

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Viewing Indians: Native Encounters with Power, Tourism, and the Camera in the Wisconsin Dells, 1866-1907

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1d6769vg>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 27(4)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Hoelscher, Steven

Publication Date

2003-09-01

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

Viewing Indians: Native Encounters with Power, Tourism, and the Camera in the Wisconsin Dells, 1866–1907

STEVEN HOELSCHER

[P]hotographs become standard evidence for historical occurrences, and acquire a hidden political significance. They demand a specific kind of approach; free-floating contemplation is not appropriate to them.

—Walter Benjamin

The photographic image possesses an incredible amount of control. Photography has the ability to control the direction of one's thinking by presenting itself as truth. Prejudices can be quickly confirmed by staged, manipulated, or misrepresented photographs. An imbalance of information is presented as truth.

—Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie

INTRODUCTION: “MR. BENNETT’S INDIANS”

In the winter of 1883, the photographer H. H. Bennett decided to spice up his descriptive catalogue of stereo views with something new. Several years earlier, a simple listing of his photographs—mostly landscape views of the area surrounding the Wisconsin River Dells—brought the small-town studio photographer considerable renown and enhanced sales. Now, after a sluggish business year, Bennett sought to recapture some of the trade that he saw

Steven Hoelscher is a cultural geographer with research interests in the connections between photography, place-making, and racial formation. His books include *Heritage on Stage* (1998) and *Textures of Place* (2001), edited with Paul Adams and Karen Till, and he has published in such journals as *American Quarterly*, the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *Ecumene*, *The Public Historian*, and the *Geographical Review*. He lives in Austin, where he teaches American studies and geography at the University of Texas.

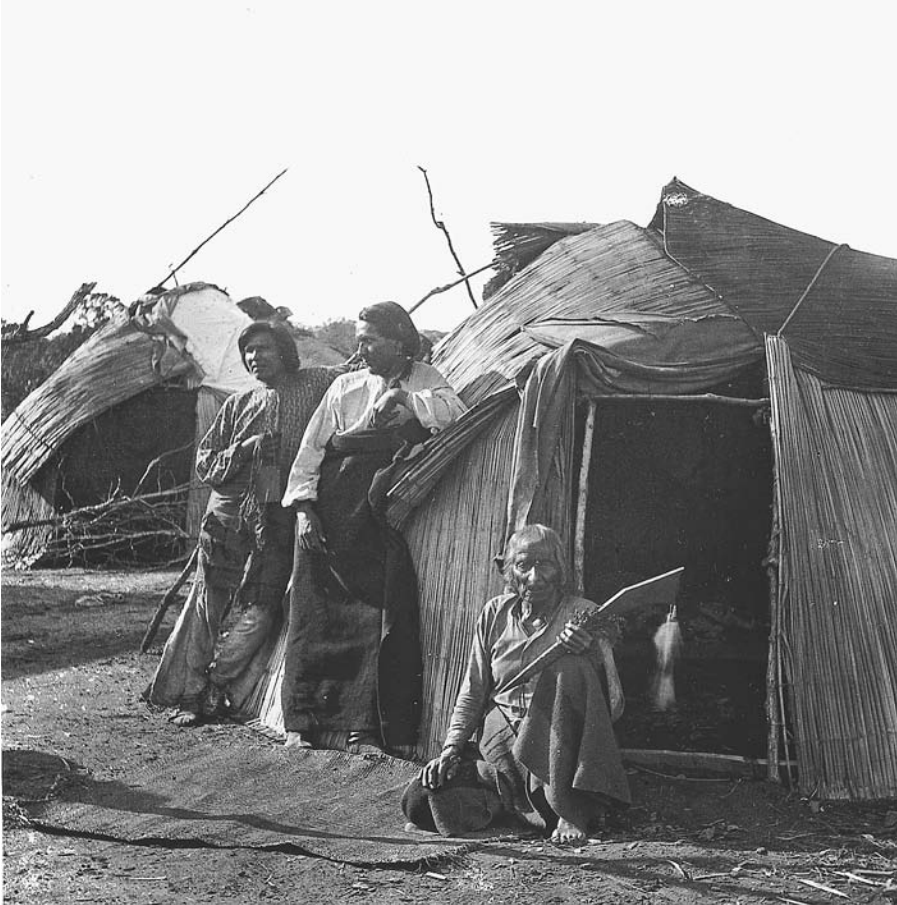


FIGURE 1. *H. H. Bennett. Wah-con-ja-z-gah (Yellow Thunder) Warrior chief 120 years old. Modern print from original stereographic glass negative half, May 1873. Photograph courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society; Bennett Collection, Neg. 297.*

slipping west with the frontier. Perhaps his imagination was triggered by a visit with Buffalo Bill Cody who, as the local paper put it, was “attracted by Bennett, the man who shoots with a camera as well as Buffalo Bill does with a rifle.” Maybe it was the particular success of one photograph taken ten years earlier—of “Wah-con-ja-z-gah (Yellow Thunder), a Warrior chief”—that led Bennett to take a slightly new promotional approach (fig. 1). Whatever the reason, the spice that Bennett used to flavor his photographic business relied on the region’s Native Americans—the Ho-Chunk nation.¹

The decision was an important one for both the photographer and the photographed. For Bennett, whose clientele consisted mostly of tourists to the Dells, cultivating a reputation of romance and adventure—for both the place and for himself—played an increasingly important part in his business. Mass tourism came of age in the years around the turn of the twentieth

century and, as the principal booster of the region's most significant tourist destination, Bennett stood to gain immeasurably from capitalizing on what he and other white promoters called "the Indian fad." Indeed, the photographs in his "Among the Winnebago" series eventually became some of his bestsellers. They seemed to offer proof that Bennett, who referred to himself as "Ho-Kee-Wah-gah-zah" (Ho-Chunk for "the Man Who Makes Pictures"), possessed considerable knowledge of the nation. After seeing his stereographic views, more than one tourist vowed, with Miss Carmel from Rockford, Illinois, "when I go to the Dells again, I am going to devote most of my time to Mr. Bennett's Indians."²

Images such as that of Wah-con-ja-z-gah were vital to building the photographer's reputation and to shaping ideas about American Indians for non-Native viewers. Sitting comfortably in front of a traditional wigwam, Wah-con-ja-z-gah looks directly into the camera lens as two young men lean casually on the shelter waiting for the photographic moment to pass. The photograph itself, although clearly posed and formal, seems documentary in its apparent candidness. What made it "romantic" was less what the image depicted than what Bennett chose to say about it. Although he was considered "superstitious" about the "mysterious operation of picture-taking," Wah-con-ja-z-gah eventually agreed to pose for Bennett, apparently because the photographer, whose "appetite for picture-taking is as relentless as the appetite for rum," was simply not to be denied:

Like all Indians, the Winnebagoes had a great dread of photography. They could not understand the process, and what red men do not understand they dread. Hence, their belief that to be photographed meant an inevitable speedy dispatch to the hunting grounds of their fathers. The oldest child of the tribe, whose name was Wahkan-gazegah, or Yellow Thunder, consented after much persuasion to face the camera.³

Meant to inform and titillate a public fascinated with all things Indian, such stories retold familiar tales of Native superstition and white civilization, of one group's "influence and ingenuity" and the other's savagery, and of the clear racial hierarchy that such oppositions implied.

But what of Wah-con-ja-z-gah and the other American Indians who agreed to pose for Bennett? Obviously, the Ho-Chunk leader would never have described himself or his people as the white tourism promoter did; however, no evidence exists to suggest that he was coerced into sitting for the picture. Is there a way that we can more accurately understand the encounter between photographer and subject?

Such questions become relevant when we remember that, within months of Bennett's 1873 photograph, the federal government was to embark upon its last major removal of Ho-Chunk from Wisconsin, forcibly rounding up more than a thousand people without warning and deporting them to a new reservation in Nebraska. Seen in this light—that of a population under tremendous social pressure—the people in Bennett's photograph take on

new meaning. No longer merely aged (“the oldest child of the tribe”), Wah-con-ja-z-gah is recognized as a powerful, dissident leader who refused to leave his homeland. The object that he grasps more clearly becomes a gunstock war club and the two men to his right could very well be positioned there for his protection. A photograph that would seem to capture a moment of timelessness and traditional life outside the stream of history, in fact, depicts three people undergoing dramatic change.

By sitting for Bennett’s camera, Wah-con-ja-z-gah unwittingly provided a model for future Ho-Chunk that continues into the present and that connects them with the region’s political economy of tourism. For more than 130 years—long before the Ho-Chunk Casino opened near Baraboo, Wisconsin, and almost a half-century before the Stand Rock Indian Ceremonial became a central attraction in the Dells (fig. 2)—Native peoples have played a vital role in shaping the area’s most important economic activity. Far from subsidiary to the story of tourism development, Ho-Chunk people have been crucial, if unequal, partners in transforming the Wisconsin Dells from small town into booming resort destination.⁴

This article traces the beginning of this significant relationship that unites American Indians, tourism, and photography. It begins with the belief that photographs of Native peoples reveal more about the photographers who created them, and the circumstances of their creation, than about the photographed themselves. I am less interested in questions of verisimilitude—are the camera’s subjects “correctly” dressed? are the photographs “accurate” representations of Native life?—than in “image construction”: the aspects of the dominant white society represented in photographs of American Indians. This article examines what Robert Berkhofer has called “the white man’s Indian,” or popular image of American Indians in white society.⁵



FIGURE 2. *Unknown Photographer.* Entrance of the Braves, Stand Rock Indian Ceremonial. *H. H. Bennett Studio Postcard, ca. 1950s.* Author’s Collection.

White Americans have long held peculiar and complex views of Native Americans; and as Rick Hill, among others, has shown, these views are well documented in and shaped by the creative arts, especially photography. “The photographic image becomes the most subtle tool for manifesting those divergent beliefs,” writes Hill. “Nearly every stereotype of Indians that existed in literature, painting, more popular writings, and newspaper articles can be seen in photographs.”⁶ Photography is prone to the same cultural influences and power struggles that shape other forms of representation, but its apparent realism and unmediated look give photography its “hidden political significance.” As a technology of domination, especially in the conquest of American Indians, photography achieved unparalleled success and became a means to justify and legitimate policies of American imperial expansion.⁷

Such readings of historic American Indian photographs have gone a long way in helping us understand the central role of photography as a means of domination, and of forever dispelling the classic view of the visual medium as a transparent and innocent reflection of reality.⁸ This article will attempt to show that H. H. Bennett, no less than his many western contemporaries, constructed popular images of Native peoples as “the vanishing race” which, when combined with print media, created a narrative of white American progress and Native American cultural decline. Bennett’s Wisconsin Dells photographs depict a playful frontier, a place “where but a few years since savagery and solitude reigned unbroken, now annually swarm[s] with gaily dressed seekers of health and pleasure.”⁹ Pictures of Native Americans themselves—nonthreatening and safe for white consumption—played a central role in this depiction.

The question remains, however: how can we begin to understand such representations in a way that more deliberately takes into account the perspective of the photographed? Can we not treat the subjects in Bennett’s Ho-Chunk photographs as people who interacted with the photographer, and not simply as objects of his camera’s colonizing gaze? Although the photographer controlled the conditions surrounding photo making, this control was never absolute or unconditional. Portrait photography, as Alan Trachtenberg argues, usually involves some sort of collaboration or mutuality between sitter and portraitist. Such encounters might be asymmetric—indeed, they nearly always are—but to suggest that American Indians have been somehow “less rational about photography and less capable of handling its remarkable capabilities” than the dominant white culture perpetuates a patronizing dismissal of Native agency.¹⁰ In other words, suppose we take the logic of photographic domination as a starting point, rather than the end of discussion. If we do so, we must agree with Walter Benjamin’s methodological argument that, by their very nature, photographs “demand a specific kind of approach; free-floating contemplation is not appropriate to them.”¹¹

Although a paucity of primary sources makes such an analysis difficult, in Bennett’s case, we’re fortunate to have a wealth of archival material documenting the social and economic exchange between the photographer and his Ho-Chunk neighbors. Personal and professional correspondence, diaries, financial records, and guidebook publications collected and

preserved from the 1860s through the first decade of the twentieth century provide a window into the making of photographs like that of Wah-con-ja-z-gah. That these sources are all written from Bennett's point of view naturally make them far from unproblematic; but that shouldn't prevent us from trying to understand them. A second set of source materials comes from several meetings with Ho-Chunk elders, language experts, and historians that took place in winter and spring 2002. Who else can better ground a discussion of Native American photographs—bring “free-floating contemplation” to earth—than their descendants?

Here, I take as a premise Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie's contention that the historical development of Native American photography must be understood in relation to the historical development of events among Natives themselves.¹² The goal of this article, then, is to amend—at least partially—the imbalance of information that has long characterized the encounter between American Indians and photography; I do this in three ways.

First, I examine Bennett's photographs of Ho-Chunk people. Part portraiture and part “landscape” or “view photography,” Bennett's Ho-Chunk *views*, as he called them, are the images that have come to represent Ho-Chunk culture for many whites. These pictures have been seen by generations of tourists to the Wisconsin Dells and, more recently, have been widely reproduced in many important historical treatments of the Ho-Chunk nation.¹³ Thus, it is essential to describe and frame them in the context of Native history, and to present some of the discourse guiding their creation.

The article then reviews Bennett's local practices while working with Ho-Chunk, as well as their interaction with the photographer. Because Bennett was not allowed *carte blanche* access to photograph whom and what he wished, at times he went to extraordinary lengths to “get the view.” Native negotiation and resistance were significant in their encounters with the camera.

Third, I connect those photographic artifacts to larger political-economic pressures facing both the photographer and the photographed. By the time of his death in 1908, Bennett had moved almost entirely away from the business that he knew so well—view photography—to sell locally and nationally produced Indian crafts. To facilitate his craft sales business, Bennett strove to learn the Ho-Chunk language, an effort based on complex motives that enjoyed only partial success. Native Americans, benefiting from and exploited by this move, became uneasy participants in a new set of social relations that paved the way for twentieth-century mass tourism.

“VIEWING” INDIANS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY WISCONSIN

Bennett's Ho-Chunk photographs were part of a large body of photographic images made for sale to a public curious about the original inhabitants of their country. Americans were curious for a variety of reasons: because these images offered picturesque views of exotic peoples; because they seemed to supply information about these peoples; because they embodied sentimental notions about the “vanishing American”; and

because they apparently recalled a lost innocence in America, and in Wisconsin. The advent of mass production of photographic images, the rise of large-scale tourism, the emergence of anthropology as a field of scientific study, and the diminishment of Indian tribes themselves stemming from the U.S. government's program of "pacification" all contributed to this exploding white interest in Native Americans during the Gilded Age.¹⁴ As a photographer/businessman, Bennett took advantage of this curiosity and used his Indian photographs both to expand his own business and to promote the region more generally.

Bennett's career as a view photographer—stretching from the end of the Civil War through the first decade of the twentieth century—coincided with the American public's fascination with Native peoples. In 1865, upon returning to Wisconsin after the war, Bennett purchased a local photographic business and began to work primarily in portraiture.¹⁵ Diary entries and letters to relatives from these earliest years indicate that the young veteran found portrait photography neither remunerative nor rewarding. He frequently wrote of the "victims" who posed for his camera and of his adopted town, Kilbourn City (now Wisconsin Dells), as a "little, insignificant, dull, out of the way, place," one that Bennett doubted could support "business enough to give more than one person a decent living."¹⁶ A "depressed" Bennett only staved off economic destitution by supplementing his income with construction work on the railroad, woodcutting, and lathing work, and from his Civil War pension. The young photographer saw his fortunes change with the shift from portrait photography toward "viewing" the nearby Wisconsin River. Although Bennett never became wealthy, view photography provided him a modest livelihood, a path similar to many of his contemporaries in landscape work.¹⁷

Also, like his western landscape contemporaries, Bennett began photographically "viewing" his American Indian neighbors at an early stage—at least as early as 1873.¹⁸ The connection between photographing the unique sandstone rock formations along the river and its earliest inhabitants probably seemed natural for Bennett who, like most frontier photographers, undoubtedly "viewed Indians as an exotic and even frightening, but ultimately doomed, segment of the western landscape."¹⁹ Within months of his return to Wisconsin after the Civil War, the young photographer wrote in his diary of a fun-filled excursion to Stand Rock, a geological formation along the Wisconsin River that would become the subject of some of his best-known landscape views. Bennett describes a local guide who "ferried us over the river and after much wading through the swamps we arrived where we started for: an Indian camp. [We] gained admittance to the 'Big wigwam,' heard some splendid speeches, any quantity of grunting and a little dancing. Got home at four o'clock. Done some singing on the way."²⁰ Although he did not bring a view camera, the 1866 outing marked the beginning of more than forty years of contact with the area's Ho-Chunk. Bennett would eventually get to know many Ho-Chunk quite well and refer to them as "friends," but elements of his naively shallow understanding would remain.²¹

“THE LAVA BEDS OF WISCONSIN MAY BE IN THIS VICINITY”:
SHOVING NATIVE AMERICANS OUT OF THE WAY

The people whom Bennett lightheartedly described in 1866, and who became his photographic subjects over the next several decades, were members of a transitional generation: many had known life both before and after the full weight of comprehensive government programs to eradicate Native life. Those policies, vividly condemned in Helen Hunt Jackson’s 1881 *A Century of Dishonor*, put Wisconsin’s Ho-Chunk in ever worsening social and economic circumstances.²² That they have survived and prospered in a state that treated them first as illegal fugitives, and then as second-class citizens without the physical security of a reservation environment, is a testament to Ho-Chunk perseverance in the face of severe hardship and systematic oppression.

Residents of what is today the state of Wisconsin, Ho-Chunk are a Siouan-speaking people who archaeologists have determined migrated to the region long before European contact.²³ According to oral history, the Ho-Chunk, or Ho-chungra, formerly known as the Winnebago, originated at Moga-Shooch (Red Banks) on the south shore of Green Bay.²⁴ There, archaeologists concur, they had a large, permanent village with extensive gardens, as well as seasonal settlements all the way to the Mississippi River. European contact introduced both devastating epidemics and a shifting balance of power with attendant warfare to the area’s most powerful nation. Interaction with whites during the fur-trade period brought a measure of “revitalization and renewed optimism,” a “middle ground,” if not stability, to the Ho-Chunk, according to Richard White.²⁵ However, once one side—the Americans—was able to achieve its ends through force, the precarious balance of power shifted rapidly and conclusively.

Increasing American influence in the region brought even greater changes in Ho-Chunk life, none more significant than those created by the new power’s insatiable appetite for land. “Between 1800 and 1850,” writes Robert Bieder, “through subterfuge, retaliation, and sale, Americans in Wisconsin wrested land from Indians until they occupied with uncertainty lands they once owned.”²⁶ The lead-mining rush to the southwestern part of the territory during the 1820s marked the beginning of the end for Ho-Chunk control over their land. They were forced to cede Lead District land in 1829 and land further east in 1832; the final and largest cession came five years later in a treaty considered by the entire nation to be fraudulent. Indeed, the 1837 treaty was signed by delegation that went to Washington specifically to stress their need to *keep* this land: so cautious were the Ho-Chunk leaders that they specifically declined to send members of the Bear Clan—the leaders who would have the requisite authority to sell land. It soon became apparent, however, that Washington officials never intended to allow the delegation to return home without signing. With winter approaching and vivid memories of a small-pox epidemic that had killed hundreds two years earlier, the delegation finally signed, “protesting that they did so under duress and that since they had not authority to sell land the government could not expect the tribe to abide by the treaty.”²⁷ To make matters worse, the Ho-Chunk delegation believed the federal government’s verbal assurances that they would have eight years to leave Wisconsin, when, in fact, the treaty stipulated eight months.

Thus began a new and difficult chapter in Ho-Chunk history, during which thousands of people were moved, in varying stages, to territories in Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota, and eventually to a new reservation in north-east Nebraska. Those who agreed to removal, however reluctantly and bitterly, became known as the “treaty-abiding faction” and quickly broke with those who refused to move west, the “disaffected bands.”²⁸ These “renegades” or “rebel faction” led a fugitive existence, “illegally” residing in their own ancestral lands. Every so often—in 1840, 1863, 1871, and 1873–74—federal troops were called into Wisconsin to coerce recalcitrant Ho-Chunk into joining their relatives further west.²⁹ Each removal further weakened the nation: the 1863 removal alone killed more than 550 of the nearly 2,000 tribal members, who during the long winter became ill from the rancid pork and rotten vegetables served them by the government.³⁰

Although neighboring whites periodically challenged such treatment (as, for instance, in Reedsburg, where citizens physically blocked federal soldiers from putting a Ho-Chunk family on a westbound train in 1873),³¹ most quietly supported such policies as inevitable. Occasionally, local support of forced relocation triggered government action; such was the case in 1873. Less than three months after Bennett photographed Wah-con-ja-z-gah, the town’s local newspaper ran a lengthy article calling for Ho-Chunk removal. Next to a travel account reprinted from the *Pecatonica News* extolling the Dells as a place for “pleasure seekers” with “some taste for the romantic,” editor Frank Wisner railed against those “in our state whose sympathies are stirred up for ‘the poor Winnebago.’” The article, characteristic of its day, is revealing and worth quoting at length:

The Winnebagos are rich—richer today than almost any equal number of farmers in the west. They have a million and one thousand dollars in clear trust funds, drawing five per cent annuity. Their reservations and improvements are worth half a million more. Our . . . white men are glad to hunt homes on our Western border; to find their teams, buy their own lands, build their own houses and raise their own families as best they can. Our native Wisconsin Winnebago has a better thing. Our Government takes him from his barren huckleberry ridges, transports him with his ponies and papposes [*sic*] to Nebraska; gives him land; feeds him; clothes him; builds him houses; finds him teams; plows his fields; puts up his fences; educates his children and puts him in the way of being something. If dirt, poverty, ignorance, drunkenness, and strolling vagabondism is better than wealth, industry, sobriety, education, and refinement, then our good people have occasion to deplore the hard fate that seems to crowd the pathway of our Wisconsin Winnebago.

The editorial concludes by arguing that the government should cease:

fooling around with the muskrat Indians, and [issue] orders for their removal without delay. The Winnebagoes still cling to their huckleberry

fields, and intimate fight. The decision is made. Now will the Indians go quietly or will the First Regiment Wisconsin Militia be called out? The lava beds of Wisconsin may be in this vicinity. Who knows!³²

Although Wisconsin did not erupt in armed conflict that year, the threat was certainly real; troops combed the state, and coerced a thousand Ho-Chunk men, women, and children into making the journey to Nebraska on foot. Characteristically, of the 860 Ho-Chunk who arrived at the new reservation, only 204 remained the following year, as some 656 returned to Wisconsin despite the hardships of travel during their removal.³³

Wah-con-ja-z-gah died just before the final removal. His stubborn refusal to leave after the 1837 treaty, of which he was a reluctant signer, added to his important role of peace chief.³⁴ As a way to evade further removal, in 1849 Wah-con-ja-z-gah persuaded a white trader to go with him to the land office in Mineral Point, Wisconsin, to purchase forty acres near the Dells. The ingenious move made him not only a “legal” resident once again, but also an even more important figure in Ho-Chunk history. His homestead became a haven for the refugees avoiding white pressure and a site of the medicine dances and other ceremonies that helped maintain traditional culture. Eventually, his action became a model for others to emulate, as more than six hundred Ho-Chunk families took advantage of special legislation in 1881 permitting them to take up forty-acre tracts. The land scattered throughout central Wisconsin—generally among the region’s poorest acreage, as the best land had long since disappeared from the market—remained tax-free and inalienable for twenty-five years. Although dispersed over a ten-county area and thus not conducive to maintaining close communal life, the homesteads provided a welcome measure of security from the threat of removal. They also ensured that Ho-Chunk would have a place in modern Wisconsin.³⁵

“SOME FINE VIEWS OF THE INDIAN CAMP”: DIMENSIONS OF BENNETT’S HO-CHUNK PHOTOGRAPHS

Living less than five miles from Wah-con-ja-z-gah’s homestead during the removal period, Bennett was surely well aware of the state’s treatment of its Ho-Chunk inhabitants. Indeed, he points out in his catalogues that many American Indians were “sent repeatedly to reservations in the Far West,” and a few years later, he wrote blandly that Ho-Chunk “seem loth [*sic*] to leave this region.”³⁶ And although Bennett rarely commented directly on the removals, evidence suggests, not surprisingly, that he was a committed assimilationist. He wrote to one correspondent in South Dakota that if “well taken care of and thoroughly instructed, [Ho-Chunk] would learn the ways and have the ambitions of white people.” Bennett went on to opine “that a few generations must come and go before all the Indians will be absorbed and become present day Americans.”³⁷ Such a view of Indians as a dying, vanishing race is crucial to understanding his work as well as that of other photographers of this period. The question then is: how do Bennett’s photographs represent the Ho-Chunk peoples that he knew to be under cultural and social stress and, ultimately, believed to be on the path from “savagery” to “civilization”?

Compared with several of his midwestern contemporaries who also photographed Native Americans, Bennett's output was decidedly modest. Unlike, say, T. W. Ingersoll from St. Paul or Charles Van Schaick of Black River Falls, Wisconsin, Bennett could boast only a handful of "authentic" Indian views—eleven in 1883 and a dozen more by the time of his death in 1908. By contrast, Van Schaick produced more than seven hundred images of Native Americans—mostly Ho-Chunk—in his small-town studio.³⁸ What Bennett lacked in productivity, he made up for in technical skill and in tireless promotion that his heirs carried on throughout the twentieth century.

By far the most common format Bennett used for his Ho-Chunk photographs was the stereograph: two photographs, taken just inches apart and then pasted onto a thin board, appear in three dimensions when viewed through an optical device called a stereoscope. By creating a convincing illusion of reality, making this illusion the platform for "flights of imagination," and seeming to transport viewers from their parlors to some distant and more exotic place, the stereograph achieved tremendous popularity in the latter half of the nineteenth century. So popular had stereographs become by the early 1870s that, nationwide, the majority of photographs of Native Americans were in stereo format.³⁹ That Bennett photographed Ho-Chunk almost entirely in stereographic format goes a long way to explain his motives. He wanted to sell his images to tourists—both visitors to the Dells and armchair travelers throughout the nation who viewed his scenes through a stereoscope. These images fall into three distinct types: studio portraits, in situ posed portraits, and what I call "hidden trace" landscapes.

Portraiture

Some of the studio portraits, such as a stereo view of a woman named He-Noo-Ke-Ku (or Youngest Girl), are set against a plain canvas backdrop that Bennett customarily used in his Kilbourn City studio (fig. 3).⁴⁰ In an otherwise conventional pose, the young woman's dark skin, blanket, intricately patterned shirt, and ornate jewelry—together with the printed series caption, "Among the Winnebago Indians"—confirm her "Indianness" in a way that the pose itself does not. Here, He-Noo-Ke-Ku—a person named, as in all of Bennett's Ho-Chunk portraits—poses in a studio setting that is notable for its simplicity.

The comparison between this portrait and one taken nearly thirty years later, in 1905, is revealing. Here, a young man, Ha-Zah-Zoch-Kah (Branching Horns), sits before a painted backdrop of a Wisconsin River Dells landscape (fig. 4). Photographed by several cameras in one sitting—multiple exposures in stereographic, 8 x 10 inch, and 18 x 22 inch formats—Ha-Zah-Zoch-Kah rests, somewhat stiffly, against a Navajo blanket that Bennett had recently acquired from an Indian trader in New Mexico. He refused Bennett's repeated requests to wear one of the Apache war bonnets that the photographer had also recently purchased, choosing instead to put on a headdress of turkey feathers. In sum, Ha-Zah-Zoch-Kah's attire is an amalgam of styles: store-bought, manufactured shirt; vaguely Sioux-like headdress; possibly Ho-Chunk, possibly Canadian, vest; German silver bracelet; handcrafted war club; and elaborate face painting.⁴¹



FIGURE 3. *H. H. Bennett or Frankie Bennett. He-Noo-Ke-Ku (or Youngest Girl). Modern print from original stereographic glass negative half, ca. 1870s. Photograph courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society; Bennett Collection, Neg. 482.*



FIGURE 4. *H. H. Bennett. Ha-Zah-Zoch-Kah (Branching Horns). Modern print from original 8 x 10 inch glass negative, 1905. Photograph courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society; Bennett Collection, Neg. 1131.*

Some contemporary Ho-Chunk regard this photograph and others like it as “pictures of show Indians”—and indeed it probably is. Ha-Zah-Zoch-Kah very possibly found employment in the various Wild West shows, as did a number of Dells-area Ho-Chunk.⁴² I’m not sure that calling this portrait a “show Indian” should be taken purely as condescension, however: if Ha-Zah-Zoch-Kah did perform with a Wild West show, such a designation, as L.G. Moses has argued, might be best understood as a marker of professional status. Certainly, by the time Ha-Zah-Zoch-Kah posed for this portrait, such stylized images of Indians circulated widely, and Bennett was simply capitalizing on what he saw to be a national trend. Moreover, he hoped to use this image differently than earlier portraits. In addition to stereos, the mammoth plate (18 x 22 inch) prints found their way into train stations along the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul lines, while the 8 x 10 inch prints were framed and sold as stand-alone artwork. So taken was Bennett by this photograph that, in May 1905, he sought to copyright it.⁴³ For his part, Ha-Zah-Zoch-Kah, by refusing Bennett’s insistence that he wear an “Apachee [*sic*] war bonnet,” exercised at least some control over his representation. His clothing—a synthesis of a variety of styles that he brought to the studio—might be seen as a reflection of his personal taste. However stylized it might be, some Ho-Chunk today see this photograph as a long way removed from the more blatantly stereotypical representations of Plains Indians that eventually came



FIGURE 5. *Unknown Photographer. On the War Path, Wisconsin Dells. H. H. Bennett Studio Postcard, ca. 1950s. Author's Collection.*

to dominate in the Dells and elsewhere (fig. 5).⁴⁴

Bennett's Ho-Chunk portraits never make the leap to the Plains Indian stereotype. But neither do we find Ho-Chunk family portraits, like the thousands taken in his studio of Kilbourn's white residents, or like the many hundreds of Ho-Chunk portraits taken by Charles Van Schaick at his Black River Falls studio (fig. 6). As in nearly all of Van Schaick's portraits, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Monegar are positioned following distinct conventions of Victorian portraiture, with one partner seated—here, the husband—next to a standing family member. Although her clothing signifies an adherence to tradition, his clearly represents a shift toward assimilation. It is important to note, however, that the decision to dress this way was more than likely that of the portrait subjects, not the photographer, as the Monegars purchased this portrait for



FIGURE 6. *Charles Van Schaick. Studio Portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Monegar. Modern print from copy negative, ca. 1900. Photograph courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society, WHi (X3) 35418.*

their own personal use.⁴⁵ This is important because the cultural practice surrounding Van Schaick's photograph is entirely different than Bennett's. The Monegars were clients who posed for a picture that was meant to become part of a family album or a portrait hung on a wall within the confines of a private home. Conversely, the photographs of Ha-Zah-Zoch-Kah and He-Noo-Ke-Ku were to be seen, from the very beginning, as a public picture by countless (white) strangers in their parlors and at train stations.⁴⁶

In-Situ Posed

Even before they were photographed in the studio, Ho-Chunk became portrait subjects outdoors. The 24 May 1873 issue of the *Wisconsin Mirror* reported, "Henry H. Bennett, the artist, has taken some fine views of the Indian Camp" (see fig. 1). A second type of photograph shows Ho-Chunk as either engaged in a number of activities or, as in the case of Wah-con-ja-z-gah, simply posed for the camera at or near their own homes. None of these photographs is "candid." Every person and scene depicted is carefully posed and presented to the camera as if sitting for a painted portrait. This is not necessarily something to be critical of; rather, it hints at the social distance between photographer and photographed in Bennett's search for salable images.

The geographical distance between Bennett and Ho-Chunk peoples was not nearly so great, however, at least during the summer months. Although Black River Falls—located some seventy miles from the Wisconsin Dells—became a focal area for Ho-Chunk settlement, families and clans were dispersed widely throughout central Wisconsin, including several near the budding tourist destination. The small-scale Ho-Chunk "camps" or homesteads, like that of Wah-con-ja-z-gah, were used mainly as headquarters for establishing small gardens and constructing wigwams to store belongings. Since most of the community practiced a seasonal, itinerant economy, summer meant tending gardens, working as farm laborers, and picking wild blueberries, which were then sold to local whites in places such as Kilbourn City. In the fall, many families moved to winter along the Mississippi River near LaCrosse, where they would hunt and trap, only to return to the Dells in the spring. Such practices caused consternation among many whites, who equated footlessness—what newspaperman Wisner called "strolling vagabondism"—with the absence of civilization. For many Ho-Chunk, however, seasonable mobility proved an effective means of coping with the dual stresses of poor land in central Wisconsin and the ever-changing market economy.⁴⁷

All of the activities that Bennett recorded are suggestive of traditional culture. For instance, although the widely reproduced stereograph of six men "playing Wah-koo-chad-ah (Moccasin) a favorite game" (fig. 7) depicts the activity nicely—note especially the blurred hands and head of the "hider" on the far left—its posed quality is reflected in the fact that the game customarily is played with two groups of five men sitting directly opposite each other.⁴⁸ Bennett's photograph not only leaves out four of the ten players, but by positioning his subjects in a semicircle, having two of the party stand, and locating the game neatly before a wigwam lodge made of reed matting, he achieves a well-composed picture, if not an entirely accurate ethnographic record.



FIGURE 7. *H. H. Bennett. Playing Wah-koo-chad-ah (Moccasin) a Favorite Game. Modern print from original stereographic glass negative half, August 1880. Photograph courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society, Bennett Collection, Neg. 501.*

As with his landscape views, Bennett was careful to make more than one negative of his most important outdoor Ho-Chunk photographs. He also strove to compose all his in-situ portraits in front of wigwams, a point of pride noted in his correspondence with customers interested in his pictures.⁴⁹ In one, “Ha-Noo-Gah Chun-hut-ah-rah (Second Boy and Pony)” stands before a wigwam in traditional clothing (fig. 8). His pose is casual, with one arm draped comfortably over his horse and legs crossed at ankles, and he looks unflinchingly at the camera. Unfortunately, we learn little about this confident young man in Bennett’s letters except that he was considered “a good specimen of an Indian as they used to dress.”⁵⁰ We learn even less about the four women sitting comfortably in the shade of a summer shelter: “Wong-chig-ah Che-da (Indian Tent) and Squaws [*sic*]” (fig. 9). With traps hung in the trees behind the shelter and a lone shoe casually left in the



FIGURE 8. *H. H. Bennett. Ha-Noo-Gah Chun-hut-ah-rah (Second Boy and Pony). Modern print from original stereographic glass negative half, ca. 1880. Photograph courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society, Bennett Collection, Neg. 30.*



FIGURE 9. *H. H. Bennett. Wong-chig-ah Che-da (Indian Tent) and Squaws. Modern print from original stereographic glass negative half, ca. 1880. Photograph courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society, Bennett Collection, Neg. 1476.*

foreground, the photograph possibly depicts a menstrual lodge. If that were indeed so, it would surely have been an indication that some Ho-Chunk genuinely trusted Bennett, as such lodges were well guarded spaces, off limits to most men—at least “the intrusion of unworthy men,” as Radin put it.⁵¹

Such speculation is not idle. This is the only photograph in Bennett’s collection suggestive of social customs; nowhere does he picture elements of religious life. Here, again, he departs from Van Schaick, who documented events such as powwows, tribal ceremonies, weddings, and funerals. This was a source of frustration for Bennett, who knew that photographs of “traditional activities” could become profitable items in his studio.⁵² Finally, and also unlike Van Schaick, there are no examples of everyday life that are not somehow “traditional,” as, for example, when the Black River Falls photographer pictured a group of neatly dressed men, women, and children on annuity day (fig. 10).

Landscapes: The Hidden Trace of the Native Past

Realizing that a good portion of the Dells’ allure hinged on what one guidebook called its “primitive associations,” Bennett worked diligently to photograph the “hidden trace of the native past.” “All places in the Dells are suggestive of Indian life,” J. E. Jones, a town booster/riverboat pilot, boasted in 1887. “There are many traces of Indian occupation to be found along the river and back through the country, investing the locality with the charm necessary to all resorts—romantic tradition.”⁵³



FIGURE 10. Charles Van Schaick. Families Gathered Outside of Werner's Drug Store on Annuity Pay Day. Modern print from copy negative, ca. 1900. Photograph courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society, WHi (X3) 35420. Note the sign that reads, "Medicine sold here," in English, Norwegian, and Ho-Chunk.

Thus, a third type of Indian photograph contained no people at all; instead, these images sought to connect the physical landscape with romantic stories that tourists would have heard on steamboats and read about in guidebooks, including Bennett's. As Martha Sandweiss and others have noted, nineteenth-century American audiences were accustomed to viewing photographs in relation to the written and spoken texts that accompanied them.⁵⁴ Although this held true for all types of photographs, it was especially so for those specifically designed to impart narratives of a place with a storied and romantic past.

The past-tense quality of these narratives was taken for granted and was all-important. "Gay yachting and rowing parties now skim the mirror-like smoothness of lakes and lakelets," marveled one such writer, "which not many moons ago were only stirred by the prow of the Sioux or Winnebago birch-bark canoe."⁵⁵ Since the landscape itself remained mute to such tales, Bennett occasionally had to add visual clues to make it seem historic. Thus, weeks after he purchased an Ojibwa-made canoe in northern Wisconsin (regional Ho-Chunk made watercraft out of dugouts, not birch bark, as this material was scarce in central Wisconsin) he made a number of well-composed stereographs, 8 x 10 inch views, and mammoth-plate panoramas of this object in different locations throughout the Dells (fig. 11).⁵⁶



FIGURE 11. *H. H. Bennett. Lone Rock from Below, with Canoe. Modern print from original 8 x 10 inch glass negative, 1897. Photograph courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society, Bennett Collection, Neg. 2681.*

Native Americans—at least the romantic ones—were deemed curiosities of the past. J. E. Jones, for one, felt compelled to apologize for the present-day Ho-Chunk whom tourists might see in the Dells:

While it may be true that the habits and appearance of the Indians who are now found in the country are not suggestive of any great degree of sentiment or romance, we should remember that they are in their most degenerate state. There was a time when the noble red man was “lord of all he surveyed,” and though ignorant and unlettered, he was proud and spirited. There is just as much reason to suppose that the Indians of North America were at some time as capable of the sentiment and nobility given them by writers of history and fiction, as were the earliest inhabitants of other sections.⁵⁷

In this way, Jones and many other booster writers sought to connect the Dells with the long literary tradition that romanticized the safely dead Indian. Invoking both Longfellow and Cooper, but following the more formulaic conventions of dime novels, fellow guidebook authors conjured a place where tourists were encouraged to see the “spur and rocks, the many bends [and imagine] the terrible danger lurking in the numerous caves and grottos.”⁵⁸

Some narratives, such as Frank Wisner’s *Romance of the Cliff*, suffered from the hackneyed formulae that infused popular writing of the time. As part of a



FIGURE 12. *H. H. Bennett. Black Hawk's Cave; Looking Out. Modern print from original stereographic glass negative half, date unknown, after 1883. Photograph courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society, Bennett Collection, Neg. 1536.*

popular 1875 guidebook, this lengthy “romance” included all the conventions that readers came to expect from the genre. These included everything from chivalric courtly love, the false promise of Indian-white marriage, and mistaken identity, to a lover’s leap, Indian melancholy, and white female captivity among “savages.” It was no coincidence, as Werner Sollors has pointed out, that such “idealized imagery of Indians was produced at the height of the Indian removals.” Wisner himself, after all, was the newspaper editor who only two years earlier had called so forcefully for local Ho-Chunk eradication.⁵⁹ In such a way, Romance Cliff and many other landmarks along the river—Indian Cavern, Cave of the Dark Waters (place of Nah-hu-nah), Indian Lover’s Rock, Squaw’s Bed Chamber, Black Hawk’s Cave, and Black Hawk’s Leap—became named and storied sites for Bennett’s camera.⁶⁰

These last two landmarks, in particular, achieved renown as the principal sites of a slightly different kind of narrative—those quasi-historical in nature that embellished portions of an actual past. The most important focused on Black Hawk, the Sauk chief who led the last major Native American resistance in Wisconsin. After the massacre at Bad Axe River ended the 1832 conflict now known as the Black Hawk War, the embattled chief hid among the Ho-Chunk before finally surrendering at Fort Crawford (present-day Prairie du Chien) several weeks later. According to Bennett and other local boosters, Black Hawk made the Dells his hideout and was captured there, but not before leaping the Wisconsin River at its narrowest point. The legend of Black Hawk's hiding place and heroic leap, although discounted as fantasy by historians today, quickly became a narrative staple that Bennett fed to tourists who visited his studio and purchased these stereo views.⁶¹ As seen through a stereoscope, Bennett's photographs successfully translate these stories into the illusion of three-dimensional reality. In "Black Hawk's Cave, Looking Out" (fig. 12), the viewer is put in the position of Black Hawk himself allegedly hiding in the dark shadows and peering into the vibrant light of the river and opposite shore.⁶²

Bennett consistently photographed Ho-Chunk or their "hidden traces" with an attention to precision and clarity of detail that he brought to all his landscape work. In this, he was far removed from the pictorialist style of Edward Curtis, who, as Mick Gidley has pointed out, stressed "character" or atmosphere over "likeness" and detail. Also, by striving to provide an accurate name in Ho-Chunk for his subjects, Bennett rarely indulged in Curtis' use of exotic titles to accentuate the representation of the "primitive." Overriding different aesthetic approaches, however, was the shared ideology of Native Americans as a vanishing race—an ideology that, when grafted onto a photograph, "created images that *naturalized* the predicament faced by indigenous North American peoples."⁶³

Despite the upheavals in American Indian life during this period, Bennett's photographs similarly removed historical change and represented Ho-Chunk as elements of a fast-disappearing landscape. Nowhere in his oeuvre is there even a hint that the Ho-Chunk nation had suffered a major catastrophe or was experiencing profound hardship brought about by white expansion. Nor do we see Native peoples performing cultural acts beyond the narrowly defined roles choreographed by the photographer. By depicting Ho-Chunk outside the stream of history, as more aligned with nature than Gilded Age culture, Bennett's photographs, no less than Curtis, veiled the "almost endless series of damaging political and economic decisions made by human individuals and agencies."⁶⁴

"CULTIVATING OUR INDIANS": PHOTOGRAPHIC PRACTICES AS PROFIT-DRIVEN EXCHANGES

For all their similarities, another important difference existed between Bennett and the better-known and more ambitious Curtis. The Wisconsin

Dells photographer, like other professional studio photographers of his day, was far more preoccupied by the mundane concerns of obtaining contracts, filling orders, and completing assignments in a timely and profitable manner. Although Bennett also enjoyed the patronage of a wealthy entrepreneur to help finance his photographic art, he received considerably less support than Curtis.⁶⁵ The workaday demands of running a barely profitable business prevented him from straying too far from his studio or from envisioning his photographs with the grandiosity of Curtis.

As a businessman, Bennett understood well the appeal of Indian representations to an American stereo-viewing public, and he worked hard to create his Ho-Chunk pictures. He was certainly prodded by his “canvassers,” traveling salesmen who marketed Bennett’s photographic views in towns across the country, to increase his Indian output.⁶⁶ He sometimes wrote of his work “cultivating our Indians,” and lamented the “slow process” necessary to “get their confidence and good will.”⁶⁷ Bennett eventually became well acquainted with a number of local Ho-Chunk, but most remained distant.

These encounters can be characterized as profit-driven exchanges between photographer and the people he considered photographic subjects. While I have argued that Bennett’s photographs legitimized the transformation of Ho-Chunk society by hiding those changes from view, it is not enough simply to decry these photographs as representations of domination. Here, I’m following the work of Nigel Holman, who has explored the history of photography among the Zuni through what he calls a “photography-as-exchange model.” Rather than focusing on photography solely as a technology of domination, which he believes “ascribes an unrealistically passive role to Indians and other native peoples,” Holman suggests investigating the continuous series of social and economic exchanges between photographer and photographed.⁶⁸ Such a line of inquiry, I argue, complicates our understanding of these important photographs—and of the negotiation and resistance that lies at the heart of their creation.

“Paid \$2 for Indian Pictures”: Negotiation in Photography

Negotiation, in Bennett’s case, usually involved monetary compensation. Because his photographs are posed, and taken with an unwieldy wet-plate outfit requiring long exposure times, one can assume that he received permission to take his published photographs. Documents also show that he paid Ho-Chunk to pose for these pictures. Unlike James C. Faris, who believes that payment and giving approval for having their “picture taken is surely not the issue,” I believe such negotiation to be highly relevant. Economic exchange was a fundamental component of the relationship between Bennett and local Native Americans that lasted for roughly forty years; recognizing this fact is essential to reading the photographs themselves.⁶⁹

Bennett’s cashbooks reveal that he “paid \$2 for Indian pictures” in May of 1873, the date of his visit to Wah-con-ja-z-gah’s homestead.⁷⁰ What led to this early encounter is impossible to tell; but photographing the political leader shortly before the twin traumas of removals and his death might have earned



FIGURE 13. *H. H. Bennett. Chach-sheb-nee-nick-ah (Young Eagle). Modern print from original 8 x 10 inch glass negative, 1905. Photograph courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society; Bennett Collection, Neg. 2076.*

Bennett local contempt, because his next Ho-Chunk photographs did not come for five more years. Between 1878 and 1881, he made six trips to different Ho-Chunk homesteads, coming away with nearly a dozen photographic views. The timing of these pictures is significant, since most took place in 1880, immediately before the release of Bennett's first catalogue of stereographs.⁷¹

As a way to diversify his photographic offerings and to cultivate his reputation as an expert knowledgeable about Indian culture, Bennett's trips to Ho-Chunk villages took on great importance. On these occasions, he paid Ho-Chunk between 70 cents and, for several different photographs during one especially busy outing, \$4.25 to pose for his camera; for the moccasin game stereograph (fig. 7), he paid the six men a total of \$1.75. These were paltry sums even for the period, especially since Bennett regularly paid between \$2 and \$3 for assistants to accompany him on daylong photo excursions.⁷²

Many Ho-Chunk today, based on what they have heard about the photographer over the years, believe that Bennett never adequately compensated the people in his photographs. While my research indicates that he did pay his portrait subjects, it remains an open question whether it was “adequate.” Such economic relationships certainly appear, from today’s perspective, asymmetrical and manipulative, with Bennett profiting handsomely over the years from several days and a few dollars among the Ho-Chunk. They also suggest the beginning of profit-driven exchanges in which Ho-Chunk traded their time and commodities for badly needed resources.⁷³

Chach-Scheb-Nee-Nicker was one such Ho-Chunk who saw photography as an opportunity to profit financially, or at least to pay off debt. In June 1904, Bennett took this fine portrait in his studio (fig. 13). Set before a painted backdrop, Chach-Scheb-Nee-Nicker appears in “full fanciful dress” that includes one of Bennett’s recently acquired Navajo blankets. Bennett described him as “one of our most intelligent men,” and, indeed, he probably was: posing for Bennett’s stereo, 8 x 10 inch, and 18 x 22 inch cameras enabled Chach-Scheb-Nee-Nicker to pay off several loans from Bennett of \$2.50 and \$3.50, and paved the way for the photographer to purchase close to \$5 worth of “unidentified objects” later that summer.⁷⁴

Such Ho-Chunk community members as Chach-Scheb-Nee-Nicker did more than passively endure an encounter with the photographer. His nearly dozen visits to the Bennett studio before and after his June 1904 portrait sitting suggest that he must have exerted some active control over his representation. He and Bennett were certainly well acquainted and involved in a complex series of monetary exchanges, in which Bennett grumbled that he was on the losing end. Ho-Chunk such as Chach-Scheb-Nee-Nicker were becoming more adept at bartering successfully with white entrepreneurs such as Bennett, who complained that he could not “seem to learn [*sic*] them white man’s methods in business.” Here, “white man’s methods” meant terms that were beneficial to the businessman—Bennett—who found that Ho-Chunk often traded on their own terms and posed how and when they wanted.⁷⁵

The Navajo blanket was the only studio prop provided and, although he was depicted as “fanciful” and “showy,” and certainly rendered harmless while clutching a tomahawk in the safe confines of Bennett’s studio, Chach-Scheb-Nee-Nicker quite possibly felt pride in this photograph. Like Ha-Zah-Zoch-Kah (shown in fig. 4), he refused Bennett’s repeated requests to be photographed in the Apache war bonnet.⁷⁶ Thus, there was tension between the power of the photographer and the agency of the portrait subjects embedded in these two portraits: on the one hand, opportunities for Native subjects to profit (however modestly) from an hour’s work; on the other, outright refusals to be photographed in certain ways.

“Indians don’t want [their] camp pictured”: Ho-Chunk Resistances to Photography

These studio photographs came late in Bennett’s career and marked a departure from both earlier portraits and in-situ poses. Their “showiness” in dress,

face paint, and backdrop; their multiple camera exposures; and their copyrighted status all indicate Bennett's desire to reach a broader American audience with his Indian pictures. Native people, with the exception of these two young men, seemed far less convinced by the advantages of appearing in Bennett's photographs. From early on, a number of Ho-Chunk prevented him from making many of the photographs that he—and probably they—knew would make money for him.

When Bennett recounted making his photograph of Wah-con-ja-z-gah, he always told of his difficulty in obtaining permission. He wrote to one friend in 1883 that when he “insist[ed] on making a view of Indian camp, Indians appear[ed] armed with guns and bows and arrows insisting that they don't want [their] camp pictured.”⁷⁷ His guidebook for that year includes a long biographical piece by a Milwaukee reporter that Bennett deemed “in substance, correct.”⁷⁸ In the highly stylized rhetoric of nineteenth-century boosterism, the reporter wrote, “when [Bennett] first attempted to picture an Indian village, the few women about rushed into the wigwams and closed the openings. One dashed through the woods and soon returned with a dozen men armed with bows and clubs. They set up a terrible whoop and made all sorts of hostile demonstrations. ‘Indian no want you here,’ one of them told him.” Typically, Bennett dismissed Ho-Chunk “dread of photography” as superstition, for “no amount of talk could convince them that the mysterious operation of picture-taking was not responsible for death.”⁷⁹

Such belittling dismissals of Native peoples' unease with photography were meant to be humorous—look how naïve these folks are: they think the camera will kill you. Further reflection, however, suggests that statements of the physical harm that photography would cause were probably intended to express an idea metaphorically. Put another way, Bennett's insistence on “viewing” Indians and selling the resultant photographs clashed with Ho-Chunk discomfort with being the objects of the camera's lens, a clash that brought into conflict two very different worldviews. At times those conflicts were resolved and some Ho-Chunk agreed to pose for Bennett's camera; at other times, probably more in fact, Ho-Chunk held fast to their belief that photography represented an inappropriate intrusion in their lives.⁸⁰

Such beliefs frustrated Bennett, who found that “these Indians are a peculiar people to get along with.”⁸¹ Not only did canvassing salesmen ask for more “Indian photographs,” tourists were demanding more things Indian. It must have pained Bennett to confess to one longtime customer from Chicago, that he had no photographs:

showing [Ho-Chunk] at their games, hunting or fishing, none of the squaws with papooses on their backs or carrying heavy burdens. Neither have I any pictures of the dances; this is because I could never persuade the head chiefs to allow pictures taken on those occasions. I speak their language a little and find some of them are superstitious about having their pictures taken and there are enough of that class in such dances as I have attended to rule my camera out.⁸²

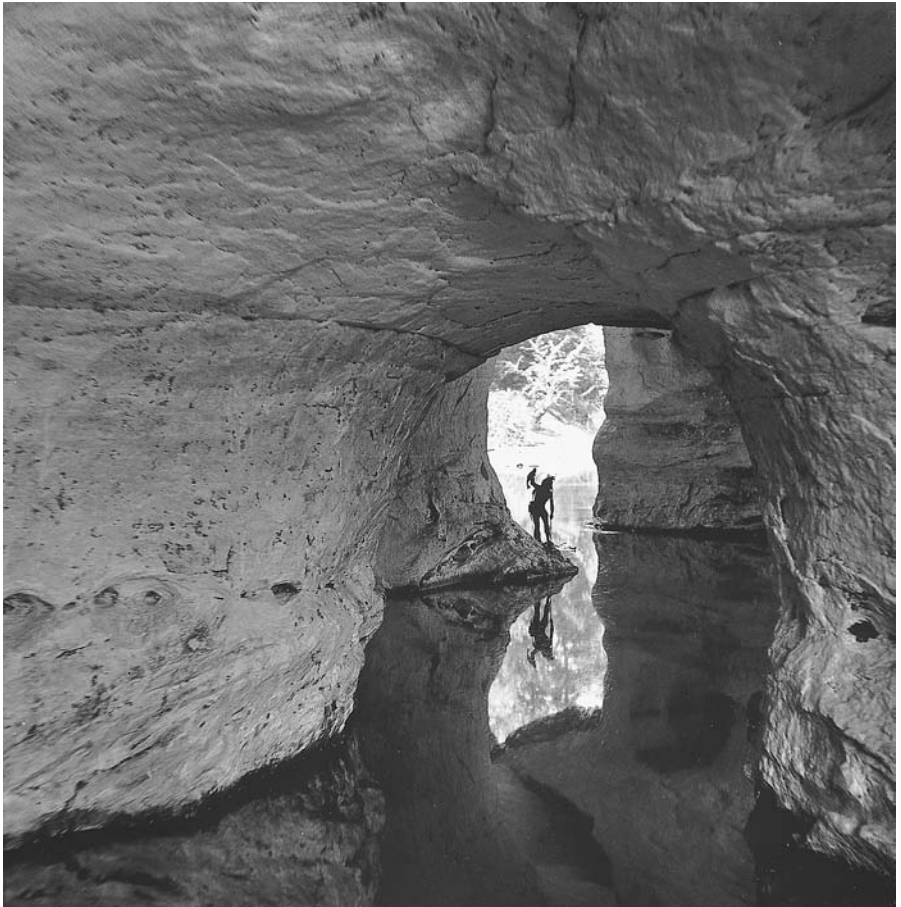


FIGURE 14. *H. H. Bennett. Cave of the Dark Waters, Reflection Arch. Modern print from original 5 x 8 inch stereographic glass negative half, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society, Bennett Collection, Neg. 8408.*

Although Ho-Chunk might have had little input into precisely how their images were packaged and sold to the American public, they exerted no small degree of control over what was photographed and when.

Making Up the Indian

Ho-Chunk resistance to Indian photography and white demand for it occasionally led Bennett to inventive solutions. In no less than a dozen instances, he plainly fabricated Indian photographic views. The most egregiously phony pictures depicted a local landmark along the Wisconsin River called “Cave of the Dark Waters,” or, as guidebook writers dubbed it, “Place of the Nah-huh-nah”⁸³ (fig. 14). After whitewashing the narrow inlet’s walls in order to reflect



FIGURE 15. *H. H. Bennett. Boat Cave, Looking Into. Modern print from original stereographic glass negative half, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society, Bennett Collection, Neg. 1538.*

light better, Bennett placed painted, cardboard cutout Indian figures into the landscape. The life-like figures were sometimes inserted into a small canoe-like boat or stood alone holding aloft what resembles a sturgeon, which allegedly gave the cave its name. Especially when seen through a stereoscope, the combination of cavernous walls, dark foreground and light background, and the reflected figure in the photograph's center produced a dramatic photograph—if a blatantly artificial picture of Native life.

In another type of fabricated view, Bennett created half dozen photographs of two or three white men in his birch-bark canoe enacting scenes from the imagined Ho-Chunk past. Draped, toga-like, in colorful blankets and topped with chicken feather headdresses, the “play Indians” are shown paddling the canoe safely to shore, shooting bows and arrows, and, here, bravely fishing in a dark cavern (fig. 15). This photograph, and others like it, might

be dismissed as silly moments of a good-humored artist, except for the fact that Bennett sold this photograph and other fabrications as “authentic.” He reproduced it as a half-tone illustration of American Indian life in his book, *The Wisconsin Dells* (1900), and a close facsimile as part of a photomontage entitled *With the Winnebago* in his *Wanderings by a Wanderer* (1890).⁸⁴ At a time when white Americans everywhere were “playing Indian”—imitating selected elements of Native life to construct their individual and collective identities—such photographs blurred the distinction between the real and the fake, the colonizer and colonized—at least to their white viewers. Native American viewers, if they saw such photographs at all, would surely have been as offended as several contemporary Ho-Chunk to whom I have shown these and other fabricated pictures.⁸⁵

Compared with the Black River Falls photographer Charles Van Schaick, who successfully photographed a wide range of Ho-Chunk ceremonies, social occasions, and activities of daily life, Bennett had to resort to creative fabrication. One can hardly avoid the conclusion that his difficulties in photographing Ho-Chunk stemmed, in no small part, because they saw him as someone who sought to profit directly from selling his images. Ho-Chunk people, far from the passive subjects of the camera’s objectifying gaze, were active participants in allowing the tourist promoter to photograph when they wanted, where they wanted, and how they wanted. For everything else, Bennett was on his own.

“ONLY PARTLY A PHOTOGRAPHER NOW”: THE CHANGING POLITICAL ECONOMY OF INDIAN PHOTOGRAPHY AND ART

During the last eight years of his life, Bennett became increasingly involved with the area’s Native inhabitants. The people he had known primarily as portrait subjects now took on a quite different role in Bennett’s life and studio; many Ho-Chunk were also changed by an expanding engagement with a tourist industry that has come to define the Wisconsin Dells. “I am only partly a Photographer now,” Bennett wrote to a friend in St. Paul, “selling souvenirs in the tourist season quite as much or more than pictures. Dealing with the Winnebago Indians of the region, selling them beads, and buying their beadwork, bows and arrows, and such of their old relics as they want to part with and I can sell.” Wistfully, he concluded: “But it’s the same old gallery.”⁸⁶ Whether or not it remained “the same old gallery,” Bennett’s Main Street studio became a far more complex site of encounter between two very different groups of people, each of whom sought to promote their own, divergent interests with varying degrees of success.

“Things Are Very Unpleasant This Year”: Changes in Capitalist Production

Bennett’s turn away from producing original photography toward selling Indian artwork came at a time of great economic pressure on him and all professional view photographers. It was not a change that pleased him. In the summer of 1903 he complained to relatives of being “driven nearly wild” with

anxiety, and of not “getting time to sleep or eat.” Earlier that spring, his business presented such “a discouraging outlook” that, were he in better health, the sixty-year-old Civil War veteran would return “to manual work.”⁸⁷ Bennett had reason for concern: between 1897 and 1905, sales of his photographs declined by 63 percent. His most profitable year for photography, 1881, brought him nearly \$4,000, whereas he netted just over \$600 twenty five years later.⁸⁸

Such a dramatic decline was not Bennett’s alone. Throughout the nation, view photographers found their businesses increasingly under attack by a wide array of impersonal, structural forces. A revolution in the photographic production and distribution system—including the advent of dry plate negatives and flexible films; the appearance of readily available mass-market equipment and supplies at far lower prices; and the beginning of advertising and promotion campaigns emphasizing the ease and fun of personal photography—helped demystify the work of Bennett and other professionals. Many tourists equipped with their own easy-to-operate cameras now preferred to produce their own photographs of the Dells landscapes, thus depleting Bennett’s clientele and transforming the tradition of outdoor view photography on which his career rested.⁸⁹ Such intense economic pressure brought on by changes in the capitalist production system forced Bennett “to dig out business in other ways”—and it is here that he turned, once again, to his Ho-Chunk neighbors.⁹⁰

“Make Believe and Real Indian Things”: Hustling Native Art

Within a few years of being “driven nearly wild” with anxiety in 1903, Bennett felt better about his economic prospects. In an informative letter to a friend who once worked in the studio, he commented on the changes that had taken place:

Here in the dark room about everything is just as you last saw it. But if you were to be around here for a few weeks you would likely wonder what has become of my photo view business, for now I am doing very little of it. If you were to look into the front room, you would see what I have been driven into. While a few views are shown, the walls are mostly covered with souvenir goods, burnt leather, burnt wood and all sorts of make believe Indian things. [These hang] beside quite of a lot of real and very old Indian relics that I have got from my Winnebago friends. I would rather make and sell views, but the people buy them only in limited quantities so I try to keep what they will buy. With much hustling, we are doing more business in souvenirs the last two seasons than for many years past with photos alone.⁹¹

Bennett’s letter to Will Holly indicates something of the complex series of economic interactions that transformed Bennett’s business. Like the studios of many other early twentieth century professional photographers, a vast array of Indian items—both “make believe” and “real and very old relics”—now adorned Bennett’s gallery.⁹² Bead belts, moccasins, and black ash splint basketry handcrafted by local Ho-Chunk sat along side pottery from the Tesuque



FIGURE 16. *Unknown photographer, possibly Eva M. Bennett. Interior View of H. H. Bennett Studio. Modern print from original glass negative, ca. 1912. Photograph courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society, Bennett Collection, Neg. WHi-3998.*

and Santo Domingo Pueblos of New Mexico. Navajo blankets and Nez Perce war rattles were propped behind “a very large and gorgeous war bonnet of eagle feathers” from Mandan, North Dakota, and a “well decorated” peace pipe that included strings of Iroquois wampum. Next to this vibrant collage of artifacts from wildly diverse Native cultures were the “cheap stuff that an Indian never saw until he saw it hanging in my place”: the Indian pipes, tomahawks, decorated wood canoes, paddles, and sweet grass baskets. Finally, there were bark picture frames, leather photo albums, china Indian figures, match holders, and “indestructible all-leather dolls”—each marked with the words “Wisconsin Dells” (fig. 16).⁹³

By 1906, then, the Dells photographer had become thoroughly enmeshed in a multifaceted web of commodities that linked souvenirs based loosely on

Indian motifs, mass-produced Indian-like goods, locally produced artifacts acquired through national distribution channels, and artwork purchased directly from local indigenous peoples. Twenty-five years earlier, Bennett had begun dabbling in souvenirs that highlighted what he knew best: the scenic landform rock formations of the river. These lithographic albums featuring his best-known stereo views were soon supplanted by sofa pillow covers and spoons displaying the scenic wonders of the Dells. Such “souvenirs,” although modest in sales figures, were significant, as they set the precedent for contracting out work that, for the first time, he could not produce himself.

More important were the items that Bennett called “Indian Goods”: the mass-produced tchotchkes that he purchased from manufacturers as far away as New York, Philadelphia, and North Conway, New Hampshire. During the summer of 1900, Bennett placed his first modest orders with the Tanner Basket Company of New York for napkin rings, grass baskets, Indian pipes, and Indian dolls. Those orders increased nearly tenfold over the next six years and grew to include everything from miniature papooses to Indian pipe racks. Such “Indian goods”—disparaged by Bennett as the “stuff that people think they want to buy”—sold well, due in part to their low cost.⁹⁴ He paid handsomely for these low-cost items, especially the grass baskets, occasionally going into debt for more than \$4,000—this at a time when the sales of photographs brought less than a quarter of that amount.

Bennett was not just purchasing Indian goods from these businesses; he was also selling them handcrafted items that he purchased from dealers across the country. In a few short years, his studio stocked a vast array of what he called “Indian crafts”: locally produced artwork and historic pieces acquired through a network of national distributors. Some, like J. S. Candelario of Santa Fe and H. C. Youtz of Cerrillos, New Mexico, were large in scale, with a system for ordering specific pieces by catalogue. A larger number of distributors were located on reservations and pueblos with direct access to the men and women who produced the artwork. Finally, there were individual and family contacts. Bennett frequently called on his brothers and a son living in the West to supply him with “saleable handiwork.” “I don’t know as there is an Indian within a hundred miles of where you are,” Bennett wrote to his son in Hot Springs, Montana, “but if there was [*sic*] many thereabouts you might be able to pick up some of their articles that we can use in our trade here.”⁹⁵ By 1907, he could boast of being able to sell “Indian crafts” from roughly a dozen separate groups, including: Navajo; Dakota from Mandan, North Dakota, from Pine Ridge, South Dakota; two Pueblo groups in New Mexico; Crow; Iroquois; Comanche; Caddo; Tesuque; Nez Perce; Cheyenne; and Ho-Chunk.⁹⁶

The salability of these items depended to a large extent on a perceived sense of their authenticity. Unlike souvenirs and mass-produced Indian goods, craft objects acquired value precisely because they were “real,” produced by the apparent “primitiveness of Indian hand labor.” At a time when increasing industrialization and corporate control were transforming every aspect of American society, the immediacy of handcrafted artwork must have seemed like a welcome antidote to such enormous changes for many middle-class

Americans. The so-called arts and crafts movement that spanned the Atlantic kindled nostalgia for the stability, tight social relations, and supposed primitivism of craft societies best exemplified by Native Americans.⁹⁷ Bennett himself was surprised at the remarkable demand for Indian crafts; although the “class of people who come here do not, as a rule, buy very expensive articles,” enough desired “genuine Indian articles” that at times he could hardly keep well stocked. In letters to his suppliers, he insisted repeatedly that he only wanted “*real* Indian work and good in design.”⁹⁸

He also insisted that suppliers furnish information about the purpose and composition of each article. As Bennett wrote to one supplier from Mandan, North Dakota, his “business depends largely on keeping our visitors interested and any information we can give as to what Indian wore or used the articles or stories connected with the things is of much value to us.” Most notably, he wanted information about the maker of each item. “Names and particulars,” he found, “even if they don’t come from any Indian of note, have much to do with the selling.” In this way, Bennett catered to a growing number of middle-class collector-connoisseurs and “Indian hobbyists” who were filling their homes with Native artifacts.⁹⁹

“I Have Got Them But Little Trained in the White Man’s Methods”

As important as Navajo rugs, Santa Domingo pottery, Apache war bonnets, and Dakota moccasins were to Bennett’s business, the most significant items came from the people he knew best and about whom he could tell the most vivid stories. Ho-Chunk artisans sold their first handcrafted object to Bennett in 1883, when he paid \$1 for “an Indian bow.”¹⁰⁰ He acquired such items slowly and haphazardly for the next twenty years until he noticed that an ever-greater number of tourists began asking for Indian crafts. The timing could hardly have been better for the photographer, whose business had been flagging for nearly a decade. “You see the Indian seems to be a fad just now and their handiwork is quite saleable,” he wrote to one brother in 1903. “I am keeping a small stock of seed beads and selling to the Indians and have got them coming my way.”¹⁰¹ A long history of trading, bargaining, and negotiation marked the photographic encounter between Bennett and many local Ho-Chunk. It must have seemed logical for each to look to the other when confronted with the newly opening market for Native American products.

Indeed, by spring and through the summer of 1903, hardly a day passed without a Ho-Chunk artisan coming to Bennett’s studio. The exact nature of their exchange varied. In many cases, Bennett supplied the beads necessary to produce the fine Ho-Chunk artwork that acquired such high demand. Then, when artisans, mostly women, completed the beadwork they would sell them to Bennett, who in turn retailed them to tourists or wholesaled them to dealers across the country. In other cases, the photographer purchased one-of-a-kind objects such as a bear claw necklace, a war club, an otter-skin medicine charm, and a deer call. Finally, and quite frequently, Bennett made small cash loans ranging from 15 cents to \$2.50, keeping items like knives, blankets, beaded shirts, shoes and pants, and bracelets as security.¹⁰² Toward the end of

his life he reflected, with a sense of superiority so characteristic of its day, that he hoped he had “been of some benefit to the Indians of this region and given them some points; but [I] cannot find that I have got them but little trained in the white man’s methods.”¹⁰³

Although these economic relationships were mutually beneficial—Ho-Chunk received badly needed cash and Bennett gained the artifacts that he sold to keep his business operating—they were always, at their core, unequal. Bennett purchased when and what he wanted, and at prices that he chose. Sometimes he returned beadwork, as he did to Choo-Nah-Hoo-Kah (James Standing Water), stating flatly, “*Don’t send any bead work to me for I can’t buy it. White folks don’t buy it any more and I have got more than I want.*” In letters like this, Bennett sometimes signed his name “Wah-goo-noo-nie-shee-dah-dah-schoon-sckoon,” which he translated as “Old Man Got No Money.” At other times, he complained that he was unable to get enough items from Ho-Chunk artisans because they could not be “depended on to furnish any given quantity.”¹⁰⁴

Such inconsistencies in supply and demand—a logic of market capitalism that ran counter to different systems of exchange—must have led many Ho-Chunk to share the same sentiments about Bennett that he did about them when he grumbled that the Ho-Chunk were “so negligent in the fulfillment of promises that I am getting tired of them.”¹⁰⁵ Indeed, so frustrated did Ho-Chunk artisans become with the photographer that at one point they began selling their beadwork “directly to tourists and often for less price” than they sold to him. At other times, they played Bennett off other local dealers, forcing up their prices for beadwork. They had “learned of the craze for beadwork,” he lamented, “and are keen for all they can get out of it.”¹⁰⁶

Bennett might have held the balance of power in such relationships (he could always order the products he needed from national distributors), but Ho-Chunk artisans were not without agency. By choosing with whom to trade, driving hard bargains, and using the production of artifacts to sustain a culture of geographic mobility, Ho-Chunk artisans successfully made an exploitative process work in their favor. Although Bennett failed in his bid to have them “trained in the white man’s methods,” Ho-Chunk artisans used those methods to their advantage.

“The Man with the Camera, or, Old Man Got No Money”: Learning to Speak Ho-Chunk

An indication of the growing interdependence between Bennett and many Wisconsin Dells-area Native Americans comes from the photographer’s sustained attempt to learn the Ho-Chunk language during the last decade of his life. For years—probably shortly after their first encounter—Bennett “made an effort to get a knowledge of the Winnebago language. But the fight for bread and butter did not allow [him to] accomplish” a thorough understanding. His knowledge at that time extended to learning a few names of individuals and objects that he photographed. Reflecting to a friend in Chicago, Bennett believed that his difficulties in learning the language stemmed from his instructors’ “good-natured assertion that when [he] said a word or phrase ‘all right’”

often the next person he spoke with would not understand him in the least. He therefore “came to feel that such of those people as [he] had the good will of were too easy as instructors to be efficient as such.”¹⁰⁷ Not surprisingly, the people he “had the good will of” tended to be those who appeared in his photographs and, later, the artisans who supplied him with artwork.¹⁰⁸

Much of this effort focused on the names of people with whom Bennett had most direct contact. Traditional names usually received primacy, as, for example, when Bennett noted, “Cha-heme-me-nonk-ga-wee-gah is known as Emma Pettibone,” or “Hah-nah-nah-schoon-e-gah known as John Canoe.” He often included notes on certain individuals, indicating, for instance, that “Ha-schooh-skah is known as Susie Redhorn, who makes good bead work” and that “Albert Thunder can read and write quite well. Says he has traveled with Buffalo Bill’s and other shows.” Albert Thunder proved to be an important informant who helped Bennett spell many of the words that he found especially troubling. Almost as frequent were words that described family relationships and which were often used as names: father, mother, oldest girl, fourth boy, and grandfather, or “Choo-kah-gah,” a name occasionally used for Bennett.¹⁰⁹

Some Ho-Chunk also taught him a number of words for principal deities, caregivers, and spiritual places. Diary entries near the end of his life indicate that several Ho-Chunk men and women visited Bennett’s studio and described a few elements of their spiritual beliefs. One such man was Thomas Ho-pin-kah, a grandson of the Ho-Chunk leader, Spoon Decorah, whom Bennett described as “one of the most intelligent and respected of the Winnebago tribe.” At twenty-five years old, Ho-pin-kah was a well-traveled man who had attended Indian boarding schools in Tomah, Wisconsin, the Hampton Institute, and Carlisle, where he was a member of the famed Carlisle Indian School Band. Bennett viewed him with admiration, noting that Ho-pin-kah spoke “three languages, has written a book for publication of the Indian legends and traditions . . . and betokens a degree of cultivation far beyond any other Indian I have known.” This last attribute was compromised by the fact that the young man still “clings to many of the traditions of his people.” Not one to miss an opportunity, however, Bennett persuaded Ho-pin-kah to describe some of those traditions, which he recorded with care.¹¹⁰

Ho-pin-kah and other Ho-Chunk who became frequent visitors to the photographer’s studio surely felt a degree of trust and good will toward him that would have been difficult to muster for many whites in town. One barometer of local sentiment was the city newspaper, which regularly ran vicious articles condemning the people who refused to leave the increasingly important resort area. In one typical article, the author emphasized the moral distance between contemporary and historic Indians: “Along the first part of the last century, until 1837, the Winnebagos owned all of the land between the Wisconsin and the Mississippi. They were a clean, courageous, energetic people, powerful among the tribes of early Wisconsin.” No more: “The ‘noble red man’ is certainly passing away through a scum of shiftless, pitiful degeneracy.”¹¹¹ In comparison, the aging photographer who enjoyed “a genuinely good visit and chat” with Ho-Chunk such as Ho-pin-hah must

have seemed different. Nonetheless, Ho-pin-kah and others were careful not to reveal too many important details of their cultural system or spiritual beliefs. Nowhere in Bennett's detailed notes does he even mention the specific clans that defined Ho-Chunk social organization; nor does he discuss the complex array of rituals, practices, and concepts that formed the basis of Ho-Chunk religious beliefs.

One finds the greatest specificity in the realm that Bennett knew best: social and economic transactions. The photographer perfected exhaustive translations of a wide array of words useful in such exchanges, such as "money," "one dollar," "birch canoe," "beads," "woman's bead belt," "reed mat," "war club of wood," "moccasins," "blanket," "bows and arrows," "baskets," "rattle," and so on. These nouns were supplemented by phrases useful for business relationships, ranging from "not much money," "how much," and "too cheap" to "hard work," "fine, feel good," and "go away." Notably absent in such exchanges were phrases of friendship that one might expect between two equal parties, like "how's your family" or "come in and have a seat."¹¹²

Contemporary Ho-Chunk conversant in the language point out that Bennett achieved a modest but one-dimensional level of fluency. That he became adept at transcribing words for salable objects and for business greetings, while stumbling at complex personal names or social contexts, should not come as a surprise.¹¹³ After all, the photographer's reasons for learning the language hinged on what would be useful for profit-driven exchanges.

"Anxious to do something": Restoring Profitability and Losing Land

At a time of serious economic jeopardy, H. H. Bennett turned to Native Americans, who essentially saved his business. The precipitous decline in his studio's total sales reversed its downward spiral around 1900 when Ho-Chunk artisans began supplying the photographer with handcrafted beadwork and black ash baskets. These items, when supplemented by Indian crafts purchased from national distributors and mass-produced Indian goods, more than offset the dramatic and continuing fall in receipts from photographs, thus restoring profitability to the Bennett Studio (fig. 17).

To achieve this modest success, Bennett worked hard to get the best prices that he could from both consumers and suppliers—as any businessman would. Unfortunately, that meant effectively suppressing the income of the people whom he had come to rely on. Although many Ho-Chunk became increasingly skillful at negotiating better prices for their work, they were at a profound disadvantage that Bennett could see, and even acknowledge. To one friend in New York, he wrote that "the lot that are near here now seem anxious to do something, or at least part of them do. So I am buying all I dare of what they make. But that is far from keeping them busy, and they can't compete with white man's prices on goods that are made in a factory."¹¹⁴

What Bennett perhaps did not realize in 1907 was that a year earlier the twenty-five-year stipulations concerning Ho-Chunk homesteads expired and, for the first time, their lands were listed on county tax rolls—a fact unknown to most Ho-Chunk. When they failed to pay taxes in 1906, a land company

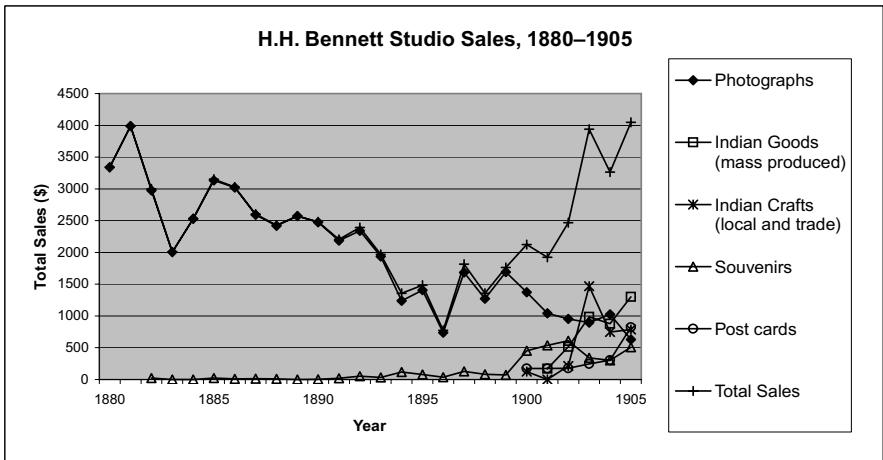


FIGURE 17. H. H. Bennett Studio Sales, 1880-1905. *Source: Sales figures calculated by author from data in Cashbooks, 1880-1905, Box 35, H. H. Bennett Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.*

quickly bought up most of their better land. Although tax-free status was restored four years later to the remaining homesteads, by then many Ho-Chunk had lost their most precious resource.¹¹⁵ It's no wonder that so many seemed "anxious to do something."

CONCLUSION

"The indigenous tragedy of a people surviving genocide, orphaned, displaced, and largely deculturated in their own homeland," Lucy Lippard writes, "is *the* tragedy of this country, affecting everyone far more than most of us realize."¹¹⁶ Photography not only recorded that tragedy, but participated in its performance. By casting American Indians in narrowly defined roles that assumed and seemed to demonstrate their inferiority, non-Native photographers such as H. H. Bennett created visual images that reinforced white cultural assumptions. Those assumptions were based on the spurious yet pervasive belief that the old-time Indians—the real Indians—were vanishing.

As a product of his age, Bennett shared the dominant culture's conviction that his Native neighbors were destined to assimilate into white society. His studio portraits and in-situ photographs of Ho-Chunk men and women depict "good specimens of Indians as they used to dress," far removed from the struggles, joys, tensions, and beauty of everyday life. A sense of timelessness shrouds his photographs, reinforcing a national wave of Gilded Age sentimentality about "the vanishing race," and cloaking the tragedy of an exploitative history in which we are all complicit.

When Rainbow Big Blackhawk looks at Bennett's Ho-Chunk photographs today, he sees what so many non-Natives also see: "the stoic Indian." "But we're so much more than that," he adds, wondering, "where is the humor and



FIGURE 18. 2002 Calendar, published by the Ho-Chunk Nation, Black River Falls, Wisconsin. Reprinted courtesy of the Ho-Chunk Nation.

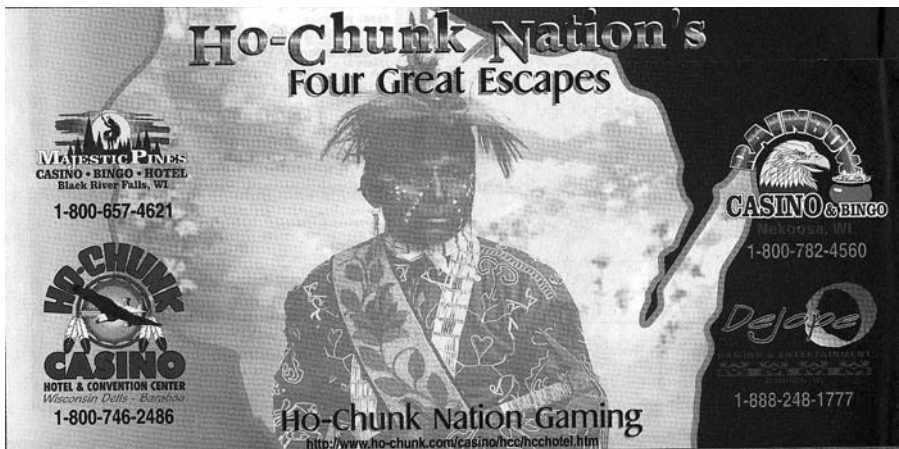


FIGURE 19. 2001 Official Wisconsin Highway Map, published by the Association of Wisconsin Tourism Attractions, Madison, Wisconsin. Reprinted courtesy of the Ho-Chunk Nation.

wit that, to me, characterize my people?” Like other Ho-Chunk whom I’ve asked to look at Bennett’s photographs, Big Blackhawk seems unconvinced that they show anything special. The various meanings that these photographs apparently held for Bennett’s non-Native viewers—of romance, danger, mystery, nostalgia, and guilt—are met with skepticism by Ho-Chunk today, whose interest in them tends to stem more from the circumstances surrounding their production.¹¹⁷

Those circumstances, or encounters, were fundamental components of a power dynamic that enabled tourist promoters such as Bennett to naturalize the replacement of a budding resort area’s indigenous inhabitants with pleasure-seeking tourists. That dynamic was never stable, however, and demonstrates a complex series of socioeconomic encounters between photographer and photographed that display the dual meaning of the word *encounter* vividly and sequentially: the benign sense of “to meet unexpectedly” was quickly transformed into the root sense of “to meet in conflict.” Sometimes Native Americans agreed to pose for his camera, while more often they refused his requests to photograph both ceremonies and individuals in ways that they deemed inappropriate. Photography and the sale of handicraft items became an important form of economic exchange that had significant cultural implications. That Bennett held the balance of power did not mean that Ho-Chunk passively endured an encounter with the photographer: in important ways, community members controlled the circumstances surrounding their representation (in both photography and artwork) and used it as a means to profit, however modestly.

Bennett’s Ho-Chunk photographs show something else, too. Although manipulated and “constructed,” these images nonetheless testify to the endurance of Native peoples in the American Midwest. Making a connection between the past and the present is important for such Ho-Chunk as Monty

Green, a retired naval officer who laments growing up without the ceremonies that were an important part of his father's generation. These photographs, he says, give a sense of "traditional life, even if they don't reflect the reality of most people in those days."¹¹⁸

Today, in a remarkable turn of events, Ho-Chunk are not only purchasing land along the Wisconsin River that was taken from them during the nineteenth century, but are using Bennett's photographs for teaching young people about their past and for advertising their hugely successful gaming enterprises (figs. 18 and 19). The Wisconsin Dells photographer, were he alive today, would probably be surprised that descendants of the people he photographed nearly 130 years ago are still around; Wah-con-ja-z-gah, undoubtedly, would not be.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank the Wisconsin Historical Society for a 2002 Geilfuss Fellowship in Economic History, which enabled me to make several important research trips to Madison, Milwaukee, and the Wisconsin Dells, and the Office of the Vice President for Research at the University of Texas at Austin, which provided funds for photographic reproduction from the Bennett Collection. Many people offered important feedback on this project, including Mary Braun, who helped launch it, William Cronon, Mick Gidley, Frank Goodyear, Theresa Harlan, Patty Loew, Nancy Lurie, Janice Rice, Alan Trachtenberg, and the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal's* three anonymous referees. My deepest gratitude goes to the members of the Ho-Chunk nation who have supported this project and who reflected on the complex relationship between Bennett's photographs and their ancestors, especially Rainbow Big Blackhawk (Donald Blackhawk), Montgomery Green, Sr., Tom Hopinkah, Susette LaMere, Corina Lonetree, Willard Lonetree, Douglas Red Eagle, Sr., Janice Rice (again), Preston Thompson, and Clayton Winneshiek. Any limitations and/or errors remain mine alone.

NOTES

1. The Cody reference is from the *Wisconsin Mirror* (undated: ca. 1882), in the H. H. Bennett Miscellaneous Articles Scrapbook, from Reel 7, H. H. Bennett Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society (hereafter, HHBP). Here and throughout, I preserve the original spelling that Bennett used in his published and unpublished writings. This is problematic because Bennett, according to Nancy Lurie, had "a tin ear" for the Ho-Chunk language; he frequently misinterpreted what he heard. However, Lurie and contemporary Ho-Chunk who are fluent in the language can often make out what he was trying to say. Thus, Bennett's translation of Yellow Thunder, *Wah-con-ja-z*, is similar to a modern Ho-Chunk translation, *Wakaja Zi*. I thank Preston Thompson of the Ho-Chunk Traditional Court and Language Division for sharing his insights into Bennett's efforts to learn the Ho-Chunk language, about which I will have more to say later in this paper. Lurie, letter to the author, 18 August 2002.

2. Miss Carmel, "A Woman's Way of Seeing Things," *Rockford Morning Star*, 27 August 1899, Reel 7, scrapbook, HHBP.

3. *Melbourne (Australia) Age*, 21 October 1893; reprinted in *Milwaukee Sunday Telegraph*, 12 December 1893, Bennett Scrapbook, Reel 7, HHBP. The article's author, one of twenty-nine international members of the World's Fair Foreign Commissioners and newspaper correspondents, visited the Dells while on assignment at the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition. He notes that "the local photographer was on board, and I kept close to his side, for I found he had been one of the earliest settlers in the district, when Indians actually did roam along these river banks, and possessed an inexhaustible fund of anecdote and information." Bennett's photographic encounter with Wah-con-ja-z-gah is also described in his 1883 photographic catalogue, *Wanderings Among the Wonders and Beauties of Western Scenery*, 1883, Box 25, Folder 18, HHBP. The catalogue includes an article written by a journalist named Kaine that first appeared in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* on 28 January 1883.

4. I would like to thank Willard Lonetree and Susette LaMere for bringing this important, and consistently neglected, observation to my attention.

5. Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

6. Rick Hill, "High-Speed Film Captures the Vanishing American, in Living Color," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 20, 3 (1996): 114, 117. Searching the historical photographic record, Hill documents no fewer than ten such images, including the Indian as Warrior, as Chief or Medicine Man, as Naked Savage, as Sex Fantasy, as Prisoner, as Noble Savage, as Vanishing American, as Object of Study, as Tourist Prop, and as Victim. See also Richard W. Hill, "Developed Identities: Seeing the Stereotypes and Beyond," in *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian*, ed. Tim Johnson (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 139–160.

7. Susan Sontag was one of the first critics to see the camera as a "predatory weapon" in America's colonization, of which "the case of the American Indian is most brutal." Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Anchor Books, 1977), 64. Similarly, Vine Deloria, Jr. calls early twentieth-century photography "a weapon in the final skirmishes of cultural warfare in which the natives of North America could be properly and finally embedded in their places in the cultural evolutionary incline." Deloria, "Introduction," in *The Vanishing American and Other Illusions: Photographs of Indians by Edward S. Curtis*, by Christopher M. Lyman (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982). The model of photography as a tool of domination is employed most vigorously in James C. Faris, *Navajo and Photography: A Critical History of the Representation of an American People* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

8. For a sophisticated discussion of photography as artistic and political representation, see Mick Gidley, *Edward S. Curtis and the North American Indian, Incorporated* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Two recent volumes making a strong case that non-Natives frequently used photography as "a weapon of colonization" to project white, colonial viewpoints onto Native American culture are *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), ed. Tim Johnson, and *Partial Recall: Photographs of Native North Americans*, ed. Lucy R. Lippard (New York: The New Press, 1992).

9. P. Donan, *The Tourists' Wonderland: Containing a Brief Description of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway Together with Interesting General Descriptive Matter Pertaining to the Country Traversed by this Line and its Connections* (Chicago: R.R. Donnelley and Sons, 1884), 7.

10. Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 29. Nigel Holman, "Photography as Social and Economic Exchange: Understanding the Challenges Posed by Photography of Zuni Religious Ceremonies," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 20, 3 (1996): 94. See also Victoria Wyatt, "Interpreting the Balance of Power: A Case Study of Photographer and Subject in Images of Native Americans," *Exposure* 28, 3 (1992): 23–33.

11. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1968 [1936]), 226. Jennifer Green-Lewis makes a similar point when she writes that "instead of focusing on disparate images, 'interrogating' old photographs for the information we suspect they harbor, or treating them as unmediating windows on a nineteenth-century world, instead of revisiting only those versions of it which are regularly displayed, we must explore photography as a cultural practice, trace its significance in social as much as aesthetic terms." Green-Lewis, *Framing the Victorians: Photography and the Culture of Realism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 19.

12. Tsinhnahjinnie, "Compensating Imbalances," *Exposure* 29, 1 (1993): 29–30. Michael Katakis further emphasizes the need for people in the photographs, and their descendants, to provide an interpretive lens: "This is a piece of the puzzle that has been missing for so long, and it must be very important piece, because for decades their voices have been purposely excluded." Katakis, "The Illusion of the Image," in *Excavating Voices: Listening to Photographs of Native Americans*, ed. Michael Katakis (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum, 1998), 1–5. For a useful, methodological statement on the issues confronted in this research, see Ira Jacknis, "Preface to Special Issue on the Photography of Native Americans," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 20, 3 (1996): 1–14. I would like to express my gratitude to Patty Loew, Janice Rice, and Susette LaMere for facilitating our daylong meeting in the Wisconsin Dells. I make no claims, nor do the meeting's ten informants, that they speak for "the Ho-Chunk." However, my understanding of Bennett's Native American photographs is shaped to a very large degree by what some of their descendants have had to say about them.

13. See, for example, Zoltán Grossman, "The Ho-Chunk and Dakota Nations," in *Wisconsin's Past and Present: A Historical Atlas*, ed. Wisconsin Cartographers Guild (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 10; Robert E. Bieder, *Native American Communities in Wisconsin 1600–1960: A Study of Tradition and Change* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 112; Nancy Oestreich Lurie, "Winnebago," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. Bruce Trigger (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1978), 702. The Wisconsin Historical Society's new H. H. Bennett Studio Museum in the Wisconsin Dells further emphasizes these important photographs.

"View photography," as Peter Bacon Hales has shown, was an especially important kind of picture making in the nineteenth century that largely emphasized landscape. But the photographic view captured more than simply pretty scenery, as it helped Americans understand the profound environmental and social changes engulfing

their country. And like all photography, it presented a perspective, a *point of view*, that could be pressed into the service of any number of concerns, including those surrounding American Indians. Hales, "American Views and the Romance of Modernization," in *Photography in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Martha Sandweiss (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1991), 205–257.

14. Natasha Bonilla Martinez and Rose Wyaco, "Camera Shots: Photographers, Expeditions, and Collections," in *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian*, ed. Tim Johnson (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 78. Additionally, see: William H. Goetzmann, *The First Americans: Photographs from the Library of Congress* (Washington, DC: Starwood Publishing, 1991); Paula Richardson Fleming and Judith Lynn Lusky, *The North American Indians in Early Photography* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993); and Alfred L. Bush and Lee Clark Mitchell, *The Photograph and the American Indian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

15. For biographical information on H. H. Bennett, see Sara Rath, *Pioneer Photographer: Wisconsin's H. H. Bennett* (Madison: Tamarack Press, 1979); Tom Bamberger, "A Sense of Place," in *H. H. Bennett: A Sense of Place*, ed. Tom Bamberger and Terrance Marvel (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum, 1992), 5–11; Steven Hoelscher, "A Pretty Strange Place: Nineteenth-Century Scenic Tourism in the Dells," in *Wisconsin Land and Life*, ed. Robert C. Ostergren and Thomas R. Vale (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 424–449; Frank H. Goodyear, "Directing the City to the Country: Henry H. Bennett in the Wisconsin Dells," *History of Photography* 24, 2 (2000): 163–168; and *Photography in Nineteenth-Century America*, 319.

16. H. H. Bennett, diary entry, 1866, Box 5, Folder 3; diary, receipts and expenses file, 1867 Box 5, Folder 4, HHBP. Emphasis in original.

17. H. H. Bennett to father, 5 February 1867, Box 1, Folder 9; letter to father and mother, 20 October 1867, Box 1, Folder 9, HHBP. See, for example, Weston Naef and James N. Wood, *Era of Exploration: The Rise of Landscape Photography in the American West, 1860–1885* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1975); Edward Nolan, *Northern Pacific Views: The Railroad Photography of F. Jay Haynes, 1876–1905* (Helena: Montana Historical Society, 1983); Peter Palmquist, *Carleton E. Watkins, Photographer of the American West (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983)*; Peter B. Hales, *William Henry Jackson and the Transformation of the American Landscape* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); and Rebecca Solnit, *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West* (New York: Viking, 2003).

18. It's difficult to provide exact dates for many of Bennett's photographs because he never labeled his negatives beyond simple titles. However, by matching a variety of sources—Bennett's stereo catalogues, letters, and business records with local newspapers—it's possible to determine some dates. The earliest discussion that I have found of Bennett's Ho-Chunk photographs comes from the local newspaper, the *Wisconsin Mirror*, which reported on 24 May 1873 that Bennett had made photographs of Wah-con-ja-z-gah's camp. Many early photographers of American Indians were also landscape or view photographers. See Nigel Russell, "Process and Pictures: The Beginnings of Photography and of Photographing American Indians," in *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian*, ed. Tim Johnson (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 113–134.

19. Martinez and Wyaco, "Camera Shots," 78.

20. Diary entry, 25 May 1866, Box 5, Folder 3, HHBP.

21. For one of the many instances in which Bennett describes his Ho-Chunk "friends," see his 2 May 1905 letter to Augusta M. Witmore of Chicago (Reel 5, HHBP). In response to a query about his relationship with Indians, Bennett wrote, "I have known these people (Winnebagos) since my boyhood, talk their language a little, and they call me their friend." I detail this below.

22. Helen Hunt Jackson, "The Winnebagoes," in *A Century of Dishonor: A Sketch of the United States Government's Dealings with Some of the Indian Tribes* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1881), 218–256.

23. Bieder, *Native American Communities in Wisconsin*, 37–43; Patty Loew, *Indian Nations of Wisconsin: Histories of Endurance and Renewal* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2001), 40–42; Lurie, "Winnebago," 690–707; and Paul Radin, *The Winnebago Tribe* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990 [1923]).

24. The Ho-Chunk formally changed their tribal name in the early 1990s from "Winnebago," a Mesquakie word meaning "people of the stinking or dirty water." Ho-Chunk or its numerous variations—Ho-chungra, Hochungra, Hocak—comes from the nation's own language and translates roughly as "People of the Big Voice" or "People of the Sacred Language." Loew, *Indian Nations*, 40.

25. Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Quote is from Lurie, "Winnebago," 696–697.

26. Bieder, *Native American Communities in Wisconsin*, 124.

27. Lurie, "Winnebago," 699. See also Bieder, *Native American Communities in Wisconsin*, 131–132. For a useful map of the Ho-Chunk land cessions, see Grossman, "Ho-Chunk and Dakota Nations," 8–9. One British traveler to Wisconsin described what he saw in 1837: "The Indians . . . are compelled to sell—the purchase money being a mere subterfuge, by which it may appear as if the lands were not being wrested from them, although, in fact, it is." Frederick Marryat, "An English Officer's Description of Wisconsin in 1837," *Wisconsin Historical Collections* 14 (1898): 137–154. Quote on page 139; emphasis in original. Henry Merrell, a postmaster at Fort Winnebago at the time of the 1837 treaty, gives a detailed account in "Pioneer Life in Wisconsin," *Wisconsin Historical Collections* 7 (1876): 366–404, esp. 393–394.

28. By the mid-nineteenth century, the U.S. government recognized two separate nations—the Nebraska and the Wisconsin Ho-Chunk. Today, people from both groups often visit each other and intermarry. However, because a tribal member can only be enrolled in one recognized nation, children of these marriages must be enrolled in either Wisconsin or Nebraska. Nancy Oestreich Lurie, *Wisconsin Indians*, 2nd ed. (Madison: The Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2002), 13.

29. The 1840 removal is described in Louise Phelps Kellogg, "The Removal of the Winnebago," *Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters* 21 (1924), 23–29; and by John T. De La Ronde, a trader in Portage, Wisconsin, in 1837. His "Personal Narrative" vividly describes three elderly women who "came up, throwing themselves on their knees, crying and beseeching Captain Sumner to kill them; that they were old, and would rather die, and be buried with their fathers, mothers, and children, than be taken away; and that they were ready to receive their death blows." *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* 7 (1876): 345–365. Quote on page 363.

30. Loew, *Indian Nations*, 47. Such treatment is further confirmed by Jakob Stucki, a Swiss missionary in Black River Falls, Wisconsin, during the mid- to late-nineteenth century. *Die Winnebago Indianer: Ihre Religion, Sitten und Gebräuche* (Cleveland: Central Publishing House, 1897), 2–3.

31. Dave Erickson and Lance Tallmadge, *Thunder in the Dells* (Spring Green, WI: Ootek Productions, 1992), Wisconsin Public Television documentary.

32. Frank Wisner, “Sympathy,” *Wisconsin Mirror*, 23 August 1873. The “lava beds” to which Wisner refers are those of the region around Tule Lake, California—the site of the Modoc Indian War of 1872–73, a bloody confrontation that captured national attention when a small band of Modocs (numbering between 55 and 70) held off more than 1000 United States Army troops for seven months. As “California’s most spectacular Indian War,” the prospect of Native American resistance to white aggression would surely have been on the minds of those calling for Ho-Chunk removal at the time. Solnit, *River of Shadows*, 103.

33. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Annual Reports* (Washington, DC, 1875), 86. See also Moses Paquette, “An Interview by the Editor [Reuben Gold Thwaites],” *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* 1892 (1892): 399–433; and Nancy Oestreich Lurie, “The Winnebago Indians: A Study in Cultural Change” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1952), 167–169.

34. Both de la Ronde (1876, 362) and Merrill (1876, 393) independently describe Yellow Thunder’s capture in 1840, his forced transportation “by ball and chain” across the Mississippi River, and eventual escape back to Wisconsin.

35. Lurie, “Winnebago,” 702–703; Bieder, *Native American Communities in Wisconsin*, 170–171.

36. Bennett, “Wanderings Among the Wonders and Beauties of Western Scenery.” Bennett to Charles A. J. Marsh, Minneapolis, MN, 4 October 1894, Reel 1, HHBP.

37. H. H. Bennett to M. L. Purcell, Flandreau, South Dakota, 17 May 1903, Reel 4, HHBP. In this statement, of course, Bennett was merely repeating conventional wisdom among white Americans about Indians as a “vanishing race.” In a 1904 article from the *Milwaukee Free Press* that focused on Ho-Chunk in the Dells and reproduced five of Bennett’s best-known photographs, the author closed with a chilling, but all-too-frequently-stated, view: “The cold fact probably is that the Winnebagos are a doomed people. General dissipation is doing much to decimate their ranks and intermarriage will do the rest. As they now exist, they are interesting but pitiable. They present a problem greater, in some respects, than that of the Negro—especially for Wisconsin—and they will get but little consideration. The sun has gone down on the Winnebago. His day is absolutely done. Destiny!” “Fact vs. Tradition,” *Milwaukee Free Press*, undated, ca. 1904 clipping, Reel 7, HHBP. For a national-scope reading of this view, see Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1982); and idem, “Photographic Allegories and Indian Destiny,” in *Images of the Indian: Portrayals of Native Peoples*, ed. Joe Sawchuk (Brandon, Manitoba: Bearpaw Publishing, 1999), 49–81.

38. T. W. Ingersoll’s photographs are described in Edward W. Earle, “The Stereograph in America: Pictorial Antecedents and Cultural Perspectives,” in *Points of View: The Stereograph in America—A Cultural History*, ed. Edward W. Earle (Rochester, NY: The Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1979), 9–23; for Van Schaick, see Matthew D. Mason,

“Native in the Frame’: Viewing the Ho-Chunk Nation in Black River Falls, Wisconsin, 1870-1930” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers, Los Angeles, 2002). Van Schaick is best known as the “careful, competent photographer” in Michael Lesy’s *Wisconsin Death Trip* (New York: Pantheon, 1973).

39. Russell, “Process and Pictures,” 123–124. See also Richard N. Masteller, “Western Views in Eastern Parlors: The Contribution of the Stereograph Photographer to the Conquest of the West,” *Prospects* 6 (1981): 55–71.

40. Although he rarely worked in portraiture after his turn to landscape views, Bennett’s wives, first Frankie and then Evaline, carried on the portrait trade. It is difficult to know who among the Bennett family actually took the photograph of He-Noo-Ke-Ku—Bennett certainly claimed it in his “Among the Winnebago” series—but it’s quite possible that Frankie took this handsome portrait. H. H. Bennett to Arthur H. McArthur, 8 September 1886, Box 4, Folder 1–5, HHBP. See also Rath, *Pioneer Photographer*, 28.

41. Shortly before his portrait of Ha-Zah-Zoch-Kah, Bennett wrote to his son, Ashley, that “I have ordered two Appachee [*sic*] war bonnets from New Mexico and as soon as I can after they get home, make some 18x22 negs of some of these Indians in costume, if they will consent.” H. H. Bennett to Ashley Bennett, Hot Springs, MT, 16 January 1904, Reel 4, HHBP. I would like to thank Nancy Lurie for helping me identify much of the material culture in this and in other Bennett Ho-Chunk photographs. Lurie interview with the author, Milwaukee, 1 July 2002.

42. Comments of Thomas Hopinkah during a meeting at the Bennett Studio Museum, Wisconsin Dells, 11 January 2002. One man who visited Bennett often and who traveled with Buffalo Bill and other Wild West shows was Albert Thunder. As I detail below, it was probably this experience that led to Albert Thunder’s fluency in English, for he helped Bennett translate many Ho-Chunk words into English: “Exercises in Ho-Chunk-ah-rah Wong-cig-ah-rah,” Box 8, Folder 9, HHBP. For other examples of Ho-Chunk performing in Wild West shows, see, “The Winnebagoes at the New York Fair,” *Badger State Banner* (Black River Falls), 22 June 1893, 4; and Nancy Oestreich Lurie, *Mountain Wolf Woman, Sister of Crashing Thunder: The Autobiography of a Winnebago Woman* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961).

43. “Copyrights granted to H.H. Bennett,” Box 15, Folder 6, HHBP. This was an unusual move for Bennett, as he submitted only twenty-seven copyright applications during his forty-year career. For two excellent discussions of “show Indians” and their important roles in Wild West performances, see L. G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883–1993* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); and Joy S. Kasson, *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 161–220.

44. For background on the making of the Plains Indian image, see Mark Engel, “Seeing with the Stereotypic Eye: The Visual Image of the Plains Indian,” in *Images of the Indian: Portrayals of Native Peoples*, ed. Joe Sawchuk (Brandon, Manitoba: Bearpaw Publishing, 1999), 82–110.

45. Indeed, as Bennett himself was to write rather condescendingly to a Milwaukee correspondent: “The dress of these people is partly Indian and partly civilized (the women). The men dress about the same as the whites.” H. H. Bennett to Gimbel Brothers (department store in Milwaukee), “Indian Bead Work Department,” 29 April 1903, Reel 4, HHBP.

46. Martha Sandweiss makes the important point that such tensions between private pictures and public uses are central to nineteenth-century photography, especially with photographs of American Indians. Here, Bennett's photographs might be more representative of the genre than Van Schaick's. As Sandweiss notes, the emergence of an "expanded market for photographic views of Indian life made it far less likely that a photograph of a Native American person would be made for the subject him- or herself, and correspondingly more probable that the picture would be made as an object of commerce, intended not as a private remembrance, but as a piece of a public story." Martha A. Sandweiss, "'Momentoes of the Race': Photography and the American Indian," in her *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 207–273. Quote on page 217.

47. Lurie, "Winnebago," 702–505; Bieder, *Native American Communities in Wisconsin*, 171.

48. Radin, *Winnebago Tribe*, 73–74. Compare Bennett's stereograph with plate 39 in Radin: "Moccasin Game," a photograph that more accurately depicts the game as it must have been played, but is compositionally bland and obscures several of the players.

49. H. H. Bennett to R. N. Bunn, Chicago, 24 June 1904, Reel 4, HHBP.

50. *Ibid.*

51. Radin, *Winnebago Tribe*, 88–90. The idea that this could be a menstrual lodge is Nancy Lurie's. Interview, 1 July 2002.

52. Mason, "Native in the Frame," 5. H. H. Bennett to R.N. Bunn, Chicago, IL, 13 April 1905, Reel 5, HHBP.

53. J.E. Jones, *A Description of a Noted Western Summer Resort: A Trip through the Dells of the Wisconsin River* (Kilbourn City, WI: 1887), n.p. Box 28, Folder 1, HHBP. Many of the dozens of period guidebooks shared this sentiment. After comparing the Dells favorably to Yellowstone and Watkin's Glen in New York, James Maitland, for one, declared "nor is this locality alone interesting because of its weird, impressive surroundings, for connected with it are reminiscences of Indian days. . . . Almost every spot along the banks of the river for miles hereabouts is identified with some legend of tragic intent." Maitland, *The Golden Northwest* (Chicago: Rollins, 1879), 29.

54. Martha A. Sandweiss, "Undecisive Moments: The Narrative Tradition in Western Photography," in *Photography in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Martha A. Sandweiss (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1991), 98–129; see also the more recent and complete statement in her recently published *Print the Legend*. Although Sandweiss is most insistent on this point, she's not the only one to make it. James Faris demonstrates persuasively that "non-photographic discourses are relevant" to the interpretation of historical photographs, and more generally, Susan Sontag has maintained that a photograph's "meaning—and the viewer's response—depends on how the picture is identified or misidentified; that is, on words." Faris, *Navajo and Photography*, 302; and Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2003), 29.

55. Donan, *The Tourists' Wonderland*, 7.

56. In a letter to a person named Gaylord, Bennett wrote that "I have a real Chippewa Indian birch canoe that I got a few days ago from the northern part of the state, which I will use in some pictures that I will make at Boat Cave and perhaps other points." 1 October 1892, Reel 1, HHBP. A nice print of a panorama with the canoe is in New York as part of the Museum of Modern Art's collection and reproduced on pages 294 and 295 of Sandweiss, *Photography in Nineteenth-Century America*.

57. Jones, *A Trip Through the Dells*, n.p. Elsewhere, Jones makes the spurious claim that an “earlier superior race” existed in the valleys of the Wisconsin River and were “driven away, doubtless, by the savages found here by the first white men to visit Wisconsin.” James E. Jones, “The Story of the Wisconsin River: Prehistoric and Indian Period,” *Illustrated Events* (Kilbourn City), November 1903, 1–6. Jones, it should be noted, was an influential community member who, in addition to piloting tour boats, published a newspaper, the *Kilbourn City Illustrated Events*, from 1903–1909.

58. *The Great West* (Chicago: Rollins, 1880), 85–86. The anonymous author goes on to suggest that “We can readily imagine this as the abode of witches and devils; we are reminded of all the Indian tales of Cooper, and those susceptible to superstitious influences will hear the wailing of the braves who died on the field of battle, in the rustlings of the trees and branches above.” For what is now a classic interpretation of these materials, see Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950).

59. Frank O. Wisner, *The Tourist’s Guide to the Wisconsin Dells, and an Illustrated Handbook Embracing the Prose, Romance, and Poetry of this Wonderful Region* (Kilbourn City: n.p., 1875), 48–61; Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 129.

60. Significantly, Bennett himself named many of these physical-geographical features that became landmarks on the tourist itinerary and portrait subjects for his landscape photography. J. J. Brown, *The Tourist’s Guide to and through the Dells of the Wisconsin River and Vicinity, Kilbourn City* (Kilbourn City, WI: 1875); Frank H. Taylor, *Through to St. Paul and Minneapolis in 1881: Random Notes from the Diary of a Man in Search of the West* (Chicago: Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway, 1881), 17. This is a key point, for, as Alan Trachtenberg notes, “naming and viewing complement each other.” Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, 127.

61. Both Roger Nichols and Nancy Lurie concur that Black Hawk found refuge among the Ho-Chunk near present-day Tomah, well north of the Wisconsin River Dells, and traveled to Prairie du Chien without coercion, but with Ho-Chunk protection. Roger L. Nichols, *Black Hawk and the Warrior’s Path* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1992), 137–139; Nancy O. Lurie, “In Search of Chaeter: New Findings on Black Hawk’s Surrender,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 71, 3 (1988): 353–364. Even before boosters in the Dells pursued tourism development, white residents told stories about Black Hawk’s capture there. H. H. Bennett’s father, George, wrote to his family in Vermont that during a pleasant boat excursion up the river, “we saw where Black Hawk the Indian warrior hid himself when he was pursued by the soldiers and he was taken but a few miles from here” (George Bennett to family, 26 July 1857, Box 1, Folder 1, HHBP). And the budding State Historical Society of Wisconsin very early described “Black Hawk’s Cave [as the place where] Black Hawk once secreted himself to avoid pursuers.” “Dells of the Wisconsin: Black Hawk’s Cave,” *Wisconsin Historical Collections* 5 (1867): 298–299.

62. The *Wisconsin Mirror*, 25 June 1875, graphically, and with words that sting the contemporary ear, describes what the viewer was supposed to see here: “the old red-skinned villain as we contemplate the deep and dark cavity in which he lay safely ensconced while his enemies were prowling through the underbrush in vain search after his scalp.”

63. Gidley, *Edward S. Curtis*, 67–71, 103. Emphasis in original.

64. *Ibid.*, 75. Although no evidence exists that Bennett ever met Curtis, he was certainly well aware of the famous photographer and his *North American Indian* project. Kilbourn's most widely read newspaper, the *Mirror-Gazette*, covered Curtis' American Indian photography, noting "each year cuts down their number and soon these old fellows who know of the days before the coming of the white man will be no more, writes E. S. Curtis." *Mirror-Gazette*, 26 July 1906.

65. William H. Metcalf, a wealthy Milwaukee businessman, became close friends with Bennett, loaning him funds to construct a new photographic studio in 1875, then writing off the loan in 1881. For a detailed discussion of Curtis' skills in raising money, most notably from the powerful banker and magnate J. P. Morgan, see Gidley, *Edward S. Curtis*, 109–133.

66. When D. A. Kennedy, Bennett's most important canvasser, asked him to photograph the Sioux in South Dakota as a way to enhance sales, Bennett responded: "With regard to getting out a set of views of the Sioux and other points you mention, I cannot get away from here long enough this spring or summer to make the negatives and cannot trust that kind of work to any one else." Bennett to Kennedy, 27 April 1891, Box 4, HHBP.

67. H. H. Bennett to Will Holly, Los Angeles, 14 March 1903; to E. E. White, Milwaukee, 10 September 1904, both from Reel 4, HHBP.

68. Holman, "Photography as Social and Economic Exchange," 96. A similar perspective has been recently suggested by Martha A. Sandweiss, who describes the nineteenth-century interaction between white photographer and Native American subject more typically as "a form of exchange" than of abject coercion. Sandweiss, "Momentoes of the Race," 207–273, 270.

69. Faris, *Navajo and Photography*, 34. As Mick Gidley points out, Native Americans who provided information to anthropologists and posed for photographers often received payment. Gidley, *Edward S. Curtis*, 92. Also dissenting from Faris, Ira Jacknis notes, "permission and compensation were certainly real issues in the past, but historical records in photographic archives are often silent on these points." Jacknis, "Photography of Native Americans," 6.

70. Cashbook, 1870–1875, entry for 16 May 1873, Box 35, Folder 5 HHBP.

71. Cashbook, 1876–1879, entry for 14 May 1878, Box 35, Folder 6; Cashbook 1880–1884, entries for 8 May 1880, 10 May 1880, 18 August 1880, 17 May 1881, Box 35, Folder 7, HHBP.

72. *Ibid.*

73. Susette LaMere, interview.

74. Indian Account Book, 19 June 1903, 1 February 1904, 10 March 1904, 26 August 1904, 29 September 1904, 7 October 1904, Box 33, Folder 1; Cashbooks, 2 January 1904, 2 June 1904, 18 July 1904, Box 36, Folder 6; Bennett to R.S. Bunn, Chicago, 24 June 1904, Reel 4, HHBP.

75. H. H. Bennett to J.E. McCourt, Ludington, MI, 31 May 1903, Reel 4, HHBP.

76. H. H. Bennett to Orville J. Greene, 7 September 1903, Reel 4, HHBP. Rick Hill reaches the same conclusion when viewing a remarkably similar photograph of Bone Necklace, a Dakota man. Hill, "The Vanishing American," 115.

77. H. H. Bennett to [Frank] Taylor, 3 February 1883 to Box 3, Folder 4, HHBP.

78. H. H. Bennett to Mathew Mason, 7 February 1883, Box 3, Folder 5, HHBP.

79. H.H. Bennett, "Wanderings Among the Wonders and Beauties of Western Scenery," 1883, Box 25, Folder 18, HHBP. Native resistance to photography was not

limited to Bennett, and one wonders how many similar, but unrecorded, encounters took place. One year after Bennett's 1873 confrontation at the Ho-Chunk camp, William Henry Jackson met a similar reception among a group of Uncompahgre Utes who refused to give him permission to photograph their village. Writing about the encounter a half century later, Jackson notes that a group of four men was "detailed to get in my way. As I attempted to focus, one of them would snatch the cloth from my head; or toss a blanket over the camera; or kick one of the supporting legs." Jackson, *Time Exposure: the Autobiography of William Henry Jackson* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986 [1940]), 227.

80. Theresa Harlan has written perceptively about such exchanges when she notes, "During the intense period of photo-documentation many Native people tried to avoid the camera, as they feared the photograph would bring illness. Some Native people believed that with each photograph their souls would weaken. This fear was looked upon as the illogical belief of a backward and simple people. Yet, I believe our grandmothers and grandfathers were right. The loss they sensed was very real and generations later is still felt by Native Americans today. Euro-American photographers contributed to and participated in the replacement of Native-conceived self imagery/identity with that of the Euro-American perceived and projected imagery of Native Americans." Theresa Harlan, "A Curator's Perspective: Native Photographers Creating a Visual Native American History," *Exposure* 29, 1 (1993): 12-22. Quote on page 14.

81. H. H. Bennett to Gimbel Brothers, Milwaukee, 29 April 1903, Reel 4, HHBP.

82. H. H. Bennett to R.N. Bunn, Chicago, IL, 13 April 1905, Reel 5, HHBP.

83. "Nothing in the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky is more strikingly beautiful than some of the dimly lighted chambers and royal archways with their floors of liquid crystal, in this Cave of the Dark Waters, or as the Indians called it, "Place of the Nah-huh-nah." P. Donan, *The Dells of the Wisconsin, Fully Illustrated* (Chicago: Rollins, 1879), 23.

84. H. H. Bennett, *The Wisconsin Dells*, (Milwaukee: Evening Wisconsin Press, 1900), Box 26, Folder 7; and H.H. Bennett, *Wanderings by a Wanderer*, n.d. [1890], Box 26, Folder 1, HHBP.

85. Two important studies on the politics of "playing Indian" are Shari M. Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); and Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

86. Bennett to Charles Zimmerman, St. Paul, 13 May 1904, Reel 4, HHBP.

87. Bennett to John Bennett, Altadena, CA, 14 July 1903; Bennett to Ed Bennett, Santa Fe, NM, 12 April 1903, Reel 4, HHBP.

88. Cashbooks, Box 35, HHBP.

89. This paragraph relies on Peter Bacon Hales', "American Views and the Romance of Modernization." For two complementary accounts of the changes in capitalist production at this time, and their attendant cultural repercussions, see Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Want, 1982); and David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

90. In Bennett's case, that was not all. A lucrative portion of his trade rested on photographing the excursion boats that plied the Wisconsin River from Kilbourn. Bennett or an assistant would join the groups, ranging in size from several dozen to a

couple of hundred, and photograph the party at key stops along the river. He would then quickly return to the studio, develop and print “keep-sake photographs,” and sell them when the group arrived back in town. Such work provided a modest but steady income, earning Bennett nearly \$700 in 1891 alone. Even this work dried up, however. The consolidation of the boat business by out-of-state investors denied Bennett access to the market he had come to rely on. His despondent wife and business partner wrote in 1902 that the photographer “is not out of the river much this year—is not picturing the boat at all. The relations with the [newly formed] Dells Co. are quite strained and things are very unpleasant this year.” Cashbooks, Box 35; Eva M. Bennett to Charley and Ella Bennett, 5 August 1902, Reel 3, HHBP.

91. Bennett to W.E. Holly, Los Angeles, CA, 26 March 1906, Reel 5, HHBP.

92. Mick Gidley has documented the important point that such practices were hardly unique, but characteristic of professional photographers at this time. Edward S. Curtis, Adam Clark Vroman, and Ronald Reed, among others, decorated their studios with Indian artifacts. Gidley, *Edward S. Curtis*, 81, 297.

93. These items are thoroughly described in dozens of letters, including ones to Ely Moore, North Conway, NH, 28 July 1903; D. H. Richardson, Belvidere, IL, 30 July 1905; and to J. D. Allan, Mandan, ND, 6 August 1905; Phoebe S. Acheson, Washington, PA, 10 September 1906; and Leo Blake, Grand Rapids, MI, 3 January 1907, Reels 4, 5, and 6, HHBP.

94. Bennett to Tanner Basket Co., New York, 17 June 1900, Reel 2; Bennett to Ely Moore, North Conway, NH, 27 June 1903, 4 September 1903; Bennett to Will Holly, Los Angeles, 14 March 1903; Bennett to Ed Bennett, Santa Fe, NM, 4 February 1903, 20 April 1903, Reel 4, HHBP.

95. Bennett to Hyde Exploring Expedition Company, New York, 17 September 1903; Bennett to J. S. Candelario, Santa Fe, NM, 12 March 1904; Bennett to H.C. Youtz, Cerrillos, NM, 8 May 1903; Bennett to Orville J. Greene, Indian Day School, Manderson, SD, 26 May 1903; Bennett to J. D. Allan, Mandan, ND, 8 August 1902; Bennett to Harriet Arengie, Indian Agent, Greenwood, ND, 16 December 1902; Bennett to George Moe, Flagstaff, AZ, 7 June 1906; Bennett to Ashley Bennett, Hot Springs, MT, 7 September 1903, Reels 3 and 4, HHBP.

96. Bennett to Leo Blake, Grand Rapids, MI, 3 January 1907, Reel 6, HHBP.

97. Leah Dilworth, *Imagining Indians in the Southwest: Persistent Visions of a Primitive Past* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 123, 125–172. See also Sherry L. Smith, *Reimagining Indians: Native Americans through Anglo Eyes, 1880–1840* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); and T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), 60–91.

98. H. H. Bennett to Ed Bennett, Santa Fe, NM, 20 April 1903, emphasis in original; H. H. Bennett to Orville J. Greene, Indian Day School, Manderson, SD, 26 May 1903, Reel 4, HHBP.

99. Bennett to Allen, 1 July 1905, and 29 July 1905, Reel 5, HHBP. Upon the sale of twelve items to the director of the Union Depot in Chicago, Bennett assured the purchaser that “the name on each tag is really the name of the squaw of whom I bought the belt or job and who said they made the article. I mention this because in my last season’s retail trade I found it of much advantage.” Bennett to E. R. Walsh, 28 February 1904, Reel 4, HHBP. On the “Indian hobbyists” of this time, see Smith, *Reimagining Indians*.

100. Cashbook, 1880–1884, Box 35, Folder 7, HHBP. It's possible that an earlier such transaction took place, but, as Bennett's copious financial records don't reveal such an exchange, I find it unlikely.

101. Bennett to Ed Bennett, Santa Fe, NM, 4 February 1903; Bennett to Ed Bennett, 12 April 1903, Reel 4, HHBP.

102. Cashbook, 1902–1903, Box 36, Folder 5; Indian Account Book, Box 33, Folder 1, HHBP.

103. Bennett to E. Moore, New York, 29 April 1907, Reel 6, HHBP.

104. Bennett to Mr. Choo-Nah-Hoo-Kah (James Standing Water), 21 March 1905, emphasis in original; see also Bennett to Susie Redhorn, New Lisbon, WI, 19 March 1905. Bennett to Ed Bennett, Santa Fe, NM 18 February 1903, Reel 4, HHBP.

105. Bennett to Orville J. Green, Indian Day School, Manderson, SD, 31 May 1903, Reel 4, HHBP.

106. Bennett to Brancel and Henry, Co., Milwaukee, 22 July 1903; Bennett to Orville J. Greent, Indian Day School, Manderson, SD, 7 September 1903; Bennett to J.E. McCourt, Ludington, MI, 31 May 1903, Reel 4, HHBP.

107. Bennett to Edmund Andrews, Chicago, 1 March 1899, Reel 2, HHBP.

108. Ever the meticulous recordkeeper, Bennett produced several handwritten notebooks documenting his language acquisition efforts. The result is a fascinating window into a dynamic and ever-changing set of social and economic relationships. Box 8, Folder 9, HHBP. Some notebooks are titled (such as "Exercises in Ho-Chunk-ah-rah Wong-chig-ah-rah"), while others bear no title and are simply collected as loose sheets of paper or written on stationery. Although Bennett was not entirely accurate in these translations, contemporary Ho-Chunk speakers recognize the sounds that he must have heard and tried to write out phonetically. I thank Preston Thompson, in particular, for pointing this out to me.

109. Bennett to Julia Lapham, Milwaukee, 10 March 1906, Reel 5, HHBP.

110. Diary entry, 3 June 1907. See also entries on 13 January 1904, 26 May 1907, and 4 August 1907, Box 8, Folder 9. In a 2 May 1905 letter to Augusta M. Witmore, Chicago, Bennett wrote, "I have no book of the Indian legends of this region, but hope sometime to publish what I have got of their stories about the Dells and surrounding country." Reel 5, HHBP. Another Ho-Chunk man whom Bennett knew well was called Hoonch-Schad-e-gah, or Big Bear. They became acquainted when the young photographer returned to Wisconsin after the Civil War and remained what Bennett characterized as "friends" for the next four decades. Letters indicate that Hoonch-Schad-e-gah occasionally joined Bennett along the river for photographic excursions and perhaps served as the interpreter who helped the photographer gain admission to Ho-Chunk camps. He also knew Bennett's family and from time to time spoke to them about his culture. During visits to the Bennett Studio, Hoonch-Schad-e-gah performed medicinal ceremonies, instructed them in the use of tobacco for healing, gave them artwork intended specifically as gifts, and told Bennett a modest amount about his people's spiritual beliefs. Bennett to Dr. Edmund Andrews, Chicago, 21 January 1899, Reel 2; Diary entry, 13 January 1904, in "Exercises in Ho-Chung-ah-rah Wong-chig-ah-rah," Box 9, Folder 9, HHBP.

111. "The Passing of the 'Noble Red Man.'" *Kilbourn Weekly Illustrated Events*, 2 December 1905.

112. I thank Janice Rice for bringing this important point to my attention.

113. Comments of Preston Thompson and Tom Hopinkah, 11 January 2002. Bennett described his frustrations with learning to speak Ho-Chunk this way: "I have not made the progress in learning to talk with them that I could wish. You see, about the time I get it fixed in my mind that Wah-nag-ink Soc-sic-x-rah, Mar-shunk-keen means 'bead belt very good' something comes up in my work about the studio that diverts my thoughts from such an interesting subject and in few minutes I have forgotten and would be as likely to say something like 'Winnebago Indian a rascal' or 'Squaw big fraud.' This of course would not be either polite or political in the presence of these people." Bennett to Will E. Holly in Los Angeles, 14 March 1903, Reel 4, HHBP.

114. Bennett to E. Moore, New York, 29 April 1907, Reel 6, HHBP.

115. Lurie, "Winnebago," 704; idem, "The Winnebago Indians," 260.

116. Lucy R. Lippard, "Introduction," in *Partial Recall*, 19. Emphasis in original.

117. Rainbow Big Blackhawk, 11 January 2002, Wisconsin Dells. Such reactions are similar to those received by Monty Roessel when he asked Navajo to look at historic Navajo photographs. Roessel, "Navajo Photography," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 20, 3 (1996): 83–91. The different readings of these views by Bennett's white audiences are thoroughly documented in the Kilbourn City newspapers, which often reprinted travel accounts.

118. Montgomery Green, Sr., interview, 11 January 2002, Wisconsin Dells.

