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# History, Language, and Power: James Hammond Trumbull's Native American Scholarship

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James Hammond Trumbull's  
Native American Scholarship

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History Senior Thesis

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## **A Careful Pursuit: James Hammond Trumbull as Native American Scholar**

James Hammond Trumbull was born in Stonington, Connecticut in 1821 and died in Hartford in 1897. Although he spent his life within the borders of a single state, his remarkable achievements in the fields of colonial history and Native American language resounded throughout a rapidly expanding America. On a local, state, and national level, Trumbull contributed to public understanding of indigenous history and language from behind the scenes. His extensive engagement with colonial documents and contemporary linguistics set him apart as a scholar, but he eschewed definitive publications in favor of brief monographs, edited volumes, and personal correspondence. Trumbull's Native American scholarship was a careful pursuit. His research often undermined popular, biased conceptions of Native American identity, history, and culture. Trumbull's own nuanced approach emerged in his research notes, manuscript drafts, and letters, but he did not promote his alternative vision in the public sphere.

Trumbull's scholarship can be understood in light of considerable existing historiography. In the 1980s, Brian W. Dippie explored the national myth of the "vanishing Indian" and the drive toward native assimilation, while historians like Robert E. Bieder and Curtis M. Hinsley investigated the practices and prejudices of nineteenth-century native ethnology and linguistics. In the 1990s, Michel-Ralph Trouillot explicated the link between power and the production of history. Within the last five years, Jean M. O'Brien and Daniel R. Mandell have explored the nineteenth-century experience of Native Americans in New England, elucidating white prejudices, cultural practices of native erasure, and state efforts toward detribalization. With a foundation in extensive

primary source material and a focus on one remarkable individual, this project seeks to integrate these strands of fresh and established, local and national historiography.

### **James Hammond Trumbull's Life**

In 1871, Trumbull received a biographical inquiry from Charles H. Hart, historiographer of the Humanitarian and Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia. His numbered responses provide a brief account of his professional accomplishments and affiliations:

17. Secretary of State of Connecticut, 1861-65,- having been previously State Registrar and State Librarian, 1854-55, and Assistant Secretary, 1858-61.

18. Corresponding Secretary of the Conn. Historical Society, 1849 to 1863, and its President since 1863. A Trustee of the Watkinson Library of reference, and its Superintendent since 1863. A Director and Secretary of the Wadsworth Athanaeum (Hartford), since 1864. Of the Executive Committee (and Treasurer) of the American Philological Association, 1869-71. Member of the American Antiquarian Society, American Oriental Society, Connecticut Academy, (the late) Conn. Society of Natural History, American Ethnological Society. Corresponding member of the New York, Massachusetts, Maine, Vermont, Wisconsin, Long Island, Buffalo = other Historical Societies; of the Wisconsin Academy of Arts, Sciences and Letters.<sup>1</sup>

Even in an era when membership in professional and educational societies was expected of New England elites, this lengthy list sets Trumbull apart. Also in 1871, one of his innumerable correspondents opened a letter with a bold statement: “You know everything, or can easily find out everything you want to know.”<sup>2</sup> In an time before the click of a mouse could open worlds of knowledge, Trumbull possessed extraordinary powers of memory and synthesis, coupled with meticulous research skills and stylish

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<sup>1</sup> James Hammond Trumbull to Charles H. Hart, 15 June 1871, II.7, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>2</sup> C.S. Henry to JHT, 15 May 1871, II.6, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

prose. As one obituary recalled, “[He] has been a sort of human cyclopaedia, carefully and full indexed... with leaves automatically turning.”<sup>3</sup> Henry Clay Trumbull imagined his brother’s brain as “a bonded warehouse, where the contents were stored in their original packages, ready for delivery for use or export to one who could prove a right to them.”<sup>4</sup> The depth of Trumbull’s interests and the breadth of his scholarly networks inspired reverence in historians, librarians, naturalists, ethnographers, and amateurs alike. During his lifetime, Trumbull was most widely renowned for his study of colonial New England history and Native American linguistics.

Trumbull’s methodology in the study of Native American history and linguistics was a product of his hometown, albeit in a roundabout way. When poor health forced him to withdraw from Yale University as a junior in 1840, his return to Stonington inspired him to begin studying shells.<sup>5</sup> The Trumbull family home on the town’s central Cannon Square, built a few years earlier, was ideally situated; the water met the sand only a few steps from the back door.<sup>6</sup> As Trumbull’s brother recalled, “He began by taking an interest in the shells on the seacoast by which we lived, and in those which were brought

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<sup>3</sup> “Dr. J. Hammond Trumbull: A Tribute to his Work and Worth,” *Hartford Courant*, August 16, 1897, <http://search.proquest.com/hnphartfordcourant/docview/554748663/13C7390D33968EFB2E9/3?accountid=14405>

<sup>4</sup> “J. Hammond Trumbull: A Helper in Every Sphere. Interesting Sketch by His Brother, H. Clay Trumbull,” *Hartford Courant*, September 1, 1897, <http://search.proquest.com/hnphartfordcourant/docview/552572347/13D3868DA235C5ACDB1/1?accountid=14405>

<sup>5</sup> Arthur W. Wright, *Biographical Memoir of James Hammond Trumbull, 1821-1897* (Washington: National Academy of Sciences, 1911), 146-147.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Margaret Thacher, 16 March 2013.

from foreign parts by whalers and sealers sailing out from that port [New London]...His classified collection came to be one of the largest in America.”<sup>7</sup>

In his early twenties, Trumbull turned away from conchology and toward history and language. Just as he had cultivated epistolary relationships with famous naturalists as a young man, he participated in extensive correspondence with far-flung historical colleagues and philological compatriots for the rest of his life. His powerful taxonomic impulse found fresh outlet in his detailed dissections of indigenous grammar and word structure and colonial native genealogies. As Trumbull’s passion for natural science began with shells in his backyard, his historical interests began with colonial Stonington and his linguistic achievements with the Algonquin language family spoken by the tribes of southeastern Connecticut. From these localized starting points, Trumbull became a nationally recognized expert.

Trumbull’s devotion to colonial history was an extraordinary example of a nineteenth-century New England trend. Local histories flourished in the decades between 1820 and 1880, as Americans sought to assert an independent intellectual identity, and before the production of history became institutionalized and commercialized. Local historians, although sometimes members of the urban literary elite, were more often middle class. They shared their work through the flourishing institution of state historical societies and served as experts when local celebrations or commemorations demanded.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> “A Helper in Every Sphere.”

<sup>8</sup> Jean M. O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xvii.

In her book *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England*, Jean M. O'Brien contends that the local histories of nineteenth-century New England constitute a revealing expression of the "vanishing Indian" narrative that dominated the time. She writes, "The collective stories these texts told insisted that non-Indians held exclusive sway over modernity, denied modernity to Indians, and in the process created a narrative of Indian extinction that has stubbornly remained in the consciousness and unconsciousness of Americans."<sup>9</sup> While acknowledging the cultural resonance of national works like James Fenimore Cooper's novel *The Last of the Mohicans* or the King Philip's War-inspired drama *Metamora*, O'Brien offers a highly compelling argument for the importance of "microlevel" histories in denying indigenous peoples an American future.<sup>10</sup> Significantly, New England's local historians researched and wrote as the region's population thinned and its national influence waned. As O'Brien astutely notes, the local histories that enshrined Indian extinction were a response to "the very out-migration that fueled Indian dispossession across the continent in the service of American nationalism."<sup>11</sup>

Over the course of the 1800s, Connecticut's local historians were simultaneously striving to define the historical validity and spiritual worth of their towns, state, and nation. Trumbull's participation in this effort, although it remained largely private, is striking for its refusal of the easy extinction narrative. The hand of providence or the will of history had no place in the town records and personal accounts he used to reconstruct the past. Through his research, Trumbull traced the all-too-human decisions that guided

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., xiii.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., xiv.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., xviii.

the course of Stonington's colonial history and effected destructive consequences for the area's native tribes.

Trumbull's linguistic achievements, like his historical efforts, set him apart within a much larger field of study. During his lifetime, the Mexican-American War, the Civil War, and the doctrine of westward expansion led to concentrated efforts by the federal government to physically subdue and culturally subjugate Native Americans. Officials struggled to formulate a convenient yet superficially compassionate Indian policy, shifting from isolationism to assimilation over the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Simultaneously, American scholars and amateur enthusiasts came to value Native American philology as a patriotic, intellectually vital pursuit.<sup>13</sup> These cultural threads met in the national linguistic project, in which missionaries, soldiers, intellectuals, white citizens, and some native individuals collected and analyzed indigenous languages. In this context, the "vanishing Indian" needed to be preserved but transformed; through the study of native language, political and intellectual leaders believed, they could better integrate Native Americans into the American community. Trumbull, as in his historical work, did not explicitly echo these dominant tropes, choosing to focus on grammatical details rather than political implications.

### **Public vs. Private**

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<sup>12</sup> Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), 77.

<sup>13</sup> Curtis M. Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian: Making a Moral Anthropology in Victorian America* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), 23-25.

My project began, by sheer luck, with the discovery of an antagonistic annotation on a faded page. At the back of his personal copy of William L. Stone's *Uncas and Miantonomoh*, Trumbull recorded a real-world encounter with its author. Trumbull challenged Stone's deeply romanticized, drastically over-simplified narrative of the relationship between the Mohegan tribe under the sachem Uncas and the white settlers who founded Norwich, Connecticut. Twenty-something Trumbull's parting shot to Stone- "All that I object to is, that you have printed the blarney, and tried to make it pass for history"- suggests a dichotomy that informed his own life and work. The distance between Trumbull's printed texts and handwritten notes, between his public etymologies and genealogies and his personal historical and political opinions, is striking. Although he privately communicated misgivings about popular narratives of and federal policy towards Native Americans, he never publically voiced dissent.

Trumbull's surviving papers suggest possible reasons for his reticence. His correspondent F.G. Clark once warned him, "...All those Indian tribes, roots, affixes, suffixes, &c. may someday come upon you with tomahawk and war whoop and destroy you. It is such an awful thing to carry such a mass of facts and figures in a mortal brain. I shall however continue to hope for the best."<sup>14</sup> In a sense, the range and intensity of Trumbull's intellectual interests did destroy his ability to produce lengthy, focused work. As a family man engaged in bibliographic, scientific, historical, and linguistic fields, he had many competing demands on his time. However, Trumbull was also limited by his own personality. He possessed a contradictory blend of well-founded intellectual self-confidence, sometimes bordering on arrogance, and a profound, paralyzing fear of

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<sup>14</sup> F.G. Clark to JHT, 25 February 1870, II.3, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

failure. Writing from an editorial standpoint in 1850, he seemed to take a strange comfort in believing his work was “not likely to obtain a general circulation or numerous readers.”<sup>15</sup> Although Trumbull maintained a studiedly casual air in both private letters and published texts, his attention to detail and clarity betrayed his intellectual enthusiasm; his letters frequently closed with an apology for their unnecessary length.

Through hundreds of manuscript pages, Trumbull emerges as a well-connected scholar with a sharp wit and a generous nature that won him many friends. He was intensely single-minded, with a near-obsessive commitment to accuracy. In response to Connecticut historian Frances M. Caulkins’ enthusiastic praise for his compendium of the state’s colonial records, Trumbull offered insight into his painstaking editorial process, projected readership, and guiding intent:

The most gratifying recompense these labors can receive is the assurance that a volume... is regarded with favor by those whose tastes incline them to historical investigations...any omissions, if but that of a single page, would have rendered the volume, as an authority, comparatively worthless to those who profess the true antiquarian spirit, which is all-exacting, distrustful, suspicious of “amended versions,” and jealous of its prerogative to “prove all things.”<sup>16</sup>

Trumbull’s consuming commitment to the exacting, unforgiving “antiquarian spirit” earned him accolades from both intellectuals and laymen, but it also undermined his scholarly potential.

Trumbull employed much of his commanding knowledge of Indian linguistics outside the public view. He served as a crucial consultant to the national linguistic project and to myriad amateur enthusiasts, but personally published relatively little. Strikingly,

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<sup>15</sup> JHT to F.M. Caulkins, 15 April 1850, I.3, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

he also never published an independent, full-length colonial history. Trumbull preferred to convey his knowledge of the era through pamphlets, published and private letters, and editorial work. An 1897 *Hartford Courant* memorial mused on his contradictory legacy:

Dr. Trumbull might have given us a history of Connecticut that would have stood first among American histories. He was often urged to do so, but he would never undertake the work... Dr. Trumbull was not going to commit himself to the possibility of blundering, and so never wrote the history that would have been for himself a worthy monument, and for the rest of us a perpetual source of pride and satisfaction. It is a curious freak of fate that the very trait which made what he did write so valuable prevented this crowning work.<sup>17</sup>

Another obituary urged readers to give Trumbull due credit: “The regret, shared by all who had any idea of what Dr. Trumbull might have done, that he did not feel himself prepared to do more, may possibly keep some from appreciating the value of what he did.”<sup>18</sup> This value was most clearly communicated to the public through Trumbull’s correspondence with friends, colleagues, and strangers alike.

Although it is impossible to measure his exact impact on the American public’s understanding of colonial history and Native American languages, the sheer volume of Trumbull’s surviving correspondence speaks to a powerful influence. Towards the end of Trumbull’s life, Sag Harbor pharmacist William Wallace Tooker wrote him to express touching gratitude for his work: “...You have prepared a dictionary and vocabulary to Eliot’s Indian Bible, This is something that I have long desired to possess, and have often wondered why you had not published something of the kind, I knew perfectly well that

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<sup>17</sup> Wright, *Biographical Memoir*, 160.

<sup>18</sup> “Letters from the People: Dr. J. Hammond Trumbull’s Place as a Scholar,” *Hartford Courant*, August 9, 1897, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/554723035?accountid=14405>

you were the only one who could do the work, But what a labor it must have been!”<sup>19</sup> For Trumbull, not all inquiries merited a polite reply: when one man asked for an Indian name to market a product, Trumbull retorted in a carefully penned note, “I regret that I have no leisure to expend in advertising your friend’s medicine.”<sup>20</sup> He occasionally deplored the time taken up by letters that could have been devoted to research, once writing to a friend, ““Have done little else- except answer stupid letters’ !!”<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of Trumbull’s correspondents received detailed answers to their questions. Trumbull’s surviving papers speak to the truth of another

*Hartford Courant* obituary:

People who questioned him foolishly or in annoying way sometimes got curt replies. Among such he was very likely reckoned somewhat crusty. But he was exceedingly helpful to those whom he saw to be in earnest, and was full of live sympathy with those whose inquiries impressed him as leading to right results. With such he would spend much time, show them authorities, and freely contribute the great assistance that his large abilities made possible.<sup>22</sup>

Mark Twain’s obituary for his friend Trumbull expressed a similar sentiment, telling readers, “He wrote myriads of letters to information-seekers all over the world- a service of self-sacrifice which made no show, and is all the more entitled to praise and remembrance for that reason.”<sup>23</sup> Despite his limited formal publications, Trumbull was committed to the dissemination of historical and linguistic knowledge.

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<sup>19</sup> William Wallace Tooker to JHT, 15 January 1890, 2.53, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>20</sup> J. Runsey Innit to JHT, 3 June 1879, 1.32, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>21</sup> W.D. Whitney to JHT, 22 December 1876, II.13, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>22</sup> Wright, *Biographical Memoir*, 160.

<sup>23</sup> Mark Twain, *Mark Twain: Life As I Find It*, ed. Charles Neider (Garden City, NY: Hanover House, 1961), 234.

Trumbull's Native American scholarship can be organized into three categories. Within the context of southeastern Connecticut, he examined obscure colonial records that led him to an understanding of the Pequot War that challenged traditional narratives. However, he never formally printed his misgivings. On a state level, as a high-ranking official, he collected colonial documents and analyzed Connecticut's native place names even as his government worked to erase tribal identities. Nationally, Trumbull collaborated with the Smithsonian Institution and the Bureau of American Ethnology in government-funded efforts to collect, catalog, and eventually silence indigenous languages across the country.

A rigorous and dedicated historian, Trumbull himself is a researcher's dream. He frequently saved copies and drafts of letters he sent, neatly transcribed his correspondents' scrawled signatures, and maintained flawless penmanship throughout his long life. More than his limited published work, the annotations in his personal library, his detailed research notes, and his extensive correspondence networks illuminate Trumbull's place within the scholarly and social debates of his time.

## **Revisionist Stonington: James Hammond Trumbull and the Local Native American Past**

On December 20, 1821, James Hammond Trumbull was born into a town deeply influenced by the historical and ongoing presence of Native Americans. English settlers had dominated southeastern Connecticut for nearly two centuries, but the Mohegan, Mashantucket Pequot, and Eastern Pequot tribal groups remained at the periphery of public life as distinct, viable communities. As a particularly intelligent and assiduous participant in the field of local history, Trumbull rejected popular assumptions in favor of a deeper exploration of colonial conquest. In extensive, exhaustively cited notebooks, Trumbull transcribed and commented on colonial records; he also drafted lectures and chapters of a projected town history.

Unlike his fellow Connecticut historians, Trumbull refused to deny or downplay the continuing historical presence of Native Americans in Stonington. Jean M. O'Brien posits that nineteenth-century historians engaged in "firsting and lasting:" claiming that white settlers were the "first" historically valid people in New England while eulogizing the "last" racially pure native individual.<sup>24</sup> Trumbull rejected these preoccupations by taking a longer view of his region's history and ignoring empty racial categories. Although Trumbull continued to view Native Americans as "prior occupants" of Stonington, to use O'Brien's vocabulary, he was careful to trace Pequot and Mohegan history throughout the 1600s and 1700s. In his vision, the cataclysmic Pequot War of 1636 and 1637 did not signal the immediate end of native presence in his hometown.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, 6, 107.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

Trumbull's research led him to a conception of the Pequots as a deeply wronged group and a critique of the Stonington colonists' cruelty and prejudice. He disseminated this revisionist interpretation in private correspondence and small lectures. However, by choosing not to transform his research into a completed, published work, Trumbull failed to adequately challenge popular narratives of Indian savagery and inevitable extinction.

### **Trumbull's Place and Times**

In the early 1800s, Native American affairs in Stonington, Connecticut were comparatively calm. However, Trumbull's beloved hometown, and southeastern Connecticut as a whole, had seen more than its fair share of interethnic tensions and explosive violence. The community was deeply affected by the Pequot War, fought from 1636 to 1637, and King Philip's War, fought between 1675 and 1676. An indigenous community continued to participate in Stonington life in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, albeit with a low profile.

In the first of these conflicts, the Pequot tribe clashed with English settlers and their Mohegan and Narragansett allies. The war was brutal for both sides; the 1637 Mystic massacre, in which Captain John Mason's forces set fire to a Pequot settlement and killed hundreds of elders, women, and children, stands out as a particularly horrifying encounter.<sup>26</sup> After the Pequots were defeated, the majority of the tribe was divided under Mohegan and Narragansett control. Although nominally under Mohegan authority, the Mashantucket Pequot group managed to assert a surprising degree of independence under

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<sup>26</sup> Alfred A. Cave, *The Pequot War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 151.

leader Robin Cassacinamon, but the tribe's situation remained highly precarious.<sup>27</sup> In 1665 the settlement of Southertown, which included the area that would become Stonington, was re-named Mystic. One colonial official justified the change, "in memory of that victory God hath pleased to give this people of Connecticut over the Pequot Indians."<sup>28</sup> Trumbull's town also suffered during King Philip's War, which pitted the Wampanoag tribe and their allies against colonial forces between 1675 and 1676. This time, the Pequots joined Stonington residents, Mohegans, and English settlers from other colonies to fight a devastating war of attrition.<sup>29</sup>

As demonstrated in Daniel R. Mandell's *Tribe, Race, History: Native Americans in Southern New England, 1780-1880*, the century between King Philip's War and the American Revolution saw southern New England's Native Americans become the *de jure* and *de facto* other. They were not citizens, had no voting rights, and were legally considered wards of the state. Most tribes were under the authority of provincial guardians, tasked with enforcing laws and managing resources. The sale of native lands was officially prohibited without the consent of the provincial assembly, but illegal property transactions often occurred anyway. Even after the Revolution, these legal strictures endured in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut.<sup>30</sup> As a result, many tribal members eagerly joined Samson Occum's Brothertown movement. Occum, a

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<sup>27</sup> Kevin A. McBride, "The Legacy of Robin Cassacinamon: Mashantucket Pequot Leadership in the Historic Period," in *Northeastern Indian Lives, 1632-1816*, edited by Robert S. Grumet (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 74, 79.

<sup>28</sup> William Haynes, *The Stonington Chronology* (Stonington: Pequot Press, 1949), 15.

<sup>29</sup> Daniel R. Mandell, *King Philip's War: Colonial Expansion, Native Resistance, and the End of Indian Sovereignty* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 60-61.

<sup>30</sup> Daniel R. Mandell, *Tribe, Race, History: Native Americans in Southern New England, 1780-1880* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 15.

Mohegan minister, believed that Native Americans' best hope for cultural integrity and survival lay in a dedication to Christian values and a separation from white influence.<sup>31</sup>

At the end of the eighteenth century, more than half of the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan tribal members left southeastern Connecticut to settle in upstate New York.<sup>32</sup>

One of Trumbull's surviving, untitled research notebooks illuminates Native Americans' role in his hometown's colonial past. Amid timelines and lists of colonial Stonington newspapers, pastors, religious denominations, and military companies, he noted incidents that highlighted the complex relationship between English and native groups. One of his transcriptions noted that in 1669, in response to a rumored plot against white settlers, worried town officials confiscated the arms and ammunition of local Indians only to return the weaponry the next day.<sup>33</sup>

However, Trumbull also transcribed records that connoted cooperation, as in 1697: "Capt. Mason + Rev. James Noyes recommend the employment of 20 or 30 men 'to scout the woods' [volunteer fashion]. The Gen. Council, reply, Apr. 1699, highly approving: the men to be Indians partly: 'to range the woods between Nashua + Deerfield + near Merrimac River.')"<sup>34</sup> Trumbull's notebook reveals that seventeenth-century Native Americans participated in wolf hunts in exchange for bounties and that "Cheemacus the Indian" was granted "liberty to mend his Weir" on the Pawcatuck River by the Stonington town council in 1671.<sup>35</sup> He also noted the participation of local natives in the

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<sup>31</sup> Mandell, *Tribe, Race, History*, 15.

<sup>32</sup> McBride, "Legacy of Robin Cassacinamon," 90.

<sup>33</sup> James Hammond Trumbull, MS notebook, Trumbull Family File, Stonington Historical Society, Stonington, Connecticut, 77.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 81, 111.

First Great Awakening of the 1740s, when the revivalist reverend James Davenport converted twenty Indians as well as nearly a hundred white settlers.<sup>36</sup> Trumbull's perspective revealed and respected native participation in Stonington's public affairs, local economy, and religious celebrations, long after the trauma of the Pequot War.

### **Local Histories**

Trumbull, the product of a small Connecticut town, inherited his passion for local colonial history from his father, Gurdon. Gurdon Trumbull was a prominent member of the Stonington community; he defended the town from British forces in the War of 1812, served as postmaster for nearly twenty years, and participated in the incorporation of the town bank.<sup>37</sup> When not busy with his concerns in Stonington's seal and whale fisheries, his son remembered, "[Gurdon] manifested an interest in historical and antiquarian studies... Of the history of his native county (New London), particularly, his knowledge was thorough, ready, and exact."<sup>38</sup> Trumbull followed his father's passion, fitting into the upper echelons of the local historian group as Secretary of State and renowned scholar in the state's bustling capital. A long-time member and leader of the Connecticut Historical Society and American Antiquarian Society, Trumbull was a wholehearted participant in the emerging culture of the genre. Despite the self-imposed limits of his scholarship to editorials and monographs, Trumbull's historical work was very well received by the literate public and by his fellow local historians.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>37</sup> Haynes, *Stonington Chronology*, 51, 52, 66.

<sup>38</sup> Wright, *Biographical Memoir*, 145-146.

At the same time, Trumbull distanced himself from the guiding historical narratives of his era. In an 1858 letter to Harvard University librarian John Langdon Sibley, Trumbull discussed his work on a history of Stonington and offered a wry defense of the local history genre:

Local histories have *always* some of the things we are looking for and cannot find anywhere else, and- where there is sufficient guaranty of the accuracy of the author,- have a positive value out of the meridian for which they are expressly calculated. The preparation of one must be a “labor of love,”- for remuneration for time and trouble is out of the question...<sup>39</sup>

Although this colonial history of Stonington was never completed, the surviving notes and manuscript chapters reveal Trumbull’s awareness of and respect for Native American history, and his resistance to the romanticized narratives that dominated his time.

### **“Gleanings of History:” Trumbull’s Research**

In a notebook he titled “Gleanings from History,” Trumbull carefully transcribed excerpts from a wide range of colonial records relating to Stonington, which covered everything from schoolmaster appointments to misbehavior in religious meetings. However, a significant portion of this notebook was dedicated to the Pequot War of 1636 and 1637. Within these snippets of correspondence and public records, Trumbull underlined pertinent passages and interjected his own opinions. These neat annotations provide fascinating insight into his work as a scholar. “Gleanings of History” reveals Trumbull’s admirable commitment to accuracy in Native American history and illuminates his sympathy for the colonial Pequots.

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<sup>39</sup> JHT to John Langdon Sibley, 7 February 1858, I.7, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

Trumbull devoted many pages to parsing out the supposed causes of the Pequot War, which his contemporary historians identified as the murders of John Stone and John Oldham. He transcribed a 1634 letter from Connecticut's Governor John Winthrop to the governor of Plymouth, literally underlining the Pequots' explanation for Stone's death; according to their testimony, Stone was murdered by Niantic tribesmen after he captured two of their fellows. Within penciled brackets, Trumbull indicted biased historians:

[Remarks. It is to be observed that the generally received account of the circumstances attending Capt. Stone's death, and indeed the account given by Morton himself differs materially from the confessions of the parties themselves, and the statements made by the Pequots, as above quoted. Historians who have subsequently mentioned Stone's death, as one of the main causes of the Pequot war have either wholly omitted to notice the circumstances that led to his murder or have glossed them over in a manner as favorable as possible to the Capt. and his companions...]<sup>40</sup>

Trumbull noted the anti-Indian prejudice of Nathaniel Morton, the event's primary chronicler, who refused to credit native witnesses and painted the outlaw Captain Stone as a martyr.

After summarizing Morton's account, which described the violent deaths of Stone and all of his companions, Trumbull offered a vindication of native testimony:

[...Now it seems somewhat singular how such accurate information of the exact manner and particulars of Stone's death should have been obtained, when we are expressly informed that every soul on board of the bark shared it with him: It seems evident that there must be something incorrect here, and we see not why the statement of the Pequots, as above given, should not be received in the absence of all contradictory evidence, particularly as the contemporary historians admit that the participation of that tribe in the murder amounted to no more than the screening from justice some who were suspected of being actively engaged in it:-]<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> JHT, *Gleanings from History* MS, VI.2, J. Hammond Trumbull Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford, Connecticut, 6.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

Trumbull's logical approach undermined the popular, lurid vision of innocent settlers brutally murdered by Niantics with tomahawks. He also returned to the point of Pequot innocence, emphasizing their limited involvement in the event.

Trumbull copied several other passages from Morton, criticizing the author for ignoring the course of events that led to Oldham's death. After Morton's description of the onset of hostilities, Trumbull summed up his arguments in a helpful note:

[Here then we have named three principal causes of war, viz;

1. The murder of John Oldham, at Manisses or Block Island
2. That of Capt. Stone at Connecticut river, and
3. 'The baffling of the Pequots with the English of the Massachusetts;' Let these be born in mind and severally noticed hereafter.]<sup>42</sup>

As he traced the run-up to war through Morton's text, Trumbull offered another striking assessment of the Pequot efforts against the settlers. According to Morton, the Pequots sought an alliance with the Narragansetts against the English, arguing that "if the Narragansetts did assist the English to subdue them, that did but make way for their own overthrow; for if they were routed out the English would soon take occasion to subjugate them..."<sup>43</sup> Ultimately, however, the Narragansetts' desire for revenge against their Pequot enemies won out and they sided with the English, who later defeated them in King Philip's War.

At this juncture in his notes, Trumbull refused to condemn the Narragansetts' choice. He also explained the devastating consequences of their decision:

[This is not the only instance in which a nation has been induced to sacrifice its best interests and to disregard the dictates of policy for the promptings of passion,

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 7

and the Narragansetts only followed the precedent of more enlightened governments: In less than forty years from the refusal of the Narragansetts to cooperate with the Pequots, the former tribe was utterly subjugated and Philip of Montauk, their last hope, had perished.]<sup>44</sup>

In comparing the colonial Narragansett society to European governments, Trumbull granted this indigenous community a political legitimacy traditionally denied them. From his desk in Hartford, he noted the irony of history while casting native people as conscious historical actors.

In a section of the notebook titled “Character of the Pequots,” Trumbull prefaced his transcription with a disclaimer, again emphasizing his sympathies for the Pequots and questioning the dominant historical narrative:

[The following statements of an unprejudiced witness as to the general character of the Pequot nation, is worthy of preservation: it has been kept out of view and never to my knowledge been republished by any American Historian, except Dwight in his history of Connecticut:- the book from which it is taken was published in London, 1634, and its author (Wood) is by no means partial to the Indian race generally as would appear from his description of the Mohawks...]

William Wood’s assessment from *New England’s Prospect*, copied into Trumbull’s notes from Dwight’s history of Connecticut, cast the tribe as “ ‘a stately, warlike people...not treacherous either to their countrymen or English: requiters of courtesies, affable towards the English.’ ”<sup>45</sup>

In the same section of “Gleanings from History,” Trumbull included Dwight’s account of the Fairfield Swamp Fight on June 13 and 14 of 1637. When English forces cornered a group of Pequot refugees and other Indians in a swamp near Fairfield, they offered safety to any person who had not spilled English blood. Pequot women and

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 7-8

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 39.

children, along with members of the non-combatant tribe, gave themselves up to English custody. However, as Dwight recounted and Trumbull rewrote, "...the Pequot warriors not only refused but attempted to kill the interpreter, who was shot at, & would have lost his life but for the interference of some of the soldiers...."<sup>46</sup> Trumbull then interjected again:

[The noble conduct of the Pequots when beseiged [sic] in the swamp near Fairfield, cannot fail to call forth our admiration mingled with regret at the stern fiat which doomed so gallant & noble a race to destruction: it must be remembered that this too was at a time when all hope of successful resistance was at an end, and when the little band of warriors (about 80 or 100) that were thus hemmed in on every side by a victorious enemy were nearly all that remained of a nation which a few weeks before had been the most powerful and one of the most numerous, east of the Hudson.]<sup>47</sup>

Here, Trumbull echoes the popular belief that Pequot defeat amounted to the tribe's destruction. The "stern fiat" he refers to appears to be the imagined dictate of civilization, predestined to replace a savage excuse for society.

Trumbull's transcriptions also included selected quotes about the war from John Mason and eighteenth-century historian Thomas Hutchinson. He copied Mason's account of the Mystic massacre with no comment, but he transcribed a quotation that emphasized both the horror of the event and Mason's hollow religious justification for it: "'And indeed such a Dreadful Terror did the Almighty let fall upon their spirits that they would fly from us and run into the very Flames, where many of them perished.'"<sup>48</sup> Trumbull also chose to highlight an incident recorded by Hutchinson, adding his own punctuation:

"...The Indians in alliance with the English had taken 18 captives. Four of the males were disposed of one to each Sachem, the rest put to the sword. Four of the

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 25.

females were left at the fort, the other four carried to Connecticut where the Indians challenged them as their prize, the English not agreeing to it, they were sacrificed to end the dispute” (!!!).<sup>49</sup>

With three exclamation points, Trumbull emphasized the cruelty displayed by supposedly civilized English settlers. He went on to transcribe Hutchinson’s belief that “...The morality of this proceeding may well be questioned. The Indians have ever shewn great barbarism to their English captives, the English in too many instances have retaliated it...Besides to destroy women and children for the barbarity of their husbands and parents, cannot easily be justified.”<sup>50</sup> In Trumbull’s notebook, Hutchinson’s thoughtful, ethical approach to warfare stands in starkly positive contrast to Mason’s vengeful brand of Christianity.

In transcribing a July 28, 1637 letter from Governor Winthrop to Governor William Bradford of Massachusetts, Trumbull underscored the war’s devastating effects on the Pequot people:

[After giving the particulars of the well known swamp fight, W. Winthrop goes on to state the results of the war.] ‘In the searching of the swamp the next morning they found nine slain, and some they pulled up, whom the Indians had buried in the mire; so as they do think that of all this company not twenty did escape, for they afterwards found some who died, in the flight, of their wounds received. The prisoners were divided, some to those of the river, and the rest to us of these parts. We sent the male children to Bermuda, by Mr. William Pierce, and the women and maid children are disposed about in the towns. There have been now slain and taken in all about seven hundred, the rest are disposed, and the Indians in all quarters so terrified as all their friends are afraid to receive them... The captains report as we have slain thirteen Sachems, but Sassacus and Mononotto are still living...’<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 8-9.

Trumbull's emphasis on numbers, both of victims and survivors, revealed his commitment to accuracy. Again, his underlined selections emphasized instances of English violence that were downplayed or left out of well-known narratives.

Trumbull's transcriptions also speak to the enduring impact of the conflict on land grants, undermining the comfortable colonial narrative of peaceful, legal territory transactions. He recorded a ruling by Connecticut's government: "It is ordered that Capt'n Mason shall have 500 acres of ground for him and his heirs about Pequoyt country, and the dispose of 500 more to such souldiers as joined with him in the Service when they conquered the Indians there."<sup>52</sup> The same Mason who praised God's work in the Pequot massacre, and the men who participated in the slaughter, materially benefited from the Pequot War. Trumbull's inclusion of this passage implies serious discomfort with these supposedly heroic early settlers of Stonington.

### **Unfinished History**

Trumbull's unfinished manuscript, based on the notebooks analyzed above, provides further insight into his historical perspective. In his neat, exquisite hand, punctuated by meticulous footnotes referencing colonial records and letters, Trumbull described the triumph and struggles of seventeenth-century Southertown. Over the course of several chapters, he recounted the inter-colonial clashes and colorful personalities that shaped the settlement's course, including its 1665 rechristening as Stonington and its 1666 incorporation into the Connecticut colony. However, he also devoted a considerable

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 30.

amount of ink to the settlement's tumultuous relationship with the surrounding Native American communities.

Although Trumbull's surviving chapters began after the destructive Pequot War, he displayed a consistent sensitivity to this vulnerable, disempowered tribe, describing "...the unfortunate Pequots... by the progress of settlement... were already much straitened for planting ground, and were exposed to constant annoyance and injury from the newcomers, so that they could not improve to advantage even the remnant of land which remained to them."<sup>53</sup> Trumbull traced the exchanges between Stonington and the government of Massachusetts, which tried to foist its responsibility to the area's tribes on to the town. He quoted a Stonington town meeting transcription that authorized several townspeople to harass a group of Eastern Pequots at their nearby settlement. Eventually, Trumbull explained,

The poor Indians were very unwilling to leave Cowissatuck, but appear to have submitted to the necessity of removal without serious opposition. "Nesomet, some time last summer, did say to me," testified John Stanton in 1669, "that they were now desperate; they did not now care where they went to live, or where they died,- speaking about their being removed from Cowissatuck." How many of them settled upon the new reservation does not appear. It is doubtful whether Herman Garret ever removed to it from his old quarters in Pawcatuck. In 1683, the general court made... a final provision for this miserable remnant of the Pequot nation, by the purchase of a tract of 280 acres in (North) Stonington, near Lantern Hill. This tract... has remained the property of the tribe to the present time...<sup>54</sup>

Cowissatuck was located in the northeast corner of Stonington; as a child and a young man, Trumbull may well have traveled through the area. The Eastern Pequots' struggles hit, quite literally, close to home. Rather than assert sympathy for the displaced tribe,

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<sup>53</sup> James Hammond Trumbull, *Colonial History of Stonington MS*, VI.1, J. Hammond Trumbull Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

Trumbull allowed John Stanton's poignant testimony to speak for itself. Mandell has documented that Herman Garret's Eastern Pequots remained at the Lantern Hill reservation through the nineteenth century despite great pressure to sell.<sup>55</sup>

Trumbull's draft also contains an account of King Philip's War that is striking for its positive portrayal of the Pequots. In 1669, several years before this devastating conflict, a rumor that the Niantics, Pequots, Montauks, and Nipmucks were joined in a conspiracy against the English swept through Connecticut. Trumbull's chapter noted the importance of religious dances among the tribes of southeastern New England, explaining that the intertribal relationships celebrated at these events gave rise to white suspicion. In response to widespread fears, the Connecticut legislature sent officials to interview Ninigret, the Niantic sachem and supposed leader of the conspiracy; Trumbull wrote that the officials were left satisfied of the natives' good faith. Then, in a striking departure from his usual reserved tone, Trumbull delivered a scorching condemnation of the Mohegan sachem, Uncas:

The Pequots had been lately compelled, much against their will, to leave their wigwams and planting grounds at Cowissatuck. The expression of their discontent, perhaps some muttered threats, may have given color to the suspicion of their treachery, But the whole story of the plot was probably an invention of the crafty and malicious Uncas. The sachem of Mohegan was continually seeking to enhance his own importance and the value of his services, by making the fidelity of his rivals suspected: and he repeatedly endeavored to effect the destruction of the Pequots, whom he hated, and of the sachem of Niantic, whom he both hated and feared, by implicating them in some pretended plot or criminal design against the English. In this instance, he was nearly successful in driving Robin and the western Pequots from the colony, - they were "heard several times to express

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<sup>55</sup> Mandell, *Tribe, Race, History*, 125.

themselves that they must go to the Mohawks' country to live, for they had so much trouble here, that they was wearied out with it..."<sup>56</sup>

In Trumbull's time, Uncas was remembered as the greatest friend of white colonists, a noble savage who made the settlement of southeastern Connecticut peaceful by selling his lands to settlers. In this context, Trumbull's consistent description of Uncas' treachery is highly unusual.

Trumbull described the isolation and fear that gripped Stonington during the bloodshed of King Philip's War. Yet, far from casting the conflict as a simple outburst of standard native savagery, he recounted the courageous efforts of the Pequots, Mohegans, and Niantics on behalf of the colonial forces. Native participation in the Fort Fight of 1675, "the hardest fought battle and the most dearly purchased victory of the war," drew particular praise from Trumbull. He also noted with admiration:

[Ninigret, the Niantic sachem, refused] to join the Narragansett sachems, his former confederates or feudal lords. His adherence to the colonists and the important services which he rendered in the prosecution of the war, were attributable in great measure to the influence of Old Mr. Thomas Stanton, the neighbor and firm friend of the Niantic sachem.<sup>57</sup>

According to John W. De Forest's 1850 *History of the Indians of Connecticut*, this same Stanton was an interpreter who apparently negotiated the release of native non-combatants during the Pequot War.<sup>58</sup> Trumbull's inclusion of this personal tie between native sachem and English settler is a remarkable acknowledgement of the period's nuanced social landscape.

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<sup>56</sup> James Hammond Trumbull, *Colonial History of Stonington* MS, VI.1, J. Hammond Trumbull Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> John W. De Forest, *History of the Indians of Connecticut From the Earliest Known Period to 1850* (Brighton, Michigan: Native American Book Publishers, 1991), 148.

Trumbull's research of colonial Stonington illuminated the historical silences imposed on his region's native inhabitants. Michel-Ralph Trouillot contends, "... One 'silences' a fact or an individual as a silencer silences a gun... Mentions and silences are thus active, dialectical counterparts of which history is the synthesis."<sup>59</sup> Trumbull's sensitivity to the post-Pequot War Native American experience challenged the dominant dialectic. His manuscript granted Mohegans and Pequots, to some degree, a historical voice.

### **Trumbull in Context: John W. De Forest and F.M. Caulkins**

Ultimately, Trumbull's revisionist Stonington history went unpublished. However, the surviving text deserves to be placed in context through comparison with contemporary works that enshrined the "vanishing Indian," simultaneously praising the imagined savage of the colonial past while negating the existence of surviving indigenous people. In a consulting capacity, Trumbull contributed to John W. De Forest's *History of the Indians of Connecticut*. In 1848, De Forest, an occasional correspondent of Trumbull, contacted him to confirm and clarify an offhand historical comment. He wrote, "I think you also informed me that the colonists twice sent men to Uncas for the purpose of establishing further his power as sachem," and requested further information.<sup>60</sup> Given this connection, De Forest's text invites comparison with Trumbull's own sense of native history as expressed in his letters, manuscripts, and marginalia.

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<sup>59</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 48.

<sup>60</sup> John W. Deforest to JHT, 22 November 1848, 2.57, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

Where Trumbull focused on the interaction of colonial-era natives and whites in and around his nascent hometown, De Forest sought to provide a broad explanation for the “steady and apparently irreversible decline” of Connecticut’s indigenous tribes.<sup>61</sup> Like Trumbull, he sympathized with the Pequots, tracing their struggles to maintain their ancestral lands and musing, “. . .the Pequots have received little from us except injustice and the most pitiless neglect.”<sup>62</sup> De Forest also shared Trumbull’s disdain for Uncas as a man and as a leader: “He was faithful [to the English] just as the jackal is faithful to the lion: not because it loves the lion, but because it gains something by remaining in his company.”<sup>63</sup> Drawing on the information provided by Trumbull, De Forest argued that the colonists had supported Uncas in hopes of suppressing the other tribes of the region with greater ease.

In one striking passage, De Forest recounted the enslavement of Pequot captives that Trumbull also noted and opined:

All this is truly horrible; and, if a historian were not, like a witness on oath, under strict obligation to tell the whole truth as well as nothing but the truth, I should be tempted to pass the transaction over in charitable silence.<sup>64</sup>

This sentiment illuminates competing nineteenth-century approaches to the study of colonial history. Was it an exercise in empire past and present, reinforcing, justifying, and glorifying white rule over native lands? Or was it an effort to carefully research and accurately recount the past? De Forest’s reluctance to describe what he saw as wrongdoing by the settlers of southeastern Connecticut, his desire for “charitable silence”

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<sup>61</sup> De Forest, *Indians of Connecticut*, 1.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

on the subject of Indian enslavement, suggests that he fell into the former category. Trumbull inhabited the latter: in his notes and manuscripts, he consistently elevated historical truth over a romanticized vision of his town's origins. However, his limited publications kept this emphasis private.

In weighing the moral rectitude of Mason and his forces, De Forest concluded, "... the burning of the Pequot fort... was a piece of stern policy, from which floods could not wash out a stain of cruelty."<sup>65</sup> Although far more willing to describe white wrongdoing, he maintained his commitment to the "vanishing Indian" myth. De Forest explained of Connecticut's indigenous people, "Some of these tribes are already laid in the grave; some have broken up and wandered away from the land of their fathers; and some, reduced to mere fragments, still cling, like ghosts, around their ancient habitations."<sup>66</sup> At the close of his text, De Forest offered a final exoneration of settlers: "[The Indians'] own barbarism has destroyed them; they are in a great measure guilty of their own destruction... the white population of Connecticut has not fulfilled its responsibilities as a civilized and Christian race... [but] it has not, on the whole, been guilty of any peculiar degree of heedlessness, or inhumanity, or injustice."<sup>67</sup> If Trumbull ever made such a sweeping generalization about native failings, no record of it survives.

The work of Frances Manwaring Caulkins, like De Forest's *History*, offers a striking comparison to Trumbull's historical perspective. Caulkins wrote a *History of New London* and a *History of Norwich*, tracing the two towns' development from the 1600s to the mid-1800s. A female historian from New London, she shared Trumbull's

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 490.

passion for local history. In a surviving letter, Caulkins praised Trumbull's efforts in collating and publishing the state's archival records: "There is great pleasure in taking up a book- which is a book- one in which we can have entire confidence, - which is authority, and that is the pleasure which you will give to many persons engaged in historical research."<sup>68</sup> She also cited his work in her text's discussion of native place names. Scholarly admiration aside, Caulkins expressed a view of Native Americans, both past and present, jarringly at odds with Trumbull's own. Her texts reveal, sometimes to stunning effect, the endurance of the "vanishing Indian" narrative in the face of historical and contemporary facts.

In her histories, Caulkins described the colonial Pequots as a cruel, bloodthirsty, quasi-demonic people. Where Trumbull noted with regret the Naragansett failure to side with the Pequots, Caulkins praised this intertribal hostility as a divine event: "The providence of God had prepared the way for the peaceful settlement of the Saxon race, by permitting for a while the deadly passions of the Indians to... make them instruments of each other's destruction."<sup>69</sup> She mentioned but did not explain the Mystic massacre, writing primly, "Our subject does not lead us to treat of the conflict in detail."<sup>70</sup> However, only pages after describing the Pequot penchant for torture and cannibalism, Caulkins sighed over the sorrowful inevitability of the tribe's fate. Her text on New London illuminated the century-old tension between the perception and reality of Indian

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<sup>68</sup> F.M. Caulkins to JHT, 12 April 1850, 2.57, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>69</sup> F.M. Caulkins, *History of Norwich, Connecticut: From its Possession by the Indians, to the year 1866* (Hartford: the author, 1866), 46.

<sup>70</sup> F.M. Caulkins, *History of New London, Connecticut. From the First Survey of the Coast in 1612, to 1852* (New London: Case, Tiffany and company, 1852), 35.

vanishing; the settlement created in the wake of the Pequot War, she explained, "...was emphatically, as it was then called Pequot; the land left by an extinguished tribe; or, if not extinguished in fact, legally held to be so, and doomed to extinction."<sup>71</sup> Caulkins expressed a more positive, though deeply patronizing, opinion of Uncas than either Trumbull or De Forest, writing, "It is impossible... for the most lenient judgment or the most ardent hope to conceive of him as a Christianized man, or even a noble-hearted barbarian. Yet there were some valuable points about him."<sup>72</sup> His "valuable points," of course, were his land grants to colonists; even Uncas, to Caulkins' mind, accepted the inherent truth that his people must give way in the face of English immigration.

Caulkins shared De Forest's impulse to blame Connecticut's tribes for their own suffering. As she declared in her history of Norwich, "There is no race of men whom it has been found so difficult to civilize and Christianize, and at the same time to preserve and render prosperous, as the Aborigines of America. A change in their wild habits leads by degrees, more or less rapid, to extinction."<sup>73</sup> Again, the contradiction of this extinction narrative appeared within mere pages, as Caulkins went on to praise the Mohegan tribe "as a civil, teachable, active, and intelligent people... favorites with the people of Norwich."<sup>74</sup> The Pequots fit more seamlessly into this reverse teleology; although she acknowledged their contribution in King Philip's War, Caulkins decried their failure to embrace civilization. She also deplored the racial mixing within their community, a sentiment Trumbull never voiced in his surviving papers.

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<sup>71</sup> Caulkins, *History of New London*, 51.

<sup>72</sup> Caulkins, *History of Norwich*, 117.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

### Spoken History: James Hammond Trumbull and William Leete Stone

Although Trumbull never published his independent colonial history of Stonington, surviving manuscripts suggest that he presented at least one scholarly oration that challenged popular conceptions of southern Connecticut's indigenous peoples and the nature of the Pequot War. An undated speech draft offers frustratingly few clues as to its origin; Trumbull notes its intended delivery to a "Stonington auditory" somewhere near the town of Guilford, under the auspices of an unidentified association.<sup>75</sup> Although no outside evidence exists to prove that the speech was delivered, it is more than likely that Trumbull lectured to a small scholarly cohort at an event that went unrecorded and unadvertised by the likes of the *Hartford Courant*.

In his written introduction, Trumbull began with an apology. Although he had been asked to give an overview of Stonington's history, he had inadvertently written almost forty pages on "the anticolonial or aboriginal history of the Pequod Territory," necessitating a lecture series rather than a one-off talk.<sup>76</sup> Trumbull's conception of his town's origins reached back to the first years of the seventeenth century, when Dutch traders first established a relationship with the Pequot tribe. He offered a striking assessment of the virtue and necessity of seriously studying the indigenous past amid a glut of romanticized "histories:"

I am aware that Indian history whether of the race, of particular tribes, or of individuals has become a hackneyed and stale topic and that an apology is wanting, for detaining you perhaps as unwilling auditors to listen to a commentary upon the characteristics of a race, whom every succeeding

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<sup>75</sup> JHT lecture MS, Trumbull Family File, Stonington Historical Society, Stonington, Connecticut.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

generation have been taught to regard as monsters of unmitigated cruelty and wickedness, an error in fact, although it may seem to have been countenanced by many of the historians of our country.<sup>77</sup>

Trumbull mentioned the ludicrous Indian origin theory of one colonial-era historian; although Reverend William Hubbard of Ipswich believed that Native Americans were the offspring of Satan and the “silly witches” of the New World, his testimony of the Pequot tribe’s character was still cited by Trumbull’s contemporaries. As he carved out his revisionist perspective, Trumbull emphasized his wholehearted commitment to intellectual integrity and scholarly care. A revisionist perspective of this era was vital, he argued:

From the concurrent testimony of these histories, as well as by the exhibition of the relics of the race which have survived until our time, degraded, downtrodden and demoralized as we find them we have been influenced to acquiesce in the justice of our ancestors, who classing them with other obnoxious animals, which interfered with their peaceful occupation of the whole territory waged a war of extermination against them. Justice to the memory of this ill fated race demands at our hands a vindication from what we now know to be groundless aspersion upon their characters and conduct, even at the hazard of imputing to some of our ancestors mistakes in policy or equity in their dealings with them.<sup>78</sup>

While his description of contemporary Pequots was in keeping with that of De Forest and Stone, Trumbull’s sense of righteous historical indignation separated him from his counterparts. His characterization of the Pequot War, the conflict that institutionalized white rule and paved the way for his beloved hometown to flourish, as an unjust “war of extermination” was a bold and uncomfortable statement for his projected audience.

Trumbull’s lecture was a sophisticated synthesis of numerous colonial documents. He pulled together the memoirs, state records, and other historical papers cited in his personal notebooks to argue that the Massachusetts Bay Colony instigated the Pequot

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

War in a naked grab for land and power; the conflict was in no way provoked by Pequot aggression. Trumbull quoted numerous colonial sources attesting to the hospitality, honesty, and egalitarianism of the Pequot tribe, concluding, “Up to 1633 I have found no allegation in any Dutch or English record or history, derogatory to their honor, justice or humanity in their intercourse with Europeans.”<sup>79</sup> Trumbull’s main draft glided over the major events of the Pequot War, assuming that they would be highly familiar to his audience. However, in supplementary notes that appear to provide an alternate ending to his speech, he described some particularly harrowing details of the conflict, unknown to most scholars. For example, Trumbull explained that after twenty-two male Pequot captives were placed on a settler’s boat,

His instructions for his disposition of them we must infer from his subsequent action. He sailed out of the Harbour and when he was about equidistant between this and Fisher Island he “cupped” them, that is he threw them overboard with their limbs fettered and left them, proceeding on his return to Pequot river...<sup>80</sup>

Trumbull wanted his listeners to understand white injustice toward the Pequots in an abstract historical sense, but he also sought to remind his audience of specific instances of settler violence.

Toward the end of his lecture draft, Trumbull qualified the ruling of his sometime correspondent and contemporary historian George Bancroft on the fate of the post-war Pequots:

Bancroft says “A nation had disappeared in a day.” This was not literally true. After the junction of the Massachusetts and Connecticut forces it is true a war of extermination was waged against them. The captives were sold into Slavery. Many were disposed of among the families of the two Colonies yet hundreds were shipped to Bermuda and Barbadoes and their [sic] exchanged for Sugar, Rum, and

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

Negroes. The first of the latter commodity imported into Massachusetts, as an article of commerce, were a part of the return cargo of Capt. Price which he obtained in exchange for some 80 Pequods which were shipped by him for sale. Heavy bounties were paid by both Colonies for the heads and hands of Pequods brought in by the neighboring Indians. Many were brought by the Narragansetts, some by the Long Island Indians, and some by the distant Mohawks to whom the fugitives had gone for protection, yet many escaped the slaughter and pursuit, and were subsequently permitted to reoccupy a portion of their native territory.<sup>81</sup>

By complicating Bancroft's vision of overwhelming white dominance and native disappearance, Trumbull's critique is fully in keeping with the sympathy for seventeenth-century Pequods seen in his unfinished manuscript history. Even as he detailed settler cruelty, his words also emphasized colonial native resilience. The "degraded, downtrodden and demoralized" nineteenth-century Pequods Trumbull perceived living at his community's edges were granted, at least, an accurate past.

Trumbull's research-based, nuanced lecture draft stands in sharp contrast to William Leete Stone's *Uncas and Miantonomoh*. This text began as a discourse delivered in Norwich on July 4, 1842, at the dedication of a monument to Uncas on the traditional Mohegan burial grounds. Stone was recognized as an expert on Native American history for his texts *Life of Brant* and *Life and Times of Red Jacket*.<sup>82</sup> His oration exemplified the romantic, fatalistic attitude toward Native Americans characteristic of the era: "The spirit of the red man had beheld with anguish the gradual extinction of his race...but the spirit of the hero would rejoice in knowing that his greatness was recognised and honored...even by the hated and dreaded white man, in whose advance was written the

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> James Grant Wilson and John Fiske, eds., "Stone, William Leete" in *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography, Volume V* (New York: Appleton and Company, 1888), 705.

destiny of the Indian to perish.”<sup>83</sup> Speaking mere miles away from the Mohegan reservation, Stone’s blithe account of the tribe’s disappearance was particularly disingenuous.

Stone’s speech lionized Uncas, the Mohegan sachem who fought with the English in the Pequot War and other conflicts with native tribes and granted the lands of Norwich to white settlers: “While we shudder at his ferocity, or pity his limited range of understanding and of knowledge, we must also hold him in greater honor for these exhibitions of generosity, of forbearance and magnanimity...Wise in council, brave in battle, prudent as a ruler, his were the qualities which command admiration in all time and from all people...”<sup>84</sup> Stone’s paternalistic assessment of this native leader, though far more effusive than Caulkins’ perspective, was no less patronizing. In comparison, Trumbull’s levelheaded, respectful descriptions of post-war Pequot leaders like Herman Garrett and Robin Cassacinamon stand out.

With his careful pencil, Trumbull poked holes in Stone’s published scholarship. In marginalia throughout his copy of the text, he pointed out dates and genealogies he thought erroneous. Although Trumbull probably sat down with Stone’s history more than ten years before he attempted his own, his disdain for Uncas and affinity for the Pequots was already apparent. When Stone asserted that Uncas’ grandfather was Tatoban, a relative of Sassacus, Trumbull countered with a footnote: “\*Tatoban, was but another

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<sup>83</sup> William L. Stone, *Uncas and Miantonomoh; a historical discourse, delivered at Norwich, (Conn.,) on the fourth day of July, 1842, on the occasion of the erection of a monument to the memory of Uncas, the white man’s friend, and first chief of the Mohegans* (New York: Dayton & Newman, 1842), 171.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 169-170.

name for Sassacus...”<sup>85</sup> Trumbull took particular umbrage at Stone’s overblown estimates of Uncas’ power. Stone scoffed, “But this estimation [of 4,000 warrior Pequods] must likewise have been an exaggeration,\* unless the Mohegans east of the Connecticut river, and along its valley, were all included.”<sup>86</sup> Trumbull retorted, “\*Where do we learn of Mohegans along the valley of the Connecticut?”<sup>87</sup> Later in the text, Stone wrote of the Native Americans in Windsor, “They were divided into small clans, having different names, and living under their own Sachems. But they were, nevertheless, all Mohegans, and with the exception of the Nahantics, if not under the immediate government of Uncas, greatly subject to his influence.”<sup>88</sup> Trumbull rejoinder- “\*What proof have we of this?”- demonstrated the concern for citation and fact-checking that would inform his own unpublished history.<sup>89</sup> At one point, Trumbull underlined Stone’s mention of Mohegan cannibalism, perhaps to make a more derogatory point.

Occasionally, Trumbull’s marginalia took on a note of barely restrained anger at Stone’s refusal to acknowledge English wrongdoing. Stone described the capture of a band of Pequots in the final days of the Pequot War, when “the women and children were spared.”<sup>90</sup> Trumbull challenged this blithe analysis: “\*Sent captives to the Bermudas!” Another correction spoke to Trumbull’s abiding interest in place names, as well as his sense of righteous anger. Stone explained the name of a harbor in Guilford in light of Sassacus’ execution: “Striking off the deceased chieftain’s head, Uncas placed it high in the crotch of an oak tree near the harbor, where the skull remained many years. Hence the

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<sup>85</sup> JHT marginalia in Watkinson Library copy, Stone, *Uncas and Miantonomoh*, 29.

<sup>86</sup> Stone, *Uncas and Miantonomoh*, 28.

<sup>87</sup> JHT marginalia in Watkinson Library copy, Stone, *Uncas and Miantonomoh*, 28

<sup>88</sup> Stone, *Uncas and Miantonomoh*, 32-33

<sup>89</sup> JHT marginalia in Watkinson Library copy, Stone, *Uncas and Miantonomoh*, 33

<sup>90</sup> Stone, *Uncas and Miantonomoh*, 75.

name of ‘Sachem’s Head.’<sup>91</sup> In his marginal footnote, Trumbull introduced a troubling question about English loyalty. Citing a colonial source, he contended, “\* ...that Sachem’s Head was so called from the fact that the two sachems retained by the English as guides were executed here.”<sup>92</sup> The harbor’s indigenous name, like its ownership, was erased by settler violence.

The most remarkable example of Trumbull’s marginal challenges appears on an endpaper at the close of the text. In an extraordinary note, Trumbull recounted an uncomfortable confrontation with Stone:

In the summer of 1842 or 4, I met Col. Stone at Stonington, -in company with Hon. A.H. Tracy (of western New York). In conversation with Mr. T., I had expressed an opinion of Uncas, as unlike as possible to that which Col. Stone’s researches had apparently led him to form, -speaking of him as the most contemptible, worthless, and treacherous, of all the Indians of Conn. Mr. Tracy, laughing, called the Colonel’s attention to my heresies. “So you don’t believe all I have said of Uncas?” he asked. I was slightly “cornered,”- but put the best face on it. “No, sir: I do not believe any of it. I think Uncas was a very miserable Indian, - hardly worth talking about; and not nearly deserving of a good monument as his father-in-law, Sassacus.” “Well! I do not know but it’s so,” said Col. S., -“but see here my young freind [sic], -if the ladies of Norwich should send for you, to come and make a speech over Uncas’s grave, and they were all present to hear you, do you think it would be well to tell all the truth about him? I couldn’t do it.” “No,” - I replied, -“I did not expect it from you. All that I object to is, that you have printed the blarney, and tried to make it pass for history.”<sup>93</sup>

Stone’s stated unwillingness to offend “the ladies of Norwich” reflects the gender restrictions of nineteenth-century Connecticut. Frances M. Caulkins was an anomaly; at her death, the Massachusetts Historical Society “could recall no other female historian in

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>92</sup> JHT marginalia in Watkinson Library copy, Stone, *Uncas and Miantonomoh*, 77.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., endpage.

New England.”<sup>94</sup> The patriotic, civically-minded women responsible for funding the Uncas memorial and organizing its dedication ceremony, argued Stone, should not be informed of the colonial period’s extensive interethnic violence. Whether Stone was actually swept up in the extinction narrative or was merely protecting delicate female sensibilities, Trumbull was outraged that publication had made his oration a permanent part of the historical record.

It is not clear when Trumbull penned his endpage recollection. However, given his penchant for primary research and personal annotations, it is not assuming too much to posit that he hoped some future researcher would stumble across it. Even if he never challenged a wrongheaded popular narrative so publically and forcefully again, he wanted to problematize the text for its next reader, and receive credit for doing so.

When Caulkins willed her “Indian papers” to Trumbull, it is doubtful that she knew of his discomfort with the popular, romantic perspective of the Pequot War and the subsequent centuries of white domination in southeastern Connecticut.<sup>95</sup> Trumbull confined his historical and moral problems with this narrative to personal annotations, preliminary prose, private letters, and, probably, small lectures. In a February 1876 letter to Trumbull, William H. Potter of Mystic inquired whether a proposed monument on the Pequot Fort site should depict “Mason the great captain, or Sassacus, the fallen chief.”<sup>96</sup> In a surviving drafted response, Trumbull maintained a careful attitude of nonchalance,

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<sup>94</sup> *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society 1867-1869*, (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1869), 60.

<sup>95</sup> Pamela Caulkins to JHT, 23 September 1876, II.3, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>96</sup> William H. Potter to JHT, 7 February 1876, II.12, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

supposedly offering an opinion “without having given the matter much consideration.”<sup>97</sup>

The draft continues:

...It strikes me that this monument should be, primarily historical rather than triumphal; that it should be of such a design as that it may appear to be, created to commemorate an event, rather than to honor a victory. The history of the Pequot War is not the portion (chapter) of our colonial history which I best love to read or remember with most pride.<sup>98</sup>

Unfortunately, it cannot be established whether Trumbull sent this message, or whether he softened his tone even further in his final letter.

Whether it stemmed from a paralyzing fear of making embarrassing historical mistakes, an unwillingness to jeopardize his popularity as a scholar among colleagues and amateurs, a reluctance to condemn his beloved hometown, or some combination of the three, Trumbull’s reluctance to boldly set the record straight on the Pequot War and its aftermath appears as a serious abdication of responsibility. However, Trumbull broke with serious scholars and popular pundits alike by privileging the minutiae of southeastern Connecticut’s historical record over sentimental and imperialist tropes. He chose to make small, gradual, individual corrections to the historical record through correspondence rather than publication. In his exhaustive research and cautious revelations, Trumbull proved himself a historian of both admirable rigor and regrettable reticence.

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<sup>97</sup> JHT MS, 8 February 1876, II.12, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

## **History, Policy, and Power: James Hammond Trumbull as Intellectual and Political Authority**

James Hammond Trumbull's intellectual gifts earned him power in both political and scholarly circles. His various positions in the Connecticut legislature, particularly his stint as Secretary of State, granted him real-world political power. In an era where colonial history informed state policy, Trumbull also possessed more subtle, but equally significant authority as an expert in that field. At the state level, Trumbull's historical and linguistic Native American scholarship intertwined. In private correspondence with state officials and local historians, he complicated the narrative of peaceful land grants that legitimized white ownership of territory. Trumbull also engaged citizens in a pet project, the collection and definition of Connecticut's indigenous place names. Although Jean M. O'Brien characterizes place name study as a practice of cultural replacement, Trumbull's historical knowledge and openness to native input also challenged this paradigm.<sup>99</sup> However, although he operated from a unique position of political authority and "archival power," Trumbull failed to speak out against his legislature's ongoing efforts to suppress surviving, vital indigenous communities.<sup>100</sup>

### **History and Policy in Connecticut**

The surviving contents of Trumbull's large Native American library reveal that national awareness of Connecticut's nineteenth-century tribes was limited and problematic. These peoples were solely the subjects of "historical" eulogies, not reports or advocates' pleas. Already "vanished" or "vanishing," no longer a threat to white expansion or stability, they attracted little national attention. However, the citizens of

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<sup>99</sup> O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, 56.

<sup>100</sup> Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 103.

Connecticut themselves shared this lack of awareness to an astonishing degree. Although the state's government recognized and employed a bureaucracy to manage the Pequot, Mohegan, Niantic, Paugussett, Tunxis, and Schaghticoke tribes, this fact went unnoticed by the public and by local historians.<sup>101</sup> Even though tribes occasionally asserted themselves before the state legislature, as when the Mohegans and Niantics defended their right to fish the Connecticut River two years before Trumbull was born, there was no sense among the general population that native groups continued to exist as independent legal and cultural communities.<sup>102</sup>

As Trumbull was growing up in Stonington, Native Americans maintained a significant presence in southern New England as a whole, and southeastern Connecticut in particular. Tribal members participated in the mainstream economy as whalers, farm laborers, domestic servants, traders, artisans, and healers.<sup>103</sup> Their traditional lands served as a vital means of subsistence and source of community ties. As Daniel R. Mandell notes in *Tribe, Race, History*, "...Persistent communal values helped Indians maintain the land base that provided a measure of flexibility and autonomy from the abrasive regional economy, which was critical for Indian survival during the upheaval of the early republic."<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, the area's Native Americans were worn down by constant attempts by whites to seize their land and precious resources. Their lives were severely limited by their social status.

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<sup>101</sup> O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, 145.

<sup>102</sup> Mandell, *Tribe, Race, History*, 15.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

Nineteenth-century Connecticut residents displayed a stunning ability to overlook the native people that lived and worked in their midst. One reason that indigenous communities were invisible to the larger population was a deeply embedded racism. When white citizens encountered native individuals, whether as whalers or farmers, indentured servants or itinerant peddlers, an emerging racial ideology allowed for the denial of Indian identity. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, intermarriage between indigenous individuals and other races was seen as a means of improving Native Americans. In the decades after Trumbull's birth, however, the rise of scientific racism cast native-black marriage as a perversion of natural law that negated a person's native lineage. The "last pure-blood" or "real Indian" of a native community became the subject of white awe and curiosity throughout New England, while "mixed" offspring became the subject of derision and dismissal.<sup>105</sup> In Connecticut, the narrative of polluted native racial lines had a particular power. Despite the state's membership in the supposedly enlightened region of New England, Connecticut's racism stood in sharp contrast to its neighbors. Although the state adopted "gradual abolition" in 1784, this law did not free any living slaves; the state's last slaves were not freed until 1848, when Trumbull was in his twenties.<sup>106</sup>

Like its neighboring states, Connecticut had a particularly uncomfortable relationship with its Native American population. In the wake of the American Revolution, the new national government did not develop relationships with New England's tribes, whether as sovereign nations or conquered peoples. Jurisdiction over

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-51.

<sup>106</sup> David Menschel, "Abolition Without Deliverance: The Law of Connecticut Slavery 1784-1848," *The Yale Law Journal* 11 (2001): 185, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/797518>.

them remained with the individual states, which retained the guardianship system but struggled like the federal government to articulate a coherent policy. O'Brien writes, "Indian affairs in this context often seem tremendously haphazard, as officials involved with tribes rarely concerned themselves much with those tribes under their oversight on the one hand, and Indian peoples frequently sought to avoid their oversight on the other."<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, New England states were still informed by the principle of knowledge for policy's sake. Connecticut policy toward indigenous peoples, particularly towards the Pequot and Mohegan tribes residing near Trumbull's hometown, was based on a particular understanding of their history. As much as Trumbull may have wanted to think of his historical work as the disinterested pursuit of knowledge, his efforts had political consequences.

### **Trumbull in Power**

In 1847, Trumbull traded Stonington for Hartford, taking up a position in the office of the Connecticut Secretary of State that was likely secured in part through his influential father. Fanny Noyes was proud of her beloved grandson's "useful, and honorable employment," but fretted over his health and mourned his absence from the close-knit family circle.<sup>108</sup> The new job granted Trumbull access to Connecticut's foundational documents, which fascinated the newly enrolled member of the Connecticut Historical Society. By 1850, Trumbull had taken it upon himself, at his own expense, to compile, edit and publish the first volume of Connecticut's colonial records.<sup>109</sup> This work

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<sup>107</sup> O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, 192.

<sup>108</sup> Fanny Noyes to James Hammond Trumbull, 7 June 1847, I.1, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>109</sup> Wright, *Biographical Memoir*, 148.

earned him attention and respect in his adopted city. Poet Lydia Sigourney, renowned as the “Sweet Singer of Hartford,” praised his diligence and intelligence “with the best wishes that these virtues may produce for you, their rational results, a life of distinction.”<sup>110</sup> Subsequent volumes published in 1852 and 1859 cemented Trumbull’s reputation as an important historian. His twin roles as public servant and public historian lent his work greater authority but also probably discouraged him from publically asserting the complicated, dark alternative narratives of colonization and Native American history that filled his notebooks.

Trumbull was appointed the first state librarian and registrar in 1854. In addition to claiming space for and organizing the library, he was placed on a committee to compile Connecticut’s statutory laws. In personal autobiographical notes, Trumbull recalled of the wearying project:

...This must be done at the busiest season of the year, when my library work and my Registrar’s Report demanded my whole time. For four or five weeks, I averaged sixteen hours per day of desk-work, and that of the most tiresome and perplexing character.<sup>111</sup>

In 1855, Trumbull stepped away from the desk, marrying Sarah A. Robinson and embarking on a year-long transatlantic honeymoon. In closely written letters to his parents back home in Stonington, he described everything from an average day onboard ship to his impressions of Easter in Rome.

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<sup>110</sup> L.H. Sigourney to JHT, 30 March 1850, 1.4, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>111</sup> JHT MS, 11 April 1884, I.19, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

Upon his return, Trumbull faced a transformed political landscape after the dissolution of the Whig Party and founding of the Republican Party. In July 1856, he remembered,

Buchanan, Fillmore and Fremont were running for the presidency. Thank heaven! I was saved from the folly and crime into which many of my old political associates fell, of voting for Buchanan and calling myself a conservative. I did vote for Fremont, but without regarding myself as a radical. The Republican party took form and shape, and I united myself to it.<sup>112</sup>

Two years later, he chose to resume his clerical position rather than run for Secretary of State, the job “having better pay with less responsibility.”<sup>113</sup> Trumbull’s urge to avoid political power and responsibility aligns with his reluctance to publish definitive, uncompromising histories.

Trumbull finally accepted the nomination for secretary of state and was annually elected from 1861 to 1866. The nature of the position was not clearly defined, at least not for the general public: in March 1864, one of Trumbull’s correspondents inquired, “Is there any other Secretary in the government of Connecticut, any ‘Secretary of War’ or ‘Secretary of the Interior.’ Are you not the Secretary of the State of Connecticut?”<sup>114</sup> By Trumbull’s own assessment, the eruption of the Civil War in 1861 transformed his office: “The issue of military commissions, and other duties incident to the war, has rendered the office less of a sinecure than formerly.”<sup>115</sup> In scattered diary entries, Trumbull

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Robert C. Learned to JHT, 21 March 1864, I.19, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>115</sup> JHT MS, 11 April 1884, I.19, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

complained about post-election pageantry and legislative lethargy. In May 1864, he wrote:

The House is of more than average ability, but has no recognized leader. The Senate- eighteen republicans and union democrats to three “copper heads”- is too strong in majority and not strong enough in talent, to give an example to the House or hurry the wheels of legislation...Nothing of importance is yet accomplished, very little of the work of the session is fairly begun.

In addition to handling military commissions, Trumbull proposed and drew up an amendment granting volunteer soldiers the vote and drew resolutions expressing the legislature’s sorrow at the death of a Connecticut general. He mused, “The roll of Connecticut heroes already fallen in this accursed rebellion is a proud one: Lyon, Ward, Winthrop, Mansfield, Foote, Sedgwick- what State has so much to mourn over, or so much to boast of?”<sup>116</sup>

### **History, Land Rights, and Detribalization: Trumbull’s Influence on State Policy**

The mid-nineteenth century saw the state governments of southern New England grow more assertive in the exercise of power. While guiding and facilitating economic development remained important to these legislatures, social goals were considered paramount.<sup>117</sup> Between 1860 and 1880, through what Mandell terms “a strange mixture of racism and egalitarianism,” the southern New England states ended the independent legal status of almost all Native American tribes within their borders.<sup>118</sup> As both a high-ranking official in Connecticut’s state government and a widely renowned expert on colonial history, Trumbull was uniquely positioned to observe and participate in this process, which privileged the past as justification for ongoing policy.

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Mandell, *Tribe, Race, History*, 201

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 195.

In 1859, motivated in part by petitions to sell land from Brothertown emigrants, Connecticut's state legislature organized a committee to investigate conditions on the Mohegan reservation. During this era, commissions were a popular way for New England state governments to approach various problems. Often, and particularly when examining native reservations, the officials involved brought pre-existing social biases to bear on their goals, assessments, and recommendations.<sup>119</sup> In the case of the 1859 Mohegan commission, one member drew on Trumbull's historical knowledge to shape the published report.

In August, Learned Hebard contacted Trumbull with a compelling question about Mohegan colonial history:

I am in the fog- can you give me light? The Town of Norwich was deeded by Uncas &c. The five mile purchase of Lebanon was made Sept 6 1692- of Oeneco Son of Uncas- and between the five mile purchase and the (now) town of Bozrah... then is the mile strip called Mason... From whom did they derive their title? And when- Was that mile strip ever a part of Norwich?<sup>120</sup>

The following year, Hebard and two other commissioners were appointed by the state to divide those Mohegan lands that were still commonly held into individual allotments. In July 1861, the state government also reclaimed authority over the Mohegans from the county court and created more officials to directly oversee the tribe's affairs.<sup>121</sup>

In 1861, Trumbull received more questions from Hebard:

I am preparing my Report upon the Distribution of the Mohegan lands as Commissioner under the Act of the last Legislation... Did Uncas the Mohegan Chief convey his lands to the Govt of Connecticut by deed. Dated 28<sup>th</sup> day of

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>120</sup> Learned Hebard to JHT, 25 August 1859, I.10, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>121</sup> Mandell, *Tribe, Race, History*, 203-204.

September 1640. Did Uncas and Waiquoan his brother Sachem of the Mohegans convey their land by deed. Dated August 15. 1659. to Major John Mason, then Dep. Gov. of the State.<sup>122</sup>

Hebard's questions struck at the heart of state claims to Mohegan land and rights to guardianship over the tribe. His preoccupation with deeds and dates from two centuries prior illustrated the importance of legal land transfers, or at least the façade of fairness, to the state government of nineteenth-century Connecticut. The appearance of John Mason, who oversaw the Mystic Massacre of the Pequot War before rising to prominence in state government, in Hebard's letters reveals the tangled, tragic processes that culminated in English domination over tribal lands.

Hebard's final report, presented with his fellow commissioners in 1861, provides powerful proof of native history's enduring impact on contemporary policy, and of the importance of Trumbull's specific historical input on the state's sense of authority over native affairs:

The State of Connecticut claims a jurisdiction over the Mohegan lands as far back as Sept, 28<sup>th</sup> 1640 when Uncas Sachem of the Mohegans "by his certain writing granted to the Governor and Magistrates of the English upon Connecticut River all his lands by what name soever called, reserving only the grounds planted by him." "August 15<sup>th</sup> 1659. Uncas and Wawequay, Sachems of Mohegan granted to Major John Mason all their lands with all the corn and corn lands wheresoever" "At a Gen. Assembly held at Hartford March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1660, Major Mason surrenders the same to the Colony" It might be a matter of interest to follow the history of these lands and their occupants, but the Commissioners do not consider a part of their duties...<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Learned Hebard to JHT, 23 March 1861, I.14, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>123</sup> "Indian Overseers' reports, 1881-1884," Box 15, Record Group 006:30, Records of the Secretary of State, Connecticut State Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

By stating that post-colonization Connecticut history fell outside their purview, Hebard and his colleagues avoided describing or allocating blame for the interim struggles of indigenous people as traced in Trumbull's manuscript notes.

The report provides an important glimpse into the white perspective on the Mohegan community. It alludes to the state ration system, recently discontinued to encourage greater productivity on the reservation. The Commissioners concluded that the division of the remaining tribally held lands among individual Mohegans would decrease tribal revenue, but existing interest and rental fees would suffice to meet expenses. They also offered a detailed account of Mohegans' interactions with local neighbors and state authority:

There has been an unwarrantable want of wood, till there is not sufficient on the Indian lands for fuel, timber and necessary fencing stuff. A practice has prevailed of [whites] cutting and carrying wood... till there is not a supply of fuel for the tenants... It appears from the Survey of the sequestered lands made in 1736, there were nearly five thousand acres. At present, the number of acres is less than half that amount, and the best part has passed out of the possession of the tribe... The Commissioners are decidedly opposed to selling any more of the lands. There is an evil resulting to the tribes from selling the lands- The reversionary interest is destroyed. And in many instances brought to the attention of the Commissioners, where individual rights of land have been sold, the entire avails have been squandered or lost in a short time and the seller pauperized... For many years many of the males have followed the seas, and left the females a prey to unprincipled men.<sup>124</sup>

The commissioners noted the common practice of Mohegans making wills to convey individual properties; although such wills had been made since the previous land allotment in 1790, they were legally invalid. In a surprising display of restraint, Hebard and his colleagues had planned to ignore this practice until a simultaneous lawsuit before the Supreme Court forced the issue. The commissioners wrote, "We have consequently

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

been under the necessity of surveying all the Mohegan lands, and of tracing the titles for more than 70 years, without a scrap of record or memorandum to refer to.”<sup>125</sup> With the help of Emma T. Baker, “a very intelligent member of the tribe,” Hebard and his colleagues established the genealogical relationships of the approximately sixty Mohegans living on the reservation.<sup>126</sup> Baker’s involvement in the state genealogical effort parallels native contributions to various linguistic projects; in both instances, indigenous input was ultimately used to reinforce state control over tribal identity.

For tribes in southern New England, common tribal lands provided invaluable resources, including fish, game, and timber. Furthermore, the reservation allowed traditional social structures and networks to endure. As Hebard found, land allotments and other tribal decisions were preserved in the memories of community elders, not in legal documents.<sup>127</sup> For Mohegans and other tribes, Mandell observes, “The reserve was their primary bond: it represented kinship, culture, and a sacred past.”<sup>128</sup> However, the commissioners stated that the Mohegans they had met with were eager to become outright owners of their property. They also wrote, “The Commissioners would do injustice to their own feelings if they failed to acknowledge the kind attentions, and respectful treatment they have recd from every member of the tribe with whom they have met...”<sup>129</sup> Hebard was rewarded for “much perplexity and labor” in the service of the state project. In 1869, he was appointed, along with Henry P. Havens and Henry B.

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Mandell, *Tribe, Race, History*, 15-20.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>129</sup> “Indian Overseers’ reports, 1881-1884,” Box 15, Record Group 006:30, Records of the Secretary of State, Connecticut State Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

Norton, as a commissioner on Mohegan affairs. His input was respected: no Mohegan land sales were immediately conducted by the state.<sup>130</sup>

In May 1872, a group of Mohegans petitioned the General Assembly for an end to state guardianship and simple ownership of individual land allotments. T.H.C.

Kingsbury, one of Hebard's fellow investigative commissioners from 1861, was summoned to weigh in on the issue. He wrote that month to his old colleague and Trumbull's former correspondent,

I would like to get your opinion, whether it would be advisable to grant their petition, or not. I have forgotten all that I ever knew about the tribe's history... before I am questioned on that point, I would like to procure from you, such statistics as you think I ought to possess, to keep myself from becoming an object of violence... How many did [the tribe] number in 1861? What is the area of the tribe lands?<sup>131</sup>

Hebard's response is unknown, but Kingsbury's "forgetfulness" suggests how little native concerns mattered to Connecticut's government officials. Regardless of his ignorance, Kingsbury never questioned his race-given right to weigh in on matters central to the tribe's survival. Connecticut's legislature, eager to follow the example of Massachusetts, swiftly terminated the Mohegans' legal status as an independent entity. Tribal members became taxpaying landowners and their reserve was annexed to the town of Montville.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Hebard, Leonard [Learned ], Item 22, *Papers relating to Mohegan Indians, 1699-1861* [bound photocopy available at History and Genealogy information desk], Connecticut State Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, Item 20.

<sup>132</sup> Mandell, *Tribe, Race, History*, 213.

Many Mohegans, including tribal leader Anson Cooper, responded with outrage to detribalization.<sup>133</sup> The threat of this action had been in the air for some time; during the Civil War, Cooper had written to the War Department to protest Mohegans' inclusion in the draft, arguing in vain that his tribe was a sovereign entity.<sup>134</sup> Nevertheless, the state's decision was made. Kingsbury chortled of the impending re-allotment process, "If Gov Jewell will appoint three Commissioners possessing the wisdom of Solomon, the meekness of Moses and the subtlety of the Devil, they may succeed in giving satisfaction to a portion of the tribe."<sup>135</sup> In October 1872, Hebard resigned from that very position.<sup>136</sup>

In contrast to the Mohegans, the Mashantucket Pequots were one of the few New England tribes to maintain their existence as a unique legal entity at mid-century. However, the tribe did not emerge from the era unscathed. A surviving document from January 1856 explains that three commissioners were appointed by the New London Superior Court "to cause to be surveyed, and divided and to sell a portion of the reserved lands for the Pequot Indians in the town of Ledyard, agreeable to an act passed by the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut at the May Session 1855."<sup>137</sup> Unlike the Mohegan land sales, this decision was made without any demand or input from tribal members actually living on the reservation. The stated motivation of the legislature was the tribe's drastically reduced numbers. An 1850 request for the sale from eleven tribal members living in Brothertown and the tribal overseer's negative assessment of the

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<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>135</sup> Hebard, Leonard [Learned], Item 20, *Papers relating to Mohegan Indians, 1699-1861* [bound photocopy available at History and Genealogy information desk], Connecticut State Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, Item 21.

<sup>137</sup> "New London County Superior Court, Papers by Subject, Indians," Box 2, Record Group 003, Connecticut State Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

tribe's morality may have also influenced the General Assembly. According to the state, selling most of the 850-acre reserve was the ideal way to address tribal debts and generational poverty. After the sales, the Mashantucket Pequots were left with 180 acres.<sup>138</sup> Trumbull was in Hartford for the May 1855 session; in his autobiographical notes, he recalled only the presentation of the state statute compilation.<sup>139</sup> His proven presence at the legislative session where the decision was made signals his complicity.

In regards to native rights, Trumbull's participation in state government had mixed results. Whatever his exact responses to Hebard, and although Hebard's conclusions were eventually ignored, the commissioner concluded that state-mandated Mohegan land sales would further hinder a struggling tribe. However, Trumbull failed to speak up against the sale of Mashantucket Pequot land. Like his historical work, Trumbull's political influence was circumspect to a fault.

### **Beyond Official Policy**

Ordinary Connecticut citizens shared the legislature's concern about the legality of white claims to native land. Over the course of 1860, as Hebard and his fellow commissioners worked to comprehend and reconfigure the nature of the Mohegan community, an editor and local historian from Willimantic wrote to Trumbull on the same issue. Despite the frustrating absence of Trumbull's replies, William Weaver's letters to the famed Indian expert represent an individual's attempt to justify his society's colonial origins and ongoing existence.

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<sup>138</sup> Mandell, *Tribe, Race, History*, 125, 214.

<sup>139</sup> JHT MS, 11 April 1884, I.19, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

Unlike newly arrived settlers in the west, nineteenth-century whites in Connecticut struggled to assert and understand their political authority over land taken from Indian tribes two centuries earlier. Paradoxically, this deep-seated impulse was a function of their long history as the dominant group in the area. O'Brien explains, "[Local historians] formulated a history that negated previous Indian history as a 'dead end'... supplanting it with a glorious New England history of just relations and property transactions rooted in American democracy that legitimated their claims to the land and the institutions they grounded there."<sup>140</sup> To admit that Connecticut was built on stolen land would jeopardize the state's cherished identity as a member of a proud, thriving, staunchly democratic New England region.

Connecticut's obsession with legitimizing white rights to land at the expense of historical nuance was a long-standing phenomenon. In a 1766 text, in answer to the Mohegans' appeal for the restoration of lands taken by the state, Connecticut representative William Samuel Johnson contended that the Pequot War had never happened, and that colonial Connecticut had acquired Pequot and Mohegan lands through treaty alone. In one fell rhetorical swoop, he rejected Mohegan claims on the state government and whitewashed Connecticut's violent past.<sup>141</sup> In *Beyond Conquest: Native Peoples and the Struggle for History in New England*, Amy Den Ouden observes that eighteenth-century Mashantucket Pequot efforts to assert tribal existence reveal "an alternative history, one in which conquest was not merely a military act finalized in a distant past, but an ongoing contest over land rights and the meaning of justice, and thus

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<sup>140</sup> O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, 55.

<sup>141</sup> Amy Den Ouden, *Beyond Conquest: Native Peoples and the Struggle for History in New England* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 197-199.

it was a contest that implied historical uncertainties.”<sup>142</sup> The colonial seizure of indigenous lands continued to resonate deeply during Trumbull’s lifetime. For some amateur historians like Weaver, the “historical uncertainties” surrounding the outcome of conquest were a persistent concern.

Weaver was working on a history of Willimantic when he sent Trumbull a list of historical questions, asking for clarification on various topics within John W. De Forest’s *History of the Indians of Connecticut*. His attention had been caught by a discrepancy around Uncas’ son Attawanhood, also known as Joshua, whose will purportedly granted extensive, poorly defined lands to a specific group of white settlers. Weaver’s first query, sent in May 1860, was purely chronological: “In the copy of Joshua’s will, found on our records, the date is 1675, and it is generally referred to as having been made in that year, and, as there is no double date, I supposed that it was in 1676, and if Joshua died in the latter year, it seems probable that that is the true date. Is De F. correct on this particular?”<sup>143</sup> Weaver’s second question was far more explosive in its implication that Norwich and the surrounding towns were founded on land that Joshua had no right to sell:

2. I have never been able to understand why Joshua should give away this tract of land, while Uncas was living, when he was not Sachem of the Mohegans, nor entitled to the succession; and De F. does not give any reasons why he claimed that tract. I should infer that it was originally in possession of the Nipmucks, but had passed over or was then claimed by the Mohegans. Why then does Joshua, and not Uncas, claim ownership and devise this to whom he will. His Sachemship of the Western Nehantics it seems could give him no claim to it and I can only understand it on the supposition that Uncas had relinquished jurisdiction in favor

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<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>143</sup> William Weaver to JHT, 10 May 1860, I.13, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

of Joshua. Do you know whether there is any record to show that such was the fact?<sup>144</sup>

Weaver's understanding of the various groups at play is reminiscent of Trumbull's own sensitivity to colonial-era intertribal rivalries and alliances.

In July, Weaver contacted Trumbull again, this time to inquire about the Nipmuck tribe's authority over Willimantic and their apparent abandonment of the area in the devastating wake of King Phillip's War. However, he circled back to the uncomfortably shady nature of Joshua's will, asking whether Trumbull's office archives included the specific map referred to in the questionable document, or any other maps of Mohegan country. In a postscript, Weaver offered a quasi-apology for his continuing interest in the matter: "PS. I do not propose to go into any very extended account of Indian affairs, but what I do state in regard to the Indians as... claimants of that tract I am very desirous should be correct."<sup>145</sup> Weaver's careful disavowal of his consuming interest mirrored Trumbull's own unwillingness to assert his profound interest in Native American history.

September 1860 found Weaver sending Trumbull yet another letter about Joshua's will and its significance for individual white territorial claims.

If I am not troubling you too much I would like your opinion on a single point. In the will of Joshua it is stipulated that the lands given to the Norwich legatees should be "divided + distributed amongst them and every of them as my father Uncas shall see meet and convenient." In our earliest proprietor's records there is an agreement to settle a town on these lands, dated Feb. 7, 1682. In this agreement it says: "having viewed the land + upon a view judge that it will afford an allotment to every thousand acres according to the distribution made by Uncas"...

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> William L. Weaver to JHT, 10 July 1860, I.13, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

It would seem by this that Uncas did proportion the land among the legatees, but I can find no record or account of it.<sup>146</sup>

Again, Weaver questioned the absolute legitimacy of Joshua's document and the idea that Uncas carefully parceled out Mohegan lands to specific, deserving settlers.

Unlike Hebard, William Weaver's unusual persistence was motivated not by a state mandate, but by his own sense of historical truth. His letters to Trumbull show his deep desire, if not desperation, to confirm the comfortable colonial narrative of above-board property transactions and amiable native-white relations that underlay Connecticut as he knew and loved it. Trumbull's responses to Hebard and Weaver are lost, but his drafted lecture on southeastern Connecticut before and after the Pequot War offers insight into his perspective. In those pages, Trumbull wrote:

The renegade and traitor Uncas claimed to be of the kindred of Sassacus, the Sachem of the Pequods. Under the guise of rewarding him for his services to the English in assisting them to hunt out and put to death his kindred and his countrymen, he was made a Sachem by Connecticut of the Pequod Country... In return Uncas as Sachem for a nominal consideration sold and conveyed to the Colony of Connecticut all the territory of the Pequods reserving to himself only the right to fish and hunt and to plant a certain tract...<sup>147</sup>

It is impossible to know whether Trumbull the high-ranking state official shared this cynical view of colonial state action in his responses to Hebard, who was working in an official capacity, or Weaver. In private letters, Trumbull was at least sometimes willing to shed light on the state's unsavory past. In 1851, a year into his career in the state legislature, he received an inquiry about slavery in Connecticut. Trumbull's response noted that, although the state never expressly authorized slavery by law, the General

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<sup>146</sup> William L. Weaver to JHT, 15 September 1860, I.13, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>147</sup> JHT lecture MS, Trumbull Family File, Stonington Historical Society, Stonington, Connecticut.

Assembly repeatedly authorized the enslavement of Africans and Native Americans.<sup>148</sup> Trumbull's unvarnished opinion on the legitimacy of Uncas and Joshua and the legality of their land grants, the beliefs he probably presented as a lecture to a small group of like-minded scholars, did not necessarily signify that he felt state intervention in native affairs to be unwarranted.

### **Connecticut Place Names and Public Enthusiasm**

Rather than delve into potent questions of land ownership, the majority of Connecticut residents preferred to engage with the state's Native American past through the study of place names. The impulse to restore, retain, and use New England's Indian place names was the foremost expression of popular interest in indigenous American languages. Before the Revolution, these terms had been largely excluded from official documents. Over the course of the seventeenth century, the English penchant for surveying led individual towns and the colonial legislature alike to measure, define, and name every inch of land possible. Only a handful of southern New England towns retained Indian names. Nevertheless, native names continued to be used within towns and to mark the landscape's geographical features.<sup>149</sup>

Nineteenth-century New England saw lively debates over the use and palatability of indigenous place names. Jean M. O'Brien cites a historian from Dedham, Massachusetts who decried white nostalgia for Indian nomenclature, criticizing "those who are trying to revive what they call the beautiful Indian names, which are mostly

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<sup>148</sup> JHT to Sam Church, 19 March 1851, 2.57, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>149</sup> O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, 92.

uncouth and to us unpronounceable and meaningless. I am glad we are Dedham and not Chicktabut... it shows that we belong to the great imperial race...”<sup>150</sup> However, as Trumbull’s voluminous correspondence proves, many other local historians, community leaders, and amateur linguists advocated the maintenance of Indian names. This impulse speaks both to the desire to assert a rich American past, independent from Europe, and the urge to further legitimize white claims to Indian land.

Even before Trumbull’s birth, his father Gurdon fielded letters on the topic of native place names. One missive from Elisha Dyer in 1803 asked for the senior Trumbull’s input on a name for a newly founded Connecticut village. Some of the settlers wanted to name their town Owaneco, after Uncas’ son, but others were uncomfortable in light of the Mohegans’ role in the Pequots’ destruction. Dyer lamented that the name Quinebaug was already taken, but assured Gurdon that at his suggestion “...any euphonius, significant name, could be adopted...”<sup>151</sup> James Hammond Trumbull received similar requests and inquiries. As he wrote to Edward Ballard in 1870, “In the first fortnight after the distribution of my paper [likely *The Composition of Indian Geographical Names, Illustrated from the Algonkin Languages*] I received more than eighty letters on the subject of Indian names.”<sup>152</sup>

In 1870, Trumbull circulated a letter that outlined his plans to compile Native American place names on behalf of the Connecticut Historical Society. As he explained to a correspondent from Brooklyn,

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>151</sup> Elisha Dyer to Gurdon Trumbull, 31 October 1803, 1.4, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>152</sup> JHT to Edward Ballard, 13 April 1870, 1.9, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

My list of Algonkin place-names has grown, in ten years, to some 2500,- two-thirds of which are from Conn, Narragansett and Mass. The paper of which I sent you a copy was prepared as an introduction to a list of Connecticut names, which I intended to print in this volume of our Society's collections: but my engagements have been such as to leave me no time for the revisions of my copy, and I decided to defer publication for a few months, and to call for assistance,- by requesting some one person, or more, in every town, to communicate all the local names preserved in the town records, and by tradition. I have little expectation of adding many names in this way,- for I have examined personally nearly all the town and probate records in Connecticut prior to 1750: but I may get a few, and shall be better satisfied as to the fullness of my list.<sup>153</sup>

Trumbull's reluctance to claim conclusive understanding of a scholarly topic, already demonstrated in his historical work, emerged again in this linguistic effort. Despite his herculean research practices, he remained uncertain of his results.

Trumbull's fellow citizens matched his enthusiasm. Several respondents apologized for not having more colloquial names to offer Trumbull. J. Willard returned Trumbull's letter with a note on the back: "I hope there are not many towns so poor in these legacies of a vanished people, and that others to whom you sent your circular have given an earlier and more satisfactory answer."<sup>154</sup> J. Kingsbury of Waterbury expressed similar sentiments and offered an explanation for the area's dearth of traditional names: "The Indians had made but little progress in manufacture and there is no other method of supporting life herabouts [sic,] the Indians therefore presently retired to more inviting fields and left the whites to 'root or die.'<sup>155</sup> Despite Willard and Kingsbury's regrets, Trumbull's finished text offered more than one hundred and fifty place names and definitions drawn from his own research and public input.

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<sup>153</sup> JHT to J. Carson Brevoort, 18 April 1870, II.4, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>154</sup> J. Willard to JHT, 6 January 1871, 1.14, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>155</sup> J. Kingsbury to JHT, 20 August 1870, 1.11, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

As whites struggled to translate and define native place names, they offered varying explanations for their efforts. Some enthusiasts invoked native nomenclature as the last legacy of a vanished race, while others inveighed, disingenuously, against the theft of native naming right.<sup>156</sup> Trumbull rarely made his own feelings about the significance of indigenous names explicit. He wrote in an 1883 response to Albert Small, “I cordially agree with you, that it is desirable to retain or restore Indian names, if euphonious...”<sup>157</sup> However, Trumbull’s work transcended the public desire for lyrical place names from a romanticized native past. In Native American languages, he explained, “Every name *described* the locality to which it was affixed. The description was sometimes *topographical*; sometimes *historical*, preserving the memory of a battle, a feast, the dwelling-place of a great sachem, or the like; sometimes it indicated one of the *natural products* of the place, or the *animals* which resorted to it...”<sup>158</sup> In this sense, Trumbull’s study of Native American place names was a natural expression and extension of his intimate knowledge of Connecticut’s geography and history.

Trumbull was more than willing to encourage and guide others in interpreting traditional place names. In his 1870 publication *The Composition of Indian Geographical Names Illustrated from the Algonquin Languages*, he cited “...recent manifestations of an increasing interest in Indian onomatology, or at least of awakened curiosity to discover the meaning of Indian names” before offering a list of suggestions for would-be

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<sup>156</sup> O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, 91.

<sup>157</sup> JHT to Albert Small, 17 September 1883, 2.46, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>158</sup> J. Hammond Trumbull, *The Composition of Indian Geographical Names: Illustrated from the Algonkin Languages* (Hartford: Case, Lockwood & Brainard, 1870), 4.

translators. Among other tips, Trumbull urged readers to research the earliest recorded form of a name and respect the inherent validity of Native American grammar.<sup>159</sup>

Nineteenth-century public enthusiasm for indigenous place names was only one manifestation of a larger cultural trend. Jean M. O'Brien posits "replacement narratives," visions of New England history that negate the Native American past and present and legitimate white authority over the land. She contends that this theme of replacement was manifested through archaeological excavation, historical monuments, commemoration ceremonies, white legal claims to native homelands, and the selective use of native place names.<sup>160</sup> Within this framework, the study and reclamation of indigenous place names stands apart. As O'Brien writes, "The process of place making suggests an emergent nomenclature for a map that included Indian and English names..."<sup>161</sup> The co-existence of English and native names in nineteenth-century New England reveals a flexibility, a space for native speech and history, in place-name use that was lacking in other "replacement narratives."

Strikingly, Trumbull's surviving papers displayed little interest in archaeology or monuments. Despite occasional participation, he approached commemoration celebrations and their resulting publications with a critical eye, as demonstrated by his annotations in Stone's text. Trumbull also engaged with colonial land claim documents in a semi-subversive way, privately transcribing deeds and treaties while acknowledging their questionable legal status and negative impact on southeastern Connecticut's native peoples. Trumbull's passion for understanding and communicating native place names, to

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>160</sup> O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, 55-57.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 93.

the exclusion of other “replacement narratives,” reveals a relatively enlightened perspective on Native American identity and importance.

Trumbull’s place name project is also noteworthy for his willingness to cite local Native Americans as experts in their own tongues. In 1889, he responded to an irreverent note from E.E. Hale (“Is Piscataqua Indian- or Hog Latin?”) by detailing the corruption of the original Abnaki word *peska-tegwe* by Algonquin Indians and Moravian missionaries alike.<sup>162</sup> Only the 1859 testimony of an elderly Connecticut native tied the term to the Mohegan term *Pisgachticook*, illustrating the word’s full progression along the Atlantic seaboard.<sup>163</sup> In an earlier book, Trumbull had cited the same native woman when defining *Housatonic*:

Eunice Mahwee (or Mauwehu), the last full-blooded survivor of the Scaticook band, in 1859, pronounced the name, “*Hous’atenuc*,” and interpreted it as, “over the mountain...” This agrees with the interpretation that was given to professor Dwight: “The river beyond the mountain;” and is sustained by analysis... The tradition received by the Scaticook Indians, of the discovery of the river and valley by those who came “over the mountain” from the west, establishes this interpretation, beyond reasonable doubt.<sup>164</sup>

From the perspective of a colonial historian, he recognized the flaws of white-dominated translations. In an essay on Indian geographical names, he described the myriad ways early settlers mangled Native American terms:

In the seventeenth century men took considerable liberties with spelling of their own surnames and very large liberties with English polysyllables- especially with

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<sup>162</sup> E.E. Hale to JHT, 5 and 11 September 1889, 2.52, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>163</sup> JHT to E.E. Hale, 11 September 1889, 2.52, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>164</sup> J. Hammond Trumbull, *Indian Names of Places, Etc., In and On the Borders of Connecticut: With Interpretations of Some of Them* (Hartford: Case, Lockwood & Brainard, 1881), 15.

local names. Scribes who contrived to find five or six different ways of writing “Hartford” or “Wethersfield,” were not likely to preserve uniformity in their dealings with Indian names. A few letters more or less were of no great consequence, but, generally, the writers tried to keep on the safe side, by putting in as many as they could find room for; prefixing a *c* to every *k*, doubling every *w* and *g*, and tacking on a superfluous final *e*, for good measure.<sup>165</sup>

Trumbull’s experience with inconsistent, often baffling colonial translations guided his work as a linguist.

However, Trumbull was not immune to the cultural cognitive dissonance of his time. Despite his government’s ongoing relationship with surviving native peoples, he believed that their tongues were essentially dead. In his 1870 publication *The Composition of Indian Geographical Names Illustrated from the Algonquin Languages*, Trumbull compared his area of study with the enduring native languages of the western frontier, like Sioux or Dakota:

In those parts of the country where Indian languages are still spoken, the analysis of such names is comparatively easy... In New England, and especially in our part of New England, the case is different. We can hardly expect to ascertain the meaning of all the names which have come down to us from dead languages of aboriginal tribes.<sup>166</sup>

He also drew a distinction between Chippewa and Cree, languages derived from the same Algonquin family as those spoken near his hometown, as surviving where the native dialects of Connecticut and Rhode Island had disappeared.<sup>167</sup>

Trumbull’s Native American scholarship failed to fully interrogate what Michel-Rolph Trouillot terms “archival power.”<sup>168</sup> In his investigation of power and history, Trouillot explains, “Archives assemble. Their assembly work is not limited to a more or

<sup>165</sup> Trumbull, *Composition of Indian Geographical Names*, 37.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 43-44.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 103.

less passive act of collecting. Rather, it is an active act of production...<sup>169</sup> Trumbull engaged closely with colonial sources as a scholar; as state librarian, he managed the compilation and maintenance of the government's official archives. He paid closer attention to native presence in colonist-produced documents than nearly any of his historian counterparts. However, Trumbull's surviving papers do not demonstrate that he ever questioned the lack of native-produced sources or recognized the value of indigenous oral history. This inability to consider non-textual sources, a failure of historical imagination, stemmed from Trumbull's consuming commitment to the written word and the limitations of his own historical era.

Trumbull, like the overwhelming majority of his contemporaries, was able to write off Connecticut's native tribes as all but extinct, even as measures regarding their legal status and landholdings played out before him. His meticulous study of colonial history, and his recognition of Native Americans' vital role in that history, made conventional "replacement narratives" unpalatable to him. Nevertheless, even as he collected native place-names, he perceived no "place" for Connecticut's tribes to viably exist in his modern, mainstream society. Through his participation in Connecticut state government, Trumbull chose to remain quiet while contemporary Native Americans were silenced.

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 52.

## **James Hammond Trumbull and the National Linguistic Project**

In the new nineteenth-century field of American linguistics, James Hammond Trumbull was a nationally recognized expert. Both the Smithsonian Institution and the Bureau of American Ethnology employed him as an expert in the national linguistic project, a government-funded effort to collect and organize indigenous languages. As he judged vocabularies, grammars, and translations under consideration for publication by these institutions, Trumbull created correspondence networks of missionaries, soldiers, scholars, and amateur enthusiasts across America. Indirectly, his efforts also drew on native feedback. Trumbull's own linguistic work was characterized by a profound respect for the complex structures and expressive power of the myriad Native American languages he studied. However, the national linguistic project as a whole was founded on the assumption that indigenous languages would swiftly, rightfully die out, allowing indigenous speakers to assume an American identity through the English language.

### **The National Linguistic Project**

On a national level, Trumbull's lifetime coincided with federal efforts to address the "Indian problem." Trumbull was alive for the passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, President Ulysses S. Grant's 1872 Peace Policy, and the Dawes Act of 1887. While he bent over translations and transcriptions at his desk in Hartford, United States forces met Comanches, Cheyennes, Kiowas, Arapahoes, and Western Sioux in bloody frontier battles.<sup>170</sup> In the *Hartford Daily Courant*, he read headlines about the "Custer slaughter," the clash at Wounded Knee, and the death of "the wily old Indian chief" Sitting Bull. For

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<sup>170</sup> S.C. Gwynn, *Empire of the Summer Moon* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 3.

American scholars of the nineteenth century, questions of Native American origins, culture, and language were of the utmost importance. As the nation looked to define itself, the presence of native tribes had to be explained; indigenous individuals needed to be transformed into American citizens.<sup>171</sup>

The study of Native American linguistics was institutionalized in March 1815, through an offshoot of Philadelphia's American Philosophical Society. The new Historical and Literary Committee, devoted to the broad realm of language study, swiftly turned its attention to Indian languages under the guidance of corresponding secretary Stephen DuPonceau. DuPonceau, a native Frenchman of wide-ranging intellectual interests, was immensely taken by the richness and complexity of Indian tongues. As he corresponded with missionaries like John Heckewelder, DuPonceau grew increasingly convinced that Native American languages were surpassingly beautiful. He, like Thomas Jefferson, he saw the study and classification of native language as a patriotic endeavor, granting his adopted land historical legitimacy. To this end, DuPonceau adopted a new approach: rather than merely compiling enormous vocabularies of individual languages, he introduced comparative grammar to Native American linguistics.<sup>172</sup> Trumbull was deeply influenced by this method.

In the first several decades of the nineteenth century, officials in Washington, D.C. struggled to create and sustain cultural institutions. After much infighting over James Smithson's substantial bequest, Joseph Henry became the first Secretary of the

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<sup>171</sup> Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, 16.

<sup>172</sup> Steven Conn, *History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 86-89.

Smithsonian Institution in 1847. From the outset, Henry worked to formalize the fledgling field of anthropology. Recognizing anthropology's cross-disciplinary potential, he sought to apply rigorous standards and recruit serious-minded practitioners.<sup>173</sup> With the decision to focus on anthropology rather than the physical sciences, Henry cast Native Americans as the central subject of the organization's work. For the rest of the century, American linguists, ethnographers, archaeologists under the Smithsonian's aegis would analyze indigenous peoples. Henry's administration followed DuPonceau's model in advancing the Smithsonian's linguistic project, reaching out to individuals on the ground in the western territories. By circulating vocabularies and instruction manuals, the Smithsonian sought to equip missionaries, soldiers, explorers, and frontier settlers for recording native languages. All incoming reports were handed off to a small group of scholars for review and correction before publication.<sup>174</sup>

From 1859 onwards, James Hammond Trumbull was one of three experts entrusted with the Smithsonian's Native American language research and, as an extension, its academic reputation.<sup>175</sup> Several surviving letters establish Trumbull's important role in the Smithsonian's efforts. As Henry wrote in 1877,

I beg leave to introduce to your acquaintance the bearer of this letter Rev Father LaCombe, who desires to present to the Institution for publication, a grammar and dictionary of the Ojibeway or Santeux language. He will explain to you all the particulars of his proposition and you will please to inform us whether in your opinion the work he proposes will be an addition to Indian philology of sufficient general interest to warrant the expense of its publication being defrayed from the Smithson fund. If your report is favorable and the work is published by the

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<sup>173</sup> Hinsley, *Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 17-18, 34-35.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 29, 48.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

Institution, your name will be given as the voucher on the reverse of the title-page. With many thanks for your kind services to the Institution in the past...<sup>176</sup>

Until 1859, Henry's inner circle of collaborators was composed entirely of professors affiliated with prominent schools. As a self-taught expert in indigenous languages, Trumbull's contributions are all the more remarkable.<sup>177</sup>

Trumbull also influenced the formation of the Smithsonian staff. In February 1876, Henry asked Trumbull's opinion of Albert Gatschet's linguistic work: "We beg leave to refer to you the accompanying communication from Mr. A.S. Gatschet, of New York, and to ask your opinion of the gentleman as to whether he could revise and prepare our vocabularies for the press under your direction..."<sup>178</sup> Although Trumbull's response is lost, it was very likely a positive one. Gatschet joined John Wesley Powell's Rocky Mountain Survey the following year and began working for the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1879.<sup>179</sup> In that capacity, Gatschet ended up supervising the posthumous publication of Trumbull's Natick language dictionary.<sup>180</sup>

In an 1874 letter, Trumbull listed the vocabularies amassed by the Smithsonian in less than three decades, noting with approval the existence of vocabularies for the Osage, Caddo, Wichita, Comanche, Muskokee, Natchez, Alabama, and Shawnee languages.<sup>181</sup> However, he was also aware of weak spots in the Smithsonian collections. The same year

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<sup>176</sup> Joseph Henry to James Hammond Trumbull, 13 February 1877, II.3 (Ha-He), J. Hammond Trumbull Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>177</sup> Hinsley, *Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 48-49, 55.

<sup>178</sup> Joseph Henry to JHT, 23 February 1876, II.3 (Ha-He,) J. Hammond Trumbull Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>179</sup> Hinsley, *Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 177-178.

<sup>180</sup> Wright, *Biographical Memoir*, 155.

<sup>181</sup> JHT to W.S. Robertson, 14 April 1874, 1.22, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

he wrote of the Southwest's indigenous communities, "The Smithsonian Institution has a few mss. vocabularies of these tribes- but no considerable ones, except three...The Smithsonian 'Standard Vocabulary' is better than none- but when opportunity is given of making a fuller one, it is very desirable that it be taken advantage of."<sup>182</sup> The Bureau of American Ethnology, formed several years later, was meant to fill the gaps that Trumbull observed; Trumbull would become an important participant in the Bureau's more specialized study of indigenous American languages.

In 1878, John Wesley Powell laid out in a letter to the Secretary of the Interior his idea for a Bureau of American Ethnology.<sup>183</sup> Powell's bold idea emerged from his varied, unique experiences as a geologist, surveyor, and anthropologist. He was appointed head of the Geographical and Topographical Survey of the Colorado River of the West in 1870. For the first four years of the survey, apparently as a result of a clerical error, Powell reported to the Smithsonian rather than to the Interior Department. From 1874 to 1879, the renamed Geographical and Geological Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region was brought under the Interior Department. However, due in part to his strong working relationship with Joseph Henry, Powell began to focus on anthropological concerns. As head surveyor, and as Special Commissioner of Indian Affairs in the Great Basin, he witnessed the dismal failure of federal policy toward America's native tribes. Only extensive study of the various tribes, Powell contended, would allow the government to understand, work with, and elevate Native Americans. In addition, Powell argued for the importance of tracing historical migrations and the relationships between tribes. This

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<sup>182</sup> JHT to W.C. Manning, 5 October 1874, 1.23, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>183</sup> Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, 167.

focus aimed to improve the reservation system, by ensuring that hostile tribes would not be forced together.<sup>184</sup> Powell contended that extensive anthropological study of Native Americans, conducted under the proposed Bureau, would shape an informed, long-term federal Indian policy.<sup>185</sup> Almost as an afterthought, Congress established the Bureau of American Ethnology under the aegis of the Smithsonian in March 1879.<sup>186</sup>

Powell saw the bewildering array of Native American vocabularies and dictionaries as a hindrance to federal administration. He was not a professional linguist; Albert Gatschet was the only member of the Bureau classically trained in Indo-European philology. To address this situation, Powell adopted the questionnaire method first created by Albert Gallatin and used by Joseph Henry. Gallatin, who served as Secretary of the Treasury under Presidents Jefferson and Madison, had studied linguistics in his native Switzerland. At Gallatin's direction, the Secretary of War circulated questionnaires to missionaries and Indian agents; he wanted to introduce philological principles to a scattered, unscientific field.<sup>187</sup> Philology was the most obscure branch of nineteenth-century Native American scholarship, particularly as compared to the far more lucrative pursuits of archaeology and artifact collecting. Gallatin's efforts, along with those of Powell and Trumbull, sought to elevate and improve American linguistic study.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Hinsley, *Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 147-151.

<sup>185</sup> Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, 167.

<sup>186</sup> Hinsley, *Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 147.

<sup>187</sup> Regna Darnell, "Languages: Linguistic Change and the Study of Indian Languages from Colonial Times to the Present," in *A Companion to American Indian History*, ed. Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 176-179.

<sup>188</sup> Robert E. Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian, 1820-1880: The Early Years of American Ethnology* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 43.

Like Henry with his questionnaires, Powell required the help of linguistic experts to assess and edit the results of his own questionnaires and other materials. Powell knew Trumbull before the foundation of the Bureau through their work with the Smithsonian. In his capacity as head of the Geographical and Geological Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region, he occasionally called on Trumbull to review linguistic reports.<sup>189</sup> In June 1880, Powell wrote to request Trumbull's involvement in his ambitious new project:

I send you by express to-day a copy of our card catalogue of the bibliography of Algonkin linguistics desiring greatly that you correct and complete it for us...Can you not also prepare for us a synopsis of the Algonkin language and dialects and, still further, a synopsis of the tribes of the same stock with their original homes when discovered by white men? I am attempting to do this generally with the Indians of North America with the assistance of several persons. I have heretofore paid less attention to the Algonkin people than to any of the others hoping to have you take the matter up...Now, Professor Trumbull, can you not help me out in this matter? The family under consideration, as you know, is by far the most difficult one to study; the literature is greatly scattered; the tribes themselves are greatly scattered, and the Indians had largely disappeared from their original homes before this subject was a matter of study by scholars. No one can do the work as well as yourself and no one can do it at all without years of previous training.<sup>190</sup>

Powell's letter suggests a commitment to a thorough understanding of Native American tribes that extended beyond policy goals. Although many groups of the Algonquin family were under the supervision of New England state governments and not a problem for the federal government, he still wanted the Bureau to study them. Powell's request also underscores Trumbull's revered status within this field, earned alongside his ongoing, extensive involvement in bibliography, library management, and natural science.

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<sup>189</sup> John Wesley Powell to JHT, 16 November 1876, II.3 (P-V), J. Hammond Trumbull Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>190</sup> John Wesley Powell to JHT, 15 June 1880, 1.35, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

Another letter from Powell, from May of the following year, was all business, “We have not seen the original vocabularies by Gen. Pike. Was the spelling changed? He lays particular stress in his explanation on the value of the characters used by him and in a letter received from him... asking about these vocabularies he referred in very strong terms to the importance of printing them as he had written them...”<sup>191</sup> Throughout his involvement with both the Smithsonian and the Bureau, Trumbull engaged with missionary and military collaborators on the frontier. The effort to communicate with and clarify the work of these participants was often frustrating and time-consuming.

Trumbull diverged from Powell and other Bureau contributors on an important theoretical issue. Powell saw vocabulary, not grammar, as the key to the classification of indigenous languages. He believed that the comparison of word lists was central; the discovery of cognates was enough to establish a common origin for two languages.<sup>192</sup> Following W.D. Whitney, his philological mentor and Trumbull’s colleague in the Smithsonian’s core scholarly group, Powell cast grammar as an evolving structure that distracted from a language’s more important lexical roots.<sup>193</sup> Trumbull, in contrast, saw grammar as absolutely vital to understanding Native American languages and the unique cultural perspective that informed them. In a letter to a lieutenant working on linguistics in the field, he explained the need for more detailed analysis, “The grammatical structure of the language is left out of sight by the vocabularies. Of this more can be learned by a

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<sup>191</sup> John Wesley Powell to JHT, 5 May 1881, 1.38, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>192</sup> Darnell, “Languages,” 178-179.

<sup>193</sup> Hinsley, *Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 159-160.

few phrases, literally translated and analyzed, than by a long vocabulary.”<sup>194</sup> In an 1869 essay, a decade before the birth of the Bureau, Trumbull described the elaborate grammatical rules that governed native languages and demanded intensive study:

As I have said before, the Indian aimed at extreme precision. His words were so constructed as to be thoroughly self-defining and immediately intelligible to the hearer. In the construction of his synthesis, he was controlled by established and universally recognized laws; in the selection and arrangement of its elements, he admitted nothing ambiguous, left nothing to conjecture.<sup>195</sup>

Trumbull’s appreciation for the complexity and stability of indigenous grammar, especially in comparison to Powell’s disregard, suggests an appreciation of Native Americans’ intellectual and cultural achievements. Despite his difference of opinion with Powell, Trumbull was an enthusiastic participant in the Bureau’s efforts until the end of his life.

James C. Pilling was a particularly important figure in Powell’s fledgling Bureau. The two men first worked together on the Rocky Mountain Survey and Powell made his friend clerk of both the Survey and Bureau in 1881. Pilling was renowned for his careful, patient approach to linguistics. In 1877, he launched a hugely ambitious project: compiling comprehensive bibliographies of the literature on every Native American language. Pilling published bibliographies for nine of the fifty-eight language families over the course of his lifetime.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> JHT to W.C. Manning, 5 October 1874, 1.23, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>195</sup> J. Hammond Trumbull, “On the Best Method of Studying the American Languages” in *Transactions of the American Philological Society* 1 (1869-1870): 78, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/310224>.

<sup>196</sup> Hinsley, *Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 164, 166.

Several of Pilling's colleagues disliked him for his painstaking methods and perceived priggishness.<sup>197</sup> However, in his surviving correspondence with Trumbull, the supposedly standoffish scholar positively bubbles with enthusiasm. In February 1884, Pilling thanked Trumbull for his suggestions on a Bureau publication, writing "...As soon as finished I shall take great pleasure in returning the sheets to you- not that you will consider them of very much importance, but I want to keep you in constant remembrance that there is a Catalogue in course of preparation and that we shall expect occasional notes from you."<sup>198</sup> Three years later, Pilling begged pardon for his continued queries: "Am I bothering you too often? Sometimes I think so; but you have been so good natured and obliging of late, that it does'nt [sic] require half as much courage as in days gone by to fire these conundrums at you. When they get too frequent shoot an injunction at me and I will stop."<sup>199</sup> Pilling's correspondence highlights the elitism and intimacy of the indigenous language expert group trusted to oversee the national linguistic project's publications.

Letters from Pilling also reveal Trumbull's wholehearted participation in his bibliography project. In February 1889, the Bureau clerk gave his colleague fair warning:

In the compilation of the Algonquin Bibliography, now in hand, there will be many instances in which I shall write to you for help if you will permit me. Knowing how busy you are, the bother you are subjected to by everybody with an Indian question to ask, and aware too that your health has been none of the best lately- all made me unwilling to call on you... I fear you have put different thoughts into my head now and that you will be inflicted pretty often by questions... A correspondence with various Algonkin missionaries and other

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>198</sup> James Pilling to JHT, 27 February 1884, II.3 (P-V), J. Hammond Trumbull Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>199</sup> James Pilling to JHT, 10 October 1887, II.3 (P-V), J. Hammond Trumbull Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

enthusiasts which has gone beyond my greatest expectations bids me hope I may make it more complete and satisfactory than at first seemed feasible... There comes from the printer today the 100 copies of the large proper Iroquoian Bibliog.... I must apologize by the way for the horrid spelling which is due to Gallatin.<sup>200</sup>

Within the intimate scholastic network of the national linguistic project, Pilling and Trumbull's correspondence often expressed frustration with some third party, whether a distant collaborator or a fellow eastern scholar. Toward the end of 1889, Pilling admitted the limited appeal of his efforts to Trumbull, who was also well acquainted with the frustrations of bibliographic work: "All the copies of the 'Algonquian' you may want will be sent you: the Government is liberal in its editions and the demand for linguistic bibliographies isn't absorbing."<sup>201</sup> Pilling's perseverance in the face of public disinterest speaks to his firm conviction, shared by Trumbull, that linguistic work must take a long view. Although nineteenth-century Americans might not be clamoring for lengthy native bibliographies, both men were confident that future scholars would find this groundwork invaluable.

A preface to Trumbull's Natick language dictionary, published by the Bureau several years after his death, summed up his substantial contributions to the institution: "During his later years he was a valued correspondent of the Bureau, and his wide knowledge of both aboriginal tongues and bibliographical methods, freely conveyed to the officers of the Bureau, proved of great service."<sup>202</sup> Through correspondence,

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<sup>200</sup> James Pilling to JHT, 9 February 1889, II.3 (P-V), J. Hammond Trumbull Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>201</sup> James Pilling to JHT, 30 October 1889, II.3 (P-V), J. Hammond Trumbull Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>202</sup> "Announcement," *Natick Dictionary*, by James Hammond Trumbull (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), vii.

Trumbull interacted with the various groups that collaborated on the national linguistic project: missionaries, soldiers, fellow scholars, and, obliquely, native people themselves.

In the hierarchy of the national linguistic project, missionaries occupied a peculiar place. Missionary-linguists differed from Trumbull's scholarly cohort in their emphasis on spoken language. While eastern linguists enjoyed translating poems and penning brief notes in indigenous dialects, they almost never knew how to speak these languages. In the eyes of many missionaries and their supervisors, however, learning native languages was a crucial first step toward the spiritual redemption of Native Americans. Eventually natives would learn English, but they needed to understand the Biblical message first. This was an incredibly difficult task, as nineteenth-century missionary societies were far more focused on operations in Africa, India, and China. The most educated and highly qualified missionaries were placed in these exotic, exciting Old World locales. Most of the missionaries in the American West had washed out of other professions, possessed no education outside the seminary, and had no experience with other languages.<sup>203</sup>

In 1872, partly in response to complaints from missionary societies, President Ulysses S. Grant instituted a Peace Policy that granted missionaries far greater input in the creation and implementation of federal Indian policy. However, by the time the initiative ended in 1882, little progress had been made on the tribes' behalf and missionary societies were giving their agents even less financial or educational support.<sup>204</sup> Nevertheless, western missionaries soldiered on in their attempts to learn

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<sup>203</sup> C.L. Higham, *Noble, Wretched, and Redeemable: Protestant Missionaries to the Indians in Canada and the United States, 1820-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 105-106.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

indigenous languages and translate Scripture. As many answered Smithsonian questionnaires and contributed to Bureau projects, some became part of Trumbull's remarkable correspondence network.

A Congregationalist in belief if not in active church membership, Trumbull took an even-handed view of missionaries' linguistic efforts.<sup>205</sup> He reserved his greatest admiration for the colonial missionary John Eliot, who had worked to convert the native peoples around Roxbury, Massachusetts in the late seventeenth century.<sup>206</sup> Trumbull often defended the missionary and his foundational text, the first translation of the Bible into Algonquin, against dismissal or slander. Tellingly, his only daughter was named Annie Eliot. As he expressed of John Eliot in an 1872 article, "...It is surprising, the difficulties of the task considered, that so much has, on the whole, been so well done. Absolute mastery of an Indian tongue is, for one to whom it is not vernacular, the work of a lifetime."<sup>207</sup> Trumbull likely admired Eliot for his trailblazing, solo scholarship.

Trumbull held contemporary missionaries to a high linguistic standard. In January 1876, Robert C. Rogers of the New York Indian Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church sent Trumbull an Ojibwe tract recently published for a mission in Minnesota.<sup>208</sup>

A month later he wrote again:

I thank you for calling my attention to the errors in the Lord's Prayer as found on page 5 of the Ojibwe Mission Service...The little book was carried thro' the Press

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<sup>205</sup> 15 June 1871, JHT to Charles H. Hart, II.7, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>206</sup> "Announcement," *Natick Dictionary*, vii.

<sup>207</sup> J. Hammond Trumbull, *Notes on Forty Algonkin Versions of the Lord's Prayer* (Hartford: 1873), 117.

<sup>208</sup> Robert C. Rogers to JHT, 28 January 1876, II.3 (R), J. Hammond Trumbull Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

‘under difficulties’... I also forward to [the missionary-author] the proof of your article on Indian languages, wh. you were so kind as to send to me. I have read it with great interest- tho’ merely a layman in such matters- but I am confident that he will esteem it a rich treat.<sup>209</sup>

Whether the beleaguered missionary actually appreciated Trumbull’s corrections remains debatable. This letter illuminates the immense geographical and mental distance between field linguists scrambling to secure salvation for a reluctant population and desk linguists crafting orderly grammars.

In their efforts to capture and catalog native languages, missionaries throughout the Midwest and West faced trials that Trumbull, in the bustling, vibrant metropolis of Hartford, had never experienced. James Pilling of the Bureau of American Ethnology, in addition to constantly querying Trumbull, corresponded with missionaries from Ontario to Oklahoma to Seattle who contended with remote locations and natural disasters. One missionary, Emile Gronard, wrote to Pilling from Saskatchewan on May 28, 1894, “Your very kind letter dated 28 October 1893 came to hand on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 1894 and now is my first chance of answering you. You may judge by this that we are shut out of the civilized world for all practical purposes.”<sup>210</sup> It was not uncommon for nearly complete linguistic works to be lost to fire, as Catholic priest J.A. Cuoq communicated to Pilling in 1879.<sup>211</sup>

Common Christian goals aside, missionary-linguists were sometimes further obstructed by jealousies and rivalries. In 1871, John P. Williamson wrote to Trumbull

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<sup>209</sup> Robert C. Rogers to JHT, 11 February 1876, II.3 (R), J. Hammond Trumbull Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>210</sup> Emile Gronard to James Pilling, 28 May 1894, Ayer MS 727, 1.18, Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>211</sup> J.A. Cuoq to James Pilling, 22 April 1879, Ayer MS 206, Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois.

from the town of Greenwood in Dakota Territory. In addition to complaining about the difficulty of printing his Dakota dictionary with little resources, Williamson criticized his rival missionaries: “The Episcopalians as you are probably aware have also a mission among the Dakotas...I do not wish to speak uncharitably but I think you yourself will perceive that their works abound in inaccuracies, the natural result of depending, not upon their own observation, but upon the hasty conclusions of poorly educated interpreters.”<sup>212</sup> Three years later, Williamson wrote again, his frustration at the other mission’s tactics bubbling over: “Would they but deal honestly with us I could wish them Godspeed and give them half the field we had been laboring a quarter of a century to subdue before Rev. S.D. Hinman spoke a word of Dakota...”<sup>213</sup> These denominational rivalries in the field mirrored the scholarly battles pitched by eastern linguists.

In April 1871, Williamson and Stephen Return Riggs, another frequent correspondent of Trumbull’s, began publishing *Iapi Oaye* (The Word Carrier), in Greenwood. This monthly Dakota-language newsletter contained poems, news articles, and religious stories in which Jesus and Moses appeared alongside *Wakantanka*, the Dakota Great Spirit. The document offers fascinating insight into the missionary perspective on indigenous languages. For missionaries like Williamson and Riggs, the translation of these tongues was merely a means to an end. The Dakota language was perfectly suited to its speakers’ intellectual capacity, but missionaries looked eagerly ahead to the day when the natives would cast it aside in favor of English. In the publication’s early years, the Dakota-English vocabulary section not-so-subtly

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<sup>212</sup> John P. Williamson to JHT, 10 April 1871, II.3 (W), J. Hammond Trumbull Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>213</sup> John P. Williamson to JHT, 21 January 1874, 1.22, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

encouraged assimilation; in one memorable instance, the model conversation urged natives to wear hats for both weekday farming and Sabbath worship.<sup>214</sup>

In addition to fighting with the Episcopalians, Williamson and Riggs clashed with the Quaker mission over the propriety of translating Scripture into Dakota, rather than teaching the natives to read it in English.<sup>215</sup> On the English-language page of *Iapi Oaye*, they conceded that learning English eventually was essential for transforming savages into civilized Americans. However, the missionaries wrote,

...Experience has led us to suspect there is a malformation in the very nature of the American aborigine. We are not sure that he *can't* speak English, but he *won't*. Bishop Hare calls it a “tenacity in holding on to their own languages,” and says it is “dogged to the last degree.” We might describe it as a bump of stubbornness in the throat, which effectually prevents the exit of any English words. But whatever we may call it, it is a most formidable mountain in the way of English instruction... It is at least wise for us to see what can be done in instructing them in some other way.<sup>216</sup>

The “tenacity” that so puzzled Williamson and Riggs was a natural response for the Dakotas, who were seeking to maintain a sense of independent identity in the face of overwhelming military force and cultural pressure.

Trumbull defended the Dakotas' right to speak their own language within the context of the missionary endeavor. In the October 1874 edition, the *Iapi Oaye* editors reproduced a letter from Trumbull in support of their stance: “On the question of teaching Indians in English or in the vernacular, he says, ‘I most cordially agree with you in maintaining that the only way to teach the Indian tribes, generally, is through the medium

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<sup>214</sup> John P. Williamson, *Iapi Oaye* (Greenwood, Dakota Territory [South Dakota]: Dakota Mission), Number XI, May 1872

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, Number VI, June 1874.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, Number XII, December 1873.

of their own language.”<sup>217</sup> Strikingly, Trumbull’s letter also expressed a desire to “strengthen the hands of those who are in the mission field,” a sentiment that never arose in correspondence with his scholarly counterparts.<sup>218</sup> It may have been a mere courtesy, but this expression implies solidarity with the missionary cause. It is possible that Trumbull felt a particular affinity for missionaries who tried so hard to engage with and communicate in a living indigenous language, even though the long-term preservation of that language was not their priority.

Trumbull’s authority in Greenwood extended beyond his ability to quell Quaker criticism. Ultimately, eastern intellectual elites like Trumbull made the final assessment of validity for missionaries’ linguistic contributions. Men who never spoke indigenous languages, and probably had never heard them, passed judgment on the translations, grammars, and dictionaries compiled by western missionaries. First-hand input was critical to Henry, Powell, and their scholarly cohort, but missionaries were decidedly second-class citizens in the national linguistic project. Nevertheless, their position in the field rendered their contributions invaluable.

Trumbull also corresponded with and about military men, another important contributing group to the national linguistic project. His inconsistent attitude toward army officials appears to have been influenced by the military’s role in subduing and managing western tribes. After the conclusion of the Mexican-American War in 1848, the United States gained enormous new territories in the North American southwest. Also, in 1849, authority over the Indian Bureau was transferred from the army to the new Department of

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<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, Number X, October 1874.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*

the Interior.<sup>219</sup> At the time of the Smithsonian's founding, federal policy was focused on the removal of Native Americans from valuable East Coast territory to the Great Plains region.<sup>220</sup> Then, after the Civil War came to an end in 1865, the military swiftly began arguing for control of territory farther west. Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, military leaders contended that army control of the frontier would prevent corruption and provide a united, powerful front against aggressive western tribes. During these same years, the army faced a surge of native uprisings on the Plains. As Brian Dippie explains in *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy*, the Indian wars “embarrassed a nation eager to proclaim its material and moral progress as it neared the hundredth anniversary of its independence...”<sup>221</sup> United States troops acted with extreme force in the west in the 1870s and 1880s. With the massacre of Lakota Sioux at Wounded Knee on December 29, 1890, the Indian wars were brought to a close, and every Native American tribe brought under federal control through military intervention.<sup>222</sup>

A surviving letter and annotated text reveal Trumbull's deep, albeit private, ambivalence about the army's involvement in Indian affairs. In January 1876, he responded to a letter from Henry Martyn Dexter, a friend and fellow historian, about the army's campaign to seize control of Indian policy: “I have just read your protest against the bill for the transference of the Indian Bureau to the War Department- to which, amen...Looking through the ponderous Report of the Special Commission to investigate the Red Cloud gang, I marked two or three passages significant of the frame of mind of

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<sup>219</sup> Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, 146.

<sup>220</sup> Higham, *Noble, Wretched*, 120.

<sup>221</sup> Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, 146-148.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

army officers, generally, toward Indians. (313, 315, 319)<sup>223</sup> In fact, Trumbull left marginal marks on many pages of the immense text, a transcript of a federal investigation into corruption and mismanagement at the Red Cloud Agency in Nebraska. He marked damning details, such as the delivery of rotten rations to the agency and the widespread practice among soldiers of cheating the agency's Indians; he also noted tensions between the agency's military and civilian officers.<sup>224</sup>

As suggested by his letter to Dexter, Trumbull paid particular attention to the testimony of army officers stationed at the agency. When one interview turned to the topic of Red Cloud, a prominent Sioux chief, Trumbull had his pencil at the ready. With marginal lines and underscoring, he set the text apart:

Q. In your opinion, what reliance can be placed in Red Cloud?

A. None at all. I think that he could be bought with a bottle of whisky.

Q. What do you say about Red Dog?

A. The same of him.

Q. Would you say the same of all Indians? [JHT underline]

A. Yes, sir...<sup>225</sup>

Similarly, Trumbull noted when a soldier scoffed, "...I paid no attention at all to these complaints of Red Cloud, because an Indian's word is not to be taken against a white

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<sup>223</sup> JHT to Henry Martyn Dexter, 7 January 1876, II.3 (D), J. Hammond Trumbull Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>224</sup> United States, *Report of the special commission appointed to investigate the affairs of the Red Cloud Indian agency, July, 1875, together with the testimony and accompanying documents* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1875), 319, 511, 516, 558.

<sup>225</sup> JHT marginalia in Watkinson Library copy, United States, *Report of the special commission appointed to investigate the affairs of the Red Cloud Indian agency, July, 1875, together with the testimony and accompanying documents* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1875), 315.

man in this civilized age, I think.”<sup>226</sup> Two hundred pages later, Trumbull was still alert to the trope of Indian duplicity, He marked Major A.S. Burt’s assessment of Native Americans: “Some Indians are not reliable. I have known a few whose word was as good as a white man’s, but Rib I did not know, and would not vouch for his reliability.”<sup>227</sup> Trumbull’s annotations in the Red Cloud report match his marginalia in Stone’s *Uncas and Miantonomoh*; he was equally opposed to thoughtless anti-Indian prejudice in colonial history and contemporary culture.

Trumbull’s disapproval of military bigotry and corruption on the frontier seem to have influenced, at least partially, his outlook on soldier-linguists. In an 1874 letter, Trumbull grudgingly acknowledged the contributions of one Albert Pike in spite of his military rank:

The collection is a large and- as seems to me- an important one. From internal evidence, I judge that the vocabularies were carefully and intelligently compiled. The phonetic notation is very exact- though I do not altogether like the alphabetic system adopted...So much work- even though performed by Gen. Pike, ought not to be wasted.<sup>228</sup>

However, Trumbull may have been more annoyed at Pike’s resistance to editing as he was wary of the linguist’s main profession.

Trumbull was not uniformly prejudiced against soldier-linguists, as proved by his 1874 letter encouraging Lieutenant W.C. Manning to continue his study of the Zuni and

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<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 518.

<sup>228</sup> JHT to W.S. Robertson, 14 April 1874, 1.22, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

Pueblo languages.<sup>229</sup> He also could not have failed to appreciate soldier-linguists' fieldwork in the face of the obstacles they shared with their missionary counterparts. On June 14, 1871, army surgeon Washington Matthews wrote to Trumbull from the Dakota Territory about his efforts on a Gros Ventre dictionary; no doubt to Trumbull's pleasure, he tossed in a jab at George Catlin's misguided attempt to connect the Mandan language with Welsh.<sup>230</sup> In November 1871, Dakota missionary Stephen Return Riggs wrote to Trumbull, thanking his Hartford colleague for arranging his membership in the American Philological Society. After discussing recent correspondence with Horatio Hale, Riggs mentioned in passing,

I met last summer, on the Missouri River, Dr. Washington Matthews, surgeon in U.S.A. station at Fort Buford, D.T., in whom I was instructed. He had prepared quite a Dictionary & Grammar of the Minnetarre (Gros Ventre) language. But unfortunately, his quarters were burned and the work lost. He promised to set himself to reproduce it.<sup>231</sup>

The national linguistic project depended on the efforts of men like Matthews, who asserted their individuality within the larger military structure by collecting and cataloging indigenous languages, despite incredible difficulties.

Trumbull maintained a particularly warm relationship with Garrick Mallery, an army captain with a passionate interest in Native American anthropology. In 1876, Mallery contacted Trumbull to inquire about the exact significance of the terms "Sioux" and "Dakota," explaining, "I am preparing an article or monograph illustrating a curious

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<sup>229</sup> JHT to W.C. Manning, 5 October 1874, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, 1.23, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>230</sup> Washington Matthews to JHT, 14 July 1871, II.7, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>231</sup> S.R. Riggs to JHT, 24 November 1871, II.7, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

chart copied from a robe- which I brought lately from the Sioux country- and which is evidently a calendar- or chronological table- extending over 71 years beginning with 1799.”<sup>232</sup> After further inquiries, Mallery’s final product cited “Dr. J. Hammond Trumbull, the distinguished ethnographer and glossologist” in defining Dakota as “associated as comrades;” he also reproduced Trumbull’s letter offering a guess at *Hunkpapa*’s meaning.<sup>233</sup> Of the calendar itself, Mallery wrote, “We may adopt regarding it Pope’s remark about the objects found in amber:- ‘The things, we know, are neither rich nor rare, But wonder how the devil they got there’ - *i.e.*, among the generally despised Sioux.”<sup>234</sup>

In the same year, Mallery also published *Former and Present Number of our Indians*, a pamphlet version of his presentation at the August 1877 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Nashville. The speech was a response to an 1867 Congressional report that had concluded: “The Indians everywhere, with the exception of the tribes within the Indian Territory are rapidly decreasing... by disease; by intemperance... and by the irrepressible conflict between a superior and inferior race...”<sup>235</sup> Mallery roundly refuted that perspective through sound research and compelling evidence. His presentation, also delivered to the Philosophical Society of Washington in December 1877, convinced Powell and other influential officials that Indian extinction was a hollow excuse for the government’s mismanagement of

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<sup>232</sup> Garrick Mallery to JHT, 26 December 1876, II.13, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>233</sup> Garrick Mallery, *A Calendar of the Dakota Nation* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1877), 8, 25.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>235</sup> United States, *Condition of the Indian tribes: report of the Joint Special Committee, appointed under joint resolution of March 3, 1865: with an appendix* (Washington: G.P.O., 1867), 3.

indigenous people.<sup>236</sup> Mallery's take was all the more surprising given his profession; the majority of frontier officers were convinced that Native Americans were both inherently vicious and doomed to die out.<sup>237</sup>

Mallery's report was founded on a thorough analysis of population data that stretched back to the colonial period. He offered a scathing indictment of the extinction narrative propagated by so many members of the government he served: "The arguments of the [1867] Joint Committee and of the authorities it quotes, amount to but the safe assertion, that when human beings are starved and butchered, demoralized and pauperized, they will decay in numbers and character."<sup>238</sup> Mallery argued that indigenous populations were growing and thriving wherever they were not oppressed. "Criminal misgovernment," not an abstract clash between cultures, was to blame for any degradation.<sup>239</sup> He defended the inherent abilities and intelligence of America's indigenous people, arguing that the western tribes were just as capable of democratic participation and economic prosperity as the Cherokee and Iroquois. He concluded with a condemnation of what modern historians call genocide:

Neither from views of their physiological, religious or sociological characteristics should they be regarded as an exceptional or abnormal part of the human race, or so treated in our national policy. Only those legislators and officials who are prepared to encourage downright murder can neglect their duty under the Satanic consolation of the convenient extinction doctrine. With continued injustice, more Sitting Bulls and Chief Josephs, driven into the last refuge of despair, will require expenditure of blood and treasure which simple truth and honesty would not only prevent, but would preserve, reclaim and elevate a race entrusted to our national

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<sup>236</sup> Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, 129.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 130-131.

<sup>238</sup> Garrick Mallery, *The Former and Present Number of our Indians* (S.I.: Salem press, 1878), 364.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 366.

honor, which may readily and with no long delay, become a valuable element in our motley community.<sup>240</sup>

Mallery believed that Native Americans would be “[absorbed] into the wondrous amalgam of all earth’s peoples which the destiny of this country may possibly effect.”<sup>241</sup> As Brian W. Dippie points out, “Ironically... Mallery had espoused a philosophy that would breathe a new life into the Vanishing American. Assimilation was a sentence to cultural death after all, and the Indian as Indian was still destined to disappear.”<sup>242</sup> The irony of Mallery’s perspective matched Trumbull’s complicated perspective on the value and viability of indigenous culture.

Mallery’s two 1877 publications caught Powell’s attention. When his Civil War injuries forced him to retire from the service in 1879, Mallery joined the Bureau of American Ethnology, where he contributed Algonquin and Iroquoian terms as part of Powell’s projected synonymy of America’s indigenous languages.<sup>243</sup> It is impossible to say whether Mallery’s intellectual rigor or righteous outrage most appealed to Powell, or to his correspondent Trumbull. Regardless, Trumbull’s support for Mallery’s anthropological dedication offers further evidence of his own respect for native cultures.

Through the foundation of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Powell, himself a Civil War veteran and army officer, straddled the line between a military and scholarly identity; he witnessed both fierce fighting on the western frontier and on the East Coast alike. Nineteenth-century Native American philology was a highly contentious field for the eastern intellectuals who presided over the national linguistic project. For every light-

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, 129.

<sup>243</sup> Hinsley, *Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 157, 167-171.

hearted linguist like E.B. O’Callaghan, who delighted in sending Trumbull postcards written entirely in Cree, there were many more who jealously defended their work.<sup>244</sup> Scholars frequently fought over such wide-ranging topics as methods of transliteration, the merits of a phonetic alphabet, definitions of individual terms, and the fundamental goals of their field. Trumbull, though he maintained a sense of humor about his work, was never one to back down from an academic challenge and was often in the thick of philological debates.

Throughout his life, Trumbull defended indigenous languages as matching European tongues in logical structure and creative potential. In his 1876 article “The Algonkin Verb,” published in *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, Trumbull challenged the giants of his field. Unfortunately, Trumbull wrote, Alexander von Humboldt’s approach to Native American linguists borrowed “Duponceau’s mistaken notion of polysynthesis...”<sup>245</sup> In the same article, Trumbull criticized Max Müller for “[conceding] true verb-forms to the Mexican and Dakota languages, but [denying] them to the Algonkin and Iroquois,” an opinion further advanced by Heymann Steinthal.<sup>246</sup> Trumbull offered an alternate view, arguing that native languages were far more complex than these European scholars would admit.

Trumbull was particularly confident in defending the Algonquin language family, his linguistic specialty. In one footnote for his article “On Algonkin Names for Man,” Trumbull managed to insult the linguistic pretensions of contemporary rival Henry

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<sup>244</sup> E.B. O’Callaghan to JHT, 13 May 1873, II.3 (Ma-Me), J. Hammond Trumbull Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>245</sup> J. Hammond Trumbull, “The Algonkin Verb” in *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 7 (1876), 146, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2935713>.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 146-147

Schoolcraft, DuPonceau, and French philology as a whole in a single sentence.<sup>247</sup>

Schoolcraft was an especially favored target. In one article, Trumbull tore apart Schoolcraft's interpretation of the Eliot Bible.<sup>248</sup> In another text, he attacked Schoolcraft's attachment to polysynthesis: "Dr. Schoolcraft believed that 'elementary syllables, *like chessmen on a board*, can be changed at the will of the player...' With such a view of the composition of Indian names, it is not surprising that he so often mistook their meaning and that his analysis is generally untrustworthy."<sup>249</sup>

In his private papers, Trumbull was even more willing to critique his fellow linguists. As he wrote in one note, "Dr. Schoolcraft proposed a great number of manufactured names... No Indian would discover these meanings in the names... None of them are aboriginal in Michigan, and none of them is correctly translated by their inventor or can be correctly translated by anybody else."<sup>250</sup> Trumbull also was not above slamming other scholars in newspaper blind items. In an 1875 letter, his personal friend and respected linguist W.D. Whitney slyly described one such missive:

"Max Müller, of Oxford, and Max Whitney, of Yale, are by the epistolary ears again concerning their respective sins of syntax. Our Max is ahead at this writing, because he keeps his temper." Perhaps, after all, this is your work; I know you are

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<sup>247</sup> J. Hammond Trumbull, "On Algonkin Names for Man" in *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 2 (1871), 153, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/310281>.

<sup>248</sup> J. Hammond Trumbull, "On Some Mistaken Notions of Algonkin Grammar, and on Mistranslations of Words from Eliot's Bible, &c" in *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 1 (1869-1870), 119, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/310228>.

<sup>249</sup> J. Hammond Trumbull, *Composition of Indian Geographical Names*, 47-48.

<sup>250</sup> JHT MS, 19 March 1870, 1.8, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

sometimes in the way of sending anonymous items to the N.Y. papers, in order to nag somebody.<sup>251</sup>

While John P. Williamson and Stephen Return Riggs boldly contradicted the Quakers in *Iapi Oaye*, desk linguists like Trumbull were slightly more subtle in communicating rivalries.

Amid the clamor of competing phonetic systems and contradictory policy goals, Trumbull had his own definite ideas about Native American philology. The field was open for innovation; as American scholars sought insight into the origins and nature of indigenous cultures, they were eager to challenge the Old World theories of von Humboldt and his peers. In an 1874 letter, Trumbull explained the guiding principles behind his work as a translator and linguist:

I cannot yet assure myself that the Chippeway and Iroquois- or the Iroquois and the Choctaw- are of a common origin; and till I can decide that question, one way or the other, it would be mere presumption to talk about the relation of either to Asiatic or S. American languages. What we now need is the material for the thorough study of each one of the N. American languages; good dictionaries and grammars; not English grammars, or Latin grammars, of Indian languages, such as most of the so-called Indian grammars have been. In the Algonkin languages, at least, there is hardly one grammatical feature which can be correctly described by any grammatical term borrowed from the English or any European languages. "Gender," "number," "person,"- "objective" and "accusative" cases- cannot mean, in an Indian grammar what they mean in an English one; and scholars are constantly misled by transferring the one meaning to the other.<sup>252</sup>

Trumbull's emphasis on close, careful language analysis illuminates a point of dissension from Powell and many other scholarly participants in the national linguistic project. For Powell's camp, as Curtis M. Hinsley explains in *The Smithsonian and the American Indian: Making a Moral Anthropology in Victorian America*, "...language study was

<sup>251</sup> W.D. Whitney to JHT, 21 December 1875, 1.25, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>252</sup> JHT to W.S. Robertson, 14 April 1874, 1.22, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

never more than a means to an end,” a way to understand indigenous origins and create federal policy. In contrast, Trumbull worked to understand Native American languages on their own terms.<sup>253</sup>

Trumbull was disgusted by continued efforts to force connections between Native American tongues and classical languages, bemoaning the waste of “a great deal of ingenuity... in tracing analogies and resemblances between Indian languages and the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.”<sup>254</sup> In a paper presented at the American Philological Association in 1869, an exasperated Trumbull sighed, “How much time and patience has been wasted in showing the resemblance between the Indian and Hebrew languages, whereas a few hours of careful study would have shown that no such resemblance existed.”<sup>255</sup> Trumbull criticized linguists for neglecting the hard work of untangling America’s native language families in favor of wild speculation about Biblical connections or ancient colonies. Although he acknowledged the immense value of works like Gallatin’s groundbreaking vocabularies, Trumbull argued, “...The real work of the linguistic scholar begins where the provisional labors of the word-collector ends.”<sup>256</sup> Indigenous languages were systematic and deserved systematic study.

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<sup>253</sup> Hinsley, *Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 56.

<sup>254</sup> J. Hammond Trumbull, “On the Best Method of Studying the American Languages” in *Transactions of the American Philological Society* 1 (1869-1870), 56, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/310224>.

<sup>255</sup> “The Indian Languages: J. Hammond Trumbull on the Study of American Languages,” *Hartford Courant*, August 2, 1869, <http://search.proquest.com/hnphartfordcourant/docview/553700855/13D386BBF0558D9FEDB/6?accountid=14405>.

<sup>256</sup> Trumbull, “Best Method,” 58.

Trumbull underscored fundamental theoretical differences between English and Native American languages that made exact translations impossible. In an 1869 essay entitled “On the Best Method of Studying the North American Languages,” Trumbull explained,

As an instance of extreme synthesis this word- *wut-ap-pe’-sit-tuk-qus’-sun-noo-weht-unk’-quoh-* is well taken, but its significance is by no means limited, as Mr. Bancroft supposed it to be, by that of the English participle “kneeling...” [it] may be translated, literally: “he, falling down upon his knees, worshipped...” Thus the *one* Indian word of *eleven* syllables requires for its accurate interpretation *eight* or *ten* English words and at least eleven syllables.<sup>257</sup>

Trumbull underscored the complexity of Native American languages as a whole, and of Algonquin languages in particular. For example, in his assessment, the Algonquin languages lacked equivalents for simple verbs like “to go.” Instead, this family possessed a huge variety of more specific terms of motion, dictated by setting, direction, and means of travel. Trumbull urged his colleagues to pursue “*the resolution of synthesis by analysis*. What the Indian has so carefully put together- ‘agglutinated’ or ‘incorporated’- must be carefully taken to pieces, and the materials of the structure be examined separately.”<sup>258</sup> Discovering the roots of Indian languages meant finding limited building blocks used in synthesis. In his suggestions for amateur linguists, Trumbull stressed the legitimacy of Native American grammar, which was so frequently overlooked: “No interpretation of a place-name is correct which makes *bad grammar* of the original. The apparatus of Indian synthesis was cumbersome and perhaps inelegant, but it was nicely adjusted to its work. The grammatical relations of words were never lost sight of.”<sup>259</sup> He

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>259</sup> Trumbull, *Composition of Indian Geographical Names*, 48-49.

also underscored the remarkable diversity of native dialects, in which definitions could shift between tribes and even villages.<sup>260</sup>

Throughout his writings, Trumbull displayed a fundamental recognition of the cultural considerations that lesser linguists ignored or tried to iron out. Of early translations of the Lord's Prayer, he wryly observed, "Bread was not the staff of life to an Indian, and his little corn-cake, baked in hot ashes, was perhaps about the last thing he would remember to pray for."<sup>261</sup> He acknowledged the impossibility of imposing white Christian ideals on a completely foreign language, shaped by a unique worldview: "It is true that a savage's conception of 'love,' subjective or objective, differs from that of a Christian..."<sup>262</sup> Trumbull also noted the impact of European linguistic influence on native languages, reflecting on the rapid rate of change and overwhelming possibility of linguistic extinction."<sup>263</sup>

Despite his acclaim, Trumbull sometimes felt restricted by his fame as a Native American linguist, perhaps in part because he knew his own limitations. He did not actually speak any indigenous languages, an ability often attributed to him. After Trumbull's death, his brother Henry Clay Trumbull recalled in a *Hartford Courant* obituary, "It has often been said of him, as if that were his chief claim to distinction, that he was best known as the one man living who could read Eliot's Indian Bible. This was a little annoying to him..."<sup>264</sup> Trumbull's achievements in this area often seeped into his various other interests. In 1882, a Columbia College professor tried to convince Trumbull

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>261</sup> Trumbull, *Forty Algonkin Versions*, 114.

<sup>262</sup> Trumbull, "Mistaken Notions," 117.

<sup>263</sup> Trumbull, "Best Method," 70.

<sup>264</sup> "A Helper in Every Sphere," *Hartford Courant*.

to write on the subject of American spelling reform by playing on his linguistic fame: “Even a brief article from you wil [sic] do a great deal of good. The American people wil listen to a man who ‘talks Injun.’”<sup>265</sup> Toward the end of her own long life, Trumbull’s daughter Annie confirmed that her father never used the Eliot Bible to conduct family prayers, as was widely reported to Trumbull’s exasperation. In fact, despite his ability to read and write many languages, she never heard him speak anything but English.<sup>266</sup> However, Trumbull’s frustration with public perception never interfered with his commitment to communicating his positive, respectful view of indigenous languages. His limited body of published work and voluminous correspondence combined to present Native American languages as sophisticated, poetic, and as inherently worthy of study as any other language.

### **Native American Participation in the National Linguistic Project**

The evidence and extent of native participation in the national linguistic project is filtered through the letters of missionaries, soldiers, and amateur enthusiasts. As Trumbull and his colleagues pursued a comprehensive understanding of American Indian languages, they interacted with a native population that was still surviving and still speaking. However, their efforts as a whole supported the government agenda that aimed

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<sup>265</sup> Charles P.Y. Scott to JHT, 14 December 1882, 1.44, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>266</sup> Stephen K. Galpin, “Indian Bible Sale Recalls Early Story: J. Hammond Trumbull Reputed Only One Able To Read Eliot Version,” *Hartford Courant*, April 13, 1947, <http://search.proquest.com/hnphartfordcourant/docview/560760437/13D386BBF0558D9FEDB/2?accountid=14405>.

to eradicate native cultural identity, languages included, and substitute American civilization and citizenship.

Missionary-linguists, striving to capture and catalog indigenous languages, worked directly with Native Americans to varying degrees. In an 1876 issue of *Iapi Oaye*, Stephen Return Riggs explained of himself and John P. Williamson: "...In making these translations, we have uniformly availed ourselves of all the native help we could command, reading every portion, as far as practicable, with some of the best scholars among the Dakota."<sup>267</sup> In letters to James Pilling at the Bureau of American Ethnology, Oklahoma-based missionary Ann Eliza W. Robertson emphasized how crucial native participation was to lucid Biblical translations.<sup>268</sup> However, she also informed Pilling, "On the revision of Larke, I had different helpers, but Rev. L.W. Perryman was my chief helper in the final revision. I could not now recall the names of all the natives, from whom I gained more or less help in the revision of John's Gospel, as it was years from the time I began correcting it..."<sup>269</sup> While she took care to cite every white collaborator that contributed to her Creek New Testament, Robertson failed to identify and fully credit any native participants.

Soldier-linguists and scholars also engaged with native people as they recorded western indigenous vocabularies and compiled grammars. Like their missionary counterparts, soldier-linguists had easy access to native input on their work. In his role as

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<sup>267</sup> Stephen Return Riggs in *Iapi Oaye*, Number VII, July 1876.

<sup>268</sup> Ann Eliza W. Robertson to James Pilling, 8 March 1892, Ayer MS 1.32, Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>269</sup> Ann Eliza W. Robertson to James Pilling, 15 June 1891, Ayer MS 1.32, Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois.

head surveyor, before the days of the Bureau, Powell wrote to Trumbull in January 1874, “Can you inform me whether vocabularies have been made of the U-chi and Naches languages?... these languages are still spoken. I have at my house a gentleman who speaks the U-chi, and perhaps within a few weeks can secure one of the Nach’es language.”<sup>270</sup> Despite their immense geographical distance from the western tribes, eastern intellectuals were eager for direct contact with tribal members. Several years later, in January of 1882, an excited E.E. Hale wrote to Trumbull,

Do you Rem. about Mr. Cushing who is with the Zunis, in New Mexico? He proposes to come on here with five of them. If we can get together three or four hundred dollars he will bring them to New England. I propose to have them at the Antiquarian Hall to see what they might make of Lord Kingsborough and other Mexican hieroglyphics...<sup>271</sup>

Frank Hamilton Cushing, the subject of Hale’s enthusiasm, was engaged in a revolutionary anthropological project. Supported by the Bureau of Ethnology and guided by Powell, his long-time mentor, Cushing lived among the Zuni tribe between 1879 and 1884. He became fluent in the Zuni language, adopted traditional dress, and participated in the tribe’s most sacred, secret rituals.<sup>272</sup> It is more than likely that Trumbull shared Hale’s eagerness to interact directly with these Zunis, but he never personally reached out to western tribes. Apart from occasional vacations to New York and New Hampshire, Trumbull was a decided homebody, unwilling to leave his native state even for the sake of interacting with vibrant, spoken indigenous languages.

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<sup>270</sup> John Wesley Powell to JHT, 14 January 1874, 1.22, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>271</sup> Edward Everett Hale to James Hammond Trumbull, 24 January 1882, II.3 (Ha-He), J. Hammond Trumbull Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford.

<sup>272</sup> Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, 284-285.

Trumbull's surviving correspondence reveals widespread public interest in Native American language. As he published his essays, columns, and pamphlets on Indian language, letters from interested readers poured in. From Baltimore, Ypsilanti, and New Brunswick to St. Paul, St. Augustine, and Santa Rosa, Americans were eager to connect with a "vanished" past. Several of Trumbull's correspondents across America contacted him after conversations with natives sparked questions about terms. In his letter to Trumbull, one Milwaukee man wrote, "Take the suggested 'Maquo-ge-bing' (which two educated Indians in two different localities—Ontonogon and Marquette—have given me..."<sup>273</sup> Another correspondent challenged Trumbull's definition of "Housatonic" after meeting a clergyman of the Stockbridge group in Wisconsin.<sup>274</sup>

Some of Trumbull's correspondents recounted native participation that occurred closer to his Hartford home. In 1882, the Boston attorney Lucius Hubbard sent Trumbull an account of cross-cultural communication: "Last October an old Indian at Oldtown—John Pennowet, mentioned by Thoreau, who spelled his name Pennyweight—gave me the names of a great many small ponds and streams in northern Maine, with their various meanings."<sup>275</sup> Although Trumbull's initial response did not survive, Hubbard's second letter several months later reveals both the extent of his own explorations and Trumbull's enthusiasm for them:

Your very kind letter has given me much pleasure. As to the names you want, I asked Pennowit what he called the Twin Lakes, and he said he knew no Indian

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<sup>273</sup> J.C. Carson to JHT, 17 December 1883, 2.47, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>274</sup> W.J. Taglon to JHT, 17 June 1881, 1.38, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>275</sup> Lucius Hubbard to JHT, 28 February 1882, 1.41, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

names for them. He added, however, that “Num-chee-na-gá-na-wis,” “a little cross-pond between the lake and the outlet,” was applicable not to North Twin Lake, but to the lower end of it only... Last year my Abnaki guide, Silas Oscunkherhine, whom I quoted in my last letter on the subject of Lancomgomoc, gave me the word for Chamberlain Lake, which I wrote ‘Pam-edsee-ne-ga-moc...’ It would seem to follow, too, either that other Indians and former writers have mispronounced or misunderstood this name, or that there is some distinction between “tegooéwick” and “taquoik.” I asked Pennowit repeatedly on this point, and he insisted that they were not the same, but could not explain the difference. I hope to make a pilgrimage to Oldtown this month or next, and shall have another interview with him, and try to elicit further information on the subject.”<sup>276</sup>

Oldtown, Maine was home to a significant Penobscot community in the nineteenth century. No evidence suggests that Trumbull ever traveled to consult tribal members himself, but his extensive correspondence network made secondhand collaboration possible.

In the same decade and in the same vein, Trumbull received a revealing series of letters from Charles G. Leland, who was living near the Passamaquoddy tribe in Point Pleasant, Maine. Leland was derogatory toward both Native Americans and recent immigrants: “...I have learned that [the Passamaquoddy] call a medicine man a K’wack. And yet we call these people savages! Beards are Wee-nook-wo-squeezele. Still the language is softer and sweeter than Italian.”<sup>277</sup> However, in 1883, he wrote to Trumbull, “Last summer... in the White Mountains I met an Indian who looks of quite the white man in good clothes and spectacles.”<sup>278</sup> The man, John Lawless, had been assisting a fellow Abenaki in the collection of New England place names. Leland offered the scholar’s name as Joseph Masters; in a note to himself, Trumbull posited the alternative

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<sup>276</sup> Lucius Hubbard to JHT, 10 March 1882, II.3 (Ho-Hy), J. Hammond Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford.

<sup>277</sup> Charles G. Leland to JHT, 27 August 1882, III.7, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>278</sup> Charles G. Leland to JHT, 27 December 1883, III. 8, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

spelling of “Masta.”<sup>279</sup> It is impossible to establish whether or not Trumbull tracked down or communicated with Lawless or Masta, but the letter provides a startling, invaluable glimpse of two Native Americans claiming the study of indigenous languages as their own.

On the whole, however, the national linguistic project was carried out by whites with the goal of silencing indigenous languages. Missionaries, soldiers, and scholars used native informants to create vocabularies and catechisms. Through schools and missions, these materials were in turn used to discourage native children from speaking their own language and, by extension, from asserting a native identity. On May 16, 1877, a woman in Tarrytown, New York penned a remarkable letter to Trumbull, requesting any Comanche, Kiowa, or Cheyenne vocabularies that he could provide. As Amy Caruthers explained:

During two winters spent, with my husband, in St. Augustine, Florida, I have been engaged, with several other ladies, in teaching the Indian prisoners, confined in the old fort there, & having gained some little knowledge of the Comanche—enough to make a vocabulary for my own use, of some three to four hundred words, I should like very much to have enlarged it. Some of the words were given me last year by the Interpreter who has since left, but the spelling was so different from the pronunciation that, since hearing them used by the Indians, & using them myself, I have had to alter it to suit myself. Other words I have obtained from the Indians themselves. I have also a list of about one hundred Kiowa words, & perhaps fifty or more Cheyenne, learned from my scholars.<sup>280</sup>

Caruthers’ pupils were casualties of America’s westward expansion. In April 1875, a group of Southern Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, and Comanche individuals were gathered at Fort Sill, Oklahoma and condemned to exile. While some had been implicated in the

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<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Mrs. H.A. Caruthers to JHT, 16 May 1877, II.3 (C), J. Hammond Trumbull Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

murder of white settlers, others of the group were not accused of any violent crime. After a 165-mile forced march to the closest railroad station, the group was taken to St. Augustine and interned at Fort Marion.<sup>281</sup>

Under the direction of Lieutenant Richard H. Pratt, the prisoners were encouraged to assimilate into white culture. A school was founded for their benefit and was staffed by experienced female schoolteachers who volunteered their services, like Caruthers. Fifty of the youngest prisoners, thought to be more receptive to instruction, were educated five days a week in seven subjects.<sup>282</sup> Caruthers offered a glowing assessment of Pratt and his visionary efforts, telling Trumbull:

[Captain Pratt is] one of the noblest and best of Christian gentlemen & soldiers. By his own efforts unaided, except by the voluntary assistance of three or four ladies, as teachers, he has changed these wild ferocious men, into orderly well behaved students, who although they do not yet speak the language, are beginning to learn it, & are giving the most satisfactory evidence of the Christian influence & example which has been over them.<sup>283</sup>

In exchange for Trumbull's help, Caruthers promised to provide him with any vocabulary he lacked; she hoped, she explained, to return to her former pupils if the opportunity arose.<sup>284</sup>

As Caruthers corresponded with Trumbull in 1877, Pratt was already requesting release on the prisoners' behalf. Over the course of the year, officials in Indian Territory debated the risks and rewards of freeing the men, but Indian Commissioner Ezra Hayt

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<sup>281</sup> Brad Lookingbill, *War Dance at Fort Marion: Plains Indian War Prisoners* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2006), 39, 43, 56-57.

<sup>282</sup> Lookingbill, *War Dance*, 107-110.

<sup>283</sup> Mrs. H.A. Caruthers to JHT, 16 May 1877, II.3 (C), J. Hammond Trumbull Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*

waited until December to recommend that they be allowed to return to their tribes.<sup>285</sup> Before any decisive action was taken, Caruthers returned to St. Augustine, likely bearing an expanded vocabulary received from Trumbull. After learning from Pratt that the Indian Office would not provide money for the continuing education of the soon-to-be-ex-prisoners, she launched a fundraising campaign to provide further education for two of her “scholars,” organizing a pageant in St. Augustine and soliciting donations from northern philanthropists.<sup>286</sup> In mid-1878, she returned to Tarrytown with her husband and Tooth Man (Zonekeuh), the Kiowa Bear Mountain (Tsaikopeta), and the Cheyenne Roman Nose (Wouhhunnih). Trumbull’s correspondent conducted morning and afternoon classes for her boarders in her sitting room; in letters to friends back in Florida, she praised her students’ diligence, perseverance, and improvement outside the confines of Fort Marion.<sup>287</sup>

In early 1879, as Pratt planned, Tooth Man and Roman Nose joined fifteen former prisoners for further education at Booker T. Washington’s Hampton Institute in Virginia. However, Pratt was unhappy with the segregation of Indian and black students he saw at Hampton. He went on to found the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania with the help of eleven former Fort Marion prisoners.<sup>288</sup> Believing that indigenous children, no less than white children, were blank slates at birth, Pratt set a curriculum of industrial education and domestic training. Education in the English language, and the discarding of indigenous tongues, was seen as essential to shaping native youths into American

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<sup>285</sup> Lookingbill, *War Dance*, 149, 152, 159.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, 166-167, 171.

adults.<sup>289</sup> In 1882, Dakota missionary Stephen Return Riggs mentioned a visit to Carlisle in a letter to Trumbull, bringing Trumbull's connection to the educational effort full circle, and underscoring the common goal of all participants in the national linguistic project.<sup>290</sup>

What did the various white participant groups in the national linguistic project hope to gain through their labors? Missionaries to the tribes, striving away at their remote, inhospitable stations, saw Native American linguistics as a means to an end: the salvation of Native American souls. Intellectually-minded army officers were intrigued by the strange, complex languages they heard on the frontier; some enterprising individuals tried to understand the culture they were meant to oppress and sent their findings eastward. The eastern elites held intellectual pretensions that the missionaries lacked. They approached linguistics as an academic challenge and saw the national project as a demonstration of America's worthwhile history in comparison to Europe. Despite these individual motivations, the national linguistic project as a whole functioned to force nineteenth-century Native Americans to assimilate. As missionaries, soldiers, and scholars collected, organized, and dispersed elements of indigenous culture, they were in effect striving to erase that culture.

In an 1890 letter, one Louis Marie Lebret of Manitoba wrote to James C. Pilling: "I heard a good deal about the Smithsonian Institution, but never could afford to go and see it. Some 25 years ago, whilst traveling among the Indians, on the shores of Hudson Bay, I gathered specimens (Beatles) for a gentleman interested in that grand Institution.

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<sup>289</sup> Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, 116-119.

<sup>290</sup> S.R. Riggs to JHT, 9 January 1882, II.3 (R), J. Hammond Trumbull Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

So that I am sure there are specimens, there which I handled.”<sup>291</sup> Unintentionally, this provincial linguist offered a striking metaphor for the national linguistic project at its highest level. Eastern elites like Trumbull, Powell, and Pilling wanted to capture, pin down, and display indigenous languages as museum specimens. Like Lebret’s beetles, Native American languages were worthy of study, interesting to examine, even beautiful. Nevertheless, scholars agreed, indigenous languages could not remain vibrant, evolving, or alive. Native American languages could only survive in isolated, individual place-names and in texts produced and funded by a government that wanted to replace indigenous identity with the values of white America.

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<sup>291</sup> Louis Marie Lebret to James Pilling, 3 January 1890, Ayer MS 727, 1.22, Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois.

## **Language, Advocacy, and Power: James Hammond Trumbull in Context**

James Hammond Trumbull was intimately familiar with, and privately condemned, the failure of colonial policy toward the native peoples of southeastern New England. Instead of vocally challenging present and future injustices against Native Americans nationwide, he discreetly protested past wrongs. Apart from a single surviving 1870 invitation to a convention held by the United States Indian Commission, there is no evidence that Trumbull ever engaged in concerted efforts to reform Indian policy at the state or federal level.<sup>292</sup> He was also complicit, to some degree, in detribalization and the weakening of native identity at the state level. Trumbull's unwillingness to act as an advocate for indigenous people mirrors his reluctance to publish definitive historical or linguistic works.

Trumbull built his scholarly life around the power of the written word. As a historian, he compiled colonial documents and meticulously recorded his own thoughts; as a linguist, he chose to dissect indigenous languages on paper rather than learn to speak them aloud. Trumbull's remarkable achievements as a librarian and bibliographer, while not explicitly tied to his Native American scholarship, further demonstrate his passion for books in the abstract. On a personal level, Trumbull's daughter recalled that her father "never thought that books or candy were extravagances."<sup>293</sup> His extensive marginalia establishes him as an engaged, thoughtful, insightful reader.

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<sup>292</sup> Edward Cromwell to James Hammond Trumbull, 13 May 1870, II.3 (C), J. Hammond Trumbull Collection, Watkinson Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>293</sup> Galpin, "Indian Bible Sale," *Courant*.

Over the course of his life, Trumbull amassed a considerable number of books on federal Indian policy and the struggles of native peoples. His personal library included congressional and state reports as well as philanthropic publications from non-governmental groups like the American Indian Mission Association, the Bishop Seabury Mission, the Society of Friends, the Dakota League of Massachusetts, and the Indian Rights Association. These texts dealt with tribes throughout the nation, spelling out the rights of the Piutes, the Utes, the Senecas, the Creeks, the Apaches, and the tribes of Arizona and Oregon.

Notably, Trumbull owned *Indian nullification of the unconstitutional laws of Massachusetts, relative to the Mashpee tribe: or, The pretended riot explained*, a text published by William Apess. Apess, was born in a small off-reservation Pequot community in 1798 Massachusetts and became a Methodist minister in 1829.<sup>294</sup> In 1833, he became highly involved in the Mashpees' effort to assert autonomy in the face of Massachusetts state guardianship. Apess successfully organized and mobilized Mashpee discontent; in March 1834, the Mashpee community was granted the right to self-governance.<sup>295</sup> The text Trumbull owned was, as Barry O'Connell explains, a "brilliant expropriation of the Anglo-American language of constitutionalism, rights, and citizenship."<sup>296</sup> Apess' literary achievement and the Mashpees' revolt flew in the face of the Indian extinction narrative. Given his library, his reading practices, and his epistolary

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<sup>294</sup> Barry O'Connell, introduction to *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*, by William Apess (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), xxvi-xxix, xxxiv.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, xxvii.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, xxviii.

networks with part-time linguists in the field, Trumbull's private concerns about the physical and cultural displacement of Native Americans emerge.

In August 1878, a man reached out to Trumbull for his opinions about Albert Gallatin's impact on American ethnology and linguistics. Would-be biographer Henry Adams explained, "I shall be very grateful for your advice on the subject and ready to follow it implicitly. I have already consulted Major Powell and Lewis H. Morgan, but beyond a general impression...I have little stock to start with."<sup>297</sup> Although Powell and Morgan proved unhelpful to Adams, these two highly influential men are useful for situating Trumbull's opinions of federal Indian policy.

In a fascinating pamphlet titled "Proper Training and the Future of the Indians," John Wesley Powell laid out his own experience studying indigenous culture and language. He recalled his childhood realization that his family's new home was built on ancient Winnebago lands; he possessed the same sense of personal geographic history that informed Trumbull's investigation into the Pequot War. Unlike Trumbull, however, Powell spent much of his life interacting with the people he studied, riding across the plains with hunting parties and sleeping in tribal camps.<sup>298</sup> Despite this lifelong encounter with the richness of various Native American cultures, Powell staunchly believed in the value of and need for indigenous assimilation. He observed with pleasure the changes that had taken place over the course of his lifetime:

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<sup>297</sup> 29 August 1878, Henry Adams to JHT, III.4, James Hammond Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>298</sup> John Wesley Powell, "Proper Training and the Future of the Indians," *Forum* 18 (1895), 623.

...Men by the thousands who were snaring rabbits in their youth and my youth are now guiding the plow; girls who were picking berries then are now churning butter. Boys and girls who were speaking in languages native to only a few hundred persons, are now speaking our common tongue... Few of the old men and women speak our language, usually the children speak it, and in another generation one homogenous tongue will replace the multiplied jargons of savagery.<sup>299</sup>

Powell's message was clear: Native Americans must reject their own languages in order to successfully embrace civilization.

Where Trumbull was complicit through silence in Mohegan detribalization and Mashantucket Pequot reservation land sales, Powell was an active participant in Indian removal at the federal level. As a Special Commissioner sent to investigate the tribes of Utah, Powell recommended their wholesale removal to newly defined reservations in 1874. His knowledge of indigenous languages was an explicit means of expediting the erasure of indigenous people: "One of your commissioners can communicate with a part of the Indians in their own language... but it will still be necessary to have one more interpreter, as the commission must necessarily be divided, and three or four parties organized to reach all the tribes in one season."<sup>300</sup> Ironically, Powell's ability to speak Native American languages and his first-hand knowledge of indigenous cultures empowered him to implement the federal vision of a culturally homogenous America.

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 624.

<sup>300</sup> John Wesley Powell, *Report of special commissioners J.W. Powell and G.W. Ingalls : on the condition of the Ute Indians of Utah, the Pai-Utes of Utah, northern Arizona, southern Nevada, and southeastern California, the Go-Si Utes of Utah and Nevada, the northwestern Shoshones of Idaho and Utah, and the western Shoshones of Nevada, and, Report concerning claims of the settlers in the Mo-A-Pa Valley, (southeastern Nevada)* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1874), 5-6.

Trumbull owned several philanthropic works outlining the right of the Utes and other tribes of the Colorado region to remain on the resource-rich lands where the government had originally placed them. Strikingly, Trumbull owned one text, *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims*, authored by a Piute woman named Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins and published in 1883. Hopkins offered an impassioned plea on her tribe's behalf: "Since the war of 1860 there have been one hundred and three (103) of my people murdered, and our reservations taken from us; and yet we, who are called blood-seeking savages, are keeping our promises to the government."<sup>301</sup> Despite Trumbull's literary leanings, there is no surviving indication that he ever challenged Powell's position privately or publically.

Lewis Henry Morgan, also one of Trumbull's contemporaries, was a prominent example of a nineteenth-century Native American scholar-advocate. In 1842, Morgan transformed his fraternal society, the Gordian Knot, into the New Confederacy of the Iroquois. Adopting Iroquois names, dividing into tribes, and inventing rituals, Morgan and his young peers sought to tap into an authentic American identity. They placed a special emphasis on the Iroquois language, combing through colonial books and treaties to glean descriptive words and place names.<sup>302</sup> This playacting led Morgan into legal advocacy on behalf of tribal peoples and a lifelong career as an ethnologist.

In 1844, Morgan developed a friendship with Ely Parker, an up-and-coming Seneca leader. In exchange for Parker's ethnographic insight into Seneca culture, Morgan

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<sup>301</sup> Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* (Boston: Cupples, Upham & Co., 1883), 89.

<sup>302</sup> Philip J. DeLoria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 73, 78-81.

threw his support behind the Seneca tribe's resistance to white wrongdoing. In 1838, after years of trying to persuade the Senecas to relocate so their lands could be sold to the Ogden Land Company, the federal government appointed, bribed, and plied Seneca chiefs with alcohol to obtain the necessary signatures. The tribe, under Parker's leadership, fought back; Morgan and his fellow New Confederacy members organized petitions and public meetings on the tribe's behalf. Henry Schoolcraft, a prominent Native American linguist and Trumbull's scholarly nemesis, was made an honorary member of the society in exchange for his expert testimony on Seneca leadership capabilities.<sup>303</sup> Although he was not personally involved, Trumbull owned *A Brief Statement of the Rights of the Seneca Indians of the State of New York*, a pamphlet published by the Committee of the Society of Friends in 1877 that compiled various state and federal court documents to demonstrate that the Senecas could remain tax-free on their lands while retaining the right to sell them.<sup>304</sup>

Morgan's perspective on the past, present, and future of Native Americans was a contradictory blend of eyewitness observations, sweeping theories of human development, and illegitimate science. With the publication of *League of the Iroquois* in 1851, Morgan believed that it was time to move on from studying Native Americans.<sup>305</sup> However, during the 1860s and 1870s, Morgan published extensive works that incorporated America's indigenous peoples. In addition to arguments for the tribes' ancient Asian origins, Morgan presented a system of human development that progressed from savagery to civilization. Morgan's conception placed all Native Americans in the

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<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 82-85.

<sup>304</sup> Society of Friends, *A Brief Statement of the Rights of the Seneca Indians of the State of New York* (Philadelphia: W.H. Pile, 1872), 3.

<sup>305</sup> Bieder, *Science Encounters*, 213.

three stages of Upper Savagery and Lower and Middle Barbarism, but implied that further evolution was only a matter of time.<sup>306</sup> After traveling among the western tribes in these same decades, Morgan was appalled at the corruption and cruelty he saw among the federal agents and military men who oversaw Indian affairs. He opposed reservations and land allotments because the transition from savagery to civilization could not be rushed; it would take generations for the native's brain to increase to the size and capacity of a white man's brain.<sup>307</sup> Toward the end of his life, ironically, Morgan dismissed his Grand Order of the Iroquois, the group that had shaped his academic career, as a frivolous fraternity.<sup>308</sup>

Trumbull's surviving publications, correspondence, and personal notes demonstrate that he did not join Powell by directly participating in the federal government's removal and suppression of Native American tribes. Despite his lack of experience with western tribes, he also never voiced Powell's unequivocal support for complete cultural assimilation. Trumbull never espoused Morgan's false Native American phrenology or appropriated native rituals to make a social club more exciting. He also did not work to support a tribe's rights, as a young Morgan did for the Seneca, or befriend any native person, as Morgan did Ely Parker. Given the pattern of reticence shown in his scholarly work, it is frustrating but unsurprising that he never publically expressed his opinion on the best course the federal government could take toward America's native people. If Trumbull ever wrote down, in the manner of his

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<sup>306</sup> Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, 103-105.

<sup>307</sup> Bieder, *Science Encounters*, 241-243.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

autobiographical notes, his vision of the future for Native Americans, those pages remain undiscovered.

## Bibliographic Note

This project was shaped by several important archival collections that merit further discussion. The Watkinson Library, an institution that benefited immensely from Trumbull's early efforts, was in turn an essential source for this project. Trumbull's relationships with James C. Pilling, Joseph Henry, and Dakota missionaries John P. Williamson and Stephen Return Riggs emerge through this collection. The Watkinson's holdings also illuminate Trumbull's historical practices, including his research notebook and the invaluable manuscript of his unfinished Stonington history. Furthermore, the library owns nearly one hundred and fifty books from Trumbull's personal library, allowing researchers to explore his marginalia.

Yale University's Trumbull collection focuses on his work as a Native American linguist. The archive reveals the impressive extent of his epistolary networks with scholars and amateur enthusiasts. Strikingly, Yale holds a substantial number of letters from Trumbull, as opposed to messages he received. The Connecticut Historical Society was another vital source, centered on Trumbull's historical achievements and scholarly affiliations. However, the Society's holdings also include Trumbull's most personal correspondence: material ranges from a brief professional autobiography, a record of his honeymoon, and letters that suggest a struggle with depression. The Stonington Historical Society maintains an unassuming "Trumbull Family Folder" which contains his fascinating lecture draft, a unique document among his surviving papers. Trumbull's transcription notebook about his hometown's colonial history remains a much-used source for the Society's members and visitors.

Although Chicago's Newberry Library does not hold any manuscripts directly related to Trumbull, its enormous Edward E. Ayer collection of Native American material offers profound insight into his historical moment. Notably, the Newberry possesses every issue of the Dakota-language newspaper *Iapi Oaye*, correspondence related to Trumbull's colleague and Bureau of American Ethnology employee James C. Pilling, and numerous letters written from frontier missionaries to their supervisor in far-off Boston. Similarly, the Connecticut State Library's Native American collection provided essential context. Learned (Leonard) Hebard's personal papers, documents from the New London County Superior Court, and the Secretary of State's reports on the Mohegan tribe proved especially revealing.

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