract described in the grant’s text, officially measuring 5,000 acres but actually consisting of over 35,000 acres. Orion obviously had become aware that the tract included many more acres than 5,000 when he first partitioned it in 1859 in a 10,000-acre sale to Elias Watson in Keokuk, Iowa, for \$25,000 (Fentress Deed K47). Apparently, Orion had the Grant 6402 tract surveyed soon after obtaining it as part of Deed H1821, in which John Marshall’s heirs each deeded their shares in the Tennessee land legacy to Orion in October 1857. Yet no surviving correspondence between Twain and Orion discusses the grant tract’s remarkable expansion. Perhaps the brothers discussed the expansion in person, without ever needing to converse about it in writing. The remarkable nature of the expansion can be seen in a deposition that surveyor Charles R. Schenck gave in the lawsuit *Duffield vs.*



*Spence*, the legal case that resulted in the Tennessee Supreme Court eventually confirming the validity of the expansion in an 1898 ruling described in Chapter Two. In the deposition of Schenck, who repeatedly surveyed the Grant 6402 tract for other clients after the Clemens heirs had already sold the entire grant tract in various parcels, attorneys skeptical of the expansion queried him as follows:

Q. Have you, in all your experience, ever before known a grant of 5,000 acres having such a vast overplus of land as this has according to your calculation of the same? [Schenck had just testified that he calculated the acreage of the Grant 6402 tract at “about 40,000 acres—perhaps more.”]

A. I do not recall any other grants so large, but know of several grants which include much more than twice as much land as called for, and some three or four times as much. (*Duffield vs. Spence* 280-81)

The exchange of questions and answers demonstrates the exceptional nature of the expansion that John Marshall embedded in Grant 6402. Such expansions are not unheard of, Schenck testifies, but even the most extreme examples he can cite of a tract’s expansion from its purported size to a larger acreage justified by its boundaries only triple or quadruple the tract’s size rather than multiplying it sevenfold—or roughly twice the expansion of the most egregious other examples that Schenck can recall.<sup>14</sup>

Orion may not have specifically discussed this expansion with his younger brother, but Twain clearly was aware of the existence of an exceptionally large tract, because he served as an intermediary in Orion’s negotiations with Jervis Langdon to either purchase or mine the tract.<sup>15</sup> The probability that John Marshall knew the tract

contained more than the 5,000 acres to which individual grantees were limited by Tennessee land is indicated by the further questioning of Schenck:

Q. Can you explain why these men in 1840 [John Marshall and his second cousin James Clemens, Jr., from whom Twain's father was purchasing the land] would treat grant 6402 as a five thousand acre tract when it actually was 40000 [sic] acres?

A. I suppose that owing to the slack way of for those old grants of which there was rarely ever more than one or two lines run may account for it. They probably did not know how far it was from the corner of the county as called for [...] to the McIver line [...] (*Duffield vs. Spence* 282)

Schenck's disingenuous answer apparently did not satisfy the skeptical attorneys, since the distance from the corner of Overton County described in Grant 6402 to McIver's line, also mentioned in the grant as a boundary marker, is about twelve miles. The attorneys persisted, implying by their next question that Twain's father simply had to know that the boundaries described by the grant are utterly inconsistent with a tract only measuring 5,000 acres, asking Schenck almost rhetorically, "John M. Clemens was an attorney at law, was he not, and a good business man?" Schenck seemingly pretends to miss their point, replying, "I do not know as to his attorneyship. I understood he was a good business man" (*Duffield vs. Spence* 282-83).

Yet that competence as a "good business man"—and as the circuit court clerk of Fentress County and as the claimant or locator for thirty-three tracts of Tennessee land—is the competence that confirms John Marshall as being fully aware of implanting a future expansion of the Grant 6402 tract in the grant text in what might crudely be described as

a land grab. Like Schenck, Twain was forced to confront the paradox inherent in his father's acquisition of the Tennessee land. Either John Marshall was both competent and mentally acute enough to set up the future expansion of the Grant 6402 tract, in addition to the use of intermediate landholders, to obtain his 75,000 to "above 100,000" acres, or he obtained the land more through chance and lucky circumstances than his mental acuity—a less morally compromising option, but also less palatable to his famous son's image of his father. Twain resolved this paradox by never directly addressing it, focusing instead on the fabulous fortunes, both real and imagined by father and son, that he claimed his father perceived in the land.

Being in the right place at the right time should count as a form of mental acuity, of course, because having the sense to seize the moment is a form of using one's mental gifts that Twain inherently recognized in his attempts to corner the market on vital new inventions that he sponsored, such as the Paige typesetter. Thus if John Marshall's "shirt-tail" family connection to Tennessee's governor in 1839, future president James K. Polk, was the reason Polk signed the major grants constituting the Tennessee land, that level of nepotism probably did not prompt Twain to despise the Tennessee land to the degree that he did. If he was aware of the possible connection between his step-grandmother Aunt Polly's cousinship to Polk's wife's brothers-in-laws and the Tennessee land, the connection is unlikely to have bothered Twain, who served in positions opportunistically obtained through patronage himself. These included clerking for a brief period for Nevada Sen. William Stewart, an acquaintance from his *Roughing It* days, while unsuccessfully trying to attain the postmastership of San Francisco and some similar government sinecure for Orion (Fred Kaplan 213). Then of course Orion's job as

secretary of Nevada Territory was a political appointment by President Lincoln onto which Twain latched as Orion's secretary, although without government pay (Fred Kaplan 82-83).

**“Hope Deferred” Produces a Reverse Trust and Land that Should Simply Be Given Away, Twain Concludes**

In sum, the search for the root cause of Twain's scorn for the Tennessee land goes far beyond its nuisance value as a reverse trust or its role as the irritant that convinced the younger brother Twain of Orion's incompetence. Nor does Twain appear to have rejected the land due to its manner of acquisition. Instead, the search for the genesis of his rejection of the land leads again and again to exactly the reason that Twain repeatedly states: the distraction that the land provided for Twain's family over the years by holding out the false promise of a vast, attainable fortune. Twain makes it clear that his father was far-sighted in perceiving this fortune but all-too-humanly foolish in acquiring it and its concomitant delayed gratification—possibly delayed forever, as the Tennessee land seemed even to young Twain, twenty-two years old at the time he wrote the following words of encouragement to his older brother, who had just been deeded the entire Tennessee land legacy the previous October:<sup>16</sup> “I am glad to see you in such high spirits about the land, and I hope will remain so, if you never get richer. I seldom venture to think about our landed wealth, for ‘hope deferred maketh the heart sick’” (SLC to Orion and Mollie, 9 Mar. 1858, “Letters,” *MTPO*).

The quotation from Proverbs 13:12 that Twain voices here suggests that while still learning to pilot a steamboat instead of focusing on the land or, indeed, writing for a

living, Twain already had come to view the land as a potent distraction that bore with it a biblical curse. The import of the pessimism embedded in the encouragement that Twain passes along to Orion suggests a similar early tilt against the land on Twain's part due to its tendency to serve as a life-detouring tangent. Twain wishes Orion luck even "if you never get richer"; the probability that this will prove the result is suggested by Twain's declaration that he personally, wisely, "seldom ventures" to even let "our landed wealth" cross his mind or divert his purpose, a career path further reified as wise by Twain's offhand invocation of holy scripture.

The false lure of the land's potential wealth might serve as a definitive answer to the curiosity that Twain's rejection of the "doubly and trebly cursed" land arouses. Yet Twain's response also was affected by other aspects of his family's roots in the Upper South, dating back to pioneer days in Kentucky: namely, his family's interactions with both African Americans and Native Americans, in addition to his own early experiences with members of both of these Othered groups. As Chapter Four and Five will consider, the violent encounters of Twain's ancestors and Native Americans, in particular, led him not to disavow the land out of guilt over its acquisition but to write in justification of the seizure of land by force and to rationalize this form of involuntary territorial cession. Yet ironically, Twain's denigration of the moral significance of land theft may also help explain why he was so willing to let the Tennessee land pass into non-Clemens hands in order to lift its "heavy curse of prospective wealth" from John Marshall's heirs: if the European American confiscation of the land was unimportant, then logically, so was its loss.

#### CHAPTER IV: THE BLOOD OF TWAIN'S ANCESTORS ON THE LAND AND ON HIS MIND: AN ORAL INHERITANCE OF ANTIPATHY

Violence committed by Native Americans against European American settlers who were Twain's ancestors, as well as violence committed by those European Americans against Native Americans, was only indirectly connected to the Tennessee land because that land had been taken from Native Americans decades prior to John Marshall Clemens's complicated process of acquiring it. Yet violence between Native and European Americans was integral to establishing Twain's essential antipathy toward Native Americans, an antipathy that equaled his vehemently negative response to the Tennessee land. Perhaps coincidentally, Twain's overt antipathies toward both Native Americans and the Tennessee land observably peaked in his writing directly preceding and following 1870, yet both antipathies constituted lifelong tendencies that endured into the twentieth century, when they both may have moderated, but only somewhat. The indirect connections that associate Twain and the Tennessee land with frontier violence between Native and European Americans significantly help explain his lifelong antipathy toward Native Americans, and those connections include Twain's ancestors' active and thorough participation in the project of forcibly seizing Kentucky land from its Native American owners, a project that necessarily preceded John Marshall Clemens's acquisition of the Tennessee land.

The confiscation of Kentucky land was a necessary precursor to John Marshall's acquisition activities in Tennessee. Firstly, neither John Marshall nor Jane Lampton would have been in Columbia, Kentucky, to meet, marry, and later become Twain's

parents if Kentucky had not been settled by Jane's ancestors. Secondly, the Tennessee land that Twain's father acquired remained available to John Marshall in the 1820s and 1830s because, into the late eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, Cherokee claims to both south-central Kentucky and Middle Tennessee blocked white settlers from expanding their hegemony directly westward from their initial footholds in northeastern Tennessee.<sup>1</sup>

These Cherokee claims, combined with Chickamauga Cherokees' actual residence in the middle third of the Tennessee River valley and the Cherokees' effective blockade of the river near present-day Chattanooga, discouraged direct westward expansion by early European American settlers, according to historian Donald Davidson (133, 182). Instead, frontiersmen including Twain's maternal ancestors settled in Kentucky long before venturing into eastern Middle Tennessee where Fentress County is located, after land speculator Richard "Carolina Dick" Henderson purportedly purchased almost the entirety of central Kentucky privately, for £10,000, from certain of the Cherokees at the Treaty of Sycamore Shoals in March, 1775.

The validity of Henderson's purchase was violently opposed by factions of Cherokees themselves,<sup>2</sup> did not address the claims of Shawnees or other Native Americans to Kentucky,<sup>3</sup> and was invalidated by both the Virginia and North Carolina legislatures.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, settlers apparently believed the treaty peacefully purchased Kentucky and the northern portions of Middle Tennessee from the Cherokees. They began migrating to central Kentucky through the Cumberland Gap, and some settlers migrated even further, turning south from Kentucky toward Fort Nashborough (now Nashville) in the Cumberland River valley of Middle Tennessee.<sup>5</sup> Settlers did not

immediately claim or occupy intervening territory between northeastern Tennessee and the Cumberland River valley settlements, territory that included Fentress and its neighboring counties where John Marshall eventually claimed the Tennessee land for himself and, ultimately, the Clemens heirs.

Additionally, the decades-long history of European American confiscation of land in the Upper South meant that antipathy toward Native Americans had deep roots among Twain's maternal ancestors, who were among the earliest confiscators even before they immigrated to the Kentucky wilderness. Dating back to these formative years in the eastern fringes of the trans-Appalachian West, Twain's maternal ancestors were steeped in the culture in which Native Americans were enemies to be fended off, often fatally, during the time period when European Americans began preempting land in northeastern Tennessee prior to their debatable purchase of Kentucky territory from some of the Cherokee chiefs. These early preemptions centered primarily in the Holston and Watauga river valleys of northeastern Tennessee and southwestern Virginia. Twain's maternal ancestors were among Holston and Watauga settlers who later moved on into central Kentucky. Although some of these "Wataugans," as the settlers were known, first leased and then purchased their land from the Cherokees (Davidson 137), eventually they began defending and expanding their claims through acts of violence against the Cherokees and involuntary land cessions by the tribe.

Twain's ancestors in both Kentucky and Tennessee frequently were directly involved in significant portions of the violence generated by the preemption of land in the Upper South by thousands of their fellow European American settlers. But even when Twain's ancestors were not directly involved in this frontier violence, their participation



in land preemptions indirectly involved them. Massive displacement of Native Americans both within the Appalachians and west of the mountains began decades before Twain was born, but quite significantly for Twain's attitudes toward Native Americans, massive displacement continued out West into the final decades of Twain's life. In fact, this trend of displacement began with the initial arrival of European Americans on the eastern seaboard, as every American schoolchild knows (Brogan 59-60, Brown 3-4), but its second and third phases, first in the trans-Appalachian West and then in the far West, most directly affected Twain. The twin facts that the particularly violent trans-Appalachian period of the displacement occurred recently enough before Twain's birth that the gory details were orally transmitted to him as a child, and that the displacement in the far West remained ongoing through Twain's most productive years as a writer, go a long way toward explaining Twain's persistent antipathy toward Native Americans and his efforts to dismiss confiscation of their land as historically inevitable.

The extreme, no-holds-barred nature of the frontier violence that involved Twain's ancestors and their peers during the trans-Appalachian preemption of land in which they participated was strongly formative of Twain's antipathy toward Native Americans, although it was not the only influence on his attitudes. As British historian Hugh Brogan writes, "the war for the conquest of Kentucky and Ohio was the longest and bloodiest of all the struggles between the Americans and the Indians" (224). Concurrently with that struggle, in northeastern Tennessee where Twain's ancestors settled before they moved into Kentucky, "[t]he Cherokee Indians resented these settlements [...] and disputed any land sales to Whites," according to historian Phillip Langsdon. "They brutally attacked and killed many settlers, including women and

children, and open warfare ranged on the frontier” from about 1775-1777 (8-9). Twain’s ancestors’ oral legacy to him simply could not have avoided reiterating this violence.

Twain’s argument in response to this oral legacy is circular, so any explanation of it must be essentially circular as well. His ancestors’ land hunger initially caused his antipathy toward Native Americans, so eventually, in *Following the Equator* (1897), he justifies the theft of Native American land by categorizing such theft as universal human behavior, in a passage the present study quotes more briefly in Chapter Three:

All the territorial possessions of all the political establishments in the earth—including America, of course—consist of pilfering from other people’s wash. No tribe, howsoever insignificant, and no nation, howsoever mighty, occupies a foot of land that was not stolen. When the English, the French, and the Spaniards reached America, the Indian tribes had been raiding each other’s territorial clotheslines for ages, and every acre of ground in the continent had been stolen and restolen five hundred times. (*FTE* 2: 298-99)

Twain prominently includes “the Indian tribes” in his universal generalization, even though clearly European Americans performed the first preemption of land from Native Americans, not vice versa, and they continued preempting Native American land through the end of the nineteenth century, with no Native American preemption of any originally European American land whatsoever. Although it is true that “the Indian tribes [...] for ages” did fight each other for territory, Twain’s argument nevertheless blames the Native American victims for their own human qualities by which he rationalizes their victimization, not only by each other but by the European American territorial incursions

that led to the Native American counter-violence that provoked Twain's antipathy toward the forcibly dispossessed.

All the elements of this analysis can be methodically fitted into place, first by considering evidence that Twain's ancestors were directly victimized by and participated in frontier violence in the Upper South, followed by evidence that Twain heard stories about his ancestors' frontier experiences throughout his childhood, adolescence, and young adult years, generating his antipathy. This chapter and Chapter Five also will consider how and why Twain's cultural and familial heritage of enmity toward Native Americans continued to influence his attitudes toward Native Americans through his life. Again and again, European American preemption of Native American land plays a catalytic role for Twain's antipathy, so the argument pointing to ancestral influences on Twain remains circular but demonstrable. It does not matter that objectively, the cycle of violence poses no question of whether the chicken or egg came first; initially, Twain's ancestors and all other European Americans seized territory that was not theirs. However, that isn't the way they viewed the conflict, and theirs was the viewpoint that shaped Mark Twain's.

Stated briefly, Twain was raised in a culture that justified (and still justifies) seizing land and resources from indigenous peoples as a valid preemption of ostensibly unused or under-used territory; preservation of North America's vast forests and prairies for Native American living was viewed (and largely still is viewed) as a waste of the potential to raise food for multitudes of European Americans who longed to seize the land and erect "civilization" where they believed only "savagery" once reigned (Pearce 66-67). Quoting leaders of the newly formed United States as politically diverse as

James Monroe, John Quincy Adams, Andrew Jackson, and William Henry Harrison, Brogan asserts that pervasive European American land hunger and disdain for primarily using land as a hunting ground “was the universal argument; its rightness was the universal feeling” (66). This virtually nationwide ideology from which few, if any, dissented was grounded legalistically and philosophically in John Locke’s *Two Treatises of Government* (1788) and Emer de Vattel’s *Law of Nations* (1758). It also could claim roots in the Calvinist ideology of the Puritans from whom John Marshall Clemens descended,<sup>6</sup> an ideology that condemned idleness, reified the value of agricultural labor, and spurned the easy acquisition of sustenance<sup>7</sup> that was partly, but not wholly, pursued by Native Americans who engaged in hunting and gathering to obtain their food (Pearce 29-31).

The pervasiveness of the ethic of land confiscation can be seen in the glorification of the exploits of Daniel Boone by Lord Byron in Canto 8 of *Don Juan*<sup>8</sup> before Twain’s time (Brogan 225, Byron 659-90) and into the twentieth century (O’Brien, Parker), a glorification that also encompasses similar frontier “Indian fighters” such as Twain’s ancestors, although those ancestors and ancestors’ associates sometimes were Boone’s rivals in frontier military politics (Harrison and Klotter 38, Talbert 65-66). The confiscation ethic placed any Native American who resorted to violence to defend his or her land in the role of the aggressor, justifying whatever brutal genocide European Americans might commit in retaliation or simply to reduce the Native American population that maintained claims to the land. Indeed, in the same 1770s that Boone and others traversed the Cumberland Gap, defying King George III’s Proclamation of 1763, to begin preempting the lands of Kentucky, the Declaration of Independence complained

that the king had “endeavored to prevent the population of these states” partly by “raising the conditions for the appropriation of new lands” and, furthermore, had “endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare, is undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions” (“Declaration [...] A Transcription”). Thus, the “savagery” of Native Americans defending “new lands” from “appropriation” is enshrined in our founding national document and thereby reified the identical ethos of Kentucky’s land confiscators, including Twain’s ancestors.

Labeling Native Americans as the aggressors was not unjustified from the settlers’ point of view, of course, in light of the casualties and captivities they suffered at the hands of the land’s original owners. The “merciless [...] undistinguished destruction” attributed to Native Americans by the Declaration resonated all too meaningfully. Settlers accepted the claims of their own leaders and government that the land they were settling had been purchased from Native Americans, even if the alleged sellers had been coerced, tricked, bribed, cheated, or impaired by alcohol transmitted to them by the alleged land purchasers.<sup>9</sup> Even when such purchase treaties had not been arranged at all, as was frequently the case on the frontier, European Americans nevertheless believed they had a moral right to “squat” on Native American hunting grounds and catalyze treaties that would legalize the squatters’ assumed titles to the land.<sup>10</sup> Thus, settlers could only view with horror and anger the often-deadly attacks by Native Americans on their persons and the capture of their wives and children.

The latter form of frontier warfare was regarded as especially barbaric and as violating the European rules of chivalrous warfare by which white frontiersmen

purported to abide. The killing or capture of women and children was regarded, in short, as “savage” and uncivilized, both during early frontier days and later Victorian times in which Twain lived and wrote. Fatal attacks on settlers and the abduction of women and children filled the stories of frontier violence from the final quarter of the eighteenth century that Twain’s mother heard from her maternal grandmother and then undoubtedly passed on to her children. However, the bitterness of the settlers’ victimization in such stories may have been intensified by one such seemingly random attack on settlers and female abduction that occurred closer to Twain’s own lifetime (1835-1910). In 1813, Jane Lampton was about ten years old and John Marshall Clemens was a young teenager, both residing in Adair County, Kentucky. About one hundred and fifty miles southwest of Adair, in Middle Tennessee, “a Creek raiding party killed seven people in a surprise attack on a settlement near the mouth of the Duck River and immediately withdrew with an American woman as prisoner,” according to Ronald N. Satz (39). The reaction among European Americans of “[i]ndignation and cries for revenge” subsequently rose to a fever pitch when the same faction of Red Sticks or Creeks resisting white land confiscation, allied with the British, massacred between two hundred and five hundred white settlers, including women and children, at Fort Mims, Alabama (Satz 40). Even before that genocidal event, the Tennessee General Assembly passed legislation demanding “atonements” for the Duck River attack, and one “frontier editor” called “at least for defense” when “the tomahawk and the scalping knife are drawn in the cabins of our peaceful and unsuspecting citizens” (Satz 39).

It is possible that word of the attack and abduction in the Duck River region escaped the attention of Twain’s future parents in neighboring Kentucky. But it is far

more likely that they heard highly alarming or even exaggerated accounts of these events from travelers passing through the Eagle House inn that was kept by Jane's uncle Lewis Lampton in Columbia, Kentucky, until he lost it to foreclosure in 1823 (Varble 29-30, 75). Especially after the Fort Mims massacre, according to Satz, "[t]he news [...] spread fear in every white settlement on the southern frontier" (40). Yet it was the more isolated attack on the Duck River that may have resonated most strongly with young Jane and her maternal grandmother, Twain's great grandmother Jane Montgomery Casey, whose experience in a similar attack on her family in frontier Kentucky will be described in detail later in this chapter. Great Grandmother Casey could not possibly have heard the news of the Duck River ambush without retelling the story of the early morning attack in 1781 on her own family, also an ambush, in which her father was fatally shot. The 1813 Duck River attack and 1781 attack on Twain's ancestors both involved random killings in general and the abduction of women in particular—offenses that Twain later singles out as particularly outrageous. Yet the deaths of male settlers by Native American tomahawks, arrows, and gunshots also were deeply resented by Twain's surrounding culture as violations of purchase treaties and the alleged right of European Americans to claim land that the settlers viewed as having been left vacant, or at least under-used, by the Native Americans.

Settlers failed to reflect that the Native Americans who allegedly had sold the land, first to colonial governments and then to the federal government, often were not the legitimate representatives of their peoples or were not the only tribes claiming the land in question. Instead, many settlers viewed themselves as the rightful owners of the land due to the warrants they had been issued for land west of the Appalachians as payment for

their military service in the American Revolution as well as for their earlier service in the French and Indian War, as described in Chapter Two.<sup>11</sup>

### **Native Americans as “Invaders” instead of “Original Occupants”**

Compounding the settlers’ sense that justice was on their side was their awareness that the British to the north in Canada were inciting, aiding, arming, and in some cases leading Native Americans into war against the settlers, both during the Revolutionary War and for a full thirteen years after Cornwallis surrendered to Washington at Yorktown in 1781.<sup>12</sup> After the outbreak of the Revolution, the British enlisted the Chickamauga Cherokees, Iroquois, part of the Shawnees, and part of the Wyandots to make war on frontier whites, or seen from the Native American viewpoint, the British assisted those indigenous peoples at a strategically opportune time in their ongoing resistance to European American encroachment on tribal lands.<sup>13</sup>

As Michelle Burnham notes, “Increasingly in captivity narratives of the Revolutionary era, the Indians and the British are conflated as enemies to the colonies since the British reportedly recruited Indian allies” and because the British paid Native Americans for settlers’ scalps (73). In turn, the land rights of Native Americans were casually overlooked in eastern Tennessee in 1777 due to the Cherokee alliance with the British, according to Irene Griffey, who reports, “It was not difficult to ignore Indians’ right of possession since they were actively assisting the British at the time” (4). After the Revolutionary War, North Carolina cited the Cherokee-British alliance as its reason for opening almost all of present-day Tennessee for sale to the white public, viewing the



land as conquered territory over which “North Carolina no longer felt obligated to honor the Cherokee Indians’ claim” (Griffey 6).

External incitement of Native Americans by both Britain and Spain assailed the Upper South from both north and south, further inducing Twain’s ancestors to view their indigenous neighbors as minions of foreign enemies and their land as legally subject to confiscation.<sup>14</sup> Even into the nineteenth century, during the girlhood of Twain’s mother and early adolescence of Twain’s father in Kentucky, the Fort Mims massacre represented only part of the extensive British alliance with intertribal Native Americans during the War of 1812. Even in the Battle of the Thames in Ontario (1813) that concluded the war up North, the majority of the soldiers on the British side were Native Americans led by the Shawnee chief Tecumseh.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the settlers of the Upper South understandably conflated the way Native Americans resisted the confiscation of tribal land with acts of war by rival European American nations including Spain and Britain.<sup>16</sup>

The extent to which this conflation pervaded the anti-indigenous ethos of European American settlers, including Jane Lampton’s immediate family, cannot be overemphasized. It would have been as difficult to avoid as the pervasive effects of the coronavirus pandemic on all Americans in 2020. It is true that Native American raids in Tennessee and Kentucky generally ceased before and during the War of 1812, with the single exception of the 1813 Duck River ambush. However, Kentuckians made up the majority of the United States forces in several War of 1812 battles in Michigan and Ontario against the allied Native Americans and British. Four hundred Kentuckians died at the Battle of the River Raisin in southern Michigan, also in 1813, “with their youthful colonel, John Allen; and this was a pitiful story to carry home, because [Native

Americans led by the Wyandot chief Roundhead] massacred the wounded,” writes Rachel Varble in her biography of Twain’s mother (32). This slaying of “many of the eighty wounded left behind [by the British] to await transportation” embittered the Kentucky populace in the same way that Native American attacks on white families during the early settlement period had done. “‘Remember the Raisin’ became the Kentucky battle cry for the rest of the war,” according to Lowell H. Harrison and James C. Klotter (91). Evidence that the bitter memory of the actions of the British and their Native American allies afflicted Twain’s direct ancestors is circumstantial but telling; Twain’s great uncle Green Casey, brother of his grandmother Peggy Casey Lampton, thereafter fathered “a baby son named John Allen, after the hero of the Raisin,” according to Varble (36).

Such was the background of white antipathy toward Native Americans in the Upper South of Twain’s ancestors. In addition to the available direct evidence that young Twain heard about his ancestors’ frontier experiences from his storytelling mother, there can be little doubt that she and other family and friends inoculated him with the lingering mentality of those frontier times, especially because similar frontier values and armed conflicts still prevailed and proliferated west of the Mississippi during Twain’s lifetime. Strongly augmenting the effect of the cultural antipathy of European Americans toward Native Americans would have been the fact that Twain’s own ancestors were directly involved in, affected by, and in more than one case, killed by the violence between Native and European Americans.

### **Twain's Ancestors Were Leading "Indian Fighters"**

In particular, Twain's great-great uncle was Col. and then Gen. Benjamin Logan, "looked upon as the leading military man in the district of Kentucky [...] between 1783 and 1788" (Talbert 801). Native Americans were the primary enemies of white Kentuckians and of their "leading military man" in those years. In 1772, Logan married Ann or Anne Montgomery, daughter of William Montgomery, Sr., and his wife Jane or Jean. William, Sr., and Jane were Mark Twain's great-great grandparents. And as Wataugans, or early residents of the Holston settlements in east Tennessee, they would have shared the community ethos that classified Native Americans as enemies. Ann Montgomery Logan's considerably younger sister, also named Jane, was destined to become Mark Twain's great grandmother Jane Montgomery Casey. She was carried along when, "[i]n the fall of 1779" (Collins 405), her parents migrated to Kentucky, where she continued to be raised in an atmosphere of fighting with and being attacked by Native Americans.

The present study identifies, for the first time, Twain's heritage of antipathy toward Native Americans dating back not only to the late eighteenth-century settlement of the Upper South, but to the middle eighteenth-century settlement of the Holston River valley in northeast Tennessee, the period of intermittent and increasing conflict with Native Americans over land rights.<sup>17</sup> However, the early settlement of the Upper South undoubtedly had the greatest effect on Twain, not only because it was closer to his own lifetime, but because the stories of his ancestors' bold deeds and narrow escapes were so dramatic—and because sometimes they didn't escape. To be European American and

present in the Upper South in the late eighteenth centuries meant participating in violent land rights conflict with Native Americans. Compound that involvement with a tincture of injustice—white families suffering random, deadly surprise attacks on land they believed they had legally acquired from Native Americans—and Twain had the matter for his lifelong intermittent eruptions of outrage against Native American guerrilla resistance to land confiscation.

In some cases, Twain's pioneer ancestors and their compatriots also can be traced to John Marshall Clemens's land-claiming activities in the 1820s in Fentress County, Tennessee. For instance, the Alexander Montgomery with whom John Marshall claimed five grants in the late 1820s and 1830 very possibly descended in some way from Nathan Montgomery, a nephew of Jane Casey's parents and thereby great grandmother Jane's cousin. Nathan migrated into Kentucky from "the Holston River country [...] performed the duties of a spy for five successive years and had many near escapes from the Indians, and engaged in many thrilling adventures with them" (Watson 9).

Logan himself does not have any apparent ties with future "Tennessee land" claimants with John Marshall but exhibited the sort of dramatic bravery under fire that probably would have been included in Twain's mother's bloody tales of frontier violence against Twain's ancestors. During a Native American siege at the "station" or fort that Great Uncle Logan helped establish,<sup>18</sup> he legendarily crept out from inside the fort under cover of twilight and "a large bag of wool" to rescue a wounded comrade during one such onslaught in 1777 (Talbert 38, Harrison and Klotter 36). In another dramatic, legend-worthy incident the next year, Native Americans repeatedly shot Logan and he suffered a broken arm after he volunteered to go out alone and drive cattle into Fort Boonesborough

immediately prior to the “Big Siege” by a Shawnee army (Trabue 60).<sup>19</sup> The extent of Logan’s belief in the anti-indigenous ethos that Twain’s mother and his culture inculcated in him can be seen in the uncle/general’s 1786 attack on Shawnee villages in Ohio that burned several of those villages and their crops, an act of attempted genocide and subjugation by starvation. One of Logan’s most hot-headed officers killed the Shawnee chief Moluntha in cold blood, by a hatchet blow to the head, after Moluntha, flying a United States flag over his village, had surrendered without fighting (Talbert 211).<sup>20</sup>

Eight years later, in 1794, settlers from Twain’s ancestral sections of southern Kentucky slipped into southern Tennessee to join militia from Nashville and Twain’s ancestral Holston River settlements in destroying the Chickamauga Cherokee villages of Nickajack and Running Water.<sup>21</sup> The significance of this attack should not be overlooked or underestimated. It was a genocidal ambush on a par with the much more widely known machine-gunning in 1890 by the US Army of more than three hundred Lakota men, women, and children at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, a massacre that, Michelle Abate debatably suggests (115, 118-20), provoked sympathy in Twain for the Native American victims.<sup>22</sup> No similar putative sympathy is recorded by Twain’s ancestors or their close comrades who participated in the Nickajack attack, and it should be emphasized that the genocidal attackers specifically included Twain’s ancestors, not generic European Americans who “stole the land from the Indians,” as the commonplace saying goes.<sup>23</sup>

Equally demonstrating the depth of investment in the anti-indigenous ethos pervasive among Twain’s ancestors, his great-great uncle Logan did not consider the genocidal destruction of Nickajack sufficient.<sup>24</sup> Early Middle Tennessee historian

Edward Albright describes “every vestige of both towns being destroyed” (195-96). Nevertheless, according to Logan’s biographer Charles Gano Talbert, “Logan did not believe that the Chickamaugans had received sufficient punishment to bring them into a sincere and lasting peace agreement” (278). Subsequent events proved the great-great uncle unduly pessimistic: Michael Watson describes the attacks as permanently ending Native American attacks in southern Kentucky (17-18), and Stanley W. Hoig writes that the Native American offensives that led to the genocide at Nickajack “marked the last organized Cherokee military resistance to the United States” (88). Not gifted with the hindsight of historians to tell him that the non-submissive faction of the Cherokees had been vanquished, and accustomed to conducting seemingly endless conflict with Native Americans, Twain’s great-great uncle Logan advertised in *The Kentucky Gazette* for volunteers to accompany him to Nashville to conduct further attacks on the Cherokees (Talbert 278) although that expedition came to naught.<sup>25</sup>

### **A Legacy of “Justified” Genocide**

The present study is not specifically a history of the frontier conflict between Native and European Americans that pervaded Tennessee until 1794, during the same years that Twain’s great grandparents were fending off attacks at Casey’s Station in southern Kentucky, as will be described below. Such attacks in Kentucky would have been the primary motivators for Twain’s ancestors’ participation in the Nickajack Expedition, and admittedly, atrocities were committed by both sides. However, the precedence of land confiscation from Native Americans, frequently enabled by violence against them, that subsequently resulted in Native American violence against the

“settlers,” went unacknowledged in the anti-indigenous ethos of Twain’s ancestors—and later, with very few exceptions, went unacknowledged by the great writer himself.

When Twain repeatedly describes Native Americans as “savage,” calls for their “extermination” in various essays, and pens lurid tales of attacks on white settlers, he also disregards what his ancestors disregarded during the Nickajack Expedition of 1794: that the continuous guerrilla attacks against the “settlers” were acts of resistance by Native Americans to the relentless displacement of their people. As Hoig describes the motivation of the Cherokees:

The chiefs were disturbed that no efforts were being made to remove settlers from their land, that the line established by the Holston treaty had not been changed [a line that ceded land to white settlers that had previously been trespassed upon by those settlers], and that they were left with less and less room to hunt. They also said that the whole nation was opposed to the passing of boats up and down the Tennessee River through their country and could not, as the government wished, permit a settlement at Muscle Shoals on the Tennessee in northern Alabama. (63)

Indeed, what Twain ignores is that from the earliest days of United States independence, white settlers pushed into Cherokee territory and attempted genocide by destroying Cherokee villages and food supplies.

An emblematic example of this cycle of white aggression in support of the preemption of indigenous territory followed by Native American resistance punished by further white aggression occurred when Tennessee’s federal territorial governor, William Blount, arranged peace talks in autumn 1793, but white militia murdered several

Cherokees, including chiefs and women, at the talks inside Hanging Maw's home at Coyatee in eastern Tennessee. Incensed, a thousand Cherokees and Creeks advanced on Knoxville, but on the way, they overwhelmed a blockhouse where settlers, all members of the Cavet family, surrendered. Bent on revenge, Chief Doublehead personally hatcheted twelve of the thirteen Cavets to death (Hoig 85-86). The murders prompted the Holston and Watauga settlers, led by the voracious land speculator John Sevier to attack numerous Cherokee towns in Georgia (Langsdon 18).

In Twain's writings nearly a century later, he emphasizes the latter, Cavet's Station sort of atrocities against women and children by Native Americans, but he disregards the infliction of similar attacks on Native Americans, warriors or civilians, of all ages and both genders, by white settlers. In fairness to him, he may never have been told the Native American side of events prior to his own life, and a steady drumbeat of propaganda against the "savages" of the far West was standard newspaper fare during Twain's lifetime—a drumbeat to which Twain contributed. However, the whole truth is that even when the Cherokees sided with the British during the American Revolution, "[t]he atrocities that whites claimed the Indians had committed against them were matched by ruthless murder and even torture of Indian women and children by the moblike militiamen," Hoig writes (61-62).

### **Native Americans Attacked Twain's Direct-Line Ancestors**

Gen. Logan is never specifically mentioned as being Twain's great-great uncle in any of Twain's own writings. But considering the statewide esteem in which Logan was held in Kentucky, and the extent to which Logan's anti-indigenous ethos pervaded



Twain's ancestors' culture, both that esteem and that ethos would have been passed down in the frontier stories that Jane Lampton Clemens told to young Twain. Nor was Logan Twain's only ancestor who took a leading role in frontier Kentucky's violence between Native and European Americans. Twain's great grandmother Jane Montgomery Casey married Col. William Casey, renowned as an "Indian fighter," who in 1791 took his bride of nine years with him to Russell's Creek near present-day Columbia, Kentucky, and established his own fort:

Here, at a distance of fifty miles from any white settlement, in conjunction with several families who pushed their fortunes with him, he located and built a station. Though feeble in numbers, the hardy band of pioneers by whom he was surrounded, and who reposed in him unbounded confidence as a leader, maintained themselves, gallantly and victoriously, against several attacks of the Indians. (Collins 231)

Those attacks at first were rare because "it was a locality not frequented by the red men, being off the beaten path and somewhat bereft of game," according to Rachel Varble, Twain's mother's biographer. "But eventually the Indians spied them out and pestered them with spiteful, bloody little raids." As a result, "[t]hree times Jane Montgomery Casey helped her husband hold his station against them," Varble writes (4).

No Caseys or Montgomerys were killed in the Native American raids on Casey's Station in the early 1790s, although no doubt Twain's great grandmother Jane was both sympathetic and horrified when, "[i]n one of the incursions [...] of a small band of savages, Mr. John Tucker, a Methodist preacher, together with his wife, were cruelly murdered" (Collins 231). The slaying was avenged by "a company of men" led by Col.

Casey, who pursued the couple's attackers and killed several of them (Watson 12). However, the attack on the Tuckers would have resurrected and reinforced Great Grandmother Jane's memories of the fatal ambush of her own father by Native Americans when she was still an unmarried teen-ager, a little more than a decade earlier. Indeed, even more crucial to understanding Twain's lifelong antipathy to Native Americans than knowing about the renowned military leaders in his family's frontier past is the story of the 1781 ambush in which three of Twain's maternal ancestors, including his great-great grandfather, were slain. Adding drama to the lingering pall of death by a Native American war party was Great Grandmother Jane's entrapment by the same band of attackers in her family's cabin immediately after her father was fatally shot (Collins 406).

The war party of about twenty-eight (Trabue 153) that ambushed Montgomery's Station in 1781 probably consisted of "a small group of Cherokee," according to Talbert (122) and Daniel Trabue editor Chester Raymond Young.<sup>26</sup> Growing up, Twain undoubtedly heard the story of this attack at his mother's knee because Jane Lampton Clemens was Jane Montgomery Casey's granddaughter; or to put it another way, Twain's maternal grandmother Margaret "Peggy" Casey Lampton—whom Twain never met—was Jane Montgomery Casey's daughter. According to Varble, Jane Lampton was raised by her grandmother Jane for at least a year after her own mother Peggy died in 1818<sup>27</sup> when Jane was fifteen, almost the same age as Grandmother Jane had been when she was entrapped by "savages" in her family's pioneer cabin back in 1781. Jane Lampton and her younger sister Patsy also were living with their Casey grandparents when Twain's great grandfather William Casey died in 1816, when Jane was thirteen, once again at

almost a peer age to the heroines in her grandmother's stories. Grandmother Jane assumed a surrogate maternal role for Jane (Varble 36-44) until her father Benjamin Lampton married Mary Margaret "Aunt Polly" Hays. As Kerry Driscoll notes, "Jane Lampton was born in 1803 at the same Kentucky homestead her maternal ancestors had defended against Indians a decade earlier. She also spent much of her childhood there, developing a deep bond with her grandparents." Because Grandmother Jane repeatedly "mesmerized Jane with stories of her pioneer past," Driscoll continues, "Jane came not only to know the tale of the Montgomery Massacre by heart but also to share her grandmother's bitter enmity toward Indians" (*MTAI* 22-23).

Specifically, the story that Jane passed on to her children, including Twain, was that his great-great grandfather William Montgomery, Sr., mentioned above as Benjamin Logan's father-in-law, was killed in a dawn ambush as he stepped out of his cabin at Montgomery's Station near the headwaters of Kentucky's Green River (Collins 406, Trabue 151). His daughter—Jane Montgomery's younger sister—Elizabeth, known as "Betsey" or "Betsie," escaped from the cabin where Jane was trapped by the Cherokees after the ambush. Betsey subsequently summoned rescuers from Logan's Fort by outrunning Cherokee pursuers, as Lewis Collins describes in his *History of Kentucky* (1847):

In the month of March, 1780 [actually about a year later], at night, a small body of Indians surrounded the cabins, which were built close to each other, and rather in a square. On the succeeding morning, between daylight and sunrise, William Montgomery the elder, followed by a negro boy, stepped out of the door of his cabin. They were immediately fired at

and both killed by the Indians, the boy's head falling back on the door-sill. Jane, the daughter, then a young woman, afterwards the wife of Col. William Casey, late of Adair county, sprang to the door, pushed out the negro's head, shut the door and called for brother Thomas' gun. Betsey, her sister, about twelve years of age,<sup>28</sup> clambered out at the chimney, which was not higher than a man's head, and took the path to Pettit's station, distant about two and a half miles. An Indian pursued her for some distance, but being quite active, she was too fleet for him, and reached the station in safety. From Pettit's a messenger was immediately dispatched to Logan's fort. (406)

Not only did this attack become a staple of both Jane Casey's and Jane Clemens's storytelling repertoire; "[t]he intergenerational legacy of fear and racial enmity provoked by the Montgomery Massacre," as Driscoll describes it (*MTAI* 23), also contributed one more element to the anti-indigenous cultural ethos in which Twain was raised.

For the sake of an accurate historic and academic record, an important point to confirm is the date of the Montgomery's Station attack that crucially, through oral history, helped formed Twain's lifelong antipathy toward Native Americans. In his *History*, Collins describes the attack as taking place "[i]n the month of March, 1780" (406), and the present study initially followed that date because Collins claims to have obtained the details of the attack by directly interviewing Twain's great grandmother<sup>29</sup> herself: "The particulars of the foregoing narrative have been received from the Montgomery family—but principally from Mrs. Jane Casey, who was an actor in the drama" (407). However, Collins is the only source that dates the attack to 1780; all

others date it as occurring in 1781. Driscoll apparently relies on Daniel Trabue's account of the attack to determine its year,<sup>30</sup> noting only that Trabue's "1827 memoir *Westward into Kentucky* is the earliest published report of the incident" (21). Incidentally, John Marshall Clemens claimed a 5,000-acre Tennessee land grant in the name of Trabue's son Daniel Trabue, Jr., in March 1830 (see Chapter Two). However, in addition to the majority opinion, another key factor tips the scales in favor of 1781: having been absent from Kentucky when the Montgomery's Station attack occurred,<sup>31</sup> Trabue also obtained his information directly from Jane Casey in conversation with her after his return to Kentucky.<sup>32</sup>

### **The Inherent Appeal of the "Massacre" Story to Young Twain**

Such a dramatic story as the "Montgomery Massacre" could not have avoided leaving a strong impression on the mind of young Twain who, as Mark Valentine notes, avidly devoured adventure-romance stories that he later came to scorn (29), ranging from classics such as James Fenimore Cooper's works and Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* to dime novels such as Ned Buntline's *The Black Avenger of the Spanish Main: or, The Fiend of Blood* (1847), a pirate yarn that Valentine calls "Tom Sawyer's favorite story" (30).

In fact, in Twain's famous boy-book *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), Tom has been rejected by Becky Thatcher and imagines himself first going west to "join the Indians" and later returning to his schoolhouse triumphantly "bristling with feathers, hideous with feathers" (*TS* 74-75)—but then he has a better idea. He will join the pirates and return to St. Petersburg below a waving "skull and cross-bones" banner, all to "hear with swelling ecstasy the whisperings, 'It's Tom Sawyer the Pirate!—the Black Avenger

of the Spanish Main!’” (*TS* 75). Thus, Valentine’s designation of Buntline’s *The Black Avenger* as Tom’s “favorite story” is supported implicitly in Twain’s own book, and the sort of excitement that inflames Tom’s imagination in that book no doubt also excited his creator’s imagination as a boy. Indeed, a rival editor whom young Twain attacked in Orion’s *Hannibal Journal* during one of Orion’s trips back to Fentress County to deal with the Tennessee land responded by directly comparing young Twain and the author of *The Black Avenger*: “This newly arisen ‘Ned Buntline’ shall be paid back in his own coin,’ the *Messenger* warned a couple of days later” (Powers, *Dangerous Water* 186-87).<sup>33</sup>

Significantly for the present argument asserting the influential effect of frontier violence between Native and European Americans on Twain, Tom Sawyer’s imagination is excited not only by the idea of unfurling the “black flag” of piracy in his hometown; he envisions disturbing its peace with “a bloodcurdling war whoop” as well (*TS* 74-75). The image of Native Americans as murderous villains such as the Injun Joe of *Tom Sawyer* arguably found its genesis in the particular ancestral story of the Montgomery’s Station attack, complemented by other sources and the overall images of Native Americans as “savages” prevalent in nineteenth-century American culture. “The Injun blood ain’t in me for nothing,” Joe growls at young Dr. Robinson shortly before stabbing the grave-robbing physician to death in the cemetery as Tom and Huck watch from the shadows (*TS* 85-86).

The element of his great grandmother’s heroism at Montgomery’s Station also would have appealed to young Twain and perhaps may have influenced his later story fragment, “Hellfire Hotchkiss” (1897), in which an unconventionally masculine tomboy

heroically rescues a drowning boy who, also unconventionally, presents a more effeminate figure than Hellfire does (Abate 120-22). If Collins's version of the "Montgomery Massacre" is closest to the story that Jane Lampton repeatedly told her children, in pushing the slain slave's head out of the doorframe and calling audibly for a gun, Twain's great grandmother Jane both took effective direct action and made a plausible, possibly bluffing verbal threat to counter the Cherokee onslaught. Collins's narrative suggests: "From some cause or other, probably the call of Jane for her brother's rifle, which was doubtless overheard by the Indians, they did not attempt to break into the cabin." Jane was forced into an adult role because her mother was absent, as Collins also reports: "Mrs. Montgomery with her youngest child, Flora, were then at Logan's fort" (406). This role is later emphasized by embellishment in Thomas Marshall Green's *Historic Families of Kentucky* (1889), in which Green writes that Jane "with a *vigorous shove* of her foot pushed out the dead boy's head, shut the door" and with "her brother's rifle [...] in her *steady* hand, *bravely defied* the foe, who feared to approach the cabin" (133, emphases added). Green also romanticizes Betsey's race to Pettit's Station to sound the alarm "as fleet as any deer of the forest, outstrip[ing] pursuit" (134). Not coincidentally, Betsey's run to summon help is the part of the Montgomery's Station attack that Twain may possibly have described to his first biographer, Albert Bigelow Paine, a pluckily "masculine" flight that Twain may have mistakenly ascribed to Jane, as this chapter will discuss further on.<sup>34</sup>

Nor in Trabue's version was there a gun in Jane's family's cabin for her to call for and scare her Cherokee attackers back from the door. According to Trabue, "Tom Montgomery, who lived with his father, was gone to Lexington with his gun on Guard,

and then their [sic] was no gun in Old Mr. Montgomery house.” Trabue’s account of the basic attack generally matches Collins’s version but omits Jane shouting for the gun:

“Old Mr. Montgomery and a Negro Man went out of his Door, and the Indians shot them boath [sic] Dead. Old Mr. Montgomery was shot with 7 bullitts [sic]. He fell in the yard. The Negro fell in the door. The Old Man’s Daughter Jean [sic, meaning Jane] Moved the negro out of the Door and shut the Door and fastened it” (151). However, three paragraphs later, Trabue describes, “Betsy inquerd [sic] of her sister Jean where was Tom’s Gun, and she told her Tom had it with him,” gratuitously adding, “There is no Doubt but if she had a Gun but what she would have made use of it. The indeans [sic] was a screming [sic] and hollowing and shooting” (152).

Thus, in Trabue’s account, too, Twain’s great grandmother Jane is credited with being willing to take effective direct action in life-threatening circumstances, in the manner of “Hellfire Hotchkiss.” A third account is the most recent to come to light, in Driscoll’s 2018 *Mark Twain among the Indians*; it verifies the degree of imminent threat that Grandmother Jane lived through. As described by her youngest daughter, Anne Casey Montgomery—who was Peggy Lampton’s sister, Jane Lampton’s aunt, Mark Twain’s great aunt, and married her cousin—“the Indians battered the cabin door ‘with their war clubs and tomahawks’ after Jane secured it.” Anne also weighs in on whether Jane and Betsey were armed: “In contrast to Collins, [Anne] claimed there was no rifle on the premises, insisting that the attackers retreated in ‘alarm and confusion’ upon hearing Jane’s command to her sister to retrieve one.” Either way, Driscoll concurs that “[i]n this version of events, Jane emerges as a formidable, larger-than-life figure—plucky, mettlesome, self-possessed—a worthy namesake for her eldest granddaughter” (*MTAI*



22), and Anne Casey Montgomery's account once again represents a record directly obtained from Grandmother Jane.<sup>35</sup>

Other versions of the story allege that Twain's great-grandmother Jane shut and barred the door against one of the attackers who tried to reach into the cabin and that she ignited a straw mattress in the fireplace to keep the Cherokees from climbing down into the chimney through which Betsey had climbed out (Watson 21-22). These additions to the story are not confirmed in either of the narratives that Collins, Trabue, and Anne Casey Montgomery obtained directly from Jane Montgomery Casey. However, whether the additional details are factual or are conflated with other frontier incidents, the tendency of tellers to embellish stories of violence between Native and European Americans in a form of the folk process again illustrates the drama inherent in the Montgomery's Station attack that would have left a lasting impression on young Twain when he was repeatedly told the story. Additionally, Collins's and Trabue's first-hand collections of the story of the attack directly from the woman who experienced it as a teen-ager suggest that if Jane Montgomery Casey told her tale to a historian unrelated to her, she also told it to her granddaughter Jane Lampton, who then told it to her own children.

### **Young Twain's Possible Direct Encounter with Grandmother Jane**

Jane Casey also may have had the opportunity to continue repeating the story directly to Twain's mother, as well as to young Twain himself; literally, he may have heard the story directly from his pioneer great grandmother. Only two years after John and Jane Clemens migrated west from Tennessee to northeastern Missouri in 1835, Jane

Casey migrated west to Iowa with her son, Twain's great uncle Green Casey, to live on land that Uncle Green had claimed. They made this move to West Point in southeastern Iowa's Lee County in 1837, and Grandmother Jane survived there until 1844, dying when young Twain was nine years old.<sup>36</sup> Like Twain's boyhood home Hannibal, Missouri, Fort Madison in Lee County is situated directly on the Mississippi River, about eighty-four road miles north of Hannibal and easily accessible from Hannibal by steamboat in the early 1840s.<sup>37</sup> West Point is less than ten miles inland from Fort Madison. It is not known whether Jane Clemens's children ever visited their great grandmother across the Missouri-Iowa line, but the possibility obviously exists.

Furthermore, at least one letter has been unearthed in which Grandmother Casey invites her granddaughter, Jane Lampton Clemens, to bring her family "up the river to see me this summer." The topics that Grandmother Casey places on the agenda are even more significant: "We will talk of your grandf<sup>r</sup> and Uncle Green and your mother. We will talk of K<sup>y</sup>," Jane Montgomery Casey promises (Varble 155). Although Grandmother Casey may have died before the proposed visit could take place, that circumstance does not rule out the chance that the Clemens family had previously visited her, and she was inviting her Missouri relatives for a return visit. The record is silent on this point, saying neither aye nor nay, but conceivably young Twain may have heard the story of the Montgomery's Station attack directly from his great grandmother who experienced it.

### **An Accumulation of Fatalities**

The death of Twain's great-great grandfather William Montgomery, Sr., in the 1781 attack on his station was not the only fatality Twain's ancestors suffered in

Kentucky's early violence between Native and European Americans, and that young Twain may have been told about. Two years prior to the Montgomery's Station attack, another of Twain's great-great uncles, Alexander Montgomery (Talbert 60), was killed when he accompanied his brother-in-law Benjamin Logan on a scouting expedition to the large Shawnee town at Chillicothe, Ohio, prior to the famous Shawnee siege of Boonesborough in 1778 (Harrison and Klotter 37-38). The white settlers, including Montgomery and Logan, admittedly intended to steal Shawnee horses during their scouting expedition (Talbert 60), and after they haltered and seized some horses, the Shawnees pursued them. Twain's great-great uncle Alexander was killed when the horses refused to swim the Ohio River and the Shawnees caught up with the raiders on the riverbank (Talbert 61).

The company Alexander was keeping included the backwoodsman Simon Kenton, a frontier settler and "Indian fighter" almost as famous as Daniel Boone (Harrison and Klotter 35); Kenton County, Kentucky, is named after him ("Kentucky County Names"). Kenton escaped the scouting party's Shawnee pursuers, but Alexander did not, and "his long blonde hair was taken as a trophy" (Talbert 61). Whatever portions of this dramatic story replete with colorful details were handed down to young Twain, the justification given for the larcenous excursion that resulted in the death of Twain's great-great uncle was the imminent threat of Shawnee "invasion" (Talbert 60) of land that the Shawnees believed they still rightfully owned.

Nor was the slaying of Twain's great-great grandfather the only death that occurred among Twain's maternal ancestors in the 1781 attack by Cherokees at Montgomery's Station. Twain's great-great uncle John Montgomery, his great

grandmother's older brother, was killed in his bed when, according to Collins, "attempting to rise, [he] was fired upon through a crack, and mortally wounded" (406). Alternately, according to Trabue, Great Uncle John was killed when "[t]he Indians broak opin [sic]" his cabin door, "and as he got up out of his bed they shot him Dead and took his wife and Nego [sic] Girl Prisoners" (151). Either way, John's death was the third among the settlers that morning, counting the fatal shooting of the African American youth who accompanied William Montgomery, Sr., out his cabin door at dawn, and both Montgomery ancestors related by blood to Twain.

Likewise, Twain's great grandmother's young niece, Flora or "Flory"—a daughter of Jane Montgomery's brother-in-law Joseph Russell and Jane's sister Molly—was tomahawked to death as the Cherokees fled Montgomery's Station with several captives. According to Collins, Logan and twelve to fifteen rescuers<sup>38</sup> from Logan's Fort were trailing the Cherokees with the help of "some signs which Mrs. Russell had the presence of mind to make, by occasionally breaking a twig and scattering along the route pieces of a white handkerchief which she had torn into fragments" so that "Logan's party found no difficulty in the pursuit" (406). On the other hand, Trabue does not mention Mrs. Russell's sign-making but also writes, "The number of Indeans and presoner made Much sine. They was easy to follow [sic, repeatedly]" (152). Either way, the successful pursuit by Twain's great uncle Benjamin and the other rescuers doomed young Flora Russell. According to Collins, after the settlers' posse nearly caught up with the Cherokees:

Logan ordered a charge, which was made with a shout, and the Indians fled with great precipitancy [...] A daughter of Mrs. Russell, about twelve

years of age,<sup>39</sup> upon hearing Logan's voice, exclaimed in ecstasy [sic],  
 "there's uncle Ben," when the savage who had her in charge struck her  
 dead with his tomahawk. (407)

Thus, a total of three of Twain's maternal ancestors died during the attack on Montgomery's Station and its aftermath, and the death of Alexander Montgomery in 1778 brings the total to four fatalities among Twain's ancestors in the frontier violence between Native and European Americans in the early Upper South.

Twain's family history of involvement in that violence has been noted in many of the biographies written about him, beginning with Paine's seminal Twain biography in 1912. However, the number of fatalities directly afflicting Twain's ancestors had never been independently tallied prior to the present study. Dixon Wecter comes close, in his *Sam Clemens of Hannibal* (1952), but he simply relies on Orion's victim count of five. However, he begins by presenting the facts of the Montgomery's Station attack to establish its significance. After first directly quoting Collins's account of the fatal shooting at dawn of William Montgomery, Sr., and his African American slave (406), Wecter writes:

After assaulting another cabin, killing Jane's brother John and capturing his wife, other women, and children, the Indians retreated, but were hotly pursued by Logan's party, routed with bloodshed, and the captives retaken. These things Mark Twain's great-great grandmother Jane remembered in her old age. (21)

Then Wecter quotes Orion's five-person tally of the family fatalities during the entire period of frontier violence in Kentucky, drawing on Orion's 1890 biographical sketch of

his newly deceased mother that Twain initially suppressed, and that Walter Blair later published. In the brief sketch, Orion notes that Grandmother Casey “shared in the perils of Indian warfare,” so although she was “a good Baptist she never could, while she lived, endure the presence of Indians, because by savages five of her relatives were killed” (Blair 381).<sup>40</sup> The eldest Clemens brother does not specify the five allegedly slain ancestors by name. However, the present study can only identify four.

### **The “Heroic Rescuer”: Twain’s Great Grandfather, “Indian Fighter”**

A description of the influence of Twain’s mother’s stories about his ancestors on Twain’s antipathy toward Native Americans would not be complete without elaborating on the role that his great grandfather William Casey played in the confiscation or settlement of Kentucky, to use terms that vary depending on whether the point of view is Native or European American. Casey no doubt was a key actor in his wife’s stories of the deadly frontier violence they experienced together in her teens and twenties. William Casey’s warfare, both defensive and offensive, also represents the prevailing anti-indigenous ethos in action. Orion describes both William and Jane Casey as earning “honorable mention” in Kentucky history, and he singles out Col. Casey as “a leader of the defenders of the pioneers against the Indians” (Blair 381). A young Irish American, unmarried pioneer based at Logan’s Fort when the Montgomery’s Station attack occurred, Casey was among the rescuers who rode with his future wife Jane’s Uncle Benjamin to recapture the two women and six children taken by the Cherokees in the attack.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Casey “happened to be” at Pettit’s Station (Watson 22) when Betsey arrived breathlessly pleading for help during the attack, so Casey was the “messenger

[...] immediately dispatched to Logan's fort" (Collins 406) to alert a large-enough body of pursuers (Watson 22-23, Talbert 122).

Such is the stuff of romance, a great grandfather who came to the rescue of his future beloved menaced by red savages, and it is frankly inconceivable that Jane Lampton Clemens, renowned for her storytelling flair, would have told the story any other way to her impressionable and romantic adventure-addicted young son, Samuel Langhorne Clemens. Of course, by the time Betsey reached Pettit's Station, the other settlers including the future Grandmother Jane Casey were close behind them, but "Betsy got their first and had already gave the knews [sic, repeatedly]." However, it was Casey who then "went with speed to Col. Ben Logan's [...] which was 12 Miles," summoning Logan and the other rescuers (Trabue 152).

Like Twain's great grandmother Jane Casey, Great Grandfather Casey would have been presented to Twain as an exemplar of the frontier ethic of righteous enmity toward Native Americans in the name of land preemption and white societal self-defense. From the very beginning of Casey's immigration to Kentucky in 1779 and his following ten years as a Lincoln County resident, "he actively engaged in the defense of the county and participated in the various military movements against the hostile Indians," according to Watson (19). Then after Casey's marriage in 1782 to Jane Montgomery, Twain's great grandparents moved to Adair County where they repeatedly withstood more Native American attacks (Collins 231, Varble 4).

Watson and Wecter both narrate the time Casey and other settlers were attacked by a large body of Native Americans, whose number is described as unknown by Watson but as fifteen by Wecter, while the settlers were harvesting a field of flax (Watson 24-26,

Wecter 22). According to Watson, Casey and one other man held the attackers off while the women and children got to safety against the fire of at least one hundred Native American rifle shots, while Wecter doesn't mention any defenders except Casey. Watson titles this narrative "Casey's Heroism under Fire." Like the other tales of violence against Twain's ancestors, this dramatic story may have found its way into Jane Lampton's litany of frontier drama with which she regaled her children. However, one ear-catching yarn about Col. Casey's slaying of "The Last Unfriendly Indian," as Watson titles it, seems even more likely to have earned Jane Lampton's repetition and recitation.

In this tale that justifies the shooting from ambush of a Native American who is given no chance to explain or defend himself, Casey is said to have found the "last unfriendly Indian" lurking to ambush him, remaining in the Adair County woods after a large group of Native Americans had already passed through: "The Indians correctly surmised that when it appeared they had gone, Casey would come out and, being off his guard, could be slain," Watson writes. However, when the alleged would-be assassin left his post for a break, Casey "detected the hiding place [...] took a position behind the blind and awaited the return of its maker, [...] and] as soon as he came within rifle shot, Casey fired upon the Indian and killed him. Thus, the would-be slayer was slain" (13-14).

The rationale behind this story is allied with the European American ethos that preemption of Native American land was justified and thus that deadly violence against the land's original owners also was justified. Such violence was deemed self-defense, and in the spirit of that trope, young Twain almost undoubtedly heard this dramatic story about his own great grandfather from his own mother's lips. According to Davidson, it is true that the Chickamauga Cherokees conducted a coordinated and widespread campaign



of assassination against leaders of the white settlers: “In widely separated ambushes, the Indians slaughtered the old valiant men of the frontier,” including John Donelson, one of the founders of Nashville (187-88).<sup>42</sup> Thus, it is possible that the “last unfriendly Indian” did intend to assassinate Casey, and Watson writes that “[i]t was learned, in years afterwards from his companions, that he was left behind for the express purpose of slaying [Casey] and securing Casey’s scalp” (14).

Yet this after-the-fact evidence does not exculpate Casey from having ambushed and slain, in cold blood, a fellow human being whom he encountered in the woods. The simplest explanation is that frontier European Americans viewed killing any and all male Native Americans whom they discovered, unannounced in preempted territory, as an act of war—the point of which is that in the story about his great grandfather’s action, such a justification of shooting the “last unfriendly Indian” would have been handed down to Twain. For instance, Varble writes that in addition to Casey’s aforementioned shooting of an “unaware Indian from ambush,” Casey “had once shot dead an Indian chief who was drinking water from a spring,” but then she states the rationale that was and still is made for Casey’s actions: “[I]t was during a time of warfare, when the Indians were bent on exterminating his settlers and had killed some of the more helpless of them” (6).

### **The Participation of Twain and His Ancestors in the “Extinction” Trope**

In an additional sense, the story of Twain’s great grandfather’s actions, when it was handed down to Twain, would have reinforced his immersion in and acceptance of the prevailing ethos regarding Native Americans: that they were naturally less suited to survive than European Americans and that they eventually would mostly die out (Pearce

55-57, 69-73). Michelle Burnham points out that to expedite this extinction without having to feel any guilt, European Americans before and during Twain's childhood found it imperative to employ "an act of deliberate forgetting" (101) about the role they had played and were continuing to play in the mass demise of Native Americans:

Central to this Jacksonian-era model of the imperialist audience is the subtraction of agency from the historical stage, so that causal aggression looks like inevitability. [...] In other words, the imperialist nation imagines itself as an unaccountable audience, affected by a tragic disappearing act that no perceptible agent has effected. (94)

Thus, the sentimentally nostalgic word "last" in Watson's title for his tale of Casey's fatal shooting of a Native American is as significant as the presumptive adjective "unfriendly." The victim's legendary "last"-ness, or the finality of his existence, that was handed down into the twentieth century through Watson's account, is complementary to the lack of agency Burnham identifies in white descriptions of the disappearance of Native Americans from the land that once was theirs. According to these descriptions, no one made it happen. It just happened. It was inevitable. And it was the European Americans' "manifest destiny" to benefit from it.

One of many examples in nineteenth-century literature is William Cullen Bryant's "An Indian at the Burial-Place of His Fathers" (1824), a somewhat premature elegy in which, according to Carl Ostrowski's reading, even "[t]he Indian acknowledges that the destiny of his people is to move West as a prelude to extinction; arguments against removal could hold little weight when the Native American himself sees annihilation as inevitable." Ostrowski notes that Bryant's sentiment is "traditionally interpreted" as the

poet's assertion that all things must pass, and all civilizations must be superseded. And yet Bryant makes this assertion in a way that obscures European American agency in Native American genocide, in the way that Michelle Burnham suggests that it obscures the white culture's genocidal agency (94, 101). Despite the traditional interpretation that Bryant's primary focus in his poem is cultural mutability, Ostrowski writes, "the effect of this sentiment, that the white culture too is subject to the forces of history, is to justify removal of the Indians on the grounds that destiny, not the white man, is the agent of the Indians' demise."<sup>43</sup>

A similar relegation to fate of all responsibility for the genocidal consequences of European American confiscation of Native American land and resources can be inferred from Twain's late-career essay "The Dervish and the Offensive Stranger" (1902), described and discussed further in Chapter Five. As Alan Gribben has documented in his bibliographic *Mark Twain's Library: A Reconstruction*, Bryant's influence on Twain may have been direct, through Twain's personal reading,<sup>44</sup> as well as indirect, through the editor-poet Bryant's influence on antebellum European American culture and encouragement of Indian Removal.

Twain's own very early use of the inevitability-of-extinction trope, in which former Native American presence on the land is nostalgically recalled, can clearly be seen in his March 25, 1852, letter to the Philadelphia *American Courier* describing Hannibal when Twain was only 16, a letter which James C. McNutt quotes (226) as an example of Twain's "early sympathy with romantic fiction":

The first house was built in this city about sixteen years ago. Then the wild war-whoop of the Indian resounded where now rise our stately

buildings, and their bark canoes were moored where now rise our noble steamers; [...] But where now are the children of the forest? Hushed is the war cry—no more does the light canoe cut the crystal waters of the proud Mississippi; but the remnant of those once powerful tribes are torn asunder and scattered abroad, and now they wander far, far from the homes of their childhood and the graves of their fathers. (“Hannibal, Missouri” 67)

This trope of Native American extinction is part and parcel with historical descriptions of the extinction or “extinguishing” of their title to their land, a syntactical usage that masks the actual agency of European Americans in making that extinction occur. This equation of the extinction of a people with the extinction of their title to their land and designation of the process as “inevitable” can be seen in early Tennessee history from the time Twain’s parents were adolescents, as well as in more modern telling of that history. For instance, historian Robert E. Corlew writes that in 1818, in a treaty with Andrew Jackson and Isaac Shelby, the former governor of Kentucky, “[t]he last claims of the Chickasaw Indians in Tennessee were *extinguished*” (149, emphasis added).

A few pages later, Corlew explicitly links the extinction of Native American land titles and Native Americans themselves by quoting Tennessee Supreme Court Justice John Catron to the effect “that the Indians were ‘mere wandering savages’ and might even ‘deserve to be exterminated as savage and pernicious beasts’” (153), adding that Catron’s opinion, handed down in 1835, impressed Jackson so much that two years later Old Hickory appointed him to the United States Supreme Court. Ironically, Catron’s call for genocide was part of a ruling that overturned a Cherokee appellant’s acquittal on a murder charge (Corlew 152-53). Yet the passive tense of his phrase “deserve to be

exterminated” provides one more example of Burnham’s theory that Jacksonian whites avoided admitting their roles in Native American extinction.

Thirty-five years later Twain, who coincidentally was born in the year Catron issued his genocidal opinion, reiterates this extermination trope in his *Galaxy* magazine essay “The Noble Red Man” (1870), complete with the use of passive voice. “[T]ruly he is nothing but a poor, filthy, naked scurvy vagabond,” Twain writes about the supposedly typical Native American, “whom to exterminate were a charity to the Creator’s worthier insects and reptiles which he oppresses.” And further on, at the end of the same lengthy paragraph: “[H]e is a good, fair, desirable subject for extermination if ever there was one” (“NRM” [427]). Then in *Roughing It* (1871), Twain consistently refers to the Gosiute people he encounters as “Goshoot Indians,” as if their name were a sentence in the imperative mode, go shoot Indians, proposing a genocidal course of action. “Extermination,” or a synonym for it, is a consistent theme from this period of Twain’s life: in 1867, in correspondence from New York City commenting on California affairs, Twain declares, “I am waiting patiently to hear that they have ordered General Connor out to polish off those Indians, but the news never comes” (SLC to *Alta California* editors, San Francisco, 5 June 1867, qtd. in Walker and Dane 266).

The same year, in Twain’s satirical sketch “The Facts Concerning the Recent Resignation” (1867) later published in *Sketches New and Old* (1875), he offers gratuitous advice to the Secretary of War that “his method of fighting the Indians on the Plains” is “too scattering,” and that the Secretary ought to concentrate these human beings “in some convenient place [...] and then have a general massacre.” Writing, of course, in jest, but seemingly without pausing to reflect on the inherent barbarity of making a joke of

genocide, Twain adds, “I said there was nothing so convincing to an Indian as a general massacre.” But in lieu of actual mass murder, Twain proceeds to advocate cultural genocide, suggesting that if the Secretary “could not approve of the massacre, I said the next surest thing for an Indian was soap and education [...] not as sudden as a massacre, but [...] more deadly in the long run.” Twain’s unsolicited advice concludes with the punchline, “Inflict soap and a spelling-book on every Indian that ravages the Plains, and let them die!” (*SNO* 322). Later in the sketch, in a Cabinet meeting, the Secretary identifies Twain as “the same visionary that came to me yesterday with a scheme to educate a portion of the Indians to death, and massacre the balance” (*SNO* 325). In sum, lethality of one sort or another with the lives of the Native Americans whom Twain sweepingly characterizes as “ravag[ing] the Plains” permeates this early sketch of Twain’s as well, and their characterization as “ravage[rs]” carries on their image from the frontier days of the Upper South in Jane Clemens’s family stories.

The list of references to “extermination” in Twain’s writings could go on and on; as Helen Harris has noted (496-97), Twain writes that the hungry Arabs he encounters in *The Innocents Abroad* (1869) “remind me much of Indians” who, hoping for spare crumbs,

[...] sat in silence, and with tireless patience watched our every motion with that vile, uncomplaining politeness which is so truly Indian, and which makes a white man so nervous and uncomfortable and savage that he wants to exterminate the whole tribe. (*IA* 472-73)

Likewise, in his *Autobiography* Twain writes that the Puritans “really had something to be thankful for” at Thanksgiving “if they had succeeded in exterminating their neighbors,

the Indians, during the previous twelve months instead of getting exterminated by their neighbors the Indians,” and that the holiday ultimately “became a habit, for the reason that in the course of time [...] it was perceived that the exterminating had ceased to be mutual and was all on the white man’s side, consequently on the Lord’s side” (*AMT* 1: 267-68). Although this passage might seem to express sympathy with Native Americans and to criticize Christian hypocrisy, a certain callousness is evident in Twain’s next observation that Thanksgiving has become a national habit even though the holiday’s seminal *raison d’être* “has long ago ceased to exist—the Indians have long ago been comprehensively and satisfactorily exterminated and the account closed with Heaven” (*AMT* 1: 268). The adjective “satisfactorily” prefacing “exterminated” and Twain’s four references to extermination further suggest his linguistic participation in the extermination trope, including his assertion that Native Americans were in fact completely gone from New England by Twain’s time, the victims of inevitable, divinely sanctioned annihilation.

Even when Twain putatively moderates his antipathy toward Native Americans in his later years by arguing that what whites did to them was only a repetition of conquests endured by every nation of people in history, his rationalization relies on the same sort of “inevitability” of the end of Native Americans that is represented by Casey’s shooting of the “last” of them in his part of frontier Kentucky. Twain’s rationalization of conquest that “[n]o tribe, howsoever insignificant, and no nation, howsoever mighty, occupies a foot of land that was not stolen” (*FTE* 2: 298) recapitulates Bryant’s argument in “A Walk at Sunset” that, according to Ostrowski, “white Americans could mitigate their guilt over treatment of the Native American by arguing that his demise was not the result of

human greed or prejudice, but rather a part of the order of nature, merely a manifestation of the rhythmic progress of history.”

### **The Chain of Oral Transmission of the “Massacre” Story to Young Twain**

Twain’s essential adoption of his culture’s genocidal ethic toward Native Americans can be traced to the violence to which the settlers resorted to obtain Native American land and to the counter-violence that Native Americans used against the settlers. There can be no doubt that young Twain was told the stories of frontier violence in Kentucky. As mentioned earlier, Orion references them in his biographical sketch of his newly deceased mother. Likewise, as previously noted, young Twain may have heard the saga of the Montgomery’s Station attack directly from his great grandmother who personally experienced it and survived in nearby Iowa, residing virtually across the Missouri state line from Hannibal until after Twain’s ninth birthday.<sup>45</sup> Orion’s sketch of his mother explicitly emphasizes the connection between Jane Lampton Clemens’s ancestral fatalities and her own prejudice against Native Americans. In addition, two other close relatives of Twain left written testimony that, first, Jane Montgomery Casey and then her granddaughter Jane Lampton regaled their children with stories of the frontier violence directly committed against them and the family.

Specifically, Twain’s great nephew provides direct evidence that Jane Lampton Clemens told her children and grandchildren the story of the Montgomery’s Station attack; presumably, straight from his mother’s lips would have been the transmission vector with the most lasting impact on Twain. This direct proof appears in a recollection of Jane Lampton Clemens written by her granddaughter Annie Moffett Webster, Twain’s



niece, and published by Annie's son Samuel Charles Webster in his part-biography, part-collection of letters *Mark Twain, Business Man* (1946).

In Twain's great nephew's book, Annie writes that "[b]oth my mother and grandmother had many stories to tell" during Annie's childhood in St. Louis in the 1850s, adding that "Grandma," or Jane Lampton Clemens, "especially loved reminiscences[....] As she rocked she told story after story in her soft drawling voice, the drawl that Uncle Sam inherited." The content of these stories, according to Annie, was primarily

[...] her early life, adventures of Patsy and herself when they were Kentucky belles spoiled by an indulgent father, stories of her grandfather and grandmother and the days of Daniel Boone and the Indians, stories of her life in Tennessee, of the long ride from Jamestown, Tennessee, to Florida, Missouri, and of the Hannibal days. (Webster 43)

Obviously, according to Annie Moffett, her grandmother was comprehensive in the depth and breadth of the yarns she passed along to her children and grandchildren at the side of her rocking chair, and most likely Jane Lampton Clemens would have been an equally comprehensive storyteller in Florida, Missouri, and in "the Hannibal days" when young Twain was part of her brood of fascinated listeners.

Simply put, when Jane Lampton talked about "the days of Daniel Boone and the Indians," it is completely inconceivable that she would have left out the dramatic, harrowing adventures that occurred to members of her own family, especially the entrapment of her own grandmother, the escape of her great aunt Betsey, and the death of her own great grandfather. Boone, the most famous of the Kentucky frontiersmen, was not one of Twain's ancestors, but Twain's ancestors knew Boone well and fought against

Native Americans beside him. In addition, as a mother proud of her family's alleged noble lineage from the Earl of Lambdon,<sup>46</sup> Jane Lampton would also have boasted of the "Indian fighters" who were indeed her ancestors such as Col. William Casey and Gen. Benjamin Logan.

In her young motherhood, with daily tasks to complete, Twain's mother might not have had much time to sit in her rocking chair spinning yarns, but the nights were long during the Missouri winters of Twain's childhood, and there was no television or radio to entertain the Clemens youngsters if she had not amused them with stories. In addition, all descriptions of her personality, including those Twain wrote about her himself,<sup>47</sup> point to her narrating gregariously from the earliest days Twain could remember. On summer evenings, her children were entertained by the African American slave Uncle Dan'l at Uncle John and Aunt Patsy Quarles's farm where Dan'l would tell his signature ghost story, "The Golden Arm," as Twain recalls in his *Autobiography* (1: 217), but the winter nights would have been Jane's in which to spin ghostly legends of her own about the perils of the Kentucky frontier.

Even without the extremely probable jump of logic that since Jane Lampton told stories of the frontier violence in old Kentucky to her grandchildren in St. Louis in the 1850s, she must have told them as well to her own children in Florida and Hannibal, Missouri, in the 1830s and '40s, Annie Moffett's testimony still confirms that Twain, as well as his niece, heard his mother's stories. The reason is that Twain was in and out of his mother's residence in the St. Louis home of Annie's mother, Pamela Clemens Moffett, and Pamela's husband, Will Moffett, throughout the late 1850s. During this period, Twain was a "cub" undergoing his training as a riverboat pilot, and his primary

“home” was on paddlewheelers and sternwheelers steaming up and down the Mississippi, back and forth from New Orleans. However, when Twain was off-duty in St. Louis, he often stayed with his mother, who was living with her daughter and successful merchant son-in-law, the Moffetts, and telling family stories to Twain’s favorite niece, Annie.

A further contributing link in the “chain of transmission” of Grandmother Jane’s stories is Anne Casey Montgomery’s previously mentioned description of the “Montgomery Massacre” stories that her own mother Jane Casey Montgomery told. This archived memoir by Twain’s great aunt shatters all doubt that Grandmother Jane told her stories so vividly that having been raised on them, Jane Lampton absolutely would have passed them on. Such jarring memories of the Montgomery’s Station attack and the three subsequent attacks on the Casey homestead, Driscoll suggests, gave Grandmother Jane lifelong physical symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, including “insomnia and digestive issues” that Grandmother Jane herself blamed on her enduring trauma (*MTAI* 22). The close-up personal nature of the Montgomery’s Station attack alone could have been the cause; as Trabue writes, “Jean Montgomery [Grandmother Jane] says she was looking at the Indean on the log when her Brother William shot him. She seen him fall and she was glad [...] The indian that was shot from the log lay their [sic], and the hogs and other [blank space] eat him” (153). Small wonder Jane Montgomery Casey apparently suffered from PTSD. Quite probably, she also was Jane Lampton’s strongest parental influence as well as the direct or indirect inspiration for “Hellfire Hotchkiss”—and a voluble oral purveyor of indelible enmity toward the guerrilla Cherokees who ambushed her and her family at dawn.

### **The Enduring Impact of the “Massacre” Story among Twain’s Later Influences**

Evidence that Twain heard the Montgomery’s Station story also can be found in Walter Blair’s introduction to Twain’s unfinished story fragment “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians” (1884). Blair notes the similarities between the massacre of the Mills family with whom Tom, Huck, and Jim are traveling on the Oregon Trail and the Montgomery’s Station attack, in addition to other instances of frontier violence that Twain’s ancestors participated in and fell prey to, without Blair going into the details of that frontier violence. “Indian massacres like the one in which several members of the Mills family died were part of Jane Clemens’s family tradition,” he writes, without elaboration (84).

The folklorist Blair, of the University of Chicago, “was regarded as the pre-eminent authority on Mark Twain,” according to his *New York Times* obituary in 1992 (“Walter Blair, 92”). While he only modestly acknowledges the probable impact that “Jane Clemens’s family tradition” of enduring “Indian massacres” in particular had on Twain’s writings and attitudes toward Native Americans, Twain’s anti-indigenous oral heritage arguably predisposed him to remain hostile when he encountered the other influences that Blair describes. These include the direct observation of Native Americans in the West that Twain claims to have made in his 1867 letter to the *Alta California*, quoted above; in *Roughing It*; and in “The Noble Red Man.” In these attacks on Native Americans, Twain is making use of a common tactic among nineteenth-century humorists, Blair argues; namely, the ridicule of egregious sentimentality in popular fiction and drama—sentimentality evidenced in this case by the oxymoronic figure of the

“noble savage.” In Twain’s descriptions of the real “Noble Red Man,” as Twain views him, he simultaneously attacks James Fenimore Cooper’s prose as well as Native Americans, as Blair points out (81-83). However, what Blair overlooks by foregrounding Twain’s experience out West over his single-sentence observation about “Jane Clemens’s family tradition” of enduring “Indian massacres” (84) is the formative and enduring impact of his mother’s dramatic stories that predisposed him to make “humor” out of disparaging an entire race of people.

The impact of Twain’s mother’s stories also can be seen in the numerous written texts that Twain collected, consulted, and annotated (Blair 81-84) to develop his derogatory characterizations of Native Americans and their behavior in “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians” and elsewhere. Twain’s receptivity to these texts, which he sought out partly in search for source material, can be traced directly to the message implicitly conveyed in Jane Lampton’s stories: that Native Americans commit unprovoked and seemingly random attacks upon European Americans, even including women and children among their victims. As stated above, Blair only makes the connection between “Jane Clemens’s family tradition” and Twain’s antipathy to Native Americans in passing, but the sourced passage that Blair cites as evidence of a text that influenced Twain makes a parallel argument to Jane’s stories: that the real injustice is Native American violence against white women and children.

As evidence, Blair notes (82 n. 1 and 84) that in “The Noble Red Man,” Twain quotes *Sheridan’s Troopers on the Borders* by De Benneville Randolph Keim (1870) including Keim’s textual report that, as Twain phrases it, “from June, 1868, to October, 1869, the Indians *massacred nearly 200 white persons and ravished over forty women*

*captured in peaceful outlying settlements along the border or belonging to emigrant trains traversing the settled routes of travel*" ("NRM" [427]). Twain's stated reason for presenting these allegations, which he describes as "official [...] facts and figures" and emphasizes in italics, is to counteract the "wail of humanitarian sympathy" that the "Noble Red Man [...] is always greeted with [...] from the Atlantic seaboard whenever he gets into trouble" when "the maids and matrons always throw up their hands in horror at the bloody vengeance wreaked upon him" ("NRM" [427-28]). The parenthesized reason for objecting to these cries of sympathy that Twain inserts next is revealing: "(They always look at the matter from the abused-Indian point of view, never from that of the bereaved white widow and orphan)" ("NRM" [428]). In this and other passages, Twain does not mention the Montgomery's Station attack that left his own great grandmother a fatherless semi-orphan, but the psychological influence of the oral history of this legacy is evident in his proposed response to Native American resistance to land confiscation.

Specifically, Twain suggests in "The Noble Red Man" that reports of the massacre, rape, and torture of pioneers who are stealing Native American lands in the West justify any degree of uncivilized retaliation that the United States military might commit against Native Americans, presumably including the genocide of non-white noncombatants, women, and children. Whenever "the maids and matrons [...] of the Atlantic seaboard" and "the newspapers clamor for a court of inquiry to examine into the conduct of the inhuman officer who inflicted the little unpleasantness upon the 'poor abused Indian,'" Twain asserts, "it is a great and unspeakable comfort to know that, let

them be as prompt about it as they may, the inquiry has always got to come *after* the good officer has administered his little admonishment” (“NRM” [429]).

Twain’s callous stance in this instance stands in marked contrast to his later anti-imperialist denunciation in “A Defence of General Funston” (1902) of a United States general who ordered his soldiers to “massacre” Filipino insurgents, in which Twain satirically claims to admire Funston’s injunction to his troops: “the more you kill, the better—Kill all above the age of ten” (“Funston” 93) and it stands in especially marked contrast to Twain’s derision toward Theodore Roosevelt’s defense of US officers in the Philippines who were court-martialed for committing a torture known as the “water cure” (“Funston” 94, Janet Smith 253-54 n. 18). It also stands in marked contrast to such historical facts as the innocence of any crimes toward whites of the 133 Cheyennes and Arapahos, primarily women and children, who were massacred and mutilated by Colorado troops at Sand Creek in 1864 (Brown 68-91). Thus, Twain’s defense of military “admonishment” of Native Americans in “The Noble Red Man,” which he further minimizes in significance by employing the euphemism “little unpleasantry,” not only brings to mind the legacy of the Montgomery’s Station attack that Twain learned at his mother’s knee, but the legacy of his ancestors’ previously described destruction of the Chickamauga Cherokee town at Nickajack, in Tennessee, as well.

### **Critical Recognition of the Ancestral Violence Factor Grows**

Despite the nods by Blair and other Twain scholars and biographers to Twain’s inheritance of an oral history of frontier violence involving his direct ancestors, scholars prior to 2018 had not previously identified the joint influence on Twain of fatalities

among his ancestors and the prevailing cultural attitude on the frontier that Native Americans were enemies who committed unprovoked aggression on European American settlers, especially including women and children. That epiphany of scholarly recognition came to Twain scholarship with the fairly recent publication of *Mark Twain among the Indians* three years ago, which Driscoll researched and wrote independently from the present study but frequently reached conclusion similar to this study's. For instance, Driscoll notes that Twain's ancestors' traumatizing experience of the "Montgomery Massacre," and their enduring emotional response to it, "affirms historian Richard Slotkin's contention that the randomized violence of frontier conditions created an atmosphere of terror, at once real and imagined" (*MTAI* 22-23). Otherwise, the fact that young Twain heard the stories of violence had only been documented to a convincing but somewhat limited extent, and occasional surmises were made regarding the stories' influence on Twain. Critical connections between the stories of frontier violence, Twain's antipathy toward Native Americans, and his culture's often-genocidal ethic toward them tended to be implicit rather than explicit, and the overall ethos of mutual enmity was often obscured as simply a historical and cultural given.

For instance, the connection between tales of ancestral violence and Twain's antipathy toward Native Americans is made explicit, but not further analyzed, when Albert Bigelow Paine writes, "The Montgomeries and the Caseys had been Indian fighters in the Daniel Boone period, and Grandmother Casey, who had been Jane Montgomery, had worn moccasins in her girlhood, and once saved her life by jumping a fence and out-running a redskin pursuer. The Montgomery and Casey annals were full of



blood-curdling adventures, and there is to-day a Casey County next to Adair, with a Montgomery County somewhat farther east” (Paine 1: 3).

The story of Jane Montgomery Casey “jumping a fence and out-running” a Native American is not widely related elsewhere in the historical record—although Collins and Trabue both tell it, too, minus the fence—so Paine may have heard it directly from Twain during the several years that Paine spent with him, researching the biography and editing and archiving Twain’s oeuvre. Indeed, Wecter speculates that Twain told Paine the story of his great grandmother’s alleged escape from a “redskin pursuer” and that Twain “almost certainly confused her with her sister Betsey” (Wecter 20).

Yet whatever the manner that Paine’s information and misinformation was obtained, his paragraph establishes both the cultural context that Native Americans were beings to be resisted by “Indian fighters” and that the result was dramatically “blood-curdling.” The paragraph also sets this cultural context as a tone for subsequent Twain biographies and provides quasi-direct evidence of Twain’s awareness of the Montgomery’s Station attack in particular, if Wecter’s interpretation is correct that Twain mistakenly ascribes Betsey’s flight to summon help as the action of his great grandmother Jane.

As Driscoll also notes (*MTAI* 23), similar quasi-direct evidence that Twain was aware of the Montgomery’s Station attack can be found in his mockery dictated on October 10, 1907, of a county Republican committee’s endorsement of hunting deer with hounds to promote “safety to man, humanity to deer and sport for hunters,” as the resolution phrased it (*AMT* 3: 161). Twain does not specifically mention either

Montgomery's Station or Betsey Montgomery, but he vividly and sympathetically describes her flight from her family's attackers:

There is something refreshing and touching about that Republican Convention's idea of humanity. When we read of red Indians chasing a helpless white girl who is fleeing for her life, with bullets and arrows whizzing around her, the Indians' humanity is not apparent to us; the Indians seem to us only cruel and brutal, and all our sympathies are with the frightened girl. The fleeing deer is just as frightened, just as timid, just as void of offence; the deer's sharp agony and the girl's is the same [...]  
(*AMT* 3: 162)

In this autobiographical dictation, Twain even employs the same metaphor that Thomas Marshall Green had earlier employed as a simile when Green describes Betsey as running "as fleet as any deer of the forest" (134). Twain's lifelong identification of Native Americans as the epitome of savagery when degrees of civilization are compared, to be discussed further in Chapter Five, also can be seen in his concluding jab at the resolution-passing Republicans: "[I]t would seem logical that if the Republican hunter's performance is sport, and legitimate, the Indian's performance must also be regarded as sport, and legitimate" (*AMT* 3: 162).

The circumstances of the Montgomery's Station attack and its personal impacts on Twain's ancestors provide contextual evidence for the sincerity of Twain's condemnation of the politicians' parallel barbarity to Native Americans hounding down fleeing girls like his future great-great aunt Betsey. Twain's comparison of "the Republican hunter" with girl-targeting Native Americans, furthermore, cannot be

interpreted as late-career sympathy for them. While he does acknowledge “the Indians’ humanity is not apparent to us” due to their mistreatment of the fleeing girl, he does not acknowledge that what also “is not apparent” to his fellow European Americans is the Native Americans’ motive for the Montgomery’s Station attack: self-defense against perceived territorial aggression and land confiscation. Twain does suggest that the girl hunt must logically be considered “legitimate” but only as “sport,” not as “war,” and only tongue in cheek.

His dictation for the day, capping his comparison off, lampoons President Theodore Roosevelt for hunting what Twain calls “tame bears” in Louisiana, “quite without courage [...] as harmless as the flying girl and the fleeing deer,” suggesting that it would be “murder” to kill them and that Roosevelt “could get the same sport [...] by slaughtering helpless bears in a menagerie—and the travel and fatigue would be less.” Twain’s habitual use of Native Americans as the epitomic symbols of savagery can again be seen in his sardonic closing sentence, picturing Roosevelt as a Native American whose hair apparently needs braiding: “The President of the United States ought to hire a squaw and a comb and get at it” (*AMT* 3: 162). Would-be capitalist Twain, with industrialist friends such as Standard Oil’s Henry Huttleston Rogers (Powers, *A Life* 561-62), scorns the “trust-busting” president for a number of reasons—including his perception of Roosevelt as “still only fourteen years old, after living half a century” (*AMT* 3: 175), as Twain remarks in his October 21, 1907 *Autobiography* entry after Teddy finally shot a bear. However, when Twain takes pen in hand to lampoon, as barbaric, a Republican county committee, the hunting of deer with hounds, and a self-aggrandizing president in a

single satirical blast, it seems significant that the metaphor he turns to is “red Indians chasing a helpless white girl [...] fleeing for her life” (*AMT* 3: 162).

### **Jane Clemens’s Theatrical Role-Modeling for Twain’s Antipathy toward Native Americans**

Biographers have suggested the influence on Twain of his mother and her storytelling in a variety of ways, some of which emphasize the similarity between Twain’s dramatic narrative ability and that of his mother, while other writers directly connect the oral history of frontier violence transmitted to Twain by his mother and Twain’s later antipathy toward Native Americans. The first emphasis can be seen in one of John Lauber’s Twain biographies, in which Lauber writes that Twain’s mother

was a noted storyteller, speaking slowly, in a soft drawl. “Her happy flow of spirits,” her son Orion reported, “made her a popular favorite wherever she lived.” Sam inherited more than his mother’s red hair; as he grew older, he would show the same capacity for wholehearted enthusiasm, and he would become a renowned storyteller, speaking in his mother’s drawl.

(*Making* 14)

In this passage, Lauber emphasizes the storytelling talents that Twain’s mother passed down to him through an apparent combination of genetics and example, or nature and nurture. But not coincidentally, Lauber’s source for Orion’s remark about his mother’s “happy flow of spirits” is the same biographical sketch in which Orion describes his mother’s hatred of Native Americans (Blair 381), suggesting that she, less happily but

more dramatically, also told her children all about the frontier violence experienced by his ancestors.

Other biographers go much further than Lauber does, taking into consideration the specific content of Twain's mother's stories in their discussions of her effect upon him.<sup>48</sup>

The recent biographer who most directly and explicitly considers the nature of Jane Lampton's fireside stories and their effect on Twain's later attitude toward Native Americans is Ron Powers, who also portrays the stories as part of young Twain's give-and-take with his mother. Specifically, Powers writes in 2005,

Jane and Sammy [young Twain] seemed to feed on each other's hair-trigger nerves. Sammy would slip bats and snakes into her sewing basket; she told him tales of brutal and sadistic Indian attacks on her mother's people. A loathing of Indians, or at least of Fenimore Cooper's fictitious noble savages, was the one racial prejudice that Mark Twain could never shake off. (*A Life* 23-24)

Apparently, the effect of Jane's stories that she told her son about the cruel, ambushing, kidnapping, and tomahawking ways of Native American guerrillas in old Kentucky indeed played the same role in young Twain's head that Christopher Castiglia describes as prevailing within the nineteenth-century white patriarchy in his study of captivity narratives, *Bound and Determined* (1996). "To the variable degree that they participated in the composition and dissemination of their stories," he cautions, "captive white women, by generating fear and hatred of the Indians and their allies, helped to further the colonization of the shifting western frontiers" (6). Twain's overt hostility to and dehumanization of Native Americans in his early writings played exactly such a

colonizing-by-propaganda role. However, Castiglia's caveat proves unnecessary in Jane's case: there can be little doubt, as this chapter repeatedly demonstrates, that Jane Lampton "participated in the composition and dissemination" to her children of her frontier blood-curdlers about her grandmother being trapped in a cabin and other female ancestors taken captive and narrowly rescued or, in young Flory Russell's case, randomly killed.

In his earlier biography of Twain's boyhood, *Dangerous Water* (1999), Powers focuses in a similar way on Twain's "mother Jane, the curator of family legends, going on and on in the chill Missouri night with tales of Indians," although Powers does not yet place these stories in the context of mother-and-son tensions as he does in *A Life* six years later. Rather, in this earlier book Powers provides an equally suggestive context of a community of frontier folklore: that of his mother's stories numbering among the "family voices telling stories and always recounting the past," voices that "Sammy's first years were filled with" (*Dangerous* 39).

The "tales of Indians" that Powers describes Twain's mother telling were about Native Americans "wildly pursuing her grandmother, a woman also named Jane, and breaking into a cabin and killing Jane's brother, a man named John, and capturing his wife and children, and of terrible retribution by the settlers..." (*Dangerous* 39-40). Some of this description does misstate the details of the Montgomery's Station attack, at least according to both Collin's and Trabue's reports of Jane Montgomery Casey's account of the attack. Driscoll calls it "skewed and somewhat sensationalized" but true in its essential fact: "Jane Montgomery Casey [...] did indeed survive a 1781 Indian attack in frontier Kentucky as a young woman" (*MTAI* 20). Until Driscoll and the present study,

however, Powers's 1999 description was the only instance of a Twain biographer narrating the specific details of Twain's ancestors' participation in and victimization by the frontier violence in Kentucky more recently than Wecter's direct quotation<sup>49</sup> in 1952 of Collins (Wecter 20-21).

A possible exception might be Varble, writing in 1964, who was Jane Lampton Clemens's biographer, not Twain's. First, Varble writes that Grandmother Jane told Jane Lampton about a day in 1783 when "twenty-three widows who owed their titles to the tomahawk or the arrow [or the indigenously fired bullet] all assembled at Logan's Station" to settle their estates—including "her own mother, General Logan's mother-in-law," or Twain's great-great grandmother, yet another Jean or Jane (42). Then, Varble describes how Parker C. Hardin, a suitor who preceded John Marshall Clemens, told Jane Lampton "the story of an old enmity between the Indians and his forebears that had taken many lives." Jane, "not to be outdone," reportedly responded with details of the Montgomery's Station attack, "fascinat[ing]" the suitor with "[h]er manner of telling the story, now in whispers, now in a rush of terrible detail, now with somber gestures for the aftermath" (70). Driscoll suggests that Jane "would later use these same dramatic techniques to imprint this bloody ancestral saga onto the minds and hearts of her own impressionable children" (23).

### **Protecting Women and Children against Random Violence**

The errors and omissions in Powers's version of the Montgomery's Station attack<sup>50</sup> are significant partly because Powers fails to mention the fatality that may have made the greatest impression on young Jane Montgomery and traumatized her the most

severely: the previously described death of her father, Twain's great-great grandfather, William Montgomery, Sr. (Collins 406, Trabue 151).<sup>51</sup> Other errors in the account may seem trivial but they involve the abduction of women and children by the Cherokee raiders, a sort of occurrence that occasions Twain's greatest ire whenever he encounters or describes it.

The true part of Powers's version is that the Cherokees captured John Montgomery's wife, per both Collins and Trabue, but Collins makes no mention of John's children, whom Powers describes as being abducted (40). Children were indeed captured during the attack. However, according to Collins, they belonged to Twain's great-great aunt whose husband, Joseph Russell, "made his escape from the cabin" and left his dependents including "his wife and three children to the mercy of the savages," and these Russells were "taken prisoner [... along] with a mulatto girl" (406). Closely concurring with Collins, Trabue's list of captives follows: "They took John Montgomery[']s wife prisoner and skelped their Negro Girl and lift her behind. She lived. They also took Mr. Russel's wife and 4 children [sic, repeatedly]" (152).<sup>52</sup> Combining the two lists, it seems possible that most of the children were Russells, but at least one may have been John Montgomery's daughter. In any case, they were all nieces and nephews of Grandmother Jane, and therefore kin to Mark Twain.<sup>53</sup>

In the Montgomery's Station attack, there was an irresponsible party who abandoned his dependents, although he may have hoped to preserve his own life in order to rescue his family as soon as possible. Yet in contrast to Joseph Russell's behavior, among the details of the stories that were handed down by Twain's ancestors and that appear in both Collins's and Trabue's accounts of the attack, one fact in particular stands



out. This salient fact is that the dependents of the European American male who fought back during the Montgomery's Station attack were not captured like the family of John Montgomery, who was killed, and like the family of Russell, who abandoned his dependents. Upon "hearing the first crack of a gun," the settler who fought back, Twain's great-great uncle William Montgomery, Jr.

sprang to his feet, seized a large trough which had been placed in his cabin to hold sugarwater, placed it against the door, and directing the apprentice boy to hold it, fired twice at the Indians, in rapid succession, before they left the ground, killing one and severely wounding another, killing two. (Collins 406)<sup>54</sup>

Later in Collins's narrative, "the Indian who had pursued Betsey Montgomery returned" to the small group of Montgomery cabins after the other raiders and their captives had left. He "mounted a large beech log in front of the younger William Montgomery's door, and commenced hallooing," much to his own risk. "Montgomery, who had not yet ventured to open his door, again fired through the crevice, and shot him dead," Collins reports (406).<sup>55</sup>

Thus, in the frontier stories that were handed down by Twain's ancestors, a man's preservation of his life by escape equaled abandonment of his dependents to "the tender mercies" of "savages," a captivity fraught with implied sexual peril as well as the potential to be slain in the manner of the tomahawked captive Miss Russell. Meanwhile, the seemingly random killings of other European American males exposed their innocent dependents to captivity along with the Russell dependents, but William Montgomery, Jr.'s vigorous defense warded off his dependents' vulnerability. Furthermore, the quick

thinking and actions of Twain's young future great grandmother, Jane, and his great-great aunt, Betsey, allowed them to evade capture despite their father's sudden, random-seeming assassination, and their actions signified a level of aggressive defense: as previously described, Jane promptly shoved the family slave's head out of the heavy cabin door, closed and barred that door, and may have even called for a gun while Betsey fled out the chimney and ran to seek help from armed European American men headed by her brother-in-law Benjamin Logan (Collins 406, Trabue 151). Likewise, Mrs. Russell may have aggressively assisted in her own rescue by those same European American men with her twig-breaking and scattered bits of handkerchief (Collins 407), an especially apt symbol of her whiteness as represented by European technology—weaving—and European folklore as collected by the Brothers Grimm in "Hansel and Gretel," in which Hansel leaves trails of white pebbles and bread crumbs to help him and his sister Gretel find their way back to their parents' house (Ashliman).

As in the story of his great grandfather Casey's slaying by ambush of the "last unfriendly Indian," the message would have been implicit to young Twain in the entire Montgomery's Station narrative that counter-aggression by European Americans was justified against Native Americans seeking to halt the ongoing confiscation of their land. This justification especially applied when the result of Native American raids was not the killing of women and children but their abduction, a fate that Twain's culture viewed as worse than death, as this chapter will presently demonstrate. However, Powers may be said to have exaggerated the European American reaction to the Montgomery's Station attack: Collins describes the deaths of four Native Americans during the raid and its aftermath, but that number of deaths could hardly be considered "terrible retribution by

the settlers” as Powers phrases it (*Dangerous* 40). If he means the future sack of Nickajack, however, Powers needed to say so.

The settlers’ reaction at Montgomery’s Station was in no way comparable, for instance, to such European American massacres of Native Americans as the destruction of Nickajack in 1794. Yet the reason the settlers did not seek bloodier retribution for the ambush perpetrated against them in 1781 is revealing. Despite the tomahawking of Miss Russell, “the remainder of the prisoners were recaptured without injury” by Logan’s force, according to Collins (407), and the Native Americans were permitted to escape without further retribution than the deaths of four warriors in combat. It is significant that the welfare of the abducted dependents was Logan’s primary consideration, just as it would have been the first thought of his great-great nephew Twain four generations later. Consider once again Twain’s condemnation of “The Noble Red Man,” described previously: his report that in addition to purportedly killing settlers, Native Americans “*ravished over forty women captured in peaceful outlying settlements along the border.*” The degree and extent of atrocity that Twain describes is worth repeating: “*Children were burned alive in the presence of their parents,*” he alleges in emphatic italics. “*Wives were ravished before their husbands’ eyes. Husbands were mutilated, tortured, and scalped, and their wives were compelled to look on*” (“NRM” [428]). These horrors obviously remain a threat to innocents in Twain’s eyes during the time in which he is writing “The Noble Red Man.” Yet his sensitivity to such dangers, and his blindness to the issue of land possession that was their root cause, may well have been exacerbated by his knowledge of his ancestral history of an endemic threat to white women and children on the frontier of the Upper South.

As noted above, according to Collins, Gen. Logan made a priority of protecting the women and children in his charge at the conclusion of the Montgomery's Station attack and rescue. "As the force of Indians was about equal to that of the whites," Collins reports, "Gen. Logan, now encumbered with the recaptured women and children, wisely determined to return immediately; and reached the cabins, in safety, before dark on the same day" (407).<sup>56</sup> Similarly, in *Huckleberry Finn*, Huck voices no protests about and even actively assists the Duke and the Dauphin with their con games until the two frauds target three young women to rob of their inheritance. The Duke and the Dauphin are not Native American, although they are opportunistic hunter-gatherers, thereby matching the European American image of indigenous lifestyles. Huck has been living a similarly opportunistic lifestyle himself, but the revealing moment occurs when Huck turns against the Duke and the Dauphin specifically because of the targets they choose: adolescent girls, children turning into women. The con men's attempt to victimize the Wilks girls proves to be the Rubicon that Huck cannot cross and he changes sides (*HF* 188), disclosing the frauds' confidence scheme to Mary Jane Wilks after he witnesses her tearful dismay at the con men's breaking-up, by auction, of the Wilkses' slave family: "She said the beautiful trip to England was most about spoiled for her [...] knowing the mother and children warn't ever going to see each other no more" (*HF* 198). As John Seelye puts it, "domesticity itself is invaded and figuratively raped by the two rascals, who commit the act most vile, breaking up slave families in order to sell them at the highest price—precisely the crime against humanity Jim is fleeing from" (xxiii). Twain's ancestors in 1781 and Twain's Huck in 1885 agreed, in other words, that the prevention of the abduction and separation of women and children was of paramount importance.

### Twain Biographers Have Connected “Massacre” Legacy to the Threat of Rape

In *Dangerous Water*, Powers homes in on most of the above aspects of the impact of the Montgomery’s Station attack story on Twain, despite his relatively minor errors and misstatements; that is, he identifies random violence against white women and children as the ultimate indigenous crime in Twain’s opinion. Powers’s omission of the death of Twain’s great-great grandfather in favor of the shooting of Twain’s great-great uncle is surprising, to be sure, but Powers conveys the essential flavor and impact of the sort of stories that Twain’s mother told her impressionable son during his Missouri boyhood. Wecter, writing in 1952, is even more explicit in describing the details that would have been the most traumatic to young Jane Montgomery, incorporating in his narrative a block quotation of Lewis Collins’s essential paragraph describing the death of Twain’s great-great grandfather and the entrapment of young Jane in her cabin. As previously noted, Wecter goes on to signify the impact of these events by quoting Orion’s description of their effect on Grandmother Jane. Powers, likewise, immediately follows his explicit if incomplete description of the Montgomery’s Station attack with an unequivocal assertion that Jane Lampton’s recitation of her family’s part in the frontier violence in Kentucky had a prejudicial effect on Twain similar to its effect on her.

Specifically, the next paragraph that Powers writes after describing the Montgomery’s Station attack asserts:

For all of his famous lifelong repudiations of racial prejudice, Mark Twain would virtually never find a kind word about Indians. “Finally they crucified the girls against the wall opposite the parents,” a far more typical

passage would go, “and cut off their noses and their breasts. They also—  
but I will not go into that. There is a limit.” (*Dangerous* 40)

Significantly, in this passage that Powers quotes<sup>57</sup> from Twain’s posthumously published *Letters from the Earth* (1909/1962), Twain not only implies that the daughters were raped in an 1862 Native American attack in Minnesota but that their rape was a more egregious aspect of the atrocity than their sadistic physical mutilation, amputation, and murder by crucifixion such as Christ endured. After Twain writes, “There is a limit,” he continues: “There are indignities so atrocious that the pen cannot write them” (*LE* 53). If there is any doubt that rape was one of the “indignities so atrocious” that Twain self-censors in this passage, on the next page of his book Twain acknowledges that he believes the Native American attackers sexually violated the Minnesota daughters, directly stating “they raped them” (*LE* 54) in a subsequent paragraph on the meaning of the attack. Apparently the pen *can* describe rape after the author has made his nod to the Victorian sensibilities that Twain personally shared, and after declining to use the specific word has made its rhetorical impact that labels the crime as unspeakable and as even worse than the stomach-churning atrocities that Twain’s narrator does initially describe.

Yet Twain’s direct assertion in *Letters from the Earth* that the attackers’ worst crime was rape may also have constituted a slip of sorts, or a phenomenon stemming from the relative anonymity of the victims. Whenever that anonymity vanishes, as it does in “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians” when Twain provides a vivid characterization of the soon-to-be abducted and implicitly raped Peggy Mills (*HTAI* 99-105), his reaction is to simply abandon his writing project, never completing it nor ever publishing it during his lifetime. In the unpublished fragment, Huck persistently implies,

over the course of several chapters, that the kind and beautiful young heroine Peggy has been gang-raped during her abduction by Native Americans. However, Huck never quite actually says so, as Wayne R. Kime, elaborating on Blair's earlier analysis, points out (Kime 327-30, Blair 91).

Perhaps, Kime suggests, it is Peggy's full characterization as an idealized Victorian young woman that makes her rape too horrific for Twain to describe: "she exerts the same effect upon Huck that Sophia Grangerford and Mary Jane Wilks had done," Kime notes (325). Harris, writing fifteen years earlier than Kime, agrees that Twain describes Peggy Mills as the sort of idealized woman who would have been dear to his heart indeed: "the girl who was to be the gang-rape victim of the Indians was described in terms that echo his descriptions of all his young heroines and his daughter Susy," Harris writes (503). Without making any direct connection to Native American attacks upon Twain's ancestors, Harris nevertheless expounds the thesis that because the victims of similar attacks included women:

[...] Twain, even in his maturity, could not portray an Indian as other than depraved. The Indian was inextricably associated with the worst of all male atrocities, committed upon victims who could have been his wife or daughters. (503)

Yet coupled with Twain's plot gimmick in "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians" of correcting James Fenimore Cooper's depiction of Native Americans as noble (Blair 81-83), the momentum of the narrative pulls Twain on to imply the rape of Peggy Mills, just as it pulls Huck and the fugitive slave Jim relentlessly into the Deep South in *Huckleberry Finn*.

In “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians,” Twain traps himself into authoring an atrocity as Huck and Tom repeatedly discover evidence that Peggy has been gang-raped and did not manage to kill herself to avoid the rape, a self-defensive suicide that Huck assures Peggy’s fiancée Brace Johnson that she has successfully committed (*HTAI* 112). Tom joins Huck in the conspiracy to deceive Brace for his own peace of mind and the two young liars even claim to have found and buried Peggy’s corpse (*HTAI* 117-18). Yet evidence of her rape in the story becomes overwhelming, forcing Twain into “perilous cultural territory,” according to Kime; “at some point it surely became clear to him that a fiction like this, centering on suspected rape, would quite possibly work lasting harm to his reputation” (Kime 330). Such practical considerations aside, the rape of Peggy Mills is too distasteful and distressing to Twain himself to permit him to continue his narrative, Kime contends:

[...] by presenting the Indians as brutal rapists he was also portraying Peggy Mills as in all likelihood the victim of rape. Here Twain fronted the problem he found insoluble: that his young heroine [...] was the embodiment of an ideal which he himself worshipped [...]. However he dissented from certain readers in his estimate of Indian character, in regard to young women portrayed in fiction he shared the squeamish sentimentality that dominated popular taste in his era. (Kime 331)

The egregiously taboo nature of describing the danger of rape even to its potential victim can be seen in the discourse between Peggy and Huck in which she confides that Brace gave her a dirk to kill herself with if she “ever fell into the hands of the savages,” but refused to tell her why she would need to take such a drastic action (*HTAI* 103).



Significantly innocent of the possibilities, Peggy steadfastly refuses to pledge herself to suicide if she falls into such savage “hands,” and Huck’s idealistic view of her later leads him to question whether, even if she had not promptly given the dirk away to “[o]ne of the Injuns, named Blue Fox” (*HTAI* 103), she would kill herself while she still had her younger sister Flaxy, also abducted, to look after (*HTAI* 117). Brace has let Huck in on the danger Peggy faces, since Huck can’t believe Brace actually wanted Peggy to kill herself, but “[h]e explained it to me, and then it was all clear,” Huck confides (*HTAI* 113). Still, it is never “all clear” to the reader, since the closest Twain gets to describing the reality of the gang rape that he implies is to have Brace, Huck, and Tom discover four pegs driven into the ground at an abandoned Native American campsite (*HTAI* 137), three pages before Twain abruptly abandons his narrative in mid-sentence (*HTAI* 140).

### **Twain Sought Out Textual Affirmation of His Inherited Image of Native Americans as Rapist/Abductors**

The overarching significance to Twain of the alleged Native American rapes of white female captives, rapes that his textual source Col. Richard Irving Dodge asserts were habitual, can be seen in his insistence, in a letter to Charles L. Webster, that Webster obtain for him Dodge’s *The Plains of the Great West and Their Inhabitants* (1877). Twain persisted in his request even though Webster had already gotten him a copy of Dodge’s somewhat toned-down *Our Wild Indians: Thirty-Three Years’ Personal Experience among the Red Men of the Great West* (1882).<sup>58</sup> It is in the earlier book, *Plains of the Great West*, that Dodge goes into extensive details about the purportedly customary mistreatment of female captives by Native American warriors in quite explicit

terms for a nineteenth-century text, emphasizing that a white woman would be mistreated with exceptional severity, “and subjected to the fury of passions fourfold increased by the fact of her being white and a novelty” (*Plains* 396). Dodge’s description of gang rapes committed against women who were “staked out” to “four pegs [...] driven into the ground” (*Plains* 395), the detail that also appears in Twain’s unfinished sequel to *Huckleberry Finn* (*HTAI* 137), leaves no doubt that gang rape is what allegedly occurred, although Dodge never uses the actual word “rape” himself. “Here, with the howling band dancing and singing around her,” Dodge asserts, “she is subjected to violation after violation, outrage after outrage, to every abuse and indignity, until not infrequently death releases her from suffering” (*Plains* 395). Dodge’s explicit but generalized description is followed by two specific episodes of gang rape and the murder of an abducted “laundress of the 3rd Infantry” by Native Americans who fatally stabbed her when they could not escape a party of pursuers without jettisoning their captive (*Plains* 396-97), much like the fate of the young Russell girl abducted during the Montgomery’s Station attack against Twain’s ancestors (Collins 407).

Twain insisted on obtaining *The Plains* and then strongly hinted at its gang-rape contents in “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians” without explicitly acknowledging his topic to his intended future readers of his story fragment. It is not clear whether Twain knew *The Plains* would be the source of such details regarding gang rapes by Native Americans before he actually obtained a copy of the book, but his keen interest in *The Plains* in particular is evident. Twain wrote “impatiently” to Webster “after receiving what Webster assumed to be the volume he desired,” *Our Wild Indians*. Twain explained that *Our Wild Indians* “is Col. Dodge’s *second* book [...] and] is useful

to me, but I want *that* one also,” referring to *The Plains* (Gribben 197). None of the detailed examples of gang rapes in *The Plains* can be found in *Our Wild Indians*, Dodge’s sequel to *The Plains*, even though his descriptions of Native Americans in *The Plains* apparently excited enough interest in readers that he focused his follow-up book almost entirely on Native American culture and behavior.

There are some strong similarities between the two books by Dodge that Twain used as sources in “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians,” and both of Dodge’s books contain a general claim, using the exact same initial wording, that “I believe I am perfectly safe in the assertion that there is not a single wild tribe of Indians in all the wide territory of the United States which does not regard the person of the female captive as the inherent right of the captor” (*The Plains* 395, *Our Wild* 529). The later book goes on to admit the exception of a white woman captured by Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce who was not raped, while *The Plains* sweepingly continues, “and I venture to assert further that in the last twenty-five years no woman has been taken prisoner by any plains Indians who did not as soon after as practicable become a victim to the lust of every one of her captors” (*The Plains* 395). Dodge’s toning-down of the later book can be seen in his admitted Nez Perce exception, as well as in his conclusion to his “regard[ing] the person of the female captive as inherent right of the captor” claim: “and I venture to assert further that [...] no woman has, in the last thirty years, been taken prisoner by any wild Indians who did not, as soon after as practicable, become a victim to the *brutality* of every one of the party of her captors” (*Our Wild* 529, emphasis added). The word “lust” in *The Plains* becomes the desexualized term “brutality” in *Our Wild Indians*, and nowhere to be seen in Dodge’s later text is the staking-down of the victim to “four pegs”;

no “howling band” dances and sings and repeatedly violates her (*Plains* 395). The case histories in *Our Wild Indians*, likewise, are not gang rapes but the captures and tortures of white men, with the single exception of a ranch attacked by Comanches where, after “the ruthless violation and murder of all the women,” the only man who persistently resists the attackers is taken prisoner and led away to be tortured to death. Even in this single instance, Dodge focuses on the captured man rather than on the raped and murdered women (*Our Wild* 537-38).

Thus, it is fairly evident that Dodge backed away from his graphic description of gang rapes in *The Plains* when he revised and expanded it to become *Our Wild Indians*, and that may be the reason Twain was dissatisfied with obtaining only the later text. Yet an enlightening clue to the Victorian unacceptability of Dodge’s reportage about the alleged rapes can be glimpsed in Dodge’s conclusion to his chapter on the rapes (Chap. 86) in *The Plains*, in which he claims to have only given a small portion of the available evidence and to have given even that much reluctantly:

I could give numbers of well-authenticated instances of outrages as bad, and many far worse, than any here described. I have told enough, however, for elucidation, and I am glad to leave this sickening and horrible subject. I would infinitely prefer to suppress all mention of these fearful atrocities, and I only mention them in the interest of truth. Without some reference to them, it is almost impossible to depict the Indian as he really is, and also to account for the antipathy which exists between those living on the frontier and the red man of the plains. (*Plains* 398)

As Kime and Harris both assert (Kime 331, Harris 503), Twain felt a squeamishness so similar to Dodge's about describing the alleged gang rapes of white women by Native Americans that he ended up abandoning "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians" without finishing the fragment. Twain avidly sought out Dodge's details of gang rape to prove the inherent savagery and lack of alleged nobility of Native Americans, and then could not stomach making use of them in his own narrative. But Twain quite evidently agreed with Dodge's rationale for describing the alleged gang rapes: due to the stories of frontier violence against his ancestors that he had heard from his mother since he was a child, he viewed the abduction and rape of white women as the essential symbol of European American grievances against Native Americans, notwithstanding the provocation of white theft of Native American land by means including genocide and, yes, the unacknowledged rapes of Native Americans by whites.

As Kime concludes, "[t]he narrative framework he had created to explode false ideas about Indian character was forcing him into a task of authorship he was unwilling to complete" (331). The rape of European American women is horrific enough that it must only be confirmed in a single slip in *Letters from the Earth*, a genuinely iconoclastic text narrated by Satan; the potential rape of a specifically identifiably European American woman such as Peggy Mills was a topic that ultimately, Twain's pen could not write, after all, at least not for publication. The possibility that if his Great Grandmother Casey had not fended off abduction, she could have been raped may also explain why Twain never wrote directly about the Montgomery's Station attack or discussed it with anyone who has recorded that discussion other than his biographer Paine, a fellow male in whom he felt he could confide.

### Native Americans as Agents of the Random Violence of God

Twain's hierarchy that places rape among the most egregious atrocities of all is made even more evident by the context in which he pens the description in *Letters from the Earth* of a Native American attack on a Minnesota farm family in 1862 (*Dangerous* 40). Twain's character Satan is attempting to demonstrate the randomness of the cruelty of God in the Old Testament. To make his case, Twain's Satan focuses on God's instructions to the Hebrews to commit genocide against the Midianites with the exception of their virgin females, who are to be divided among their conquerors for sexual purposes. Twain's Satan defines God's mandate as the epitome of atrocity, not only because the Hebrews are ordered to slay all the males in the conquered territory of the Midianites, including male children, but also because they are ordered to sexually abuse and enslave the young Midianite females.

After quoting God's instructions verbatim from selected verses of Numbers 31:1-47,<sup>59</sup> Twain's Satan explicitly declares that the rapes and enslavements mandated by God are both the most arbitrary and the most cruel of his instructions: "The heaviest punishment of all was meted out to persons who could not by any possibility have deserved so horrible a fate—the 32,000 virgins" (*LE* 52). In the remainder of this paragraph, Twain's Satan does not overlook young women's innocence of blame for their mistreatment, but he also goes into surprisingly explicit detail about their sexual violation, describing how "[t]heir naked privacies were probed, to make sure they still possessed the hymen unruptured." He connects this rape by physical examination of the virgins with the confiscation of their people's physical territory, noting that "after this

humiliation they were sent away from the land that had been their home, to be sold into slavery.” While this connection is highly significant to the focus of the present study regarding the land obtained by Twain’s ancestors directly and indirectly from Native Americans, Twain’s Satan does not pursue it further at this point, instead continuing to hammer home the egregious atrocity of the virgins’ rape by examination, followed as it was by *de facto* abduction and enslavement. Not only were the virgins sold into slavery, Twain’s Satan expostulates, but it was “the worst of slaveries and the shamefulest, [...] bed-slavery, to excite lust, and satisfy it with their bodies; slavery to any buyer, be he gentleman or be he a coarse and filthy ruffian” (*LE* 52).

Helen Harris in particular has identified “the violations inflicted upon innocent girls in Biblical times and in the nineteenth century” as Twain’s primary “point in comparison” in this passage from *Letters from the Earth*. She writes:

The captive girls from the Midianite campaign were made available to the army; the Indians raped, mutilated and killed their captives. Twain expressed his rage against a God who allowed men to perpetrate such horrors by declaring Him worse than the Indian. (Harris 504)

Twain’s Satan, indeed, concludes that God, who mandated the sequence of atrocities against the Midianites, was to blame for “this ferocious and undeserved punishment” of the virgins, “whose parents and kindred he had slaughtered before their eyes” (*LE* 52). God’s culpability is the entire point of the comparison between the Midianite campaign and the Minnesota attacks. Yet Twain’s ancestral history lurks in a form of psychological palimpsest behind Satan’s description of the abduction and rapes of the young Midianite women. As briefly suggested earlier, Jane Montgomery Casey would

have found herself in a similar situation on the morning of the Montgomery's Station attack in 1781 if she had not successfully defended her family's cabin against intrusion by the same Native Americans who had gunned down her "parents and kindred" only minutes or seconds before, right outside her cabin door as well as within a neighboring cabin.

### **Abduction: A Cultural Threat to Patriarchy**

If her self-defense had not succeeded, Twain's great grandmother would have been abducted by the Cherokee raiders, defined by their very status as Others as "coarse and filthy ruffian[s]." As previously described, at least two of Jane Montgomery's kinswomen were, indeed, abducted in the aftermath of the attack, and the rape or torture of European American abductees was a common theme in published captivity narratives of the Revolutionary period in which the Montgomery women were abducted. For instance, in one such narrative, a "symbolic gang rape" of Frederic Manheim's twin daughters is committed by two Native Americans in western New York in 1779 by the sisters' abductors, who strip them and torture them by setting fire to hundreds of turpentine-soaked splinters in their backs from their shoulders on down (Burnham 73). This story resonated so strongly with European Americans in the United States that it is repeated, in one case verbatim, in at least two other captivity narratives of the early national period, in 1815 and 1818, as if the exact same torture purportedly committed in 1779 had been committed upon the later captives of Native Americans (Castiglia 107). Her story continued to resonate: roughly a hundred years later than the Revolutionary era, Dodge repeats the story of torture by fiery splinters in both *The Plains* and *Our Wild*



*Indians*, except the victim in Dodge's version is a preadolescent "drummer boy" (*The Plains* 393-94, *Our Wild* 524-25). A similar tale of abduction and mistreatment served as a major incentive for "the largest enlistment of patriot soldiers during the entire Revolutionary War," according to Burnham; varying versions describe the 1777 slaying and scalping by Native Americans of Jane McCrea, who either travels through the woods to marry her loyalist fiancé, is captured in her cabin with her mother, where both women meet their demise, or is taken into the woods, stripped, raped, murdered, and scalped (Burnham 75).

The veracity of such stories of rape is far from settled. In his analysis of the 1675 captivity of Mary Rowlandson by the Narragansetts, the 1864 captivity of Fanny Wiggins Kelly by the Sioux, and the 1974 captivity of Patty Hearst by the Symbionese Liberation Army, Castiglia notes:

That Rowlandson, Kelly, and Hearst all needed to refute the suggestion of rape, despite the fact that the Indians reportedly did not rape captives, points to an identification in the minds of their white audiences between captivity, race, and sexual vulnerability. (122)

Thus it does not entirely matter whether "the Indian and British threat of rape" that "legitimated [rescue] in revolutionary-era narratives" (Burnham 99) was real or not; the ethos that would have been handed down to Twain was the belief of his ancestors and their peers that this threat was all too real.

Additionally, if Logan's men had not rescued the Montgomery women from their abduction, their destiny might have been adoption into their captors' tribes and marriage to their captors, even if they were not forcibly raped. Captivity narratives again point the

way to this possibility: the late eighteenth-century stories of Mary Jameson, Frances Slocum, and Eunice Williams each “became well-known in their day,” according to Castiglia, and in each case, the captives married their Mohawk or Delaware captors (34-36). Equally alarmingly to the white patriarchy, when European American captives experienced a culture alien to their own such as that of Native Americans, they found themselves in “a culturally liminal position” and frequently “used [...] their identifications with their captors to destabilize dominant constructions of identity” and “to challenge the treatment of women in both societies,” Castiglia suggests (43). The threats posed by captivity, both to the captives and to white society, were palpable,<sup>60</sup> and therefore it is unsurprising that even though Twain never specifically wrote about the Montgomery’s Station attack, its implications resonate in his Satan’s outrage over the fate of the Midianite women.

### **Influenced by the “Massacre” Oral History, Twain Projects the Old Testament God onto Native Americans of the Nineteenth Century**

The hard core of residual ancestral antipathy that Twain felt against Native Americans can be further seen in the fact that his Satan identifies them as modern-day perpetrators of the type of random cruelty that God instigated against the Midianites. Twain’s Satan asserts that the Native Americans in Minnesota were not as random or cruel as the Hebrews were when they slaughtered, raped, and enslaved the Midianites under orders from God, but it is significant that Twain identifies Native rather than European Americans as perpetrators of an “incident” (*LE* 53) approaching but not equaling the random cruelty of the genocide and rape of the Midianites. Of course,

Twain does admit the conflict between Native and European Americans in his own times was bilateral rather than solely the fault of Native Americans, as his introduction to his Satan's account of the Minnesota "massacre" demonstrates:

In 1862 the Indians of Minnesota, having been deeply wronged and treacherously treated by the government of the United States, rose against the white settlers and massacred them; massacred all they could lay their hands on, sparing neither age nor sex. (*LE* 53)

Yet Twain's acknowledgement of white misdoing blames only the government and not the individuals who were confiscating Native American lands at a steady westward pace, albeit with the government's permission or by purchase from the government in most, if not all, cases. Notably, Twain does not specifically identify the deep wrongs and treacherous treatment, significantly shying away from explicitly condemning the confiscation of Native American land. In fact the government's failure, during the tumultuous second year of the Civil War, to pay the annuity promised by treaty to compensate for seized Santee Sioux land left the Sioux starving on the small amount of land still in their possession, and Indian agent Thomas Galbraith refused to sell them food on credit (Brown 39-40).

Twain's use of the single incident that sparked the ensuing war between the whites and Sioux elaborates on that incident without citing any source for its purportedly indescribable details. In the incident, four uncontrolled young Native Americans attacked only a single family (Brown 42) although the Sioux did kill more than five hundred white settlers across Minnesota by summer's end (Driscoll, *MTAI* 202). More to the point, by focusing on the single family attack, Twain also ignores the lengthy, previously described

history of European American confiscation of Native American land in the Upper South where Twain's own ancestors settled. The history ignored by Twain was periodically punctuated by betrayals of Native American leaders who were slaughtered inside cabins to which white leaders had summoned them, and aggravated early in the history of the white settlement of Tennessee by white military leaders raping the wives of Cherokee leaders (Davidson 116). Most significantly, Twain's use of the Native American murderers and rapists who attacked the Minnesota family in 1862 is an act of psychological projection and transference: probable non-believers in the very creed that Twain's Satan is attacking are given as examples of the random cruelty still venerated as the scripture of the religion of Twain's own culture.

Repeatedly, the key factor that makes Twain unable to view Native Americans sympathetically may be the residual blame that he places on them for all atrocities ever committed by any Native Americans against European American women and children, despite his acknowledgement in *Letters from the Earth* and, occasionally, elsewhere that the Native Americans had been "deeply wronged and treacherously treated" (*LE* 53). Twain's persistent image of Native Americans as sneaky, backstabbing, ungrateful, and untrustworthy rapists and murderers appears even when their image as rapists is not his focus, or at least not his initial focus. In "The Noble Red Man," the primary "purpose of the essay is to debunk the romantic notion of [Native Americans'] towering nobility conveyed in books, particularly Cooper's," according to David L. Newquist. Yet partly because Twain "generalizes about Indians with unrelenting sarcasm," Newquist adds, "Twain's diatribe against the Indians in [...] 'The Noble Red Man' is the most troubling" of Twain's bigoted rhetoric (67). Well into the essay, Twain launches into his most

damning evidence against “the Red Man” by describing him as “a skulking coward and a windy braggart, who strikes without warning—usually from an ambush or cover of night” (“NRM”), in much the same way as the Montgomery’s Station attack against Twain’s ancestors began as an ambush that killed his great-great grandfather and great-great uncle.

Twain goes on in the same long sentence to declare that the Native American “kills helpless women and little children, and massacres the men in their beds” (“NRM”), again bringing to mind the tomahawking of Jane Montgomery’s abducted Russell cousin and the fatal shooting of Twain’s great uncle John Montgomery in his bed. Finally, Twain’s ninety-one-word sentence asserts that the Native American “then brags about it as long as he lives, and his son and his grandson and his great grandson after him glorify it among the ‘heroic deeds of their ancestors’” (“NRM”). This grand finale to Twain’s lengthy accusation subtly suggests the true or subjective source of Twain’s beliefs about the character of Native Americans, namely the oral history that had been passed down to him by the European American descendants of his own ambushed great-great grandfather. Perhaps not coincidentally, the number of generations through which Twain describes the story of a massacre being handed down among Native Americans is exactly the generational distance that existed between Twain and William Montgomery, Sr. A second hint of the origin of Twain’s antipathy toward Native Americans is suggested by Twain’s evidentiary attribution at the beginning of yet the same sentence: “All *history* and honest observation will show that the Red Man...” exhibits all the terroristic tendencies that Twain goes on to describe (“NRM,” emphasis added).

Harris points out that in Twain's short story "The Californian's Tale" (1893), he has not changed his viewpoint but instead, "expressed what he had insisted in 1870 needed to be shown to dispel sympathy for the Indians: the effects of Indian-white conflict from the white survivors' point of view" (Harris 500). In the tale, a lonely settler awaits his wife's return at the same time of year, every year for nineteen years. His friends humor him and wait for her with him until they drink-and-drug him to uneasy unconsciousness. She will not return, of course; she was long ago captured by Native Americans and killed. "That or worse," the widower's friends tell the previously uninformed narrator, who has happened onto the welcome-home party ("CT" 273). The wife's demise or "worse" has driven the widower insane in his home that is obviously decorated by a Victorian woman's hand and thus, "Twain selected the components that would most effectively elicit pity and horror," Harris suggests. "Twain did not have to mention massacre or rape: the nation knew that Indians held a monopoly on these crimes" (500). Like Twain's demonization of Native Americans in "The Noble Red Man" and "The Californian's Tale," Twain's labeling of the Native American attackers in Minnesota as latter-day perpetrators of genocide and rape allowed to run wild by the random cruelty of God, if not directly by God's orders, can be traced directly back to his ancestors' experience in frontier Kentucky

However, Twain's labeling of the Native American attackers in Minnesota in this manner also stems from his ambivalence about his own culture and its "savage" aspects, including the corruption of its social structures, such as government, for private gain that Twain and co-author Charles Dudley Warner lambaste in *The Gilded Age: A Tale of To-Day* (1873). Similarly, Twain perceives savagery in the "bad faith" that, as Forrest G.

Robinson suggests, is exhibited by the Mississippi Valley communities portrayed in *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* when they espouse democracy and Christian values but practice racism and slavery (Robinson 8-16, 113-16, 122-26). Twain projects the blame for this “savage” lack of true “civilization” onto Native Americans, as can be seen from his specific use of those two terms that, as Roy Harvey Pearce notes, were frequently presented in the nineteenth century as antithetically opposed: “There is nothing in either *savage* or *civilized* history that is more utterly complete, more remorselessly sweeping than the Father of Mercy’s campaign among the Midianites” (*LE* 53, emphases added).

Twain’s projection and transference of European American “savagery” onto Native Americans, moreover, is not complete but proves ambivalent itself, compiling a virtual palimpsest of ambivalence. By comparing the Hebrews who slew, raped, and enslaved the Midianites to the Native Americans in Minnesota, Twain’s Satan specifically equates the two groups and their behavior at first and then backs off from their conflation, a rhetorical strategy clearly signifying the author’s ambivalence. Before describing the Minnesota “massacre,” Twain’s Satan specifically racializes it as an example from recent “history made by the red Indian of America” who “has duplicated God’s work, and done it in the very spirit of God” (*LE* 53). Not long thereafter, Twain’s Satan claims to have fully described “what happened under the personal direction of the Father of Mercies in the Midianite campaign,” clearly signifying the blame that lies with the God of European American culture, and he further asserts, “The Minnesota campaign was merely a duplicate of the Midianite raid. Nothing happened in the one that did not happen in the other” (*LE* 54). But in his next paragraph Twain’s Satan radically retreats from his initial flat assertion:

No, that is not strictly true. The Indian was more merciful than was the Father of Mercies. He sold no virgins into slavery to minister to the lusts of the murderers of their kindred while their sad lives might last; he raped them, then charitably made their subsequent sufferings brief, ending them with the precious gift of death. (*LE* 54)

Even if Twain's repetitiveness in this text may not qualify it as classic literature, his repetition is revealing. Themes he already discussed a few pages earlier in *Letters from the Earth*, such as the superlatively horrific nature of repeated rape compared even with one-time rape, still represent his hierarchies, and he dwells on them. However, now he has partially inverted the situation in which his great grandmother found herself at peril at Montgomery's Station. Native Americans are still presented as murderers and worse, but they do not commit the crime of abduction after they rape and murder; instead, the abducting aspect of human savagery is projected and transferred to the religion and, therefore, the culture of European Americans.

Thus, Powers's citation of Twain's description of the Minnesota "massacre" of 1862 aptly connects, in multiple ways, the Clemens family stories about the Montgomery's Station attack four score and two years earlier with Twain's lifelong antipathy toward Native Americans. It is not the only instance of Powers noting connections between Twain's prejudiced writing against Native Americans and the stories of frontier violence he heard primarily from his mother, however. In *Mark Twain: A Life*, Powers describes the hoax, "A Bloody Massacre near Carson" (*A Life* 127) that Twain published in *The Territorial Enterprise* of Virginia City, Nevada, in 1863, while Twain was writing for the newspaper (*ETS* 1: 324-26). Powers notes that Twain "had



tapped real-life [current] events” for his story: “There had been an ax-murder spree in the region about five months earlier, and Twain borrowed details from it for his piece.” Yet Powers goes on to suggest that Twain’s mother’s tales of frontier violence also inspired and generated his hoax:

[...] the image of the killer brandishing a scalp was his invention, and it may have been drawn from deep personal wells. Indian-fighting frontiersmen ran through the maternal side of Sam Clemens’ ancestry; massacres by marauding Indians in old Kentucky formed much of the Lampton family folklore; and Jane, with her storytelling flair, passed several of these bloody tales along to Sammy. (*A Life* 127)

According to Twain biographer Andrew Hoffman, Twain actually intended the “ax murder” hoax as a protest against California newspapers that criticized Nevada companies for “cooking” dividends or overpricing virtually worthless stock, but overlooked “similar scheming financial practices [...] being done in California” (Hoffman 82). Powers likewise describes Twain as writing with satirical intent for essentially the same purpose that Hoffman describes, although Powers’s description varies in emphasis and certain details from Hoffman’s. Yet as Powers asserts, the fact that Twain’s satire takes the form of a “bloody massacre” can plausibly be linked to Jane Lampton’s telling the Clemens children similar stories of frontier violence, and it is noteworthy that Powers makes such an assertion that further supports the influence of her stories on Twain.

Both Hoffman and Powers note that toward the end of Twain’s hoax, which Twain authored anonymously, it is revealed that the purported scalp-taker and mass

murderer of his wife and most of his children has been driven mad by the loss of “his life savings in various crooked schemes” (*A Life* 126). However, this additional information adds further insight into Twain’s sidewise swipe at Native Americans in this hoax. The swipe is sidewise because the alleged killer is not Native American himself, but he brandishes a scalp as Native Americans were said to do. The further insight can be gleaned from Twain’s metaphorical portrayal of silver mine speculators as Native American scalpers. The background information that Twain’s intended target was the misuse of capitalism, a cornerstone of European American “civilization,” in “savage” exploitation of hapless victims, points to Twain’s use of Native Americans to express his ambivalence about his culture in a frequently repeated pattern of projection and transference of white faults and vices onto Native Americans.

In yet another Twain biographer’s work, Fred Kaplan’s *The Singular Mark Twain* (2003), the focus is shifted entirely away from the Clemens family stories of frontier violence to the “alien” nature and Otherness of Native Americans that so strongly informed Twain’s simultaneous ambivalence and antipathy toward them:

When he first saw Native Americans, they were a curiosity; later, when he wrote about them, they were to him—and to the government—a blight to be extinguished. By 1871, the reality of Native Americans contrasted sharply with the idealistic image of the noble savage, of James Fenimore Cooper’s literary red men. They were a shattered illusion, the one instance of an ethnic minority so alien and anti-Victorian and so much in the way of “progress” that Twain joined America at large in seeing

nothing redeemable about them. Later, he was to admire and promote the legend of General George Custer. (Fred Kaplan 90)

It is true, as Kaplan writes, that Twain's first actual encounters with Native Americans, possibly excepting the prototype for Injun Joe in *Tom Sawyer*, occurred out West in Nevada during the Civil War, where the Gosiutes endured a hardscrabble subsistence in the face of an unrelentingly hostile desert environment, and their adaptation to the arrival of European Americans in their territory had not placed them in a positive light. Yet the stories that Twain heard as a youth from his mother and other family members predisposed him to see Gosiutes at their worst, and to adopt the most extreme version of the culturally prevalent attitude: that Native Americans literally should be subjected to "extermination" ("NRM" [427]).

As Chapter Five will further demonstrate, his mother's stories left an indelible impression on Twain's psyche that he never managed to completely efface. The persistence of his anti-indigenous prejudice stands in sharp contrast to his adult views about African Americans that mark his growth from a traditional southern racist to a sympathetic portrayer of African Americans, a transformation he made as an author who relocated to New York and New England and utterly reversed his racial views<sup>61</sup>—except in the case of Native Americans.

CHAPTER V: TWAIN AND LAND TAKEN FROM OTHERS:  
THE DEFENSE OF INEVITABLE CONQUEST

Mark Twain never completely relinquished his personal antipathy toward Native Americans, instead rationalizing and excusing the violent seizure and retention of their lands by European Americans by describing conquest and the dispossession of territory anywhere in the world as pervasive and inevitable (*FTE* 2: 298-301). Twain's hostility to Native Americans contrasts significantly with his sympathy for African and Asian Americans, Jews, and the indigenous peoples of the British Empire, China, the Belgian Congo, and the United States-occupied Philippines. Over the past half century, scholars have discerned instances of Twain apparently moderating his antipathy to Native Americans in his later life and work, but each instance of apparent moderation is wedged among other examples of continued antipathy. Beginning as the post-colonial era heightened racial, ethnic, and gender identity consciousness, multiple scholars have sought to redeem the reputation of a beloved and influential literary lion whose accomplishments include remarkable anti-imperialism, yet their evidence can be interpreted in opposing ways, leaving scant evidence that Twain ever changed his mind much in favor of Native Americans.

The most recent scholarly theories point out Twain's sympathy for people of color in the Anglophone countries that Twain visited during his world-circling lecture tour that he describes in *Following the Equator* (1899), the same two volumes in which he rationalizes the seizure of lands from other peoples as pervasive and inevitable. According to these theories, promulgated first by Michelle Abate and most recently (with

some caveats) by Kerry Driscoll, Twain's sympathy for the native peoples of Australia and/or New Zealand inherently implies similar sympathy for Native Americans and their experience of genocide, land confiscation, and forced cultural assimilation. These most recent theories derive from the late twentieth and early twenty-first century conflation of all people of color as oppressed, a conflation that associates sympathy for *any* peoples of color with sympathy for *all* peoples of color oppressed by white hegemony. However, Twain lived and wrote in the late nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth, a period in which no such sweeping conflation was regularly made, and he was surrounded by a long-standing cultural ethos in the United States that identified Native Americans as singularly untrustworthy.

It should be noted that Driscoll more generally views Twain's lifelong attitudes toward Native Americans as, at best, "lifelong ambivalence" (*MTAI* 51), producing texts that are "vexingly erratic and paradoxical, commingling antipathy and sympathy, fascination and visceral repugnance" (*MTAI* 4). Similarly to the present study, she observes that every intermittent instance of Twain moderating his antipathy toward Native Americans seems to be followed sooner or later by an expression of hostility toward them – especially, as Twain viewed it, their predilection for random revenge against whites in general and the sexual assault of white women in particular. "He never succeeded in fully exorcising this racial animus," Driscoll observes (*MTAI* 13). Thus, the guerrilla aspect of the Montgomery's Station surprise attack on Twain's ancestors and other frontier violence in the Upper South may have played the strongest role in prompting Twain to accept this ethic of enmity toward Native Americans, who were defending their land using guerrilla tactics but appearing from the white point of view to

randomly target innocent European American families. This aspect of Jane Lampton's stories of "the days of Daniel Boone and the Indians" (Webster 43) may have been the most important of the specific details of the violence in forming Twain's lifelong antipathy toward Native Americans.

Further evidence of the impact of the generally culture-wide ethic of enmity toward Native Americans on Twain can be seen in the other sources of his ideas about the nature and behavior of the Native Americans that he depicts in "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians," in which the European American heroine Peggy Mills is captured and gang-raped<sup>1</sup> after Oglala Sioux attack her wagon train and murder her parents ("HTAI" 106-7, 129). In turn, Twain's own contribution to the ethic of enmity can be seen in his writings ranging from his *Alta California* letter and "The Noble Red Man" to "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians" and *Letters from the Earth* that parallel the ideas of his primary textual sources. Twain's motives for making direct attacks on Native Americans in his texts echo the motives of his textual source Col. Richard Irving Dodge for writing his two books—motives that will be described presently in greater detail, but which are rooted in reaction to the guerrilla tactics employed by Native Americans to defend their land.

Twain derived a good portion of his ideas about the Plains Indians that went into "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians" from Col. Dodge's two books (Blair 84-88)—*The Plains of the Great West* (1877) and *Our Wild Indians* (1882). These are the books with which Twain, while writing "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians," shares motives with Dodge for emphasizing the untrustworthiness and duplicity of Native Americans in the story fragment, and from which he seems to have taken

elements that he uses in the fragment. The staking out and gang rapes of female captives by Native Americans are perhaps the most striking of the similarities between Dodge's and Twain's texts. However, the introductory chapter of Dodge's *Our Wild Indians* in particular may have resonated with Twain, the one-time young auditor of Jane's tales about the Montgomery's Station attack. Dodge's introductory chapter describes how, during his childhood in western North Carolina, "[m]y earliest recollections are tinged with stories of Indian atrocities." Ironically, Dodge freely admits:

It is true the Cherokees had committed no atrocities, but their white neighbors, being in constant dread of what three or four thousand warriors might do, were vociferous in demands for their removal beyond the limits of the State. (*Our Wild* 29)

Thus, despite exhibiting pacific behavior in the years following Dragging Canoe's last stand, the genocide at Nickajack in 1794, the Cherokees still faced cultural attitudes among European Americans of enmity and unjustified fear. A similar residual attitude was passed down by Twain's mother in the stories of frontier violence she repeatedly and dramatically told her children.

In Missouri, young Twain's education in the ways of the world was partly conducted by the African American slaves on the Quarles Farm, as previously mentioned (*AMT* 1: 217). Thus Dodge's next paragraph in *Our Wild Indians* may have described childhood experiences similar to Twain's, replete with direct interaction with African Americans, because Dodge states that it was "[t]he negroes" who "were especially terror-stricken" by the Cherokee-phobia fomented by wealthy whites "who may have had solid pecuniary reasons for wishing to get rid of the Indians" (*Our Wild* 29-30). The latter is

Dodge's nod to the land-grabbing motives of his fellow European Americans who advocated Indian Removal, but the common thread between his work and Twain's is that in both authors' texts, African Americans believed in and feared witches. The recollections that Twain read about the African American slaves in Dodge's community asserted that

[...]forgetting for the time, their usual stories of witches and ghosts, [the slaves] often caused my "hairs to stand on end" with their thrilling narratives of the cunning, ferocity, and immunity from danger, of Indians. According to them an Indian could make himself invisible in air, and was much harder to kill than even a witch. (*Our Wild* 30)

Twain's African American characters in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) exhibit a strong belief in, and fear of, witchcraft (*HF* 19, 244-45), as does Roxy (*PW* 24) in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894). Twain's experience with African Americans of the Mississippi Valley was direct and extensive, despite the minstrel shows that Twain enjoyed and that influenced him to sometimes depict African Americans stereotypically (Powers, *A Life* 35-37; *AMT* 2: 293-97). Their lack of phobias about Native Americans in *Huckleberry Finn* may be simply explained by their lack of proximity to any Native Americans, but Twain might readily have accepted Dodge's report about the Cherokee-phobia of African Americans superseding their fear of witchcraft because the latter detail, that fear, would have given verisimilitude to Dodge's description from Twain's viewpoint.

The most striking feature of Dodge's description of the communitywide Cherokee-phobia of his childhood home, however, is that Dodge came to believe it



despite personally experiencing no evidence to dispute such an attitude. Such was the power of the prevalent phobia. Dodge writes that at first, he felt fearful when Native Americans came to visit, but relaxed after he realized they were only target-shooting at six-pences with their bows and arrows and that they wanted to visit his own home merely “to ask my mother to play for them on the only piano that our village then boasted” (*Our Wild* 30-31). Calmed by “their grave and quiet demeanor” coupled with “their unalloyed delight at the music,” the young Dodge “began to believe the Indians a greatly slandered race.” Yet “[n]ext day they were gone,” he writes, and “the favorable impression made was soon almost entirely effaced by continual repetition of stories of their horrible cruelties” (*Our Wild* 31).

Dodge’s passage describing the oral transmission of testimony regarding the brutal and therefore uncivilized nature of Native Americans closely parallels the similar indoctrination of Twain in his childhood and youth. The figure of the violent “savage” could have struck Twain as justified for the same reasons that Dodge came to believe his peers were not lying, even though he experienced no atrocities at Native American hands. “[T]hough my personal experience made me something of a doubter, I could not gainsay the evidence of the people about me, backed as it was by the history of the colonies, of which, about this time, I began the study,” Dodge describes (*Our Wild* 31). In other words, a combination of oral and written tradition that placed Native Americans in the category of feared, uncivilized Others finally converted Dodge to fearing them himself, in the same manner that oral traditions handed down to Twain based on one-sided stories of his ancestors’ history in the Upper South provided the genesis of Twain’s antipathy toward Native Americans.

Thus, Dodge's method of introducing his experiences with Native Americans would have resonated with Twain in more than one way, from the two authors' shared belief in African American fascination with and fear of witchcraft, to the tales of "horrible cruelties" that both writers heard as young boys. It is no wonder that Twain adopted Dodge as his most credible authority about Native Americans in all matters, drawing heavily on him for descriptions of Native American duplicity, vengeance, abduction, and rape in his story fragment that attempts to give Huck and Tom an adventure out West, where they ultimately find the Native Americans they encounter too uncivilized even for Huck, who famously flees "sivilization" (*HF* 296).

The third source of the resonance that Twain must have felt when he read Dodge's texts can be found in Dodge's motives for writing about Native Americans, beginning with his chapters about them in *The Plains of the Great West*, but continuing into Dodge's later *Our Wild Indians*. The resonance draws directly on the stories of the Montgomery's Station attack on Twain's ancestors. Both Twain and Dodge were confronted with diametrically opposed European American versions of the nature of Native Americans in their time. Both versions viewed Native Americans as "savage," but one version figured them as noble savages while the other fully embraced the ethic of enmity toward them that dehumanized them on the grounds that they inhumanely attacked European Americans. As Kerry Driscoll notes ("Man Factories" 16), Twain's scorn for whites who sympathized with Native Americans can be seen not only in excerpts from "The Noble Red Man" (1870), but in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876). Like "the maids and matrons [... of] the Atlantic seaboard" bewailing the massacre of Native Americans on the Great Plains ("NRM" [427-28]), the "sappy

women” of St. Petersburg take pity on Injun Joe and petition the governor for Joe’s pardon:

Injun Joe was believed to have killed five citizens of the village, but so what? If he had been Satan himself there would have been plenty of weaklings ready to ascribe their names to a pardon petition, and drop a tear on it from their permanently impaired and leaky water-works. (*TS* 269-70)

In “The Noble Red Man,” Twain expresses concern for the white victims of Native American violence rather than for the Native American victims of white violence and land theft, and in this passage from *Tom Sawyer* Twain again appears to have been influenced by his mother’s stories of frontier violence against his ancestors to take the white victims’ side.

Notably, Twain tags sympathy for Native Americans as an eastern, female weakness in “The Noble Red Man” but only attributes it to excessive feminine sentimentality in *Tom Sawyer*, in which the women are midwestern or southern, giving the tendency to overlook the purportedly murderous nature of Native Americans a more national cast. Either way, Twain’s writings on the subject essentially parallel those of Dodge, who distinguishes a dichotomy of eastern and western opinion on the subject of Native Americans even though he does not identify those divergent opinions with proclivities associated with gender.

Specifically, in *The Plains of the Great West*, Dodge asserts that, in the 1870s, “[e]astern people, educated, by reading Cooper’s and other similar novels” frequently entertained idealistic, unrealistic ideas sympathetic to Native Americans, “indulging in a

philosophy, safe because distant, and sincere because ignorant [and were] ready to believe all impossible good, and nothing bad, of the ‘noble savage.’” On the same page, Dodge proceeds to give the western version of the same “savage,” formed in the forge of stories like the ones Twain was repeatedly indoctrinated with at his mother’s knee:

The western frontier people who come in contact with him, who suffer from his depredations, and whose life is made a nightmare by his vicinity, have no words to express their detestation of his duplicity, cruelty, and barbarism. No amount of reason, no statement of facts, will ever change the opinion of either eastern or western people on this subject. (*The Plains* 255)

The parallels between Twain and Dodge’s texts are not perfect: in his juvenile *Tom Sawyer*, Twain accuses Injun Joe of murdering five local men but avoids mentioning any sexual violence committed by Native Americans such as Dodge alleges. On the other hand, in “The Noble Red Man,” Twain does emphasize in italics how “*Wives were ravished before their husbands’ eyes*” (“NRM” [428]).

Dodge covers both bases: he plays up the allegations of Native American rapes and killings of white women by using them to cap his list of injuries that westerners could not forget when conceptualizing Native Americans: “the western man, who has lost his horses, had his house burned, or his wife violated and murdered, finds a whole life of hatred and revenge too little to devote to his side of the question” (*The Plains* 255). However, both authors are Eurocentric, making no direct acknowledgement in Dodge’s texts, in *Tom Sawyer*, or in “The Noble Red Man” that the whites’ presence on Native American lands was a trespass constituting grounds for war against those whites. Dodge

rationalizes the endless encroachment on Native American land as inevitable and beyond the power of the United States government to stop, a rationalization that Twain echoes in ways that will be revisited presently.

A detail of the two authors' common motivation for attacking Native Americans in print for their alleged random cruelty can be seen in their similar dismissals of James Fenimore Cooper's figures of noble savages such as Uncas in Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). "The ideal Indian of Cooper is a creation of his own prolific brain," Dodge suggests in *Our Wild Indians*. "No such savage as Uncas ever existed, or could exist, and no one knew this better than Cooper himself." As proof of Cooper's core awareness of Native American savagery, Dodge continues, "All hostile Indians [in Cooper's novels]—Mingoes, Iroquois, etc.—are painted as fiends, in whom the furies themselves would have delighted." Dodge posits the implausibility of a noble savage as self-evident due to Native American culture's general lack of civilization. "How he could possibly have arrived at those good qualities, when born and reared among savages without a moral code, is a question that admits of but one answer,—'no such individual could possibly have existed,'" Dodge asserts (*Our Wild* 54).

Similarly, as Lynn W. Denton has noted, "Twain's aversion to the Noble Red Man of Cooper's novels is legendary" (1). Although any direct influence of Twain on Dodge has not been documented, Dodge's argument about Cooper seemingly echoes that of Twain in Twain's previously mentioned *Alta California* letter, included as a chapter in *Mark Twain's Travels with Mr. Brown*, in which Twain expresses fond hopes that a general would "polish off those Indians," and then goes on to cast the blame for overly benign views of Native Americans on Cooper:

He has shown that he knows how to fight the kind of Indians that God made, but I suppose the humanitarians want somebody to fight the Indians that J. Fenimore Cooper made[....] The Cooper Indians are dead—died with their creator. The kind that are left are of altogether a different breed, and cannot be successfully fought with poetry, and sentiment, and soft soap, and magnanimity.<sup>2</sup>

Twain's letter in the *Alta California*, a western newspaper, was not published in a location where Dodge was likely to have read it, although contemporary newspapers frequently reprinted each other's stories, even across the continent. But Twain published similar sentiments about Cooper's fictional Native Americans in *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), in which Twain labels them "an extinct tribe that never existed" following his description of alleged Paiute customs including the consumption of "grasshopper soup" and mourning their dead by "roast[ing]" them, covering themselves with the resulting grease, and "caterwauling about the hills," all evidence in Twain's opinion that they are merely "degraded savages" (IA 205). *The Innocents Abroad* was a national best-seller, so a chain of influence conceivably may have flowed from Twain to Dodge and not exclusively vice versa. In any case, like Dodge, Twain places much of the blame on Cooper for the alleged misrepresentation of Native Americans as possessing noble qualities to mitigate their savagery and humanize them, and Twain places this blame on Cooper repeatedly, in multiple texts.

Admittedly, placing this blame is not the only focus of Twain's scathing attacks on Cooper. His deconstruction of Cooper's diction and the lack of verisimilitude in Cooper's plotting and dialog undoubtedly demonstrates Twain's employment of a

frequent strategy of nineteenth-century humorists, making fun of romantic conventions and sentiment (Blair 81-83). According to Ron Powers (*A Life* 560), this strategy most famously appears in Twain's *North American Review* essay "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses" (1894), which does not address the concept of the noble savage at all, but instead portrays the "Cooper Indian" as constantly making stupid mistakes that render him ineffectual in battle against Natty Bumppo: "In the matter of intellect, the difference between a Cooper Indian and the Indian that stands in front of the cigar-shop is not spacious," Twain asserts in the essay (69). Even Twain's attack on "Goshoots" in *Roughing It* (1872) includes a burlesque of *The Last of the Mohicans*, mentioned by name, and of the novel's "backwoodsmen who divide each sentence into two equal parts; one part critically grammatical, refined, and choice of language," while the end of the backwoodsman's sentence appears to be "just such an attempt to talk like a hunter or mountaineer as a Broadway clerk might make after [...] studying frontier life at the Bowery Theater for a couple of weeks" (*RI* 1: 134). But Twain's hostility toward Cooper seems to go much deeper than literary burlesque and to derive fundamentally from his response, as one of Dodge's westerners, to the oral history of enmity between European and Native Americans that generated serious resentment of and scorn for the figure of the noble savage. Like Dodge, Twain clearly believed that Cooper's figure of the noble savage perpetuated a pernicious, dangerous fallacy – and the roots of Twain's "racial animus," again like Dodge, reach back into his oral heritage from the Upper South. On the impact of this childhood influence on Twain, the present study and Kerry Driscoll strongly agree. For instance, after describing "The Noble Red Man" as "without question Twain's harshest depiction of Indians," Driscoll further defines the essay as "the hateful

crescendo of a racial bias rooted in the tales of frontier violence his mother had told him as a child” (*MTAI* 144).

### **Random Ambush in *Roughing It* and “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians”**

In Twain’s description of his first encounter with Gosiutes during his 1861 stagecoach ride into Nevada Territory from Salt Lake City, Twain clearly labels them as inscrutably Other by describing Gosiutes as “a silent, sneaking, treacherous-looking race; taking note of everything, covertly, like all the other ‘Noble Red Men’ that we (do not) read about, and betraying no sign in their countenances” (*RI* 1: 132). Here is an Orientalist refutation of Cooper’s figure of the noble savage that goes beyond literary burlesque, a refutation that Twain links specifically with Cooper two pages later by claiming to have previously been blinded by “the mellow moonshine of romance” into “overestimating the Red Man” as “a disciple of Cooper and a worshiper of the Red Men—even of the scholarly savages in the *Last of the Mohicans*” (*RI* 1: 134). Indeed, Twain read adventure romances voraciously in his boyhood, but it is difficult to conceive of Twain continuing as a “disciple” of romantic authors into his adulthood. Instead, he launches a direct attack on them when, in *Life on the Mississippi*, he blames Sir Walter Scott’s books for encouraging the Civil War,<sup>3</sup> and when he parodies numerous romantic authors in *Huckleberry Finn*,<sup>4</sup> even naming the wrecked steamboat that Huck and Jim explore the *Walter Scott* (*HF* 83).

It is possible that Twain’s purported loss of innocence regarding the true nature of Native Americans is fully true, and not a rhetorical pose. But if so, he evidently



experienced an attitude reversal that only strengthened his aversion to Cooper's figure of the noble savage once Twain developed his aversion. Twain's mother's stories of frontier violence against his ancestors still must be considered as powerful conceptual counter-influences to Cooper's noble savages, even in Twain's childhood. And such counter-images could, indeed, have been reinforced by Cooper's portrayals of "hostile Indians [...] as fiends, in whom the furies themselves would have delighted," portrayals that impelled Dodge to suggest that even Cooper understood Native Americans' "actual" nature, if only Cooper would admit it (*Our Wild* 54).

Twain's central idea in "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians" was to debunk the verisimilitude of Cooper's noble savages, and in the story fragment Twain has Tom explicitly admit to Huck that he got his romantic ideas about the kindness, friendliness, generosity, strength, honesty, loyalty, and above all, sense of honor ("HTAI" 94-96) of Native Americans from Cooper. "Tom, where did you learn about Injuns—how noble they was, and all that?" Huck inquires after the Mills parents have been massacred by seemingly friendly Oglala Sioux warriors, who also have kidnapped the Mills daughters and Jim. Tom's shamefaced reply is "Cooper's novels" ("HTAI" 109). Twain's nobility-debunking plot proves too slender to bear the weight of an entire novel, however, Walter Blair points out, and the implied gang rape of Peggy Mills also proves too problematic to allow Twain to finish writing "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians." Still, the unfeasibility of Twain's attempted but unfinished plot serves to demonstrate that debunking Cooper was indeed Twain's driving motive for writing the story fragment, just as it motivated Dodge to write his two books, other than commercial

considerations for both authors, of course. Specifically, Blair writes about Twain's truncated manuscript,

The humorist's belief that Cooper's Indians are falsely drawn and that actual Indians are scoundrels is hardly a fitting theme for a long narrative. As soon as the Indians have been shown to be treacherous and cruel part way through chapter three, the theme has been developed, and further instances of treachery and cruelty are superfluous. (90)

In the case of "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians," such "further instances" were "superfluous," indeed – but in Twain's lifetime oeuvre, they appear again and again, probably due to prejudices embedded in his psyche as a child.

In Chapter Nineteen of *Roughing It*, which Twain devotes to denigrating the Gosiutes for their alleged filthiness, laziness, inscrutability, and hunting and gathering lifestyle (*RI* 1: 131-35), his most extended anecdote attacking the tribe describes the night-time ambush by Gosiutes of a stagecoach carrying a symbol of white paternal authority, "a District Judge, of Nevada Territory" (*RI* 1: 133), an event much like the dawn ambush of Twain's own great-great grandfather at Montgomery's Station in early frontier Kentucky.<sup>5</sup> Twain introduces the anecdote by first dehumanizing Gosiutes by comparing them to timid rodents rather than brave men to enhance the reader's sense of surprise that they would dare to attack European Americans:

One would as soon expect the rabbits to fight as the Goshoots, and yet they used to live off the offal and refuse of the [stagecoach] stations a few months and then come some dark night when no mischief was expected,

and burn down the buildings and kill the men from ambush as they rushed out. (*RI* 1:132-33)

This description is immediately followed by how “once, in the night” the Gosiutes attacked the stage in which the judge is the only passenger. According to Twain, they “mortally wounded the driver,” who nonetheless stays heroically alive, remembers the features of the road, and gives directions to the judge who has taken the reins until the stage reaches safety at the next station (*RI* 1: 133). Twain published *Roughing It* twelve years before he tried to write “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians,” but then as later, he could not seem to help dwelling on his image of Native Americans as treacherous sub-humans who could not be trusted not to attack lethally without warning, despite sometimes appearing friendly or harmless.

Making Twain’s obsessive antipathy toward Native Americans especially clear is the fact that he proceeds in *Roughing It* to generalize his negative assessment of Gosiutes to all Native Americans. Twain claims that after he abandoned “the mellow moonshine of romance” about the Native American,

The paint and tinsel fell away from him and left him treacherous, filthy, and repulsive [...] how quickly the evidence accumulated that wherever one finds an Indian tribe he has only found Goshoots more or less modified by circumstances and surroundings—but Goshoots, after all. (*RI* 1: 134)

But what specific evidence “quickly [...] accumulated”? Twain does not present any evidence purporting to support his generalization whatsoever. This very absence of evidence to support such sweeping ethnic antipathy, a sort of hostility that Twain tends to

lack toward other ethnicities, suggests deeper psychological motives that also can be inferred from Twain's childhood indoctrination by his mother to dehumanize any and all Native Americans as potential killers of the white families who were preempting the land.

Admittedly, stories of random violence against families from Twain's childhood were not the only sources of his antipathy toward Native Americans, but they strongly appear to be a root cause exacerbating other sources of Twain's antipathy. He did observe Gosiutes in Nevada directly, and as Kime suggests, "Twain believed that his own limited contacts with Indians [out West] enabled him to speak of them with a certain authority" (322). First-hand observation of a subject that most European Americans had not seen directly was part of Twain's stock in trade on the lecture platform and in his travel narratives, so perhaps his western observations justified, to him, generalizing about all Native Americans to summarize his denigration of Gosiutes in *Roughing It* (1: 134). In any event, Twain's perception of himself as an authority on Native Americans made him receptive to Dodge's similar ideas about them, according to Kime: "And so, when he encountered a new book by an acknowledged authority on Indian beliefs and behavior, a man of wide experience whose beliefs tallied with his own, he studied that author with interest and approval" (322-23). Yet attributing Twain's receptivity to Dodge's perceptions and descriptions of Native Americans solely to the two authors' common experiences ignores their predisposition to shared conclusions, a predisposition that was established by their childhood experiences and the "stories of [...] horrible cruelties" (*Our Wild* 31) that both authors were told as young boys. A circle of influence appears likely: Twain's mother's oral history of frontier violence against whites influenced his

perception of the Gosiutes, and both his mother's stories and his observations of the Gosiutes made him receptive to Dodge.

Specifically, out of all the tales young Mark Twain's mother undoubtedly told him of frontier violence involving Twain's ancestors and Native Americans, the story of the Montgomery's Station attack may have made the greatest impact on Twain as a cause of his essentially lifelong antipathy toward Native Americans. In that historic incident at Montgomery's Station, not only were Twain's ancestors killed by Native Americans, but his female ancestors were entrapped or abducted and thereby underwent the threat of rape, and one of them was killed at the tender age of twelve (Collins 405-07). The influence of the Montgomery's Station attack can be seen throughout Twain's story fragment "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians" (1884); in Twain's hope for the Army "to polish off those Indians" in an *Alta California* letter (1867) and his advice to the Secretary of War to gather the peoples of the Plains together for a "general massacre" (*SNO* 322) in "The Facts Concerning the Recent Resignation" (also 1867); in Twain's call for Native American "extermination" in his *Galaxy* magazine essay "The Noble Red Man" (1870); in his early journalistic hoax "A Bloody Massacre near Carson" (1863); in the abduction and murder of the fictional wife in "The Californian's Tale" (1893); and in Twain's description, in his posthumously published *Letters from the Earth* (1909/1962), of the Sioux murders and rapes of white family members in Minnesota in 1862.

In fact, Kerry Driscoll has described "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians" and *Letters from the Earth* as "respective bookends from the beginning and end of the writer's career [which] demonstrate that he never relinquished the notion of

Indians as lustful, barbarous creatures intent upon the destruction of white womanhood” (*MTAI* 358). However, those works are not the only manifestations of the influence on young Twain of his mother’s stories of the Montgomery’s Station attack on his great grandmother’s settlement and its men, women, and children. Less direct representations of that attack can also be found throughout Twain’s masterpiece *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), further demonstrating the influence of Twain’s mother’s stories of the specific Montgomery’s Station attack that arguably played a part in Twain’s core acceptance of the pervasive European American ethic of enmity toward Native Americans. In her *Mark Twain among the Indians* (2018), Driscoll observes that despite occasionally moderating his personal antipathy toward Native Americans to some degree that is difficult to precisely gauge, Twain ultimately rationalized it for reasons that directly connect to the violent seizure and retention of Native American lands by European Americans.

The specter of the orally transmitted ancestral memory of the Montgomery’s Station attack takes textual shape in *Huckleberry Finn* in the type of predicaments that Huck finds himself in and in his use of his intelligence under pressure to survive. He is trapped in a cabin by an uncivilized father frequently rendered savage by strong drink, just as Twain’s own great grandmother Jane Montgomery was trapped in her cabin by warriors deemed “savage” by her people. To escape, Huck shoots a wild pig for its blood to fake his own death and scalping that readers would identify as a Native American *modus operandi*: “Well, last I pulled out some of my hair, and bloodied the axe good, and stuck it on the back side” (*HF* 45). Near the end of the novel, when Jim is imprisoned in a cabin on the Phelps Plantation, he, Huck, and Tom escape by taking a back route out

and climbing over a fence “in Injun file” (*HF* 278) as their heavily armed attackers congregate in the front part of the cabin. Because Albert Bigelow Paine writes in his Twain biography that Jane Montgomery “once saved her life by jumping a fence and out-running a redskin pursuer” (Paine 1: 3) and Dixon Wecter speculates that Twain was Paine’s source for this story (Wecter 20), the story of Tom, Huck, and Jim’s flight from the entrapping cabin over a fence contains additional imagery that Twain may originally have heard in his mother’s tales of the Montgomery’s Station attack.

**Misdirected Revenge, a Component of Random Ambush, as Contemplated by Twain’s Only Major Native American Character, Injun Joe**

An example of the degree to which Twain considered random or at least misdirected violence against families to be the worst kind of transgression against human decency also can be found in his assignment of such a violent role to Injun Joe in *Tom Sawyer*, in a passage that Susan Kalter describes as Twain using “indigenous punitive practices that he neither understands nor repeats accurately” as a device of “confrontation with an alternative social order” (Kalter 70). Twain’s putative sequel to *Tom Sawyer* maintains his line of thinking; in *Huckleberry Finn*, Twain continues his condemnation of social codes that incorporate such random violence by satirizing them in the organizational scene for Tom’s Gang of Robbers (*HF* 20-21).

The misdirected violence that Injun Joe intends to commit in *Tom Sawyer* involves taking revenge against the Widow Douglas for punishment that was meted out to him by her late husband, the justice of the peace (again, a symbol of the white patriarchy and its legal system that a Native American conspires to place under attack).

Huck overhears Injun Joe explaining that Judge Douglas had Joe jailed and horsewhipped in public “like a nigger” for vagrancy, or in other words, for not possessing a residence (*TS* 236). As Driscoll points out, “Joe’s resistance to Anglo-American hegemony is evident in his angry denunciation of the punishment inflicted on him by Judge Douglas for the crime of vagrancy” (*MTAI* 43). This “crime” of course constitutes an ironic form of victim-blaming since European Americans dispossessed Native Americans from their residential lands after categorizing them as uncivilized for not claiming specific tracts as their personal property, although Twain does not acknowledge this irony. Joe vows to take his revenge on the Widow Douglas by barbarically mutilating her, a punishment that he describes as worse than death for a woman:

“Kill?” [Joe asks.] “Who said anything about killing? I would kill *him* if he was here; but not her. When you want to get revenge on a woman you don’t kill her—bosh! You go for her looks. You slit her nostrils—you notch her ears like a sow!” (*TS* 236)

Injun Joe’s genetic heritage is mixed, but his classification as Native American is signified by his name, and the savagery of his intentions is consistent with the rapes and mutilations that Twain later would claim the Santee Sioux committed against a Minnesota farm family in his *Letters from the Earth* that he wrote approximately three decades after *Tom Sawyer* (*LE* 53-54).

The trope of Native Americans committing misdirected acts of revenge, whether targeted against a victim with connections to the perceived offender, such as the Widow Douglas, or simply any random settlers, and often including sexual assault, appears again and again in Twain’s work. As Driscoll points out:



Moreover, the disturbing details of Joe's revenge plot—tying the widow down in bed and allowing her to bleed to death—imply a metaphorical rape. This threat of sexual defilement, a trope Twain would associate with Indians in a number of later works, is the quintessential expression of Joe's savagery. (*MTAI* 42)

Additionally, Kalter asserts that Injun Joe's threats represent a complete miscarriage of both white and Native American ideas of justice (71), an assertion that also supports the present study's point that Twain consistently portrays Native Americans as committing random or at least misdirected violence against white families.

Injun Joe's threatened attack on the Widow Douglas (*TS* 236) appears misdirected partly because, in European American culture, a person's death generally ends his or her liability for trespasses against another person<sup>6</sup>; in addition, as Kalter points out, "[t]he Widow has not committed adultery, has not according to Anglo norms committed any offense." But Twain likewise misrepresents Native American traditions, according to Kalter, who explains:

...according to most renditions of clan-based justice, she as the Judge's wife would not be a likely substitute for him in the exercise of postmortem justice. As a member of a different clan, she would be immune to Joe's complaint; rather, a brother, sister, sororal nephew, mother, or some other member of his own clan would more likely take his place under Joe's knife. (71)

Thus, Twain portrays Injun Joe as planning a random or at least misdirected assault that is illogical by the norms of any culture in Joe's genetic heritage. Yes, Joe is a villain,

“operating out of any communal sanctioning of his retribution,” Kalter acknowledges, but that fact nevertheless “fails to prevent his activities from being read by non-Indians as representative of Indian thought and behavior” (71). When Joe’s threats shockingly violate all contemporary ideas of justice and logic, by both white and Native American rules, a Native American is explicitly threatening to commit misdirected violence against a white family much like the random violence that the Cherokees committed against Twain’s ancestors in his mother’s stories.

### **The Subtext of Land Dispossession by Deceit Followed by Violence**

In *Letters from the Earth*, Twain only briefly touches on a subtext that Dodge also brings up only once, the ulterior motive of “some men of intelligence and position” (40) for stirring up Cherokee-phobia in his boyhood community to garner support for Indian Removal. That ulterior motive, of course, was to acquire the Cherokees’ land. Yet although Dodge only acknowledges this form of white hypocrisy once, Twain’s Satan brings it up thrice in *Letters from the Earth*. Two such mentions of land theft in *Letters* have already been described: once when Twain’s Satan condemns the United States government for its poor treatment of the Santee Sioux who rose up against Minnesota whites, and once when Twain’s Satan, quoting scripture, acknowledges that the Midianite virgins were abducted on God’s orders from land that had been wrested from their people. The third time Twain’s Satan mentions land theft in *Letters from the Earth*, he again references scripture, this time quoting Deuteronomy 20. It is part of his evidence that the Old Testament God was superlatively random and cruel, based on the instructions

and general operating principles that God gives to his people in the passages that Twain quotes.

Specifically, in this passage from Deuteronomy the Hebrews are instructed to seize territory by deceit, i.e., “When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it”,<sup>7</sup> and then to commit brutal genocide upon the inhabitants:

And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword[.... O]f the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth.<sup>8</sup>

This procedure is almost exactly the one that was followed by European Americans to acquire Native American land since the beginning of their colonization of the continent: make a treaty with Native Americans and then break it by warring against them for their lands which incidentally are described as their “inheritance” from their patriarchal God. Probably only subliminally thinking of his own father’s land legacy, Twain emphasizes the barbarity of these instructions from God in particular when he expounds on it five pages later, italicizing “*all ‘creatures that breathe’*” (LE 53).

The process that the Hebrews followed is described by sociologist-historian and Native American rights activist Ward Churchill as having been adopted early in United States national history by President Washington, who “borrowed liberally from another English tradition which had been evolving since Jamestown, advising that a series of treaties be negotiated with indigenous nations” (210). According to Churchill,

The purpose of these [treaties] was to convince the Indians, people by people, to cede strategic localities to the United States in exchange for

solemn guarantees of their remaining landbases [sic]. Thus outpositioned as well as outnumbered and outgunned, they could be eliminated one after another, either by “voluntary” relocation to areas beyond the claimed boundaries of the United States or through liquidation by force. (210)

Such was the strategy that Washington recommended and Congress adopted, according to Churchill, quoting the assertions in historian Allan W. Eckert’s *That Dark and Bloody River* that “[a]part from the fact it was immoral, unethical and actually criminal,” Washington’s strategy was “so logical and well laid out” that Congress adopted it “practically without opposition and immediately put [it] into action.”<sup>9</sup> The European American strategy was to “proclaim peace” to obtain the best possible positions for conquest by guile or war, thereby reducing “the costs, both human and financial, which might otherwise attend this wholesale takeover of what was unquestionably native territory,” as Churchill phrases it (210), adding that Eckert quotes Washington as asserting, “There is nothing to be gained by an Indian war but the soil they live on and that can be obtained ... at less expense” through coercive diplomacy in preference to warfare.<sup>10</sup>

Twain’s interpretation in *Letters from the Earth* of God’s instructions in Deuteronomy to “proclaim peace” and then commit genocide is not fully echoed in early United States land-acquisition policy since Washington’s recommendations do not explicitly endorse genocide. Yet land was the source of the staples of Native American livelihood in addition to serving as residential space for Native American peoples. The actions of, first, royal British troops and then federal armies and frontier militia alike of burning Native American villages and destroying tribal food stores point convincingly to

an unofficial strategy of genocide by starvation that European Americans deployed hand-in-hand with their official policy of serial treaty-and-war-making. Similarly, according to Twain's Satan, the crimes committed by the Hebrews acting under God's orders included "the wholesale massacre of the Midianitish [sic] men and babies *and cattle*" and "the wholesale *destruction of house and city*" in addition to the "wholesale banishment of the virgins into a filthy and unspeakable slavery" (*LE* 54-55, emphasis mine). Thus Twain indicates his awareness that in contrast to the Beatitudes, a set of humble and pacific moral precepts that Twain's Satan quotes and then labels as "these immense sarcasms" and "these giant hypocrisies" (*LE* 54), the offenses mandated by the Beatitudes' author God in his earlier book, Deuteronomy, include economic warfare aimed at the Midianites' subsistence in addition to the direct taking of their lives, liberty, and sexual sanctity.

Most saliently, in his quotation of Deuteronomy Twain signals his awareness of the hypocrisy of proclaiming peace as a ruse and then making total war upon an enemy. Yet ultimately, as previously described, Twain inverts his awareness of this hypocrisy when he projects and transfers white guilt for white brutality in the annals and precepts of European American religion into "the fiendish cruelties which were repeated by the red Indians, detail by detail, in Minnesota eighteen centuries later" (*LE* 55). Twain's Satan still assigns the ultimate blame and responsibility to the white God, but only because God fails to forestall the rape, torture, and slaying of the Minnesota family at the hands of Native Americans who actively commit the atrocities; thus Twain designates Native Americans rather than whites as the agents of God's sadistic toying with humanity. "The

Midianite episode filled him with joy,” Twain’s Satan concludes in *Letters from the Earth*. “So did the Minnesota one, or he would have prevented it” (55).

Twain likewise describes his loathing of claiming peaceful intentions and then making war in “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians,” but in that previously described story fragment, Twain once again assigns the blame for this sort of behavior to Native Americans, this time simply castigating Native Americans directly rather than using their actions as metaphors for God’s cruel hypocrisy. In “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians,” Twain has the Sioux warriors that Huck, Tom, Jim, and the Mills family encounter behave in a friendly fashion toward the European Americans and then suddenly and inexplicably turn violently against them. Later, Peggy’s fiancée Brace Johnson explains to Huck and Tom that the Mills family was randomly selected to represent whites as a race to satisfy the humiliation that one warrior had received by losing a kinsman killed by whites. “You see,” Brace explains, “some white man has killed a relation of that Injun, and so he has hunted up some whites to retaliate on” (“HTAI” 116). Yet of course, in the story fragment Twain does not acknowledge that whites collectively, if not the Mills family members individually, were in the process of concluding nearly three centuries of proclaiming peace to Native Americans collectively and then killing them individually for their collective land.<sup>11</sup>

### **Random Ambush Minus Any Memory of Causation: The Grangerfords vs. the Shepherdsons**

“Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians” is not the only time Twain records his antipathy to senseless, eye-for-eye vengeance, as the story of the Grangerford-

Shepherdson feud in *Huckleberry Finn* amply demonstrates (117-34). Furthermore, in the feud chapter, Twain has Huck almost instantly seek to attribute the senseless violence to territorial disputes such as those that fueled the frontier violence in the Upper South of Twain's ancestors. It is the first possible cause that comes to Huck's mind. Buck Grangerford explains to Huck how a feud works, and that nobody remembers the cause, but possibly it was a lawsuit. Immediately, Huck presses him, "What was the trouble about, Buck?—land?" and Buck responds that he doesn't know (*HF* 128). While Huck's question to Buck could simply represent acknowledgement that disputed land titles were a frequent cause of interfamilial acrimony in the nineteenth century, Huck's question also could stem from Twain's latent awareness, derived from his mother's tales of frontier violence, that the root cause of seemingly random Native American killings of European Americans was the theft of their land.

Elsewhere in the Grangerford-Shepherdson chapter, Twain has the feuding families mutually "proclaim peace" (Deut. 20:10) and then make war against each other, attending church together to hear a sermon about "brotherly love" with their guns "kept [...] between their knees" or resting "handy against the wall" (*HF* 129). Later in the chapter, they commit mutual genocide. This may primarily exemplify the "bad faith" and hypocrisy in the antebellum South that Forrest G. Robinson believes Twain exposes in both *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*, and thus the entire feud may figure as a metaphor for the Civil War. However, the church-going feud-fighters also resonate with the stories of frontier violence against Twain's ancestors that he was told as a child, and ultimately Twain takes sides in the feud, in the following way. It is the Shepherdsons who ultimately represent Native Americans by overstepping the bounds of civilization

when they murder the wounded teen-age Buck—like Huck, a mere child, after all—riding along the riverbank hunting him and his nineteen-year-old cousin, “shooting at them and singing out, ‘Kill them, kill them!’” (*HF* 133).

On the next page, the Shepherdsons possibly mutilate Buck’s corpse savagely, although as in the rape of the Minnesota pioneer girls in *Letters from the Earth* (53-54), Twain has Huck describe the Shepherdsons’ actions as unspeakable:

I ain’t agoing to tell *all* that happened—it would make me sick again if I was to do that. I wished I hadn’t ever come ashore that night, to see such things. I ain’t ever going to get shut of them—lots of times I dream about them. (*HF* 134)

Indeed, even if Twain figures the Grangerfords, initially, as “white Indians,” due to Buck’s name and calling them a “tribe,”<sup>12</sup> Huck’s sympathies ultimately bend toward them, if only due to their hospitality and the prolonged contact he has with them. This is the sort of circumstance that likewise may have led Twain to appreciate the culture and humanity of African Americans while he never arrived at a similar sympathy for Native Americans.

Robert E. Lowery cites the Shepherdsons’ exuberant shooting at the wounded Grangerford boys in the river as an illustration “to some extent [...] of] the struggle between civilized man and the barbaric primitive” (20). The relative “civilization” of the Grangerfords, compared to the Shepherdsons, also is evidenced earlier in the chapter when Huck observes the Grangerford patriarch eschewing the Native American-style guerrilla tactics that Buck employs to shoot at Harney Shepherdson, followed by the



Shepherdsons implicitly being labeled as uncivilized due to their consistent use of guerrilla tactics:

[Father:] “I don’t like that shooting from behind a bush. Why didn’t you step into the road, my boy?”

[Buck:] “The Shepherdsons don’t, father. They always take advantage.”

(*HF* 127)

Again, in Twain’s obvious adaptation of the *Romeo and Juliet* plot in the book’s feud chapter, other parallels to the Montgomery’s Station attack can be seen. Sophia’s relief when Buck fails to fatally shoot Harney and her joy upon reading Harney’s note which Huck retrieves from church for her make it abundantly clear that Sophia elopes quite voluntarily with Harney (*HF* 127, 129-30). But the Grangerfords evidently view her departure as an abduction similar to the abduction of the Montgomery women and children by the Cherokees (Collins 406-07). Similarly to the white Kentucky settlers approximately sixty years earlier who formed a posse to pursue the abductors and captives, as described in Chapter Four, the Grangerford men immediately take up arms and ride to intercept the eloping couple “for to try to ketch dat young man and kill him ’fo he kin git across de river wid Miss Sophia,” Huck’s assigned slave Jack informs him (*HF* 132). Additionally, the name of the Shepherdsons brings to mind reliance on *herds* of deer and other wild game, although not sheep – the hunter-gatherer form of subsistence that whites believed Native Americans relied upon. At the same time, “Grangerford” resonates with the image of agrarian “grangers,” i.e., white farmers.<sup>13</sup>

Even certain incidental details of the Shepherdson-Grangerford feud bear resemblances to the Montgomery’s Station attack, although admittedly they may be

coincidental. The feud occurs south of where Huck and Jim's raft misses Cairo in the fog, and Huck's involvement results from the raft being run over by a steamboat from which he swims downstream to the "left-hand shore" of the Mississippi (*HF* 116), thus landing him in western Kentucky or Tennessee, the Upper South of Twain's ancestors. Likewise, in the final scenes of the feud, Huck witnesses Buck and his cousin hiding behind a wood-rank where, when their attackers have been "cavorting around and yelling," one of the attackers is shot out of his saddle by one of the Grangerford youths who rises and "draws a steady bead" on him (*HF* 133). This parallels the incident during the Montgomery's Station attack, described more fully in Chapter Four, in which "the Indian who had pursued Betsey Montgomery returned" to the settlement after the other abductors and captives were already gone "and commenced hallooing," and Twain's great-great uncle William Montgomery, Jr., "shot him dead" (Collins 406).

Again, these parallels between *Huckleberry Finn* and the stories that young Twain was told of Native American attacks on his ancestors may merely represent common occurrences in frontier-through-antebellum times. But taken in *toto*, they suggest the persistent influence of those stories on Twain's psyche and his idealistic disdain of random ambush, as do the further actions of Huck and the feudists in the novel. During the ensuing mayhem after Miss Sophia and Harney elope, Huck assists the Grangerford youths who are pinned down by the "cavorting" Shepherdsons. He passes information to Buck and his cousin from his hiding place in a tree, and agrees to serve as a lookout after they seemingly retreat: "I sung out to Buck and told him," Huck describes. "He told me to watch out sharp and let him know when the men come in sight again." Huck collaborates, in other words, in resisting the Shepherdsons' guerrilla tactics, the nature of

which are made explicit when Buck warns that his tormenters have only temporarily departed—“said they was up to some devilment or other—wouldn’t be gone long” (*HF* 133). Buck’s term “devilment” labels the Shepherdsons as “savage.” So does his description of how the Shepherdsons had killed the Grangerford family patriarch “in ambush,” similarly to the way Twain’s great-great grandfather William Montgomery, Sr., also the family patriarch, was ambushed when he stepped out of his cabin at dawn in the Montgomery’s Station attack (Collins 406, Trabue 151). Specifically, during the brief lull in the fighting after the Shepherdsons retreat, Buck “said his father and his two brothers was killed, and two or three of the enemy. Said the Shepherdsons laid for them, in ambush” (*HF* 133).

Buck’s description resonates with the Clemens family stories of frontier violence in two ways. One is the literal parallel noted in the previous paragraph, although in the Montgomery’s Station attack, only one of the patriarch’s sons was killed. Twain’s great-great uncle John Montgomery, the son of William Sr., was killed in his cabin by a Cherokee bullet (Collins 406, Trabue 151)—while in the feud, two sons die. However, the difference is only quantitative and not qualitative. Buck vows that he and his cousin “would make up for this day, yet” (*HF* 133), the same way that Native American attacks on whites in the Upper South and in all the lands being stolen from Native Americans instilled an ethic of enmity in whites toward their attackers.

The second form of resonance stems from the Shepherdsons lying “in ambush” for the Grangerfords, which suggests that while Sophia elopes without the consent of her family, Harney conspires with his own family to bear her away with armed protection in his wake – a guerrilla-style ambush that not only enables the elopement to succeed, but

suggests a more sinister sort of lethal entrapment that fully justifies the Grangerfords' interpretation of the elopement as an abduction. The episode concludes with Buck's death and unspoken mutilation, but not before the Shepherdsons put one more guerrilla tactic into effect, catching Buck and his cousin unaware, as Huck reports: "All of a sudden, bang! bang! bang! goes three or four guns—the men had slipped around through the woods and come in from behind without their horses!" (*HF* 133). The boys seek safety by jumping in the river, and that's when the true barbarity of the Shepherdsons is shown, as mentioned above; the youths are hunted to death in cold blood. The Shepherdsons' actions speak for themselves, but to make the point perfectly clear Huck expresses his utter revulsion of them, as described above (*HF* 134); Huck's comments and his collaboration with Buck prior to Buck's murder place Huck's author firmly in the camp of detesting guerrilla tactics and their brutal consequences.

#### **Arthur's Knights as Guerrilla "White Indians" in *A Connecticut Yankee***

Roughly four years after Twain objects to guerrilla tactics in his unpublished description of a surprise Sioux attack on white settlers they had pretended to befriend in "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians" and in his published description of the Grangerford-Shepherdson feud in *Huckleberry Finn*, Twain returns to the guerrilla theme in the opening scenes of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), as Kerry Driscoll has suggested. Hank Morgan initially sympathizes with his fellow captives in the royal court, and technically he labels only the captives as "white Indians," but he does so because he generalizes their plight into a pejorative diagnosis of the entire court.

Hank declares that “[t]he thought was forced upon me” that his battered and bleeding fellow captives “have served other people in their day; it being their own turn, now, they were not expecting any better treatment than this” (*CY* 20). Driscoll does not use the specific term “guerrilla tactics,” but she suggests that “Hank’s paradoxical epithet” signifies the inherent treachery and brutal consequences of guerrilla warfare:

A “white Indian” not only lacks the distinguishing outward marks of civilization, such as the ability to read and write, but also—more importantly—is devoid of fundamental respect for human life. The prisoners, Hank surmises, live in accordance with a primitive code of violence and revenge, and are therefore deserving of the pain they suffer. (“Man Factories” 10)

Hank’s identification of the battered and bloody captives with their captors, the knights and ladies of the Round Table, is reiterated when, later in the novel, Hank describes the Arthurian nobility to his traveling companion and future wife, Sandy, as “just a sort of polished-up court of Comanches” in which “there isn’t a squaw [...] who doesn’t stand ready at the dropping of a hat to desert to the buck with the biggest string of scalps at his belt” (*CY* 119).

Of course, Sandy is a noblewoman, too, but as Driscoll observes (“Man Factories” 11), Hank initially classifies her as another of the “merely modified savages [...] measured by modern standards” (*CY* 101) because she never bathes and appears unconcerned about eating breakfast. “[A]nd that smacks of the savage, too,” Hank observes, because

[o]n their long journeys, those Britons were used to long fasts, and knew how to bear them; and also how to freight up against probable fasts before starting, after the style of *the Indian* and the anaconda. As like as not, Sandy was loaded for a three-day stretch. (CY 101-02, emphasis added)

Hank does not, at this point, discuss the purpose of the “long journeys” that ancient Britons, Native Americans, and voracious tropical snakes were presumed to undertake (although, of course, being compared and classed with reptiles dehumanizes the first two categories). However, at some point in their “long journeys” all three categories could be expected to make surprise violent attacks upon enemies or prey, as Twain learned about “the Indian” through the stories of frontier violence he heard in his childhood; as “the anaconda” with whom Hank pairs “the Indian” does, by its nature; and as Hank describes the behavior of the Arthurian nobility.

Specifically, only a few pages after Hank disparages his questing mate for her “savage” disinterest in breakfast, the questing pair are attacked from ambush, without provocation, by “half a dozen armed knights” who charge Hank “[a]ll together, too; none of those chivalrous magnanimities which one reads so much about—one courtly rascal at a time, and the rest standing by to see fair play. No, they came in a body” (CY 112-13). Hank cleverly terrifies them by smoking a pipe inside his helm, giving them the impression he’s a fire-breathing dragon, in a move that post-colonial theorists would recognize as the use of “civilized technology” to induce “savage superstition” and dominate a colonial culture, even if Hank is a one-man colonizer. The theme is first introduced early in the book, when Hank saves himself from being burned at the stake by recalling “how Columbus, or Cortez, or one of those people, played an eclipse as a saving

trump once, on some savages, and I saw my chance” (CY 39). Hank proceeds to “play [...] an eclipse” on his captors himself, escaping random, irrational execution by “some savages” who happen to be his own cultural ancestors, i.e., “white Indians.”

The specific mention of Columbus is significant, Driscoll observes; Hank’s use of the eclipse to “establish his reputation as Camelot’s most powerful magician [...] offers not only a pragmatic solution to his immediate predicament, but also [...] emulates the deific stance of a celebrated European explorer,” incidentally providing “an inspirational paradigm of cultural ascendancy” (“Man Factories” 10), however colonialist that may seem. Hank’s exploitation of “his scientific understanding of the physical universe to manipulate and control an ignorant, primitive audience,” as Driscoll goes on to describe it, is justified in the novel by his circumstances. Hank has been condemned to death randomly, for committing no crime or offense whatsoever, similarly to the seemingly random, violent Native American attacks on frontier whites, from the whites’ point of view, like the attack at Montgomery’s Station in which Twain’s ancestors were killed or abducted.

Put simply, Hank paints the Arthurian aristocracy as savage in the same ways that Twain views Native Americans, in the same manner that they are pictured in the predominant ethos of the American frontier: as irredeemably crude and violent. As Driscoll suggests:

[...] the substance of his allegation—that the women of Arthur’s court are fickle and promiscuous—is [...] a moral judgment grounded in a sense of ethnocentric superiority. In Hank’s estimation, such inconstancy [of the Arthurian “squaws”] exemplifies a primitive, debased value system

wherein status, sexual allure, and the very motion [sic]<sup>14</sup> of manhood are equated with violence and gruesome war trophies. (“Man Factories” 11)

In a similar vein, Helen Harris calls *A Connecticut Yankee* “[t]he classic instance [...] of Mark Twain’s use of the Indian as a stereotype of savage squalor,” quoting both the passage about the Arthurian nobility resembling “polished-up Comanches” and Hank Morgan’s assertion that “many of the terms used in the most matter-of-fact way by this great assemblage of the first ladies and gentlemen in the land would have made a Comanche blush” (CY 31). The cultural commonplace for such risqué humor is that “it would have made a sailor blush,” so Twain’s use of Native Americans to represent Arthurian savagery reveals his ingrained, deep-seated prejudice against them. Of course, once Twain introduces the “white Indian” concept eleven pages earlier in the novel, it is hardly surprising that he declines to mix metaphors, but extends them instead. Still, given Twain’s lifelong antipathy toward Native American, it also is hardly surprising that “the Indian, already established as an analogy [earlier in the book ...] became the ready-made choice for comparison,” as Harris suggests (500).

### **The Comanches as a Yardstick to Measure the Failings of France**

Throughout Twain’s career, his fiction continues intermittently but doggedly to demonstrate the persistent impact of his mother’s stories of the Montgomery’s Station attack, as the present study suggests in agreement with Driscoll. And the comparative trope is a salient point of evidence of that impact. Driscoll traces “[t]he origins of Hank’s analogy” figuring the Arthurian nobility as “white Indians” back to Twain’s essay “The French and the Comanches” which Twain first wrote in 1879 and then deleted as a



chapter (*LE* [181]) for his European travel narrative *A Tramp Abroad* (1879). It was later published in *Letters from the Earth* (183-89). Driscoll asserts that in the essay Twain equates the French and the Comanches as “existing upon the same moral and social level” due to their mutual “cruelty, savagery, and [...] spirit of massacre.”<sup>15</sup> In truth, Twain does not make this equation without reservation. Tongue in cheek, first he disparages the French by placing them at a lower level than even the despised Comanches due to the French penchant for fratricidal violence. He then satirically elevates the French for being “more ingenious in their methods” of committing fratricide, valorizing them for their mental acuity even as he lambastes the mendacious ends to which they put that acuity. But the significance of his condemnation of the French for purportedly resembling the Comanches can be found in one of his main arguments against French behavior: the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre that, according to Twain, was committed by surprise (*LE* 185-86). He does not explicitly mention the Montgomery’s Station attack, by any means, but once again, he rails against the ambush style of the Montgomery’s Station attack that was described to him so frequently as a young child.

Twain also does not accuse the Comanches of committing massacre by surprise; in fact, very little of the essay focuses on them, as Twain devotes the bulk of his argument to condemning the French. Elizabeth Hanson even suggests that “the essay loses much of its virulence as an anti-Indian effusion because Twain ignores the Comanches altogether after the first two pages of the essay” (12). The alleged savagery of the Comanches, representing the frontier European American conception of Native Americans as a type, is simply referenced by Twain’s allusion to their purported “cruelty, savagery, and [...] spirit of massacre” (*LE* 183) and then he savages the French instead.

Driscoll characterizes the essay as Twain's first foray into the concept of "white Indians" ("Man Factories" 10). It also is significant that Twain spends a good portion of the essay condemning the French not only because, as Twain asserts, "[t]he spirit of massacre seems to be theirs by divine right," but because the Catholics allegedly murdered the Protestants by surprise after remaining entirely sociable with them and giving no hint that their genocidal slaughter was contemplated:

The truly pious [Catholics] prepared their arms, preserved their secret, and waited; they visited and were visited by their sinful and unsuspecting neighbors as usual, and the doom that was in the air gave no token. The King held the kindest communion with the leader of the sinners; and if this latter had been of an observant turn he could have seen there the very gun with which his majesty was going to cripple him from the palace windows a little later. (*LE* 185)

Twain proceeds to emphasize and reiterate the treachery of the Catholics, a treachery that brings to mind the betrayal of the Mills family by the seemingly friendly Sioux who visit, eat with, and receive presents from the family in "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians" (102-05). When "[t]he appointed hour came" at midnight on St. Bartholomew's Day, "[t]he pious were ready, the sinful were taken by surprise," Twain relates (*LE* 186). His central argument to condemn the massacre is its *modus operandi*, a guerrilla sneak attack by "white Indians," even though Twain does not actually coin that term until *Connecticut Yankee* is published, ten years later than "The French and the Comanches" was written in 1879.

Twain also is careful to emphasize that his bigotry is ethnic rather than religious, emphasizing that either Catholics or Protestants could have conceived and executed the surprise massacre, so long as they were French, as bad as the Comanches. Twain condemns both the killers and their victims as “white Indians,” at least potentially. “[I]f they had happened to think of it first,” Twain asserts, the martyrs would have committed the same genocidal treachery against the Catholics “—for they were Frenchmen, and [...] they would have massacred the others” (*LE* 186). Thus, Twain meticulously maintains his trope of an entirely “savage” population group, minimizing the centuries of bloodshed between the two major Western divisions of Christianity, Catholicism and Protestantism, in favor of his humorously intended attack on the entire French populace and culture. The Comanches and, by implication, all Native Americans are similarly indicted by Twain’s use of them for comparative purposes. As Harris notes, Twain’s description of “the cruelty, savagery and propensity for violence of the French” is made “by comparing them to an Indian tribe, the most bloodthirsty people he could think of” (502).

Twain placing the French in the category of “white Indians,” even though his actual coinage of that term does not come until a decade later, is only ambiguously mitigated by his valorization of the French as having greater mental acuity than the Comanches and other Native Americans. In Twain’s eyes, the cleverness of the French makes them semi-civilized on a basic conceptual level that transcends satire even when their behavior is savage; it is their “civilization,” described not as technology, but a system of laws and social structure, that makes them “white,” and the barbarity of their laws and social structure in practice that turns the French “Indian.” For example, to support his claim of French superiority, Twain first itemizes socioeconomic injustices

against the French serfs of the feudal era unmatched by any equivalent “striking and remarkable customs” among the Comanches, but then he culminates his list with “*le droit du seigneur*” which he squeamishly declines to describe (*LE* 184)—much as he later would shy away from explicitly describing the gang rapes of Peggy Mills in “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians” (Kime 327-30, Blair 91) and the Minnesota daughters in *Letters from the Earth* (53). “Let it go in French,” he declares, “it would soil the English language to describe it in that tongue” (*LE* 184), making use of the same rhetorical strategy that he employs to label the Minnesota rapes unspeakable: “There is a limit. There are indignities so atrocious that the pen cannot write them” (*LE* 53). Thus, although *le droit du seigneur* serves as one final example of a French custom and law, Twain’s rhetoric simultaneously categorizes it as an unspeakable rape, the most egregious of atrocities, as described in Chapter Four—and in that sense, Twain essentially equalizes the barbarity of the French and Native Americans.

Twain’s somewhat contradictory stance shifts, finally, one more time toward satiric elevation of the French for the “ingenuity” of their atrocities, relying on the foundational criterion he emphatically shares with his nineteenth-century Anglo-American culture, the valorization of mental acuity:

The Comanches might beat these [atrocities] ... possibly, but they could not beat them much. However, French ingenuity struck its supremist altitude during the Revolution, when the revolutionists tied naked men to naked women, and threw them into the river. This was a step beyond the invention of the Comanche. Therefore here the Comanche fails and the Frenchman takes precedence. (*LE* 184)

It is significant that “revolutionists” are not followers of custom and law at all, and thus Twain’s satiric praise of their sado-sexual method of execution by mutual drowning rests entirely on their “ingenuity.” The same paragraph begins with Twain’s assertions that “I very much doubt if the French are more cruel than the Comanches; I think they are only more ingenious in their methods” and that “[i]f this can be established as a fact, it will be evidence that the Frenchman is a higher being than the Comanche” (*LE* 183).

So which position does Twain ultimately adopt within his droll attempt to elicit humor and outrage through claiming that the behavior of an entire nation of Europe, a continent dedicated to bearing the torch of “civilization” to its colonies, might be comparable to the uncouth and “cruel” Comanches? Ultimately, Twain exhibits the colonialist’s ambiguity; underneath the veneer of “civilization,” he suggests, perhaps we fear we are all savage, or the oxymoron “white Indians” could not signify. The point relevant to the influence of his mother’s stories of frontier violence on Twain’s antipathy toward Native Americans is this: guerrilla warfare often is the most intelligent, because most effective, military strategy, but that doesn’t make it morally right. When used by any peoples with “a primitive, debased value system” (Driscoll, ““Man Factories”” 11), whether they are the sixth-century Britons of *A Connecticut Yankee*, the feudal French, the Jacobins or the indigenous peoples of North America, guerrilla warfare ranks with rape as an egregious atrocity in Twain’s moral hierarchy. The two crimes often accompany each other, he implies, and both are a form of treachery. Thus ultimately, Twain’s praise of the French for the “ingenuity” of their savagery is indeed satirical: their mental acuity and their role in Western civilization mean they should know better than,

for instance, committing fratricide by surprise attack or heaving bound nude couples into the Seine.

### **No Guilt for, but Justification of, Land Dispossession**

Having demonstrated the extensive influence of his mother's stories of frontier violence on Twain's antipathy toward Native Americans, the present study must address an alternate theory as well. It is tempting to ascribe Twain's antipathy to a desire to bulwark his father's claims to the Tennessee land that was, after all, indirectly taken from Native Americans, although John Marshall Clemens did not battle them to obtain it. The temptation grows when one considers the circumstance that John Marshall obtained his land during the process of Indian Removal in Tennessee and the rest of the southeast United States. However, John Marshall's land acquisition in parallel with the various stages of Indian Removal in the 1830s does not appear to have motivated Twain's antipathy toward Native Americans; this was not a case of the sins of the father being visited upon the son. Twain's antipathy toward the Tennessee land appears to stem from other causes; specifically, it likely stems from the "reverse trust" that the land represented for himself and his heirs. Yet Twain's antipathy toward Native Americans does spring from European American acquisition of Native American land; specifically, it springs from the land that his ancestors settled and died for at the hands of Cherokees, Shawnees, and other Native Americans in frontier Kentucky.

This violence endorsed and justified the cultural discourse that labeled Native Americans "savage" in Twain's mind, and the label was used by European Americans to justify the confiscation of Native American land across the continent. Thus, the

Tennessee land did influence Twain's hatred of Native Americans because the Tennessee land was part of all the land that European Americans seized, provoking the Native Americans' defensive violence. However, in her 2001 dissertation, Catherine Carlstroem partially misinterprets this connection when she suggests that Twain repeatedly labels the Tennessee land as a "heavy curse" (*MTA* 1: 3, *AMT* 1: 61) due to his awareness and acceptance of European American guilt for the theft of land from Native Americans. Carlstroem first acknowledges Twain's loathing of his father's "reverse trust," although she does not use that term. "While acknowledging the cause of curse as its status as prospective, rather than actual, wealth[,] Twain focuses unswervingly on the property's future," Carlstroem notes, and she also emphasizes that Twain does not explicitly address the land's history of confiscation from Native Americans prior to John Marshall's acquisition of it: "While the suspicion of theft has, in this case, a strong foundation, Twain never overtly discusses it [...] He is notably silent on its relationship, symbolic or real, to any past." Finally, despite these caveats, or taking Twain's "notable" silence about the land's history as a type of negative evidence, Carlstroem suggests Twain's designation of the land as a "heavy curse" upon his family acknowledges the land's history: "Yet even his ironic nomination of it as a curse suggests a past; curses are traditionally associated with revenge, with punishment for unresolved wrongs, unrestituted injury," she asserts (11).

Carlstroem's interpretation implies that Twain eventually became able to see beyond Native American violence against his ancestors and other European Americans to empathize with the injury that land confiscation had done to Native Americans. Yet the evidence is very slender that Twain ever reached this empathetic point of view. Nor does

the history of a curse, whatever its past may be, necessarily define the significance of that curse. Rather, the terror of a curse resides most strongly in its potential to wreak havoc in the future, just as Twain saw the Tennessee land as robbing his family members of their potential productivity by inducing them to cling to an obsolete past that Twain believed they could render powerless by simply discarding. Twain would have preferred not to be bothered by his family's unrealistic hopes for the Tennessee land, once he determined that he could not personally make his family's dreams of riches from the land come true. But he did not appear concerned about whether it had been rightfully obtained from Native Americans.

Nor was Twain willing to alienate his white readers across the continent by telling them that their titles to their homes and farms were not valid, even though their land had been stolen from Native Americans as surely as the homeland of the Midianites was stolen, a biblical theft that Twain's quotations of Numbers and Deuteronomy in *Letters from the Earth* surely indicates his awareness of. Ironically, he may have been more conscious of the Midianite land theft than his own culture's similar transgression due to his own family's deep involvement in Native American land theft that Carlstroem summarizes as follows: "In the Tennessee lands Twain owns a tangible piece of the larger landscape: the American homicidal-economics of dispossession and genocide" (12). Twain's willingness to sometimes self-censor to accommodate his readers' sensibilities can be seen in his abandonment of writing the gang-rape-tinctured "Huck and Tom among the Indians"; his accession to not publishing "the hottest criticism" in *Life On The Mississippi* (1883) that castigated the South (Budd 91); and his decision not to publish his anti-lynching satire, "The United States of Lyncherdom" (1901), or a proposed



subscription book on lynching, for which his satire would have been the introduction.<sup>16</sup>

In all three of the latter cases, Twain evidently wished to avoid offending his many southern readers and becoming unable to sell his books in the South. It is not at all inconceivable that he followed a similar course regarding the European American theft of Native American land; in fact, what he did do was rationalize that theft as inevitable instead of speaking out against it or even recognizing the injustice therein.

Then again, Twain may not have self-censored at all regarding the injustice of European American theft of Native American land because he may never have truly perceived that injustice. The oral history that he heard in his boyhood of the frontier violence involving his ancestors in the Upper South arguably continued to exert a strong, persistent effect on him through his life. It simply is not at all clear that Twain ever resolved and dissolved his inheritance of antipathy toward Native Americans. True, Driscoll reports that in marginalia to the manuscript of the British edition of *Following the Equator*, at the point where Twain is recounting atrocities committed against native Tasmanians, Twain observes, “Our own modern dealings with the Indians seem to show that civilization is merely (temporarily) suppressed savagery.”<sup>17</sup> The marginalia are crossed out, “indicating that the writer himself never intended them for publication,” Driscoll concedes, but she goes on to assert they “offer irrefutable proof that he recognized the parallels between the shameful abuses [of Tasmanians] and the mistreatment of American Indians by colonial settlers back home but chose not to address them in his work” (*MTAI* 270-71). Her latter point is key, that Twain “chose not to address” the parallels he observed. “This omission,” Driscoll acknowledges, “minimizes

the culpability of his countrymen for their abuse of Native Americans while highlighting the colonial transgressions of Britain and Spain” (*MTAI* 273).

As the remainder of this chapter will demonstrate, Twain’s antipathy toward Native Americans lingered in the form of a willingness to free himself of prejudice against almost all other oppressed peoples of the Earth, but to only grudgingly, partially, and indirectly admit that Native Americans were wronged by the European American theft of their land. Furthermore, Twain’s childhood hearing of violent frontier stories apparently exerted such a powerful influence on him that even though the “Huck” portion of his personality identified with a hunting and gathering lifestyle, Twain nevertheless consistently condemned Native Americans for practicing it in preference to participating in European American “civilization”—that is, an agricultural-industrial mode of living.

Twain yearned, in effect, to “light out for the Territories” as Huck does (*HF* 296), or at least to float on a raft down the Mississippi, living the easy life off the land and water. But Twain’s family history of experiencing guerrilla violence in the Upper South persuaded him that when Huck arrived in “the Territory,” in “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians,” he would encounter Native American savagery that would make the cut-throat capitalists, robber barons, and crooked politicians of the era that he named the Gilded Age look as innocent by comparison as the Sunday school picnic that Tom’s gang of juvenile robbers attacks in *Huckleberry Finn* (24-25). European Americans might briefly indulge in the hunting and gathering lifestyle, during a vacation, but partly due to their ingrained belief that Native Americans were likely to commit violence without warning, and partly due to the fact that Twain was indoctrinated in this

belief himself, Twain and his culture rejected the hunter-gatherer lifestyle as unsustainable.

### **Refuting Pervasive Claims that Twain's Antipathy Noticeably Moderated**

Describing critics' efforts to find a softening of Twain's antipathy toward Native Americans, Driscoll acknowledges that despite the substantial scholarly interest in and multiple books about Twain's generally positive attitudes toward African Americans, "[c]omparatively little attention has been paid to the author's stance on [...] the dispossession and attempted extermination of the country's indigenous population." Driscoll adds that "[t]he paucity of critical inquiry [...] is in my estimation not a matter of oversight but deliberate avoidance." Twain's reputation "as an American cultural icon" who spoke out for oppressed peoples in all situations, foreign and domestic, was at stake (*MTAI* 4). Indeed, one motive for the scholarly effort to find texts, lectures, or correspondence in which Twain either retreats from his antipathy toward Native Americans or expresses sympathy for them might be the preservation of his status as a great man of letters and wisdom, "the Lincoln of our literature," as William Dean Howells calls him (101). The drolly quotable great American sage should not be an Indian-hater.

Distortion was the inevitable result of the heightened scholarly interest in Twain's attitudes toward Native Americans, Driscoll asserts, producing descriptions of his attitudes "either vilifying or idealizing them" (*MTAI* 4). The first renowned critic she mentions as postulating that Twain rose above his early antipathy toward Native Americans is Philip Foner in his *Mark Twain: Social Critic* (1959). Foner admits that

Twain's writings "too often present the Indians in their worst light" but adds that Twain "also shows the misery of these people," a dubious reading of the great author since it implies sympathy. More startlingly, Foner asserts on the basis of a single 1881 lecture by Twain that the author attributes the Native Americans' misery as "stemming not so much from any defect of the Indian character as from the fact that the white settlers of America had stolen the land from the Indians and reduced them to a state of peonage" (Foner 237). Next, "[m]ore than a decade later," Driscoll reports, "Maxwell Geismar followed Foner's lead in both his acknowledgement of the writer's 'deep prejudice' against Indians and insistence that it was fully overcome." This rehabilitative approach toward Twain's reputation is "problematic in its determination to absolve Twain from the charge of racism through selective use of evidence," Driscoll further observes (*MTAI* 5). In fact, a whole series of scholars, not all of whom are cited by Driscoll, present evidence from late in Twain's career that can be seen as mitigating Twain's antipathy toward Native Americans in his early career as a writer; their evidence consistently appears to suggest that Twain genuinely moderated this antipathy or even transformed it into sympathy. However, in each instance the scholar seizes upon a different piece of ambiguous evidence that can readily be disputed.

Although Driscoll herself does not look away from Twain's late-career texts that attack Native Americans, she asserts that such critics as Leslie Fiedler and Helen Harris who characterize Twain's antipathy toward Native Americans as lifelong are demonstrating "absolutism" that ignores such evidence as "an 1886 letter to President Grover Cleveland, in which Clemens denounces a New Mexico bounty on Apache scalps" (*MTAI* 5).<sup>18</sup> For instance, Driscoll dismisses as grandstanding Fiedler's 1968

claim that Twain was “an absolute Indian hater, consumed by the desire to destroy not only real Indians, but any image of Indian life which stands between White Americans and a total commitment to genocide.” Fiedler’s primary evidence is Injun Joe (qtd. in Driscoll, *MTAI* 4-5). More persuasive to her are Louis J. Budd (1962), James McNutt (1978), Jeffrey Steinbrink (1991), and Harold Kolb (2015), who separately argue that “while Twain’s prejudice against Indians diminished over time, it did not entirely disappear” (*MTAI* 6). However, the level of Twain’s vehemence in such late-in-life diatribes as *Letters from the Earth* argues against any significant diminution of his antipathy toward Native Americans at all.

However, all critics except Joseph L. Coulombe<sup>19</sup> who consider the question of Twain’s purportedly diminishing prejudice against Native Americans agree that Twain definitely did not like Native Americans early in his life and career. As Coulombe notes in his 2001 essay in *American Literary Realism*, most scholars begin by quoting Twain’s assertion that the Native American “is a good, fair, desirable subject for extermination if there ever was one” in “The Noble Red Man” (“NRM” [427]) and “then typically trace Twain’s development toward a more humanistic attitude, although they provide different reasons for the change (or the non-change)” (Coulombe 262). A good example of a scholar tracing this purported trajectory appears in Lynn Denton’s seminal 1972 essay in *The Mark Twain Journal*, the first scholarly article specifically about Twain and Native Americans published in a journal, as opposed to the earlier books by Foner, Budd, Fiedler, and Geismar that Driscoll cites (*MTAI* 4-7).

Denton asserts that Twain’s antipathy eventually moderated remarkably, suggesting that Twain’s early “strong prejudice against the Indians [...] eventually

changed to toleration and then finally to idealism” (1) and that “[u]ltimately,” Twain “began to idealize the Indian” (2). The evidence that Denton presents to support her claim of Twain’s moderation (1-3) can be interpreted instead as the author using Puritan attacks on Native Americans as rhetorical ammunition for his own satirical attacks on Puritans in his speech “Plymouth Rock and the Pilgrims” (22 Dec. 1881), as Harris has pointed out (499-500 n. 12). This is the same speech, an address to the first annual dinner of the New England Society, that Foner describes as an admission of European culpability for the theft of Native American land (237) and Geismar calls “a remarkable opening of the ignorant frontier mind” on Twain’s part (315). However, the author’s mind may have been less opened than Geismar suggests due to Twain’s willingness to manufacture “humor” through dehumanizing Native Americans.

Denton draws her conclusions from Twain’s declaration in the 1881 speech, “My first American ancestor, gentlemen, was an Indian—an early Indian. Your ancestors skinned him alive, and I am an orphan” (*MTS* 20). Any construction of Twain’s claim as literal would be fallacious; his genealogy is not known to include any actual Native Americans. The address, therefore, must be taken as satire, a rhetorical pose amply illustrated by the entirety of the speech, rather than taking Twain’s claim to brotherhood with Native Americans at face value. It is true that his “joke” that the ancestors of his audience “skinned” the “early Indian [...] alive” can be viewed as an acknowledgement of white mistreatment of the continent’s original inhabitants. However, Twain goes on to elaborate:

They skinned him! I do not object to that, if they needed his fur; but alive, gentlemen—alive! They skinned him alive—and before company! That

is what rankles. Think how he must have felt; for he was a sensitive person and easily embarrassed. If he had been a bird, it would have been all right, and no violence done to his feelings, because he would have been considered “dressed.” But he was not a bird, gentlemen, he was a man, and probably one of the most undressed men that ever was. (*MTS* 20)

Making this sort of “humor” from fictional murder by sadistic mutilation hardly constitutes “decisive rejection” of antipathy toward Native Americans on Twain’s part in the manner that Denton claims (3), and minimizes the genocide that early New England settlers actually committed against the region’s original people such as the Pequots (Grandjean 384-85).

While a parallel between Twain’s speech and Jonathan Swift’s classic satire advocating the preparation of Irish babies for the English table could be argued, an underlying attitude of disparagement of Native Americans remains evident throughout the “skinning” passage. Twain simultaneously labels Native Americans as uncivilized Others by mocking their lack of clothing and dehumanizes them by suggesting that they could have been “dressed” like a bird prepared for roasting. Dehumanization is also suggested by his quip that skinning a Native American would have been acceptable if, like an animal, “they needed his fur.” Twain’s assertion that the ancestral “Indian [...] was not a bird, gentlemen, he was a man” might be viewed as countering the dehumanization evident in the preceding sentences, but even conceiving that a Native American might acceptably be roasted or “skinned” for “his fur” suggests a level of dehumanization too basic to be denied: a conviction that the people who ambushed Twain’s ancestors were animals, not people.

Writing in the prestigious *American Literature* three years later, in 1975, Harris's review of Twain's attitude toward Native Americans speaks back to Foner, Geismar, and Hanson's revisionist rehabilitations of Twain's reputation. She begins, "Mark Twain has been called the 'champion of the oppressed,' but when he wrote of the Native American he was unfailingly hostile" (495). Her opinion remains relevant nearly half a century later because she is the critic who comprehensively responded to the emerging revisionists. Subsequent attempts to find redemption for Twain in his swerves toward sympathizing with Native Americans are preemptively refuted by Harris's exhaustive list of Twain's persistent, periodic textual attacks on Native Americans.<sup>20</sup> No more than any author could, Twain couldn't be convincingly progressive one week, month, or year and regressive the next.

Driscoll repeatedly makes this point herself, especially when refuting Geismar, who argues that Twain's placement of "red angels" in *Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven* (1909) "finally exorcised" his "ingrained prejudice about the Indians" (Geismar 285). In response, Driscoll describes Geismar's conclusion as "rendered untenable by his [Twain's] gruesome description of the rape, mutilation, and murder of Minnesota settlers at the hands of Indians in *Letters from the Earth*, composed just months before his death" (MTAI 5). A wide range of textual and contextual evidence instead suggest that "Twain's expressions of sympathy for Indians tend to be discrete, short-lived epiphanies, punctuated by lapses into more regressive modes of thinking," Driscoll asserts. "This incongruity is reflected in the dissonance between Clemens's 1886 letter to Cleveland [protesting the bounty on Apache scalps ...] and the ethnocentric imagery found in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, published three years later" (MTAI 9).



However, there is a difference between Harris's foundational position in 1975 and Driscoll's more contextualized stance, forty-three years later, in 2018.

That difference seems to be that Harris describes Twain's attitude toward Native Americans as "unfailing hostile," while Driscoll suggests that Twain seldom fails to revert to that hostility despite some intriguing temporary retreats from his prejudice. As key evidence for her more sweeping position, Harris points to Twain's habit of using Native Americans as emblems of a "savage" lack of civilization, beginning with Twain's description in *The Innocents Abroad* of Arabs as reminiscent of "Indians" (Harris 472-73) and especially in his "classic" use of them for figuring the Arthurian nobility as "white Indians" in *A Connecticut Yankee* (Harris 500). Twain repeatedly "found the stereotypical Indian a convenient analogy to describe and explain the negative aspects of other peoples and their cultures," Harris asserts. "Evidently finding this technique effective, he was later to use it many times in his fiction" (496). Not every negative reference to Native Americans was to their alleged violence and treachery such as young Twain learned at his mother's knee. Yet Twain's use of Native Americans as a "convenient analogy" for disparaging Others certainly demonstrates the sort of extreme antipathy that his mother's stories of frontier violence apparently generated in the author.

Driscoll's contribution to Harris's position is Driscoll's focus on the effect of the Montgomery's Station attack and his mother's stories about it. Driscoll traces Twain's awareness of the Sioux attack on a Minnesota family to Dodge's third-hand mention of it in *The Plains of North America*, published in 1877—but Twain didn't include it in a book until his *Letters from the Earth*, completed but not published in 1909. Because Twain's account of the Minnesota massacre "is not a verbatim extract from Dodge but an

impressionistic re-creation more than a quarter century later,” Driscoll supposes that when Twain first read about the Minnesota attack, “its iconic qualities—unsuspecting settlers beset at daybreak inside the security of their home—likely reminded him of Jane Clemens’s harrowing tale of the Montgomery Massacre [...] suggesting that its horrors were deeply imprinted in his memory” (*MTAI* 357). Thus, once again, thanks to the long-lasting effects of his mother’s dramatic stories, Twain used Native Americans as a comparative, this time against divine injustice, Harris points out: “Twain expressed his rage against a God who allowed men to perpetrate such horrors by declaring Him worse than the Indian” (504).

Furthermore, many of Twain’s “depictions of [Native Americans] and allusions to their qualities assumed a common knowledge of their cultural degradation” in ways that directly figure Native Americans as violent, Harris suggests (499). For instance, in *Huckleberry Finn*, Twain “could convey the lack of intelligent control in either a drunken man or an excited mob by comparing either to an Indian,” she points out (500). “Boggs [...] was ‘whooping and yelling like an Injun’; the mob of people swarming along to lynch Col. Sherburn were ‘a-whooping and raging like Injuns’” (*HF* 156, 161).<sup>21</sup> As Harris concludes (502), Twain continues to employ the stereotype for comparative purposes clear into his final years, using it in his short story “A Horse’s Tale” (1906), written only a year before Twain purportedly “idealize[s]” Native Americans in *Stormfield’s Visit*, according to Denton’s view (Denton 1, 3). “A Horse’s Tale” includes Twain emphasizing “the small white girl Cathy’s kindness to animals by contrasting it with the Indian boys’ delight in cuffing and torturing them,” Harris points out (502).

Likewise, in “To the Person Sitting in Darkness” (1901), Twain’s polemic published in the *North American Review* only five years before “A Horse’s Tale,” Harris notes that “[w]hen Twain wanted to stress the cruelty of the missionaries to the Chinese, he compared them to the Pawnees, to whom he gave credit for originality in America” (502). “To the Person” is one more example of Twain using Native Americans for comparative purposes as stereotypically ultimate in savagery, Harris suggests. But “To the Person” is also one more example of Twain using Native Americans to condemn European Americans for behaving like the Cherokees and Shawnees who fatally ambushed his ancestors and otherwise attacked whites in a seemingly random way from the viewpoint of European American settlers in the Upper South. As Twain writes in “To the Person,” satirically quoting a non-existent “Macallum’s History” and figuring the Chinese as “white Boxer[s]” and the American missionary as “Pawnees”:

When a white Boxer kills a Pawnee and destroys his property, the other Pawnees do not trouble to seek *him* out, they kill any white person that comes along; also, they make some white village pay deceased’s heirs the full cash value of deceased, together with full cash value of the property destroyed; they also make the village pay, in addition, *thirteen times* the value of that property into a fund for the dissemination of the Pawnee religion, which they consider the best of all religions for the softening and humanizing of the heart of man. It is their idea that it is only fair and right that the innocent should be made to suffer for the guilty, and that it is better that ninety and nine innocent should suffer than that one guilty person should escape. (“To the Person” 7-8)

Twain's tongue-in-cheek, purported historical excerpt is worth quoting at length because it illustrates exactly his definition of "savage" behavior that, thanks to his mother's stories of frontier violence and Dodge's books about the Great Plains and their inhabitants, Twain attributes first and foremost to Native Americans. Central to Twain's definition of barbarity is how randomly the miscreant missionaries, whom Twain describes as "Pawnees," select the targets of their retribution.

### **Further Critical Use of "Selective Evidence" to Demonstrate Purported Softening of Twain's Antipathy**

Some Twain texts involving Native Americans also could be taken opposing ways, depending on whether or not the critic perceives Twain's perpetuation of a negative Native American stereotype underlying an apparent softening of Twain's antipathy toward Native Americans. The stereotype undercuts the purported softening, of course. *Stormfield's Visit* is a prime example of a possible attitude improvement by Twain that cannot avoid showing the underlying stereotype. In *Stormfield's Visit*, first published serially six years later than "To the Person,"<sup>22</sup> Twain seemingly moderates his antipathy toward Native Americans, both Denton and McNutt suggest, following Geismar. The seeming moderation is deceptive, however. McNutt, writing in *American Indian Quarterly*, focuses on Twain's different rhetorical emphases in his descriptions in 1869 of grieving Paiutes in *The Innocents Abroad* and forty years later in *Stormfield's Visit*. In *Innocents*, Twain identifies the Paiutes as "degraded savages" but in *Stormfield*, he describes an individual Paiute whom he meets in Heaven as "a mighty good fellow," as McNutt notes (223). The visiting captain claims he was "glad to see" the Paiute and

“felt that I was in the right kind of a heaven at last” (*CSVH* 573). Nevertheless, the underlying stereotypes in the two passages are evident, as the following excerpts demonstrate. In *Innocents*, Twain states that “the Diggers” or Paiutes “roast their dead relatives, then mix the human grease and ashes of bones with tar and ‘gaum’ it thick all over their heads and foreheads and ears, and go caterwauling about the hills and call it *mourning*” (*IA* 205). In *Stormfield*, Twain remembers attending the funeral of the “Pi Ute Injun [...] which consisted of him being burnt, and the other Injuns gauming their faces with his ashes and howling like wildcats” (*CSVH* 573). McNutt asserts that the “two passages differ enormously in presentation and tone” partly because the “more explicit details – ‘roast,’ ‘human grease,’ ‘bones,’ and ‘tar’ – of *Innocents Abroad* have been omitted” (223). Yet both descriptions self-evidently place the alleged funeral practices of Paiutes outside the bounds of European American propriety and squarely in the category of the savagery of Others. The toning down in *Stormfield’s Visit* does not change Twain’s core antipathy toward Native Americans, forged in his mother’s stories about their “savage” Otherness in the frontier Upper South.<sup>23</sup>

Denton’s claim that Twain “idealize[s]” Native Americans in *Stormfield’s Visit* is based on Twain’s picture of the American sector of Heaven being primarily inhabited by a “few hundred thousand billions of red angels, with now and then a curiously complected *diseased* one,” meaning European and African Americans. Scholarly visitors to the sector “think we whites and the occasional nigger are Injuns that have been bleached out or blackened by some leprous disease or other,” Capt. Stormfield reports (*CSVH* 592). The reason for the Native American majority, a veteran resident of Heaven explains to Stormfield, is that “Injuns and Aztecs, and that sort of folks” had occupied

America “a billion years and more [...] before a white man ever set his foot in it” (*CSVH* 591). Thus, Twain does acknowledge in *Stormfield’s Visit* that Native Americans held precedent residence on the lands of his country, but this implicit admission is as far as he goes toward any self-evident moderation of his antipathy toward those same Native Americans. Twain’s emphasis appears to be on the longevity of Native Americans’ residence in the Americas rather than any innate goodness which admission to Heaven, by definition, implies. Twain has not suddenly converted to a Noble Red Man believer, or at least, Twain offers no explicit affirmation of Native American goodness in *Stormfield’s Visit* except for Stormfield’s previously mentioned claim that the one Paiute he meets is “a mighty good fellow” (*CSVH* 573). Instead, Twain does have the cacophony of amateur harp players in Heaven worsened by a plethora of “Injun tribes” that “kept up such another war-whooping that they kind of took the tuck out of the music” (*CSVH* 574).

The novella achieves its humor and insights by deconstructing conventional ideas about the nature of Heaven current in Twain’s time, and those included the preconception that white racial hegemony would persist in Heaven as it did in the late nineteenth-century United States. In the same manner that Twain tests, and finds wanting, the notion that people-turned-angels would be happy endlessly playing harps and wearing wings, he simply takes a literal look at the ethnic ratio that might actually constitute Heaven’s population—albeit with a touch of literary license.<sup>24</sup> Twain also deflates the presumptions of European Americans in the passage, quoting Capt. Stormfield’s informant Sandy McWilliams as pronouncing that “[i]t is a mighty sour pill for us all, my friend” (*CSVH* 592) that post-Columbian inhabitants of North America constitute a tiny

majority in Heaven. However, Twain's deflation of his contemporaries' presumptions does not necessarily imply that in *Stormfield's Visit* Twain "wholly renounces the prejudice" against Native Americans "so characteristic of [...his] colorful writings of the Nevada days," as Denton suggests, or that "[i]n effect, Twain here categorically rejects white American and European civilizations in favor of the innate goodness of the original inhabitants of the continent (before the corrupting influence of outsiders affected the Indians)" (Denton 3). Nothing in *Stormfield's Visit* justifies these conclusions.

Yet another critic who begins an essay by rapidly identifying Twain texts adverse to Native Americans and then by seizing selectively on limited evidence "to absolve Twain from the charge of racism," as Driscoll puts it (*MTAI* 5), is David L. Newquist. Beginning his 1994 essay "Mark Twain among the Indians" by suggesting that in *Tom Sawyer*, Injun Joe exhibits "a depravity of character which resonates with racial attitudes from the frontier" (59), Newquist attributes Twain's antipathy to Native Americans to "his early encounters with them and their *general reputations*" (71, emphasis added). Newquist suggests that these "general reputations" were formed by such conflicts with Native Americans during Twain's lifetime as "the Sioux uprising of the early 1860s and the Battle of Little Big Horn, for which Brevet General George Custer was a tragic hero in the popular mind," and he adds that the Oglala Sioux tribe "had earned a reputation for prosecuting its claim on the land with ferocity" (69). Certainly, Twain drew on these events and reputations: the uprising in 1862 is the topic of the mutilation, rape, and murder passage in *Letters from the Earth*, and the alleged treachery and ferocity of the Oglalas forms the theme of "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians." Additionally, Newquist acknowledges that land confiscation was central to the ongoing

conflict between Native and European Americans in Twain's time when he comments that Huck's decision to "light out for the Territory ahead of the rest" (*HF* 296) implies that Huck "is headed to the Territory to participate in the dispossession of the American Indians" (59). Yet Newquist, like most other Twain scholars, does not focus closely on the role that the centuries-long history of Native American resistance to land confiscation played in shaping the cultural attitudes of European Americans toward Native Americans, that this history began long before Twain's lifetime, and that Twain was told as a child about its deadly impact on his own family.

Newquist convincingly identifies the power of prevailing cultural attitudes among whites toward Native Americans, and he reiterates the litany of Twain's literary attacks on them.<sup>25</sup> But the influences on Twain that Newquist identifies simply do not plausibly suffice to explain the "near-bitterness" that Newquist suggests these influences "inspired" in Twain (71). "Near-bitterness" has a connotation of extreme feeling seldom generated by mere "general reputations" that, in the case of other ethnic groups, were the basis of cultural prejudices that Twain evidently rose above, as Newquist points out:

The starkly negative comments and portrayals regarding American Indians in Twain's work seem to contradict his elaborate exposures and satires concerning the injustices and prejudice faced by blacks, Jews, Chinese, and others. (65)

Nor, in his "early encounters" with Native Americans, was Twain himself ever directly imperiled by them in the way he repeatedly portrays Native Americans in his writings to an extent that might generate "near-bitterness" in his attitudes toward them. However, Twain's family history of victimization by Native American violence, narrated



dramatically to him at a young age by his own mother, might plausibly generate “near-bitterness” in him, indeed.

The selective evidence that Newquist ultimately seizes on to demonstrate Twain’s alleged moderation, post-1870s, of his antipathy toward Native Americans is Twain’s inclusion in *Life on the Mississippi*, near the end of the book, of two Native American legends (*LM* 483-85, 515-27). Twain treats the two legends with a degree of respect that Newquist interprets as transcendence of his prejudices—or, as Newquist hints early in his essay, at least a “mitigation” of that antipathy.<sup>26</sup> Twain, given to quoting extensively from outside sources to pad his sold-by-subscription travel narratives, required by their nature to be bulky, just as likely was trying to fill space—even by cultural appropriation. Newquist also notes that Twain commends the second legend that he reprints in *Life on the Mississippi*, “The Undying Head,” by remarking upon several of its features that mitigate “what it lacks in brevity,” including “weird conceits, fairy-tale prodigies, variety of incident, and energy of movement” (*LM* 485). Yet Twain does not go on to assess whether all these characteristics are positive or whether some may carry negative connotations: “He makes no further comment; just offers it for the reader’s consideration,” Newquist describes.<sup>27</sup> The paucity of “further comment” that Newquist notes hardly constitutes a ringing endorsement of Native American literature that Newquist perceives: “It was in their literature that he found his greatest appreciation” of Native Americans, and it was their literature through which he entered their point of view and appears to have been beguiled” (71). Twain achieving his “greatest appreciation” of people whom he views with “near-bitterness,” as Newquist puts it in the same paragraph, may not have ever been a significantly great “appreciation,” however.

Instead, a palimpsest of images suggesting the ambivalence and cultural appropriation of the colonizer can be perceived in the monologue that a verbose self-appointed travel guide delivers immediately prior to Twain's first reprinting of a Native American legend in *Life on the Mississippi*:

[...] anon we see bursting upon us the domes and steeples of St. Paul, giant young chief of the North, marching with seven-league stride in the van of progress, banner-bearer of the highest and newest civilization, carving his beneficent way with the tomahawk of commercial enterprise, sounding the war-whoop of Christian culture, tearing off the reeking scalp of sloth and superstition to plant there the steam-plow and the schoolhouse [...] (LM 480)

Twain is having fun mixing metaphors shamelessly in this passage, an apparent but ambiguous lampoon of Col. Sellers-style boosterism and American exceptionalism, but beneath the humor can be seen numerous negative images of Native Americans – “the tomahawk,” “the war-whoop” and the “scalp” which is “reeking [...] of sloth and superstition” – all phrases being employed by a European American to celebrate civilization, the opposite of stereotypical “savagery.” Civilization's purported elements include “beneficent [...] commercial enterprise,” “Christian culture” as disseminated in “the schoolhouse,” and the nineteenth century's new industrial-agrarian complex represented by “the steam-plow.” Twain's verbose St. Paul booster can be interpreted various ways: as a boosterish purveyor of clichés; as unconsciously critiquing the advance of “civilization” as savage in its own methods; or as representing Twain's own considerable faith in invention and technology that later emerges in the words and deeds

of Hank Morgan in *A Connecticut Yankee*.<sup>28</sup> Yet the writer who places such stereotypically negative phrases about Native Americans in his character's description of St. Paul seems unlikely, as Newquist suggests, to have "entered their point of view and [...] been beguiled" by Native Americans (71). Instead, the booster's use of Native American metaphors for European Americans' pursuit of their own ideals and goals seemingly grants European Americans a higher moral status because their ends justify their means and even their means are justifiable: their "tomahawk" is "beneficent."

Waxing metaphysical, Newquist explicitly suggests in his conclusion that Twain admits Native Americans into a universal fraternity of letters by reprinting the two Native American legends in *Life on the Mississippi*:

Ultimately, Twain was a literary man, and literature moved him to a higher plane of human perception [...]. Just like Huck Finn led our literature to a higher plane of human perception, a few Indian tales seem to have done that for Twain. (71)

The problem with this conclusion is that if Twain suddenly views Native Americans as civilized legend-tellers in 1883 when *Life on the Mississippi* was published, he still has a lot of antipathy to vent against them in the years to come.<sup>29</sup> Twain penned "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians," about the implied gang rape of Peggy Mills following the Oglalas' slaughter of her parents who befriended them, only two years after he supposedly places Native Americans on a "higher plane of human perception" in *Life on the Mississippi*, according to Newquist (71). Twenty-five years later in *Letters*, in 1909, Twain still views Native Americans as the perfect modern example of perpetrating

the kind of random cruelty that God ordered the Old Testament Hebrews to inflict upon the Midianites.

### **Twain's "Final Solution" May Not Have Been a Mere "Modest Proposal"**

The entire question of how to interpret Twain's apparent advocacy of "exterminating" Native Americans has drawn differing interpretations from scholars and critics as well. Harris notes in response to "The Noble Red Man" that Sydney J. Krause "insists that Twain's proposal 'is no more to be taken seriously than in Swift's 'Modest Proposal'" (Harris 497). Prior to making the claim that Harris quotes, Krause asserts that Twain suggests a "Final Solution to the Indian Problem"—Krause's words, unfortunately evoking the Holocaust—as an artful rhetorical device, "as a foil to the equivalent hyperbole of the humanitarians and romantics" who extend undue sympathy to Native Americans by naively viewing them as abused, innocent children of the forest. Krause adds that he perceives "irony" in Twain proposing "extermination [...] in a form that understates his overstated meaning [and] is but further evidence of the Swiftian complexity of his exaggeration" (Krause 139).

Perhaps, but Harris convincingly responds to Krause's interpretation by considering Twain's modest proposal in terms of its potential effect in the context of the nineteenth-century United States: "Although it may be conceded that Twain was not [...] serious in proposing that the Indian be exterminated, the ultimate result of his efforts, if successful, would have removed one of the few impediments to genocide of the Indian," the popular concept of the Native Americans' humanity as the "Noble Red Man" (Harris 497). As she significantly suggests:

To oversimplify Twain's response to the Native American tribes [...] may be to ignore the relationship between Twain's literary insistence on the inferiority of the Indian and the nation's need to mythologize extermination of the natives and seizure of their homelands as an admirable part of the "pioneer struggle." (495)

Harris cites the renowned Twain scholar Louis J. Budd as one of the critics who has discerned a late-life moderation of Twain's antipathy toward Native Americans (Harris 495 n. 3), but even Budd's description of Twain's alleged moderation does not evince a very significant moderation, if any. Budd notes that Twain unsuccessfully sought the chance to advise the newly elected Rutherford B. Hayes that *Our Wild Indians* author Dodge "should head up the Indian Department because of his 'humanity'—which opposed the white grafters on the reservations yet favored having the army teach the red man to expect swift punishment for any nonsense" (67). Dodge's position, accurately summarized by Budd, is foreshadowed of course by Twain's earlier statement of satisfaction that "the inquiry has always got to come *after* the good officer has administered his little admonishment" ("NRM" [429]). Combined, Twain's and Dodge's positions stand squarely in support of "the nation's need to mythologize extermination of the natives and seizure of their homelands," as Harris suggests, above.

### **Hypothesized "Racial Pattern" Ignores Twain's Oral Legacy**

The scholarship that diverges the most from the trend of establishing Twain's early antipathy toward Native Americans and then perceiving moderation of that antipathy in his later years is that of Coulombe. He proposes a four-stage "racial pattern"

in Twain's writing sequentially involving "neutral association, sympathetic identification, vestigial prejudice, and emotional abandonment" toward Native Americans and all other peoples of color (272). Coulombe suggests the same pattern can be seen in Twain's attitude toward African Americans in the text of *Huckleberry Finn*, contradicting the opinion of numerous other critics that, for his time, Twain was remarkably sympathetic to African Americans. In essence, Coulombe argues that Twain's ultimate antipathy toward Native Americans was nothing unusual for him but merely represents his overall "racial pattern" of classifying all persons of non-European descent as Other.

Coulombe begins by suggesting that Twain's early journalistic writing in Nevada in 1862 indicates a "neutral association" with or indifference to Native Americans because Twain's reporting is "more factual than otherwise" (272). According to Coulombe, Twain only disparages them by labeling them "uncivilized pirates" in one article and "chooses the oft-used term 'savages'" in another news item, both of which deal with Native American attacks on wagon trains. Although the terms "uncivilized" and "savage" both participate in the prevailing European American ethic of condemning Native Americans as Others who randomly attack whites offensively rather than in justified defense of their land, Coulombe observes that Twain's use of the terms "does not come close to embodying the irritation of his 1870s writings" (273). However, Twain's rhetorical purpose in his early correspondence involving Native Americans was reporting the news, not commenting on it other than by referencing commonplace derogatory labels for Native Americans. As Coulombe admits, "he wrote of them in a conventionally reportorial vein" (273). Unstated is the fact that initially, the cub reporter Twain had not attained the clout at the *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise* that later gave

him considerable free rein in commenting on the news and even perpetrating journalistic hoaxes.

Once Twain obtained greater free sway, however, the early writings that Coulombe quotes do not necessarily seem to “come across as quite sympathetic” to Native Americans, as Coulombe suggests (265). For instance, Twain reports in the “Local Column” that Native Americans became infected with smallpox after scavenging a shirt from diseased whites. Twain editorializes that the infection must have been accidental because he doesn’t believe “any man” would “maliciously” leave a contaminated garment “where these poor devils can get hold of it,” although he does identify such “careless[ness]” as “censurable,”<sup>30</sup> and Coulombe admits that “[u]se of the somewhat condescending phrase, ‘poor devils,’ incriminates Twain” (265). But Coulombe argues that, in effect, Twain takes their side in the “local” item, notwithstanding the fact that Twain whitewashes the possible intentional culpability of European Americans in the Native Americans’ infection.

Certainly, very little “sympathetic identification” with Native Americans can be seen in Twain’s descriptions of Gosiutes in *Roughing It* (1: 131-35), and Coulombe does not claim that it can be seen. In fact, he acknowledges that in *Roughing It* and in Twain’s “Noble Red Man” essay that preceded *Roughing It* by a year, “Twain’s vitriol extended beyond that required to refute romantic ideals” (262) such as describing Gosiutes as “the wretchedest type of mankind” (*RI* 1: 131). However, even in Twain’s 1862 sketch about the “Pah-Ute” pioneers, meaning the earliest of Anglo American settlers in Nevada instead of actual Paiutes, Coulombe perceives a key substantive difference between the portrayed settlers and actual Native Americans:

The complex intermingling of white men and American Indians failed to obscure the primary focus of Western men—financial opportunity. Rather than seeking freedom or fun, the immigrants “knocked at the doors” of the “treasure vaults.” Too often, the vaults remained “sealed,” the wealth beyond their grasp. Yet if Twain and the other white men occupied a marginal or peripheral space in the West, they also hoped—and could hope—to join a culture that systematically excluded (or simply exterminated) American Indians. (270)

As Coulombe suggests, Twain’s loyalties ultimately lie with European Americans. They do not lie with the Native Americans who blocked access to the “treasure vaults” that in Nevada were silver veins but in the frontier Upper South of his ancestors were tracts of arable land.

Coulombe posits a similar “racial pattern” of sequential emotional responses to African Americans in *Huckleberry Finn*, so he abandons his analysis of Twain’s attitudes toward Native Americans quite early in Twain’s literary career. His discussion of the novel focuses on Twain’s attitudes toward African Americans, not Native Americans.<sup>31</sup> In addition, Coulombe’s interpretation of the “racial pattern” in *Huckleberry Finn* itself is flawed. As critics have long noted, “sympathetic identification” with Jim abounds in the novel as Huck comes slowly to understand that if Jim is representative of his race, African Americans feel strong positive emotions, care for their families and, in short, are human. Huck even famously decides to “go to hell” (*HF* 223) rather than betray his friend and surrogate father. But persistent criticism also insists that in the novel’s final chapters, Twain minstrelizes Jim on behalf of literary parody.<sup>32</sup> The validity of this point



does not exclude the previously mentioned possibility that Twain consciously or subconsciously penned the final chapters as an allegory for the farce of Reconstruction that by 1885 had only yielded continued subjugation for African Americans in the South.<sup>33</sup> Coulombe attempts to dismiss this theory by quoting Bernard DeVoto's revelation<sup>34</sup> that Twain considered ending the novel by having Tom, Huck, and Jim ramble around on an elephant, asserting:

If Twain had really envisioned the final chapters as an ironic re-creation of Reconstruction, it seems doubtful that Jim would have been included in the absurd lark of destroying the Southern country-side on an elephant. (Rather, he probably would have lived under continued oppression.) (276)

This argument is fallacious on two counts. One is that the elephant ending is not the only one Twain considered, and rejected, for *Huckleberry Finn*.<sup>35</sup> But the other problem is that Twain did not write any of the alternative endings that he considered. He wrote the ending that he published, in which Twain has Jim live “under continued oppression” for several chapters, a “free nigger” (*HF* 292) still being treated like an enslaved one—in short, “an ironic re-creation of Reconstruction.”

The limited validity of the “racial pattern” that Coulombe perceives in *Huckleberry Finn* applies to the present discussion by speaking to whether Twain was exceptionally prejudiced against Native Americans by comparison with African Americans. However, the “anti-racism” against African Americans that David L. Smith sees in the novel (4), and that Jocelyn Chadwick-Joshua sees in the novel, Twain's own life, and his other writings throughout her book-length study *The Jim Dilemma* (1998), points to the divergence of Twain's antipathy toward Native Americans and his sympathy

for African Americans. This divergence minimalizes rather than substantiates any similarities between Twain's attitudes toward the two ethnic groups. Far more common among scholars is the assertion that Twain did manifest an antipathy toward Native Americans that was both exceptional and at variance with his usual "racial pattern" of sympathy for oppressed non-whites, and that he moderated his antipathy in his later years.

### **Unsupported or Insufficiently Supported Hypotheses about Twain's (Lack of) Reaction to Wounded Knee**

A representative and relatively recent sample of the scholarly effort to cleanse Twain's reputation of antipathy to Native Americans is Michelle Abate's 2010 suggestion in *American Literary Realism* that the title of his story fragment "Hellfire Hotchkiss" (1897, 1967) somehow implies a sympathy for Native American victims of genocide. Abate perceives a connection between the title character's name in the 1897 fragment which was not published until 1967 (115, 119) and the use of Hotchkiss machine guns by the United States Cavalry to massacre "around three hundred" Lakota men, women, and children at Wounded Knee (115, 118-20).

Her evidence for a connection is intriguing but largely circumstantial, however, and does not convincingly demonstrate that Twain seized upon the surname Hotchkiss to denounce rather than approve of or ignore the events at Wounded Knee on Dec. 29, 1890 (Brown 419). Twain may indeed have selected "Hotchkiss" for his protagonist's name from the national atmosphere in which that type of machine gun maintained a persistent presence in the news, popular culture, and political discourse, as Abate asserts. But that

possible influence on Twain's name selection process, taken by itself, neither offers any evidence to suggest sympathy or antipathy toward Native Americans nor approval or disapproval of the Wounded Knee massacre. Abate reports that initially the shooters who fired the Hotchkisses at Wounded Knee were awarded Congressional Medals of Honor, twenty in all, and only later did severely dissenting, critical reports of the genocide come to the surface and sway public opinion (116). But was Twain among the citizens whose opinion was swayed? No documented evidence says so.

Furthermore, Abate may be utterly correct in suggesting Twain was influenced consciously or subconsciously to choose "Hotchkiss" as his protagonist's name by its persistent presence in the cultural atmosphere around him, but the 1897 story fragment is not his first use of the name for a character. In *Huckleberry Finn*, published twelve years earlier than Twain composed "Hellfire Hotchkiss," an "Old Mrs. Hotchkiss" appears among the neighbors who flock to Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas Phelps's house after Tom is shot. Huck mentions "Old Mrs." or "sister" Hotchkiss by name in the scene not once but thrice.<sup>36</sup> Her appearance in *Huckleberry* casts a shadow of doubt on Abate's suggestion that the Hotchkiss machine guns at Wounded Knee were Twain's source of Hellfire's surname.

Even if the guns actually were Twain's source for Hellfire's surname, Abate's evidence that it indicates Twain's underlying sympathy with Native Americans flies in the face of Driscoll's documentation of Twain's reluctance to participate more than once in supporting the Connecticut Indian Association, a "grassroots native rights advocacy organization" ("Man Factories" 15) which was supported by the sort of "sappy women" Twain denounces as overly sympathetic to Injun Joe in *Tom Sawyer* (269-70), as Driscoll

points out.<sup>37</sup> Possibly adding even more to the “social discomfort” Twain felt around the emerging association sympathetic to Native Americans in 1880s Hartford, Driscoll suggests, was the membership list of its advisory board “comprised of fifteen prominent local clergymen, politicians, and businessmen, some of whom—like the Reverend Joseph Twichell and Hartford *Daily Courant* editor Charles Dudley Warner—Mark Twain numbered among his dearest friends” (“Man Factories” 15-16). To persist in being at best apathetic to Native Americans, or even to maintain his antipathy toward them that he had previously expressed repeatedly, Twain found himself in the position of opposing the sympathetic stand taken by the local social and literary elite to which he had come to belong.

Yet Driscoll convincingly asserts that Twain did oppose the elite by only participating once in any event benefitting the Connecticut Indian Association, as a platform guest at a Chauncey Depew lecture in Hartford in 1885. Driscoll further cites Twain’s replies to two letters from Sara Thomson Kinney, “the association’s president for over thirty years,” in 1889 (“Man Factories” 16). Those replies are decidedly unsympathetic in the sense that Twain “graciously but firmly declines whatever it is she has asked of him” (“Man Factories” 20). Featuring such colorfully evasive language as “The Injun has lost a friend; but it was so ordained” and “Thou knowest I am a shirk. Never never shall reform, I do believe,”<sup>38</sup> Twain’s replies fail to indicate that he would have had any predisposition to take the Native American view of Wounded Knee. Twain’s second refusal of Kinney’s solicitations and his completion of *Connecticut Yankee*<sup>39</sup> came in fairly close proximity in time to the actual massacre at Wounded Knee in December, 1890, approximately fifteen months afterward. By chronology alone, the

antipathy toward Native Americans that pervades Twain's replies to Kinney as well as *Connecticut Yankee* implies a differing interpretation of "Hellfire Hotchkiss" than Abate suggests. However, Driscoll marshals additional circumstantial and epistolary evidence that Twain considered but declined to participate in an "unspecified event" on behalf of the Women's National Indian Association in Washington, D.C., in early 1891 soon after Wounded Knee, phrasing his demurral with friendly "fervor," as Driscoll phrases it.<sup>40</sup> But again, the possibility he was outraged by the genocidal attack on the Lakota<sup>41</sup> is "purely—though compellingly—speculative," Driscoll acknowledges, "since Twain never explicitly mentions Wounded Knee in either his published works or personal correspondence" (*MTAI* 264).

Twain's lack of public or private response to Wounded Knee could just as easily be interpreted as his continued disinterest in defending the Native Americans whom he had been taught at his mother's knee to loathe, since other injustices had ignited and would continue to ignite Twain's pen, but Wounded Knee did not. Without further evidence, it's impossible to know whether he privately condemned the attacks or rationalized the mass killings. However, Driscoll goes on to note that in Twain's next book, *The American Claimant* (1892), Col. Sellers invents a materialization machine to resurrect "legions" of classic Greek and Roman warriors to provide the United States government with "soldiers that will chase Indians year in and year out on materialized horses, and cost never a cent for rations or repairs" (*AC* 29). In other words, Sellers proposes "a commercial enterprise that will perpetuate the US Army's genocidal war against Indians," Driscoll notes (*MTAI* 264)—hardly a ringing condemnation on Twain's part of Wounded Knee-like "battles."

### **A Problem with Reading Sympathy for Aboriginals and Maoris as Sympathy for Native Americans**

A continued problem with a lack of evidence – and with attempts to discern sympathy for Native Americans where Twain has expressed none – can be seen in Abate's attempts to find that sympathy in Twain's defense, in *Following the Equator* (1897), of oppressed natives in the southwest Pacific, including greater Australia (Abate 123-24). Pacific Islanders, Aboriginals, and Tasmanians are not Native Americans, and Abate overlooks Twain's silence, in the same book, about any explicit parallels between the United States' mistreatment of Native Americans and their mistreatment by European imperial powers and settlers in the southwest Pacific.

Abate presents Twain's horrified response to some of the white colonists' ghastly actions against indigenous peoples that he describes in the book as indicative of newfound sympathy on his part for indigenous peoples. She particularly highlights Twain's tale of a "white Australian squatter who obtained his land by offering the local [A]borigines a Christmas present of bread pudding that 'had been sweetened with sugar and arsenic.'"<sup>42</sup> Twain condemns this genocide by satirically pretending to praise it, in the manner of Jonathan Swift, as only objectionable for massacring indigenous peoples too blatantly: "The white man's spirit was right, but his method was wrong [...] Its unusual nature makes it stand out and attract an amount of attention which it is not entitled to" (*FTE* 1: 189). Among the lower-profile methods of exterminating native peoples that Twain claims "custom has inured us to" are that

[i]n many countries we have taken the savage's land from him, and made him our slave, and lashed him every day, and broken his pride, and made death his only friend, and overworked him till he dropped in his tracks; [...] yet a quick death by poison is loving-kindness to it. (*FTE* 1: 190)

However, except for the confiscation of “the savage’s land,” this sentence could apply most readily in the United States to the history of African Americans rather than that of Native Americans, who refused to be enslaved even as they were systematically killed and pushed westward acre by acre. In fact, Driscoll suggests that the Aboriginals’ greater physical resemblance to African Americans than to Native Americans “disrupt[ed] the familiar binaries of native and black” for Twain so that “[t]he sympathy Clemens expresses for Australia’s indigenous peoples may thus be unconsciously rooted in a compassionate view of African Americans.”<sup>43</sup> Such sympathy also could be applied almost anywhere in the colonial world of Twain’s time, incorporating by universalism the indigenous peoples of the United States among the world’s victimized “savages.” But in only one place does Twain make any sort of direct comparison between Native Americans and the exploited and even exterminated “savages” of the southern hemisphere, cryptically observing, “Fenimore Cooper lost his chance. He would have known how to value these people [Aboriginals]. He wouldn’t have traded the dullest of them for the brightest Mohawk he ever invented” (*FTE* 1: 198).

However, Twain’s once again mocking Cooper’s figure of the “noble red man” does not conceivably constitute acknowledgement of white inhumanity to Native Americans in the United States. It provides only a slender thread of connection, bestowing mutual status as Others for aborigines and Native Americans in the eyes of

whites, with Native Americans compared negatively to Aborigines. The question therefore remains, what is signified by Twain's silence on the applicability of his criticism of colonial exploitation and genocide to the United States? Abate interprets Twain's critique of colonialism abroad in *Following the Equator* as evidence he "altered his opinion about American Indians later in life" (123). But silence can mean anything a critic wants it to mean since it explicitly signifies nothing. It is equally possible to view Twain's failure to compare the treatment of southwest Pacific peoples with the oppression of Native Americans as a continuation of his substantial antipathy toward Native Americans in his earlier writings. For example, Twain precedes his poisoning story with the following description of Aborigines that reiterates the primary rationalization used by whites to seize indigenous lands due to the alleged deficiency in work ethic and agrarianism of non-white peoples:

They were lazy—always lazy. Perhaps that was their trouble. It is a killing defect. Surely, they could have invented and built a competent house, but they didn't. And they could have invented and developed the agricultural arts, but they didn't. They went naked and houseless, and lived on fish and grubs and worms and wild fruits, and were just plain savages, for all their smartness. (*FTE* 1: 185)

This is, of course, the sort of rationalization Twain also employs in *Roughing It* to denigrate Gosiutes. Twain's reference to the "smartness" of Aborigines reflects his appreciation that they invented the boomerang and were excellent trackers (*FTE* 1: 183-85), and a few pages later he concedes that "[w]ithin certain limits this savage's intellect is the alertest and brightest known to history or tradition," but then he goes on to ponder



that “yet the poor creature was never able to invent a counting system that would reach above five, nor a vessel that he could boil water in.” Finally, in the very next sentence after Twain scoffs at the limited accomplishments of Aboriginals from a white viewpoint, he invokes the trope of inevitable extinction of the non-white “savage”: “To all intents and purposes he is dead—in the body; but he has features that will live in literature” (*FTE* 1: 195). Such passages simply fail to unambiguously support Abate’s suggestion that “[w]hereas Twain had previously advocated for the inferiority of indigenous peoples, he was now [...] aware of the false and propagandistic nature of such sentiments” (123), or to demonstrate that Twain’s alleged newfound awareness extended to Native Americans.

Even the chapter in *Following the Equator* that praises Britain’s treatment of the Maoris of New Zealand exhibits a lack of comparison with European Americans’ treatment of Native Americans that is, indeed, notable for its absence.<sup>44</sup> Twain praises the Maoris as “a superior breed of savages.” He lists their cultural attributes that “modify their savagery to a semi-civilization—or at least to a quarter-civilization.” These attributes notably include Maori house-building skills, “military arts and devices which so nearly approached the white man’s,” and giving “so much attention to agriculture” (*FTE* 1: 304). A similarly “civilized” people, the Cherokees, could be found in the Upper South where Twain’s immediate ancestors resided. But he does not reference the Cherokees’ death-march removal, despite their degree of “civilization,” westward on the Trail of Tears, even when he goes on to call it “a compliment to” the Maoris that the British “did not exterminate them, as they did the Australians and the Tasmanians.” Twain gives the Maoris’ level of civilization partial credit for their own survival, praising

the British as well for setting limits on their seizures of Maori land in New Zealand, unlike the Indian Removal from the Upper and Middle South that Twain does not mention:

And it is another compliment to them [the Maoris] that the British did not take the whole of their choicest lands, but left a considerable part, and then went farther and protected them from the rapacities of land-sharks—a protection which the New Zealand Government still extends to them[....] It has not been the custom of the world for conquerors to act in this large a spirit toward the conquered. (*FTE* 1: 304)

In this passage, Twain clearly is grappling with indigenous land confiscation, but his conclusion is, once again, the defense of inevitable conquest. If the British had taken the “choicest” Maori lands, they would only have been acting like conquerors throughout history; the theft could stand unchallenged except by any settlers’ conscience pangs induced by the Maori level of “civilization.” In addition, crediting their level of “civilization” for the Maoris not being excessively victimized, but only robbed of *part* of their lands for not being “civilized” enough, simply blames the victims.

The Maoris provide the case history in which Driscoll nearly takes her own ungrounded leap of implication that perceives newfound sympathy for Native Americans in Twain’s somewhat amazingly positive assessment of the Maoris. For instance, she describes Twain labeling the Maoris who defended their land rights in the 1864 Battle of Moutoa Island as “patriots [who] fought for their homes [and] fought for their country” (*FTE* 1: 307) while he further labels those who “fought against their own kin in defense of colonial hegemony” (*MTAI* 342) as disloyal, unpatriotic, flag-deserting traitors. This

is not exactly the way Twain wrote about the participants in the 1876 Battle of Little Big Horn because he never wrote about it either publicly or privately, but Driscoll doesn't claim he did. However, she goes on to describe Twain dining at the Wellington Club with a small group of his New Zealand hosts, including Maori politicians, as "akin to Twain breaking bread with a descendant of Red Cloud, Crazy Horse, or Sitting Bull" (*MTAI* 343). Here Driscoll dangerously dares false equivalency because the only way Twain could demonstrate his belief in social equality with Native American chiefs would be "breaking bread" with *them* instead of the Maori leaders. In fact, Driscoll's introduction describes a possibly apocryphal visit by "Sioux, Comanche, Iowa, and Pawnee" performers with a touring circus to talk with Twain at his Nook Farm home that didn't go so well (*MTAI* 1-3).

Driscoll sees further parallels to the United States in Twain's "thumbnail history" of New Zealand in *Following the Equator* that describes, "The natives sold land without clearly understanding the terms of exchange, and the whites bought it without being much disturbed about the natives' confusion of mind" (*FTE* 1: 308-09). This is the exact scenario that took place at the Treaty of Sycamore Shoals in March, 1775, from which Twain's ancestor's titles to their Kentucky lands derive. The scenario "echoes the pattern of North American colonial conquest," Driscoll writes, but Twain goes on to "champion the spirited resistance of the Maori rather than denouncing them as savages," Driscoll points out (*MTAI* 246)—even though Twain never defended the Cherokees who attacked his ancestors in defense of their own frontier lands. Ultimately, as perceptive and morally grounded as Twain frequently was, "he too could be 'blind,' unable to forthrightly acknowledge the shameful legacy of America's imperial past," Driscoll

concludes (*MTAI* 348). The key points may be that at the time Twain failed or was unwilling to see it, the “imperial past” was contemporary, and appreciating Maori land rights did not constitute appreciating those of Native Americans. The United States was still actively confiscating Native American land and committing both literal and cultural genocide against Native American people.

### **The Subtext of Twain’s Defense of Inevitable Conquest Remains Eurocentric**

Twain’s antipathy toward Native Americans moderated only in the sense that Twain claimed to believe that all people, as “the damned human race” (Howells 76-81), were equally capable of perpetrating cruelty against each other and equally capable of stealing each other’s land. But in *Following the Equator*, Twain also maintains a hierarchy of which people were most likely to actually perpetrate the cruelty they were capable of. Thus, Twain opines in his travel narrative that since it was inevitable that the whole world would be colonized, Great Britain was the most humane nation to do the colonizing. Twain’s hierarchy descends from the European colonizers who, in his view, are the most humane exploiters of non-European peoples to, at the bottom, peoples of all kinds who behave in a way that Twain considers “savage.” However, his hierarchy either contradicts or is moderated by his eventual view, a long time forming, that all people are equally sinful and therefore essentially “savage” – that is, “human,” as Twain comedically phrases it. Still, when Twain iterates his egalitarian philosophy in his essay “Concerning the Jews” (1899), he does not specify any of the human groups that are subject to race, color, caste, or creed prejudices. In this essay, Twain does not explicitly include Native Americans in his humorously cynical declaration of his tolerance, and

“numerous commentators” have speculated he implicitly excludes Native Americans, according to Driscoll (*MTAI* 25):

I am quite sure that (bar one) I have no race prejudices, and I think I have no color prejudices nor caste prejudices nor creed prejudices [....] I can stand any society. All that I care to know is that a man is a human being—that is enough for me; he can’t be any worse. (“Concerning the Jews” 161)

The crucial factor to determine when interpreting Twain’s declaration is whether he knew that a Native American “is a human being,” which his previous dehumanization of Native Americans might call into question.

The context of Twain’s argument asserting the inevitability of conquest is his puzzlement over why Britain had transferred control of Madagascar to France, honoring France’s prior claim to the island. “Did she respect a theft of a couple of centuries ago?” Twain inquires. “Dear me, robbery by European nations of each other’s territory has never been a sin, is not a sin to-day” (*FTE* 2: 298). Twain’s limitation of the right of conquest to “European nations” also implies a right of Europeans and European Americans to confiscate the lands of Others, especially the lands of “savage,” non-white Others. His defense that “[n]o tribe, howsoever insignificant, and no nation, howsoever mighty, occupies a foot of land that was not stolen” encompasses Native Americans, but only in a subordinate status. Although Twain asserts that when the colonizers arrived, “the Indian tribes had been raiding each other’s territorial clotheslines for ages,” he goes on to argue with comedic intent that “[t]he English, the French, and the Spaniards went to work and stole it all over again; and when that was satisfactorily accomplished they went

diligently to work and stole it from each other” (*FTE* 2: 298-99). Very probably, Twain makes such a claim to justify the actions, both direct and indirect, of his ancestors in the Upper South, his father in Tennessee and Missouri, and his white countrymen across the continent who confiscated Native American land by trick or treaty. Twain strives to imply that land conquest is so customary that prior titles are meaningless and their defense humorous. In so doing, he fails “to distinguish between the indigeneity of Indians—and the hereditary landrights [sic] conferred by millennia of continuous habitation—and the foreignness of European colonizers,” as Driscoll puts it. She further describes Twain’s defense of inevitable conquest as rationalizing “the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, allowing him to sidestep any overt acknowledgment of national guilt” (*MTAI* 350). His position also begs the question because he justifies the essentially permanent dispossession of Native Americans by noting the temporary nature, over the long run, of all land claims.

Meanwhile, on the world’s other major continents, the instances of conquest have been virtually uncountable, Twain contends in his next sentence: “In Europe and Asia and Africa every acre of ground has been stolen several millions of times” (*FTE* 2: 298). Thus having already claimed that European theft of Native American territory was justified because Native Americans had committed land theft among themselves, Twain indirectly implies that Native Americans should contentedly accept being robbed of their residential and life-sustaining territory on the grounds that they were only suffering the same fate that the people of other continents have repeatedly suffered. Yet that is not entirely Twain’s point, because his inclusion of Native Americans as fellow-suffering humans does not explicitly grant them the same right as European nations to commit

“robbery [...] of each other’s territory” (*FTE* 2: 298) or the logically concomitant right to defend territorial claims by force of arms, if necessary. Rather, Twain limits those rights to Europeans including, presumably, European Americans—except earlier in *Following the Equator*, when he contradictorily calls the Maoris who defended their land “patriots” (*FTE* 1: 307).

Otherwise, Twain’s stance regarding the temporary nature of land possession appears consistent across his writings: his nonchalance regarding prior claims in Madagascar resonates in his dismissal of the importance of profiting from his father’s acquisition of Tennessee land and in his satirical treatment of perpetual rights to real estate vis-à-vis literary copyrights. The history of conquest worldwide is so pervasive that conquest has become a law unto itself, one that cannot be challenged under the legal systems of any but the conquerors, according to Twain: “A crime persevered in a thousand centuries ceases to be a crime, and becomes a virtue. This is the law of custom, and custom supersedes all other forms of law” (*FTE* 2: 299). Yet in other writings and contexts, Twain does not excuse sin because it is pervasive. For instance, in *Letters from the Earth*, Twain’s Satan calls the God of the Beatitudes a hypocrite for mandating the conquest of the Midianites, partly because that same God also mandates the rape of the young Midianite women. Rape very conceivably has plagued humanity for as long as conquest has plagued us, but it seems unimaginable to think that Twain would designate rape as a “virtue” due to its perseverance for a thousand centuries, the way he labels land conquest. Certainly, Twain does not excuse rape as a “virtue” in “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians.”

### **Twain's Late-Career, Partial Admission of White Culpability for Land Confiscation Is Limited by the Impartiality of "Consequences"**

Eventually, Twain does expand his belief in human fallibility to very tentatively become all-inclusive and to even apply to Native Americans, not in *Following the Equator* as Abate suggests, but in a somewhat later dialogic essay, "The Dervish and the Offensive Stranger" (1902), not published until thirteen years after Twain's death, in *Europe and Elsewhere* (1923). Yet even his new rationalization in "Dervish" for European American crimes of conquest against Native Americans essentially relies on, or restates in new terms, his thesis in *Following the Equator* that all conquests merely repeat other conquests endured by every nation of people in history, and therefore can safely be shrugged off (*FTE* 2: 298-99).

In "Dervish," in one form of Twain's basic rationalization from *Following*, he acknowledges that "intentions" that had good consequences for European Americans had bad consequences for Native Americans (311-12). But Twain acknowledges this phenomenon only to assert that it demonstrates a more universal claim, and that therefore no culpability attaches to it; Twain's acknowledgement resembles a historic/political Alford plea of not contesting an allegation but also not admitting it. He acknowledges the harmful results to Native Americans of white "impulses" to support his thesis in "Dervish" that under inviolable "law" established by no specified party, "[h]alf the results of a good intention are evil; half the results of an evil intention are good" and "no man can command the results, nor allot them" (310). The first part of this thesis, voiced by the Offensive Stranger to the Dervish, suggests a belief in fickle and random Lady



Fortune but does not provide support, either philosophical or scientific, for its claim that good and evil results are always evenly divided. Logically, Twain's thesis also would rule out "win-win," mutually beneficial results from "impulses," as well as "evil" consequences for all parties concerned. Perhaps that is understandable coming from the grandson of a family that only partly survived lethal "us vs. them" conflict in the frontier Upper South. But the question remains, who established this "law" of mirrored good-and-evil consequences that the Stranger describes? Twain does not attribute the "law" to God or even to Nature by name; he only asserts that the proof can be seen in any direction one looks. "[A] single case cannot prove the rule," the Dervish objects; "Pardon me, *all* cases prove it," the Stranger retorts (312).

To Twain, who essentially adopts the Stranger's persona in "Dervish," one thing is certain: mankind did not enact this rigid "law" requiring that the results of "impulses [...] are of both kinds, in all cases" (311); in fact, mankind is helpless in the law's face. Consequences just happen because "no man can command the results, nor allot them" (310). Historic "impulses" must not even be called good or bad "deeds," the Stranger insists to the Dervish: "deed," the very term for an action taken, must be avoided. A pure definition of "deed" must be maintained, the Stranger implies; it only becomes a "done deed," to use a colloquialism, if it achieves its intended results, and the Stranger maintains that results are always ambivalent.

Yet Twain stretches his credibility when he suggests that European Americans could not foresee the results of their wars against Native Americans and their confiscation of Native American wealth, health, lives, and land. The wars and confiscation had been going on for nearly four hundred years by the time Twain joined

the discourse about them; European Americans had been indulging a very consistent confiscatory “impulse” with very consistent negative results for Native Americans that anyone could see or have foreseen. Twain even presents the evidence of this four-century history and its effects when, in “Dervish,” he has his Offensive Stranger summon “VOICES OUT OF UTAH” on cue (311) to provide evidence for his thesis to the Dervish that offers an entirely foreseeable result, although neither Twain nor his Stranger acknowledges its foreseeability.

First a “White Chief” proclaims to “his people” that “[t]his wide plain was a desert,” but by their “heaven-blest industry” they dammed the river for irrigation and “turned the desert into smiling fields whose fruitage makes prosperous and happy a thousand homes where poverty and hunger dwelt before” (311-12). In apparent reply, the “Indian Chief” declaims to “his people”:

This wide plain, which the Spanish priests taught our fathers to irrigate,  
was a smiling field, whose fruitage made our homes prosperous and  
happy. The white man has dammed our river, taken away our water for  
his own valley, and turned our field into a desert; wherefore we starve.  
(312)

By presenting this exchange, the Stranger would have the Dervish and reader believe that white settlers were unaware that if they diverted a water supply upstream, people living downstream would no longer receive the same amount of water. The argument, despite its skillful parallel structure, is patently specious. The Dervish mildly accepts it as a single proof of the “law” of mirrored results that is only flawed by its merely anecdotal

nature. “I perceive the good intention did really bring both good and evil results in equal measure,” the Dervish admits before calling for further proof (312).

Yet by definition, the European Americans’ “intention” cannot be categorized as “good” if they knew what effects their actions would have on Native American downstream dwellers. Twain also shies away in this passage from what actually was consistently taken from Native Americans: not their water rights, but the land itself.<sup>45</sup> It is very difficult to take land directly away from people without knowing they are being dispossessed of it. Water rights can be crucial, especially out West, but Twain’s insertion of water rights in his parable of the two speaking “chiefs” in place of actual land confiscation suggests that he still subscribed to the ethos of Emer de Vattel’s *Law of Nations* (1758). As previously described, Vattel holds that lands only being used for hunting and gathering are unoccupied and, therefore, fair game to be claimed and settled by people who want to use them for a European agricultural lifestyle.<sup>46</sup> “Vacant” lands can legitimately be “settled,” in other words, and in “Dervish” Twain makes the point that the “wide plain” that was settled “was a desert”; the only thing the settlers stole was the water to irrigate a wasteland, and they refrained from stealing the “smiling field” full of “fruitage” downstream (312). Their self-restraint was remarkable and uncharacteristic of actual settlers. It is true that Mormon settlers irrigated the Utah desert and made it bloom, so perhaps Twain’s parable is not so far-fetched, but it cannot stand unchallenged as a late-life blossoming of sympathy for Native Americans.

However, Twain goes on to make a somewhat more credible admission of white offenses against Native Americans, marred primarily by Twain’s continued reliance on the inevitability of conquest:

*The Offensive Stranger.* Pardon me, *all* cases prove it. Columbus discovered a new world and gave to the plodding poor and the landless of Europe farms and breathing space and plenty and happiness—

*The Dervish.* A good result.

*The Offensive Stranger.* And they hunted and harried the original owners of the soil, and robbed them, beggared them, drove them from their homes, and exterminated them, root and branch.

*The Dervish.* An evil result, yes. (312)

This exchange may well be the closest that Twain ever came to viewing the frontier conflict between Native and European Americans from the Native American point of view.<sup>47</sup> Yet it still frames the “evil result” as an inevitability.

As discussed in Chapter Four, Michelle Burnham suggests the conquest of Native Americans had been fueled by the collective dodging of responsibility by “the imperialist audience [and ...] the subtraction of agency from the historical stage, so that causal aggression looks like inevitability” (94), dating back to the Jacksonian era when John Marshall Clemens was busily acquiring land grants in Fentress County, Tennessee. Thus, according to Twain, the settlers could not help cutting off downstream water supplies because, after all, they needed the water themselves; and the poverty and population pressure on European farmland acted deterministically to force European Americans to hunt, harry, rob, beggar, evict and exterminate “the original owners of the soil.” The word “exterminated,” once again, comes tripping from Twain’s pen at the late date when “Dervish” was composed. As Driscoll points out, Twain “unquestionably knew that Indians had neither ‘vanished’ nor been ‘exterminated, root and branch’” (*MTAI* 352).

And although it appears that this time, he views it as an unfortunate historic occurrence rather than an end to be desired, Twain thereby repeats the trope that Native American extermination was inevitable. His mysterious “law” of mirrored consequences, corollary to the inevitability of conquest, continues to allow “the imperialist nation to imagine [...] itself as an unaccountable audience, affected by a tragic disappearing act that no perceptible agent has effected,” as Burnham phrases it (94).

Twain’s late-career writing, in other words, shows that the effects of his mother’s stories of frontier violence in the Upper South never completely wore off. He searched for and found philosophical rationalizations for feeling no guilt for his personal role or his ancestors’ role in the whole sordid saga, and he continued to share in his culture’s relentless labeling of Native Americans as “savage.” In an autobiographical dictation on May 23, 1907, about his newly conferred honorary doctorate from Oxford, he confides, “I take the same childlike delight in a new [university] degree that the Indian takes in a fresh scalp, and I take no more pains to conceal my joy than the Indian does” (*AMT* 3: 53). Never mind such valid “adult” motives as retaliation or self-defense from being “hunted and harried,” driven from homes, and so on; the “childlike” Native American takes “a fresh scalp” like a new bauble in the same way Twain regards his prestigious new honor. And the Tennessee land, too—all 92,988½ acres of it—is merely an albatross that his father misguidedly collected for the Clemens family to jettison, Twain reasons: it has changed hands before, and it will change hands again.

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## NOTES

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*Chapter I Endnotes*

<sup>1</sup> The phrase “Tennessee land” is frequently enclosed in quotation marks in Twain biographies and scholarship, apparently in silent recognition of the Clemens family’s consistent usage of the phrase, *sans* quotation marks, in their correspondence as the name of their real estate legacy. Twain used the phrase, *sans* quotation marks, both in his correspondence and in his *Autobiography* (AMT 1: 63, 208). Thus, the quotation convention will not generally be followed in this dissertation except in the title and in quotations from scholars.

<sup>2</sup> Blair 381; Collins 406-7; Trabue 151-53.

<sup>3</sup> Michelle Burnham describes the way the United States of the Jacksonian era “imagines itself as an unaccountable audience, affected by a tragic disappearing act that no perceptible agent has effected” (94). Her identification of the Native American “extinction” trope is supported by Carl Ostrowski’s analysis of two poems by Bryant, “A Walk at Sunset” (1821) and “An Indian at the Burial-Place” (1824). As a teenager, Twain himself writes a profile of his hometown Hannibal for the Philadelphia *American Courier* that perpetuates the “vanishing Indian” trope (“Hannibal, Missouri” 67-68) and “is masterfully deconstructed in Bryan W. Dippie’s 1982 study, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and US Indian Policy*,” Kerry Driscoll writes (MTAI 14-15).

<sup>4</sup> MTAI 347, 351, 396, n. 3 and 9.

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*Chapter II Endnotes*

<sup>1</sup> *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, will be cited in the present study as *MTA*, while *Autobiography of Mark Twain*, edited by Benjamin Griffin and Harriet Elinor Smith at the University of California Bancroft Library's Mark Twain Project, will be cited as *AMT*.

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence Howe's initial report on the Tennessee land can be found in his 2011 presentation at the American Literature Association convention in Boston, "Real Property and Fictional Land: The Fact and the Fiction of the Tennessee Land." Portions of the same text, revised and expanded, appear in an opening chapter credited solely to Howe six years later in *Mark Twain and Money: Language, Capital, and Culture* (2017), the book he co-edited with Henry B. Wonham. The chapter in question is titled "Narrating the Tennessee Land: Real Property, Fictional Land, and Mark Twain's Literary Enterprise."

<sup>3</sup> Twain received his pilot's license in April 1859 (*AMT* 1: 559, endnote to 207.1), so he was in the midst of learning the pilot's trade and the geographic features of the river in earnest when he signed the deed transferring the Tennessee land to Orion in October 1857 (Fentress Deed H1821).

<sup>4</sup> These 62,384 acres include the 1,000 acres in Fentress Entry 450—the claim that became Grant 6414—that should possibly be deducted from the Tennessee land due to John Marshall's transfer of the Grant 6414 tract to his namesake nephew John Marshall Clemens, Jr., the son of his younger brother Hannibal, in 1842 (Fentress Deed H1850). Yet the tract was back among the real estate that the Clemens heirs conveyed to the

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Fentress Land Co. in 1907 (Fentress Deed F2-17), while Twain was still writing and revising his *Autobiography* (AMT 1: 23-24), so the present study is including it as part of the 92,988½ acres of Tennessee land claimed by the Clemens heirs.

<sup>5</sup> The Wolf River grant that Twain's father received was among more than 4,500 that Kentucky granted "south of Walker's Line [i.e., in Tennessee]" to individuals and even to two of Kentucky's own county courts between 1825 and 1923, including about 120 grants in Fentress County (Jillson 1: 892-948). Under the Tennessee Compact, Kentucky gained ownership of all unclaimed land parcels in this area, despite ceding political jurisdiction to Tennessee ("Ratification of TN Compact"). Dr. Walker erred in surveying the state line in the late eighteenth century and marked it farther north than the latitude 36°30' that he had been attempting to follow to extend the Virginia-North Carolina line westward (Samuel C. Williams). After achieving statehood, Kentucky demanded jurisdiction clear south to 36°30' from Walker's Line, and when the Tennessee Compact granted that area to Tennessee instead, Kentucky received ownership of all unclaimed land parcels in the previously disputed area ("Ratification of TN Compact"). In 1824, the Kentucky General Assembly set the price of grants in the Tennessee Compact zone at twenty dollars per hundred acres, plus a fifty-cent recording fee. Grants were recorded by and in the Kentucky counties directly north of the Tennessee counties in which the grant tracts were physically located ("Establishes Patent Series"). For forty acres, John Marshall would have paid \$8.50.

<sup>6</sup> John Marshall's claims in partnership with Hannibal were Fentress Entries 238 and 239. The former, Entry 238, was a 73-acre tract that John Marshall, Hannibal, and Alexander Montgomery claimed together. The latter, Entry 239, claimed 190 acres for

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the Clemens brothers only. Having followed John Marshall and his family to Fentress County, where Hannibal established a tannery (Selby 4), Hannibal traveled due north to Monticello in Wayne County, Kentucky, where he married Jane Hudson Jones on January 9, 1829 (“Re: Hannibal”). She was the sister of Sarah B. Jones McBeath, who had moved from Wayne County with her husband John McBeath and settled near John Marshall and his family (“Re: Hannibal”). Thus, John Marshall was claiming land with a future “shirt-tail” brother-in-law when he partnered with McBeath and Hannibal in March, 1827, to claim Fentress Entry 277: McBeath would soon be the brother-in-law of John Marshall’s brother’s wife.

<sup>7</sup> John Marshall’s claims in partnership with Alexander Montgomery were Fentress Entries 237 and 238. The former, Entry 237, was a 245-acre tract that John Marshall and Alexander Montgomery claimed jointly. The latter, Entry 238, was the 73-acre tract that John Marshall, Hannibal, and Alexander Montgomery claimed together.

<sup>8</sup> The present study was unable to determine Alexander’s exact relationship to Twain’s mother, if any existed. As this dissertation will describe in greater detail in Chapter Four, Jane Lampton’s maternal grandmother was Jane Montgomery Casey, daughter of William Montgomery, Sr.; her father, Twain’s great-great-grandfather, was killed in a 1781 ambush by Native Americans at Montgomery’s Station in pioneer Kentucky (Trabue 151, Collins 406). In addition to Twain’s mother’s descent from a line of intermarried Montgomerys who were frequently named after the original Alexander, her kinship to the line was strengthened on October 24, 1810, when Jane was only seven, when her maternal aunt Anne Casey married John Montgomery, who was Anne’s cousin (Varble 14, Watson 1: 284-85 and 2: 601, Adair Marriage Bonds Book 1). John

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Montgomery also partnered with Jane Lampton's father Benjamin Lampton in running a general store that eventually failed in Columbia, Kentucky (Varble 54-55). Thus, business partnerships between Montgomerys and Lamptons were not unprecedented, if not always successful.

<sup>9</sup> Gov. Houston was the future president of the Republic of Texas and later, its US senator and governor after statehood (John Hoyt Williams).

<sup>10</sup> The authorizations listed on these state grants that confirmed the early claims of John Marshall and his partners were an act of the General Assembly on December 3, 1825 (Grants 2100 and 5465), or in the case of the two signed by Sam Houston, the grants were simply issued "by virtue of entry" (Grants 499 and 502). The early grant signed by Gov. William Carroll was Grant 2100.

<sup>11</sup> W. B. Richardson was the deputy Fentress County Register of Deeds in 1830 (Fentress Deed A70) and served a one-year term as Register of Deeds from 1837-38. William McGee preceded him as Register from 1835-37 ("History of Fentress Register"). John H. Richardson was the county clerk in 1830 (Fentress Deed A70). Like the other three 1826 claims that ended up in the Clemens land legacy, this claim by the Richardsons and McGee was made under the 1825 land claims act (Fentress Entry 233, Grant 5465).

<sup>12</sup> Further documentation of John Marshall and the Clemens heirs' ownership of Fentress Entry 233 that became Grant 5465 can be found in the sale of the grant tract by the Clemenses to "John I. Northrup of the State of Tennessee" in December 1849 in Missouri (Fentress Deed F1209). The price for 765 acres from six different grant tracts was only \$100, yet that sum likely represented life's bread for the recent widow and fatherless Clemens survivors. Paradoxically, the Entry 233-Grant 5465 tract also is confirmed as

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part of the Tennessee land legacy by its inclusion in the Clemens heirs' final aggregate sale of their holdings to the Fentress Land Co. in 1907 (Fentress Deed F2-17). The tract's inclusion is paradoxical because it had already been sold in Deed F1209, yet its inclusion in Deed F2-17 constitutes yet one more claim for its standing in the legacy.

<sup>13</sup> The November 1827 claims entered by John Marshall alone were Fentress Entries 321 and 322; the two entered by John Marshall in partnership with Alexander Montgomery were Fentress Entries 324 and 325; and two allegedly entered by Orion were Fentress Entries 320 and 326.

<sup>14</sup> Orion Clemens was born July 17, 1825, in Gainesboro, Tennessee (Selby 5).

<sup>15</sup> An eighth claim probably does not belong in the Clemens land legacy because its title never came into John Marshall's hands; he was neither a claiming partner nor the entry's "locator"; no state grant appears to have been issued as a result of the entry; and the Clemens heirs did not claim the tract in either of their aggregate transfers, Fentress Deeds H1821 and F2-17. This probably disallowable, 100-acre claim on Crooked Creek remains of interest because it was made jointly by Hannibal Clemens and Alexander Montgomery in the middle of a three-day, six-entry claiming spree by John Marshall and Montgomery; and it was "located" by the claimants themselves, demonstrating yet another tie between Montgomery and the Clemens brothers, even without John Marshall's direct participation (Fentress Entry 233).

<sup>16</sup> John Marshall claimed the 50- to 100-acre tracts in Fentress Entries 392, 393, 394 and 399; he claimed the 300-acre tract in Fentress Entry 401; and the confirming state grants for four of these tracts continue the trend of being jointly issued in "1838" by governors Cannon and Polk under Tennessee's 1825 land claims act (Grants 6401, 6405, 6407 and



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6410). Actually, Grant 6407 states that it was issued under a state law passed December 3, 1835, but that probably was a clerical error made in an attempt to describe the state law passed on December 3, 1825, a decade earlier. John Marshall's fifth claim in 1829, for fifty acres on Yellow Creek (Fentress Entry 399), apparently never was confirmed as a state grant; at least, no such grant could be located in the State Archives.

<sup>17</sup> Specifically, the grants that cited the 1825 law as the claiming authority for their Fentress entries were Grants 2099, 2100, 5465, 6400, 6401, 6403-08 and 6410.

<sup>18</sup> The total of confirming state grants based on 1830 claims is only sixteen because no confirming grant could be located in the State Archives for a seventeenth Fentress entry by John Marshall and Lewis Stinson made on March 10, 1830 for 1,000 acres (Fentress Entry 470).

<sup>19</sup> Grants mentioning the penny-per-acre price were 2099, 2100, 5465, 6400, 6401, 6403-08, 6409 and 6410. Grants omitting any mention of purchase prices or terms were 499 and 502. Exemplifying the first category is Grant 2099, based on John Marshall's 1827 claim made by Fentress Entry 322. The grant awards him title to fifty acres "for and in Consideration of the sum of One Cent per Acre paid into the Office of the Entry Taker of Fentress County [...] pursuant to the provisions of an Act of the General Assembly passed on the third day of December 1825." However, the statute referred to is not a special act to grant John Marshall his particular fifty acres; it is the general law establishing or re-affirming the penny-per-acre price that Chapter 85 repealed in 1830 in the case of new claims, but that Chapter 87 kept in place that same year for claims originally made prior to 1830 (*Acts* 116-17).

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<sup>20</sup> The 2,600 acres were claimed in Fentress Entries 449 and 450—totaling 1,000 acres apiece, both on White Oak Creek—and Fentress Entries 451 and 520, totaling 400 and 200 acres, respectively, both on Rock Castle Creek. The two separate tracts claimed by John Marshall with partners were claimed in Fentress Entries 470 and 511, totaling 1,000 acres and 5,000 acres, respectively.

<sup>21</sup> The nine 5,000-acre claims made in other individuals' names for which John Marshall registered as "locator" were Fentress Entries 465, 496, 498, 506, 508-10, 512, and 547.

<sup>22</sup> The tracts in question were first claimed by these Clemens and Lampton family members and relatives in Fentress Entries 506 and 547. Jane's status as Benjamin Quarles's aunt is documented at Selby 14, Loving 17, and *AMT* 1: 533, endnote to 218.25. Her relationship as the half-sister of James Andrew Hays Lampton is verified at Fred Kaplan 14, Webster 60, and Blair 356. For more on Twain's adaptation of his mother's first cousin James J. Lampton into Col. Sellers in *The Gilded Age*, see Loving 202, Webster 17, Varble 29, *AMT* 1: 55, 206-7, endnote on 529, and "Lampton, James J."

<sup>23</sup> Among the Fentress land claimants closely related to John Marshall and Jane, Jane's younger half-brother James Andrew Hays Lampton also had roots in Adair County because James's father Benjamin Lampton, who was Twain's maternal grandfather, married Jane's stepmother Mary Margaret "Aunt Polly" Hays in the county on February 2, 1819 (Varble 51, Adair Marriage Bonds Book 1).

<sup>24</sup> John Marshall's partner in claiming the 1,000-acre Fentress Entry 470 on March 10, 1830, may be the Lewis C. Stinson who appeared on the 1833 Fentress County tax list, as did John Marshall and Hannibal (York), but Stinson was not listed as a Fentress County resident in either the 1830 or 1840 censuses.

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<sup>25</sup> In a sketch of his mother penned by Orion roughly a week after her death on October 27, 1890—a sketch Twain successfully ordered Orion by telegram not to publish in various western newspapers that had solicited it—Orion began an anecdote involving Cyrus and Jane Lampton as follows: “Cyrus Walker was a young attorney, just married to a cousin of [the future] Mrs. Clemens, and was traveling on his circuit. He took his fees in cash or other articles of value.” On the occasion in Orion’s elegiac anecdote, Cyrus had just been paid with a silk dress pattern for some of his law work, and he bumbled into a household where teen-age Jane was amusing the party by imitating Cyrus’ awkward attempts at dancing, according to Orion’s sketch. Cyrus “wished to see himself as she saw him, but she refused until he offered the silk dress,” Orion wrote. Her imitation of his dancing “amused” Cyrus, and “she got the dress,” Orion concluded (Blair 382).

<sup>26</sup> Fentress Entry 470, Grant 6422, Fentress Deed I-158.

<sup>27</sup> Daniel Trabue’s wide-ranging personal history is summarized from the Adair Minutes Books A and D throughout, Varble 15-17, and editor Chester Raymond Young in Trabue 5-6, 12-13, 27-28.

<sup>28</sup> John Marshall and Jane Lampton married in Columbia on May 6, 1823 (“Clemens and Langdon”; *AMT* 1: 528, endnote to 205.41; “First Marriage Book of Adair County” cited in Broaddus). However, the marriage bond and license cannot be found in current Adair public records.

<sup>29</sup> Not a William Cheek but a Tom Cheek was John Marshall’s best man (Varble 93) at his wedding to Jane Lampton in 1823; perhaps William was known as Tom to his friends.

<sup>30</sup> In 1830, John Marshall himself was unquestionably a Fentress resident due to his family’s inclusion in the 1830 US Census for the Tennessee county (York); he was in fact

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clerk of the Fentress Circuit Court from approximately 1828-34 (Fentress Deed Books A-B throughout).

<sup>31</sup> John Marshall jointly claimed Fentress Entry 511 with “R. Williams.”

<sup>32</sup> In fact, when grants were issued based on entries “located” by John Marshall for claimants who used mere initials for first names, they were awarded in the names of only one Williams—N. W.—and that grant was awarded to N. W. and John Marshall jointly (Grant 6399). The other two Williams claims were granted to “Hugh Meredith, afsignee of John M. Clemmens + Williams” [sic] and “John A. Quarles afsignee of TW. Williams” (Grants 6416 and 6421).

<sup>33</sup> Evidence complicating the hypothesis that John Marshall fabricated the “Williams” claimants can be found in Fentress Entries 479, 480, and 482, in which claimants named Williams with full first names matching the initials given in Entries 510, 511, and 512 each entered claims for adjoining 5,000-acre tracts on Clear Fork for which they identified themselves, instead of John Marshall, as the “locator.” These claimants were listed in the texts of the entries as Robert Williams, Nathaniel Washington Williams, and Timothy W. H. Williams. The fact that these additional claims were filed by individuals with full first and middle names rather than mere initials points to the claimants’ actual existence, of course, even if they were not Fentress County residents. In fact, when grants were issued based on entries “located” by John Marshall for claimants who used mere initials for first names, they were awarded in the names of only one Williams—N. W.—and that grant was awarded to N. W. and John Marshall jointly (Grant 6399). The other two Williams claims were granted to “Hugh Meredith, afsignee of John M.

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Clemmens + Williams” [sic] and “John A. Quarles afsignee of TW. Williams” (Grants 6416 and 6421).

<sup>34</sup> Mr. Brown’s role in Twain’s early travel narratives is summarized and quoted in Fred Kaplan 132, 139-44, 148-49, 153, 197, 206, and Loving 113, 156.

<sup>35</sup> Twain biographer Andrew Hoffman joins the consensus about Twain’s father’s stern moral code: “If John had had fewer scruples about paying his bills, he might have thrived on credit” (11). Even the brief biographical summary about John Marshall in the 2010-15 edition of the *Autobiography* concurs: “He was regarded as one of the foremost citizens of the county [Marion, Missouri], scrupulously honest...” (*AMT* 1: 654).

<sup>36</sup> The only exception is Grant 6399, in which Fentress Entry 510, claimed by N. W. Williams but “located” by John Marshall, was issued jointly to John Marshall and N. W. Williams.

<sup>37</sup> To any of the preliminary totals, an additional 30,604½ acres should be added to account for the documented expansion of the Grant 6402 tract.

<sup>38</sup> Perhaps it might be seen as improbable that John Marshall Clemens, a fervent Whig (Budd 2, Hoffman 11), would end up obtaining land grants at all in Tennessee, since the state was dominated politically by Democrats led partly by Andrew Jackson, especially after Jackson’s election as president in 1828 (Corlew 178-80), and partly by William Carroll, a Jacksonian reformer with his own solid base of loyal followers (Langsdon 72). Yet the lines between the two political parties were not distinct when lawmakers decided whether to actually grant tracts of land or support infrastructure projects to provide access to those tracts and to develop the new state. This bipartisan pragmatism and blurring of ideological lines perhaps minimizes the possibility that John Marshall’s political

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affiliation affected the issuance of the 5,000-acre state grants that became the bulk of his legacy. Even Polk, so fervently opposed in the Congress of the early 1830s to public internal improvements, bowed to pragmatism after his election in 1839 and approved public projects (Cutler).

<sup>39</sup> Indian Removal did not directly clear title to land previously owned by Native American nations in Fentress County because that had already been done. Fentress was part of the majority of land north of the Tennessee River that had been transferred to the United States from the Cherokees in treaties at Hopewell, South Carolina, in 1785, and at Tellico, Tennessee, in 1805 (Powell 648-9, qtd. in Griffey 497; Powell 672-73, qtd. in Griffey 498-99).

<sup>40</sup> Prior to becoming governor, Newton Cannon “worked in Congress for the extinction of Indian land titles in Tennessee,” according to John E. Harkins (359). James K. Polk supported Jackson’s position on dispossessing the Cherokees and voted for the Indian Removal Act as a congressman in 1830, as did the entire Tennessee congressional delegation except Davy Crockett, according to Corlew (152). The unpopularity of Crockett’s position became apparent when he lost his reelection bid in 1832.

<sup>41</sup> Supporting this “relocation” explanation for the assignment of land entries in the eventual Clemens land legacy, compared with other possible explanations, is the continuous issuance of grants to numerous other recipients in Fentress County throughout the 1830s despite previously mentioned complicating external factors—while in contrast, the grants in the Clemens land legacy were mostly delayed until 1839. Specifically, 207 land grants were issued to individuals in Fentress County between 1830 and 1839, although only 45 of those were for 5,000-acre tracts (Hogue, *One Hundred Years* 73-87).

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<sup>42</sup> In addition to the surveys of his future Tennessee tracts that were conducted in September, 1838, John Marshall's return trip to Fentress County that late summer and early autumn is documented by the deed he signed in Jamestown conveying the rights to 200 acres surrounding a mill at Rock Castle Cove to its owner John Albertson, Jr. As the deed officially certified:

*Personally appeared before me* John H. Richardson, Clerk of the County Court of said [Fentress] County, John M. Clemens, and John Albertson, Jr. [...] who acknowledge the same *in my presence* to be their act and deed (Fentress Deed C303, emphases added)

As local historian and attorney Albert Ross Hogue of Jamestown puts it, "If this is true John M. Clemens was in Jamestown when Mark Twain was about three years old" (*One Hundred Years* 12). John Marshall's return trip to Fentress in 1838 is doubly documented by an assignment of a land entry in which Clerk Richardson certified that John Marshall "personally appeared before me" and "acknowledged that he made and executed the within assignment [...] Witness my hand at office this 18th day of September, 1838" (Fentress Deed K2-167).

<sup>43</sup> Even prior to ratification of the 1834 Tennessee Constitution and its ensuing changes and uncertainties, new state laws required the surveying of land claims so they could become eligible for confirmation as state grants, a further factor that may explain the timing of the majority of the Clemens legacy grants being signed by Polk a year after Cannon had them drawn up, but bearing an earlier, "1838" date. Obliging if anachronistically, Polk may have pre-dated his signature to help the grantees meet a statutory deadline for validating and confirming their Fentress County claims as state

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grants. The state laws requiring claims to be surveyed were repeatedly supplemented by new laws usually establishing two-year extensions of deadlines for obtaining surveys of claimed tracts, in 1823, 1825, 1827, 1829, 1831, 1835, 1837, and 1839 (Henry Whitney 194, 315, 318, 323, 328-31 and 333-34). The requirement of land surveys also was spawned by the state's attempt to untangle the overlapping and ambiguous boundaries of land claims issued under a palimpsest of authorities: first the colonial and then the state governments of North Carolina, primarily, as well as Virginia and later, Kentucky; the federal government that governed Tennessee as the "Southwest Territory" prior to statehood; and the claims of Native Americans (Griffey 1-8, 21-24, 38-49, 55-57, 497-503).

<sup>44</sup> The only deed in the Fentress County title books John Marshall recorded during his Tennessee visit in 1838 was Deed C303, a "quit-claim" that essentially clarified the boundary lines of two Clemens claims. One of John Marshall's entry claims supporting the deed was not actually granted to him by Gov. James C. Jones until 1841 (Grant 8684), although John Marshall personally entered it in Fentress during his 1830 claiming spree (Fentress Entry 451). The second claim that received a boundary settlement in Deed C303 was Fentress Entry 495, actually "located" and filed by Twain's uncle Hannibal Clemens in 1830, so Deed C303's assertion that John Marshall was the tract's owner and possessed the right to record a "quit-claim" to part of it appears odd. He did not possess locator's rights nor had he recorded any purchase of the tract from Henry Thomas, the eventual recipient of the 1,000 acres in Grant 6413. Thomas had not even been issued the grant yet, a circumstance that provides intriguing evidence that the grant went to Thomas through prearrangement with John Marshall, Hannibal, or both Clemens



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brothers that Thomas would merely serve as an intermediate land holder for John Marshall—who ultimately purchased Grant 6413 from Thomas in 1840 (Fentress Deed H1851).

<sup>45</sup> Perhaps some of the intermediate land holders in Missouri also held the grant tracts as a peculiar form of security for John Marshall’s credit: the merchants would release land to him that they held in their own names if he paid his debts. At the very least, passing the grant tracts along to John Marshall would relieve the intermediate land holders of the risk that they would be assessed taxes on the remote mountainous land.

<sup>46</sup> Fred Kaplan describes James Clemens, Jr., as “a wealthy St. Louis resident who believed he was a distant cousin” to John Marshall when he loaned John Marshall \$250 toward his purchase of a quarter of a city block in Hannibal in 1839, at the same time that James A. H. Lampton loaned John Marshall \$747 for the same purchase/purpose (14). However, James, Jr., undoubtedly knew he was a closer cousin than “distant” to John Marshall. James, Jr., was John Marshall’s second cousin, according to the genealogy suggested by the endnotes in the 2010-15 *Autobiography* (*AMT* 1: 525-26, endnote to 203.8; *AMT* 1: 527, endnote to 205.18). The relation of John Marshall and James, Jr., derives from Ezekiel Clemens (1696-1778), who was their mutual great grandfather. John Marshall’s father Samuel B. Clemens (1772-1805) was a first cousin of James, Jr.’s father Jeremiah Clemens (1763-1826), the father of James, Jr., making John Marshall and James, Jr., second cousins.

<sup>47</sup> Fred Kaplan describes how James, Jr., bought “the modest clapboard on a small lot on Hill Street” that the Clemens family moved into in 1847. The family had no place else to go, and James, Jr., apparently came to his widowed and orphaned relatives’ rescue,

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assuming more of the role of an uncle than a second cousin (14-15). Perhaps it is for this reason, in addition to pure genealogical confusion, that James, Jr., is sometimes mistakenly referred to as “Mark Twain’s uncle” (Murphy) or his nephew (Howe, “Narrating” 28). Yet confusion about his identity seems pervasive. The 2010-15 *Autobiography* describes him—in contrast to Kaplan’s identification of him as an attorney like John Marshall—as a “well-to-do *doctor* in St. Louis” (*AMT* 1: 527, endnote to 205.18, emphasis added).

<sup>48</sup> James Clemens, Jr., sold John Marshall two tracts on October 23, 1840, totaling 10,000 acres (Fentress Deed G1421, Grants 6402 and 6411, *Fentress Land Co. vs. Gernt*).

<sup>49</sup> Henry Thomas sold John Marshall two tracts on October 23, 1840 (Fentress Deed H1851, Grants 6398 and 6413) totaling 6,000 acres that the Clemens heirs later partially re-sold (Fentress Deeds F1173, F1355, and K264), further demonstrating the legitimacy of the heirs’ ownership of the two grant tracts.

<sup>50</sup> John Marshall “located” 15,000 of the acres in question. Hannibal originally “located” the other 1,000 acres for himself in 1830 and then assigned his claim to Henry Thomas (Fentress Entry 495, Grant 6413). John Marshall “located” 5,000 acres for William Cheek that Cheek later assigned to James Clemens, Jr. (Fentress Entry 509, Grant 6411), and John Marshall also “located” 5,000 acres for James A. H. Lampton, Benjamin Quarles, and Orion, as previously described: 5,000 acres that John Marshall’s three young kinsmen later assigned to James, Jr. (Fentress Entry 547, Grant 6402). Additionally, John Marshall “located” 5,000 acres for Alexander Montgomery that

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Montgomery later assigned to Henry Thomas (Fentress Entry 506, Grant 6398) and that John Marshall then purchased from Henry (Fentress Deed H1851, Grant 6398).

<sup>51</sup> In online research for the present study, the only mention of anyone by Thomas's name that could be located in connection with mid-nineteenth-century Hannibal was the performance on May 25, 1847, of a wedding by "Elder Henry Thomas" of "Dr. C. C. Fuqua to Miss Mary J. Gillespie, both of Monroe co." (Hamilton), roughly two months after John Marshall died. The notice appeared in the *Hannibal Journal*, the newspaper that Orion later purchased and published with Twain as his apprentice typesetter and writer, sometimes standing in for Orion as editor. In Monroe County—site of the village of Florida—a Henry Thomas was listed among the early settlers of Jackson Township. Individuals named "Elder Henry Thomas" or just "Henry Thomas" also were described as founders, re-organizers, and ministers, from the 1830s forward, of four different "Christian" or Disciples of Christ congregations in Monroe County (*History of Monroe* 21, 285-86, 620).

<sup>52</sup> John Marshall's deal with Henry Thomas was witnessed by a notary public on October 23, 1840, in St. Louis, but not recorded in Jamestown by Fentress Register of Deeds George S. Kington until February 29, 1858, roughly eleven years after John Marshall's death in March 1847, and over seventeen years after John Marshall purchased the 6,000 acres from Thomas, all of which is stated in Fentress Deed H1851.

<sup>53</sup> Another anachronism that occurred appears typical of the Clemens family's handling of its Tennessee land legacy: parcels were sold from the 1,000-acre tract that John Marshall acquired from Thomas (Grant 6413) and deeds for these parcels were recorded granting title from the Clemens heirs to the new owners while the 1,000 acres were still

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titled in Thomas's name. Specifically, 200 of the 1,000 acres awarded to Thomas by Grant 6413 were sold to John W. Gould for \$50 by real estate agent Arnold Buffum, representing the Clemens heirs in a deal made and witnessed in March, 1850, in New York City, and registered on September 13, 1852, in Jamestown (Fentress Deed F1173). Similarly, another 200 acres of the 1,000 were sold to Robert Carroll for \$50 by Buffum "on Wall Street" in March, 1850, and registered April 13, 1854, in Jamestown (Fentress Deed F1355). These transactions were made in New York City more than eight years before John Marshall's acquisition of these 400 acres was recorded in Jamestown in 1858 (Fentress Deed H1851). In its text, Fentress Deed F1173 confirms the facts that Hannibal filed Fentress Entry 495 and that Thomas was awarded Grant 6413, but it never states why those facts would give the Clemens heirs the right to sell any portion of the tract—land that, after all, had been granted to Thomas. Fentress Deed F1355 to Carroll confirms the same facts about Hannibal and Thomas, but it does state—for the first time in Fentress County land records—that later, the grant was "conveyed by him [Thomas] to John M. Clemens, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 1840." Thus, in an indirect, "back-door" manner, John Marshall's purchase of Grant 6413 was placed into Fentress County record books about one decade after the deal was concluded.

<sup>54</sup> The formality of recording John Marshall's 1840 purchase of the 5,000-acre Grant 6420 tract from John Kerr in the Fentress Register of Deeds office was delayed until March 5, 1903 (Fentress Deed A2-517), when the Clemens heirs finally had it done, for reasons that are not evident from the records. An 1868 judgment in Fentress Chancery Court also awarded title to the Clemens heirs for the Grant 6420 tract, but the court's ruling was not recorded in the Register of Deed's books until 1903. According to the

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judgment in that lawsuit, filed by the Clemens heirs to prove John Marshall's purchase of Grant 6420 from Kerr, the purchase was obscured when records were lost during the Civil War (Chancery Minutes 365-66). A total of 1,100 of the 5,000 acres in the grant tract had previously been sold by the Clemens heirs in 1850, 1852, and 1856, so perhaps the 1903 registration of the Clemens heirs' ownership was performed to clarify or reify those buyers' titles that were registered in the early- to mid-1850s. Agent Arnold Buffum sold four 200-acre parcels in 1850 and 1852 for the Clemens heirs for \$50 apiece in New York City to three buyers from Yonkers, New York, and one from New York City, and Buffum registered those sales in Fentress County a few months after the sales (Fentress Deeds E1066, E1075, E1083, and F1171). A few years later, Buffum sold 300 acres of the Grant 6420 tract for \$75 to George Fisher of Yonkers, recording the transaction on May 6, 1856, in New York City, having it certified the next day by Tennessee's land commissioner in New York City, and registering it two months later in Jamestown (Fentress Deed G1668). Through these five deeds filed in the 1850s that—together—recorded Buffum's sale of 1,100 acres of the Grant 6420 tract, the Clemens heirs registered John Marshall's purchase from Kerr in the same sort of indirect, "back-door" recording that first revealed John Marshall's purchase of Grant 6413 from Henry Thomas (Fentress Deed F1355).

<sup>55</sup> It is possible that John Marshall's intermediate land holder for the Grant 6420 tract was the John Kerr who—beginning in 1837—helped upgrade the Planter's Hotel, a wood-frame trading post in formerly frontier St. Louis, into the four-story, 300-room Planter's House where over time famous guests including "Jefferson Davis, Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, U. S. Grant," Charles Dickens, "Buffalo Bill"

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Cody, and Mark Twain feasted on such fare as “*filet de boeuf*, fried oysters, broiled grouse, saddle of antelope, and wild duck,” as St. Louis genealogist and historian David Lossos reports, with Albert Bigelow Paine adding Twain to the list (2: 740). Twain himself mentions the Planter’s by name in *The Gilded Age* in a con job conducted by Col. Sellers at the hotel (1: 129-33). “The building of the second Planter’s House Hotel was financed through the investment of private citizens,” Lossos writes, adding that trustees selected by those investors included one “John Kerr.” Another John Kerr, possibly the same Kerr, married into the Charless family, whose patriarch Joseph, Sr., operated the first newspaper west of the Mississippi, the *Missouri Gazette* (Billon 230).

<sup>56</sup> The 5,000 acres on Crooked Creek were “located” by John Marshall and claimed by E. N. Robertson on April 1, 1830 (Fentress Entry 508), but the tract later was awarded—under the date October 11, 1838—to “G. W. Kerr, afsignee of E. N. Robison [sic]” (Grant 6419). The Clemens heirs’ ownership of the tract was affirmed by a Fentress Chancery Court ruling on April 11, 1859, that divested the Kerr heirs of title (Chancery Minutes 175-76). John Marshall’s purchase of the tract from Kerr on an unstated date at an unstated location was implied by the ruling, since the court declared that the plaintiffs—the Clemens heirs—had “paid all of the Consideration money for said land” (Chancery Minutes 176) and therefore rightfully held title. No registration of John Marshall’s acquisition of the Grant 6419 tract from George W. Kerr can be found in Fentress County deeds. Yet the tract was included in the December, 1870, sale of seven grant tracts to E. R. Ford of Keokuk, Iowa, where Orion’s wife Mollie was raised and Orion and Mollie eventually settled (“Clemens, Mary E.”). Both of the grant tracts that John Marshall obtained from Kerrs—Grants 6419 and 6420—also were included in the

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compilation of grants that were transferred, in October, 1857, from all of John Marshall's heirs to Orion (Fentress Deed H1821) and in the final aggregate sale of the Tennessee land in February 1907 (Fentress Deed F2-17).

<sup>57</sup> The 10,900 acres that John Marshall acquired from Quarles included two 5,000-acre tracts—Grants 6421 and 6422—for which Quarles had been assigned the rights of earlier claimants Cyrus Walker and T. W. Williams (Fentress Entries 478 and 512), as previously described. Fentress Deed I-158 packaged four smaller tracts (Grants 6400, 6403, 6406 and 6408), totaling 900 acres all together, into the same conveyance with the 10,000 acres. In the grants for the four smaller tracts, Quarles had been assigned the rights of prior claimants Orion, Hannibal Clemens, John McBeath, Alexander Montgomery, and John Marshall himself (Fentress Entries 277, 320, and 325).

<sup>58</sup> *AMT* 1: 211-12. Twain also uses the name Uncle Dan'l for a Hawkins family slave in *The Gilded Age* who panics when he sees a steamboat for the first time, blazing fire and belching smoke, and refers to it fearfully as “de Almighty” (1: 19-24). Jocelyn Chadwick-Joshua, however, in her insightful and influential monograph *The Jim Dilemma*, identifies three sources for the character of Jim: Uncle Daniel (18-19), Twain's butler George Griffin whose room notably adjoined Twain's third-floor billiards room in Hartford, “within the nucleus of the house” rather than in servants' quarters (18, 22-23), and John Lewis, “a free-born African American who saved Twain's brother-in-law's family from certain injury and perhaps death in a runaway carriage” (18-22).

<sup>59</sup> For more about the two brothers-in-law's business partnership, break-up, possible acrimony, and speedy but only partial reconciliation, see Powers, *A Life* 15; Hoffman 7, 13; Fred Kaplan 12. Quarles and John Marshall were married to the Lampton sisters,

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who had been close all their lives; thus, Quarles's motives for selling his Tennessee land to Twain's father for a nominal dollar might have included spousal influence or familial affection. The gregarious Quarles and reserved John Marshall also may have been inclined to friendship with each other, despite their opposing temperamental polarities: they shared the unconventional attitude in their times and places of being non-religious "free thinkers" (Fred Kaplan 10), a philosophy that John Marshall passed on to his author son despite Jane's best efforts to inculcate religiosity in him. Indeed, "[l]ike the patriarchs in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, John Quarles and John Marshall became, despite their conventionally religious wives, freethinkers and Universalists," Jerome Loving writes (18).

<sup>60</sup> Further verification of the Clemens heirs' having owned three of the smaller Quarles tracts (Grants 6403, 6406, and 6408, totaling 700 acres) is available because the tracts were seized by Fentress County tax collectors from the heirs in 1854. The three grant tracts were collectively advertised in the Nashville *Union and American* and then sold at the courthouse door in Jamestown on November 25, 1854, to R. H. and A. Bledsoe—along with 100 acres that had been directly awarded in Grant 6407 to John Marshall—for a total tax-sale price of \$100, or 12½ cents per acre (Fentress Deed T415). The tax sale occurred roughly three years before the Quarles land grants were anachronistically "conveyed" to Orion in Fentress Deed H1821 in 1857, although the Bledsoes' titles to the properties they purchased in the tax sale were not recorded in Fentress until May 6, 1891 (Fentress Deed T415). No reason is stated in the public documents for this delay in recording the Bledsoes' purchase, but it undoubtedly resulted from the Bledsoes' deaths



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as Confederate officers in Civil War combat at Sparta in early October, 1863, during Wheeler's Raid (Pogue, *History* 26).

<sup>61</sup> Similarly to John Marshall's purchase of two 5,000-acre grant tracts in the early 1840s from John and George W. Kerr that he never recorded before his death in 1847 (Grants 6419 and 6420), John Marshall's purchase of the 5,000-acre Grant 6417 tract was documented by a subsequent lawsuit in Fentress Chancery Court that did not specifically state where the Grant 6417 transaction took place. However, the purchase most likely occurred in Hannibal. The lawsuit, which the Clemens heirs instigated, was heard on the same day—March 31, 1868—as the Clemens heirs' second lawsuit against the Kerr heirs that conveyed the Grant 6420 tract to the Clemenses. Some of the language is nearly identical in the two versions of the exchanges between each seller—John Kerr or Hugh Meredith, respectively—and purchaser John Marshall. The styling of the Meredith case was widow against widow (Jane Clemens vs. Anna Meredith) and their offspring, two surviving sons apiece and a sole surviving daughter on each side. Like the second Kerr ruling, the Meredith decision invoked the chaos of the 1860s as the reason for the antebellum land deal never having been recorded by the Fentress County Register of Deeds, but confirmed the Clemens-Meredith land deal transpired: "In the year 1840 or 1841, said Hugh Meredith duly executed for a valuable consideration said land to said John M. Clemens; but said deed was never registered, and was lost or destroyed during the civil war..." (Fentress Chancery Minutes 364-65). And since "said John M. Clemens paid all the consideration money for said land," the court awarded the Grant 6417 tract to the Clemens heirs—who also were assessed the court costs, the same as in the Kerr case.

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<sup>62</sup> Unlike most of John Marshall's second set of intermediate land holders, Dr. Meredith did not originally immigrate to Missouri from Kentucky and Tennessee, as John Marshall himself did. A summary of the 1850 US Census for Hannibal includes a Dr. Meredith, age 44 in 1850, who migrated to Hannibal from Bucks County, Pennsylvania, with his wife and children (Dobson). Identified by the editors of the 2010-15 *Autobiography* as "born in Pennsylvania" and living from 1806-64, Dr. Meredith is glossed in the edition as "a personal friend and business associate of Clemens's father in Florida, Missouri, and then in Hannibal" (*AMT* 1: 520, endnote to 1: 188.19-20). The wife and children's names in the 1850 Census listing for Hugh Meredith also closely match those of the Meredith widow and children in the 1868 Chancery lawsuit *Clemens vs. Meredith* in Fentress County—as well as the Meredith family members listed in an additional endnote in the 2010-15 *Autobiography* ((Fentress Chancery Minutes 364, *AMT* 1: 614, endnote to 402.8-12)—so Meredith's identity seems certain.

<sup>63</sup> Twain reports, for instance, that "Dr. Meredith removed to Hannibal, by and by, and was our family physician there, and saved my life several times. Still, he was a good man and meant well. Let it go" (*AMT* 1: 215). Meredith's son Charles also rescued Twain on one occasion from "drowning in Bear Creek," Twain later recalled (*AMT* 1: 189). After Hugh and Charles Meredith returned from the California Gold Rush of 1849, Meredith performed another favor for the Clemens family that, once again, involved the Tennessee land, just as he had done when he served as an intermediate land holder for John Marshall: "Orion had him edit the *Journal* [...] while Orion briefly went to Tennessee in connection with the settlement of his father's estate" (Blair 359).

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<sup>64</sup> Dated “1838,” Grant 6416 awarded 5,000 acres on Clear Fork, extending into Morgan County, to Hugh Meredith, and the tract can be considered part of the Tennessee legacy for even more reasons. John Marshall, in partnership with the somewhat mystified “R. Williams,” entered the original claim for the tract on April 8, 1830, after John Marshall “located” the entry (Fentress Entry 511), and then it was awarded in Grant 6416 to “Hugh Meridith [sic], afsignee of John M. Clemens and Williams.” Following John Marshall’s probable purchase of the tract from Meredith in Missouri for which no direct documentation has been located, it was included in the tracts transferred in October, 1857, from all the Clemens heirs to Orion in Fentress Deed H1821. After Orion sold the Grant 6416 tract to Phillips and Gatewood in 1858 (Fentress Deed J29), it disappeared out of the Clemens name in county real estate records, but Deeds H1821 and J52 jointly qualify it as a positively identified parcel of the Tennessee land.

<sup>65</sup> Other than John Marshall’s name as “locator” on Pitman’s original claim, it remains difficult to see why the Clemens heirs would have believed they owned the Grant 6418 tract. However, they did sell portions of the tract, and those sales were legally accepted and recorded by the Fentress Register of Deeds. The 5,000-acre tract was counted by the Clemens heirs as theirs even though it was taken away from them (Fentress Deed K2-167) on October 7, 1913—approximately 3½ years after Twain’s death on April 21, 1910—and even though the tract may never have actually belonged to the Clemenses. The tract was among eleven the same size “located” by John Marshall (Fentress Entry 465, Grant 6418) during his widespread claiming spree in early 1830. The Clemens heirs included it in both their mass transfer of their properties to Orion in 1857 and their final aggregate sale to the Fentress Land Co. in 1907 (Fentress Deeds H1821 and F2-17).

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Orion sold 1,900 of the 5,000 acres in Grant 6418 to his real estate agent Abner Phillips for \$25 in 1858 (Fentress Deed L378). Phillips and R. T. Hildreth, Orion's other real estate agent in Fentress County at the time, sold an additional 200 acres to Nathaniel Lankford for an unspecified sum in 1859 (Fentress Deed I-182). Orion also sold 2,000 acres from Grant 6418 to Peter Schnitter for \$600 "to me paid" in an 1859 deal in Lee County, Iowa (Fentress Deed I-139). The additional evidence provided by these five deeds for including Grant 6418 in the Tennessee land legacy seems clear enough, except for the record completely lacking any reason that the Clemens heirs should think they owned 5,000 acres that Tennessee granted to J. S. Pease. However, Orion must have had his reasons for representing the tract as his to sell, and selling two-fifths of it, since otherwise he risked committing land fraud or perjury in his legal attestation.

<sup>66</sup> "Joseph S." or "J. S." Pease can be identified as an early to mid-nineteenth-century St. Louis merchant in several online and print sources. This Pease has not been connected to John Marshall through any extant documents as the recipient of Grant 6418, but because other St. Louis merchants served as intermediate land holders for John Marshall, and because Twain's father purchased merchandise for his stores on credit from St. Louis wholesalers, this Pease very probably was the Tennessee grant recipient. Pease may have started out as a gunsmith: according to a book by gun expert Jim Gordon of Springfield, Missouri, a "J. S. Pease" of St. Louis was included in a list of "Missouri gunsmiths" in the 1830s ("Re: Missouri Rifle?"). Like John Marshall himself, "J. S. Pease of St. Louis" also owned slaves: on June 11, 1836, he purchased a woman named Phoebe for \$700 in an estate sale at the courthouse door in Perry County, three counties downriver from St. Louis (Mills). Similarly, Pease owned an elderly man named Lukey, "slave of J. S. Pease

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[...] St. Louis” (“Missouri Birth and Death”). However, Pease appears most frequently in historic records as a merchant. For instance, in 1837, he was listed in *The Western Address Directory* as “J. S. PEASE & CO. / IMPORTERS AND WHOLESALE DEALERS IN / *British and American Hardware* ...” (Lyford 419). The address, “No. 20, MAIN STREET, St. Louis,” was less than a city block away from James Clemens, Jr., dry goods wholesaler, at “*No. 14, MAIN STREET*” (Lyford 414).

<sup>67</sup> Pease’s honesty and credibility were called into question when he served as a middleman supplier to the Union Army in St. Louis at the beginning of the Civil War, service that contributed to the court-martial of Justus McKinstry, quartermaster to Maj. Gen. John C. Frémont, the famed explorer and 1856 Republican candidate for president. McKinstry was convicted on twenty-six of the sixty-one counts against him but found guilty on only four of the counts that named Pease as the collaborating middleman (Rule, McCou).

<sup>68</sup> Considerable additional evidence suggests that Twain’s father premeditated the expansion of Grant 6402, but it will be reserved for Chapter Three since the validity of the expansion serves to demonstrate John Marshall’s mental acuity and to support his extremely high valuation of the Tennessee land.

<sup>69</sup> The Fentress entries for the five tracts seized for taxes in 1846 were not made in John Marshall’s name, nor is he listed as their “locator” (Fentress Entries 746-50); there is no evident reason that John Marshall should have been connected with them at all. Perhaps he purchased assignments to receive the eventual state grants, which were never awarded by any Tennessee governor. John Marshall would have purchased the assignments from John B. McCormack, “locator” for all five entries, but all five bear evidence of

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fraudulence. One after another, they claim to have been made on April 27, 1836, and each one is described as being located “on the North West Corner” of the previous one. No other directory or locative “calls” are given; the tracts are not located “on the waters of” any specific creeks or rivers; no natural boundaries are cited, nor any other neighbors except the previous claimant to the southeast. These entries could be applied generically to any unclaimed spot in the county, like the old borderless land warrants that were used to pay off Revolutionary War veterans with unspecified terrain west of the Appalachians (Griffey 14-15). Another question suggesting irregularities involving Fentress Entries 746-50 is why these land “entries” were considered subject to taxation since an entry did not constitute an actual title of ownership until the governor and secretary of state issued a confirming state grant (Griffey 20-21).

<sup>70</sup> Sources for the genealogical records that confirm the double first cousin relationship of Dr. John Brown Hays, James Walker, Sr., and Twain’s step-grandmother “Aunt Polly” include Rachel Varble, Herbert Weaver and his associate editors’ *Correspondence of James K. Polk*, and the online genealogical sites listed in the Works Cited as Hays, Edie Gale; “John Hays”; “Charles Hays”; and “James K. Polk, 11th President of the United States.”

<sup>71</sup> Tennessee historian Paul H. Bergeron likewise describes the Hays men as strong partisans for their kinsman-by-marriage Young Hickory. When Polk won his first, hotly contested speakership of the US House of Representatives, Bergeron quotes Andrew C. Hays as declaring that it appeared a harbinger of Democratic victory in the upcoming 1836 presidential election: “Van Buren will get the State!!!” Hays proved correct about the national results but not about Tennessee, where Van Buren lost to US Sen. Hugh

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Lawson White, a Whig. Bergeron further reports that “Polk’s brother-in-law [whom the historian does not name] insisted that the speakership outcome was ‘conclusive evidence of the utter hopelessness of Judge White’s prospects of Success in the Presidential canvass’” (37-38). That enthusiastic brother-in-law most likely was Dr. John Brown Hays or James Walker, Sr., both of whom were first cousins to “Aunt Polly” Hays Lampton.

<sup>72</sup> Dr. Hays’s mother was one of John’s two wives, both named Ann or Anne. John married the second after the first wife’s death, but genealogical records do not clearly indicate which wife was Dr. Hays’s mother.

<sup>73</sup> Hayses and Walkers repeatedly were born in Adair, bought land in Adair, married each other in Adair (in one instance marrying a cousin), died and left wills that were executed in Adair, as Edie Gale Hays reports online and as public records testify in the Adair County courthouse and public library.

### *Chapter III Endnotes*

<sup>1</sup> Justin Kaplan writes, “By 1881 Mark Twain’s scale of living was so high that just running the house and providing champagne, canvasbacks, fillets of beef, and ice-cream cherubs for his procession of visitors cost about as much as he earned from royalties and investments” (235). Similarly, Fred Kaplan reports, “The amount [Twain] invested from 1879 to 1883 was disproportionate to his and Livy’s incomes and expenses [....] Between one investment and another, it seems likely that he lost about \$100,000 in these five years” (365). With his desire to maintain an upper-class lifestyle and his seemingly

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irresistible yen to invest in inventions, Twain undoubtedly viewed the Tennessee land as a minor, irritating expense, but perhaps all the more irritating because he wanted the money for financial endeavors and social indulgences he considered more worthwhile.

<sup>2</sup> An explanatory note to a letter Twain wrote to Orion documents Twain's repeated payment of taxes on the Tennessee land: "Clemens had been helping his family pay the taxes on their Tennessee property, despite washing his hands of it in 1866 and renouncing his share of it in 1869" (SLC to Orion, 1 Aug. 1870, n. 1, "Letters," *MTPO*). A year earlier, Twain promises that if Orion concluded a then-pending sale of the Tennessee land, "I will pay my [...] share of the taxes & things—I would do pretty much anything to 'get shut' of that land" (SLC to Pamela A. Moffett, 23 June 1869, n. 8, "Letters," *MTPO*). That year, Twain also briefly remarks, "I sent you my share of the Tennessee money—however, I believe I wrote you about that" (SLC to Jane Lampton Clemens and family, 15 Dec. 1869, "Letters," *MTPO*). A note to that letter explains that "by her own reckoning," Twain's mother received \$415 from Twain that year, and that "[o]n 8 December, he had withdrawn \$250" from a cash account in New York City, "all or part of which may have gone toward his share of 'the Tennessee money'—undoubtedly a tax payment on the family property" (SLC to Jane Lampton Clemens and family, 15 Dec. 1869, n. 2). Twain also complains about having to pay taxes after Orion quashed Twain's proposed sale of the land to Herman Camp in 1866: "The land, from being suddenly worth two hundred thousand dollars, became as suddenly worth what it was before—nothing, and taxes to pay" (*AMT* 1: 470-71, endnote to 63.14-16).

<sup>3</sup> Twain's friendship with the steel magnate Andrew Carnegie is mentioned repeatedly by Fred Kaplan, among other biographers. For instance, Kaplan describes Carnegie as



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Twain's "friendly acquaintance" who invited him to address the St. Andrew's Society on Scots humor, an invitation that Twain accepted in September, 1901 (591), although he turned down Mrs. Carnegie's invitation to dinner in January, 1905 (618). Jerome Loving describes Twain, in 1893, "regularly attending grand dinners and yachting with [...] robber barons such as Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie" (337).

<sup>4</sup> When in 1894 the Paige typesetter in which Twain had deeply invested "failed a crucial test at the *Chicago Times-Herald*" and Twain realized its hoped-for success would not rescue his failing Webster & Co. publishing house, Twain looked for expenses to cut, but he wrote that he could not cut Orion's monthly stipend of \$50 (Loving 353-54) because "he has nothing else to live on" (SLC to Franklin G. Whitmore, 8 Jan. 1895, Mark Twain House, Hartford, CT, qtd. in Loving 354).

<sup>5</sup> Twain's use of "Whiteman" as a pun for a European American prospector in recently Native American territory may be subconscious, or it may reflect the actual name of a Whiteman's legendary lost silver lode, but the pun is as strikingly evident as the surname of protagonist Christopher Newman in Henry James's *The American* (1876-77).

<sup>6</sup> Like the extended quotation by Twain that follows, this characterization of Camp's potential grape-growers is drawn from Twain's autobiographical dictation of April 5, 1906 (SLC to Orion and Mary E. Clemens, 13 Dec. 1865, n. 2, "Letters," *MTPO*).

<sup>7</sup> Settlers from England established Tennessee's oldest winery, an establishment that is still in business, in a Fentress County colony they named Rugby; "[t]here, they made wines that won a number of gold medals at wine-tasting competitions in the 1880s" ("Tennessee's Oldest"). Around the same time, German settlers established the Fentress County community of Allardt, like Rugby a few miles east of Jamestown, where the

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Germans also “brought their wine making skills to this new territory [...] established personal vineyards and made some excellent wines for their own use,” continues the same website (which is sponsored by a geocaching club). Similar successful colonization efforts by wine- and cheese-making Swiss immigrants who settled northeast of Fentress County on the Cumberland Plateau, in Laurel County, Kentucky, established the still-thriving communities of Swiss Colony and East Bernstadt.

<sup>8</sup> The total \$200,000 price also strains credibility. In 1865-66, Twain apparently believed the Tennessee land only measured approximately 30,000 acres. Thus the \$200,000 offer represents a price of about \$6.67 per acre, remarkably higher than the prewar average price in Fentress County that, according to Blanche Henry Clark, never exceeded a dollar per acre. Nor does the price come anywhere close to the highest rate Orion ever obtained in any of the sales he made himself, a price of \$2.50 per acre.

<sup>9</sup> European American blindness to Native American agrarianism developed despite the expropriation by early European Americans of Native American farming methods, according to Pearce, who blames the blindness on the way the “intellectual and cultural traditions” of European Americans “so informed their thoughts and their actions that they could see and conceive of nothing but the Indian who hunted” (66). Of course, the Native Americans that European Americans, including Twain, encountered in the West did subsist primarily by hunting, reinforcing prior misconceptions about Native American lifestyles (Pearce 109).

<sup>10</sup> The threat of neighboring cultures that did not reify lifestyles based on private property ownership has often been noted in American literature, for instance, as when the narrator in St. John de Crèvecoeur’s *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) worries

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that the ease of subsistence by hunting that frontiersmen enjoy will take them too far away from the civilizing tendency of an agricultural lifestyle (51-54).

<sup>11</sup> According to an endnote in the 2010-2015 *Autobiography*, “Orion’s trade has not been documented,” but the endnote adds that Pamela Moffett gushed in an 1881 letter, “I have some good news to tell you: Charley [Webster] has sold the very last acre of Tennessee land. Is not that something to rejoice over? He traded it for a lot in St. Paul Minn. which was assessed last year at \$800. or \$850. and this year at \$1,050” (Pamela Moffett to Orion and Mollie, 20 May 1881, “Letters,” *MTPO*; qtd. in *AMT* 1: 530, n. to 208.31). Further research is needed in the recorded deeds of Corry, Pennsylvania, and St. Paul to verify which of these claims about land swaps are true, or to what extent either of these claims is true, since they do not appear to have been recorded in any way in Tennessee.

<sup>12</sup> The publication history of Twain’s claim that Orion’s land swaps circa 1887 “ended” the Clemens heirs’ possession of the Tennessee land can be found in the interrogatories that attorneys for the defendants in *Gernt* presented to Twain, including:

12<sup>th</sup> Int. Did you or not write a series of articles, which, under the title of “The Autobiography of Mark Twain,” were published in the *North American Review*, between September, 1906, and January 1, 1908, and which were published in the “Sunday Magazine of the *New York Tribune*,” and the “Sunday Magazine of the *Philadelphia Press*, during the year 1908? (Interrogatories “propounded” to SLC, *Fentress Land Co. vs. Gernt*, 1909, italics added to publication titles)

Interrogatory 13 is the one that Twain answered by asserting his claim’s truth “literarily” but not as “sworn testimony.” This interrogatory quoted a passage “verbatim” about the

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“end” of the Tennessee land from “the ‘Sunday Magazine of the *Philadelphia Press*’ for Feb. 16, 1908,” and it is the exact passage, word for word, about the “end” of the Tennessee land that appears in the *Autobiography* (AMT 1: 208) except for three differences in which numbers are spelled out as words or appear in their numeral forms.

<sup>13</sup> The monetary totals that Twain cites in this passage, at his stated rate of a dollar per acre, indicate an acreage range for the Tennessee land of 90,000 to 100,000, nearly confirming the “above 100,000” acres that Twain repeatedly claims in his own footnotes in the *Autobiography* (AMT 1: 206, 208) and likewise supporting the nearly 93,000 acres that the present study documents in Chapter Two.

<sup>14</sup> Schenck’s description of his surveys of the Grant 6402 tract can be found in his deposition in the lawsuit *Fentress Land Co. vs. Gernt*, 10 Nov. 1909, on pages 16 and 20.

<sup>15</sup> The second time Orion refused an offer that Twain would have gladly accepted on behalf of the Clemens heirs, the offer came from Twain’s father-in-law-to-be, and once again Orion’s refusal was grounded in moral scruples. In 1869, Twain conveyed Jervis Langdon’s offer to Orion of \$30,000 for the land (SLC to Orion, 3? July 1869, paraphrased in Orion to Mary E. Clemens, 7 July 1869, “Letters,” *MTPO*). Orion declined to accept unless Langdon or Langdon’s agent personally examined the land and agreed it was worth the offered sum (Orion to SLC, 7 July 1869, qtd. in SLC to Orion, 3? July 1869, n. 1, “Letters,” *MTPO*). Roughly a decade later, Orion explained, “I deeply regret that I did not send you a deed for all the Tennessee land when you had a chance to trade with Mr. Langdon. But I feared you would unconsciously cheat your prospective father-in-law” (Orion to SLC, 4 Nov. 1880, qtd. in SLC to Pamela A. Moffett, 9 Nov. 1869, n. 2, “Letters,” *MTPO*).

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<sup>16</sup> John Marshall's heirs had just deeded to Orion the entire Tennessee land legacy that they knew about on October 3, 1857, in Fentress Deed H1821, that is.

### *Chapter IV Endnotes*

<sup>1</sup> As noted in Chapter Two, Fentress County was part of the majority of land north of the Tennessee River that was transferred to the United States from the Cherokees in treaties at Hopewell, South Carolina, in 1785, and at Tellico, Tennessee, in 1805 (Powell 648-9, qtd. in Griffey 497; Powell 672-73, qtd. in Griffey 498-99).

<sup>2</sup> According to historians Donald Davidson, Wilma Dykeman, Irene Griffey, Stanley W. Hoig, and Ronald N. Satz, writing separately, senior Cherokee chiefs Attakullakulla and Oconostota both signed the Treaty of Sycamore Shoals that purported to convey central Kentucky and the Cumberland River's entire watershed north of the river, including the portion in Tennessee, to Henderson's Transylvania Company for about £10,000, or about \$50,000 worth of trade goods. However, the senior Cherokee chiefs held no authority to bar individual Cherokees from hunting in the territory they "sold" simply because, according to Satz, the Cherokees had no truly centralized tribal government at the time (58). Attakullakulla's son Dragging Canoe also refused to sign, warning that Kentucky was a "dark and bloody ground" that he and fellow resisting Cherokees, known as Chickamaugas, would make difficult to settle (Davidson 141-42, Dykeman 43-44, Harrison and Klotter 26, Hoig 58, Satz 64). Due to the limited Native American participation in signing it, the treaty simply failed to bilaterally extinguish the claims of the Shawnees, Chickasaws, other Native Americans, and the entire Cherokee nation to

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the land in question, as Twain's ancestors and their fellow white settlers of Kentucky and Middle Tennessee painfully learned throughout the following two decades of constant direct and guerrilla warfare with the Shawnees and Chickamaugan Cherokees.

<sup>3</sup> According to Ronald N. Satz, the Shawnees claimed hunting rights in the territory allegedly purchased by the Transylvania Company at Sycamore Shoals (34-35) even though they had already been driven from their homes in the Cumberland River Valley by Cherokees and Chickasaws acting in concert as recently as 1745 (Corlew 18 and 39, Davidson 41). Yet in addition to those nations, the Shawnees, Iroquois, and Creeks all "hunted on the land during game season but always returned to their towns [...] on less disputed and safer grounds" (Corlew 145). Thus, each of these peoples could be said to "own" the eastern two-thirds of Kentucky and portions of Middle Tennessee—although none of them really believed in holding title to land at all in the white sense of the word (Harrison and Klotter 8).

<sup>4</sup> Both Virginia and North Carolina voided Henderson's purchase on the grounds that private individuals and companies could not purchase land directly from the Native Americans (Dykeman 60, Griffey 24), but both states "also conveniently assumed that his purchase voided Cherokee claims, and each state awarded the Henderson group two hundred thousand acres as a consolation prize" (Davidson 143).

<sup>5</sup> According to Donald Davidson, "an island of settlement began in Middle Tennessee in 1780, and another one in Kentucky some years earlier. Both 'islands' were reached by a roundabout northern route—the difficult Wilderness Road—that led away from the Watauga settlements [in northeastern Tennessee], away from the Tennessee Valley, northwest across the Cumberlands and through Cumberland Gap, and so on around"

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(133). Later, Davidson adds, “as long as Dragging Canoe and his warriors of the Lower Towns held the Tennessee [River] in firm blockade, there could be no such mass emigration down the Tennessee as distinguished the Ohio [...] Settlers bound for Middle Tennessee took the old route through the Cumberland Gap and Kentucky, or waited at Southwest Point (Kingston) for a guard to accompany them over the newly built wagon road across the Cumberland plateau to Nashville” (182). The first settlers at Fort Nashborough, also known as the French Lick before it became Nashville, were led by James Robertson across Kentucky from the Watauga settlements and herded their stock across the ice-covered Cumberland River on Christmas Day, 1779 (Corlew 51-52, Dykeman 62, Langsdon 10, Satz 48). However, that same winter, an exception to the general trend of pioneers traveling through Kentucky to avoid Dragging Canoe’s guerrillas was Col. John Donelson’s flotilla of settlers including women, children, and 15-year-old Rachel Donelson, who later became Andrew Jackson’s wife. This flotilla headed straight through Dragging Canoe’s base and ran the gauntlet past the Cherokee blockade of the Tennessee River to reach Nashville (Corlew 52, Davidson 150-66, Dykeman 62, Langsdon 10, Satz 48).

<sup>6</sup> Not only did Twain’s paternal ancestors migrate from Puritan-dominated colonial Massachusetts, where Robert Clements helped found the town of Haverhill in 1642, to Virginia and then westward to Kentucky (*AMT* 1: 525-6, endnote to 203.8), Twain claims that one of his distant ancestors was the Puritan regicide Gregory Clements, misidentified by Twain as Geoffrey Clements (Scharnhorst 3). This “putative ancestor” of Twain’s was one of the signers of Charles I’s death warrant in 1649 during the Cromwellian Revolution led by the Puritans, although the editors of the 2010-15 *Autobiography* note

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that “[e]xtensive genealogical research” has failed to confirm Twain’s alleged ancestral connection to Gregory Clements (*AMT* 1: 203-4, 526, endnote to 204.1-4).

<sup>7</sup> This repudiation of idleness was not always a theological judgment, for as Georg Cavallar suggests in his analysis of Vattel, who prioritizes agriculture as a function of natural law, “[t]here is an additional utilitarian calculus involved. Population increases make an extensive use of the soil necessary” (206). Cavallar is referring to Vattel’s assertion that nomads “who, to avoid labor, chuse [sic] to live only by hunting, and [by] their flocks” follow a lifestyle that “might, doubtless, be allowed in the first ages of the world, when the earth, without cultivation, produced more than was sufficient to feed its small number of inhabitants” (Vattel 129) but, even by the mid-eighteenth century, had become so populous that “it could not subsist if all nations were disposed to live in that manner” (Vattel 130).

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that Byron does not mention the frontier warfare conducted by “General Boon,” as the British Romantic poet labels the frontiersman; rather, Byron praises the “back-woodsman of Kentucky / For killing nothing but a buck and bear” (659, Canto 8, stanza 61), specifically contrasting Boone with “Sylla the manslayer” and omitting the Native Americans that Boone undoubtedly slew in the settlers’ repeated battles with them.

<sup>9</sup> “Treachery was a principal theme in the whites’ treatment of the red men,” especially in maneuvers to obtain Native American land, British historian Hugh Brogan writes (61). For instance, President Thomas Jefferson’s explicitly instructed his agent to the Chickasaws to encourage individual chiefs to run up debts at trading posts because, “whenever in that situation, they will always cede land to rid themselves of debt”



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(Dykeman 60, Satz 52). The scheme worked all too well; the Chickasaws ceded sections of land piecemeal to pay debts before they finally ceded all of West Tennessee and far-western Kentucky in the Jackson Purchase of 1818 (Satz 52-54). Questionable tactics also were likely used to conclude the 1798 Treaty of Tellico that obtained the whites' right-of-way for the Cumberland Road through Middle Tennessee from eastern Tennessee to Nashville, clearing the way for John Marshall Clemens's eventual acquisition of his land grants in Fentress County. Cherokee chiefs initially opposed the treaty, Stanley W. Hoig reports, but "whether by the usual method of getting the chiefs drunk or bribery or both," the treaty commissioners eventually acquired the right-of-way plus other land cessions from the Cherokees (90).

<sup>10</sup> Making treaties with Native Americans, followed by the subsequent abrogation of those treaties by the United States government, was the most frequent gambit employed to win land cessions, a pattern of duplicity and betrayal that earns Twain's condemnation when it is used by the Hebrews against the Midianites in the Old Testament (*LE* 46-55). The customary argument in these ultimately broken treaties was that the federal government could not control its people from preempting land, but if Native Americans would cede those portions of land that had already been seized by settlers, the government would somehow suddenly control its people from seizing the remaining land (Churchill 210, Corlew 90-91, Hoig 67, 74). Then the cycle would begin again as settlers squatted on more land and the government sought, by treaty, to legalize their squatting. Alternately, the government simply made war against Native American peoples and claimed their territory as the spoils of war (Kluger 212). This pattern of illegal settlement, coerced treaty making and unprovoked warfare initiated by white politicians,

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the Indian Bureau, and the United States Army continued in the Great Plains and the rest of the Far West during Twain's most active years as a writer in repeated instances that Dee Brown has documented throughout his *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (1970), a pattern perpetrated and perpetuated in campaigns against the Navajos, Santee Sioux, Cheyennes, Arapahos, Comanches, plains Sioux, Nez Perces, Modocs, Poncas, Utes, and Apaches, according to Brown. Twain's awareness of the suppression of the Modocs in northern California, although not necessarily any expression of sympathy on his part for Modocs who suffered the white theft of their land, can be seen in Twain's nickname for his favorite daughter Susy as a young girl, whom he affectionately called "the Modoc" due to "the cut of her hair" (SLC to Mary Mason Fairbanks, 6 July 1873, n. 19, "Letters," *MTPO*).

<sup>11</sup> The pervasiveness of paying veterans of both the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War for their service with trans-Appalachian land warrants can be found in Albright 142, Griffey 5-8, 10, 21-22, 38-39, Harrison and Klotter 53, Kluger 93, Langsdon 19, and Talbert 17-18.

<sup>12</sup> For evidence of the British alliance with and support of Native Americans in their post-Revolutionary wars against trans-Appalachian settlers, see Albright 72-73, Graves 34, Griffey 4, Pearce 54-55, and Talbert 158-59.

<sup>13</sup> For details of British deployment of and alliance with Native Americans on the Crown's side of the Revolutionary War itself, see Brogan 183, Corlew 62-65, Davidson 144, Driscoll 48-50, Harrison and Klotter 34, 40-42, Pearce 53, Satz 66, and Talbert 31, 43, 67, 98.

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<sup>14</sup> During the Revolutionary War, the British controlled Florida and abetted Native Americans in warring on Kentucky and Tennessee settlers from that direction (Hoig 59). After the war, the Spanish governments in Florida and Louisiana either winked at or encouraged similar border conflict between Native Americans and settlers in the Upper South. For details of Spanish support of Native American resistance to settlers' preemption of Alabama, Mississippi, and western Tennessee, see Davidson 184, Hoig 84, Langsdon 18-19, Pearce 55, and Satz 51.

<sup>15</sup> In the South, Creek resistance against the settlers was brutally put down by Andrew Jackson's troops at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in Alabama (1814). The British encouraged the intertribal resistance of Tecumseh's followers at the Battle of Tippecanoe in western Indiana (1811) and throughout the ensuing War of 1812, and Tecumseh died leading the predominantly Native American forces for the British in the Battle of the Thames. In each case, the forced cession of millions of acres to the United States motivated the Native American resistance. For details of the British alliance with and support of the Creeks in the South, see Corlew 139-40, Pearce 55, and Satz 38. For more on the British alliance with and strong reliance on Native Americans in the North and Canada against United States forces predominated by Kentuckians, see Harrison and Klotter 87-92, Ralph Paine 43-44, and Pearce 54-55.

<sup>16</sup> The European American viewpoint that the Native Americans were "savage" aggressors against peaceful agrarian settlers, egged on by the monarchical enemies of the new American republic, is thoroughly described in Albright's *Early History of Middle Tennessee* (1909). Young Twain would have been exposed to this ethos, of course, roughly sixty-five years before Albright published his history. The complete envelopment

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of white settlers, including Twain's ancestors, in an atmosphere of perpetual fear placed them on constant alert, according to Albright, and such an atmosphere was a cultural memory that Twain's storytelling mother surely would have inculcated in him. Albright dismisses the Native Americans' grievances by effectively placing them in the category of uncivilized Others, labeling them as "savage" and cruel and accusing them of wasting potential farmland as "hunting grounds" (72-73). The persistent ethos that Native Americans were "the enemy" pervades Albright's text. They are described over and over again as either "the enemy" or "the savages"; a typical passage states, "After the close of the year 1781, the settlers enjoyed a brief season of quiet, but early in February following, signs of *the enemy* again appeared" (100, emphasis added).

<sup>17</sup> For details of the Holston years of Twain's maternal ancestors, Montgomery family genealogy, and other Holston precedents to and connection with the early settlement of Kentucky, see Collins 405, Green 142, Harrison and Klotter 29, Talbert 6, Trabue 60-63, 172 n. 40, 198 n. 65, and Waddell 404, 480.

<sup>18</sup> Various known as Logan's Fort or St. Asaph near present-day Stanford, Kentucky. The "Indian fighting" of Logan—Twain's great-great uncle—had already included frontier service as a sergeant under Col. Henry Bouquet in 1764 and as a lieutenant under Capt. William Cocke in Lord Dunmore's 1774 campaign against the Shawnees at Ohio's Scioto River (Talbert 5, 8-10, Waddell 404).

<sup>19</sup> After about an hour trying to herd the cattle, Logan returned to the fort with two or three gunshot wounds, riding his "very bloody" white horse and biting his thumb to hold up a broken arm: "It was a bad affair. He said about 9 or 10 Indians all fired on him with in [sic] a few steps of him" (Trabue 60).

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<sup>20</sup> Moluntha was one of the Shawnee chiefs who had signed a treaty with the United States the previous year. In Logan's defense, it must be noted that he court-martialed the offending officer for murder (Talbert 211-15), but he nevertheless stood prominently among Twain's ancestors who turned their anti-indigenous attitudes into anti-indigenous actions.

<sup>21</sup> The attack on Nickajack is described in Albright 190-96, Davidson 194-98, and Langsdon 18.

<sup>22</sup> For further discussion of Abate's theory about Twain and Wounded Knee, see Chapter Five.

<sup>23</sup> We know this because, as Michael Watson reports, Logan's and Col. William Whitley's troops marched through Casey and Adair counties in Kentucky on their way to Nashville. According to Watson, "[t]here were not at that time more than fifty men in Adair County and tradition relates that as many of them participated in the expedition as could be spared [...]. Tradition has preserved the name of only one resident of the county who went on the expedition, Maj. Nathan Montgomery" (17-18).

<sup>24</sup> The Nickajack genocide was not entirely unprovoked; two years earlier, in 1792, the mixed-blood Cherokee chief John Watts led a concerted but unsuccessful attempt to "wipe out the western Cumberland settlements [including Nashville] and then turn back and fall upon the detested Wataugans to the east" who populated the Holston settlements, according to Hoig (82). The residents of Nickajack also attacked a boatload of white traders coming down the Tennessee River in 1794, killing three women and four children (Davidson 188, Hoig 87). The Cherokees also lethally attacked boats on the Tennessee in 1788, 1790, and 1791 (Albright 142-44, Davidson 188).

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<sup>25</sup> When peace talks with Chief Doublehead formally terminated the hostilities, Logan failed to recruit more than thirty volunteers. He traveled to central Kentucky instead of Nashville because he had been elected to the Kentucky General Assembly (Talbert 279-80).

<sup>26</sup> According to Young, “Benjamin Briggs told Lyman Draper that these Indians were Cherokee” (Trabue 198 n. 71). Young elsewhere identifies Briggs thus: “For the reminiscences of an old man who as a lad of thirteen years had lived in Logan’s Fort during this alarm, see Lyman C. Draper, Interview with Benjamin Briggs, Lincoln County, Ky., fall 1844” (Trabue 171-72 n. 39). Draper’s collection of historic manuscripts is archived at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, including Trabue’s 1827 MS for *Westward into Kentucky* (UP of Kentucky. 1981), which Young edited. Trabue himself titled the short book “The Narrative of Daniel Trabue: Memorandum made by me D Trabue in the year of 1827 of a Jurnal [sic] of events from memory and Tradition” ([35]).

<sup>27</sup> Jane Lampton’s mother Margaret “Peggy” Casey died on October 6, 1818, nearly two decades before Twain was born on November 31, 1835. She is buried in the Casey’s Station Cemetery, also known as the Johnston Cemetery, just outside Columbia, Kentucky (Hill).

<sup>28</sup> Trabue editor Young estimates a slightly older age for Betsey, giving Jane’s age as eighteen (198 n. 75) and Elizabeth’s as “two years younger than Jane,” or sixteen (199 n. 79).

<sup>29</sup> Collins’s account is internally consistent; it reports that Twain’s Montgomery ancestors “remained but a few months” at Logan’s Fort to which “[i]n the fall of 1779”

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they “moved from Virginia to Kentucky,” implying that they had newly built and relocated to Montgomery’s Station when they were attacked “[i]n the month of March, 1780” (405-406). However, most likely, the “fully knee Deep” snow of the “intencly [sic] cold [...] ‘Hard Winter’ of 1779-1780” (Trabue 73-74), a winter that solidly froze both the Kentucky and Cumberland rivers (Trabue 175 n. 19), kept the Montgomery family from moving out of Logan’s Fort that winter and thus, they must have been attacked an entire year later, in 1781.

<sup>30</sup> Logan biographer Charles Gano Talbert also gives 1781 as the date of the attack (121, 123) while Michael Watson describes it as occurring “one night in March 1781” (21). A minor inconsistency remains: Trabue reports that the attack happened “on the 27 of February 1781,” not March (151).

<sup>31</sup> 1.) Trabue was present in Kentucky in spring, 1780, and does not report the attack happening then; 2.) Trabue was back in his native Virginia throughout 1781, participating in the Revolutionary War and the Battle of Yorktown in October, 1781, a fact that explains his omission of any direct experience of the Montgomery’s Station attack in 1781.

<sup>32</sup> “Note by Lyman C. Draper: From Mrs. Casey, Col. Trabue obtained this narrative, and wrote it down at the time [...] This note from James Trabue, now of St. Louis, Nov. 28, 1851” (Trabue 199 n. 90).

<sup>33</sup> Powers footnotes this quotation from the Hannibal *Messenger* by identifying Buntline as “a lurid ‘dime novelist’ of the period” (*Dangerous Water* 187).

<sup>34</sup> Trabue editor Young genderizes Betsey’s flight and Otherizes the Native Americans when he reports in an endnote, “When the Indian who chased Elizabeth failed to overtake

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her, his fellow braves laughingly said that he ‘couldn’t catch a young squaw’” (Trabue 199 n. 80), without explaining how he could know what they said. Trabue also describes a somewhat more complicated flight path for Betsey, including brief refuge in her uncle John Montgomery’s cabin, which at the time was occupied and controlled by the attackers. Her pursuer did not follow her inside, and she quickly dodged outside again—before the Cherokees in the cabin could seize her? In any case, the outcome was the same as Collins reports because Betsey “then [...] made her escape” (Trabue 192).

<sup>35</sup> Driscoll silently selects an “e” as the preferred spelling of Anne Casey Montgomery’s name and cites her memoir thus: “‘Col. Wm. Casey, of Ky. From his daughter, Mrs. Ann Montgomery, Columbia, Ky., 1844.’ Draper Manuscripts 12C, Wisconsin Historical Society” (*MTAI* 373 n. 35).

<sup>36</sup> The date and location of Jane Casey’s death are documented by her gravestone in West Point Cemetery, Lee County, Iowa, that identifies her as “JANE / WIFE OF / COL. WM. CASEY / DIED / Jan. 20, 1844 / AGED / 83 YEARS” (Spengler). For details of her move to Iowa, see Lee County, Iowa, historians Ann Stroupe and Jim Ramsey’s “Mark Twain Lee County Connection: Did Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) Meet Thomas Sawyer of Lee County, Iowa Before He Wrote *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*?” and Lyman C. Draper’s footnote to Daniel Trabue, “She [Jane Casey] Emigrated to Illinois, and then to Iowa, with her son Green Casey, and there both died, she some 4 or 5 years ago” (Trabue 199 n. 90).

<sup>37</sup> In addition to daily mail service in warm weather between Hannibal and St. Louis to the south, regular steamboat traffic also ran on up the Mississippi as far north as Minneapolis during Twain’s childhood (Hoffman 10, Fred Kaplan 13). In *Life on the*



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*Mississippi*, Twain himself reports, “Once a day a cheap, gaudy packet arrived upward from St. Louis, and another downward from Keokuk” in Lee County, Iowa (*LM* 32).

<sup>38</sup> Trabue puts the number of rescuers who responded at “25 Men” (152).

<sup>39</sup> Trabue gives Flory’s age as “about 8 years Old” (152).

<sup>40</sup> It’s also possible to infer from Orion’s syntax that he is referring to the antipathy to Native Americans felt by Jane Lampton Clemens herself, if the antecedents for “she” and “her” extend further back in Orion’s paragraph. However, during Twain’s childhood, Jane took her family (excluding John Marshall, a deist who refused to attend) to the Presbyterian church in Hannibal (Powers, *A Life* 29-30). Apparently, she was not a Baptist, as Orion specifies. Wecter credits his quotation of Orion to an “[u]ntitled six-page fragment in Orion’s hand” in “MTP, Documents File” (Wecter 276 n. 12). Of course, Wecter’s Twain biography preceded Walter Blair’s *Mark Twain’s Hannibal, Huck, and Tom* (1969), in which Orion’s biographical sketch of his mother eventually was published and from which the present study quotes Orion.

<sup>41</sup> For details of the prisoners’ identities, abduction, and recapture, see Collins 406, Talbert 187-88, 262-63, and Trabue 152.

<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, in his authoritative *Tennessee: A Short History*, Robert E. Corlew appears to cast some doubt on the cause of John Donelson’s death “supposedly at the hands of Indians” (113), and in his *Tennessee: A Political History*, Philip Langsdon does not even mention Native Americans in connection with Donelson’s death prior to his daughter Rachel’s marriage to Andrew Jackson, “the Indian fighter” (30). Langsdon writes, “Mr. Donelson had been robbed and murdered in Kentucky, near the Tennessee line, while returning from a trip to Washington” (29).

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<sup>43</sup> The image that the land is the spoil that will somehow come to white men off-handedly, as a natural consequence of the preordained disappearance of its previous owners, is implicit in Bryant's linkage of "the fate of the Indian with the natural cycle of sunrise and sunset" in his "A Walk at Sunset" (1821) and "An Indian at the Burial-Place" (1824), according to Ostrowski. The latter poem offers its audience verbal images of European Americans "fill[ing] the land," driving its current inhabitants "into the Western sea," and turning up Native American bone fragments with the agrarian plow. Furthermore, Bryant's sunset symbolism also explicitly suggests a direct connection between Native American extinction and territorial dispossession, Ostrowski writes: in "A Walk at Sunset," the poet reassures his audience "that the demise of the Indian is as inevitable and as natural as the passing of day, and no more cause for mourning, since the persona will predict at the poem's close that with a new sunrise, a new people will come to take the Indian's place on the land."

<sup>44</sup> Gribben lists four instances of Twain's exposure to Bryant (107-08). In an 1873 letter, Twain mentions *The Family Library of Poetry of Song* (1870), a 1,066-page anthology compiled by Bryant, and its inclusion of a facsimile of Bryant's autograph (SLC to "Dear Sir," 31 July 1873, Massachusetts Historical Society, qtd. in Gribben 108). The anthology's "contents" pages list twenty-seven poems or portions of poems by Bryant (*Family Library* 10) although they do not include any of Bryant's works specifically mentioned by Ostrowski.

<sup>45</sup> Even if young Twain did not hear his great grandmother's stories directly from her lips, and primarily heard them told by his own mother, Lewis Collins's account of the Montgomery's Station attack based primarily on Jane Montgomery Casey's recollections

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first appeared in his *History of Kentucky* in 1847. Gribben does not list Lewis Collins in his bibliography of Twain's reading, going directly instead from "Collin, Gracie Lathrop" to "Collins, Wilkie" in *Mark Twain's Library* (1: 154). However, the lack of "Collins, Lewis" in Gribben only suggests that Twain did not own Collins's tome and never mentioned it in print. In fact, as Driscoll notes, Orion's 1890 biographical sketch in eulogy to his mother mentions his great grandfather Casey's "honorable mention" in "the printed history of Kentucky" (Blair 381) which probably refers to Collins's book (*MTAI* 20). Thomas Marshall Green, in his previously mentioned *Historic Families of Kentucky* (1889), describes the attack and then adds that Jane Montgomery "afterward married the gallant General Casey, of Adair, and was the grandmother [sic] of 'Mark Twain,' the noted humorist" (133-34). His almost-correct information also is reprinted and credited to Green in Joseph A. Waddell's *Annals of Augusta County, Virginia* (1888) at the conclusion of Waddell's own description of the Montgomery's Station attack: "The Jane Montgomery mentioned became the wife of General Casey of Kentucky, and was the grandmother [sic] of the famous humorist, 'Mark Twain' (*Green*)" (480-81). In addition, although it does not mention Twain's descent from Jane Montgomery Casey, a fourth book published during Twain's lifetime also describes the Montgomery's Station attack in detail: Perrin et al.'s *Kentucky: A History of the State* (1888) repeats the entire story from Collins's 1847 volume in a paraphrased narrative (175).

<sup>46</sup> For details of Jane Lampton Clemens's pride in the alleged aristocratic roots of her ancestors, see *AMT* 1: 329, "JLC" 47, Fred Kaplan 6, Powers, *Dangerous* 34, Varble 313, and Webster 13.

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<sup>47</sup> For descriptions of his mother by Twain himself, see *AMT* 1: 212, “JLC” 44-45, and Lauber, *Making* 14.

<sup>48</sup> These biographers other than Lauber also depict the mother and son’s interaction as much more fraught with intergenerational tension than Lauber implies. This tension also is suggested by the relationship between Aunt Polly and Tom Sawyer in the latter’s eponymous novel (*TS* 1-5, 20-21 52-53, 104-9, 154-59, 166-69), recapitulated by the testy relationship between Aunt Sally and Tom on the Phelps farm in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (*HF* 236-38, 261-62, 270-71).

<sup>49</sup> In his *Sam Clemens of Hannibal* (1952), Wecter relies on a later version of Lewis Collins’s *History of Kentucky* (1847) than the 1968 facsimile edition that I consulted for the present study, a facsimile that reproduces Collins’s original version verbatim. Wecter draws upon an edition that was revised by Richard H. Collins twenty-seven years after its initial appearance and then was published in Covington, Ky., in 1874 (Wecter 319: “Collins, Lewis” bibliography entry). Wecter’s quotation of the Collinses’ narrative of the Montgomery’s Station attack (Wecter 21) is derived from pages 472-73 of the 1874 edition of *History of Kentucky*, according to Wecter 276 n. 11.

<sup>50</sup> One such error may be Powers’s statement that Twain’s great-great uncle John Montgomery was killed after the raiders broke into his cabin (39-40). As noted earlier in this chapter, according to Collins, John had been “in bed” and “was fired upon through a crack, and mortally wounded,” and only then was “his door forced open, and his wife made prisoner” (406). Trabue’s account, on the other hand, would support Powers’s version—but it is Collins’s account (via Wecter), that Powers relies upon, not Trabue’s. Powers indicates that in *Dangerous Water*, “[d]etails from these Kentucky and Tennessee

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years, and of the Clemens family migration from Tennessee to Florida, Mo., are taken principally from Wecter, op. cit.” (307 n. 22) and that the Wecter tome in question is *Sam Clemens of Hannibal* (306 n. 3).

<sup>51</sup> Even though Wecter quotes Collins’s essential paragraph describing the death of Twain’s great-great grandfather in the attack and the entrapment of Jane Montgomery Casey in her cabin, Powers does not specifically mention either occurrence.

<sup>52</sup> Collins further elaborates about the African American slave whom Trabue describes as “skelped” but surviving: “After traveling some distance, they came upon the yellow [mulatto] girl, who had been tomahawked, scalped and left for dead; but who, on hearing the well-known voice of General Logan, sprang to her feet, and afterwards recovered” (Collins 406). Furthermore, Grandmother Jane appears again in a detail of Anne Casey Montgomery’s story that seemingly contradicts Collins, “Anne also recalled that the scalped mulatto left for dead in the clearing ‘was found ... towards evening ... by Jane Montgomery [not Logan], brought in and finally recovered’” (*MTAI* 22). Anne’s version once again casts her mother in a heroic light, and as a “Casey family” version, it may be the closest to the one Grandmother Jane told her granddaughter Jane Lampton.

<sup>53</sup> Trabue also confirms the escape of Joseph Russell, Jane’s brother-in-law: “They [the Cherokees] also broke open Mr. Russel’s house and took them all prisoners Except Mr. Russil [sic]. He made his escape” (151).

<sup>54</sup> Trabue’s version fairly closely corroborates Collins’s account here as well: “William Montgomery [...] Jum[p]ed to his Door when the indeans was trying to opin it and put a large trough against it and then shot at 2 endeans at once and Mortally wounded one and break the other one’s thigh [sic, repeatedly]” (151-52).

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<sup>55</sup> Once again, Trabue's version is fairly close to that of Collins: "After a little while one Indian got up on a log, appeared to be scolding about something; and William shot him Down Dead" (152).

<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, Trabue reports that the pursuers turned back because they were unable to keep trailing the fleeing Cherokees: "The indeans made so little sighn in this cain brak and scattered in such a manner that our men persued no further after them [sic, repeatedly]" (153).

<sup>57</sup> The source of Twain's passage as quoted by Powers (40) can be readily located through perusal of Twain's collected writings, but Powers also specifically identifies it in an endnote: "From a description of a massacre in Minnesota retold by Satan in *Letters from the Earth*" (Powers 307, endnote 1).

<sup>58</sup> Twain's letter (24 July 1884) to Webster, who was Twain's publisher at the time as well as his nephew-in-law is quoted in Gribben 197.

<sup>59</sup> A more precise explanation is that Twain's Satan quotes selected verses of Numbers 31:1-47 without citing that biblical passage by its book or chapter (*LE* 46-48), stating only verse numbers for the verses selected from the passage. However, at the conclusion of *Letters from the Earth*, Twain's Satan does acknowledge that the verses he quotes come from the book of Numbers, in addition to other verses that he quotes from Deuteronomy: "The Beatitudes and the quoted chapters from Numbers and Deuteronomy ought always to be read from the pulpit together," he recommends (*LE* 55).

<sup>60</sup> Complete acculturation of white family members by Native American captors was especially feared. For instance, Edward Albright describes one outcome of the previously mentioned Native American attack on the flatboats of trader-settlers traveling

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down the Tennessee River in 1788. “The youngest of the children, a boy, was detained for five years among the Creeks,” Albright reports. “When released he had forgotten the language of his parents and spoke only in the Indian tongue” (144).

<sup>61</sup> Although nearly every Twain biographer mentions it, Twain’s immersion into a northern, abolitionist *ethos* upon his 1870 marriage to Olivia Langdon (“Clemens and Langdon”) and his subsequent residence among abolitionists including Harriet Beecher Stowe in Hartford, Connecticut, is documented especially thoroughly by Sherwood Cummings in his 1991 *American Literature* essay “Mark Twain’s Moveable Farm and the Evasion” (450-51).

### *Chapter V Endnotes*

<sup>1</sup> Blair 91, Harris 503, Kime 327-30.

<sup>2</sup> SLC to *Alta California* editors, San Francisco, 5 June 1867, qtd. in Walker and Dane 266.

<sup>3</sup> *LM* 375-78, Budd 89-91, Seelye xxii.

<sup>4</sup> *HF* 25, 247-51, 264-69, 272-73.

<sup>5</sup> Collins 406, Trabue 151.

<sup>6</sup> An exception to this cultural commonplace might be found in wrongful-death lawsuits against the estate of the perpetrator of an alleged wrongful death; in this sense alone, Injun Joe’s targeting of the Widow Douglas can be read as bearing a certain, albeit limited, validity. Yet the egregious brutality and barbarity of Joe’s threatened reprisal renders Twain’s implicit condemnation of Joe’s threats unmistakable, and Twain’s scorn

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of hereditary consequences and claims, discussed in detail in Chapter Three, also can be sensed in his reader-shocking recitation of Joe's intended mutilation of the Widow and his indifference to the possibility of a chain reaction of possible consequences.

<sup>7</sup> Deut. 20:10, qtd. in *LE* 48.

<sup>8</sup> Deut. 20: 13 and 16, qtd. in *LE* 48.

<sup>9</sup> Eckert 440-41, qtd. in Churchill 210.

<sup>10</sup> Eckert 440-41, qtd. in Churchill 275, n. 421.

<sup>11</sup> David Newquist interprets Twain's description of the warrior's revenge as suggesting the possibility that Twain may have intended to consider white wrongs against Native Americans if he had continued his narrative, but acknowledges that no evidence is available to confirm or refute that possibility (69).

<sup>12</sup> There is no literal suggestion that Buck is Native American despite Huck's metaphorical reference to his family as "the tribe of Grangerfords" (*HF* 126). However, Buck's name does echo Twain's usage of the term "bucks and squaws" when he describes the knights and ladies in *A Connecticut Yankee in King's Arthur's Court* (1889) as "white Indians" (*CY* 20).

<sup>13</sup> For discussions of the agrarian vs. nomadic implications of the feuding families' names, see Hoy 19; Lowery 19-21. In particular, Lowery comments that "the two forces in natural conflict are the man of land and the wanderer" (20).

<sup>14</sup> Presumably, Driscoll intended the word "notion" rather than "motion" to appear at this point.

<sup>15</sup> *LE* 183, qtd. in "'Man Factories'" 10.



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<sup>16</sup> That Twain's decision not to publish "The United States of Lyncherdom" and his proposed book on lynching was due to their potential to offend his southern readers is documented by Andrew Hoffman, Justin Kaplan, Fred Kaplan, and Jerome Loving, but briefly mentioned and disputed by Ron Powers. Justin Kaplan writes that Twain ultimately felt forced to agree with his publisher at the time, Frank Bliss, "that in one crucial respect the lynching book was a poor idea: it would kill sales in the South" (364-65). Loving puts it this way: "Neither the book nor the article was ever published in Twain's lifetime because, as the *North American Review* editors warned him, it would cost him his southern readership" (286). Loving later reiterates his claim that Twain, in declining to write the book or publish "The United States of Lyncherdom," was practicing "self-censorship" (407). Hoffman concludes that "the businessman in him soon intervened against the moralist" in fear of "destroy[ing] his southern market," and he quotes Twain as writing to Bliss, "I shouldn't have even half a friend left down there, after it issued from the press" (SLC to Bliss, 29 Aug. 1901, qtd. in Hoffman 439, also qtd. in Justin Kaplan 365 without a source note). Fred Kaplan writes that Twain "changed his mind about the entire project, realizing the value of the 'Southern trade' to both him and his publishers," and he quotes a different sentence from Twain's Aug. 29 letter to Bliss: "Upon reflection ... it won't do for me to write that book" (qtd. in Fred Kaplan 590-91).

<sup>17</sup> Driscoll cites the marginalia to the manuscript of *More Tramps Abroad*, the British title for *Following the Equator*, ms. p. 728, "housed in the New York Public Library's Berg Collection of English and American literature" (*MTAI* 396, n. 3 and 9).

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<sup>18</sup> Driscoll hypothesizes that both Fiedler and Harris “were apparently unaware of” Twain’s 1886 letter to President Cleveland denouncing the bounty as “scoundrelism” (*MTAI* 5). However, Harris *does* acknowledge, “In either 1885 or 1886, he wrote Grover Cleveland a letter protesting the taking of Indian scalps for bounties,” but wryly adds, “He had also written protests against cruelty to animals” (502-03). Thus, rightly or wrongly, Harris suggests that even Twain’s letter to Cleveland cannot be interpreted as varying significantly from his customary dehumanization of Native Americans.

<sup>19</sup> Coulombe interpretation of Twain’s attitude toward Native Americans as sequentially following a four-stage “racial pattern” in Twain’s writing will be addressed later in this chapter.

<sup>20</sup> Harris lists almost all of Twain’s attacks on Native Americans that have previously been mentioned in the present study, including the treacherous massacre of the Mills family and the abduction and gang rape of their daughter in “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians” (Harris 503); Twain’s condemnation of the Gosiutes’ omnivorous eating habits and lack of personal hygiene in *Roughing It* (Harris 498); Twain’s suggestion that the Army should “polish off those Indians” in his previously described *Alta California* letter (Harris 498); and his advice to the Secretary of War “that for the Indian soap and education were more effective than a massacre” (Harris 497) in “The Facts Concerning the Recent Resignation,” although Harris does not mention Twain’s satiric advocacy of massacring Native Americans to commit literal genocide before trying soap and education to commit cultural genocide (*SNO* 322). Harris also mentions Twain’s purportedly satiric advocacy of Native American “extermination” in “The Noble

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Red Man” (Harris 497) and the abduction and murder of the fictional wife by Native Americans in “The Californian’s Tale” (Harris 500).

<sup>21</sup> Harris neglects to mention that Twain also has Boggs himself claim, “I’m on the waw-path” (*HF* 156).

<sup>22</sup> Credible evidence including a letter to Orion points to Twain drafting an early version of *Stormfield’s Visit* in the late 1860s, but a revised and expanded version first appeared in *Harper’s Magazine* in two installments in December 1907 and January 1908 (Baetzhöld and McCullough 130, 137-38). Twain’s final version, quoted in the present study, was published in book form in 1909.

<sup>23</sup> In fact, given the possible time overlap of the early composition of *Stormfield’s Visit* and the 1869 publication of *Innocents*, Twain may have simply paraphrased his description of Paiute funeral practices from *Innocents* somewhat more concisely in *Stormfield’s Visit*, but contemporaneously rather than forty years later.

<sup>24</sup> Harries dismisses the presence of Native Americans in *Stormfield’s Heaven* as insignificant “as he also admitted Henry the Eighth” (Harris 504). The English king renowned for his six wives and church schism performs as a tragedian in Heaven and reenacts “the scenes where he kills people” (*CSVH* 594). Twain also admits Homer, Alexander, Caesar, Hannibal, the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets, Buddha, “Hindoos,” and “Mahomet” (*CSVH* 583-89, 596-97) without any theological hair-splitting about their non-conversion to Christianity that might disqualify them from admission, unlike Dante’s detailed consideration of the same issue in *The Inferno*.

<sup>25</sup> Newquist’s litany of Twain’s literary attacks on Native Americans includes their treachery in “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians,” a text which portrays “a

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scheming amiability and a violent malevolence in the Indians encountered by Huck and Tom,” according to Newquist (60); “his mention of the ‘Goshoots’ in *Roughing It*,” which Newquist describes as “harshly denunciatory and intense in its portrait of debased humanity”; and Twain’s “scathing” essay, “The Noble Red Man” (Newquist 59-60).

<sup>26</sup> Newquist 60. Newquist also suggests that Twain reprints the first of the two legends with a side comment that Longfellow incorporated it in *Song of Hiawatha* (1855) partly to make a “dig at Longfellow’s poesy” (71) when Twain comments that “it is worth reading in the original form, if only that one may see how effective a genuine poem can be without the helps and graces of poetic measure and rhythm” (*LM* 483-84).

<sup>27</sup> Newquist 71. Twain does not include “The Undying Head” in his actual chapter, but only in an appendix (*LM* 485, 515-27).

<sup>28</sup> *CY* 5, 53, 70-81, 119, 211.

<sup>29</sup> The years to come after *Life on the Mississippi* saw the publication of *A Connecticut Yankee* in 1889, “The Californian’s Tale” in 1893, “To the Person Sitting in Darkness” in 1901, and “A Horse’s Tale” in 1906, as well as Twain’s composition of the posthumously published “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians” in 1885 and *Letters from the Earth* in 1909. As previously described, in these texts Twain either used Native Americans as the standard of “savagery” against which true civilization could be measured or more directly attacked them as treacherous and randomly murderous and rapacious.

<sup>30</sup> *Territorial Enterprise* 22 Feb. 1863, qtd. in Coulombe 264-65.

<sup>31</sup> *Tom Sawyer* bookends Coulombe’s analysis of Twain and Native Americans on its upper end, since Coulombe discusses Twain’s treatment of Injun Joe’s lonely demise as

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“poetic justice done to a stereotypically sadistic non-white” (Coulombe 265), but stops there. He simply does not mention such post-1876 texts as “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians,” *Stormfield’s Visit*, “A Californian’s Tale,” *Letters from the Earth*, or all the references to “white Indians” in *A Connecticut Yankee*.

<sup>32</sup> Sattelmeyer 369, Seelye xiii.

<sup>33</sup> Twain’s minstrelizing Jim for the sake of literary parody could and very possibly does coexist with Twain’s writing the “evasion” chapters as an allegory for Reconstruction at the end of *Huckleberry Finn*, weaving a Bakhtinian, carnivalesque fabric of widespread parody. As previously mentioned, for the proponents of the allegory theory, see Chadwick-Joshua 26, 30, 81, 118, 120, 131, 133; Cummings 455, 458; Margolis 330, 338-40; Niemeyer 53-55; Nilon 21-27, Scott 203.

<sup>34</sup> Coulombe cites his source of DeVoto’s revelation as Robert Sattelmeyer’s ““Interesting, but Tough”” chapter in *100 Years of Huckleberry Finn* (Coulombe 279 n. 26). In the chapter, Sattelmeyer reports that according to Twain’s “working notes” for the ending of *Huckleberry Finn*, Twain entertained a wide range of plot options, most of them “horrors that, fortunately, we are spared, but that indicate the essential lack of seriousness with which he now conceived the work” (369). In the specific example of a thankfully unused plot option that Sattelmeyer gives, “Farmer has bought an elephant at auction. Gives him to Tom Huck & Jim & they go about the country on him & make no end of trouble” (DeVoto 77, 79, 92).

<sup>35</sup> Twain also considered having Jim tried for murder so that “Huck would show up in time to reprieve the innocent accused” (Seelye xxiv-xxv). The foundation for that plot line remains in place early in the novel when Judith Loftus tells Huck that after his

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alleged murder was discovered, “[m]ost everybody [...] judged it was done by a runaway nigger named Jim” (*HF* 68).

<sup>36</sup> “Old Mrs. Hotchkiss was the worst; her tongue was agoing all the time,” Huck describes, quoting her verbatim for eleven lines followed by two more mentions of Hotchkiss in quoted dialogue: “‘An’ look at that-air ladder made out’n rags, sister Hotchkiss,’ says old Mrs. Damrell...” and a third, unidentified speaker again addressing “sister Hotchkiss” (*HF* 283). Also, “OLD MRS. HOTCHKISS,” as she is captioned in all-capital letters, is the subject of one of E. W. Kemble’s original illustrations for *Huckleberry Finn*, on the same page as the textual references to her.

<sup>37</sup> “‘Man Factories’” 16. Such women, in real life, significantly included Twain’s Nook Farm neighbor Harriet Beecher Stowe, the association’s executive vice president, and Kate Foote, aunt of longtime Clemens family governess Lilly Gillette Foote and head of the Washington, DC, auxiliary of the Women’s National Indian Association, according to Driscoll (*MTAI* 257-58).

<sup>38</sup> SLC to Sara Kinney, 13 Feb. 1889, and SLC to Sara Kinney, 28/29 Sept. 1889, qtd. in Driscoll, “‘Man Factories’” 20-21.

<sup>39</sup> Driscoll suggests that Twain’s “archaic” language in his second reply to Kinney links it to the similarly archaic culture and “white Indians” of *Connecticut Yankee* and the novel’s implicit demonstration that “unlike his fictional counterpart, the failed reformer Hank Morgan, Mark Twain did not believe that savages could ever be civilized” (“‘Man Factories’” 21-22).

<sup>40</sup> *MTAI* 257-64. Twain’s demurring note reads in part, “I wish I could say yes—I would do it in a minute” (SLC to Kate Foote, 16 Jan. 1891, qtd. in *MTAI* 260, 390 n. 86).

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Additional contextual evidence such as Twain's absence from a banquet at Delmonico's affirms the sincerity of Twain's demurral, Driscoll further reports, because he was conforming to "the withdrawal from public life dictated by Victorian protocols of mourning" for both Jane Lampton Clemens and the elder Olivia Langdon, Twain's mother-in-law (*MTAI* 263).

<sup>41</sup> Driscoll asserts that Twain could not possibly have missed, and possibly was appalled by, the news reports of Wounded Knee in *The New York Times*, which referred to the massacre as a "battle." In particular, Lakota physician Charles Eastman published a horrific eyewitness account of the slaughter in the *Daily Courant* that Driscoll believes Twain would have been outraged by, "extrapolating from the moral indignation Clemens had expressed five years earlier in response to the *Courant's* report about the New Mexico bounty on Apache scalps."

<sup>42</sup> Abate 123, quoting *FTE* 1: 189. In *Following the Equator*, Twain attributes the poisoning story to *Sketches of Australian Life* by Mrs. Campbell Praed, and quotes the relevant passage verbatim from Praed (*FTE* 187-89).

<sup>43</sup> *MTAI* 289. Driscoll examines much of the same material from *Following the Equator* that Abate does, although she interprets it somewhat differently. She never mentions Abate in her book.

<sup>44</sup> Twain's response to the Maoris is not mentioned in Abate's article but is given an entire chapter in Driscoll's book (*MTAI* 309-48).

<sup>45</sup> It also is noteworthy from a deconstructive viewpoint that the word "deed" doubles as the name for title to land, giving Twain a secondary, subliminal reason for his Stranger to insist that the use of the term "deed" be avoided as he displaces actual land confiscation

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with the taking of water rights. Thus, Twain's elaborate rejection of the word "deed" here also reinforces his comparative lack of respect for the perpetuity claimed in land titles.

<sup>46</sup> The "White Chief speaks" passage also reveals the biblical bent in Twain's diction and, with its "heaven-blest industry" and call for agricultural hegemony, it echoes Gen. 1:28: "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Scofield).

<sup>47</sup> Driscoll also mentions, as truly representing a view sympathetic to Native American land rights, a Twain interview that appeared in *The Baltimore News* in 1907. Twain excoriates the "titled robbers" who gave out royal charters to found such colonies as Maryland and Pennsylvania for "granting [...] vast estates not yet stolen from their real owners, but just about to be stolen [...] with no right but the right of superior force" (*MTAI* 351).