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SPIDER IN THE RIVER: A COMPARATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY OF THE IMPACT OF THE CACHE LA POUDRE WATERSHED ON CHEYENNES AND EURO-AMERICANS, 1830-1880

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This thesis is a case study of the Cache la Poudre watershed in Colorado in the mid-nineteenth century and how it contributed to cultural transformations of both Cheyennes and Euro-Americans. This research follows the relationship that developed between Cheyennes and rivers since they inhabited Mille de Lacs in Minnesota in the seventeenth century. It examines the creation of settler-colonialism through the formation of boundaries and colonies in Colorado through the use of rivers. This further illustrates the connectedness of both Euro-Americans and Cheyennes to the rivers and argues that there were battles over these rivers and not only over the land. Finally, this thesis examines how the colonists that settled Colorado also disputed between themselves over the right to these rivers, by committing themselves to the idea of the mythic West. Some were disillusioned and left, but founder of Union Colony, Nathan Meeker, propagated and promoted the mythic West, and by committing themselves to the rivers, survived in that region.

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Adhuc multa habeo vobis dicere, sed non potestis portare modo. Cum autem venerit ille, Spiritus veritatis, deducet vos in omnem veritatem

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Chapter 1: Spiders and Desert People

Cheyenne oral tradition features a trickster character named Wihio who depended on the Cheyennes in order to live. In one legend, Wihio learned to fish from a Cheyenne man, who cut strips of his skin off as bait and succeeded in catching many fish. Wihio learned this technique and was warned by his teacher to not do this more than four times. Wihio lost track of how many times he had fished and even though his sack was full, he kept trying to catch fish. The fifth time he cast his line, a fish dragged him into the water and swallowed him. The fish choked on Wihio and its body washed ashore where Wihio's wife rescued him by cutting open the fish. Afterwards, he ungratefully told his wife after getting out of the fish that, "I wish to have the choice pieces of this fish saved for me, for I caught it."[1] This example of sacred oral tradition illustrates the relationship that the Cheyennes had with Wihio, which is also the Cheyenne term for a white man, meaning "spider." Wihio is sometimes asked for help, but according to anthropologist George Bird Grinnell, "More often he fills the role of mischief-maker or villain. Often he seems to possess intelligence greater than that of most of the Indians, as the etymology of his name might seem to suggest."[2] Wihio illustrates Cheyenne conceptions of whites and also is symbolic of the risks of an insatiable thirst for water in Colorado.

Rivers and lakes were battlefields in the mid-nineteenth century and have remained contested in courtrooms. Throughout these conflicts, humans have reimagined their culture through their access to water and in its many forms because it is essential to life. Scholarship on this topic has examined the battles between whites and Cheyennes as a fight over land and access to hunting grounds, ignoring the equally important tensions

[1] George Bird Grinnell, *By Cheyenne Campfires*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 297.
[2] George Bird Grinnell, *By Cheyenne Campfires* 281.

arising from competition for access to water for horticulture and trade. This study argues that Colorado was not merely a place where various peoples interacted, but also where environmental resources interacted through the peoples that controlled them. Within the Piedmont of Colorado from 1800 until 1880, the Cheyennes struggled for control of the rivers. Cheyennes and Arapahoes created a sustainable niche in Colorado territory through horticulture, raiding and trading, and seminomadism.[3] In their earliest years on the Plains together, Euro-American and Native peoples' interests converged, which led to exploitation of plains animals like the bison and a space for cultural transmission between trappers like William Bent and Kit Carson with other Cheyennes. Throughout the nineteenth century, conflict increased between whites and Cheyennes because the land that Cheyennes traveled and the waterways that they depended on were the same resources that whites sought to control. Consequently, Native Americans and whites depended on this ecosystem to gain the same thing: energy. Both sides depended upon water, and Cheyennes relied on the water by following it, while whites created the prior-appropriation law that established "first in time, first in right."[4]

Humans for the most part attempt to increase their yields whenever they can. Historian Richard White illustrates this point in his study of Native Americans' and whites' utilization of the Columbia River. To gain that river's energy, humans both changed themselves and the water that they dammed and exploited. This effort required

[3] Arapahoes are a Native American band that lived in the Black Hills and joined the Cheyennes once they arrived in the Black Hills as well. They currently live on the same reservation as the Southern Cheyenne in Oklahoma and their nations are closely related. George Hyde, *Life of George Bent* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 20.

[4] The law is called Prior-Appropriation Law and states, "the first person to appropriate water and apply that water to use has the first right to use that water within a particular stream system. This person (after receiving a court decree verifying their priority status) then becomes the senior water right holder on the stream, and that water right must be satisfied before any other water rights can be fulfilled."(Colorado Division of Water Resources: Department of Natural Resources, *"Prior Appropriation Law"*).

cultural transformation, environmental commodification, and federal subsidies. In the Plains, the Cheyennes and Arapahoes adapted to the organisms that they had available and succeeded. They used horses that were introduced to them for hunting and traveling to shelters in the wintertime, and rivers to collect fish and water their crops.

Newcomer whites created a legal system and racial hierarchy that privileged particular members of society to allocate water for others. Worster excoriated the American system by saying, "The hydraulic society of the West is increasingly a coercive, monolithic, and hierarchical system, ruled by a power elite based on the ownership of capital and expertise."[5] Despite Worster's frustrations, the boosters that encouraged land transformation proposed an idea to make land habitable for humans. This is a point of contrast between the Euro-American and Cheyenne examples of inhabiting the Cache la Poudre watershed, and the whites tried to transform it through diverting the water into irrigation ditches. Similarly, historian William Cronon elaborates on how Euro-American settlers developed east coast America, and he states,

> The destruction of Indian communities in fact brought some of the most important ecological changes, which followed the Europeans' arrival in America. The choice is not between two landscapes, one with and one without a human influence; it is between two human ways of living, two ways of belonging to an ecosystem.[6]

Additionally, Richard White demonstrates the way Coast Salish and Euro-Americans viewed the Columbia River differently. Humans for the most part attempt to increase their yields whenever they can. Historian Richard White illustrates this point in *The Organic Machine* with his study on the Columbia River and how both Native Americans

[5] Worster, 7.
[6] William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 12.

and whites utilized it through harnessing its energy in the forms of salmon and hydroelectricity.

Overall, the hydroelectric dams and prior appropriation water rights challenged the individualistic myth of the West. Living in the West required cooperation, corporations, and government aid. For the Coast Salish, it was a source of energy through salmon and for whites it was through the hydroelectric energy that they could harvest from the river. In short, rivers as important sites of Indian-white relations and the conduit for federal and American conquest are an element of Colorado's history that deserves more consideration.

Human modifications to nature were not a hindrance, but adaptations that people and ecosystems created. For example, White states, "We can't treat the river as if it is simply nature and all dams, hatcheries, channels, pumps, cities, ranches, and pulp mills are ugly and unnecessary blotches on a still coherent natural system. These things are now part of the river itself."[7] Furthermore, historian Patricia Limerick refutes Worster's negative claims by stating, "Those of us who live in the American West today are dependent on, complicit with, and indebted to the organizations and institutions that disrupted the ecosystems and disturbed the landscapes that, a little late in the game, we came to treasure."[8] These historians acknowledge that changes are not a bad thing, but humans create contingences from modifying waterways. Acquired land was usually taken from someone else, and appropriated water often left a particular area dry. This led to violence and unanticipated effects on the environments like flooding and introduced

[7] Richard White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 109.
[8] Patricia Limerick, *A Ditch in Time: The City, The West, and Water* (Golden: Fulcrum Books, 2012), 4.

species outcompeting native organisms.[9] However, one of the more interesting aspects that I examine is how culture changes as well.

Within the different hydraulic strategies of whites and Cheyennes, similarities in cultural and societal changes emerge. For example, the Cheyenne society viewed the different genders as equal, and in Union Colony Nathan Meeker cultivated Greeley, Colorado into becoming a space of gender equality. Women in Cheyenne society were important for trade delegations, and in Greeley, women gained the right to suffrage in certain town elections and Meeker promoted their role as leaders in the town.[10] Part of this stems from the roles that men and women needed to assume in this region to survive, Cheyenne men would hunt bison, and Greeley men would mine coal or work on irrigation ditches. This contributed to a greater sense of independence for the women in these bands and towns and they explored what they could accomplish.

The second chapter of this thesis re-evaluates Cheyenne culture and history to illustrate their dependence on rivers and how riverine ecosystems changed them. Relying on turn of the century ethnologies of Cheyennes by George Bird Grinnell, George Hyde, James C. Mooney, and E. Adamson Hoebel can be problematic because of their dated research, but they are used here because they offer excellent accounts and interviews with Cheyennes about their tribes' residency in Colorado. These Cheyenne ethnographies are supplemented through *Life of George Bent*, a biography based on his letters, and John Stands in Timber's oral history recorded in *A Cheyenne Voice*. Additionally, contemporary ethnographies, such as John H. Moore's *The Cheyenne Nation*, illuminate

[9] The Platte Canyon Dam in 1900 led to a massive flood that destroyed the homes and property of Littleton residents (Limerick, 2013), 63. Additionally, Mark Fiege's *Irrigated Eden* explores the violence between farmers and unanticipated ecological impacts of irrigation and farming practices in Idaho.
[10] Joseph Jablow, *The Cheyenne in Plains Indian Trade Relations 1795-1840* (Lincoln: Bison Books, 1994), 49.

other aspects of Cheyenne culture such as the Sun Dance and reservation life to give a fuller depiction of how the Cheyenne nation has evolved over time. All of these works together articulate how different evidence from French trappers to origin myths complement each other and create questions for scholars such as why accounts of events differ and how historians can revise the narrative of Cheyenne displacement.[11] This chapter is meant to illustrate the transformation that Cheyennes underwent in adopting successful subsistence strategies that compare to the changes that Union Colonists made in the role of women in their society.

The methodology informing this approach to Cheyenne history mirrors that used in *Transforming Ethnohistories* because of its inclusiveness in bridging the disciplines of history and anthropology. According to Sebastian Felix Braun, "[ethnohistory] does nothing less than challenge the dominance of academic discourse, yet also, at the same time, restores credibility and inclusiveness to it."[12] Furthermore, historian Colin Calloway states, "Mythic tales linked to specific places contained morals and teachings that enabled people to live as true human beings."[13] The myths and oral histories of Cheyennes create ethnographic passages that complement and aid non-Cheyennes' understandings of that tribe's history. Through these myths truths emerge about the intimacy with the environment and the interpretation of Euro-American involvement. Additionally, through their presence on rivers they became so intimately close to it that

[11] Ari Kelman's *A Misplaced Massacre* (Harvard University Press: 2013) does a fantastic job of explaining the role of memory of events and how white memorialization and military surveys can differ from oral histories, and how both accounts contain kernels of truth.
[12] Sebastian Felix Braun, "An Ethnohistory of Listening," in *Transforming Ethnohistories* ed. Sebastian Felix Braun (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 10.
[13] Colin G. Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 7.

two rivers bear the name Cheyenne for the time spent on these rivers. Overall, rivers were important to Cheyennes for their journey west and their survival.

The third chapter chronicles the Euro-American conquest of Cheyennes through the control of rivers, and examines how boosterism and urban development led to federal policy that shrunk Native lands. This chapter focuses on the settler colonial process that led to the disenfranchisement of Cheyennes. Rivers represented to the Cheyennes the borders of their land and the imposing Euro-Americans were the force challenging their borders. In 1859, whites enticed by the prospect of gold in Colorado Territory headed to Pike's Peak to try their luck. Though most hopefuls failed at that particular site, boosters and city planners saw the potential for another means of success on the Front Range because of the closeness of rivers. The Colorado Piedmont is a region of high plains in eastern Colorado that parallel the Arkansas and South Platte Rivers. These rivers helped convince early Coloradans to invest in Denver because of its location at the confluence of the South Platte River, Cherry Creek, and short distance to mines and health retreats, which made it a good midpoint for travelers.[14] In 1851, the central Plains nations signed the Treaty of Fort Laramie that gave them rights to specific lands, and a decade later the Cheyennes signed the Fort Wise treaty that further receded their land to only along the Arkansas River, thus removing them from the Cache la Poudre. In general, Euro-Americans saw potential in the Front Range's landscape to build cities, farm, and pan gold, but they needed to appropriate the land and the water to realize these opportunities.

Settlers anticipated the chance to head west and claim the land that they had heard about in travelogues and stories from fur trappers along the Santa Fe Trail. Men like William Bent, his brothers, and Ceran St. Vrain became wealthy on this trail along the

[14] Wyckoff, 110.

Arkansas River. St. Vrain expanded the operations from Bent's Fort to the Cache la Poudre River where he built Fort St. Vrain and traded with the Sioux, Cheyennes, and Arapahoes who lived too far away from Bent's Fort to trade.[15] There was mounting competition on the South Platte River from the Sublettes, a famous fur trading family, built Fort Vasquez to get goods from the Native Americans that lived in that region. They lived on the fringes of New Mexico where they could acquire goods from Taos and Santa Fe, and in Cheyenne territory where they could acquire the bison hides that they shipped to St. Louis to make a handsome profit. Also the trails to the Pike's Peak gold rush followed the Platte Rivers or the Arkansas River and demonstrated to the travelers the potential in the landscape due to the tall grass on the verdant pastures, and flourishing livestock. According to Charles Post as his caravan went through Kansas, "Cattle are all thriving. The character of the world, timber scarce, lots of lime and building rock, gravel and splendid water."[16] In contrast to this account though, by 1859 bison and other game declined from overhunting and settlers traveling west needed to plan on what foodstuffs they would bring with them. Captain R. B. Marcy recommended an "allowance for each adult of 150 pounds of flour, twenty-five pounds of bacon or pork; fifteen pounds of coffee and twenty-five of sugar."[17] Despite this decline in wild game, the travelers still had an idea of the potential through Kansas Territory before they arrived in Wyoming or west of the Rocky Mountains. Through these travellers' experiences, they helped promote the West as an edenic zone that they believed they had a manifest right to.

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[15] Edward Broadhead, *Ceran St. Vrain: 1802-1870* (Pueblo: Pueblo County Historical Society, 1987), 12. Ceran St. Vrain's brother Marcellin was primarily in charge of this fort, while his brother made business connections in New Mexico.
[16] Charles C Post, "The Arkansas Route," *Overland Routes to Gold Fields* (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Co, 1942), 30.
[17] W. J. Ghent, *The Road to Oregon* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1929), 100.

Despite Euro-American belief that they owned the land, they would still have to tend to the land and deal with boosters, who stretched the truth to popularize Colorado. The main booster who helped build Denver was William Byers, who marketed through the Rocky Mountain News to stabilize Colorado's economy and fill its borders. Pamphlets by Byers made claims that ranged from Colorado being rich in silver and gold, to promoting the aridity of the landscape for shepherds because due to "the dryness of the soil and the climate, they escape many of the diseases to which flocks are subject in the eastern and middle states."[18] Byers's success at attracting land speculators turned the idea of gold and land in Colorado into an industry. This induced President Lincoln to bring John Evans, a doctor and land speculator who is the namesake for Evanston, Illinois, to become the Governor of Colorado Territory in 1862. Evans was an astute businessman who had made his money as a land and railroad speculator in Illinois. One of his main goals was to connect Denver to the Union Pacific and become a main artery of this railroad. To do so, he sold off large tracts of land that they appropriated from Native Americans to sell to land speculators to fund his project. Byers joined in on the scheme and wrote promotional material that boosted the idea of coming to Colorado for any reason. One of his suggestions was to emigrate form a colony:

> If there are a number of people in your section of country who contemplate moving west, it will be found advantageous to all to organize a colony. Brief public notice will bring them together in a meeting when temporary officers may be chosen and a committee appointed to prepare and submit a plan of organization.[19]

[18] William Byers, *3,000,000 Acres of Choice Farming, Grazing, Coal, and Timber Land in Colorado along the Kansas Pacific and Denver Pacific Railways* (Denver: Rocky Mountain News Steam Printing House, 1873), 18.
[19] Byers., 22.

This promotion of settling the land proved important for the development of Greeley, Colorado.

Euro-American interest in rivers and the land led to conflicts with Cheyennes and Arapahoes as the new settlers entered their land. One of the important routes that Native Americans and animals followed was along the South Platte River. Traders adopted this well-worn trail in the 1700s, and gold seekers and stagecoaches used it in the 1860s. Whites used this path because it was a readily available source of water that led into Denver.[20] White adoption of this path intersected Cheyenne settlements and made raiding and trading with whites possible. Raiding and trading ultimately exacerbated relations with early Coloradans, and in response to the violence along this crowded route, John Evans, Governor of Colorado Territory, and Colonel John Chivington increased military incursions. This was followed by the proliferation of forts and an increased military presence at potential "flashpoints" of violence between Cheyennes and Euro-American emigrants.[21] The forts were generally located on rivers such as Ft. McPherson and Ft. Kearney on the Platte River, Ft. Dodge and Ft. Larned on the Arkansas River.[22] Most significantly the federal government bought and retrofitted William Bent's Old Fort to become the military base Fort Lyon, where John Chivington launched his attack on the Cheyennes and Arapahoes at Sand Creek. These rivers and Ft. Lyon were important for Cheyennes and Arapahoe societies because they had been their homes and highways on their migration west. Bent's Old Fort's adobe walls had been a gathering place for trading

[20] Jeff Broome, *Cheyenne War: Indian Raids on the Roads to Denver 1864-1869* (Sheridan: Aberdeen Books, 2013) 31.
[21] Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1999), 275.
[22] Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1999), 275.

more than just material goods; they shared stories, myths, and the calumet pipe. Bent's Fort had been a structure of peace and understanding for people of all races and origins, but by 1864 had become a place of death. By 1867, the struggle between white settlers and the Natives ended in words through the Medicine Lodge Treaty, which banished the local natives into Indian Territory in Oklahoma, but would not be over through the continued resistance of the Northern Cheyennes' exodus into Montana and how they thrived on their new reservations.[23]

Denver's power struggle and demand for water illustrated German philosopher Karl Wittfogel's "hydraulic society" thesis. In short, "as societies try to remake nature, they remake themselves, without ever really escaping natural influences."[24] As chapter three illustrates, this remaking was a process the Cheyennes already knew and accepted for themselves. Water became the mode of production for Colorado industry and the survival of the state in the arid West. In comparison, it was a resource that Cheyennes and Arapahoes adapted to by utilizing the waterways for villages and untended horticulture, following herds of bison that went to these rivers to sate their thirst, and to trade with whites for food and tools. For Cheyennes, rivers were a constant during their exile west that changed in significance as they adapted to their new home in arid landscapes and represented their spatial history between the Arkansas and North Platte Rivers. The military tried to strip them of their rivers and their subsistence strategies in favor of 160 acres per person and agriculture. The settler colonialism of this period began innocuously with trade at Bent's Fort that led to economic prosperity for both the trappers and

[23] I will cover in greater detail the impact of the Medicine Lodge Treaty in my third chapter and the efforts of this treaty to assimilate Native Americans to Euro-American subsistence strategies.
[24] Karl Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 12.

Cheyennes, and ended with violence. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the phases of settler colonialism within a developing urban area.

The fourth chapter discusses the growth of Union Colony in Greeley, Colorado and examines the expectations of life in the West with the cultural transformation. The primary change is the growth of gender equality in Greeley, Colorado. The colony began when Horace Greeley, who was one of the most prominent promoters of the West and proclaimer of "Go West, young man, go West and grow up with the country," used the land sales in Colorado as an opportunity to form his own egalitarian, utopian colony, based on the philosophy of Charles Fourier. Greeley's mission was to help tame the goldseekers and citizens who lived on the fringes of society by influencing their morals and ideology. Though this type of moral endeavor had been popular in antebellum America, communitarianism and socialism increased after the war in the West to infuse it with these popular, moral institutions and to struggle with Native Americans for control of the United States. But New England elite could improve upon the past colonial experiments to create the perfect society, thus the reformist and conservative could both support these efforts.[25] Within New England's exceptionalist framework that Cronon illustrated in *Changes in the Land*, Greeley believed that he could transform the West into a new New England through colonialism. As a prominent New Englander, Greeley wished to revitalize the colonial experiments of the 1840s in the West, which was the only place where he could purchase enough land to try. He hired Nathan Meeker, one of his followers from a previous utopian colony experiment in New England, to be the

[25] Arthur Bestor, *Backwoods Utopias: The Sectarian Origins and the Owenite Phase of Communitarian Socialism in America: 1663-1829* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970), 240.

leader of this colony and purchased 12,000 acres of land for $31,058.58.[26] This experiment was unique because it was a combination of communitarian living with capitalism since the $155 subscription fee went to providing necessities such as irrigation ditches, sawmills, dairies, and traveling teachers, but part of the subscription fee allowed individuals to buy more land to build their shops on.[27]

Greeley and Meeker assembled well-to-do families from across New England and parts of the Midwest to go to Colorado and create a new life for themselves that had two rules: no alcohol – except in medicinal cases – and no fences. These Fourierian ideals were the basis of a fascinating experiment, but Greeley gave an interesting answer when a reporter of the *Greeley Tribune* asked, "What is Union Colony?" He replied, "Union Colony is an association or company of persons who work for a living, with intent to select and secure advantageous location whereon to establish their future homes."[28] Greeley does not mention Fourier, or the noble socialist experiment that people would be a part of; instead, Greeley promoted Union Colony as a venture for people to purchase desirable land. He did state later in the article that Union Colony wanted "sober, industrious, intelligent, moral men. It does not covet blacklegs, grogsellers, nor any class which aims to get rich by speculating on the needs or pandering to the vices of others."[29] Unfortunately for Greeley, some of the colony's early failures resulted from both his inability to separate the industrious and moral from the speculative grogsellers and the lies that Meeker promoted. Despite the mistruths Meeker promoted, the town of Greeley

[26] Denver Pacific Railroad & Telegraph Co. Volume 7 Land Sales, April 1870, *Denver Pacific Papers*, Nebraska Historical Society, call number C978.008W525, reel 548.
[27] Worster, 84.
[28] Horace Greeley, "Union Colony," *The Greeley Tribune* November 23, 1870.
[29] Greeley "Union Colony."

emerged and depended upon the Poudre. Their society developed around the intimacy that they shared with the river and produced new gender norms by giving women rights.

Finally, the conclusion sums up how Cheyennes and Union Colonists memorialized Colorado. For the Union Colonists, comparable to the Cheyenne oral histories that explain their relationships to the Cache la Poudre region, so too did newcomers weave master narratives to convince themselves of their superiority and to justify the extermination and removal of Native peoples from Western lands. The Cheyennes elaborated this point through their continued reliance on the rivers and their resistance to Euro-American pressures to conform to their ways.

These chapters illustrate that rivers draw humans to them, for various reasons, but for a similar goal: to find stability. However, to achieve this stability, people have transformed their beliefs and social norms to survive. They Cheyennes became intimately tied to the rivers, the Colorado militia fought to control the rivers in the Piedmont, and women gained prominence in Union Colony from the freedom that the Poudre gave them since the Greeley men needed to work on the rivers. This period of human history led to many significant changes, comparable to the history of the seismic shifts leading to the Rocky Mountains.

Environmental historians tell their own stories about the importance of water on the Plains that began ages before the story of Wihio and the River were told. East of the Continental Divide the Plains reach their terminus. Life west of the 98th meridian depend upon two water sources to maintain in the "Great American Desert:" the runoff of the Rocky Mountains or the North and South Plattes. These sources of water have sustained animals, humans, and plants for centuries and made life in Colorado a tenable venture.

Bison, a particularly vital piece to this ecosystem, adapted to the semiarid conditions through the protein shortgrasses that grew west of the 98th meridian "because their digestive system requires one part protein for every six parts carbohydrates."[30] These animals helped support the lifestyles of seminomadic Cheyennes, who originated from Algonquian-speaking tribes around the Mississippi River in Minnesota. Along with the domestication of horses, Cheyenne culture depended on living near rivers. These people moved west along the rivers and settled at the Continental Divide, where the Plains end but the rivers continue.

The Cache la Poudre that attracted the Cheyennes and spiders originates in the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains and descends from its 10,700 feet origin at the Poudre Lake to break off into two forks besides the Poudre Proper: the North Fork and the South Fork.[31] The Poudre's geological history is intertwined with that of the Rocky Mountains, as illustrated by the locations of minerals and deposits. The Rockies rose about 70 million years ago during the "Laramide Revolution" in which basement rocks and sediments emerged.[32] Plate tectonics slowly elevated the basement rocks of the Rocky Mountains, which gathered water from the clouds to create the early streams that became the ancestors of the Poudre. These streams eroded the sediment down to reveal reddish sandstones, shale, and limestone. As the mountains rose, both the Front Range, which are the plains and eastern mountains of the Rockies, and stream gradients, increased which created valleys and basins for water to collect in and rivers to form. In contrast, the precipitation on the mountains wore down the sediments on the Front Range,

[30] Andrew Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 22.
[31] Howard Evans, *Cache la Poudre: the Natural History of a Rocky Mountain River* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 1991), 6.
[32] Evans, 8.

collecting in gravel deposits, which is now a mosaic to all of the sediment that has been worn away for ages.[33]

Finally, volcanoes and glaciers sculpted the geological formations that feed water into the Poudre. Volcanic activity created columns of volcanic tuff that kept water in the Poudre Lake and flowed down the Rockies into the Poudre. The volcanoes' various minerals colored the canyon walls of the river, with white quartz, salmon feldspar, and translucent black mica, illustrating the Poudre's rich geological history. Glaciation was the final geologic process that created valleys for the river to flow through. Glaciers formed and receded for thousands of years in the Cache, and the largest one emerged in present day Rocky Mountain National Park in the valley of the Colorado River. This glacier was "twenty miles long" that flattened La Poudre Pass, and as the water races down the rapids this flattened pass soothes the river into rolling streams to water the lands below. The great Rocky Mountains stand in contrast to these streams as a living temple with water trickling down from its behemoth formations to give life to the land miles below.[34]

The Poudre that intimately formed the Rockies would also transform the hopes of the first Native American pioneers and then Euro-American homesteaders as they each found potential for growth in Colorado.[35] This river watered an ecosystem that a multitude of organisms could thrive on. According to Frances Kaye, "Prairie is a diverse ecosystem, offering hundreds of plants and animals for food, medicine, inspiration, and co-management. But hunger, want, and warfare came too, as part of the cycle – and hard

[33] Evans, 10.
[34] Evans., 11.
[35] I am borrowing the term "pioneer" from Colin Calloway to describe the Native American emigrants into Colorado. The Cheyennes proved to be as resilient as the Paleo-Indians that Calloway described in *One Vast Winter Count* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003,) 33.

work and danger."[36] The river sustained these organisms on the central plains of Colorado and life thousands of miles away from its Rockies' origins. The water trickles down from the Front Range and is fed by many tributaries (such as Willow, Creek, Chapin Creek, Cascade Creek, and many others.)"[37] The Poudre enters the South Platte, which joins the Missouri, and flows into the Mississippi River until it enters into the Gulf of Mexico. Water from the Rocky Mountains journeys thousands of miles and has been a pathway for fish, water for the plants that line its banks, and for thousands of years offered refreshment to humans such as Clovis peoples 30,000 years ago and more recently, Cheyennes and whites. Life as a result has been supported by the waters of the Rocky Mountains for millennia and has stood as a beacon of life, calling humans home through the streams, rivers, and other tendrils of water that have reached out to them. The way people have responded to this call has led to the transformation of the landscape and of the humans.

[36] Frances W. Kaye, *Good Lands: A Meditation and History on the Great Plains* (Edmonton: AU Press, 2011), 3.
[37] Evans., 39.

Chapter 2: Desert People in the Water

In the beginning, according to Cheyenne myth, the world was covered with water and only the waterfowl and a Cheyenne man floated on its surface. The man asked the birds to find some earth for him, which was at the bottom of the lake. The larger swans and geese tried to swim down, but could not reach. It was not until a small duck tried, that he retrieved some mud and brought it the man. The man sprinkled this mud and it grew to become all the land on the earth.[1] This early origin story illustrates the spiritual connectedness of Cheyennes to waterways and remains a lasting vestige of their origin in the Great Lakes region.[2] According to the anthropologist Sebastian Felix Braun, "Myths, in fact, establish communities, uphold them, give them rules to live by, and explain realities."[3] This myth, in which a water-covered world gave rise to land, offers an important insight into how Cheyennes viewed the world. Called the Cheyennes by others, the band referred to themselves as the "Desert People," who emerged from the water that gave them the subsistence and means that they depended on for survival.[4]

Water is an obvious necessity for maintaining life. In an interview with anthropologist George Bird Grinnell in the early twentieth century, a Cheyenne man said,

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[1] George Bird Grinnell, "Some Early Cheyenne Tales," *The Journal of American Folklore* 20, No.78 (1907), 170. A quick note on Grinnell - his stories are generally accurate except in a few details, according to John Stands in Timber. In one legend, Sweet Medicine was exiled after murdering an old man, who was trying to steal his buffalo hide, but Grinnell's version says that Sweet Medicine did not kill the old man. This is an example of how legends varied according to each tribe. (John Stands in Timber, 2013, 21).

[2] Wihio is the Cheyenne word for both white man and spider. In my introduction I told the Cheyenne myth of Wihio overfishing a river.

[3] Sebastian Felix Braun, "Introduction: An Ethnohistory of Listening," *Transforming Ethnohistories* ed. Sebastian Felix Braun (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 17. Cheyenne myths are as important to my work as clarifying and disproving the myths of Curtis's "the vanishing race" and Turner's "Frontier Thesis." These two illustrate a different perspective and offer insights into the beliefs of a different culture.

[4] John Stands in Timber, *Cheyenne Memories* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 6. "Desert People" also means people who live in the prairie, so their name reflects how they shifted from a water saturated ecosystem to one of scarcity. "Desert People" is an ancient name that Cheyennes still use in tribal ceremonies.

> In ancient times people used to camp on the tops of high bluffs. In such places we still find circles of stones where the lodges have been, with fire places and bed places marked out. Sometimes we can even see the place for the door. People seem to have been foolish then, camping as they did so far from water.[5]

Though it appears vitally important to address this, a focus on water has escaped the attention of many historians.[6] Rivers led Cheyennes to their new homes in the Great Plains after other tribes forced them from Mille de Lacs in the Great Lakes region. They transformed their identities to their new ecosystems, and water, once abundant and now scarce, remained the constant feature of their survival.

At the end of the seventeenth century, Cheyennes began their exodus out of the Mille De Lacs region to the Continental Divide as a result of British and French imperial westward expansion and Ojibwa migration into the Great Lakes area. The Voyageurs' main goal was to acquire furs and other material goods. As a result of this pressure to move from their original home in modern day Minnesota, Cheyennes relied on waterways to guide them to a new ecosystem. Fur trappers' reports, diaries, and Cheyenne oral histories have helped map out the migration that Cheyennes took from the Mississippi River up to the Sheyenne River near Lisbon, North Dakota, then to the Missouri before ending in western Great Plains in the western Dakotas and eastern Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado.[7] Here, they proved to Euroamericans that life could be sustained in what Stephen Long had dismissed as the "Great American Desert."

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[5] George Bird Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians: Their History and Ways of Life Vol. 1* (Lincoln: Bison Books, 1972), 51.

[6] Rivers are an element of Colorado's history that I am addressing to complement the current environmental scholarship. Elliott West's *Contested Plains* and Thomas Andrews' *Killing for Coal* are both invaluable resources in developing my arguments on Colorado's history, and I feel that my work fits into the middle of them. Colorado produced vital minerals of coal and gold into the nation's boilers and economy. They fed the nation, but the rivers that settlers depended upon fed these industries.

[7] E. Adamson Hoebel, *The Cheyennes: Indians of the Great Plains* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 1978), 6.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Americans and immigrants attempted to find ways around the Rocky Mountains and what homesteaders would later term the "Rainbelt."[8] During the early westward migrations of whites, as thousands departed from St. Louis and made their way through the Mormon colonies in Salt Lake City, to the gold fields in California, or the fertile Willamette Valley, few stopped to settle near the Continental Divide. The land had so few Euroamerican settlers that George Bent, son of trader William Bent and Owl Woman and an important Cheyenne historian, stated that on his father's wagon train journeys in the 1840s from Bent's Fort in central Colorado to the Missouri River in Kansas City, "It was 530 miles to the Missouri River, and in all that great stretch of plains between the fort and the river, there was not a settlement, not a single house, not even a trading post or a government fort."[9] Westward migrants could not see the arid landscape as anything more than a wasteland. Explorers such as Zebulon Pike, Stephen H. Long, and John C. Fremont reported on the barrenness of the western country and helped spread the myth of a desolate landscape. According to Pike,

> These vast plains of the western hemisphere may become in time as celebrated as the sandy deserts of Africa; for I saw in my route, in various places, tracts of many leagues where the wind had thrown up the sand in all the fanciful form of the ocean's rolling wave, and on which not a speck of vegetable matter existed.[10]

Consequently, the Union Pacific was partially established to connect the agricultural East with the growing cities along the Pacific Coast and completely bypass the Rainbelt.[11]

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[8] "Rainbelt" is a term used to define the arid portions of between the Continental Divide and the 98th Meridian. (David Wishart, *Last Days of the Rainbelt*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013).
[9] George E. Hyde, *A Life of George Bent: Written From His Letters* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 70.
[10] Zebulon Pike, Elliott Coues, *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike: To Headwaters of the Mississippi River, Through Louisiana Territory, and in New Spain, During the Years 1805-6-7.* Vol. 2, (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1895), 525.
[11] Homer Hoyt, *Expert Testimony Before the Indian Claims Commission: Appraisal of Cheyenne and Arapaho Lands in Colorado, Kansas, Wyoming and Nebraska, 1865*. (United States: Indian Claims Commission, 1973), 26.

This lack of interest in the early- and mid-nineteenth century ultimately created space for Cheyennes to reconstruct their identity to fit the ecologies that the Sioux and Ojibwa had pushed them toward in the eighteenth century. The relationships and kinships that they developed with different tribes, such as the Gros Ventres and Lakota, ebbed and flowed depending on trade, disease, and American interventions. By the nineteenth century, the Cheyennes inculcated cultural hybridization to ensure survival both by creating allies with Native neighbors and diversifying what it meant to be Cheyenne. According to Moore, "Hybrid bands created by large-scale intermarriages, such as the Masikotas, Wotapios, and Dog Soldiers, played an important role in Cheyenne history."[12] Overall, the inclusivity of Cheyenne culture illustrates their history of adaptation to the landscapes that both human and natural factors forced upon them.

The Cheyennes' journey west and subsequent cultural evolution depended on their ability to constantly shift over time, while simultaneously maintaining their relationship to rivers. Their society was mutable, and went through three different phases of adaptation. They originated as fishers and gatherers, became untended horticulturalists and seminomadic hunters, and finally made themselves known as nomadic hunters and traders. Elliott West has termed their ability to change a "mastery of adaptive fluency."[13] By transforming their culture, Cheyennes became some of the first settlers to create a niche in Colorado, and rivers remained a constant necessity in all phases of their self-transformation. Rivers offered many different resources to Cheyennes. It was their road to new ecosystems, gave them fish, and supplied the beaver that provided a pathway to

[12] John H. Moore, *The Cheyennes* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 9.
[13] Elliott West, "Called Out People: The Cheyennes and the Central Plains" *Montana: The Western Magazine* 48, no. 2 (1998), 2.

European trade. In short, a primary reason for Cheyennes' success and failures in the West was the tribe's changing relationship to waterways.

In early Cheyenne history, a time they call "Before Cheyennes had bows and arrows," the tribe used lakes to meet their subsistence needs through fishing and gathering.[14] Cheyennes distinguished themselves as a branch of Algonquian speakers sometime before the mid-seventeenth century in an area northeast of the Great Lakes.[15] As is typical of tribes whose histories include multiple migrations and transformations, Cheyennes maintain more than one origin story for themselves. In addition to the one that opened this chapter, another Cheyenne legend states that their people emerged from the ground, and journeyed until they arrived at the Mississippi River where trees grew. According to George Bird Grinnell's interview with a Cheyenne,

> Here a star fell from the sky and set fire to the timber, and in this way the Cheyennes learned of fire, to cook by and for warmth. They continued to travel and came to the shores of a great water where were found may things showing that other people had camped there. Hammers and axes of stone were found hidden in the soil, and wooden tent-pins were standing in the ground, even to the water's edge. The Cheyennes remained here a long time.[16]

This legend offers many insights into the formation of Cheyenne practices and cultural beliefs. It indicates that early on the tribe remained nomadic, moving from one rough terrain to another until they could establish a village near rivers and timber. Rivers and timber were the basis for settlement because they could fish using seines and willow shoots, by disturbing the water around the fish and scooping them into their seines.

Louis Hennepin, a French Franciscan traveling with the fur trader Robert de la Salle, recorded aspects of Cheyenne and Sioux culture and the means of subsistence they

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[14] Hyde, 4.
[15] Refer to Richard White's *The Middle Ground* (Cambridge University Press, 1990) for further details on white and Native trade as they sought to create the middle ground for understanding.
[16] Grinnell, Vol. 1, 1972, 5.

created near rivers and lakes. In the spring they hunted bears and other animals such as deer, elk, and turkeys. In the late summer, early fall, Cheyennes and Sioux gathered wild rice in shallow waters, and women covered their harvests with basswood to protect against waterfowl. Throughout the year they also relied on fishing for bass, eels, pike, salmon, sturgeon and whitefish.[17] These early accounts document the sustaining relationships that Cheyennes had to rivers and the life they provided.

By the mid- to late-seventeenth century, Cheyennes increased their sustainability by embracing horticulture as their primary subsistence strategy. Practicing horticulture enabled them to settle for longer periods and erect permanent dwellings in Mille de Lacs. One of the primary staples that emerged for Native groups was the cultivation of corn and beans, which were important sources of vitamins, protein, and amino acids.[18] Through their system of riverine irrigation, Cheyennes effectively grew these highly valued foods. These practices both ensured them a stable supply of food and attracted the help of trade allies, who could also support them in the event of any conflicts.

As the Cheyennes grew crops and harvested the abundant plant and animal resources available throughout west central Minnesota's Mille de Lacs region, the tribe engaged both the Sioux and French traders in an intersection of cultural trading partners. Throughout these trade networks they gained the name Cheyenne, which means either "red talker," or according to some French trappers the Sioux also called them *Shah-ee-aie-Ioo-haha*, which translates to, "You have painted yourselves red" for the red paint

[17] Louis Hennepin, *Description of Louisiana*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1938), 140, 170-2

[18] Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 55.

that Cheyennes applied to their thighs.[19] In this period the Cheyennes appeared as a tribe on French cartographer Jean Baptiste Louis Franquelin's map in 1688 that placed the Cheyenne Indians with the Sioux near the Minnesota River Valley.[20]

Unfortunately for the Cheyennes, by the mid-seventeenth century, Ojibwa, Cree, and Assiniboine forces displaced them from their Minnesota home. Cree and Assiniboine entered the Mille de Lacs region shortly after the British set up forts in the Great Lakes for the Hudson's Bay Company and began trading weapons and goods for furs.[21] The English trappers encouraged their allied Native partners—Ojibwas, Crees, and Assiniboine—to attack and drive out any other tribe that partnered with their French rivals. The Sioux and Cheyennes traded with the French, and thus Minnesota became a battleground in the larger North American colonial context. These developments both displaced and reorganized Native peoples, and formed advantageous alliances for trading partnerships and goods.[22] The Sioux and Cheyennes were in a poorly defensible area, and the English Native allies quickly forced them out of their territory. Shortly afterwards, the Cheyennes' Sioux allies turned against them and became their rivals.

In response to their ouster from Minnesota, Cheyennes dispersed West and adopted new subsistence patterns. According to Grinnell, "In the late eighteenth and in the early part of the nineteenth century, camps of the Cheyennes were found over a wide territory extending from west of the Black Hills to the Missouri River on the east, and from the Little Missouri River toward its mouth, south at least as far as the Arkansas

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[19] Geo. Wilson, "Cheyenne," *Science* 10, 249 (1887), 239.
[20] Jean Baptiste Louis Franquelin's 1688 map, from Library of Congress G3300 1688 .F7. Note that Franquelin refers to Cheyennes "Issatis" which is close to their nation's name Tsistsistas.
[21] James Charles Mooney, *The Cheyenne Indians* (Millwood: Kraus Reprint Co., 1976), 364.
[22] Richter's *Facing East From Indian Country* explores this concept and the way that Native American nations resisted and adapted to European powers through intermarriage, religious conversion, and westward movement.

River, and perhaps still farther."[23] Cheyennes thus adopted several different means to survive. Some established impressive villages, like the one on the Sheyenne River, part of the Red River drainage basin in eastern North Dakota, that archaeologists have named the Biesterfeldt Site, while others became nomadic hunters. They also partnered with Plains nations such as the Arapahos and Suhtai on their journey west. The Arapahos are a nation synonymous with Cheyennes and are still a part of the Southern Cheyenne cultural group. The Suhtai are not a commonly known tribal group, but were significant for the contributions that they gave the Cheyennes. The Suhtai were a band that Cheyennes, according to tradition, met "near the pipestone quarries in a land of lakes."[24] They relied upon bison hunting and spoke an Algonquian dialect that the Cheyennes understood. According to George Bent, "When the Cheyennes and Suhtais first met, both tribes lined up and prepared to fight, both sides shouting, but before the battle began the Cheyennes discovered that the Suhtais spoke a dialect of the Cheyenne tongue. The chiefs then met in the middle of the field and made peace."[25]

These three tribes acknowledged each other's social beliefs and practices primarily by participating in shared medicine rituals, such as the Cheyennes' Sacred Arrows and the Suhtais' Buffalo Hat ceremonies.[26] The *Mahuts* (Sacred Arrows) and *Is'siwun* (the Sacred Buffalo Hat), represent Cheyennes' connection to Maheo, the All Father. Sweet Medicine received the Sacred Arrows from the All Father and the Sacred

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[23] Grinnell, vol. 1, 1972, 14.
[24] Peter J. Powell, *Sweet Medicine: The Continuing Role of the Sacred Arrows, the Sun Dance, and the Sacred Buffalo Hat in Northern Cheyenne History, vol. 1* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), 24. This place most likely near modern day Pipestone, Minnesota because of the quarry and its place on the Cheyennes' path to the Red River.
[25] Hyde, 13.
[26] Mooney, 370.

Powers at *Nowah'wus* (The Hill Where the People Are Taught.)[27] Sweet Medicine went to meet with the gods and they gave him four Sacred Arrows, two were meant for hunting and two for war.[28] Afterward, the gods told Sweet Medicine to modify the Cheyenne government by installing forty-four chiefs and creating four military societies – the Swift Foxes, Elks, Red Shields, and Bowstrings. Additionally, he organized the chiefs by giving them his medicine, and part of the ritual involved smoking a pipe that made them "strong in their hearts, and also became healthy and a good chief."[29] The Cheyennes elevated the Sacred Arrows for its cultural and social significance in their history, and the Suhtai similarly held the Buffalo Hat in high regard because of its promise for success in bison hunts and the proliferation of future Suhtai generations.

These objects were spiritual signs that represented both men and women. Mahuts represented masculinity because of the arrow's ability to control both men and animals. The Is'siwun's power "renewed buffalo herds of the past, as well as the cattle herds of the present."[30] The Buffalo Hat was particularly important for its role in bringing the Cheyenne and the Suhtai nations together. To reinforce their bonds, they performed the Sun Dance. The Sun Dance annually consummates the relationship of Suhtai and Cheyennes by joining men and women together to produce the next generation of Cheyennes.[31] This early form of adopting spiritual objects indicated Cheyennes willingness to extend their relationship to other nations in deeply spiritual ways.

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[27] Powell, 19. This place is also known as Bear Butte to the Sioux and is an important pilgrimage site for many Plains nations.
[28] Stands in Timber, 36.
[29] Ibid., 99. The Cheyennes have many spiritual objects and places such as the Buffalo Hat, Sacred Arrows, and Bear Butte is one of the most sacred places for them.
[30] Powell., xxiii.
[31] Powell notes that Is'siwun comes from an old Algonquian word meaning "Something Coming Out of the Ground," and it is a woman's name. (Powell, xxiii).

Cheyennes shifted from full time horticulture and trade to untended horticulture and hunting at their village on the Red River from early to mid-eighteenth century.[32] Evidence shows that after living near the Mississippi River, they followed the Minnesota River north to a site on the Red River in eastern North Dakota. This would have been around a 500-mile journey that utilized rivers both as roads and as a means of sustenance. According to George Bent, Cheyennes do not remember why they left Minnesota. He mentions that after Cheyenne displacement they ended up on a fork of the Red River that the Sioux knew as *Shaien wojubi* (Place where the Cheyennes plant).[33] George Bent stated, "After many years in the village by the lake, the Cheyennes moved again, but the old people do not know why or when this movement was made."[34] Cheyennes perhaps erased their forced removal from their cultural history due to its incredible disruption to their way of life. They also could have repressed this memory as a nation because this was a period of reorganization as the Cheyennes incorporated Suhtais and Arapahoes shortly after their removal.

The Cheyennes established a village along the Red River in the eighteenth century that had strategic defensive positions and the ability to support horticulture. Their new village was located on the crest of a hill against the Sheyenne River, which irrigated their fields and defended their settlement from rival Native groups. This village sustained an impressive population. Archaeological evidence has uncovered the remains for lodges that were twenty feet in diameter and housed about fifteen people per lodge. The number of lodges suggests that this village supported around 900 Cheyennes.[35] Residents tended

[32] The Red River is commonly known today as the James River in eastern North Dakota.
[33] Hyde, 8. This river is also the Sheyenne River and the site that Bent mentions is the Biesterfeldt site.
[34] Ibid., 8. Chippewas and Assiniboine forced the Cheyennes from Mille de Lacs around 1700.
[35] Moore, 1996, 26.

somewhere between 2,200 and 3,500 gardens, with each garden composed of about five acres. Cheyennes developed dependable irrigation so they could practice untended horticulture with plants like corn, beans, and squash that were compatible with each other. As a result, they were able to hunt for bison and supplement their diet with the produce that they grew. Horticulturalist John Pohly writes, "Each plant produces one or two ears, meaning that the amount of water to produce that ear is two to four gallons weekly. To produce an acre of corn, takes 350,000 gallons of water over a 100-day growing season."[36] The Cheyennes benefited from the somewhat reliable rainfall east of the one-hundredth meridian as well. In short, the intricacy of the irrigation infrastructure that was required to water the tribe's fields is remarkable, considering that they constructed their village less than a century after the Ojibwas forced them out of the Minnesota River Valley.

The Cheyennes' new village on the Sheyenne River illustrates the influence of several different tribes that helped them quickly sophisticate their technology. For example, the Cheyennes exchanged corn and vegetables for meat and hides from Arikaras and Hidatsas.[37] This phase in their history illustrates a Native American trade network that was nearly independent of European influence.

As the Cheyennes expanded their cultivation, hunting, and trading practices, they also diversified their alliances and methods. The early eighteenth century saw the increased integration of horses in Cheyenne society. Cheyennes' collective memory does not acknowledge having horses during their time on the Sheyenne River and posits that

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[36] John Pohly, "How Much Water" in *Gardening: CSU Extension Campus Website*, revised January 5, 2010, http://www.colostate.edu/Dept/CoopExt/4DMG/Xeris/howmuch.htm. For 11,000 acres the water required for corn over a growing season is almost four billion gallons of water.
[37] E. Adamson Hoebel, *The Cheyennes: Indians of the Great Plains* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1978), 7.

they only had dogs to carry their goods for them, although archaeological evidence suggests that horses have been with Cheyennes since they were in North Dakota.[38] This distinction between oral and recorded history suggests that like the stratified society of the Comanches, only some of the rich had horses, but most common people used dogs on their westward move.[39] This is further evidenced by the fact that at this village site the central earthen lodges were larger, indicating that there was a hierarchy in housing.[40]

Cheyennes remembered the horse later in their cultural memory by attributing it to their Plains Indian allies such as Arapahos, Arikaras, and Crows.[41] According to George Bent, "These Cheyenne traders operated in this way: they secured horses, some by trade from the Kiowas and other tribes, some by stealing from the Pawnees and other hostile tribes. Took part of these animals to the Mandan or Ree villages on the Missouri and exchanged them for guns, ammunition, British goods, corn, dried pumpkins, and tobacco."[42] Cheyennes and their allies supported and exchanged cultural practices, and relied on each other when Sioux or other rivals attacked them. Overall, they depended on horses for their survival, so Cheyennes attributed receiving horses from their allies to strengthen their ties with them. Unfortunately for the Cheyennes, their successful settlement on the Sheyenne River would only be a brief respite due to increasing conflicts between the Ojibwas and Sioux.

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[38] Moore, 1996, 26.
[39] Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 25. The conversation on Cheyenne class offers an interesting comparative insight into political formations at their village on the Sheyenne River with Melanesians as seen in Marshall Sahlin's classic article "Poor Man, Rich Man, Big-Man, Chief." In it he states, "Smaller units are integrated into larger through a system of intergroup ranking" similar to the Cheyenne tribes that emerged in the early nineteenth century in the western Great Plains. (*Comparative Studies in Society and History* 5, 1963, 287.)
[40] Moore, 1996, 26.
[41] Hyde, 17.
[42] Ibid., 32.

The Cheyennes maintained a position of neutrality at their North Dakota village, which resulted in more trading partners, but also put them in a vulnerable position during times of violence. For example, Cheyennes continued to plant corn and beans, a vestige of their Minnesota subsistence that helped supplement the diets of other plains Indians. One of the Chippewa said, "They had Corn and other Vegetables, which we had not, and of which we were fond, and traded with them."[43] This passage emphasizes Cheyenne neutrality because they eagerly traded with the peoples who forced them out of their original home. This neutrality, however, struck other tribes as compliance with their rivals. The Saulteaux Ojibwas continued their conflict with the Sioux over dominance of the Plains, and Cheyennes were caught in the middle. In 1800, French fur trader Alexander Henry described this event; "once a very large party (of Ojibwas) having been very unsuccessful in finding out their enemies (the Sioux), on their return wreaked their vengeance on those people (Cheyennes), destroyed their village, and murdered the major part of them."[44] This attack killed several Cheyennes and was the impetus for them to continue wandering westward.

Following the Ojibwa's attack, the Cheyennes moved to the Missouri River and by 1770 established a village near modern day Fort Yates, North Dakota, where they replicated their Sheyenne River village subsistence strategies.[45] According to George Bent, "Cheyennes established an earth-lodge village near Standing Rock on the Missouri. Again they planted fields, hunted bison. People made seines again and caught large

[43] The Chippewas were a tribe of Ojibwa nation. Raymond Wood, *Biesterfeldt: A Post-Contact Coalescent Site on the Northern Plains* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1971), 56.
[44] Alexander Henry, *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest: The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and of David Thompson, 1799-1814; Exploration and Adventure Among the Indians on the Red, Saskatchewan, Missouri, and Columbia Rivers* (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1897), 90.
[45] Today, the Cheyenne village on the Missouri is part of the Standing Rock Sioux Band's reservation.

numbers of fish."[46] Bent illustrates that tribal roles changed and became more specialized to adapt to their new environment. Cheyennes along the Cheyenne River and up to the Black Hills lived in lodges and also created new traditions that reinforced gender differences.[47] One of these that Grinnell outlines is fetching morning water and bathing rituals. In the morning before the sun had risen,

> Women were hurrying down to the stream, or coming from it, carrying to the lodges water for the morning use; for the Cheyennes did not use water that had stood all night – they called it dead, and said that they wished to drink living water. As the light grew stronger, men and boys – some of them little fellows just able to walk – came from the lodges and hurried down to the stream, to plunge into it; for the early morning bath was a regular practice.[48]

Water represented an important element to Cheyenne morning rituals. They depended on establishing villages close enough to its banks so they could cleanse themselves and have fresh water for the morning. In short, women gathered water in the morning for their households' use throughout the day, and men bathed themselves in water as a way to begin the day. Women did not participate in the morning bathing ritual perhaps for pragmatic reasons since they were responsible for tending to their homes, while the men went on the hunt.[49] Despite not being a part of this practice, women held equally important roles for the Cheyennes and their communities usually turned to women for the final word on an issue.

By the nineteenth century, the Cheyennes had reached their settlement in modern day western South Dakota, Wyoming, and Colorado. The Lewis and Clark and Alexander Henry's expeditions both encountered Cheyennes in these regions. Lewis and Clark

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[46] Hyde, 16.
[47] The Sheyenne and Cheyenne Rivers are two different bodies of water. The Cheyennes not only derive their origins from water, but their presence on these rivers led to their names.
[48] Grinnell vol. 1, 1972, 63.
[49] Ibid., 128.

referred to the Cheyenne Indians on October 1, 1804 as they tried to learn some information about the Cheyenne River. A trader named Mr. Vallie told them that the, "Chyenne (sic) Nation has about 300 Lodges hunt Buffalow, Steel horses from the Spanish Settlements."[50] Raiding became an essential aspect of Cheyenne identity because of the increasing European presence in the West. According to Patricia Albers, "Groups like the Cheyenne and Crow functioned entirely as middlemen, intercepting the flow of horses against guns. It was through these middlemen connections that the entire plains became integrated into a regional trade system."[51] Consequently, the Cheyennes could support larger bands, and when they joined together for summer ceremonies, like the Sun Dance, these numbers compare to those of larger Southern Plains nations Comanches. For example, to maintain order, the *Paraibos* (Comanche chiefs) would assemble all the Comanches in Comanchería to maintain social cohesion, and at these grand councils, Comanches numbered in the hundreds.[52] In 1806, when Lewis and Clark stayed with the Cheyennes they counted 120 lodges. Regardless of the size of their settlements, they had solidified their identity as raiders and traders along the Cheyenne and Platte Rivers by the early nineteenth century.

Through trading with their allies and raiding Europeans, the Cheyennes filled the middleman role for many of their allies. For example, the Hidatsa and Cheyennes developed a trade network that Alexander Henry recorded when he first met with the Cheyennes in 1806.[53] The Cheyenne camp appeared to be comprised of 120 tents and

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[50] William Clark's Journal, October 1, 1804, *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* website by University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
[51] Patricia Albers, "Symbiosis, Merger, and War: Contrasting Forms of Intertribal Relationship Among Historic Plains Indians" in *The Political Economy of North American Indians* ed. John H. Moore, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 103.
[52] Hämäläinen, 276.
[53] Henry and Lewis and Clark mistakenly thought that the Hidatsas were Gros Ventres.

beside them were smaller tents that women used for cooking and dressing hides. Between these tents, the Cheyennes hanged meat to dry.[54] Additionally, since Cheyennes had allies that would protect their village, the Cheyennes could focus on specializing gendered labor that allowed men to focus on the hunt while women to worked on crafting the resources that men gathered. According to historian Joseph Jablow, "With the elimination of the direct participation of women in [bison hunts], they were enabled to devote more time to fulfilling the requirements of the fur trade by preparing skins for market."[55] The Cheyennes developed a village that manufactured bison hides that the Hidatsas wanted, thus creating a mutually beneficial relationship. The Hidatsas gave them corn and vegetables and the Cheyennes gave them hides, meat, and horses. This type trade network was at the basis of Cheyennes forging kinship networks with other groups.

Just as the Desert People shared sacred objects and rituals with neighbors, the Cheyennes also practiced exogamous marriages to gain allies and create specialized bands. At the Standing Rock village on the Missouri River in the late-eighteenth century, they developed relationships with the Rees Arikaras. The Cheyennes utilized their relationships with the Rees and other nations to create vehicles of social and material exchange. These relationships led to additional divisions of ritual groups or sodalities. These groups and fictive adoptions among other nations "were modeled after a sibling or parent-child relationship. Although having no biological basis, ties of sodality were often as compelling in their reciprocal obligations as those based on kinship."[56] The Cheyenne

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[54] Henry, 382.
[55] Joseph Jablow, *The Cheyenne in Plains Indian Trade Relations 1795-1840* (Lincoln: Bison Books, 1994), 20. This idea of female manufacturing is similar to Comanche practices of accumulating female slaves. According to Hämäläinen, "The escalation of polygyny went hand in hand with the escalation of slavery. The two institutions had a common genesis – both developed to offset chronic labor shortages arising from market production…" (Hämäläinen, 2008), 250.
[56] Albers, 98.

practice matrilineal descent, and the man who married into a Cheyenne woman's tribe needed to follow her community's beliefs. Furthermore, Cheyennes encouraged exogamous marriages because a couple could not be related at all.[57] In short, as Cheyennes moved from the tall grasslands of Minnesota and into the mixed and short grasslands of the Great Plains, they split like the branches of a river into different bands and merged their cultural and genetic streams with new nations.

One way the Cheyennes endorsed exogamous marriage was through the development of ceremonies that fostered relationships with other nations. Cheyenne intermarriage rituals helped them come together with their allies for the good of the collective, for trading, and for codifying hunting rituals. The Antelope Pit Ceremony helped meet such cultural needs for the Cheyennes as it worked to maintain relationships with allies and to provide protein for their people. George Bent described the Antelope Pit Ceremony thusly:

> When all the men, women, and children, had hidden themselves behind the lines of brush and the antelope priest was seated on the ground back of the pit with his medicine sticks in his hands, a few good runners were sent out on foot to drive the antelope toward the trap. When the antelope came running toward the pit, the priest kept singing to them and beckoning them forward with his medicine sticks until the whole herd rushed toward him and jumped into the pit. … When the trap was full of antelope, the priest gave the signal and the Indians entered and began killing the animals. … The antelope were knocked on the head with clubs, and lariats were used to drag some of the animals out of the bottom of the pit.[58]

This ceremony allowed neighbors and families to participate in a ritual hunt that provided physical and spiritual sustenance for the survival of their relatives. The Antelope

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[57] Grinnell, vol. 1, 1972, 93.

[58] Hyde, 18. John Stands in Timber, a Northern Cheyenne, recalls his relatives telling him about this event that happened near Belle Fourche, South Dakota. His relatives were about seventy years old when they told him about this event in 1920. According to them, the pit was used before time. John Stands in Timber and Margot Liberty, *Cheyenne Memories* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 86.

Ceremony opened channels of conversation for the Cheyennes to interact with and to aid other Native nations, while still maintaining a distinct identity.

By following the rivers, Cheyennes entered drastically different ecosystems from the tall grass prairie that they originated from. As a result, their adoption of the horse proved incredibly important because both horses and bison adapted perfectly to the mixed and short grass prairies. The change in grass length between the eastern prairie and the western Great Plains significantly affects to the nutritional quality of the grasses. The bison that became central to Cheyenne subsistence need "one-seventh protein to six-sevenths fuel nutrients (carbohydrates)," and bison "can make use of only that amount of carbohydrates which is balanced by the proper amount of protein."[59] Additionally, the grasses that both bison and horses relied on grew at meager times in the winter. The northwestern plains supported dry, cool-season grasses a month earlier on the plains to support bison in lean times in the winter. According to Theodore Binnema, "Growth was sparse, but the tender new shoots were highly nutritious."[60] Furthermore, the Chinook winds, warm winter winds, periodically melted the snow from the Northwestern Plains, which "helped cure the grasses, ensuring that the nutritive value of plants in this region remained higher than it was in moister regions of the plains."[61] In short, the climate and growing season of grasses were greatly suited to meet bison nutritional needs.

Similarly, mature horses need sustenance comparable to bison. Ones that "do moderate to heavy work need about 2 to 2.15 pounds of protein a day."[62] In contrast,

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[59] Charles W. Johnson, "Protein as a Factor in the Distribution of the American Bison," *Geographical Review*, 41 (April 1951), 330.
[60] Theodore Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 24.
[61] Binnema, 31.
[62] "Equine Protein Requirements" in *Kentucky Equine Research* last modified in 2010, http://www.ker.com/library/health/2010/07/equine-protein-requirements.html.

scientists have discovered that a horse's muscle glycogen concentration increased by fifty percent, "by feeding a low-carbohydrate during exhaustive, high-intensity exercise."[63] The grasses west of the one-hundredth meridian fulfill these requirements, "even when they mature and dry out in the fall, they contain 15 to 20 percent protein and 75 to 80 percent carbohydrates."[64] In this case, having less rainwater was beneficial for Plains Indians that relied on hunting bison and maintaining their horses because it provided the proper grass for feeding, but they still needed water from rivers because horses still need to "intake 5 to 10 gallons of fresh water per day."[65] Thus, the nutritious grasses of the Great Plains allowed both horses and bison to thrive, and opened up a voluminous resource that made the arid West a livable ecosystem for the Cheyennes as they continued to follow the rivers to.

Cheyennes viewed horses as an invaluable ally because they were the best means to hunt bison. Guns in the early nineteenth century were less important on hunts and were "actually prohibited by the Assiniboin."[66] Horses, on the other hand, were essential to the survival of nomadic tribes due to their swiftness on hunts. Captain Randolph B. Marcy recalled on one of his hunts that a Comanche chief declined Marcy's offers to purchase his horse. The chief explained, "If he were to sell him it would prove a calamity to this whole band, as it often required all the speed of this animal to insure success in the buffalo chase; that his loss would be felt by all his people."[67] Additionally, women were

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[63] *Nutrient Requirements of Horses: Vol. 6 of Nutrient Requirements of Domestic Animals* (National Academies, 1989), 3. Muscle glycogen is how the body stores carbohydrates for energy.
[64] Isenberg, 22.
[65] Helene McKernan, "How Much Drinking Water Does Your Horse Need?" *Penn State Extension*, July 7, 2012.
[66] Jablow, 18.
[67] Randolph B.Marcy, *Adventure on Red River*, ed. Grant Foreman (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1937), 158.

as adept as men on the horse, and many could lasso an antelope with ease.[68] Most members of Plains tribes needed to have adequate skills on horses because of their reliance on the animal for transportation and survival.

With equestrian mobility a staple of their subsistence strategies, and Sweet Medicine's teachings a part of their cultural identity, Cheyennes had the ability to branch out into unique bands and social organizations that saturated the Great Plains like the Platte River watershed. Moore states, "At the time of Lewis and Clark, the main body of Cheyennes had apparently not yet divided into discrete bands with separate histories. It was only the accumulation of horses, the opportunity for trade, and the adoption of a new ecology that finally forced this multiple fission."[69] They originated with three distinct bands: Hevataniu, Suhtai, and Omissis. From these emerged seven others.[70] They all came together once a year for a traditional celebration, and they arranged themselves in a circle based on their kingship affiliation.[71]

Each subgroup adopted different forms of medicine and distinctive rituals. The Cheyennes differentiated themselves through the Tribal Circle. For example, the *I vists tsi nih pah*, "closed aorta," are a Northern Cheyenne band that believes its name comes from a time when they did not have a pipe so they made one out of a dried bison's aorta. For the *I vists tsi nih pah*, collecting beaver skins or killing beavers is taboo because they believe that one of their followers killed a medicine beaver in the past.[72] This belief dictated their decision to uphold cultural beliefs in the sacred status of beaver rather than

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[68] Ibid., 156.
[69] John H. Moore, *The Cheyenne Nation: A Social and Demographic History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 234.
[70] The seven other tribes are *O iv I mah nah* (scabby band), *Issio me tan iu* (Hill people), *Wu tap piu* (eaters or Omissis), *Hof no wa* (Poor people), *Ohk to unna* (protruding lower jaw), *Mah sih ko ta* (lying with knees drawn up).
[71] Grinnell, 1972, vol. 1, 89.
[72] Ibid., 94.

profit financially from the beaver fur trade that their tribal allies embraced. As the Cheyennes permeated the Great Plains in diverse streams of inter-related bands, each group adopted independent belief systems and practices to reflect their unique relationships to the ecological and spiritual niches they occupied.

Once the Cheyennes reached Colorado, they shifted their identity once more by transforming themselves into permanent traders with whites. They no longer needed a chain of trade with other Native Americans because whites built forts in their territory, and Cheyennes could directly acquire the European goods from the source. According to Albers, "Conditions for merger were most apparent among Plains Indians in the years after 1820, when Euro-American traders began bypassing native middlemen and locating themselves at the various crossroads of the plains. Now that traders appropriated their goods directly from native producers, most bands had direct access to one or more trading posts."[73] For the Cheyennes, St. Vrain and Bent's forts became important centers of trade.

Beginning in 1830, the primary center of trade in Colorado was Bent's Fort. William Bent, George Bent's father, was born in St. Louis in 1806 to a judge. According to historian Anne Hyde, "St. Louis functioned as an exchange point in the fur trade. Trappers and traders brought furs to the city on small boats." [74] Bent matured around the fur trading industry, and consequently, grew up in a diverse setting of Spanish, French, and Native peoples. In 1823, the American Fur Company employed William and his

[73] Albers, 114.
[74] Anne Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800-1860*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 8.

brother Charles, and in 1826 Ceran St. Vrain joined the Bents along with their brothers George and Robert to become trappers along the Arkansas River.[75]

The United States federal government acted to protect the interests of companies like the American Fur Company in Cheyenne trade and tried to create a monopoly on their goods. On July 6, 1825 the Cheyennes agreed to their first treaty with the United States. The initial language was vague as the United States agreed "to receive the Cheyenne tribe of Indians into their friendship."[76] More importantly though, the treaty constituted a trade agreement with the Cheyenne nation that "all trade and intercourse with the Cheyenne tribe shall be transacted at such place or places as may be designated and pointed out by the President of the United States."[77] No one but licensed United States citizens could trade with the Cheyennes as a result of this treaty, and Bent established his fort on the edge of Mexican and United States territory on the Arkansas River. The treaty discouraged the Cheyennes from trading their furs with Mexicans so the Americans could profit more from the furs they captured. This agreement helped pave the way for the Bents and St. Vrain to establish trade with the Cheyennes.

As the Bent Fur Trading Co. prepared to establish their forts, Cheyennes began to move toward the Platte and Arkansas Rivers. The Blackfeet enticed the Cheyennes with stories of "great herds of buffalo between the Arkansas and the Platte and that plenty of wild horses were also to be found in that region."[78] This wealth of livestock served as an important inducement to enter Colorado, and there they met the Bent, St. Vrain Co.

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[75] George Bird Grinnell, *Bent's Old Fort and Its Builders* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1923), 2.
[76] Treaty with the Cheyenne Tribe, 1825, *Treaties, Land Cessions, and Other U. S. Congressional Documents Relative to American Indian Tribes* ed. George E. Fay (Greeley: University of Northern Colorado, 1971), 1.
[77] Ibid., 1.
[78] Ibid., 33.

William Bent and Ceran St. Vrain each built a fort in modern day Colorado. Bent's Fort was strategically located on the border between United States and Mexican territory on the Arkansas River. Ceran St. Vrain built his fort on the Cache la Poudre, near modern day Greeley, Colorado. Both trappers attracted Cheyenne Indians to their forts and relied on them for producing profitable furs. William Bent married a Cheyenne woman to ensure his financial and social connections to his new allies. This development was advantageous for Cheyennes because they were able to get European goods independent of their neighbors.[79] The Cheyennes no longer needed to rely upon the trade networks and rivalries that existed among Plains nations. They had access to bison and beavers, two types of furs that remained in vogue for whites during the first half of the nineteenth century, which resulted in an enterprising relationship with their new American neighbors. Americans' interest in Colorado grew in the mid-nineteenth century because the Cheyennes demonstrated that the arid landscape could be made profitable.

Though most historians have concentrated their study of the nineteenth-century Cheyennes on developments arising from their important ties to Bent's Fort, the remaining chapters of this thesis turn north to the Cheyenne settlement of the Cache la Poudre region at St. Vrain's Fort and tensions growing with the increased American settlement of the Greeley region. By 1859, white settlers looking for economic salvation from the Panic of 1857 came seeking gold, many left empty handed, yet speculators saw the potential in the landscape, and more importantly, in the rivers for irrigation. The "Great American Desert" soon became an oasis for the destitute and desperate. Despite all of their transformations, the Cheyennes and Arapahos remained a river-dependent people, and they paved the way for whites to enter into Colorado by demonstrating how

[79] Albers, 114.

to survive through using the rivers to support their needs. These increasing tensions between Euroamericans and Native Americans led to violence over who would have control of water. My next chapter will explore these conflicts and how they primarily stemmed from a war over water. The U.S. Army forced the Cheyennes into the Medicine Creek Treaty, and sold land to fund the Denver Pacific Railroad. One of the major buyers was Horace Greeley, who bought 12,000 acres to begin a utopian colony on the Cache la Poudre River. By the mid-nineteenth century, Wihio arrived at the river.

Chapter 3: Visions of Colorado

Two young men covered with sacred paint entered the water and met an elderly woman submerged under the water who had earthen vessels with her. This woman said to the two men, "Come in, my grandchildren. Why have you not come sooner? Why have you gone hungry so long?"[1] She gave to these men an abundance of corn and meat, and told them that at night herds of bison would emerge from the stream and their people would know no more hunger. It happened just as she said, and the people could not sleep from the thunderous herd that emerged from the water. From this same creek, Standing on the Ground entered and returned with the Buffalo Cap, which marked a new beginning for the Cheyenne peoples. This cap would drive away disease, and ensured that the Cheyennes and Suhtai would have bison for as long as they protected it. From this legend, the Cheyennes indicated the great importance of the springs and rivers that marked where they lived. Water provided them with the bison that they survived on and nourished the fields of corn that they traded with others. By the 1820s, with the introduction of whites, this place that the Cheyennes had occupied became for whites a launching point into the West for new markets. The importance of rivers was a geographical landscape that became the borders and source of life or cultural transmission for many settlers.

The Cheyennes and Suhtais have two primary culture heroes that they tell stories of: the Suhtai have Standing on the Ground, and Sweet Medicine is the Messianic figure for the Cheyennes.[2] In one of the Standing on the Ground legends, the Cheyennes and Suhtai peoples wandered the eastern plains, knowing nothing of bison at this point. They

[1] Ibid., 259.
[2] George Bird Grinnell, *By Cheyenne Campfires* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), 257.

hunted skunks and birds instead of larger game. While on a medicine hunt, some men stayed to rest near a spring that emerged from a rock, which they called "Old Woman's Water." In this and many other stories, water was central to leading the Cheyennes to Colorado, and once they arrived it became central to survival. They occupied the land from what became Bent's Fort in south-central Colorado to Montana. They established an empire comparable to the infamous *Comancheria* in the central plains that rested on the borderlands of both Mexico and the United States.[3] The Euro-American settlers that gained a foothold in Colorado were William Bent, his brothers, and Ceran St. Vrain. They established the Bent, St. Vrain Company and established forts on both the Arkansas River and the Cache la Poudre River near Greeley, Colorado.[4] They positioned their forts in such a way as to reach out to every possible Native band to trade with them. Overall, their venture was solely economic, and even through the fictive relationships that they created, the Bents and St. Vrain tried to trade with Cheyenne rivals like the Comanche and Apache.

This initial phase of settler colonialism during early Euro-American settlement in Colorado established newcomers as transnationals, but failed to replicate the same level of racial hierarchy typical of settler colonialism. According to Dolores Janiewski, "The United States and its ancestral colonies developed forms of racial domination and distinct

[3] This is in reference to the Comanches land in Texas and the influence that they commanded.
[4] Similar development of cities and borderlands occurred in Victoria, British Columbia and Melbourne, Australia. Penelope Edmonds explores this transition and how Aborigines and First Nations Peoples tested the boundaries until they were disenfranchised. She writes, "First Nations workers were crucial to the fisheries and forestry industries, and these workers came to form the backbone of the colonial economy by the late nineteenth century" (28). Similarly, the Cheyennes helped develop the importance of the fur trading industry for Bent which contributed to the economic attraction of the landscape. Penelope Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).

racialized communities through the interaction of its settlers with indigenous peoples."[5] Rather, the trappers and early boosters in Colorado depended on the Cheyennes for economic survival in that region. As a result, the status of whites gives them a transnational status in Colorado being on the fringes of eastern society.[6] William Bent sealed his alliance with them through his marriage to Owl Woman, the daughter of White Thunder, a Cheyenne medicine man. According to George Bent, William Bent's son, White Thunder was well respected because he carried the Sacred Medicine Arrows.[7] William Bent thus became a member of the Cheyennes through this marriage. Despite this difference, the economic benefits that the Bents and St. Vrain enjoyed contributed to the myth that Colorado was a source of material wealth in both furs and gold with the onset of the 1859 Pike's Peak Gold Rush.

With this gold rush, a wave of fortune seekers flooded toward Colorado and launched the second phase of settler colonialism, with racist tensions emerging as boosters tried to settle the land with as many Euro-American settlers as possible. The boosters promoted railroads to make the movement of goods from the periphery to the core more efficient. Abraham Lincoln forced the Cheyennes to consolidate their land, and they were left with only land on the Arkansas River near Bent's Fort where they traded, losing land near the Cache la Poudre for colonists like Nathan Meeker and Horace Greeley to colonize for moral and financial purposes. Lincoln enacted the Homestead Act in 1862 and tried to fit all Cheyennes under an umbrella of imperialism.

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[5] Dolores Janiewski, "Gendering, Racializing and Classifying: Settler Colonization in the United States, 1590-1900" In *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class*, edited by Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis (London: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1995), 132.
[6] Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 10. Anne Hyde in *Empires, Nations, and Families* goes into a similar conversation about the way that Euro-Americans entered into Native spaces and created transnational zones.
[7] George Hyde, *The Life of George Bent* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 68.

By the time the Cheyennes signed the Medicine Lodge Treaty in 1867, the United States implemented the final phase of settler colonialism with an ultimatum to assimilate. The Cheyennes agreed in principle to take up their 160 acres and farm on land without water. The Indian Affairs agents, by moving them to Oklahoma, sent them to a desert without rivers to guide them. They would be without the resource that they had depended on for centuries. Despite these depredations, the Cheyennes remained an "inassimilable culture inside the dominant culture that could neither eliminate nor expel them despite the efforts of the settlers, the government, and the military."[8] Overall, Euro-Americans and Cheyennes had different subsistence strategies that led to conflict with the rapid increase of Euro-Americans into the region.

By the 1850s, Euro-Americans and Native Americans had contrasting visions of the spatial narratives that they lived in and the importance of rivers that they depended upon. Spatial Narrative is a concept that Timothy Mahoney developed from the philosophy of Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau. Mahoney explains spatial narratives as "almost anything one does in a city 'takes place' and becomes a 'spatial practices' that shapes, and is shaped by, the social, economic, political, or cultural space of the city."[9] Applying this theory to the early forts that whites inhabited contrasts this prototype of colonization with the later versions that Nathan Meeker promoted. Cheyennes came to that place to trade and their spatial narratives extended from the North Platte to the Arkansas River to collect the bison hides and meat that they could trade there. The Cheyennes negotiated in the 1851 treaty of Fort Laramie the right to hold

[8] Janiewski, 134. I will describe these revolts in greater detail in the third chapter when I specifically examine Meeker's Union Colony.
[9] Timothy Mahoney, "What Is a Spatial Narrative?" in *Gilded Age Plains City: The Great Sheedy Murder Trial and the Booster Ethos of Lincoln, Nebraska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2008). http://gildedage.unl.edu/narrative/topics.php?q=theory#n01

onto boundaries that extended "up the north fork of the Platte River to its source," along the Rocky Mountains "to the head-waters of the Arkansas River."[10] In contrast, the Bents and St. Vrain viewed the Arkansas as the highway along the Santa Fe Trail to Mexican markets where they could trade their wares and the South Platte as a highway to eastern trade in Kansas City. In short, despite inhabiting the same areas, the Cheyennes and whites had different spatial narratives surrounding the forts and plains that they lived in.

For William Bent, his brothers, and Ceran St. Vrain, Colorado was a gateway to the Mexican markets. Regardless of their economic ventures, they worked in conjunction with the Cheyennes and Arapahoes in Colorado. Ceran St. Vrain in contrast did not form fictive kinship bonds with Cheyennes and instead focused more on economic interests. His initial excursion to the West took place in 1824 when he ended up in Taos in 1825, became acclimated and learned Spanish, and returned in 1826 for more supplies.[11] Overall, it made the most sense for this company to remain on the outskirts of Mexico, due to the violence from Apache and Comanche raids. For example, in 1826 Apaches massacred Michel Robidoux's party and two years later similarly decimated Ewing Young's party."[12] Both the Bents and Ceran St. Vrain were familiar with the West, acclimated to the cultures – Bent with the Cheyennes and St. Vrain with the Mexicans – and prepared to do business.

The Bent, St. Vrain Company built Bent's Fort on the Arkansas River that represented the transnational status of this trading company and their interest in Mexico. Additionally, at both Bent's Fort and St. Vrain's Fort, they built cisterns within the walls

[10] D. D. Mitchell and Thomas Fitzpatrick, *Treaty of Fort Laramie with Sioux, Etc., 1851*. September 17, 1851, Fort Laramie,
[11] David Lavender, *Bent's Fort* (New York: Doubleday Publishing Company, 1954) 65.
[12] David Lavender., 125.

of their forts so that they would not become dependent on obtaining water from outside their walls. Charles Bent wanted the fort to be made out of adobe instead of wood because he felt that "a fort built of adobes would be practically fireproof, and could under no circumstances be burned by Indians from outside."[13] Charles Bent then went down to Santa Fe and hired Mexican workers to make and lay the adobe bricks for the first Bent's Fort. This dedication to investing in making adobe bricks illustrates their willingness to adapt to New Mexican customs and take advantage of the resources available to them. The Bents and St. Vrain were dependent on both Mexicans and Cheyennes for the survival of their business. Bent's second fort on the Arkansas River was once again well build and the United States military refashioned it into Fort Wise in 1862 in their fights against the Cheyennes and Arapahoes. The St. Vrain Fort was built shortly afterwards in the mid-1830s on the South Platte near the Cache la Poudre for the Sioux and Northern Cheyennes and Arapahoes, who could not travel to Bent's Fort.[14] St. Vrain's Fort lasted a similarly longer time, and the Miles, Stocking and Co. retrofitted it into a "miners' ranche" on the Cache la Poudre River.[15] Both of these locations on rivers helped bring the markets to the Cheyennes and helped trade with the Cheyennes. According to the 1838 report to the War Department,

> In consequence of jealousy and difficulties inseparable from Indians when different tribes occupy the same hunting grounds, the Cheyennes abandoned the country of the Sioux some years ago, and are now generally found on the Arkansas River and carry on trade with some of our citizens at a post on that river.[16]

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[13] George Bird Grinnell, *Bent's Old Fort and its Builders* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1923), 5.
[14] Grinell, *Bent's Old Fort* 15.
[15] Luke Tierney, *The Luke Tierney Guidebook*, (144
[16] United States Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the years 1826-1839*, 499.

These men made sure that they carefully placed their forts to best exchange with the different bands of Sioux, Cheyennes, and Arapahoes without infringing on their hunting grounds.

The Bent and St. Vrain Company was successful because the total value of furs shipped from "Santa Fe to Missouri that year was estimated at $50,000, which was nearly half the amount of the return estimated as coming directly from the Rocky Mountains to Missouri."[17] According to "The Consumer Price Index" after inflation the Bent's were making approximately $1,188,285.52 in profits each year.[18] Consequently, the promising outlook for Bent's Fort looked west along the Arkansas River to important trading posts like Taos. Their profits were much less than those of John Jacob Astor's American Fur Trading Company, which accumulated over $82,000 in its least profitable year of the 1830s in 1835, and in 1837, the Pratte, Chouteau and Company in St. Louis made $141,342.66.[19] Regardless the Bent and St. Vrain Company had a profitable operation there.

The Bent and St. Vrain Company maintained peaceful relations with the Cheyennes and Arapahoes because these economic ventures did not colonize the large swathes of Cheyenne land. Their principle focus rested on extracting profit of fur from the land that would be taken either east to Missouri or Taos in Mexico. Furthermore, the Cheyennes and Arapahoes had control of the bison that whites traded with them. Each segment of this trade had a purpose that did not challenge the other. At this point from the

[17] Harold H. Dunham, "Ceran St. Vrain," *Mountain Men and Fur Traders of the Far West* (Lincoln: Bison Books, 1972), 154.
[18] "The Inflation Calculator," last modified 2013, http://www.westegg.com/inflation/.
[19] Michael Casler, "Economics and Transshipments of the American Fur Company in the West," *The Missouri River History Conference: Steamers, Sandbars, and Snags* (Ponca: Ponca State Park, 2008), 10, 14.

1830s until the mid-1850s, the rivers that Euro-Americans and Cheyennes followed or maintained as their boundaries were not overwhelmed by the amount of people that relied on them at this point. This period was not fully settler colonialism, because it lacked the qualities of "destroying to replace."[20] Rather, it was a phase of transnational whites meeting in Colorado for extractive purposes, yet the Bent, St. Vrain Co. was did not view Colorado as its terminus.[21]

The Bent, St. Vrain Company could move around Colorado without threatening Cheyennes' control of hunting grounds and rivers. Bison were plentiful at times and in certain places and they could trade with the Bents for corn and other Euro-American goods. Even by 1864, Richard W. Clarke, a pioneer whose account was recorded by the Works Progress Administration, stated that during one of his times with the Cheyennes, "We had started seeing buffalo beyond Council Grove and they became thicker and thicker. We went on for a hundred miles and saw what seemed like millions and millions of buffalo."[22] Despite Clarke's memory of the situation, years of drought and exponential increase of settlers kept the herds of bison in a constant state of flux until raiding and trading became the only means of survival for the Cheyennes in the late 1850s. At this time, though the Cheyennes maintained peace with fur trappers because they did try to accumulate more land. Rather the Cheyennes controlled the flow of the resources into

[20] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native," *Journal of Genocide Research* (2006), 8, 388.
[21] In fact, the Bent, St. Vrain Co. sent delegates around 1840 to the Canada River to establish trading post and develop relationships with the Apache, Comanche and Kiowa Indians. These nations refused to assist the Bent, St. Vrain Co., and after a few skirmishes the company abandoned its fort. According to T. Lindsay Baker and Billy R. Harrison, "From then on, its bare adobe walls stood peacefully, their solitude broken only by occasional passing Indians or white men." (*Adobe Walls,* College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1986), 14.
[22] W. H. Banfill, "Billings Pioneer Gives His Version of Sand Creek Fight When Many Indians were Slaughtered," *Billings Gazette*, October 19, 1930. Other years though, as in 1861 the buffalo hunt produced little due to the drought that year.

Bent's Fort, and William Bent had maintained kinship with Owl Woman's band that emphasized the good faith trade relationships between whites and Cheyennes. Both sides thrived in this arrangement and according to George Bent, "before the big cholera of 1849 there were 500 lodges of S Cheyennes they counted the lodges on the Ark below Bent's Fort; the N Cheyennes had about 250 to 300 lodges then."[23] Head of Indian Affairs D. D. Mitchell corroborated Bent's estimations and states, "[In the Lewis and Clark account in 1803] 'They still number three hundred men.' Since this was written they appear to have thriven greatly. In 1847, the agent for the upper Missouri reported them to have 530 lodges, containing five thousand three hundred souls."[24] They had no competition for their land or the bison at this time except from other Native American nations.

In the 1830s, the Cheyennes and Arapahoes engaged in conflicts with the equestrian bands south of them. The Kiowas, Apaches, and Comanches were at peace with one another and moved together in their war with the Cheyennes and Arapahoes, whose riverine borders at this time, according to George Bent were on the Arkansas and Canadian Rivers.[25] The Cheyennes exacerbated the struggles with these nations by stealing their horses, and eventually the Apaches, Comanches, and Kiowas killed 42 Cheyennes on the Washita River, and Cheyennes retaliated by killing "50 or 60" members of the other tribes including women.[26] The Cheyennes had a more traumatic experience with the Pawnees on the North Platte in 1833. At this skirmish, the Pawnees seized the Cheyenne medicine-arrows from the medicine man Bull. He had the four

[23] [23] George Bent to George Hyde, Colony, Oklahoma, January 23rd, 1905.
[24] D. D. Mitchell, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Years 1846-1850*, 75. This evidence shows the importance of hybridization that I mentioned in my previous chapter.
[25] George Bent to George Hyde, Colony, Oklahoma, January 23rd, 1905.
[26] George bent to George Hyde Jan 23rd.

arrows tied to his lance, saw a wounded Pawnee and attempted to "count-coup on him, but the Pawnee wrenched the lance away from Bull," and some other Pawnees took the lance with the arrows away.[27] The Cheyennes sued for peace, and got two of their four arrows back, but had to replace the other two through a ceremony to reach their sacred number of four. In these instances, the Cheyennes fought with these other bands because they were close to the Cheyennes and Arapahoes on their rivers and wanted to control the same resources for their respective areas. Despite these conflicts that had major social impacts on the Cheyennes, they were able to survive in relative peace with other bands that had traditionally been their enemies. For example, the military band the Dog Soldiers were part Sioux and lived with Cheyennes on the Republican River.[28] The Office of Indian Affairs also confirmed this in 1849 when giving a brief history of Cheyennes. These examples demonstrate the examples of violence that provided the United States government to develop treaties with these Indian Nations because the Oregon Trail and other paths went through these areas of hostility. In short, this was an effort to protect settlers travelling west from potential attacks against them.

The Fort Laramie Treaty ratified in 1851 established barriers and boundaries for Cheyennes at a time when a majority of whites did not want to live in the "Great American Desert," but they and the US government needed to protect their interests in the Santa Fe and Oregon Trails. The American government was also interested in

[27] George Bent to George Hyde, Colony, Oklahoma, February 6th, 1905. To 'count-coup' means according to the *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*, "credit of victory was taken for three brave deeds, killing an enemy, scalping an enemy or being the first to strike an enemy either alive or dead. Each one of these entitled a man to rank as a warrior and to recount the exploit in public; but to be first to touch the enemy was regarded as the greatest deed of all, as it implied close approach during battle" (ed. Frederick Webb Hodge, 1910), 354.

[28] George Bent to George Hyde, Colony, Oklahoma, January 23rd, 1905. More importantly for the Native American tribes, they started identifying themselves with these different rivers that the United States assigned to them as seen through George Bent's correspondence with George Hyde.

maintaining its treaty with Native Americans following the Indian Removal Act of 1830. The treaty states, "the United States will forever secure and guaranty to them, and their heirs or successors, the country so exchanged with them," and the government will always provide them with provisions.[29] As a result, settlers had two incentives for not settling the Midwest: explorers had named it the "Great American Desert" and it was illegal to settle the Midwest. In spite of America setting this land aside for Native Americans, the United States and fur trappers alike needed the Santa Fe Trail that connected New Mexico with the eastern America. Additionally, the United States needed to establish borders for all of the Native American nations to ensure that the Oregon Trail and all of its routes were protected. For example, based on the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, the Oregon Trail went through Sioux and Cheyenne territory as settlers moved West. This treaty further delineates the land where nations resided, and for the Cheyennes it did not disrupt their hunting grounds or access to Bent, St. Vrain Co. forts. Consequently, it was important for the federal government to protect settlers' idea of Manifest Destiny. One of the problems that the Cheyennes would not have imagined with the trails through their land was the sheer numbers of people who crossed their land. According to Elliott West, "Between 1841 and 1859, more than 300,000 persons and at least 1.5 million oxen, cattle, horses, and sheep moved up the Platte road."[30] This number, in conjunction with the Cheyennes' own resources and horses numbering over 20,000, placed a great strain on the land and depleted the grasslands that they depended upon along the Arkansas River.

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[29] *An Act to provide for an exchange of lands with the Indians residing in any of the states or territories, and for their removal west of the river Mississippi*, May 28, 1830, 21st Congress, 1st Session, Chapter 148, 411.

[30] Elliott West, *The Contested Plains* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1999), 88.

Despite whites designating the Plains Indians' homelands as "The Great American Desert," agent Thomas Fitzpatrick's report on the land that the Cheyennes settled on the South Platte dispelled the myth of the "Great American Desert." According to Fitzpatrick, the Cheyennes lived in an oasis. It had "sheltered valleys, a mild temperature, large growths of timber, and an immense water power."[31] The myths of gold also arose in this report and the prescient agent at this agency on the Upper Platte stated, "Indications of mineral wealth likewise abound in the sands of the water courses, and the gorges and canons from which they issue; and should public attention ever be strongly directed to this section of our territory, and free access be obtained, the inducements which it holds out will soon people it with thousands of citizens, and cause it to rise up speedily into a flourishing mountain State."[32] The myth of the "Great American Desert" was changing and conflicts already started to emerge with the Cheyenne's Sioux allies. During the distribution of annuities an American soldier killed a Sioux man, which led to retaliations from the Sioux.[33] With the increased presence of the United States military through the Fort Laramie Treaty and the foreshadowing comments caused concern for the future of the Plains nations. By "extinguishing the Indian title," Fitzpatrick stated "It renders necessary that very system of removals, and of congregating tribes in small parcels of territory, that has eventuated so injuriously upon those who have been already subjected to it. It is the legalized murder of a whole nation. It is expensive, vicious, inhumane, and producing these consequences, and these alone. The custom, being judged

[31] United States Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual report of the commissioner of Indian affairs, for the year 1853*, 126.
[32] Thomas Fitzpatrick United States Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual report of the commissioner of Indian affairs, for the year 1853*, 127.
[33] Thomas Fitzpatrick United States Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual report of the commissioner of Indian affairs, for the year 1853*, 127.

by its fruits, should not be persisted in."[34] Fitzpatrick's plea indicates the progressive attitudes of people toward Native Americans before the major conflicts broke out surrounding the Pike's Peak gold rush.

In 1858, some of the first reports emerged of gold in Colorado Territory near St. Vrain's Fort on the South Platte. According to Oliver P. Goodwin, a miner and veteran of the Mexican American War, "on the headwaters of the South fork of Platte, near Long's Peak, gold mines have been discovered and 500 persons are now working them. These mines are now yielding on an average $12 a day to each hand. They are 175 miles from Fort Laramie, and 25 miles from St. Vrains Fort, in Nebraska."[35] The importance of the trails through the Plains Indians territory and the resulting travelogues created more interest among the Euro-American settlers to gamble on the landscape. The success of these travelers along the Platte River proved to easterners that it was possible to make it to Colorado by simply following the rivers that fed right into Denver. For many, these routes showed the beauty and fecundity of the landscape and inspired them with other careers in the West than gold panning. For example while on the Arkansas River Route, Charles C. Post noted that ranchers' cattle were thriving in this landscape and wrote, "our oxen came very near busting from eating the grass which is from eight to ten inches high."[36] Post, an attorney by trade, litigated mining deals, but the sight of successful ranches and thriving stock must have inspired future Coloradans to adopt ranching. Likewise, the soil proved to be fertile for growing not only grass, but also grains and with

[34] Thomas Fitzpatrick United States Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual report of the commissioner of Indian affairs, for the year 1853*, 130.
[35] Oliver P. Goodwin, "Latest From Utah and the Plains," *Kansas Weekly Herald* (Leavenworth), July 24, 1858. A brief note on location, at this time what is now known as Colorado was a part of both Kansas Territory and Nebraska. Additionally some of the writers may have been confused on which territory they were in since there were not clear delineations.
[36] Charles C. Post, "Arkansas River Route," *Overland Routes* ed. LeRoy R. Hafen (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1942), 29, 30.

the huge swell of people traveling into Colorado and the real wealth could be made from feeding the miners.[37] By following the rivers into these regions, the miners and other travelers saw the prospect of farming because seeing only the most fertile land and ground water while following these rivers. Furthermore, the amount of grass that grew along these rivers helped propel and fuel both the miners' livestock to head west and the furs and minerals that went in the opposite direction to Kansas City or St. Louis. The Arkansas River was famous for its connection into New Mexico and trappers and traders like the Bents made it popular when they used it to get to Kansas City and St. Louis. These positive accounts of the western landscape contributed to the myth of the fertile frontier, and gave prospective agriculturalists the dream of a new spatial narrative of leaving the city to begin a new life as a farmer.

Along the path, many of the travellers met miners who were heading back east to their homes. Many of the reports were mixed on the yield of the mines. According to Post, "We met a large train going back having heard bad news from Pike's Peak, but it is a fact that not one we have yet met have struck a shovel in the ground for gold, but have taken others' say so for it."[38] In contrast to this news, another prospecter E. H. N. Patterson wrote about his confidence in finding gold if he "will put in hard licks for it," and would not believe reports about the paucity of gold until he "tested the matter by actual experiment."[39] Despite the mixed reports, people were drawn into this gamble, and city boosters relied on these men and families.

Many boosters took this opportunity to attract visitors by different routes via the Platte, Republican, Smoky Hill, and Arkansas Rivers to come to get to the gold fields of

[37] Elliott West, 131.
[38] Post, 36.
[39] E. H. N. Patterson, "The Platte River Route," 95

Pikes Peak. William Byers, founder of the *Rocky Mountain News*, was an early booster of developing Denver and thus promoted newspapers and maps to encourage settlers to at least stay a while in Denver before heading for the gold fields or health retreats in Colorado Springs. One of his earlier goals was to draw up maps that described routes to the gold mines that helped promote their respective city. Many of these maps contained egregious errors on distance and Elliott West states, "Byers featured a map with the Smoky Hill originating about sixty miles east of the Rockies, at least fifty miles closer to the mountains than was actually the case."[40] Others admitted that gold was scarce in Colorado unless one used Luke Tierney's guidebook because he had "spent several months in prospecting, with varied success," yet has "endeavored to point out with accuracy where the precious may be found, and where it is useless to search for it."[41] By using a selfless rhetorical style, Tierney appealed to settlers' sensibilities that he was a charitable man, who only intended on helping the common person and America find gold. William B. Parsons employed a different rhetorical style that made the miners' pursuit patriotic. Parsons pronounces,

> "If all history is worth anything, it teaches us unmistakably that a nation arrives at a high point of prosperity and grandeur not in a day or year, not by one or two strokes of fortune but by successive steps taken through a long course of years each one of which, though seemingly unimportant in itself, yet becomes of inestimable value to a country's welfare."[42]

Parsons indicates that digging for gold was not only a personal pursuit, but good for the country in general. He also states, "Gold is found everywhere, equally on the highest hills

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[40] Elliott West, 128.
[41] Luke Tierney, *History of the Gold Discoveries on the South Platte River: to which is Appended a Guide of the Route* (Pacific City: Smith and Oaks, 1859), 93.
[42] William B Parsons, *The Gold Mines of Western Kansas; Being a omplete Description of the Newly Discovered Gold Mines, Different Routes, Camping Places, Tools & Outfit and Containing Everything Important for the Emigrant and Miner to Know* (Lawrence: Lawrence Republican Book & Job Printing Office, 1858), 157

and in the lowest valleys" and that with "RELIABLE AND UNIMPEACHABLE testimony," the gold mines in Pike's Peak produced more gold in six months than Sutter's Mill did in eighteen.[43] These three mendacious techniques among many others led to what Elliott West termed the "Battle of the Maps," which *raison d'etre* was to improve the prosperity of towns like Leavenworth, Denver, and Auraria by building interest around the prospect of wealth and constantly reminding people of the gold rush. Libeus Barney writes, "The emigration is really a godsend to this five-year-old town. 'Pike's Peak Hotel,' 'Pike's Peak Ranch,' Pike's Peak Lunch,' 'Pike's Peak Outfits,' 'Pike's Peak Line,' the shortest, cheapest and most reliable route, and Pike's Peak almost everything, greets you upon either hand, and Leavenworth is realizing glorious profits out of general excitement."[44] The mendacious myths of gold turned Pike's Peak into a humbug of destitution, yet the ingenious promotion of the Territory through guidebooks and maps fueled the development of this region.

Though Denver was poor in natural resources, boosters such as Byers and Evans, built up Denver's economy through promoting it as a hub and waypoint to the captivating Rockies, the gold sluices, and health retreats. Denver was the creation of visitors seeing the grass greener on the other side. According to historian Kathleen Brosnan, "Building on strong, experienced entrepreneurial leadership, the city dominated the flow of capital, information, goods, and people into and out of the region."[45] One of the main attractions of Denver was its confluence of the major rivers. They became the gatekeepers to the natural profits of the eastern slope and the Front Range and it did not matter if these miners were winners or losers because their efforts drove the economy of these

[43] Parsons, 162, 193. Emphasis author's own.
[44] Libeus Barney, *Letters of the Pike's Peak Gold Rush* (San Jose: The Talisman Press, 1959), 18.
[45] Kathleen Brosnan, *The Uniting Mountain & Plain* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 10.

burgeoning towns. As historian Scott Sandage states, "Low ambition offends Americans even more than low achievement.[46] The settlers and prospectors had expectations of succeeding in this new land by putting forth enough hard work to almost will the gold from the land. Consequently, Colorado Territory became a focal point for economic development and in the 1860s, Abraham Lincoln exploited Colorado as much as possible. This demonstrated the dyad that emerged during the Civil War. According to historian Walter L. Hixson, "the South sought to preserve slavery whereas the preferred solution of the Union at the outset of the war, including President Abraham Lincoln, was colonization."[47] The colonization process had gradually been taking place since Thomas Fitzpatrick pleaded for the Cheyennes to have their own space. During this consolidation in 1856, the Indian agents pushed for establishing an "Indian agency, farm, and trading post for the Arapahoe and Cheyenne bands, on Cache la Poudre, near St. Vrain's fort."[48] This is another indication of how valuable the Poudre was to the Cheyennes that the Indian agents recommended giving them a parcel of this land to conciliate them despite the consolidation. Unfortunately for the Cheyennes, this area around St. Vrain's Fort on the Cache la Poudre appeared to be excellent farming land that Colorado officials would eventually sell off to colonists and forts along the Poudre. Lincoln exacerbated the relationships with the Native Americans through consolidating even more of their land until the only Native American left was an integrated and conquered person.

The arrangement that the Cheyennes had with the federal government changed once the Euro-American settlers elected to settle in Colorado permanently to profit from the land by 1859. Conflict with whites emerged when they moved into the fixed borders

[46] Scott A. Sandage, *Born Losers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 2.
[47] Walter L. Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 88
[48] Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual report of the commissioner of Indian affairs*, 1856, 34, 98.

that the United States government imposed upon the tribe. The whites appropriated what the Cheyennes considered the most essential part of their land. One of the most explicit appropriations was through the Fort Wise Treaty of 1861. Abraham Lincoln ratified this treaty that made the Cheyenne and Arapahoe tribes "cede and relinquish to the United States all the lands now owned, possessed, or claimed by them, wherever situated, except a tract to be reserved (beginning at the Sandy Fork of the Arkansas River and extending to the Purgatory River)."[49] This treaty reduced Cheyenne land rights from 44 million in 1851 to less than 4 million acres.[50] The federal government imposed new spatial narratives on them by using the rivers to as defined borders that were constantly shrinking until they could only live around Bent's Fort. Part of this could be viewed as a punishment for the Sumner Campaign in 1857 because the Cheyennes raided white settlers of their livestock beginning at this time. For example, the Cheyennes once found four horses that had escaped a rancher's land, and the Cheyennes returned only three of the four horses because Little Wolf believed that this horse was not found with the other ones.[51] This led to an increased military presence and the Cheyennes felt that the soldiers and Sumner were trying to start a fight. The Cheyennes attacked, and the military retaliated by burning their lodges on the Arkansas, seizing their annuities at Bent's Fort, and finally overwhelmed them with their forces at the Solomon River on July 29, 1857.[52] In short, the United States government became more invested in colonizing the Colorado territory by the waves of settlers moving into that region. They saw the profits that could

[49] A. G. Boone, *Treaty with the Arapaho and Cheyenne, 1861*, Washington D.C.: United States Department of Indian Affairs.
[50] Eric Sainio, "A Tale of Two Treaties" *National Parks Service News Release*, accessed on January 21, 2015 http://www.nps.gov/sand/parknews/a-tale-of-two-treaties.htm.
[51] *The Fighting Cheyennes*, 111.
[52] The Fighting Cheyennes, 121

be made through both the settlers and the outbreak of violence. This land was precious to not only Euro-Americans, but to Utes, Sioux, Kiowas, Comanches, Cheyennes, and Arapahoes control the resources on the land. As historian Ned Blackhawk states, ""Violence weds the history of these Native groups to larger imperial histories."[53] This drastic increase of violence also resulted from Native Americans uncertain about the new subsistence strategies that the United States tried to impose.

The Cheyennes relied on forts for exchanging material goods, and when they lost this land, they lost the ability to hunt for bison and trade the hides for European goods. According to an Ogallala chiefs, "When the corn crop failed, as it sometimes must, the Indians would have nothing for food, and would starve unless they should eat their own children."[54] He expressed the fears that all of the Central Plains tribes were facing, losing the land and rivers that they had constructed a new spatial narrative around. As a result, the Cheyennes engaged in more raiding even at Bent's Fort. Colonel Sumner wanted to leave some of his goods at this fort, but Bent refused because, "As soon as the Cheyennes learned that the goods were within the fort and would not be distributed until the soldiers came, an attack would be made which would result not only in the loss of the government property, but also of everything he possessed, and the massacre of every one within."[55] The gravity of Bent's words illustrates how the drastically changing environment led to desperation and sweeping adjustments for the Cheyennes. Their spatial narrative relied on rivers for borders, a wide landscape for hunting, and one fort for trading with. With

[53] Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 8.
[54] Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual report of the commissioner of Indian affairs*, 1856, 34, 97.
[55] United States, Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual report of the commissioner of Indian affairs, for the year* 1857, 145.

increasing competition for the land, water, and forts, the Cheyennes needed to fight to survive during this time.

For the first time in their history of conflicts with whites, the Cheyennes did not move but stayed on the Arkansas River despite the drastic change in their homeland. Sweet Medicine had prophesied the buffalo's disappearance and the adoption of new animals such as cows when he foreboded, "your ways will change. You will leave your religion for something new. You will lose respect for your leaders and start quarreling with one another. You will take after the Earth Men's ways."[56] The Treaty of Fort Laramie illustrated the efforts of the Cheyennes to maintain peace with the United States because their livelihood on bison was ending, and they felt that they needed to adopt agriculture to survive. Beginning in 1847, Chief Yellow Wolf suggested to the Southern Cheyennes that their people adopt agriculture. The Cheyenne chiefs revived this idea in 1858.[57] The Southern Cheyennes "no longer listened to their young men who continually clamored for war," Black Kettle stated, but hoped that the United States would "give them a home where they might be protected against the encroachments of their white brothers until at least, they had been taught to cultivate the soil and other arts of civilized life."[58] The Council of Forty-Four lost respect of some of their younger members for making this treaty and fulfilling the Sweet Medicine's prophecy of losing their ways. Furthermore, the United States government could not keep this promise because the settlers needed the same water sources for agriculture and sluicing that the Cheyennes were going to need as well. This treaty was only a hasty remedy for the Native American

[56] John Stands in Timber and Margot Liberty, *Cheyenne Memories* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 40.
[57] Thom Hatch, *Black Kettle: The Cheyenne Chief Who Sought Peace But Found War* (Hoboken: Wiley & Sons, 2004), 67.
[58] *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1858*, 96-100.

issue as boosters tried to develop the infrastructure of Colorado to eventually attract the Transcontinental Railroad through Denver.

With all this new land wrested from native and placed into white hands, Lincoln assigned John Evans, an astute businessman and the namesake for Evanston, Illinois, to be the governor of the Colorado Territory. Evans had a high acumen for business and was a successful land speculator in Chicago. For example, he earned "an average net income of $5,000 per year" from his rentals, and also invested in building a railroad line that connected Chicago with Fort Wayne in 1852.[59] His past as a railroad speculator and land speculator illustrated his ability to help continue making Colorado a profitable place after the miners' enthusiasm for gold panning and mining waned. He, with Byers and others, saw the potential in the rivers and landscape for farming, ranching, and building communitarian societies. Additionally, Evans, Byers, and others like William Gilpin, or David Moffatt who boosted Colorado developed their ethos and ethic from the Eastern sensibilities of the Gilded Age. They, like their Eastern contemporaries, tried to develop their cities to drive up the value of their property and take what they could from the new settlers entering their territory. According to historian Gene Gressley, mineral and land prospectors were "Middle-class in perspective, optimistically hopeful for material progress, the Westerner was imbued with a strong booster psychology, a trait on which may an Eastern entrepreneur and Western promoter capitalized time and again."[60] The Manifest Destiny that Easterners thought would save them from the doldrums of economic ruin in the East only exacerbated their condition. By encountering savvy boosters as ruthless as Jay Gould, many of the hopeful miners who bet the rest of their

[59] Harry E. Kelsey Jr. *Frontier Capitalist* (Denver: State Historical Society of Colorado, 1969), 66, 73.
[60] Gene M. Gressley, *West by East: The American West in the Gilded Age* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1972), 6.

livelihoods on the West lost in their search for gold. Ironically, at this time, newspaper editor Horace Greeley and one of his early adherents, Nathan Cook Meeker, were combatting this form of capitalist exploitation through communitarian living and needed to buy into the capitalist structure to survive.[61] By the time the myth became an epidemic of opportunity for settlers, the final phase of expulsion or assimilation began.

The incentive to attack Cheyennes began when John Evans promoted the martyrs of the Box Elder Creek Massacre. They were a family that lived on a homestead and were killed by a band of Arapahoes raiding the landscape. This act of violence resonated with Evans, who responded to the massacre with a proclamation that any peaceful Native American should go to a fort, and he commissioned any white male to join the militia and "kill and destroy as enemies of the country, wherever they may be found, all such hostile Indians."[62] The attack at Box Elder represented an attack on the boosters' efforts to create a space for eastern Americans to settle in. Evans also incentivized joining the militia by allowing the soldiers to claim any property that the hostile Native Americans had on them. Black Kettle and other Cheyenne chiefs handed themselves over, but Chivington would not say if they had peace or not. Then Maj. Scott Anthony replaced Ned Wynkoop, a recent arrival to Colorado, who wanted peace, but was unsure how to handle Native American delegations. Anthony was much more willing to engage in violence with the Cheyennes and forbade them from entering the Fort Lyon where many Cheyennes and Arapahoes received goods and annuities from the United States. Ned Wynkoop thought that despite barring them from entering the fort, Anthony was more generous with food than he had been. Anthony after gaining their trust told the Cheyennes and Arapahoes to

[61] This is expressed more thoroughly in the third chapter.
[62] J. W. Wright, *Chivington Massacre* 1865. Printed Material: Chivington Massacre of the Cheyenne Indians, 1. History Colorado Center.

go to Sand Creek where they would be under the military's auspices. They moved there on November 17, 1864 and this move led to the fateful events of John Chivington attacking Sand Creek.[63]

Chivington was a Methodist minister, who first arrived in Colorado as a missionary and shortly after arriving helped build the Colorado First Regiment in 1860. According to Chivington, "[William Gilpin raised the First Regiment] from the necessity of our surrounding. It was thought to be a wild project when he did it but proved to be the salvation of this country from the hands of the rebels."[64] Chivington also had excellent knowledge of eastern Colorado's geography after performing his missionary work. Using this knowledge, Chivington took his Colorado militia at his disposal, and attacked the Cheyennes and Arapahoes at Sand Creek where they were unarmed since they were under the auspices of the US military. Initially according to Sand Creek survivor Richard W. Clarke he believed that Chivington's army was actually Texans seeking revenge from Cheyenne raids. Clarke states, "The Government during the (Civil War) put no obstacles in the way of bands of Indians going down into Texas on raids. It was a sort of war measure. Along the border, there were stories of the horrible things that some of these bands did."[65] Since they lacked any deterrent from raiding south of the Arkansas River, the borders that the United States established with the Cheyennes were more a delineation between northern whites north of the Arkansas River and New Mexicans and Confederates beneath it. Cheyennes were allowed to raid and trade with whomever they wanted to South of the Arkansas without being molested by the government. Whites felt

[63] Kraft, 129.
[64] John Chivington, *The First Colorado Regiment 1884* (Berkeley: Bancroft Library), 2.
[65] Banfill, 1. Similar events of raiding helped the United States win the Mexican American War, and Brian DeLay goes into further detail of this in *War of a Thousand Deserts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

that Cheyennes provoked violence that Euro-Americans demarcated for themselves, which led to the Sand Creek Massacre and removal from Colorado.

Chivington surprised the Cheyennes and killed over 150 of them, and John Evans and John Chivington got what they wanted: a war that would force the Cheyennes out of Colorado. Following the Sand Creek Massacre, Evans reported in the *Rocky Mountain News* "Among the brilliant feats of arms in Indian warfare, the recent campaign of our Colorado Volunteers will stand in history with few rivals, and none to exceed it in final results."[66] Historian Ari Kelman explicates the narrative of the memory of the Sand Creek through the recollections of Chivington, Silas Soule a soldier, and George Bent. According to Kelman, ""Whereas to his dying day Chivington insisted that Sand Creek had pacified the Plains Tribes, clearing the way for civilization's spread throughout the region, and Soule only suggested that the opposite might prove true, Bent knew for certain that the bloodletting had touched off the brutal Indian Wars."[67] A congressional investigation followed this massacre, but nothing came of it, and Chivington became famous as the "Fighting Parson," and "the Sand Creek Hero," and his son sold pictures of him for $1.00.[68]

The Cheyennes nominally concluded the war with the Medicine Creek Lodge Treaty in which they agreed to stay on land south of the Arkansas River. The United States gave them this land, but ensured that there was enough land for every person to have access to 160 acres.[69] The treaty makers realized that it was becoming impossible for Native Americans to have land separate from the whites. As a result they adopted

[66] *Rocky Mountain News,* December 17, 1864.
[67] Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 37.
[68] Letter from Henry Lee to T. M. Chivington, August 26, 1898, 994/1/2 History Colorado.
[69] Bureau of Indian Affairs, "Article 3," *Treaty with the Cheyenne and Arapaho, 1867*. 15 Stats., 593, written October 28, 1867, ratified July 25, 1868, proclaimed August 19, 1868.

rhetoric of "assimilation, allotment, and citizenship."[70] The Cheyennes were expected to act like naturalized citizens of the United States Government and adopt agricultural subsistence strategies. This nation believed that they still had lone rights to hunting bison in the panhandle of Texas and Oklahoma, south of the Arkansas River, but in the actual treaty it states, "they yet reserve the right to hunt on any lands south of the Arkansas so long as the buffalo may range thereon in such numbers as to justify the chase; and no white settlements shall be permitted on any part of the lands contained in the old reservation."[71] In reality, the government was allowing anyone to hunt bison in the Texas Panhandle, and this encouraged Euro-American hunters to build the Adobe Walls fort and exploit the bison. They contributed to the decimation of bison and sought to end Cheyenne hunting routines. Ultimately, the government tried to use the Medicine Lodge Treaty to impose the Homestead Act upon the Cheyennes, and conform them to the rest of the male settlers, who had 160 acres for farming. President Grant also became transfixed on the idea of sending Cheyennes to Indian Territory in Oklahoma, despite the protestations of the delegates making treaties with the Cheyennes.[72] This was insulting to Cheyenne men, who according to historian James N. Leiker "Cheyennes' own cultural view of gender roles, acquired through a century of hunting in which feminine power had declined significantly, presented perhaps the greatest obstacle; any Cheyenne male past the age of twenty struggled with the stigma of farming as effeminate and degrading."[73]

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[70] Fred A Seaton and Elmer F. Bennett, *Federal Indian Law* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1958), 210.
[71] Bureau of Indian Affairs, "Articles 11," *Treaty with the Cheyenne and Arapaho*, *1867*. 15 Stats., 593, written October 28, 1867, ratified July 25, 1868, proclaimed August 19, 1868. Referenced in T. Lindsay Baker and Billy R. Harrison's *Adobe Walls* (2001).
[72] James N. Leiker and Ramon Powers, *The Northern Cheyenne Exodus: In History and Memory* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 6.
[73] James N. Leiker and Ramon Powers, *The Northern Cheyenne Exodus: In History and Memory* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 40.

The conflict resumed between the Cheyennes and United States military and this period of misunderstanding between the Euro-American side and the Cheyennes led to the Northern Cheyennes exodus. [74]

The conflict continued in the western Great Plains as the Sioux, Cheyennes, and Arapahoes continued to fight against the United States military. Despite this warfare, Southern Cheyennes moved to Oklahoma to Indian Territory. The Northern Cheyennes moved their as well, but resisted and made an exodus to Montana, where their current reservation still stands. They adopted the landscape and found new ways to survive in Oklahoma and Montana. In Colorado, Evans was able to try and fulfill his entrepreneurial dreams to create a branch of the Transcontinental Railroad through Denver, and in his attempts to do that, he created the chance for Nathan Meeker to try and develop a utopian colony once again. Within this context of an urbanizing Colorado with seemingly little resistance from Native Americans, the Euro-Americans would come into increasing conflict with the landscape to control it, and this also led to them transforming their social norms and culture.

[74] For more information read *Tell Them We Are Going Home* and *The Great Northern Cheyenne Exodus*.

Chapter 4: The Communitarian Spiders

The Cheyennes have many legends describing their relationship to whites through the misadventures of Wihio, a trickster character whose name means both spider and white person. Usually these stories describe how the Cheyennes taught Wihio a skill like fishing or how to cut meat off from his own back.[1] The Cheyennes taught him how to survive and support his family in the West. Other tales describe how he tricked animals so he could kill them for food.[2] In 1869, a Wihio from New England named Nathan Meeker tricked Easterners to give up their livelihoods and follow him to Colorado to begin a communitarian society. Meeker was a journalist for *The New York Tribune*, and in his article "A Western Colony" he enticed settlers with promises of verdant pastures in the west. In this article he described eastern Colorado as "well watered with streams and springs, there are beautiful pine groves, the soil is rich, the climate is healthful, grass will keep stock the year round."[3] He had a legitimate reputation as a fruit grower in Illinois, which gave him the credentials to become the agricultural editor for the *New York Tribune*.[4]

People enthusiastically responded to his article and agreed to join because they were enraptured by Meeker's promises. He promised schools for their children and land that would be worth five to ten times what they bought it for.[5] It was a speculator's dream to buy up land that the United States had recently acquired from the Cheyennes in a time of postbellum desperation and dreams of gold and recovery after the Civil War. Meeker

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[1] George Bird Grinnell, *By Cheyenne Campfires* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 292, 296. These stories are called "The Back Scraper" and "He Catches Fish."
[2] Ibid., 291. This story called "Where the Mice Danced" describes how Wihio tricked animals to dance to his music and he clubbed them while they were dancing.
[3] Nathan Meeker, "A Western Colony," *The New York Tribune*, December 14, 1869, 1.
[4] "N.C. Meeker," *The Daily Colorado Tribune*, April 12, 1870, 1.
[5] Meeker, " Western Colony" 1.

spun a myth of the West that confirmed what other settlers wanted to believe about the place: that it was open, cheap, and would become very valuable. They struggled to survive and many quit, but eventually most adopted new ways of approaching the land to survive.

This final chapter explores Nathan Meeker as a trickster in multiple ways. In one way, he promised economic prosperity to the colonists, who followed him to Colorado. Within his family he tricked his wife, by promising her gender equality, but neglected to actually make changes to the patriarchy. Despite being a trickster, he too was tricked by the Denver boosters, who promoted a mythic West of opportunity and fertile land. Casting Meeker as a nineteenth-century Wihio, this chapter compares his methods of survival to Cheyenne subsistence strategies by examining how he transformed middle-class New Englanders into agriculturalists dependent on the Cache la Poudre for life.

Meeker lived in a time in the United States when economic aptitude was the standard in defining both men's personal identity and success. In the book *Born Losers*, Scott Sandage describes the 1840s as the time when "capitalism came of age and entrepreneurship became the primary model of American identity."[6] Within this context, Arthur Bestor's interpretation of utopian colonies takes on a different meaning. He states, "the communitarian belief in social harmony as opposed to class warfare was certainly the prevalent hope of Americans generally. The communitarian emphasis upon voluntary action met exactly the American conception of freedom."[7] After losing in capitalism, communitarianism became a new path to success for individuals like Meeker, and by 1870 the West had opened for Euro-American ventures.

[6] Scott Sandage, *Born Losers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 3.
[7] Arthur Bestor, *Backwoods Utopias* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1950), 16.

The mythic West and the boosters who promoted it also tricked the trickster Meeker. The West became a promised land and a sacred space outside of the capitalist realm that held the potential for Eastern society's losers to find success in living off the ground. For Meeker, that also meant a society of equality where his wife, Arvilla Meeker, would be able to contribute as a leader of and pillar in Union Colony. Meeker promoted gender equality throughout his life, yet he was never able to completely follow through on these promises. Throughout his courtship of and marriage to Arvilla Delight Smith, Meeker proposed grand ideas of gender equality and wanted his wife to be his intellectual equal. He wrote to her describing how communitarianism would increase the role of women in society and in Greeley, Colorado women participated in elections and also worked for their living. Despite these promises, these women were still subjected to the patriarchy and made changes to their day-to-day life out of necessity more so than opportunity.

Generally, historians look upon Union Colony and Greeley either as a failure or as an experiment in environmentalism. In 1976, Dolores Hayden included Union Colony as one of the utopian projects that she examined. She distilled the town and its accomplishments to "an average town with a single idealistic episode in its early history."[8] Historian Donald Worster likewise dismissed the colonial project and instead focused on Union Colony's "program of reform in western water law and institutions."[9] He examined the impact of irrigation on the town, and how it contributed to the formation of the Colorado Law for water allocation. Overall, none of the historians examined Meeker's impact on the colonists of Union Colony by convincing them to leave their

[8] Dolores Hayden, *Seven American Utopias* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976), 284.
[9] Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 87.

lives and move west because of the promises he made to them through the press, and more intimately through his letters describing his desire for increased equality.

Meeker lived in a time of radical change and clashed against the rising trends in society toward capitalism. He combated against capitalism by developing a colony that took the outcasts and economic losers and promised them an opportunity for equality. He also promised his wife and other women opportunities for economic and political freedom. Yet, Meeker emerged as a successful trickster in the late-nineteenth century and despite his rhetorical support to women's equality, he could not fulfill his promises. Despite these mistruths he still successfully helped form a town that developed an infrastructure around the Cache la Poudre and helped the colonists adopt a new subsistence strategy different from those they had known in New England.

Nathan Meeker was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1818 and for most of his life aspired to become an intellectual who proposed grand ideas. He found a partner who shared a love of knowledge in his wife, Arvilla Delight Smith. In one of their correspondences during courtship, Meeker wrote, "You were never, perhaps, more astonished than at the size of this sheet nor more disheartened, perhaps than when you see how much reading I have prepared for you. It is a love trial, and, if you stand it I will say that you are true." His list contained "touches of poetry, geology, astronomy, Fourierism, transcendentalism, Grahamism, and melancholies." [10] He had plans for his wife to share his ideas and spread his desire for knowledge, which explains part of his attraction to Fourierism.

Fourierism developed in late-eighteenth century France by the philosopher Charles Fourier. He came to the conclusion that society could only flourish through socialism, a revelation that he came to when he encountered an apple at market that cost fourteen

[10] Nathan C. Meeker to Arvilla Delight Smith, January 24, 1844.

sous. According to Fourier, this apple would change human history, and he believed, "Two were famous by the disasters they caused, those of Adam and of Paris, and who by services rendered to mankind, Newton's and my own."[11] This proverbial apple represented Fourier's disdain for capitalism and a system that could not benefit its adherents. Fourier believed that society would be perfected once everyone lived in communitarian towns that he called "phalanxes." In these phalanxes, egalitarianism would break down the capitalistic oppression of the poor by the rich. The key in his ideology was to promote and encourage the "passions" which Guarneri describes as "the springs of motivation," or the sources of desire that occurred before a person thought about the intention of the impulses.[12] By cultivating the passions, phalanxes would become attractive and entice more settlers to help build and provide for others' passions. Eventually, phalanxes would connect to overthrow societies, ills such as totalitarian institutions like the Catholic Church, and other uninspired philosophies.

Alfred Brisbane, an American student studying abroad in France in 1832, exported Fourier's ideas to the United States, where it was promoted in part by the progressive abolitionist Horace Greeley. Greeley was attracted to Fourierism's combination of ideologies: "unfettered individual effort and a communal ethos," which he thought could easily be used to settle open land in the West.[13] Greeley reprinted Brisbane's work and sparked communication in a network of Fourierist editors who began plans to colonize under the model. The ideas that sprung from Fourier's apple became the panacea for Meeker's woes.

[11] Carl J Guarneri, *The Utopian Alternative* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 16.
[12] Guarneri, 18.
[13] Guarneri, 44.

Nathan Meeker's love for knowledge was not his only inducement toward Fourierism, but rather his appreciation for the prosperity that it promised. In his young adult life, Meeker was a struggling newspaper journalist searching for work in Jersey City, and at Bowling Green. He felt that his struggle emerged because of his desire for alcohol and fine things. He wrote to Arvilla Smith saying, "I was a poor scholar and could not write myself into a place as I could now" because of his misuse of his talents by becoming "intoxicated" and "swearing and aping about Byron."[14] His itinerant status during his time as a failed scholar was the source of his developing ideology, and his pride was hurt by the thought that he would "become a negro driver" instead of a journalist or a tutor in the classic languages.[15] He believed that the root of his problem was alcohol, and he would become a figure for the temperance movement. Fourierism seemed to be the philosophy of life that would both satisfy Meeker's desire for equality and morality.

Contrary to recent historiographical assertions that New Englanders valued religiosity above all else, Meeker's ideology demonstrated that economic success was equivalent to religious success. Meeker adopted Fourierist theory to create an association, which he defined as "a union of many families into one and it is a singular feature in the sense that the united seeking the good of all we do it firstly seeking our own."[16] This idea of association attracted settlers who had been disappointed by what they saw as the cruelty of capitalism. According to historian Scott Sandage, "By 1841, the magazine *Arcturus* renamed the era of the self-made man: "Ours is the age of suicide and mysterious

[14] Nathan Meeker to Arvilla Smith, January 25, 1844.
[15] Nathan Meeker to Arvilla Smith, January 25, 1844.
[16] Nathan Meeker, "Lectures on Association," October 9, 1843.

disappearance."[17] Meeker was one of these self-made men, who like many of his followers, could not catch a break in the early years of his young adult life. Fourier's philosophy inspired these desperate Northeasterners to band together and lift themselves and each other out of the economic quagmire that they were stuck in. These failed businessmen contributed to Horace Greeley's idea of the West as a "safety valve" for those who could not find work. By losing in the financial game, these people already set themselves up as members on the fringes of society because they lacked the ability to compete in American capitalism. Sandage's framework of economic success challenges historian Arthur Bestor's commentary, "various socialistic colonies of the early nineteenth century cannot possibly be subsumed under any definition phrased in purely economic terms."[18] Economic success became a religious experience and a means to survive. This quotation refers back to Max Weber's idea of the Protestant Work Ethic, since seeking the good of the community comes from a personal self-worth through asceticism and hard work.[19] At this point, a person's social status and ability to support oneself in New England society was more important than religious affiliation.

From a woman's perspective, Annie Maria V. Green composed her memoirs of her family's decision to join Union Colony, which she summed up as a whim of her husband. According to her, he arrived at his home and announced, "I have found it at last! A chance to get out of this tiresome and monotonous business in which I am engaged."[20] Among these curious correspondents there was excitement at the prospect of leaving the

[17] Scott Sandage, *Born Loser* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 6.
[18] Arthur Bestor, *Backwoods Utopias* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1950), 3.
[19] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* trans. Talcott Parsons (London: Routledge Classics, 1992), 7.
[20] Annie Maria V. Green, *Sixteen Years on the Great American Desert; or, the Trials and Triumphs of a Frontier Life*, (Titusville: Frank W. Truesdell, 1887) 2. Green's memoir proves invaluable in this research about a woman's experience in Greeley, Colorado. She offers insights into how she felt that does not align with the propaganda that Meeker promoted.

east and capitalism to live in a place where there was a chance to have control of one's success in becoming an agriculturalist. The West represented a frontier where religion could become the focus again by stabilizing a communitarian society's economy and by the promises of an adventurous life.

Meeker was a successful trickster because he had the credentials to convince settlers and Horace Greeley to back him. By the mid-1860s, Meeker became a successful agricultural editor for *The New York Tribune* where he proved his aptitude at planting and formed a friendship with Horace Greeley.[21] It is difficult to find Meeker's articles, but the newspaper was the self-proclaimed "leading political and agricultural journal in the United States," which also included activist literature.[22] In 1866, Meeker wrote a letter to his wife Arvilla that stated,

> I cannot help suspecting that the West will be the place for us after all & certainly that it will unless I can make more money. We will find out by Spring. I think too that if we had our wish in some thing we would not have many things which we now possess and which we highly prise (sic). If we had a nice house and if we lived where we could have good society our children might not be smart-good and handsom (sic). What we lack money will buy - & some money we have. [23]

Meeker became enraptured in the myth of the West and what it meant for their family in regards to education and equality. He also promoted the belief that the only means to achieve good society is through acquiring money.

His most significant work of literature, *Life in the West,* reiterated his desire to start anew. This travelogue from 1868 promoted the West and illustrated the possibility for democratization. Meeker portrayed the West as a success story of capitalism for those

[21] Before this he was a poet for *The New York Mirror* and despised poetry so much afterwards that when he formed *The Greeley Tribune* he refused to include poems in his newspaper, and it only served him when he fell down and his poetry stuffed in his hat saved him from getting badly injured. (Boyd, *A History*), 13.
[22] "The Weekly Tribune," New-York Tribune, February 5, 1868. This is an example of the activist literature that they published. In regards to the story about the woman incarcerated the *New-York Tribune* asked to help pay for this woman's bond.
[23] Nathan Meeker to Arvilla Meeker, December 23, 1866, New York.

who had failed since "In no other country have the producers been able to keep so much wealth from the grasp of the idle and the wicked."[24] In *Life in the West*, Meeker follows the life of Aleck, who tries to survive during the Civil War as a salesman. He eventually gets the courage to move west after he meets a young woman, who challenges his values. Ellen, a cook, declines Aleck's invitation to marriage because she did not believe he had the "substance of a Union man" in him because he tried to "*serve two masters*" by selling goods to both Union and Confederate soldiers in Memphis.[25] She further embarrasses Aleck by saying, "I think you do not understand the first principles on which this war is waged; nor do I believe that you care."[26] This story contains autobiographical elements of Meeker's journey west and the inspiration that his wife offered him in his own life.

In demonstrating that women have the ability to convert men in ideology and persuade them to become better people, Meeker was making a larger statement about republican womanhood and the cult of domesticity. By setting his story against the backdrop of the Civil War, Meeker was also indicating how many opportunities were available for a new and better life by leaving the East and setting out for a new life. One of the underlying themes of his thinly veiled autobiography is that a man needs to have anti-slavery ideological principles to become a virile man. Meeker's propaganda spread, and he was able to influence people by his words. As a result, he seemed to be the natural leader for a new association. He had both the pragmatic agricultural skills and the Fourierist vision. Meeker would be the one to lead a group out into the West, but needed to find land to for his followers to settle.

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[24] Meeker, *Life in the West,* v.
[25] Nathan Meeker, *Life in the West; or, Stories of the Mississippi Valley* (New York: Samuel R. Wells, 1868), 41. Emphasis is Meeker's.
[26] Meeker, *Life in the West*, 44.

The boosters of Denver—William Byers, David Moffat, and John Evans—worked to supplement and support the growth of the city after the initial gold rush in 1859. Denver did not have many attractions, either in beauty or in industry to attract settlers to stay. The boosters decided to build up their city and Colorado as a railroad hub to transport gold and other minerals to markets around the United States. Additionally, the Denver Pacific helped move immigrants. According to representative G.W. Julian:

> Foreign immigration increases in the ratio of our railway extension; that our exports and imports increase in the same proportion, as does also our domestic trade; that the settlement and population of our western States and Territories obey the same general law, thereby increasing production and supplying the means of paying our national debt.[27]

To fund the first railway, the Denver Pacific Railway, boosters needed approval from Congress to sell land to settlers along the Union Pacific charter. They were particularly successful because of their promises to settlers. Historian David Wrobel explains, "The railroads and their boosters sought to generate trust among readers by claiming that social welfare was their primary mission."[28] This method already had success during the gold rushes when venture capitalists assumed the guise of benevolent prospectors who would privilege their readership with maps and details of where to find the most gold in Colorado.[29] Byers not only succeeded in convincing others of their benevolence, but also by making the government understand the pragmatism of a railroad going through Colorado in light of the Native American wars that had taken place recently. The government compared the price of building the railroad and shipping the supplies via the Denver Pacific at $511,988.24 against shipping via wagons, which cost $1,358,291.06

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[27] "Denver Pacific Railway: Remarks of Hon. G.W. Julian of Indiana, in the House of Representatives," *The Congressional Globe*, January 25, 1869.
[28] David Wrobel, *Promised Lands* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002), 22.
[29] In chapter two, I described these services such as William B. Parsons *The Gold Mines of Western Kansas* and Luke Tierney's *History of the Gold Discoveries on the South Platte River* both published in 1859.

saving them $846,332.82.[30] Thus, the boosters showcased the economic incentives in building the Denver Pacific. The United States Government approved their railway in 1869, and later that year Meeker made a detour in Denver and was inspired by the people and the land.

In the fall of 1869, Meeker was forced to stop in Denver due to a blizzard on a reporting trip of the Mormon colonies and their irrigation system in Utah. During his accidental stay he was impressed and inspired by the villages of eastern immigrants that emerged along the railroads. Meeker stated, "The shabby little stations, the centers and nuclei of which were stores, containing few goods and plenty of whisky, have given place to neat villages of the New England pattern. … Industry and correct ideas are manifest, and in a few years these places will have an aspect common to those parts of the East where culture and refinement prevail."[31] Meeker saw the prototype of a West that began to resemble New England, and wanted to ensure its growth into this ideal place. He believed that his immigration plan would help settlers maintain the Protestant work ethic and Eastern values. Shortly after his stay in Denver, Meeker called for a colony in Colorado, and the response was overwhelming.

During December in 1869, Meeker received messages from prospective colonists who had many concerns and questions about Colorado. Many were concerned with the viability of the landscape and the Native American wars. Despite these apprehensions, others were excited at the prospect of living in a communitarian society where their children would receive an education and they could profit as a society. There was still an economic and capitalist incentive to take what they could from the land.

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[30] A.F. Stevens "Denver Pacific Railway," *The Congressional Globe*, (40th Congress 3rd Session January 25, 1869), 72.
[31] Boyd, 17.

Many potential settlers were enticed by the idea of profitable land. E.D. Barton asked Meeker, "Is it a good country for raising such produce as could be carried to a distance with advantage such as dairy products or wool? You spoke of cattle raising, but it seem as if it was too far away to make very much at that but of course I know nothing about it."[32] Others had more realistic expectations of the colony. A.D. Holt wrote, "What is the character of the soil? How far from Denver is the place you speak of? Is the climate and the make of the grass suitable for dairy? Would the tame grapes grow if the land was seeded with them?"[33] In short, people had concerns with the land and were not willing to embark on this utopian pursuit without knowing more information about the ecology. The visions that they had of Colorado did not match up with how the Cheyennes lived on the Front Range.

Beyond the typical settler inquiries about land, lodging, and weather, many people wrote Meeker about his ideological purposes, especially in regards to education. Some settlers even cared more about education than economics, such as Benton Aldrich, who wrote that while his family had material prosperity, his major concern was that his children "should go to school and though we have offered to open our house for one and have even proposed to hear the children recite free of charge yet after four years of persistent effort a school seems to be farther off than when we came here."[34] T.O. Allen had similar concerns and was willing to move to a colony because his "young children must go where there is a school."[35] J. Max Clark, who became a friend of Nathan Meeker had similar concerns for raising his children to have an education. He lived in Tennessee

[32] E.D. Barton to Nathan Meeker, December 13, 1869.
[33] A.D. Holt to Nathan Meeker, December 10, 1869.
[34] Benton Aldrich to Nathan Meeker, December 17, 1869.
[35] T.O. Allen to Nathan Meeker, December 15, 1869.

after the Civil War and the Tennessee legislature decided to reject Northern education. He was primarily concerned with their accents and states, "I remember, that the boy's linguistic attainments were already a matter of astonishment and dismay to his parents. Two tow-headed little white playmates … were more than a match for our influence and tongues."[36]

Many people also wanted to leave the South during Reconstruction and start over as agriculturalists. For example, Dr. L.C. Walker was interested in gaining more land and entering into livestock business. He was a surgeon during the Civil War and thought poorly of the land on the east coast. In his estimation, "the South is most unhealthy sections of country & you were perfectly right in your view about the Black belt being so suitable for the negro. The Southern Cracker, is I think the lowest in the scale of all white people in our country. He is the offspring of the Southern Climate together with the slavery institution."[37] Walker saw Meeker's plan as an exodus from the reconstructing South and the people he found least desirable. Clark also explained that he moved to Tennessee after the Civil War for the pleasant climate. He enjoyed the environment, but the people, in his opinion, were "red hot; and all social affairs, politics, polite intercourse among neighbors, and religion, as well, seemed to take their cue from the fiery climate also, making the temperature too high, in fact, for the naturally cool blood of Northern men."[38] Clark also judged the inherent character of northerners and southerners, and decided that he would rather start again in the West. John N. Pratt was another example of a settler who participated in the Reconstruction of the South. He was originally from Massachusetts, but moved to Virginia to work at a "colored school under the auspices of

[36] J. Max Clark, *Colonial Days* (Denver: Smith-Brooks Co, 1901), 13.
[37] L.C. Walker to Nathan Meeker, December 15, 1869, Fountain Dale Adams Co, Pennsylvania.
[38] J. Max Clark, *Colonial Days* (Greeley: Smith-Brooks Co., 1902), 2.

the New England Branch Freemen's Union Commission" and was ready to move to Meeker's "colonial temple."[39] In Pratt's letter, he was also concerned with the Native American wars and wondered how poor people would secure lodging in this new colony.

Pratt's letter outlined all of the ideological controversies of Meeker faced when he began Union Colony. Pratt alluded to the outburst of violence in Colorado that occurred between Euro-Americans and Native Americans. According to Meeker, "A slight drawback has hitherto existed in consequence of Indian invasions, and I was told that last year they drove $500,000 worth of stock out of the country, and that they robbed and murdered within a few miles of Denver."[40] This issue with Native Americans combined with the increased military presence, demonstrated the aftermath of the Sand Creek Massacre and the continued resistance of Cheyennes against the U.S. military. Cheyenne historian John Stands in Timber recounted the Fetterman Fight on the Bozeman Trail where Cheyennes routed U.S. soldiers in 1866 and also how the Cheyennes and Sioux derailed a train near Cheyenne, Wyoming on the Union Pacific Railroad in 1867.[41] All of these events impacted Easterners' view of the West and illustrated how Meeker was openly tricking potential settlers, who would build a town with him.

Although Meeker sought equality for women in his colony, of the 324 letters Nathan Meeker received in regards to colonization came from a woman. Ellen P. McKean's questions were typical: she asked when they were leaving, when the colony would be built, but also she asked if "single women can join the colony."[42] She stood out because she expected to be treated as an equal as well. In her own words she stated, "I am thirty,

[39] John N Pratt to Nathan Meeker, 12 December 1869.
[40] Boyd, 24.
[41] John Stands in Timber, *Cheyenne Memories* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 174.
[42] Ellen P. McKean to Nathan Meeker, December 10, 1869, Highland, Pennsylvania.

was married and have lived on a farm nearly all my life, am blessed with good health, and am not afraid of work if with and among those who cultivate the finer interests in humanity."[43] She ultimately did not leave to join the Union Colonists, but challenged the idea of the heteronormative family structure by asking if single women could join.

Some men wrote on behalf of their wives, attesting to their ability even though husbands still had control over their lives. For example, men like Walter S. Brag promoted the talents of his wife, and he stated, "My wife is a very capable woman (sic?) has had experience in tailoring, straw sewing and a good singer and teacher of vocal music."[44] CJE Blood likewise described the self-sufficiency of his wife, who had "a practical and working wife, she does her own work."[45] The patriarchs of these families maintained control over the affairs of their wives, but took pride in their achievements as well. From this point, families prepared for the journey west to help build up the town of Greeley, Colorado.

Although Meeker saw himself as an improver of vacant land, he moved onto land that the Sioux, Cheyennes, and Arapaho had made into a home. Meeker had promoted this townsite as a place of perfection in his article "A Western Colony," and elaborated on the superiority of this destination. Meeker proclaimed, "The Rocky Mountain scenery is the grandest and most enchanting in America. I have never seen a place which presents so many advantages and opportunities."[46] The settlers moved into Greeley, Colorado in 1870 in an attempt to transform the land into an idyllic New England hamlet.

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[43] Ellen P. McKean to Nathan Meeker, December 10, 1869, Highland, Pennsylvania.
[44] Walter S Brag to Nathan Meeker, December 28, 1869, Maine.
[45] J. C. E. Blood to Nathan Meeker, December 20, 1869, Connecticut.
[46] Meeker, " A Western Colony," 1.

By the time the settlers began forming the colony in 1870, they realized that their new home was not resource rich utopia that Meeker had promised. They could not simply plant seeds and hoped that they grew. They needed to transform and change similar to the ways that Cheyennes adopted new subsistence strategies from their original home in Minnesota to Colorado. In Greeley, Timber was lacking, and they could not float felled trees down to their colony. Horace Greeley admitted, "The enterprise of floating timber down the river, was not wholly crowned a success," but they would make due because "wood is of little use in these days, for it is a costly job to cut it, and its chief use is to start coal."[47] To state that wood was not a necessity stood in contrast with what settlers were expecting. James L. Lee was disappointed by Meeker's lie that "lumber could be had for $40 for thousand, that living was about as cheap as in the states."[48] Despite the paucity of wood for home building, Meeker afforded to find the raw materials necessary to build a press and print newspapers promoting Fourierist beliefs and myths about the landscape.

The real ecological and climatological problem that emerged was that North America was in the midst of a drought. According to Celine Herweijer, weak La Niña conditions failed to produce jet streams that bring precipitation to North America, and led to droughts from 1856-65 and 1870-76 that were worse than the Dust Bowl.[49] Meeker only visited Colorado in 1869 in between the worst droughts of the nineteenth century. According to Meeker, "Here and there ranches have been opened, and everywhere the

[47] Horace Greeley, "Wood and Coal," *The Greeley Tribune*, November 23, 1870. In spite of disparaging the role of wood, Union colonists persisted and spent more money to float the logs upriver, but failed again. "The Lumber Enterprise" *The Greeley Tribune* August 16, 1871.
[48] James L. Lee to Nathan Meeker, Buchanan County, Iowa, May 23, 1870.
[49] Celine Herweijer, Richard Seager, and Edward R. Cook, "North American droughts of the mid to late nineteenth century: a history, simulation and implication for Mediaeval drought," *The Holocene* 16 (2006), 169.

soil was rich and deep. It is to be noted in particular that upon this divide irrigation is wholly unnecessary, for rain falls as frequently as in Ohio or New York."[50] By all accounts, he was tricked by the elements and subsequently tricked the settlers, who followed him. Meeker displayed typical Wihio behavior in this instance. As a result, many settlers felt betrayed by both Nathan Meeker and Horace Greeley. One of the settlers Annie Maria V. Green griped, "Not a tree, plant nor shrub on which to rest my weary eye, to break the monotony of the sand beds and cactas (sic) of the Great American desert."[51] The elements bamboozled Meeker when he was so desperate to believe in the myth of the West that he ignored the paucity of flora. Additionally, by removing the Cheyennes from the land the Americans also removed Cheyenne knowledge of the land that they had learned through generations of living on its banks

The trip through the Great American Desert tested the rectitude of many of the easterners, who made the commitment to join Union Colony. Green, who was forced by her husband to move to the West, wrote a letter to her friend, Lizzie, about Greeley, Colorado. In it she forlornly pleaded, "My dear girl, be content in your beautiful 'Garden of Eden,' not forgetting to pray for your unfortunate and unhappy friend. …If you wish my opinion of Union Colony, you can have it, from the depth of my soul. I consider it the greatest swindle of the age, and am praying every day for its dissolution."[52] The overwhelming disappointment of the settler women illustrated to Meeker the need to build camaraderie and pride in their town.

Meeker put up displays of happiness and hosted events to help the settlers trick themselves into believing that Greeley was a good place. Green recalled, "It was the

[50] Boyd, 24.
[51] Green, 13.
[52] Green, 11.

glorious Fourth of July; most of the people repaired to Island Park, a beautiful grove situated on the Cache la Poudre. … a beautiful song was sung by the Inman brothers of their own composing entitled, "Greeley is My Home." I tried with all my soul to feel it was my home, but vain were my attempts." [53] Green demonstrated that despite Meeker's attempts to convince the settlers that Greeley lived up to his promotion, the settlers themselves understood its limitations. Other settlers like Charles E. Thompson, wrote Horace Greeley to thoroughly explain their disgust and excoriate Meeker. Thompson asked Greeley for a refund, and according to Thompson, "I have nothing to show that the Colony will pay me back my money but should be glad to have you send me something to that effect. I have no confidence whatever in R. A. Cameron who is buying up claims or rights at $100 each."[54] For many of these settlers, the West quickly transformed from a myth to a reality, and the land that they thought would be the cornerstone for their society proved to be a stumbling block to financial success. These colonization efforts and forts helped establish an eastern environment that prevented Cheyennes from maintaining a connection to Colorado.

By bringing the East to the West, settlers and military units built forts and towns that soon made it impossible for the Cheyennes to perform their sacred rituals. They could not follow the rivers to their sacred sites for the Sun Dance. At this time in the early 1870s, the Buffalo Hat was destroyed and the Sacred Arrows could not be renewed. Meanwhile, the Euro-American settlers destroyed over seven million bison between 1872 and 1874.[55] Besides the settlements, the forts also represented the destruction of the bison and the

[53] Green, *Life in the Great American Desert*, 11.
[54] Charles E. Thompson to Horace Greeley, Greeley, Colorado, May 23, 1870. Cameron later on moved upriver and started Colorado Springs.
[55] Peter Powell, *Sweet Medicine Vol. 1* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), 83.

damming of rivers. By taking this land away from the Cheyennes, the American government peace between Sioux, Cheyennes, and Arapahoes was severely tested. Native Americans continued to struggle against the imposition of Euro-American settlers taking their land and working to integrate Native Americans into Euro-American society. Later in life, Meeker engaged in this process by becoming a Native American agent and worked to train Utes how to irrigate land on their reservation. Meeker only saw his goals and his mission in this new homeland through the lens of boosterism.

Union Colonists had bought land already transformed by Cheyennes and Arapahoes through trade and the bison hunt. Within this context, the question Meeker tried to answer in *The Greeley Tribune* "Why Greeley Was Not Settled Before" took on a new meaning and demonstrated his belief in the vacant land theory. He explained, "The Cache la Poudre valley was so remote from the mines that farm produce would scarcely bear transportation" but more importantly "The Indians had devastated the country below the mouth of the Cache la Poudre, and among others killed was a brother of our Sheriff Brush."[56] For Meeker, Greeley was good land, but he believed Native Americans were not using the land to its fullest potential. These easterners never before had to transform their subsistence strategies or envision a new way of surviving in the West and did not turn to Native Americans to learn how to live. Yet they remained near the Poudre where St. Vrain's Fort stood and where Cheyennes and Arapahoes watered their horses and traded hides for goods and thrived. In order to survive on the land, the Union Colonists would have to adopt the ways of the Desert People and learn how to adapt both the land, and themselves.

[56] Nathan Meeker, "Why Greeley Was Not Settled Before" *The Greeley Tribune*, November 15, 1871.

The most important step to ensuring that Greeley was sustainable was through promoting ventures such as mining and irrigation canal building, which took men away from the domestic sphere. This created the opportunities for women to participate in developing the identity of the town. In this respect they needed to adopt subsistence strategies comparable to the Cheyennes. For Cheyennes, the men were responsible for hunting and leaving their bands, while the women tended to the domestic front and raised crops during certain times of their history.[57] For example, when Annie Green's husband left for the mines to search for coal, she began to take up boarders and sell bread, which she claimed were the largest loaves in town. She also managed to apply the heat from the bread ovens to heat irons for clothing.[58] Green's husband's departure created the opportunity for her to engage in capitalism and to run her own business. Union Colonist's gendered division of labor was reminiscent of Cheyenne society, in which the men were responsible for trading, while the women maintained the domestic front. Yet Cheyenne women were viewed as equals to men, commanding respect from their husbands for their opinions. Green earned a new living and developed a sense of independence while her husband was away, even if he did not recognize the new status she eked out for herself. Green kept her profits from baking a secret and tried to establish some economic independence from her husband. Furthermore, Green's husband was unavailable in the domestic sphere, but he still tried to maintain control over his wife's work. This example of Green's life illustrates the separate spheres that men and women worked in, and also demonstrates the impetus for Green's husband to leave. The society needed to support the

[57] George Bird Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1915), 10. I say at certain points because during times that they were sedentary around a river this was their living arrangement and women would also assist in trading delegations with other Native nations.
[58] Green, 18.

irrigation canals to ensure that the life-giving streams of the Poudre could reach them and water their fields. This evokes the intimacy that the Cheyennes had with their rivers.

Meeker's newspaper *The Greeley Tribune* entertained the notion of gender equality, despite not working for more pragmatic changes and a tension between rhetoric and reality emerged. For example, Meeker reported on opportunities that developed for women in the United States. One article described the success of artist Harriet Hosmer, and the opening of four New England colleges that admitted women, which were "Bates at Lewiston, Maine; Colby at Waterville, Maine; Vermont University, at Burlington, Vermont, and Wesleyan College at Middletown, Connecticut," in addition to the estimated attendance of two hundred women at Michigan University in 1872.[59] Meeker wrote a daily fictional story called "Rosa Robbins or, Life Among John Logan's Men" that described Rosa Robbin's journey to the West. Meeker used his press as a mouthpiece to promote women's rights, which led to Union Colony's own suffrage movement. In 1871, Union Colonists agreed to allow women to vote for the postmaster because the "present Postmaster was permanently absent, and in the service of Fountain Colony."[60] A woman, Miss Morris, even ran for the position, but lost because she announced her candidacy the morning of the election. Ninety-eight women voted in the election, and it demonstrated the further political prominence of women in making decisions in the colony. This election and its step toward gender equality was another example of the desert people of Union colony becoming more like the Cheyennes that they replaced. The more pronounced gender roles and physical separation of these spaces illustrate how the women of Greeley gained some freedom from their husbands to challenge the masculine

[59] Nathan Meeker, "Women Workers," *The Greeley Tribune*, October 4, 1871.
[60] Nathan Meeker, "Post Office Election – Women Voting in Greeley," *The Greeley Tribune,* December 6, 1871.

structure of the village. Despite this, the veneer of progressive ideology was not substantial enough for real progress to be made in the everyday lives of Greeley women, as Green's memoirs indicate.

In addition to these mistruths about gender equality, Meeker's estimated costs for the irrigation canals were also grossly undervalued. This caused the Union Colonists to struggle to find the funds to maintain access to the Poudre that they relied on and the forts upstream that took all of the water that Greeley needed. First off the cost of the irrigation canals greatly exceeded what they had allocated for it. They expected it would run $20,000, but just the first ditch cost $27,000, and once they were finished they had spent $412,000."[61] Furthermore, Donald Worster described how Fort Collins diverted all of the Poudre in 1874, and Union Colony sued Fort Collins to have access to their fair share of the water. Union Colonists fought out of desperation for the Poudre knowing that their colony would die if Fort Collins absorbed all the water that they depended on. They eventually won their right to water when the judge decided that the Euro-American settlers who were there first had the first right to water. According to Worster, this court case is important because the ruling dictated that "the West should in fact be growing crops and building up its population, that it should be cut up into private property, that its water or any other resource should be exploited to its maximum economic potential."[62] More importantly, this case illustrates the violence and disputes that took place over the Poudre for at least fifty years. The Cheyennes and the whites both depended on it, and fought different forces to have access to it.

[61] Donald Worster, *River of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 87. Worster summarizes the trial thoroughly and demonstrates the importance of this court case in creating the Colorado Water Law.
[62] Worster, 92.

Nathan Meeker had incurred debt from Horace Greeley as he worked to establish Greeley, Colorado. After Greeley died in 1872, his family sued Meeker in 1876. The newly formed Centennial State sided with Greeley's family and charged Meeker $2,117.70.[63] If Meeker was in fact a "Born Loser" gone West, he nonetheless managed to cut his losses in the Union Colony and convince himself that a post as Indian Agent at the Ute's White River Agency was his higher calling.

Nathan Meeker, his wife Arvilla, and their daughter Josephine moved to the White River Agency to continue their progressive activity by teaching Utes how to set up irrigation canals. Meeker was already encouraged by tribal members' agricultural work in the summer of 1871. According to the Denver Tribune, "some of the Yampah's had commenced tilling the soil and that they seemed to take an interest in this work," and the agent had brought cattle and other livestock to the Utes.[64] Meeker expected that his expertise with irrigation, if not money management, would be well suited for the White River Agency. Meeker was invited to attend the Philadelphia Exposition because of the fame he earned for starting Union Colony. After meeting with dignitaries at the Philadelphia Exposition, Meeker made connections with Colorado congressmen Thomas M. Patterson and James Belford, and convinced them to make him a Native American agent for the Utes. Meeker convinced his son Ralph that he would become an agent for the Utes because, "I think I have some real fitness for managing Indian affairs. I have seen them a good deal, seen their school and churches have studied their ways, and

[63] Charles Storrs and Richard H Manning vs. Nathan C. Meeker, State of Colorado, Weld County, November Term, 1876.
[64] "Indian Farms," *The Denver Tribune* July 25, 1871.

beside have had much experiences in the cure of people and in the news of whites on the frontier."[65]

Shortly before they left for the White River Agency, Meeker sent his wife a letter illustrating how he viewed himself as unworthy of her, but he also stated, "I have a claim on you since I have labored for you, and struggled to reform myself so as to gain your love, and I am anxious, and should be delighted still to improve and to gain your highest approbation, that in so doing I may prepare myself for wider appreciation and love of all things."[66] Despite his words of affection he continued to act as a trickster. A trickster to the Union Colonists for convincing them of a false reality of the mythic West, to the women he met and encountered by promoting a false reality of gendered progress. Despite all of his mistruths, a town emerged from his lies that adopted an intimacy to the Poudre. The Cache La Poudre could only teach those willing to learn and this willingness to listen to the land and its waters divided the Cheyenne from their displacers, the Union Colonists and the American government that stood behind them.

[65] Nathan Meeker to Ralph Meeker, March 10, 1877, Greeley, Colorado.
[66] Nathan Meeker to Arvilla Meeker, October 16, 1876.

Conclusion: Spiders and Desert People's Memories of Colorado

Though their interests and perspectives were often in conflict, both Nathan Meeker and the Cheyennes memorialized their time in Colorado and rivers like the Cache la Poudre left an indelible mark on them. For Meeker's memorialization, former adherents expressed the success of settler colonialism in the West, while the Cheyennes remembered their experience in Colorado in their use of rivers in Oklahoma and through their resistance against Euro-American influence. H. J. Hay's *Colorado Poetry Illustrated Wholly from White River Scenery* and Bureau of Indian Affairs documents reveal settler-colonial and Cheyenne claims to lands in the Cache la Poudre basin. Hay's poetry idolizes Meeker and his efforts to settle in Colorado, while BIA records chronicle the Cheyennes' adoption of agriculture and their oral histories of the time after Colorado. Ultimately these literary and legal documents illustrate that the Cache la Poudre represented an important source of life that provided Natives and newcomers alike with the means to survive in the "Great American Desert."

H.J. Hay, the county treasurer of Meeker, Colorado at its incorporation in 1885, wrote a book of poetry entitled, *Colorado Poetry Illustrated Wholly from White River Scenery* in 1908.[1] Hay specifically utilized imagery of the White River to focus on the town of Meeker, named for Nathan Meeker. Hay's book of poetry served three purposes: to illustrate the environmental beauty of White River through photography, to memorialize Meeker, and to condemn Ute Indians. After Meeker left Greeley, he tried to force Utes to adopt agriculture at the White River Reservation. During his work in White River, the resident Utes rebelled against the white agents, and according to Meeker, "We

[1] Frank Hall, *History of the State of Colorado, Embracing Accounts of the Pre-historic Races and Their Remains* (Denver: Blakely Printing Company, 1895), 286.

have plowed eighty acres. The Indians object to any more being done. Shall stop plowing. One of the plowmen was shot at last week. I was assaulted Monday in my own house by Chief Johnson, forced out doors, and considerably injured."[2] Finally, frustrated by the Meeker's imposition of agriculture, they murdered him in 1879, thus contributing to the beginning of the Ute War.[3]

Hay wanted to illustrate Euro-Americans had concluded the violence and memorialize Meeker who had built Union Colony. Ultimately, Hay's poetry book illustrated that Native Americans, universally, were a "vanishing race." To convince his readers of these points, Hay gendered both Native Americans and white settlers in different ways by examining Ute men as the last of a race and emasculated without families, and the white settlers of Meeker as reproductive bearers of civilization. Hay accomplished this by assembling men, women, and children in photographic composites to represent heteronormative family units and the sustainable future of white settlement. Consequently, Hay's depiction of Ute extinction and white success underscores the nearly thirty years of animosity that remained since the Meeker Massacre and Ute War. Overall, the whites of the White River area were not ready to forget, but rather to reinforce the legacy of their nineteenth-century settler-colonial dominance in Colorado.

One image that communicated Hay's anger at Utes was Meeker's deserted ranch where they killed him. Hay distorted the images of two Utes to express his belief in white supremacy through modernism. He selected two male Utes as the subjects for his poetry to remove any sympathy that could be attributed to a woman or child. Additionally, by merely showing male Utes, Hay tacitly promoted that they have no future because they

[2] Nathan Meeker, "Letter from Agent Meeker," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 2 October 1879, 2.
[3] Ralph Meeker, "The Martyred Meeker," *Kinsley Graphic*, November 1, 1879, 2.

had no women to reproduce children and propagate their culture. Hay contributed to the "vanishing race" myth that Edward S. Curtis and George Catlin made popular. This theory assumed that Natives would slowly die out, and only artwork and photographs would preserve them. This theory assumes stereotypes about all Native Americans. According to historian Philip Deloria, "If all Indians were alike in a certain way (heathen savages), then one could see clearly what was to be done (convert them)."[4] Hay played on a similar theme by illustrating that all Utes were vanishing or were dying.

In this book of poetry, the Utes failed to adopt agriculture and killed Meeker, thus they passed their lives until their culture no longer exists. Hay describes the Utes as savages, but he could not capture this barbarity in his images of them. Rather, the first image of a "Ute Medicine Man," portrayed him as calm, with his gaze directed at the camera, almost insouciant as if he was somber and sullen for the photographer to be finished with his work. Additionally, he is bedecked in some traditional tribal garb with feathers and a headband, and has incorporated a plaid blanket into clothing. This medicine man definitely seemed to indicate that he is either living on the reservation and has passively accepted the inevitable dominance of white society. The second photo shows another passive Ute, named "White River Ute." Hay opines "This sunny land no longer knows the Ute; His mystic tales are told, his lips are mute."[5] The White River Ute is wrapped up in a garment that seems to cover his body from the cold and his clothing also covered his mouth, which made him "mute." Similar to the medicine man, "White River Ute" is depicted in some traditional clothing items such as a feather in his hair and moccasins. He is not facing the camera, and his gaze is pointed downwards, indicating

[4] Philip Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004), 8.
[5] Ibid., 13.

his submissive acceptance of the presumably white viewer's scrutiny. Still, the Ute appears languid and unperturbed. Additionally, it is difficult to see, but there appears to be a settlement behind him, and a horse tied up to post as if he has created a permanent settlement.

Although Hay intended to illustrate Ute men as a defeated people or a primitive, barbaric race, Ute people survived settler-colonialism and there are signs of their persistence in Hay's photographs. In the case of the "mute" Ute, it appears that he has established home and was not vanishing. His wife and children or an entire village of Utes might have been living in the settlement that Hay promoted as vanishing. Additionally, many of them potentially could have adapted to the white gaze of the camera, such as other Native Americans like the Apache chief Geronimo.[6] Patricia Limerick summed up this acclimatization well when she said, "Adaptation and borrowing were far more central to Indian tradition than was any imposed notion of purity."[7] Furthermore, a strange irony emerged that the Utes in these pictures either were not alive for the "Meeker Massacre," or else were too young to participate. Overall, historian Laura Wexler states, "they are actual people who have been photographed, but they are also symbolic constructions that produced [a] highly political meaning."[8] The term Ute was all that mattered when attached to a race of people and Hay manipulated the history between Utes and whites to create a book of poetry that promoted propaganda of white settlers' success.

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[6] Sandweiss, 230.
[7] Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1987), 189.
[8] Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 61.

Just as the Utes battled Meeker and federal Indian policy in Colorado, the Cheyennes struggled to survive in Oklahoma, and succeeded despite opposition from the arid landscape. According Indian agent John Miles,

> A more earnest effort I never witnessed put forth by any people than was by the Cheyennes, so far as their means and knowledge extended, and as a result they have been quite successful and have already received and are now receiving a fair reward for their industry. I have seen some of these Cheyennes, who could not secure the use of a plow or hoe use sticks of wood, axes, and their hands in preparing the land for planting and cultivation.[9]

Just as they had done in the Cache La Poudre basin, the Cheyennes once again showed their ability to survive in a new landscape, but the United States Department of the Interior undermined their efforts. By the late-nineteenth century, the Cheyennes projected growing 100,000 bushels of corn. According to anthropologist John Moore, "That year, however, the land was given over to white settlers, and so the harvest was aborted and what corn was left on Cheyenne land was soon trampled down by homesteader activity or eaten by their stock."[10] The Cheyennes continued to fight and struggle despite the odds that were against them.

For the Northern Cheyennes, they likewise adopted agriculture in Montana during a time Stands in Timber called "Getting civilized." They too successfully adopted agriculture at their new reservation. Despite these successes, Stands in Timber recalled that the Cheyennes at that time struggled to learn English. According to him, "One story they still tell is about the fellow who translated a certain kind of tobacco as 'powder.'" In this story a man smoked with his friend and later went home and smoked gunpowder. Comparable to a Wihio story, the Cheyenne man's wife told him to not smoke it since gunpowder explodes. He did regardless and the stem blew way back into his mouth.

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[9] United States of America and John Miles, *22nd Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1876*.
[10] John H Moore, *The Cheyenne Nation*, 147.

According to the story, his wife walked back into their home and said "Go ahead, smoke some more of that powder."[11] This story illustrates that despite their new subsistence strategies, in their new homes, they would never become like white people fully. There was always this difference between the Desert People and the spiders.

The Euro-Americans and Native Americans remembered the Cache la Poudre as a source of life for both groups of people. The Arapahoes, Cheyennes, and Utes had fished and hunted on its banks and French trappers named this river after they were caught in a blizzard and needed to bury their gun powder to prevent it from getting wet.[12] This river had served humans and helped them survive, but they ultimately discovered ways to live and survive in the Colorado Piedmont through transforming their cultures and environment. Although these transformations in Cheyenne and Euro-American culture were different, their ability to transform the landscape and themselves is a testament the resiliency of Cheyennes and spiders in Colorado. Wihio was able to survive, but only because the Cheyennes pioneered the way first and the Poudre provided them with nourishment.

[11] John Stands in Timber, 280.
[12] Norman Walter Fry, *Cache la Poudre "The River" As Seen from 1889*, 10.

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