

MOMUMENTS OF MULTIPLE MEANINGS: ALEXANDER
PHIMISTER PROCTOR'S UNIVERSITY OF OREGON
REPRESENTATIONS OF PIONEERS AND NATIVE
AMERICANS OVER TIME

by

MADELINE JENKINS

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This paper investigates the shifting meanings of Alexander Phimister Proctor's University of Oregon statues, *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother*. Because of changing social and historical contexts, these pioneer statues convey significantly different implications now than they did when they first arrived on campus in the early twentieth century. By exploring the biography the artist, the history of the statues, their donors, and their reception on campus, we can observe how the University of Oregon community viewed these pioneer statues during their introductions to campus. Subsequently, by examining the implications of the monumental sculpture genre, the current nationwide trend in reconsidering historical monuments, and the history of settler-colonialism in the Willamette Valley, we can identify what *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother* mean to a contemporary campus. The goal of this research is to establish that these statues have not one, but multiple meanings across time and contextual transformations.

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Introduction

Alexander Phimister Proctor's pioneer statues at the University of Oregon, *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother*, act as distinctive campus landmarks. These works, the final forms of which were ultimately decided by their patrons, present images of Oregon's pioneers who traversed the Oregon Trail to begin life again in a land of bountiful promise. At the time of their introduction to campus, the statues sparked within the campus community an immense sense of pride for its pioneering heritage. *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother* represented the courage and struggles associated with the trying journey west – the very same journey that at its end established Eugene and later its university, resting within the forested foothills of the Willamette Valley. This collective pioneering legacy, shared among a campus community that functioned on and around pioneer-developed land, persisted during the inductions of Proctor's statues. At this time, *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother* served as embodiments of honor, collective heritage, and the completion of American westward expansion.

Today, however, these monumental campus works have begun to be interpreted with complex multiplicities by contemporary audiences. All over the United States, communities are engaging in major ideological reconsiderations of monumentalized historical figures. To much of the campus community walking among these works nearly a century later, *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother* invoke ideas of development in the Willamette Valley, colonialism, Native American displacement, participation in the classic American college experience, and perhaps even white supremacy. In other words, these statues no longer signify one thing, but over the passage of time now convey many meanings.

How did statues that once exuded heroic dignity become multifaceted symbols of contrasting stories of the American west? By tracing the evolving meaning of *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother*, we can observe how the shifting contexts of these statues leave them as modern day reminders of lamentable colonial consequences.

Creating Monumentality

Alexander Phimister Proctor and His Statues of the West

The fourth of eleven children, Alexander Phimister Proctor was born on September 27, 1860 in Bosanquet, Ontario, Canada. He was the last of his parents' children to be born in Canada. His father, also named Alexander Proctor, and mother Thirzah Smith moved the family out of Canada to Clinton, Michigan in 1866. Like their Proctor ancestors before them, the family made their journey in a covered wagon. In his autobiography, Proctor stated that he came from a long lineage of pioneers, but granted no further details on these settler ancestors.¹ Soon after the family arrived in Clinton, they resettled again in Newton, Iowa. Here Proctor noted that he saw his first Indian, an event that had a significant impression on his young mind. In 1866, the family moved again to Des Moines. Throughout Proctor's life, his father often spoke to him about the West and its bounty of promises. Proctor reported that this also shaped his young psyche in a way that would later notably affect his artistic practices.² Finally in 1871, Proctor's father decided to act on his dreams of the West and moved his family to the Colorado frontier.³ Proctor had already lived a life filled with migration, adventure, and the allure of the western frontier at the young age of eleven.

Shortly after the family's move to Colorado, Proctor began taking his first formal art lessons. Although Proctor does not remember the name of this first instructor, he later began working under J. Harrison Mills, an artist from Buffalo, New York. Mills

¹ Alexander Phimister Proctor, *Sculptor in Buckskin: The Autobiography of Alexander Phimister Proctor*, ed. Katharine C. Ebner (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 5.

² *Sculptor in Buckskin: The Autobiography of Alexander Phimister Proctor*, 6.

³ *Ibid.*, 7.

trained Proctor in wood engraving until the young artist entered the studio of David McCluskey, an artist who strongly encouraged Proctor to pursue art in the cosmopolitan center of New York City.⁴ Proctor's first official commission was a project to design engraved illustrations for a book called *Hands Up*, a novel tracing the life of Sheriff David Cook who had killed numerous men in the fight for frontier justice. The artist confessed in his autobiography that he shouldn't have accepted the commission. Proctor had very little training in engraving, and felt that the results of his first paid commission proved to be somewhat embarrassing.⁵

Proctor became quite serious about the study of art when he took McCluskey's advice and moved to New York in 1885, enrolling in the National Academy of Design. There he studied drawing and painting and later joined the Art Students' League of New York where his interest in sculpture began to form.⁶ At the 1891 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where the artist was appointed to craft animal sculptures, Proctor met his soon to be wife, Margaret Daisy Gerow. The two married in Chicago in 1893 and left for Paris in October of that year.⁷ When they returned to the United States six years later, he was well schooled in the Beaux-Arts tradition. His move back to New York City marked the height of Proctor's artistic career as an "animalier", a sculptor of animals. Proctor worried, however, that the city was an improper place for his newly born children to grow up and the artist moved the family up north to a sixty-acre farm in Indian Hill, New York.⁸

⁴ Ibid., 19.

⁵ Ibid., 22.

⁶ Ibid., 76.

⁷ Ibid., 107-117.

⁸ Ibid., 136-139.

Already at this point in the artist's life, Proctor clearly displayed his love for the west. A few years after the World's Columbian Exposition and his return from Paris, Proctor befriended Theodore Roosevelt, and later accepted White House commissions from him.⁹ Roosevelt was the national figure of frontier manliness during his presidency, and his relationship with Proctor further legitimized both of their claims to western identities.¹⁰ Proctor and President Roosevelt, however, were certainly not the first to engage with frontier subjects as symbols strength, progress, and masculinity. Working in New York City as a serious artist, he joined a long-standing tradition of artists in the American east who portrayed expansion into the west.¹¹ Between roughly 1820 and 1920, images of westward expansion proliferated the idea of national progress.¹² To these artists living and working in the highly industrialized east, the undeveloped western frontier expressed the fulfillment of the American prophecy of Manifest Destiny.¹³ This concept became a dominant theme in artistic practices because, as William Truettner argues, Manifest Destiny had so crucially "shaped national character" in nineteenth century America.¹⁴ Whether or not these depictions of life on the western frontier were fully accurate, by the time Proctor began engaging with these subjects, notably late within the period, visual conventions of the west had become so concrete that they were held as true to those producing works of this subject

⁹ Ibid., 111, 188-189.

¹⁰ Daniel Worden, *Masculine Style: The American West and Literary Modernism*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 45.

¹¹ William H. Truettner, "Ideology and Image," in *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920*, ed. William H. Truettner (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 30.

¹² "Ideology and Image", 35.

¹³ Ibid., 34.

¹⁴ Ibid., 36.

matter. With virtually all frontier land settled by this time, the moment was ripe for Proctor and others to “review and canonize the frontier past” through his works.¹⁵

After moving out of the city, Proctor continued to travel throughout the western United States in order to study living frontier subjects. After a summer observing and sketching the Cheyenne Indians of Montana, Proctor made his first trip to Oregon in 1914. The artist stopped in Portland, Seaside, and finally arrived in Pendleton, Oregon to study cowboys, Indians, buffalos, and frontiersmen at the Pendleton Oregon Roundup. The Roundup Association hesitated to allow Proctor into the arena to sketch until they discovered that he too had grown up in the West.¹⁶ Longing to return to the beloved frontier, Proctor moved his family out to Pendleton shortly after his studies at the Roundup. Upon moving to Oregon one of Proctor’s sons asked, “Is this Daddy’s West?”¹⁷ His son’s inquiry again signifies not only that Proctor in fact carried on his own father’s tradition of western storytelling, but that it was also a readily identifiable part of his personal character.

During the family’s stay in Oregon, Proctor made wax sketches of monuments to Lewis and Clark, hoping that it would inspire an Oregonian patron.¹⁸ At this point in his career, the sculptor was attempting to shift away from his well-established oeuvre of animal sculptures towards more prestigious monumental human subjects. However, the patron Proctor had hoped for wanted something a bit different; an image commemorating the pioneers who came to the West in the 1840s and 50s. This patron,

¹⁵ Ibid., 49.

¹⁶ *Sculptor in Buckskin: The Autobiography of Alexander Phimister Proctor*, 157-164.

¹⁷ Ibid., 166.

¹⁸ Peter H Hassrick, *Wildlife and Western Heroes: Alexander Phimister Proctor* (London: Third Millennium Publishing, 2003), 74.

Joseph N. Teal, was a prominent lumberman, lawyer, and Portland community leader. Teal first contacted Proctor in a January 1917 letter explaining the project, which he ultimately intended to give to the University of Oregon upon completion. Teal wanted his pioneer statue to derive from an eastern prototype, Augustus Saint-Gauden's 1899 *The Puritan*, which resided in Springfield, Massachusetts (Fig. 1). He insisted on this monumental bronze precursor because to Teal, the Oregon pioneers were the Western counterparts to America's first English and Dutch settlers. Proctor, who hadn't had any commissions for a while, put aside his vision of a monument to Lewis and Clark to undertake Teal's pioneer project. With Proctor's official acceptance of the commission, he set out to find a proper human model for Teal's pioneer monument to study from. It wasn't long before the artist decided that Jess Cravens, a trapper whom Proctor had met in Pendleton a couple of years before, would fit the bill for this concept. He sketched the trapper in both Lewiston and Los Altos, California, where the Proctor family had by then relocated. The plaster of *The Pioneer* was cast in bronze in Providence, Rhode Island and as Teal promised, the finished product was installed on the University of Oregon campus in 1919.¹⁹

Today, at thirteen feet tall including the plinth, Proctor's dark bronze statue towers above viewers (Fig. 2). With his right leg thrust forward and left leg planted behind him, the figure strides forward powerfully, frozen in his dynamic action. *The Pioneer* exudes pride, with his torso, shoulders, neck, and head lifted towards the sky. His clothing unmistakably reads as the garb of a rugged western explorer. His textured knee-high boots, pants, long-sleeved fringed shirt, thin mid-waist belt, full beard and

¹⁹ *Wildlife and Western Heroes: Alexander Phimister Proctor*, 75.

mustache, and wide brimmed hat contrast the surface of his smooth skin. Furthermore, he carries equipment typical of nineteenth century pioneers. His bent left arm holds the sling of a rifle, which hangs upright behind the his back, while in the other arm, which rests relaxed at his side, *The Pioneer* holds a handle attached to a rope, likely representing an oxen whip. The statue dominates the space that it occupies, isolated on its rock platform and surrounded by lush trees and shrubs that flank the figure and provide it with a background reflective of the tree-lined Willamette Valley.

Admittedly, *The Pioneer* displays some marked differences from its New England predecessor. For example, the statue is notably more human than Saint-Gaudens' gallant religious hero.²⁰ Author Peter Hassrick states that the statue "shows more earthly weariness rather than *The Puritan's* spiritual determination".²¹ Teal, however, was satisfied with the work and gave a passionate address at the statue's campus dedication.

In 1922, Proctor received yet another pioneer-inspired commission. Howard Vanderslice of Kansas City, Missouri contacted the artist to inquire about the possibility of a female representation of the pioneer archetype. In regards to this commission Proctor wrote, "It seemed to me that most people, in thinking of pioneers, thought solely of the men. I considered the heroism of the women equal to, and perhaps greater than, the men's".²² Albeit a rather unique opinion for the time, his reflection proves that Proctor met the challenge with a personal enthusiasm. After accepting Vanderslice's commission, the artist discovered that casting the full-size plaster model in his New

²⁰ Ibid., 75.

²¹ Ibid., 76.

²² *Sculptor in Buckskin: The Autobiography of Alexander Phimister Proctor*, 191-192.

York studio ceased to be practical. The city had become increasingly expensive in the mid-1920s, forcing Proctor to consider other locations for the project's final stages. When sharing this predicament with his wife, Margaret suggested completing the sculpture in one of the international capitals of globally influential sculpture—Rome. The idea of working in the eternal city excited Proctor, and he immediately contacted William Mitchell Kendall, chairman of the American Academy in Rome, who offered the artist an academy studio. Proctor seized this opportunity, and finished the statue in Italy.²³ The Missouri *Pioneer Mother*, the predecessor to the female pioneer work on the University of Oregon campus, memorializes feminine pioneering courage, showing a mother riding on horseback while holding a swaddled baby to her chest (Fig. 3). Her male counterpart, who calmly leads the horse by its reins, contrasts her dauntless motherly dynamism. The statue was dedicated in 1927 at Penn Valley Park in Kansas City, Missouri.²⁴ Returning from Rome and receiving wide critical acclaim for *The Pioneer Mother*, Proctor moved his family to Wilton, Connecticut later that year.²⁵

Word of Proctor's innovatively female-focused pioneer group had spread and in Wilton, the artist received a letter of interest about a second female pioneer sculpture. Burt Brown Barker, a New York-based benefactor of the University of Oregon, contacted Proctor with his vision of a mother pioneer "somewhat different from other such sculptures."²⁶ Barker, a Harvard Law alumnus who had grown up in Oregon, was developing a serious interest in American art. The east coast patron desired a statue representing repose instead of the dynamism of westward movement that was typical in

²³ Ibid., 195.

²⁴ Ibid., 200.

²⁵ Ibid., 203.

²⁶ Ibid., 203.

Proctor's prior pioneer works. Barker wrote to Proctor of his idea for an elderly woman looking back on her pioneering days in contemplation, with a half closed book in her hands and her westward journey alive only in memory. This pioneer mother was to be inspired in part by Barker's mother, Elvira Brown Barker, whose own mother before her had traveled the Oregon Trail in 1852 at the age of four. Barker indicated that the calm sense of peace present in *Portrait of the Artist's Mother*, an iconic painting by east coast born artist James Whistler, should serve as further inspiration for his pioneer mother (Fig. 4).²⁷

Barker wrote to Proctor that he wanted the work to represent the pioneer woman in her "'sunset' years".²⁸ This segment of his letter to Proctor demonstrates his vision quite elegantly.

Others have perpetuated their struggles; I want to perpetuate the peace which followed her struggles. Others have perpetuated her adventure; I want to perpetuate the spirit which made the adventure possible, and the joy which crowned her declining years as she looked upon the fruits of her labor and caught but a faint glimpse of what it will mean for posterity.²⁹

Proctor first met with Barker in Montclair, New Jersey to discuss the potential project. Proctor was at first resistant to Barker's propositions, as the artist had at this point gained a profitable reputation for his energetic statues of western heroes. He eventually conceded to the idea, and Proctor soon began work on the new statue in New York. This commission persisted as a particularly challenging one for Proctor, who struggled with the concept even in the initial stages of sketching.³⁰ In October of 1929, Barker paid a

²⁷ *Wildlife and Western Heroes: Alexander Phimister Proctor*, 225.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 225.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 225.

³⁰ *Wildlife and Western Heroes: Alexander Phimister Proctor*, 225.

visit to his studio to view the model for the forthcoming statue. Insisting on the aged prototypes listed in his original letter, Barker criticized the selected model as too youthful for his vision, but afterwards left Proctor to complete his task independently.³¹

Upon installation, the completed 1932 bronze statue, titled *The Pioneer Mother* as the Missouri monument had been, now meets *The Pioneer's* gaze. She faces north directly across the street from her counterpart, between Johnson and Gerlinger Halls (Fig. 5). When the front and back doors of Johnson Hall are opened it is said that the two statues 'look' at each other.³² The role of vision between *The Pioneer* and Barker's concept for a female counterpart highlights her reflective qualities. While Proctor's earlier male statue gazes forward, both metaphorically onto western lands and literally onto Barker's female pioneer through the doors of Johnson Hall, the patron insisted that this female pioneer must look back on her past introspectively.³³ Not only do the prevailing moods of these two pioneer works contrast each other markedly, but their physical relationship to one another also makes suggestions, perhaps unintentionally, about gender dynamics and voyeurism.

Like Proctor's 1919 campus work, *The Pioneer Mother* too towers over her viewers, resting on a massive granite block that reads "The Pioneer Mother Pax" on the front and a portion of donor Barker's original visionary letter to Proctor on the back. *The Pioneer Mother's* pose reflects her patron's wishes, mirroring Whistler's mother as she sits erect in a chair. Proctor's aging mother, however, hangs her head towards the book in her lap, probably a copy of the Bible. She breaks further away from Whistler's

³¹ Ibid., 225-227.

³² Berniker, 2016.

³³ Talia Berniker, University of Oregon Ambassador, e-mail message to author, 2016.

pictorial rigidity with her left foot propped up on a raised surface, causing her left knee to rest slightly above her right one. Furthermore, the chair's armrest props up her right elbow, while her left arm remains closer to her torso. While *The Pioneer* is dressed for the trail, *The Pioneer Mother* wears clothing that suggests that the hardships have passed. She wears a floor-length, long-sleeved dress with a button down vest on the torso, and a shawl that spills over the sides of her chair. Her serious expression, time-wrinkled skin, and hair pulled back in a neat, wavy bun adds to her mood of an earned, dignified calm. Likewise her chair, a dignified throne-like piece, has large a floral design that adorns the back while a wave pattern borders its perimeter. *The Pioneer Mother* commands her space more solidly than her forefather *The Pioneer*. Her limbs kept close to her body, cloaked by fabric, utilize very little negative space. Furthermore, the figure is nearly completely isolated in her designated female space, the central campus Women's Quadrangle, accompanied only by plants at her base, a backdrop of disparate trees, and the north side of Gerlinger Hall.

While still largely complying with Barker's wishes for a pioneer mother of reflective serenity, Proctor convinced the donor of the value of including the sometimes action-packed, often times tragic, pioneer narrative into this otherwise passive work through bas-reliefs on the east and west sides of *The Pioneer Mother's* granite platform. Based on photographs the artist had in his studio, both compositions convey the difficulty and hardship associated with westward movement.³⁴ This is the very same hardship that *The Pioneer Mother* reflects on as she sits above, as though through these reliefs her pioneering memories are visually projected for viewers, allowing them to

³⁴ Ibid., 227.

share in her experience. Although these reliefs were not explicitly outlined in Baker's concept for the statue, he approved the additions to the work two years before a formal dedication.³⁵

The bronze bas-relief on the west side of *The Pioneer Mother's* platform, approximately one and a half by two feet in size, demonstrates the physical toll and test of determination associated with the pioneers' journey (Fig 6). In this dynamic scene, a male figure whips the oxen up a steep hill, accompanied by another male figure behind him, while in the lower right corner a female figure sticks her head out from underneath the covered wagon to view the action. These pioneers, however, are not completely alone in this struggle. In the far right of the relief, viewers can just barely make out yet another covered wagon on the horizon. Yet still, the mountains that tower over the laboring figures remind them of the hardship that is still yet to come.

The congruent relief on the east side of *The Mother Pioneer's* granite platform exemplifies the tragic consequences that can arise from this difficult journey (Fig. 7). Three female figures and one male figure in hooded cloaks huddle together mournfully in somber stillness, gazing at a hole dug into the earth by two male figures who lean on their shovels, dressed in pants and rolled up long-sleeved shirts. As the central figures engage in this roadside funeral, we are again reminded that this group is not completely alone in their sorrow. A team of westward travelers follows them, with a procession of covered wagons receding in space.

While *The Pioneer Mother* marks the end of Proctor's series of statues officially commissioned for the University of Oregon, another statue by the artist exists on

³⁵ *Wildlife and Western Heroes: Alexander Phimister Proctor*, 227.

campus. On the ground level of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, the *Indian Maiden with Fawn* is Proctor's vision of the ethereal Native American woman (Fig. 8). The statue was modeled upon the image of indigenous women who Proctor had encountered at the Pendleton Roundup, an Oregon event that left a marked impression on Proctor's work even years later. In fact, *Indian Maiden with Fawn* closely resembles Eliza Cowapoo, who was crowned winner of Pendleton's 1923 Indian Beauty Contest.³⁶

The statue captures a nude female figure accompanied by a deer. The figure stands with her weight on her right foot, while her left gracefully grazes the ground behind. Her pose recalls the actions of a well-trained ballerina who stretches into fourth position to display the beauty of the human body. The maiden's slender left arm extends outwards as she offers food to a fawn on her right. Her other arm floats above the fawn's head in a perfectly choreographed position. With her downward gaze, the maiden accepts her viewers with quiet passivity as they watch her perform. She is more perfect still with flawlessly smooth skin and lack of bodily hair. The headband and two long braids that trail down her polished back reflect representational conventions of Native Americans, recalling the standard Native American headwear worn at pageants of western life such as the Pendleton Roundup. In a perfect union with nature, the plump fawn that the maiden feeds cranes its thick neck towards the foliage she offers, unbothered by being in such close proximity to a human. Together in their human-animal bond, they mingle interlaced on a small rounded platform.

Unlike *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother*, *Indian Maiden with Fawn* was not specifically intended for the University of Oregon. Originally commissioned by Robert

³⁶ *Wildlife and Western Heroes: Alexander Phimister Proctor*, 208.

E. Maytag, the sculpture was passed into the hands of Carl Washburn, whose estate donated the work to the museum in 1962. The statue previously stood outdoors at the museum entrance until 1980, when unknown vandals overturned the statue and broke off one of the maiden's arms. Insurance covered the repair and the work was moved inside the museum walls to discourage further damage.³⁷

While all of Proctor's works are highly romanticized, this statue operates quite differently than the artist's typical monuments of rugged toughness and hard-earned determination. The idealism present in *Indian Maiden with Fawn*, which operates upon an established representational vocabulary of Native American subjects rather than those of the pioneer archetype, displays a whimsical and eroticized view of frontier life.

³⁷ "Vandalized," *Eugene Register-Guard* (Eugene, OR), Apr. 3, 1980.

Monumental Reconsiderations

Thus far, *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother* have been referred to as ‘monumental’ sculptures. The significance of this term becomes important in tracing these statues’ evolving meanings. The definition of ‘monumental’ offered by Peter and Linda Murray in their 1968 *A Dictionary of Art and Artists* provides an effective starting point for following this transformation. The entry for monumental reads,

It is intended to convey the idea that a particular work of art, or a part of such a work, is grand, noble, elevated in idea, simple in conception and execution, without any excess of virtuosity, and having something of the enduring, stable, and timeless nature of great architecture...It is not a synonym for large³⁸

This explanation emphasizes the degree of grandeur and dignity associated with the genre while maintaining the concept that monumental sculpture must have a lasting effect that transcends time. While the authors take special care to qualify that monumental does not in fact mean large, the definition conveys that sculptural nobility can come in part from a persistent and surviving strength.

After all, most American monuments, including *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother*, who depict larger than life sized humans, come from a legacy of grand-manner sculptures. In Witold Rybczynski’s introduction for *American Monument*, he reminds readers that, “Americans have never trodden lightly on the land. We want to leave our mark...So we overcompensate. We make our monuments big. Really, really big.”³⁹ To whatever degree large American monuments may be acting as overcompensations, the nation comes by it naturally. In her work *The Nation’s First Monument and the Origins*

³⁸ Linda and Peter Murray, *Dictionaries of Art and Artists* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1965), 138.

³⁹ Witold Rybczynski, “Really, Really Big,” In *American Monument*, by Lynn Davis (New York: The Monicelli Press, 2004), 2-3.

of the *American Memorial Tradition*, author Sally Webster points out that “the American [monumental] tradition is largely a manifestation of our strong European ties.”⁴⁰ Birthed from the European practice of large-scale monuments, the American tradition also saw size as a part of the monumental sculpture definition.

The fact that *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother* still stand on the University of Oregon campus today, nearly a century later, testifies to their enduring character. Their larger than life size follows not only the American monumental tradition, but a European sculptural heritage as well. Patron Joseph N. Teal even explicitly provided Proctor with an American monumental sculpture, the Springfield *Puritan*, for inspiration. Based on these defining qualities of monumental sculpture, along with their durable bronze medium, *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother* without a doubt fall into this genre.

By looking at the statue’s reception in historical context we can understand precisely what concepts the pioneer figures monumentalized for the campus audience. Their historical reception, both during the moment of their production, the 1910s and 1930s, and today, reveals their complex place in campus culture.

Initial Campus Reception at the University of Oregon

The university community first learned of *The Pioneer* on April 13, 1918 in an article in the school newspaper, *The Daily Emerald*. The article informed readers that the statue was to be placed among the campus firs between what was then Friendly Hall and the library. The article reported, “Mr. Proctor considers the chosen site to be a

⁴⁰ Sally Webster, *The Nation’s First Monument and the Origin of the American Memorial Tradition* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015), 5.

fitting setting for the statue” seeing as “it is both artistic and central.”⁴¹ Proctor added later in the article that the University of Oregon was “the proper place for the statue.”⁴² Excitement about the statue boiled up again a year later in a *Daily Emerald* article that announced the imminent arrival of the work. The report revealed the intended purpose of the work as being “an inspiration to the youth of Oregon” and “a reminder of those whom [students] owe every opportunity they enjoy.”⁴³ Soon after the delivery of the work, *The Daily Emerald* declared that the university had plans for a formal dedication under way for the “canvas-covered” statue.⁴⁴ The paper later reported that the covered statue left many students with a “forbidding, spook”, textually confirming the aura of apprehensive allure surrounding the statue that many students experienced.⁴⁵

Finally, the big day arrived and on May 22, 1919, *The Daily Emerald* reported that *The Pioneer* was revealed with an “impressive ceremony” that was “peculiarly and distinctly a pioneer affair.”⁴⁶ The article stated that along with addresses by the donor, Mr. J.W. Teal, and the artist, many elderly residents of the state traveled to Eugene to attend the ceremony. The school orchestra played, contributing to an emotionally charged event that celebrated the pioneer heritage and its continuing legacy. In this same article, Proctor himself asserted that he wanted the work to portray the “real spirit of the West” and that the archetype of the pioneer was best suited for this job because “the vastness of the country is reflected in the eyes of the Pioneer.”⁴⁷ The dignity of the pioneers was affirmed through oral rhetoric as well. In his ceremonial speech, Teal

⁴¹ “Statue Will Stand amid Campus firs,” *Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), April 13, 1918.

⁴² “Statue Will Stand amid Campus firs,” 1918.

⁴³ “Pioneer statue to arrive soon,” *Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), April 10, 1919.

⁴⁴ “‘Pioneer’ erected on Campus site; canvas-covered,” *Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), May 13, 1919.

⁴⁵ “Program ready for dedication of ‘The Pioneer’,” *Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), May 20, 1919.

⁴⁶ “Pioneer statue, J. W. Teal's gift to Oregon, unveiled,” *Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), May 22, 1919.

⁴⁷ “Statue Will Stand amid Campus firs,” 1918.

stated that the pioneers “saved the west for this country.”⁴⁸ Teal continued, asserting that the pioneer “represents all that is noblest and best in our history” and was “animated by the highest of motives” in the journey west.⁴⁹ The donor argued further for the emotional appeal of the pioneers as heroes, emphasizing that they “made untold sacrifices and endured hardship of every kind” which “should ever be an inspiration to the youth of the country.”⁵⁰

The first mention of *The Pioneer Mother* appeared in *The Daily Emerald* on May 10, 1932. The article noted that the reveal of the statue was the “highlight of the Junior Week-end and Mother’s Day Festivities.”⁵¹ Donor Burt Brown Barker’s own daughter, Barbara Barker, led the unveiling ceremony. The university president, Arnold Bennet Hall, read aloud a letter from President Herbert Hoover.⁵² Hoover’s letter praised *The Pioneer Mother*, stating that, “It goes to the end of the trail and memorializes the spirit which made possible the journey, the peace which followed her struggles and the joy which consummated her victory.”⁵³

Five years later on April 9th, *The Daily Emerald* published a retrospective piece on the work titled “Pioneer Mother typifies peace and achievement of Oregon’s forefathers”. As a part of a series on “interesting ‘landmarks’ on the Oregon campus”, the article explored the pioneering legacy of Mrs. Elvira Brown Barker.⁵⁴ Barker, who

⁴⁸ “Pioneer statue, J. W. Teal's gift to Oregon, unveiled,” 1919.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ “‘Pioneer Mother’ unveiled with impressive ceremony,” *Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), April 9, 1937.

⁵² “‘Pioneer Mother’ unveiled with impressive ceremony,” 1937.

⁵³ Donor of Statue Dedicated to Pioneer Mothers Tells of Inspiration for Project,” *Sunday Oregonian* (Portland, OR), May 1, 1923.

⁵⁴ “Pioneer mother typifies peace and achievement of Oregon’s forefathers,” *Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), May 10, 1932.

in part served as inspiration for *The Pioneer Mother*, had pioneering heritage through her mother, who traveled the Oregon Trail in 1852.⁵⁵

Clearly, the University of Oregon campus community of the twentieth century also felt profound dignity for their collective ancestry of westward expansion. Americans in general were “eager to cast territorial expansion as the major accomplishment” of the preceding era.⁵⁶ The prosperity afforded by the official transition of The United States from a wilderness society to a major industrial power boosted national esteem.⁵⁷ For Oregonians, this pride was heightened by a shared sentiment of collective heritage. Oregonians at this time saw themselves as the logical descendants of these brave pioneers who carved out the land for their use and fortune. Proctor’s pioneer statues at the University of Oregon campus affirmed this communal attitude towards the history of westward expansion.

Subsequent Reception: Settler Colonialism and The Kalapuya Peoples

Over time, the narrative of Oregon’s history monumentalized by the pioneer statues gave way to a more complete picture of the history of the Willamette Valley and the role of native people and cultures in the region. The history of the Kalapuya people, who are the original inhabitants of the Willamette Valley, came to be understood as an equally important part of Oregon’s identity, and foil for understanding the pioneer figures monumentalized by Proctor and others. A brief review of the history of the

⁵⁵ Because Proctor’s *Indian Maiden with Fawn* was a donation to the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art and not specifically commissioned for the University of Oregon, campus reports on the statue’s reception to campus remain absent. *The Eugene Register-Guard*, however, did publish a report on the 1980 vandalism of the work.

⁵⁶ “Ideology and Image”, 27.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

Kalapuya and their engagement with settler colonizers helps bring this evolving reception of their pioneer figures into focus.

The Kalapuya are an ethnic group consisting of nineteen individual tribes.⁵⁸ The Kalapuya largely lost their lives and lifeways to the pioneers who migrated into the valley. The first humans are thought to have arrived in the Willamette Valley as far back as ten thousand years ago, with the earliest known records of the Kalapuya dating to 1600 C.E..⁵⁹ The Kalapuya enjoyed a rich and varied life in the Willamette Valley. They engaged in seasonal rounds, meaning that they “lived within the seasons, subsisting off what the natural world and the natural cycles of the land and environments produced”⁶⁰ and shared a variety of spoken dialects within the Oregon Penutian language family.⁶¹

The pioneers, whom the Kalapuya would meet beginning in 1812,⁶² migrated across the country to enjoy the abundance of this region as well. From the earliest expeditions east, news of plentiful agricultural and economic opportunity sparked a large-scale white immigration into the Pacific Northwest. Between 1840 and 1860, over 350,000 people left their lives in the eastern United States for a chance to begin anew.⁶³ Many fur traders and trappers were drawn westward by the large population of Oregon

⁵⁸ Lloyd R., “The Cultural Position of the Kalapuya in the Pacific Northwest” (master’s thesis, University of Oregon, 1951), 18.

⁵⁹ “The Cultural Position of the Kalapuya in the Pacific Northwest”, 103-104.

⁶⁰ David Lewis, “Tualatin Kalapuyans and Seasonal Rounds,” *Ndnhistoryresearch: Critical & Indigenous Anthropology*, 2017, <https://ndnhistoryresearch.wordpress.com/2017/02/06/tualatin-kalapuyans-and-seasonal-rounds/>.

⁶¹ Judy Juntunen, May Dasch, and Ann Rogers, *The World of the Kalapuya: A Native People of Western Oregon* (Philomath: Benton County Historical Society, 2005), 17.

⁶² Janice Weide and Jane Kirby, “Kalapuya of the Willamette Valley,” *Salem Online History*. 2006, http://www.salemhistory.net/people/native_americans.htm.

⁶³ “Oregon Trail,” *The Oregon Encyclopedia*, 2016, https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oregon_trail/.

beavers, whose pelts were extremely valuable in the global market.⁶⁴ Some made the 2,170-mile trek based on word of gold deposits.⁶⁵ And then there were the religiously-motivated migrants who, either escaping persecution or looking to convert others, left the east for Oregon.⁶⁶ However, by far the largest incentive that the journey offered the potential settler was cheap, undeveloped land, which was becoming increasingly scarce back east.⁶⁷ Stretching from the Missouri River to Oregon's Willamette Valley, the Oregon Trail was used by most of the pioneers to make their perilous journey.⁶⁸ By 1863, the trail was amended to accommodate large, ox-driven wagons that could traverse rivers and carry up to 2,500 pounds.⁶⁹ Although many pioneer families enjoyed the security of traveling the trail in large groups of around twenty-five wagons, the sixth-month journey was incredibly dangerous.⁷⁰ As exemplified in Proctor's somber bas-relief on the east side of *The Pioneer Mother*, many pioneers died along the way from disease, injury, or exhaustion.⁷¹

Those who survived the trials of the trail constructed farmstead properties and homes within larger settler communities. Large-scale land cultivation and farming, timber and mineral resources, sawmills, and a readily available river transport network

⁶⁴“Idaho Fur Trade,” *Idaho State Historical Society Reference Series*, 1973, <https://web.archive.org/web/20090416142248/http://www.history.idaho.gov/Reference%20Series/0444.pdf>.

⁶⁵ Wilfred Brown, “The Trail of the Pioneer,” *Old Oregon* 12, no. 9 (1930): 8.

⁶⁶ Henry H. and Eliza Spalding, “Protestant Ladder,” *The Oregon History Project*, 2015, <https://oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/protestant-ladder/>.

⁶⁷ Bob Brooke, “Oregon Trail: Wagon Tracks West,” *HistoryNet*, 2000, <http://www.historynet.com/oregon-trail>.

⁶⁸ Brooke, “Oregon Trail: Wagon Tracks West,” 2000.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

helped these communities rapidly expand.⁷² County governments were established shortly after settlement. Although these rural settler communities lived relatively simple lives by the industrialized standards of the east, tightly knit social networks were quickly woven. Settlers were eager to assist those who were a part of their communities but actively aggressive to outsiders such as foreigners, minorities, and lone men.⁷³ Oregon settler and poet W.W. Scott's 1883 poem, "The Oregon Pioneer", reveals how enthusiastic pioneers perceived the lavish land they had reached. Scott writes, "Prophetic only was his knowing / That his coming was but sowing / Soon the West would be expanding / Fertile fields from woods demanding / Climbers to the gables growing / Roses in mid-winter blowing."

The Oregon settlers' success in the Willamette Valley cannot be accredited exclusively to the region's plentiful natural resources and pioneer ingenuity. Fur traders and early settlers depended on Native Americans not only for financial profit, but for their very survival.⁷⁴ Furthermore, few non-Natives were able to safely navigate the Willamette River, and without the help of the Kalapuya to do so pioneers would have stood little chance to establish their lucrative river trade networks.⁷⁵ Additionally, the commercial aspect of the Kalapuya's rich material culture initially meshed well with settler business objectives.⁷⁶ Sexual relationships between Kalapuya women and early

⁷² "Willamette Valley Pioneer Houses and Farmsteads," *Restore Oregon: Saving Historic Places*, 2017, <http://restoreoregon.org/pioneer-farmsteads/>.

⁷³ "Oregon History: Spread of Settlement," *Oregon Blue Book*, 2017, <http://www.bluebook.state.or.us/cultural/history/history13.htm>.

⁷⁴ Mathias D. Bergmann, "'We Should Lose Much by Their Absence': The Centrality of Chinookans and Kalapuyans to Life in Frontier Oregon," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 109, no.1 (2008), 37.

⁷⁵ Bergmann, "'We Should Lose Much by Their Absence'", 40.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

male settlers assisted in forging cultural ties and advanced the political-economic status of a Kalapuya woman's family or tribe.⁷⁷

This mutually beneficial collaboration weakened as more and more settlers entered the region. Pioneers began to see themselves in contest with the Kalapuya for the valley's fertile land and desired exclusive rights to the Oregon Territory.⁷⁸ Cultural values between Euro-American colonizers and Native populations started to clash as the Kalapuya refused to adhere to unfamiliar rituals and rules. For centuries, the Kalapuya had carefully burned the Willamette Valley floor with controlled fires in order to create the lush, expansive plains that had attracted so many settlers in the first place. Ironically, Oregonian settlers banned the practice in the 1840s, fearing that the fires would destroy their commercialized crops, homes, and ever-expanding territories.⁷⁹ Missionaries seeking to evangelize the Kalapuya became increasingly frustrated with the Natives' unwillingness to abandon their religious beliefs and convert to Christianity.⁸⁰ Discrepancies surrounding socio-cultural practices added further to confusions between the missions and the Kalapuya. The enduring cultural practice of gift exchange that was a commonplace in Kalapuya society was equally unfamiliar to missionaries, who misinterpreted the act as a form of begging.⁸¹

As time passed, pioneers saw their Native American counterparts less as allies in a new land and more as inferior nuisances. Many settlers even believed that pushing

⁷⁷ Ibid., 48.

⁷⁸ Ronald Spores, "Too Small a Place: The Removal of the Willamette Valley Indians, 1850-1856," *The American Indian Quarterly* 17, no. 2 (1993), 117.

⁷⁹ Bergmann, "We Should Lose Much by Their Absence", 51.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 50.

⁸¹ Ibid., 49

‘lesser developed’ peoples out of the west was God’s will.⁸² The propaganda of Manifest Destiny left many Americans with the impression that it was their duty to claim the west for whites.⁸³ A handful of settlers believed in the possibility of a cohesive community, such as missionary H. H. Spalding who “reported "a universal wish" among the whites that the Calapooya be allowed to remain in the area on small reservations accessible to labor and food.”⁸⁴ According to historian Ronald Spores however, by the 1840s the popular opinion of white Oregonians was that “the only good Indians were dead Indians.”⁸⁵

At the beginning of mass settler immigration into the valley, 10,000 members of the Kalapuya people are estimated to have been present.⁸⁶ As settler communities in the Willamette Valley grew and solidified, the Kalapuya population “suffered catastrophic declines” especially between 1830 and 1833 when a plague of malaria swept through the Willamette Valley.⁸⁷ Some sources claim that as many as ninety percent of the Kalapuya lost their lives to this epidemic.⁸⁸ Small pox and measles continued to ravage Native American populations in the Pacific Northwest up until the 1870s.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, various Methodist and Catholic missionaries worked to aid the Kalapuya

⁸² Spores, “Too Small a Place: The Removal of the Willamette Valley Indians, 1850-1856.”

⁸³ “The Influential Use of the Phrase ‘Manifest Destiny’,” *The History Engine*, 2015, <https://historyengine.richmond.edu/episodes/view/102>.

⁸⁴ Spores, “Too Small a Place: The Removal of the Willamette Valley Indians, 1850-1856,” 176.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁸⁷ Henry B. Zenk, “Kalapuyans,” in *Handbook Of North American Indians* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 551.

⁸⁸ Eugene Hunn, *Neh 'i-Wana – “The Big River”’: Mid-Columbian Indians and Their Land* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), 27-32.

⁸⁹ Daniel Boxberger, Review of “The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Diseases and Population Decline among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774-1874 by Robert Boyd,” *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 1 (2001), 191.

and in 1841 established a Manual Labor Training School for Native American children.⁹⁰

In treaty negotiations beginning in 1851, the Kalapuya and other regional tribes ceded territory “stretching from the Columbia River to the Calapooia Mountains between the coastal and Cascade mountain ranges” in exchange for supplies, tools, and access to schools and general stores.⁹¹ Remaining Kalapuya tribal members who refused this contract were moved to the Grand Ronde Reservation in 1856 along with other indigenous groups from western Oregon. Sharing the Willamette Valley appears to have persisted as an issue for the Eugene settlers and Native Americans even well after the officially sanctioned Kalapuya removal. The Lane County Briefs, a collection early country events and news, of reported that on October 9, 1869, “a band of ‘aboriginal nuisances’ camped back of the Mill in Eugene. The Guard urge[d] their removal to proper reservation.”⁹² A century later, the tribe was stripped of their tribal rights by termination policies that sought to assimilate Native Americans into mainstream American society.⁹³ In 1983, the tribe regained federal recognition as The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.⁹⁴ Many Kalapuya remain a part of this confederation today and work to preserve traditional language, culture, and lifeways.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Weide and Kirby, “Kalapuya of the Willamette Valley.”

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² E.J. Griffith and Alfred Powers, “Old Times with Lane County Pioneers,” *Historical Records Survey* (n.d.).

⁹³ Zenk, “Kalapuyans,” 551.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 552.

⁹⁵ Weide and Kirby, “Kalapuya of the Willamette Valley.”

Subsequent Reception: University Monuments to Native American History

Since the 1960s, numerous monuments and visual representations of Native American history have appeared on the University of Oregon campus, perhaps providing ‘answers’ to Proctor’s monumental pioneers. One such example of this indigenous representation aside from Proctor’s *Indian Maiden with Fawn* exists within the Museum of Natural and Cultural History (Fig. 9). Among exhibitions on geological and primordial history, the museum exhibits the traditional lifeways of Oregon’s Native populations and contemporary Native American life. Titled “Oregon – Where Past is Present”, the display cases show woven baskets, arrowheads, clothing, and other material culture items from the pre-colonial era.⁹⁶ Displays showing traditional Native American houses, natural Oregon landscapes, and ways of cultivating resources demonstrate how Oregon’s indigenous populations lived before colonization. The exhibit also showcases contemporary examples of Native American material culture such as beadwork, weaving, and vivid photographs of contemporary indigenous life.

The Many Nations Longhouse on campus operates as a community-gathering place for Native American students and Eugene residents (Fig. 10). The Many Nations Longhouse is located on the far-east side of campus in between the Global Scholars Hall and the Knight Law Center. Beginning in the late 1960s, Native American students at the University of Oregon requested their own space in order to maintain traditional lifeways while they were away from their home communities.⁹⁷ In the 1970s, the university granted the Native American Student Union a retired World War II military

⁹⁶ “Oregon – Where Past is Present,” *The Museum of Natural and Cultural History*, 2014, <http://natural-history.uoregon.edu/exhibits/new-oregon-where-past-present>.

⁹⁷ “History of the Many Nations Longhouse,” *Many Nations Longhouse*, <http://longhouse.uoregon.edu/history-many-nations-longhouse>.

barrack. For three decades, this ‘longhouse’ offered generations of Native American students a place to socialize, study, and practice traditional culture while away at school. This original longhouse, however, suffered deterioration beyond use.⁹⁸ In 2002, the longhouse was torn down to open up room for a new space to be designed by Choctaw-Cherokee architect Johnpaul Jones. Jones, an alumnus of the University of Oregon, also served as the lead architect for the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.. This new longhouse, named The Many Nations Longhouse, was inspired by traditional Kalapuya cedar plank longhouses built seasonally for the Willamette Valley winters.⁹⁹ Whether through tribal finances or through the furnishing of materials, each of the nine federally recognized tribes of Oregon in some way contributed to the creation of this space.¹⁰⁰

Today, the longhouse still acts as a place of study and tradition for Native American students, but also serves as the location for Native American Student Union and Native American Law Student Association meetings, gatherings of the President’s Native American Advisory Council, potlucks, and conventions for tribal governments.¹⁰¹ Kalamath tribal elder Gordon Bettles currently serves as the official steward of the longhouse after years of using the original barrack longhouse when he was a student.¹⁰²

A bronze Native American counterpart to the campus pioneer that statues peaks out of the bushes on the north side of the Museum of Natural and Cultural History.

⁹⁸ “History of the Many Nations Longhouse.”

⁹⁹ Lewis, “Tualatin Kalapuyans and Seasonal Rounds.”

¹⁰⁰ “History of the Many Nations Longhouse.”

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Gordon Bettles, Many Nations Longhouse Steward, in discussion with class, April 2017.

Mark Holman's sculpture, *Spring Run*, welcomes viewers into a firsthand look at traditional Native American life in the Willamette Valley (Fig. 11). The indigenous woman depicted occupies her space sparingly, crouching down and folding her body to hold a salmon in her palms. The woman wears two long braids and a button down dress that trails along her bronze base. She wears a rounded hat and dons a wide smile, addressing her viewers directly. *Spring Run* was created by the artist in 2000 and was funded by the Percent for Art commission associated with the Museum of Natural and Cultural History. Holman, a University of Oregon alumnus, also helped restore the bronze doors on Knight Library.¹⁰³

Perhaps the most central and visible examples of Native American presence on campus are the tribal flags that circle the Erb Memorial Union Amphitheater (Fig. 12). Raised in 2014, the nine flags represent each of Oregon's nine federally recognized tribal nations.¹⁰⁴ On the round base of each of the flagpoles, high relief plaques of the state of Oregon and its significant geographical features mark the original locations of each tribe. *Around the O* campus news reported that the flags were to act as "a daily sign to Native students that they have a home here and a reminder to others of the significance of the First Peoples, both to the campus and the state."¹⁰⁵ The concept for the flags actually grew out of an effort of student advocacy, introduced in 2012 by business student Orion Falvey. Even after graduation, the original group of twelve student advocates continued to work with tribal members to see this project realized.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ "Spring Run," *UO Libraries*, <https://library.uoregon.edu/architecture/oregon/xspringrun.html>.

¹⁰⁴ Greg Bolt, "Nine Flags ceremony raises the banners of tribal nations," *Around the O*, Sept. 29, 2014, <https://around.uoregon.edu/content/nine-flags-ceremony-raises-banners-tribal-nations>.

¹⁰⁵ "Nine Flags ceremony raises the banners of tribal nations".

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

The campus' gestures of welcoming and validation continued in the fall of 2017 when a new residence hall given the name Kalapuya Ilihi opened its doors to students on the east side of campus (Fig. 13). A clear reference to the Kalapuya people who originally occupied the Willamette Valley, this residence hall hosts an academic residential community titled 'Native American and Indigenous Studies'.¹⁰⁷ Although there is currently little information available about how this name was decided upon, it is apparent that the University's new dormitory makes an attempt to memorialize the indigenous history of the region.

All of these examples demonstrate that since the 1960s, the University of Oregon has made multiple efforts to memorialize Native American history and continued presence. The Many Nations Longhouse and EMU flags are the results of hard-fought student advocacy. Collaboratively working with tribal members and administrative offices, both of these grassroots movements took extensive time and serious dedication to see through. Today, the Many Nations Longhouse and EMU flags make Native American presence undoubtedly apparent, providing recognizable landmarks in a way that is similar to *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother*.

Contemporary Reception: Reconsidering America's Monumental Past

Countless communities across the United States are currently caught up in the process of reconsidering their monuments and sculptures based on changing context and the public's understanding of American history. Since the election of President Donald Trump and terrorist attacks like those in Charlottesville and Charleston, lasting

¹⁰⁷ "Kalapuya Ilihi (New Residence Hall)," *University Housing*, <https://housing.uoregon.edu/new-residence-hall>.

ideologies of white supremacy have proved to be alarmingly active in the United States.¹⁰⁸ In response, discussions concerning the removal of white supremacist symbols, chiefly Confederate monuments, have become an issue of great public concern. While many Americans are only now engaging in this debate in the wake of recent national episodes, many African Americans have grappled with this problem since Reconstruction.¹⁰⁹ The shifting meaning, and sometimes-subsequent removal, of monuments to confederate history is an especially volatile topic in the current political climate, and it serves as a useful foil for understanding the new meanings that have been ascribed to the pioneer statues at the University of Oregon in recent years.

In 2015 at the University of Texas in Austin, a statue of Confederate President Jefferson Davis was removed from the South Mall of campus (Fig. 14). Though it had stood on the campus since 1933, the UT student government voted to remove the monumental sculpture from the central campus area. NPR's Scott Neuman writes that "the statue had been a target of vandals who have criticized it as a symbol of racism", especially following the terrorist attacks on the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in South Carolina just months prior.¹¹⁰ The statue, however, was not completely removed from UT's campus, but instead relocated. After much administrative debate, University President Gregory Fenves announced that the work would be relocated at the

¹⁰⁸ Dell Upton, "Confederate Monuments and Civic Values in the Wake of Charlottesville," *Society of Architectural Historians*, 13 September 2017, http://www.sah.org/publications-and-research/sah-blog/sah-blog/2017/09/13/confederate-monuments-and-civic-values-in-the-wake-of-charlottesville?utm_source=Sep%202017&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_content=SAH%20Newsletter.

¹⁰⁹ "Confederate Monuments and Civic Values in the Wake of Charlottesville," 2017.

¹¹⁰ Scott Neuman, "Jefferson Davis Statue Comes Down At University of Texas," *NPR*, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/08/30/436072805/jefferson-davis-statue-comes-down-at-university-of-texas>.

newly constructed Briscoe Center for American History. On display there now, the statue, according to Fenves, better explains Davis' role in the American Civil War.¹¹¹

The University of Texas student body found it inappropriate for a statue of a Confederate leader to command attention at a principal campus location. Davis, a figure many once considered to be an emblem of Southern pride and heritage, now reads as a symbol of overt racism. Consequently, this monumental statue has experienced a dramatic shift in meaning. As discussed previously, the monumental genre implies a degree of reverence for the figure displayed. UT's student body was unwilling to allow the memory of Davis to continue in the realm of the monument that by definition assumed viewers' respect.

This reconsideration of historical figures, their shifting meanings and changing contextual implications, is not exclusive to monumental sculptures. Names of college campus buildings are being reconsidered as well. This process occurs on the University of Oregon campus itself. In November of 2015, the Black Student Task Force (BSTF) marched on the University of Oregon campus and presented to the administration a list of twelve demands concerning the equity and inclusion of African American students. This action was partially galvanized by racial unrest triggered at the University of Missouri earlier that year. One of the BSTF's demands called to "change the names of all of the KKK related buildings on campus."¹¹² On a campus that advertises "a commitment to institutional fairness and equality" and "eradication of

¹¹¹ Dave Byknish, "UT's controversial Jefferson Davis statue unveiled at Briscoe Center," *Kxan*, 2017, <http://kxan.com/2017/04/10/uts-controversial-jefferson-davis-statue-unveiled-at-briscoe-center>.

¹¹² Michael Schill, "Deady and Dunn Halls - next steps," *University of Oregon*, 2016, <https://president.uoregon.edu/deady-and-dunn-halls-next-steps>.

discrimination”,¹¹³ the administration pledged to look into the personal histories of Dunn (Fig. 15) and Deady Hall’s (Fig. 16) namesakes.

President Michael Schill assembled a committee on December 1, 2015 to craft criteria upon which “denaming” a building would be deemed appropriate. After completion on March 14, 2016, Schill assigned a group of historians the task of examining the historical records of Dunn and Deady against the established guidelines.¹¹⁴ It was found that Frederick S. Dunn was not only a member of the Ku Klux Klan, but a regional leader within the organization. Matthew Paul Deady, on the other hand, was not ever found to be a member of the KKK but certainly supported racist ideologies. Deady ran for office as a proslavery delegate and is quoted saying “If we are compelled to have the colored race amongst us, they should be slaves.”¹¹⁵ It was uncovered that later in his life, Deady experienced a change of heart and denounced his previous sentiments of racism. On September 1, 2016, President Schill officially announced his decision to rename Dunn Hall, but not Deady Hall. His letter declared that along with selecting a new name that will represent diversity and inclusion, a plaque would be installed to give explanation to Dunn’s bigoted ideologies and the building’s overdue renaming.¹¹⁶ Schill’s decision to proceed with the renaming process only for Dunn Hall, but not Deady Hall, was met with harshly divided sentiments, and campus buzz surrounding the issue continues still today.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ “Equity and Inclusion,” *University of Oregon*, <https://inclusion.uoregon.edu>.

¹¹⁴ Micheal Schill, “Process for considering the denaming of Deady and Dunn Halls,” *University of Oregon*, 2016, <http://president.uoregon.edu/content/process-considering-denaming-deady-and-dunn-halls>.

¹¹⁵ Schill, “Deady and Dunn Halls - next steps.”

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Andrew Field, “Dunn Hall is now renamed Unthank Hall,” *The Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), June 5, 2017.

The demand for a reexamination of Dunn and Deady Halls' namesakes exemplifies again the current trend in calling attention to the shifting meanings of historical figures. Much like the students at the University of Texas, UO students felt that these figures no longer matched current campus ideologies. Just like Davis, Dunn, and Deady, *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother* once meant something to their audience, but that meaning is no longer monolithic or uncomplicated.

Contemporary Reception: The Pioneer Statues Today

Today, *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother* remain physically unchanged, buffered from the shifting political climate by their strong bronze materiality. They continue to overlook campus in the very same spots they did when they first were installed in Eugene. And yet, their meaning has shifted, and there exists something irrefutably unsettling about their unchanging nature amidst a rapidly changing world and campus. Many among the campus community today, influenced by the social transformation of past decades, see these statues quite differently than their colleagues did in 1919 and 1932.

From today's historical vantage point, the fanfare associated with the unveiling of the Pioneer statues on campus in the early twentieth century reflects many of the historical perspectives that feel out of synch with contemporary views about native sovereignty and the place of the pioneer in American history. Even before the statue's arrival at the university, *The Daily Emerald* informed students that *The Pioneer* was to act didactically by reminding students of their ancestors who suffered great hardships so that future Oregonians might prosper. This rhetoric, which insisted on a collective debt to the pioneers, solidified the settlers in the popular imagination as figures who

deserved campus-wide respect. Similarly, Proctor's statement around the unveiling that the pioneer was the only genuine symbol of the west concealed other players in the frontier narrative, including the indigenous communities that we now understand to have been rightful owners of the land. His claim that the eyes of the pioneer mirrored the expanse of the country suggested an innate right to ownership over the land that Kalapuya claimed as their own. In this sense, the landscape actually became a part of the pioneer's own personal physicality as he gazed across campus grounds. Similarly, by crediting the pioneers with rescuing the nation from its undeveloped infancy, Teal not only assured the community that the land needed pioneer intervention on its behalf, but that this rescuing benefited all parties involved. The ceremonial audience standing in the Willamette Valley, the promised Eden at the end of the Oregon Trail, was living evidence of the donor's claim. For a reader today, all of these perspectives reveal complex and uncomfortable positions regarding the legacy of settler colonialism and manifest destiny as they relate to the image of the pioneer.

Some argue that removing statues of problematic historical figures effectively erases the history they monumentalize, denying viewers the chance to learn from the mistakes of the past and bringing the nation dangerously close to totalitarian censorship. As scholar John Winberry argues with regards to Confederate monuments, the monument is not simply the product of a forgotten era, but rather a tangible part of the present. Winberry states that to the south Confederate monuments symbolize suffering,

the loss of manhood, heroism and courage, and persistence. These monuments make the South unique within the United States.¹¹⁸

The pioneer statues at the University of Oregon function in the same way for the Pacific Northwest, and these symbolic meanings must be taken seriously. Ultimately however, this is not a debate about which parts of history should or shouldn't be erased. Rather, this is a critical evaluation of which histories should and shouldn't be publicly celebrated through monuments.¹¹⁹ Discussion among whether *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother* should be removed from campus nearly every time the topic arises is a testament to how pervasive this persisting pattern of reevaluating historical monuments has become in modern society. Although Proctor's statues don't explicitly convey the same degree of aggressive white supremacy as their Confederate parallels, it is difficult to discuss their place on campus without acknowledging the contemporary critique of historical monuments. Likewise, the historical monument debate is so current that it operates in ways that historians cannot yet fully assess.

A contemporary vantage point on these events shows a chronicle in which one group of people, whether motivated by greed, racism, or a combination of both, essentially subjugated and forcibly removed another group of people. The Kalapuya native to the Willamette Valley, who still exist in commendable resilience today, lost their traditional homelands, rich social and horticultural practices, and vast population all to the injustices of Manifest Destiny. This legacy of settler colonialism simply wasn't what the campus community was thinking about when *The Pioneer* and *The*

¹¹⁸ John J. Winberry, "Lest We Forget": the Confederate monument and the southern townscape," *Southeastern Geographer* 55, no. 1 (2015), 19.

¹¹⁹ "Confederate Monuments and Civic Values in the Wake of Charlottesville," 2017.

Pioneer Mother arrived at the university in the early twentieth century. The more recent campus additions of monuments to Native American history perhaps attempts to balance the story that monuments on campus tell about Oregon's complicated history, but in practice they fail to completely address these colonial wrongdoings.

With these changing contexts in mind, it needs to be understood that the campus communities of 1919 and 1932 did not regard this chapter in history the same way that many do now. Although their actions are objectionable, it's not productive to demonize the Oregon pioneers, the artist who immortalized them in bronze, or the campus culture that revered them. The passage of time makes it too late to change these acts and impressions. Rather, the task now is to thoroughly unpack this history in order to learn from it, lest we make similar mistakes again. This being the case, those who ultimately decide the fates of *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother* on the University of Oregon campus should take great care to fully understand their historical contexts in order to avoid repeating the assumptions of an unquestioning campus culture.

Conclusion

By tracing the milestones of Alexander Phimister Proctor's life, we see not only how deeply the artist of *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother* was engaged with artistic concepts of westward expansion, but also how these notions spanned widely across the nation during his lifetime. Contemporaneous University of Oregon news publications affirm that the campus community shared this overwhelmingly positive perception of the region's colonial history. A look into the contextual significance of the genre of monumental sculpture further uncovers the statues' nuanced meanings, ratifying how these statues once conveyed sentiments of bravery, pride, and communal heritage.

Today, however, these meanings are dramatically shifting. The current national trend of reevaluating monumental sculptures demonstrates that the changing significance of Proctor's pioneer statues is not an isolated incident. An overview of the colonial history in the Willamette Valley calls attention to the problematic nature of the history that *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother* represent. Recent campus additions of monuments to Native American presence, alongside a critical analysis of the 1919 and 1932 discourses surrounding Proctor's works, highlights the gap between how these campus communities once viewed these pioneering memorials and how a contemporary campus culture sees them today. Questions about the future of *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother* at the University of Oregon remain unanswered despite continuing debates about the removal of historical monuments across the nation.

What conclusion is to be gleaned from these varying perspectives can be summed up in an acknowledgment of the multilayered character implicit within *The Pioneer* and *The Pioneer Mother*. These statues do not mean this or that—rather they

mean this and that.¹²⁰ They are simultaneously symbols of brave pioneers who brought industrial and agricultural development to the Willamette Valley and settler-colonizers who effectively dominated and exiled the native Kalapuya. They convey Proctor's undying love for all things western, while also acting as symbols of the American college experience at the University of Oregon. Oftentimes, these multifaceted meanings directly contradict one another. An awareness that these pioneer statues, which continue to make their unchanging presence known on an ever-changing campus, could have multidimensional meanings brings us closer not only to understanding them, but our shared values as a contemporary society as well.

¹²⁰ Leila Ahmed, *A Border Passage: From Cairo to America—A Woman's Journey*, (London: Penguin Books, 1999).

Appendix



Figure 1: Augustus Saint-Gauden. *The Puritan*, 1899. Bronze. Springfield, Massachusetts.



Figure 2: Alexander Phimister Proctor. *The Pioneer*, 1919. Bronze, 13'0". University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.



Figure 3: Alexander Phimister Proctor. *The Pioneer Mother*. 1927. Bronze. Kansas City, Missouri.



Figure 4: James McNeill Whistler. *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1 (Portrait of the Artist's Mother)*, 1871. Oil on canvas. Musee d'Orsay, Paris.



Figure 5: Alexander Phimister Proctor. *The Pioneer Mother*, 1932. Bronze, 13”0’. The University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.



Figure 6: Alexander Phimister Proctor. Bas-relief on the west side of *The Pioneer Mother*, 1930 (installed 1932). Bronze, 1" x 1.5". The University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.



Figure 7: Alexander Phimister Proctor. Bas-relief on the east side of *The Pioneer Mother*, 1930 (installed 1932). Bronze, 1" x 1.5". The University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.



Figure 8: Alexander Phimister Proctor. *Indian Maiden with Fawn*, 1924. Bronze, 1'7". Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, Eugene, Oregon.



Figure 9: A visitor reads about Native American life at the *Where Past is Present* exhibit at the Museum of Natural and Cultural History at the University of Oregon.



Figure 10: The Many Nations Longhouse at the University of Oregon.



Figure 11: Mack Holman. *Spring Run*, 2000. Bronze, 3'0". University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.



Figure 12: Nine Tribal Flags at the Erb Memorial Union Amphitheater at the University of Oregon.



Figure 13: Kalapuya Ilihi (2017) Student Residence Hall at the University of Oregon



Figure 14: Statue of Jefferson Davis at the University of Texas at Austin, 1924.



Figure 15: Entrance to Dunn Hall student housing at the University of Oregon.



Figure 16: Deady Hall (1876) at the University of Oregon.

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