THEY “LOOK WITH LONGING EYES”: PRE-ALLOTMENT STRATEGIES ON THE CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF THE UMATILLA RESERVATION, 1880-1885

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Before the ratification of a national allotment policy in 1887, the US Office of Indian Affairs used assimilation policies to prepare individual reservations for privatization. Situated within the larger themes of US colonialism and nineteenth-century Indigenous landownership, this microhistory examines assimilatory methods and their impact on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation from 1880 to 1885. During this period, the reservation became a space of conflict as government ideologies clashed with Indigenous and settler realities. In their attempt to prove the reservation was prepared for allotment, Indian agents only increased the Confederated Tribes vulnerability to settler interests through a faulty education system; cash-crop agriculture that promoted settler immigration; and the diminishment of a viable economic resource: pastoralism. With Indigenous allottees, white farmers, and white ranchers vying for available land, these assimilation policies did little to prevent settler greed—and extreme land loss—during the Confederated Tribes allotment era.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the early days of August 1885, Indian Agent E.J. Sommerville sat in his office writing a new report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Just four months earlier, the U.S. Congress had passed the Umatilla Allotment Act, which guaranteed families and individuals 160-acre private plots—effectively disrupting communal landownership. Despite this achievement, Sommerville's yearly summary to Washington DC conveyed extreme doubt. Although Congress officially approved the legislation, government officials required consent from the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation before implementation. Therefore, instead of celebrating his success, Sommerville found himself in tense negotiations with the Confederated Tribes Council over the bill's fate. Stuck in stalling debates, with no agreement in sight, it seemed the council would ultimately reject privatizing the reservation—at least, for the moment.[1] However, the Confederated Tribes' hesitance was not a surprise. They had years of experience warding off government land-grabs, beginning with the reservation's formation.

Thirty years earlier, after the Walla Walla Treaty of 1855—which defined the reservation's boundaries and placed the Umatilla, Cayuse, and Walla Walla nations within close proximity—officials from the U.S. Office of Indian Affairs had already begun contemplating land sales. By this time, white settlers posed a serious problem for Indian agents. Instigated by lucrative gold mining in Oregon and Idaho, hopeful wealth-seekers blazed trails near the reservation.[2] These migrations introduced miners to the possibilities of landownership, with

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[1] United States, Office of Indian Affairs [OIA], *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885): 169-170.

[2] OIA, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1854): 111.

many attracted to the agricultural potential of eastern Oregon. As unlawful squatting became more common in the 1860s, J.W. Perit Huntington, Superintendent of Indian Affairs in Oregon, even requested access to nearby troops to remove trespassers.[3]

While many land-seeking individuals tested the government's authority by ignoring reservation borders, most advocated for the Confederated Tribes complete removal, filing petitions and complaints.[4] The Department of the Interior responded to settler unrest by authorizing federal negotiations with the Confederated Tribes council in 1870.[5] Confident in their ability to quell encroachments while also preserving the reputations of Indian agents—who, at this time, lacked the resources to enforce treaty borders—the U.S. government approached the council with two options: (1) The Umatilla, Cayuse, and Walla Walla could completely relinquish their treaty rights to the reservation and remove themselves to a different region in Oregon or Washington state; or (2), the Confederated Tribes could accept small allotments and allow the government to sell the remaining surplus to eager settlers.[6] What occurred next completely blindsided officials. After initial talks during the second week of August 1871 the council rejected both scenarios.[7]

Despite their failure in persuading the Confederated Tribes to sell, the U.S. government refused to deviate from their initial goal—prompted by settlers— of uprooting collective ownership. But their approach toward land sales needed to change. With many nations, including

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[3] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1854, 112.

[4] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1854, 112.

[5] James B. Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation, 1855-1975: Factors Contributing to a Diminished Land Resource Base" (PhD diss., Oregon State University, 1977), 81.

[6] OIA, *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1871): 8.

[7] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 81; OIA, *Annual Report*, 1871, 8.

the Confederated Tribes, unwilling to sell their reservations—and, in turn, experience removal—the Office of Indian Affairs instead strongly advocated for allotment policies, which aimed to undermine Indigenous land rights by dividing reservations into private parcels for individual ownership and then selling the "surplus" land to colonists.[8]

Interestingly, the federal government always considered allotment as a viable option. The 1855 Walla Walla Treaty outlined a process for privatizing the Umatilla Reservation, citing that individuals over twenty-one-years-old could obtain forty-acre plots.[9] Federal and Indigenous negotiators also agreed to include this allotment option in other treaties signed during the Walla Walla Council of 1855. For example, both the Nez Perce and Yakama reservations had allotment provisions under Article 6 of their treaties.[10] Thus, government employees had treaty-secured guidelines when arranging allotments on Pacific Northwest reservations such as the Confederated Tribes. For reservation employees in the 1880s, however, implementing this policy proved difficult. As they soon learned, government expectations and actual on-the-ground reservation experiences were two completely different realities.

Before the introduction of a national allotment policy throughout the western United States in 1887, the Department of the Interior considered the privatization of Native reservations a privilege, a reward for "model Indians." In fact, by government standards, it was an honor bestowed only on communities—and their representing Indian agents—who met pre-existing criteria based on Western models of "civilization." To meet this criteria, the Office of Indian

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[8] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 86.

[9] U.S., Congress, *Treaty with the Cayuse, Walla Walla, and Umatilla, 1855*, 12 Stat. 945.

[10] All three treaties made for the Umatilla, Nez Perce and Yakama reservations were based on the Omaha Treaty of 1854, which also included provisions for allotment. For more information, see *Treaty with the Cayuse, Walla Walla, and Umatilla, 1855*; U.S., Congress, *Treaty with the Nez Perce, 1855*, 12 Stat. 957; U.S., Congress, *Treaty with the Yakama, 1855*, 12 Stat. 951; U.S., Congress, *Treaty with the Omaha*, 1854, 10 Stat. 1043.

Affairs expected agents to implement a robust education model, maintain economic self-sufficiency through large-scale farming, and, depending on the reservation's agricultural success, encourage the dissolution of sovereign-strengthening traditional subsistence and economic avenues such as pastoralism.

From 1880 to 1885, Indian agents, the Confederated Tribes, and neighboring settlers witnessed multiple upheavals as each battled to protect—or further—their own interests. Government employees sought to preserve their own positions, while also attempting to validate Euro-American civilization rhetoric. The Umatilla, Cayuse, and Walla Walla peoples found themselves navigating oppressive educational and agricultural policies that sought to disrupt their influence and agency within Umatilla County—while also opposing multiple allotment propositions that threatened to diminish their land base. Finally, the goals of white farmers and ranchers frequently intersected and diverged. Many protested the reservation's collective ownership in an effort to obtain surplus acreage for themselves; others protested allotment policies altogether to ensure the land remained "free" for livestock ranging via continued illegal encroachment.

In the end, the Confederated Tribes reservation was not ready for allotment. Trying to solve the country's "Indian problem," the Office of Indian Affairs used agents to experiment with allotment to promote land privatization. Despite efforts to implement assimilative policies, Indian agents frequently failed due to a lack of government funding and illegal settler intrusions. Instead, in their attempt to prove the reservation was prepared for allotment, and consequently protected from colonists, the federal government only increased the Confederated Tribes vulnerability to settler interests through a broken education system; cash-crop agriculture that encouraged settler immigration; and the severe diminishment of a viable economic staple:

pastoralism. These assimilation policies did little to prevent settler greed during the Confederated Tribes eventual privatization period. Thus, with Indigenous allottees, white farmers, and white ranchers pitted against each other, the reservation would suffer extreme land loss at the expense of settler greed. Unfortunately, it would take years for the Confederated Tribes to recover.

This story is situated within the larger themes of Euro-American colonialism and nineteenth-century land privatization on reservations. Many historians have analyzed the history of nineteenth-century US privatization, and its impacts on reservations as a national policy. By taking a local perspective and examining pre-allotment strategies and their influences on an individual reservation, I endeavor to connect the Confederated Tribe's scene to the broader US stage. Though not exhaustive, highlighted below are some of the scholars who contributed extensively to the subject, and consequently, my thesis's historical structure.

Emily Greenwald's *Reconfiguring the Reservation* uses government and Indian agency reports, diaries, letters and other important sources to outline the experiences of the Nez Perce and Jicarilla Apaches during the national allotment era after 1887.[11] Analyzing the effects this transformation had on two reservations, Greenwald investigates the spatial history of privatization by interpreting Indigenous resistance and survivance strategies through their choice of allotment selections. She argues that allotment was not, in fact, a tale of dispossession but individual stories of agency through the control of "space." Greenwald's book also remains one of the only sources to mention the Confederated Tribes' allotment.

[11] Emily Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation: the Nez Perces, Jicarilla Apaches, and the Dawes Act* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002).

Janet A. McDonnel's *the Dispossession of the American Indian, 1887-1934* also brings privatization into conversation.[12] Focusing on the federal government's implementation of land policies during the Dawes Act era, McDonnel examines the political and economic impacts of dispossession and assimilation. Relying on government documents, she outlines how evolving U.S. bureaucratic structures influenced reservation land management, farming and stock raising, water policies, and leasing. According to McDonnel, these factors contributed to Native American land loss, impoverishment, and alienation from Euro-American society.

While Greenwald and McDonnel analyzed nineteenth-century allotment in the United States, John C. Weaver's *The Great Land Rush* explores British land acquisition on a global scale.[13] Taking a specific interest in improvement rhetoric and its role in justifying land dispossession, Weaver's comparative history reveals the foundation of modern-day property rights. He goes on to argue that many settler-colonial events in countries such as the U.S., Canada, and New Zealand began not as state-led expeditions, but as forms of settler defiance—with individuals seeking land and economic prosperity against state mandates. This "rule-breaking," coupled with the formal justifications used to cement property accumulation by colonial powers, created spaces of violence and land theft in Indigenous territories around the world.

Allan Greer also provided a wealth of information on land tenure in his book, *Property and Dispossession: Natives, Empires and Land in Early Modern America.*[14] Taking a global

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[12] Janet McDonnel, *The Dispossession of the American Indian, 1887-1934* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

[13] John C. Weaver, *The Great Land Rush: And the Making of the Modern World, 1650*-1900 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

[14] Allen, Greer, *Property and Dispossession: Natives, Empires and Land in Early Modern North America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

approach, Greer considers how Europeans and their descendants claimed land and resources in North America through the implementation of property rights—many of which unsettled Indigenous notions of land ownership. By exploring three major colonial centers, New Spain, New France, and New England, Greer examines the diverse property systems cultivated and imposed by Native and Euro-American peoples to form a cross-cultural awareness of property formation in these regions. This analysis proved essential to my understanding of the evolving process of land rhetoric from the seventeenth- to nineteenth century.

Another critical contribution was James R. Kennedy's dissertation, "The Umatilla Indian Reservation, 1855-1975: Factors Contributing to a Diminished Land Base." Throughout this project, Kennedy analyzed the cultural, economic, and geographic impacts of settler colonialism on the community—a central topic included the reservation's encounters with European agriculture, livestock, and territorial boundaries.[15] He argues that the transfer of land title from the Confederated Tribes to settler ownership was due, in part, because of historical events such as the development of agricultural fringe communities, the cultural traditions and "resource perceptions" of the Confederated Tribes, federal legislation, and the actions of public agencies, including the impacts of local settler colonialism on the reservation. Despite the importance of this dissertation, its disciplinary focus on the geographical—rather than historical—context, meant that many sections, including those orientated around education, agriculture, and livestock

[15] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 42-43. Although I did not refer to their book in my thesis, I also want to recognize another important contribution to histories on reservations and allotments: Daniel Heath Justice and Jean M. O'Brien, eds., *Allotment Stories: Indigenous Land Relations Under Settler* Siege (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021). In this anthology, scholars revealed that the function of privatization has been to demolish kinship networks between human and "other-than-human" relatives in order to better exploit Indigenous communities. However, this volume brings the experiences of individuals, families, and communities into conversation to argue that despite federal attempts to fragmentize Indigenous nations, Native peoples responded—and adapted—to sustain kinship and cultural relationships despite allotment goals.

colonialism, lack substantial background information about events leading up to the communities' introduction to pre-allotment policies—and its impacts on later privatization efforts. Thus, much of my own work builds on Kennedy's research.

However, because my research occurred during the Covid pandemic, this story is only partially complete. With the closure of the National Archives, many sources—including important Umatilla Agency letters to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and Umatilla Council minutes—were inaccessible. This restricted my ability to narrate important elements of this allotment story, including, to my dismay, a robust Confederated Tribes' perspective. As an Indigenous scholar, my goal as a researcher is to always put Native voices and histories in the forefront of my work. By doing this, we recover significant narratives previously buried by colonial machinations. Unfortunately, the pandemic severely limited my ability to narrate Indigenous perspectives because of my limited access to source material. I necessarily relied on Office of Indian Affairs reports, congressional documents, and booster newspapers, all produced by people who instigated, or prospered from, settler interference on the Confederated Tribes reservation. I hope that readers will keep this in mind while reading and, most importantly, acknowledge the impact of settler-imposed silences within historical narratives and sources.

Taking a thematical approach, this thesis examines the impacts of pre-allotment civilization policies on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation. Chapter Two follows the political and education battles waged by Indian agents as they attempted to prove the reservation was eligible for individual allotment after the expiration of federal funding guaranteed by the Walla Walla Treaty of 1855. This section delves deeply into the history and motivations of government-enforced privatization on a national and local scale. Chapter Three addresses the federal government's role in promoting agriculture as a necessary credential for

landownership. Hoping to create an agrarian empire, the Office of Indian Affairs used farming to encourage the assimilation of Native peoples into American society. It also provided a fundamental foundation for the civilization rhetoric used to justify settler attempts to diminish the Confederated Tribes reservation.

Chapter Four investigates pastoralism and the dual nature of domestic animals as both tools for colonial land accumulation and decreased Native mobility, and sources of Indigenous agency and economic sovereignty. Chapter Five analyses the Umatilla Allotment Act and its slow ratification. Stalled by settler inner conflict, white ranchers became an unexpected ally in the Confederated Tribes' attempt to evade the legislation—though, white farmers soon benefited with the reservation's eventual allotment. Finally, the Conclusion brings this thesis full-circle by expanding on the Confederated Tribe's ultimate hesitancy to allot their reservation—despite settler and Indian agent attempts to completely abolish the communal system. While education and agriculture had significant impacts on the Indigenous communities, we learn that such assimilative policies soon became tools of resistance for the Confederated Tribes—who used their high-status in "civilized" pursuits to cultivate agency against government demands.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCING INDIVIDUAL ALLOTMENT AND INDIAN AGENTS: THE EDUCATION PHASE OF PRE-ALLOTMENT ON THE UMATILLA RESERVATION

By 1881, the federal government assigned nearly every Indigenous person to a reservation in Oregon state. Most communities were established in the 1850s under the supervision of Washington and Oregon governors Isaac Stevens and Joel Palmer. Together, the governors, in concert with the Office of Indian Affairs, created over two dozen reservations that encompassed millions of acres to the east and west of the Cascade Range; this included the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation.[1] The Walla Walla Treaty Council of 1855 forced the Umatilla, Cayuse, and Walla Walla nations—whose traditional lands lay throughout the Columbia Basin— to cede 6.4 million acres of their original territories and move to eastern Oregon.[2]

During negotiations at the 1855 Council, federal representatives used the threat of white immigration to pressure Umatilla, Cayuse, and Walla Walla leaders to approve the cession.[3] According to Antone Minthorn, a descendent of the Cayuse and a member of the Confederated Tribes, Superintendents Stevens and Palmer "acted on behalf of and for the benefit of their own country, not the Indian nations of the Northwest." Their methods "followed the well-worn path

[1] Robert E. Ficken, "After the Treaties: Administering Pacific Northwest Indian Reservations," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 106, no. 3 (2005): 442. Also see, OIA, *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885), 14.

[2] Antone Minthorn, "Wars, Treaties, and the Beginning of Reservation Life," in *Wiyaxayxt / Wiyaakaa'awn / As Days Go By: Our History, Our Land, Our People—The Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla,* ed. Jennifer Karson, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015), 5, 66-69; "Member Tribes Overview," *the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation*, The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation - CRITFC; the Confederated Tribes reservation is located within the traditional land base of the Cayuse people.

[3] Minthorn, *As Days Go By*, 66-67.

of the United States to negotiate treaties, open up millions of acres to white settlement, and confine Indians to reservations where the Office of Indian Affairs can control them."[4] Despite this extreme loss in territory, each nation had one consolation: a guarantee that the reservation would remain unencumbered by settler encroachment.[5] Minthorn wrote that many tribal members approached the Walla Walla Treaty of 1855 with the hope that their children would have a permanent place to call home. "The Umatilla Indian Reservation became the anchor for the survival of the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla nation, the stronghold that protects our culture and sovereignty as unique people."[6] Unfortunately, settlers would continue causing problems for the Confederated Tribes in the years to come.

Although land cessions for settlers became a primary goal in the treaty talks of 1855, Stevens and Palmers had another motivation. Within reservation borders, government officials also hoped to establish assimilation policies to mold children and adults into Westernized citizens. Within the treaty, the Confederated Tribes and the federal government agreed to allocate a portion of the land-sale funds to farming—which, according to government officials, would encourage the civilization of the Umatilla, Cayuse, and Walla Walla peoples.[7] The Department of the Interior considered agriculture as a primary motivator for economic

[4] Minthorn, *As Days Go By,* 71; for more information on the treaty, also see U.S., Congress, *Treaty with the Cayuse, Walla Walla, and Umatilla, 1855*, 12 Stat. 945.

[5] U.S. Congress, *Treaty with the Cayuse, Walla Walla, and Umatilla, 1855*, 946.

[6] Minthorn, *As Days Go By,* 71-73. *Umatilla Tribal Lands*, photograph, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation, The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation - CRITFC. The reservation is marked in dark red, while the ceded traditional lands of the Cayuse, Walla Walla, and Umatilla are marked in light red.

[7] U.S. Congress, *Treaty with the Cayuse, Walla Walla, and Umatilla, 1855*, 946.

assimilation.[8] Instead of practicing ranching or sovereign-strengthening food cultures such as hunting, fishing, and root-gathering, white officials preferred financial avenues that promoted the Confederated Tribes' participation in the U.S. market, primarily because officials believed farming would encourage landownership through economic individualism.[9]

In addition to agriculture, the Walla Walla Treaty of 1855 outlined the importance of education. With the selling of ceded lands, the federal government and the Confederated Tribes agreed to use a portion of the funds to construct two school buildings and employ two teachers on the reservation.[10] The government believed that Native children should learn "to read and write and to understand…the simple branches of education as are necessary for their condition in life, and at other hours to labor in the garden and fields…or various branches of household duties."[11] Therefore through careful instruction, the Office of Indian Affairs argued that western-assimilated Indigenous youth could evade "extinction" through industrial schooling. Thus, government officials prioritized, at least theoretically, the inclusion of education funding for schools and teachers when creating treaty stipulations and special government appropriations to Native communities.[12]

Using agriculture and education to promote their assimilative agenda, Indian agents would spend the 1870s and 1880s attempting to push the Confederated Tribes toward their civilized potential, in this case, by encouraging allotment in severalty. After all, by the mid-

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[8] Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the reservation,* 25.

[9] Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation*, 25.

[10] U.S. Congress, *Treaty with the Cayuse, Walla Walla, and Umatilla, 1855*, 947.

[11] OIA, *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1854), 7.

[12] United States, Office of Indian Affairs, *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1870 and 1871), 5.

nineteenth century, policymakers agreed that private property was necessary for Indigenous peoples' complete assimilation into US society.[13] Thus, by gaining self-sufficiency through agriculture and education, Native could potentially forgo the reservation and instead maintain individual allotments. However, agents encountered several barriers in their attempt to allot reservations. Employees needed to not only prove that reservations had the ability to productively use their private property through "civilizing" models such as agriculture and Western-orientated education, but also highlight advancements in economic and personal individualism. Only then would the Office of Indian Affairs—and, by association, surrounding white communities—believe Native peoples could benefit, and productively use, their private plots.

By examining the Confederated Tribes' pre-allotment experience from 1880-1885, we begin to understand how this win-lose mentality toward privatization impacted Indian agents—who navigated increasingly low government funds, job instability, and tense settler-Native relations. As a result, this chapter traces the role of education on the Confederated Tribes' reservation prior to the ratification of the Umatilla Allotment Act on March 3, 1885. In attempting to gain the Department of the Interior's interest, Umatilla Indian agents used established civilization markers and the absence of a boarding school to persuade Washington DC officials to invest in the Oregon reservation after the termination of federal funding outlined in the Walla Walla Treaty of 1885.

Interestingly, little scholarship focuses on the Confederated Tribe's entangled experience with allotment and education reform. In addition, the sources available demonstrate the *impacts* of allotment rather than the actions committed beforehand. Seeking to address this knowledge

[13] Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation,* 25.

gap by examining Commissioner reports on reservation progress and failure, we can highlight how Indian agents—and, in turn, the Confederated Tribes—conceptualized, and experienced, these instigated changes. Soon, it would become apparent that the US government's ideal path toward privatization clashed with settler goals, a lack of government funding, and allotment, itself. Despite the Office of Indian Affairs' determination to enforce education as a landownership credential, this seemed to have little sway when colonial encroachment increased—with settlers preferring removal over Indigenous allotments. Thus, Indian agents had to use assimilation methods such as the construction of an industrial school to further their allotment schemes—sometimes directly opposing settler interests. Although the construction of an industrial school eventually persuaded the Office of Indian Affairs to invest in the reservation's allotment future, the "idea" of a school had more power than the actual institution. With the federal government ignoring the reality of the school's productivity, it seemed that this allotment phase did little to prepare the reservation for its future.

Years before Senator Dawes introduced the General Allotment Act of 1887, Indian agents on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation began the process of allotting lands in response to pressure from land-seeking settlers—and promulgating the perception that the Confederated Tribes were sufficiently assimilated. The Department of the Interior assigned specific roles to Indian agents to help promote—and successfully complete—privatization attempts. These obligations included mediating reservation and settler negotiations, preparing the reservation for economic independence, usually through agricultural production and sales, and implementing Western-orientated education structures to ensure the instruction of Indigenous youth in not only classroom studies, but also industrial pursuits such as farming and carpentry.

However, the government—especially the Department of the Interior—had doubts on the trustworthiness of their Western representatives. Newly-selected agents arrived with little experience in maintaining relationships with Indigenous communities or representing the government in the best light.[14] Of course, some professionals did approach their work earnestly, but soon experienced difficulties in navigating financial challenges, government expectations, and the general powerlessness of living in the periphery of Washington DC.[15] Moreover, in their attempt to find men who represented the ideal Euro-American citizen—white, industrious, Christian, and with a "disposition to endure hardship and courageously encounter…disappointment"— the government frequently failed to attract experienced individuals because of bureaucratic failures, notably low wages, poor training, and a severe disconnect between government expectations and local realities on reservations.[16] Now, with allotment in the mix, Indian agents such as N.A. Conroyer—who originally proposed privatizing the Umatilla reservation in 1880—found themselves preparing reservations for lands in severalty with little resources, low job security, and Native resistance to colonial interference.

Dealing with a seemingly impossible scenario, Hiram Price, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1882, rebuked employees from the Office of Indian Affair for their growing distrust toward Indian agents. "Some of them [agents] are good and true men, doing the very best they can under the embarrassing circumstances by which they are surrounded; and some of them are capable; but I repeat, the inducements for such men to remain are insufficient."[17] The continued

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[14] Flora Warren Seymour, *Indian Agents of the Old Frontier* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1941), 2-5.

[15] Seymour, *Indian Agents*, 2-4.

[16] OIA, *Annual report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1882), iv-vi.

[17] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, vi.

difficulties agents endured, including incompetent hiring committees, only reaffirmed the Department of the Interior's—and by association, the Office of Indian Affair's— role in supporting dishonesty and corruption within government spaces on reservations.[18]

Therefore, when the federal government started implementing individual allotment policies on select reservations in the nineteenth century, the Office of Indian Affairs witnessed a rising number of agents recommending land privatization—many who, according to Emily Greenwald, "in the interest of keeping their jobs… tended to exaggerate and sometimes fabricate information" to gain recognition and credence to bolster their careers**.**[19] As Flora Warren Seymour—an attorney and the first female member of the Board of Commissioners—noted: "it became a byword that a new agent…[could] come empty-handed to an Indian reservation, [only] to retire four years later."[20] With this in mind, the next eleven years of rushed allotment served as a testament to this self-interest, this was especially true regarding education.

In 1881, the Office of Indian Affairs revealed that a growing number of Indian agents, from Washington and Oregon Territories, considered the establishment of reservation industrial schools as a prerequisite of allotment. Agents, including those from the Confederated Tribes, asked the Office of Indian Affairs for an increase in "educational facilities"—while also hinting that reservations with schools should be surveyed and provided titles of severalty.[21]

As more agents requested allotment, they increasingly used the presence of boarding schools as a marker for elevated civilization on specific reservations.[22] In turn, the

[18] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, vi.

[19] Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the reservation,* 21; OIA, *Annual Report,* 1882, v.

[20] Seymour, *Indian Agents*, 2.

[21] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, lxv.

[22] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, lxv.

Commissioners of Indian Affairs incorporated education into their own Indian policy rhetoric. When approaching schooling on the reservation, federal policymakers wanted agents to ensure that "every step taken, every move made, every suggestion offered, every thing done with reference to the Indians should be" completed with the understanding that Natives "must learn to work for a living, and they must understand that it is their interest and duty to send their children to school. Industry and education are the two powerful co-operating forces which, together, will elevate the Indian, and plant him upon the basis of material independence."[23] In other words, Indigenous youth needed instruction in Western industry and education to gain the quintessential American characteristic: individualism, which meant independence from communal land, Native culture, and, by association, their own identities. This meant abandoning "tribal relations" and "superstitions" and instead adopting the tools and ideologies needed to "rear their families as white people do, and to know more of their obligations to the Government and to society."[24] By enforcing US educational models, the Office of Indian Affairs believed they could elevate Indigenous peoples to a "white" status as self-sustaining landowners.[25]

This assimilation goal depended on boarding children away from their families and industrial education. By 1882, the United States government funded seventy-four institutions throughout the country—including the Forest Grove Indian Training School in Forest Grove, Oregon.[26] Young girls learned about the "household industry"—which emphasized domestic chores such as kitchen, laundry, dormitory, and sewing duties, all of which they regularly

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[23] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1885, v.

[24] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, v.

[25] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, v.

[26] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, xxxiii; the Forest Grove Indian Training School was affiliated with Portland's Pacific University. For more information, see [Indian Training School campus in Forest Grove · heritage (pacificu.edu)].

performed under the supervision of school employees.[27] However, according to the Office of Indian Affairs, much of the educational focus in these boarding schools centered on industrial training for boys.[28] Frequently called the apprentices of civilization, boys studied basic classroom academics—such as English and math—along with farming, blacksmithing, tailoring, and other trades with the expectation that they would someday contribute to society through manual labor.[29] Government officials, including those working with the Office of Indian Affairs, were so impressed by these institutions that they soon called them the "center of Indian civilization."[30]

The potential benefits of these education models, especially their "purifying" influence on Native children, also contributed to an increased interest in agency-run industrial boarding schools. Unlike Carlisle, Hampton, or Forest Grove—which forced children to leave their homes and relocate to distant institutions— officials built these academies on reservation land. By doing this, Indian agents hoped the buildings' proximity to Indigenous communities would encourage parental consent.[31] In many instances, domestic training schools acted as a stand-in for distant institutions, primarily because of the lack of money allocated to travel expenses. However, they also supposedly provided a positive influence on reservations, specifically by creating a supportive environment for returning boarding school students.[32] As stated by Hiram Price, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs:

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[27] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, xxxiii.

[28] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, xxxiii.

[29] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, xxxiii.

[30] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, xxxiii.

[31] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, xxxiii.

[32] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, xxxiv.

> Unless a strong purifying influence is exerted on the reservation atmosphere while the students are absent, they will return to a fire-damp of heathenism, ignorance, and superstition that will extinguish all the flames of intelligence and virtue that have been kindled by contact with civilization.[33]

It seems he equated civilization and progress with "flames," while a reservation without a boarding school—or any type of western education model—dampened the potential for such flames to arise. In any case, residential institutions offered agencies an opportunity to cultivate much-needed skills within their reservation populations—including carpentry and farming. These skills offered immediate advantages, including the construction of buildings and the maintenance of farms for commercial agriculture.[34] Beyond the material benefits, the solidification of important Euro-American ideologies also helped reaffirm Indian agents' commitment to allotment policies, which emphasized "personal independence and manhood"—both of which were supposed to "create a desire for possessing property, and a knowledge of its advantages and rights."[35] However, this was easier said than done, especially for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation.

The push for privatization on reservations was not a new argument in the late nineteenth century. According to historian D.S. Otis, federal officials understood the practice of allotment for some time. Otis speculated that the theory had roots in the Choctaw Treaty of 1805, in which "the government had begun the practice of reserving for individuals certain tracts of land for

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[33] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, xxxiv.

[34] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, v.

[35] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, v.

which patents in many cases were issued later."[36] By 1885, policymakers, with the aid of multiple treaties and laws, issued over 11,000 patents to Native individuals and 1,290 allotment certificates. "The fact that 8,595 of these patents and 1,195 of these certificates were issued under laws passed during the period 1850-1869," Otis argued, "suggests that the forces which produced the General Allotment Act of 1887 were coming to life in the mid-century."[37]

Several factors contributed to the federal government's decision to utilize allotments, including settler pressures regarding land-use, and assimilation. But in every instance, federal agents attempted to encourage individualism and self-reliance among Indigenous communities, while also enforcing settler rhetoric that associated the U.S. reservation system with "un-American" idealism.[38] Settlers relied on population numbers to argue that Indigenous nations could survive on smaller plots of land. As stated by historian William T. Hagan, "it was routinely assumed that the needs of the white race were superior to those of the Native Americans because a prescribed area could support more whites than Indians."[39] For example, boosters in Umatilla County argued that because of the Confederated Tribes low population—in comparison to white settlers in the region— they should not "be allowed to monopolize a body of land capable of

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[36] D.S. Otis, *The Dawes Act and the Allotment of Indian Lands* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), 14; this citation refers to the kindle version of the original book, consequently the page numbers are different. For those referencing the paper format, Otis' discussion of the Choctaw treaty can be found on the first page of Chapter 1: The General Allotment Law (Dawes Act). For more information on the treaty, *see Treaty with the Choctaws, 1805*, 7 Stat., 98.

[37] Otis, *The Dawes Act*, 15; for those with print version, information about allotment can be found on the second page of chapter 1.

[38] Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation,* 21; some federal officials and settlers considered reservations as the antithesis of American values. Based on ideals cultivated by Gilded Aged Americanism and evangelical Protestantism, "individual salvation" and "self-made" Americans "rested on economic self-sufficiency." For more information, see Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation*, 21.

[39] William T. Hagan, "Justifying Dispossession of the Indian: The Land Utilization Argument," *in American Indian Environments: Ecological Issues in Native American History*, ed. Christopher Vecsey and Robert W. Venables (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1980), 67, 73.

supporting many thousands of white American citizens."[40] This perceived slight toward settlers triggered increased calls for privatization.

Allotment, however, could not occur without assimilation. U.S. reformers, including notable groups such as the Friends of the Indian, believed that Indigenous communities' economic reliance on the federal government—"however meager"—created a cycle of codependence on reservations.[41] Rather than the Office of Indian Affairs' supplying food, equipment, and other basic necessities on-demand, reformers believed the reservation system hindered Native communities from "melting" into Euro-American society. By learning industry, English, and the norms of white America, assimilation, in the words of Emily Greenwald, "would eliminate the government's obligation to treat Indians as wards…and it would entitle Indians to all the rights and privileges that other Americans enjoyed."[42] Thus, reformers honestly hoped that by dissolving reservations and accepting private property, Native would join mainstream America as independent workers.[43]

Additionally, the belief that Native peoples were destined to succumb to settler land grabs played a significant role in nineteenth-century federal Indian policy. When Senator Henry Dawes of Massachusetts introduced national privatization—the General Allotment Act— in 1887, he argued that dividing reservations into individual properties would protect Natives from an influx

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[40] "Umatilla Needs," *The East Oregonian*, October 21, 1881; in 1881, agent R.H. Fay estimated that the Confederated Tribes population included 751 Natives. However, he admitted that this census only included those present on the reservation during the census. Some Natives continued to scorn reservation boundaries and lived near the Columbia River. For more information, see OIA, *Annual Report,* 1881, 150.

[41] Greenwald, Reconfiguring the Reservation, 24.

[42] Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation*, 24.

[43] Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation*, 24.

of white settlers by giving them clear title to land.[44] Proponents of this law genuinely believed they were "saving" Indigenous communities from an apocalyptic future, postulating that Natives had *two* options: Save themselves by accepting government interference, or risk land theft and injury at the hands of conniving settlers. Whichever extreme tribal nations chose, officials from the Department of the Interior predicted that "without allotment….Indians were doomed to extermination."[45]

While "saving" Natives from white settlers fulfilled a moral obligation, reformers and the Office of Indian Affairs' had several ulterior motives. According to historian Janet McDonnel, the U.S. government approached Indian policies with two fundamental biases: Native Americans should give up their communal identity and embrace western civilization; and they should join white society as independent—and productive—citizens. With this in mind, land allotments offered the perfect solution to the government's "Indian problem." By destroying communal holdings, officials hoped the dependent, sovereign nations would vanish with the imposition of private ownership— liberating the government from the collective power tribal communities fostered.[46]

In early August 1880, five years before Sommerville penned his fears about the Confederated Tribes allotment rejection, Indian Agent N.A. Conroyer was at his own crossroads. With no functioning school and depleting government funds, Conroyer had little to say about education in his report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.[47] This was a problem because in

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[44] McDonnel, *The Dispossession of the American Indian,* 1-4; David A. Chang, "Enclosures of Land and Sovereignty: The Allotment of American Indian Lands," *Radical History Review* 109 (Winter 2011), 109, 21.

[45] Kenneth H. Bobroff, "Retelling Allotment: Indian Property Rights and the Myth of Common Ownership," *Vanderbilt Law Review* 54 (2001), 1561.

[46] McDonnel, *The Dispossession*, 1-2; David Chang, *The Color of the Land: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Landownership in Oklahoma, 1832-1929* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2010), 74-75.

the same summary he also requested allotment for the reservation. Though, perhaps Conroyer had a reason to push for privatization.

The years 1879 and 1880 were filled with uncertainty for the Confederated Tribes reservation. The 1855 Walla Walla Treaty, which guaranteed government stipends for the cession of traditional lands had expired on June 30, 1880.[48] In previous years, this annual stipend funded the salaries of teachers, laborers, and mechanics—it also supported the maintenance repairs of shops, mills, and agency buildings.[49] While government sources remain scarce on this period, it seems that the looming termination of federal resources encouraged some members of the Confederated Tribes to take allotments in 1879—rather than face the reservation's undecided economic fate.[50] This privatization event was not universal, and only impacted the families who selected the private plots—not the entire reservation.[51] Because these allotments lacked an official congressional act, allottees most likely relied on the provisions of the 1855 Walla Walla Treaty to accrue private acreage—which outlined that tracts of the reservation could be "set apart as a permanent home for those Indians, to be surveyed into lots and assigned to such Indians of the confederated bands as may wish to enjoy the privilege."[52]

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[47] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880, 144-147.

[48] US Congress, *Treaty with the Cayuse, Walla Walla, and Umatilla, 1855*, 946-947; OIA, *Annual Report,* 1880, xlviii.

[49] *Annual Report,* 1880, xlviii.

[50] OIA, *Annual report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, 1879, 133; it seems that in 1878, the Umatilla Agency and the Confederated Tribes chiefs agreed that members of the Umatilla, Cayuse, and Walla Walla could take allotments, most likely citing article six of the 1855 Walla Walla Treaty. For more information, see US Congress, *Treaty with the Cayuse, Walla Walla, and Umatilla,* 1855.

[51] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1879, 133.

[52] US Congress, *Treaty with the Cayuse, Walla Walla, and Umatilla,* 1855, 947.

For those who chose allotment, this avenue most likely seemed safest. Despite the protection guaranteed by the 1855 Walla Walla Treaty, settlers continued to advocate against the reservation system well after its formation. According to E.A. Hayt, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, "this desire, which gains strength yearly, is well known to the Indians, and begets and feeling of restlessness and uncertainty."[53] Settler resentment spurred Hayt to propose removal to the Yakama Reservation.[54] While this recommendation never occurred, the Confederated Tribes' murky future was a major concern for government officials.

Witnessing the reservation's instability, Agent Conroyer had a solution: allotment. By persuading the Office of Indian Affairs that the reservation had the credentials to privatize, he hoped to extend government funding to maintain agency salaries, infrastructure upkeep, and farming implements—all of which suffered without the financial supported guaranteed by the 1855 Walla Walla Treaty.[55] As stated by Conroyer, "the present condition of these Indians renders it very important that the aid and assistance heretofore extended be continued, and that early steps be taken for their permanent settlement upon lands in severalty."[56] For Conroyer, allotment would still require continued government investment—which was desperately needed on the reservation.

Barring his education conundrum, Conroyer believed the community possessed several pre-requisites needed for privatization—including reliable land resources and expanding individual self-reliance through agriculture.[57] Attempting to portray the reservation in the best

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[53] OIA, *Annual report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, 1878, xxxvii.

[54] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1878, xxxvii.

[55] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880, xlviii.

[56] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880, xlviii.

[57] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1880, 144.

possible light, Conroyer argued that the reservation of approximately 326,500 acres—though this number fluctuated through the years on account of poor surveying—was flourishing.[58] Known for its abundant ecological wealth—sustained by the Umatilla River's multiple tributaries—the reservation's sprawling prairie and pastures, thick forests, and creeks teeming with fish, had supported the Umatilla, Cayuse, and Walla Wallas for years.[59]

While the idea of building industrial boarding schools on reservations was ideal, persuading the Department of the Interior to pay for the necessary supplies and labor was a significant roadblock for Indian agents such as Conroyer. When mentioning this problem in his report, the Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Edgar M. Marble, stated that "while the sum provided by Congress for educating Indian children seems to be a large one…it barely suffices to continue the work already begun, and is insufficient to permit…any extended increase in educational facilities, and wholly inadequate to meet the increasing demands of the service."[60] This economic disparity reveals a stark disconnect between the idealistic expectations of employees in Washington DC—who pressed for educational advancement—and the harsh realities of Congressional underfunding.[61]

In 1881, the Office of Indian Affairs allocated only $85,000 to support nearly all the agency day schools and boarding institutions throughout the US.[62] However, this amount "fell far

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[58] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880, 144; OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, 169-170; Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 9-10.

[59] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880, 144.

[60] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1880, iv.

[61] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880, v; 144; OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, xiv.

[62] OIA, Annual Report, 1881, xiv.

short of meeting the increased needs of the service."[63] With many of the reservations requesting an increase in supplies and employee wages, the OIA frequently denied proposals "made for funds…simply because of the inadequate appropriations provided for the purpose."[64] These monetary burdens greatly hampered Indian agent goals.

The significant number of boarding school requests only exacerbated financial tensions, presumably leading to competition between reservation employees bidding for government assistance. Putting this in a broader context, at the time of Conroyer's report, "no more than fifteen out of sixty-six agencies" had adequate educational provisions for Indigenous children on reservations.[65] Despite acknowledging this imbalance, the Office of Indian Affairs opened three new schools in 1880, with a promise to fund an additional thirteen in the next year.[66]

Still, Conroyer wrote begging for educational funding with the goal of preparing the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation for allotment. In this case, Conroyer attempted to tout his efforts on the Confederated Tribe's reservation with specific goals in mind: obtaining federal funding, building an industrial school, and then using the institution's success to further advocate for allotment. To achieve these objectives, Conroyer turned to the community for help in 1880. First, he met with tribal representatives to discuss the possibility of land sales and its impact on the reservation.[67] While tribal leaders made no concrete decisions on the official implementation of allotment—similar to the Council of 1871—they did consider and accept

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[63] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, xxxviii.

[64] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880, iii.

[65] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1880, vi.

[66] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1880, v.

[67] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1880, 145.

several initial propositions by outside representatives such as Conroyer.[68] Many of these early agreements centered on the founding of a boarding school. For instance, if allotment did eventually occur, the council determined that a portion of the funds accumulated from surplus land sales needed "to be appropriated to erect and furnish a manual-labor and boarding school for their children."[69] It became apparent during this council, and following meetings, that tribal leaders endorsed education as a tool to promote Indigenous sovereignty. With a strong knowledge in western academics, elders hoped that children would gain the necessary skills to compete with neighboring settlers.[70] The possibility of an on-reservation school also benefited families—ensuring that children continued to engage in seasonal subsistence gatherings and cultural customs.[71] However, council members also asked for the continued presence of an Indian agent representative to ensure their protection against white settlers during initial border surveys and preparations for allotment.[72]

This cooperation significantly helped Conroyer's petition for allotment. In fact, a year later the Department of the Interior requested a financial estimate on the labor and materials needed to build a school.[73] This was a significant win for Conroyer. Washington officials were willing to take the first step—beyond providing agricultural tools and supplies— in seriously investing in the initiation of an allotment process. By urging the Confederated Tribes to divide

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[68] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1880, 145-146.

[69] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1880, 146.

[70] Patrick Stephen Lozar, "'An Anxious Desire of Self Preservation': Colonialism, Transition, and Identity on the Umatilla Indian Reservation, 1860-1910," (MA Thesis, University of Oregon, 2013), 106.

[71] *Lozar, "An Anxious Desire," 106.*

[72] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880, 146.

[73] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1881, lxv.

sections of their land with fencing, encouraging small, family farm plots, managing large farming operations, promoting the sale of goods to white settlements and towns, and even spurring individuals to wear Westernized clothing, Conroyer laid the groundwork for a convincing argument. First, Conroyer believed the Confederated Tribes were at least willing to negotiate terms. Second, the communities reached a level of civilization that could only be unmatched through allotment. Third, a boarding school would only enhance the reservation's potential; and finally, the potential surplus land was ripe for settler occupation. [74]

Unfortunately for Conroyer, the CTUR would not have a functioning school within their borders until 1883—three years after he left his position for unknown reasons.[75] However, by listening to Conroyer's suggestions and investing in the boarding school, government officials reaffirmed the connection between educational advancement and allotment on the Confederated Tribes' reservation. The only thing the next agent had to do was maintain, and build upon, Conroyer's achievements. Unfortunately for the Confederated Tribes, this proved difficult.

When E.J. Sommerville arrived on the reservation in 1883, Conroyer's legacy was freshly stamped on the newly constructed homes, the acres of fencing, the small farming plots, and the new industrial boarding school established that year.[76] By this time, Sommerville considered most—if not all—of CTUR members as civilized individuals, who had the potential of travelling beyond the reservation and taking "good care of themselves."[77] Many of the acquired skills needed to navigate a non-reservation environment were taught in the Umatilla school.

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[74] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880, 145-147; *Annual Report*, 1881, 149-152.

[75] OIA, *Annual report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883/84), 49.

[76] OIA, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1884), 147-148.

[77] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1884, 147.

Considered a place of rapid progress and development, the school catered to multiple agendas. Depending on their age and gender, the seventy-two participating children took lessons in subjects such as reading, writing, history, sewing, and domestic work under the tutelage of six teachers and four staff members.[78] Since labor and manual training were also a fundamental aspect of the US Indian boarding school experience, we can assume the boys maintained the institution's twenty-five acres of land and thus cultivated crops such as corn, oats, wheat, turnips, and potatoes. Assured of the children's progress, Sommerville expressed confidence in his yearly correspondence: "The question of civilizing the…Indians is no longer problematic."[79] Sommerville provided this progress report at the height of allotment debates between Congress, the Department of the Interior, and the Confederated Tribes.

Almost two years earlier, in 1882, Congress introduced the first versions of the Umatilla Allotment Bill (S. 1434 and H.R. 2579) for debate. Both proposed that the Confederated Tribes should take 160-acre land allotments, with lands divided into farming and timbered selections.[80] While the allotment legislation ultimately failed in Congress, the proposed allocation of surplus funds offers an interesting perspective on Indian agents' influence and negotiation power.[81] Thinking back to Conroyer's initial allotment agreement with the Umatilla council members in 1880—where they concluded that if allotment was implemented on the reservation, the leftover funds would go toward beneficial policies such as education within the communities—many of these proposals were also seen in the 1882 bills.[82] For example, if the legislation actually passed,

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[78] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1883/1884, clxxiv.

[79] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1883/84, 149.

[80] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1882, lxxi.

[81] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, lxxi.

[82] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880, 145-146.

the money accumulated from the surplus land sales would have been used to not only settle families and individuals onto their allotment parcels, but also "support the industrial farm and school for the children."[83] Whether by coincidence or design, policymakers examined these bills during the CTUR's construction of the industrial school. However, all of these plans greatly relied on the CTUR agents' reports and their subsequent honesty about the reservation's conditions.

Consequently, the silences and knowledge gaps seen in Sommerville's reports over the span of three years provide insight on the agent's self-interest in using the idea of a functioning boarding school to further his allotment plans. For instance, two years after Sommerville's 1885 summary to the Office of Indian Affairs, when once again, the reservation's allotment future was at risk, an inspector by the name of Pearsons visited the reservation. In his letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, he expressed dismay over the boarding school's condition.[84] Pearsons speculated that "an insane man" must have built the institution. Not only was it situated on a vulnerable slope, but the only thing keeping the "death trap" standing was large tree trunks "braced against" the western side."[85] Sommerville mentioned none of these concerns in his report, instead stating the school buildings were kept in "excellent order" and singing praises about the teachers and employees.[86]

A letter from R.S. Gardner—another visiting inspector who travelled to the reservation in 1887—further elaborated on Pearson's concerns. Agreeing with the previous inspector's notes on

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[83] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, lxxi.

[84] Ficken, "After the Treaties," 446; R.S. Gardner, *Report on the Umatilla Agency School*, October 5, 1887, Department of the Interior, National Archives (Record Group 64, item 803).

[85] Ficken, "After the Treaties," 446.

[86] *Annual Report*, 1885, 170.

the building's location, Gardner emphasized the danger it posed to occupants: the school "has the appearance of falling over, and possibly might do so…in a short time."[87] After touring the building, he also noted that while sanitary, sufficient furniture was solely lacking. Moreover, the student attendance significantly dropped from the seventy-two students reported in 1884. Now, only twelve children regularly participated—seven girls and five boys.[88] While the lack of sources make it difficult to infer what exactly occurred in the last three years to leave the school in such a state of disrepair—likely lack of funding and lack of regular maintenance by the agent—we can conclude with certainty that this was never mentioned in Sommerville's progress reports to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

With only twelve children participating, the reservation industrial school failed to prepare the Confederated Tribes' youth for allotment. The Office of Indian Affairs pushed education as an assimilation requirement because it would instruct children in the skills necessary to compete with white neighbors and successfully maintain their allotments as landowners—with English speaking, reading, and writing skills. With so few students attending, we can assume that the school fell short of meeting these government goals. This begs the question: why did the Office of Indian Affairs continue advocating for allotment despite this missing, and supposedly vital, credential?

It seemed the federal government supported assimilation goals only when they benefited colonial strategies. While the Office of Indian Affairs used education and other tactics, including agriculture, to "prepare" the reservation for more interactions with American society, their main goal was ultimately allotment and the removal of the Confederated Tribes from communal

[87] Gardner, *Annual Report,* 1887.

[88] Gardner, *Annual Report*, 1887.

ownership to private plots. Education thus became a weak, and ultimately failed, justification to introduce privatization rhetoric to the Umatilla, Cayuse, and Walla Walla communities. Robust assimilation was never a deal-breaker in this allotment story, and the decrepit school provides evidence of this oversight.

During initial privatization attempts on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation, Indian agents such as N.A. Conroyer and E.J. Sommerville used several tactics to persuade the Office of Indian Affairs to implement an individual allotment policy. Conroyer's focus on agriculture and the necessity of a boarding school paved the way toward eventual financial assistance for not only erecting an educational institution, but also securing the government's long-term investment in planning and negotiating allotment on the reservation. All Sommerville had to do at this point was manage upkeep and continue fostering relations with community members and the Office of Indian Affairs. However, between 1883-1887, the reservation's educational "progress" took a turn for the worst.

Despite efforts to use education as a method to accumulate funds and gain allotment on the reservation, the Umatilla industrial school—and student attendance—was still lacking by 1887. With government inspectors regularly reporting on the school's faults, the Confederated Tribes' lackluster education model had little impact on the Office of Indian Affairs' efforts to allot the reservation. If anything, this assimilation episode reveals the struggle between government ideals and reality. First used as an option to extend government funding after the expiration of annuities provided by the Walla Walla Treaty of 1855, federal employees seemed to genuinely believe that education—and the creation of a reservation industrial school—was a necessary component for Indigenous peoples' progress toward landownership. However, the demands of white settlers frequently came first, and this would become even more apparent as

agriculture encouraged white immigration in the late nineteenth century. Despite continued boarding school difficulties, Indian agents continued to push toward privatization. While the reservation's education model was insufficient, government employees knew the reservation's natural strengths; in this case, the agricultural potential seemed nearly limitless. For Conroyer, Sommerville, and other colonial figures, farming was vital for allotment's future success.

CHAPTER 3

THE "PERVASIVE ALBION": AGRARIAN CIVILIZATION'S ROLE IN ALLOTMENT

In 1881, Indian agent R.H. Fay oversaw the forced removal of ten children from the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation in Northeastern Oregon. The agent took them from their families and sent them to the Forest Grove Indian School in Portland to learn the skills necessary to join Euro-American society as citizens.[1] These ten Umatilla children soon found themselves surrounded by government officials determined to abolish their cultural traditions—while simultaneously attempting to indoctrinate Western ideologies.

Boarding schools represented more than classroom theories. Government and educational officials used these spaces to enforce other so-called "civilizing" practices, including agriculture. As a marker of individuality and potential self-autonomy from the government, the United States Office of Indian Affairs' favored the implementation of Western agriculture not only within schools, but also throughout Indigenous reservations during the pre-allotment era. Consequently, Indian agents, including those in Oregon, quickly capitalized on Euro-American notions of improvement and civilization to optimize their chances for approval to reservation lands—with varying results.

By the Department of the Interior's standards, Superintendent M.C. Wilkinson's Forest Grove institution was a success in the early 1880s.[2] In only three years, he took on an underfunded government project and managed to persuade Washington DC to provide enough

[1] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, xxxvi, 200.

[2] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, xxxvii.

funds to create a 'functioning' educational business by 1882.[3] Seemingly undaunted by the lack of dormitories, tools, classroom materials, agricultural implements, and sufficient wages to support the teachers, matrons, and cook, Wilkinson criticized both the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the Secretary of the Interior for the lack of monetary assistance in his 1880 report, writing:

> When it is the evident policy to break up reservations, dividing lands in severalty among the Indians, it certainly would seem that our law-makers would see the wisdom of making full appropriations for the special support of schools in character like this, where so many Indian boys and girls may at least measurably prepare as teachers, housekeepers, craftsmen, and farmers, for the trying change which so speedily and surely awaits them.[4]

Employing familiar assimilation rhetoric, Wilkinson was quick to argue the importance of boarding schools in molding Indigenous children for futures in manual labor and allotment.[5] Surprisingly, the next two years involved a significant increase in infrastructure and economic independence—including the construction of two additional buildings for dormitories and the accumulation of a yearly net worth of $772 through blacksmith and cobbler activities.[6] This was all done, or supplemented by, Native child labor under the guise of apprenticeship programs.[7]

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[3] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, xxxvii.

[4] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1880, 178.

[5] The ten Umatilla students are Haley (or Hallay) George, Emma Winnum, Tina Lowry, Winnie Abrahams, Albert John, Charley Wilhelm, William Barnhart, Moses Price Minthorn, Hugh [Minthorn?], and Roy Cook.

[6] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, xxxvii.

[7] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, xxxvii.

Despite these improvements, the school desperately needed enough land for a farm and a garden.[8] In his 1881 report to the Commissioner, Wilkinson requested 150 acres to not only educate his pupils in agriculture, but to also support a growing number of student needs—including sustenance and farming instruction.[9] With the addition of the ten Umatilla students, Forest Grove had 90 children attending the institution by 1881—54 boys and 36 girls from ten different Indigenous nations, with ages ranging from twenty-three to six-years-old. However, Wilkinson wanted at least 300 students in total—the maximum capacity of his newly-erected dormitories.[10]

Apparently, the Office of Indian Affair denied this request. Instead, Pacific University, also located in Forest Grove, rented to the boarding school forty-five acres to provide "practical lessons" to the boarding school's male children.[11] According to Wilkinson, this farming method became such a success that a local newspaper "raised its warning cry for the protection of white labor." The superintendent bristled at this local insecurity, stating "the boys have worked side by side with the white man, earned the same wages, and this in a section of country where it has always been claimed the Indian would not work."[12] As such, Wilkinson reasserted his plea from the year prior: The school needed its own property in order to continue their "civilizing"

[8] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, xxxvi.

[9] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, 200.

[10] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, xxxvi, 188. from 1880 to 1885, the Forest Grove school taught 310 students, ranging from six to twenty three-years old and representing over 30 tribal nations. Primarily taking children from the Pacific Northwest region, the institute's administrators first targeted students who attended missionary schools, before accepting younger—and less assimilated—children. For more information, see "The Forest Grove Training Roster," Forest Grove Indian School Archives, Pacific university, Students · heritage (pacificu.edu).

[11] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, xxxvii.

[12] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, xxxvii.

project.[13] After all, how could he ensure the institution's progress—specifically the school's ability to teach male students farming—without land?

This lack of extensive land was undoubtedly a source of continued frustration, and possibly concern, for Wilkinson—and once again reveals a disconnect between the Office of Indian Affairs' expectations and the realities their employees endured in distant locations. When establishing the Forest Grove Institute, which primarily catered to Indigenous populations on the West Coast, the government wished to prepare children to compete with their white neighbors. After learning the basic techniques of farming and other manual trades, officials in Washington DC assumed these children would grow "to become teachers among their own people," thus speeding up the assimilation process. [14] Interestingly, one of the original ten Umatilla students, Albert Minthorn, returned to the Confederated Tribes reservation after graduating in 1886; he became a teacher for the Umatilla Agency's boarding school.[15]

For Wilkinson, who invested a great deal in the civilizing power of education and agriculture, the land question became even more critical because of the school's location. With many students coming from West Coast regions, including the Umatilla children, instructors need to cater to their traditional environments. Agreeing with Wilkinson's argument, Hiram Price, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, wrote: "pupils leaving this school [Forest Grove] …will generally seek employment among white people. But as most of the Indians upon this [west] coast have good land, many will engage in farming, and for this reason it is doubly important that the school should have a farm."[16]

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[13] OIA*, Annual Report*, 1882, xxxvii.

[14] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880, vi-vii.

[15] See the "Forest Grove Indian Training School Roster," Pacific University Archives.

[16] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1882 and 1883, 26.

With so much change occurring, including the beginning of an allotment era, reservations would need these skills. And, according to Wilkinson, only those who completely dedicated themselves to the task of teaching Indigenous children would succeed in pushing Native nations into a new age. Somewhat critiquing the distance between the Office of Indian Affairs and the Forest Grove school, the superintendent argued that "Indian education" would not occur rapidly "at the end of a pair of tongs, nor by any one who has had an idea that the Creator must have made a mistake in creating this race."[17] To achieve their civilization prerogative, the government needed the dedication of men and women with a strong work ethic and a belief that Native peoples could evolve. Only boarding schools, especially those with land—at least, in Wilkinson's view—could meet this goal.[18]

This focus on agriculture was not a revolutionary concept. In the mid- to late-1800s, private property and agriculture were integral to societal progress.[19] European scholars argued that all societies experienced an evolution from savagery to civilization, a theory that came from Enlightenment ideas about "human progress," in which Europeans drew from their own conceptions of art, science, and geography to conclude that European societies were the pinnacle of human development.[20] According to Emily Greenwald, "Indians, according to this view, were at the opposite end of the spectrum—they were savages. But policymakers and humanitarians believed they could usher Indians through the stages of social evolution in a speedy fashion."[21]

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[17] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, 199.

[18] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, 100.

[19] Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation*, 19; David Rich Lewis, *Neither Wolf Nor Dog: American Indians, Environment, and Agrarian Change* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 7.

[20] Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation*, 19.

[21] Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation,* 19.

Taking this civilizing "logic" to heart, the US government—including the Office of Indian Affairs—concocted assimilation policies based on agrarian idealism.[22] In short, politicians and humanitarians argued that the only way to "incorporate" Indigenous peoples into American society was to "transform them into individualistic yeomen farmers and farm families, the backbone of American democracy."[23] Since the ancient Greeks and Romans, promoters of Western civilization praised the practitioners of agriculture for their contributions to the state.[24] This idealization spread throughout Europe, with eighteenth-century English and French elite landowners arguing, as historian David Rich Lewis has noted, that "agriculture embodied natural law, constituted the source of all wealth for nations, and should therefore dictate the sociopolitical order."[25] Settlers carried these ingrained perspectives with them as they searched for land and resources in the Americas; the United States was no exception to this rule.[26]

Similar to their European ancestors, early white Americans praised agriculture for its transformative effect on the landscape. When British arrivals settled the East Coast in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century, they proclaimed the region a vast "wilderness." Looking beyond their settlements and villages, they saw rich, non-productive fields and forests—with no cash-crop (intensive) farming, no livestock, and no "claimed" individual property.[27] Disparaging local Indigenous practices, the British considered these large swaths of fertile lands open for

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[22] Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation*, 19; Lewis, *Neither Wolf nor Dog*, 7.

[23] Lewis, *Neither Wolf nor Dog*, 7.

[24] Lewis, *Neither Wolf nor Dog*, 8; Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation*, 19-20.

[25] Lewis, *Neither Wolf nor Dog*, 7-8.

[26] Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation*, 19-20.

[27] Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 78-79.

colonial pursuits, and to justify these imperialistic ambitions, they clung to “Roman legal theory” and the concept of *res nullius*—“which held that ‘empty things,’ including land, remained common property until they were put to use.”[28] Colonists thus depicted the region as “boundless space” available to anyone willing to productively use it.[29]

Euro-Americans consequently defined productivity according to their own conceptions of landownership. In order to change the “wild” landscape, one needed to invest capital and labor—and thus impose a legitimate claim of individual belonging. Because intensive farming met these standards, it seemed only logical to use it as a differentiating standard between the so-called civilized, land-owning white settlers and land-“dwelling” Indigenous peoples.[30] According to Virginia Anderson, “English imperial promoters could not have devised an argument more congenial to English taste and experience.” After all, such practices accommodated England’s long-lasting agrarian traditions.[31]

By the nineteenth-century, wrote Greenwald, “Euroamericans regarded agriculture as the highest use of the land and the noblest pursuit for American citizens.”[32] The Office of Indian Affairs pushed for an agrarian republic—filled with the ideal citizens: land-owning yeomen farmers.[33] This political vision solidified federal government’s belief that “civilized” society was

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[28] Anderson, *Creatures of Empire*, 79.

[29] Anderson, *Creatures of Empire*, 79; for more information on Roman law and its influences on European property rights, see Greer, *Property and Dispossession,* 13-18; Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Sovereignty, Property and Empire, 1500-2000* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 33-39.

[30] Anderson, *Creatures of Empire*, 78-80; while the “progress” ideology proved invasive, so did “improvement” rhetoric. For more information, see Weaver, *The Great Land Rush,* 27-28, 81-84.

[31] Anderson, *Creatures of Empire*, 79.

[32] Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation*, 20.

[33] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880, iii; *Annual Report*, 1881, v.

cultivated by individualism—achieved through farming ventures—while “savagery was marked by tribalism and collectivism,” notes Greenwald.[34] This only reaffirmed colonists’ positionality, physically and ideologically, as productive land-owners.

The impacts of initial civilization and agrarian rhetoric in the early United States persisted well into the late-nineteenth and mid-twentieth-centuries. It acted as a foundation for the implementation of land ownership and removal throughout the United States. Consequently, it had a large influence on the Department of the Interior’s approach toward allotment of Native lands.[35] In the case of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation, Indian agents hoped to use agricultural production as a “civilizing” tool to promote individualism and privatization. Luckily for resident Umatilla agents, or “farmers-in-charge,” the reservation was known for its agricultural wealth.

Reservation members plotted and tilled small farms long before the Umatilla Allotment Act passed in 1885.[36] By 1871, farmers cultivated small plots on over nine hundred acres of land (out of an estimated land base of as much as three hundred thousand acres)—with crops grown specifically for reservation consumption.[37] Agriculture ventures continued to grow throughout the decade, with Indian Agent N.A. Conroyer claiming in 1880 that “nearly all of these Indians are self-supporting, and many of them raise a surplus of hay, cereals, and vegetables, for which

[34] Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation*, 20.

[35] Lewis, *Neither Wolf nor Dog*, 7.

[36] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880, 144; OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, 169-170.

[37] Kennedy, “The Umatilla Reservation,” 80.

they find a ready sale in the adjoining settlements."[38] In 1882 alone, the Confederated tribes enclosed or fenced-in twenty-five small farms of eight to ten acres.[39]

Despite continued delays caused by cricket infestations and dry weather, the reservation's agricultural "progress" continued to increase exponentially, and by 1884, community members used government-supplied axes, scythes, rakes, wagons, and plows to cultivate more than one hundred twenty thousand acres—culminating in forty thousand bushels of wheat, twenty-three thousand bushels of corn, and other assorted products.[40] An impressed official later wrote, "the Indians are, in my opinion, civilized as much as ever they will be," and "nearly all of…[them] are now and have been busily employed in fencing, and doing all kinds of farming work, and it is very seldom you will see any adult Indian doing nothing, or loafing around on this reservation."[41] Nonetheless, curbing so-called "laziness" became a central argument for Indian agents during this era.

When writing his report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1880, Conroyer was quick to differentiate community members who continued traditional subsistence methods—such as fishing, hunting, and root-gathering—from their more "civilized" peers who practiced farming.[42] Conroyer believed the former participated in non-agricultural activities out of sheer "laziness," dismissing the cultural relevance of traditional hunting and harvesting migrations throughout the region.[43] Despite resistance, the Indian agent remained optimistic; in the same

[38] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880, 144.

[39] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1882, 143.

[40] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1882, 143; OIA, *Annual Report*, 1884, 147.

[41] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1884, 147.

[42] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880, 144.

[43] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880, 144.

report, he assured the Commissioner of the reservation's "steady improvement" in farming, stating that "these Indians are slowly but surely adopting more and more…manners and customs of civilization."[44] Whether this step toward "improvement" led to self-determination was another matter altogether.

While Indian agents on the Umatilla reservation identified, and exploited, the large-scale farming potential in the eastern-Oregon region to promote their assimilation agendas, settlers soon came to the same conclusion and wanted the land for themselves. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, newspapers such as the *East Oregonian* depicted Umatilla County as an oasis with some of the best agricultural lands in the United States.[45] Because the area was known for its optimal grazing pastures, timber resources, and rich soil, one unnamed booster concluded "there was no better place to emigrate to and settle in than Eastern Oregon."[46] Many opportunistic individuals and families seemed to take this to heart and slowly made the journey to "cultivate every plain and hillside."[47]

Settlers hoping to acquire wealth through wheat and barley production readily agreed that the Umatilla reservation had the finest portion of land east of the Cascades—to their absolute annoyance.[48] The growing number of squatters willing to skirt boundary lines even worried the resident Indian agent. In 1881, R.H. Fay warned the Office of Indian Affairs that the

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[44] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880, 144; the actual number of families and individuals who refused to farm remains unknown—and Conroyer did not elaborate. More discussions on civilization and its relation to farming and industry were discussed in the OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, 50.

[45] "Eastern Oregon: A Territory of Great Fertility, as Large as New England, Open to Immigration," *The East Oregonian*, March 12, 1881; "Mention of Our Surrounding Counties," *The East Oregonian*, January 2, 1889; "The Umatilla Indians are Historical," The *East Oregonian,* Dec. 15. 1906.

[46] "Mention of Our Surrounding Counties," *East Oregonian*, January 2, 1889.

[47] "A Territory of Great Fertility," *East Oregonian*, March 12, 1881.

[48] "A Territory of Great Fertility," *East Oregonian*, March 12, 1881.

reservation's apparent vulnerability would only promote "endless disputes and encroachments, and [this] will perhaps eventually lead to serious trouble, as the whites look upon this place with longing eyes, being about the finest land in Oregon."[49] Unfortunately, this settler problem would continue seemingly unchecked.

The creation of a booming national market for agricultural goods only exacerbated the local push for white-owned territory.[50] By the late nineteenth century, officials such as Carl Shurtz, who served as Secretary of the Interior from 1877 to 1881, supported familiar agrarian rhetoric which equated land development with farming and food production.[51] Such logic used economic growth to justify US interference on reservation lands.[52] Barring the potential threat this reasoning posed for Indigenous land sovereignty, it also jeopardized West Coast food cultures and modes of subsistence. Many Native nations in the western US, including the Confederated Tribes, continued to practice livestock ranching, hunting, fishing, and gathering as their primary cultural and economic staples—many of which required large territories to support growing communities.[53] On the other hand, Euro-Americans intensively cultivated privately-owned parcels that produced various crops. This contributed to settlers' greater participation in the U.S. market, which encouraged white farmers to aggressively cultivate food products in

[49] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, 151.

[50] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 76.

[51] Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation*, 23; Carl Shurtz continued to promote severalty legislation in the early 1880s, specifically arguing that individual farms would encourage progress within Indigenous communities and families. For more information, see Wilcomb E. Washburn, *The Assault on Indian Tribalism* (Malabar, Florida: Robert E Krieger, 1986), 7.

[52] Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation*, 23.

[53] Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation*, 23.

search of profit, depleting soil nutrients. Unfortunately for Native nations, these agricultural techniques also required the constant availability of unexploited lands.[54]

In result, cash-crop agriculture, and the need for open territories, became a justification that colonial entities abused in the name of "progress" and "improvement."[55] This exacerbated Indian agent complaints, especially as settlers in nearby towns identified the 'untapped' potential of the reservation's farmland. As stated by Kennedy, "Agents who had enthusiastically welcomed the new markets [soon] became concerned as the reservation's resources were threatened."[56] This only solidified government officials' argument for privatization. If the land was allotted, the Department of the Interior could potentially solve two looming problems: the question of finding surplus lands to sell to white farmers and an opportunity to bolster their assimilation narrative—that individual allotments would protect Native communities from settler encroachment threats.[57]

By the 1880s, the Office of Indian Affairs determined that Indian assimilation—and in turn, guaranteed protection from settlers— could never be reached until Native families dwelled on their own private acreage with the tools and seeds necessary for successful farming.[58] Once these tools were provided to Native individuals and families, it was the Indian agent's duty to "compel" them to depend on their own efforts to make a livelihood. "The Indian must be made to understand that if he expects to live and prosper in this country he must learn" to work— thereby

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[54] Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation*, 23.

[55] Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation*, 23.

[56] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 76.

[57] Greenwald, *Reconfiguring the Reservation*, 25.

[58] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, v.

ridding "the government of this vexed 'Indian question,' [and] making the Indian a blessing instead of a curse to himself and country."[59]

Because government sources reveal little about the Confederated Tribes' motivations concerning agriculture and its adoption, we can only speculate why community members were relatively quick to participate in large-scale farming ventures. One possible explanation dates back to the 1860s, nearly twenty years before Indian agents advocated for allotment. At this time, early immigrants increasingly pressured officials to remove the three communities altogether through the cession of Indigenous land. Exasperated by the large swaths of seemingly unused land, settlers attempted to solidify their claim by submitting petitions to Congress and their state legislators.[60] Some white neighbors even resorted to goading Native individuals in hopes of inciting violence, including threatening to remove the Confederated Tribes population themselves.[61]

With the threat of removal ever present, Kennedy argued that the incentive for the Umatilla, Cayuse, and Walla to "remain on the reservation was born of necessity and experimentation."[62] Although the Walla Walla Treaty of 1855, which created the Confederated Tribes reservation, ensured community members could travel across borders for food gathering and grazing, these activities became increasingly difficult for individuals and families. Potential confrontations with restless settlers contributed to this unease. Despite growing tensions, the Confederated Tribes refused pressures to sell. However, their determination to stay seemed

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[59] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, v.

[60] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 78; OIA, Annual *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), 9-10, 17.

[61] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1867, 68.

[62] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation, 79.

constantly challenged by Indian agents' persistent belief that the community needed to leave or allot.[63]

By the late 1860s, the reservation had multiple roads crisscrossing the reservation and a railroad survey in the works.[64] It seemed inevitable, at least to Indian agents, that corporate and settler interests would soon overrun the reservation.[65] Agent Amos Harvey, an employee of the Oregon Superintendency of Indian Affairs, even speculated that the reservation could be sold for around $200 thousand. [66] If such a sale occurred, the government would then allocate funds to the Confederated Tribes—while also aiding in the acquisition of a new "home" for the communities.[67] In this case, Harvey proposed that the federal government buy several white-owned farms in Yakima Valley, located near the Yakama Reservation, for the collective use of the Umatilla, Cayuse, and Walla Walla—potentially as a new reservation.[68] "The tract is very suitable for their use, affording abundant grazing, and sufficient tillable land."[69]

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[63] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 79-80; OIA, *Annual Report*, 1871, 8.

[64] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 80-81.

[65] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 81.

[66] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1871, 68-69; Harvey estimated that the Office of Indian Affairs needed to purchase at least twenty five farms to create this new "reservation" in Yakima Valley. Also see, OIA, *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1854), 10.

[67] The Office of Indian Affairs did not specify how or when the Confederated Tribes would receive these funds if the sale occurred. For more information, see *Annual Report*, 1871, 17. It should be noted that the Office of Indian Affairs—later the Bureau of Indian Affairs— did not have agents in western reservations until 1873. Before this time, agents from superintendencies managed and represented reservations.

[68] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1871, 68. It seems that the federal government also considered the Lapwai Reservation in Idaho as a potential removal destination for the Confederated Tribes. For more information, see J. Orin Oliphant, "Encroachments of Cattlemen on Indian Reservations in the Pacific Northwest, 1870-1890," *Agricultural History* 24, no. 1 (1950), 53.

[69] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1871, 69.

While the Office of Indian Affairs also tentatively considered allotments, settler goals and the initial proposal given to the Umatilla Council, seemed to center on removal.[70] It should be noted, however, that Harvey seemed to approach this problem with good intentions, at least for the most part. While some settlers threatened to "drive the Indians off" and forcibly take the land, others held public meetings to plot different methods to open the reservation to white settlement through, for example, petitions, the latter of which circulated through the state legislature and Congress with numerous signatures.[71] According to Harvey, these increasingly hostile settler confrontations alarmed the Confederated Tribes, though the agent seemed more concerned that the tribal nation would react violently in response to continued colonial disturbances. "As these tribes are among the most warlike, intelligent, and best provided with horses and arms, a war with them will be no trifling matter."[72] To avoid a possibly disastrous confrontation, Harvey concluded the only solution was complete removal. However, land cessions needed the communities' consent.[73]

This consent problem led to the Council of 1871, in which federal negotiators met with the Confederated Tribes' Council to discuss the potential sale of the reservation.[74] Although community members remained unchanged in their decision, much to the disappointment of settlers and negotiators, they did express "that in the future they would rely solely on

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[70] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1871, 9, 16, 29.

[71] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1867, 68.

[72] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1867, 68.

[73] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1867, 68.

[74] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 81-82. The three negotiators were Hon. A.B. Meacham, A. Conroyer, and J.G. White; for more information, see OIA, *Annual Report*, 1871, 95-96.

agriculture"—to the absolute gratification of the presiding Indian agent.[75] While sources remain limited on this event, one can speculate that several factors, including increased settler hostilities, solidifying reservation boundaries, and the hopes of attaining stronger economic—and consequently sovereign—independence contributed to the Confederated Tribes willingness to incorporate large-scale farming within their community. However, this would be a slow process, since many continued to practice pastural and gathering traditions long after the Council of 1871.

The Confederated Tribes refused to relinquish their treaty rights during this phase of allotment pressures and agricultural change. Evidence from government reports on "the results of early attempts at allotment" suggest an overwhelming majority of Native Americans opposed privatization in the late nineteenth century. And yet, their voices were, according to Wilcomb Washburn, "either not heard, not heeded, or falsely reported"—as experienced by the Confederated Tribes.[76] Unfortunately, these mixed narratives would continue well into the late 1880s.

White colonists stewed in their disappointment. While the meeting between the Confederated Tribes and the negotiators revealed the tribal nation's stance against removal and land sales, settler interests remained firm, which—as we have seen—contributed to Indian agents eventual decision to advance allotment rhetoric inside, and outside, the reservation during the 1880s.[77] Their snail-like progress caused frustration and anger among white communities. In fact, some settlers —including the publishers of Oregon newspapers such as the *Weston Weekly*

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[75] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 79.

[76] Washburn, *The Assault on Indian Tribalism*, 8.

[77] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 80-81.

Leader, targeted the US reservation system to bolster their stance against Native communal ownership.[78] The editor of the *Weston Weekly Leader* charged:

> It has never been very clearly demonstrated that the Reservation system has had any great civilizing influence upon the Indians….After a summer's work of pillage and murder a Reservation is a convenient place in which to pass a winter under the protection of the government.[79]

The possibility that the Oregon public had similar views exposes another example of contention between the federal government and white landowners on nineteenth-century Indian policy. In this case, the *Weston Weekly Leader* pushed their argument beyond land title and instead addressed the Office of Indian Affair's assimilation goals—arguing that the civilization model had failed in Native communities throughout the United States. The newspaper went on to suggest "that politicians care more for individual advantage and party success than for the interests of the people. Political influence…[is] of more importance than the lives of inoffensive settlers."[80]

The *East Oregonian* further supported this rhetoric by urging their white readers to consider the reservation's forbidden-like qualities. Why should government employees bar settlers from such fertile agricultural lands—which could potentially support thousands of white American citizens?[81] Farmers wanted the land desperately, and they were prepared to attack the Department of the Interior's policies to ensure colonial land acquisitions.

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[78] "Untitled," *Weston Weekly Leader*, July 3, 1885.

[79] "Untitled," *Weston Weekly Reader,* 1885.

[80] "Untitled," *Weston Weekly Reader*, 1885.

[81] "Umatilla Needs," The East Oregonian, October 21, 1881.

While the Confederated Tribes, Indian agents, and settlers strived to determine the future of the reservation during a period of agricultural development, ten Umatilla children spent their days learning "civilized" pursuits at the Forest Grove boarding school. The boys overall success in farming further supported the Office of Indian Affairs belief in the "practicability of Indian civilization" and assimilation efforts.[82] These students represented a possible bridge between the Confederated Tribes and the federal government. With the proper training, these youngsters could provide instruction on the reservation. In fact, after graduating, Albert Minthorn did just that, and became a teacher at the Umatilla Reservation Boarding School. The possibility of school children encouraging civilization techniques such as farming in their home communities gave the federal government confidence in the 'yeomen farmer' dream—specifically that Indigenous peoples could one day successfully till their own private allotments—during a time when whites continued to challenge policies to gain more land.[83]

Agrarian colonialism had a significant role in these conflicts. In early colonial pursuits, agriculture determined English land claims and defined Indigenous peoples—who lacked this subsistence model— as "lesser." Based on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century civilization rhetoric, Native communities would endure the effects of this narrative well into the 1880s as allotment took center stage. As assimilation became the ultimate goal, Indian agents—including those on the Confederated Tribes reservation—used white fears and assumptions and stories of successful farmers to continue this privatization narrative. From this point on, the Office of Indian Affairs would begin citing the necessity of agriculture in order to foster independent, land-owning Indigenous citizens.

[82] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, xxvi.

[83] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, xxxvii-xxxviii.

This notion would have mixed results. After all, many community members continued to practice other economic ventures, including livestock-raising. In addition, settlers continued to encroach reservation land with seemingly no end in sight. Adding to an already difficult scenario, Indian agents soon discovered that farming allotments directly interfered with Natives' and white ranchers' needs for large, open pastures for grazing. Consequently, attempts to diminish the Confederated Tribes reliance on cattle and horses had unexpected results, with white ranchers joining Indigenous protests to dispute the Office of Indian Affairs'—and white farmers'— agrarian future.

CHAPTER 4

THE LIVESTOCK PARADISE: INDIGENOUS AND SETTLER RANCHING IN UMATILLA COUNTY

European settlers never imagined a colonial America without livestock. With their animals tucked "safely" below deck, newcomers admired the unbroken coastal fields and meadows as they approached New England's shores. However, looking into the round, doleful eyes of cows and bulls huddled together in the cargo holds of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century ships, one might find it difficult to imagine these creatures as colonizers—much less capable of shaping legal and social concepts of land tenure and ownership.[1] But in those cramped and dirty stalls, the futures of cattle and other European animals were decided. As livestock carved Euro-American pathways throughout Indigenous territories in the United States, they aided settlers in establishing colonial property rights that challenged Native land sovereignty and economic mobility.[2]

By the nineteenth century, white ranchers played a significant role in the settler encroachment of tribal reservations. They argued that Native nations possessed more land than necessary, with most of it remaining unused and "wasted."[3] This was especially true for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation in Eastern Oregon, where the grazing fields seemed unlimited.[4] The Commissioner of Indian Affairs received countless complaints about

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[1] John Ryan Fischer*, Cattle Colonialism: An Environmental History of the Conquest of California and Hawai'i* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 5-6.

[2] Fischer, *Cattle Colonialism*, 6-7.

[3] Peter Iverson, "Cowboys, Indians and the Modern West," *Journal of the SouthWest* 28 (1986), 107.

[4] J. Orin Oliphant, "Encroachments of Cattlemen on Indian Reservations in the Pacific Northwest, 1870-1890," *Agricultural History* 24 (1950): 44.

trespassing ranchers, and the historian J. Oliphant has argued that this was hardly a surprise for the Office of Indian Affairs. "This was the period during which the range-and-ranch cattle business in the Pacific Northwest reached the peak of its development, and it was also the period during which, in many districts of that region, it entered upon a rapid decline."[5] Sadly, the Confederated Tribes learned this lesson the hard way.

When Indian agents proposed allotment in the 1880s, pastoralism and herding still wielded a significant influence over the reservation's social and economic structures.[6] However, this soon changed as settler immigration increased, thus contributing to the gradual silencing of the Confederated Tribe's livestock presence. With the introduction of Euro-American civilization theories, economic instability due to fluctuating livestock prices, settler-ranching encroachment, and solidifying economic and physical borders within—and outside—the reservation, the Confederated Tribes experienced a decrease in ranching opportunities throughout the 1880s.

However, in the late nineteenth century, Umatilla County was a rising star in settler propaganda narratives. Newspapers such as the *East Oregonian* swooned over the region's environmental diversity, paying special attention to the "undeveloped" forests, sprawling fields, and irrigation potential of the Columbia River.[7] By the 1880s, local white communities hoped to reshape the landscape to not only promote Euro-American ventures in stock-raising and agriculture, but to also entice profit-seeking immigrants to help burgeon settler populations in Eastern Oregon.

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[5] Oliphant, "Encroachments of Cattlemen," 44.

[6] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 42-43.

[7] "A Territory of Great Fertility as Large as New England, open to Immigration," *East Oregonian*, March 12, 1881.

Only a few years earlier, however, travelling settlers bypassed the area altogether. Gazing across the seemingly sandy and dry plateau, they considered the land "worthless and uninhabitable"—more akin to a desert than a productive oasis for colonial pursuits.[8] Perhaps these assumptions would have continued if not for the gold and silver deposits. After miners stumbled across mineral treasures between 1861 and 1864, white interests turned toward the Blue Mountains and its surrounding region. They recognized a palpable future in the once dry and unworthy fields; now, settlers saw rich soil and acres upon acres of "untouched" grazing lands just waiting for Euro-American innovation.[9]

Eventually, settlers transformed Eastern Oregon from individual mining operations into lucrative stock-raising enterprises.[10] White entrepreneurs took advantage of the local terrain and drove their immense herds of cattle, sheep, and horses to the best grazing areas. In the summer, this included fields located at the base of the Blue Mountains—while the winter prompted relocations to "the great rolling hills and plateaus covered with the famous natural bunch grass", as the *East Oregonian* described it.[11] Unsurprisingly, many considered Umatilla County as a prime ranching area—the so-called "cream of Eastern Oregon."[12] With the best resources located within manageable walking distances, or so the *East Oregonian* claimed, a rancher could lead his flocks and herds east to the mountain slopes, or make his way north to the Columbia River where

[8] "Mention of Our Surrounding Counties—A Region Rich in Resources, Just Beginning to Be Developed," *East Oregonian*, January 2, 1889.

[9] "East of the Cascades: The Fairest and Most Favored Region of the East," *The Daily East Oregonian,* January 1, 1892.

[10] "East of the Cascades," *The East Oregonian*, 1892.

[11] "A Territory of Great Fertility," *The East Oregonian,* 1881; for more information on summer grazing in the Blue Mountains, also see Fredrick Vernon Coville, *Forest Growth and Sheep Grazing in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898), 10.

[12] "A Territory of Great Fertility," *The East Oregonian*, 1881.

the sandy ground offered sagebrush and "fine grass" for his livestock to gorge on.[13] Such opportunities, and seemingly endless land, beckoned settlers by the thousands.[14]

These opportunists pushed west with rose-tinted assumptions of American individualism and competition, white superiority over nature, and the need for quick rewards.[15] According to historian John Weaver, the frontier trudged forward using grazing as one of its enduring champions; in fact, during the nineteenth century livestock aided in the long-lasting occupation of Kentucky, southern Ohio, Missouri, and Arkansas. However, colonial expansion proved more complex than initially assumed. Unlike common westward expansion tropes sometimes presented, ranching frontiers did not strictly march westward.[16] Instead, ranchers and their livestock sometimes advanced by ships and settled distant islands in the Pacific or drove north from sun-streaked Mexican valleys as European descendants' corralled their livestock onward.[17] With this narrative in mind, many US cattle herds—and their livestock companions—spent the 1850s and 1860s meandering through states such as Iowa and Texas, crisscrossing the Great Plains, enjoying lush fields in California, and heading north into British Columbia by the 1870s.[18]

Barring their human guides, this was truly a multi-generational expedition for the four-legged settlers. Staring at the backs of their fellow herd-mates, one can image the days passed

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[13] "East of the Cascades," *The East Oregonian*, 1892; in reality, such treks could be 30 to 40 miles from the Pendleton area, easily a day's walk.

[14] "A Territory of Great Fertility," *The East Oregonian*, 1881.

[15] For more on individualism and competition, see Weaver, *The Great Land Rush,* 265-272.

[16] Fischer, *Cattle Colonialism,* 4.

[17] Fischer, *Cattle Colonialism*, 4-5.

[18] Weaver, *The Great Land Rush,* 271-272.

slowly—with individuals presumably measuring time by their grumbling stomachs. As fields and pastures gave way to munching teeth and clambering hooves, cows and bulls undoubtedly watched their herds shrink when clusters of cattle split from the group and wandered-off toward unknown destinations. All the while, those remaining continued forward, only to find cramped, wooden corrals waiting at the finish line.[19]Although Western settlement occurred in fits-and-bursts, cattle and other livestock thrived and multiplied.[20] After all, cattle established and reaffirmed European notions of private property. Because of widespread influence in systems of trade, land tenure, and labor, ranching frontiers became a dominating force in the late nineteenth century. These all-consuming factors enforced—and justified—the transfer of Indigenous lands to colonial ranchers.[21]

However, as livestock numbers continued to flourish and expand throughout the country, Indigenous nations such as the Confederates Tribes quickly incorporated animals such as cattle, horses, and sheep, into their daily and cultural lives. For instance, by 1847 trading groups travelled to California to purchase cattle and grow their own herds in Oregon.[22] Sheep followed soon after—though James Kennedy has indicated that the missionary Marcus Whitman tried to encourage the use of sheep as early as 1838.[23] Although settlers previously assumed Indigenous peoples lacked the fortitude to climb the so-called "civilization" ladder, they soon discovered that Native peoples could navigate socially-imposed hurdles through ranching—and

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[19] "Eastern Oregon—Scene on a Stock Ranch, Umatilla County," *The Daily East Oregonian*, January 1, 1892.

[20] Fischer, *Cattle Colonialism*, 5-6.

[21] Fischer, *Cattle Colonialism*, 6.

[22] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 42.

[23] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 42-43.

consequently compete with white ranchers in commercial markets.[24] This posed significant problems for settlers in Umatilla county.

Of course, in their attempt to promote mythologies of empty fields and unlimited ranching property, local newspapers conveniently bypassed—and silenced—Indigenous communities and their own herding ventures.[25] By 1881, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation covered over three hundred thousand acres, with nearly ten thousand horses, four hundred head of cattle, and three thousand sheep crossing reservation borders in search of the tastiest ranges.[26] Located a half-mile outside Pendleton, Oregon, the reservation frequently competed with their white neighbors in livestock sales—which accumulated profits of *at least* $50 thousand per year.[27]

However, these livestock numbers are difficult to pin down. From 1880 to 1885, Indian agents of the Confederated Tribes reservation noted vastly different statistics from year-to-year—with few sources remaining to cross-analyze annual stock sales, births, and deaths. For example, while a Commissioner of Indian Affairs' report noted the presence of ten thousand horses and ponies on the reservation in 1881, the prior year had as many as seventeen thousand.[28] Although several factors could explain this fluctuation, including large sales or—more likely—statistical errors, it is impossible to know the actual numbers of livestock. While Indian agents weakly attempted to include a summary of the community's herds in 1883—by this time, only

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[24] Fischer, *Cattle Colonialism*, 16.

[25] "East of the Cascades," *The East Oregonian*, 1892; "A Territory of Great Fertility," *The East Oregonian*, 1881; "Mention of Our Surrounding Counties," *East Oregonian*, 1889.

[26] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1881, 150.

[27] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 13; OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880), 144.

[28] *Annual Report*, 1881, 150; OIA, Annual Report, 1880, 144-145, 271.

about six thousand horses and four hundred head of cattle were supposedly on the reservation—the next two years were completely silent on the issue. Despite government representatives' detailed reports on agricultural progress, fencing, and their dealings with settlers, the question of livestock was a tiny footnote in the Office of Indian Affairs' narrative.[29] Thus, historians must accept these government statistics with utmost caution.

Unfortunately, this source problem also continued outside the reservation. Barring Indian agent reports, very few individuals paid specific attention to Indigenous-owned livestock in Umatilla County, at least beyond Native-settler encounters documented in small newspaper articles.[30] These absences encourage several questions. Looking at government and local settler perspectives in their entirety—including Indian agents' decreasing interest in reporting reservation livestock and newspapers' boasting the region's 'open land' qualities—one has to wonder if white interests purposely excluded Indigenous stock-holding averages to encourage settler-colonial ranching pursuits—and immigration— in Umatilla County.

Despite local theories about wilderness and large fields of empty, grazing lands, Umatilla County and the region surrounding the reservation never lacked in Native-owned livestock before the 1880s. For instance, the sheer presence of horses—specifically the "Cayuse" pony—was difficult to dismiss, even by boosters**.** In many Indigenous cultures of the Plains and the Columbia Plateau, horses were signifiers of wealth and prestige**.** By the 1860s, some individuals and families owned herds numbering from one hundred to one thousand—with individual horses selling at "$40 to $100."[31]

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[29] For statistical information on livestock, see OIA, *Annual Report*, 1883, 299; OIA, *Annual Report,* 1884, 147-148; *Annual Report*, 1885, 169-170.

[30] For more information and examples, see "East of the Cascades," *East Oregonian*, 1892; "A Territory of Great Fertility," *East Oregonian*, 1881.

[31] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 43.

Unsurprisingly, the Confederated Tribes, specifically the Cayuse, became "synonymous with horse"—not just because of their horse-keeping abilities, but for a breed of pony reared in the Pacific Northwest region.[32] Boosters and horse-owners portrayed the creature—known for its rebellious nature—in contradictory terms, with some observers praising their endurance and others criticizing their rambunctious behavior. The Cayuse pony's popularity and decline played an important role in Umatilla County's growing farming enterprise and this had a damaging economic impact for the Confederated Tribes.

On June 26, 1880, a reporter from Umatilla county's *Weston Weekly Leader* drafted a small article on Pacific Northwest horses.[33] Going only by his surname, Nagan offered a step-by-step analysis of the creature, while also highlighting settler perceptions of Indigenous peoples during this period:

> The cayuse is a biped or quadruped, according to circumstances, in the former of these conditions he is a very uninteresting object of pity and disgust. In fact, he is nothing but an Indian. Almost every one knows what that is—an animal of treachery, laziness and camas….The quadruped cayuse is a much more useful animal. He is a horse.[34]

Used specifically as a "riding horse," the small and stocky animals were known for their speed and endurance.[35] Despite their petite stature, settlers generally found the ponies disconcerting. One early account observed their "habit for bucking, or jumping high in the air as…lambs do, striking with every joint stiffened…[which] is so violent that, unless the rider is

[32] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 43.

[33] "The Cayuse," *Weston Weekly Leader*, 1880.

[34] "The Cayuse," *Weston Weekly Leader*, 1880.

[35] "Cayuse: breed of horse," *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

experienced, one or two efforts will be enough to dash him to the ground."[36] Nothing seemed to tame them, though not for a lack of trying by Euro-Americans, who attempted whipping and "kind" treatment interchangeably.[37] Interestingly, in the same metaphoric breath, the author alluded that this behavior was due to their connection to the Cayuse.[38] "In the [horse's] breaking he is frequently ruined, but this is more often the fault of the Cayuse man than the Cayuse horse.

Although Cayuse horses seemed favorable for long-distance travel, their bad temperament, smaller physique, and racialized connections left many equestrian enthusiasts and ranchers unimpressed. Whether these narratives had significant impacts on horse sales remains unknown, but by 1886, reservation horse prices dropped significantly. Twenty years earlier, one could buy a pony for one hundred dollars, however by the end of the nineteenth century, the Confederated Tribes had trouble getting even fifteen dollars.[39] This downward trend continued well into the 1890s, with one journalist stating that the Cayuse horse "nuisances" "are not worth $1 dollar apiece. There is absolutely no market for them."[40]

One important factor—among many—contributed to this lower market value in reservation ponies and horses: agriculture. With the growing emphasis on farming wheat and other products throughout Umatilla county in the mid- to late- nineteenth century, the region's horse-raising industry also went through a transformation—or, as the *Oregon Daily Journal*

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[36] J. G. Holland, eds. "The Ascent of Mount Hayden," in *Scribner's Monthly, an Illustrated Magazine for the People* (New York: Scribner, 1873), 135.

[37] Holland, "The Ascent," 135.

[38] Holland, "The Ascent," 135. An unnamed journalist for the *East Oregonian* also believed the Cayuse pony's proneness for kicking was due to their training by Cayuse Natives. For more information, see "The Western Cayuse," *East Oregonian*, July 15, 1907.

[39] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 43.

[40] "The Cayuse Nuisance," *The Dallas Weekly Chronicle*, December 9, 1896.

reported, an "improvement."[41] Farmers needed more than temperamental ponies to plow the fields and perform other manual labors on the ranch. Instead, there was an "eager demand for well-bred, serviceable horses, especially draft animals."[42] By 1896, it seemed that not even the east coast glue factories wanted the Cayuse horse.[43]

While few sources illustrate the personal impact this decline had on individual families on the reservation, one journalist noted the increased presence of ponies aimlessly wandering the fields outside the reserve boundaries.[44] According to the unnamed observer, "horses have become so cheap that many bands are running loose without being branded or cared for in the least."[45] This caused general fury among competing white ranchers, who used these regions for their own livestock. Seemingly unchecked—and with no economic demand to ship the horses to other communities and states—"they have multiplied rapidly and are now eating bunch grass that should otherwise support thousands of cattle and sheep which bring in revenue."[46] The journalist went on to state that "the horses are destroying the ranges twelve months in the year. There are over 100,000 head in Eastern Washington and they are destroying ranges that would support 500,000 head of cattle. The situation is really appalling, viewed from the cattleman's standpoint."[47]

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[41] "Horses in Demand," *The Oregon Daily Journal*, December 14, 1906.

[42] "Horses in Demand," *The Oregon Daily Journal*, 1906.

[43] "The Cayuse Nuisance," *Dallas Weekly Chronicle*, 1896.

[44] "The Cayuse Nuisance," *Dallas Weekly Chronicle*, 1896.

[45] "The Cayuse Nuisance," *Dallas Weekly Chronicle*, 1896.

[46] "The Cayuse Nuisance," *Dallas Weekly Chronicle*, 1896.

[47] "The Cayuse Nuisance," *Dallas Weekly Chronicle*, 1896.

These changes were especially disconcerting as settlers continued to question Indigenous land sovereignty. For so long, the reservation's economic livestock conglomerate acted as a useful tool to prove community productivity. While Umatilla Indian agents regarded many aspects of the reservation "lacking"—including their education and agricultural efforts—the sheer numbers of domestic animals encouraged even government representatives to deem the Confederated Tribes as "self-supporting."[48] But as agriculture became a more lucrative option in Umatilla County, Indian agents attempted to use assimilation rhetoric to encourage farming on individual plots of land at the expense of ranching.[49]

Therefore, the plummeting livestock economy, coupled with increased pressures to farm, left the Confederated Tribes in a difficult position. Many reservation members who previously relied on the horse trade now competed with settlers for grazing lands. Because of this increased competition, some families and individuals needed to reduce their herds and supplement their losses with agriculture.[50] Unfortunately, the Umatilla reservation's difficulties only continued as boundaries shifted.

Against the backdrop of declining livestock sales, white ranching, and continued settler immigration, the reservation's internal borders were simultaneously solidifying and shrinking. By 1881, community members fenced in over four thousand acres of land for agricultural practices, which Indian agent R.H. Fay considered "a marked and gratifying improvement in the cultivation of their farms and general industry."[51] But these signs of improvement did not deter encroaching colonists from the Pendleton area.

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[48] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880, 144.

[49] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880, 144-145.

[50] Lozar, "An Anxious Desire," 116.

[51] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1881, 150.

With little care for established—and agent-enforced—reservation boundaries, white neighbors frequently cut trees and took other resources from the Umatilla reservation for their own use.[52] Fay warned poachers of their criminal offenses, but that little to stop ranchers and 'cattlemen' from guiding livestock to reservation pastures.[53] This became such a problem that Indian agents rented out sections of Umatilla lands to prevent illegal grazing throughout the 1880s—at around $365, in total.[54] According to Fay, such privileges allowed ranchers to move their cattle and other domestic animals on-and-off the reservation at their own discretion each spring, with more and more settlers participating each year.[55]

Still, colonial interests continued to circumvent Indigenous land sovereignty. Between 1880 and 1881, Pendleton residents ignored treaty obligations altogether and built saloons, stables, and other buildings within reservation boundaries for their own enjoyment—citing the need for land "improvements" and the necessity of expanding Pendleton interests to accommodate population growth.[56] Boundary line disputes only exacerbated this growing problem, with both parties arguing over lands near Wild Horse Creek. Because of poor border markers—including environmentally-vulnerable tree marks and rock formations—Indigenous and white authorities had difficulty replicating the original land survey used to delineate the Confederated Tribes' reservation in the 1850s.[57] According to Agent Fay's letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs:

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[52] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, 150.

[53] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, 150.

[54] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, 150.

[55] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, 150.

[56] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, 150-151.

[57] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, 151.

> The Indians…claim that the survey does not extend to the source of Wild Horse Creek, as it should according to the provisions of the [1885] treaty, but that it runs up a small branch of the creek below the source, thereby cutting off a portion of the reservation through the Blues Mountains.[58]

Settlers happily took advantage of this "oversight" and used it as an excuse to encroach.[59] This increased activity only added to Indian agents' allotment argument—citing that only individual privatization could prevent illegal land use, and consequently protect Indigenous sovereignty.[60] Within this context of illegal encroachment, poor livestock sales, farming interests, and shifting reservation borders, many Confederated Tribes members, with no other options, advocated for allotment in order to personally control their own property and livelihoods.[61] Thus, on May 6, 1885, acting Indian agent Sommerville, ex-Oregon Senator James Slater, and Pendleton Judge William La Dow approached the Confederated Tribes Council to negotiate on "the subject of taking their lands in severalty."[62]

As settler ranching and agriculture slowly transformed Umatilla County's landscape, it seemed that the Confederated Tribes' livestock would fade into distant memory. However, in direct contrast to boosters' claims of empty land and wilderness, settlers struggled to deny the presence of domestic animals on—and off—the reservation. Using the Cayuse pony and other livestock to promote sovereignty, the Confederated Tribes were an economic power leading up to privatization. But, as the tribal communities' monetary staples became somewhat obsolete

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[58] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, 151; Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 17-21.

[59] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881, 151; OIA, *Annual Report,* 1882, 143.

[60] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1881 Report, 151; Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 82, 86.

[61] Lozar, "An Anxious Desire," 117.

[62] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, 169; OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, ixxi.

with the introduction of farming, colonial trespassers soon doubted the reservation's self-sufficiency and, in turn, Indigenous rights to the land. Nevertheless, in their attempt to accumulate land, white ranchers and farmers soon found themselves at odds with each other. This in-fighting both hurt, and benefited, the Confederated Tribes reservation as allotment progressed.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTING THE ALLOTMENT BILL: SETTLER CONFLICT AND A CHANGING RESERVATION

Allotting the Confederated Tribes reservation was an incredibly slow process, at least, according to impatient settlers. For years, newspaper organizations and boosters painted a picture of opportunity and endless lands for those willing to start a life in Umatilla County. However, it seemed that white land seekers had enough of the federal government's inability to quickly achieve the privatization of the reservation. As stated by the *East Oregonian*, perhaps the Department of the Interior "knows something about Indians, and Reservations, and allotting land in severalty, and the interests of both Indians and white people in the vicinity of reservations; but, judging from their acts, it is doubtful."[1]

As Indian agents attempted to allot a reluctant Native population, rising settler contention permeated negotiations. With white farmers advocating for privatization and surplus land sales, and white ranchers arguing for open borders and no allotment, Agent Sommerville struggled between three powerful worldviews. Surprisingly, the Confederated Tribes would gain an unexpected ally in their attempt to prevent the fracturing of communal ownership. With the introduction of the Umatilla Allotment Act of 1885, livestock interests became symbols of anti-colonial resistance as both settler and Indigenous parties attempted to circumvent private, agricultural land grabs. Although allotment eventually occurred on the reservation, such alliances—no matter how self-serving—played a fundamental role in asserting Indigenous agency, at least for a while.

[1] "The Reservation Farce," *The East Oregonian*, March 8, 1888.

In the mid- and late-nineteenth century, Umatilla County was a livestock paradise. Transforming the "untouched" fields into prime grazing areas, cattlemen created an industry that drew thousands of settlers to Eastern Oregon in search of fortune. However, in attempt to promote immigration, Indigenous livestock were virtually erased—with cattle and horses economically demoted as agriculture and colonial farming animals took center stage. This shift in Euro-American pursuits also had an unintended impact on white cattlemen, who struggled to compete against privatization. When initially proposing allotment, the US government argued that private property would protect Indigenous families and communities from settler encroachment— especially with the selling of surplus lands. However, not every settler agreed with this legislation, including ranchers in Umatilla County.[2] Instead, it seemed they preferred open "access" to reservation grazing fields through rent agreements or blatant encroachment—instigated by blurred boundary lines. Despite protests from tribal members and white ranchers, however, the Office of Indian Affairs soon show their favoritism for farming.

Congress passed the Umatilla Allotment Bill—otherwise known as the Slater Act of March 3, 1885—months before informing the Confederated Tribes of the land proposal.[3] Based on a prior, failed attempt at persuading the Council to allot in 1880, this legislation "guaranteed" private agricultural plots of 160-acres to "heads of families and to children under eighteen years of age"—while Indian agents themselves would select allotments for orphans.[4] After "un-biased" individuals surveyed and approved land parcels, the President would then issue patents that

[2] Oliphant, "Encroachments of Cattlemen," 45.

[3] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1885, 169-170, 269.

[4] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1880, 145. For the complete Umatilla Act document, also see the Annual Report, 1885, 269; for further elaboration on said bill, see the OIA, *Annual Report,* 1885, lxx; also see U.S. Congress, House, *Umatilla Allotment Act of 1885,* Forty-eighth Cong., 2d sess., 23 Stat. 340.

declared the US government held the acreage “in trust” for a “period of twenty-five years…for the sole use and benefit of the Indian to whom such allotment shall have been made.”[5]

Once government employees divided the reservation amongst tribal members, any surplus acreage would be surveyed and appraised at no more than “one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre.”[6] The local land-office handled sales, and, “each purchaser of any said lands at such sale” were “entitled to purchase one hundred and sixty acres of untimbered lands and an additional tract of forty acres of timbered lands, and no more.”[7] While private acreage might benefit farming interests, specifically settlers looking to purchase surplus reservation lands to grow wheat, barley and other goods, it threatened widespread ranching.[8] After all, solidified property lines did not promote free-range livestock. In this case, it seemed white ranchers sided with Indigenous community members who advocated “in keeping the reservation as it is.”[9]

Of course, this outcry against privatization primarily benefited select white interests. While most of the Confederated Tribes’ population refuted government intervention to ward off land dispossession, the 1885 Commissioner of Indian Affairs report also hinted at internal pressures from white spouses of Indigenous members and “mixed-bloods.”[10] As stated by Indian agent Sommerville, “the true reason for the hostility of the mixed-bloods [specifically their white partners] is, that their tenure on the land they occupy at present is rather uncertain, as they are

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[5] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, 270.

[6] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, 270.

[7] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, 271.

[8] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, 169-170.

[9] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, 169-170.

[10] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, 169.

here on instructions from the honorary Commissioner of Indian Affairs."[11] On the other side of the spectrum, white ranchers fiercely opposed allotment interventions in fear of losing their ranging "privileges"—because private land equaled "protected" property.[12] Although the allotment bill also guaranteed "a reasonable amount of pasture" for grazing purposes, this measure was only offered to Indigenous allottees—not settler purchasers.[13] Consequently, both parties seemed to have a profound impact on the Confederated Tribes' Council, who subsequently refused to sign any allotment agreement with government representatives in 1885, citing their need to finish the farming season and then gather the entire community for an official vote.[14] As agent Sommerville observed:

> The provisions of this most excellent, fair, and just bill were ably and intelligently explained and interpreted to the Indians…and as I believe, were fully understood by them at the time as well as at the present. They however, after some speaking and deliberation on the matter, asked through their chiefs and head men for some little time to deliberate on the matter themselves, which was granted.[15]

Because tribal consent was necessary, government officials conceded after the Council assured another meeting between US representatives and Indigenous members in three months.[16] However acting Indian agent Sommerville and other officials doubted the outcome. Again citing external and internal pressures from white ranching interests and continued discontent from tribal

[11] OIA, A*nnual Report*, 1885, 170.

[12] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, 169-170.

[13] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, 270.

[14] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, 170, 169.

[15] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, 169.

[16] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, 169, lxxi

community members, the Office of Indian Affairs observed that the Confederated Tribes appeared "strongly disposed to reject the proposition entirely."[17] Since colonial officials acted as the middle ground between the reservation and the Office of Indian Affairs, the reports concerning this event—including the Council's opinions about allotment—should be considered with skepticism. Understanding that reservation employees assumed most reservation members wanted individual, private plots, the widespread objection revealed gaps in communication between the Confederated Tribes and the US government; whether out of ignorance or general apathy remains uncertain.[18]

While agent Sommerville and other government employees perceived white interests as the main reason for the community's hesitancy toward land privatization, continued land sovereignty and a reluctance to lose acreage to white neighbors also prompted criticism of allotment.[19] By 1884, growing immigration caused concern. In fact, "almost every piece of land of any value in Umatilla County has been located on," wrote Sommerville, and the reservation was a source of deep longing for many ambitious colonial neighbors.[20] Although private property might prevent squatter and livestock interventions for a time, permanent land titles did not solve white ranchers' land dispute with farmers.[21]

As agriculture slowly transformed prime grazing fields into neat rows of melons, grains, and vegetables, livestock mobility in Umatilla County decreased. In fact, newspapers such as the *Heppner Weekly Gazette* speculated that Eastern Oregon was losing its title of "stock country" to

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[17] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, Ixxii.

[18] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1882, 143-144; OIA, *Annual Report,* 1884, 147.

[19] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1884, 147; Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 88.

[20] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1884, 147; OIA, *Annual Report*, 1880, 146.

[21] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1885, 270.

Western Oregon.[22] Some believed that cattle raising "as a separate and distinct occupation must be given up" in lieu of a dual farming and stock-raising approach.[23] Cattlemen blamed this decrease in profits on new settlers looking for their own private properties to plant crops.[24] As the *East Oregonian* editorialized:

> The large and fertile ranges, covered with the succulent bunchgrass, which were the empire of the cattle king in the long ago, are gradually being invaded and monopolized by the settler, fenced in and plowed, and soon not only every foot of available ground, but bunchgrass, itself, will have disappeared as far as the cattle owner is concerned.[25]

This tension between white farmers and ranchers added another layer of complexity to this story. Frequently, agriculture and ranching worked in tandem. The former provided oats, hay, and other foods for livestock, while the latter played a fundamental role in staking Euro-American land claims for development.[26] In this scenario, cooperation between the two industries seemed precarious, especially with agriculture becoming a lucrative reason for settlers to emigrate to Umatilla County.[27] Although the future looked grim for white ranchers, they celebrated the postponement of reservation allotment. The years ahead saw the slow transformation of the Confederated Tribes from a communal to allotted region, but for now,

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[22] "Discussion," *Heppner Weekly Gazette,* April 10, 1890.

[23] "The Empire of the Cattle King, Fast Fading Away," *East Oregonian*, January 11, 1889.

[24] "The Empire of the Cattle King," *East Oregonian*, 1889.

[25] "The Empire of the Cattle King," *East Oregonian*, 1889.

[26] Elliot West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 250, 252-253.

[27] "A Territory of Great Fertility," *East Oregonian*, March 12, 1881.

Euro-American livestock continued to skirt borders and enjoy lush fields of bunch grass. Unknown to those grazing animals, agrarian ideologies would soon replace them.

Struggling to meet the demands of the Confederated Tribes, as well as white farmers and ranchers, agent Sommerville expressed dismay in his 1885 report to the Office of Indian Affairs. Before these conflicts, the Umatilla Allotment Act seemed perfect. Aware of outside influences, including desperate white ranchers who frequently used the reservation as optimal rangeland, the government and Native representatives spent long hours negotiating during two meetings held in 1885. In fact, one newspaper stated the group ate and slept in "a large hall for a week" in attempt to make a deal; fearing unnecessary tension and interference, the Confederated Tribes members "had been requested not to leave the building for fear they might be influenced by agitators."[28] However, despite continued pressures from the Indian agent and settlers during these meetings, the Confederated Tribes Council refused the allotment legislation. At least, for a moment.

In October 1886, the federal Commission once again met with the Council. After several days of deliberation, the community representatives agreed with the provisions outlined in the Umatilla Allotment Act. While the resident Indian agent admitted some members of the Confederated Tribe protested the decision, sources outlining the vote and the number of those against the decision remain unclear. No matter how controversial, tribal consent allowed the implementation of allotment—and, in result, began a new chapter of change and adaptation on the reservation. However, as James Kennedy noted, "neither the Indians or the negotiators could have been aware of the many problems that would develop. The [early] optimism expressed at the council table was destined to vanish as rapidly as the Indians' land resource base."[29]

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[28] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 89; Oliphant, "Encroachments of Cattlemen," 45.

[29] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 90; OIA, *Annual Report,* 1887, 191.

By April 1891, the diminishment of tribal lands began in earnest.[30] Despite the implementation of a national allotment policy in 1887, the federal government still enforced the privatization model agreed upon during the 1885 council meetings.[31] Primarily targeting agricultural lands, the Umatilla Allotment Act was quite similar to the national legislation. Both provided twenty five-year patents, held the surplus-sale funds in the U.S. Treasury—some of which would go toward education and agriculture—and allowed allottees to select their own land parcels.[32] One major difference, however, was the enforcement of citizenship.

When negotiating the Umatilla bill, council members stipulated the exclusion of citizenship rights. According to Indian agent Lee Moorhouse, the imposition of this credential—instigated by the General Allotment Act of 1887—significantly contributed to the reservation's privatization delay.[33] "The chiefs…have been resorting to every devise [sic] they can conceive to delay the work…[because] as soon as the Indian are allotted they become citizens, their tribal customs and usages will become a memory of the past."[34] This, along with the Umatilla Agency's approach toward surplus sales, created incredible confusion.

While prominent members of the Confederated Tribes resisted additions to the Umatilla Act, settlers benefited from the federal government's motivation to diminish the reservation. Before the communities had the opportunity to select their parcels, the federal government

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[30] Kennedy, 91; also see OIA, *Annual Report*, 1891, 378.

[31] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1890, xliv.

[32] U.S. Congress, *Umatilla Allotment Act of 1885,* Forty-eighth Cong., 2d sess., 23 Stat. 340; U.S. Congress, House, General Allotment Act of 1887, Forty-nineth Congress, 2d sess., 24 Stat. 388. According to the Umatilla Allotment Act legislation, the federal government promised to allocate twenty percent of the funds made from surplus sales toward settling families on their allotments; another $20,000 would go toward the Umatilla Boarding school and farming advancement.

[33] OIA, *Annual Report,* 1891, 378.

[34] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1891, 378.

allowed the sale of surplus acreage to white settlers. According to Moorhouse, the sales office sold about twenty-five thousand acres of agriculture lands for a total of $210,000.[35] While the Office of Indian Affairs guaranteed all proceeds would be held in trust for the Confederated Tribes' "advancement," a significant portion of the land was "sold at prices below fair market value."[36] Thus, it was only after settlers—especially farmers—selected their choice plots that privatization commenced for the Confederated Tribes.

When analyzing this seemingly backward approach to allotment, one must consider the—once again—difficult situation reservation employees navigated during this period of intense change. Indian agents had multiple groups to please. If the federal government allowed the Confederated Tribes to select their land parcels first, Indigenous ownership would be "scattered" over a considerable—rather than contained— area. If this occurred, officials feared that the dispersed allotments might hinder surplus land sales, which required adequate acreage.[37] To ensure the choicest agricultural lands went to white farmers and entrepreneurs, Indians agents allowed settlers to go first, with the supposed beneficiaries chosen last.

In the end, the events leading up to the Umatilla Allotment Act seemed primarily aimed toward pleasing white settler ambitions. With agricultural enhancement on the minds of farmers and the Office of Indian Affairs, Indian agents attempted to gain the Confederated Tribes' consent, while also balancing various—and contradicting—goals. To the consternation of white farmers, several delays occurred in the federal government's allotment plan. Between the additional complications of citizenship and white ranchers' struggle to maintain the benefits of

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[35] OIA, *Annual Report*, 1891, 379. Settlers could purchase up to 160 acres of untimbered, farming land and 40 acres of timbered land; for more information, see OIA, *Annual Report*, 1890, l.

[36] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 91, 96.

[37] Kennedy, "The Umatilla Reservation," 96.

encroachment, the Confederated Tribes did not officially allot until 1891. However, privatization primarily benefited the privileged. Trying to contain Indigenous private lands to a small area, settlers had the opportunity to select their 160-acre plots before the Umatilla, Cayuse, and Walla Walla peoples.

By doing this, the Office of Indian Affairs hoped to limit the sprawl of Native ownership to benefit settler farming interests. Thus, throughout this entire period, it seemed only one group truly thrived—at the expense of the Confederated Tribes and, to a lesser extent, white ranchers. Euro-American farmers, and other settlers, purchased over twenty-five thousand acres of reservation farming land at, in many cases, very low rates. Despite experiencing years of government intervention and enforced policies to either “improve” or demote the Confederated Tribes’ educational, farming, and pastoral policies, nothing could prepare for this moment of extreme loss.

CONCLUSION

THE FUTURE OF THE UMATILLA ALLOTMENT ACT

By all standards, the reservation was not prepared for privatization. In their rush to solve Umatilla County's "Indian problem," agents attempted to implement several pre-allotment policies with the hopes of transitioning the Confederated Tribes into individual land-owning farmers. Steeped in civilization rhetoric, the Office of Indian Affair believed the introduction of a comprehensive education system, intensive agriculture, and the diminishment of livestock ranching would promote individualism and self-reliance, two important characteristics for successful landowners. However, these efforts limited the reservations ability to evade colonial ambitions to divide the reservation.

In their attempt to prove the Confederated Tribes met assimilation credentials, Umatilla Indian agents navigated limited government funding, deteriorating job stability, and rising settler-Indigenous conflicts to introduce allotment. Understanding the benefits of gaining the Office of Indian Affairs interest—including monetary investment for infrastructure maintenance and supplies—reservation employees argued that education and the construction of a local boarding institution would increase the community's progress toward privatization. In addition, colonial entities hoped the presence of a school encouraged children to learn the necessary skills to perform manual labor and prosper as American citizens, all of which the government considered necessary for successful allottees.

However, in their efforts to show the benefits of a reservation school, Indian agents frequently exaggerated their success to the Office of Indian Affairs. This was especially evident when inspectors learned of the school's deteriorating condition and overall lack of student attendance. Because Federal Indian policy's approach to education and agriculture went hand-in-

hand, low attendance rates presumably equated to less opportunities for younger—and older—generations to learn the skills needed to manage private acreage and participate in the growing agricultural market.

Farming was a central aspect of assimilation rhetoric in the nineteenth century. Thus, it was implemented throughout US boarding schools and reservations during the pre-allotment era—with many Indian agents using it to bolster their privatization goals. Before 1880, the Umatilla, Cayuse, and Walla Walla peoples primarily practiced subsistence farming, along with a continued reliance on traditional modes of food acquisition such as fishing, gathering, and hunting. But, as white immigration increased, agriculture soon became a source of agency against land loss.

Nonetheless, the transition from small-scale farms to intensive agriculture on the Confederated Tribes reservation soon drew the eyes of surrounding settlers, who considered the reservation as prime agricultural lands within Umatilla County. This contributed to increased encroachment and calls for privatization as many farmers hoped to also take part in the United States' agrarian empire narrative. Even Indian agents found themselves overwhelmed at the confrontational nature of white farmers and soon somewhat regretted introducing commercial agriculture to the reservation.

Despite an increase in crop production within the communities, many Indigenous members participated in other economic ventures, including pastoralism. Respected for their skill in horse- and cattle-raising, the Confederated Tribes benefited a great deal from their savvy trade enterprise before allotment. However, with the introduction of wide-spread agrarian models throughout Umatilla County in the late nineteenth-century, the community faced economic difficulties as horse sales plummeted, with many settlers instead choosing more durable animals

to work the farms. This prompted the next phase in the eventual privatization of the reservation: the slow decline of livestock opportunities. While this era would last well-into the 1890s, the period from 1880 to 1885 proved significant because of the solidification of reservation boundaries.

With most Confederated Tribes members living on the reservation by this time, Indian agents labored to keep them there as sedentary farmers. This led to reduced ranching opportunities outside the Confederated Tribes territory, and thus, overgrazing problems. These conflicts, coupled with plummeting livestock prices, created a grim narrative for the reservation. It only continued as white ranchers seemingly benefited from unstopped encroachment onto optimal grazing areas within the community. Surprisingly, this dispute among settlers later benefited the Confederated Tribes as they continued their fight against severalty.

White ranchers despised allotment. With privatization came borders and law-protected ownership rights. After prospering from encroachment, ranchers turned on their neighboring farmers and advocated against the federal government's decision to allot the Confederated Tribes—so much so, that the legislation was even prevented for a time. From this chapter in Umatilla County's history, we learn that perhaps settlers were not as united in the taking of Indigenous lands as previously believed.

Although the reservation soon endured many of the difficulties experienced by multiple Indigenous nations years later, this pre-allotment experiment teaches us several important lessons. First, the Office of Indian Affairs put a monumental emphasis on the civilization theory when outlining the requirements of Indigenous allotment in the nineteenth century. Believing Native Americans needed to reach a certain level of "advancement" before privatization, they enlisted Indian agents to impose assimilatory tactics on reservations, including the Confederated

Tribes. However, theory and action were two completely different realities. In their attempt to transition a supposedly vulnerable community—threatened by growing white encroachment—onto government-protected properties, Indian agents allowed the implementation of a faulty education model, a commercial agriculture system that encouraged further settler interests, and a policy against pastoralism—encouraged by agrarian politics—that choked out other forms of economic sovereignty.

Together, these defective management tactics created few options for the Confederated Tribes. If anything, it produced instability as community members were not only pitted against each other, but settlers as well, only to be thrown unprepared into a corrupted allotment system that altogether favored white interests. However, it should be noted that despite the continued impacts of settler colonialism, the Confederated Tribes remained resolute against privatization—and land loss—for years, much to the consternation of Indian agents.

While we can infer many examples of resistance during this period, one must also acknowledge the sheer lack of sources on the Confederated Tribes' perspective from 1880 to 1885. Throughout this pre-allotment phase, Indian agents cared more about listing their accomplishments and trials, rather than discussing community members' opinions and experiences. Perhaps this was because, at this time, allotment legislation required community consent, which—as we have learned—was lacking early-on.

Understanding these silences as a product of settler colonialism, it is difficult to infer how the Umatilla, Cayuse, and Walla Walla reacted to pre-allotment policies in the late nineteenth century. But by taking a micro-historical approach and attempting to read against the grain of colonial perceptions, we can recover pathways of Indigenous resistance, adaptability, and survivance. All of which continue to this day.

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