Making Nebraska: The Pawnee, The United States, and the Transformation of Space, 1803-1854

Ethan Reavis Bennett
Washington University in St. Louis

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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS
Department of History

Dissertation Examination Committee:
Peter J. Kastor, Chair
Iver Bernstein
Elizabeth Borgwardt
Christine Johnson
Abram van Engen

Making Nebraska:
The Pawnee, The United States, and the Transformation of Space, 1803-1854
by
Ethan Reavis Bennett

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of Washington University in
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Abbreviations

**ASP:IA**  
*American State Papers: Indian Affairs*

**ASP:MA**  
*American State Papers: Military Affairs*

**LROIA: CS**  
Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs: Central Superintendency

**LROIA: CBA**  
Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs: Council Bluffs Agency

**LROIA: StLS**  
Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs: St. Louis Superintendency

**LROIA: WS**  
Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs: Western Superintendency

**LROIA: UMA**  
Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs: Upper Missouri Agency

**NA: RG 107, SecWarLR**  
National Archives: Record Group 107, Letters Received by the Secretary of War. Registered Series, 1801-1870

**PML**  
Richard Jensen, ed. *The Pawnee Mission Letters, 1834-1851*

Note on Spelling

All quotations retain the original, idiosyncratic spelling and grammar.
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Ethan Reavis Bennett

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Making Nebraska:
The Pawnee, The United States, and the Transformation of Space, 1803-1854

By

Ethan Reavis Bennett
Doctor of Philosophy in History
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Professor Peter J. Kastor, Chair

Making Nebraska is a history of foreign relations and power politics between the Pawnee confederacy and the United States over the control and governance of the greater Platte Valley between 1803 and 1854. These groups never fought a war, but struggled over the meaning and use of power to control space at a transitional moment of North American history. While nominally part of the United States post-1803, the region remained outside the federal territorial system. Yet, this space was central to larger strategic and policy concerns over Indian Removal, territorial expansion, and the survival of the Pawnee as a nation. The struggles to create Nebraska reveal the hollowness of federal pretensions to continental dominance or hemispheric authority. The United States pushed its frontier, only for the space, and its Pawnee residents to push back. Leaders on both sides scrambled to make sense of their place at this interstitial moment in a space neither could fully control. The bilateral relationship forged new understandings of power politics on the Great Plains.

This was not a story of settler colonialism, or of outright military conquest, but of a struggle between two rising powers and the results of extended diplomatic contact. Whether
state power and authority were fixed at specific sites like Fort Atkinson at the Council Bluffs or mobile and expansive with far-ranging cavalry forces determined the narratives of control.

Pawnee leaders used their military power to counter federal policies regarding Indian Removal and shape the development of the region as an Indian Territory. Pawnee power made the future Oklahoma, not Nebraska, Indian Territory. The crises of Sioux invasions, federal efforts to limit Pawnee mobility, and the social crisis of disease forced the Pawnee to recalibrate their strategic understandings of themselves and the spaces in which they lived. By adapting to the military world of the plains, federal officials limited the Pawnee ability to set the strategic framework of regional diplomacy. By containing Pawnee military power and refusing diplomatic overtures for alliances against the Sioux, the United States curbed independent Pawnee foreign and military policy. By the 1850s, Pawnee leaders looked to fixed notions of defense for national survival, while federal leaders adapted to a mobile military capable of enforcing an expansive, continental vision of control. Nebraska became Nebraska because the United States developed the mechanisms for and visions of the military domination of space.
Prologue

It was a damp, cold day in March. The kind of day where the sun does not bother to come out. It stayed hidden behind a uniformly gray wall of clouds that obscure any sense of warmth and make you regret being outdoors. The kind of day where the weather hits your bones. The kind where you can feel small, miserable, and alone, even in the best of company. It was that day I first walked the grounds and reconstructed buildings at Fort Atkinson (active 1819-1827) in the tiny town of Fort Calhoun, Nebraska.

A mere seventeen miles north of Omaha, the site is now a state park with trails, a visitor center, the partly reconstructed fort and Indian agency, memorial to Lewis and Clark’s meeting with the Omaha and Otoe, and a monument to the hundreds of U.S. soldiers who died of scurvy, exposure, and other diseases during the disastrous winter of 1819-20. Here, 1,120 men of the Yellowstone Expedition got stranded at the site due to poor planning, bad equipment, negligent contractors, and unrealistic expectations from the War Department. The visitor center was closed for the season. No one else was foolish enough to be walking around.

Image 1: Approaching Fort Atkinson from the west. Author's photograph, 2014
The fort sits squat and low as one approaches over the field from the west, rising little more than a single-story house. A simple square of wooden barracks, storerooms, and offices with walls cut with musket-firing loops barely enclose a large parade ground on the bluffs above the Missouri River. Formerly the channel flowed right below the fort giving the garrison a command of the river and a more imposing authority as one approached from the bottom of the bluffs. Shifting currents pushed the river more than three miles away since 1820.

The fort was once one of the premier military posts of the United States with one of its largest garrisons and the westernmost outpost of federal power on the continent. It was the gateway to the fur trade of the Rockies, the burgeoning trade with Santa Fe, and diplomatic missions to dozens of Native American nations. It was really a large town. At its height nearly 1,000 residents called it home, mostly enlisted men and officers of the U.S. Army, with a scattering of civilians in the Indian agency, sutlers, artisans, and their families. Walking the grounds that day made all of it hard to imagine. The buildings are simple, even crude.

I felt a deep sense of isolation on that cold day. One could easily imagine a solitary infantryman on guard duty feeling very alone in the world. He was 200 miles from the nearest American settlement. He was surrounded by people in the midst of major political and social upheavals. His nearest neighbors were potential enemies. He was only a few days ride from thousands of Pawnee warriors and not much more from the Sioux. What story did he tell himself about his place in this foreign world? What did he think his mission was? How did he and his contemporaries in the officers’ mess, the Indian agency, and the Pawnee villages make sense of the profound collisions and reformulations going on about them? This dissertation attempts to tell those stories by understanding the spatial transformations at work at this site and the Platte River Valley more broadly from the late-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries.
Two Maps of Pawnee Lands: 1718 and 1856

Image 2:

Guillaume de L'Isle, *Carte de la Louisiane et du cours du Mississipi i.e. Mississippi: dressée sur un grand nombre de mémoires entrautres sur ceux de Mr. le Maire. Paris: Chez l'auteur le Sr. Delisle sur le quay de l'horloge avec privilege du roy*, 1718. The upper left shows the Pawnee, though is limited on the detail of their location, strength, or even names. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress: Geography and Maps Division. https://www.loc.gov/item/2001624908/
“Nibraskier” or Nebraska, the Shallow Stream, English adventurer Sir Richard F. Burton told his readers, preserved the “musical and picturesque aboriginal term” for what voyageurs labeled La Platte, the Flat River. The scenery disappointed the globe-trotting traveler as one “of remarkable sameness: its singularity in this point affects the memory . . . bounded on both sides by low, rolling, sandy hills, thinly vegetated.”¹ Beyond the river, the soil was “either sandy, quickly absorbing water, or it is a hard, cold, unwholesome clay, which long retains muddy pools, black with decayed vegetation, and which often, in the lowest levels, becomes a mere marsh.” After an expensive 75-cent breakfast of “vile bread and viler coffee,” at Kearny Station which made him dearly miss his time in Egypt, Burton got moving, quickly.² He was not impressed. Nebraska was merely a burden to pass through as quickly as possible. It was boring, fetid, and unfarmable, with terrible, overpriced coffee. One could imagine him agreeing with the pejorative label of fly-over country. Little did he know the struggles over the spaces through which he travelled and the efforts to create the place he so easily dismissed as useless.

² Burton, City of the Saints, 34-5.
Yet, he recognized the centrality of the Platte to the United States’ continental expansion well-underway by the time he visited in 1860. The river valley was a gateway westward and principal route for travelers to Oregon by the 1840s. Fort Kearny and Fort Laramie extended federal authority along the road and separated the Pawnee to the north and their traditional enemies to the west and south. It “is doubtless the most important western influent of the Mississippi,” Burton argued, “at present the traveler can cross the 300 or 400 miles of desert between the settlements in the east and the populated parts of the western mountains by its broad highway, with never failing supplies of water, and, in places, fuel.”3 Here was the problem for federal officials and white settlers imagining their place in the central plains: it was a space both central to geopolitical concerns over expansion and power, yet peripheral to common notions of a useful, habitable place. The creation of this space took eons. The creation of the Nebraska Burton saw took two generations.

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3 Burton, City of the Saints, 33.
This creation story exists in a world between two maps. The first map—“Carte de la Louisiane et du cours du Mississipi” by Guillaume de L'Isle from 1718—is one of the earliest French maps of the Louisiana territory that charts the Missouri River as high as possibly present-day Montana. Centered in the upper left are notations for “les Panis” and “les Panimaha.” They are an identified, but nebulously understood people occupying a space at the edge of French knowledge. This is clearly Pawnee space. Their villages are the prominent markers along the “Riv. des Panis,” the Pawnee River, now known as the Platte.4


The second map—“Kansas and Nebraska, 1856” by Sidney Morse and Samuel Gaston of New York—was owned by President Millard Fillmore and shows a conception of the same space.

138 years later. Arkansas, Missouri, and Iowa are states. The new territories of Kansas and Nebraska are being organized and simultaneously torn apart in the prelude to Civil War. North of the Platte River, Oregon Trail, and Fort Kearny, the Pawnee label denotes a people still very much present in the landscape. This was still the Pawnee homeland, but now it was bounded, known, and increasingly isolated by an expansive federal state concerned about the far West and Pacific coast.  

Maps present narratives of political power as they tell stories about how to interpret space and who controls the land. These maps present a singular story of spatial transformation where European empires and the United States expanded into the continental interior, conquered it, and mapped it as their own.

This is a false narrative that presents continental changes and the Native American dispossession of their lands as a \textit{fait accompli}. Conceptions of the West or the frontier are


similar narrative inventions. “History created them,” as Richard White argues. To understand the transformation of the greater Platte Valley requires understanding the narratives created during the process and represented on these maps.

This dissertation examines the relationship of two broadly defined groups: Pawnee leaders and federal officials. These groups included Pawnee chiefs like Petalesharoo and Sharitarish, and U.S. officials like Superintendent of Indian Affairs William Clark, Indian agents like his nephew Benjamin O’Fallon or John Dougherty, and army officers like Henry Atkinson. Together, representatives from both groups shaped the regional and continental changes at work in North America in the early-nineteenth century. The Sioux, Omaha, Osage, Otoe, Cheyenne, Arikara, Kiowa, Comanche, as well as fur traders, missionaries, Spaniards, Mexicans, and others all figure into the story of the region, but it is these two groups—Pawnee leaders and federal officials—that provide the main focal point. They led two political powers claiming authority over the greater Platte Valley. The Pawnee never fought a war with the United States, putting them at odds with the familiar story of plains Indian wars in the latter-half of the nineteenth century. By the 1860s, Pawnee auxiliaries even campaigned alongside the United States Army against the Sioux. This project examines a people and place that do not fit the traditional narrative of federal-Native American interactions on the Great Plains. It is neither a story of war, nor of abject decline and conquest, but of political choices about the usage of space and the strategic consequences of those decisions.

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8 While important to understanding the deeply violent encounters of the United States and Native Americans of the West, narratives of conquest do not fully account for the complexities of independent Native American power. These narratives often see Native Americans merely as victims, rather than co-equal partners in shaping the history of the West. For nations like the Pawnee, who never fought the United States and at times served with the U.S. Army in the wars of the later-nineteenth century, this model of victim of imperialism does not fit. Jeffrey Ostler, The Plains Sioux and U. S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); David J. Wishart, An Unspeakable Sadness: The Dispossession of the Nebraska Indians (Lincoln:
The Chatiks si chatiks, the men of men as the Pawnee know themselves, occupied semi-permanent earth-lodge villages on the Platte, Loup, and Republican Rivers in present-day Nebraska and northern Kansas. The four bands, Skidi (Skiri or Loup), Chaui (Chawi, Asking-for-Meat, or Grand), Kitkahahki (Little Earthlodge or Republican), and Pitahawirata (Mangoing-Downstream, East or Tappages) formed a confederacy that by 1750 controlled the Platte Valley. Even as the bands maintained significant autonomy, the Pawnee could fight simultaneous wars at all compass points and range into Spanish Mexico.\footnote{Throughout the period, the Pawnee faced threats and setbacks as they balanced conflicts with their competitors and the increasing pressures wrought by federal Removal policy. Military and economic threats against the Pawnee came from multiple directions, but through diplomacy and warfare they preserved their independence and bargaining power to shape regional politics through the 1840s. Of their numerous regional competitors, none were as persistent or dangerous as the various Sioux peoples whose expansion after 1800 most directly threatened the Pawnee. In the face of mounting pressures, the Pawnee nonetheless remained a commanding polity in the region.}

Wishart’s work is the first major one to address this type non-violent conflict between the United States and Native Americans for the Kansas-Platte River systems. He focuses on the market relationships between the Pawnee, Omaha, Otoe-Missouria, Ponca, and whites, but the Pawnee do not fit well within this group. Pawnee military, economic, and diplomatic power as well as territorial claims far exceeded that of their immediate neighbors. Ned Blackhawk, \textit{Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); Judith A. Boughter, \textit{Betraying the Omaha Nation, 1790-1916} (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998); Marth Royce Blaine, \textit{The Iowa Indians} (1975, reprinted Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), especially 139-203.

When possible, I use the Pawnee names of the specific bands rather than more common Anglicized version to reflect the people’s own sense of identity. While generally united in a confederacy, they remained socially and political autonomous. An exception was in foreign policy as they appeared to be more united in the face of outside threats than not. This did not mean a united imperial political entity on par with Pekka Hämäläinen’s conception of a Comanche empire, but it did mean a general consensus on broad-stroke policy goals, social norms, and actions in the face of outsiders. I use Pawnee as a blanket term when thinking about the larger policies and actions affecting the entire nation. I use band to refer to the individual subgroup such as the Chaui, while nation is reserved for the Pawnee as a whole. Rather than tribe, nation denotes the sense of social, cultural, and political identity of a unified, generally homogeneous people. A mixed Euro-Pawnee population existed with the Pawnee, but it seems that they generally considered themselves to be Pawnee. Richard White, \textit{The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 147-51, 362, nos. 4-5; Mark van de Logt, \textit{War Party in Blue: Pawnee Scouts in the U.S. Army} (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 13-14, 249, nos. 4-5.
The term federal officials is similarly a sweeping catch-all of those who claimed governmental authority and jurisdiction. This group includes the United States Army, both enlisted personnel and officers; various explorers and scientists on government missions; and a variety of War Department personnel tasked with Indian affairs. Like the Pawnee, these Americans had their own internal political autonomy and competing agendas even though the Army and Indian Bureau both reported to the Secretary of War. Yet both these groups shared a broad unity in the face of external opposition, reinforcing their own political and cultural identities. Federal officials consistently overestimated their capabilities and power to shape the Platte Valley from the initial forays after 1803 through the 1840s. The lack of direct military power and inability to control trade or enforce regulations limited what these officials could do to reshape the region. Persistent fears of a regional, multi-party war continually upset efforts to assert federal sovereignty over the region and transform the space through the 1840s. Federal officials had to learn about their limitations within the space they claimed to govern.

Indian Removal, the forced migration of Native American nations from the East to a newly created Indian Territory west of the Mississippi, serves as a fulcrum for the relationship between the Pawnee and the United States. The displacement of Native Americans and establishment of federal sovereignty were long-standing, broad policies dating from the creation of the United States. Removal became formally articulated and carried out to its most horrific extent during and immediately following the administration of President Andrew Jackson. While not directed at the Pawnee, Removal reshaped the Pawnee world by introducing new neighbors and political and economic pressures. The federal presence in the Platte Valley expanded with efforts to secure a regional peace and place for the forced migrants in the West. Pawnee adaptations and responses to these diplomatic challenges shaped their relationships to
the United States, as well as their old and new neighbors. Both the Pawnee and the United States struggled to understand each other’s intentions, capabilities, and their own limitations as they collided over the status of the Platte Valley and their relationship.

In tracing the relationships among the polities operating in the Platte Valley, this dissertation asks one fundamental question: How did Nebraska become Nebraska? Between the Louisiana Purchase and the creation of a Nebraska Territory in 1854, this space largely remained outside the regular federal system of territorial expansion created in the 1780s. Why did it not remain Pawnee land, or transform into an Indian Territory as many federal officials envisioned in the 1820s and 1830s? What did government look like on the Great Plains, in the Platte Valley in particular, and at the interstitial points of contact between polities? How did people understand their relationship to space through their lived experiences as members of a political society?

The key to answering these questions lies in understanding the roots of political power in the region. By examining the forts, council sites, villages, and larger zones of inter-racial and inter-ethnic contact between the regionally dominant powers of the United States and the Pawnee, and their neighbors, this dissertation argues that political power was military power. Government was militarized. It was a place where the state writ large was a martial one, dependent on conceptions of individual martial masculinity and collective ability to harness military power in the furtherance of foreign policy. Men derived their authority from military positions, battlefield exploits, or their ability to command the service of others to understand their place as independent men. Their societies deployed these notions of martial authority to further political aims, be they federal claims of sovereignty or jurisdiction or Pawnee ability to control hunting grounds and defend their homes. The zones of intercultural contact were
therefore necessarily militarized ones, governed by a broadly understood ethos of the martial male.

It bears repeating, however, that this was not a region consumed by open warfare between the United States and the Pawnee. Rather, as in so many long-running standoffs before and after, the militarized culture of the Platte Valley emerged in a period of intense and extended militarized diplomatic exchanges punctuated by brief periods of violent military conflict.

The Platte Valley between the Louisiana Purchase and the creation of the Nebraska Territory then is a space outside the traditional narrative of federal political expansion. It was a place run by codes of hierarchical martial masculinity at odds with the democratization of United States political culture. Likewise, it was at odds with prevailing notions of territorial expansion, which operated through the development of political institutions and incorporation. How each polity understood those martial systems in relation to their place on the landscape differed, but the Pawnee and United States operated within the broad framework of military governance where power ultimately came from the ability to deploy force either in actual combat, utilizing threats of war, or setting narratives about their own military prowess.

In understanding the regional governance system as one of martial power, this dissertation questions the notion of spatial transformation in the North American interior. Rather than borderlands becoming bordered lands in a transition from empires to states, this story is one of transformation from a bordered land with one government and conception of power, to a borderland of competing ideas and governors within broadly similar conceptions of power, and back to a bordered land with the replacement of Pawnee for federal sovereignty.10

The story of the Platte Valley before 1854 predates the history of settler colonialism in Nebraska. The United States was too weak to remove, conquer, or juridically eliminate the Native Americans who lived there. As Michael Witgen writes, “Settler colonialism . . . seeks an end or completion of the colonial project via the elimination of the indigenous population and its replacement by a settler population.”11 Only after nearly thirty years of federal failures could such a process take place in the Platte Valley, through events beyond the full control of either federal or Pawnee leaders. Settler colonialism is the end, not the beginning of the story.

The transformation of a bordered land to borderland and of two independent powers to a settler colonial system explains how the Pawnee became close allies of the United States. The alliance came too late to preserve Pawnee lands and independence, precisely the point of a settler colonialism that placed a new value on the Pawnee as a military power that could serve as an ally in U.S. conflicts. Whether by intent or accident, the story of the Platte Valley explains how federal authorities incorporated a similarly martial people into the expanded federal state in the latter-half of the nineteenth century.

Rather than a brief hesitation on an inexorable march westward, the struggles to create Nebraska reveal the hollowness of federal pretensions to continental power at the moment the United States projected an image of hemispheric authority against European interference and made claims to the Pacific coast. Histories of federal westward expansion reveal several moments when the United States discovered the limitations of its ability to control people, land, and project power. Well-known are 1790s in the Old Northwest, the 1840s and 1850s along the southern borderlands, wars against the peoples of the northern Great Plains, as well as the geographic limitations of the arid West. The struggle to define the space of the Platte Valley is another such moment. The United States pushed its frontier, and the Pawnee pushed back.

This dissertation discusses the history of Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma, but it does not mean the narrative road leads to the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Oklahoma land rush as either inevitable or central to the regional history examined herein. Those events are peripheral results of the contest for control of the Platte Valley and different chapters of a regional political history of the United States, rather than a diplomatic history of two polities on the Great Plains. This dissertation focuses on the region as a site of dynamic intercultural contact and intercultural politics involving the Pawnee, the United States, and their neighbors. That story, of the bilateral relationship of militarized diplomacy, is a self-contained one separate from the fundamentally Euro-American story of sectional conflict and white settlement within the United States. That latter narrative of settler colonialism and sectional strife marks the beginning of a different regional history, one that appears only after a fundamental change in the political relationship between the Pawnee and the United States over military power on the Great Plains.

Transforming the Platte Valley into Nebraska occurred at a moment in U.S. foreign relations and Indian policy that is largely absent from the historiographies of both. Just as the
space was outside the federal territorial system, this period, in this place, is largely self-contained from the larger histories of the early republic or the antebellum era. It follows the collapse of centuries-old European imperial systems in North America and predates the appearance of a powerful U.S. military-administrative state in the West following the Mexican-American War. Many of the defining issues of these periods exist at or outside the margins of the Pawnee-United States relationship. Federal territorial expansion into the trans-Appalachian region, the expansion of slavery as a divisive national issue beginning with the Missouri Compromise, the Texas-Mexico-U.S.-Comanche conflict, and the Plains Indian wars informed, but did not determine the regional history. Yet this space was central to large strategic and policy concerns over Indian Removal or the survival of the Pawnee as a nation. Leaders on both sides scrambled to make sense of their place at this interstitial moment, in a space neither could fully control.

Both polities operated within a mutually understood notion of militarized political power. Governance in the greater Platte Valley is then about the clash of similarly powerful military states and who could best deploy their martial power to define the relationships of people to the landscape. This dissertation argues then, that North American state-building, at least in the Platte Valley, is a military history. Martial power created the values of an American West where military utility rather than republican ideologies formed the normative story of political incorporation of space.

Making sense of the Pawnee-U.S. relationship to each other and to the land they both sought to govern reveals the changing nature of sovereignty and the changing conceptions of space in the intertwined histories of the Great Plains, federal state-building, Indian policy, and westward expansion. All of this occurred during a transformative period at the shift from the early republic to the antebellum era. It was also a time of profound changes in Native American
life across the continent, with formalized Removal in the East, and the creation of Indian Territory in the West. All of these changes occurred within a political framework of martial masculinity. War and diplomacy were the purview of soldiers and warriors who shaped the space of the Platte and Missouri River Valleys between the Corps of Discovery under Lewis and Clark and the end of the Mexican-American War. The landscape was simultaneously the Great American Desert, a rich home for the Pawnee, or merely a pass through first to the Rocky Mountain fur trade, then to the bounties of Oregon and California until 1854, when it was fully incorporated into the federal system as the Nebraska Territory. Regional struggles over the meaning of power and control in these spaces were foundational, not marginal to larger narratives or power and control.

A case study of the Platte Valley in the second quarter of the nineteenth century suggests several larger trends for the history of North America. First, it shows that peripheral areas are often the historical centers. While the Platte Valley has largely been at the margins of traditional narratives of U.S. westward expansion, Indian Removal, and state-building, the Pawnee-U.S. relationship guided those histories. Second, the period reveals the fundamental instability of the rise of the nation-state and nationalism in North America. The United States, Pawnee, Comanche, and Sioux, were large, youthful, expansive polities that created instabilities across the continent as they grew. State-building, in the context of both Native and Euro-American polities, was a destabilizing continental process rather than a move toward the stability of robust fiscal-military-administrative government. Governments faced the limitations of their functionality. As the polities grew, so did the existential anxieties about the meaning of sovereign control, the contours of national identity, and concern about the integration of material

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things be they people, places, or objects of value. Territorial acquisition created more problems about what to do with spaces and peoples than the imposition of sovereignty solved. Third, in trying to find its place on the continent, the United States lost its initial claims to an identity of republican inclusivity. Being outside the federal territorial system until the 1850s, this period in the story of Nebraska prefigured the U.S. history of direct military conquest and imperial expansion seen in the latter-half of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries across the continental interior and eventually overseas. Expansion meant the development and deployment of illiberal brute force in the furtherance of racialized conceptions of nationhood, rather than republican ideology and political incorporation.

To see these trends, this dissertation examines a broadly-defined region and the minute sites where conflict took place: forts, council houses, villages. At these places, grand narratives of geopolitical power, authority, land use, and social organization gave meaning to and drew meaning from the larger landscape. Forts, councils, and villages are generally assumed to be areas of control where the dominant power sets the narratives and enforces their norms in older historiographies and the popular imagination. These places supposedly offered a clear line of demarcation, a fortified frontier that as Robert Athearn writes, “delineated two definite realms.” The fort thus becomes a cultural and historical simplifier by naturalizing an ideology of conquest and superiority. It is a false dichotomy to suggest such clear delineation between federal or Native American space or a heroic outpost of imperial changes in the midst of savage wilderness that dominated nineteenth and twentieth century historical and popular

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13 Many works on forts as places follow a battle and campaign model, emphasizing defenses, architecture, the lives of the soldiers, and military campaigns the garrisons participated in. Fur trading forts, the private outposts manned by various corporations such as Bent’s Fort near New Mexico or Fort Union high up the Missouri, are treated in a similar fashion in older histories. Robert G. Athearn, *Forts of the Upper Missouri* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), vii-viii; David Lavender, *Bent’s Fort* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1954).
As scholars like James Ronda, Douglas Comer, and Daniel Ingram have so powerfully argued, these places were local frontiers undergoing constant negotiation and reconfiguration over the nature of power and authority.

If space is the final frontier, then we must reimagine what the concept of space means here as part of the collective past of North America and a larger notion of American history. Philosopher Edward Casey suggests that space is an overly broad thing—a universal unity that fails “to locate things or events in any senses other than that of pinpointing positions on a planiform geometric or cartographic grid.” In contrast, place “situates, and it does so richly and diversely. It locates things in regions whose most complex expression is neither geometric nor cartographic.” Such a notion allows for the more complex relationships, especially of non-Western cultures to their locales in defining a sense of space and deriving or inscribing meaning onto that landscape. The distinction allows for a return to contingency in histories of the Great Plains where no outcome was inevitable.

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14 Popular culture placed value on the fort as the site of civilization in works like James Fenimore Cooper’s *Last of the Mohicans* or 20th-century Western films like *Fort Apache* or lesser known B-movies like *Fort Bowie*.


16 Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 201. In attempting to theorize space, French theorist Henri Lefebvre rejects a notion of space as “nothing more than the passive locus of social relations, the milieu in which their combination takes on body, or the aggregate of the procedures employed in their removal.” He sees the longer continuum of production as one of biology. Once a body starts to think about its own existence, it begins a creative process that produces space and eventually, if extrapolated, place. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 11, 169-228.

17 Andrew L. Cayton and Fredrika J. Teute, eds., *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), embodies this contingency of backcountry frontiers as hyper-local with diverse and changeable meanings.
space that mutually reinforced environment and human imagination.\textsuperscript{18} Space is a physical thing for all; place is the constantly changing meaning created for it.

Creating a place means ascribing a value. Patricia Nelson Limerick argues that, “the events of Western history represent, not a simple process of territorial expansion, but an array of efforts to wrap the concept of property around unwieldy objects.”\textsuperscript{19} Making Nebraska then is a story of state-building and changes in government, not just of territorial expansion, but of remaking the value of places through transformation of meaning. Old spaces were remade with new values.

As Juliana Barr and Edward Countryman argue about maps and their ability to create narratives of power, a good map of the contested spaces of North America “would show a set of sometimes fluid, sometimes unbending fields of force.”\textsuperscript{20} Geographer Alan Pred argues that place, is a “historically contingent process that emphasizes institutional and individual practices as well as the structural features with which those practices are inter woven.” This comes from an “emphasis on local practical life and its conceptualization of genre de vie as a creative adoption to natural environment rather than dictate by imperial metropoles.”\textsuperscript{21} As Richard White and John Findlay note simply, “place is a spatial reality constructed by people.”\textsuperscript{22} Imagining the West for Americans was a decades-long process of government and cultural

\textsuperscript{18} Dan Flores, \textit{The Natural West: Environmental History in the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains} (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 94.
production that created a federal state and remade the continent. The people who defined space of the Platte and Missouri river valleys gave it meaning through stories and actions and defended it through military and cultural power politics. The geography of the Platte Valley—the relationships of people to the space and to each other within that space—frames the historical narrative.

Power to define place is a political act that requires governance. State power conceived broadly as a governing political entity with its ability to harness culture, resources, and people, particularly military power, made governance possible. Native American polities did not conform to a normative Euro-American view of states, which makes many historians wary of labeling their government systems as states. Yet, the story of the Pawnee in the Platte Valley reveals a formalized governing system with clear divisions of power, leadership castes, military and foreign policies, the unity of spiritual and temporal power, and leaders’ control over their populations. Moreover, the Pawnee controlled territory and organized their economy in relationship to their social and political needs. They demonstrated every basic function of a political state.

23 Stephanie LeMenager argues that the process of imagining the West through multiple versions of Manifest Destiny as seen in nineteenth-century American literature was a way to compensate for American feelings of inferiority among the world powers. A feeble state imagined itself as a great power. Stephanie LeMenager, Manifest and Other Destinies: Territorial Fictions of the Nineteenth-Century United States (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 8-9.

24 For the distinction see two competing notions of Comanche government between Pekka Hämäläinen, The Comanche Empire (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008) and Brian Delay, War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008). Both recognize the power of Native American polities to remake space according to their policy needs, with the former suggesting an organized Comanche imperial system. Delay writes in his 2015 review essay for Diplomatic History that “Native societies employed a host of social mechanisms to collectively define and pursue public goals; that is, they employed an array of political traditions in order to debate and to craft policy, and often executed policy with a degree of coordination and shared purpose that left surrounding states looking hapless and disorganized.” Brian Delay, “Indian Polities, Empire, and the History of American Foreign Relations,” Diplomatic History 39 no. 5 (2015): 937. He shies away from calling this statecraft the product of a state. If a society is organized like a state, deploys power and gathers resources like a state, holds territory like state, it should be recognized as a state, albeit with the caveat that the Pawnee system was less formalized or bureaucratic than its counterparts in Washington, D.C. or Mexico City.

25 White, Roots of Dependency, 172-6, 190-2.
Power was the physical military force able to organize and monopolize violence and hold territory, but it was also about establishing and enforcing norms of identity and behavior as part of the narrative of authority. Ideas of martial masculinity provided the framework for diplomatic exchanges. Men argued about the nature and use of power, who had it, and why. In a council with newly arrived federal officials in the fall of 1819, the powerful Kitkahahki Pawnee chief Petalesharoop pinpointed the grand stakes of power and cultural norms within a world of martial masculinity. After offering some token and unenforceable words of obedience to federal power, the chief bitterly complained that “I am now like a squaw, and instead of carrying the mark of a man, I have that of a woman. My right arm, and that half of my body is white man, and the other only Indian.”

Men demonstrated they were men through their martial prowess and independence.

This gendered understanding of power and authority became a key point of friction as federal officials sought to impose white American norms of gendered behavior to turn Pawnee men into farmers and curtail their martial independence as warriors. Insecurities over status, over military prowess, over the obedience of subordinates, and generational change dominated the political struggles. Pawnee warriors gained political status through military feats. Their entire adult male identity came from their participation in war.

Younger federal officials coming of age well after the Revolutionary generation and their children fretted about their fitness to govern and assert their own authority. Gendered power created a framework for larger struggles over the meaning of place, authority, and the notion of the Platte as a site of contested

26 Speech of Petalesharoop, October 19, 1819, James, Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, 1:400.
27 White, Roots of Dependency, 173-7; van de Logt, War Party in Blue, 3-36.
military strength. The frontier was a physical one on the landscape and one of cultural norms where competing armies and leaders fought a culture war over identity.28

This dissertation looks at the different conceptions of power and struggles over its deployment in the Platte Valley. It emerges from and engages with a larger scholarly effort that seeks to make sense of the intercultural contact zones of North America. These zones take different forms, from urban centers, forts, trading sites, settlements, and elsewhere, but they fall into a larger category of frontiers. Definitions of a frontier abound in historical scholarship. Yet, it is difficult to pinpoint what can be simultaneously a physical entity and an abstract process, or switch from one to the other based on perspective. The frontier as the leading edge of a phenomenon, the meeting ground or place of convergence is, as Jay Gitlin writes, “both a moving target and a space shaped by many perspectives.”29


The last two decades reveal two distinct scholarly branches of a new frontier history dependent upon the geographical and methodological orientation of the scholar. One branch generally follows Gregory Nobles’ admonition that a frontier “is a region in which no culture, group, or government can claim effective control or hegemony over others,” where “contact often involves conflict, a sometimes multisided struggle with an undetermined outcome.” The other branch follows a model akin to work by James F. Brooks and Kathleen DuVal in which encounters occurred within a space defined by one group to which the interlocutors adapted, albeit in the process altering the local situation. The former typically offers a more traditional Turnerian approach to cultural and political change as fluidity gives way to hegemony. The latter offers more possibilities to see the syncretism created by extended periods of contact and exchange. As Pekka Hämäläinen argues, “every homeland was also a borderland, a zone of contestation and intermixing.” This could be inside the walls of a fort, or a Pawnee earth lodge, or over hundreds of square miles of territory.

In their influential article, “From Borderlands to Borders,” Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron critiqued “the persistence of cross-cultural mixing, social fluidity, and the creation of syncretic formations,” that “downplayed profound changes in favor of continuity.”

were “a meeting place of peoples in which geographic and cultural borders were not clearly defined,” while borderlands were “the contested boundaries between colonial domains,” in order to see multiple processes of European imperialism and indigenous responses. In their framework, the transitions from empires to independent states in North America redefined relationships of people by juridically separating societies and inscribing new notions of citizenship. This approach emphasized nation-building and state control over fixed boundaries based upon the economic transformations of capitalism in reformulating the stakes of identity and property, even if Adelman and Aron did ultimately acknowledge indigenous agency. For the Platte, however, state-building is not a transition from empires to independent states. Rather, it is a contest between two already formed states with claims of territorial and cultural limits.

In critiquing such a state-centric lens, Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett argue “the rise of American nations becomes an abrupt, violent, and incomplete deflection of a continental history that for centuries pulled in many directions.” They emphasize contingency and de-center the state’s jurisdictional role by “combating directionality and closure” in narratives of the Americas. Yet the state-centric model of transformation offers the best possibility to understand the larger continental transformations underway. Native American nations are presumed to be nation-states by expanding definitions of the state to account for an indigenous North American notion of government. In the Platte Valley in particular this means de facto military control of space and martialing of resources to further military and foreign policy goals.

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As federal military dominance replaced Pawnee authority, the change became a de jure legal control that fulfilled narratives of U.S. sovereignty.

The political transformation of North American government then is one of story-telling about what counts as power, how it is used, and who wields it. The stories about governance force the recalibration of diplomatic history in the Platte Valley and Great Plains more broadly. Moving from a legal fiction of federal control on a map to its reality occurred through laws, boundaries, jurisdictions, and ultimately a change in how people talked, wrote, and thought about place. This dissertation seeks to meet the dual challenges posed by Brian Delay who urges historians of foreign relations to see Native Americans as actors in the history of foreign affairs. Seeing how “power worked on the ground,” allows for an understanding of the interplay of state-level fights about de jure sovereignty and “the struggle between indigenous polities, settlers, and states for practical control over space.” Doing so allows for “understanding of the complex relationships between de jure and de facto sovereignty as they evolved in particular North American contexts over time [that] would lay the groundwork for a new history of the continent’s dynamic international system.”

The emerging scholarly consensus about federal power east of the Mississippi in the early republic broadly aligns with Delay’s call to see state-building as a continental process involving the interplay between Euro and Native American governments. Rather than anemic and limited,

41 Delay, “Indian Polities,” 940. This shortcoming is partly addressed by Leonard Sadosky, who unifies previously separated spheres of European and Indian diplomacy and their role in the making of the United States. This comprehensive interpretation of North America places Indians as competitors for sovereign status within a larger political culture of diplomacy. Sadosky illuminates the centrality of negotiations at the margins of state systems to the core polities from which the negotiators came, by tracing the evolving assumptions, methods, and practices of the conduct of politics. While he argues that power, not principle eventually determined the American policy of Indian Removal, he does not explore how this power was constructed, the limitations of American power in the West, or how Indians appropriated Removal for their own strategic purposes. Sadosky, Revolutionary Negotiations, 5-12; James P. Ronda, “We Have a Country”: Race, Geography, and the Invention of Indian Territory,” Journal of the Early Republic Vol. 19, No. 4, Special Issue on Racial Consciousness and Nation-Building in the Early Republic (Winter, 1999): 739-755.
the early federal government rapidly developed into a robust and expansive fiscal-military state capable of deploying power to its edges to create and defend hardening borders of national and racial identity.42

Policymakers used federal fiscal-military power to extend the boundaries of a racially defined United States. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 codified what was de facto practice. Successive Indian Intercourse Acts form the 1790s through the 1830s delineated formal boundaries of U.S. and Indian spaces and set parameters of contact. Supreme Court decisions supplied the legal framework to justify the actions. In Johnson v. M’Intosh (1823), the court reserved the power to extinguish sovereign Indian titles to the federal government. Chief Justice John Marshall’s declaration that Indians were “domestic dependent nations” in Cherokee Nation v. Georgia (1831) formally distinguished the legal and cultural otherness of Native Americans as outside the federal polity, yet subject to it. Furthermore, this decision was universally applicable as Marshall made this claim over all “tribes which reside within the acknowledged limits of the United States,” even ones beyond the effective control of federal power, but within the de jure territorial boundaries. The decision simplified the process of subjugation and revealed an American consensus to reduce Indian power either on the battlefield or through treaties. By 1830, Removal was national policy. East of the Mississippi it was all but accomplished by 1838 with the exception of Florida. By convincing Native Americans to constrain their imaginations

of the politically possible, federal authorities remade places into ones they actually controlled.\textsuperscript{43} Native Americans did not accept this passively, but resistance generally failed. The policy ended any pretenses of federal civilization efforts as a pathway to inclusion within the body politic, although these efforts continued through missionaries and federal funding of farming, educational, and other projects. Rather, the policy established militarized racial exclusion as the preferred method of American territorial organization by the Jackson administration.\textsuperscript{44} This was a century-long process only partly underway by the 1830s.

Removal was horrific, but it masked the realities of political power in the West. In a statement that could be broadly applied to the Pawnee as well as their Comanche and Sioux neighbors, Lieutenant James Allen wrote of the Ojibwa near the Canadian border in 1832 that, they “feel inaccessible and secure from any power whatever, even that of the United States.”\textsuperscript{45}


Federal sovereignty generally remained a legal fiction on the upper Mississippi and Missouri river systems.

By framing this study as one of militarized culture, this dissertation also reconsiders the ways historians understand military institutions. Turning the fiction of sovereignty into reality was the responsibility of the War Department, both through the U.S. Army and through the War Department’s authority over Indian affairs. This dissertation follows the path of the new military history and uses the Army as a lens to see broader patterns of the political, institutional, and social development of the United States and American political culture. Posing questions about the roles of soldiers as diplomats and cultural ambassadors, as well as the force’s internal social and class divisions, destabilizes notions of a monolithic American state presence in the West. This shift also permits the nuanced study of intercultural contact at multiple levels beyond formal diplomatic exchanges between elite military leaders. Histories of the United States Army as the primary agent of federal power tend to follow four broad categories: battle and campaign histories, organizational or institutional histories, development and exploration histories, and as agents of policy. The focus on battles and strategies severely limits the types of questions it addresses and ignores intercultural contact beyond relatively infrequent wars against on the Great Plains prior to 1860, or makes them secondary to concerns about professionalization relative to

European armies. These works often minimize the effects of contact in shaping Native American societies and militaries or role in United States political development. Narrow views of soldiers as merely instruments of policy assume Native Americans to be the subjects of policy rather than coequals.

Samuel Watson’s sweeping two volume study of the officer corps on the frontier from 1810-1846 rightly situates United States military history as formative to the federal state and its relations with potential enemies and subjects along its borderlands. It is an institutional history on a grand scale that more accurately reflects the complexities of military power. Building from this perspective requires understanding the Pawnee as the dominant regional political and military power that they were and as the main oppositional force to the U.S. Army in the region. This approach requires shifting focus from the Texas-Comanche-Mexico conflicts to the south

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48 Francis Paul Prucha and William Goetzmann framed the history of militarized state building in the West over half a century ago, yet this work remains the deeply influential view of military governance in the early republic. It is by definition limited given the changes in historical understandings of Indian politics, westward expansion, and the military. In building forts and roads, conducting surveys, and serving as territorial administrators, the U.S Army brought federal power to the West, but was caught between competing notions of federal and local authority. Francis Paul Prucha, *Broadax and Bayonet: The Role of the United States Army in the Development of the Northwest, 1815-1860* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1953, reprinted Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995) and *Sword of the Republic* (see page 268 for the praise of the Army’s conduct during Removal); William H. Goetzmann, *Army Exploration in the American West, 1803-1863* (1959, reprinted with new introduction, Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1991); William Adler, “State Capacity and Bureaucratic Autonomy in the Early United States: The Case of the Army Corps of Topographical Engineers.” *Studies in American Political Development* 26 (October 2012): 107-124.


and future Sioux-U.S. conflicts to the north to see the Platte as the first conflict zone on the Great Plains and one that emerged at a critical time in the development of federal power.\(^{51}\)

Blending the new military history with the new Indian history that emerged from the late-1970s offers a more productive route to understand spatial and political transformations in the region. The new Indian history rejects the limited conceptions of Native Americans as timeless, monolithic cultures and reintroduces the dynamism of their politics and the transformative possibilities of intercultural exchanges.\(^{52}\) As Pekka Hämäläinen writes, Native Americans have returned to history as “full-fledged protagonists,” who previously “lingered in the recesses of the American imagination as a kind of dark matter of history,” and as “a hazy frontier backdrop.”\(^{53}\) Fluidity allowed for diverse political responses from accommodation and synthesis to resistance employed by different Native American groups, depending upon factors such as relative strength and geopolitical alliances.\(^{54}\) This new Indian history combines well with the new Western history’s interest in continuity and the lingering effects of political and cultural conquests.\(^{55}\)

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\(^{51}\) Watson argues the Pawnee posed little threat to U.S. interests and therefore the U.S. Army made little effort to subject them to strict control. Larger federal interests in containing Pawnee independence and creating an Indian Territory, however, suggest a more complex regional history. Watson, *Peacekeepers and Conquerors*, 34, 318, 347-8; Watson, *Jackson’s Sword*, 218-9.


\(^{55}\) Brian Delay suggests that both Mexico and the United States viewed each other through the lens of the Comanche as a measure their respective abilities to establish government in the Southwest. See in particular his work on the Texas Creation Myth. “Independent Indians and the U.S.-Mexican War,” *American Historical Review*, 112 (February 2007): 36, 45; Pekka Hämäläinen suggests the Comanche had an imperial system capable of projecting power across long distances, transforming Spanish and Mexican peripheries into economic satellites of a Comanche state. Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 210; Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*, 6-10. He argues that violence was a tripartite force that shifted daily life by reorganizing societies that in turn destroyed any conceptualization of timeless ethnographic or political Indian entities. Violence furthermore links Native American
Recent work on the Mandan, Comanche, and Lakota Sioux provide a useful framework for reconceptualizing the basis of Indian governance projects.  

For the Pawnee in particular and for the Platte Valley and surrounding area in general, there is no complete picture of how these claimants to governing authority interacted in these militarized diplomatic spaces. Neither do historians have a clear understanding of how these encounters of soldiers, diplomats, chiefs, and others informed the constructions of political identities or institutional development. Many studies of the Pawnee fit within a field of ethnohistorical inquiry, starting with early personal memoirs or ethnographic accounts from missionaries, explorers, and traders or their reminiscences, as well as turn of the twentieth century efforts by the anthropologists to capture the disappearing Wild West.

Richard White noted in 1981, that “the Pawnee have been relatively neglected by historians,” though the “lack of good history is somewhat compensated for by excellent ethnologies of the nation,” a fact he began to change by placing the Pawnee struggles of the nineteenth century into the context of environmental and social history. Taking up White’s challenge for a broader history of the Pawnee, masters theses by R. Paul Collister and Benjamin Kracht, and James Riding In’s 1991 dissertation on the development and destruction of Pawnee culture offer excellent studies of changing Pawnee society as they focus principally on and Euro-American histories in the West as the tool through which people legitimized power and imposed new social relationships. Blackhawk positions the United States Army merely as a tool of repression and conquest rather than in a dual role as diplomats and policy enforcers.; Limerick, The Legacy of Conquest, 25-6; White, It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own, 1-117.


58 White, Roots of Dependency, 408-9. Matching the ethnological material was a wealth of archaeological material.
ethnohistorical approaches or outsider views of the people. This dissertation seeks to expand their framework to see the overlapping political and diplomatic struggles over space between the Pawnee, their neighbors, and the federal government that coincided with the social disruptions. Those earlier studies provide revealing views of Pawnee society internally. This dissertation situates that culture externally, by locating the Pawnee in relation to a variety of regional powers.

The Pawnee world fits between a historiography of Plains Indian wars and the conquest of peoples. This dissertation examines them at a time when they were the regionally dominant military power and as such, the strongest claimants to political authority. This development was partly the result of the Pawnee nation’s historical position as a militarized competitor to and eventual ally of the United States, rather than a direct military foe as the Lakota, Comanche, or other nations of the West that actively fought the federal government.

The traditional news maxim of if it bleeds, it leads fits well for a historiography of Great Plains Native American interactions with the federal government in terms of historical interest. Since 1990, however, historians are becoming more interested in Pawnee relationships outside the traditional narratives of war and conquest to appreciate their power struggle with the United States as one of co-equals in the early-nineteenth century where missionaries, federal officials, and the U.S. Army still operated on Pawnee terms.

59 R. Paul Collister, “An Early Stage in Decline: The Pawnee as Seen Through Indian Office Correspondence, 1824-1835” (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1985); Benjamin R. Kracht, “The Effects of Disease and Warfare on Pawnee Social Organization, 1830-1859: An Ethnohistorical Approach” (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1982); James Thomas Riding In, “Keepers of Tirawahut’s Covenant: The Development and Destruction of Pawnee Culture” (Ph.D. diss., University of California Los Angeles, 1991). James Riding In, himself a member of the Pawnee nation, offers the most comprehensive look at the social changes of the Pawnee trying to preserve cultural lifeways under threat from both white and Native American invaders, especially once independent Pawnee military power ceased to dominate the region post-1840.

The following chapters trace a story of collision, contestation, and reassessment as two regional powers came together, argued about the control and meanings of spaces, and then reformulated their strategic policies and cultural understandings of their place in the Platte Valley. Defining spaces and establishing boundaries is at the heart of state-building. Who sets these definitions sets the narratives about control and political power over space. The Platte was a meeting point where the hubris of imperial visions ran into the realities of local power politics.

Chapter one examines the place: the Platte River Valley. The Pawnee were at home in this space of rolling prairie hills and open spaces. They set the terms of engagement and gave meaning to the space. Their position between European empires, the Comanche, and the Lakota allowed them to build an expansionist military policy through the eighteenth century as middlemen in the horse-captive trade system. The openness of the landscape created opportunities for people to imagine their identities and the possible uses of the land, but these dreams were limited by Pawnee dominance. Europeans stumbled in with Spanish forays in the sixteenth-century, followed by the French in the late-seventeenth, guided more by fantasies of riches and trade routes than practical realities of the land and inhabitants. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, a new political force in the federal government followed its own path of

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Ground: Indians, Missionaries, and the Forging of the Antebellum Frontiers” (Ph.D. diss. University of Missouri, 2016). The last is restricted as the author develops a forthcoming book manuscript, but he does argue that like forts and council sites, “In building their stations on the frontier, missionaries opened new zones for indigenous action, and often resisted or tempered the colonial forces bearing down on their Indian charges. This space that missionaries created was under American hegemony, but preceded the arrival of white settlement or US forces en masse. Hence, missionaries made a place that was not quite as open as the middle ground, but nonetheless hosted a wide range of social, cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity. I call this zone the missional ground because the fluidity and Native agency in this space was squelched once the missionaries left, and troops and settlers arrived. The missional ground was consequently fragile, and required a precise balancing of missionaries, settlers, agents, diverse Indian groups, and all their interrelations. This means that the missional ground was also deeply contextual: the personality, theology, assumptions about gender and race, denomination, and class background of a missionary could make or break his mission. Hence, the missional ground not only supported Indian agency, but served as a crucible where American culture, religion, politics, and internal conflicts all boiled over.”
expansion to project a vision of the West as an American place, ignorant of or unwilling to learn about the complexities of diplomacy, military power, and cultural norms.

Chapter two examines the first point of extended contact between the Pawnee and the United States as well as neighbors like the Omaha and Otoe. This chapter examines a hyper-local place of Fort Atkinson and the Council Bluffs as a meeting point of cultures, diplomacy, and site of one of the largest garrisons of the United States Army. Secretary of War John C. Calhoun’s plan to extend federal control to the edges of the Louisiana Purchase following the War of 1812 resulted in the development of Fort Atkinson into a self-sustaining garrison and what became a model American town. It highlighted the industry, economy, and cultural norms seen as ideal for American colonization of the West: strict military discipline and control of its residents, ironically at odds with the larger democratization process at work during the shift from the early republic to an antebellum political culture in the rest of the country. It was a fixed vision of power, and on the plains, a very limited one where federal control did not reach beyond the walls of the garrison. Both the soldiers and neighboring Native Americans resisted such a model of control leading to reassessments over what federal expansion had to be in the West. Direct control did not work and threatened the very order the Army sought to build.

Chapter 3 moves into a larger view of the region. Fort Atkinson was abandoned in favor of Fort Leavenworth as the anticipated hub of a new Indian Territory that was closer to the American frontier. The area just south of core Pawnee lands would house those peoples forcibly removed from the East as part of a larger vision of establishing the racialized legal boundaries of the federal state through Removal and clearly mapped territories. What is now the state of Kansas and the southern portion of Nebraska would become a space of multi-ethnic forced migration. The federal vision for the space remained focused on fixed power and a notion of
tightly controlled space centered on a fort and its militarized vision of politics. Pawnee leadership, however, still defined this region as a plural set of spaces that they understood through careful strategic calculations. In the face of resource competition from the arrival of the removed Delaware nation, increased Sioux attacks, and a smallpox epidemic, Pawnee leaders utilized their mobile military power to preserve their territory and strategic options. Pawnee forces directed where the envisioned Indian Territory would be and on what terms. They shaped the development of the future Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma. The 1833 U.S.-Pawnee treaty restructured the diplomatic relationship as strategic needs forced a closer relationship to the federal government to acquire military resources. From the Pawnee perspective it positioned them as political equals over the same space even as they faced strategic challenges.

Chapter 4 chronicles the shift in this relationship between 1833 and the end of 1835. After years of failures to expand beyond the narrow confines of forts and river valleys, federal authorities looked toward an expansive vision of military power. Federal officials sought to remake the region between the Platte and Red rivers as the site for Native Americans forcibly removed from the East. Developing the United States Dragoon regiment and deploying troops far into the Great Plains challenged the Pawnee dominance of space. American missionaries arrived in the Pawnee world. Pawnee leaders faced a strategic dilemma over the relationship to places they previously understood as theirs.

By the late-1830s, this resulted in the circumstances of Chapter 5, when Pawnee leadership looked inward to reassess what was strategically possible and necessary for survival. Sioux attacks, the arrival of U.S. Dragoons, and internal divisions over the role of missionaries and government workers fractured Pawnee society. What it meant to be Pawnee had to be modified to fit the geopolitical realities. Pawnee leaders could no longer claim to be the masters
of their space. What this meant cut to the heart of Pawnee identity. Federal officials, emboldened by the success of the dragoons and the decline of Pawnee capabilities, embraced the notion of mobile military power. Control was not about direct rule through forts, but about changing what the Pawnee saw as strategically possible. The United States bypassed the Pawnee as irrelevant to larger strategic concerns after 1846. It was both a conscious federal policy and an accidental result of bureaucratic chaos. The result, the curtailment of Pawnee ability to shape regional politics, was precisely what federal officials wanted. Pawnee leaders looked toward earlier federal models of fixed power in fortifications to protect a limited core space akin to Fort Atkinson. The Pawnee inverted their relationship to the land and militarized power politics.

Within two generations, the Platte Valley switched from the domain of the Pawnee, to a contested ground, to a region constrained by federal power and authority if not yet directly controlled. This was despite the best efforts and calculated strategies of Pawnee leaders. By 1857, the Pawnee accepted a small 15 by 30-mile reservation in Nebraska, while the United States was incorporating states on the Pacific coast and planning for transcontinental railways. This was not inevitable. It was the result of choices made and not made and the occasional tragedy of circumstance. Nor was this the end of the story. The Pawnee did not disappear, nor did the United States become the unquestioned masters of the landscape. This dissertation ends as the relationship between these two polities changed. From a bilateral diplomatic contest between regional powers over the control of space, it became one where the domestic political stakes of national survival and identity took precedence as both faced existential crises.
Chapter One
A Regional Collision

The Pawnee and the United States began their complex diplomatic relationship at the turn of the nineteenth century. They may have been strangers, but the relationship did not take form on a blank slate. Rather, the political and military cultures of Pawnee-U.S. relations emerged as a product of both regional and continental developments.

This chapter therefore examines two rising, expansive powers prior to their sustained contact and protracted struggles post-1818 within the Missouri and Platte valleys. The space in which they met shaped their respective imaginations of the politically possible. The Pawnee were the first to define their relationship to the plains and rivers and give them meaning within a Pawnee cosmological and temporal worldview. They created the place. This cultural underpinning of political space guided their politics as they became the Pawnee from the thirteenth to eighteenth centuries. The Pawnee development and use of military power dominated the region. They interacted with their immediate Native American neighbors, the Comanche and Sioux (who would become the most powerful indigenous nations of the mid-nineteenth century), and increasingly after 1690, Europeans who stumbled into the Platte.

Here, European imperial strength was minimal. Spaniards and Frenchmen encountered this place and these people, providing early descriptions, but they were merely visitors to an unfamiliar land at the fringes of their respective empires. The Great Plains and the Pawnee were known, yet ephemeral and mysterious just beyond the limits of Europeans. It was Pawnee space,
regulated according to Pawnee norms, enforced by Pawnee power, within a diplomatic world of the Pawnee making.

Federal entrée to the Plains after the Louisiana Purchase brought a new imperial force to the trans-Mississippi West, but one that stumbled in its early efforts to adjust to a new landscape, a powerful people, and its role on the continent in the face of European imperial collapse. The United States claimed the space, but it had no ability to make those claims reality and little idea of what to do about it if they could. Creating and projecting a federal vision of power that developed in the East was not easily transferrable to the landscape and people of the West.

What governance looked like in the heart of the continent was contingent on the interactions of peoples in what was simultaneously a familiar and an alien landscape. The particular land—its topography, its environmental conditions, its proximity to other spaces—shaped power as an expression of brute strength military force and of cultural lifeways. The Pawnee and the United States both prized expansion as a foundational norm of political behaviors. Their march toward conflict over the nature and meaning of space at the heart of North America and respective histories of expansion, diplomacy, and military struggles at once created their notions of effective and possible politics and limited their ability to complete those goals. While they never fought a war, their struggle to define the place was a constant negotiation over the nature of power in the Platte Valley. Power was martial, gendered, and tied to geopolitical concerns, but always strongly rooted in the local conditions of the land and how people worked within its limitations and possibilities. Their foundational beliefs guided the process of collision as they moved toward sustained, direct contact and competition after 1818.

1.1 The Space
As Julie Maragon (Jean Simmons) tells James McKay (Gregory Peck) in the 1958 film *The Big Country*, “It is a big country. And you shouldn’t be wandering out by yourself. People have gotten lost out here you know.”¹ For those new to the grass oceans and gently swelling hills, it was easy to feel adrift. For those able to navigate them, however, the prairies were filled with possibilities to fix an order onto what others only saw as empty space. Historian Elliot West called the region a place for experimentation where the landscape pushed people into “forever imagining new environments and trying to muscle them into being.”² The region encompassed the tall-grass prairies, the mixed-grass plains, and the river valleys where the Pawnee spent half their year when not out hunting. It was a dry region, but not quite the arid West. It had enough rain for farmers to get by. At their height the Pawnee had as much as 1,300 acres under cultivation that in a good year produced as much as 30,000 bushels of corn.³ With a little manipulation, the landscape was very livable for those with imagination.

This landscape made the deepest impression to many newcomers. It was one of apparent sameness, a product of its long geological history of being scraped, reformed, scraped again as successive geological ages remade the space of the Platte watershed. Repeated glacial periods cleared the land. A great sea formed, deposited debris, dried, and turned to forest, and was scraped away again. Meltwater flooded the region depositing finer sediments, the clay and sand so derided by Burton. It was a slow process of streams carving valleys and gradually shaping a network through sandy soil and low hills.⁴

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¹ *The Big Country*, dir. William Wyler, 2 hr. 46 min., MGM/United Artists, 1958, DVD.
⁴ A.T. Andreas, *History of the Start of Nebraska: Containing A Full Account of Its Growth from an Uninhabited Territory to a Wealthy and Important State; of Its Early Settlements; Its Rapid Increase in Population, and the Marvelous Development of its Great Natural Resources. Also an Extended Description of its Counties, Cities,
Like many of the Europeans before them, white travelers from the United States saw in this landscape a foreign place that was fundamentally different from the woodlands and river systems of the East. Geographer Edwin James, who accompanied Major Stephen Long’s exploration party in 1819, described the region as “little less tiresome to the eye, and fatiguing to the spirit, than the dreary solitude of the ocean.” He channeled a cultural and political unease over the geography of a region in which federal officials, soldiers, American trappers, and traders operated for nearly a generation. The prairies were vast, difficult, and too much like the open ocean. Rivers were the roads, the safe places with resources, guideposts, and rest stops for travelers unsure of themselves in open spaces. These were spaces to pass through, not places to settle.

Baptist missionary and sometime government official Isaac McCoy spent years in the region. Writing in 1835, McCoy echoed James. The land has “a striking similarity between all parts of the Territory. In its general character it is high and undulating, rather level than hilly.” But he saw possibilities and reported fertile soil, numerous rivers though “none of which are favorable to navigation,” salubrious climate, grass fit for cattle, coal, iron ore, and salt deposits ready for exploitation, and a prairie that could be transformed. It was boring because it was so open, so flat, so seemingly endless. But it was a space for the imagination to create notions of place as a fixed, known, mapped, quantified, whole, part of the expanding United States. Federal officials, army officers, traders, artists, and writers, though usually wary, saw possibilities.

5 James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains*, 1:460.
6 Isaac McCoy, *Annual Register of Indian Affairs In the Western (or Indian) Territory, 1835-1838* (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 1998), 3-4.
Those who actually lived in the region understood their relationship to the land. A delegation of sixteen Pawnee, Omaha, Otoe, Missouri, and Kansa leaders travelled to Washington in 1822, three years after the establishment of Fort Atkinson and the Indian agency at Council Bluffs. The tour was designed to impress these leaders with U.S. technical advancements prior to meeting with federal officials hoping to establish a supremacy over the nations. The need to take these leaders away from their local power centers to try and impress them revealed the limitations of federal power within the Platte watershed, even after building Fort Atkinson. Meeting with President James Monroe, Pawnee chief Sharitarish admitted to being impressed by American technology, but that was as it should be. “The Great Spirit made us all . . . He placed us on this earth, and intended that we should live differently from each other,” he told Monroe, “I am like you, my Great Father, I love my country; I love my people; I love the manner in which we live, and I think myself and my warriors brave.” His views reflected a deep comfort with the land, a place that was his source of political power and military strength. It was a familiar space where he lived at relative ease across vast spaces whereas white Americans, he pointed out, liked their fixed settlements. “We have every thing we want,” he told the president, “We have plenty of land, if you will keep your people off of it.”7 As Sharitarish argued, the two systems, two power centers, two ways of life were not incompatible, just suited to different spaces. Pawnee and neighboring nations saw a home, easily known and understood.

Different landscapes, different geopolitics, different sources of power and ways of life, and different people made the Platte watershed truly foreign space for any notion of federal expansion or previous Europeans merely passing through. For those already living there, centuries of occupation imbued a deep meaning onto the space that rooted cultural norms of

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identity and power as part of the natural environment. Despite grand dreams, Americans were unmoored on the plains. The Pawnee were home.

1.2 Pawnee Foundations

   Geography shaped the Pawnee. Their deep ties to the Platte Valley provided a profound sense of spiritual connection to the landscape and specific locales that merged the cosmic and temporal worlds. They had a centrally located position between the other emergent Native American peoples in the middle of North America: the Comanche, Sioux, Osage, and Cheyenne. Location spurred their need for military power and cultural identity as a preeminent military force on the Great Plains. Their position afforded them close diplomatic ties and access to the larger trading networks of their neighbors while shielding them from the burden of close European empires. The Pawnee were masters of their space.

   Exactly when the Pawnee arrived in the Platte Valley remains a source of disagreement, but it is clear that their presence extends back for many centuries. The Pawnee nation currently claims a history as people of Nebraska going back 700 years.\(^8\) Archaeological and historical accounts suggest a more recent creation of the modern Pawnee people between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though their roots in the Platte watershed certainly run deep. A major drought in the early-thirteenth century pushed a people known as the Upper Republicans from their small villages, soon covered with 10-20 inches of loess in a preview of the Dustbowl, eastward to the Missouri River. By 1400, they returned to the Loup River as the climate

\(^8\) “Pawnee History,” Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma, accessed September 19, 2019, https://www.pawneenation.org/page/home/pawnee-history. This official government website lays out the stakes of national identity, suggesting a lineage that predates historical accounts, and the divergence of social science and national mythic identities.
improved. Archaeological evidence suggests they were at least some of the Pawnee ancestors, possibly the Skidi who claimed kinship with their northern Arikara neighbors.  


The three southern bands, Chaui, Kitkahahki, and Pitahawirata, may have different origins as a result of the Mississippian diasporas and collapse of the Arkansas Valley chiefdoms. The Cayas, Tula, and Quivera documented by Coronado collapsed in the wake of the first Spanish-brought epidemics of the early-sixteenth century. These places were probably the ancestors of the Caddoan-speaking peoples of the greater Arkansas Valley, including the progenitors of the Pawnee. These places fractured from disease, environmental stress, war, and other factors into the societies first encountered by the French more than a century later. The people fractured, reformed, and moved, many following old routes of bison hunting out into the

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plains where they found more permanent settlement.\footnote{Duval, Native Ground, 27, 58-62; White, Roots of Dependency, 148-9.} The people arrived, then they began the process of becoming Pawnee.

Archaeological evidence suggests a proto-Pawnee movement into the Platte known as the Lower Loup Focus period between roughly 1500-1750. By the mid-seventeenth century, village sites permeated the Platte tributaries primarily around Beaver Creek and Shell Creek, as well as the Loup River. They covered large areas from 15 to 100 acres, usually on bluffs or hilltops, and at least occasionally, fortified by walls and ditches. Remains of these fortified villages still appeared in the 1820s, suggesting both the pervasiveness and considerable size of the works that survived nearly two centuries. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Kitkahahki and Pitawahirata bands split from the main Chaui band, possibly violently. The former two then built villages on the Republican River and Smoky Hill and Blue Rivers respectively. The emergence of a Pawnee confederacy between the Skidi and three other main bands suggests a more unified political and cultural identity by 1750.\footnote{The Skidi maintained a different dialect, often went on separate bison hunts, and held slightly different rituals than their relatives. There is also evidence of wars between the Skidi and other Pawnee prior to 1750, suggesting the process of creating a Pawnee confederacy, let alone any form of unified nation was a difficult process. White, Roots of Dependency, 148-9; Grinnell, Pawnee Hero Stories and Folk Tales, 223-7; James Murie, Pawnee Indian Societies, Pawnee Indian Societies, Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. 11, pt. 7 (New York, 1914), 549; Dunbar, “Missionary Life Among the Pawnee,” Nebraska State Historical Society Collections, 16 (Lincoln, 1911): 276; Weltfish, Lost Universe, 4; Dorsey, Pawnee Mythology, 8-9; Hyde, Pawnee Indians, 178; Grange, Pawnee Pottery, 142-3; Waldo Wedel, The Direct-Historical Approach in Pawnee Archaeology, Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, 101, no. 3. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1941), 3.} Their combined core territory was at its maximum, pointing to a powerful, expansionist people. By about 1800, villages appeared about 40-60 miles west up the Platte. Regardless of origins or early fractiousness between the different bands, by the time of extended European contact post-1720, it is possible to speak of a Pawnee confederacy with a generally unified notion of identity, politics, and cosmology, though with significant variations.

Evidence of rather brutal warfare and a continuum of building practices across Pawnee bands
that merged ritual with geography and architecture suggest a broadly applicable Pawnee political, cultural, and spatial identity by the mid to late-eighteenth century. The differences were relatively modest compared to an overall sense of Pawnee identity against external foes.  

Bounded by extensive hunting lands north to the Niobrara River, and as far south as the Cimarron, Pawnee core territory existed along the Platte River from the mouth of Skull Creek, north to present-day Hamilton County, Nebraska, and from the mouth of the Loup River to north of Cottonwood Creek. Powerful Kiowa and Cheyenne neighbors with whom the Pawnee remained perpetually at war, checked Pawnee expansion to the south and west. To the east, the Arikara, Omaha, Missouri, Otoe, and Kansa formed a semi-circular buffer between Sioux expansion, Osage migration, and Euro-American settlement. Between 1800 and 1830, the Pawnee maintained a population of around 10,000 people of whom perhaps 2-3,000 were warriors, making them the preeminent power of the central Great Plains.

In the fall of 2019 the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City displayed a Pawnee gun-stock form war club from about 1800 from the Charles and Valerie Diker Collection. The highly polished and red-dyed wood shaped into the angular, stylized deer-leg offers both an effective weapon of war and a format to link the cosmos and temporal worlds of Pawnee power and identity. It is richly adorned with a star chart including the Pleiades and a


circle with lines suggesting storm clouds and lightning, a comet, or perhaps a representation of Venus that was so important in Pawnee mythologies of power and renewal. The club directly linked its wielder and his conceptions of power and place within those systems.\textsuperscript{15}

Prior to white contact the Pawnee were already highly attuned astronomers, locating themselves within a larger cosmos. Their detailed star charts surprised early ethnographers like Ralph Buckstaff who in 1927 concluded his analysis of one in the Field Museum collections that, “the Pawnee Indians must have had a knowledge of astronomy comparable to that of the early white men.” He noted that the map contains a deep understanding of the cyclical mathematics of the cosmos, reflecting a number of constellations and the pathway for the transit of Venus through the Pleiades every eight years.\textsuperscript{16} Buckstaff’s racial assumptions about primitiveness aside, this is hardly surprising.

Pawnee society closely linked the cosmic cycles and the temporal world, necessitating a close knowledge of the stars. Skidi Pawnee and ethnographer James Murie recorded how knowledge of these movements were foundational to social organization and management of religious and political systems. Venus and Mars (Evening and Morning Star, respectively) are linked as part of the creation of humans. Pawnee religious rituals united the political and religious as one continuous harmony. Various ceremonies including human sacrifice, linked

\textsuperscript{15} Both the online catalogue record and the descriptive tag, as of September 2019, merely suggest the image is “a graceful image of a comet,” or “a circle and lightning-like lines representing spiritual energy,” respectively. Given that the transit of Venus through the Pleiades happened in 1796 and 1804, the date of the club to circa 1800 would add further evidence to the notion of this being crafted at a time approaching the next cycle. Item catalogue number L.2018.35.68, “War Club: Pawnee,” Metropolitan Museum of Art, accessed September 18, 2019, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/639782. As of January 2020, the club has been removed from the museum website; Gaylord Torrence, “Star Power,” \textit{The Magazine Antiques}, January/February 2019, (https://www.themagazineantiques.com/article/star-power/) (accessed January 23, 2020); Gaylord Torrence, Ned Blackhawk, Sylvia Yount, and Kamilah Foreman, \textit{Art of Native America: The Charles and Valerie Diker Collection} (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2018).

cosmic renewal, power bundles, the directional location of power, and how to physically represent the unity of the cosmos and people. Power bundles of sacred objects bridged the worlds.¹⁷ Noted archaeo-astronomer and anthropologist Anthony Aveni simplifies this complexity by writing that for societies with a similar focus on renewal and the cycles of Venus, “they were always looking for better ways to meet the challenge of mediating the affairs of nature, society, and the gods.”¹⁸

Looking back at the war club and assuming the tail of the object represents a cyclical transit of Venus through the Pleiades on the reverse, perhaps its path toward the four smaller lines with identical angles suggest a way of marking time. If so, it may suggest that the owner was in his mid-30s or 40s having seen four, going on five cycles, making him an experienced warrior. He would know his place in the cosmic order. He may have participated in raids to secure the requisite sacrificial captives.¹⁹ The club is a singular representation of three main features of Pawnee identity. It reproduces a sacred geographic knowledge of the land, the people, and the cosmos. It links cultural and military power to the larger spiritual world. Finally, it is a physical reminder of expansion and regional power struggles for captives, horses, lands, and trade that made the Pawnee the premier military power of Platte Valley through the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

The Pawnee saw themselves as centrally located within a larger cosmos, deeply tied to the physical spaces they occupied as one level of a larger spiritual and temporal world. This

¹⁷ Murie, Pawnee Indian Societies, 549-561; George Hyde, The Pawnee Indians (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951, reprinted 1974), 137-9, 161. The Missouri Gazette of St. Louis routinely printed stories of sacrifices and rescues of captives. Fur trader and Indian agent Manuel Lisa gained acclaim for one such rescue of a Spanish boy taken captive for a sacrifice in June 1818, though the true credit was due to Pawnee chief Petalesharoo.
¹⁸ Astronomer and anthropologist Anthony Aveni’s foundational work on ancient Mayan calendar systems highlights the links of celestial maps, especially of peoples with notions of cycles of death, rebirth, and continuity. Aveni’s work correlates well with similar Pawnee understandings of the cosmos. Anthony F. Aveni, Empires of Time: Calendars, Clocks, Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 203.
¹⁹ Aveni, Empires of Time, 163-223.
knowledge gave power to the self-identity of a people calling themselves chatiks si chatiks or “Men of Men,” who emerged from the sacred union of the heavens and earth, precisely where they needed to be and as a people tied to sacred places. They created the mechanisms of social, diplomatic, and military power to fully ascribe meaning to their space.

How the Pawnee inscribed meaning of place onto the vastness of the plains emerges from this deep sense of sacred space. It is not that the Pawnee were unique in this belief of sacred geography among their neighbors, but that they had a highly specific concept of the cosmological links as the original people with a direct ancestral connection to the stars. The Earth was created for the daughter of the Evening and Morning Stars, the Sun and Moon had a boy, together they created the people.20 As anthropologist Douglas Parks and archaeologist Waldo Wedel conclusively outlined, the Pawnee relationship to sacred places linked temporal power and spiritual power. At least fourteen separate animal lodges (places that linked a watery underworld of animal spirits to places where they emerged) instructed humans, and acted as intercessors to the cosmos. Such places were “rahrahwa:ruksti: ’u, “(being) holy ground,” and fixed as landmarks like springs and small hills that gave some definition to the terrain.21 These places bounded the Pawnee world. The limited number of now identifiable places stretched from the Solomon River in present-day Kansas north throughout the Platte Valley.22

The Pawnee knew their space. The appearance of Spanish horses in the Pawnee world transformed it. Horses obtained from raids by other nations or the large-scale escapes following the 1680 Pueblo Revolt made the Pawnee an expansive Great Plains power. It dramatically

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20 Murie, *Pawnee Indian Societies*, 553.
22 Wedel and Parks, “Pawnee Geography,” 147. Their map of identifiable animal lodges and historic village sites is limited with only 5 of the 14 mentioned sacred sites conclusively identified, but does point to the expansive understanding of the Pawnee homeland.
extended their spatial reach. In the process, it reshaped their culture. By 1714, Frenchman Etienne de Bourgmont reported the Pawnee to be “alert, good horsemen,” suggesting at least a generation or two of experience.\textsuperscript{23} A century later, observers reported that a skilled Pawnee horseman could fire a bow in battle while hanging on the horse’s side and shooting from under the neck.\textsuperscript{24} By 1724, access to horses drove Pawnee foreign policy. They concluded a peace with the Apache to secure access to New Mexican horses, while also raiding the Spanish directly. Occasional raids on the Comanche ended by 1800 after the Pawnee negotiated a peace and alliance that secured more trade routes. They traded horses with the Omaha, Arikara, Otoe, and Missouri, and lost them to Sioux, Cheyenne, and Kansa raiders.\textsuperscript{25}

Horses and early access to French goods meant that by as early as 1695, Pawnee forces raided into traditionally Apache lands to the south and west.\textsuperscript{26} Eleven years later, Spanish militia captain Juan de Ulibarri reported the French trading guns to the Pawnee (possibly the Wichita who were sometimes labeled Pawnee Picts) and that the Cuartelejo Apache desired an alliance to attack their Pawnee enemies and allied French traders.\textsuperscript{27} Pawnee trading networks extended from the Utes in southwest Wyoming, the Comanche in Oklahoma, and the Mandan and Arikara on the Upper Missouri in the Dakotas and Montana, as much as 800 miles from Pawnee

\textsuperscript{23} Bourgmont, ed. Giraud, “Exact Description of Louisiana,” 16.
\textsuperscript{25} White, \textit{Roots of Dependency}, 179, 373 n.4.
This military expansion made the Pawnee a key regional power that influenced geopolitics far beyond their immediate borders.

Geography allowed considerable independence. A dual diplomatic and military policy of expansion during this period integrated tightly controlled trade networks and rituals with the ability to project power far beyond core Pawnee lands. A beneficial geographic position placed the Pawnee 12-25 days ride from Santa Fe and roughly 150 miles from the Missouri River. The Spanish were too far to be a political concern. The French, mostly confined to the eastern side of the Osage, were neighbors of neighbors, close enough to be useful trading partners and distant enough to avoid being troublesome. Pawnee leaders could choose policies rather than being constantly reactive to imperial machinations.

The Pawnee diplomatic world was of their own creation as they established the calumet pipe ceremony. This ritual, widespread throughout the North American West, served as a means of safe conduct for travel and trade even temporarily among enemies. Pawnee chiefs brought putative outsiders within a cultural and economic orbit. By creating fictive kinships during a multi-day ceremony they forged diplomatic and trade ties with the Comanche, Omaha, Otoes, Poncas, and even their Sioux competitors. Visitors “represented Fathers, while the ones they visited were designated their Children,” allowing for guests to be honored, but with reciprocal kinship obligations. Outsiders were potential slaves or enemies. It was a highly prescribed ritual exchange benefitting Pawnee chiefs who increased their influence and exerted a degree of

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unified policy that could strictly control goods entering Pawnee society, such as the liquor.\footnote{Weltfish, *The Lost Universe*, 7, 19, 175; White, *Roots of Dependency*, 191; Alice C. Fletcher, *The Hako: Song, Pipe, and Unity in a Pawnee Calumet Ceremony* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 182, 256; Wishart, *An Unspeakable Sadness*, 31.} They positioned themselves as middlemen in the plains horse trade that shuffled animals from New and Old Mexico to people further east and north, and eventually the French and Americans.

With the mechanisms for extended trade and diplomacy as well as a key location as middlemen, Pawnee leaders seemed to expand their power in the region. With a collective horse herd of 6,000-9,000 head by the early-nineteenth century, Pawnee warriors had the means to expand their reach far into the plains, though of course not all were available for military use. The vagaries of seasonal feed and drought combined with the colder winters of the Platte Valley limited the herd size.\footnote{White, *Roots of Dependency*, 179-181, Hämäläinen, *Comanche Empire*, 241; Kinbacher, “Indians and Empires,” 216.} They could project power, but not fully conquer space. Yet this limitation seemingly fit within a larger policy directive to keep open lines of raiding and trade within an extractive economic and military system. Horse and captive raids did not require a permanent presence on the land, just the ability to strike at will and retreat with the goods. It had all the benefits of an extractive imperial system over tributary peoples without the hassle of direct administration.\footnote{Pawnee raids functioned as an extractive, hands-off imperialism akin to their sometime Comanche allies, though perhaps not as fully realized given their greater distance from New Mexico and northern Mexico. Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 14-15, 141-238; Delay, *War of a Thousand Deserts*, 114-38. Delay is more subdued in claims of an imperial system at play, but the world both he and Hämäläinen describe functions in that way.}

To outsiders, the Pawnee often appeared as a more unified nation rather than four relatively independent bands. This image was due in part to a policy of raiding Euro-Americans indiscriminately. Everyone was a source of income for the Pawnee. Cheyenne and Lakota Sioux attacks in the eighteenth century further consolidated power among a leadership caste concerned with military affairs. Later observers like Edwin James noted that they “live in great
harmony amongst themselves." Social cohesion, consensus on foreign policy issues, and Pawnee military power meant a commanding regional dominance. Defensively situated villages of prior centuries were abandoned in favor of fertile sites in river valleys with better access to fields and timber. Seasonal abandonments for hunting expeditions belied the relative permanence of village sites, as some were in continuous use for as long as 35 years. This extended residence and ability to range with whole populations over large hunting grounds for entire seasons indicated a strong ability to control and defend their agricultural and residential core. Pawnee warriors projected power to their frontiers, directing foreign affairs on their own terms.

Martial culture among the Pawnee in part led to this appearance and formed a significant part of male Pawnee identity. Men trained from boyhood to be warriors. “It was the proper destiny of men to go out on the warpath,” Pitahawirata Pawnee Effie Blaine recalled her father, chief Resaru pitku saying in the late-nineteenth century, as “it is far better to lie in the open and be eaten by birds.” Bravery was the most desired trait as it corresponded to status in temporal politics and the afterlife, and produced a fatalism about noble sacrifice for one’s people. A Pawnee man placed himself within a complex martial culture, at once in charge of his destiny to be a brave warrior, in the hands of cosmic fate about whether he would survive, and comfortable

35 White, Roots of Dependency, 158. It was timber scarcity more than any other factor that usually caused villages to uproot and move during this period as earth lodges consumed considerable amounts of wood in construction. Large populations at this point meant that timber quickly disappeared and women reportedly had to travel up to eight miles from villages to obtained firewood by 1835 at the Skidi village.
36 White, Roots of Dependency, 162; Grange, Pawnee Pottery, 19-27.
38 Blaine, Some Things are not Forgotten, 9.
with his sacrifice should he not. Warfare was part of a ritual of sacrifice. Trophies of war obtained on raids were part of a larger cosmic intertwining linked by power bundles. If unsuccessful, a fallen Pawnee warrior was the sacrifice. He was tough. He could endure extremes of mental and physical toils, riding more than 100 miles in 24 hours. He was well-armed preferring a bow, at least in the early-nineteenth century, to a gun, along with a club, battle axe, shield, spear, and knife. He understood his identity in society, on the plains, and in the cosmos. He was also not alone. Estimates suggest the Pawnee could collectively field 2,000 warriors in 1806, far more than their immediate neighbors like the Omaha. This military strength made the Pawnee the great regional power of the central plains by 1800.

Historian Kurt Kinbacher and modern Omaha leader Howard Wolf argue that both the Omaha and Pawnee deviated from the “Indian way” by 1808. This presents a false dichotomy of authentically Indian or Euro-American behaviors. The focus on authentic behavior ignores what the Pawnee valued most at the time: a martial culture that linked the heavens and earth through dominance of their space.

The eighteenth century in the Platte Valley challenged Pawnee military power as they faced various threats from all four compass directions, moved to consolidate their position, and expand access to horses, captives, and guns. Imperial machinations on the eastern side of the Mississippi throughout the eighteenth century upended a century of diplomatic and economic relationships with French imperial collapse in North America. This process largely occurred outside the Pawnee world. Their space was not the middle ground of the pays d’en haut.

41 James, Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, 1:163. He reported a number of 1,993 from Pike’s visit thirteen years earlier, though this is more of a rough estimate than actual count. Estimates for the Omaha suggest only 2,500-3,000 members compared to 6,000-10,000 Pawnee around 1806, though these numbers were conjectural at best. Kinbacher, “Indians and Empires,” 210.
The ubiquity of intertribal warfare highlights the machinations of regional power-politics. The Pawnee sought alliances, fought over trade and hunting rights, took and traded captives, and battled for their very existence in a complex web of alliances and enmities. Larger powers, often with access to guns and horses, expanded at the expense of smaller or more isolated ones.\textsuperscript{43} Pawnee policy appears to be one of expansion in the midst of this struggle. They reached the height of their historical territorial claims suggesting they could not only sustain extended wars, but that both battle losses and enemy raids to take Pawnee captives did little to dent their overall military capabilities.\textsuperscript{44} What happened in their space was, by and large, decided by the Pawnee at the dawn of the nineteenth century.

Outside of Pedro Villasur’s disastrous campaign in 1720, Pawnee territory faced no direct threat from European empires at least until the 1790s. To the west, normal cycles of raids against the Arapaho and Cheyenne continued until at least the 1830s.\textsuperscript{45} Competition with the Apache in the late-seventeenth century to the west and southwards toward the greater Arkansas Valley limited expansion in that region and touched off a long-simmering war that lasted until the Comanche pushed out the Apache in the early-eighteenth century. The ensuing border warfare lasted through the 1740s, with the Pawnee often getting the upper hand, while the

\textsuperscript{43} John C. Ewers, “Intertribal Warfare as the Precursor to Indian-White Warfare on the Northern Great Plains,”\textit{Western Historical Quarterly} 6, no. 4 (October 1975): 397-410. Ewers suggests that four major alliance systems in the Northern Great Plains provided the framework for the space itself, with nations fitting in more or less to these great power systems. While the Pawnee were on the margins of the world Ewers examined, they could be included, as with the Comanche, as a major power at the center of similar systems of groups composed of allies, trade partners, or tributary peoples. Colin G. Calloway sees the Great Plains of 1760-1850 as one great contest for a balance of power in the midst of endemic wars over access to trade goods and horses, and as the century progressed, increasingly vital and scarce hunting grounds. Colin G. Calloway, “The Inter-Tribal Balance of Power on the Great Plains, 1760-1850,”\textit{Journal of American Studies} 16, no.1 (April 1982): 25-47.

\textsuperscript{44} White, \textit{Roots of Dependency}, 152.

\textsuperscript{45} Hugh Evans, “Hugh Evans’ Journal of Colonel Henry Dodge’s Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in 1835,” Fred S. Perrine, ed.\textit{Mississippi Valley Historical Review} 14, no. 2 (Sept. 1927): 213-14.
Comanche struggled to fight the Pawnee, Arapaho, and Osage, the latter now heavily armed with French guns.⁴⁶

Pawnee alliance-making with their distant Wichita relatives, especially the Taovayas, allowed them to parlay this position into one of diplomatic strength that the Comanche soon recognized.⁴⁷ By 1750, a Comanche détente and alliance with the Taovayas brought a larger peace and alliance with at least the Skidi and Chaui Pawnee bands. Combined, the three nations turned toward their mutual Osage enemy on the Pawnee’s southeastern flank and met with initial success by 1751. Six years later, the Osage regrouped and pushed the Taovayas 200 miles west.⁴⁸ Spanish officials noted a Pawnee-Comanche peace and trade alliance in 1795. It was likely a renewal or continuation of previous arrangements that appeared to last through the 1830s.⁴⁹ Pawnee military power and diplomatic luck turned enemies into allies, further cementing their position as the dominant power between the Spanish-Comanche borderlands and the French-Osage alliance of the Missouri-Mississippi confluence.

It was to the north that the Pawnee faced their greatest challenge with the people known collectively as the Sioux, a broad term covering the seven allied groups whose western members were often referred to as Lakota.⁵⁰ The Sioux were an unexpected imperial power on the margins of the plains. Their rise from woodlands peoples without horses, guns, or metal in the

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⁴⁶ White, *Roots of Dependency*, 151-4; Hämäläinen, *Comanche Empire*, 42. While White suggests that the Comanche were the principal enemies of the Pawnee until the Sioux and American expansions of the nineteenth century, more recent work on the Comanche suggests a stronger truce, if not outright alliance with the Pawnee post-1750, as both powers looked toward their common enemies and the possibilities of raids against Spanish territory.
⁵⁰ The Lakotas, Yanktons, Yanktonais, Mdewakantons, Sissetons, Wahpetons, and Wahpekutes. Dakota is a cover term for the latter four, eastern branches of the larger Sioux identity. Lakota is often shorthand for the three more western branches. I use Sioux here as a blanket term when more specific names are not known. In part, the specific branch of the Sioux people did not matter for the Pawnee, as they were generally all collectively enemies.
1650s, to being what historian Pekka Hämäläinen labels “the most powerful Indigenous nation in the Americas” by the mid-nineteenth century, is a story of reinvention and empire building.\(^{51}\)

By the 1710s, early clashes with Missouri Valley nations saw the beginning of the larger Sioux expansion into the plains. By the 1750s, Lakota expansion created a crisis among the Omahas, Otoes, Poncas, and Iowas, all of whom fled the advance. Raids on the Mandan established a Sicangus, Oglala, and Yanktonai power along the upper Missouri, and raids similarly reached Pawnee territory to the south. As the United States declared its independence, the Sioux asserted themselves as the rising power and threat to the Pawnee, establishing the Missouri River between Pawnee and Sioux lands as a perpetual war zone for the next century. Like the Pawnee, Sioux struggles for horses, lands, and trade access dominated a broadly conceived foreign policy. The rising powers competed for dominance. By 1815, the Great Plains were broadly divided into a great power system of competing alliances and empires. Lakota raids occurred frequently enough that Edwin James reported the Pawnee routinely placed their horses under guard by 1819. By 1830, the Lakota “tightened their grip on the Missouri artery,” as Hämäläinen argues. They positioned themselves as controllers of river-based trade and ultimately the beneficiaries of a proliferation of American trading companies taking advantage of the deregulated chaos of the post-War of 1812 regional market. This Lakota advance reached its height just as the Pawnee welcomed American newcomers into their orbit

\(^{51}\) Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 3.
with promises of trade goods, guns, and a possible ally or at least intermediary against the most pressing existential threat to Pawnee territory.\textsuperscript{52}

All of these realignments benefitted the Pawnee in the short-term. The post-1776 dual upheavals of American independence and Sioux expansion opened more avenues for Pawnee trade. As Richard White notes, the Pawnee “turned their resources, land, and labor into the market.”\textsuperscript{53} War is good business. Wars between the Osage, Sac-Fox, Iowa, Missouri, and Kansa, who were all more directly involved with the imperial shifts of the late-eighteenth century meant the Pawnee filled gaps in trade networks and supplied horses to belligerents. They parlayed their position to trade simultaneously with the Spanish, British, French creole agents, and by the 1800s, Americans, as well as their own Comanche and Kiowa allies. Lewis

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\textsuperscript{53} White, \textit{Roots of Dependency}, xv.
and Clark reported “their trade is a valuable one . . . their population is increasing.” They viewed the Pawnee as “friendly and hospitable to all white persons,” and could see potential allies and trading partners, without ever encountering the Pawnee themselves.\footnote{Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, and Reuben Gold Thwaites, \textit{Original Journals of the Lewis And Clark Expedition, 1804-1806: Printed From the Original Manuscripts In the Library of the American Philosophical Society And by Direction of Its Committee On Historical Documents, Together With Manuscript Material of Lewis And Clark From Other Sources, Including Note-books, Letters, Maps, Etc., And the Journals of Charles Floyd And Joseph Whitehouse, Now for the First Time Published In Full And Exactly As Written}, 8 vols. (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1959), 6:86.} Spanish officials desperately sought Pawnee allies and gave medals to any male of supposed importance. Given the tumultuousness of the 1780s and 1790s—with continental smallpox epidemics, imperial realignments, and regional warfare—the fact that the Pawnee population increased suggests just how well-positioned they were. Chaos benefited the Pawnee, as long as they remained just distant enough from it.\footnote{Thorne, \textit{Many Hands of My Relations}, 99, 111; Kinbacher, “Indians and Empires,” 217-8.}

On the cusp of sustained contact with the federal government and American traders, the Pawnee remained very much masters of their space. Their military and economic position vis-à-vis their immediate neighbors made them the dominant power. Carefully cultivated alliances with the Comanche kept open vital routes for raiding and trade. Their ongoing war with the Cheyenne was manageable. While worrisome, the Lakota Sioux were not yet the existential threat as they would become by 1840. Expansive and secure, the Pawnee could look to the nineteenth century with confidence in their power. Americans were just another potential component of the Pawnee military and economic orbit.

1.3 Europeans Stumble About
This was a Pawnee world. European empires had little power in the Platte. They were connected to the region, but they did not matter as they did for the Algonquians of the *pays d’en haut* or the Comanche of the Mexican frontier. Spanish and French empires were present, but ephemeral and largely beyond the Pawnee core as few of their people were ever in direct, sustained contact. The British were almost non-existent in this mid-continental space. All entered the Platte Valley on Pawnee terms.

The Spanish and French presence can appear deceptively large in no small part because Spanish and French documents provide the first written accounts of the Pawnee and the landscape, but they struggled to adjust to the space and the geopolitical realities. Spain and France were deeply connected to the Pawnee world as subjects of raids, trading partners, or neighbors of neighbors, but even with knowledge and connections they remained peripheral. Their experiences on the Great Plains between 1540 and 1800 fit two general modes: Spanish efforts to impose a military and political dominance, and French adaptations to local conditions. The former, guided by hubris, limited knowledge, and the near-absence of any demonstrable military power at the fringes of the Spanish empire, failed spectacularly. Spain retreated toward a more permanent frontier line. The latter, cognizant of its limits and more interested in connections than conquest, adapted itself to the ways of the plains while altering the region with more weapons and globally connected trade systems. The landscape swallowed pretensions of European control or power as interlopers died or became part of the local cultures. Europeans merely passed through.

The landscape surprised those unfamiliar with it. Francisco Váquez de Coronado’s disastrous foray into the plains in April 1541 filled his men with a sense of being lost at sea. For hundreds of miles after leaving the New Mexican pueblos, they saw neither “a hill nor a hillock
which was three times as high as a man. Several lakes were found at intervals . . . The country is like a bowl, so that when a man sits down, the horizon surrounds him all around at the distance of a musket shot . . . the rivers, which flow at the bottom of some ravines where the trees grow so thick that they were not noticed until one was right on the edge of them. They are of dead earth,” recalled Pedro de Castaneda.\textsuperscript{56} Spaniards were scared by the unnerving qualities of the land, the herds of bison, the absence of information about their surroundings, and the people who clearly knew much more than they let on about how to operate in such a foreign place. Men got lost, sometimes for days at a time, sometimes permanently. They were, as historian Kathleen Duval so aptly writes, “adrift in these unknown and unreadable lands.”\textsuperscript{57} The failures of Coronado and the de Soto expeditions, the problems of settlement and revolt in New Mexico through the 1600s, and of powerful Native Americans meant that Spanish interest in the plains was limited.\textsuperscript{58} They were a hostile place best left alone.

Not until the early-eighteenth century did the Franco-Spanish imperial rivalry spur renewed Spanish interest in the greater Platte Valley. Rumors and scraps of information about the presence of French traders and soldiers along the Mississippi and Missouri rivers reached Santa Fe in the 1690s. It was second or third hand information, though increased raids by Utes and Comanches supposedly with the aid and encouragement of the French confirmed deep suspicions about rival Europeans.

\textsuperscript{56} Pedro de Castaneda, in \textit{The Journey of Coronado, 1540-1542, From the City of Mexico to the Grand Canyon of the Colorado and the Buffalo Plains of Texas, Kansas, Nebraska, As told by Himself and Others}, ed. and trans., George Parker Winship (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1904), 111.

\textsuperscript{57} Duval, \textit{The Native Ground}, 50-1.

\textsuperscript{58} David J. Weber, \textit{The Spanish Frontier in North America} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 204-35; David J. Weber, \textit{Bárbaros: Spaniards and Their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 195-201. The trade fairs at Taos were as close as the Spanish empire got, other than as victims of raids, to the plains political and commercial systems.
As early as 1700, French reports of the Pawnee suggested the Pawnee’s central importance and connections to the horse and captive trade originating from New Mexico. Etienne Veniard de Bourgmont travelled up the Missouri River to the mouth of the Platte in 1714 and noted that 10 villages of Pawnee lived about 80-85 miles upstream. Bourgmont was awestruck by “the most beautiful countries and the most beautiful pieces of land in the world. The prairies there are like seas and full of wild beasts . . . which are there in numbers that stagger the imagination.”

French interests along the Missouri prompted an expedition to build Fort d’Orleans in 1724 near present-day Dewitt, Missouri as a diplomatic outpost. Bourgmont used the location as a base from which to extend diplomatic ties to the Comanche, Pawnee, Otoe, and Osage. It was in this context of French expansion that forty-five Spaniards and sixty Pueblo allies under Pedro Villasur left Santa Fe in 1720 for the Loup and Platte confluence to assert Spanish interests in the region.

The expedition was a tactical and strategic blunder from its inception. Soldiers desperately needed for the defense of New Mexico against Ute and Comanche raids wandered into the midst of a war between the Pawnee and Apache without a clear understanding of local conditions. Villasur had little information about where he was going and relied on a captive Pawnee named François Sistaca, whom promptly escaped to a Pawnee group the expedition met along the Platte. The Pawnee were furious at the invasion by forces allied to their Apache enemies. A surprise attack by the Pawnee killed 42 of Villasur’s men and sent the survivors racing toward safety in Santa Fe. Governor Antonio Valverde y Cosío eagerly blamed a

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supposed force of French soldiers for the defeat. It was easier to blame other Europeans than acknowledge Native American power, Spanish limitations, or the combination of poor planning, poor intelligence, and hubris. It was the last large-scale Spanish expedition into the region for almost a century as Spain struggled to defend New Mexico from increased Comanche, Ute, and occasional Pawnee raids. Barely able to man their border presidios let alone expand, the Platte remained far outside the Spanish defensive perimeter.63

By contrast, French interventions into the heart of Pawnee lands followed a similar pattern of adaptation and accommodation seen throughout much of the inland waterways of North America: occasional trade, intermarriage, local alliances, and systems of coexistence that acknowledged the local power of Native Americans. In the trans-Mississippi West, the French were ever-present, but ephemeral figures. They adapted to the locales rather than trying to bend the landscape and people to the whims of Paris, Quebec, or New Orleans. Marquette (1673), LaSalle (1682), and Hennepin (1687) recorded Indian slaves described as Pani among Mississippi River peoples. Whether they were actually Pawnee is debatable. Pani-Maha, a blanket term for the hundreds if not thousands of Indian captives sold into French Illinois and Louisiana through the 1760s, suggests a deep connection to the Pawnee, yet a removal from

63 Steinke, “Leading the Father,” 44-5, 52-3. Such a French presence would have caused an international diplomatic crisis as a violation of the 1720 Treaty of the Hague that ended the War of the Quadruple Alliance. The presidio boundary line eventually stretched for 1,800 miles along the northern boundaries of New Spain. This was an incomplete system with multiple eras of organization, vast differences in numbers and quality of troops, colonial volunteers, and Indian auxiliaries manning the posts. Spain’s overall strategic concern was monitoring French, English, and Russian imperial rivals rather than expanding influence into the Great Plains. Prior to the systematic Bourbon reforms of 1729, the presidio system itself lacked a single regulatory framework. The loss of 44 men was a significant blow when the post at Santa Fe had a garrison of only 100, and the 18 total posts were manned by 1,006 officers and men. Max L. Moorhead, The Presidio: Bastion of the Spanish Borderlands (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975, reprinted 1991): ix-x, 27-31; Weber, Spanish Frontier, 158-171; Hämäläinen, Comanche Empire, 48-9. One Spaniard related that by 1758, everything east of the Pecos River was simply, “tierra du Cumanches,” implying the Spanish surrendered any interest in the region. Spanish forces did not venture into Pawnee territory in force again until 1806 in response to Zebulon Montgomery Pike’s expedition, during which the Spanish made peace with the Pawnee, a fact the Skidi used to then steal the Spaniard’s horses. White, The Roots of Dependency, 153, 364, n. 14.
direct contact as Osage, Sioux, or Algonquian intermediaries provided the captives. Reports of French goods reaching a people labeled “Panni” by Spanish writers appear by 1716. By 1743, the French had a sense of the landscape along the whole of the Missouri at least to the Mandan as well contact with several of the Pawnee bands. Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, French officials viewed Louisiana, specifically the Missouri watershed, as one of boundless opportunities with fertile lands, river systems, and access to New Mexican silver that required further ascent of the Missouri. Pawnee lands were an elusive, but tempting prize.64

The French remained at the margins of the Pawnee world. Frenchmen were neighbors of neighbors. The post at the Osage-Missouri and later Missouri-Grand confluences remained the westernmost on the Missouri system, well below the Pawnee heartland.65 Positioned between the extreme edges of two European empires, Pawnee lands and the Platte Valley remained centrally important to continental imperial politics, but largely an unknown space. As historian Paul Mapp writes of general European ignorance as late as the 1760s, large parts of the continental interior including Pawnee lands, “remained realms of rumor and imagination rather than of reliable information.” Residents were often lumped into generalized categories that ignored complex realities, though geographic knowledge of the region improved by the 1780s.66

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65 Aron, American Confluence, 34-5. By 1730, however, Fort Orleans was abandoned and no permanent French post existed west of the Missouri-Mississippi confluence.

66 A general scheme of the river systems and rough sense of the people living there did not constitute full awareness or familiarity. Spanish sources often used general terms like “Ute,” “Apache,” and “Pawnee” to describe a myriad of diverse peoples that ignored the complexities of demographics and political identities, just as many plains peoples lumped “French” or “Spanish” identities to describe any Europeans. Mapp, The Elusive West, 5-9, 75-6. Work by French royal cartographer Rigobert Bonne was perhaps one of the most widely known and copied cartographers of the late-eighteenth century, partly for his accuracy and attention to practical detail. His maps from the 1770s and 1780s in Atlas Moderne (1772), Guillaume Raynal’s Atlas de Toutes les Parties Connue du Globe Terrestre (1780),
In reality, only a few Frenchmen were ever present among the Pawnee throughout much of the eighteenth century. Even with the founding of St. Louis in 1764, French interactions, now limited to trade, intermarriage, and cultural exchanges, remained focused more on the lower Missouri. Close relationships with the Osage and their geographic proximity to French settlements limited access to nations up river even as the Pawnee were deeply linked to the French trade system.67 Traders’ desires for more access to the Platte Valley, as well as the regional struggles between the Osage and their neighbors meant that by the late-1780s the region was engulfed in a larger conflict over access to the weapons, horse, and captive trade connected to St. Louis.68

French knowledge of the people and the geography far surpassed any information the Spanish possessed. In large part this resulted from the complexities of French-Indian intermarriages and relationships among the extensive fur trade networks pioneered by the Chouteau family and others out of St. Louis throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Reports of Franco-Pawnee children appear in St. Louis baptismal records by 1773.69 Franco-Indian families offered a tangible connection to the region, but were increasingly moved to the fringes of political power and cultural acceptance by their Euro-American cousins by the nineteenth century.70

and the Atlas de Geographie (1785) and Atlas Encydopeadique (1787), published with Nicholas Desmaret, established a baseline of knowledge about the North American interior by the latter-quarter of the eighteenth century. His 1780 map “Partie Occidentale du Canada, contenant le cinq Grand Lacs, avec les Pays Circonvoisins,” from Raynal’s Atlas includes much of the Missouri watershed, including three references to the rough location of Pawnee lands. Personal collection of the author.

67 Aron, American Confluence, 24-5, 48-49. DuTisné’s efforts to establish a post on the Osage River in 1719 met with direct hostility as the Osage blocked the effort to reach the Pawnee, and sent messengers warning the Pawnee of French intentions to raid for slaves, in order to preserve the Osage position as middlemen and favored trading partners whose access to French weapons offered a significant strategic advantage in the conflicts over hunting grounds to the west between Osage, Kansa, Oto, Omaha, and Pawnee territories. By 1751, Pawnee raiders killed 22 Osage, and joined Comanche and Wichita allies against both the Osage and the Spanish to the south and west.

68 Aron, American Confluence, 88.

69 Thorne, Many Hands of My Relations, 94-5.

70 Thorne, Many Hands of My Relations, 98-133.
Louisiana’s post-1763 transfer to Spain changed little as Madrid viewed Louisiana on the whole as a backwater. Spain did not bother to send a governor until 1766, and no official military presence arrived in St. Louis until 1769. British and American rivals on the borders of Louisiana forced Spain to expand its presence in the Missouri Valley. The Missouri Company formed in 1792 with orders to seek a route to the Pacific and exert Spanish influence. Pawnee raiders liberated most of the goods before traders even reached Pawnee territory and thwarted a similar effort four years later. Spain continued to send emissaries toward the Pawnee through 1810, but they could not make substantive claims to the region. British trade increasingly threatened a tenuous Spanish presence. Traders reached the Platte by 1796, but could not claim any serious influence.  

The increased competition and violence associated with the horse-captive-weapons trade post-1790 was worrisome, but Spain generally let local merchant elites run their Indian policy through gift giving and trade regulations that favored established Euro-American families. The merchants remained more closely aligned with the Osage, Missouri, Otoe, and Omaha than the Pawnee, who still occupied a more peripheral location vis-à-vis St. Louis. It was a concession to reality. Spanish focus was north and eastward toward the British and post-1783, Americans now just across the Mississippi.  

Spain and France tried and failed to understand the Platte Valley. Thwarted by their lack of direct knowledge, they projected their fears of a disorienting space filled with enemies or a fantasy of untold riches in captives, furs, and access to the Pacific and mines of New Mexico. Neither vision fully acknowledged the realities of the space or its people. While Europeans  


72 Thorne, Many Hand of My Relations, 98-104; Aron, American Confluence, 58-9, 69-105.
slowly improved their knowledge of the land, by 1800 it was still Pawnee land, ruled by Pawnee people and customs. Any European pretensions to governance were simply that. The Pawnee remained as they had been throughout at least the previous century. They were a centrally located people on the margins of European machinations across North America, at once hidden by their geographic position, but deeply connected to the larger networks of trade and war across the Great Plains.

1.4 Federal Entrée

Three interconnected histories prefigured the United States entry into the Platte prior to 1818: Westward expansion, Indian policy, and European imperial collapse. Federal experience in the trans-Mississippi West was limited. Jefferson purchased Louisiana well before he or the government knew what to do with it, or had the capacity to govern it. Federal officials needed the intervening fifteen years to gain control of the trans-Mississippi East before thinking about sustained expansion across the river. Only in 1818 did the federal state finally possess the ability and geopolitical conditions necessary to envision the Missouri River system as national space.

Prior to 1818, only a few small expeditions ventured into the larger Louisiana Purchase. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were the most famous, but they never actually entered the Platte Valley.\(^73\) Part of the federal delay came from the need to extinguish independent Native American power by force or negotiation east of the Mississippi. This also meant dealing with

\(^73\) The journals of the expedition record numerous encounters with people close to or at the margins of the Pawnee world, but never the Pawnee themselves, at least as a political body. Searching the journals yields 93 instances that mention the Pawnee, or some variation thereof, often in the context of geographic proximity to places the Corps stopped or peoples at war or allied with the Pawnee. For a complete listing visit The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition Online, https://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu.
the chaos of collapsing European empires that could aid independent Indians, threaten to reclaim old imperial lands, or wage war on the United States itself. Creating the security conditions for expansion meant defining the boundaries of the federal state, both in terms of racial nationhood and its physical boundaries with the British to the north and Spanish empire and emergent Mexican state to the south.

From 1803 until 1815, federal entrée to the Missouri and Platte valleys was limited, occasional, and lacked any persuasive means of enforcing ownership or control. On June 13, 1804, the Corps of Discovery passed by two signs that perfectly encapsulated the turbulent world they were entering. Near present day Kansas City, the Corps saw “the ancient village of the Missouris. Of this village there remains no vestige, nor anything to recall this great and numerous nation…they were driven from their seat by the invasions of Sauks and other Indians from the Mississippi [Sioux].” Opposite to the site, “there was an island and a French fort, but there is now no appearance of either, the successive inundations having probably washed them away.”74 One place revealed the destructiveness and disruption of the regional wars sparked by Sioux expansion, the other a metaphor of European imperial failure. The power of the landscape literally erased the French. Lewis and Clark did not understand the world through which they moved. They were as James Ronda writes, “simply players in a complex game made more intricate by their very presence.”75

The first task to expand federal power was to know the spaces and peoples. Zebulon Montgomery Pike’s 1806 expedition was the first federal entrance to the Platte Valley to show

74 The Missouri split with some seeking refuge with the Osage, the rest joining the Otoes on the Platte. Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, William Clark, Nicholas Biddle, Paul Allen, and Joseph Meredith Toner Collection, History of the expedition under the command of Captains Lewis and Clark, to the sources of the Missouri, thence across the Rocky Mountains and down the river Columbia to the Pacific Ocean: Performed during the years -5-6 by order of the government of the United States (Philadelphia: Published by Bradford and Inskeep and Abm. H. Inskeep, New York: J. Maxwell, printer, 1814), 13-14, Web. https://lccn.loc.gov/rc01001477.
75 James P. Ronda, Lewis and Clark Among the Indians (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 85, 95.
the flag, scout the southern border with Mexico, and announce that a new white father in Washington demanded obedience. U.S-Pawnee diplomacy began as a military encounter. Pike, an Army officer at the head of a military detachment, arrived to command the space and people into obedience. What he found was an unsettling landscape ruled by militarily powerful people. He recorded that Pawnee territory was an “immense tract of meadow country.” Pike’s group relied on its Indian guides and felt lost once the party left the rivers. After visiting the Pawnee, Pike followed the trails of the Spanish expedition sent to find him, and often “lost them entirely. This was a mortifying stroke, as we had reason to calculate, that they had good guides, and were on the best route for wood and water.” He did not even realize that at one point they wandered only three miles from the Arkansas River. Pike’s 1810 published narrative reported the region was, “barren soil, parched and dried up for eight months in the year, presents neither moisture nor nutrition sufficient, to nourish the timber. These vast plains of the western hemisphere, may become in time equally celebrated as the sandy deserts of Africa.”

A number of Pawnee accompanied Pike’s party to monitor the interlopers, even though twenty infantrymen wandering about were of little danger. A council on September 29, 1806 reinforced this notion. Pike reported that a large Spanish cavalry force impressed the Pawnee during their earlier visit and left a Spanish flag. He insisted “it was impossible for the nation to have two fathers; that they must be either the children of the Spaniard or acknowledge their American father.” An older chief exchanged the Spanish flag for an American, but Pike returned

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76 Pike, Journals, 2:23.
77 Pike, Journals, 1:334.
78 Pike, Journals, 1:336.
79 Pike, Journals, 2:27. There is a discrepancy in Pike’s accounts. His 1806 journal reported significant amounts of rainfall and relatively fertile regions well-stocked with game. There is an argument that Pike, operating under orders from Spanish agent and Aaron Burr conspirator General James Wilkinson, may have purposely misconstrued his observations to prevent American interest in the Great Plains in favor of a later Burr-related expansion. For an examination of the “tantalizing circumstantial evidence,” see Merlin P. Lawson, Randall Cerveny, and Cary Mock, “Zebulon Pike: Great American Explorer or Climate Spy?” Weatherwise 63, no. 1 (Jan-Feb. 2010): 26-33.
it so that “as they had now shewn themselves dutiful children . . . I did not wish to embarrass them with the Spaniards,” should they return in force after delivering “an injunction that it should never be hoisted during our stay.”\textsuperscript{80} It must have been a farcical scene: twenty Americans dictating geopolitics to a nation of thousands.

The Pawnee had just stopped the Spanish from exploring further into their country and warned that should Pike proceed further, they would stop him “by force of arms.” Bluffing his way out, Pike threatened dire consequences of revenge from an army sent “to gather our bones and revenge our deaths . . . when our spirits would rejoice in hearing our exploits sung in the war songs of our chiefs.”\textsuperscript{81} Bluster worked. Pike moved on after proving his readiness to die for his people, a characteristic the Pawnee could admire. Considering it was a party of twenty who could easily be found by Spanish cavalry, there really was little risk to Pawnee geopolitics. Americans were a novelty to be tolerated.

Understanding the treatment Pike and his men received by the Pawnee requires an understanding of the regional politics that predated the creation of the United States. But understanding why Pike was there and what the federal leadership expected of him requires an understanding of a U.S. Indian policy that had been taking shape since the Declaration of Independence.

Here was a key divergence between a narrative of thirty years of expanding federal power and the regional peculiarities of a landscape and people that gave federal officials pause. Those on the frontlines had grave concerns about the viability of national expansion into an alien landscape. Those making policy in Washington did not fully understand the regional dynamics. Explorers were bit players, small parties moving around country managed by others. It was a

\textsuperscript{80} Pike, Journals, 1:328-9.  
\textsuperscript{81} Pike, Journals, 1:329-30.
task too monumental for small, haphazard parties. Knowing the West meant developing the Army into a force of both scientific exploration and American state and cultural power. It was an exercise in nation-building that placed the emphasis on development at the edges of federal authority and it took time. No federal officials understood the Pawnee world.

The adoption of the Northwest Ordinance and the Constitution created a territorial system under a national aegis that allowed the United States to project national power into contested lands. This framework created a process for the full political incorporation of new territory. While nominally U.S. territory on a map, the Platte Valley remained outside this system of territorial governance and incorporation that had guided federal expansion since the 1780s. This was a land beyond the bounds of regular federal governance.

Federal officials did not fully realize the problems of distance and geography in administering the Missouri watershed. The farthest Indian sub agencies—small diplomatic outposts often with no more than a low-ranking resident official and a translator—established in the 1810s and 1820s, were more than 1000 miles by water above St. Louis and isolated much of the year. Sub Agent John Sanford, later of Dred Scott infamy, epitomized the untenable problems of his distant post complaining that he was “under the Superintendence of a man [in St. Louis] who has no more connection with me or my Indians then the governor of Vermont has.”

Federal authorities relied on coercive power, as territorial administration often meant preventing Indian wars and clearing illegal white settlements. But that required an active and

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82 Kastor, *William Clark’s World*, 101-125. The creation of a topographical engineer unit during the War of 1812 sparked further interest in systematic exploration. An 1816 report by the War Department recommended “the completion of a frontier military survey of the whole interior and exterior of the United States.” Quoted in Goetzmann, *Army Exploration in the American West*, 8. It also took time. Major Isaac Roberdeau, acting chief of the Topographical Bureau reported “No other country in the world feels the want of professional character of this kind [engineers] as does the United States; nor is there a nation in the world whose prosperity and improvement so much depends upon the establishment of some system by which this deficiency may be supplied.” Isaac Roberdeau to Thomas Newton, December 25, 1822, quoted in Goetzmann, *Army Exploration*, 9.
83 John F. A. Sanford to John Eaton, November 24, 1830, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
sizeable military presence. This duty fell to the U.S. Army, which acted as a federal police force and military buffer. Indian wars created the federal government, at least the fiscal-military state capable of deploying power against non-white enemies on its margins. This was neither a short nor simple process. It was only after a series of disastrous military defeats in the early 1790s that the United States devoted the military and administrative resources necessary to begin to extinguish Native American power in the trans-Appalachian West in the mid-1790s.84

Federal officials operated within a landscape of the familiar Eastern Woodlands and within military frameworks understood for generations. Infantry, backed by networks of closely linked forts and settlements, fought wars of attrition against Native Americans. Cavalry was aristocratic, expensive, and unnecessary. Fortifications were both protective garrisons and administrative centers. As such, they were sites of political tension between locals wary of coercive state power and federal officials tasked with enforcing regulations. This model continued across the Mississippi after 1803.85 By the 1810s, federal power was a cudgel that deployed national strength against fractured Native American societies and positioned the United

States for continental expansion. As historian Andrew Cayton writes, policies and laws were important, but more significant was “establishing the impression that the United States had the power to make them work.”

Federal policy makers can be forgiven for thinking that what worked in the East could be easily replicated. After 1815, they looked westward with a reasonable expectation for continued success. The territorial system largely settled questions over jurisdictions and the fears of a diffusion of authority over an expansive frontier. Territories and peoples remained loyal to the national state through the trial of war. Federal officials deployed military power through wars, built forts and infrastructure, and selectively used force against racial outsiders. The last major threat of a pan-Indian confederacy disappeared, though regionally powerful groups remained. Federal officials entered the trans-Mississippi West with the undeserved arrogance of conquerors and guided by notions of racial and civilizational superiority.

The independent United States struggled for political and racial self-definition as it tried to extinguish Native American power in the East by force or negotiation. As historian Peter Silver writes of the great American paradox, “increased toleration for one group can nearly always be found tangled together with increased intolerance toward another.” In this case a mid-eighteenth century creation of whiteness as a political identity vis-à-vis Native Americans created a broadly democratic identity of white versus Indian interests and loyalties. Race defined American nationalism and state-building processes. Federal officials used divide and conquer

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diplomacy to exploit preexisting internal divisions within Native American societies to either force accommodation or flight westward.⁸⁸

Thomas Jefferson epitomized a confusion over national identity. His conflation of race and nation struggled to reconcile if Native Americans “as natural republicans,” could or should be brought into the American political system once properly civilized and removed from the corrupting influence of foreign powers. Writing to chiefs in the Old Northwest in 1808, Jefferson presented a generally applicable warning that “the tribe which shall begin an unprovoked war against us, we will extirpate from the earth.”⁹⁰ If they rejected the charitable hand of American paternalism, the fault was theirs. Join the American system or die. A generational shift and hardening of racial boundaries promoted the latter. By 1819, this policy manifested itself in the dual expulsion movements of the American Colonization Society and the establishment of a long-imagined Indian Territory somewhere west of the Mississippi.⁹⁰

Often grand designs ignored the physical and political realities. Notions of racial and cultural superiority, expansive power, the dangers of unmanaged and unbounded peoples all fit into a seemingly open space ready to be shaped. “Who can limit the extent to which the federative principle may operate effectively?” argued Thomas Jefferson, while defending the Louisiana Purchase in his second inaugural address. “Is it not better that the opposite bank of the Mississippi should be settled by our own brethren and children, than by strangers of another

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family?” he asked, revealing the underlying nationalistic and racial elements of white American expansion. It was a grandiose dream by a man who often had to be brought back down to reality. Lewis and Clark had not crossed Rockies, yet Jefferson was planning the full political incorporation of a new American West. General James Wilkinson was more realistic about the strategic difficulties of governance. He estimated that control required a minimum of 10,000 troops, more than three and a half times the authorized size of the U.S. Army, for a proper show of force. Dreams versus realities remained the ever-present tension for federal officials in Washington and their agents in the field.

Americans, like Europeans before them, could imagine nearly infinite possibilities for the landscape along grand scales, but with little understanding of the contextual dynamics of the space and people. Jefferson briefly entertained a scheme to drain the Euro-American population from above the 31st parallel, move them to the Old Northwest, and turn the area into a version of Indian Territory. The goal to separate racial nationalities and prevent wars was a logical idea. It might prevent the insanity of confusing land claims that plagued Kentucky and Tennessee and the violence of contested frontiers, thus limiting the requisite expenditure of federal resources. Like many of his grandiose, impractical schemes, it had almost no actual support.

Federal authority nominally stretched to the Rockies as officials panicked over resurgent pan-Indian confederacies and struggled to control territories and people east of the Mississippi. The limited federal presence along the Platte was dictated by the limits of an overextended

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93 Aron, American Confluence, 115-119.
national power prior to 1812. Fort Osage, primarily a government-run trading factory on the Missouri, and Fort Madison at the confluence of the Des Moines and Mississippi, became the outer reaches of the federal presence in 1808. They were far removed from Pawnee and Sioux lands. French trader Pierre Chouteau urged the War Department to find “reliable and intelligent” men for agents among the Omaha, Otoe, Missouri, Kansa, and Pawnee in 1805 and 1806, but Indian agents were few and far between. Federal officials did not conclude treaties with most of the regional nations until after 1816. Primary contact remained with St. Louis-based merchants.94

As federal leaders sought to extend the reach of Indian policy into the trans-Mississippi West in the 1810s, they selected an official who would become instrumental to U.S.-Pawnee relations for a generation. In 1813, William Clark became territorial governor of Missouri, a position he held until statehood eight years later. But Clark was already serving as the principle Indian agent for the territory west of the Mississippi, and it was in this role that he would become a principle figure in the U.S. and Pawnee diplomatic world.

Given federal vulnerability during the War of 1812, it took years for Clark to enact a grand vision for federal-Native American relations west of the Mississippi. Fears, both real and imaginary, of British-aligned tribes through the War of 1812 prioritized protecting vulnerable frontiers rather than expanding American influence. Clark spent the war largely balancing a complex web of allies and competing interests. The war in the Mississippi-Missouri confluence was in large part a contest between Native American groups, a fact Clark realized, if bemoaned. “Missouri tribes must either be engaged for us, or they will be opposed to us without doubt,” he

advised the War Department. The Mississippi was now the site of “the most destructive Indian war.” Reporting on his efforts, Clark told Secretary of War William Crawford that “I adopted the only expedient in my power calculated to check the British influence and the extension of British warfare, which was to set some of the large tribes of the Missouri, nearest our southern frontiers, at war against the Tribes of the Mississippi.” Relations with the Omaha, Otoe, Iowa, and Sauk were at best tenuous with the latter nations more loyal to their British allies and Tecumseh’s movement.

To secure Omaha and Otoe friendship, trader Manuel Lisa of the Missouri Fur Company received an appointment as Indian sub agent near Council Bluffs in 1814. Lisa was a regular presence in the region and maintained a trading post rather grandiosely called Fort Lisa, eleven miles up the Missouri from present-day Omaha. It was a rude compound. Set on the slope of a hill “near a small creek whose steep banks enclose[d] it nearly like a wall,” it offered little more than a convenient gathering place and warehouse close to the river according to Paul Wilhelm, the duke of Würtemberg who visited in the 1820s. Fort Lisa was hardly a formidable outpost, but rather a nearly hidden and inaccessible place, unobtrusive within the landscape. Lisa’s connections, however, did alter the geopolitics of the region. According to Clark, “Lisa succeeded to my expectations and has produced valuable changes in the dispositions of [the Sioux, Omaha, and Pawnee].” His appointment solidified Council Bluffs as indispensable for

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96 Clark to William Crawford, December 11, 1815, NA: RG 107, SecWarLR, Roll 68.
99 Clark to Crawford, December 11, 1815, NA: RG 107, SecWarLR, Roll 68.
future expansion while the fur company incubated local expertise like future Superintendent of Indian Affairs Joshua Pilcher.100

While federal officials barely escaped national defeat and embarrassment by the British in the East, they looked westward upon a generally victorious war effort and toward a grand realignment of Indian affairs on the upper Mississippi and Missouri rivers. Clark and other federal officials conducted negotiations with 37 Native American groups between 1815 and 1817 to reset relations.101 The resultant treaties positioned the United States as the dominant power broker for the Mississippi. The Missouri was a different matter. Fewer groups came to St. Louis for talks. Except for Manuel Lisa’s agency, no federal presence existed west of Fort Osage.102

Federal expansion required a physical presence to delineate boundaries and redefine space as American. Clark pushed early and hard for more forts along the newly negotiated boundaries, arguing for the Arkansas River that “to prevent settlements extending up the Arkansaw (sic) as well as to detect illicit Trade, a military post is essential.”103 Major General Edmund Gaines agreed in principal, suggesting two of the three main purposes of the Army were to build forts and infrastructure. Forts were teaching laboratories for troops, but as fixed positions they limited force readiness. “Soldier[s] should explore the country bordering on the frontier and obtain from actual observation a knowledge of its topography,” he argued. Troops could not learn everything “from books or within the walls of a Fort.”104 An expansive notion of

101 William Clark, Ninian Edwards, Auguste Chouteau, June 17, 1816, NA:RG 107, SecWarLR, Roll 68.
103 Clark to Crawford, September 30, 1816, NA: RG107, SecWarLR, Roll 68.
fort building combined with practical local knowledge were key to a national security predicated on distinct boundaries between white Americans and the frontiers.

Following the War of 1812, federal officials could look toward this expansive view of continental power because of the larger chaos of the Atlantic world as European empires collapsed under internal pressures and the crises of the Napoleonic Wars. Napoleon’s failed effort to rebuild the French empire in Haiti and Louisiana resulted in the fire sale of the latter to the United States. Relations with Britain, though at times tense, entered a period of relative calm and increased trade. The crisis points of Anglo-American relations shifted from the Great Lakes and support for Native American resistance to claims over Oregon. The United States had the geopolitical space to expand.

Relations with Spain were a different matter. The crumbling empire faced revolutions across Latin America and a borderland in North America it could not defend. A volatile situation, exacerbated by renegade white Americans, independent Native Americans, and popular support for Latin American revolutions threatened federal control and ability to direct a national policy. Foreign relations, the Madison and Monroe administrations discovered, required expanded federal control of Americans as well as their borders. Negotiations for U.S. acquisition of Florida began in 1818, spurred by the region’s part in supporting independent Creek and Seminole power in the Southeast. The negotiations eventually included a settlement of the southern boundary of the United States, clarifying the ambiguities of the Louisiana Purchase with the Transcontinental Treaty of 1819. By the spring of 1819, federal officials could look to stable if permeable borders on the north and south, erasure of European claims to

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the space in between—minus the Pacific coast—and a belief, however wrong, that any remaining Native American powers were now a solely federal problem.106

As Secretary of State John Quincy Adams quipped about federal ambitions in North American to British ambassador Stratford Canning in 1821, “keep what is yours, leave the rest of the continent to us.”107 The question was what to do with it. A group of active expansionists pushed federal policy toward a vision of continental dominance, among them John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, Thomas Hart Benton, Andrew Jackson, and especially John C. Calhoun who as secretary of war took responsibility to make the vision a reality.

By 1817, Congressional desire for a distinct western Indian Territory and stronger border controls increased sharply. The Committee on Public Lands worried that “the present irregular form of the frontier, deeply indented by tracts of Indian territory, presents an extended boundary on which intercourse is maintained between the citizen and the savage, the effect of which on the moral habits of both is not unworthy of regard.” Without a clearly delineated physical, racial, and national boundary “the civilized man cannot be improved, and by which there is ground to believe the savage is depraved.”108

Many Army officers shared this sentiment, particularly Gaines, under whose command frontier military policy took definitive shape. His was a vision of benevolent paternalism focused on humanitarian goals of government sponsored civilizing efforts where subordinate Indians recognized federal supremacy coupled with the ability to compel obedience. As early as 1815, he saw frontier Indians as easy to conquer and, “should the neighboring Indians renew

107 Quoted in Herring, From Colony to Superpower, 134.
their system of massacre on our exposed settlements a prompt exhibition of our force and a little
timely chastisement of these Barbarians will insure a cheap lasting peace.”

It was hubris from a commander who did not know the Platte Valley.

The Monroe administration agreed with Gaines. Efforts by Secretary of War John C. Calhoun spearheaded the process of removal and the creation of a distinct boundary line that could be policed, patrolled, and regulated. Taking advantage of a report on Indian trade to the House of Representatives, Calhoun pushed strongly for systematic regional management and strict regulation. Without an active federal presence to protect American and Indian interests, he argued, “a state of disorder and violence would universally prevail.” Disorder could be guised as actual attacks, economic chaos, or the muddling of racial and national identities. Moreover, fear of foreign influences, principally British fur traders who had operated in the Platte region since the 1790s, might again incite hostilities among people Calhoun considered “the most warlike and powerful” who were becoming the “near neighbors” of western settlements. Such independence posed a direct strategic threat to American security.

Calhoun began a wave of experimentation to reform Indian policy and army organization. He saw the Missouri Valley as integral to his broad expansionist and reform agenda, where Council Bluffs would be “permanently occupied in considerable force,” to link posts along the river. Calhoun sought advice from his commanders who suggested a diplomatic framework to

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111 Calhoun to Richard Johnson, Chair of House Committee on Military Affairs, December 28, 1819, New York Spectator Vol. XXIII, January 18, 1820; Kinbacher, “Indians and Empires,” 213. Calhoun was justifying his actions after the fact to a congressional investigation about the failures of the Yellowstone Expedition, but the rationale followed his earlier strategic thinking about the importance of a fortified boundary.
112 Calhoun produced several of the most insightful white papers on the direction of American policy during the nineteenth century on army reorganization and strategic vision for national expansion. Calhoun to Clay, December 5, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 3:341-55; Calhoun to Clay, December 11, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 3:374-86; Henry Atkinson to Calhoun, January 2, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 4: 529, 540.
treat the less advanced in a tutelary manner that Gaines recognized as the prerogative of strong, civilized neighbors. “The savage must be taught and compelled to do that which is right, and to abstain from that which is wrong,” he argued, “The poisonous cup of barbarism cannot be taken from the lips of the savage by the mild voice of reason alone; the strong mandate of justice must be resorted to, and enforced,” leaving little doubt of the need for a boots-on-the-ground presence along the border. Such a view reinforced the understanding that beyond the boundary lines Native American nations were still distinct, powerful entities. Echoing Jefferson’s 1808 and 1809 messages, Gaines argued that if Native Americans resisted, “we should annihilate them.”

The result was a dramatic expansion of the federal presence in the West. By 1818, federal officials started thinking in vast imaginaries of spatial domination from Fort Smith on the Arkansas, to Council Bluffs on the Missouri, and to the Falls of St. Anthony near present-day Minneapolis and the future Fort Snelling. Major Stephen H. Long’s 1819-20 expedition through the Great Plains to the Rocky Mountains formed the corollary portion of this strategy: map, explore, document, and know the places and peoples to be brought into the American orbit. Long’s description of “a great sandy desert,” that was hot, parched, and “wholly unfit for cultivation, and of course uninhabitable by a people depending upon agriculture for their subsistence,” reinforced the Great Plains as unfit terra incognita. But this did not stop federal policy makers from thinking about the uses of space, even if it was unfit for white settlement.

113 Gaines to Calhoun, December 4, 1817, ASP:IA, 2:161; Watson Peacekeepers and Conquerors: 35-41. These views did not represent the entire officer corps. Many held sympathetic views of Native Americans and their plight in the face of white expansion and removal programs. Sympathy, however, was not enough for officers to stop being agents of white national expansion. Watson gives the military a pass arguing that “American military officers were much less belligerent or ruthless against the Arikara, Winnebago, Sauk, and Seminole than their British, French, and Russian counterparts were in India, Africa, and Asia.” Less ruthless is not equivalent to less culpable.
Rather than a specific place, the United States looked to grand transformations. Federal knowledge and authority would remake the physical space on a scale previously inconceivable. As they would learn at Council Bluffs in 1819, however, federal officials and the U.S. Army in particular were prepared neither physically nor conceptually for the kind of power necessary to impose an American cultural or political norm over putatively subject peoples and places. This unpreparedness was a recurring theme through the 1820s and 1830s as federal officials tried to imagine a new use for the trans-Mississippi West as the place to resettle Native Americans removed from the East.116

1.5 Realignment

By 1818, two vastly different regional powers appeared ready to dramatically realign the geopolitics of the Platte Valley. The Pawnee recognized the emergent power on their frontier had to be incorporated into Pawnee diplomacy. The United States looked to reorganize Indian affairs and Western diplomacy on a grand scale by blustering in to dictate a new order based on federal supremacy with a massive military presence. Neither group fully accounted for the power of the other.

Delegations of all four Pawnee bands traveled to St. Louis in 1818 to negotiate treaties of friendship with the United States, represented by William Clark and French trading magnate Auguste Chouteau. It was supposed to be a reset for new relationships in preparation for the federal advance up the Missouri. Pawnee leaders nominally pledged to be under federal

116 Federal removal policy had a long history beginning in the founding of the republic, but it found full expression with the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and the consequent horrors of the Trail of Tears. Ronald N. Satz, *American Indian Policy In the Jacksonian Era* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1975); Saunt, *Unworthy Republic*, 258-322.
protection, acknowledge no other foreign power, and turn over any individuals who violated the peace to federal authorities. They were easy pledges to make to officials hundreds of miles downstream with no physical presence in Pawnee territory or ability to enforce the new rules.\textsuperscript{117}

Federal military expansion sought to model direct and hierarchical control of subordinate places and people. It was a manifestation of society at odds with a cultural emphasis on democratic individualism apparent by the 1810s.\textsuperscript{118} Those men who journeyed up the Missouri found a contested place where geography, pre-existing Native American ideals of masculine authority, and the contradictions of state claims to authority over increasingly democratic and unruly men thwarted the hopes for orderly federal regional consolidation.\textsuperscript{119} Secure in their leadership roles as mediators of the temporal and spiritual worlds, and their geopolitical position as the dominant power on the Platte, Pawnee leaders saw little behavior worth emulating.

The appearance of federal forces did little to immediately change Pawnee conceptions of place and power. Edwin James recorded a mixed reception at the Pawnee villages when he arrived in late-April 1820 with the Long Expedition and Clark’s nephew, newly appointed Indian Agent Benjamin O’Fallon. Sharitarish of the Chaui and other Pawnee leaders offered a warm welcome and hospitality. Tarrarecawaho, however, remained initially aloof with a “dignity of his appearance; but his extreme hauteur became manifest . . . by not offering his hand, or even deigning to look at us.”\textsuperscript{120} Tarrarecawaho previously met Clark in St. Louis and walked a careful diplomatic line. He acknowledged federal power over the flow of military supplies by

\textsuperscript{117} ASP:IA, 2:171-2.
\textsuperscript{119} Watson, in \textit{Jackson’s Sword and Peacekeepers and Conquerors}, argues that the officer corps professionalized in part by generally divorcing itself from the formal politics of Washington. Yet life at Fort Atkinson shows a military rife with dissention whose members struggled to reconcile professional and political behaviors as well as petty squabbles.
\textsuperscript{120} James, \textit{Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains}, 1:351.
recognizing that O’Fallon was a chief, at least in terms of the agent’s ability to control trade goods. “I have no personal fear,” he told his assembled younger warriors, but would invite the American chief to council, “and if any of you wish to speak to him then, you have my consent. Do as I do; I am not ashamed of what I have done; follow my example.”\textsuperscript{121} In the context of Pawnee power this was a clever diplomatic position. It reinforced Tarrarecawaho’s authority as he conducted the proceedings from a secure position while simple words placated the Americans.

Telling stories conveyed an even stronger message about Pawnee self-conceptions. A few days later while meeting with the Métis [recorded as Metiff] Pawnee chief, James reported a mourning ceremony for the losses of a war party the previous winter that included the chief’s half-brother, a distinguished full-blood Pawnee warrior. A party of 93 Pawnee, on foot to raid horses and armed with only 12 guns was surrounded and attacked by a large force of Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Kiowa. A brutal, day-long battle of hand to hand combat ensued with the Pawnee leader falling mortally wounded. Even so, the leader urged on his men to “fight whilst you can move a limb, and when your arrows are expended take to your knives.” At their most desperate moment he ordered the survivors to break out on a fighting retreat. One leader was so ashamed at surviving he ran back to the enemy to die fighting. Forty survivors initially escaped, but several wounded men requested to be killed or left to die. One man, “after soliciting death from his brother repeatedly in vain . . . finally plunged his knife in his heart.”\textsuperscript{122}

It was a dramatic story filled with not so subtle messages for Americans. Pawnee leaders simultaneously extolled the military bravery and capabilities of their warriors and signaled the lengths to which their men would go if necessary to fight for their people. Even in defeat, Pawnee warriors were the masters of their fate. Death before dishonor; death before becoming a

\textsuperscript{121} James, \textit{Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains}, 1:352-3.
\textsuperscript{122} James, \textit{Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains}, 1:363-4.
burden that endangered their compatriots. It was a thinly concealed warning. Pawnee self-conceptions of their bravery, martial skill, and ability to control their space and people were secure. Change, if it came, would come on their terms. James did not dwell on this message or its import. Perhaps he was comforted by the federal military power deployed along the Missouri.

That power appeared in force in 1819. Colonel Henry Atkinson led 1,000 men from St. Louis toward the Yellowstone River in July as part of Calhoun’s ambitious attempt to bring the region into federal control. Atkinson’s force partially escorted the Long Expedition, and the entire party reconvened in October as supply problems, incompetent contractors, and bad transportation stranded the troops at the Council Bluffs where temporary winter quarters evolved into the more permanent Fort Atkinson. The contest over control and meaning at this space, at one time the largest U.S. Army garrison, symbolized the larger problem of military expansion and federal visions for power in the Platte Valley and the West writ large. Federal officials rushed to remake the space in their own image undaunted by the landscape or the complexities of regional politics. Like the Europeans before, they understood little, imagined a lot, and learned through hard experience about the particulars of trying to remake space into a Euro-American place. The United States expanded its frontier, and here among the Pawnee, the frontier pushed back.

Chapter Two
Defining Spaces: Fort Atkinson at the Council Bluffs

Pawnee diplomacy, politics, and the life of the Platte Valley began to change in 1819 as the United States arrived in earnest. Secretary of War John C. Calhoun planned to extend federal authority to the Upper Missouri River by sending thousands of troops far beyond American settlements. This chapter chronicles the years immediately after the United States tried to stake its claim to the region by constructing and manning Fort Atkinson at Council Bluffs. Through this project of military construction and military occupation, the United States sought to build itself into the landscape and insert its vision of power into the regional diplomatic and military dynamics.

Federal officials succeeded in establishing a diplomatic presence, but failed in their efforts to make U.S. sovereignty over the region a reality. One fort manned by infantry fixed power in a small locale. It could not remake the dynamics of an expansive region. While the United States was unable to achieve its goals, Pawnee leaders did succeed in bringing the United States into their diplomatic world. They preserved their sovereignty and ability to conduct independent military and foreign policy outside the limited range of Fort Atkinson’s guns.

Forts are by their nature physical symbols of state power upon the landscape. They are fixed, secure, foreboding projections of coercive authority that claim a monopoly of violence controlled through strict hierarchy and discipline. Fort Atkinson was supposed to fit this model. The military complex with its associated Indian Agency was an experiment in military
government predicated on a system of martial patriarchy and supported by coerced obedience.¹ This was federal authority showcased as raw coercive power.

Council Bluffs was a space in-between centers of power. At the eastern edge of Pawnee territory, it was similarly a military outpost where Pawnee leaders could engage in diplomacy, assess federal power, and meet rivals at a neutral location. Native American military power offered competing claims of sovereignty and models of governance grounded on customary behavior. Chiefs’ status originated in self-control, martial leadership, and command over the behavior of their young men. Federal officers thought small and tried to maintain order within the fort’s confines. Secure in their positions, Pawnee and other Native American leaders looked beyond Council Bluffs to diplomatic and economic networks from Mexico to Canada.

Fort Atkinson was designed to impose a coercive order on Native American people outside of the American nation. Fort Atkinson was both a military installation and a small agricultural settlement. It was an atypical frontier city in that its government, social order, and cultural self-conceptions were guided by its martial role and population, often diametrically

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¹ Patriarchy is used here to encapsulate a broader argument about the reciprocal relationship of authority and its basis in gendered norms. Leaders’ claims to status required reciprocal acknowledgement by their followers, and a recognition of legitimacy through obedience, provided certain conditions such as the delivery of food, gifts, or protection were fulfilled by the leadership. This can be broken into broadly understood systems. An informal one more often associated with internal Native American politics based upon personal relationships and recognition of individual qualities such as being a successful hunter, bravery in combat, and the ability to supply and redistribute wealth. A more structured system with regulation and enforced not by personal example, but by codes of conduct and punishment for disobedience as well as more physical conceptions of hierarchy like buildings and equipment characteristic of the U.S. Army. The former placed greater emphasis on the consent of the governed while the latter tamped down the reciprocal nature of the relationship, concentrating power in the elites. The Pawnee occupied a middle space in this with generally stricter lines of authority and control, but also heavily reliant on personal conduct to signify leadership ability. At Fort Atkinson, the tension between these two were in stark contrast to each other with the shifting ideals of the independent American man as both equal to his peers and superior to those outside the fraternity. Both, however, relied on the control of oneself and one’s subordinates in order to be a fully capable, independent male. Military patriarchy as a system of government offered a lingua franca for intercultural diplomacy between warrior elites as a way to assess an opponent’s relative power and legitimacy, but the emphasis on force and coercive control rather than reciprocal relations posed a direct threat to the concept of an independent man as the basic unit of politics. At the level of the nation state, militarized patriarchy threatened the self-conceptions of Native and Euro-American polities by creating more rigid and hierarchical societies with less room for social and political mobility.
opposed to U.S. and local Native American political cultures. Life at Fort Atkinson was bounded by law, but outside the norms of expected U.S. legal and political culture. Here, expansion was about imposing control through the broad categories of labor and economics, crime and punishment, and military power around Council Bluffs. Military justice theoretically governed the space, but rebellious members of the Army, civilian officials and workers, traders and travelers, and local Native Americans belied notions of authoritarian control. The mission to expand control failed, spectacularly.

Federal authorities could not control their own people or model norms of behavior that appealed to local Native American powers. Nor could they project power to alter the complex geopolitics of the Platte and Missouri river systems. Internal conflicts over hierarchy, authority, governance, and the meaning of independent manhood itself belied the supposed regularity and discipline of a professional military force arrayed against Native American military power. A nominally secure federal space was in reality a dynamic frontier. How federal officials and Native American leaders worked within common norms of martial masculinity to assert their authority, govern their people, and punish transgressors informed the larger debate about power and control of the Platte and Missouri valleys. Federal officials did not understand the geopolitical world of mobile power wielded by Native American nations confident in their cultural norms. In trying to make the Council Bluffs into a model of a coercive state, federal

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2 Gitlin, Berglund, and Arenson, *Frontier Cities*, 6-8. As the authors conceptualize them, cities are civilian enterprises with far less rigid or prescribed codes of behavior, more democratic organization and court systems that offer more avenues of redress for citizens, and far more divergent economic and political *raisons d’être* compared to military outposts with more clearly defined tactical and strategic functions, an appointed and hierarchical command structure, and fewer methods to check governmental power. Fundamentally then, while forts and cities share many of the structural identifiers of urbanization – population, industry, diversity, regional gravitational pulls – their underlying organizations are fundamentally incompatible given their differences in political culture and daily governance.
officials merely alienated their own citizens and local Native Americans evaluating whether this new model of behavior was worth emulating.

The power of a fort to overawe visitors, white and Indian alike, with the physical presence of the government and the apparent success of civilization over a savage wilderness lies at the heart of a persistent American myth of forts on the frontier. Americans conquered a complex wilderness space by turning it into a place with specific, ordered functions and appearances. Forts naturalized narratives of power, or tried to project that image to those who entered the gates.

Such a naturalized image is precisely what some visitors saw. On an oppressively hot June day in 1823 a party of American fur traders and European travelers made the short trip from Cabanné’s trading post along the Missouri River up to Fort Atkinson. The intense heat and the dense underbrush along the difficult trail slowed the progress to a crawl as the party took more than an hour to make the two miles to the open prairie around the outpost. Duke Paul Wilhelm of Württemberg who organized the trip as part of his North American excursions, exclaimed that from almost every direction from the picturesque bluffs, “the tasteful, whitewashed buildings of the fort could be seen at a considerable distance, and for me it was a genuine pleasure to see the dwellings of civilized men, yes a small town again after months of separation in the wilderness.” For the duke, it appeared as a natural formation, a bastion of white civilization.

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3 The popular imagination of the twentieth century envisioned forts in similar ways. Westerns like *Fort Apache* or *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* portrayed them as the advanced posts of American civilization, complete with women, families, and social scenes straight out of Philadelphia drawing rooms at odds with the savagery lurking outside the walls. Later scholars like Francis Paul Prucha found forts to be the advance guards of American culture and government, literally clearing the way for the settlement and political incorporation. Prucha, *Broadax and Bayonet*, and Prucha, *Sword of the Republic*; Ingram, *Indians and British Outposts in Eighteenth-Century America*, 1-3.


conquering the savage wilderness, bringing the ax, the plough, and the government of Euro-Americans. The attached Indian agency with its council house and resident agent further marked the place as a site of federal authority, with its own gravitational pull bringing diverse peoples into the political orbit of the United States. What the duke saw was simple to explain: federal officials created a model town that was picturesque, powerful, and organized along simple lines of hierarchical power. Little did he know this was merely an illusion of control.

What the duke did not understand was that the façade of federal power at Fort Atkinson hid anxious men, unsure of their authority and identity, in a daily battle over how to run the United States’ western-most outpost. It was an isolated American island in a sea of grass. Fort Atkinson’s residents were legally squatters whose presence depended on the benevolence of their Native American hosts. The post was claustrophobic, surrounded by potential enemies, hundreds of miles from resupply or reinforcement, and manned by infantry limited in their ability to project power beyond the fort’s cannons.

This chapter argues that the struggles to define the fort as a place matched a larger struggle over the basis of masculinity and its relationship to political authority. By trying to control the individual male at the frontier, federal leaders nationalized bodies to establish the borders of race, culture, and nation out of an international space. Honor, courage, self-sufficiency, mastery over oneself and one’s subordinates, technical prowess, and the ability to avoid physical harm while retaining the ability to inflict it marked the successful man. Pawnee

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6 The treaty securing the military reservation at Council Bluffs was never actually ratified by the Senate. “Treaty with the Mahas made at Council Bluff,” ASP:IA, 2:226.
7 Walter Johnson, River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 3-4. Johnson’s examination of the cotton kingdom holds similar analytical power for the initial military settlement of the Missouri Valley. The Army reproduced a Jeffersonian ideal of independent outposts with a clear gendered and racialized hierarchy akin to Southern plantations and the household political economy and social order. It was the mechanism for turning vast land holdings into federal places and situating direct copies of white American households—albeit ones on a massive scale—into a foreign and international landscape.
chief Tarrarecawaho emphasized this in an 1819 council with federal officials. “The Master of Life placed me on this land, and what should I fear? Nothing,” he proclaimed to Indian Agent Benjamin O’Fallon, “You are a chief, and I am a chief.” Military patriarchy as a governing concept could be mutually understood by federal and Native American leaders. Here was equality among the leadership class. If Tarrarecawaho was as powerful as the agent appointed over him, the boundaries of race, nation, and political authority remained unsettled.

The federal presence disrupted Pawnee diplomatic and political worlds, and to a lesser extent Sioux, Omaha, Otoe, Missouri, and Kansa political worlds. Disruption, however, did not mean erasure or total change of policies. Pawnee leaders reassessed their positions vis-à-vis the federal interlopers who were largely confined to Council Bluffs. Fixed power and limited control at Fort Atkinson did little to alter the Pawnee’s ability to conduct their own affairs.

Four interrelated themes—the transformation of space, the creation of a martial culture, the regulation and rebellion of bodies through sexuality, labor, and criminality, and the diplomatic consequences of federal claims—carry through the period. The chapter examines each in turn to see why this creation of a federal space failed in its goals to transform regional geopolitics.

2.1 Making a Federal Place

In July 1804 just north of present-day Omaha, the Corps of Discovery found graceful forests interspersed with dense brush and open prairies, testifying to the versatility of the landscape and health of the soil. The sweeping vistas and overall beauty of the place were not

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8 Speech of Tarrarecawaho, October 19, 1819, James, Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, 1:395.
lost on the usually taciturn William Clark. As he recorded in his journal, Clark and Meriwether Lewis “walked in the Prairie on the top of the Bluff and observed the most butifull prospects imagionable.” Clark’s idiosyncratic spelling managed to capture the essential feel of the locale. A tranquil scene of timber and bottomland was an ideal landscape waiting for exploitation and conquest by settlement. The strategic value of the place was more immediately apparent to the pragmatic officer. Clark noted that the commanding views of river valley were perfectly suited for a trading or military post. The bluffs’ physical dominance of the valley made them an attractive meeting and trading site for the independent Native American powers.

For the moment, however, Clark and his compatriots could do little beyond plan for the future. Forty men briefly passing through the region were hardly the agents of permanent U.S. colonization. “After Delivering a Speech informing thos Children of ours of the Change which had taken place,” he and Lewis delivered “the wishes of our government to Cultivate friendship & good understanding, the method of . . . good advice & Some Directions, we made . . . Some presents of Meadels.” Imagining federal control was an act of wishful thinking. A few gifts, some grandiose speeches about federal territorial claims and power, renaming the local geography, and a quick departure were hardly the signs of authority and control. In response, the Otoe chiefs at the council “each . . . delivered a Speech acknowledging their approbation to what they had heard and promised to prosue the good advice and Caustion, they were happy with ther new fathers who gave good ad[vice].” These were easy speeches to make to newcomers who could be useful allies against the Sioux and other enemies, but not direct threats themselves.

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10 Clark, Journal, August 3, 1804, Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Clark recorded that as “those people [the Pawnee and Sioux] are now at war with each other,” he wrote, “an establishment here would bring about peace and be the means of Keeping of it.”
Council Bluffs occupied a potentially dangerous middle point in a violent regional political economy of endemic raiding and warfare sparked largely by the Sioux expansion in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{12} Lying 70 miles south of the principal Omaha village, two days ride from the Otoe near the mouth of the Platte, and four days from the Pawnee, Council Bluffs was strategically situated, but immensely vulnerable with potentially thousands of neighboring warriors.\textsuperscript{13} It linked the imagined American border as the closest point on the Missouri to Fort Snelling near present-day St. Paul, and halfway between St. Louis and the Mandan Villages. Council Bluffs was 25 days hard ride to the Santa Fe pass at the head of the Arkansas River. The proximity of Spanish New Mexico troubled federal officials trying to establish American sovereignty in an international space.\textsuperscript{14}

To carry out Calhoun’s vision of territorial expansion up the Missouri, elements of the 5\textsuperscript{th} and 6\textsuperscript{th} Infantry began massing near St. Louis in 1818. An advance party wintered at Cantonment Martin on Cow Island, near present-day Iatan, Missouri, more than 300 miles from St. Louis. The main force, waiting on contractors to supply steamboats and rations, did not begin moving until July to rendezvous with the advance party. In addition to reinforcing the federal presence at Council Bluffs, they were also supposed to escort a federal surveying expedition led by Major Stephen H. Long. Long’s primary task was to survey the Missouri River up to the mouth of the Yellowstone River, but the expedition wintered at Council Bluffs in 1819-1820.

Failures of the steamboats, rancid rations, and other delays meant that the reconvened force did not leave Cow Island until September 5, not reaching the Platte until September 26. Three days later they met Long’s party, which had already established winter quarters near


\textsuperscript{13} James, \textit{Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains}, 1:152-3; Paul Wilhelm, \textit{Travels in North America}, 377-8, 387-88.

\textsuperscript{14} Calhoun to House Committee on Military Affairs, December 28, 1819, New York \textit{Spectator}, January 18, 1820.
Manuel Lisa’s trading post and sub agency at Council Bluffs. With little prospect for further travel, the force established nearby Cantonment Missouri. Disease, exposure, concerns about cost overruns, and the strategic necessity of establishing a presence at Council Bluffs meant that temporary quarters evolved into Fort Atkinson during the spring of 1820.15

This camp instantly established the single largest white settlement for hundreds of miles in any direction. Unlike temporary fur traders or government explorers, these men were intent on establishing permanent residency. Yet, American fortifications signaled an inherent weakness in culture and politics that needed protection. Pawnee villages and defenses were more dispersed and less fortified. The contrast highlighted the perceived superiority of Pawnee mobile military power. Pawnee forces could move at ease through their country. American soldiers were trapped in a world of their own making.

At its founding as Cantonment Missouri, the post was the largest garrison in the United States with 1,120 men in 1819, and remained one of the largest and western-most military posts until its closure in 1827.16 Turning Council Bluffs into a federal place meant carving it out of the

15 Surgeon John Gale kept a detailed diary of his time with the advance party at Cantonment Martin and the dangers of the exposed position. Infrequent and inadequate supplies made the situation precarious and forced the troops to rely on hunting and foraging that caused at least one death from accidental gunshot. River travel also posed problems in which several soldiers and at least one woman and child died. Gale complained of the “lethargy of the Government, and the unwarranted and unnecessary delays . . . of the contractor,” in 1818, which could equally apply to the problems of 1819. John Gale, The Missouri Expedition, 1818-1820: The Journal of Surgeon John Gale with Related Documents, ed. Roger Nichols (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), 3-77, quote on 5. In 1818, James Johnson of Kentucky received a contract to supply the Yellowstone Expedition. He had extensive contracting experience from the War of 1812, and received $193,407.23 to supply five western forts. Johnson’s brother Richard was a proponent of Calhoun’s expansion plans and one of the most powerful Congressmen in the nation before becoming a Senator and Vice President. As one historian noted, “The Johnsons were accused of holding the purse strings of the nation for more than twenty years, and that scarcely a federal dollar passed through Kentucky that had not been first their property.” James A. Padgett, “The Life and Letters of James Johnson of Kentucky,” Register of Kentucky State Historical Society 35, no. 113 (1937): 301-38. The cost overruns and overall failures sparked a congressional investigation that made national headlines as reports and documents were reprinted in newspaper beyond Washington. New York Spectator, January 18, 1820.

16 In 1818, the 7,421-man army was scattered in 64 posts, only 23 of which had garrisons of more than 100 men. Coffman, The Old Army, 162. Edgar Bruce Wesley, “Life at a Frontier Post: Fort Atkinson, 1823-1826,” Journal of the American Military Institute 3 no. 4 (1939), 202. Henry Atkinson, Willoughby Morgan, Talbot Chambers, William S. Foster, Henry Leavenworth, Daniel Ketchum and Abram Woolley all commanded the fort at different points. The garrison went from a high of 1,120 in 1819 to a low of 423, rising again to 490 when the post was
shared intercultural space, placing a property value on it, and Americanizing its daily governance. In practical terms this meant curbing violence into state sanctioned or controlled avenues and limiting the ability of non-whites to employ violence as a means of politics, exercise perceived deviant or archaic political economies, or forge autonomous diplomatic alliances. Building this space required securing the locale, constructing the physical manifestations of state power, and projecting that power onto the local geopolitical scene. For infantry isolated on the edge of the prairie, this was a monumental task.

Calhoun’s plans for the Missouri Valley meant that Council Bluffs would be “permanently occupied in considerable force,” both as a secure point between posts higher upriver and to control the local people. Colonel Henry Atkinson agreed once he reached the Bluffs and assessed its strategic position first hand. “It will be necessary to leave a garrison of four or five hundred men at the Council Bluffs; this point holds in check a greater body of Indians than any other on the river & covers our frontier from insult or depredation,” he argued. The remote position required a 300-acre garrison farm and numerous other facilities to make it relatively self-sufficient. Making Fort Atkinson such a permanent fixture suggests that Calhoun and his generals saw the Missouri River as a true dividing line at least for the foreseeable future between the United States and any future Indian Territory.

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18 Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, March 6, 1819, *Calhoun Papers*, 3:633-4.

19 Atkinson to Jackson, November 25, 1819, *Calhoun Papers*, 4:529; Atkinson to Calhoun, January 2, 1820, *Calhoun Papers*, 4:540. In effect, Atkinson’s plan for stationing troops at the Bluffs and further up at the Great Bend and Mandan Villages amounted to garrisoning about 1200 men along the Missouri River, equivalent to 10% of the entire U.S. Army prior to the 1821 reductions, and nearly 1/6 afterwards. It was an overly ambitious plan and rightly rejected to accommodate reductions in military spending and troop levels.
By planting the flag and building defensive works, the Army anchored itself to the land. Shortly after arriving at Council Bluffs, Atkinson detailed Colonel Talbot Chambers, Majors Gad Humphreys and Thomas Biddle, and Captains Thomas Hamilton and Wyly Martin as a survey board to locate a suitable position for the fort. After a brief examination, the flotilla moved upriver to a cottonwood grove three miles above Council Bluffs to unload and prepare winter quarters.²⁰

Surgeon John Gale remained cautiously optimistic about the enterprise as he observed his new surroundings. The abundance of natural produce, especially grapes and hazel nuts, as well as small game and fowl pointed to the site being a productive and potentially rich area. But dangers lurked in the shadows. Prairie fires burned around the encampment for five days. Stragglers from the flotilla dragged in and offered testimony about the hazards of travel in an unfamiliar country. A detachment under Lieutenant Gantt arrived on October 13 after a week lost in the wilderness. Lieutenant Keeler arrived three days later after his keelboat caught a snag

²⁰ Gale, *The Missouri Expedition*, 76.
and sank with cannons and ordnance cargo. Lieutenant Mix appeared on the 18th after being lost for five days without food. They were lucky. Those unfortunate enough to be injured away from camp faced gruesome prospects. One soldier went missing after a fight on October 19 only to be found the next morning “partially consumed by wolves about 90 yards from camp.”

The men set about hewing logs and quarrying stone at a feverish pace to complete the works before winter. It was grueling fatigue duty on a massive scale. Almost a month into construction Atkinson reported to the War Department that:

The Barrack[s] are laid out, as well for defence, as for accommodation. They form a square, each curtain presenting a front of 520 feet, made of heavy logs & the wall about sixteen feet high & the whole of the roofs sloping to the interior. In the center of each projection there is a projection of twenty feet, its width twenty with a heavy ten foot gate in the front. These projections will be pierced with three embrasures for cannon, two raking the curtain each way form the centre & the other through the gate to the front. The upper part of the projection will have a second floor & still project over the tower part to afford loops to fire down through. It will be raised to barbet[te] height & will answer for cannon & musketry. The Barrack rooms, the exterior of which form the curtains, are 20 feet by 20 & will be pierced with loop holes for small arms. When completed, no force will be able to carry the work without the aid of cannon.

The building followed the typical pattern of frontier forts: built quickly and efficiently, often of simple hewn logs, and cheap enough to be easily rebuilt or abandoned as the strategic conditions warranted. Federal troops convinced themselves that they had established a powerful presence. Quartermaster General Thomas Jesup justified the expense of the expedition by suggesting Fort Atkinson could “hold in check five powerful and warlike nations of Indians,” as a new regional hub for economic and political exchanges.

21 Gale, Missouri Expedition, 76-78.
22 Atkinson to Calhoun, October 19, 1819, Calhoun Papers, 4:380-1.
23 Army engineers faced two building challenges: erecting effective but cheap and easily abandoned forts along a moving frontier line and permanent, imposing earth and masonry fortress to defend against European fleets along the coastline. Rarely did the interior fortifications reach similar levels of permanence in either construction materials or length of service as coastal fortifications.
24 Thomas Jesup to Calhoun, December 28, 1819, New York Spectator, January 18, 1820.
But the federal presence was more nebulous. Atkinson and O’Fallon negotiated a cession from the Omaha for a ten-square mile military reserve. The Senate refused to ratify the treaty. Calhoun did not foresee a problem. His calculus that Omaha ignorance of federal treaty-making processes and “the liberality of the government in fulfilling the treaty on its part, will induce the Indians to observe it on their part so far as to permit the peaceable occupation of the country by the troops of the U States, as long as it may be deemed necessary by the Govt.” Council Bluffs was a space between two legal worlds that was neither fully Omaha, nor legally American.

At some level Fort Atkinson’s defenses were overkill. No Native Americans possessed the cannons necessary to breach the walls, nor did the preeminent cavalry forces in North America have the strategic desire for or tactical training in siege warfare. Why so much effort and labor went into building these fortifications reveals two intertwined aspects of the federal presence at Council Bluffs. The troops were tactically vulnerable, a fact the strength of the fort was meant to mask. The walls were equally, if not more, about regulating the internal politics of the post than projecting power to outsiders. Moreover, they remained only partially complete through the winter of 1819-20.

The large structure visible for miles around would make a greater statement of state power than the isolated and tactically outmatched troops at Council Bluffs. By bringing Native Americans to Council Bluffs for diplomatic negotiations and trade, the fort nullified some of the mobility advantages those nations possessed. They had to seek out the Americans. They were generally outnumbered as the whole band rarely traveled to Council Bluffs. Perhaps most importantly, they conducted business in an environment specifically crafted to overawe visitors with the architecture of state power.

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25 Calhoun to Atkinson, April 6, 1821, Calhoun Papers, 6:20.
26 Atkinson to Calhoun, January 2, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 4:538: Gale, Missouri Expedition, 80.
Despite the apparent power of the fort, outside of cannon-range and the fort walls infantry was at a profound disadvantage on the horse-dominated plains. Reliance on fixed positions created a fundamental impotence in projecting power beyond the narrow confines of fortifications and the river. Infantry at the edge of the Great Plains was militarily impractical. Without a regular cavalry force, the troops had little hope of imposing their will beyond the confines of the military reservation. A reliance on water transport also meant that soldiers were confined spatially to the river bottoms. A short transport season between low water, ice, or extreme flooding prevented large transport vessels or steamships from navigating the Missouri.

Local conditions remained dangerous both from natural and Native American threats. There was a constant fear of theft, particularly of horses. Conditions remained so tenuous by 1823 that Colonel Henry Leavenworth considered it “prudent that individuals or parties who go any considerable distance from the Garrison should carry their arms and be prepared to defend themselves” from Indian war parties in the vicinity. That no attack ever occurred did not mitigate the fact that the post remained under a constant threat that subjected the inhabitants to an uneasy relationship with their dangerous surroundings.

The new works at Council Bluffs tapped into a long regional tradition of military fortifications. The disruptions wrought by drought, migrations, and warfare in the sixteenth

28 The only significant military operation at the fort was the 1823 Arikara War. A group of fur traders further up the Missouri in present-day South Dakota was attacked and robbed by the Arikara. In response, Colonel Henry Leavenworth organized an expedition of 230 soldiers and 50 trappers, accompanied by 750-800 Sioux warriors supplied through the efforts of Indian Agent Benjamin O’Fallon. The August campaign was a mixed success. Some reprisals and burnings were carried out, but little actual damage or killing occurred. The debates and recriminations about the policies and actions soured relations between Leavenworth and O’Fallon that nearly resulted in a duel between the two highest ranking Americans in the region, and involved their superiors in a lengthy and vicious correspondence for a considerable time afterwards. It is significant to note that this conflict took place far from the fort and revealed the general impotence of federal military force away from its stronghold. For a thorough account of the Arikara War see William R. Nestor, The Arikara War: The First Plains Indian War, 1823 (Missoula, MT: Mountain Press, 2001); J. Wendel Cox, “A World Together, A World Apart: The United States and the Arikara, 1803-1851” (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1998).
through eighteenth centuries meant the people who became Pawnee situated villages for defense, often on hills or bluffs. Skidi villages near Beaver Creek still showed evidence of this period as late as the 1820s when the Long Expedition passed through. One site, known locally as Pawnee Medicine, was an earthwork 200-feet long, 130 wide, and 30 deep, carved into the brow of the bluffs. Edwin James, a botanist who accompanied the Long expedition, noted that “an entire nation may have here defied the efforts of an allied army of an extensive coalition.”29 These were older sites and did not fully reflect the current Pawnee military mindset regarding fortifications.

Pawnee war parties retained the practice of fortifying their camps with small breastworks of logs and bison carcasses, but these were limited and temporary. As James related about one such camp along the Platte, a returning Skidi party used decorated bison skulls as a form of flag, relating how many warriors occupied the place, their intentions to return home, and their success in taking scalps.30 These symbols announced a masculine prowess and power: the warriors were brave and accomplished, having killed four enemies, and they were unafraid of retribution by anyone in pursuit. Painted skulls, poles with human hair, and the camp itself show a Pawnee military system fully immersed in the use of fortifications as metaphors of power and as a language of diplomacy, but they did not rely on them for defense.

This sentiment was central to Pawnee understandings of diplomacy. “I am not afraid to see you,” Chaui chief Tarrarecawaho proclaimed to O’Fallon in 1819, “we are fond of pipes, we like to travel to our neighboring nations, and smoke with them.”31 The Pawnee had little to fear in their own lands. Rather than being invaded and dictated to, they sent emissaries, made peace

31 James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains*, 1:395.
and alliances, and negotiated with neighbors as equals and from positions of strength. In short, the Pawnee built environment near Council Bluffs reflected a world built around military power that was outward looking rather than inwardly defensive. Military and diplomatic power came from encounters on the Pawnee frontiers, not from the strength of defensive works.

Defensive walls could not stop disease or replace adequate supplies and military planning. Most of the soldiers were physically exhausted after months of arduous travel and feverish construction. The winter closure of the river meant supplies quickly ran low. By January 10, 1820, Surgeon John Gale reported widespread scurvy among the garrison. A diet consisting of “putrescent salted meat, damaged flour, a deficiency of vegetable matter and groceries” as well as the variable weather and the unhealthy location of the barracks contributed to a growing health crisis.32 By March 10, conditions were dire. Gale reported that of 788 men on the rolls on January 1, 1820, 160 died from disease and an additional 360 were still on the sick list.33 “Entering the hospital is considered by them [the soldiers] as a certain passport to the grave,” reported Edwin James from his slightly better-appointed winter quarters with the Long Expedition.34 Those strong enough to make the trip were sent downriver to a temporary hospital at Fort Osage. Of those 100 men, 30 died en route to St. Louis.35 With medical supplies exhausted and rations still limited and unhealthy, little could be done except wait for spring weather and the 600 tons of supplies requested by Atkinson for relief of the garrison.36

32 Gale, Missouri Expedition, 81; Gale to board of officers, February 25, 1820, in Missouri Expedition, 122.
33 Gale, Missouri Expedition, 83. Wild vegetables began appearing on April 1, 1820. Supplies from below arrived with the breakup of the winter ice. The 160 did not count the 11 who died in December from other diseases. Atkinson to Calhoun, March 10, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 4:709. This is compared to only 10 other recorded scurvy fatalities between 1819 and 1838 in the entire U.S. Army. Coffman, The Old Army, 186.
34 James, Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, 1:195.
35 Gale, Missouri Expedition, 83; Atkinson to Calhoun, April 28, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 5:80. Gale reported that medical supplies were exhausted by March 20.
36 Atkinson to Calhoun, April 7, 1820, Calhoun Papers, 5:13.
Conditions deteriorated so much that post commander Willoughby Morgan undertook extensive efforts to conceal the garrison’s vulnerable condition from Native American visitors. So many sick men remained in camp that they could not be easily hidden. Pawnee leaders knew about the losses and sensed federal weakness. Officers sent out warnings against visiting the garrison, as Edwin James noted, because “we did not wish them to observe the extent of the malady, with which the camp was afflicted.” When Ongpatonga (Big Elk), Washcomonea, and Big Eyes of the Omaha visited the Engineer Cantonment on March 8, 1820, only the sternest warnings could deter the chiefs from visiting the fort. Ongpatonga, himself a smallpox survivor, exhibited no fear of disease nor of the harsh weather as “his life was at the disposal of the great Wahconda only, and he could not die before his time.” With many of remaining men sent out into the woods looking for wild game, the post was a skeletal version of itself.

If American commanders could not safeguard their own men at their own post, their claims to a larger regional governing authority were mere hollow proclamations. The supposed strength of federal state architecture was of little use in promoting the health and welfare of the garrison. Gale indicted the site of the fort itself as a contributing factor. “Serious objections may be made, to our local situation,” he reported to the officer board investigating the outbreak, as it was “flat, low, moist and clayey and in the neighborhood of a Stagnant pond. Dry, Sandy Elevated places are most conducive to health.”

Colonel Atkinson returned from St. Louis to take personal command of the outpost’s reorganization. By May 27, he proudly reported that the worst of the disease scare was over as
no more men died. To prevent a recurrence of scurvy he planned for 300 acres of corn and extensive gardens to combat dietary deficiencies.

Despite Atkinson’s grand designs for the fort, the officers who selected the location failed to account for the annual flooding of the Missouri. Floodwaters breached the riverbanks and rendered the bottom land uninhabitable shortly after Atkinson arrived. Nearly 70 acres of crops were ruined and any plans for further movement during the summer of 1820 were immediately discarded as the troops set about hauling the salvaged remains up the bluffs. Atkinson reported that at present “taking down and putting up again our present work, tending & gathering our crop, cutting & saving Hay, erecting a grist mill, opening a road to Chariton, marking a route to St. Peters, exploring the country between this & the Mississippi, & driving up cattle & Hogs to stock the post, will require all, or most of our time.”\textsuperscript{41} At the very least, such a disastrous result from the carefully laid plans epitomized the tenuousness of the federal presence and inexperience and ineffectiveness of the officer corps in creating an imposing built environment to project authority. Such a colossal waste of time and resources from carelessness and hubris if not outright neglect of duty and incompetence went unpunished.

Rebuilding atop the bluffs provided a more secure location. The fort quickly grew to include a number of outbuildings and industrial operations such as a gristmill, barn, three-story warehouse for whiskey, salted meat, and grain, another building for agricultural equipment, and a distillery. Soldiers built a dairy by 1825. The efforts turned the military space into a nearly self-sufficient outpost more akin to a small town.\textsuperscript{42} Major General Gaines inspected the fort in September 1822, noting positively the apparent equal facility in cultivation and military

\textsuperscript{42} Ney, \textit{Fort on the Prairie}, 140.
This praise was not universal. Inspector General George Croghan’s 1826 tour issued alarms that instead of being a military establishment, Fort Atkinson had “barn yards that would not disgrace a Pennsylvania farmer, herds of cattle that would do credit to a Potomac grazier.” Instead of martial honor, the agricultural system threatened masculine prowess as it “would sink the proud soldier into the menial and reduce him who may have gallantly led in the front of our enemies into a base overseer of a troop of awkward ploughmen.” Croghan’s critique had merit. During planting and harvesting season drills and parades were dispensed with to concentrate on agriculture, further questioning exactly what role enlisted men held. This hero of the War of 1812 had little patience for anything but military proficiency and found the general lack of training at frontier posts in general truly alarming. “Ask an officer . . . what his place is in the event of alarms, and his answer will be, I don’t know . . . we never have alarms,” Croghan reported, “Order a shell to be thrown, and the time for firing three or more will be taken up in finding one small enough to enter the muzzle of the howitzer.”

The agricultural and industrial works were part of a larger statement about American technical progress meant to showcase federal power. The farming operations transformed the space around the fort. Technology could transform notions of power by demonstrating federal officials possessed a superior civilization and the specialized knowledge needed to control potentially dangerous equipment like artillery and steam boilers. Technology was also a practical and symbolic tool of empire that held the possibility of domesticating nature. Steam could erase distances. Howitzers and air guns could overwhelm people by cowing them into

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45 Woolley, Order No. 81, April 28, 1826, Sixth Infantry Regimental Order Book, Army Collection, Missouri Historical Society Archives.
46 George Croghan, quoted in Coffman, The Old Army, 101.
submission or physically eradicating them. Modern agriculture would make the wilds fertile and settled. Yet, these technologies had potential to undo the imperial project should they fail or, nearly as bad, fail to make an impression on the intended targets.

The appearance of steam power on the Missouri was supposed to shrink both time and space and connect the distant fringes of American empire. Erratic water flows, shifting and frequent sand bars, and indeterminate channels were problems enough for keelboats on a river. Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton once described as “too thick to swim in and too thin to walk on,” making travel at best a dangerous and exhausting undertaking. Steam answered the purposes of shrinking space. At Council Bluffs it teetered between being a grandiose symbol of empire and a descent into mere novelty. Although the contractor James Johnson’s steamboats were miserable failures in 1818 and 1819, Major Stephen Long’s Western Engineer managed to dock at Council Bluffs, proving the theoretical viability of the technology on the river.

Based at the Engineer Cantonment, the Western Engineer became a tourist attraction for visiting Native Americans. James reported that on November 15, 1819, a visiting Sioux delegation “hesitated to enter the boat, fearing, as they said, that it was, or that it contained, some great medicine of the Big-knives that might injure them” and that “they appeared much delighted with the boat; its size seemed to surprise them,” once they were encouraged to come aboard.  

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47 Keelboats, typically 50-75 feet long and 15-20 feet wide were crafted with a sharp bow and stern, a small cabin, and capable of carrying 10-20 tons of cargo with a remarkably shallow draft of just 30 inches. Even this often proved too deep for the Missouri during times of low water. In addition to a sail and oars boats were fitted with walkways so crews could literally push the boats upstream using poles and a cordelle, a 30-yard rope that 20-30 men used to pull the boat from shore. It was exhausting and time-consuming work. Ney, Fort on the Prairie, 5; Gale, Missouri Expedition, 29; Henry Putney Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 1815-1846 (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1975, reprint), 41-42. Thomas Hart Benton, quoted in Fred Albert Shannon, The Farmer’s Last Frontier: Agriculture, 1860-1897 (New York: Farrar and Rhinehart, 1945), 34.

48 James, Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, 1:179. Three Sioux were from the Tetons, one was a Yankton, and another a Sa-ho-ne, according to James, which spoke to the larger draw the post had for Native Americans whose curiosity was matched by the diplomatic necessity of assessing the newcomers’ capabilities.
Captain Wyly Martin whose two years of disastrous experiences moving boats on the river elicited a prediction that “any steam boat on this river of 80 tons or upwards will never reach the Yellow Stone, nor do I think she will ever return from whence she came.” He preferred sails, oars, and rope.\(^{49}\) Despite these warnings, Calhoun refused to abandon the idea of steam power as transformative solution to federal territorial overstretch. One or two functioning steamboats, Calhoun wrote Atkinson, “would give much more interest and éclat,” to a contemplated troop movement further up the Missouri and “probably impress the Indians and the British with our means of supporting and holding intercourse with the remote posts.”\(^{50}\) Such assumptions about the political importance of technology had merit.

Shock was precisely the reaction federal officials sought. As tools of imperial dominion, technological marvels like the magnets, air guns, and howitzers firing case shot upset the physical and cosmological balance of power. James recorded that the effect of case shot “was new and unexpected, and [the Sioux] covered their mouths with their hands, to express their astonishment.”\(^{51}\) Atkinson similarly claimed that Pawnee and Omaha chiefs were “impressed with our strength” after viewing ordnance demonstrations in 1819.\(^{52}\) Technological novelty could make up for the limited ability of infantry to project power.

Psychological experiments involving the regimental band, however, demonstrated limited power of new technologies to impress. Musicians lined a path to the council meeting on October 19, 1819 with the Pawnee. When Tarrarecawaho arrived, the band “struck up, suddenly and loudly, a martial air.” Observing the proceedings, James admitted that “We wished to observe the effect which instruments, that he had never seen or heard before, would produce on this

\(^{50}\) Calhoun to Atkinson, February 7, 1820, \textit{Calhoun Papers} 4:646.
\(^{51}\) James, \textit{Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains}, 1:179.
distinguished man, and therefore eyed him closely, and were not disappointed to observe that he did not deign to look upon them, or to manifest, by any motion whatever, that he was sensible of their presence.” For James, Tarrarecawaho was a test subject worthy of scientific study similar to the natural world around him. To fail in this test of self-control would have threatened Tarrarecawaho’s claims to power and infantilized him as an immature individual bereft of political authority.

What was apparently lost upon James and many officers at the post was that initial shock at new technology did not translate into permanently altered perceptions about federal power. Pawnee, Sioux, and other local nations who visited Council Bluffs were well acquainted with whites through trade and visits to St. Louis. They gauged how the federal presence altered the political and spiritual balance of the region. If federal power was limited in its ability to reach beyond the military reserve, it did not matter. After examining the steamboat, one Sioux warrior commented to James the he “hardly thought the Big-knives had any medicine to hurt them,” revealing the limitations of novelty to permanently impress.

For Sioux and Pawnee visitors the challenge posed by American technology was how to incorporate these novel objects and their power into a pre-existing cosmology of power. Pawnee medicine bundles containing sacred objects helped regulate the natural order. By appropriating the power of an object, the bundle connected the Pawnee with tirawahut, the heavenly unifier of all earthly power. This power was available through the intercession of chiefs and priests, often one and the same, whose ability to understand and manipulate power bundles for earthly purposes gave them the spiritual authority to rule. If American technology upset the previous

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53 James, Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, 1:163.
54 James, Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, 1:179.
order, then such items had to be understood, and if possible, incorporated into the Pawnee world to gain their power and nullify any threats to the masculine identities of the chiefly priests as fathers of their children.

Fort Atkinson similarly tried to remake the economic space with soldiers acting as a police force to regulate and control the influx of traders and adventurers pouring into the Missouri Valley. Strict licensing accompanied by restrictions of trade goods and the posting of bonds by traders placed some measure of regulation on trade. Once beyond Fort Atkinson and Council Bluffs, little could be done to enforce regulations or inspect cargoes. By 1825, the amount of capital invested in Indian trade going up the Missouri was $78,114, by 1826 it jumped to nearly a quarter million dollars for the entire St. Louis Superintendency, with Pratte and Company accounting for $53,000 up the Missouri alone. O’Fallon and his fellow Indian agents tried to bring the Missouri River nations within a federal economic orbit by controlling access to goods. This kind of economic regulation only worked if those under interdiction were inseparably tied to American goods. Full control remained elusive throughout the 1820s.

Pawnee participation in the fur trade was minimal in the 1820s, partly a condition of the difficulty of the Platte as a trading route, and partly from a cultural pride in self-sufficiency and autonomy. As a Pawnee priest explained why the duke of Württemberg was generally welcomed during his tour in 1824, “You have not come into our country to trade with us nor to throw down all sorts of useless trash or poisoned drink . . . for our best property, nor to enrich yourself by our poverty.” Strict internal controls over the liquor trade also contributed to Pawnee resistance to white economic dependence. The chiefs prevented the social problems increasingly plaguing

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56 Clark to James Barbour, October 24, 1825 and October 12, 1826, LROIA: StLS, Roll, 747.
their neighbors. Trade occurred with the sanction of chiefs, under their direct control, and only with their approbation.58

Army officers built a new space physically and technologically, but in the process, often forgot their primary duty as soldiers or were blinded by their assumptions of superiority to the regional power dynamics. They built an impressive island that could easily be bypassed by nations reliant on mobile power. Making Fort Atkinson’s garrison largely self-sufficient required extraordinary amounts of labor. Every acre farmed, every head of cattle tended to meant time away from drills. It meant soldiers were less like military men and more like highly regimented farmers and laborers, subject to strict discipline and limited freedoms.

2.2 Martial Culture

Social categories across the United States were on display at Fort Atkinson. The fort brought American bachelors, families, and men of varying social classes into close proximity with their Native American counterparts and those straddling multiple worlds like mixed-race traders. Most residents were soldiers or had been at one point in their lives. At Council Bluffs, this military identity became the lens through which men across these cultures viewed their status. Rituals that recounted heroics, the behavior of men in command, and personal comportment outlined the framework of martial, masculine authority.

Developing a local, martial, and mutually intelligible masculine political culture unsettled the boundaries of race, nationality, and class at a time when federal officials desperately tried to establish clearly delineated borders.59 Creating the simplicity necessary for federal control

58 White, Roots of Dependency, 190-2.
59 Ronda, “We Have a Country,” 739-55.
depended on subordinating the land to the plough and the military engineer, enlisted men to officers, Indians to federal agents, and the individual to the state. Control required eliminating complexity by fixing identities relative to status. In a region where the idealized male was a fiercely independent warrior such subordination proved difficult to achieve.

Efforts to control the norms of masculinity reveal the patriarchal assumptions about civilization, government, and the gendered meaning of authority. Despite the large numbers of women and children present at the fort, it was a male-dominated world, a masculine outpost and industrial center built and maintained by disciplined men. Many, though not all soldiers and officers were bachelors. They represented the possibilities of unfettered men able to create their own identities and lives. They were also a population of potentially unrestrained, violent, or predatory men outside the social and civil fabric of society. At Council Bluffs, the development of a martial masculinity as the ideal of manhood made it problematic to control individuals who viewed independence as the basis of their identity.⁶⁰

This was no less so for the nation. While the freewheeling bachelor might be a useful agent of empire as a fur trader, soldier, or settler, his gains had to be brought within a governing structure to tie masculine power to state purposes. Defining borders, claiming dominion, and exercising sovereign authority over populations epitomized the nation state. Only by controlling the economics, politics, and autonomous diplomacy of the Native American populations in its

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⁶⁰Connell, *Masculinities*, 45-89; John Gilbert McCurdy’s work on the development of a political culture around bachelorhood and the emancipation of the single man from social restraints shows the process was a metaphor for the independence of the United States. Once emancipated and made equal before the law, young single men were left to define how their identity fit within a new national framework. McCurdy, *Citizen Bachelors*, 6-11, 162-4. Property ownership and exchange as the mark of manhood was especially true in the West at intercultural contact points. As James F. Brooks shows, turning women, children, and other moveable resources into tradable commodities satisfied the pragmatic need for economic transfers while developing a ritual culture of exchange, redemption, and honor that forged a masculine politics of diplomacy at the expense of those least able to resist. Importantly these are mutually constitutive exchanges that underpin the identities of each community. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins*, 3-10.
new territories could the United States claim to have arrived at full independence. Control turned international spaces into domesticated places with definitive rules, regulations, and hierarchies. The Indian Agency further acted as an economic and political draw bringing the outside world into the theoretically separate world of the military reservation. Such interactions created tensions between residents and newcomers that brought different people face-to-face and juxtaposed rival visions of political and social order in a militarized cultural venue.

Encounters at Fort Atkinson reinforced the martial underpinnings of command authority. Individual bravery was a commonly respected trait that both informed Native American notions of political authority and offered white observers a common measure for judgment of character. Many of the field officers were combat veterans of the War of 1812. Junior officers looked to military expeditions as a path to advancement in an otherwise mostly static queue for promotion. Omaha, and neighboring nations, similarly valued individual bravery as pathways toward political recognition. “High distinction is due to the gallant soul, that advances upon the field of battle, and captures an enemy, or who first strikes, or even touches the body of a fallen enemy,” during a battle recorded James, as it denoted “extraordinary proof of courage.” The romanticized notions of heroism he highlighted could be universally admirable political qualities of fearlessness and grit in the face death.61

Martial masculinity translated into political power. Kansa chief Caegawatanninga held “nothing like monarchical authority,” as he “maintain[ed] his distinction only by his bravery and good conduct.”62 Iowa chief Wangewaha typified these commonalities. His efforts to unite the Iowa, Missouri, and Otoe offer a testament to his political skill and charismatic leadership. Yet it was his ability to cross cultural lines that most attracted James to a man “said to have more

61 James, Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, 1:295.
62 Thomas Say, quoted in James, Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, 1:122-3.
intimate knowledge of the manners of the whites than any other Indian of the Missouri.” As a veteran of 50 battles and commander of seven, Wangewaha viewed inter-tribal warfare as the primary path to honor and status. Conversely, he viewed federal efforts to curb Indian warfare as a threat to his identity as a warrior and man. Upon being insulted by a former army captain, Wangewaha claimed the status of a white gentleman by demanding satisfaction in a duel according to white customs. Honor culture deemed dueling to be an activity reserved for social equals. Tapping into this exclusive domain of elite white males provided the avenue for Wangewaha to assert his status as a political leader while showcasing his bravery in defense of honor. It also threatened to undermine racial barriers of identity.

Ritual performances affirmed the power and status of the individual while engaging in a conversation with the audience. Otoe and Iowa leaders arriving for a council at the Bluffs on October 3, 1819 performed a ritual dance for O’Fallon that symbolically honored brave or distinguished persons. For the twenty-six-year-old recently appointed government agent, the affirmation of authority confirmed his identity as a politically powerful individual and part of the gentlemen’s club of leadership. The ritual simultaneously claimed Native American authority to recognize political leaders within the very heart of one of the largest federal garrisons.

A regular feature at councils was the “striking the post” performance. The substance of the dance offered a stylized recounting of warriors on a raid and the exultation of personal bravery in the midst of danger. The ritual linked masculine bravery to diplomacy and politics in a form that predated the federal presence in the region. More important than the dance were the intervening spaces in which “a warrior would step forward and strike a flagstaff they had erected with a stick, whip, or other weapon, and recount his martial deeds.” Individual warriors and

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63 James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains*, 1:180-3.
64 James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains*, 1:154.
chiefs offered their credentials to claim authority and status. “Whatever is then said may be relied upon as rigid truth,” recorded James, “being delivered in the presence of many a jealous warrior and witness, who could easily detect and would immediately disgrace the striker for exaggeration or falsehood.” Here was intercultural diplomacy based upon a mutually intelligible martial honor culture. The emphasis on individual feats offered potential challenges to the self-conception of American soldiers as brave individuals. The message, however, was apparently lost on the intended audience. Atkinson dismissed Indian warfare as little beyond horse stealing and the loss of a few lives.

Military leaders sought to embody a settled respectability of manners, comportment, and action as commissioned gentlemen. Commanders faced challenges of maintaining authority without abrogating self-assured restraint. O’Fallon considered the Army to be a serious threat to civilian government, writing to his uncle William Clark that, “An Indian Agent is too dependent on the immediate commandant of the military post at which he is located. . . Military men are too frequently arbitrary, especially when in command . . . They think that everything should be subservient to them.” O’Fallon revealed underlying fears about subservience as a threat to his own and broadly American civilian, masculine independence. These rifts undermined federal ability to project a united policy front.

The leadership capabilities and limitations of Fort Atkinson’s different commanders, as well as O’Fallon as the highest ranking civilian at the fort, highlight the divergent notions of what an American leader could be. Leaders modeled behavior and a vision of authority. Failure

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65 James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains*, 1:154-7.
67 Benjamin O’Fallon to Clark, January 14, 1824, and August 4, 1824, Benjamin O’Fallon Letterbook.
to show the traits of an effective, yet benevolent leadership undermined the authority to command or be perceived as worthy diplomatic partners.

To be effective, officers had to be in firm command. Lieutenant Colonel Talbot Chambers garnered a reputation for uncontrolled subordinates during his leadership of the advance party on the Missouri in 1818-19. Moving a detachment up the Missouri in 1818 to prepare for the main force, Captain Wyly Martin flogged a civilian boatman when the latter lost supplies in the river. Calhoun was infuriated that Chambers allowed such an action to occur under his command. The fifty lashes represented “a most violent outrage” upon a civilian considering that “so distant and important a Command requires the greatest degree of firmness and prudence,” he wrote Chambers. Inability to control subordinates dishonored the officer, the Army, and the administration. Illegal punishments undermined claims of martial authority and revealed the perpetrator as unnecessarily violent.68

As a capable leader and diplomat, Henry Atkinson most typified chiefly behavior: brave, stoic, in command of his subordinates, and in effect the ideal martial man. Atkinson was atypical among the officers and Indian department officials at the post in his military competence, administrative abilities, and diplomatic skill. But his tenure at Fort Atkinson was limited. Atkinson spent most of his time in St. Louis as a regional commander after 1820, though he returned in 1825 to lead an expedition to make treaties with 12 Native American groups further upriver. Atkinson’s partner in those negotiations, Benjamin O’Fallon, revealed both a personal insecurity in his position and at times a histrionic antipathy toward any Native Americans who offended the honor of the United States. Only in his mid-20s, O’Fallon struggled to distinguish himself as an independent authority figure. His agency extended 900

68 Calhoun to Chambers, November 25, 1818, Calhoun Papers, 3:297-8.
miles west from Council Bluffs, but his position was as tenuous as his claims to controlling the lands and people were grandiose.  

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Leavenworth relieved Atkinson as post commander in 1821. He struggled to balance military and civilian authority in the region while adapting to the geographic distinctiveness and irregularity of plains warfare. In May 1823, the Arikara attacked fur traders several hundred miles above the fort. Leavenworth led the retaliatory strike, but the limited campaign highlighted the weakness of infantry and general inability to project federal power on the Great Plains. He boasted of imagined victories and left the Indian department out of critical negotiations. O’Fallon derided Leavenworth as among “the most indulgent officers of this fortification, how widely I differ with him as to the supposed effect produced by the cannonading and his unfortunate negotiations.” Recriminations between Leavenworth and O’Fallon over the campaign soured their relationship and nearly resulted in a duel between the region’s two highest ranking Americans.

Major Willoughby Morgan was a competent and humanitarian officer who handled the scurvy crisis during the winter of 1819-20 with care for the health and morale of the post. Morgan’s personal sentiments reflected a measured approach to keep punishments “within the narrowest limits possible,” consistent with military order. This restraint showed his self-confidence and security in command.

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69 Richard E. Jensen and James S. Hutchins, eds., Wheelboats on the Missouri: The Journals and Documents of the Atkinson-O’Fallon Expedition, 1824-26 (Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society Press, 2001); Watson, Peacekeepers and Conquerors, 53-4; James, Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, 1:397-8; O’Fallon to Clark, June 23, 1823, Benjamin O’Fallon Letterbook.


71 Ney, Fort on the Prairie, 68-9; Gale, Missouri Expedition, 122; Coffman, The Old Army, 186.
Lieutenant Colonel Abram Woolley commanded Fort Atkinson twice between 1825 and 1827. He embodied the martial martinet. Woolley’s previous assignment at Fort Smith in the Arkansas Territory earned him a reputation as a detested leader who belittled subordinates with extra duties and punishments to reassure his authority. Woolley marked his tenure at Fort Atkinson with a series of courts martial against subordinates for often imagined offenses. Woolley’s personal fear of retaliation became so great that by April 1826 he increased guards around the fort, especially for his own quarters.\(^{72}\) These problems epitomized concerns about military authority and its potential for arbitrariness outside of civilian oversight.

These officers had to behave as diplomats toward their Native American counterparts who visited the fort. Pawnee status as leaders depended upon similar expectations and exhibitions of chiefly conduct that would have been familiar to U.S Army officers. An ideal chief had no need to proclaim his authority, it was understood. Tarrarecawaho had “the appearance and character of an intrepid man,” both “artful and politic,” suggesting his leadership savviness.\(^{73}\) Historian Preston Holder synthesized this chiefly bearing, albeit with tropes of the stoic, noble savage, describing them as:

Men to whom violence was a stranger; they were quiet and secure in their knowledge of their power. Their voices were never raised in anger or threatened violence. The image was one of large knowledge, infinite quiet patience, and thorough understanding. There was no outward show of authority; such was not needed . . . These secure, calm, well-bred, gracious men whose largess was noted and who had no need to shout of their strength.\(^{74}\)

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\(^{73}\) James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains*, 1:160.

In April 1820, a delegation consisting of Benjamin O’Fallon, sub agent John Dougherty, Edwin James, four officers, and twenty-seven soldiers visited the Chaui village. Prior to the council the group “performed a half circuit around the village, and entered it with the sound of the bugle, drum, and fife, with which the commonalty and children seemed highly delighted.” This performance revealed the distinction in what federal officials deemed to be legitimate reactions to the novelty of the situation. A distinguished chief was mature, deliberate, and in emotional control. Those without legitimate claims to leadership, commoners and children, were unable to master their emotional response to the display of novel forms of technology and entertainment.

Omaha conceptions of martial masculinity similarly valued stoic fortitude in the face of hardships. “They appear to esteem themselves more brave, more generous and hospitable to strangers than white people,” recorded James after visiting with several of the leaders. They “regard the white people, as very deficient in one of these cardinal virtues [hospitality].” Pawnee leaders shared this assessment of white deficiency in the traits of a strong male. O’Fallon recalled a conversation with Pawnee leaders who told him “that a white man was like a dog—he would come into an Indian lodge for a skin as a dog for a bone, and if struck on the head would run out and around howling, and as soon as the hurt is over, return for the same skin as a dog for the same bone.” This was a military problem. Pawnee leaders, nor other Native Americans, would not fear deficient and defenseless men, O’Fallon worried. He urged Atkinson to strengthen the military presence in the region to challenge the notion. American traders and trappers had to be protected or “the Indian country should be shut against our citizens—They should not be suffered, under existing circumstances, injured by the pecuniary embarrassment of our country, and prospect of gain, to ascend high up this river, to loose their lives or prostrate in

75 James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains*, 1:351.
76 James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains*, 1:321.
the estimation of Indians, the American character.” Nothing less than national honor and white racial pride was at stake. For O’Fallon, these were inseparable issues.77

Martial culture provided a broadly understood framework through which leaders saw themselves and their counterparts. These understandings informed debates about gendered norms of behavior among individuals and the larger relationship of those individual bodies to their societies. How to regulate those bodies within such a framework was not easy.

2.3 Regulating Bodies: Sex, Race, and Labor

Fort Atkinson was a microcosm of the larger social fabric of the United States. But it operated under an exaggerated context. People from varying social classes and backgrounds labored under a strict code of military justice. Class was more strictly denoted here than within the democratizing United States. Officers, officially gentlemen by commission, and their wives held privileges according to rank. Bachelor enlisted men and those few with families operated in a different, subordinate social world. Their labor and bodies were not totally their own. Fluidity of racial identities and gender norms among the neighboring societies of this isolated post threatened to upend federal claims about what constituted normative behavior. Building and maintaining Fort Atkinson required a large, well-controlled workforce that could fulfill Calhoun’s plans to make the post nearly self-sufficient. Theoretically the Army provided this. In reality, individuals bristled at being controlled.

A physically tenuous hold on the ground matched the disciplinary instability within the walls. Regulating individual bodies, labor, and punishing transgressors was key to making an

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77 O’Fallon to Atkinson, July 17, 1824, Benjamin O’Fallon Letterbook.
American place in a nominally wild space. Forced labor, strict hierarchy, and little to no remuneration for those working hardest, restricted the notion of independent masculinity to those select few able to give orders. Distance from American society gave officers license to behave as authoritarian leaders in conflict with the new ideal of American manhood. By 1819, white men increasingly defined themselves in terms of service, to themselves, their families, and their country as independent actors making free choices about their own governance and economic roles. No longer static and rooted in property, proof of manhood required continuous service as an active citizen.78

Many officials at Fort Atkinson drew on ideas of order and stability learned on family plantations. Atkinson, a North Carolinian from a 6,100-acre plantation, was the biggest proponent of Calhoun’s military agriculture program. He even wrote of the garrison’s labor as if he personally did all the work, much like a plantation owner claiming his slaves’ labor as his own. Indian Agent Benjamin O’Fallon embodied the conflict of slaveholders between the need for rigid order and cherished beliefs in individual autonomy. Yet he saw coercive state power as necessary when it came to enforcing racial boundaries. O’Fallon feared that unchecked whites became servants to their base passions and such behavior destroyed the republican foundations of national character.79

Concerns with subservience revealed a more widespread belief in proper behavior as the roots of political independence. On New Year’s Eve 1819, several Canadians employed by the Missouri Fur Company appeared at the Engineer Cantonment to sing and dance for some food and liquor. Edwin James recorded his disgust at white men “adorned with paint after the Indian manner, clothed with bison robes,” with “bells attached to different parts of their dress. So

78 Kimmel, Manhood in America, 15-17.
79 O’Fallon to Atkinson, July 17, 1824, Benjamin O’Fallon Letterbook.
completely were they disguised, that three of their employers . . . had much difficulty in recognizing them.” On this frontier, such behavior threatened a precarious racial hierarchy. Whiteness formed a broad racial, economic, and cultural identity that needed guarding. Begging for food and liquor denoted the loss of independence akin the idealized role whites wished Indians to perform. Whites, even Canadians, performing as Indians stepped too far into the subversive to be acceptable as an American norm.

Exotic and taboo behaviors delineated stark cultural boundaries between Euro and Native American norms of masculinity. James quoted expedition members’ shock that “sodomy is a crime not uncommonly committed,” among the Kansa, “the subjects of it are publicly known, and do not appear to be despised, or to excite disgust.” To fulfill a vow, one mystic “submitted himself to it . . . which obliged him to change his dress for that of a squaw, to do their work, and to permit his hair to grow.” Aside from shock value, such behavior labeled Native American notions of gender fluidity as dangerous, criminal, and abhorrent. Sexuality provided clear distinctions. James recorded many encounters with “respectable Indians who thought pimping no disgrace.” Wangewaha, an Iowa chief and U.S. ally, visited the Engineer Cantonment with his three wives in December 1819. Wangewaha’s polygamy appealed to masculine fantasies of unlimited sexual satisfaction, but an unsettling one as one wife “appeared to be about nine or ten years of age, and whom we mistook for his daughter, until he undeceived us.” Such suggestive phrasing by James presents a disturbing portrait of Indian male lasciviousness. The skilled warrior and diplomat remained a dangerous hypersexual exotic.

80 James, Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to Rocky Mountains, 1:188.
81 James, Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, 1:181, 128-9; Kelly Ryan, Regulating Passion: Sexuality and Patriarchal Rule in Massachusetts, 1700-1830 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014),166-75.
Sexuality was political, especially as federal officials sought to build stricter racial borders. Fears about the immaturity of young men and their political and social instability were rampant in the early republic and remained as a holdover of colonial norms about bachelorhood. Interracial sexual relationships among European men and Native American women offered entrée into Indian kinship networks for trade, served as an important source of labor, and helped create a creole population that built cross-cultural bridges. For military men who did not seek kinship networks for business purposes, sex resulted from basic human needs and actual love. Reports of officers having multiple wives, perhaps a local, temporary “wife” as their legal brides were far from the frontier, were common. At Fort Snelling, a post founded in 1819 near present-day St. Paul, Minnesota, Lieutenant James McClure fell in love with and married a Sioux woman. McClure’s love apparently went beyond simple lust as he fought a duel with another officer to defend her honor. Fort Atkinson’s surgeon John Gale fathered a child with Nicomi of the Iowa. Such relationships threatened officers’ standing as white gentlemen as middle-class sexual respectability took on larger cultural cachet in the 1820s.

Controlling the parameters of acceptable sexual relationships denoted the ability of the state to regulate bodies and exert power. O’Fallon echoed traditional worries about the degenerating effects of Indian Country upon unworthy characters. In arguing for a stronger military presence to stymie this descent, O’Fallon opined that:

Owing to the want of protection, the forbearance, and mistaken policy of our government they fall into the power of miserable Indians, and being obliged to submit, become accustomed to submitting – they soon lose [sic] their national pride, and all spirit of resentment, and becoming slaves to their own interest, make every thing subservient to it.

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82 McCoy, Citizen Bachelors, 94-6, 130-2, 198-201.
83 White, The Middle Ground, 60-70.
84 Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, 217.
85 Ney, Fort on the Prairie, 89.
86 Lyons, Sex Among the Rabble, 391-2.
There are some tho few high minded, brave and honourable men, whom can intercourse with the Indians, whom no circumstances can change.\(^7\)

This racialized notion of nationhood reveals a gendered conception of power. Unrestrained profit-seeking destroyed the masculine character of individuals. Instead of controlling their passions they became slaves to gain.

Fluidity further undermined racial boundaries. Principal Omaha chief Ongpatonga viewed himself as part of a trans-racial ruling elite. “Such was his attachment to us, that he believed that he should, at a future day, be a white man himself,” wrote James.\(^8\) While James no doubt focused on the idea of white cultural superiority, Ongpatonga’s desire was a commentary on gendered power where his own chiefly status depended upon rituals of gifting and access to the large quantities of trade goods that belonged to whites. Whiteness formed not a racial identity, but an economic and cultural one. As such, a “negro belonging to the [Missouri] Fur Company” was described by a delegation of visiting Native Americans as “the black whiteman.”\(^9\)

John Dougherty provided the standard white American view of Native American women as sexually exotic temptresses. He related a conversation with Omaha chief Sans Oreille about male control of female sexuality. “I am not so silly as to believe that a woman would reject a timely offer [when her husband is away hunting],” stated Sans Oreille, “Even this squaw of mine, who sits by my side, would, I have no doubt, kindly accede to the opportune solicitations of a young, handsome, and brave suitor.” According to Dougherty, “his squaw laughed heartily, but did not affect to repel the imputation.” James added that, “Many husbands will take no

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\(^7\) O’Fallon to Atkinson, July 17, 1824, Benjamin O’Fallon Letterbook.
\(^8\) James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains*, 1:194.
\(^9\) James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains*, 1:199. It is unclear if the man was enslaved or a free employee.
cognizance whatever of the breach of conjugal fidelity on the part of the wife; and the offer of their wives for company during the night . . . was no cause of surprise to us during our stay at their villages.”  

From the Native American perspective, sex played an important role in forging political and economic kinship networks. From the white American perspective, this lack of exclusivity threatened patriarchy. Native American men unmanned themselves by allowing broad access to their sexual partners. White American norms and the establishment of restricted space around Fort Atkinson set women apart as objects of protected exclusivity.

If Fort Atkinson was to be a model American community, those in command had to protect their immediate families. White masculine sexuality adopted a veneer of respectability as the presence of families made the fort a site of supposed domestic tranquility and reproduced a semblance of familiar gendered order. Protecting the nascent and vulnerable domestic sphere from physical and social disintegration occupied considerable time.

Labor or leisure offered a stark dividing line among women. Fort Atkinson modeled the idealized American home for those of the upper class. Enlisted men and their wives resembled the growing urban working class where labor threatened conceptions of femininity and domesticity. Officers’ wives enjoyed leisurely pursuits: dances, banquets, dramatic productions, the garrison library, and socializing among the officers and similarly ranked civilians. Such events reinforced the class differences compared to women lower on the social scale.

Army regulations sanctioned the presence of as many as four women laborers per company. They were often the wives of enlisted men or widows who worked as laundresses for up to 17 men each. They were subject to military justice and regulations in return for a modicum

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90 James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains*, 1:233.
of economic security of 50 cents per month for every NCO or enlisted man’s laundry and 75 cents per officer, as well as a whiskey ration.\textsuperscript{92} Considering the backbreaking work involved this was a pittance, but it meant some extra income for frontier military families trying to navigate the high costs of distant service. Their work allowed upper class women a stronger claim on femininity as non-wage laborers in the delineation of a domestic sphere.\textsuperscript{93}

Creating an ideal domestic space of upper class, leisured women intertwined the issues of class, labor, and race. Laboring American women more closely resembled their Native American counterparts. Edwin James made constant references to the tropes of lazy Indian men by expressing shock at the apparent exploitation of female labor within their societies. An Omaha man made his Sioux wife carry his furs and trade goods “whilst he carried only a keg of whiskey slung over his shoulders, and his gun and hunting apparatus.”\textsuperscript{94} While James was cutting wood, an Omaha man approached and desired a piece to make a bowl. James handed him an axe, but the Omaha man indicated that it would make his hand sore, and gave it to one of his female companions who “handled the axe very dexterously.” This incident upset James’s notion of gendered behavior as he suggested to the woman that several young men should be enlisted to assist her. “She laughed significantly,” James stated, “as if she would say – you are ironical.”\textsuperscript{95} James intended the anecdotes to indict Native American men, but they reveal his own unreflective assumptions about gender, labor, and class. He scarcely mentioned working white women.

\textsuperscript{94} James, \textit{Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains}, 1:182.
\textsuperscript{95} James, \textit{Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains}, 1:185.
Children at the post added to concerns about security and the development of the
domestic sphere. By January 1822, enough children lived at the fort to warrant establishing a
post school. Run by Sergeant Thomas Mumford, a 22-year old former distiller from
Connecticut, the education was limited, but better than nothing. Despite their military roots, the
post children seemed to be lacking in any kind of discipline or conduct conducive to a healthy
garrison. Commanders had to compel attendance.\(^96\) As late as 1826, Lt. Colonel Abram
Woolley, the post commander, had to remind parents in a regimental order that “The few
children in the quarters must be taught habits of cleanliness by their parents and not be permitted
to do what they please, when they please.”\(^97\) One can imagine Woolley’s frustration at the
undisciplined behavior and its reflection upon his authority as a commander, especially
considering his penchant for being a martial martinet and fastidious about the details of his
command. As a group needing constant protection and instruction, the children were a hindrance
to the efficiency of the post from a military perspective.

Good order required efficiency across all operations, especially as the post needed to
supply much of its own sustenance. Military agriculture reflected a model of American society
in line with Southern plantations and based on similar principals of coerced labor.\(^98\) Officers
boasted of their success turning a prairie into one of the most important and prosperous
communities west of the Mississippi with a highly organized, hierarchical labor system. The
first harvest in 1820 yielded 10,000 bushels of corn, 3,000 of potatoes and turnips, and had 25

\(^{96}\) Johnson, “The Sixth’s Elysian Fields,” 22; Descriptive Roll of the Sixth Infantry 1817-1827, 1823, p. 13, cited in Ney, *Fort on the Prairie*, 83-7. At 15 cents per day, plus 50 cents per officer’s student per month and an extra ration of whiskey, Mumford was hardly overpaid for his work, but he was probably barely qualified. After six months, Major Daniel Ketchum sought leave to remove his family to Franklin, Missouri to better educate his children. By 1825, Mumford was sick of the job. Even the ability to purchase 2 gallons of whiskey per month did not induce him to retain the post. Private Bonnell Berry, who had been a teacher prior to his enlistment in 1824, assumed the duties until the post was abandoned.

\(^{97}\) Woolley, Orders 99, April 30, 1826, Sixth Infantry Regimental Order Book.

acres of vegetables.\textsuperscript{99} It was an impressive return considering that flooding inundated some fields and forced the evacuation and rebuilding of the post on higher ground during the summer. The success of individual officers testified to their mastery of men and nature. The St. Louis County Agricultural Society even inducted Atkinson as an honorary member in 1823.\textsuperscript{100} One presumes that he did not actually lift a hoe or yoke an ox to earn such recognition. Such efforts represented a total transformation of the physical space with a domestic core surrounded by hundreds of acres of croplands and industry. Council Bluffs blended the political economy of a plantation with the size and appearance of a small town.

For the men laboring in the fields, however, farming brought little glory and added fatigue. Rather than being independent masters and yeoman farmers, they became forced laborers within a strict military hierarchy. Work was dull, albeit potentially hazardous. Hidden dangers required constant alertness. Harvest time was an all-hands operation with all non-employed soldiers mustered for duty with their weapons and under strict orders to return to the post at retreat. Guards were stationed in the fields overnight to prevent the fort’s neighbors from stealing the produce from right under the garrison’s windows.\textsuperscript{101}

Fragmentary evidence of soldiers’ reactions to this regime exists in the court martial records. Resistance to the coercive system of labor control, while rare, demonstrated class-consciousness among enlisted men confronted with a very different picture of army life than one of martial glory. During the critical planting season, refusals to work set the entire farming project in jeopardy. In April 1826, Private Samuel Richmond refused an officer’s order to take a hoe to the blacksmith for repairs, while Private Evans refused to work in the company garden. A


\textsuperscript{100} Ney, \textit{Fort on the Prairie}, 146.

\textsuperscript{101} Henry Leavenworth, Orders 299, November 15, 1821, quoted in Ney, \textit{Fort on the Prairie}, 143.
month later Private Gwist earned a trip to the guardhouse for refusing to work. Three cases within a month at the critical planting time suggests that there was a larger discontent with the isolation of the post and the labor required to keep it functioning.

Calhoun’s military agriculture served as a cultural weapon. He asked the Osage along the Arkansas River to accept missionaries that would help, “to prepare your food like the white people, to shew your young men how to make axes, hoes and ploughs, and the way to use them in tilling your lands and raising crops for the support of yourselves and families.” Calhoun wanted to “introduce among you, generally, the arts of civilized life,” and outlined a particular model that was racially coded as superior, modern, and above all civilized for its static nature in the ideal image of an agrarian republic.

Fort Atkinson offered an archetypal model of American gender norms: hierarchical, patriarchal authority based loosely around the concept of the independent man at the head of a nuclear family. Inherent in this plan was the assumption of control over subordinate bodies. Individuals, however, jealously guarded their freedoms and rebelled when they were threatened.

2.4 Crime and Punishment

Fort Atkinson was not immune to crime. Unlike the civilian world, however, military justice provided for fewer rights and individual freedoms. Rebellion in any form threatened security and the daily functioning of the fort. The isolation of the post further concentrated power amongst the upper echelons. Disciplined military hierarchy conflicted with the ability of

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102 General Court Martial on April 15, 1826 and Regimental Court Martial on May 3, 1826, Sixth Infantry Regimental Order Book.
enlisted men and junior officers to assert their masculine independence. Courts martial show how individualistic masculinity ran into confrontation with state and elite desires for rational order, and at what point those desires became too pernicious for men in a free society.104 These problems were hardly unique to Fort Atkinson, but they acquired a special significance in a place where military culture was emerging as the principal language of intercultural contact.

Brigadier General Winfield Scott’s 1821 “Systems of Martial Law” encouraged European-style dominance of enlisted men to acclimate them to subordination and “a passive obedience.” Enforcing this control became increasingly difficult for the officer corps. Civilian qualms about corporal punishment limited legal methods of discipline, including a de jure ban of flogging throughout the 1820s. Violators faced court martial, loss of rank, or dismissal. Life at Fort Atkinson revealed that Scott’s theory of military administration conflicted with how American men viewed their prerogatives as individuals, even within the hierarchical army.105

Military structures reinforced class divisions. Unlike the enlisted men they commanded, officers enjoyed considerable leeway to conduct private business and act as fully independent

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104 It is useful to frame these governance efforts through Michel Foucault’s Panopticon, which renders power into a state of permanent consciousness and visibility. Internalizing criminal systems and the consequences of illicit behavior created a self-sustaining order as individuals undertook self-regulation, thus making enforcement by the state unnecessary. For Army officers or Indian agents it was not necessary to be constantly stationed in Native American villages, but only to enact swift responses showing that the United States was constantly aware of any transgressions perpetrated by errant warriors or chiefs. For enlisted men, the system of military discipline and constant repetitive actions were supposed to instill a similar mentality, though often with mixed results. Public punishments, constant reminders in the forms of drills, orders, and in the extreme, permanent physical manifestations of past crimes such as bodily mutilations offered abject lessons about the locus of power. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995), 201.

105 Physical punishments were a major determinant of class and racial status. Prior to 1812, Army regulations allowed floggings of up to 100 lashes as punishment for a myriad of crimes, not to mention many other permanent or scarring physical punishments. The Navy applied lashes frequently up to 1850. For a brief period, flogging and severe corporal punishment were abolished by order of Major General Jacob Brown who hoped to attract “individuals of respectable connections and elevated spirit to . . . the ranks.” Officers begged for its return as the only effective means to keep enlisted men in check. Flogging returned as a punishment for desertion in 1833 with up to 50 lashes authorized, but this was abandoned by 1861. Fort Atkinson existed in this interstitial moment when permanently scarring physical punishment of enlisted men did not legally exist, yet troops often ignored corporal punishment prohibitions. Coffman, *The Old Army*, 196-7; Scott, “Systems of Martial Law, and Field Service, and Police,” *ASP:MA*, 2:201; Skelton, *American Profession of Arms*, 268.
men. Leavenworth partnered with sutler James Kennerly in a farming venture. They used Jim and Reddy, two of Kennerly’s slaves, to raise corn to sell to the garrison. This was the ideal arrangement of exploitative hierarchy with elite control and limited autonomy for subordinates who followed orders without reaping the rewards. It was symbolic of Fort Atkinson on the whole: plantation management reinforced by military authority.\textsuperscript{106}

James Kennerly was deeply entwined with the O’Fallon brothers. Kennerly was related by marriage to Indian Agent Benjamin, and successor to sutler John. His position occupied an intermediary space in the post hierarchy as both an independent merchant and an officer. He officially ranked as a cadet without command and was subject to officers of the Council of Administration who fixed prices and profits. Like Benjamin O’Fallon, he viewed military control over civilian operations as particularly antithetical to American cultural norms. Such strict controls were “unfair and unjust,” as officers knew little about the risks. The conflict between discipline and entrepreneurship threatened his economic rights as a free American. With manhood increasingly linked to marketplace success, Kennerly remained continuously anxious about his status.\textsuperscript{107}

Entrepreneurial soldiers threatened military discipline. At five dollars a month, privates labored hard for little reward compared to fur company employees who received on average three times more as a base salary. They held no rights to work independently. Officers regulated their purchases and limited their credit at the sutler to one half-month’s pay. This was at odds with the increased cultural belief in free enterprise within broader American society.\textsuperscript{108} Private Frederick Anson showed remarkable business ability in creating an illicit trade in whiskey and

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{106} Kennerly, “Diary,” 47-9, 64-5.
\end{itemize}
provisions with liquor at one dollar per pint and butter at 25 cents per pound. His business grew large enough to employ Private Bonnell Berry as an assistant. Anson was convicted at an 1825 court martial and suffered a partial loss of pay and one presumes the confiscation of his stash. As a frontier precursor to Milo Minderbinder of Catch-22, Anson embodied the entrepreneurial ideal while subverting military order.109

Alcohol fueled chaos. Enlisted men received a daily whiskey ration until 1830. Fort Atkinson’s commissary held 9,000 gallons for the troops. With limited social outlets, troops had little else to relieve grueling fatigue duties and the stress of isolation. Henry Leavenworth recorded dozens of charges for drunkenness after one payday. One ten-month period witnessed nearly 40 courts martial with almost as many descriptions of intoxication. After leaving the guardhouse for a prior alcohol conviction, Musician Richard Burk “did become so completely intoxicated as to loose not only the power of utterance but the power of Recollection,” testifying to his lack of masculine self-control. Chronic problems reinforced fears of chaotic subordinates and the necessity for strict policing.110

Officers and chiefs were held to higher standards. Restrained leaders gained a cross-racial respectability with expectations of mutual gentlemanly conduct. Those who lost their self-control also lost their status and authority to command. Bored junior officers hosted raucous parties fueled by easy, privileged access to sutler alcohol. Several possibly drunk officers detonated gunpowder in the northwest bastion “for fun,” reported Kennerly, causing a garrison-wide alarm in May 1824. James Gray faced charges of “being so much intoxicated as to be incapable of performing his duties appertaining to his station as a captain,” while commanding a

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109 General Court Martial, November 11, 1825, Sixth Infantry Regimental Order Book.
detachment. Continued offenses forced commander Abram Woolley to limit officers’ access to liquor, effectively demoting them to enlisted men incapable of exercising self-control.\textsuperscript{111}

Drunks gave the majority of the troops a bad reputation. Within the United States the problem was limited to administrative headaches. At this western-most fort, however, drunken disorder undermined federal authority and belied official efforts to portray an all-powerful state. Commanders could not prevent illicit liquor among their own men, let alone its introduction into Indian Country. Each nation had a different relationship to alcohol, but the Pawnee remained particularly unaffected by liquor. Strict control of trade by the chiefs limited alcohol-fueled political and social problems through the 1820s, in stark contrast to their federal neighbors.\textsuperscript{112}

Underlying the problem was the fort’s location. Isolation and grueling fatigue duties spurred rebelliousness, with occasionally fatal results. Private John Shepard was hanged for mutiny and murder on April 1, 1821, in the only execution at Fort Atkinson. The entire garrison including sick men on excused duty witnessed the display of state power to literally unmake the physical person. Since 1790, federal criminal law provided for dissection of convicted murderers as a form of supra-capital punishment to further humiliate the convict and reinforce the message of state power. The court followed precedent and ordered Shepard’s body dissected by the post surgeon. Even for a violent time and place, it was a cruel sentence that denied a traditional burial, contrary to cultural norms.\textsuperscript{113}

The lesson failed to take hold. Easy recourse to violence in daily life showed the state’s inability to craft an orderly society through exemplary punishment. A sample of incidents

\textsuperscript{111} Kennerly, “Diary,” 72; General Court Martial, November 8, 1825, Sixth Infantry Regimental Order Book; Ney, \textit{Fort on the Prairie}, 82; Order No. 68, April 1, 1826, Sixth Infantry Regimental Order Book.

\textsuperscript{112} Paul Wilhelm, \textit{Travels in North America}, 394; White, \textit{Roots of Dependency}, 190-1.

\textsuperscript{113} \textit{An Act for the Punishment of certain Crimes against the United States}, April 15, 1790, ch. 9, 1 Stat. 112; Ney, \textit{Fort on the Prairie}, 22-3; Aaron Tward and Hugh Patterson, “From Grave Robbing to Gift Giving: Cadaver Supply in the United States,” \textit{JAMA} 287, no.9 (March 2002): 1183; Foucault, \textit{Discipline and Punish}, 47-57.
include the case of a corporal beaten to death while working at the limekiln, a musician who tried to stab his sergeant, and a private who threatened his company commander with a pistol. Enlisted men held few avenues to retain mastery over their bodies, which fueled violent responses from those with little to lose. Consider Private Moses Elkins. He refused an order to arrest another soldier, and was himself arrested. As others tried to detain him, Elkins grabbed his musket, fixed the bayonet, and declared “that he would kill every man of the party before he would be taken or conveyed to the Guard house,” before breaking free and deserting. For Elkins, the threat of punishment or death at the hands of Indian bounty hunters sent after him was less important than his autonomy of action. A court martial sentenced him to hard labor on the fortifications at the mouth of the Mississippi. For the remainder of his enlistment he was to wear “a ball and chain,” and “an Iron Collar weighing 8lbs having 2 prongs each 3 foot in length.”

Nor were senior NCOs above such violent responses. Sergeant Lathrop stabbed his wife and Assistant Surgeon William Nicoll seven times, suggesting the discovery of an illicit rendezvous. Lathrop’s response is hardly surprising given the circumstances. Being cuckolded by a superior officer destroyed Lathrop’s position as a familial patriarch at home and leader in the ranks. Enlisted men were paradoxically the representatives of a democratizing American society, yet highly constrained in their ability to act as such while surrounded by examples of elite warrior men who jealously guarded their freedom of action. Indian men were freer individuals than white Americans.

Officers overstepping the legal bounds of punishment created constant tension over the meaning of power and authority. Free, white Americans were not supposed to be subject to

114 General Court Martial, November 11, 1825; Orders No. 2, February 21, 1826, Sixth Infantry Regimental Order Book; Kennerly, “Diary,” 67.
115 Kennerly, “Diary,” 56.
cruelties reserved for slaves. Beginning during the Jefferson administration, civilian political pressure directed punishments away from floggings and mutilations that permanently scarred white bodies. Yet flogging often occurred at the company and battalion level. These were unsanctioned punishments. Administration officials routinely court-martialed complicit officers. Reports of whippings and ear cropping outraged Calhoun and Monroe as embarrassing extrajudicial attacks on the bodily integrity of American citizens. Incidents in 1818 and 1819 sparked investigations, while another caused Abram Woolley to be cashiered from the Army in 1828. Beyond a desire to avoid Congressional inquiries, such hypersensitivity to punishment by two slave owners underscores that the physical integrity of a white man’s body was the ultimate marker of masculine independence.116

Calhoun was infuriated that an officer in Missouri flogged a civilian boatman and demanded Colonel Talbot Chambers answer for his officer’s abuse of authority. “The great responsibility attached to so distant and important a Command requires the greatest degree of firmness and prudence,” he reminded Chambers, “without these qualities the great object of affording additional security to our frontiers and extending our fur trade, will be entirely defeated to the dishonor of the Officers charged with it, and the Executive by whom it was planned.”117

Furthermore, they negated the Army’s legitimacy and effectiveness as a governing force over white Americans or Indians. Reliance on military justice and the absence of civilian courts meant that commandants regularly acted as the complainant, witness, prosecutor, and commanding officer in a court martial, a fact sutler James Kennerly found “rather odd.”118

Power originating from brutality created illegitimate authority. Fort Atkinson’s isolation meant fewer checks against authoritarianism and brutal governance.

Racial distinctions often delineated acceptable behavior. O’Fallon displayed unusual cruelty during a council with Otoe and Omaha representatives. A métis man among the Indians boasted of participating in the massacre of American prisoners at Chicago in 1812 and tried to organize an attack on O’Fallon during the council. Being informed of this plot by a chief, O’Fallon “promptly cut off the fellow’s ears, gave him 100 lashes, threw his arms in the river, and set him loose.”¹¹⁹ That a brutal and summary punishment did not ignite a crisis suggests at least tacit approval by chiefs who balked at aiding one who threatened the diplomatic customs of a council. By identifying as an Indian, the man surrendered any protections his partial white status afforded against such treatment. When some Kitkahahki Pawnee whipped two whites in 1819, the ensuing diplomatic crisis required a council meeting, restitution, and obeisance to federal authority under the threat of military retaliation.¹²⁰

White criminals jeopardized their racial status and privileges of citizenship. Desertion was a chronic problem generally with 6,952 cases from 1823-1830. The average strength of the force during the period was only 5,100. Troops stationed near population centers saw easy opportunities to flee toward better pay and less discipline. At Fort Atkinson, American towns were a hard journey through several potentially hostile Indian nations. The army road to Chariton, Missouri was 330 miles and St. Louis by water was nearly 500. Those men driven to desertion made powerful statements about their beliefs in bodily ownership.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Gale, Missouri Expedition, 35.
¹²⁰ James, Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, 1:397.
¹²¹ Coffman, The Old Army, 192-5; Prucha, Sword of the Republic, 144.
Deserters showed considerable desperation and bravery. Fleeing soldiers faced summary punishment, mutilation, or death from comrades or Indian bounty hunters. Colonel Talbot Chambers had the ignominious distinction of being subjected to one of the first courts martial at Fort Atkinson after he cropped the ears of two deserters in 1819. His subsequent arrest was on the personal order of President Monroe. The light sentence, a one-month suspension from duty, outraged Calhoun as inadequate for “such illegal and odious punishment.”¹²² Henry Leavenworth’s standing orders from 1823 reinforced the dangers for a deserter, stating that “it will be well to take him alive, but better to shoot him than to let him escape . . . if he should not stand when hailed, or should attempt to make resistance, the Country will expect the pursuers to do their duty.”¹²³ Summarily shooting deserters in peacetime emphasized notions of military justice at extreme odds with the due process rights of any American. Seven men deserted in August 1824 and O’Fallon enlisted neighboring Indians to hunt them down. By encouraging Native American bounty hunters the government made a political statement that flight equated to abandonment of racial identity. Sentencing further unmanned deserters as outcasts of white nationhood. Convicts routinely served at hard labor on Mississippi River fortifications while wearing pronged iron collars commonly reserved for escaped slaves. One of the only significant differences between convicted soldiers and the slaves laboring around them in the Louisiana sun was that the soldiers were freed upon the survival and completion of their sentences.¹²⁴

Viewed from a law and order standpoint, Fort Atkinson was a chaotic mess and the precise opposite of a disciplined military establishment. By contrast Pawnee villages displayed

¹²² Calhoun to James Monroe, June 18, 1821, Calhoun Papers, 6:196.
¹²³ Order No. 87, April 2, 1822, in Ney, Fort on the Prairie, 99.
¹²⁴ Calhoun to Atkinson, December 4, 1820, Territorial Papers of the United States, 15:682; O’Fallon to “The Panis Nation of Indians,” August 27, 1824, Benjamin O’Fallon Letterbook; General Court Martial, November 11, 1825, Sixth Infantry Regimental Order Book.
“excellent order” and “decorous behavior of the young people,” according to Paul Wilhelm. The duke’s impression of an “extremely proud people . . . and should they become hostile, exceedingly dangerous,” said much about the chiefs’ control of their followers and ability to act with a unity that federal officers struggled to emulate.125

Policing the daily life of the fort and its surroundings took on added political significance. Diplomatic encounters over crime and the terms of punishment constituted the most contested issues around the military reserve. Control of punishment and defining criminality offered the clearest indicator of sovereignty and the ability to govern. Control of bodies delineated the boundaries of group identity in the Missouri Valley. O’Fallon outlined these stakes at a meeting at Council Bluffs to address Pawnee thefts from the Long Expedition. He warned Pawnee chiefs that, “When you find yourselves unable to punish those dogs among you, think that you hear the sound of those bugles from the hills near your village.”126 The message was unambiguous: order would be maintained, if necessary by the sword. Enforcing those regulations proved to be one of the greatest challenges at Fort Atkinson.

Retaining bodily sovereignty reserved political authority within Native American societies. Omaha chief Ongpatonga understood this well. Avoiding dependency was of paramount concern. At an 1819 council, he revealed the fears inherent within the confusion of multiple legal systems vying for legitimacy. He asked newly arrived agent O’Fallon, “We have heard of your tying up and whipping individuals of several nations, as you ascended this river. What is the offence which will subject us to this punishment? I wish to know, that I may inform

125 Paul Wilhelm, Travels in North America, 389.
126 James, Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, 1:403.
my people, that they may be on their guard.” Ongpatonga understood Fort Atkinson remade or at least questioned the paradigms of criminal behavior and sovereign authority in the region.127

Indian sub agent John Dougherty doubted the Pawnee chiefs’ ability to control young men who required martial glory for political status. Pawnee leaders were savvier than Dougherty allowed. In claiming an inability to control their warriors’ occasional raids or theft, chiefs pitted domestic and foreign relations imperatives against each other. By playing as dependent, weak children, chiefs appealed to malleable power metaphors to acquire federal recognition of their authority while offering only token acts of restitution and punishment.128

The power to denote crimes and punishments represented the most basic level of political authority. Without internal group control, claims to sovereignty were ephemeral rhetoric and as easily dissipated as council fire smoke. While O’Fallon probably understood the following exchange as proof of obeisance to federal authority, Pawnee chief Petalesharoo crafted routes to maintain sovereign authority by simply avoiding situations that might threaten his leadership. Petalesharoo offered to whip his own people as punishment for theft in an act of political accommodation. “I am now an American,” he stated at a council meeting, “and you shall hear that it is true. If you hear of my being whipped when I return to my village, consider yourself the cause of it, for I will whip those dogs that insulted you as you desire me. You love your children; I love mine.” Petalesharoo told O’Fallon exactly what the agent wanted to hear, yet maintained his own legal and paternal authority to punish offenders. Potential retribution was preferable to the loss of sovereignty if federal officials sought out and punished the offenders instead. But even token appearances of submission cut at the heart of Pawnee masculine authority as Petalesharoo bitterly complained that “I am now like a squaw . . . instead of carrying

127 James, Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, 1:176, 194.
128 James, Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, 1:174-5, 228-9.
the mark of a man, I have that of a woman . . . My right arm, and that half of my body is white man, and the other only Indian.” Occasionally punishing a young warrior for acting like a warrior and participating in the raid-based plains economy was the diplomatic price of autonomy, even at the cost of Pawnee leaders’ self-conceptions of gendered power and racial identity.\textsuperscript{129}

Tarrarecawaho, however, was unafraid of O’Fallon. He spoke with the air of a man totally secure in his position, telling the agent that “I am not a child,” and that he considered “all those people around me,” including the whites as his children.\textsuperscript{130} Federal efforts to impart a new system of law and order first had to change Pawnee notions of their own power and sovereignty. The officials running Fort Atkinson and the Indian Agency squabbled like children, pursued petty disputes, exercised arbitrary and at times cruel punishments, and failed to act as a cohesive unit implanting national policy. Here, the differences in political culture between Pawnee and American society were in stark relief.

2.5 Pawnee Skepticism

Pawnee leaders viewed the Americans with a mix of scorn, skepticism, and novelty. Their geopolitical world did not change in demonstrable ways. They retained mobile power at a distance from Fort Atkinson and a secure core homeland. The United States could do little to intervene in their affairs to the west or south, far beyond the reach of federal military power.

\textsuperscript{129} James, \textit{Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains}, 1:400-1.
\textsuperscript{130} James, \textit{Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains}, 1:396.
Pawnee leaders understood their position as the regionally preeminent military power. The possibility of good federal-Pawnee relations unnerved their neighbors. Ongpatonga of the Omaha warned of serious blowback to prevent arms from reaching the Pawnee. He tried to scare federal officials, cautioning that any weapons given “would be stained with white man’s blood, before they reached the Pawnee village.”\textsuperscript{131} Extended raids to Mexico and wars to the west demonstrated Pawnee ability to project force over large distances. An attack in the late-1810s brought Pawnee cavalry into the heart of the Kansa village. An assault against an easily fortified and defended place showcased Pawnee confidence in their capabilities.\textsuperscript{132}

It was difficult for the United States to create a new regional diplomatic landscape in the face of both Pawnee power and the problems within Fort Atkinson. If they could not be

\textsuperscript{131} James, \textit{Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains}, 1:175.
\textsuperscript{132} James, \textit{Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains}, 1:303-4. It appears the story was recounted to James by the Kansa, who claimed they out-generated the Pawnee by laying a trap, using ravines as cover to get into the Pawnee rear, killing 80 and forcing the rest to flee, though the numbers may be hard to accept at face value. Only thirty years later, Sioux attackers perpetrated the same kind of assault on the Pawnee, with disastrous results for the latter, suggesting how far the strategic situation had changed.
conquerors of the type Secretary of War Calhoun hoped, perhaps they could be brokers. O’Fallon and his successor, John Dougherty worked to make federal agents the arbitrators of inter-Indian disputes. They also had to create the agency next to the fort as the primary spot for conducting negotiations by making it the site for annuity and gift distribution, trade, and the repair of tools and guns. In effect they had to create a new space of neutral, measured, and patriarchal authority in a chaotic environment. Efforts to settle regional disputes promoted this claim of being neutral arbiters.

On the way to Council Bluffs in September 1819, O’Fallon and Dougherty mediated a peace between the Otoe and Kansa nations. It was a fragile peace and constantly in danger of failure, but affirmed O’Fallon’s status as mediator. Dougherty similarly acted as a go between for the Iowa, Otoe, and Missouri. These were modest successes. While they reoriented the political landscape and positioned the Indian agents as new fathers within the context of diplomacy for these nations, these were easier cases. The people involved were far less politically and militarily powerful than their Pawnee or Sioux neighbors.

Pawnee raids into Mexico intensified during this period, posing a political challenge for officials at the agency and threatening U.S.-Mexican relations. A stream of letters from New Mexican governors Joseph Anthony Vizcarra and his successor Bartolome Baca began arriving in 1823. They pressed both O’Fallon and Missouri governor Alexander McNair to interdict the raids emanating from American territory. As “the said tribe is within the boundaries of the United States and consequently belongs to them,” wrote Vizcarra, “I have therefore to request

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133 James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains*, 1:150-2, 184, 189-90, 310. With O’Fallon’s intervention as a peace mediator, Otoe chief Hashea barely restrained his people from avenging a December horse raid by the Kansa, despite evidence of the Saks being the perpetrators. Ietan, another Otoe chief visiting the post in January to repair some guns further solidified O’Fallon’s status by seeking out his permission to go to war with the Kansa over some horse thefts to repair the honor of his nation. O’Fallon’s refusal to grant permission and mediation of the dispute at least temporarily cooled the situation.
that you will have the goodness to cause a serious remonstrance to be made to them that the said hostilities may cease. Should they however maintain their perfidious hostilities I shall be compelled to declare war against them.”

Mexican assumptions of federal responsibility over Pawnee conduct and the threat of a retaliatory invasion placed an urgency on establishing federal diplomatic control.

Twenty years after making his first reference to the Pawnee in his journals on the Lewis and Clark Expedition, William Clark was still concerned about the Pawnee. Since 1807, he had served as a federal Indian agent. It was an office he held before becoming governor of the Missouri Territory, and one he continued to hold for the rest of his life. In 1824, Clark was apprehensive that much could be done to curtail the raiding, informing Calhoun that “it will be with much difficulty that those Indians will be restrained from pursuing a warfare which have been lucrative without much loss on their part.” It was an honest assessment of the limitations of federal authority.

O’Fallon, however, was more eager to prove himself in his role as a diplomat responsible for theoretically subordinate people. Mexico proposed sending negotiators to Council Bluffs for a peace council mediated by O’Fallon, which he eagerly accepted. Clark worried that O’Fallon exceeded his authority and undermined federal policy of maintaining the exclusive negotiating authority over resident Native Americans. At the fringes of federal control O’Fallon assumed far more authority than he was probably entitled to, but it did not stop him.

A delegation of 14 Mexicans and 12 Christian Indians arrived at Council Bluffs for a peace conference in August 1824. After a three-day council with the Pawnee in September, the

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134 Joseph Anthony Vizcarra to Alexander McNair, September 8, 1823, translation included in Clark to Calhoun, February 11, 1824, LROIA: StLS, Roll 747. Similar letters reached O’Fallon.
135 Clark to Calhoun, February 11, 1824, LROIA: StLS, Roll 747.
136 Clark to Calhoun, May 19, 1824, LROIA: StLS, Roll 747.
delegation returned to New Mexico with a peace deal, but within a framework that reasserted federal authority to mediate disputes and control over negotiations with the Pawnee. O’Fallon’s message to Governor Baca offered thinly veiled insults about Mexican power and “the pecuniary embarrassment and unsettled state of the government of your unhappy country.” O’Fallon excused the governor for his meddling. Asserting federal authority, he reminded Baca that the Pawnee and others “residing in our territory are dependent on and subject to this government, therefore it would be considered unfriendly and improper . . . to give or sell to them any uniform clothing other than that of the United States, or medals, flags arm Bands or other ornaments of dress bearing the figures, devices or emblems of any other nation.”137 Such pronouncements offered a sharp rebuke to Mexican efforts to muddle the international boundary by engaging in direct diplomacy with one of their foremost military foes. But pretensions of federal control were illusory.

O’Fallon’s self-assuredness about federal diplomatic strength and ability to coerce the Pawnee signified the reorientation of Council Bluffs and Fort Atkinson as the regional diplomatic hub. This did not fully represent reality. Pawnee raids continued unabated against their neighbors, Mexico, and the Santa Fe Trail. Without any force capable of patrolling the plains to the west, federal officials could do little to quell the regional wars.138

The Pawnee did not care about federal claims to regional control. Infantry confined to the river valley was ineffective. Within the military reserve at Council Bluffs, federal authority was certainly stronger, but it could not dictate policy to independent people. The Pawnee, Sioux,

137 O’Fallon to Bartolome Baca, September 9, 1824, Benjamin O’Fallon Letterbook.
138 Clark to Barbour, July 12, 1826, LROIA: StLS, Roll 747; Clark to Thomas McKenney, February 25, 1828, LROIA: StLS, Roll, 748; John Dougherty to Clark, November 4, 1828, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.
and others knew federal power was limited and fixed. O’Fallon eventually recognized this futility and argued for mounted rangers to project power into the central plains.\textsuperscript{139}

As a model of American government and society, Fort Atkinson failed to create the control envisioned by federal military planners. Too much leeway remained for assertions of independent political authority among Native Americans and white soldiers. Although Americans attempted to fit their own version of martial masculinity and patriarchal authority over the region their efforts remained incomplete. Federal officials failed to emulate the standards of leadership required to supplant Pawnee chiefs. Fort Atkinson was too exposed without providing the projected benefits. It was abandoned on June 6, 1827.\textsuperscript{140}

Federal agents failed to make U.S. sovereignty a regional reality. They entered the Pawnee diplomatic world as weak challengers to Pawnee power. Diplomacy rather than direct models of control marked the next phase of federal Indian policy in the Platte Valley. The next round of federal expansion would be closer to the U.S. frontier and focused on building a new space for forcibly removed Native Americans from the East. The Pawnee brought the United States into their world, set the terms of engagement, and retained their sovereignty to pursue independent policies. The Pawnee remained masters of the Platte.

\textsuperscript{139} O’Fallon to Willis Green, December 8, 1829, Benjamin O’Fallon Letterbook.
\textsuperscript{140} Ney, \textit{Fort on the Prairie}, 191.
On May 8, 1827, Colonel Henry Leavenworth reported to the War Department about selecting the location for a new fort on the western bank of the Missouri. It was “a high, dry, and rolling country” about twenty miles from the mouth of the Little Platte close to the start of the Santa Fe Road, and exceedingly healthy, away from the fetid and flood-prone river bottom.\(^1\) Philip St. George Cooke, a young second lieutenant stationed at the new Fort Leavenworth, was similarly impressed by the landscape and the tinge of romance in its natural beauty. After five months of escort duty along the Santa Fe Road he described the area around the new post in rapturous delight:

> Every line of every surface is curved with symmetry and beauty. On the one hand is to be seen the mighty river . . . stretching away till mellowed to aerial blue; on the other, rolling prairies, dotted with groves, and bounded on the west by a bold grassy ridge . . . [beyond, a] view of the prairie lost in a dim and vague outline. How feeble are words! How inadequate to give a general idea, much more to paint this rare scenery, where grandeur is softened by beauty.\(^2\)

Cooke was enthralled by the scenery, perhaps more because it meant secure quarters away from the dangers of the prairies. The vagueness Cooke described hid a complexity of Native American relations, multiple ongoing wars, and the sense that federal officials still very much struggled to understand their place in this vast space. Fort Leavenworth was a safe, bounded place with distinct markers separating it from the dimly understood prairie in the distance. It was

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\(^1\) Henry Leavenworth to E. G. W. Butler, May 8, 1827, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883. Originally designated Cantonment Leavenworth, it became Fort Leavenworth in 1832 when the War Department discontinued regular use of cantonment to designate temporary posts.

\(^2\) Philip St. George Cooke, _Scenes and Adventures in the Army: or, Romance of Military Life_ (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston 1857), 93.
more a park than a fortress, and easily distinguished from its surroundings. Yet this view was largely imaginary.

Unlike Fort Atkinson, Fort Leavenworth was the precursor necessary for Removal, the coordinated federal policy in the 1830s that called for the relocation of all Native Americans east of the Mississippi to a designated Indian Territory in the West. Fort Leavenworth was the perfect spot for a second attempt to assert federal military power along the Missouri River after the failure of Fort Atkinson. Here the United States could pivot to the southwest and the growing trade with New Mexico and the increasingly important interactions with the Comanche and Kiowa. It was a healthy place, closer to white settlements springing up along the western edge of Missouri. Fort Leavenworth would be the administration center for the Shawnee, Delaware, Kickapoo, Piankashaw, and Peoria, native peoples who William Clark was in the midst of removing from Missouri and Illinois. Combined with resident agents the new post “would give greater confidence to the Indians, in the permanency of the New Settlements, and will most probably facilitate the union of the tribes,” Clark reasoned.

Between 1827 and 1833, federal officials envisioned the region around the Kansas and Platte rivers as the necessary space for a sweeping Removal program that would functionally clear the East of Native Americans and place them as a buffer of civilized tribes along the U.S. frontier between more hostile neighbors. The area would be close enough to act as a second buffer between the Osage being pushed west and their traditional Pawnee, Omaha, and Otoe enemies. It was the spot to control migrations and the transfer of populations, an anchor for newly arrived peoples, a political hub, and the base from which military power could ultimately

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3 Cooke, Scenes and Adventures, 84-5; Dougherty to Lewis Cass, November 19, 1831, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883. Dougherty reported that increased traffic to Santa Fe put traders in grave danger of Indian attacks from Comanche, Kiowa, Arapahoe, and Wichita especially once they left American territory.
4 Clark to Barbour, June 11, 1826, LROIA: StLS, Roll 747.
enforce the protection clause embedded in the Removal legislation. Here, federal officials assumed they could create a neighborhood of civilized tribes subject to federal oversight and missionary reformers.

In addition to Fort Leavenworth, developing this region required securing a regional peace among the local nations. In particular this meant blunting Pawnee military power both against their long-term neighbors and the increasing numbers of new arrivals. This remained elusive at best. For the Pawnee, this period was the most challenging they had faced to that point. Their military power was stretched thin. Pawnee fighters covered ongoing conflicts to the north and west, and new conflicts with the appearance of removed nations like the Delaware who encroached on Pawnee territory to the south. Careful strategic calculations, however, meant the Pawnee often directed the course of Removal policy in the region and where Indian Territory ultimately took shape. Yet careful strategy could not prevent smallpox from upending Pawnee geopolitics and forcing a strategic recalibration by 1833.

This chapter argues that Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma took shape in the nineteenth century because of the bilateral relationship between the Pawnee and the United States. Federal conceptions of power as fixable hampered U.S. efforts to reimagine the space and create an Indian Territory in the West as part of an emerging Removal policy in the late-1820s and early-1830s. While Removal settled U.S. Indian affairs in the East through forced migration, it unsettled the West. Federal officials could not force their vision of settled, controlled Native American groups onto the space around Fort Leavenworth. Removal was in part decided by Pawnee military power. Through strategic calculations and force deployment, Pawnee leaders and warriors directed the creation of Indian Territory to the future Oklahoma, instead of Kansas and Nebraska. Federal officials had to adapt to the Pawnee understanding of military power as
mobile and far-ranging. This process challenged Pawnee military dominance as they adapted to the new strategic reality of a robust federal presence in the region and need for a new relationship in the face of political threats and a smallpox epidemic. The resultant treaty in 1833 shaped U.S. expansion into the West and Pawnee responses for decades. The Pawnee sought an alliance of equals while the U.S. sought dominance over the Platte and its inhabitants.

3.1 Envisioning a Neighborhood

From his office in St. Louis, Superintendent of Indian Affairs William Clark imagined Fort Leavenworth as the anchor of a new Indian Territory formed to the west and south of the post. Here, thousands of Eastern Native Americans could be relocated as Removal became the formal policy of the Jackson administration. This perspective ignored the fact that the world just beyond the vision of its garrison was turbulent, undergoing massive population shifts and economic readjustments. In the late-1820s, the years immediately before the Jackson administration promulgated the Removal Policy, Clark had observed a region that defied federal control. Native Americans were already moving there as a result of the federal government’s existing practices of coerced migration, with all of the challenges that ensued. Meanwhile, the Pawnee remained the ongoing power brokers, and they actively prevented the federal government from extending governing authority between the Platte and the Arkansas rivers.

Sioux expansion from the northeast pushed the Omaha, Arikara, Iowa, and Ponca closer to the Missouri River and American support. The Delaware, Shawnee, and Kickapoo (who were undergoing forced relocation by the federal government) squeezed the Kansa and Pawnee from the south and encroached on hunting grounds south of the Platte. In addition to long-standing
conflicts with the Cheyenne and Sioux, the Pawnee were fighting a war of extermination with the Kansa, who were already hard-pressed by disease and the social collapse precipitated by the disappearing fur trade and pervasive alcoholism. The different bands and sub groups of the Sioux and Pawnee conducted autonomous foreign relations, further complicating the labyrinthine relationships of regional alliances and enmities between Native American groups.\(^5\)

This was the neighborhood surrounding Fort Leavenworth. Pawnee military actions south of the Platte made the region a terrible place to settle removed Native Americans. Forming a new Indian Territory in the midst of prime hunting grounds was not within the Pawnee imagination. Through the late-1820s and into the early 1830s, the Pawnee pushed back against federal plans and those of the often destitute and desperate removed peoples trying to settle themselves after their forced relocation. Relocating nations hesitated to move into a potential war zone near the Platte Valley.

Yet, for a new outpost “there is no other place that will answer the purposes required within the prescribed distance of the Little Platte,” argued Leavenworth about his chosen location. Moreover, “there will no doubt soon be many tribes of Indians to visit this new post, and if not inconsistent with the views of the Government, I should be happy to have Mr. Dougherty [Indian Agent at Council Bluffs] ordered to this new post.”\(^6\) Here was the basis for a new sense of place for the region, as the administrative hub of Indian Country, for both the native inhabitants and those Indians forced west.

Building the fort changed little in the natural landscape that so captivated St. George Cooke. Rather than create a model American town like Fort Atkinson, Fort Leavenworth was

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\(^6\) Leavenworth to Butler, May 8, 1827, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
merely a garrison, depot, and administrative hub to keep a regional peace. The post “was in reality but a straggling cantonment,” two years after construction began with quarters described only as “miserable huts and sheds.” It remained severely undermanned. Even with the burden of escorting Santa Fe caravans, barely 200 officers and men garrisoned the post in 1829. The rude walls and buildings matched a limited sense of state power that was largely static and difficult to project beyond the slow march of infantry over the plains. It had little influence on nations that relied on mobility for their military power.

For the independent Pawnee and Sioux, mobility was central to their political world and an economy based on hunting, raiding, and the trade in horses and captives. It depended on precisely the mobility the United States sought to curb. Yet both federal officials and Native American leaders spoke in similar terms about their strategic goals, framed by rhetoric of neighbors and neighborhood.

In creating a gathering spot, Fort Leavenworth was supposed to remake the space around it into a neighborhood where local ties existed through the common focal point of the fort. Here was the federal ideal of Indian Country as a series of contained and clearly bounded lands governed from a central location. “There are but two ways to keep Indians at peace one by force of arms,” argued veteran Indian Agent John Dougherty about American policy for the region,

7 Cooke, Scenes and Adventures, 93.
8 Hamilton Gardner, “Romance at Old Cantonment Leavenworth: The Marriage of 2d Lt. Phillip St. George Cooke in 1830,” Kansas Historical Quarterly 22, no. 2 (Summer 1956): 98. Cantonment Leavenworth was initially designed more as a frontier outpost than a major troop and supply center in its first incarnation. Most troops in the West not on frontier duty were headquartered at the Infantry School of Instruction at the new Jefferson Barracks, south of St. Louis, which made reinforcing Missouri or Mississippi river posts easier and increased the combat readiness of troops too long subjected to agricultural labor and other non-military duties.
9 The plains trade network connected nations from the Rockies to the Missouri state line and as far south as central Mexico. Pawnee raiding against the Cheyenne also fulfilled important religious obligations by taking captives for human sacrifice during the Morning Star ritual. Pawnee raids against New Mexico in the 1820s prompted a US-brokered peace conference at Fort Atkinson in 1824. Vizcarra to McNair, September 8, 1823, in Clark to Calhoun, February 11, 1824, LROIA: StLS, Roll 747; Hyde, Pawnee Indians, 137-9, 161; Calloway, “The Inter-Tribal Balance of Power,” 27; Delay, War of A Thousand Deserts, 88-90, 117-118.
“the other by convincing them of their own interest in being at peace with their neighbors, which has to be done by . . . presents.”"\(^{10}\) Key to this mixed policy of force and persuasion was the necessity of getting Native Americans to see themselves as neighbors, first to each other, and then to the United States.

This was not a foreign concept to Native American policy makers. Repeated discussions and treaty negotiations between nations utilized the language of neighbors and neighborhood to outline a spatial and political world. Kansa chief Now-Pe-Warai wished to live close to the fort and as “I consider myself as an American and my wife as an American woman. I want to take every thing like white people (meaning house furniture) to receive white people.”"\(^{11}\) Speaking at a treaty council at Fort Leavenworth the following year, the aging Omaha chief Ongpatonga announced to Dougherty that “now that I have seen how those live in your neighborhood (meaning Shawnees) I have determined to establish myself and if possible cultivate the soil and collect all kinds of domestic animals around me,” and be “situated like the southern Indians [those removed to the vicinity of Fort Leavenworth].”"\(^{12}\) When Pawnee chiefs complained to Dougherty about the preferential treatment and annuities given to the Otoe and Omaha for land transfers, and none for their own transfer to the Delaware, they complained about their neighbors."\(^{13}\) This was an unlikely word choice, though perhaps it reflects a translator’s influence, considering the bitter and long-standing enmities. Wars did not appear to be neighborly interactions.

The rhetoric of the neighborhood encompassed so many different relationships: individuals and groups to their sense of place, the boundaries of identity and physical space, and

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\(^{10}\) Dougherty to Clark, June 28, 1827 LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
\(^{11}\) Now-Pe-Warai to Clark, May 17, 1827, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.
\(^{12}\) Ongpatonga to Dougherty, June 24, 1828, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
\(^{13}\) Dougherty to Clark, October 29, 1831, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
even the space itself into a place. Fort Leavenworth, like Atkinson before it, was supposed to transform space into a place of power through the physicality of state architecture, but it was a minor physical presence over the oceans of grasslands and distances of up to a thousand miles between agencies with one or two officials.

The abstraction of place, ascribing a meaning to the space and the inhabitants, was far more important. Neighborhoods brought a sense of place to different and vast geographic terrains. As the historian of slavery Anthony Kaye writes, neighborhoods were “pervasive but not uniform,” and encompassed “a geography of kinship” by ordering social relationships and a sense of place. Neighborhoods embraced pluralism and difference by providing the structure to understand relationships to people and places. They were political places that framed international spaces. Their creation and recreation were ways to “recalibrate the balance of power.”

This model explains the complexities of political relationships and diplomatic relations between local Native American nations of disparate power and new arrivals from the East in the late-1820s and 1830s. A common understanding of neighborhood and neighborly behaviors framed diplomacy, negotiations, and a sense of fairness or correct action to protect territory or judge the efficacy of alliances. The sense of who constituted a neighbor, through geographic proximity or behavior, gave meaning to the landscape and order to the disruption.

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14 Place should be understood as a spatial reality constructed by people. It brings together the physical space with a created understanding of meaning, defined boundaries, and the abstraction of meaning imposed onto a natural space. Place, argues geographer Allan Pred, “always involves an appropriation and transformation of space and nature that is inseparable from the reproduction and transformation of society in time and space.” Pred, “Place as Historically Contingent Process,” 279; White and Findlay, eds., Power and Place in the North American West, x.

15 Anthony Kaye, Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 1-7, 12. Kaye’s argument moves studies of slavery beyond the tired questions of resistance to the “terrains of struggle” by emphasizing the importance of place and locality. Indian Country was similarly not a monolithic place, but a dynamic place constantly being remade by the inhabitants. Seeing the complexity of political relationships similarly gets us beyond the older questions about resistance or lack thereof to federal expansion by highlighting the regional differences, squabbles, and the conflicting interests of dozens of political groups each with a unique set of foreign and domestic policy priorities framed by the sense of local place and neighborhood belonging.
wrought by disease, migration, and warfare. A sense of neighborhood placed old inhabitants and new arrivals within a comprehensible political framework.

Pawnee visions of their neighborhood placed themselves as the central power. Between 1819 and 1827, federal officials upset the old order of things around Pawnee territory. The entry of federal agents into the diplomatic world of the Missouri Valley merely complicated the multifaceted relationships between the regional Native American powers, it did not replace Pawnee dominance. Treaties of friendship between the United States and Pawnee in 1818 and 1825 tried to place federal sovereignty over regional affairs. Pawnee acknowledgements that they lived within the borders of the United States were pro forma. The treaties did little to alter existing conditions of Pawnee independence or power.¹⁶ Federal retreat to Fort Leavenworth in 1827 and the intermittent occupation of the Indian Agency at Council Bluffs effectively opened the area southeast of Pawnee territory for raids on the Otoe and Kansa.¹⁷ In 1826, the primary threat to Pawnee territory and power was the Sioux expansion southward. The Sioux absorbed smaller

¹⁶ The 1818 treaties negotiated by Missouri’s territorial Governor and Superintendent of Indian Affairs William Clark and St. Louis fur magnate Auguste Chouteau with the Grand, “Pitavirate Noisy,” Republic, and “Marhar” bands of Pawnee were notable, aside from the utter failure to record Pawnee names properly, for their limited scope. Identical boiler-plate language proclaimed the Pawnee to be under federal sovereignty – an easy item to agree to on paper and impossible to enforce without an actual agent or military presence in Pawnee territory – and the reciprocal desires to maintain peace through extradition protocols and a willingness to mark the treaty as a reset for any past violence committed by either side. They represented a pro forma approach to Indian treaties with nations beyond the reach of federal power. ASP:IA, 2:171-172. The 1825 treaty was part of the effort to secure Indian relations along the entirety of the Missouri. Before leaving Fort Atkinson with several hundred men, Brigadier General Atkinson and Indian Agent Benjamin O’Fallon negotiated a comprehensive Pawnee treaty that lumped all the bands together. The initial reiteration of Pawnee submission to the United States was reinforced by a statement that the Pawnee recognized they lived within the boundaries of the United States as a protectorate tribe. Traders authorized by the United States, under Pawnee protection, would conduct all trade and unauthorized people trading or entering Indian country would be apprehended by the Pawnee and delivered to federal officials. No trade in guns or ammunition to Indians not in amity with the United States would occur. Criminals would be delivered to officials and safe passage was secured for the caravans to New Mexico. None of this was observed in practice. Federal officials claimed sovereignty on paper, but the Pawnee were still masters of the region who controlled access to it and could, if they wanted, threaten American security and commerce. ASP:IA, 2:603-604.

¹⁷ John Dougherty made the unauthorized move to Leavenworth in 1827, effectively abandoning Council Bluffs. After five years of making every excuse about the beneficial location, necessity of military support, and outright refusal to move, he finally purchased a former trading post of the Missouri Fur Company at Bellevue (about 20 miles south of the old post at Council Bluffs) and moved the agency back up the Missouri.
nations on the edge of the Pawnee, like the Ponca, into their political world. Uneasy relations with the Omaha and Otoe further damaged the buffer between this aggressive expansion and the Pawnee. Constriction of the Pawnee neighborhood and the arrival of new threats at their doorsteps forced the chiefs to solve a foreign policy crisis of potentially existential proportions.

By the fall of 1826, two different conceptions of neighborhood were being formed in the minds of federal bureaucrats and Pawnee chiefs: Americans wanted a regional community center anchored by a fort, the Pawnee wanted to maintain the regional balance of power between increasingly hostile neighbors.

Indian Removal in the period between 1827 and 1835 is typically told from the perspective of the Eastern nations relocated to the West, either by choice or force. It is a story of the terrible triumph of federal power over Native American independence and sovereignty. Except for the Seminoles of Florida, Indian power east of the Mississippi ceased to exist. Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma appeared as a formally organized region to receive those people who survived the unforgivable and avoidable tragedy of the Trail of Tears. Federal authorities, not Native Americans, determined the outcome of events and drove the migrations of people westward. While the federal government might determine what happened in the East, it was the local people in the West, notably the Pawnee, who shaped the outcomes of federal policy.

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18 White, “The Winning of the West,” 330-331; Dougherty to Elbert Herring, August 20, 1835, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883. White argues convincingly that the western Sioux were a colonial power with a policy of expansion for resource extraction in buffalo and agricultural products. By outsourcing farming to conquered tribes, the Sioux maintained their cultural identity as that of hunters and warriors while maintaining a strategic reserve of produce grown by buffer tribes positioned between them and their more powerful enemies, the Pawnee.

19 Satz, American Indian Policy; Saunt, Unworthy Republic. Most famously the reduction of Indian tribes to the status of “domestic dependent” nations and wards of the United States in John Marshall’s infamous Cherokee Nation v. Georgia decision of 1831 presents the period as one of legal and political triumph to complete the military victories of the 1790s and 1810s over independent Indian powers and confederacies.

20 Scallet, “‘This Inglorious War’”; John W. Hall, Uncommon Defense: Indian Allies in the Black Hawk War (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009). Americans brought approximately 7,000 regulars, militia, and Native American allies into the field against a band of roughly 1,000 outgunned and undersupplied men, women, and children. Despite the alarm and fear, this was hardly an existential crisis for the American frontier given the disparity.
and the development of Indian Territory.

The conception of an empty wilderness was central to federal policy makers’ understandings of the land and its potential value as a dumping ground for Native Americans removed from the East. It was a transformable landscape ready to be remade according to American policy dictates with clearly demarcated boundaries and federal oversight. William Clark should have known better after his decades of experience, but even he fell into the trap of thinking that the West was easily transformable. The problem was not just removing nations from the East, but where to put them once uprooted. The problem limited previous removal efforts. Clark’s March 1826 report to Secretary of War James Barbour outlined the basic architecture of the western components of Removal. Clark argued that “the country west of Missouri and Arkansas and west of the Mississippi river north of Missouri is the one destined to receive [the forced migrants] . . . this country will be well adapted to their residence. It is well watered . . . abounds with grass . . . has many salt springs . . . contains much prairie land, which will make the opening of farms easy, and afford a temporary supply of game.”

It was the perfect landscape to create civilized and settled Indian nations. Indian Territory would be in the central plains, between the Kansas and Platte river valleys. In modern terms, the federal government designated what is now the state of Kansas as the new home for Native Americans from throughout the East. Peoples who had never encountered each other before would suddenly find themselves becoming neighbors.

For those Native Americans already occupying the region, Clark reported their condition “is the most pitiable that can be imagined,” with pervasive famine from which “many die for want of food, and during which the living child is often buried with the dead mother, because no

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21 Ronda, “We Have A Country,” 742-3.
22 Clark to Barbour, March 1, 1826, LROIA: StLS, Roll 747.
can spare it as much food as would sustain it through its helpless infancy. This description applies to Sioux, Osages, and many others, but I mention those because they are powerful tribes and live near our borders.”

Considering the Sioux as destitute and starving severely downplayed their collective power either ignorantly or by design to promote the removal plan. Clark based the plan on the faulty premise that resident Native Americans would acquiesce to thousands of strangers competing for their resources.

Dougherty agreed with Clark’s assessments about the bleak conditions in Indian Country. The bordering tribes “are constantly at war with each other,” he reported to superiors in Washington in 1827, so much so that “starvation is at this time one of the leading causes of their disputes, the game has left them . . . and many of them starve half their time.”

Certainly the smaller nations like the Kansa suffered greatly. Increased indebtedness to traders with their stores of smuggled whiskey and the loss of social and political control fit Dougherty’s description of dependence and his own perceptions about the importance of his agency in remedying the pitiful humanitarian crisis. Without such federally organized intervention, “the natural consequence is that hungry worm is constantly gnawing on them, and keeps them prowling over the country like so many hungry wolves seeking out and devouring everything eatable that comes in their way.”

Such bleak assessments fit within a larger understanding among many federal officials that Removal would be beneficial to Native Americans across the continent. Removal itself was nothing new: Clark merely extended the policy tradition of creating a racial and national

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23 Clark to Barbour, March 1, 1826, LROIA: StLS, Roll 747.
24 Dougherty to McKenney, September 4, 1827, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
25 Dougherty to McKenney, September 4, 1827, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
separation that many whites and some Native Americans saw as necessary for Indian survival. Federal administrators hoped to fix what Dougherty observed as the “unsettled state of their boundary lines,” that federal officials saw as fundamental to nearly all the intertribal conflicts. Surveyed, fixed, and policed spaces would stop wars. Static tribes would be more receptive to civilizing reformers, undertaking agricultural pursuits in the place of hunting, and limit the collateral damage against white traders and settlers from intertribal warfare. The 1830 Indian Removal Act merely enshrined this long-held view. It assumed federal control over the entirety of the land acquired through the Louisiana Purchase, including the authority and power to make borders, enforce exchanges, and ultimately protect against “all interruption and disturbance” from other Indians or white intruders. By granting title to the lands and establishing property boundaries, the United States created the legal basis for direct oversight, turned the wild space into a settled place, diminished Indian ability to act independently by reducing their landholding to permanent tenant status through the provision that all lands would revert to the United States should the tribe abandon the lands or become extinct. “A speedy removal,” argued President Andrew Jackson in his annual message to Congress, “will place a civilized and dense population

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26 Every administration had envisioned some form of removal and separation of white and Native American populations. The Monroe administration drafted the first comprehensive program for removal. This effort stalled in the John Quincy Adams administration, though Adams reluctantly agreed that removal would be necessary to tamp down jurisdictional conflicts between states and the federal government over Native Americans. Jackson rightly receives the blame and infamy for much of the horrors of a full-throated Removal policy, but he and his subordinates were operating within longstanding policy guidelines. Ronda, “We Have A Country,” 742-5; Satz, American Indian Policy, 1-8.

27 Dougherty to Eaton, October 27, 1829, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.

28 “An Act to provide for an exchange of lands with the Indians residing in any of the states or territories, and for their removal west of the river Mississippi.” United States Statutes at Large, 21st Cong., Session 1, Chapter 148. This followed the judicial theory laid out by Chief Justice John Marshall in Johnson v. McIntosh in 1823, Indians were “the rightful occupants of the soil, with a legal as well as just claim to retain possession of it, and to use it according to their own discretion,” the European discovery of America “gave exclusive title to those who made it,” which “necessarily diminished” Indian ability “to dispose of the soil at their own will, to whomsoever they pleased.” See Johnson v. McIntosh, 21 U.S. (8 Wheat.) 543, 574 (1823).
in large tracts of country now occupied by a few savage hunters.”\textsuperscript{29} It would clarify jurisdictions and settle issues of federalism thus reaffirming national power over national space.

3.2 Creating Neighbors

Federal efforts to create a regional neighborhood required getting local nations to acquiesce to the plan. Those nations under stress looked forward to a new fort and direct relationships with the United States. Those with considerably more power, like the Pawnee, remained apprehensive and continued their military policies of raiding and resource extraction. Throughout the late-1820s and early-1830s, Clark and Dougherty focused on trying to make a general peace to establish the necessary preconditions to consolidate nations in the immediate vicinity of Fort Leavenworth.

Kansa chief Now-Pe-Warai (White Plume) visited Clark in St. Louis at the same time Leavenworth made his survey for the new fort. His people were being hard-pressed by the Pawnee. Rival claimants to political power threatened his rule and the succession of his son Chin-ga-ca-he-ga. Disease, encroaching whites, wars with other nations, and economic collapse threatened the Kansa with annihilation. Now-Pe-Warai urged Clark to expedite construction of the new fort as a solution to his strategic insecurity. “My Father, I understand you are making a fort near my village. I am glad of it. I hope you will lend me your hand to correct my men when they do wrong,” he told Clark. Now-Pe-Warai sought a political guarantor to assist him in asserting control over a world in the midst of political upheaval and imminent social collapse. “My people are bad people, they ought to be corrected,” he exclaimed. They ought to “have

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{29} Andrew Jackson, “President’s Message”, in Register of Debates, 21\textsuperscript{st}, Cong. 2\textsuperscript{nd} Session, Appendix to Gales and Seaton’s Register, ix (1830).
\end{footnotesize}
their ears cropped and their backs striped. I hope you will give me a paper for the commanding
officer to assist me in correcting my people – as you have made me a chief I want to use my
authority among them. I do not want to be a chief behind the bush.”

Even if Now-Pe-Warai merely told Clark what the superintendent wanted to hear, the underlying issues of the Kansa crisis suggest Now-Pe-Warai needed a direct federal presence to better order his neighborhood and retain power.

Leaders like Now-Pe-Warai were eager to ally themselves with the United States. They preferred a possibly malevolent, but neutral power to guarantee security against more powerful neighbors like the Pawnee. Federal authorities could further tamp down internal squabbles over leadership by recognizing existing political leaders like Now-Pe-Warai, who could then claim the economic benefits of official recognition like housing, goods, and even slaves as the chief requested. Federal officials backed away from an extended commitment up the Missouri, creating space between places of Pawnee and federal control. People like the Kansa pulled the government closer, relying on it to create a hybrid federal-Native American place. Kansa leaders changed the scale of the relationship with Americans and the United States to an intimate, dependent one. Here, leaders in positions like that of Now-Pe-Warai sought to shrink distance as a key to political survival. This also fit into federal plans for consolidation and control of space in the immediate vicinity of Fort Leavenworth.

Consolidation was key. Just as Now-Pe-Warai tried to consolidate his own governing authority through close interpersonal relations with Clark, the Superintendent sought to a more cohesive strategy to centralize administration. “Many leading chiefs,” Clark wrote of the emigrating Indians, “are zealous in this work, and labouring hard to collect their dispersed and

30 Now-Pe-Warai to Clark, May 17, 1827, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.
broken tribes at their new and permanent homes.” Collecting scattered peoples simplified administration of a remade Indian Territory, allowing each polity to develop a hierarchy of leadership anointed by resident agents and a singular tribal identity centered on a fixed location, all while being more easily controllable than multiple factions. Fixed boundaries with local agents would imbue the new residents with a sense of place and collective identity. Rather than divide and conquer, this was a strategy of unification.

At work was a fundamental misunderstanding of power in this region as fixable, rather than as flexible and mobile. Federal military strategy looked to fix locations with a centralized power of state architecture in buildings, officials, troops, culture, law, and ultimately backed by force. It was a strategy of posts that showed officials learned little from the experience of Fort Atkinson. Fixed positions, however, did not work within the geographic context of the Great Plains. Lieutenant Philip Cooke highlighted the stark differences while on escort duty with a detachment of the Sixth Infantry guarding the Santa Fe caravan in 1829:

> It was a humiliating condition to be surrounded by these rascally Indians, who, by means of their horses, could tantalize us with hopes of battle, and elude our efforts; who could annoy us by preventing all individual excursions for hunting, &c., and who could insult us with impunity. Much did we regret that we were not mounted too.  

The regionally dominant military powers, particularly the Pawnee, but also the Sioux to the north and Comanche to the south, relied on cavalry. Their power lay in mobile warrior societies outside American forts.

> Forts could not project power beyond a limited range. The infantry garrisoning Fort Leavenworth were just as ineffective on the plains as their predecessors at Fort Atkinson. The

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31 Clark to Barbour, March 11, 1826, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.
U.S. Mounted Rangers, a paramilitary force outside the regular army and designed primarily for escort duty of the Santa Fe trade did not receive Congressional authorization until 1832.\textsuperscript{33} Between 1827 and 1833 the United States had little military ability to enforce the process of spatial transformation or create stable relations with Native American nations on its western border. Despite federal assertions to the contrary, the Pawnee remained the arbiters of the land, controlling access and setting the terms of engagement.

Veteran Indian agent and keen observer John Dougherty considered the Pawnee the most powerful of the tribes bordering U.S. territory, capable of simultaneous military campaigns against the Osage, Kansa, and Cheyenne. The Kitkahahki were “carrying on an exterminating war,” against the Kansa, even with the latter living mere miles from the month-old Fort Leavenworth. The arrival of forcibly relocated Native Americans created increasingly complicated relationships between the new arrivals and the original inhabitants. Arrivals sparked new feuds. Older disputes reignited or intensified. Without settling these disputes, Dougherty warned Clark, “all that section of the country which you so wisely recommended, and still contemplate having set apart for the location and seat of Government for all the remnants of Indian tribes East of this will, in my opinion, soon become a perfect field of blood and pillage.”\textsuperscript{34}

Implementing Removal policy and creating a federally envisioned neighborhood fell largely to Clark. Coordinating emigrations, establishing boundaries, and most importantly securing the cooperation of local nations hostile to newcomers appeared to be nearly insurmountable problems. Complicating the situation were the intractable regional animosities along the Missouri. “The Sioux and Pawnees of the Missouri are unfriendly to each other and some of each nation have been killed by their War Parties,” Clark wrote to the War Department.

\textsuperscript{34} Dougherty to Clark, June 28, 1827, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
“Those distant and roving bands of Indians are continually at war with each other, and I am inclined to believe, that we have not the power at this time, to prevent it,” he worried. Fearing little could be done, he reported being “apprehensive of much difficulty in bringing about peace and friendship between the Osages and the combination of Delaware, Kickapoo, Cherokee, and others, as the unfriendly feelings which have long existed and the recent acts of violence, have increased them to a deadly hatred and eagerness for revenge.”35 From Clark’s perspective, Indian Country was a diplomatic quagmire of unremitting hostility and a giant multi-ethnic warzone. With less than $68,000 to run the entirety of his superintendency for the fiscal year from September 1826 to September 1827, including support for often destitute relocated Native Americans, Clark found himself continually hard-pressed to manage daily affairs, let alone establish an ambitious peace plan to remake the Missouri Valley. By January 1828, the superintendency was running nearly $20,000 over budget in unfulfilled expenses from treaty implementation and removal costs.36

Garrison commanders in the region were even less optimistic about the prospects of effecting a general peace in Indian Country. High up the Mississippi at the Falls of St. Anthony, Colonel Josiah Snelling reported back to Brigadier General Henry Atkinson and Clark in St. Louis that not even the presence of an American garrison could keep the peace. A Sioux party even opened fire on their Chippewa hosts within sight of Fort Snelling. Chippewa leaders captured the two Sioux murderers and promptly executed them under terms of a peace treaty signed by both parties at Prairie du Chien less than two years before. Even with this framework to settle disputes, Sioux leaders promised revenge for the execution. “The transaction is an

35 Clark to Barbour, May 8, 1826, LROIA: StLS, Roll 747.
36 Clark to Barbour, “Estimate of Yearly Expenses,” September 1, 1826, LROIA: StLS, Roll 747; Clark to Barbour, January 1, 1828, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.
excellent commentary of the efficacy of Indian Treaties, held at an immense expense and broken as soon as they are made,” lamented Snelling, whose years of experience in the midst of intertribal warfare made him a calloused observer. He concluded that the whole idea of creating a federally-enforced peace in Indian Country, and making treaties in particular, may “tell well in the newspapers, but are worse than useless to the Government.”

Such sentiments remained all too valid for federal relations with the Pawnee. Continued outrages (to use contemporary terminology) against Santa Fe caravans and the road commissioners sent to mark the official trail in 1826 belied the language of the 1818 and 1825 treaties that theoretically established federal territorial sovereignty over the region. Santa Fe road commissioner Benjamin Reeves suffered through repeated raids and complained to the War Department that unanswered Pawnee attacks set a dangerous precedent about the lack of federal power. Indian Department head Thomas McKenney concurred and ordered Clark to fix the situation. In “thus daring the power of the United States,” wrote McKenney, they need to “be held accountable and made to suffer for such outrages, if they do not immediately desist the practice of them, and cause demand to be made of the property taken, and to take such steps in regard to the irruptive disposition of this Tribe, as may be best calculated to produce a change in their practice of committing such acts for the future.”

Without restitution and punishment to hold the Pawnee accountable, federal power counted for nothing. In reality there was no federal power west of Fort Leavenworth.

Clark remained pessimistic about changing Pawnee behavior. Replying directly to Secretary of War Barbour he argued that little could be done as “Those Pawnees who inhabit the Country on the River Platte and those on the Red River [the Wichita, known as Pawnee Picts]

37 Josiah Snelling to Atkinson, May 30 and 31, 1827, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.
38 McKenney to Clark, May 30, 1826, in Clark to Barbour, July 12, 1826, LROIA: StLS, Roll 747.
have been in the habit of killing and robbing the Spaniards, both before and since the change of
Govt of Louisiana and occasionally robbing the traders between new Mexico and their
Settlements, as also the Kansas, Osages, and others.” Each reported incident was recorded and
official demands made of the Pawnee with “spirited remonstrances” by local agents. “The
Pawnees of Missouri, Osages, and Kansas have been frequently threatened,” Clark reported,
“and it is believed their depredations have been less frequent,” but he remained unconvinced of
any permanent changes. The best recourse, he suggested, was to buy off the Pawnee. Treaties
that exchanged “a discretionary annuity of guns, powder, and lead with an expressed
understanding, that all trade will be suspended with them, for violations of the stipulations, the
most salutary effect, may be produced in those as well as other Tribes, who are dependent upon
the articles furnished to them by Traders for their support.”

Federal power was so weak, the best plan was to pay protection money. Pawnee independence and Clark’s limited enforcement
capability meant that federal officials relied on the kind of treaty-making diplomacy that kept
producing ineffectual results. The contemplated bribes for good behavior merely fed Pawnee
power by supplying them with weapons more appropriate for continued warfare.

Adding to this state of affairs were the unclear jurisdictions of federal Indian officials.
John Dougherty succeeded Benjamin O’Fallon after the latter’s resignation due to poor health in
March 1827. Dougherty promptly moved the Upper Missouri Agency, responsible for the
Pawnee, Omaha, and Otoe, away from Council Bluffs. The sub agents for the Sioux and
Mandan, and any other nations higher up the Missouri, while technically within Dougherty’s
agency, reported directly to Clark in St. Louis, along with those for the Kansa, Delaware, and

39 Clark to Barbour, July 12, 1826, LROIA: StLS, Roll 747.
40 Bows and arrows remained the weapon of choice for hunting purposes. Guns were more difficult to reload and
aim while on horseback, and an arrow wound was more effective at eventually bringing down a bison than a bullet
wound. White, Roots of Dependency, 187, 376 f.n.25.
others gathered around Fort Leavenworth. As late as 1830, unclear lines of communication further complicated a jurisdictional mess already clouded by personal antipathies. The bureaucratic maneuvering even prompted Dougherty to write directly to the War Department claiming that Clark “evinced a disposition to curtail and take from, the rights and powers appertaining to that station [Upper Missouri Indian Agent],” and asking for “the authority properly belonging to my station.”

Within this context of bureaucratic wrangling, Dougherty and Clark had to work toward implementing the changes in Pawnee behavior. The growing political pressure of Santa Fe traders and the increased demands for speedy Indian removal emanating from Washington spurred action. Dougherty’s budget estimates for fiscal year 1828 reflected the growing importance of the Upper Missouri Agency as it encompassed a spending increase to $11,250 for gifts, staff including translators and blacksmiths, annuities, and other responsibilities to in effect buy peaceful relations. To focus on stabilizing Indian relations around the Platte-Missouri confluence, he advocated a partial pullback from higher up the Missouri. The sub agents there were too isolated and dependent on fur traders for supplies. Dougherty recommended using $1000 destined for the sub agents’ housing be reallocated to bribe the Pawnee into making peace with their Otoe, Omaha, Osage, and Kansa neighbors. It suggested a significant federal retreat from the upper Missouri if fully implemented. Clark approved of the peace plan. It fit within his grand strategy to settle affairs around Council Bluffs and Fort Leavenworth. Planning began for

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41 Dougherty to Clark, October 16, 1829, Clark to Eaton, no date (probably October 1829), Clark to Eaton, November 15, 1829, all in LROIA: UMA, Roll 883. In the comments for Dougherty’s budget estimates for 1828, Clark wrote the War Department that other than budgeting issues and supplies, matters best handled by Clark in St. Louis to reduce costs, the sub agents were to report to Dougherty. Dougherty and sub agents Richard Bean and John Sanford clashed professionally and personally. Secretary of War John Eaton finally settled the matter in Dougherty’s favor, but the back and forth remained one more distraction in an already overworked department.

42 Dougherty to Clark, “Estimate for Missouri Agency,” September 1, 1827, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
several treaty councils to be convened in the summer of 1828 to settle land disputes between the
Sioux, Omaha, Kansa, Otoe, Pawnee, Shawnee, Iowa, Sac and Fox.43

This small shift in funds was not enough to adequately cover the larger strategic needs of
the Agency. Between 1827 and 1831, the percentage of funds within the St. Louis
Superintendency allocated for the main agency around Council Bluffs, Bellevue, and Fort
Leavenworth fell from 51.5% to 38.8%. Money increasingly went toward the Sioux and Mandan
sub agencies. Clark estimated the needs of the whole Superintendency more than doubled in the
same period, from $89,000 in 1827 to $200,800 in 1830. The amount fell to $144,100 in 1831 as
the administration strove for fiscal economy and the demands of Removal drained resources and
attention from stabilizing the region north of Fort Leavenworth.44 Clark did not have the
resources to buy peace.

3.3 The Pawnee Homeland

Through the 1820s, the Pawnee built the preconditions of economic and military power
necessary to counter federal efforts to remake the diplomatic world of the Platte Valley. Pawnee
actions from the mid- to late-1820s reaffirmed their capabilities, though they faced increasingly
difficult challenges. For the Pawnee the political status quo at the start of 1828 was not ideal, but
appeared manageable given their recent history.

Mobility gave Pawnee warriors a strategic edge over their neighbors, especially the
horse-poor Sioux. Herds of around 8,000 horses gave the Pawnee flexibility to project power

43 Clark to Barbour, January 1, 1828, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748; Clark to Dougherty, October 12, 1827, LROIA:
UMA, Roll 883.
44 Collister, “An Early Stage in Decline,” 116.
through long-range raiding and trading, as well as a rapid response capability to any incursions of peripheral hunting grounds or core territory. The core territory produced sufficient food to maintain a population of around 10,000 people. The herds allowed for extensive hunting ranges to the west. These economic preconditions preserved the Pawnee as the dominant regional power at the close of the decade. They allowed Pawnee leaders to manage their regional geopolitics with some degree of flexibility.

Chiefs routinely complained about their young men as uncontrollable and eager to wage war, raid, and not listen to federal demands. But these remained convenient rhetorical tactics to deflect federal pressure while preserving Pawnee political culture and pathways to power for the next generation. Without combat experience or success on raids, a Pawnee man remained politically immature, a boy among men in the village without the proof of bravery necessary for political power. By decade’s close, the warriors and younger leaders who were labeled troublesome in 1819 and 1820 reached political maturity and assumed newly opened leadership positions. A generational shift in leadership began after the limited Pawnee-U.S. treaty of friendship signed in 1825. Older leaders who made the first connections with the United States were dead or dying: Sharitarish II of the Chaui was replaced by his younger brother Iskatape (Wicked Chief), Knife Chief, and Petalesharoo of the Skidi were last recorded in the 1825 treaty.

The younger leaders participated in the great raids into Mexico and wars against the Arapaho, and Kiowa in the early 1820s. After a century of conflict, the Chaui and Kitkahahki

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45 White, *Roots of Dependency*, 200.  
bands concluded a peace with the Arapaho in 1822 that gave the Pawnee freedom to range west against their Cheyenne enemies. Cheyenne captives provided sacrifices for the Morning Star religious ritual central to Pawnee cosmology. Renewed peace and alliance with the Comanche allowed for continued raiding south to Mexico. Great and Little Osage moves into the northern Oklahoma Pawnee hunting grounds in the 1810s remained a constant source of annoyance, but not enough to prevent a general peace between the groups in 1822. The Pawnee secured their southern borders and hunting grounds with at least neutral, if not friendly neighbors by mid-decade. This diplomacy allowed for a strategic pivot toward threats from the east and northeast.

Pressure on the Pawnee core territory mounted throughout the 1820s. With less buffer space on the eastern and northern borders, the Ponca, Arikara, Omaha, Otoe, and Kansa neighbors were a more direct threat. Meanwhile, the Oglala and Brulé Sioux pushed into the buffalo hunting grounds of the Platte drainage. This expansion largely confined itself to the loosely defined neutral grounds between rival Native American powers. These lands were generally too dangerous for anyone but war parties, which made them excellent hunting grounds and conduits of relatively safe passage for war and trading parties that wanted to bypass population centers. American pressure in the form of overhunting fueled by the fur trade and removal of tribes from the state of Missouri, squeezed the Kansa and Otoe along the Missouri River closer toward Pawnee land and into greater competition for resources.

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49 Even with the traders’ penchant for misidentifying Comanche, Kiowa, and Arapaho raiders as Pawnee, it is clear the Pawnee raids to Mexico and along the Santa Fe Trail continued with few impediments. Traders to Santa Fe reported that 2,000 Chauti and Kitkahahki warriors were on their way to meet their new friends the Comanche in June 1822, and presumably continued into Mexico. Pawnee raids into New Mexico prompted urgent pleas from Mexican authorities for federal officials to curtail the raids and effect a peace treaty. Hyde, *The Pawnee Indians*, 177-8; Vizcarra to McNair, September 8, 1823, in Clark to Calhoun, February 11, 1824, LROIA: StLS, Roll 747.  

The Pawnee homeland remained remarkably secure economically and socially despite the growing dangers at the margins. American explorers and agents dismissed Pawnee agriculture in part to emphasize the need for federal civilization efforts. Twenty years earlier, Zebulon Pike had observed that they only raised enough corn “to afford a little thickening to their soup.” But this claim ran counter to the reality that the “most industrious” Pawnee women “raise[d] an abundance of corn.”\textsuperscript{52} Conservative estimates from the late-1830s suggested over 400 acres in cultivation with annual yields of about 10,000 bushels of corn. Agricultural output, in conjunction with the all-important buffalo hunts, provided enough to sustain a population of around 10,000.\textsuperscript{53}

Economic autonomy further secured political cohesion. American trade with the Pawnee was limited in scope and value. Domination of trade by the chiefs limited the influence of alcohol through the 1820s with its attendant social problems, cycle of indebtedness to traders, and environmental collapse from overhunting.\textsuperscript{54}

In total, the Pawnee were economically and politically secure at the close of 1827. Their leadership was composed of younger, battle-tested men. Their military resources allowed them to project power up to a thousand miles from their homeland, and when united in a general confederacy, they fielded over 2,000 expert cavalrymen. The Pawnee were regional masters with a secure southern border and enough strength to match incursions from the east and north.

How the Pawnee used this power in the region was, from the perspective of Lucien Fontenelle who ran the American Fur Company outpost at Bellevue near present-day Omaha, nothing but “a continual stream of abuses.” In 1829, Fontenelle constructed a retrospective


\textsuperscript{53} White, \textit{Roots of Dependency}, 161-2, 368, f.n. 13 for an extended discussion of the sources; Collister, “An Early Stage in Decline,” 65-69.

\textsuperscript{54} White, \textit{Roots of Dependency}, 190-1; Samuel Allis, “Journal,” \textit{PML}, 152.
history of the previous decade that told the story of Pawnee power as one of Pawnee abuses. At Dougherty’s request, Fontenelle catalogued a series of robberies, murders, captive taking, raiding parties, and general insults from his own experiences going back to 1819. Such outrages resulted from Pawnee hubris, and according to Fontenelle:

It is my considered opinion that the Pawnis knowing themselves to be a powerfull tribe, have for a long time past been under the firm belief, that no American force that could be sent against them could in the least, injure or molest them. They have often said publickly and in my presence, that no combined force could frighten them. All these threats are verified by their continuing hostility against American citizens travelling on the road leading to Santa Fee as well as on those who enter the Upper Missouri.

Fontenelle made no distinction between acts of economic or political violence, as all these outrages were insulting to the American flag and sovereignty, as well as treaty violations. No acts of kindness could bring them into submission, only force. In Fontenelle’s telling, a Pawnee war party attacked Stephen Long’s expedition in 1819. “They entered the camp, pulled down an American flag which was then flying at the major’s tent, trampled it and cut it to pieces,” to remind the interlopers who controlled the territory through which they travelled. Even after more consistent relations were established an officer of the 6th Regiment at Fort Atkinson pursuing deserters was “shamefully treated” and temporarily kept in confinement in 1824. Travelers along the Santa Fe Trail, supposedly protected by federal agreements with the Pawnee, were more often than not subjected to detentions and demands for payment.55

Pawnee leaders held little regard for American military power. Fontenelle recalled that in 1824, “I heard myself the Pawnis observe that they would be happy to meet them [Americans] in a fight to show them that the Americans could be used up like buffaloes in a chase.”56 They had

55 Lucien Fontenelle to Dougherty, February 26, 1829, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
56 Fontenelle to Dougherty, February 26, 1829, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
a point. The Pawnee could literally ride circles around American infantry and outnumbered garrisons at Fort Atkinson and Fort Leavenworth by anywhere between four and six to one.

What Fontenelle did not understand was the rationale behind these incidents as tools of Pawnee foreign policy and revenue extraction within an intertwined political and religious cosmology. For Pawnee leaders, the Santa Fe Trail operated as a source of revenue and military supplies. Each trader who entered Pawnee country was liable to what amounted to a licensing fee of gifts in tobacco, goods, horses, or in more extreme cases all of a trader’s merchandize and even his life. As horses, guns, and ammunition were the most common articles taken it is clear that Pawnee raiders viewed Americans as a vital source of weaponry. One raiding party leader declared, “that it was nothing to rob white men, they were such cowards and dogs.”57 Americans were not worthy men, capable of bearing arms and acting the part of warriors.

Appropriating the cultural and physical power of interloping whites fit within a Pawnee cosmology of assimilating power objects. A village leader flogged a resident American as punishment for several Pawnee dying of disease in 1825. From the Pawnee perspective, this was part of a larger regulatory system that asserted chiefly control over supernatural forces and physical objects. Taxing trade and regulating travel across Pawnee lands represented the foreign policy extension of a cosmological imperative to maintain spiritual order of all things, forces, and people.58

Central to this cosmology was the Morning Star sacrificial ritual that revitalized the earth and maintained the balance of supernatural forces that protected the Pawnee and provided fertility through human sacrifice.59 Federal officials tried desperately to eradicate the practice

57 Fontenelle to Dougherty, February 26, 1829, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
58 White, Roots of Dependency, 172-173.
59 The ritual featured the sacrifice of a captive girl, though occasionally it seems a boy would suffice. The captive was treated well for a year in preparation for the rite. In Pawnee origin stories, the Morning Star (Mars, male, light)
from the 1810s through the 1830s. On April 3, 1827, Dougherty received word from traders that
the Pawnee intended to sacrifice a captive Cheyenne woman. Dougherty, his Sub Agent Captain
George Kennerly, three other officers and a small detachment of troops immediately tried to
secure her release. Upon their arrival at the Skidi village, Dougherty demanded the captive.
“After some long deliberations from the part of the Indians and some presents were made to
them by the Agent, they agreed that the prisoner should be sent in . . . by some of their own
people and delivered to the whites,” according to the report by Lucien Fontenelle. What ensued,
however, was a horrifying scene of bloodletting. As the captive was being exchanged, “some 8
or 10 Pawnis prepared for the act, rushed on them, killed the woman and cut the body into pieces
in presence of the party.” No Americans were injured, “but the act itself, taken in proper light
and as the Indians themselves would take it, was in my opinion and not less in theirs a great
insult to the American government.”60 It was a visually appalling scene. That it occurred after
federal agents supposedly reached a diplomatic resolution offered a stunning reminder of the
limited ability to alter foundational Pawnee culture.

The general impotence of federal officials to enforce treaty provisions or obtain the
surrender of accused criminals only reinforced Pawnee perceptions of their own power. News of
war parties in the fall of 1828 made U.S. officials nervous about a possible rupture in relations
and increased raiding. The best Dougherty could do, however, was order Sub Agent R. P.

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was in opposition to the Evening Star (Venus, female, dark) and by the former’s sexual conquest of the latter, the
first woman was born on Earth. The sacrifice was to return the first woman to the sky power of the Morning Star to
ensure continued protection and fertility through a balance of light and dark forces. According to Hyde, this was a
custom more common to the Skidi, but White is more convinced of the pervasiveness of the practice, which also
seems to have occurred among the Arikara. If so, this cultural commonality helps explain the close alliance between
the two groups in the face of Sioux expansion in 1832 as more than just one of political expediency. The practice
was waning by the 1820s, as some Pawnee leaders like Petalesharoo gained fame among Americans for intervening
to stop the sacrifices. White, Roots of Dependency, 172; Hyde, The Pawnee Indians, 157-61. The transit of Venus
through the Pleiades would occur again in 1828, on its continuous eight-year cycle, perhaps lending some increased
urgency to the ceremony in 1827, as it prefigured a major event of cyclical continuity.

60 Fontenelle to R. P. Beauchamp, March 12, 1829, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
Beauchamp to “read to the nation the treaty (a copy of which is furnished you) concluded at Council Bluffs on the 30\textsuperscript{th} Sept. 1825 and inform them that the Government is fully apprised of their frequent violation of that instrument.” Dougherty cautioned him that, “should you ascertain . . . that there would be too much hazard in visiting the villages you will employ such men and interpreters who are the habits of intercourse with them,” or failing “to procure such suitable white men to send to the villages, you will employ the most competent Indians of the Otoes or Omahaws for that purpose.”\textsuperscript{61} If the agents responsible for the Pawnee dared not travel to Pawnee lands there was little hope of enforcing treaty provisions or changing Pawnee behavior.

Clark was not surprised by the state of affairs. After 100 horses and mules were stolen along the Santa Fe Trail, he lamented that the Pawnee “have conducted themselves badly since the troops left the Council Bluffs. The Ricaras [Arikara], are restless and presumptuous. Our neighboring tribes conduct themselves as usual.”\textsuperscript{62} The violence deeply troubled him, but Clark still held hopes for a regional peace. A proposed council with the Pawnee, Kansa, Osage, Otoe, and Iowa at Council Bluffs in May 1828 offered a last-ditch effort to settle the inter-tribal conflicts and limit Pawnee power prior to the arrival of a large group of Native Americans being removed west.

3.4 Removal and the Pawnee Creation of Indian Territory

Pressure to relocated Eastern nations grew as the decade ended. Increasing numbers of U.S.-sponsored delegations arrived to view potential resettlement areas around Fort Leavenworth. Pressure from U.S. officials only exacerbated the situation. The region was still a

\textsuperscript{61} Dougherty to Beauchamp, February 20, 1829, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.

\textsuperscript{62} Clark to McKenney, February 25, 1828, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.
conflict zone dominated by the Pawnee. Whatever Clark’s intentions to form a neighborhood, Pawnee policy and military power determined where Indian Territory would become reality.

Clark grew increasingly worried about the prospects for successful Removal, even as he was dogged by Washington’s incessant drive for economy. Clark had a limited budget to support those being forced into the West. He paid out $7,373.74 beyond the allotted funds in 1827 to support those who arrived at the Mississippi River in near starving condition. Clark’s conservative estimate for 1828 Removal costs required $28,334, or about 20% of his entire budget, not counting peace negotiations, annuities, or other expenses.\(^{63}\) Superintendent of Indian Affairs Thomas McKenney warned that the Department’s contingency funds could no longer bear the increased demands for the cost of emigration and that Congress remained unwilling to make to requisite appropriations.\(^{64}\) Washington’s ignorance of the costs of Removal in human and monetary terms exacerbated the difficulties Clark already faced in resettling thousands of Native Americans. Despite witnessing the suffering of forced migrations, Clark believed removal on the whole benefited Native Americans and continued implementing the policy.

Clark and McKenney’s correspondence served as a reminder that Removal did not begin with Jackson’s annual message, let alone the Removal Act of 1830. The federal government had already designated the fringes of Pawnee territory as a dumping ground for Native Americans located on both sides of the Mississippi River.

Aside from concerns about the growing inhumanity of the situation, such cheapness on the part of the government threatened frontier security. “My situation will be rendered more unpleasant when I have numbers of Indians depending upon me (as is always the case) for food

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\(^{63}\) Clark to Barbour, January 1, 1828, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748; Clark to Barbour, October 20, 1827, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.

\(^{64}\) McKenney quoted in Clark to McKenney, January 20, 1828, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.
and other assistance; without my having the means of affording them any,” Clark warned.

“Numerous complaints may be expected,” that would create “encreased difficulties . . . between the Indians and white people.” The consequences of an inhumane approach based on Washington’s penny-pinching undermined federal authority and credibility. He asked McKenney about how to answer to those who left their homes based on federal promises of support only to be told, “no assistance can be afforded you; you must go to the country assigned you west of the Missouri, and do the best you can.” What would those people feel “on receiving such language from the Agent of a Government which they may have considered just and humane,” asked Clark.\(^65\) Without assistance, these people could not act as a civilized buffer of Indian Territory alongside the American frontier. Poverty and desperation would create a neighborhood of theft, raiding, and violence perpetrated against white Americans, and would leave the removed nations vulnerable to attacks by their powerful neighbors. If the United States fulfilled obligations as the guarantor of security for the removed people, it would be embroiled in inter-Indian conflicts and damage claims from settlers and traders.

By April 1828, Clark was negotiating with the Kickapoo and Delaware of Missouri about exchanging lands within the state for new ones in the vicinity of Fort Leavenworth. The Shawnees of Ohio were already on the move toward the Kansas River.\(^66\) This was the ideal fruition of Clark’s strategy: civilized, centralized nations living in settled communities close to military and federal government control. They would also be outside state boundaries as a buffer between the U.S. frontier settlements and potentially more hostile neighbors.

The continued violence in the region between the Pawnee and their neighbors, however, halted the Delaware relocation already in progress. Chief William Anderson expressed great

\(^{65}\) Clark to McKenney, January 20, 1828, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.

\(^{66}\) Clark to McKenney, April 1, 1828, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.
reluctance about moving to the middle of a potential six-way war between the Osage, Otoe, Omaha, Iowa, Kansa, and Pawnee. After viewing the lands Clark offered along the Kansas River, the Delaware delegation instead requested a ten-square mile plot on the eastern side of the Missouri line running south of the mouth of the Kansas River. Residing within Missouri afforded more protection from hostile neighbors.67

Peace among the regional powers first had to be obtained prior to settling new arrivals. Dougherty and Clark recommended a departmental shift toward the Pawnee as the regional key to stability, an act to be accomplished through increased gifts, if not outright bribes for good behavior.68 By May 1828, Clark’s anticipated regional peace conference was taking shape at the Council Bluffs Agency near the recently abandoned Fort Atkinson. Representatives from all the warring groups arrived except the Osage, whose agent failed to invite them. After several weeks of negotiations Dougherty reported a breakthrough agreement between the Pawnee, Omaha, Otoe, Kansa, Iowa, Sac, and Shawnee. The Ponca attended, but did not sign in the absence of their chief. The council left Dougherty optimistic about frontier Indian relations as he “never saw more if as much good feeling and friendship exhibited as was by all the contracting parties . . . Peace as you know is very uncertain between all nations and particularly Indians, but I must be allowed to say it is my firm belief that the one this day concluded will be of some considerable duration.” Most importantly for the future plans, Dougherty reported to Clark back

67 William Anderson to Clark, August 18, 1827; Anderson to Clark, February 29, 1828; Speech of Anderson to Clark, February 22, 1828; Anderson to Clark, Private Speech, attached to February 22, 1828, all in LROIA: StLS, Roll 748. Anderson more often than not referred to Clark as his brother, which was atypical for Native American leaders and reflected perhaps both his white heritage which made he and Clark more equal, as well as his understanding of their relative political status. The requests also included provisions to build fields and fences, hunting access to white lands, land for their current government blacksmith to relocate with them, provisions for land and/or annuities for the mixed white and Delaware people, compensation for giving up lead-bearing lands along White River, secret annuity payments for Anderson and all his children, and a warning that more requests would arrive as they were thought of.
68 Clark to Barbour, January 1, 1828, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.
in St. Louis that “All the Indians in council seemed to be much pleased with the Shawnees,” and that the “Shawnees also appear to be well pleased with their neighbors generally.”

The leaders present evinced a dramatic change of mind regarding federal involvement in settling the region. Ongpatonga of the Omaha expressed a newfound willingness to settle and civilize according to American customs. He blamed traders for encouraging a nomadic lifestyle, but that “now that I have seen how those live in your neighborhood (meaning Shawnees) I have determined to establish myself and if possible cultivate the soil and collect all kinds of domestic animals around me . . . and I have now determined to exert myself and by and with his assistance am in hopes we will one day live in abundance.” With such sentiments among the leaders, Dougherty and Clark could afford to be hopeful about the resettlement plans for the Delaware, Choctaw, and Chickasaw underway for 1829 and 1830.

Negotiations between the eight signatory nations effectively secured a regional peace from the area north and west of Fort Leavenworth, through Pawnee territory in at least the eastern half of Nebraska, and well into Iowa. It theoretically secured the entire northern flank of a new Indian Territory from hostilities toward new arrivals.

With a regional peace concluded, Clark turned toward the regulation of Indian Country to assert American sovereignty through policing. Clark lamented the historic lack of federal power to police Indian Country. He argued that asserting effective control therefore required “a

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69 Dougherty to Clark, June 23, 1828, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
70 Ongpatonga speech to Dougherty, June 24, 1828, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
71 Indian Intercourse Acts were continuations of the regulations from the colonial and Confederation periods. The first federal act of July 22, 1790 regulated commerce and boundaries to limit the bad influence of unchecked traders who might spark an Indian war or introduce alcohol. Subsequent acts of 1793, 1796, 1799, 1802, and 1834 increased the detail of boundaries, licensing provisions for traders, and penalties, giving the army authority to act a police force and remove illegal traders and settlers. In theory the federal government assumed regulatory authority over unincorporated Indian country beyond the frontier line. In practice, federal authorities were too few and too scattered to have much practical effect and were routinely hampered by local courts and officials with interests in Indian trade or other illegal activity like lead mining or logging. The result was an ad hoc exercise of federal
general system of regulations similar to those which govern the administration of the several branches of the military service." Negotiate a peace. Enforce it, and federal sovereignty more broadly, through military power.

Such an argument for the militarization of Indian Country harkened back to the failed strategy of 1819-1827 at Fort Atkinson. Yet the combination of a regional peace with a new fort and the neighborhood strategy of the consolidated, removed nations offered hope for the creation of Indian Territory under a strict federal administrative system. More direct military administration would give agents increased power to enforce federal policy without resort to the cajoling and bribery that brought such limited success.

Developing Fort Leavenworth as an administrative hub remained key to this policy. The Kansa, Iowa, and Shawnee living near the fort visited frequently, which constantly drained the budget for presents. Dougherty estimated that 8,684 warriors and 43,420 total Native Americans lived within his agency. With only $5000 for presents, or roughly 11.5 cents per person, “the amount of presents from the government for the Indians of Missouri goes but a little way towards giving them a support . . . or leave a favourable impression.” Nor could he rely on the architecture of state power to impress Indians. He complained to Clark and the War Department in October 1828 that “I have been for the last 12 months living in a cabin 18 feet long . . . and 6 ½ feet high thrown up in a hurry by the troops and that too of the roughest kind of logs, clapboard and puncheons.” Such a hut hardly showed the state power needed for the direct control Clark envisioned.

sovereignty that caused resentments from both Indians and local whites for being either too ineffective or overzealous in the application of the laws. Satz, American Indian Policy, 46-7, 132-145.
72 Clark to Peter B. Porter, August 27, 1828, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.
73 Dougherty, Remarks in Yearly Estimate for 1829, in Clark to Porter, October 10, 1828, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748. Combined with annuities, an estimated $30,000 necessary to support relocating Native Americans, and requisitions for more buildings and operating expenses, Clark submitted a $210,352 budget request for fiscal year 1829, double
Impressing visitors assumed new importance in the fall of 1828 as Ottawa, Pottawatomie, Creek, Chickasaw, and Choctaw delegations arrived at Fort Leavenworth to scout for new territories. Clark had a short window to sell the scouts on the land that fall before winter, the spring floods, summer heat, and oppressive flies negated any favorable impressions. Initial plans to locate tribes along the Kansas River met with some skepticism. Despite finding the land “generally a high rolling country exhibiting a healthy appearance, stone, and almost universally limestone sufficiently abundant for use,” Isaac McCoy, who accompanied one delegation, noted that the creeks failed in the dry season and “wood is too scarce, especially beyond the distance of 60 miles west of this state and ten miles south of Kanzas river.” The last point deeply troubled Ottawa and Pottawatomie representatives. Like federal officials, these Eastern people had difficulty seeing the potential of prairies as healthy or useable land.

The landscape soon became the least of Clark’s problems. While McCoy reported friendly encounters with the Osage, Kansa, Shawnee, and Pawnee the situation deteriorated rapidly as November approached. An express from Dougherty at Fort Leavenworth warned that Pawnee conduct was becoming “more and more outrageous.” Direct insults to federal sovereignty like “flagellating and otherwise cruelly treating several of our licensed traders,” as well as “murdering and pillaging the Santa Fe Merchants on the United States road to New Mexico,” violated the 1825 treaty and mocked federal claims to protection of the Santa Fe Trail. More alarming, Chaui and Skidi warriors showed signs of preparation for all-out war with the United States.

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the previous amount expended within the Superintendency. The amount reflected the growing importance of the region and the costs of creating an Indian Territory under more direct federal control.

74 Clark to McKenney, August 21, 1828, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.
75 McCoy to Clark, October 7, 1828, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.
76 Dougherty to Clark, November 4, 1828, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.
77 George Hyde discounts this event as one of mistaken identity or mistaken intent. Either the Pawnee in question were actually confused for Comanche, Kiowa, or a strange band, or Dougherty got bad information about the intent.
A clerk of the American Fur Company at the Pawnee villages reported that the Chaui and Skidi left their villages en masse on October 20. Their 1,500 mounted warriors outnumbered any American force west of the Mississippi, had a two-week head start, and could out maneuver any river-based American infantry sent to respond. They rode for the Santa Fe Trail, according to witnesses, “publicly declaring their determination to rob and murder every white man who should have the misfortune to fall into their power . . . One of their distinguished War Chiefs proclaimed, on leaving his village, that the Santa Fe road should henceforth become a home to himself and band; for the purpose of plunder.” Clark’s achievements for 1828 appeared to be for naught. For Dougherty, this movement resulted from an indulgent policy of forbearance. “The frontier settlements from Red River to this place presents a wide and open field for their depredations,” he further warned, “and I am sorry to say that I fear they will avail themselves of every opportunity to take the lives and property of all they may meet.” Even warnings about federal power and retribution from the resident traders held little sway. The Pawnee “still hold great confidence in their own strength believing themselves to be more numerous warlike and brave than any other nation on earth,” and “say they would rejoice to see [Americans] arrayed against them – that they were able to run them down like Buffaloe in the Prairie.” Here was the nightmare scenario for the Indian Department: a hostile force able to outfight any immediate military detachment and willing to challenge American sovereignty, trade, and frontier settlers.78

The worst fears of an Indian war subsided as the Pawnee refrained from movements against the U.S. frontier, but the damage to Clark’s vision for Indian Territory was considerable.

78 Dougherty to Clark, November 4, 1828, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.
While escorting the Choctaw and Chickasaw delegation near the Kansas River, Sub Agent George Kennerly received a warning from Dougherty who advised them to be on guard “or you may loose your horses – and perhaps your scalps. Let no ponies approach your camp, under any circumstances.”79 This was a dire warning.

The news placed Kennerly in a difficult position as the leader of the delegation. The government expected him to sell the region and the favorability of removing there to the Choctaw and Chickasaw. Kennerly was also deeply aware “that the eyes of the nation is fixed on me,” to conclude the business safely. He was at a loss for the correct course of action. If he reported the message to his party, Kennerly “was confident they would have returned without examining any of the country west . . . Those people are naturally timid, and I have had great difficulty in persuading them to pass through even the Osage Country.” In consultations with his colleagues, Kennerly decided to confine their route close to the state lines of Missouri and Arkansas. “After examining the country between the Osages and Kansas,” he reported, “I will pursue a course down the Neosho by the way of the Osage Villages and Agency to the Fort Gibson, after which we will examine as much of the country on the Canadian Fork and I think we can do in safety.”80 This was a dramatic change in plans from those Clark envisioned.

The Pawnee effectively closed off the entire region around the Platte and Kansas to immigrating Indians. Unlike the smaller nations easily relocated in the vicinity of Leavenworth, the federal government determined it needed far more space for the larger groups moving from Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. By steering the party south and west, the Pawnee effectively

79 Dougherty to George Kennerly, “Express Received November 8, 1828,” in Kennerly to Clark, November 9, 1828, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.
80 Kennerly to Clark, November 9, 1828, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.
determined that the lands that became Indian Territory would not be where Clark envisioned near Fort Leavenworth, but in the future state of Oklahoma.

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact purpose of the Pawnee movement that fall. Veteran traders and officials familiar with the cycles of Pawnee movements would not have mistaken a hunting expedition. If the statements about Pawnee intentions were accurate and not a hyperbolic reaction to years of smaller Pawnee acts of hostility, then it is possible that Pawnee leaders intended to scare off potential immigrants through a demonstration of their military capabilities. At this moment the Pawnee were at the height of their power with younger militaristic leaders, a strong economic and social base at home, and a commanding sense of military and diplomatic superiority at the margins of their territory. Why not project that power?

Pawnee threats to close down the proposed relocation areas remained persistent through 1830. Surveying for the Delaware lands south of the Platte in August, Baptist missionary turned federal Indian official Isaac McCoy complained of the Army’s unwillingness to provide him a sufficient escort as “[General Henry] Atkinson, and every one else in this country knew that not a year for several years had passed, in which those Pawnees did not kill, and rob, and otherwise abuse, more or fewer of the citizens of the U. States who happened to fall into their hands.”

McCoy so feared Pawnee attack that he could not understand the reluctance to properly arm and escort his party, complaining in his journal of “Clark's neglect of duty, and Atkinson's foolish & wicked orders, and [Major William – who initially refused the escort] Davenport's childishness.” McCoy was right to worry. His party was trying to operate amidst a war zone.

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Though hard pressed by the new arrivals and the expanding Sioux, at the close the 1820s the Pawnee were shaping the course of Removal policy. This ability relied on two foundations. One, that the Pawnee could maintain the ability to project power. Two, that the core strength of their home territory and population could sustain the losses of protracted wars while reacting to new crises along their borders and at home. This was increasingly difficult by 1830 as military demands only increased.

3.5 Pawnee Strategic Recalibrations

Strains on Pawnee military power and increasingly fraught foreign affairs pushed the nation toward a recalibration of its relations with the federal government. This was not a capitulation by any means. Efforts to secure better access to weapons, avenues for diplomacy, and perhaps an alliance against the Sioux were about strengthening Pawnee independence. A smallpox outbreak forced the Pawnee hand and made the reset all the more urgent.

By the summer of 1829, warfare was again the norm within the territory surrounding the Pawnee. Violence among the Sioux and the Sac and Fox on the Upper Mississippi was matched by renewed war between the Pawnee and the Osage, Kansa, and Delaware with occasional deaths on all sides. Despite this unsettled state of affairs, Clark faced drastic budget cuts and unfunded mandates from the newly established Jackson administration. Without funds to buy peace or exert military control the United States had few viable alternatives except encouraging

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83 The Jackson administration began its tenure with a fundamental ignorance about the costs of western Indian affairs. Secretary of War John Eaton’s push for economy of spending in the superintendency “to the lowest possible amount, consistently with the Treaty obligations of the Government” left Clark without sufficient funds to run his department and forced him to issue drafts for the remainder, hoping for later Congressional appropriations and reimbursement. Eaton to Clark, March 10, 1829, LROIA: StLS, Roll 749.; Clark to Eaton, April 8, 1829, LROIA: StLS, Roll 749.
the continuation of inter-tribal war and hope that the exhausted victors would be too weak to resist federal policy. “A combination between the Shawnees, Delawares, Osages, and Kansas is in contemplation for the purpose of attacking the Pania and forcing them to terms,” reported Clark to his superiors, “and I am inclined to believe it would not be good policy to stop them in the present state of our relations with these Tribes.” Clark wanted to let the Indians kill each other. It was a dramatic reversal of policy given the effort expended for regional peace. But it fit within Clark’s overall goal of settling Native American disputes once and for all and merely repeated his strategy from the War of 1812. It was a cold and brutal calculation.

The strategy apparently worked. Nations south of the Platte encroached even more into Pawnee territory. Pawnee forces fought several battles to protect their hunting parties and defend against raiders. A visit by Dougherty to the Skidi and Pitahawirata villages on October 13, 1829 revealed that most of the warriors were absent on campaigns. After demanding their compliance with treaty obligations, Dougherty reported that “They all professed a friendly feeling for the whites, denied having committed any mischief themselves, threw the blame on their inconsiderate young men; and declared their inability to prevent a recurrence of such deeds; but promised to exert themselves to do so.” It was a familiar trope that shifted blame from the leadership to the impetuous young warriors. The chiefs also requested a resident agent “in order to advise their young men frequently; which they thought, would have the effect to prevent them from injuring our traders.” It was a request Dougherty understood to be motivated more by a desire for gifts, but it signaled a new course in Pawnee policy. A similar interest in acquiring a blacksmith, primarily to mend guns, and a government-employed farmer marked a new era of Pawnee strategic thinking.  

84 Clark to Eaton, August 18, 1829, LROIA: StLS, Roll 749.  
85 Dougherty to Clark, October 26, 1829, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
Why this reversal and eagerness to bring federal officials and workers into the heart of Pawnee territory? The Pawnee needed help both militarily and economically. Wars stretched their military power thin by the end of 1829 and several military setbacks may have forced the change in strategy. Osage warriors reported victories as the year ended, including one battle on the upper Arkansas River in which they surprised a camp of Pawnee and killed 80-90 men, women, and children, stole as many horses, and took at least 5 captives. The Osage boasted “they had shed more Pawnee blood than in any fight since they had known the tribe.”86 Such an attack showed Pawnee inability to protect what they considered core territory.

The request for a resident agent, blacksmith, and farmer represented a strategic reassessment rather than an admission of defeat on the part of the Pawnee. To federal officials, this was a step toward the cultural imperialism of civilizing a savage tribe. But if viewed as part of the Pawnee political cosmology surrounding power bundles and chiefly authority, such a request may have had the opposite effect and enhanced the power of Pawnee chiefs. By adapting outsider knowledge within Pawnee society, the chiefs were taking what they wanted for their own purposes.87 Sacred objects and the knowledge to manipulate them constituted “earthly reservoirs of a power which enabled [chiefs] to be the fathers and protectors of their children, the people.”88 Through direct access to the federal political and material world, Pawnee chiefs could bring different forces into a knowable and exploitable system. By making this request Pawnee leaders signaled their willingness to adapt to preserve their current social and political system at a time of military stress. Both federal and Pawnee interpretations could be true at the same time.

86 Hyde, The Pawnee Indians, 179.
87 White, Roots of Dependency, 172-3.
88 Holder, The Hoe and the Horse on the Plains, 44.
Yet for all the Pawnee ambitions, Dougherty saw the requests as an opportunity to contain Pawnee power. He lamented the ineffectiveness of previous government reform programs after a decade of work in the region as “they continue in the same aboriginal condition in which our government found them – of the mechanical arts; they know nothing – of agriculture nothing more, than they have possessed . . . as to ‘education’ there is not a single Indian man, woman, or child . . . from the head of the Missouri to the mouth of the Kanzas river, that knows one letter from another.”

The requests also signaled an opportunity to rebuild the regional peace efforts. A planned council at Prairie du Chien [Fort Crawford] on the Mississippi for the summer of 1830 tapped into the war-weariness of the region. Clark counted on the council to effect “a lasting peace between contending tribes of the Mississippi and Missouri, there will be something definite acted upon in relation to their hunting lands on the Missouri, and to the line and boundaries of the different nations.”

Fixing boundary lines took on new urgency. Delaware and Kickapoo leaders anxiously awaited final settlements of land claims and payments in order to undertake their move out of Missouri. Yet the superintendency remained underfunded thanks to Congressional parsimony. Supplies of medals, flags, and other trappings of chiefly status prevented Clark from developing effective relationships with Native American leaders. “As to funds,” Clark complained to the War Department, “I must do the best I can upon my own credit, as Congress has neglected to make the appropriations which are necessary and which are daily required.”

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89 Dougherty to McKenney, January 30, 1830, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
90 Clark to Dougherty, April 25, 1830, LROIA: StLS, Roll 749. The Sioux and Menominee war against the Sac and Fox along the Upper Mississippi was one more military distraction from Clark’s efforts at Removal. The conflict also had repercussions for the Missouri Valley as the Sac and Fox were also at war with the Otoe and Omaha.
91 Clark to Eaton, February 22, 1830, LROIA: StLS, Roll 749. George Vashon, the Delaware Indian Agent conducted additional councils with the Weas, Peorias, and Crooked Creek Shawnees, all of whom were eager to move provided they received government compensation and assistance, as the prior settlement of the Delaware. George Vashon to Clark, October 29, 1829, LROIA: StLS, Roll 749.
92 Clark to McKenney, August 6, 1830, LROIA: StLS, Roll 749.
itself was in no condition for new arrivals. The Kansa were in the midst of a civil war and only the quick actions of their agent prevented an all-out battle at the agency itself. The Pawnee-Osage war continued unabated around the Kansas and Arkansas rivers. To the west, Pawnee and Cheyenne forces continued to exchange blows.

January 1831 arrived with little visible progress by either federal officials who sought to stabilize the neighborhood around Fort Leavenworth or by the regional powers who sought to settle their differences. A despondent Clark sought instructions, complaining of the lack of funds, confusing jurisdictional lines, multiple unfulfilled treaty obligations, and the fear of losing American influence to the British on the Upper Missouri. For its part, the War Department continued the economy drive initiated in 1829 by shuttering sub agencies and laying off staff.

Clark and Dougherty used the moment to reframe the strategic necessity of a robust, militarized Indian policy of containment over independent nations like the Pawnee. Lack of force plagued all the prior efforts to organize an Indian Territory in the neighborhood of Fort Leavenworth. Referring to the Pawnee and other nations of the Upper Missouri, Dougherty

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93 Marston Clark to William Clark, July 28, 1830, LROIA: StLS, Roll 749. Marston Clark reported that the rival factions were under competing interests from the traders, whom he viewed as a pernicious influence. Annuity disbursements brought the rivals together, which precipitated an armed standoff as both sides arrayed for battle. Only Marston Clark’s swift action of literally placing himself between the battle lines and warning of the dire consequences of federal military retribution should he be killed staved off the fight.


95 Clark to Eaton, January 17 and 22, 1831, LROIA: StLS, Roll 749. Clark remained ever watchful of British intentions on the Upper Missouri fearful of the loss of American control and territory as well as the dangers to traders. So little federal authority existed beyond Council Bluffs that murders of traders went unpunished. Clark had little power of redress or capability to punish the offenders, a point he viewed as symptomatic of a disorganized Indian policy in general and particularly dangerous as the appearance of impotent authority only encouraged hostility and British influence.

96 Clark to Eaton, January 31, 1831, LROIA: StLS, Roll 749; Dougherty to Eaton, March 11, 1831, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883. Dougherty advocated a far more radical approach with the general abandonment of the Upper Missouri and the reduction of four sub agents from the Upper Missouri agency. The tribes closest to the frontier line were smaller, more assimilated to white norms, and easily controlled by the military. Those far up the river were too independent and hostile to listen to an agent without a strong military force. Eliminating those sub agents, of course, made Dougherty’s position all the more important. Clark was far less draconian, advocating fewer reductions and more shifting of resources and personnel from older, less important positions to new locations further west, following the movement of removed tribes. Sub Agent John Sanford strongly urged against any reduction on the Upper Missouri, writing in his budget estimate that his position was in the midst of eight distinct Indian nations,
advised Secretary of War Eaton that “from their known and predatory characters, these tribes would but little regard any treaty you might make with them, unless restrained by a military force in their neighborhood without which, I am of opinion it would be useless, if not impracticable to make treaties with any of these tribes.” Federal strategy required a shift in focus from the Upper Missouri to the Santa Fe Trail. There, a new fort at the head of the Arkansas could extend federal influence to the southwest, check hostile tribes, protect the trade route, and partly guard against Comanche and Kiowa raids.97

Central to Dougherty’s strategic outlook was a reliance on the Chaui to act as an entrée for agents and military representatives along the Arkansas, using their summer hunt to open communications with the Comanche, Kiowa, and Arapaho. The documentary record provides no indication of whether the Chaui themselves or Pawnee as a whole approved of these measures, but Dougherty’s confidence suggests that relations with at least the Chaui were improving at the start of 1831. This may have been part of the Pawnee strategic shift, in addition to their requests for a resident agent, blacksmiths, and farmers.

For the Pawnee, 1831 held the promise of better regional relations after beating back Cheyenne incursions. With the Sioux occupied by their war with the Sac and Fox, and still kept partially at bay by the Pawnee’s eastern neighbors, only occasional Sioux hunting parties threatened the Platte Valley.98 The Pawnee maintained a precarious balance of power here. With requests for blacksmiths, farmers, and better relations with the United States as yet unfulfilled, Pawnee leaders defended the status quo. Any major disruption would throw off the

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97 Dougherty to Eaton, March 11, 1831, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
balance and bring the dual disaster of a political existential crisis and cultural disorder suggesting the chiefs lacked control of the spiritual world.

By the end of summer all hopes for an improved situation disappeared as smallpox took hold in Pawnee territory. A Pawnee party recently returned from the Santa Fe Trail brought the virus with them after contracting it from the traders. Missionary Isaac McCoy reported from the region that the epidemic was a deliberate case of germ warfare, insisting that the traders packed smallpox with them to lace trade goods and gifts for any “troublesome” Indians. Regardless of the accuracy of McCoy’s report, the net result remained the same: nearly apocalyptic devastation with perhaps 4,000 dead by the end of the year.

Dougherty visited the Pawnee in October and found them in a deplorable condition. He struggled to find words for the misery he saw. “I am fully persuaded that one half the whole number of souls of each village have and will be carried off . . . not one under 33 years of age, escape the monstrous disease,” he reported. Smallpox last appeared around 1800, leaving a large segment of the population without immunity from previous exposure. The Pawnee were dying so fast and in such large numbers “that they had ceased to bury their dead.” He saw bodies in

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99 Previous smallpox and measles epidemics occurred in 1750, 1790, and around 1800, each time the population recovered rapidly. White, *Roots of Dependency*, 154-5; Hyde, *The Pawnee Indians*, 181; Barbara Alice Mann, *The Tainted Gift: The Disease Method of Frontier Expansion* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2009), 49; Isaac McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions: Embracing Remarks on the Former and Present Condition of the Aboriginal Tribes, their Settlement within the Indian Territory, and their Future Prospects* (Washington: W.M. Morrison; New York: H. and S. Rayner, 1840), 441-443. Considering that traders often shot dead any Pawnee approaching their caravans, as they did to a chief in 1831 or 1832, letting a group of Pawnee visit the traders’ camp suggests a deliberate effort to bring the Pawnee close enough to infect. McCoy claimed that a young man “of veracity” and a member of the trading party gave him a certificate attesting to the events and the cause of the outbreak. There is no corroborating testimony, but McCoy wrote directly to President Andrew Jackson with the claim, suggesting he believed it. Whether the outbreak was deliberate or accidental is almost a moot point, the effect was the same.

100 McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, 443. After witnessing the devastation, McCoy joined a chorus of regional Indian officials in lobbying for a vaccination program. Considerable sectional and partisan resistance to the measure revealed a prevalent attitude that epidemics were a beneficial tool of expansion and just rewards for those Missouri’s Senator Alexander Buckner labeled “our natural enemies.” Eventually $12,000 was appropriated for use by the Secretary of War to establish a vaccination program that began working in May 1832. For a more thorough treatment see J. Diane Pearson, “Lewis Cass and the Politics of Disease: The Indian Vaccination Act of 1832,” *Wicazo Sa Review*, Vol. 18, No. 2, The Politics of Sovereignty (Autumn, 2003): 9-35.
every direction, “laying about in the rivers, gorges, on the sand banks, in the hog weeds around the villages, and in their old corn cashes, others again were dragged off by the hungry dogs in the prairie where they were torn to pieces by the more hungry wolves.” Dougherty suggested the Pawnee were in collective shock. The “misery was so great, and so general that they seem to be unconscious of it,” he wrote, and the survivors “look upon the dead and dying as they would on so many dead horses.”

Many of the chiefs who signed the 1825 treaty disappeared from the historical record at this time, possibly felled by the disease. With their leadership decimated, the Pawnee faced an existential crisis of the highest order. Thousands were dead. Military power was in shambles. Decades of experience in political, military, and spiritual leadership was erased. It was clear evidence that the chiefs could not manipulate spiritual power to protect the people.

Smallpox effectively did what federal military and economic power could not. It reorganized the regional power dynamic. Following a vaccination program in the fall of 1832, Dougherty noted that “The Pawnee treated us with marked attention, and I took advantage of their good feeling toward the Government to prepare their minds in advance for meeting the U.S. Commissioners, and I have no hesitation in believing that the difficulty concerning hunting grounds, between them the Delawares can be easily adjusted.” Chaui leaders exhibited a dramatic change in policy as they sought closer relations to the United States on par with those of their Otoe and Omaha neighbors. The latter two received an annuity for allowing immigrating

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101 Dougherty to Clark, October 29, 1831, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
102 Estimates of Pawnee population within a few years of the epidemic remained high at around 10,000, suggesting either higher starting population in 1831, a speedy recovery, or a combination of both. Another smallpox outbreak in 1838 killed about 2,500, most of whom were children, which in combination with endemic disease and increased malnutrition from an inability to protect hunting grounds and agricultural stores by the 1840s reduced the population to 6,244 in 1840. White, *Roots of Dependency*, 155. A vaccination program among the Pawnee and the other regional nations in 1832 cost $1824.50. Dougherty to Cass, December 3, 1832, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
103 Dougherty to Cass, December 6, 1832, LROIA: StLS, Roll 750.
Indians the use of some of their hunting lands. It was an arrangement the Pawnee wanted to join. As they told Dougherty in 1831, since “he had surveyed off a portion of Pawnee Land and given it to his Delaware children . . . which they hoped he would take pity on his Pawnee children also, and do for them as he was doing for his Oto and Omohaw Children.”\textsuperscript{104} The desire was urgent.

For the Pawnee it was a strategic recalibration in the face of changed military realities. They could not defend everything, but they could use the annuity to rebuild their power, acquire more weaponry, and skilled tradesmen like blacksmiths to make tools and repair guns that were desperately needed to fend off the encroaching Sioux and Cheyenne. Sioux attacks threatened the Pawnee core itself. An attack on the Pawnee villages themselves in 1832 killed 100.\textsuperscript{105}

Disease and military crisis forced a dramatic reassessment.

As Pawnee power crumbled, the United States devised a new strategy to project military power into the region. Lewis Cass, newly confirmed as secretary of War in 1832, brought a fresh perspective to the department given his experience with Indian affairs as a territorial governor and treaty negotiator with Clark. He initiated a review of federal policy and strategic focus that coincided with the epidemic.\textsuperscript{106} Clark warned that if left unchecked, dangers posed to the Santa Fe trade by the Pawnee, Comanche, and Kiowa, the latter two having “no idea whatever” of American power, remained the biggest hurdle to establishing federal control over the region. “Unless some effectual mode should be speedily adopted, to inform them on this

\textsuperscript{104} Dougherty to Clark, October 29, 1831, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.

\textsuperscript{105} Hyde, \textit{The Pawnee Indians}, 181-182. The Cheyenne in combination with the Arapaho, surrounded a Pawnee war party near present-day Fort Lyon, Arkansas and killed the entire group in 1832 or 1833. Another war party met a similar fate on the South Platte northeast of Fort Morgan, Colorado. When mounted enemies surprised Pawnee raiders who ventured out on foot to steal horses the consequences could be disastrous.

\textsuperscript{106} Cass sent inquiries to Clark, Dougherty, and various other front-line officials requesting information about the state of the fur trade up the Missouri to the Rockies, British influence, the extent and value of the Santa Fe trade, dangers faced, and suggestions for improved safety of American citizens and commerce. His work reflected a major shift in the department from one of economy and fixing borders, to a more expansive one that harkened back to John C. Calhoun’s vision of 1818-1819 and the extension of American power into unorganized Indian Country. Clark to Cass, November 20, 1831, LROIA: StLS, Roll 749.
subject,” wrote Clark, “the injury to hundreds of our citizens will be severely felt.” Clark worried that federal impotence would embolden border nations “who witness the unchecked hostility of their roving neighbors, and who can scarcely refrain from an open expression of their contempt for a Government which could permit a few Bands of half starved naked savages to prey upon so many of its citizens – to strip them of everything they possess, and even to shed their blood with impunity.”

Settling the neighborhood required the rapid militarization of enforcement and an ability to project power onto the prairie. Clark recommended the formation of a mounted volunteer corps as the only effectual method to enforce federal policy. “Being mounted, and operating chiefly in a prairie country, it would be in the power of select detachments from this corps to move to the points requiring their presence with the utmost celerity imaginable,” Clark advised. Such a force had the added benefit of “preserving peace among the various Tribes collected, and collecting on our borders, and who are already beginning to require an interposition of the strong arm of the Government to quell their feuds.”

After years of fruitless peace negotiations, Clark

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107 Clark to Cass, November 20, 1831, LROIA: StLS, Roll 749.
108 Clark to Cass, November 20, 1831, LROIA: StLS, Roll 749. The force would ideally be composed of 1,000 young volunteers serving three-year terms, led by commissioned officers, and heavily armed with “a rifle, Harper’s Ferry pistols, sword, knife, and tomahawk. The Rifle should be occasionally exchanged (at the Depot) for a musket and Bayonette which is known to be far superior to the former in a night attack.” The formation of the Mounted Rangers partially fulfilled Clark’s plan. With the creation of the Dragoon Regiment in 1833, the Army officially absorbed many of the men and duties of the Mounted Rangers, a move that finally signaled Washington’s acceptance that the prairie was impossible to control without adapting to cavalry warfare. Indian trader and sub agent Joshua Pilcher echoed Clark’s assessment of the military situation and called for new forts between Missouri and the terminus of the American portion of the Santa Fe Trail with “about six companies of troops, at least one part of them should be mounted, as experience has long since proved the almost uselessness of infantry in operating against such an enemy as must be expected to be encountered in this country. By such a body of mounted men the caravans could be safely escorted at least as far as the American limits, and I think it very probable that the Mexican government would co-operate in such a plan, which would give entire security to the trade. When not employed upon this service, such a corps would be useful in preserving tranquility upon our frontier; and all who are acquainted with the nature of the country and the present state of our Indian relations, must admit that some measure of this kind will soon become necessary. Indeed it has always been my opinion that a part of the troops at every post on our western frontier should be mounted – doubting, as I always have, the utility of a body of troops, stationed in a country like that in question, without the means of making a prompt movement beyond the immediate vicinity of their quarters.” Joshua Pilcher to Cass, December 1, 1831, LROIA: StLS, Roll 749.
finally concluded that mobile military force directly engaged in the region was the only effective means of creating the settled, civilized neighborhood he envisioned for Indian Territory.

As this plan developed, tensions in the region continued to rise. Skirmishes between the Pawnee and Omaha over the winter of 1831-32 produced a hasty peace conference organized by Dougherty the following October. Neither side desired a protracted war as both were hard-pressed by invaders. Dougherty reported that he had “never seen the Pawnees so much inclined to be at peace with their neighbours nor have I ever known them apparently so friendly disposed towards the whites.” Pawnee complaints about white trappers and traders along the Santa Fe Trail driving away the bison and beaver suggest significant stress on western Pawnee hunting grounds, so much so that they demanded federal compensation for their losses. After an exchange of gifts, horses, and lengthy discussions, Dougherty happily reported the settlement of differences and that “I never left them to all appearances so well satisfied.”

Settled affairs with the Omaha granted the Pawnee a free hand to strike at a more pressing threat from the Delaware to their immediate south.

While many like veteran trader and sub agent Joshua Pilcher considered them to still be “the most numerous, the most turbulent and the most savage nation upon our borders,” the Pawnee ability to direct the course of regional development waned. Their regional dominance was on the verge of collapse in the wake of the epidemic. A strip of land reserved for the Delaware adjacent to Fort Leavenworth, 10 miles wide and extending back from the Missouri for 150 miles, just north of the Kansas River and Kansa tribal territory, cut directly into Pawnee

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109 Dougherty to Clark, November 20, 1832, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
110 Pilcher to Clark, undated, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883. This undated letter from late 1832 or early 1833 criticized Dougherty’s conduct as an agent and the perceived mismanagement of the agency, in large part because Pilcher wanted the job. It also highlights the command the Pawnee retained over the American imagination about the regional power dynamic. Pilcher also estimated that the Chaui, Skidi, Pitahawirata, and Kitkahahki could field 1,800-2,000 warriors. While considerably decreased from earlier estimates, this was still a large force, albeit one scattered between four competing and only occasionally confederated bands.
hunting grounds. Despite an initial and cordial diplomatic understanding between the Delaware and Pawnee over use of the corridor for transit, by October 1831, Delaware hunters regularly ventured into the region between the Kansas and the Platte. These incursions initiated a series of violent reactions.\footnote{Clark to Herring, December 20, 1831, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.} From the north, Ponca forces attacked the Pitahawirata near their village while returning from their summer hunt in August and killed three.\footnote{Clark to Cass, November 17, 1832, LROIA: StLS, Roll 750.}

Geography and poor planning were partly at fault. In the absence of natural markers or a clear survey line it was next to impossible to know the exact boundaries of territory. The corridor cut through the heart of Pawnee hunting ground south of the Platte and the major travel route to other lands near the Arkansas. Such a narrow corridor also suggested the place was less a hunting ground and more of a thoroughfare to lands farther west for Delaware use. “If the government should purchase the particular slip named, and make no additional arrangement with the Pawnees,” Dougherty argued from Fort Leavenworth, “the evil intended to be remedied will in a great degree still exist.”\footnote{Dougherty to Clark, March 30, 1832, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.} Events quickly proved him correct.

In early 1832, the Chaui killed a Delaware hunting party it found on Pawnee land. Delaware chief Souwanock responded by sending a war party to the Chaui village on the Platte, and although it was empty, the band having already left for their hunt, burned the village and destroyed every lodge. After rebuilding, the Pawnee formed an alliance with the Otoe, whose lands at the mouth of Platte were most under threat from the new arrivals. The Osage joined the Delaware, and by May 1833 tensions escalated to the point where a regional pan-Indian war involving the Pawnee, Otoe, Osage, Delaware, Shawnee, Kansa, Iowa, Kickapoo, and Sac and Fox of Iowa appeared likely.\footnote{Hyde, \textit{The Pawnee Indians}, 182-4, 189; Clark to Herring, May 25, 1833, LROIA: StLS, Roll 750.}
Even more disturbing for the Pawnee a Teton Sioux raiding party attacked the Skidi village in late September, killed 19 men, stole 20 horses, and lost only two dead. Out-gunned by the well-armed Tetons and with only seven firearms in the entire village, the Skidi turned their earthen lodges into makeshift forts to wait out the attack.\textsuperscript{115} The year proved disastrous for the Pawnee: two villages attacked, two powerful enemies on their doorsteps, at will violations of their hunting ground, a regional war set to break out at any moment, and only a small diplomatic victory with the Omaha to their credit.

With the Army concentrated in Illinois and Wisconsin chasing Black Hawk and his people, primary responsibility for the Missouri frontier during these violent years fell to the Indian department. Clark and his superiors used this moment of Pawnee crisis as an opportunity to settle the regional issues and finalize the long-anticipated Removal plans. Dougherty observed the validity of historical Pawnee claims to all the land south of the Platte. He recommended extinguishing all claim to the entirety of the territory as “this would give us an additional tract of considerable extent, on which, should it be thought expedient and proper, to locate emigrating Indians,” as well as reserving the region for a common hunting ground to be used “by permission of the government.”\textsuperscript{116} Clark concurred. The plan fulfilled his desire for a federally managed, bounded neighborhood. Furthermore, it brought the Pawnee within the annuity system that tied the other regional nations to federal administrators.\textsuperscript{117} A dedicated annuity gave federal agents leverage to guarantee good behavior from the Pawnee.

For their part, the Pawnee needed the revenue to rebuild their military defenses and appeared willing to trade land for time and additional resources. The disasters of 1831 and 1832

\textsuperscript{115} Dougherty to Clark, November 29, 1832, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.  
\textsuperscript{116} Dougherty to Clark, March 30, 1832, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.  
\textsuperscript{117} Clark to Cass, April 25, 1832, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
fostered an increased sense of Pawnee identity and political unity. Dougherty recommended viewing all four bands as equally interested in the land. As they “never failed to make common cause, in all cases of war, or in any other matter, interesting either of the tribes,” he wrote. Having only “separated into four villages, for the purpose of convenience and comfort, in consequence . . . they still retain their national attachment for each other . . . They speak the same language, have intermarried with each other, and in all cases, when an individual of one tribe is at the village of either of the others, he considers himself at home.”

An increased internal unity matched an increase of foreign alliances. Continued Sioux raids against the Arikara further up the Missouri in the 1820s and 1830s forced the latter to abandon their villages and move close to the Skidi Pawnee for security. Consolidation and retrenchment governed Pawnee strategy as they pursued treaty negotiations with the newly arrived American commission sent to settle boundary and other disputes. Building a unified, but smaller neighborhood united by cultural and political kinship reduced the necessity of fighting foreign wars over extended territory and the constant drain of men lost on those expeditions.

The commission sent to resolve the Pawnee, Otoe, Omaha, and Delaware disputes worked through the summer and fall of 1833, logging hundreds of miles of hard riding across the plains shuttling between villages from Council Bluffs to Fort Gibson. Commissioners easily secured promises from the Otoe and Omaha to relocate their villages and adopt the sedentary agricultural life. Without game or other options, the chiefs were “brought to this certain alternative – to till the ground or starve,” reported commissioner Henry Ellsworth on October 4, 1833 from the Otoe village on the Platte.

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118 Dougherty to Clark, March 30, 1832, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
119 White, “Winning the West,” 333; Dougherty to Clark, November 12, 1834, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883; Sanford to Clark, July 17, 1832, LROIA: StLS, Roll 750.
120 Henry Ellsworth to Herring, October 4, 1833, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
increasingly circumscribed to lands unfit for hunting and agriculture, and without a viable alternative, Omaha leaders surrendered to federal wishes and ceded control of their foreign affairs to federal agents. If “we have any difficulty with neighboring tribes,” declared Ongpatonga and his fellow chiefs, they would “refer the matter in dispute to some arbiter whom you shall appoint to settle the same. This we are willing to do. We have done.” With two nations thus brought into the federal orbit, attention turned to the Pawnee.

Five days later at the Chaui village the commissioners concluded the most comprehensive treaty to date with the Pawnee confederacy. Despite the setbacks of the 1831 and 1832, Pawnee chiefs extracted a number of concessions from the commission. Pawnee leaders ceded all claims to the land south of the Platte, which would become a neutral hunting ground. In return the Pawnee were to receive $4,600 in goods annually for twelve years, $2,000 a year for agricultural equipment for at least five years, $1,000 a year for ten years for schools, two blacksmiths and strikers for ten years at government expense, four farmers to teach agriculture for five years along with $1,000 in stock animals, four corn mills, and a signing bonus of $1,600 for a total cost of roughly $110,000. Remaining at home to protect any American farmers or smiths further entitled each Pawnee village to a military aid

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121 Petition of the Omaha to the President of the United States, included in Ellsworth to Herring, October 4, 1833, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
package of a 25-gun arsenal and ammunition for use in the event of attack by Sioux or other invaders.\textsuperscript{122} Even considering full payment would not occur for a decade, this sum represents approximately the entire annual operating budget of the St. Louis Superintendency and a major investment in building the neighborhood of settled tribes federal authorities envisioned.

By securing this aid Pawnee negotiators accomplished their most pressing strategic goal since 1829 of bringing federal technical and material power into the Pawnee world. Here was the basis to rebuild the Pawnee core territory by diversifying the economy through predictable annuities, providing a more secure food supply, acquiring expertise in necessary trades, and securing a much-needed arsenal. Pawnee hunters even retained access to the ceded land all while outsourcing the costs of security to the United States. While article nine called for an end to raids on the Santa Fe traders, the revenue from annuities theoretically compensated for the loss. On the surface it appeared to be a near-total victory for the Pawnee leadership.

Article ten, however, offered a very different interpretation. Unless the Pawnee located themselves “in convenient agricultural districts, and remain in these districts the whole year,” to protect any government employees, the United States had no obligation to provide schools, blacksmiths, farmers, or mills. Furthermore, any disputes with whites or neighboring nations came under an arbitration provision in which a federal official appointed by the president had ultimate authority to resolve the conflict.\textsuperscript{123} In effect this provision theoretically limited Pawnee movement and foreign affairs in the same way as the agreement with Omaha. Determining whether the Pawnee met the specific conditions and by what metrics remained unclear. This oversight by Pawnee leaders led to disastrous consequences through the next decade.

\textsuperscript{122} “Treaty with the Pawnee,” \textit{PML}, 111-114. Some costs like mill construction and farmer salaries were left unspecified, but contemporary expenses of similar items for other nations suggest $110,000 as a close approximation. The treaty was ratified on April 12, 1834.

\textsuperscript{123} “Treaty with the Pawnee,” \textit{PML}, 113.
The treaty was a decision point for federal-Pawnee relations. It offered the kind of alliance the Pawnee needed to maintain their independent power. It also prefigured what Pawnee scholar James Riding In rightly labels a cultural genocide that started in 1833 and continued through the treaties of 1857 and removal to Indian Territory, as the Pawnee “did not . . . consent to the eradication of their traditional ways of living or agree to be colonized.” With an alternate federal vision for the relationship, the 1833 treaty could have been a very different turning point in line with Pawnee strategic goals of an alliance.

After nearly eight years of planning, negotiations, and failures, Clark finally had the secure neighborhood he envisioned for the region. Whether or not the Pawnee fulfilled the treaty remained to be seen. On March 2, 1833 Congress created the dragoon regiment, a move that finally answered the repeated calls for an effective federal cavalry presence on the plains. By December 1833, the United States appeared to be in control of the Missouri valley as high as the Mandan villages and as far west as the present Colorado-Nebraska border. The Pawnee interpreted the treaty very differently. It offered a strategic reset rather than a capitulation to federal desires. Securing the immediate southern and eastern borders and rebuilding the core opened the possibility for continued war and raiding to the west. Who set the boundaries and terms of the neighborhood remained very much unsettled at the dawn of 1834.

125 Oliva, Soldiers on the Santa Fe Trail, 36-7. Designated the United States Regiment of Dragoons, it became the 1st Dragoons with the addition of a second regiment in 1836.
After the 1833 Pawnee-U.S. treaty, a new understanding of spatial relationships emerged in the Platte and larger West. Federal officials imagined an expanded role in shaping the West by projecting military power beyond any previous limits, inserting themselves as the arbiters of diplomacy and war between Native American nations, and defining the space as federally controlled. Pawnee leaders looked toward maintaining an increasingly tenuous autonomy of foreign policy and war powers. Sioux advances from the north and federal efforts to create a Western or Indian Territory to the south squeezed Pawnee territory. In each case, the control of space guided policy goals.

Beginning in earnest in 1829 and culminating in the treaty of 1833, Pawnee leaders had moved toward a more strategic alliance with the United States to access military equipment and economic aid. Yet they retained significant independence over their foreign and domestic policy through the 1830s. Pawnee power depended on understanding spatial relationships and boundaries as impressionistic: usefully nebulous enough for wide interpretation, but within an overarching and recognizable form. This was the Pawnee core and hinterlands of 1829, strongly defined at its social and political core around the villages of the Loup and Platte Rivers, but fluid and fungible at the margins.

Pawnee actions gave meaning to the space of the central Great Plains and turned it into Pawnee places. Here the Pawnee defined their space through their movements and policies. Indian Commissioner Henry Ellsworth reported that in 1833, Pawnee land holdings totaled
approximately 25,000 square miles, or 16,000,000 acres, around the Platte and Elkhorn.¹ This was the Pawnee core from which they could extend their power west and south, and to a lesser extent against the Sioux to the north. Such large holdings allowed for an expansive view of foreign policy opportunities. Protecting the core was the highest priority for Pawnee leaders. Incursions from the south and north, even if manageable, revealed the need for a shift in policy.

Ellsworth’s report served as a useful benchmark of Pawnee-U.S. relations in the late-1820s and early-1830s. Meanwhile, Ellsworth’s report combined with an 1845 letter from Superintendent of Indian Affairs Thomas Harvey provides a point of reference that reveals the specific and significant changes that occurred in the decade.

Writing in July 1845, Harvey reported that the Pawnee villages were increasingly beset by Sioux invaders. Their village was fortified, their horses guarded day and night from theft, their women “have to be guarded while working their corns and digging roots and with all their vigilance they frequently fall victims to the scalping knife in sight of their village.” They were an appropriate charity case and “a most inviting field for the philanthropist, they are . . . exceedingly mild and easily instructed by whites . . . They are poor and often suffer for subsistence; they see the advantage of civilization and are anxious to adopt the habits of the whites.”² This was a dramatic, if hyperbolic statement about a nation consistently ranked by Harvey’s predecessors as the most powerful and potentially dangerous in the West. Yet there was some truth in it.

By 1845, Pawnee spatial understandings had shifted from the expansive vision of the 1820s to a starkly limited outlook. Harvey’s report highlighted the constricted nature of Pawnee

¹ Ellsworth, (unsigned, undated), “Appendix C,” in Horace Everett, Regulating the Indian Department, Report No. 474 for the House Committee on Indian Affairs, 23rd Cong., 1st sess., 1834, 121.
² Thomas Harvey to Thomas Hartley Crawford, July 25, 1845, LROIA: CBA, Roll 216.
space as dictated more by outsiders than Pawnee self-constructions. Simultaneously the report spoke to the expansive vision taking shape within the federal bureaucracy. For federal officials, the heretofore limited entry into Pawnee society and non-existent military presence on the plains represented a sort of political and spatial void.

This chapter examines the inversion of Pawnee and federal strategic thinking that emerged following the 1833 treaty. The treaty alone did not cause these changes, but it was a harbinger of things to come. The period between the Pawnee-U.S. treaty of 1833 and the end of 1835 marks the beginning of the strategic inversion. The chapter traces a spatial reorganization of political possibilities and necessary cultural adaptations. In this period, federal officials tried to establish a new Western or Indian Territory through a regional pan-Indian peace negotiation. American missionaries began work among the Pawnee. The Army expanded its presence in the West with the creation and deployment of the U.S. Dragoons. These events redefined the Pawnee diplomatic and military world, and constricted Pawnee ability to operate outside of federal influence or oversight.

This was not an immediate shift, nor a complete one. Even the sudden appearance of the dragoons to the west of the Pawnee core was limited in its long-term effects as the regiment had few patrols westward through the 1830s. The Pawnee reputation for military power and independence, carried over from the 1820s, did much to solidify their increasingly tenuous political position in the mid-1830s. Without maintaining the underlying factors of military strength and freedom of movement that created the reputation, however, the Pawnee could not operate as the unchecked regional power they had been.

The trajectory of Pawnee policy in the years preceding the 1833 treaty was to mitigate the damages of wars with neighboring Native American powers. Securing their southern border
along the Platte allowed Pawnee leaders to refocus attention on the greater menace of Sioux invasions while keeping U.S.-backed emigrant Indians from further encroachment. Agents noted constant hostile movements south that they feared would upset American trade interests.\(^3\) A war with the Delaware (who had recently arrived as part of Removal) and intensifying Sioux hostility throughout the early-1830s drove much of the Pawnee realignment. These military conflicts, combined with disease, forced the Pawnee into a new calculation of their position. By late-1833, they had to settle their southern borders.\(^4\)

For Pawnee leadership, securing regional peace with their southern neighbors was priority two after securing better federal relations. Securing the Pawnee neighborhood as part of the larger federal Removal effort formed a crucial part of Commissioner Ellsworth’s work, and a goal that held broad support among the regional nations. Speaking generally, Ellsworth reported that although many tribes exhibited hostilities, “there is a general desire for peace, and I trust we shall ere long, establish a general peace among all the tribes on this side of the Rocky Mountains.” The situation remained volatile. The Pawnee refused to come to any meetings near Osage, Cherokee, or Delaware territory.\(^5\) The goal was not as foolhardy as it may have appeared. The Removed nations desired a territorial government, one that depended on a general peace. The Pawnee used their reputation and still considerable military power to navigate the new reality of their southern border and negotiate the terms of what peace and an Indian Territory might look like. But Pawnee freedom of action faced increasing constrictions through the 1830s as they adjusted to the new regional state of affairs.

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\(^3\) Jonathan Bean to Clark, October 7, 1832, LROIA: StLS, Roll 750.  
\(^4\) Clark to Cass, November 17, 1832, LROIA: StLS, 750.  
\(^5\) Ellsworth to Cass, November 18, 1832, LROIA: WS, Roll 921.
4.1 The Pawnee Reputation

Among white visitors to the Great Plains, the Pawnee reputation for unchecked power and independence framed the understandings of the space and the power dynamics of the region. The reality and the reputation began diverging in the mid-1830s. Yet the literary representation of the Pawnee solidified their place within the American cultural imagination as the preeminent military power of the Platte and a people uncontrolled by federal authority.

John Treat Irving, nephew and traveling companion of novelist Washington, accompanied Indian Commissioner Henry Ellsworth during his trip to the Pawnee in 1833. Irving observed of the Pawnee he encountered, “upon the prairies . . . he is in his element. An air of wild freedom breathes around him. His head droops not . . . not a single feature yields in submission to his fellow man. He is unrestrained in body; unfettered in spirit; and as wayward as the breeze, which sweeps over the grass of his own hills.”6 Such rhapsodic imagery highlighted the roots of Pawnee power: the unchecked freedom of movement over land they knew to be unquestionably theirs without fear of competition. National independence was rooted within the individual’s understanding of place and space. Irving pointed to the martial masculinity idealized across the racial divides of white and Native American societies as the true delineations of power. Those personal characteristics formed the foundation of national and racial independence. As masters of themselves, Native Americans mastered their space. But it was a reciprocal relationship in which the space shaped the character of the residents.

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6 John Treat Irving, *Indian Sketches: Taken During an Expedition to the Pawnee Tribes: In Two Volumes* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Blanchard, 1835), 1:261-2. Irving, the twenty-year old volunteer secretary to the commission, was part of the larger party of commissioners Henry Ellsworth, John Schermerhorn, and Montfort Stokes appointed by President Jackson in 1832 to settle disputes and establish peace prior to the increased Indian Removal and the creation of a Western Territory around present-day Oklahoma.
To Irving, the Indian was free, but it was a wild freedom, unfettered by civilization’s restraints and in line with his environment. Visiting the region within a year of Irving, the British traveler Charles Augustus Murray remarked that the Pawnee were “children of the desert,” with the implications of nomadic Bedouin warriors concerned with primitive masculine characteristics of war and horse stealing who lacked the virtues of civilization, like honesty. When a few Pawnee horsemen accoutered for war encountered Murray’s party, their demurred denials about their activities as disapproved by the United States met with skepticism from Murray who knew better. “In this vast wilderness the threat is empty,” in terms of punishment or American enforcement, he wrote, making such unsanctioned theft the casually winked at norm.7

Even Murray’s Indian packhorses resisted attempts at confinement. Upon arriving at Fort Leavenworth, “no power” could induce the horses to approach the “white walls . . . and when at last we led them as far as the gate . . . we were unable to make them pass through it; they snorted, they reared, and would have defeated our attempts, whether at persuasion or coercion,” had a soldier not forced the horses through.8 The undertone throughout was clear: the Indian character existed across the human and animal divide, united by a total resistance to authority and the need for military force to control. Such force, however, was limited to the confines of a fort and centralized power. Soldiers could tame wild horses, but on the open prairie federal authority could be winked at and dismissed as fantasy.

Such was the condition of the wilderness, spawning savage people and animals who enjoyed the unchecked freedom to ignore norms of civilization. To white observers, the Pawnee

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7 Charles Augustus Murray, *Travels in North America During the Years 1834, 1835, and 1836 Including a Summer Residence with the Pawnee Tribe of Indians, in the Remote Prairies of the Missouri, and a Visit to Cuba and the Azore Islands*, 2 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1839), 2:19, 23.
were masters of their space because they behaved as a savage and wild people commensurate with their untamed environment.

Even with the policy setbacks and attacks of 1829-33, the Pawnee still exhibited the spirit of unbridled control of their spaces, but not as exuberantly as these literary observers gave them credit. Sioux movements increasingly concerned Pawnee leaders. The regional pan-Indian war sparked by Delaware and Pawnee territorial disputes of 1831 and 1832 questioned the ability of the latter to protect their core villages. Delaware chief Souwahnock openly boasted of his July 1833 raid that burned the Chaui Pawnee village while in peace councils at Fort Leavenworth that November. What these white observers did not fully appreciate was the extent of the changes beginning to appear within the Pawnee strategic framework, starting with the need to secure their southern border.

4.2 Forging A Regional Peace

The Pawnee saw Removal as a challenge to their regional power and adapted policies to meet the developments in the late-1820s. But they did not fully appreciate the extent to which federal policies and American cultural understandings were changing the region between the Platte and the Red River to the south. Understanding the transition of strategic thinking in the 1830s requires understanding the longer context of changes at work to the south of the Pawnee as Removal developed in the late-1820s and took formal shape by the mid-1830s. From 1829 to the fall of 1833, federal policymakers and American visitors could not decide whether the Pawnee

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9 Despite being outnumbered as much as 10 to 1 by the collective Pawnee population, the boldness of the Delaware assault threw Pawnee leadership into crisis. Irving, Indian Sketches, 2:283; Ellsworth to Herring, November 6, 1833, LROIA: WS, Roll 921.
were still the regional power they had been or were, by October 1833, easily controllable. The American strategy of Removal and western territorial development included the tactic of limiting Indian sovereignty under the guise of autonomy. The creation of a Western or Indian Territory, halting in the 1820s, took on new significance with tens of thousands of forced migrants heading west in the 1830s. Federal plans only worked if the United States could create a relatively peaceful space, as promised by treaty obligations for the new arrivals, and tamp down the regional wars making administration difficult if not impossible.

Jackson administration policy to promote Removal emphasized self-rule and limited federal interference. In reality, it reflected the larger goals of subsuming tribes within an expansive view of federal power. Jackson himself believed that Native Americans lacked the education and intelligence for self-rule, and said so in the first draft of his 1829 annual message to Congress.10 While he removed the passage from the final version, it was an idea shared by Secretary of War John Eaton, who considered the removed tribes as “fostered children.” He also seemed to believe the independent nations west of the Mississippi were also simple wards of the state in need of federal protection and governance. “As moral influences can be of little benefit to minds not cultivated,” he argued, it was therefore necessary to “arrange to the best advantage the physical force of the country.”11 He did not understand the region.

William Clark’s vision for a neighborhood of tribes anchored by Fort Leavenworth was only part of the larger federal plan to remake Indian Country into a governable territory and organized place within the scope of the 1830 Removal Act. Eaton’s successor at the War

Department, Lewis Cass, pursued a multi-pronged effort to reorganize the territory and subsume independent Native Americans from the Mexican border to Canada within a more manageable scheme. This meant consolidated nations and clear lines of authority for an effective and permanent remaking of the space. Part of this effort was the Stokes-Schermerhorn-Ellsworth commission that spent much of 1833 traveling through the region between the Red and Platte rivers to assess the situation, negotiate treaties, and begin forging the regional peace necessary to implement Removal fully.

The continuing strategic and political problem for the United States was how to balance jurisdictional authority with the idea of Indian autonomy and improvement. American space had to be federally governed in order to protect citizens, secure boundaries, and fulfill treaty obligations to tribes in the process of or contemplating Removal. Previous legislation emphasized federal control over the lands across the frontier line, but administrative experience meant that Indian Country was beyond the power of the federal state to regulate fully. Problems of enforcement from the lack of staff and legal questions over jurisdiction plagued efforts to establish sovereign authority. It was a problem the territorial judiciary refused to address. Governance was spotty at best and non-existent or unenforceable at worst without

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12 As Leonard Sadosky argues the limitations of federal power in the early republic meant that the United States had to at least acknowledge independent Native American power and sovereignty even as it spent the first four decades of its national existence working to conquer or reduce to dependent status those same peoples. Sadosky, Revolutionary Negotiations, 7-8.

13 The series of Trade and Intercourse Acts, beginning in 1790 and occasionally updated, set the boundary lines of American and Indian territory, but also the idea of federal authority to regulate movement and commerce beyond the legal boundaries of the federal judiciary. The 1817 Act to Provide for the Punishment of Crimes and Offenses Committed within the Indian Boundaries gave federal jurisdiction to crimes committed on Indian lands not yet ceded to the United States, but left open to interpretation whether Indian Country, beyond the legally established territorial limits fell within federal jurisdiction beyond any criminal violation of the Trade and Intercourse acts such as whiskey smuggling or trespass. Conflicts across the frontier line made judges nervous about extending authority in cases where their own jurisdiction was in doubt. A district judge in Missouri declined to hear a case about a violent clash between Missouri settlers and Iowa Indians because it occurred over the state boundary line in Indian Country, and therefore he doubted his own authority. Act to Provide for the Punishment of Crimes and Offenses Committed within the Indian Boundaries, ch. 92, 3 Stat., 383; Clark to Eaton, November 14, 1829, LROIA: StLS, Roll 749.
delineated authority and judicial sovereignty clarified by territorial government structures. Secretary of War James Barbour, working in conjunction with the House Committee on Indian Affairs, sought a spatial reorganization of an American territory in the West under the jurisdiction and governance of the United States, not any Indian nations, but did not get Congressional approval for his overhaul. By 1830, the West remained largely within the early republic paradigm where independent Native American power remained in nominally federal space.

Consolidation and centralization of Native American government was key to better control. As Clark looked toward the Fort Leavenworth region as a potential consolidation point, others, including veteran missionary turned federal official Isaac McCoy looked toward the lands immediately south of the Kansas River for similar efforts. Through the early-1830s Clark remained pragmatic about the limited prospects for significant changes, at least around Fort Leavenworth. McCoy, in part looking for continued work from the War Department, outlined the hyperbolically optimistic prospects of a new Western Territory where consolidated emigrant tribes would exist within a mutual defense and common government framework. He predicted that the shift would bring an era of peace and prosperity for a new part of the United States. Schools, industry, and religion would “promote happiness in this world,” and “prepare them for the next.” A remade West, with a new territory for and ruled in part by Native Americans was the ideal end result of decades of policy, and if followed, would usher in a millenarian epoch of prosperity, at least in McCoy’s view.

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14 Everett, Regulating the Indian Department, 15.
15 Clark to Cass, November 20, 1831, LROIA: StLS, Roll 749.
Other missionary boards, including the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions who eventually established a mission among the Pawnee, echoed the millennialism of Removal and territorial expansion, eyeing converts as potential new citizens, once properly reformed. Once on the ground in the West among both whites and Indians, Commissioner Ellsworth discovered “a strong desire for a Territorial Government . . . which if satisfactory to the govt will I am confident do much to advance the future welfare of the Indians.”

This was to be a restrained process that was orderly, humane, and controlled tightly by federal authorities. Even Indian hater Andrew Jackson appealed to sympathy for uncivilized people whose “emigration should be voluntary, for it would be as cruel as unjust to compel the aborigines to abandon the graves of their fathers.” Jacksonian Indian policy writ large represented a paradigm shift in federal strategic thinking. Racial antipathy and Removal did not originate here, rather it was the scale of thinking that underwent significant changes. For the first time in almost a generation since the failed Yellowstone Expedition, federal policy makers felt emboldened to remake Indian Country into an American protectorate. Broad confidence from Washington bureaucrats, missionaries, and larger cultural shifts about the possibilities and necessity of expansion remade American political culture. The shift was from one nervous about unchecked expansion and worry of the costs to one that increasingly saw expansion as politically and morally necessary.

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17 Baptist and Dutch Reformed leaders published sentiments about the dual mission of Indian reform and expansion that harkened back to early Jeffersonian notions about civilization efforts as the prerequisite to potential Indian citizenship. Removal was the first necessary step to incorporation, and to remake a wild space into an American place of orderly government and Christian citizens. Magazine of the Reformed Dutch Church 4 (October 1829), 222; American Baptist Magazine 10 (April 1830) 126-127; Samuel Parker to American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, April 10, 1833, PML, 1.
18 Ellsworth to Cass, November 18, 1832, LROIA: WS, Roll 921.
Writing a new introduction from Paris in 1832 for his novel *The Prairie*, James Fenimore Cooper presented his readers with an enduring characterization of the Great Plains. Cooper argued that “They resemble the steppes of Tartary more than any other known portion of the world,” as it was “a vast country, incapable of sustaining a dense population, in the absence of the two great necessaries [wood and water] . . . Rivers abound it is true; but this region is nearly destitute of brooks and the smaller water courses, which tend so much to comfort and fertility.” Cooper presented American conquest of the region as a *fait accompli*, that “made us masters of a belt of fertile country . . . and placed the countless tribes of savages, who lay on our borders, entirely within our controul.” Despite “a barrier of desert to the extension of our population,” it was “an empty empire,” ready for Americans. Expansion was not to be an unchecked free-for-all, but one conducted with thorough planning, large-scale vision for regional transformation, and requiring the coordination and acquiescence of more than two dozen nations.

Such writing revealed a profound ignorance of the place and people born of distance from Cooper’s subject and unfounded notions of racial superiority. Sub Agent John Sanford decried the lack of federal power beyond Council Bluffs where British traders and Indian wars made his job useless. The Indians “are, (as usual) at war with each other – and will always continue so,” he wrote Clark, and “I once was pipe bearer amongst them and patched up a peace frequently (as

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22 For a more detailed examination of the bureaucratic debates about Indian policy and the development of the Western Territory see Satz, *American Indian Policy*, 126-45. Satz neglects the policy prerogatives of many of the Native Americans that desired a reorganization of Indian Country. This was not a top-down dictation from Washington, but mutually sought. Officials from local Indian agents to the secretary of war expressed continued concerns about the humaneness of Indian policy and the necessity for government actions from vaccine programs to stopping wars or supplying food relief after floods and crop failures. Small relief efforts and peace making were successful humanitarian responses, but they were overshadowed by the gross incompetence and callous disregard for Indian welfare exhibited during the larger removal process. Dougherty to Cass, December 6, 1832, LROIA: StLS, 750; Montfort Stokes to Cass, November 3, 1833, LROIA: WS, Roll 921.
others do some times and are doing). But the clouds of smoke had scarcely time to disappear, before a war party was out expecting to find their enemies off guard,” negating the entire effort.23

His post near the mouth of the Yellowstone made him the westernmost official of the Indian Department. There he recognized the hubris of a government completely out of touch with conditions and unaware of its powerlessness on the fringes of empire. Sitting in the midst of eight different nations with an estimated 75,000 people, “not in the Navy Yard at Washington, where there are public magazines and guards to protect property . . . I am in the plains, and the Government has not as yet paid for a skin lodge to cover me (its worthy representative) or its goods.” He was at the mercy of the elements, the Indians, and the traders without any real power. Furthermore, he complained, “my generous government thinks $400!!! for an Interpreter too expensive and must be lopped off,” even as a sinecure for the Corps of Discovery veteran Toussaint Charbonneau who proved indispensable as Sanford’s aid.24

Through 1833, William Clark and John Dougherty worked within this framework of limited local power and increasingly grand plans emanating from Washington as they tried to establish the regional stability required for emigrants and a new Western Territory. Their efforts largely failed as federal power was dispersed across the plains in the face of stronger regional polities. Commissioner Ellsworth finally secured step one by negotiating a treaty with the Pawnee in October 1833.

23 Sanford to Clark, July 20, 1833 and September 3, 1833, LROIA: StLS, Roll 750. Sanford was in a dark place. Isolated and powerless with few gifts to give or even adequate interpreters to influence local affairs, he could do little but wring his hands and complain to his superiors about the uselessness of his position. British trader influence across the ill-defined border meant any federal regulations were in practice null. On July 20, he reported 18-20 American trappers killed over the 1832-3 winter. His closing rant typified his growing frustration with a job he soon left for the comforts of St. Louis, writing Clark that “This comprises every thing necessary for the Government to know. And indeed I hardly believe that any part of it was absolutely necessary, - for I cannot and do not believe that she will ever protect her citizens in that country. There has been too many reports of murders, heretofore, for this to have any effect. I might have enlarged this to a considerable size – But of what avail?”

24 Sanford to Clark, July 21, 1833, LROIA: StLS, 750.
Step two, concurrent with the Pawnee-U.S. treaty and extending afterwards into the fall of 1833, was for a grand spatial transformation. This began with securing a regional peace to the south between the Platte and Red rivers. Disagreement over the scope of this transformation remained a constant problem within the Indian Department. While Clark, Ellsworth, and Cass looked to a grand reconfiguration, others like Montfort Stokes, a close political ally of Cass, former North Carolina governor, and putative head of the commission, dismissed Pawnee diplomacy as a waste of time. He suggested conflicts in the Platte Valley were beyond the scope of the commission to prepare for emigrating Eastern nations and not worth the commission’s effort. Recalling his time in the Senate ratifying the 1818 treaty of friendship, he believed “there is no complaint of their conduct towards the citizens of the United States,” and that the Pawnee “are not the formidable Rovers of the Great Prairie.” Ellsworth’s trip was therefore “of little importance towards forwarding the views and advancing the interest of the government.” Stokes apparently enjoyed willful ignorance.

Stokes and Ellsworth clashed over a number of issues both personal and professional. The former spent considerable energy undermining the report of the commission, accusing his colleagues of financial malfeasance, and seeking personal enrichment through their recommendations. Yet these differences did not prevent them from working toward the shared goal of spatial reorganization, albeit often along different paths as Ellsworth travelled north to pursue Pawnee regional peace while Stokes remained at Fort Gibson. Arriving at Fort Leavenworth in August 1833, Ellsworth reported that the fort was healthy and well-appointed.

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26 Stokes to Matthew Arbuckle, May 11, 1833, LROIA: WS, Roll 921. The commissioners rarely agreed, and their personal animosities quickly involved those around them, including the garrison at Fort Gibson, whose officers were drawn into rival camps, putting Colonel Arbuckle in the awkward position of having to investigate accusations levied by Stokes as well as assist the commission in the continuance of their duties as Indian negotiators. The back and forth lasted well into 1834 after the commission was disbanded early by presidential order despite important unfinished business. Ellsworth to Cass, June 13, 1834, LROIA: WS, Roll 921.
but that the recent Delaware raid on the Chaui Pawnee “will exacerbate the talks very much.” But he retained hope that “we shall stop the numerous war parties.”27 Express reports of cholera further up river near the Council Bluffs Agency, coupled with an outbreak at the fort three weeks later did not dispel Ellsworth’s optimism, though he feared for the health of Native Americans given the dearth of medicine available. Disease and dissention only reinforced the perception of immediacy necessary for regional stability.28

Federal officials went into the fall of 1833 with some hubris about their ability to affect changes. Cass charged the commissioners with a broad mandate in his instructions: to settle any disputes among emigrating Native Americans, clarify boundaries, and clear the way for new waves of Indian refugees by securing peace with the potentially hostile border nations. Peace was the primary concern as the federal government pledged to protect the new arrivals.29 Such thinking suggested that the United States had already won the great contest for control and now it just needed to settle the details. John Irving put it more lyrically in summation of the two-month expedition to the Pawnee:

We had lived in the land of the savage; we had seen, in his real character, the man of nature. We had seen him in his moments of joy and pain; in his moments of pride and humility; in his paroxysms of excitement, when urged on by his impetuous nature . . . The illusions thrown around him by the exaggerated reports of travelers, and the fictions of poets, had been removed; and we beheld him as he really was – an untutored, generous, yet savage man. He had lost much of the romance with which imagination had clothed him . . . still with all his imperfections we had learned to admire his chivalrous nature.30

Such a summation epitomized the old trope of the noble savage. Perhaps it is unfair to expect more cogent analysis from an author who spent so little time with his subjects and who was

27 Ellsworth to Herring, August 4, 1833, LROIA: WS, Roll 921.
28 Ellsworth to Herring, August 8, 23, 1833, LROIA: WS, Roll 921.
weighted down by his own prejudices. Irving’s prose does reveal an important facet of American thinking about the Pawnee. Unlike almost every other previous traveler and official, Irving claimed the Pawnee were now easily mastered and understood. They were not the lurking menace outside of federal control. The Pawnee were just another type of the same Indian familiar to any American who read some James Fennimore Cooper. The Pawnee and their lands could be demystified and brought within an American cultural system.

Born from convictions of racial superiority and the successful realization of racial supremacy in the East, Irving’s ideas did not represent reality. The Pawnee still held considerable power to ignore any plans to turn them into a client state. Pawnee willingness to enter the treaty negotiations and broader peace talks called for by Ellsworth at Fort Leavenworth in November 1833 came from a degree of strategic desperation about the conflicts on their southern borders. “The Delawares said they had complained in vain to the government, and would take revenge against the Pawnees; who by the way were defending their own land,” reported Ellsworth. He learned from Kansa Agent Marston Clark that “the constant interruption of war parties going through his tribe against the Pawnees,” pushed the agent to exasperation and potential resignation.31 The Pawnee were on alert to the point that a false alarm about a Sioux raid sent the whole Chaui village into an uproar and panic.32

Even with these conditions the Pawnee themselves were divided as to strategy. Leaders faced the delicate task of maintaining the appearance of unchecked military power while also trying to secure the southern boundaries through peace councils with their federal and Native American adversaries. To succeed in the regional power struggle with the Sioux, the Pawnee had to compete and win on the micro level of the councils with displays of masculine authority,

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31 Ellsworth to Herring, December 11, 1833, LROIA: WS, Roll 921.
reinforcement of the Pawnee conceptions of personal power, and reminders of the possibility of unchecked military force beyond the reach of federal intervention. Sharitarish, principle chief of the Chaui, and a large faction of warriors engaged in heated debate over the path forward for treaty negotiations. Only the interventions of Wild Horse appeared to calm the proceedings and welcome Ellsworth’s negotiation party. The proposed general peace conference thus took on greater importance to settle the internal Pawnee political divide.

Fulfilling Cass’s mandates to organize the territory for new arrivals required the settlement of the Indian war raging through the Fort Leavenworth area. As of November 19, 1833, Ellsworth reported that the garrison held two Omaha prisoners, while eight Iowa and three Otoe had lately escaped, and one Iowa remained at large, all of whom were held for murdering other Native Americans during the preceding months. “It is clear that the criminals deserve (in a moral point of view) some punishment,” wrote Ellsworth, “and it is important for the dignity and influence of the government that those who have escaped should be retaken.” Per the treaty of Prairie du Chien, these criminals would be turned over to the United States for punishment, thus inserting federal authority over Indian affairs and removing a cause for wars of revenge. Yet this created a jurisdictional nightmare for federal officials and threatened to upend any progress on peace. Ellsworth recommended releasing the Omaha to preserve the hopes of peace at the expense of justice and a demonstration of federal authority.

Such was the climate around Fort Leavenworth in the critical month of November. Ellsworth toured the Pawnee villages to arrange a general conference. Pawnee reluctance to cede their power to federal officials was emphasized at each chief’s lodge the federal negotiators visited. At the Chaui, the official meeting of the chiefs and federal agents was cloaked in the

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34 Ellsworth to Herring, November 19, 1833, LROIA: WS, Roll 921.
rituals of military power. Upon entering the lodge, Sharitarish was enveloped in a white wolf skin painted in hieroglyphics of his military exploits and victories, only to remove it and present the robe to Ellsworth as a dramatic reinforcement of the chief’s status and accomplishments.\textsuperscript{35} Pawnee leaders repeated the ritual at each village, reinforcing the point that the Americans were tolerated as guests by choice, at the pleasure of their more powerful hosts.

Ellsworth convinced each band to send four delegates to the general peace conference. The Pawnee delegation evinced little desire to put aside their military ambitions. While the Pawnee travelled with the commissioner, a group of unknown Indians emerged from cover. Believing them to be their long-time Kansa enemies and spoiling for a fight, Wild Horse led a frantic charge at the party “every feeling . . . now absorbed in the deep, burning thirst for blood.” Only the last-minute recognition of the hunting party as Otoe, at peace with the Pawnee, prevented a massacre of the smaller band.\textsuperscript{36} Such a display by Pawnee leaders and warriors while traveling with federal officials on a peace mission revealed a significant hubris regarding their power. The impetuousness of Wild Horse and his men could very well have destroyed any peace effort for a strategically unimportant target of opportunity. This was Pawnee land and would be defended as such. A successful attack would symbolize to the Americans and their Otoe escorts, more than anything else, that the Pawnee retained the ultimate military power over their lands, and thus granting them the rights and privileges to make the space their own. Across the cultural divide of Pawnee and federal diplomacy, the gamesmanship of the military display provided clear messages that military power was political authority.

Either undeterred by such gestures, or ignorant of their meaning, Ellsworth labored to exert the government’s influence to further blunt the military power of the Pawnee following

\textsuperscript{35} Irving, \textit{Indian Sketches}, 2:11-12, and again at the Skidi, 134.
\textsuperscript{36} Irving, \textit{Indian Sketches}, 2:199-204.
their lands cessions of October. Fourteen warring tribes gathered at Fort Leavenworth for the larger regional peace council at the beginning of November 1833. Ellsworth was optimistic. In reality the Indian Department was in turmoil. A late-summer cholera epidemic on the heels of the smallpox epidemic wiped out almost the entirety of the Council Bluffs Agency staff including the sub agent and two interpreters, placing an even greater burden on the commission staff who struggled to understand the regional politics without the local experts.\(^{37}\)

The diplomatic complications of so many hostile groups in close proximity provided a tactical minefield for officials running between the separated camps. The council almost fell apart before it began from Delaware hostility toward the whole proceeding. Ellsworth rebuffed a demand for a $1000 payment by the Pawnee for each Delaware scalp taken as a non-starter given the recent Pawnee land cession. Delaware grievances over perceived slights by the local nations who refused to acknowledge the former as “the grandfather of all the tribes around here,” a claim based on their origins in the East and early contact with whites, was negotiable.\(^{38}\) The Delaware claimed the Pawnee as their figurative descendants, and as such the Pawnee were being disobedient and unfilial to their elders. Americans and Pawnees met the claim with equal parts confusion and derision. With only 150 warriors, the Delaware claimed a power position totally disproportionate to their size and regional importance. Pawnee negotiators viewed the Delaware position with contempt and disavowed descent from “Delaware dogs.” Proceeding with the council required Ellsworth to create some diplomatic fictions that preserved both honor and acknowledgement of reality. He implored the Pawnee chiefs to humor the Delaware for the

\(^{37}\) Clark to Daniel Kurtz, September 3, 1833, LROIA: StLS, Roll 750.
\(^{38}\) Ellsworth to Herring, November 6, 1833, LROIA: WS, Roll 921.
duration of the council while privately acknowledging the United States shared their beliefs of the absurdity of the claims.\textsuperscript{39}

Both the Delaware and Pawnee claimed a relationship to power based on their tenure on different lands. Delaware claims to a fictive kinship and progenitor status were superficially ridiculous, but from a more metaphorical standpoint, the Lenni Lenape considered themselves literally “the original people” and constituted a broad cultural group, transformed by time and space into an amalgamation that could speak for all Indians. Their power came from travelling and gathering scattered people under the broad cloak of the Delaware. Chief William Anderson outlined the idea to Clark in the 1820s when the former suggested that he considered the regional powers of the Platte to be his grandchildren and lamented that they were perpetually at war. Speaking in the broadest terms of pan-Indian leadership, he feared for his scattered people and requested help to consolidate the different nations. Because they had done so much to further federal policy, and would continue to do so in helping coalesce scattered Native American groups in the West, the Delaware required special status that included acknowledgment from their petulant grandchildren.\textsuperscript{40}

For the Pawnee, such talk, even in metaphors, was nonsense. Despite the recent Delaware victory, the Pawnee outnumbered the smaller tribe almost ten to one in military strength. Their power came from spatial dominance rooted in the sense of permanence on the land. Pawnee origin mythology looked to the west and to the north, centered on what they considered divinely-granted Pawnee land.\textsuperscript{41} Identity as hunters and warriors, the rituals and

\textsuperscript{39} Irving, \textit{Indian Sketches}, 2:278-81.
\textsuperscript{40} Richard C. Anderson, \textit{A Delaware Indian Legend and the Story of their Troubles}, (Washington, D.C.: Richard C. Adams, 1899); Anderson to Clark, February 22 and 29, 1828, both in LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.
training carried on by each village and each warrior, emerged from this spatially oriented mythology. Games of skill played before others, where men launched a spear through a rolling four-inch ring, was both good training and symbolic of the ability to hunt and fight anywhere across the plains, to hit a fixed point, and continue the cultural heritage of Pawnee as masters of their space.\textsuperscript{42} To look beyond their own rituals, their own heritage, their own space for origins or allegiance was fantastical. The mutual antipathy of the Pawnee and Delaware remained rooted in their conceptions of self in their space.

With a fictional family tree settled, the more difficult task of securing the regional peace commenced. As with the displays of masculine leadership at the Pawnee villages, the delegates comported themselves as embodiments of martial power and within white observer tropes of savage versus civilized Indians. Wild Horse, who earlier captured Irving’s attention, embodied that principle of stoic immunity to physical discomfort as he appeared on a cold autumn day barely clothed. He spoke in measured lines of simple truth, as he said, “I cannot lie, for I am a Pawnee chief.” He was the archetype of the wild, noble warrior. Those with longer histories of white interaction were feminized and clothed like whites in Irving’s record. They appeared as objects of mockery who merely parroted behavior.\textsuperscript{43} These were familiar literary tropes.

Even accounting for Irving’s reliance on the tired tropes of Indian nobility, the assessment of Pawnee leaders as epitomes of raw martial masculinity underscored the importance of comportment in the confined space of the council circle. Seated opposite bitter enemies, ones who boasted of their exploits and exhibited white habits of jeering their

\textsuperscript{43} Irving, \textit{Indian Sketches}, 2:274-7, 284.
opponents, Pawnee stoicism, marked only by smiles of “scorn at the frivolous deportment of their enemies,” garnered admiration.\textsuperscript{44} Pawnee leaders earned respect for their restraint.

More difficult than the Delaware-Pawnee reconciliation was that between the Pawnee and their seemingly eternal enemies the Kansa. The day following the Delaware council, longtime Kansa chief Now-Pe-Warai rose to needle the Pawnee into a violent outburst and curry favor with his American benefactors.\textsuperscript{45} Representing the Pawnee as a “mean and miserly race – perfidious and revengeful,” he did his best to provoke, but to no avail. Calming his subordinates and thrice stifling his own anger, Pitahawirata chief Skalahlaysharo (The Only Chief), performed an admirable feat of diplomatic judo, dodging the attack and flipping the power dynamic with a deft recital of Kansa outrages and behavior that reclaimed the Pawnee moral high ground.\textsuperscript{46} These preliminaries were necessary for the larger negotiations among the fourteen groups invited to Fort Leavenworth.

General negotiations began in the second week of November between representatives of the Delaware, Shawnee, Kickapoo, Potawatomie, Ottawa, Peoria and Kaskaskia, Weas, Otoes, Omaha, Kansa, Iowa, Sauk, Piankashaw, Osage, and all four Pawnee bands. The signatories agreed to “mutually covenant with each other, and bind ourselves . . . maintain peace, to respect the rights of persons, and property, and to do all in their power to perpetuate the friendship.”\textsuperscript{47}

In some respects, the treaty erased regional history as it wiped out past transgressions to break the cycle of retributive justice killings. Acts of personal violence became acts of

\textsuperscript{44} Irving, \textit{Indian Sketches}, 2:285-6.
\textsuperscript{45} Now-Pe-Warai was a long-term recipient of federal bribes and gifts that ensured his own political power over a faction of the Kansa, even going so far as to request federal officials to police his own people. Now-Pe-Warai to Clark, May 17, 1827, LROIA: StLS, Roll 748.
criminality with offenders subject to arrest and prosecution by federal authorities, not *casus belli* for new wars. The realignment imposed a white American conception of property rights as paramount to maintaining security. “No private revenge shall be sought, and all damages sustained by either tribe in any party is hereby cancelled, settled, and forgiven,” it read. Furthermore, “any individual shall have the right to prefer claim against any other individual of another tribe, for horses lost or stolen, or any other property wrongfully taken, or detained; to the adjustment of the umpire [federally designated official] hereafter mentioned.” For chiefs, such a scheme held some appeal in that they would not be held responsible for the behavior of their young warriors, who now assumed personal responsibility for raids.

Federal officials merely acted as brokers fulfilling their duty to protect emigrants and settle differences per Removal policy and prior treaties. The distinction remained important as this was not a federal dictation, but a mutually negotiated and accepted treaty by independent polities. They still held control of their foreign policies, even if they were nudged by the United States. By agreeing that the “flag of the United States shall be our protection, and token of friendship, whenever and wherever we meet,” federal authority became the guarantor of diplomatic norms and further solidified the United States as the emergent regional power.

The degree to which Ellsworth, the seven Indian agents, and other officials present sought to remake Indian Country norms of behavior was significant. The scope of the agreement suggested that federal legal norms—personal rather than collective rights and responsibilities and the paramount protection of personal property—dominated the new diplomatic frameworks of the regional political economy. It cancelled old tribal damage claims, replacing national rights

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with individual rights. It atomized regional powers and deprived them of their national standing as claimants. The United States became the symbolic and actual guarantor of the treaty.\textsuperscript{50}

Removal policies could now proceed with a regional peace. The ambitious regional legal transformation attempted to make intractable and impossibly large problems manageable as micro issues easily adjusted without treaties, conferences, and the expense of controlling nations. Federal sovereignty remained at the heart of the agreement. With the legally establish doctrine of federal sovereignty over the regional powers, government officials could claim, at least to their own satisfaction, that the United States extended authority over previously independent tribes and established a framework for territorial management.

Articles four and seven established a new paradigm of regional governance. Article four called for an annual assembly of representatives for the tribes. The provision did what the United States had for decades desperately tried to avoid: pan-Indian political connections. Article seven went further by providing the framework for an expansion of the regional body to include later signatories: the Osage, newly removed Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminoles living north of Red River.\textsuperscript{51} As part of the larger effort to create a Western Territory, this body was a racially modified version of prior territorial expansion. The 1834 bill from the House of Representatives to create the territory proposed a governing council for the associated Native Americans, albeit one subject to veto and dissolution of the body by the territorial governor. A judicial system composed of chiefs would settle law. An Indian delegate to Congress would represent a region defined along strict borderlines between white and Native America. Bringing together diverse and unruly people under the umbrella of federal control was step one toward Jackson’s publicly stated plan for including this new, wild space within federal

\textsuperscript{50} “General Treaty of Peace,” in Everett, \textit{Regulating the Indian Department}, 406.

\textsuperscript{51} “General Treaty of Peace,” in Everett, \textit{Regulating the Indian Department}, 406.
governance. It seemingly answered Jefferson’s question about inclusion of Native Americans in the federal system. Per the racialist sentiments of the administration, of course, this meant first civilizing the savage inhabitants through imposing peace, controlling crime, policing bodies, and fully extending federal sovereignty over the space.52

While the proposed government council would police the body politic, local tribes were to police their own people. Enforcing stricter racial barriers included limiting white-Native American sexual encounters.53 In a private council with the Delaware and Shawnee, Ellsworth admonished the chiefs about the “chastity of your women. Among white men a harlot is despised. She is often diseased and never respected. There are some of your women in the habit of frequently sleeping with white men, and by these men have children. Let me tell you if you become a happy nation, you must restrain your women from intercourse with bad men.” While the chiefs agreed, they lamented that whites were too rich to resist and that “we have no laws and our great father does not put into execution those he makes himself.”54 Governing Indian bodies required more direct control both at the local and regional levels.

Ellsworth urged Commissioner of Indian Affairs Elbert Herring to pressure Congress to support the agreement as a necessary step toward Indian civilization.55 Within the broader historical context of American fears about pan-Indian confederacies this was a big request.

Federal help to organize a local governing body and defray the costs of gathering representatives

52 President Jackson’s Message to Congress “On Indian Removal,” December 6, 1830; Records of the United States Senate, 1789-1990; Record Group 46; Records of the United States Senate, 1789-1990; National Archives; Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era*, 140-2.
53 Fears of bodily corruption pervaded American thoughts at the council and the commission’s travels beforehand. Irving routinely observed what he considered the damaging effects close contact between whites and Indians, for the latter. The civilized tribes he chided for adopting the bad habits of whites in speech, dress, deportment, and character, without any benefits. Indians close to whites were degraded from a noble savage ideal. Irving, *Indian Sketches*, 2:216-17, 270-82;
54 Ellsworth to Herring, no date, “Appendix I,” LROIA: WS, Roll 921. Neither this section of Appendix I nor the previous Appendix H appeared in the final printed version of the report published by Congress in 1834.
55 Ellsworth to Herring, November 14, 1833, LROIA: WS, Roll 921.
was a dramatic departure from previous policy of limiting Native American alliance building and actively dividing nations against themselves.\textsuperscript{56}

Ellsworth’s efforts were underappreciated by his superiors. When correspondence finally caught up with him in December, he learned that government parsimony was again threatening to overturn the hard work of officials in the field. For want of funds, instructions from Washington were “to delay in accomplishing with all possible dispatch, the objects named in the first instructions – Among the most important of these were the difficulties between the northern tribes; the Delawares Pawnees and others.” Without his work, Ellsworth argued, no chance to resolve the regional war was available until the following July. Only a general peace could begin the process of civilization reforms among the nations north of the Platte.\textsuperscript{57}

Ellsworth’s efforts allowed a Pawnee delegation to travel safely to Fort Gibson for meetings with the Osage, Cherokee, Creek, and Choctaw precedent to peace negotiations. The efforts also revealed a fundamental ignorance of the diplomatic relationships of the region. Stokes decried the trip as useless, but Ellsworth corrected the record as “the Pawnees of the Platte are at war \textit{indiscriminately}, with all south of the Kanza river.” Southern nations “considered the Pawnee Picts [Wichita] and the Pawnees of the Platte to be the same people, connected by language and by blood. How important to show them the difference between the American and Mexican Indians. Among 10,000 Pawnees of the Platte, only one could be found

\textsuperscript{56} The pervasiveness of American fears of hostile Indian confederacies remained a strong undercurrent of frontier official thinking within the Indian department staff. Memories of the 1790s and 1810s wars in the Old Northwest and Red Stick War in the South remained potent forces galvanizing whites along the edges of the American settlements. Reports of Arikara trying to unite the Sioux, Mandan, and other northern tribes into an anti-American confederacy in 1824 prompted mobilization and cautious preparations for war by the Fort Snelling garrison. Snelling to unknown (Secretary of War?), April 11, 1824, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883. Fears about Black Hawk uniting regional Native American nations prompted outrage at the lack of federal effort to quash any such proposals. William Campbell to Jackson, June 17, 1832, LROIA: StLS, Roll 750.
\textsuperscript{57} Ellsworth to Herring, December 11, 1833, LROIA: WS, Roll 921.
who understands the language of the Picts!” Fifty Pawnee and Otoe representatives met another 100 Osage as well as Cherokee leaders who all appeared eager to settle differences.

Such eagerness revealed the difficulties faced by those north and south of the Platte. Pawnee efforts to secure their southern boundaries to refocus on the Sioux and Cheyenne meant they could ill-afford to alienate the newly arrived people. Repeated concerns about the Comanche and Wichita, the latter too often mistaken for the northern relations, revealed deep concerns about the safety of any proposed Western Territory. In an earlier council with the Osage, the commissioners reassured leaders nervous about repeated Comanche and Wichita raids should the Osage resettle as the Creek and Cherokee. “Your Great Father will erect forts soon, and put soldiers in them, out on the Arkansas, Canadian and Red Rivers, west of your settlements,” the commissioners promised. In addition to making peace, “you may therefore be assured your Great Father will protect you in your farms, and no one shall hurt you, for your Great Father has a great many soldiers who can, in a short time, kill all the wild Indians that hurt his red children here.” It was a wildly presumptuous claim given the limited forces available, but revelatory of federal thinking about spatial control based on direct military dominance. The claims echoed Congressional ignorance of the frontier in suggesting the Comanche were dissipating as a threat and could be easily handled.

4.3 Territorial Reorganization and the Arrival of Missionaries and Dragoons

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58 Ellsworth to Herring, December 11, 1833, LROIA: WS, Roll 921.
59 Stokes to Cass, December 17, 1833; Ellsworth to Herring, December 11, 1833, both in LROIA: WS, Roll 921.
60 “Journal of the Proceedings of a Council held by the U.S. Commissioners with the Osage Indians commencing at the Great Saline upon Neosha River, on the 25th of Feb 1833,” in Stokes to Cass, December 17, 1833, LROIA: WS, Roll 921.
61 Everett, Regulating the Indian Department, 22. The Everett report suggested that only 1000 Comanche warriors posed a limited threat to the Removed tribes, in total ignorance of the reality of Comanche power.
Federal concerns about the fragility of any peace with the Pawnee or their neighbors, and the limited ability to enforce policy at its territorial margins pushed the War Department toward a more active presence on the Great Plains. Stabilizing the new Indian Territory and projecting power through the creation of the Mounted Rangers, a temporary and ineffective solution, and eventually the United States Dragoon Regiment, changed the regional strategic situation. The United States had the capability to enter what the Pawnee heretofore considered their exclusive space in force.

Pawnee leaders scrambled to adapt to the new reality. The War Department remained concerned about the Pawnee reputation for unchecked hostility along the Santa Fe Road. Rumored hostile movements reported by traders fueled the fears. Dougherty, commenting about the ignorance of Washington officials, reassured Clark that he “never found them so friendly disposed as during the last year.” Moreover, he usually attributed Pawnee hostile actions along the Santa Fe Road to misidentification by scared whites who “are generally unacquainted with the various and mischievous tribes who roam over the country between our western borders and Santa Fe therefore their inability to distinguish one tribe from another.”

He may have been right. Pawnee policy suggested that their primary concern was to bring federal officials into a closer strategic partnership. They “have never evinced so good and friendly feelings towards both the whites and their Red neighbors,” Dougherty claimed, and “express a strong desire to have their Farmers, Teachers, and Blacksmiths located at their towns next spring.” The Pawnee further promised to leave behind a sufficient security force to protect the government employees. Pawnee intentions as reported to federal officials revealed a more circumspect view of their spatial limits to refocus on their core. Dougherty opined that they

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62 Dougherty to Clark, August 15, 1834, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
were “truly desirous of being instructed in the domestic arts,” though he remained unable to see the rationale as part of the larger strategic shift. Notwithstanding government obligations and desires, however, Dougherty recommended against the immediate fulfilment of treaty provisions as a waste until the Pawnee demonstrated their actual desires to remain at home. If the Sioux and Pawnee were brought to peace terms, as they implored Dougherty to arrange, treaty obligations could be fulfilled easily.\(^63\)

This was a big if. Sioux aggressions turned the formerly formidable Arikara into refugees who desperately sought alliance and protection with their Pawnee neighbors. The Pawnee in turn threaded a fine diplomatic needle of gaining necessary allies to the north while not upsetting Americans with memories of Arikara hostility. For Dougherty, such a relation suggested the Arikara could “be more easily controlled, when located at the Pawnees.” For the Pawnee, the Arikara offered significant numbers of veteran fighters to add to the growing anti-Sioux coalition around the Platte. This latter consideration did give Dougherty pause. “The Pawnees are a very numerous and powerful tribe, (particularly if the Rees should be attached to them),” he wrote to Clark, “all the other tribes together of my agency are small, and of much less importance.” A military presence and shift in agency business to Fort Leavenworth was necessary to impress them with federal power. Given that “Our intercourse with them is increasing so rapidly,” at the fort Dougherty “would have it in his power to keep the Dept. and the commanding military officer on the frontiers better informed of everything going on among the Indians.”\(^64\) Dougherty’s repeated requests to move the agency from Bellevue to Fort Leavenworth followed his understanding of the need for an increasingly militarized conduct of Indian affairs and interest in direct control. Clark denied the requests.

\(^{63}\) Dougherty to Clark, November 2, 1834, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
\(^{64}\) Dougherty to Clark, November 2, 1834, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
In their 1834 annuity council, Pawnee leaders reported their readiness to comply with the treaty. Big Axe pointed toward the wealth and power disparities as the primary reasons for the pivot to the United States. “We know the whites are wise and rich – we know that their ways are better than our ways; therefore, we want to learn of them,” he told Dougherty, not from a willingness to abandon Pawnee ways, but to learn the secrets of white power. “I love the white man; the white man cannot cry in the prairie but, I will be there to assist him,” he continued, “I want to know something of the great religion which you have among you; and if any of those people who come to teach us about the Great Spirit, and how to write, will come to my lodge, I will see that they shall be neither cold nor hungry.” Such words sounded nice, even if they were merely calculated to placate federal officials to produce the alliance Big Axe sought.

Pawnee eagerness to welcome government workers and missionaries revealed the shift in strategic focus already occurring by the close of 1834. Accepting the missionaries John Dunbar and Samuel Allis from the interdenominational American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions did not represent a fundamental rejection of Pawnee culture. It fit within the Pawnee cosmology of incorporating new ideas and sources of spiritual and temporal power. As Dunbar related upon his arrival at the Pawnee villages, several chiefs were eager for their sons to read to better serve as political go-betweens with the white world and incorporate new forms of power.

Federal policymakers felt none of the constraints or pressures limiting the Pawnee chiefs. Washington officialdom entered 1834 on a wave of critical successes in transforming the West. Cass’s long-term project to remake federal Indian policy appeared successful with the exception of curbing Sioux aggression. His commissioners forwarded recommendations for territorial government that respected local Indian autonomy in domestic legal affairs, tribal sovereignty

65 Big Axe, Speech, October 18, 1834, in Dougherty to Clark, November 12, 1834. LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
66 John Dunbar, Journal, November 11, 1834, PML, 129.
within specific boundaries, and allowed for direct yet unobtrusive federal control in all other areas, with an American governor situated at Fort Leavenworth to exert military control.\textsuperscript{67}

Cass forwarded the recommendations to Congress as part of his plan for a systemic overhaul of Indian affairs he had initiated as secretary of War. His was merely the latest reform effort. His predecessors, especially Calhoun and to an extent Eaton, also tinkered with the system resulting in a bureaucratic mess by the 1830s. Horace Everett’s House Committee on Indian Affairs suggested that “so manifestly defective and inadequate is our present system, that an immediate revision seems to be imperiously demanded.” The department itself was “of doubtful origin and authority. Its administration is expensive, inefficient, and irresponsible,” and that the “committee have sought, in vain, for any lawful authority for the appointment of a majority of the agents and subagents of Indian Affairs now in office.”\textsuperscript{68}

In addition to the normal desires for economy and streamlined authority, the report showed the shift in federal strategic thinking. Previously, the report argued, “conciliation was sought; but the time is now passed when the fear of Indian hostility should be a leading feature of our Indian intercourse.” After decades of wars coupled with fears about pan-Indian confederacies and foreign influence, the United States was finally asserting its control. The federal relationship to Native Americans “is now that of the strong to the weak, and demands at our hands a more liberal policy, as well directed to promote their welfare as our political

\textsuperscript{67} Stokes, Ellsworth, and Schermerhorn to Cass, “Report of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs, West,” February 10, 1834, “Appendix T,” in Everett, Regulating the Indian Department, 100, 129.

\textsuperscript{68} Everett, Regulating the Indian Department, 1-3. Among other recommendations the committee wanted to reduce the staff of the department, eliminate what it deemed unnecessary agencies, and geographically consolidate the administration that included the possible closure of the Council Bluffs Agency. That this position came up even as a proposal shows the fundamental lack of knowledge about the state of federal diplomacy and strength in the Platte Valley. The assumption that the Pawnee were now solidly within the federal sphere of influence as pliable clients, a view prevalent among Stokes and others unfamiliar with the local situation, conveniently downplayed the difficulties remaining in projecting federal power in the region, especially with the heretofore untested dragoons who had yet to make their first expeditions deep into the West.
Adopting this mindset of federal supremacy, even with the limited recent successes of the commissioners, meant that federal policy and bureaucracy reforms could be dictated from positions of strength and control. It was the hubris of victors who viewed lines on a map as definitive markers. Policy makers removed from the Platte remained ignorant of the spatial and diplomatic realities that nullified claims to finality. The report and map showed a disconnect between federal officials who assumed the Pawnee to be controllable and the reality on the ground that the Pawnee still held considerable independent power.

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69 Everett, *Regulating the Indian Department*, 10-11.
Image 11 is a map by George Washington Hood, a leading cartographer in the Army’s department of topographical engineers. Hood’s map delineated the new tribal boundaries and proposed Western Territory. This map was a cartographic sleight of hand, demonstrating a wishful understanding of Indian Country and its boundaries. Suggesting that the Pawnee core
ended along clear lines to the west and north was pure fiction.70 Pawnee leaders at no point ceded any land or claims toward the west. Their policy shifts to the United States in fact were designed to free their military power to continue raiding west against the Cheyenne. It was a useful tool for Congressional action and federal claims, but held little basis in the reality of the Platte Valley. To an extent, factual reality did not matter. Federal policymakers felt comfortable that such boundaries could be implemented, at least over time.

The House committee proposed three bills to completely reorganize federal Indian policy: a revised trade and intercourse act, an authorization of the Indian Office within the War Department, and the proposed Western Territory. This was merely the latest effort at reform following previous overhaul attempts by Calhoun and each of his successors. The report and bills received general support from the administration and broader Jacksonian party. Writing about the sweeping reform efforts, the National Intelligencer argued that “the report seems, with a view to secure a real reform, to have avoided all topics of a culpatory character, or [ones] that could be used to excite party considerations.”71 The first two bills were non-partisan administrative reform measures and passed in June 1834.72

Fears from both Jacksonian and anti-Jackson factions combined to stall the plan for a Western Territory. From his perch in the House of Representatives, former President John Quincy Adams thought creating and admitting a territory of Indians was unconstitutional and dangerous for Eastern states’ power. Other opponents feared such a territory increased executive

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70 Prepared by Lt. Washington Hood of the Topographical Engineers, the map showed distinctive boundaries that theoretically settled many of the problems of competing territorial claims. The Western Territory would encompass all the land west of the Missouri, south of the Platte, and west of the Missouri and Arkansas state lines, running along the Mexican border.

71 National Intelligencer, June 28, 1834.

72 “An Act to regulate trade and intercourse with the Indian tribes, and to preserve peace on the frontiers,” June 30, 1834, ch.161, 4 Stat. 729; “An act to provide for the organization of the department of Indian affairs,” June 30, 1834, ch. 162, 4 Stat. 735.
and military power over territorial governance. Virginian William S. Archer revealed the deep antipathies to racial mixing underlying Removal and warned that opening admission to Native Americans might be a precursor to extending similar rights to African Americans. This congressional wrangling undercut the plan for an Indian-governed territory negotiated by the commissioners in favor of a more draconian approach of direct federal control. The land south of the Platte would be governed by a federal policy of strict economic and racial segregation under the Trade and Intercourse Act and enforced by military power. Local government was limited. Adjudication of disputes would be within the federal courts of Missouri and Arkansas where Indians remained at a disadvantage. As historian Ronald Satz wrote of the legislation, it “placed Indian emigrants at the mercy of the white man’s conception of justice.” This was a dictatorial system of direct rule rather than the tutelary model of republican governance Ellsworth negotiated.73

Washington’s focus on the Western Territory importantly took federal attention away from the Pawnee and the Upper Missouri. Ellsworth, Schermerhorn, and Stokes reported their findings from the previous two years of travel and negotiations in February 1834. The commissioners “hoped the numerous Sioux and other still more northern tribes or bands will ere long embrace the opportunity afforded by the terms of pacification, for their admission to the same,” but provided no evidence this was even contemplated by the Sioux. The report suggested wishful thinking alone would be sufficient to settle the conflicts north of the Platte.74

commissioners and Congress assumed the Pawnee would remain at home to protect the
government employees, thereby giving up their hunts and war expeditions per the 1833 treaty.75

The commissioners argued that peace could be maintained through a massive expansion
of forts in two concentric rings, “on the borders of the Indian country and the state of Missouri
and Arkansas Territory. The other in the interior, on the western line of the agricultural district,
extending from Red river to the Upper Missouri.” Placing a garrison on the Platte, above the
Chaui village, and at least one on the Upper Missouri in Sioux country was “indispensably
necessary for the peace and protection of the Indian country, that this tribe should cease to make
war and commit depredations on their neighbors . . . [in] their extensive country.” Echoing
decades-long calls for a mobile strike force, the commission pushed for a strategy of active
intervention deep into Indian Country by the dragoons. Strongpoints anchoring an extensive
annual or bi-annual patrol route by an impressive corps whose “active and martial appearance”
was the military force best suited to the peculiarities of the regions.76

It was a curious mix of wishful thinking and direct military control unlike anything
previously attempted in the West, even the experiment of Fort Atkinson. Yet little came of the
report’s call for direct military involvement. The appearance of the U.S. Dragoons in December
1833 proved a sea-change in strategic power on the Plains and at least partly justified the
arrogance of policy makers. Authorized in March 1833, and deployed by December, the
dragoons slowly replaced the mounted rangers who had struggled to protect themselves from the
Comanche and Wichita, let alone project federal power.77 Colonel Henry Dodge’s arrival at Fort

75 Stokes, Ellsworth, Schermerhorn to Cass, February 10, 1834, “Appendix T,” in Everett, Regulating the Indian
Department, 93.
76 Stokes, Ellsworth, Schermerhorn to Cass, February 10, 1834, “Appendix T,” in Everett, Regulating the Indian
Department, 91-93.
77 In June 1833, George Abbey of the Mounted Rangers under Captain Nathan Boone was captured by the Wichita.
The rangers were unable to secure his release or win departmental approval to mount a rescue effort. E. D. W.
Scrags to Cass, December 18, 1833; Jonathan Abbey, Sr. to Cass, April 25, 1834, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
Gibson in the midst of the Pawnee conference with the southern Indians produced an immediate effect on Pawnee strategic thinking. “The arrival of the dragoons was at a lucky moment just as the Pawnees and Otoes reached the garrison,” reported commission secretary Edward Ellsworth, as “the wild Indians expressed much curiosity to see what they have called the ‘horse soldiers.’” Parading his men before the assembled Cherokee, Creek, Pawnee, Otoe, Osage, and Seneca, Dodge was finally able to show federal power on par with the expert horsemen of the Pawnee. But this was an illusion. The dragoons were mostly for show and barely organized as a unit. Cavalry was expensive, patrols cost money, and forts in the far West for support would be even costlier, which made the report’s recommendations impractical at least in the near-term.

Congressional reluctance to fund western military and Indian policy in general usually meant that a robust expansion of the Army’s role in the West was a non-starter. Recent experiences of Santa Fe caravans, continual pushes from officials about the need for mounted men, and the panic of the Blackhawk War pushed Congress toward reconsidering the need for expanded military presence in the West, including cavalry. As a former western governor, Cass knew the importance of forts:

The stockaded works erected in Indian country, are important to overawe the Indians, and to retrain their perpetual disposition to war. Under any circumstances, in peace or war, they must be retained and supported. They command the great avenues of communication into the country; they cover the whole frontier; they protect our citizens in the various employment required by

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78 Ellsworth to Herring, December 24, 1833, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
79 Federal officials clamoring for more cavalry to counter mounted Native American nations had a political ally in Jacksonian Democrat Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri who argued for an increased military presence on the Plains to protect trade and show the flag. By 1833, the debate was not about whether to have a mounted force, but over how that force would be constituted. Those advocating for mounted rangers had to face facts that by 1833, the corps was twice as costly as a regular dragoon regiment to maintain ($297,530 vs. $143,598), ill-disciplined, and ineffective, even if it did conform to romanticized notions of the citizen-soldier protecting his own backyard. The conversion of the rangers into the dragoon regiment presented difficulties of mixing amateur political appointees with West Point professionals, and it took several years for the officer corps and enlisted personnel to sort themselves out into a professional unit. Cass, “Annual Report,” November 25, 1832, ASP:MA, 5:18-9; Robert Wooster, The American Military Frontiers: The United States Army in the West, 1783-1900 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), 78-82.
their duties, public and private, and they produce a moral effect upon the Indians, which is visible and permanent.\textsuperscript{80}

He also understood the growing importance of mobility as they key to an expansive federal strategy. Creating the U.S. cavalry force, however, was more difficult in reality.

The dragoons’ initial appearance in December 1833 did little besides announce their arrival. The first real dragoon campaign to visit the Comanche, Wichita, and Kiowa 250 miles to the west of Fort Gibson in the summer of 1834 was a disaster. Of 500 men, only 200 reached the destination fit for duty, the rest falling out from sickness and exhaustion, with as many as 100 succumbing to their illnesses. Accompanying the regiment, artist George Catlin labeled the whole affair “this most disastrous campaign.”\textsuperscript{81} Despite the embarrassing first campaign, Cass remained undeterred in his evolution toward mobile military force. One company escorted the Santa Fe caravan while the remainder showed the flag along the southwest border. Washington finally had the capabilities to project power onto the Great Plains, albeit with very mixed results in the initial forays. The mobility of the cavalry, the security afforded by treaties with the border nations, and the confidence in Removal policy writ large suggested federal comfort with extending unfettered American dominion to the Rocky Mountains, or so policy makers assumed.

A similar exuberance about U.S. political and cultural power undergirded the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and their efforts to establish more western outposts. The interdenominational board drew most of its support from Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and the Dutch Reformed churches. It funded 33 different mission stations,

\textsuperscript{80} HR 42, 19\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 1\textsuperscript{st} sess., serial 141, 13. This report from 1826 on military roads and fortifications in Michigan shows Cass’s long-term position about the importance of an American military presence deep into Indian country as a symbol of state power.

claimed 900 Indian converts, and 1000 students enrolled in its schools. Originally sent to scout locations west of the Rockies in the spring of 1834, Samuel Allis, John Dunbar, and Samuel Parker were dissuaded by Dougherty who advised them to work with the Pawnee who were eager for assistance.\textsuperscript{82} Initially more ethnographers than missionaries, the group was dismayed by Pawnee callousness about death, suffering, and medicine. Dunbar exclaimed to his journal that “the sight of my eyes affected my heart. I felt solemn. But this is only the beginning of my witnessing heathenism in real life.” Such moral superiority was to be expected, as were commentaries about male idleness, women treated as “mere slaves,” and the grudging respect for Indians who went out of their way to make life comfortable for their guests.\textsuperscript{83} Rather than immediately dictating new ways of life to the Pawnee, the missionaries sought to learn the language and customs, and establish themselves as model American Christians, farmers, and teachers as ambassadors of soft power. Conversions would take place once the cultural fields were prepared and the Pawnee recognized what Dunbar and Allis already considered to be their own innate superiority.

Pawnee responses to the missionaries ranged from indifference to welcoming. Performative claims to cultural and physical space showed what language barriers could not: Pawnee dominance and confidence in their internal structures as a people that had “less intercourse with the whites, than almost any tribe on this side of the mountains.”\textsuperscript{84} Dunbar’s journal recorded numerous instances where Pawnee actions showed their confidence in behavioral norms including treatment of guests. As they had with cultural interlopers like the Paul Wilhelm and John Irving, Pawnee leaders brought Dunbar into their centers of power, the

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\textsuperscript{82} Jensen, \textit{PML}, 38-45; Rice, “Gazing Westward, Watching God,” 44, 46.
\textsuperscript{83} Dunbar, Journal, October 21, 1834, \textit{PML}, 121, 138-9, 147.
\textsuperscript{84} Dunbar, Journal, April 2, 1835, \textit{PML}, 142.
\end{flushright}
rituals surrounding the sacred bundles at the heart of chiefly cosmic authority. Describing a feast of thanksgiving to Terawah [Tirawahut], whom Dunbar assumed to be a Christian-like God of the Pawnee, he witnessed the opening of a sacred bundle, the rituals of the feast, the speeches which he did not understand, and was given an equal share of the sacrifice. Assumining his status as that of a regular guest, Dunbar did not appreciate the diplomatic significance of the scene. He was invited into the heart of Pawnee religious and political circles to demonstrate that they needed little of his theology. He was there as a useful guest. Whereas previous efforts to impress visitors had their intended effects, Dunbar was either unable or unwilling given his missionary zeal and aversion to heathenism, to accept the Pawnee claims over their sacred political spaces.

Treaties and missionaries did not diminish the Pawnee conceptions of their regional control. Dunbar suggested in March 1835, that Pawnee men were “abominably lazy” as “they say their proper business is killing buffalo and war,” and “since the recent treaty with the United States, they have been obliged to give up the last mentioned business,” and now lounge away their time. Yet such optimism about Pawnee docility belied the centrality of war to their cosmology. Witnessing a village-wide festival two weeks later, Dunbar noted the importance of Cheyenne scalps within the ceremonies, scalps that remained prominently displayed as trophies and marks of Pawnee dominance. The realignment simply shifted the focus of Pawnee military power westward.

4.4 Dragoons Move West

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85 Dunbar, Journal, April 2, 1835, PML, 144.
86 Dunbar, Journal, March 3, 1835, PML, 139.
87 Dunbar, Journal, March 20, 1835, PML, 140-1.
The disasters of the 1834 dragoon campaign did not deter Army leaders from renewing the push westward in 1835. Now able to showcase federal power, the War Department used the dragoons to insert a vision of sovereignty where few U.S. officials had previously ventured. Mobile power offered a way to contain Pawnee westward movements; begin bringing the Cheyenne and Arapahoe into the federal orbit; and patrol the nebulous border with Mexico.

In 1835, one dragoon company patrolled the Osage boundary from Fort Gibson. Three more scouted the Des Moines River. Three others based at Fort Leavenworth received orders in March to ride for the Rockies on a diplomatic mission and show of force.88 They left Fort Leavenworth on May 29. Colonel Henry Dodge commanded about 120 men with a small wagon and mule train, two swivel guns, and a herd of cattle to supply the march. Agent Dougherty and former captain turned Indian trader John Gantt who had served at Fort Atkinson, accompanied the detachment. Their march, with stops at the Otoe, Omaha, Pawnee, Arikara, Cheyenne, and other nations covered 1,600 miles. It partially replicated the exploration route of Major Stephen

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88 There are three accounts of this expedition, the official report prepared by Lt. G. P. Kingsbury as the official diarist and submitted by Colonel Henry Dodge. The second was a journal kept by Sergeant Hugh Evans, orderly sergeant of Company G. Evans’s journal ends abruptly in August 1835, despite making the return to Fort Leavenworth in October. The third was a journal kept by Captain Lemuel Ford, commanding company G and a holdover officer from the Mounted Rangers. Henry Dodge, “Journal of the march of a detachment of dragoons, under the command of Colonel Dodge, during the summer of 1835,” ASP:MA, 6:130-46; Hugh Evans, “Hugh Evans’ Journal of Colonel Henry Dodge’s Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in 1835,” Fred S. Perrine, ed. Mississippi Valley Historical Review 14, no. 2 (Sept. 1927): 192-214; Lemuel Ford, “Captain Ford’s Journal of an Expedition to the Rocky Mountains,” Louis Pelzer, ed. Mississippi Valley Historical Review 12, no. 4 (Mar. 1926): 550-579. Prucha, Sword of the Republic, 373-5. Prucha suggests the importance of what he terms “the most extensive military campaign yet undertaken in the West”—discounting the Yellowstone Expedition—and its success in showing the flag among nations not accustomed to dealing with the United States, but does not examine what the campaign meant for Native American foreign affairs. Recent scholarship does not place nearly as much importance on this expedition. Wooster dismisses it in a two-sentence blurb outlining the route taken and nations met, but assigns no significance. Wooster, American Military Frontiers, 81. Watson does not mention the 1835 expedition directly, implying the dragoons under the politically appointed Dodge were ineffective remnants of the Mounted Rangers and only saved by Dodge’s promotion to the territorial governorship of Wisconsin, a move that allowed twenty-four-year Army veteran Stephen Watts Kearny to professionalize the force. Watson, Peacekeepers and Conquerors, 59.
Long in 1820, albeit as a force of pacification rather than a small exploring party.\(^{89}\) This was the most formidable, professional American expedition to go west of Council Bluffs. Most importantly, it was a mobile force free from dependence on rivers or orders to protect Santa Fe convoys.

After meetings in June with the Iowa, Otoe, and Omaha, the dragoons proceeded to the Pawnee villages. The welcome the troops received was reminiscent of that which greeted the Ellsworth commission and intended as a display of continued Pawnee power. After halting the column to meet with the principal chief Angry Man, the troopers faced the same mock attack from several hundred Pawnee warriors who displayed their horsemanship and surrounded the command. Captain Ford was unimpressed and thought the warriors possessed “a great deal of Timidaty,” and while they made “quite a display but I believe One hundred of our command could whip One thousand of them on the prararie.”\(^{90}\) More impressive to his military eye were the Pawnee earthen lodges, which he viewed as perfect fortifications impervious to small arms. Sergeant Evans was more impressed that the Pawnee possessed more “energy and enterprise about them that is if an Indian is supposed to possess interprise,” and that they had a shrewd eye for trade and the value of goods.\(^{91}\) Lieutenant Kingsbury recorded similarly favorable impressions of a rich country and a people “wanting but a little instruction and industry” to become fully civilized.\(^{92}\) Despite their recent military setbacks, the Pawnee retained a strong sense of core identity as military men and powerful brokers in the Great Plains trading networks.

Pawnee independence was most evident in their initial reactions to the arrival of the dragoons. To sow dissension between the Pawnee and their Arikara allies, a Kansa Indian

\(^{89}\) Prucha, *Sword of the Republic*, 373.
\(^{90}\) Ford, “Captain Ford’s Journal,” 556.
spread the rumor that the troops were there to exterminate the Arikara. The Arikara fled to their Skidi neighbors, so alarming the Pawnee that they prepared for war until reassured by Dougherty of the peaceful intentions of the troops.\footnote{Dodge, “Journal of a March of the Dragoons,” \textit{ASP:MA}, 6:133.} The Pawnee continued to exist outside of effective federal control and engaged in wars with the Cheyenne, Arapahoe, and Sioux as well as Santa Fe traders. They remained nervous about federal reprisals for these acts despite six years of efforts at rapprochement.

Lieutenant Kingsbury decried the Pawnee as “inveterate in their hostility,” and “if not restrained by the influence of the whites, would be very formidable to their enemies.” Yet their “high opinion of the power of the United States,” meant that it would be easy for the government to in a short time “exert a controlling influence over them.”\footnote{Dodge, “Journal of a March of the Dragoons,” \textit{ASP:MA}, 6:133.} Such a dissonant view of the Pawnee among the military observers reflected an inner tension among officers convinced of their newfound military power, but fundamentally unsure of their ability to reshape the regional geopolitics while the Pawnee retained their autonomous power.

Dodge and Dougherty met with the collected Pawnee on June 23, 1835, and set out to alleviate Pawnee fears and reinforce the necessity of settlement before a full reset in the relationship with the United States. Emphasizing the newfound federal role as regional peacemakers, Dodge offered his services and proof of his effort to settle inter-tribal wars in 1834. He wished to reprise the performance between the Cheyenne, Arapahoe, and Pawnee. Curiously, his insistence on Pawnee unity as “the first importance” that the four bands maintain a “friendly union” to prevent outside interference or “to lose your standing among your friends,” seemed to be at odds with a classic policy of divide and conquer. Pawnee unity and power were the problems for federal officials trying to penetrate Pawnee society with missionaries and
political overtures. Counseling the chiefs to handle instances of violence, raiding, or warfare as an internal Pawnee policing matters appeared to reverse course for unclear reasons.\textsuperscript{95} With the exception of some Skidi warriors who joined the Arikara in raids on the Cheyenne, Dougherty reported that Pawnee behavior for the preceding year was commendable.\textsuperscript{96} As far as he knew.

Perhaps the message was one of flattery to continue the process of ingratiating federal officials to Pawnee leaders in an appeal to the success of their leadership. More likely is that Dougherty realized, and counselled Dodge, that the Pawnee were not susceptible to shows of American force at their villages. Here the Pawnee were most secure in their power, as they demonstrated with their military displays. It was turning out to be a good year for the Pawnee. They had a “large and very promising crop of corn, beans, and pumpkins growing . . . and owing to the numerous hordes of Indians who have recently come along the east side of the Mountains . . . the Buffaloes have been driven in nearer to them than they have been for some time back.”\textsuperscript{97} The carrot of aid promised in 1833, if dispersed at that point, would have been useless government spending wasted on a people in a more secure position than at any point in years. Flattery and promises of help with foreign affairs were the only means to affect some changes in Pawnee-federal relations.

Pawnee responses offered more proof of a strengthened position. Angry Man of the Chaui strongly doubted federal desires for inter-tribal peace and internal policing, saying that only time would prove whether they heard, or more accurately, agreed with, Dodge’s talks. While Angry Man blamed his son-in-law Big Axe of the Skidi for causing the trouble, Big Axe claimed that his young warriors would not listen, despite the general change of heart among his

\textsuperscript{96} Dougherty to Clark, July 16, 1835, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
\textsuperscript{97} Dougherty to Clark, July 16, 1835, LROIA: UMA, Roll 883.
people for better relations. It was fundamentally the same argument presented again and again for federal officials: they were good chiefs who loved the Americans, and they tried to act as leaders and got punished for it by their people, but that they could not always control their young men who were to blame not listening to their wise leaders. Benjamin O’Fallon heard it in 1819. So had Dougherty in nearly every council since. It was a compelling fiction that could not be disproven and mended fences between leaders while preserving independent authority.

This responsibility shell game covered the internal debates among Pawnee leaders about the rapprochement and their relationship to neighboring tribes. Angry Man cited peace efforts as the main reason behind a newfound ability for safe travel and inter-Indian cooperation. “I am desirous to have as many red friends as possible wherever I go,” he told the council, hinting at the Pawnee need for more allies in their wars against the Sioux. Mole in the Face of the Kitkahahki reminded the council of the devastating effects of recent calamities on Pawnee leadership, that “our chiefs were all killed and our people lived like wolves.” Leaders of all four of the individual bands alluded to their dependence on federal gifts and favor for their continued power among their people. This was a half-truth. Their recent ascension to the leadership after the crises of 1831-3, their tenuous hold over the younger warriors, and the diplomatic challenges facing the collected Pawnee nation made good relations imperative.

Peace came at a price. Because of federal insistence on peace, “some of our friends accuse us of being squaws,” and that “makes some of our neighbors say we ought to wear petticoats,” lamented Angry Man. To maintain their chiefly authority, they needed to maintain their status as war leaders and brave men. To do so jeopardized their necessary shift toward a

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potential federal alliance. Previously, Pawnee leaders could accommodate both desires by making peace in the East and South and focusing military efforts on the West and North. There, wars with the Cheyenne and Sioux remained avenues for martial displays of chiefly authority where warriors could prove fitness for future command and office. Establishing a stark claim for the feminization of Pawnee leadership marked the lengths to which the chiefs were willing to go to please their federal counterparts.

Arguing within the lingua franca of martial diplomacy that their core political identity was under threat had worked well as a diplomatic tool in the past. It followed Petalesharoo’s 1819 pronouncement of feminine frailty if he acceded to federal requests to punish his young men. Like previous exchanges, such claims were easy enough to make in council and just as easily forgotten when Pawnee military attention turned toward their distant neighbors beyond the vision or reach of federal officials. From appearances in the council, the Pawnee leaders operated within the same diplomatic framework of the previous twenty years: offer apologies, argue their own weakness, display the reality of collected military might, and wait for the Americans to go back east after distributing their gifts. The turning point came the following day, June 24, when the command turned westward into the heart of a war zone.

Federal insistence on projecting power to the far West was in part to make peace between the Pawnee, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe. Two Skidi Pawnee accompanied the dragoons, ostensibly to assist in making peace with the western nations. More likely they were supposed to keep tabs on what the dragoons were actually doing.101 Meetings with the Arikara produced a universally favorable impression of a proud warrior nation long-feared by Americans in Indian Country.102

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102 Ford thought they were the wildest and most savage of any of the tribes they encountered, immune to cold, totally unreliable and devious, though he interestingly remarked their complexion as nearly white. Evans reported that the command feared attack from the Arikara at any moment. Even with only 300-400 warriors, they remained a feared
Arguing that the current Arikara course of constant warfare was unsustainable, Dodge pursued the twin goals of settling Native Americans on defined reservations and ensuring the regional peace requisite for spatial transformation. Becoming the friends of the United States, he argued, would guarantee the survival of their nation. Should they continue to attack Americans and make war with their neighbors, “ruin and destruction must await you.” He threatened the Arikara with swift future retribution and warned that his small force was a peace mission and not representative of the full military might of the United States. They had to choose between good and evil, upon which choice their national fate depended.103

At the heart of Dodge’s pronouncement was the larger federal belief in the power to affect realistic changes in the region. Describing his 1834 efforts to make peace in the Southwest and near Ft. Leavenworth, Dodge reiterated the federal conception of spatial dominance and thinking in terms of continental Indian policy that all the nations were interconnected. Leavenworth’s campaign of 1823 accomplished very little to change Arikara behavior, but the appearance of the mobile force of dragoons, combined with the very real threat of annihilation by the Sioux, meant a sea change in the limited options of the Arikara.104


104 Cox, “A World Together,” 175-9. Cox argues that being beset by too many enemies and turned into a nomadic people forced a change in behavior and closer alliance with the United States. Perhaps they viewed the federal promise of a reservation as a way back to their ancestral lands with some modicum of protection. The immediate effects of the expedition were not as dramatic as Dodge or the War Department hoped, but their belief in the ability to dictate changes was almost as important. It marked a turning point in federal thinking where military and Indian department officials could imagine ending harassment and murder of American traders and trappers, and policing the Western Plains beyond an occasional and ineffective punitive expedition. Ford recorded that traders Winters and Fallon left their military escort on July 8 to return to the Arikara to trade, suggesting a new sense of security for Americans. Ford, “Captain Ford’s Journal,” 560.
with turrets and rock-crowned battlements.” Awed by his surroundings, Evans recorded the “truly grand and majestic” view of the “beauty and sublimity of those Mountains” such that “every eye was struck with astonishment and wonder . . . [of] this grand scene of nature.”

Here was a confrontation with the North American wilderness in its purest form. It was at once a fortified, foreboding, and natural boundary, yet sublimely beautiful enough to capture the minds of each man in the command and draw men west just for a glimpse. The Rockies presented a very real problem for Dodge and his superiors. They formed a natural limit for federal power: cavalry was ill-suited for the mountains, nor could American forces survive easily or cheaply so far from supply lines. Reconciling the need for mobile power with a continental vision of control meant imitating the natural fortifications of the continent. Only a dramatically expanded fortification program could hope to compete with the natural defenses of the continental divide and support further expansion into the mountains. Where the cavalrymen reported the beauty and fertility of the plains they crossed, in contrast to what Stephen Long described as a desert less than two decades previously, the mountains were the next formidable barrier to federal expansion. The mountains were a limiting force checking the continental claims of control.

Dodge’s troopers were still interlopers, a fact reflected in their attitudes toward Native Americans. Camping about Pike’s Peak and Fountain Creek near a spring that the Arapahoe considered the origin spot of their people, the dragoons discovered the basin filled with items left as offerings. Evans reported these were promptly pilfered as souvenirs or discarded as garbage items of “Indian triumphy.” Destroying the shrine of a nation the United States was trying to

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107 Ford simply recorded “the most Magnificent appearance” of the mountains, but added little about his thoughts as to his place in relation to the scenery or the prospects for American exploration and conquest. Ford, “Captain Ford’s Journal,” 562.
108 Evans, “Hugh Evans’ Journal,” 208. Neither Dodge’s report or Ford’s journal record any thefts, but Ford did at least mention the spot held some significance.
impress encapsulated the underlying purpose of the expedition, to erase Native American independence with clear indications of federal control. This was not a temporary expedition, but a harbinger of future federal dominance as military discipline, arms, and power in numbers provided cover for dictation and disrespect. That this desecration occurred to the west of the Pawnee revealed the changing U.S. attitudes about the possible range of federal power.

Overconfidence in their abilities as peacemakers and a military power followed the command toward Bent’s Fort near the Mexican border. Dodge pursued the most pressing issues: concluding a regional peace among the Cheyenne, Arapahoe, Blackfeet, and Gros Ventres, impressing them with federal power, designating chiefs, and making introductions to a few Pawnee representatives to initiate peace talks. Self-congratulations over this last effort were belied by the fact that Skidi representatives had already initiated diplomatic overtures the previous year. The August 11 council revealed the depth of enmity between these peoples, an enmity not easily reconciled by a hundred dragoons already low on supplies.

Representing his nation, the brother of the principle Skidi chief hinted at the difficulties of peace. He “spoke very Independently . . . [and said to the council that] they had made friends before but so soon as the Schians [Cheyenne] could find it convenient they Stole their horses and killed one of their men,” laying the blame at the Cheyenne for what in reality was at least several generations of hostility. It was the third or fourth attempt to make peace in recent years. The Skidi leader reiterated his fearlessness at being in the heart of his enemy’s country, but kindly pledged not to kill any party sent to the Pawnee villages for talks. Little Moon of the Cheyenne stalled. He expected the war parties dispatched prior to the dragoons’ arrival to return

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110 Ford, “Captain Ford’s Journal,” 567; Dodge, “Journal of a March of the Dragoons,” ASP:MA, 6:142. Pawnee rituals including the Morning Star sacrifice required a western captive, so any claims about one recent attack or death as the start of renewed hostility were disingenuous at best.
soon, and their successes or failures would drive the next phase of negotiations. “I know but little,” he told Dodge in council, “what I do know I have told you; wait until our war parties return; I shall then know what to say.”\textsuperscript{111} It was also a direct message to the Americans not to be too comfortable with their apparent superiority. Many Cheyenne warriors were absent, giving a false sense of relative federal power.

For all of Dodge’s efforts, peace remained outside of federal abilities to dictate. He extolled the potential of Pawnee-Cheyenne friendship in terms of food security and mutually shared hunting grounds on the Platte. Dodge was either contradicting federal policy to settle the Pawnee as farmers or woefully uninformed about policy.\textsuperscript{112} He could implore, he could designate official chiefs, he could suggest the benefits of closer federal relations and trade, but he could not dictate. Numerous trading parties from Taos highlighted the porous Mexican border. The few Americans remained weak figures among many. Settling the big questions of federal sovereignty, border security, or exercising control over Native Americans’ foreign policy remained elusive.

Such limitations revealed themselves in stark fashion four days later. The dragoons arrived at a Cheyenne village on August 14 just after the return of a successful raiding party against the Comanche. The detachment camped nearby and met with the chiefs and warriors who left their own village unattended. The following morning the dragoon camp resounded with gunfire from over the hill, throwing the Cheyenne in the camp into a panic. The dragoons formed a battle line around the camp and prepared for an imminent attack. A war party of more than 100 Skidi Pawnee and some Arikara, led by their principal chief Big Axe, appeared over the ridge. Ostensibly the gun fire was a means of friendly announcement of their arrival for peace


talks. Neither Ford nor Evans believed the story. Both thought it was a Pawnee raid interrupted by the surprise presence of the dragoons. Evans had seen enough of Indian tactics to record that given the existing hostilities, Big Axe’s intentions were “to come to this Shyan encampment fall upon kill and murder all they could and drive off all their horses,” as the “encampment was composed of old men women and children, the principal men and warriors out on a buffalo hunt.” The Pawnee apparently thought the command went up the North rather than the South fork of the Platte, and thus would have been well clear of the raiding party.¹¹³

Such a chance encounter had profound consequences for Pawnee strategy and ideas about spatial power. Previous Pawnee campaigns occurred nearly completely out of sight of federal officials. The Pawnee imagined their western frontier to be unrestricted. One can sense the shock Big Axe felt at seeing the dragoons where he expected easy plunder. The American presence instantly altered his plans. Not wanting to go back on his previous promises to Dodge and thereby jeopardize federal aid, he agreed to a peace council. In the totality of Pawnee dealings with the Cheyenne, one aborted raid counted for little. The appearance of federal troops where they were unexpected and novel was dangerous. It meant a greater restriction of Pawnee strategic possibilities. Formalized U.S. relations with the Cheyenne and Arapaho meant the Pawnee could not conceal their military activities in the West with the same ease as heretofore. Even if the dragoon presence was temporary, their mere appearance signaled an altered diplomatic and strategic situation that threatened the core of Pawnee political power.

Dodge used the moment to argue for a new era of coexistence. Signaling federal desires for the nations to come together in peace “that you should all live in the same country,” and that

“you will make your children friends; they will, when grown, take each other by the hand.” Such optimism about future relations was in part predicated on making the region a collective hunting ground for the uncivilized tribes, as Dodge promised that “you are poor: you have no country that your great father wants.”114 In the immediate term this was true. Debates over the Western Territory said little about the Far West. The region beyond the Pawnee was still unorganized Indian Country.

In the wake of all these negotiations, Dodge sought to burnish his reputation and eagerly promoted his successful work in 1834 and 1835. He argued that “the good effects of the expedition are thus becoming apparent, and it will probably have the effect to establish peace between all the different tribes between the Arkansas and the Platte.” Here they could remain independent, “as they will thereby have an extensive country opened to them, covered with innumerable buffalo, where they can hunt in safety without fear of being attacked by their enemies.”115 Such emphasis on unity and continued nomadic hunts remained starkly opposed to policy for Native Americans within the imagined borders of federal control. Federal policy and pleas from resettled tribes to that point insisted on the security of borders as a prerequisite of settlement and civilization efforts. Dodge either spoke without understanding this or signaled a policy shift that placed the Far West beyond immediate federal control or interest.

Despite the actual limitations of his campaign, Dodge’s effort to shape the understanding of his actions proved successful. His return to Fort Leavenworth in September 1835 garnered strong praise from the War Department. After the disaster of 1834, the 1835 expedition proved the capabilities of the dragoons, having lost only one man, no horses or supplies, and achieving

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apparently significant diplomatic victories. Major General Edmund Gaines, commanding the Western Department of the Army, hyperbolically lauded the expedition as an extraordinary and unprecedented feat of great men on par with George Washington. Eager to boost his command in the face of the growing Texas rebellion, Gaines recommended honors and awards be given to the expedition to reward and retain the now highly experienced troops. Gaines looked toward the near future when U.S. cavalry might be needed to secure the southern borders in the face of Mexican civil war and possible American filibustering efforts. The dragoons proved that such thinking could be translated into realistic power projection. A new agency and fort that Dodge recommended near the head of the Arkansas River could secure peace in the entire region.

Concerns about federal territorial integrity remained at the fore of Indian and military policy. Continual problems with the porous borders challenged any notion of federal sovereignty along the New Mexican frontier. Just as Benjamin O’Fallon and William Clark worried about Pawnee interactions with the Spanish and Mexicans in the early 1820s, the presence of Taos traders and whiskey in putatively federal space kept open alternative sources of goods and influence. Establishing the racial boundaries remained an important subtext of the expedition as part of limiting foreign incursions. Ford, disgusted by the Mexican traders near Bent’s Fort, described them as “the meanest looking race of People I ever saw, don’t appear more civilized than our Indians generally. Dirty filthy creatures.” Evans was less interested in establishing racial distinctions, he was simply glad for the flour and whiskey they provided to supplement the diminishing supplies. Kingsbury’s official journal claimed the Mexican whiskey peddlers were confined to the opposite side of the border, conveniently omitting why the dragoons failed to

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116 Gaines to Robert Jones, Nov. 12, 1835, ASP:MA, 6:146.
enforce trade regulations.\textsuperscript{119}

Whiteness here was predicated on not just skin color, but bearing and comportment. Encountering one of the Bent brothers and Ceran St. Vrain at their trading post, Ford was relieved to see “the first White men we found living in Indian country . . . they appear to be much of gentleman,” as they entertained the officers.\textsuperscript{120} Whiteness was based on wealth and genteel behavior, with settled positions, fortifications, and the outward appearance of power. Their trading fort, complete with artillery, offered a martial example of American identity where Indians came to trade. The Bents and St. Vrain were settled and not quasi-Indians chasing trade across the plains like Indians chasing buffalo. Mexican traders were neither genteel nor settled, but were to be guarded against as potential enemies on par with wild, warrior Indians. The irony was that once Indians ceased to be noble warriors and plains savages, they decreased in racial status. Ford viewed the more settled Otoe as having lost that air of wild nobility.\textsuperscript{121} Native Americans that chose acculturation to white norms gave up the martial status that earned respect.

The Pawnee had been masters of their space in John Treat Irving’s view because of their unchecked freedom of movement. Dodge’s campaign did not automatically extinguish this freedom. Dragoon operations were still limited by costs, pressing needs elsewhere, and too much space for one regiment to cover. Pawnee acquiescence to federal plans for the Western Territory were bargaining tactics to secure aid. Now, the Pawnee faced the choice of continuing their martial traditions of westward raids or losing much needed aid to fight against the Sioux. Stalling or polite deferrals to federal demands no longer sufficed. The Pawnee entered the fall of 1835 at a heretofore unthinkable crossroads for their strategic future as they faced more stringent

\textsuperscript{120} Ford, “Captain Ford’s Journal,” 566.
\textsuperscript{121} Ford, “Captain Ford’s Journal,” 566.
requirements for settlement, the curtailment at least in some degree of western military expeditions, and the increasing presence of missionaries in the heart of Pawnee territory.
Chapter Five
Remaking the Village

Between the dragoon expedition of 1835 and the start of the Mexican-American War in 1846, the Platte Valley switched control. The United States looked toward continental mastery. Federal officials developed the ability to project power and enforce federal control across vast distances. Pawnee leaders, pressured by Sioux attacks, federal encroachment, and unsuccessful diplomatic overtures for alliances and aid, could not sustain the mobile military power that made them regionally dominant. Pawnee overtures for a renegotiated relationship to the United States occurred while federal officials were distracted by a major war in Florida and the unsettled Texan-Mexican conflict. Rebuffed, the Pawnee adopted a limited, fixed view of power, confining themselves into smaller spaces that required greater protection. The process inverted notions of military power between the United States and Pawnee from what they had been a generation earlier. The United States had a mobile cavalry force able to range far into the West. The Pawnee fortified their villages and consolidated their space. Imagining what was politically possible changed, with dire consequences.

Lewis Cass viewed the dragoon expedition as an unqualified success. Dodge’s men proved American fantasies of continental power could be realized. As part of a continental thinking about Indian spaces, Cass and his subordinates began drawing connections between the West, problems along the Mexican border, and the Second Seminole War. He saw a common Indian problem for federal power rather than isolated individual tribes competing for attention, alliances, or hostilities with federal interests. As John C. Calhoun envisioned almost two
decades earlier, Cass pushed an expansive nationalist version of federal power in the West predicated on military efficiency and large-scale construction efforts. Cass planned for eight or nine new forts along an 800-mile frontier, connected by military roads, and with a force of dragoons patrolling the boundaries. With faith in dragoons as “a species of force particularly dreaded by the Indians,” this barrier and accompanying Removal would provide the secure and permanent frontier long-desired by policymakers. It was an expanded version of plans agent John Dougherty argued for years earlier, and largely involved by-passing the Pawnee in favor of continental rather than regional strategic planning.¹

By ignoring the Platte and its people, the United States did more to further the cause of conquest and incorporation than nearly three decades of engagement, diplomacy, and military governance. Infighting among missionaries and government employees created factions within Pawnee leadership and village circles, drawing the nation into the petty squabbles of self-interested white Americans. Indian agents spent more time settling disputes among whites and themselves than advocating for federal policies or on behalf of their putative Pawnee wards.

Mixing direct local control of forts with the long-range force-projection of cavalry eliminated the dichotomy between white and Native American lands by pushing federal authority directly into territory previously at the extreme edges of the control. Federal success depended on limiting the ability and willingness of nations like the Pawnee to move beyond the confines of territorial or village boundaries. Implementing this change of mindset was at best ad hoc and hands-off, but therein lay its ultimate effectiveness over previous efforts and universal systems of

¹ This plan was estimated to cost $65,000 for the forts, and $35,000 for the road from Red River to Minnesota, to be built by troops. It would join the 2,500 miles of military roads built between 1815 and 1831, and seen by Cass and other westerners, as essential to development. Cass to Thomas Hart Benton, January 14, 1836, ASP:MA, 6:13; Dougherty to J. B. Brant, December 16, 1834, ASPMA, 6:14-5; Harold B. Nelson, “Military Roads for War and Peace, 1791-1836,” Military Affairs 19 (Spring 1955): 1-14; Prucha, Sword of the Republic, 191-2; Wooster, American Military Frontiers, 82.
control. Certainly the process of land cessions and effective federal control proceeded slowly. Simple mistakes over land cessions cost time and money such as an 1838 treaty to clarify previous cessions by the Otoe-Missouria and Omaha. Staff reshuffles in the 1830s and 1840s coinciding with the death of long-time superintendent William Clark in 1838 further complicated the process.

Pawnee leaders met the new reality with far less enthusiasm than their federal counterparts. Placed on the defensive, they faced the daunting task of keeping their core territory Pawnee. Their strategic situation resulted in part from Pawnee successes at maintaining autonomy through the previous two decades. Pawnee leaders kept traders with their inherent socio-political problems largely at arms-length, successfully deflected the heaviest resettlement of Eastern nations to outside Pawnee territory, and negotiated some concessions to avoid direct federal control of their lands. White cultural encroachment from missionaries and technical assistance in the form of farmers, blacksmiths, and teachers came at the Pawnee invitation and for Pawnee strategic plans. These combined factors had the unintended consequence of moving the center of federal strategic interests away from core Pawnee territory. With the treaty of 1833, the establishment of Indian Territory away from Pawnee lands, and increased Pawnee interest in better relations, federal officials perceived the Pawnee as less threatening than only five or ten years earlier, and therefore less deserving of attention and resources.

This chapter traces the readjustment of Pawnee thinking in response to the changes in the regional political situation from 1835-1846 that threatened Pawnee territory. The ongoing

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2 Dougherty to Clark, May 11, 1838, “Articles of a Treaty, made at the Otoe Village, Big River Platte, between John Dougherty, Agent Indian Affairs, being duly authorized on the part of the United States, and the Otoe and Missouria and Omaha tribes of Indians,” LROIA: StLS, Roll 751. The treaty had to clarify confusing language that allowed for continued Indian claims on the land, at the potential cost of $60,500 over seven years, plus the expense of sending a delegation that included Pawnee leaders to Washington.
consequences of Removal policy and formation of Indian Territory to the south and Sioux attacks from the north squeezed the Pawnee core. Infighting among missionary and federal officials complicated diplomatic endeavors for security. Yet this is not a story of societal or political collapse. Even within the more circumscribed boundaries of Pawnee power, refocusing on the territorial core and the village fit within a larger Pawnee cosmology of sacred geography and cultural identity. It is important to frame the changes of the mid-1830s to mid-1840s within the Pawnee religious and political cosmology. This outlook emphasized sacred spaces and relationships between celestial bodies/deities, their earthly animal intercessors whose powers gave leaders their abilities to heal, govern, and order society, and the chiefs and priests who received these powers and maintained the sacred spaces, power bundles, and rituals.

In the end, the strategic situation for federal and Pawnee leaders inverted itself. Federal officials thought expansively, even in the midst of the debacle of the Second Seminole War, as they had not in almost twenty years. Pawnee leaders looked toward maintaining the sacred and political core. Where Pawnee horsemen once fought wars far into enemy territory, their fights now took place on their doorsteps. By 1843, Pawnee leaders evidenced a certain desperation for military support, including artillery.\(^3\) That the Pawnee did not receive any spoke to a federal disinterest in using the Pawnee as effective auxiliaries against the Sioux, who continued to receive weapons from the United States.\(^4\)

Federal policy, either intentional or through neglect, that sought to transform the regional

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\(^3\) Daniel Miller to David D. Mitchell, December 24, 1843, LROIA: CBA, Roll 216.

\(^4\) By 1840, the federal government was fueling Sioux expansion at the expense of the Pawnee, Otoe, Omaha, and others near Council Bluffs. Sioux bands under Council Bluff Agency jurisdiction received guns as part of their annuities by the close of the 1830s. The original document is unclear as to the amount of either $11.75 or $1,175, the latter seeming to be more likely. Whether this was intentional policy or merely poor communication and planning among bureaucrats did not change the net result. Joshua Pilcher, “Statement showing the amount to be invested in the several kinds of annuity goods required for the Indians on the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers for the year 1841,” December 14, 1840, LROIA: StLS, Roll 752.
geopolitical and spatial relationships by constricting the Pawnee worked. The Pawnee were in
the same strategic situation as those early garrisons at Fort Atkinson: surrounded, outnumbered,
and thinking with a limited vision to defend the sacred and territorial core of Pawnee lands.
Villages were more akin to American forts of the 1820s; isolated and defensive. Federal
counterparts and Sioux enemies became the mobile powers thinking and acting as expansionists.
Here, Manifest Destiny was predicated on getting the Pawnee to think of their worlds as limited
and circumscribed to their villages and environs. American forts were no longer there to model
ideal behavior and living as Fort Atkinson had. Western forts transitioned to limited police
stations and depots. The Pawnee became the isolated, under-siege garrison society they had so
easily dismissed at Fort Atkinson in the 1820s.

5.1 The Platte Valley in Context

Events outside the Platte Valley shaped the possibilities available for those within it to
imagine their futures. To the east, Florida distracted federal officials who pumped men, money,
and attention into the Second Seminole War. To the far south, the Texas war for independence
and the increase in Comanche raids both against Mexico and within Texas began diverting
significant amounts of federal attention not being used in Florida as the Mexican-Texas-
Comanche conflict evolved into the Mexican-American War by 1846. To the immediate south,
the consequences of Removal were ongoing with more and more peoples who also competed for
Pawnee resources forced into present-day Kansas and Oklahoma. Of the most immediate
concern, however, the increased Sioux advances south into the Platte squeezed the Pawnee and
their neighbors.
Federal attention was far from the Platte Valley after 1834 as the War Department struggled with the quagmire of the Second Seminole War. It swallowed men, resources, and careers while threatening to rend the nation apart. Of immediate concern for the West was the perception of federal weakness. News of the Seminole annihilation of Major Francis Dade’s company in 1835 precipitated a panic among officials along the Missouri who reported celebrations of the defeat. Problems continued to grow by 1837. John Dougherty feared the repercussions in the Platte Valley among Native Americans and mixed-race people with access to news from Florida who:

boastingly and with great exaggeration relate all they have picked up concerning Oseola, and his feats ... fly from the Pottowattamies and Kickapoos to the Sacs, from the Sacs to the Ioways, from the Ioways, to the Otoes and Missourias, from them to the Pawnees and Omahaws, from the Omahaws to the Ponkaws and Sioux, by whom it is rolled on from tribe to tribe throughout our whole Indian country, like the snow ball rolling down hill, growing larger and larger at every turn.

Boasts among some of the regional nations threatened to open a new front of a pan-Indian war. Dougherty recorded popular sentiments that “if they were compelled to take up arms against the whites it would be seen they were quite as good warriors as the Seminoles.”

With thousands of soldiers tied down in Florida and little money or manpower to spare, such concerns played into persistent federal fears of pan-Indian confederacies. The situation made regional control a greater necessity and meant that all actions had to be done cheaply and without blowback such as an armed or invigorated regional Indian power.

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5 Scallett, “‘This Inglorious War’; Watson, Peacekeepers and Conquerors, 209-38.
6 Richard Cummins and Matthew Duncan, “Proceedings of a Council Held at Ft. Leavenworth on the 13th June 1836 with the Kickapoo, on instructions from Headquarters Right Wing Western Division (Atkinson),” LROIA: StLS, Roll 751.
7 Dougherty to Clark, February 1, 1837, LROIA: UMA, Roll 884.
8 From 1835 to 1842, 10,000 regulars and 30,000 militia volunteers cycled through Florida. At any given time, the bulk of the U.S. Army was stationed in the region. While only 55 volunteers and 328 regulars were killed in action, the drain on men and resources strained the Army nearly to the breaking point. Watson, Peacekeepers and Conquerors, 202.
federal desperation and fear did not preclude the War Department asking Dougherty to recruit 1,000 Native American volunteers for Florida. Armed Indians were useful, so long as they were very far from home.

A different foreign relations crisis garnered attention to the far south of the Platte. Beginning in the 1830s, the Comanche, Kiowa, and Navajo abandoned long-standing peace arrangements with Mexico and raided deep into Mexican territory. These conflicts merged into the decade-long struggle between Texas and Mexico sparked by the Texas independence movement. This situation further drained attention from what had been the priority for Removal efforts with the continued construction of a multi-ethnic space of forced migration in what is now Oklahoma. An active war zone on the southern side of Indian Territory and the possibility by the 1840s of Texan admission to the United States meant the Platte was now a strategic backwater for federal interests shifting toward a future conflict with Mexico.  

By 1836, the Pawnee joined a spectrum of Mississippi and Missouri valley nations feeling hemmed in from the south as the forced migration of new arrivals to Indian Territory competed for resources in Kansas and Nebraska. Even more pressing, however, was the danger from the north as increased Sioux incursions posed the greatest threat to Platte Valley residents. In mid-June 1836, Missouri Sac chiefs complained to agents John Dougherty and Matthew Duncan at Fort Leavenworth about “the great fog of white people, which is rolling towards the setting sun,” and fears of being “devoured soul and body by the cut throat Sioux.”

9 Dougherty to Clark, September 4, 1837, LROIA: CBA, Roll 215. Desperate for additional men accustomed to guerrilla tactics in Florida, Indian agents recruited amongst the tribes around Fort Leavenworth with the Delaware sending a party in the late-1830s. McCoy to Joel Poinsett, July 1, 1839, LROIA: StLS, Roll 752
10 Delay, War of A Thousand Deserts, xv, 212-27.
11 Report of Council with Chiefs of the Missouri Sacs, June 12, 1836, LROIA: StLS, Roll 751.
Combined, these pressures constricted the Pawnee freedom of action. Continued federal strategic neglect, missionary inroads, and increased Pawnee desperation served as holding actions for federal officials until they could pursue the full-throated expansion initiated with the dragoons and envisioned by Cass. Pawnee leaders then faced the serious prospect of disunity over foreign policy in the face of an empowered Sioux expansion effort, lack of access to the weapons and supplies promised by negotiators in 1833, and little strategic power to bargain with as federal commercial and foreign policy interests shifted to Texas and New Mexico.

5.2 Preserving the Pawnee Core

By 1836, the Pawnee strategic outlook was constrained by the outside powers of the dragoons and Sioux, internal divisions over the role of missionaries and federal workers within Pawnee society, and the existential threats to both Pawnee villages and the cosmological underpinnings of identity and culture. These factors forced an evolution of Pawnee strategic thinking from a policy of aggressive expansion into one of measured defense, albeit one aligned with core values of security and cultural identity. Rather than capitulating to federal domination, the Pawnee pivoted to policies that worked within their understandings of geopolitics and cultural needs. This pivot had the unintended consequence of being precisely what federal officials wanted: a curtailment of Pawnee power projection and ability to shape regional politics. To be clear, this was both a conscious policy on the part of federal officials and an accidental result of neglect and lack of direct control where chaotic infighting among missionaries and overburdened agents brought a beneficial chaos to disturb what had been a general Pawnee political and social cohesiveness.
Underlying the Pawnee strategic perspective were deep cultural understandings that informed their larger political world. Pawnee cultural metaphors about the need to defend people and sacred space provided a framework to shift political priorities. In doing so, the Pawnee maintained their core identity as they navigated external crises.

Settlement, not nomadism, remained the norm of Pawnee life. It had deep cultural roots as seen in part of the hako ceremony. In relating its rationale for being a protector animal, the woodpecker explains in the story that “security is the only thing that can insure the continuation of life. I can, therefore, claim with good reason the right to care for the human race. I build my nest in the heart of the tall oak, where my eggs and young are safe . . . While I have fewer eggs, they hatch in security and the birds live until they die of old age. It is my place to be a protector of the life of men.” Security of the people was paramount. For a people who spent the previous century almost perpetually at war at all points of the compass, the metaphor of sturdy fortifications protecting a societal core mixed with the ability to fly out and project power linked cultural belief to a political agenda. The more circumscribed abilities to range beyond the Pawnee core by the mid-1830s, however, did not alter this foundational belief in the priority of village or core territory security.

Moreover, the ceremonial script argued that security was far more important than numerical success. Though the turkey had more eggs and “wherever I go my young cover the ground,” the offspring were vulnerable and easily devoured. The metaphor offered both a reassurance that despite years of disease and war decimating the population, this was less important than maintaining the core beliefs. So long as a strong, secure core remained, Pawnee

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13 Fletcher, “Hako,” 173.
losses did not detract from their central identity as Pawnee. The land cessions of 1833 and the
limitations on foreign expeditions placed on them by the dragoons and Sioux altered the
expansionist policy of the previous fifty years. What looked like geopolitical setbacks and the
limitations of Pawnee power could easily be interpreted as a return to first principles of Pawnee
society. Rather than wasteful expansionism, strengthening defensive power marked a careful
recalibration of priorities. The situation was not yet an outright existential crisis.

As Douglas Parks and Waldo Wedel outline in their discussion of the geography of Pawnee
sacred places, the location of specific sites formed a sacred geographical system. These
were mythical meeting spots of animals and places where the temporal and celestial came
together. Pawnee belief in descent from the stars was linked to a physical geography of
underground or underwater sites denoted by physical features like bluffs, springs, or islands.
Here, animals met to confer power on selected individuals, the shamans and chiefs responsible
for power bundles and maintaining the cosmological and temporal order. The places were
“rahurahwa:ruksti: ‘u, “(being) holy ground.””14 Animals served as the temporal intercessors for
the gods of the cosmos. Each had the ability to confer powers to priests, but without a strict
hierarchy or exclusive system. All animals figured into this cosmology. Their meeting places
accrued significance for Pawnee rites and social order. Such places were central to Pawnee
religious and cultural life in ways unique among their neighbors.15

The larger Pawnee confederation was reaffirmed through the four-pole ceremony where
chiefs and priests responsible for sacred power bundles and maintaining celestial-temporal

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14 Parks and Wedel, “Pawnee Geography,” 143-5.
15 James R. Murie, Ceremonies of the Pawnee, 2 vols., Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology, no. 27
(Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), 67-73, 205; Murie, Pawnee Indian Societies, 600-1; Parks
and Wedel, “Pawnee Geography,” 144, 147, 152-4. For a detailed map of sites relative to early-nineteenth century
Pawnee settlement, see “Pawnee Village Sites and Animal Lodges” from Parks and Wedel.
balance arranged themselves in conformity with geographic space. As James Murie observed
toward the end of the nineteenth century, “a circular embankment was thrown up with an
opening to the east . . . the bundles . . . and their keepers had fixed positions according to their
rank and the geographical relations of the respective villages.” Political authority and social
order derived from this point. Chiefs responsible for power bundles appointed “one elderly
warrior as his personal aid and advisor. Only those who have reached a certain high grade of
distinction can serve in this capacity . . . one brave for each village and he selects three men to
act as police under his direction . . . These are strong and aggressive men. Their function was
purely that of village and camp police.”16 Political order derived from the relationship to the
sacred places and martial identity.

Protecting this geographical core and the well-spring of Pawnee identity thus became the
political priority as expansionism was replaced by land cessions and Sioux attacks. At least two
sacred spots—Pa:hu:ru’ (Hill That Points the Way) and Kicawi:caku (Spring on the Edge of a
Bank), Waconda or Great Spirit Spring—were south of the Platte and already ceded by the 1833
treaty. That the Pawnee ceded these places suggests either the precariousness of the Pawnee in
1832 and 1833, beset by enemies and disease and willing to trade space for time. Or, perhaps
more in keeping with Pawnee cosmology and politics, ceding the land did not cede access or
rights to the spaces. Speaking about access to buffalo, Petalesharoo of the Chaui told Barclay
White, head of the Central Superintendency that “our fathers owned both the land and the
animals feeding on it. We sold the land to the whites, but reserved the buffalo.”17 A similar logic
applied to sacred spaces. Given their status as mythical places visited in dream-states, the land
cessions of 1833 may not have been as catastrophic a loss. The Pawnee would still retain access,

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16 Murie, Pawnee Indian Societies, 552-4, 557.
17 Quoted in White, Roots of Dependency, 201.
at least metaphysically. These were also sites on the periphery of Pawnee lands. The other sites identified by Parks and Wedel were in the heart of Pawnee settlements. Any threat to those sites was a threat to the Pawnee core itself.

5.3 A Confusion of Federal Strategies

At the same time that the Pawnee struggled to reconcile their cosmology with changing circumstances, federal efforts to dictate policy to the Pawnee suffered from bureaucratic squabbles, reorganizations, and staff changes as officials resigned, died off, or were ousted. A reorganization of gift and annuity payments made Army officers more responsible in the latter-1830s. This undercut the power of agents. As Joshua Pilcher complained, it “degraded them in the estimation of those they are appointed to govern.” A larger military presence in contracting goods, accounting, and dispersal of funds, as well as opening bidding for annuity goods to Eastern companies meant further delays and mistakes as new officials stumbled to learn the nuances of trade, timelines, and the difficulties of travel. In trying to reorganize itself the War Department succeeded in both undermining its influence and confusing its agents in the field.

Further confusion came from efforts to regulate trade under the Intercourse Act of 1834. Trade theoretically brought federal control and Native American dependence, a point not lost on top military and civilian officials looking at ways to reform federal operations and control Native Americans. Major General Edmund P. Gaines suggested a more direct military-controlled system of trade in a strategic overview to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Carey A. Harris in

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18 Pilcher to Clark, December 26, 1837, LROIA: UMA, Roll 884.
19 Ethan Allen Hitchcock to Crawford, August 27, 1838, LROIA: StLS, Roll 751; Hitchcock to Crawford, February 8, 1839, LROIA: CBA, Roll 215.
1838. With Florida on his mind, Gaines assumed a perpetual state of war with the Western Native American nations, such that if “officers can learn in peace touching the character, habits and country . . . the better shall we be prepared . . . to subdue them.” The key to eventual military control was to give license to military officers and sutlers to engage in Indian trade.  

Such a move threatened Harris’s department and encroached on civilian control, as well as the business of the many politically powerful trading companies. Despite agreement on principles of military preparedness, Harris could not imagine “any measure, that will induce the frequent resort of Indians to military stations, or draw them from their own Country, where settled habits may have been, or may be formed,” or so he reported to Secretary of War Joel Poinsett. This bureaucratic turf war epitomized Washington’s problems of conflicting policy goals. Officials who often agreed on ends differed so vastly on means that agents in the field struggled to know the exact course of action. Such divisions of course benefitted the private traders ranging throughout the Missouri watershed.

None of this wrangling fulfilled Pawnee needs or treaty obligations. The United States still owed the Pawnee large amounts of goods, arms, and support for blacksmiths and farmers. Dougherty reported that the long-simmering conflict with the Sioux from the fall of 1835 through the summer of 1836 cost at least 10 Sioux and 20 Pawnee lives to the point that the “Pawnees thus harassed are desirous (many of them) of moving their village up the Platte one hundred miles higher than their present location, whilst others wish to remain. Thus divided, there is little probability of their making a location with the view to receiving the aid of the

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20 Gaines to Carey A. Harris, May 25, 1838, LROIA: StLS, Roll 751.
21 Harris to Joel Poinsett, June 8, 1838, LROIA: StLS, Roll 751.
22 In July and August of 1838 alone, 10 licenses for trading groups totaling more $42,000 worth of goods and at least 100 men were recorded by Clark. The previous year recorded four groups, at least 75 men, and approximately $26,300 just to the Pawnee, Omaha, and Otoe. Clark to Harris, July 20 and August 4, 1838. It was actually a decrease from the more than $70,000 in goods sent up river by traders in 1836. Clark to Herring, May 10, 1836; George Maguire to Harris, July 22 and August 7 1837. All in LROIA: StLS, Roll 751.
Government in farming, etc., etc., agreeably to treaty stipulation.” By 1840, the Pawnee were still receiving annuity payments per their treaty of 1833 with goods, two blacksmith establishments, $2000 worth of agricultural tools, $1000 for education, and four farmers at $2400 a year, but these goods suffered delays and only partially fulfilled the obligations.

The numbers belied the realities on the ground. Agent Joseph Hamilton noted that the Pawnee were insufficiently settled to fulfill any parts of the treaty other than annuity goods and the blacksmith shops, but that he would “break up a piece of land one season, 25 guns and ammunition to be given to farmers, in case Pawnees remain at home all the year.” Such a material breach of the treaty, with the Pawnee continuing their cyclical hunting routine and spending considerable time away from their villages, meant that very little of the agreed to aid reached them nearly ten years after ceding lands south of the Platte.

Prevarications from federal officials about the status of Pawnee settlement fit into a preconceived narrative rather than appreciating the full realities of the situation. Pawnee villages remained roughly in similar places between 1836 and 1840. Pawnee hunting and farming cycles remained relatively stable. The biggest change was the increase in violence between the Pawnee and their neighbors. Feeling more squeezed than ever before, Pawnee warriors fought back and took what they could, threatening to reignite a regional war. The Kansa captured and flogged a young Pawnee man in search of wild horses, sparking raids and counter raids that Dougherty warned would end in bloodshed before the end of the summer of 1836. Pawnee leaders complained even more about Delaware encroachment on their hunting lands. Skirmishes with the Omaha resulted in seven dead Pawnee and two Omaha. Dougherty reported that “they were

23 Dougherty to Clark, June 8, 1836, LROIA: CBA, Roll 215.
25 Dougherty to Clark, June 8, 1836, LROIA: CBA, Roll 215.
both to blame and with some difficulty I got them together and prevailed upon them to make peace again.”

Dougherty viewed this period as critical for the entire region. “Unless the contemplated cordon of military posts be established in the course of 12 or 18 months,” he warned Washington directly, “our frontier from Red River to the Lakes will be one scene of bloodshed, far be it from me to give alarm when there is not occasion, but such is my opinion and I feel bound as an agent of the government to give it freely.” These small-scale conflicts revealed a subtle change in the Pawnee strategic situation. It was not just distant enemies with whom they fought, but neighboring peoples on their immediate doorstep. These groups were themselves being squeezed into greater conflict over smaller spaces by both whites and the Sioux.

Some federal officials did not immediately grasp the changes occurring in the Pawnee world. Dougherty reported that “the Sioux and the Pawnees are the two master tribes in the Upper Indian country, and it is they who govern nearly all the smaller ones; this and other reasons, why I think it good policy to invite them together; let them travel and see our large cities, and it will give them some idea of our strength.” Distracted with their own strategic problems in Florida and Texas, officials in Washington did not seem overly concerned with Dougherty’s plans or the regional dynamics.

5.4 Seeking Alliances and Fortifying the Core

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26 Dougherty to Clark, June 28, 1836, LROIA: CBA, Roll 215.
27 Dougherty to Harris, June 27, 1836, LROIA: CBA, Roll 215.
28 Dougherty to Harris, June 27, 1836, LROIA: CBA, Roll 215.
Perhaps realizing their predicament, Pawnee leaders looked toward the United States as a neutral arbiter to buy some time against the Sioux, or even as a potential ally. Pawnee, Omaha, and Otoe leaders wanted to be included within a regional conference already planned for the Sioux, Sac, and Ioway. Pawnee leaders pleaded with Dougherty that the Sioux and “themselves had been and are still daily killing and plundering each other, had never known what peace was, and that perhaps if they went together to see and talk to the President of the United States, a lasting peace might be effected; they really were very urgent in expressing their desire to see Washington.”29 The resultant visit in 1837 included sixteen Pawnee leaders, but they arrived too late to meet the Sioux. Despite failing to address the most pressing Pawnee strategic need the trip still helped settle disputes with the Omaha.30 Conflicts continued to simmer, however, undermining the stability and settled perspective necessary to convince federal agents to release funds, provide weapons, and hire workers per the 1833 treaty obligations.

By 1838, evidence appeared of rifts within Pawnee leadership over the appropriate course of action, or perhaps some hubris about being able to conduct business as usual without making any substantive changes in behavior. After the chiefs returned on April 15, reports reached Dougherty that younger Pawnee warriors were again fighting nations to the west, likely the Cheyenne, as well as pushing into Mexican territory, “carrying on a war as usual,” in both directions. This information suggests either that the chiefs had little control over their younger warriors or they did not think such actions mattered in relations with the United States. Any peace overtures to the Sioux apparently had little effect as “the young men of the Sioux and

29 Dougherty to Harris, June 27, 1836, LROIA: CBA, Roll 215.
Pawnees have parties out against each other constantly stealing horses and occasionally a scalp.”\textsuperscript{31} It put Dougherty in a difficult position as a supposed diplomatic arbiter.

Even hopes of a renewed peace with the Omaha evaporated, despite their mutual interest in fighting the Sioux. Pawnee raids took 64 horses from the Omaha, three from the Otoe, and another four from nearby whites since Dougherty’s peace intervention less than a year earlier.\textsuperscript{32} Such actions, while minor in themselves, reinforced a sense of powerlessness to make substantive changes in Pawnee behavior by federal officials. Dougherty adopted a tone of exasperation and resignation in meetings with the chiefs. He reminded them of the very recent promises made in Washington and asked the chiefs to “recollect them,” and that “I am your friend, but do not wish to be laughed at by you, or made ashamed of you.” Threats to stop annuity payments eased tensions at least temporarily.\textsuperscript{33} While the patronizing tone fit into a narrative of a father scolding children, Dougherty’s concern for larger strategic goals and his own sense of personal embarrassment ran deep throughout the council. Having spent more than double his allotted funds for the delegation to Washington, such a quick reversion to the status quo meant the funds were wasted.\textsuperscript{34}

Professional embarrassment aside, of greater concern was the rapidly deteriorating security situation along the Platte and Missouri by the summer of 1838. It was a familiar situation through the 1820s and 1830s. Constant skirmishes meant the possibility of larger conflicts and threatened to bring the whole region into a general war. Smaller nations grew nervous about being caught up in the great power struggle of the Pawnee and Sioux.

\textsuperscript{31} Dougherty to Clark, May 31, 1838, LROIA: CBA, Roll 215.
\textsuperscript{32} Dougherty, “Talk to Pawnee Chiefs,” May 8, 1838, LROIA: CBA, Roll 215.
\textsuperscript{33} Dougherty to Clark, May 31, 1838, LROIA: CBA, Roll 215.
\textsuperscript{34} Hitchcock to Harris, February 7, 1838, LROIA: StLS, Roll 751; Hitchcock to Harris, February 2, 1838, LROIA: CBA, Roll 215.
Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Chippewa leaders highlighted three regional points of concern. First, a smallpox outbreak destabilized the regional nations through 1837 and 1838, increasing the chaotic and violent responses of people under pressure. Second, the leaders suggested that without a strong federal military presence the region was about to erupt in inter-tribal warfare on a grand scale as a matter of defensive necessity. Finally, they urgently requested a promised “military post; in order to keep peace among our neighbors and ourselves,” the leaders told Col. Stephen Watts Kearny of the dragoons. Kearny admitted to his superiors that he had no idea what treaty, let alone fort the leaders referenced. He urgently requested relevant treaties and information be sent to all field commanders. It was yet another example of agents and officers in the field working at cross purposes with Washington.

Two competing federal strategies took shape at this time: strict boundaries and sealed borders patrolled by cavalry, or direct engagement and control secured by forts within Indian Country. Agent Joshua Pilcher confirmed the desperate need for a greater control over boundaries. Denouncing the long-anticipated strategy of more forts linked by roving patrols as a “chimerical scheme,” Pilcher despaired of federal power over Indian Country. Only the heavily patrolled, natural barrier of the Missouri River could offer the protection and racial separation he desired. “I cannot believe there lives a man so credulous as to think it practicable to prevent an extensive and constant intercourse,” he warned, “unless it were by posting a chain of sentinels at hailing distance along the whole line of frontier from the Sabine to the shores of Lake Superior.” Pilcher suggested a series of specific actions. First, seal the borders and keep a distinct boundary. To show federal largesse and power he argued, deposit “a small quantity of corn and

a few goods and blankets, furnished at the expense of the government, and to be issued . . . when circumstances seem to require it,” so that “hundreds of Indians would be relieved from extreme hunger, protected against the chilling blast, and the government and all its officers charge with the management of Indians, will be looked up to with gratitude, as protectors and benefactors.”

Second, leave the Indians to fend for themselves. If they start a massive war amongst themselves, the U.S. frontier would be well away from it. It was isolationism at the extreme and counter to prevailing attitudes, though it had the benefit of costing almost nothing. One could see the logical conclusion that once the inter-tribal wars subsided, federal officials could exercise authority over the remaining people. Dougherty disagreed, pushing Clark and his superiors for more forts, especially at the mouth of the Platte as the seat of a proposed Council Bluffs Agency and what was essentially a return to 1819 policy.

Social instability, low-level raiding, and pressure on borders only increased. More incursions by unlicensed white traders and other intruders added yet one more element of contention. Federal authority beyond Fort Leavenworth was scant at best. Pilcher argued that orders from Harris and Clark to arrest a Sioux murderer or take hostages to ensure his arrest, were farcical as “it will require an immense military force.” By the summer of 1839, Dougherty warned Secretary of War Joel Poinsett that only a dramatic increase in federal power would suffice to quell the regional concerns. An act of Congress was necessary to grant the secretary authority to better police and enforce the Intercourse Acts and forcibly remove intruders, but Dougherty placed greater hopes for a new fort situated someplace above Fort Leavenworth. It

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37 Pilcher to Clark, December 26, 1837, LROIA: UMA, Roll 884.
38 Dougherty to Clark, May 31, 1838, LROIA: StLS, Roll 751.
39 Pilcher to Clark, July 18, 1838, LROIA: UMA, Roll 884. Clark and Harris did not seem to know the band they identified the murder was from was on the Upper Mississippi and completely out of Pilcher’s jurisdiction and knowledge.
was a “point of importance,” that required Dougherty “to urge upon you the great necessity of the immediate establishment” of a new post.\textsuperscript{40} While such calls could be seen as hyperbole, Dougherty’s twenty-plus years of experience in the field and close relationships with the regional nations could not be discounted. If he thought the situation was dire, he was probably correct. But it was a big ask. Considering the Indian department disbursed between $300,000 and $400,000 a year in operating costs, not counting military expenses in the region, another fort was another fort too many two years into a crippling national financial crisis.\textsuperscript{41}

Dougherty did not stay to see his policy recommendations implemented. He resigned his post in June 1839 after roughly twenty years in the field. It followed the death of William Clark the previous September. Their departures meant that nearly 60 years of collective diplomatic experience and interpersonal relationships disappeared. It also meant the loss of two strong advocates for a regional peace between local and removed nations as Pilcher replaced Clark for a time as superintendent.\textsuperscript{42}

While federal officials dithered about expanding a military presence and whether or not to become more deeply involved in the regional conflict between the Sioux and Pawnee, Pawnee leaders faced a mounting crisis. Since the early-1830s, Sioux raiders appeared increasingly well-armed. A Teton (Ogallala or Brulé) Sioux attack on the Skidi village killed 19, as the Sioux “came well supplied with firearms” while the Pawnee had only seven guns in the whole village.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{40} Dougherty to Poinsett, June 26, 1839, LROIA: StLS, Roll 752.
\textsuperscript{41} Hitchcock to Crawford, November 19, 1838, LROIA: StLS, Roll 751. Hitchcock estimated that in only a few years as military disbursing agent he funneled $1,000,000 through his office to various suppliers, agents, and Native American nations. With a $12,000,000 budget deficit in 1837 alone, such expenditures were already too high. Budget deficit source: Harold Faber, “The Nation: Once Upon a Time, a Budget Surplus,” New York Times, December 31, 1995.
\textsuperscript{42} Dougherty to Crawford, June 25, 1839, LROIA: CBA, Roll 215. Dougherty had been involved with the Pawnee since at least 1819. His replacement, Joshua Pilcher was an experienced Indian trader and agent on the upper Missouri. He had been a critic of Dougherty’s conduct with a behind the scenes smear campaign to Washington.
\textsuperscript{43} Dougherty to Clark, November 29, 1832, LROIA: UMA Roll 883.
It was a preview of the situation at the close of the decade. Through the ensuing decade the attacks continued. Between the fall of 1835 and June 1836, Sioux and Ponca attacks on the Pawnee villages killed 20 Pawnee and took 200 horses.\textsuperscript{44} Sioux attacks through 1838 meant it was unsafe for the missionaries to settle among the Pawnee. John Dunbar’s annual report to his superiors at the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1839 detailed continued Sioux harassment of the Pawnee villages.\textsuperscript{45} Until federal agents secured a peace between, both the missionaries’ property and lives were at risk.

Estimates suggest that more than 500 warriors and civilians died in combat between 1835 and 1845. Sometimes entire war parties disappeared.\textsuperscript{46} Given the devastation wrought by poor hunts and subsequent food shortages, losses of hundreds of horses mainly to the Sioux, and the fact that Pawnee raiders often left on foot leaving themselves vulnerable to ambush by mounted enemies, the losses were not surprising. Missionary Samuel Allis brushed off these concerns with a certainty born of religious zeal, naïveté, and a belief that the Sioux were always friendly towards the whites, so it did not matter.\textsuperscript{47}

Eager for assistance, Pawnee leaders seemed to at least tolerate missionaries if they did not fully welcome them. Dunbar thought the tribe the friendliest one between the Missouri and the Rockies and “readily listen to the truths of the gospel.” Returning from Washington, the Pawnee chiefs stopped at the temporary mission at Bellevue and reported their favorable impressions with American civilization, at least according to Dunbar’s understanding. Their “passage on the railroad excited their admiration to the highest pitch. They said the white man

\textsuperscript{44} Dougherty to Clark, June 8, 1836, LROIA: CBA, Roll 215.  
\textsuperscript{45} Dunbar to David Greene, March 18, 1839, \textit{PML}, 232.  
\textsuperscript{46} Allis to Greene, September 1, 1841, \textit{PML}, 284. Fifty Skidis died while out against the Cheyenne in the spring of 1841. Allis to Greene, July 21, 1843, \textit{PML}, 338-9. Allis reported that since March 1843 alone, 200-250 Pawnee died in combat or raids by the Sioux. Dunbar to Greene, November 14, 1843, \textit{PML}, 342; White, \textit{Roots of Dependency}, 207, 380 n.16.  
\textsuperscript{47} Allis to Greene, May 31, 1837, \textit{PML}, 204.
does many things like Te-rah-wah,” suggesting a conflation of whites with the gods of the Pawnee cosmology.\footnote{\textit{Dunbar to Greene, June 8, 1838, PML, 219.}}

A very different interpretation of this scene occurs when one removes the patronizing missionary lens. It becomes one in which the Pawnee leadership, having failed to meet and make a peace with the Sioux in Washington, faced continuing a protracted war. They saw American technology as desperately needed. Missionaries were useful, but peripheral figures to fulfill what federal agents had not: a means of effective communal defense for a people in crisis. While speaking with Dunbar, the Pawnee leaders suggested they were finally willing to acquiesce to the demands of the 1833 treaty and “become fixed at some place.” Why they evinced this shift had perhaps less to do with their visit to the United States and more with the devastating problems facing them at home. The spring 1838 hunt went poorly. Their blacksmith was fired, depriving them of needed weapon and tool-making or repairs. They lost many horses over the 1837-8 winter. Missionaries might be the avenue to pursue the long-sought military alliance with the United States, acquire the promised weapons, or even serve as unwitting human shields in the villages.\footnote{\textit{Dunbar to Greene, June 8, 1838, PML, 219.}}

The year 1838 appeared to a be a turning point in Pawnee strategic thinking as two major setbacks further complicated the situation. Sioux forces burned the Chaui village while the people were out on their spring hunt. Lodges could be rebuilt, but people could not be replaced. During the winter, Skidi hunting parties fell upon a party of Sioux, killed some, and took about 20 women and children captives. It was a pyrrhic victory as the captives soon succumbed to smallpox. The disease quickly spread to their captors, aided by malnutrition from unsuccessful hunting. From there the other Pawnee villages became infected with the disease that killed many
of the children who had not been exposed during the previous epidemic. One count suggested 2,500 Pawnee died in all. The toll from the disease, combined with the warfare and malnutrition from continuously unsuccessful hunts, meant the overall Pawnee population declined precipitously. An actual census listed 6,244 members less than two years after the epidemic. From a population that numbered well over 10,000 less than a decade earlier, this was a devastating decline.\textsuperscript{50}

Among the casualties was the beloved son and presumptive heir of the primary chief of the Chaui. In a mix of grief and concern about the loss of his power as a spiritual mediator who could not save his own children, the chief led a party south. Its intent was initially unclear. Dunbar suggested it was a raiding party aimed at the Comanche or Kiowa, but it may have been to join them on raids further south into Texas or Mexico. Such a raid would have solidified the chief’s perhaps now tenuous status as a leader. Reports upon the party’s return suggested it was a diplomatic mission to the Comanche and Wichita.\textsuperscript{51} The diplomatic move signaled a need to secure allies on the Pawnee south, perhaps as a counter to the new arrivals from the East encroaching on traditional Pawnee hunting grounds. Given previous Pawnee-Comanche alliances and joint raids into Mexico, both scenarios are quite possibly true. It demonstrated a certain amount of political desperation as the inherent risks of each policy could have further isolated the Pawnee and cost lives they could ill-afford to lose if unsuccessful.

The moment revealed a deep split within broader Pawnee leadership and the different bands of the nation. The Chaui looked toward extending alliances to other nations and American missionaries while reinforcing political leadership. The Skidi reached toward a revitalization of tradition and a return to the Morning Star sacrificial ritual. As the Skidi victory introduced the

\textsuperscript{50} Dunbar to Greene, June 8, 1838, \textit{PML}, 219-20; White, \textit{Roots of Dependency}, 155.
\textsuperscript{51} Dunbar to Greene, June 8, 1838, \textit{PML}, 221.
smallpox epidemic and became linked with the unsuccessful hunt, they needed a reversal of fortune. It came at a terrible price for one of their captives. Dunbar blamed the “deeprooted ferocious superstition” of the Skidi, in typical disgust at the behavior without a more careful analysis of what it represented. He merely provided gruesome details and refused to add commentary except that “the dark corners of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.” Though invited to the ceremony, leaders of the other bands refused to witness it.52

This radical approach of renewing the sacred bonds of Pawnee cosmology fit within a larger pattern of Native Americans looking toward restoration movements at times of political and social upheaval that fractured otherwise unified groups.53 It was the Skidi who only several years earlier had promised to give up a Cheyenne captive to federal officials, only to then kill her before she could leave the village. Despite promising to cease further sacrifices, the extreme stressors of epidemic and starvation suggest a renewed focus on tradition rather than accommodation, a protection of core identity and place rather than the outreach of those more closely aligned with federal officials.

The difficulties of 1838 pushed the Chaui, Pitahawirata, and Kitkahahki closer to the federal orbit. While visiting the agency and mission at Bellevue in the fall, Pawnee leaders held serious talks with both federal agents and missionaries to guarantee fulfilment of treaty obligations in preparation for consolidating their villages and settling permanently. This was a major concession point and suggests just how desperate their situation was. Chaui chief Us-a-ru-ra-kue-el pushed for either the government or missionaries to begin the settlement, implying that at least some buildings be erected after which his people would move in. It was a delicate

52 Dunbar to Greene, June 8, 1838, PML, 220-1.
balance of pushing federal agents for real progress without fully committing themselves or
alienating allies who could be helpful. Fifty-two plows and harness delivered in 1838 as well as
new blacksmiths and farmers provided some reassurance of federal good faith. Dunbar reported
his missionary station was still at Bellevue, too far from the actual Pawnee villages to be of any
use, yet he remained hopeful. From the Pawnee viewpoint he was useful as an intermediary to
convince federal agents.\(^{54}\)

Returning in the spring, Pawnee leaders repeated their requests. While “alleging they
were ready to comply” with the stipulations, the answer from the agents was delay and
obfuscation with promises to submit the request in writing to higher officials in Washington.\(^{55}\)
Pawnee actions suggest that this was only one aspect of their policy to bring in federal
assistance. Movements through 1839 were ones of consolidation as the Kitkahahki moved closer
to the Chaui. Their leadership urged Dunbar to move to the villages. “They wish to have their
smiths, farmers, and teachers to be with them as soon as may be,” though Dunbar perhaps did not
see this as a strategic hedge against Sioux attack. Additional whites would be convenient human
shields. Overall Dunbar was hopeful that “unless government shall in some way interfere, we
now have some confidence with reference to the improvement of the Pawnees. We have seen

\(^{54}\) Dunbar to Greene, March 18, 1839, *PML*, 233-4.
\(^{55}\) Dunbar to Greene, May 15, 1839, *PML*, 235.
enough to know that what government does for the improvement of the Indians may be done in such a way as effectually to prevent their improvement.”  

Pawnee efforts to direct government policy remained strong in the face of delay. Dougherty’s replacement as agent, Joseph Hamilton, seemed far less interested in managing the Pawnee. He delegated Dunbar and Allis to scout for new village sites, hire farmers, and act as teachers—even though Allis was barely literate—effectively outsourcing government work to contractors. They in turn deferred to the Pawnee. Capote Bleu of the Kitkahahki wished Hamilton “would tell the president that he loved his land very much,” and was loath to leave his

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56 Dunbar to Greene, May 15, 1839, *PML*, 236.
57 Dunbar to Greene, October 1, 1839, *PML*, 242.
new village south of the Platte. Despite this, consolidation remained the prevailing sentiment. Dunbar reported that “the eyes of all those who were for removing at all were directed to the country on the north side of the Loup Fork . . . This may be said to be a place of their own selection.”58 It was also more strategically defensible.

Dunbar’s map shows the Pawnee villages all within an easy ride of each other. While the Skidi and Pitahawirata moved first to the Loup fork of the Platte, the Chaui and Kitkahahki contemplated joining them. Once accomplished, the villages would be no more than 20 miles apart at the farthest point, consolidated, and easily united for defense if given proper warning. “If the treaty stipulations are fulfilled,” Dunbar urged Hamilton, “I have little doubt all the Pawnees will be on the ground in one year from this time,” thus fulfilling a key policy goal of permanent settlement and consolidation away from the ceded lands south of the Platte.59 Though hands-off, Hamilton wanted to accomplish what his predecessors had failed to do: settle the Pawnee. To that end he anticipated that the missionaries would begin assisting the farming and teaching operations by the spring of 1840, provided the Pawnee followed through with the intended move.60

Central to this Pawnee movement was the fear of Sioux attack. It drove policy considerations. Pawnee leaders urgently pressed Dunbar for aid in addressing the issue. “I hope you will not fail to recommend an effort on the part of our government to conciliate the Sioux and Pawnees,” he wrote agent Hamilton. Yet despite this urgency and Hamilton’s willingness to fulfill treaty obligations, the agent still withheld the most needed material: weapons. By the fall of 1839, only an assistant blacksmith served the Pawnee, though Hamilton informed superiors

58 Dunbar to Hamilton, October 14, 1839, LROIA: CBA, Roll 215.
59 Dunbar to Hamilton, October 14, 1839, LROIA: CBA, Roll 215.
60 Dunbar to Greene, October 1, 1839, PML, 243.
that he would “break up a piece of land one season,” and have ready “25 guns and ammunition to be given to farmers, in case Pawnees remain at home all the year.”\(^{61}\)

Despite promises made in the field, Washington officials seemed determined to scuttle any understandings. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Thomas Crawford stuck to a strict interpretation of the treaty: no farmers and no aid until the Pawnee were settled for a whole year. It was an unreasonable stance, given the realities on the ground. Reverend David Greene, heading the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and Dunbar’s superior, asked incredulously how could the Pawnee “at once, settle down, become agriculturalists, and without utensils, or cattle, or seed procure the means of subsistence from the soil? Would they not almost inevitably starve?” Crawford was wasting the moment. The Pawnee “appear very desirous to locate themselves and have the treaty stipulations carried into effect the ensuing spring, that they may try the new proposed manner of life; and fears are entertained that, if disappointed now, it may be long before they will be in so favorable a state of mind again,” Greene argued.\(^{62}\) Crawford’s inaction squandered the best chance to implement the stated federal policy since at least 1833 to bring the Pawnee into a limited, settled territory directly under the control of either federal or missionary officials. Strong, federally-aligned Pawnee leaders were ready to guide the process. Whatever his rationale about the treaty stipulations, Crawford’s intransigence divided Pawnee political unity and undermined those seeking better federal relations.

This continuation of broken promises further split Pawnee leadership between those seeking accommodation and those looking to remain more strictly independent. Though the

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\(^{62}\) Greene to Crawford, February 13, 1840, LROIA: CBA, Roll 215.
record is unclear, it was probably the latter who continued raiding into Mexican territory in the spring of 1840, seeking to recoup some of the losses of horses and wealth of the previous years. Hamilton reported a party returned with seven captives whom he ransomed and sent to St. Louis.63 Even with limited resources, the Pawnee could still project force beyond their borders, complicating federal relationships with Texas and Mexico.

This was a rarer occurrence than ever before. Lack of weapons blunted the effectiveness of any Pawnee expeditions and meant they could not defend themselves from their closest neighbors who were in similarly difficult positions. The Omaha and Otoe-Missouri habitually raided Pawnee crops and food stores when the latter went hunting. Otoe raiders took or destroyed most of the 1839 corn crop leaving the Pawnee “entirely destitute of provisions,” and as Dunbar warned “their subsistence for this life is very precarious.”64

Even in rare moments of cooperation such as a joint hunting expedition with the Otoe-Missouria, Pawnee power was routinely curtailed by the lack of weapons. The former, armed with rifles, convinced their Chaui companions to hide from a rushing bison herd while they killed enough meat for both. When out of bowshot, the combined Otoe-Missouria force “fired upon them killing six of them on the spot . . . the seventh escaped though badly wounded,” and brought news back to the main village. Rather than immediately initiating a war, nine Pawnee leaders went to the agency to demand federal officials mediate a restitution. Pleading poverty, the Otoe and Missouri authorized a payment of two horses and $300 worth of goods, including 50 pounds of gunpowder and 100 pounds of lead, to secure peace.65 That the Pawnee accepted this rather paltry amount for six dead warriors suggests the difficulties they themselves faced.

63 Hamilton to Pilcher, May 19, 1840, LROIA: CBA, Roll 215.
64 Dunbar to Greene, July 13, 1840, PML, 261; White, Roots of Dependency, 206-7.
Something, especially military supplies, was better than nothing, or worse another open war that none could afford. For a nation that less than ten years earlier could fight three or four major enemies at once, this unwillingness to avenge their people or risk the displeasure of their hoped-for American allies highlighted a dramatic reversal of fortune.

Pawnee leaders continued espousing a desire to relocate and consolidate through 1840. By the fall they had yet to move north en masse to the Loup fork. They waited for the promised assistance and the preparation of farmland by government agents. The idea of moving, Samuel Allis reported, held “a good deal of feeling and interest by the Pawnee, but . . . it is my candid opinion they never will [move] until our government, or Missionaries first go among them and build; and we need not expect any thing further from the government until we break the ice.”66 He had reason to doubt federal interest.

Pawnee leaders repeatedly appealed for a decision on settlement and aid at their October annuity council. They spent considerable time discussing locations over the summer and wanted the matter settled. Hamilton “studiously . . . avoided allusion to the subject.” Department instructions again urged delay and obfuscation as Crawford preferred to hand-off the matter to the next presidential administration the following spring.67 Unless the new administration acted promptly upon taking office the planting season would be pass before arrangements could be made, effectively ensuring that any new farmland or government assistance would arrive too late to be utilized in 1841. Such inaction fed a now familiar circular pattern of self-fulfilling criticism of the Pawnee for not fulfilling the treaty conditions and refusal to provide the means by which they could comply.

66 Allis to Greene, October 12, 1840, PML, 217.
67 Dunbar to Greene, December 9, 1840, PML, 275-6.
By 1841, Dunbar and Allis viewed the situation as proof of government negligence. They moved to establish the Pawnee mission near the proposed consolidated village sites in the hopes that their initiative would push the Pawnee still south of the Loup to relocate. Dunbar and Allis reached their site 30 miles above the Loup junction with the Platte [near present-day Fullerton, NE] on May 17 and commenced operations. Pawnee leaders visited, found the site agreeable, and suggested they would move their villages that following year. No doubt this decision was spurred by the loss of another Skidi war party of 50 men to the Cheyenne in the spring of 1841. Daniel Miller replaced Hamilton around the same time. Miller appeared to be more engaged and energetic, though not in positive ways for the Pawnee, whom he treated with contempt. He encouraged the movements and supported Dunbar and Allis’s recommendations for employees, but continued the more hands-off federal approach, preferring to let the missionaries do the primary work.

The combination of pressure and example worked. Dunbar reported that by May 1842, nearly 300 Pawnee representing all four bands relocated to the mission site. The Chaui, Pitahawirata, and Kitkahahki planned a unified village about a mile away, the Skidi only four miles. Many of the principal Pawnee leaders including the first chief of the Chaui, the principal chief of the Kitkahahki, third and fourth chiefs of the Pitahawirata, and two Skidi leaders were among the early arrivals. The principal Pitahawirata chief wanted to come but was too ill.

Miller was pleased with the success. Judging the treaty conditions fulfilled, he appointed two farmers, a blacksmith and striker, ordered the second smith to remove from Bellevue to the

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68 Dunbar to Greene, July 31, 1841, *PML*, 279-80.
69 Miller at times withheld supplying farmers per the 1833 treaty because he did not want the Pawnee to feel entitled to servants or consider themselves to be above white government employees. Riding In, “Keepers of Tirawahut’s Covenant,” 153-61.
70 Allis to Greene, September 1, 1841, *PML*, 284; Dunbar to Greene, April 26, 1842, *PML*, 301-3; Allis to Greene, May 13, 1842, *PML*, 305.
71 Dunbar to Greene, April 26, 1842, *PML*, 302.
new village, and hired Allis as the promised teacher. Nearly a decade after the treaty, David D. Mitchell, who replaced Pilcher as Superintendent of Indian Affairs in St. Louis, relayed the news to Washington. He recommended that, as “the Pawnees . . . evince every disposition to comply in their parts with the terms of their treaty; it will therefore be incumbent on the Dept. as early as practicable to take measures for the erection of the mills promised for in the treaty of 1833, and also, to place the necessary arms in the hands of the farmers for their protection.” Finally, the Pawnee thought they would get what they needed: resident blacksmiths and farmers; a teacher; and perhaps most importantly, a consolidated, defensible population center with arms and resident whites who might shield them from attack.

It was not enough. No guns were delivered in 1843. Almost immediately the missionaries and government workers split along theological lines as well as over how to behave toward the Pawnee. Financial concerns, accusations, and political snipping meant that the missionary station was never the cohesive force federal or missionary board officials wanted. Investigations, letter-writing smear campaigns, and general ill-disciplined behavior diminished any claims to authority emanating from the mission or agency as Miller became embroiled in the factionalism.

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72 Dunbar to Greene, April 26, 1842, PML, 302-3; Allis to Greene, May 13, 1842, PML, 305.
74 Concerns about some government employees being Catholic, and differences over minor theological points between the Eastern-trained Dunbar and Allis and the Oberlin-trained George Gaston who was to replace Allis, divided the leadership. Behavior among the employees followed a similar pattern seen years earlier among the garrison of Fort Atkinson with petty offenses, resort to violence, and recriminations that dragged Miller into the middle of the struggle and forced him to spend as much or more time mediating between the whites as dealing with the Pawnee. By 1845, the conflict spilled over into the Pawnee with a former government farmer embroiled in a fight with a Kitkahakhi leader. The result of the fight was both men mortally wounded and a potentially explosive crisis for the already strained Pawnee-U.S. relations. For a more comprehensive examination of the mission and its history, as well as further study of the problems see Rice, “Gazing Westward, Watching God,” esp. 80-99; Riding In, “Keepers of Tirawahut’s Covenant,”153-61.
While distracting and potentially explosive for any hope of good relations with the Pawnee as a whole, the missionary infighting did not matter as much to the Pawnee themselves. Principal Kitkahahki chief Ter-er-it-tit-a-kush looked past the problems to see the benefits of selective use of white technology and cultural norms, even suggesting that those who rested on Sundays were more productive later as “our labors are continued from day to day – it is hard – we drag out life – not enjoy it.” His comment contained volumes, suggesting the continued struggles of his people to recover from the two epidemics, military setbacks, bad hunts, and failed crops. It also betrayed a sadness and weariness of the struggle, especially given what he saw during his trip to Washington in 1838, and the need to bring that temporal and sacred power into the Pawnee orbit. Squabbles among the missionaries did not solve the bigger strategic concerns. What mattered was the Sioux threat and the ability to mount a defense against them. For that, the Pawnee needed the security of their farms, their villages, and above all guns. None of which happened.

5.5 Sioux in the Village

Despite their concerns and constrained circumstances, the Pawnee seemed to get a respite in 1842. The village relocation appeared to be underway with minimal problems. No major conflicts immediately threatened the Pawnee. While 1842 passed relatively calmly, providing federally-aligned chiefs with proof their policies worked, it gave a false hope for future success. Allis reported that three Pawnee war parties left the villages in March 1843 to raid horses, from which 80 or 90 warriors died. A Sioux raid on the Skidi village several months later killed four,

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75 Dunbar to Greene, July 10, 1843, *PML*, 329.
wounded some, and took 100 badly needed horses. These defeats merely built into a larger story of loss and deepening crisis through the remainder of the decade. Raids along the Santa Fe Trail, had been a traditional source of revenue for a generation, but became increasingly costly as U.S. troops openly fought Pawnee and Comanche raiders.

For decades, the Sioux—not the United States—had been the principal strategic concern and the principal military antagonist facing the Pawnee. In the 1840s, the Sioux perceived the collapsing Pawnee circumstances. They saw the military opportunity they had long been seeking, and they did not have any reservations about taking it. Sioux attacks on the Pawnee villages themselves signified a loss of control over their core space and a dramatic reversal of the Pawnee strategic position from less than fifteen years before.

By mid-June 1843, a general panic set in among the Chaui, Pitahawirata, and Kitkahahki mission village. Dunbar’s station was less than a mile from the village, “in plain view” of it, as he reported, suggesting just how much the Pawnee were relying on their white American guests to provide cover. Signs of a large party of mounted warriors appeared in several places near the village. Horse trails through the grass, moccasins, feathers, and other evidence of scouting parties pointed toward an imminent Sioux attack. With at most only 1,000 warriors between the entire Pawnee nation scattered at the different villages, or out hunting and raiding, ranging outside the villages was not an option. Whereas in 1835, several hundred Pawnee could mount an expedition to Cheyenne territory, they could not, nor dared not risk moving too far beyond the protection of their village in 1843. Without enough horses, men, and guns to mount a serious scouting party or counter-attack, the village waited apprehensively for what they seemed to know

76 Allis to Greene, July 21, 1843, PML, 338.
was coming. On the morning of June 27, that threat manifested as 400-500 Sioux warriors that later reports labeled as Dakota and possibly Yankton, but the precise Sioux bands are unclear.  

Sioux forces launched a coordinated attack just after dawn. A small party killed a lone Pawnee man tending horses. The seven Sioux then fled, drawing out a small group of mounted Pawnee in pursuit. They immediately encountered a large detachment of Sioux who killed three Pawnee. Allis, viewing the scene a day later recalled the bodies “literally filled with arrows, and a gun barrel thrust into the body of one by two feet.” The Pawnee fell back to their village, harried the entire way. Accounts suggest that Sioux forces planned a three-pronged assault from concealed positions along the streams surrounding the village and separating it from the mission, blacksmiths, and farmers. The village was completely surprised and nearly surrounded. Villagers had little time to mount a defense against such a large body that Allis reported stretched a mile when arrayed in battle line.

Such a massive attack directed at a village rather than smaller, isolated parties on the prairie was unusual for the typical style of regional warfare and suggests that the Sioux were both emboldened enough to think they could win, well-armed enough to carry the fight to the heart of the Pawnee, and that their enemies were weak enough to offer minimal resistance. After years of seeing Pawnee performance in the field and taking captives, perhaps the Sioux realized their long-time enemies were no longer the regional power they had been only a decade earlier.

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77 Dunbar to Greene, July 10, 1843, PML, 331; James Carleton, The Prairie Logbooks: Dragoon Campaigns to the Pawnee Villages in 1844, and to the Rocky Mountains in 1845, ed. Louis Pelzer (Chicago: Caxton Club, 1945; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 107. Citations refer to the University of Nebraska edition; Dunbar to Green, November 14, 1843, PML, 342; Andrew Drips, sub agent for the Upper Missouri ransomed a Pawnee woman taken during the attack from the Yankton, “after much trouble and difficulty,” and returned her. Andrew Drips to Harvey, July 6, 1844, LROIA: UMA, Roll 884.

78 Allis to Greene, July 21, 1843, PML, 339.

79 Dunbar to Greene, July 10, 1843, PML, 331; Carleton, The Prairie Logbooks, 107; Allis to Greene, July 21, 1843, PML, 338.
It was also unusual for how long the fight lasted and how bloody it became. The Sioux were all mounted and well-armed with guns. Dunbar watched from a short distance away and reported “the greatest confusion” in the village as the Sioux forces rode right into its heart, killing a number of women and children.80 Using their lodges as makeshift forts, Pawnee fighters took the high ground and fought back against several concerted charges. Sioux forces rotated their troops. Multiple detachments made attacks while others rested or stole horses. The attackers set a number of lodges on fire and drove civilians out into the open where many fell as they fled to more secure places. Allis watched the “truly distressing” scene before him, as he and the other whites “saw the dead, burning lodges also the confusion, heard the shrieks and cries of the women and children.”81

The battle raged for more than five hours. It was hand to hand combat at its worst. Dunbar’s wife Esther recalled “both parties would be indiscriminately mingled, pell-mell in the work of death, and filling the air with the most fiendish yells and shrieks.”82 The principal Kitkahahki chief Capote-Bleu led the desperate defense standing his ground with a lance and tomahawk in the face of repeated Sioux charges. Dragoon Lieutenant James Carleton praised the chief’s “gallantry” and “spirited resistance,” after interviewing witnesses. Carleton had known the chief for several years and had exchanged gifts. The officer eulogized the bravery of a fellow warrior who fell after taking a dozen bullet wounds. Acknowledging that “had he lived with us and fought as he fought there, and have fallen, his name would have been immortal.”83 It was perhaps easy to romanticize the trope of a noble, Indian warrior, but having seen the ruins and interviewed survivors, it seems that Carleton was truly and deeply moved. With half the village

80 Dunbar to Greene, July 10, 1843, PML, 330-1.
81 Allis to Greene, July 21, 1843, PML, 339.
83 Carleton, The Prairie Logbooks, 108.
on fire, terrified civilians sheltered in the remaining structures, and enemies determined to stay and fight, this was a desperate struggle for the survival of the Pawnee nation. That it was in the heart of the village rather than some distant prairie battlefield merely emphasized the dire stakes.

Despite Capote-Bleu’s leadership, the Sioux burned 20 of the 41 lodges, stole more than 200 of the increasingly scarce Pawnee herd, killed 68, and wounded 26. Reinforcements from the Chauí village about 10 hard miles away helped drive off the Sioux, but were too tired to pursue. The Skidi, though only four miles away refused to engage, claiming they wanted to defend their own village should a second attack come. Except for a brief pursuit of the Sioux rear from which they recovered a few horses, the Skidi gave further proof of the deep divisions within Pawnee society by refusing aid. The attack so “fritened away” the survivors that they departed early for the hunt, “and left some of their corn onhoed,” reported Allis who visited the “desolate place” the following day and helped bury the dead. Dunbar recorded that “some of the best and bravest men of the tribe lost their lives,” including Capote-Bleu, who “was a firm friend of the whites, and one desirous of improving himself and his people.” Allis confirmed that those killed “were those that had fulfilled the treaty by moveing, consequently they are in a bad situation, from the fact that those that are opposed to moveing make use of every thing like the present calamity to induce others not to move.” Moreover, interpreter Louis LaChappelle, a federal employee for almost a decade and Capote-Bleu’s son-in-law, died in the attack as well as the Pawnee wife of blacksmith Michael Seedlow. Despite efforts to safeguard his wife in the

84 Allis to Greene, July 21, 1843, PML, 338.
85 Dunbar to Greene, July 10, 1843, PML, 332.
86 Allis to Greene, July 21, 1843, PML, 339. Dunbar reported that the survivors sought refuge at the Chauí village south of the Platte, among those who had not relocated to the mission area. Dunbar to Greene, November 14, 1843, PML, 342.
87 Dunbar to Greene, July 10, 1843, PML, 332.
88 Allis to Greene, July 21, 1843, PML, 339.
blacksmith shop, Sioux warriors killed her in front of Seedlow who was subsequently whipped by the attackers. Property losses totaled more than $10,000.\footnote{Dunbar to Greene, July 10, 1843, \textit{PML}, 332; Carleton, \textit{The Prairie Logbooks}, 109; “Western Indians: Hostilities,” \textit{Niles’ National Register}, July 29, 1843.}

This was national news. The \textit{St. Louis Era} picked up the story on July 13, and by July 29, \textit{Niles’ National Register} republished the limited account based on Seedlow’s letter to a friend in St. Louis detailing his wife’s murder. The Sioux attack was expected for some time, stated the \textit{Era}, as “these Indians have exhibited hostile feelings on several occasions.” Most importantly, the United States was treaty-bound to defend the Pawnee. This was now a matter of national honor and law. Yet “we are surprised that some efforts have not been made to prevent these murders,” the paper wrote, pointing to the abject failure of the federal government. “If the Indians are not entitled to protection,” they mused, “certainly those in the employ of the government may claim it.”\footnote{“Western Indians: Hostilities,” \textit{Niles’ National Register}, July 29, 1843.}

The paper foreshadowed the next several decades of Pawnee, Sioux, and federal relations: a shift from a tripartite regional power to one of Pawnee weakness, federal ascendancy, and increased or continued federal hostility toward the Sioux. Direct confrontation of Sioux aggression and assertion of federal supremacy was the only logical response for the press. Had the idea not occurred to officials before, this would have been the ideal time to seek more formal alliances with the Pawnee, arm them, and use them as auxiliaries against the rising power of the Sioux. As usual, little changed in federal policy.

The Sioux attack of 1843 tore apart the heart of Pawnee society when they most needed unity. The result could only be described as apocalyptic. Returning survivors constantly searched for new signs of attack while scavenging the remains of the village. Dazed and
disoriented “in their sad condition,” lamented Dunbar, “they seemed to be more than usually inclined to plunder themselves, each appropriating to his use whatever came his way, instead of restoring it to its rightful owner however needy he might be.”91 For a people whose reputation was for social cohesion, strong leadership, and control of deleterious things like alcohol and debt, such behavior showed the trauma of the attack and its ability to unmake Pawnee society.

Warnings passed from Miller and Dunbar that the Sioux intended “to exterminate them,” further unnerved the Pawnee, though thankfully no other Sioux attack manifested that summer. But in the fall, an attack by an unknown party suspected to be Sioux, Cheyenne, or Arapahoe hit the Skidi near their hunting camp on the Platte, about 160 miles west of the mission. Losing seven people as well as most of their goods and food placed them in a desperate situation, though they killed enough bison to survive the winter, barely.92 Miller advised their consolidation to two new mutually supportable villages, a point they eagerly accepted. Some moved that fall and the rest following in the spring of 1844. Importantly, each village was built for defense. Government farmers and smiths assisted in building a sod fence around each village, effectively turning them into forts whose earthen lodges and walls offered a modicum of protection.93 While not impregnable, nor as heavily armed, this fortification was designed to be a serious deterrent to future attack.

Survival was the primary concern. Defense of a core Pawnee territory meant defending the homes of their families rather than far-ranging hunting grounds or sacred places. What geographic boundaries they fought to protect through the treaty of 1833 now meant little compared to an existential struggle for the survival of the Pawnee people. The reversion to

91 Dunbar to Greene, November 14, 1843, PML, 343.
92 Allis to Greene, March 2, 1844, PML, 359.
93 Dunbar to Greene, November 14, 1843, PML, 343-4.
purely defensive settlement was a profound statement about the fortunes of a people who had fielded some of the best light cavalry forces in North America capable of ranging from the Dakotas to Mexico.

The Pawnee consolidation fulfilled the federal goal of small, easily monitored, and controllable villages. It did not provide much else of benefit to the Pawnee themselves. Colonel Stephen Kearny of the dragoons requested a two-month expedition to show the flag and bring some measure of regional stability, but the plan, “not being deemed necessary by the Secretary of war and Commanding General, to be sufficient at this time,” went nowhere. Yet Washington officials expected him “to do all in his power, to reconcile the difficulties now existing between the two tribes mentioned and the Sioux.”94 This was difficult with the regiment confined to Fort Leavenworth.

The attack did finally move Indian department officials into action, or at least the discussion of action. Specifically this meant furnishing the long-promised arms to the Pawnee. Miller reminded Mitchell of the commitment to supply 100 guns and ammunition and that swift action was necessary. He expected a “furious attack” by the Sioux in May or June 1844, which necessitated more alacrity than the government had previously shown. Miller pleaded that if supplying guns was all that could be done, “it may save them from a ruinous defeat.” Failure to do so would be a violation of federal promises and duty. Pawnee blood would be on American hands. He warned that “the Pawnees will say, if our Great Father had done as he promised, by giving us the guns and ammunition we would been able to have protected our wives and children from slaughter; and our property from waste and plunder, by Defeating our Enemies.”95

94 Jones to Kearny, May 31, 1844, LROIA: CBA, Roll 216.
95 Miller to Mitchell, December 23, 1843, LROIA: CBA, Roll 216.
For Miller, the implementation of federal guardianship over the Pawnee would demonstrate that “we are the enlightened and strong,” and “are endeavoring to win over from heathenism, the ignorant and weak.” It was a national duty. “We have much to reflect upon, to be able to do our Duty,” he pleaded with Mitchell, “as to acquit ourselves before our fellow man, and to feel conscious, of not having neglected a command of Almighty God.” This was not a half-hearted inquiry, but a determined call to fulfill national obligations, regain some honor for failing to prevent or avenge the attack, and perhaps assuage a guilty conscience for previous inaction. Even should “the Pawnees meeting with a Defeat, with those guns and ammunition in their hands; and the entire property falling in the hands of their Enemies, if such should be the result, we have only done our duty,” he concluded.96 Miller delivered fifty available guns, but needed more.97

Pawnee leaders needed more. Their strategy was to turn their villages into American-style forts with earthworks to stop cavalry, strong defensible earth lodges should attackers enter the village, and both small arms and cannon. They pleaded with Miller not just for more guns, but bigger ones. Repeatedly, the Pawnee spoke “of the propriety of having big guns at their villages, with a view of frightening the Enemy out of their country.” Artillery, not just rifles, would be the decisive factor. Miller argued that with the new fortified villages, “the most effectual way of deterring the Sioux, and preventing them from making attacks in future upon the Pawnee villages,” was to supply several pieces of field artillery, “and that, an occasional report of these guns when the enemy was in hearing, would so intimidate them, as ever after to consider the Pawnee villages so fortified . . . as to forbid attack.” Such an overwhelming show of force would change the nature of regional warfare. Miller reported that those “well acquainted with

96 Miller to Mitchell, December 23, 1843, LROIA: CBA, Roll 216.
97 Miller to Mitchell, December 24, 1843, LROIA: CBA, Roll 216.
the Indian warfare – and of their timidity when chances appear to be even equal,” could attest to the value of artillery.98

Thomas Harvey, who replaced Mitchell as the St. Louis Superintendent, forwarded the requests with his endorsement for immediately providing the promised rifles as “they seem to be absolutely necessary for the protection of both farmers and Indians.” Such measures were as much about protecting the missionaries and government employees as the Pawnee, but the end result would still be the same. Artillery was another matter, though. Larger guns would make the Pawnee more independent. Instead, “I should also be gratified if the wish of the agent could be complied with, by furnishing a small swivel for each of the Pawnee villages,” he suggested to Crawford.99 Swivel guns were close combat weapons. Their effectiveness as large shotguns firing grapeshot at close range made them a good last-ditch defense. Their relatively portable size made transport easier, but they were not the impressive, army stopping, long-range weapons the Pawnee desired. Only one per village was more for show than combat. A gun crew would have to be constantly on the move to each critical point, especially if the Sioux repeated their multi-pronged attack strategy. But, either because of specific policy determinations or from apathy among top officials there is no evidence the swivel guns were ever supplied. Perhaps this was swayed by reports that “the whites that are at the Pawnee villages do not expect that, the Sioux will molest them [the whites] as is manifest from the fact, of their remaining there.”100 Pawnee lives were expendable, white Americans were not.

That the Pawnee wanted field artillery shows their strategic conceptions of warfare and military power had already changed. By digging in, the Pawnee ceded the remainder of their

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98 Miller to Mitchell, December 24, 1843, LROIA: CBA, Roll 216.
99 Harvey to Crawford, February 9, 1844, LROIA: CBA, Roll 216.
100 Miller to Mitchell, December 24, 1843, LROIA: CBA, Roll 216.
territory to the Sioux and their western enemies, the Cheyenne and Arapahoe. It was in many ways a fulfillment of the woodpecker and turkey dialogue from the hako ceremony: security of the people was paramount. Territory, sacred or not, was expendable.

All the concern among federal officials over the Sioux-Pawnee conflict was apparently merely for show, however. By only partially fulfilling the need for guns, the United States shirked its treaty provisions. Moreover, it did not do anything to make an effective peace between the two groups or provide for the military defense of the Pawnee per treaty obligations. Inquiries about securing some sort of peace failed. Agent Andrew Drips serving among the Sioux found it “utterly impossible to keep the Sioux from going to war against the Pawnees, a few days before I left Fort John a war party of the former returned from one of the villages of the latter bringing with them ten scalps, principally of women which they found some distance from the villages digging roots.”

After spending the winter of 1844-5 along the North Fork of the Platte with the Sioux and Cheyenne he despaired of making any changes. Crawford agreed, annotating the report that, “I do not see that anything more can be done in regard to the hostilities between parties of the Sioux and Pawnees – Col. Kearny will do all that can be done in the contemplated dragoon excursion,” effectively passing off the problem and the consequences.

Within 18 months, federal officials went from very concerned to completely indifferent about the state of affairs. Worse, the 1845 annuity for the Yankton Sioux, who had probably participated in the 1843 attack or would at least be trading with Sioux bands that had, included proposals for furnishing more than 1000 lbs. of gunpowder, one ton of bullets, and more than

101 Drips to Harvey, April 6, 1845, LROIA: UMA, Roll 884.
102 Crawford, undated annotation on Drips to Harvey, April 6, 1845, LROIA: UMA, Roll 884.
100 guns. In 1846, the request was for 1200 lbs. of powder and 3,000 lbs. of lead.\textsuperscript{103} Either federal officials did not realize what they were doing, did not care, or were undertaking a conscious effort to destroy the Pawnee. Regardless of intention, the effect was the same. One side of a war of extermination was being heavily armed. The other side was prevented from properly defending itself despite assurances of support and friendship.

If the underlying indifference was racially motivated, in that concern for the safety of the white Americans was the only concern of the department, federal officials made a grave error. By June 1846, Sioux raiders, perhaps emboldened by the lack of punishment and weakness of the Pawnee, returned. Pawnee parents feared for their children’s safety and left some with the government employees. They had begged Dunbar for years to accept some into his care, though he “uniformly declined,” as the “care and anxiety on their account being very great, besides the additional exposure of my own family and effects to savage violence.”\textsuperscript{104} So much for his supposed Christian values.

The Pawnee left for their hunt on June 12 and two days later a Sioux party raided the village, burning some structures. They then approached the government workers who were hiding some of the Pawnee children, threatened them, and tried to force their way into the buildings. Several Sioux shot at, but missed Samuel Allis and another white man. Three days later, a second larger party of Sioux came by, forcing all the whites to shelter at the government buildings. Hostile words, some horse thefts, and pot shots taken at Samuel Allis disabused the missionaries of any pretense of Sioux friendship. The threat convinced both the government workers and missionaries to abandon the post as soon as possible. By June 30, Dunbar was at

\textsuperscript{103} Unsigned, “Proposals for furnishing goods to the Yancton Sioux,” July 29, 1845 and May 14, 1846, LROIA: UMA, Roll 884. Drips noted that the 1845 costs were too high, and pushed back the requisition to 1846 to allow for more goods at the same price.

\textsuperscript{104} Dunbar to Greene, June 30, 1846, \textit{PML}, 543.
Bellevue, more than 100 miles away. Sub agent R. B. Mitchell reported the Sioux left the Pawnee village “reduced to ashes. The Blacksmith and others employed their by the government believe if they overtake the Pawnees they will exterminate them.” Thanks to the bravery of the government employees, 30 Pawnee children fled safely to Bellevue.

The mission was abandoned, the government station abandoned, one Pawnee village at least partially burned, and the Sioux emboldened. It did not matter to federal officials. On April 26, 1846, Mexican cavalry attacked U.S. troops under Zachary Taylor who had entered the disputed territory between the new American state of Texas and Mexico. President Polk got his long-desired excuse for war. The Platte Valley was now a backwater of a backwater in federal strategic concerns. While Kearny’s forces did pass through on their expedition to New Mexico, making peace between the Sioux and Pawnee, or punishing the Sioux was not the priority.

Pawnee villages could be easily bypassed by emigrants to Oregon or dragoon patrols ranging to the Rocky Mountains.

Beyond the Pawnee core, the situation was no better. In the fall of 1847, a group of about 60 Pawnee returning from a raid to the south stopped near the small post of Fort Mann along the Santa Fe Trail. Captain William Pelzer ordered his men to bring the Pawnee inside, and about 30 came to accept the promised gifts and food, leaving their weapons outside. When they tried to leave, Pelzer ordered them arrested, and the troops fired on those who resisted. At least two Pawnee died immediately, perhaps two dozen were wounded, of whom maybe 10 succumbed to their wounds. Reports suggest that some soldiers actually turned their weapons on their

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105 Dunbar to Greene, June 30, 1846, PML, 541-3.
106 R. B. Mitchell to Harvey, June 28, 1846, LROIA: CBA, Roll 216. Mitchell reported the missionaries hid the children under their floor, but Dunbar’s own admission and report contradicts this claim.
comrades to prevent a worse massacre. Pawnee leaders demanded compensation. None arrived. Apparently the only disciplinary action was Captain Pelzer’s removal from the region.¹⁰⁷

That such a massacre did not cause an immediate war with the United States revealed the tenuousness of the Pawnee strategic situation. They could ill-afford to fight the Army, nor could they further alienate a government upon whom they were still desperately hoping to supply weapons and an alliance against the Sioux. Pawnee leaders could not deliver what they needed for defense. Nor could they carry out the basic governing function of protecting their people from attack or avenging their deaths afterwards. The Pawnee villages were isolated, island settlements in an American prairie controlled by a continental power.

While not inevitable, the almost total collapse of Pawnee military and political power by 1846 was dramatic for its rapidity. By 1859, Indian Agent William Dennison counted only 820 men and 1,505 women in the nation, a mere fraction of the more than 10,000 little more than a generation earlier.¹⁰⁸ The Pawnee did everything right from their strategic point of view. They maintained a territorial and agricultural core as well as a largely cohesive social and political structure that prevented many of the ill-effects brought by traders such as alcohol. They directed federal policy and shaped the contours of the West and the formation of Indian Territory through military power. They traded space for time and resources, bargaining that good relations with the federal government would supply them the necessary equipment and assistance to maintain

¹⁰⁷ Miller to Harvey, March 20, 1848 LROIA: CBA, Roll 217; Riding In, “Keepers of Tirawahut’s Covenant,” 144-5. Pelzer is sometimes misspelled Pilzer or Peltzer. Pelzer was part of the Missouri volunteer battalion stationed along the Santa Fe Trail and the U.S. Army supply routes for New Mexico, sometimes labeled as Indian Battalion Missouri Volunteers, Battalion of Missouri Volunteers for the plains; Gilpin's Battalion Missouri Mounted Volunteers; Oregon Battalion; and Separate Battalion of Missouri Volunteers. Fort Mann was little more than a supply depot with one cannon and some small arms, a stockade, some barracks, and storehouses. The troops were ill-equipped, ill-trained, and suffered from dissension between Anglo-American and German ethnic groups within the unit. The incident was national news and reports from St. Louis were reprinted in Niles’ National Register, January 1, 1848, 275.

¹⁰⁸ William Dennison to A. M. Robinson, July 16, 1859, quoted in White, Roots of Dependency, 207.
their political independence and military power. The United States squandered an opportunity to
turn the Pawnee into close allies and use their military power as a police force for the Great
Plains, helping interdict alcohol and traders, offering a counterbalance to Sioux expansions, or
using them as a wedge to isolate and fight the Comanche, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe. It required a
vision of relations no federal officials were willing or able to comprehend.

From their position as the main Native American power between the Sioux and the
Comanche in 1830 to their fall to a minor client nation within the U.S. orbit by 1850 revealed not
just a series of misfortunes—two smallpox epidemics and several bad hunts and crop yields—but
a concerted federal policy of neglect and incompetence. Luckily for federal officials, the Pawnee
political decline ultimately promoted United States sovereignty over the Platte Valley nearly five
decades after its titular acquisition.

The Pawnee did not disappear. They did not die off. This political fall in some limited
and deeply tragic ways made the Pawnee nation stronger. Territorial consolidation forced the
four bands together. Population losses forced them into even greater unity for cultural and social
survival. They suffered greatly, but they retained a core sense of political, social, and cultural
identity. Pawnee strategy shifted to survival and recalibration of what it meant to remain
Pawnee. In the ensuing decades, this increasingly meant alliance with the United States, service
with the U.S. Army against the Sioux, Cheyenne, and others in the wars of the latter-nineteenth
century, and ultimately, the Pawnee choice to relocate to Indian Territory in Oklahoma to
preserve their people. Sometimes, survival is the most important victory.
Epilogue

Remaining Pawnee

Making Nebraska was a process of state-building outside of the typically understood processes of European imperial collapse, federal territorial expansion, and narratives of Native American dispossession. Between 1819 and 1849, the region was deeply influenced by events like Indian Removal and U.S. expansion toward Texas, but within its own history of Native American conflicts and alliances as a strong Native American power pushed back against federal ambitions. Uncertainty, diplomatic scrambling, and the general failures of people to fully control their space marked a place central to North American history, yet marginal to historiographies of United States Indian policy, continental expansion, and Native American political histories. After 1849, Nebraska fits into a framework of settler colonialism that tried to erase the history and the people from the broader historical consciousness. But the Pawnee did not disappear, nor did the United States become the unquestioned master of Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma.

The history of federal and Pawnee interactions from 1819-1849 is one of spatial transformation. For federal officials, the land transitioned from an unknown, far away space to a known, bounded place. For the Pawnee, it was a dislocation of the familiar place and the search for new identity and rootedness in an unfamiliar political landscape. Forts, agencies, and territorial boundaries remade spaces into administrative places just as they helped dislocate fixed places into contested space for those who lived there. In just over a generation this process remade the greater Platte Valley as both groups looked to find a sense of rootedness, of a need for something familiar to claim as central to identity in the midst of unfamiliar places and
cultural disruption. For the United States, this was a continuation, modified, of the process of military expansion and political incorporation of the East. For the Pawnee, this was a recalibration of what it meant to be Pawnee and a retrenchment of deep cultural norms of gendered power and social identity.

The story of their interactions from 1819-1849 is about the unintended consequences of foreign policy between multiple regional powers that included, but was not limited to, the United States and the Pawnee. What choices each made about alliances, warfare, accommodation, resistance, and political-cultural identity mattered, but they were also subject to the vagaries of bad luck, the decisions of others, and the problem of geography. Sometimes living in the wrong place between the wrong people matters more than making calculated strategic choices. The initial years of prolonged contact between 1818 and 1830 saw two regional powers vying for local supremacy, and the U.S. learning hard lessons about the limits of their power on the Great Plains. Little more than a generation later federal officials were the presumptive masters of a continent and thinking about territorial management on a scale seemingly impossible during the tumultuous 1820s. After 1844, the United States and Pawnee took radically divergent paths. The Pawnee, who at one time had raided into Mexico, or who were able to fight the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe simultaneously, could no longer defend their own villages from attack. They ceased to exist as a regional power. Meanwhile, the United States moved beyond its original limited power of infantry in fixed fortifications trying to secure a border along the edge of the Great Plains. Federal troops and officials entered a transcontinental space with the capabilities to manage it, control the Native American polities within it, and the incorporate the land into a national framework.
After 1849, the options available for the Pawnee-federal relationship became constricted by the loss of Pawnee mobile power and the political incorporation of Nebraska within a larger military-administrative state. As the United States adapted to managing a continental empire, Nebraska’s incorporation within the traditional territorial system meant increased settler colonialism and the imperative to contain and nullify Pawnee independence. Federal officials could not imagine any other alternative than domination of the people and land.

The end of this story, however, is not about the disappearance of the Pawnee. Nor is it about a simple narrative of triumphant conquest by the United States of a region it heretofore could not control. This dissertation ends at a particular moment when the stakes of the regional political struggle changed for the two main claimants to the Platte Valley.

For the Pawnee, this meant a shift in thinking about what was essential for political and cultural survival and how to accomplish those goals. In practice this meant even closer relations to the federal government for an alliance and protection, culminating in the decision to relocate the nation to Indian Territory in the 1870s to preserve the people.

For the United States, this moment marked a shift in domestic politics from the struggles of regionalism, primarily the tensions between East and West, to the struggles of sectionalism and the conflict between North and South. The United States won the contest for the Platte, but it lost the war for national development. Territorial expansion forced the sectional divide over slavery into open, violent conflict nearly as soon as the region was incorporated as the federal territories of Kansas and Nebraska.

The story of Nebraska shifted from the bilateral diplomatic relationship of regional military powers, to one focused on the domestic concerns of national survival and identity for both the Pawnee and United States.
Some federal officials recognized the divergence of national fortunes almost immediately in the wake of the Sioux attacks of the mid-1840s. By 1848, it was readily apparent. Agent G. C. Matlock’s interactions with the Yankton and other Sioux bands near the Upper Missouri Agency highlighted the changed relationship. In council with Sioux leaders, Matlock reminded them “that they must cease killing [the Pawnee] unless they did there Grand Father was determined to punish them,” and “dwelt in length upon the impropriety of war – upon any terms with there neighbours.”¹ The Sioux bristled at the instructions and “question[ed] the right of their Grand Father interfereing in their domestic feuds and petty wars with other tribes,” Matlock reported. He lamented that “unless something is done to put an end to existing hostilities with the Sioux and the Otoes, Omehaws, and Pawnees, the latter tribes will soon become extinct.”² The Pawnee were in a war for national survival and losing, badly.

Matlock’s analysis revealed several key points. The Pawnee, rather being the dominant power as a series of previous federal officials warned, were helpless victims. Federal officials viewed them as wards worthy of compassion and protection rather than a competing geopolitical force. Matlock felt confident enough in federal ability to project military force against the Sioux of the Upper Missouri that he could threaten retaliation. To that end, he and Superintendent Thomas Harvey started work to prevent arms reaching the Upper Missouri, as guns were of “very little use for any other purpose than that of war – they use arrows in killing buffalo.” While his predecessors felt so isolated from reinforcement as to be powerless, Matlock’s confidence showed a changed attitude about federal notions of control, their ability to project

¹ G. C. Matlock to Harvey, June 16, 1848, LROIA: UMA, Roll 884. Matlock previously met with sixty Pawnee leaders in April, all of whom were eager to have the United States broker a peace between the two groups. Such a united eagerness for a third-party intervention suggests the precarious situation in which the Pawnee found themselves by 1848. Matlock to Harvey, April 22, 1848, LROIA: UMA, Roll 884.
² Matlock to Harvey, June 16, 1848, LROIA: UMA, Roll 884. Matlock also reported that Sioux war parties took at least 22 Pawnee and 28 Otoe scalps the previous fall, and several war parties were out currently hunting the Pawnee, Otoe, and Omaha in the spring of 1848.
power, and their responsibilities as guardians of domestic dependent nations. Unlike similar claims from agents like Benjamin O’Fallon in 1819, Matlock’s claims could be reinforced by the Army, now with more than a decade of experience projecting force across the plains. Rather than thinking about a defensive frontier line, Matlock suggested a broad expansion of federal power in keeping with larger departmental changes including a self-sufficient fort in the heart of Sioux territory 120 miles from Council Bluffs. It was a full-throated returned to Calhoun’s ambitious expansionist policies.3

Federal plans to secure the Oregon Trail necessitated new forts along the route, including Fort Childs, soon renamed Fort Kearny, just across the Platte from present-day Kearney, Nebraska in 1848. Importantly, Fort Kearny was about 90 miles further west up the Platte from the mission and village abandoned in 1846. It signified the permanent change in federal thinking about the Pawnee. Agent Miller complained that being on the south bank, it was “protection in name only” from Sioux raids.4 Being to the west of the main Pawnee villages it also suggested federal self-assuredness about the limitations of Pawnee power and that the post was not too isolated. Unlike Fort Atkinson’s sprawling town-like complex of buildings described by the duke of Württemberg, Fort Kearny was according to traveler James Wilkins, “a Miserable looking place . . . being built primarily of sods,” with only a couple frame houses a full year after construction began.5 It was hardly a military stronghold meant to impress or awe the locals. It did not have to be. Rather than an imposing monument of federal authority and American cultural norms, Fort Kearny was just a waystation and depot.6

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3 Matlock to Harvey, June 16, 1848, LROIA: UMA, Roll 884.
4 Miller to Harvey, September 10, 1847, LROIA: CBA, Roll 217.
6 The fort was approximately at the 1/6th point of the Oregon Trail, and offered a place to rest and refit before Fort Laramie, at least 30 days travel further west. Richard E. Jensen, “Introduction,” to William Tappan, “William Tappan’s Diary, 1848,” eds. Ellen F. Tappan and Richard E. Jensen, Nebraska History, 82, no. 3, (2001): 90-121,
Fort Kearny’s construction matched an increased interest in the far West with the shift of Indian affairs from the War Department into the newly forming Interior Department and the expansion of agencies westward. D. D. Mitchell, again superintendent in St. Louis in 1849, was “struck with the several changes” over the previous five years. In a massive report on the state of the St. Louis Superintendency, Mitchell looked much farther west for his long-term strategic thinking, urging councils and treaties to “include the hostile tribes of New Mexico,” among others near the Rockies. “The ultimate destiny of the prairie tribes looks gloomy in the extreme,” he wrote, which would lead to even further violence as nations fought over scarce resources, suggesting the importance of a rapid increase of federal military power in the region. Mitchell wrote of the nations of the far West as “wandering tribes,” with an “abundance of horses and being as much at home in one part of the prairie as another,” in the same language his predecessors reserved for the Pawnee thirty years earlier.\footnote{Mitchell to Orlando Brown, October 13, 1849, LROIA: StLS, Roll 755.} Four new agencies—Upper Platte, Salt Lake, Santa Fe, and Sacramento—in addition to a general reorganization meant that Mitchell requested $487,045 for operations of 13 agencies, sub agencies, and the main superintendent’s office in St. Louis for 1850. Of this the Pawnee only accounted for $3,440 or about .007%, suggesting how little interest they garnered relative to the West writ large.\footnote{Mitchell to Brown, October 1, 1849, LROIA: StLS, Roll 755.}

Pawnee leaders for their part saw this shift. They still straddled the principal route to Oregon and California, but their limited ability to extract concessions revealed their relative weakness. The Pawnee could not even protect themselves within their former core territory. Seven men died fighting during the journey to the incomplete Fort Kearny to negotiate a treaty

and land cession on August 6, 1848. It showed confidence for the Army to present the fort as a fait accompli and dictate the treaty ceding a swath of bottomland and bluffs stretching approximately 60 miles along the Platte embracing all of Grand Island (roughly between present-day Grand Island and Kearney, NE). The cession secured a heavily wooded military reserve for the fort’s construction and maintenance and a large area for settlers to rest after having traveled about 1/6 of the Oregon trail, all for the paltry sum of $2,000 in goods. Supposedly, this included 150 guns, 500 lbs. of lead, 200 lbs. of powder, 500 flints, and 150 knives.

It was an instant arsenal, but too late to reverse Pawnee military desperation. They still needed more and bigger guns. Shari-tarish of the Chaui repeated the long-running demand for artillery, “the big guns they talked so much about,” in exchange for stolen government mules. Perhaps remarkably, the Skidi whom missionary John Dunbar once considered the most resistant to change, pushed the hardest to conform to federal requests for resettlement north of the Platte and avoiding antagonizing federal officials. Their stance suggested dramatically altered circumstances from a decade earlier. Weapons were the paramount concern for the Pawnee who still hoped to develop their fortification and defensive capabilities.

Beyond the immediate need for defense, the Pawnee requests revealed a larger political culture debate within their society over how to preserve themselves as Pawnee. On paper, the chiefs fully ceded their sovereignty, agreeing to “renew their assurances of friendship . . . their

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9 William Tappan, a civilian artist accompanying the Missouri Mounted Volunteers attached to the party building Fort Kearny kept the best record of the early days of the fort. He recorded the construction party reached the site on June 2. Tappan, “Diary,” 13, 29. Tappan records the treaty meeting as August 8, but the official record in Statutes at Large records August 6.
10 Tappan, “Diary,” 30; Miller to Harvey, June 17, 1848, LROIA: CBA, Roll 217.
11 Tappan, “Diary,” 30. Ish-ka-op-pa, or He Who Has Killed Many, called out Pawnee leaders who had stolen mules, harassed travelers, and refused to resettle north of the Platte, “Do you not feel ashamed when he tells you that it is all yours now? If you do not you should. You know that you have not done as he [the US agent] has told you. Try now to do differently though I dare say that before the sun goes down in the west you will have done something wrong you will have stolen something, for so it has always been.”
fidelity to the United States,” and to refer all disputes “to such arbitration as the President of the United States may direct.”\textsuperscript{12} Political sovereignty was questionable, so preserving a cultural identity for the leadership took the form of remaining masculine, martial warriors. While soldiers at Fort Atkinson in the 1820s obsessed about their status as men, Pawnee and other local Native Americans remained confident in their status. Now, the Pawnee were under threat of losing their status as warriors and being incapable of fighting their enemies or protecting their people. Their internal social and political cohesion was tenuous at best. An alarm that the Pawnee threatened an attack on a military detachment and perhaps a wagon train on August 13, 1849 sent Fort Kearny into action. Immediately 350 men and two guns went out to destroy the Pawnee village. The initial panic resulted from misinterpreted signs about a domestic political dispute over patriarchal status, law, and chiefly authority that divided the nation.\textsuperscript{13}


\textsuperscript{13} Chiefs warned the military escort to not stop in the Pawnee village for fear young men might rob them. The troops misinterpreted the warning as threatening an attack on them and a nearby wagon train, sparking a panic at the fort. The turmoil resulted from a year-long conflict between the bands arising from a domestic fight between a young chief Capan Bleu who in a fight with his wife, the daughter of Sharitarish, killed her. Law dictated Sharitarish take his revenge. Reports conflict with either Sharitarish severely wounding Capan Bleu, who then committed suicide, which was rare and frowned upon, or the elder chief succeeding in killing his son-in-law. The conflict divided the Pawnee leadership. Tappan, “Diary,” 30-1; \textit{Daily Missouri Republican}, September 7, 1847; Albert Watkins, ed. \textit{Notes on the Early History of the Nebraska Country} (Lincoln, NE: Publications of the Nebraska State Historical Society, 1922), 180-3.
The locus of regional power was now far beyond the boundaries of Pawnee territory. With President Franklin Pierce’s signature on May 30, 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act effectively legislated away Pawnee independence. Expansive boundaries of the new Nebraska Territory completely surrounded core Pawnee lands. It was decided with little concern for the peoples living there. The assumption, at least strategically, was that they did not matter as independent political actors, merely as remnants to be mopped up by land cessions, territorial government, militias, and if necessary federal troops should the rest fail.

The act forbade anything to “impair the rights of person or property now pertaining the Indians,” and precluded any lands not yet ceded as within the jurisdictional bounds of the new government “without the consent of said tribe, to be included within the territorial line.” But it anticipated Native Americans wanting to be incorporated as they would be once “said tribe shall signify their assent to the President of the United States to be included within the said Territory.
of Nebraska.”\textsuperscript{14} The Pawnee remained distinct, but their options for independent action were constrained by law and by reality on the ground. By 1856, two dozen counties were already laid out in Nebraska. The Omaha were already confined to a reservation in northeast Nebraska. Pawnee territory was bounded by U.S. forts on the south (Fort Kearny) and west (Fort Laramie), both guarding the principal route to the Pacific and hemming in Pawnee movement toward their traditional areas of raiding, including the Santa Fe and Oregon Trails. Sioux forces to the north and west added an additional buffer. The Pawnee now lived within a contained space. Federal claims to the landscape were no longer imaginary. Mopping up Pawnee power, forcing assimilation, and reducing them to dependents on a limited reservation could now follow along a similar trajectory that so many other nations had experienced.\textsuperscript{15}

With territorial government, the United States finally brought the region into the federal political system. No longer a distinct region, it was merely one more place within federal space, subject to the laws, regulations, and policies of a robust military-administrative state. Disputes over the boundaries of ceded lands in 1855 and 1856 resulted in two small conflicts between the territorial government acting on behalf of encroaching settlers and the Pawnee. They were familiar in a longer history of settler colonialism and dispossession of Native Americans. The former assumed far more land was available, the latter considered white settlers to be squatters.\textsuperscript{16}

Treaty negotiations to settle these claims began in September 1857, resulting in the near total dispossession of the Pawnee from their lands. In exchange for removing to a 15 by 30-mile reservation near the villages north of the Loup River and relinquishing approximately 10 million

\textsuperscript{14} An Act to Organize the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas, 1854; Record Group 11; General Records of the United States Government; National Archives.
\textsuperscript{15} For a detailed examination of Pawnee-federal relations in territorial Nebraska, see James Riding In, “Keepers of Tirawahut’s Covenant,” 230-75.
\textsuperscript{16} James Riding In, “Keepers of Tirawahut’s Convent,” 233-5.
acres of land, the nation was supposed to receive $40,000 for five years, and $30,000 per annum afterwards, half of which would be in trade goods. For a nation that had claims to parts of Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Colorado, and the ability to fight even further afield at their height, this was a near erasure of their spatial claims. Two manual labor schools would be established, tools, farmers, laborers, and a steam-mill for lumber and grain represented similar demands from the 1833 treaty for technical aid. But the tone had changed. Gone were requirements for military assistance. Now, “The United States agree to protect the Pawnees in the possession of the new homes,” just as “the Pawnees acknowledge their dependence on the Government of the United States.” It was the language of capitulation in the hopes of alliance and protection. Read differently, the United States extorted submission through the vague promise of protection against external enemies. There was no enforcement mechanism to hold the U.S. accountable for its promise.

17 Kappler, ed. Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, 2:764-7. The treaty was signed on September 24, 1857, and ratified on May 26, 1858. 11 Stats. 729.
Remaining warriors was the way to maintain a core Pawnee identity and perhaps mitigate the growing internal divisions and loss of external political control. It was a strong desire that matched an increasing federal need for scouts, auxiliaries, and combat troops to counter Sioux and Cheyenne threats to U.S. interests beginning in the 1850s. The approach to enlisting Native Americans, first as scouts or auxiliaries and later unfulfilled plans to incorporate full companies with each regular regiment was, Robert Wooster writes, “formulated in the same manner as the government’s overall Indian affairs were – as a haphazard, inconclusive response to the distinctive conditions of the western frontier.” Yet, beginning in the 1850s and in earnest as manpower needs of the Civil War and increased conflicts of the 1860s and 1870s demanded, large numbers of Crow, Navajo, and Pawnee joined the Army. They first appeared as irregulars and later as organized units such as the Pawnee Battalion that authorized 100 recruits under Luther and Frank North for the Powder River campaign of 1865.18 Their service over

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twenty years through several campaigns and nine major battles put them at the center of the much mythologized struggle between the U.S. Army and Native Americans on the Great Plains.\(^{19}\)

By continuing the wars started by their fathers, grandfathers, and older generations, Pawnee men could claim their status as warriors, put their enemies on the defensive, and secure the core of the Pawnee nation. Posing for a photograph in 1868, Coo-Towy-Goots-Oo-Ter-A-Oos (Blue Hawk) and Tuc-Ca-Rix-Ta-Ru-Pe-Row (Coming Around With The Herd) showed their multiple identities as warriors and scouts with traditionally decorated pants, brass tack-embellished Army uniform jackets, and blankets draped across their shoulders. Coo-Towy-Goots-Oo-Ter-A-Oos carries a Springfield rifle, perhaps it was a prop, but it was certainly symbolic of their status as members of a federally-backed combat unit. Their faces appear defiant as they stare straight at the camera. As their nation fought for its survival, these scouts embodied a continuity of the foundational identity of Pawnee martial masculinity.

Within this history was a shift in the sacred. While the land remained important, the sense of space and place shifted from the land to the people. Removal to Indian Territory, following the massacre of a Pawnee hunting party in 1873, was again about preserving the people as a foundation of identity. Drought and grasshoppers destroyed the crops, while white settlers surrounded the now isolated Pawnee reservation. The first group of emigres fled to Indian Territory in 1874. Land was a fixed thing, a place within the larger space of Pawnee culture and cosmology. Without the people, the land was meaningless. The people were the link

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\(^{19}\) Van de Logt, War Party in Blue, 8-9; R. Eli Paul, ed., The Nebraska Indian Wars Reader, 1865-1877 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 71.
between the sacred and temporal who gave space meaning. Removal was about remaining Pawnee, a vital, voluntary action of preservation, even though ultimately tragic and done under duress.\textsuperscript{20} Doing so preserved a core identity.

Pawnee masculinity was tied to the battlefield. While recruiting for the 1876 campaign against the Cheyenne, Luther North encountered a deep-rooted desire to fight even among those who were too sick or elderly. One old man tried repeatedly to join the scouts. He begged to fight and crawled onto the train. North “finally strapped him across the back. The old man said, ‘You have shamed me.’ North replied, “No you have shamed me. Here you are an old man and I have to strike you, an old man, so you will know you cannot go.’ . . . so many wanted to go because life was hard on the reservation, they were hungry, and they wanted to be warriors and feel successful again.”\textsuperscript{21} Pitahawirata chief Resaru (Two Chiefs) who spanned life in Nebraska and the Oklahoma reservation recalled that “when I grew up I would sit among the old men and give heed to the wisdom of their words. They would say, ‘A man’s life is not a happy thing. When a man is born they say, “It’s a boy,” and everyone says regretfully that it would have been better had it been a girl. For it is the proper destiny of men that they should go out on the warpath and be killed. It is a bitter thought that this child will some day have to lie dead on the plain.” The “old men spoke bitterly about life,” according to his daughter Effie Blaine who passed along the words.\textsuperscript{22} The men spoke to the resignation of the difficulties faced from the 1820s-1860s with the seemingly endless wars and military setbacks. Yet they also spoke to the

\textsuperscript{20} White, \textit{Roots of Dependency}, 210-1, 381.
\textsuperscript{21} Blaine, \textit{Some Things Are Not Forgotten}, 10.
\textsuperscript{22} Blaine, \textit{Some Things Are Not Forgotten}, 9.
centrality of the military ethos within the notion of Pawnee manhood. To be a man, to be Pawnee, was to be a warrior.\textsuperscript{23}

For Richard Burton, who passed through Nebraska on his 1860 journey to Salt Lake City, the land was a terrible place. The people comparable to “Bedouin Arabs,” except for the Pawnee who were “Ishmaelites, whose hand is against every man.” Their “propensity to plunder,” and who, “African-like, will cut the throat of a sleeping guest,” made the Pawnee “too treacherous to be used as soldiers.”\textsuperscript{24} Burton’s knowledge, mixed with his racial bigotry, was superficial. He recorded almost as much wrong information as correct about the Pawnee. He dismissed them as uninteresting and powerless, much like their landscape. Such dismissiveness of the people and the land revealed an already changed narrative of the place less than a decade after federal incorporation. Nebraska was merely an inconvenient, sometimes dangerous waystation on the road to something better. The story of the place was rewritten. The history covered over and partially forgotten. The people, relegated to wistful reminiscences about their place as military masters of the Platte Valley, and written-off by outsiders.

The space took on new significance within U.S. national history as a prelude to the Civil War, where its acquisition mattered less than the struggles to incorporate the space as slave or free territory. The region became part of a narrative of North America as manifestly belonging to the United States and the struggles to give that space new meaning. Nebraska could now become fully immersed in the larger process of American settler colonialism.

\textsuperscript{24} Burton, \textit{City of the Saints}, 30-1.
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