"Traveling the White Man's Road" : The Quest for Identity in Hampton's Indian Newspaper, 1886 1907

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"TRAVELING THE WHITE MAN'S ROAD":
THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN HAMPTON'S INDIAN NEWSPAPER, 1886-1907

A Master's Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the American Studies Department
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Eli T. Winkler
1998
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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Approved, December 1998

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the two co-advisors for this thesis, Professors Robert Gross and Richard Price, for their guidance. Professor Gross kindly agreed to oversee the project despite his year-long sabbatical, and I am grateful to him for his time and considerable effort on my behalf. Thanks also to Professor James Axtell for his expertise and careful reading of the manuscript. A final thanks as well to the helpful and friendly staff of the Hampton University archives.
ABSTRACT

In the late nineteenth century, the U.S. federal government committed itself to policies that forced native peoples to assimilate into white society in the name of “civilization.” The Indian School at Hampton University was born of this process in 1878.

At Hampton, under the leadership of a charismatic former Civil War general, the Indian students followed a curriculum designed to allow them to capitalize on the promises of integration. Training in English, literacy, agriculture, and technical vocations intended to prepare Indians for future professional endeavors and make them proficient teachers for their respective tribes.

Indian students at the school had their own newspaper, *Talks and Thoughts*, from 1886 to 1907. The newspaper was one facet of the program at Hampton, but it was also a means of communication for a larger Indian community. *Talks and Thoughts* united current and former Hampton students, and also connected them with Indians at other boarding schools.

This thesis explores the ways in which Indian students used *Talks and Thoughts* to project themselves as an elite group that was committed to the project of assimilation under the terms set out by Hampton. In the newspaper there are indications of protest by the Indian students. These traces of dissatisfaction are examined in detail and placed in their historical context.

Despite *Talks and Thoughts*’s best efforts at proving the capacities of Indians for “civilization,” some whites continued to resist their inclusion. This paper shows how the students at Hampton attempted to use their newspaper as a vehicle for asserting a pan-Indian identity that they hoped would bring them the recognition they deserved.
“TRAVELING THE WHITE MAN’S ROAD”:
THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN HAMPTON’S INDIAN NEWSPAPER,
1886-1907
Hampton Institute was founded in 1868 for the education of the recently emancipated black freedmen. In 1877, Hampton extended its mission to include Indians. The program lasted until 1923, with a total of 1,451 Indians representing sixty-five tribes passing through its doors. Only 155 graduated. From 1886 to 1907 the Indian students had their own newspaper known as Talks and Thoughts. The newspaper was intended to connect current Hampton Indian students with their former classmates, many of whom had returned to their reservations.

In January 1889, an anonymous Indian student began the narrative that he contributed to the Hampton Indian School newspaper with the following advice: “The patient reader of our noble little pioneer paper, the Talks and Thoughts, is... earnestly requested to read between the lines.” If it was true at the time of the writing of the article that any reader had to endeavor to understand not only the content but the context of the material at hand, it is equally true a century later. In the case of Hampton and its Indian newspaper, that particular context is

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2 Ibid., Appendix A.

As a point of comparison with black students, for the school years 1908-09 to 1913-14 inclusive, 1,423 black students entered Hampton. Within that time, 300 (21%) graduated, 689 (48%) dropped out, and 434 (31%) stayed on for the 1914-15 term. 106 (24%) of the 434 who stayed for 1914-15 graduated that same year. See M.J. Sherman, “Negro Students Entering Hampton 1908-’9 to 1913-’14 Inclusive,” Student Conduct and Activities Record Group (1915), Hampton University Archives.

3 I explore this article, “Custer Massacre,” in much greater depth below in the chapter entitled “Talks and Thoughts as a Space for Indian Assertions of Identity.”
unique. Hampton Institute was the only school of its time to educate both blacks and Indians on the same premises. And, *Talks and Thoughts* was, in the words of its editors, "the only paper in the country whose editors and contributors are only Indians. Other papers are written for the Indians, but not by them."\(^4\)

Although printed, written, and marketed by Indian students, *Talks and Thoughts* was directly supervised by Hampton faculty. Like any official publication, *Talks and Thoughts* reflected on the reputation and "progress" of the Indian School and the larger Hampton Institute. Here Indian students, with the help of the school’s resources, attempted to show their capacities for the various aspects that "civilization" implied—literacy, industry, private property, domesticity, self-improvement, liberty, and law. Displays of this kind served to enhance the overall mission of Hampton and prove that Indians were capable of assimilation into white society. When dishonest or ignorant whites refused to play by the rules that "civilization" supposedly mandated—i.e. treaties and land settlements that cheated or took advantage of Indians, or the denial of equality on a racial basis—*Talks and Thoughts* responded with measured criticism.

In analyzing the newspaper, it becomes evident that it served as a means for Indian students to express themselves—albeit under institutional supervision—to a small audience consisting mainly of comprehending, empathetic readers like themselves. It also suggests the emergence of new pan-Indian identity, as *Talks and Thoughts* strove to unite a growing group

\(^4\) Editorial board, untitled, *Talks and Thoughts* (Nov. 1904).
of Indians that still recognized tribal distinctions but also felt connected by the potential that they might, as Hampton's motto encouraged them, "lead and serve" their race. This could be accomplished in a variety of ways. Indian students, most of whom were recruited from Midwestern reservations, might return to their tribes as teachers, translators, farmers, lawyers, among other professions. Moreover, they could bring the experience of having served as cultural mediators. This knowledge might make a substantial difference in important tribal decisions that related to land deals, government aid, or communication with federal Indian agents.

Hampton Indian students faced a daunting task. As Midwestern Indian communities emerged from military subjugation in the mid/late-nineteenth century, they embraced diverse political strategies. Some tribal leaders chose to cling to their old ways in a setting that no longer supported them. Others synthesized old and new into resistance against the new conditions imposed upon them. A third class of modernizers largely accepted the terms of assimilation, but protested when whites refused to accept them on equal terms as they attempted to adopt white customs and bourgeois values. Many Hampton Indian students belonged to this final category, as their education made them especially capable to navigate between white and Indian cultures. Yet it could not save them from significant disappointment: in *Talks and Thoughts* we can see how Hampton Indian students embraced the promises of inclusion but also struggled with difficult obstacles like racial prejudice, the loss of native values, and betrayal by whites with regard to treaties and contracts.

In this paper I examine the text of the newspaper closely, but only after first exploring the social terrain from which it emerged. This includes brief forays into the history of Hampton
and its founding, the national politics of Indian education, and the institutional ideologies that motivated and sustained the Indian School. I analyze the print shop from which the newspaper was produced in its commercial and promotional capacities, and I consider *Talks and Thoughts* in relation to other campus publications. Finally, by “reading between the lines” of the newspaper, I show how Indian students attempted to define themselves as members of an educated elite determined to succeed, both on a personal level and on behalf of their indigenous cultures, in white society.
CHAPTER I

Black Hampton and the National Education Scene

Even before the Civil War ended, the town of Hampton had already become a testing-ground for the new national order that was to follow the social upheaval of civil war and the emancipation of black slaves throughout the South. During the war, Union forces controlled the area around Fortress Monroe, causing local whites to burn and then abandon the town.5 Thus deserted, the area became a zone of refuge for many escaped slaves who settled there and cultivated much of the land. Immediately after the war, the national government recognized the importance of restoring order to such newly formed communities, of which Hampton was one of the largest. Numerous groups converged upon the town in pursuit of a variety of goals. Whites originally from Hampton returned to reclaim land, blacks kept pouring in looking for work, missionaries arrived ready to begin their “civilizing” missions, while the government sent administrators from the Freedmen’s Bureau to impose federal law on the land.

It was around this time, February 1866, that Hampton Institute’s eventual founder Samuel Chapman Armstrong entered the local political arena. The son of Hawaiian missionaries and a former general in the Union Army, Armstrong was appointed superintendent

5 Donal F. Lindsey, Indians at Hampton Institute, 1877-1923, (Urbana, IL, 1995), 7.
of the Ninth Subdivision of Virginia by the Freedmen’s Bureau. The area under his control included nine counties, was headquartered at Hampton, and was considered to be among the “most delicate” in the country. The responsibilities of that a superintendent faced “can only be described as daunting;” wrote historian Eric Foner, “they included introducing a workable system of free labor in the South, establishing schools for freedmen, providing aid to the destitute, aged, ill, and insane, adjudicating disputes among blacks and between the races, and attempting to secure for blacks and white Unionists equal justice from the state and local governments established during Presidential Reconstruction.”

It was from this position of authority that Armstrong first began to design the school, which he wished to be independent of the prevailing American Missionary Association (AMA) liberal-arts models that were being implemented throughout the country. The AMA schools emphasized literacy; Armstrong preferred instead a curriculum of only modest liberal-arts content focused primarily on intensive instruction in agricultural, industrial, and mechanical vocations. Conceptually, the goals of the school were closely related to the unifying theme of the Freedmen’s Bureau: the preparation of a free labor force for the South. This meant not only training men and women for specific tasks, but also instilling in them a work ethic appropriate for a labor pool that would be propelled by economic rationality rather than slavery. Armstrong’s stated mission was “to make of them not accomplished scholars, but to

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7 Eric Foner, A Short History of Reconstruction, 1863-1877, (New York, 1990), 64.
build up character and manhood."^8 Although Armstrong harbored high hopes for the professional prospects of his students, the pressing need for manual labor in the fields during the immediate post-war period determined that most blacks that remained in the South would fulfill the familiar underclass positions. Armstrong’s plan was to plant the seeds for their eventual climb.

It is not surprising, then, that Hampton Institute was founded as a school where manual labor existed as a means to something greater. Students worked during the day, turning their wages into remuneration for the “book” education they received from the Night School, while the Institute benefitted from their labor by way of financially tenable (if not outrightly profitable) workshops and farms.^9 As Armstrong said, “Of course [manual labor] cannot pay in a money way, but it will pay in a moral way. It will make them men and women as nothing else will. It is the only way to make them Christians.”^10 Literacy, in the general’s schema, took a backseat to character. Hampton students needed to be able to command the respect of the whites, and this required understanding a coda what was considered mature, adult behavior.

By the time Hampton opened its doors in 1868, Armstrong had secured a solid political base to ensure support for the project. This had required adept political maneuvering, as Armstrong had to garner funds and allies the midst of the transition from the “presidential” to

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^9 Engs, Freedom’s First Generation, 149.

^10 Francis Greenwood Peabody, Education for Life, (Hampton, VA, 1914), 60.
“radical” reconstruction of the South. Presidential reconstruction under President Andrew Johnson had restored whites to positions of power and reneged on the government’s promises of full-fledged emancipation. Laws mandating blacks to return to rural areas and sign work contracts had the effect of inhibiting the development of a truly free market in land and labor. Radical reconstruction put a new set of players with vastly different objectives, as a Republican-dominated Congress moved to guarantee black suffrage through the Fourteenth Amendment, remove rebels from office, and institute military rule in the South. The Freedmen’s Bureau was the constant in the political tumult, despite its temporary status. Of all its duties, education was the only one that intended to leave permanent institutions in the South. Armstrong seized onto education as a viable crusade that would have a lasting place in any plan for reconstruction.

Education had come to be seen as the most pragmatic way to allow individuals to pursue economic advancement without disrupting the prevailing class structures in the South. With its relatively conservative agenda, Hampton was a safe bet to be well-received by present and future federal governments. Although Armstrong had risen to prominence during the war and the restoration period, by 1868 he had already allied himself with leaders of radical reconstruction, including future President James Garfield and AMA head Mark Hopkins. As with the later Indian School, Armstrong’s ability to procure prominent supporters for Hampton was integral to his success. Armstrong was also alert to shifts in public sentiment, and he often

gauged the appropriate moments to initiate lobbying campaigns locally, in Congress, or among northern donors. The campus' newspapers—Southern Workman and, to a much lesser extent, Talks and Thoughts—played substantial roles in the promotion of Hampton to distant audiences eager to fund a worthy project.

Indeed, Armstrong's project appealed to many of his contemporaries because of its grand scope. Unlike many of the schools for freedmen, Hampton aimed not just to educate a particular community but an entire race by providing them with capable black teachers to go out into the field and to further Hampton's edifying mission. Armstrong's insistence on coeducation was commensurate with his vision that Hampton be all-inclusive; it was to be a "little world" unto itself, a microcosm of black existence. The need for such a comprehensive education, Armstrong told his potential donors, was pressing. Black students did not simply need industrial training, they needed industriousness. As Armstrong saw it, this sense of thrift and self-reliance could be taught by actively demonstrating the "Puritan" work ethic. Accordingly, students were instructed by white teachers who preached and practiced "virtuous" behavior and encouraged blacks to cultivate essential characteristics such as independence and self-discipline. Racist whites were condemned by Hampton, but in general whites were held out as examples for imitation. Even when a third race was added to Hampton's mix with the arrival of the Indian students, whites were still the only model of proper behavior—despite the plethora of black examples on campus. Accordingly, Hampton devised

12 Engs, Freedom's First Generation, 144.
an "outing" program that placed Indian students with white families during the summer break in order to show them how white families lived, farmed, and worked.

Despite some progressive elements of Hampton, the school and its founder were inclined toward a vision that endorsed only moderate social change. "In short," commented historian Louis Harlan, "Armstrong undertook to prepare blacks not only in the skills but the psychological attitudes that he thought would best promote their assimilation into white society at the level he paternalistically judged them to be best fitted." Whenever possible, Armstrong reminded his students that their task was to become indispensable to whites through material rather than political means. Harlan enumerated the school's conservatism:

When the Civil Rights Act of 1875 was passed... the Southern Workman pleaded with black people "to raise no needless and ill-considered issue under the present law," and to use integrated facilities only when none were provided for blacks separately....

Readers of the南方工作分子 probably found the title of the [newspaper] itself significant of the role they were being prepared to play.... [The newspaper] said also that the labor unions were conspiracies to defy the laws of economics and try to get something for nothing.14 Armstrong relentlessly championed self-help, but he paradoxically refused to acknowledge the way his own involvement in black affairs violated this sacred principle.

The limited scope of Armstrong's curriculum was controversial and widely debated. Armstrong insisted, rather ironically in the eyes of his detractors, on teaching ex-slaves how to work. He argued that "An English course embracing reading and elocution, geography and

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14 Harlan, Booker T. Washington, 74-75.
mathematics, history, the sciences, the study of the mental and moral science, or political
economy would, I think... exhaust the best powers of nineteen-twentieths of those who would
for years come to the Institute.”¹⁵ Instead, he focused on immediate mechanical and industrial
education, which was complemented by the Normal School. Amid the debate, Hampton
opened in April 1868 with five teachers and fifteen pupils. Historian Robert Engs described the
initial criteria for selection:

Students were to be of “good character,” be able to read and write at the fifth-
grade level, and be between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five. Admission
procedures were generally lax; students usually appeared at the school, were
briefly interviewed by a teacher, and accepted “on trial.” Those who had a
trade were admonished to “bring your tools along.”¹⁶

By 1887, the curriculum was roughly equal to that of a high school, with students receiving
degrees after three years of study if no supplementary labor was needed to finance their
education. With what amounted to a secondary school education, most Hampton graduates
would be qualified to teach elementary school. Hampton did not become a standard college
until the 1920's; up until that time, it committed itself mainly to providing its graduates with
enough of an education to return to the black community to teach others basic skills.¹⁷

¹⁵ Peabody, Education for Life, 8.

¹⁶ Engs, Freedom’s First Generation, 149.

¹⁷ That is not to say, however, that Hampton did not take its curriculum seriously. On the
contrary, Hampton during this epoch graduated only about one-fifth of its students. “This was in many
cases because the poverty of students would not allow them to continue in school, but here a
competitive principal operated, for Hampton found ways to keep the more promising students in
school.... The school was deeply serious about its function as a sifter and a winnower.” See Harlan,
Booker T. Washington, 72.
Many students were not channeled directly through the Normal School. The majority of the students had a trade and thus did a combination of work and study. Hampton evolved to meet their needs and its own. Armstrong created two systems, the Night School, in which the student worked a full day and received a book education in the evening, and the alternative routine by which regular students worked two full days per week and studied during the remainder of the time. Complex jobs in the printing office, blacksmith and wheelwright shops, the sawmill, and the farm required regular work and hence called for night school students. According to Engs's calculations, by 1884, 228 of the 654 total students at Hampton were doing the Night School program, most of whom apparently never actually completed the regular Normal School.

Thus, by the time the Indian students began to arrive in significant numbers in 1878, Hampton had already constructed a curriculum that balanced the school's financial and ideological concerns with pressing student needs. Although the new Indian pupils were thrust into the pre-existing system at Hampton, the school soon recognized that the Indian students would require special classes in English as well as substantially different disciplinary and cultural treatment.
CHAPTER II

U.S. Federal Policy and the Formation of the Indian School at Hampton

By the 1860's, federal Indian policy had taken a major turn from its original “removal” strategy designed to push native Americans away from eastern population centers. With the westward expansion of the railroad opening up new lands and opportunities for whites in the West, the national government increasingly looked to secure those areas and make them safe for settlers and commerce. The resulting national policy was the reservation system, which separated whites and Indians. Removal had effectively given way to containment. The assumption was that with Indians settled in permanent locations, their eventual “civilization” would effectively break down the reservation system and, by implication, the indigenous cultures themselves.

Among those efforts to break down the reservation system was the removal of children from native lands to boarding schools, where they could begin to learn the things that would eventually integrate them into white society and weaken the individual tribes. In addition to Armstrong’s commitment to the “civilizing” mission, his interest in Indian education was in part attributable to the growing attention and funding aimed at the “Indian problem.” Hampton’s Indian School was by no means the first attempt at Indian education, but it was the leader in a wave of new schools prompted by the annual appropriations begun by the federal government
in 1877.\textsuperscript{18} Between 1887 and 1900, the number of Indian schools in existence almost doubled from 150 to 296, school attendance increased five-fold, and the amount of annual federal funding rose from $20,000 to $2,936,080.\textsuperscript{19} Armstrong quickly realized the potential benefits of such funding. His motivation was aptly articulated in a letter to his wife in 1878: “[The Indians] are a new step ahead & make the school very strong, and, really, Kitty, they are a big card for this school & will diminish my grey hairs. There’s money in them I tell you.”\textsuperscript{20} Such funds might also be used to subsidize the freedmen’s education.

Changes in Indian education were only one facet of larger policy reforms. Most prominent among them was the Dawes Act of 1887, which sought effectively to force Indians into citizenship and to privatize land distribution. The act granted 160 acres of land to each Indian on the reservation, which carried with it a 25-year period of waiting before the granting of an official title in fee, at which time the Indian would become subject to state law and

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{18} Other schools that had previously attempted Indian education with limited federal funds included, but were not limited to, a small educational project aimed at the Six Nations of New York (1793), mechanical training within an academic program at Choctaw Academy (Kentucky, 1834), a manual labor school at Ft. Leavenworth (Kansas), and a boarding school on the Yakima reservation (Washington, 1860). These funds were provisional, unlike the annual granting that provided for the 1877 boom in Indian schools. See Margaret Rosten Muir, “Indian Education at Hampton Institute and Federal Indian Policy: Solutions to the Indian Problem,” (M.A. thesis, Brown University, 1970), 10-11.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior}, (Washington, 1900), 54.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{20} Samuel C. Armstrong, to Emma Armstrong, April 19, 1878, Williamsona Collection, Williams College Archives and Special Collections, Williams College, Massachusetts, cited in Mary Lou Hultgren and Paulette Fairbanks Molin, \textit{To Lead and To Serve: American Indian Education at Hampton Institute, 1878-1923}, (Virginia Beach, VA, 1989), 17-18.}
\end{footnotes}
taxation. The Dawes Act replaced the Coke Bill of 1881, which had allowed each tribe to choose whether or not it wished to participate in the allocation program. Indians in the West were being incorporated into the mechanisms of land ownership, but with limited opportunities for success. Many of the tribes were not traditionally inclined toward agriculture, and even those that were prepared for it faced stiff and often unlawful competition from whites for the land. It is estimated that eventually over fifty million acres of land were expropriated from Indian control.\textsuperscript{21} Hampton-educated Indians, with their linguistic, cultural, and agricultural training, might have been best prepared for the challenges that the Dawes Act posed, but they did not comprise a contingent large enough to stem the large-scale transfers of land out of tribal hands that the legislation condoned. Even so, Armstrong's goal of making Hampton Indian students capable speakers for and protectors of their respective tribes seems in retrospect a logical, if not entirely effective, plan for dealing with the dramatic changes (such as land redistribution) prompted by forced integration.

Armstrong played a vital role in the passage of the Dawes Act, which he saw as an impetus for the Indian to get off the public dole and into the private marketplace. Like many of the black students at Hampton, Armstrong likened the Indians to the black race "only twenty-five years earlier," provided with their food, clothes, and entirely dependent on others for basic needs, but without the "advantages" of acculturation from years of enslavement. The General used his expert status as educator of Indians to influence passage of the Dawes Act; he lobbied

\textsuperscript{21} Hultgren and Molin, \textit{To Lead and to Serve}, 12.
fellow members of the 1885 Mohonk Conference with a position paper endorsing the enforced compliance and allotment features of the proposal.

With the signing of the Dawes Act into law on February 8, 1887, Hampton designated its anniversary “Indian Independence Day” and celebrated it annually with food, activities, and speakers. Senator Dawes, the sponsor of the bill, attended several of these commemorations, and their yearly succession is detailed in the pages of *Talks and Thoughts*. More concretely, Hampton redoubled its efforts at agricultural training for Indian students after 1887 with the expectation that more would have the chance to utilize it. The Dawes Act and Armstrong’s participation in its passage are representative of the interdependent relationship between the Hampton Indian School and federal Indian policy. The Indian School arose specifically out of the “civilizing” mission of the reservation system, and then, with its subsequent creation, became a major trend-setter in national Indian education. The Dawes Act and the Indian School came into being at a moment when the overpowering force of the American nation could not be avoided by Indians. Regardless of their attitudes toward whites, the prospects of Indians depended on the promises of the Dawes Act and the pursuit of assimilation. Armstrong offered leadership and required faith.
CHAPTER III

The Introduction of Indians to Hampton and the Production Process

Peter Johnson (Ute) became Hampton’s first Indian student in 1877. He was followed by the arrival of a group of Plains Indians in the spring of 1878 under the command of Captain Richard Pratt, an eventual Hampton administrator and founder of his own Indian Industrial School at Carlisle (Pennsylvania). The group, of which fifteen were to remain at Hampton (the others dispersed to other locations or their former homes), was transferred from a St. Augustine prison, where they had been serving time for supposed “savage” behavior on the frontier. Pratt, who had directed black and Indian forces in the Civil War, had been in charge of the group ever since their capture in the Midwest and he served as their administrator during their time in St. Augustine. Although they were prisoners, he removed their chains and put them to work picking oranges doing local wage jobs. After three years of labor and rudimentary education, it was decided that returning the Indians to the reservation would likely undo the purported benefits they had obtained from interaction with whites. Pratt contacted Hampton to see if other arrangements were possible.

Armstrong initially resisted, preferring instead to seek a “wilder” Indian group in need of “taming” that would bring Hampton more publicity than the St. Augustine prisoners (mostly Cheyenne, Kiowa and Arapaho) who already dressed and spoke like whites. However, when
it became clear that funding was available for this particular group, Armstrong consented.

Finally, on April 14, 1878, the Indians set foot on the Hampton campus amid numerous and contradictory fears that circulated throughout the town and school. Some worried that red and black would become intimate, others that they would fight, and yet others that the two races would collude and rise up against whites. Armstrong declared there was no need for worry because they had come to work. The Cheyenne war chief, speaking through Pratt, assuaged apprehensions by stating that the "skins of the people he meets here are just alike, colored, and these young men here all say to you, 'How do ye do?'"22

While local whites feared discord as a result of biracial education and many went so far as to say that contact with blacks would defile Indians, a few prominent black critics also expressed disapproval of the Hampton experiment. Virginia Starr editor John W. Cromwell was one vocal dissenter. Cromwell thought that the inclusion of Indian prisoners was inappropriate and detrimental to the school, which he thought had already been compromised by its emphasis on vocational, rather than academic, training. More moderate detractors wondered if the more sensationalized campaign to educate Indians would distract attention and money from black students. Armstrong defended the school against such charges by claiming that the original intent had been to help the "despised races," not just the Negro.23

Within months after accepting the Florida prisoners, Armstrong went about expanding the program under national supervision. Several tribes were selected for involvement, primarily

22 Lindsey, Indians at Hampton Institute, 30.

23 Lindsey, Indians at Hampton Institute, 56.
the Sioux. As an especially "warlike" tribe, the Sioux were chosen in order to show how even
the most aggressive Indians could be "civilized" through education. But the motivation for taking
Indian children from their families on the reservation was not entirely altruistic; "These
prospective Hampton students were hostages. Their attendance in a distant boarding school
insured peace, stability, and order. More importantly, their presence among former enemies
was designed to make tribal leaders more manageable and cooperative."24 Indian pupils were
also aggressively recruited from other less troublesome tribes, but many decided not to allow
their youngsters to go. Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce refused all attempts to educate his
children, including offers from Hampton.25

On the other hand, some chiefs were eager to provide their children with the
opportunities that boarding schools afforded them. Armstrong commented on this trend: "[F]or
more than a century the Indian rejected our civilization. Now their thinking men (for they are a
race of thinkers), forecast the future, and wish their children taught the white man’s way as the
only hope.... They do not choose this, they are compelled to it; hundreds, thousands, and
waiting and glad to work for an education."26 These chiefs, unlike the strict Indian traditionalists
who tried to carry on old ways that no longer served them well in a new setting, realized that a
new generation of formally educated Indians would have greater chances for success at both

24 Brudvig, "Bridging the Cultural Divide," 61.

25 Ibid., 60.

26 Samuel C. Armstrong, The Indian Question (Hampton, 1883), 21-22, cited in Brudvig.
"Bridging the Cultural Divide," 91.
the individual and tribal level.

Many of the students at Hampton were the sons and daughters of such foresighted leaders. At the other extreme, however, there were numerous orphans that were sent to Hampton by traditionalist tribes that resisted giving up all other (parented, and thus more readily protected) children. Boys were more likely to be released into custody because women did more indispensable labor around the reservations. Males were also more expendable as their traditional warrior roles had lost value in the defeated Indian communities. But some girls did find their way to Hampton despite cautions about intermarriage with blacks.

Those students who did eventually arrive at Hampton, whether by coercion or choice, often began to realize the power of education. Joseph DuBray (Sioux) pronounced that “the Indian must provide himself with the same weapon as the white man, and that is knowledge.” 27 This knowledge could benefit native tribes as their educated sons and daughters returned as Hampton’s graduates could be translators, informed readers of contracts and land deals, and cultural mediators in exchanges with whites. These students came to see Hampton “as an opportunity, not as an institution bent on destroying their culture.” 28

The school set up a largely separate program for the increasing number of Indian students. Its goals were more or less parallel to those of its black curriculum, but some of the activities often differed because of the Indians’ distinct (especially linguistic) needs. Boys followed a quasi-military routine already in place for blacks which consisted of early mornings, 

27 Joseph DuBray, untitled, Talks and Thoughts (March 1894).

28 Brudvig, “Bridging the Cultural Divide,” 98.
uniforms, and drills. Girls were trained in household maintenance and manners, and both males and females received intense training in Christian doctrine. Traditional Indian clothing was, of course, no longer permitted. Instead of blankets, male Indian students now wore starched gray school uniforms and heavy leather shoes. Feeling uncomfortable in the restrictive shoes, the Indian students replaced them with moccasins for the summer; Hampton's black students and employees soon followed their example.29

Northern donors and government funds ($167 per Indian pupil in 1878) financed scholarships for the industrial training and tuition of Indian and black students alike. The original St. Augustine group was put to work immediately after their arrival in the carpenter shop, on the school farm, and in other departments. The day consisted mostly of labor, with an hour-long English class at night and religious training on Sundays. Over half the ex-prisoners were at least thirty years old, making them atypical students, but they were soon joined in November 1878 by Pratt's new, mainly Sioux, younger recruits, 40 boys and 9 girls.

Worries about the fragile health of many of the Indian students dictated that they not share quarters with blacks at Hampton, so the school set about building cottages for the Indian boys and one for the girls. In September 1878, with $10,000 from private donors, construction of the male dormitory (later to become known as the “Wigwam”) began.30 By 1882 the girls, who had been provisionally lodged on campus, also had their own quarters.

Booker T. Washington, Hampton's famous graduate and an early skeptic of the Indian

29 Ibid., 74.

30 Hultgren and Molin, To Lead and to Serve, 19.
education program, nonetheless accepted the position of "house-father" in the Wigwam. He wrote of his students, "The things they disliked most were to have their long hair cut, to give up wearing their blankets, and to cease smoking; but no white American ever thinks that any other race is wholly civilized until he wears the white man's clothes, eats the white man's food, speaks the white man's language, and professes the white man's religion." Only about one-third of the students previously had any schooling, and those few had mostly been taught in Lakota, not English. Accordingly, an Indian department was created in 1879. It consisted of seven non-graded levels through which students could advance at their own rate. Standard lessons employed objects, pictures, and oral exercises.

Despite the relative segregation of blacks and Indians, the ideological vision of Hampton and its founder remained the same for both races. Books, Armstrong wrote, are "essential to knowledge, but not to wisdom and manly force. The taboo of books [during slavery] was the greatest stimulus the [Negro] ever had.... Restricting knowledge gave it charm; it was the white man's source of power; with it he would be like him; to possess its secret became a passion, and this passion... it is the hope of the race in its sudden emancipation." There is strong evidence that Armstrong actually withheld books from the Indian students (permitting them access only to his mouthpiece, the Southern Workman, and the Bible) in order to make them crave them. He said in 1883 that, "Knowing the reaction sure to follow


gratifying a childish desire for school books, we kept them back, to their discontent, gradually allowing their use.” However, Indian students often brought with them to Hampton fears of what white customs and practices would do to them, even with regard to reading. When trachoma, a disease spread by the sharing of towels, spread through the Wigwam, the Indian students blamed it on reading. After one student named Joshua Givens became near-sighted and needed glasses, his peers teased him with names like “Kiowa white man [with] glass eyes.” One remarked, “That’s what you get for trying to be a white man.” Such suspicions of strange white ways belied more general worries about the effects of assimilation.

Although Indian students had their own classes and dormitories, Hampton nonetheless provided a space for relatively daring levels of collaborative interaction between the races. Nowhere is this more evident than the workshops, including the printing office. In 1886, the first year of *Talks and Thoughts*, the manager of the printing office reported the employment of 14 regular hands—“5 colored boys, night students, 3 Indian boys working two days a weeks [sic], and four colored graduates, one of them a girl type-setter. The bindery employs 2 outside hands—one veteran soldier...and one young white woman. Two or more soldiers are also

33 Samuel C. Armstrong, “Indian Education at the East,” *Pamphlets in American History*, (Washington, D.C., 1883), 4, cited in Lindsey, *Indians at Hampton Institute*, 107. Lindsey also relates that Booker T. Washington indicated that books were initially denied to the Indian students, “to attend study hour like the colored students, and have a big pile of school books, has been one of the greatest desires of the Indians.” Washington, “Incidents,” *Southern Workman* (Dec. 1880), cited in Lindsey, *Indians at Hampton Institute*, 107.

employed as compositors in press of work.”

In addition to its role as a place for students to learn a trade, the print shop was also intended to publish materials deemed worthy of or crucial to promoting Hampton’s innovative program across the nation, including pamphlets (such as *Pictures Showing the Work of Hampton Institute for Indians, and the Work of Indians for their People*), propaganda (*Hampton Institute, 1868-1885: Its Work for Two Races*), and various periodicals such as *Alumni Journal*, *Home Bulletin* (weekly), *American Liberty* (quarterly), and *African Repository*. Perhaps the most vital of all to the marketing and fund-raising effort was the *Southern Workman*, which featured articles by Armstrong, administrators, and teachers and was sent out to all of Hampton’s contributors and supporters as well as to national policymakers and politicians. *Talks and Thoughts* was used for similar purposes on occasion, although its circulation was much more limited. The Hampton Normal School Press also issued books by Hampton personnel, including teacher Helen Ludlow’s *Pocahontas* (1907) and Indian student William Jones’s *Algonquian (Fox)* and *Proceedings of the Indian Council in the Wigwam*. Hampton was able to advertise its own educational program, actively recruit donors from all over the country, and promote its faculty and students by publishing their works.

Like the other workshops on campus, the printing office was also expected to aim for financial solvency, which it occasionally achieved. The printing press had been donated the

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leading manufacturer of steam-powered cylinder presses, R. Hoe & Co. The company was apparently later thanked with an article in the *Southern Workman* promoting its Hand Stop-Cylinder Press.\(^{36}\) Work was solicited from local businesses. One of the most consistent clients was the nearby Hygeia Hotel, which, along with other paying customers, often gave the printing office enough job work to turn a profit. Normal School Press Manager C.W. Betts boasted, “The office is capable of producing any class of ordinary job work, at prices that compare favorably with those of any city.”\(^{37}\) In fact, the school asked its supporters to supply the press with work. Certain years proved more lucrative than others. In 1883, Betts reported,

> At no time during the year has work been slack; most of the time it has been necessary to employ from one to four extra journeymen....The class of work has been better than ever. Hotel registers, check books, ruled blanks have been turned out to the satisfaction of customers. We have published a book on Emancipation, written by a colored man, J.T. Wilson, of Norfolk, and are running off the first of a series of Practical Scientific text books....We still publish the *African Repository, Southern Workman* and *Alumni Journal*, and are printing an eight-page illustrated paper for a party in Newport News.\(^{38}\)

For this particular year, he even could claim a substantial profit of $736 (with receipts totaling $5597 and expenses at $5023—his math difference not explained). His only complaint, and one that he would make several times over the years, was that, “There is no lack of work, and hardly facility for doing what is demanded, the engine being old and the press not fast enough

\(^{36}\) Unsigned, “The Printing Press,” *Southern Workman* (May 1873). Donations like the Campbell Press were not uncommon. The March 1894 issue notes, “The title, running heads, editorial head, and column rules have been made for *Talks and Thoughts* by Adams & Davis of Philadelphia.”

\(^{37}\) Ibid.

By 1886, the work load had settled down a bit and a Campbell Complete press was installed to replace the faltering one. The greater capacity of the new machinery may in part explain why the printing office was able to begin producing Talks and Thoughts, since the more efficient printing press processed the limited commercial orders quickly enough to leave time for other less lucrative ventures. Additionally, the volume of local paid orders was diminishing at the moment, and "none has yet been received from the friends of the institution in response to request for [work] at the beginning of the year." Betts vented his frustrations in his annual report, complaining that "The students' work has not been satisfactory this year; of eight who started last year five were dismissed from the school this year, and four new hands were taken in at intervals of two months. As the apprenticeship is for four years, this has been a serious hindrance. The Indians, from their imperfect English, receive more benefit than they give for a long time."

Thus, the activity of the printing office at Hampton was commensurate with the overall goals of the school: to educate students in their respective trades and to contribute to the promotion of the Institute. The print shop's solvency ensured its existence while simultaneously involving the students in its profitable execution. And, not unlike the school’s mission of sending

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41 Ibid.
its "talented tenth" of graduates back out into the world to spread Hampton’s gospel, the Normal School Press sent forth a great volume of material meant to bring respect, glory, and funding back to the campus. Indian students were pulled into the production system almost as soon as they arrived, and with the accumulation of students, they soon had developed their own product, *Talks and Thoughts*, to complement the array of Hampton publications already in existence.
CHAPTER IV

Talks and Thoughts: The Founding and Implementation of an Indian School

Newspaper

The first issue of Talks and Thoughts was likely published in March 1886, although the first surviving copy is from May of the same year. The student editors, Walter Battice, Samuel De Fond, and Margaret La Flesche, indicate that Talks and Thoughts replaced Speeches, a monthly subscription-based transcription of the proceedings of the Indian Council, the Indian students' governing body: "Those who have subscribed to the former paper called Speeches, and did not get the full valuation, it will be sent as usual til the term of their subscription expires." Although no copies of Speeches exist, the move to a monthly newspaper format indicates a change not only in content but in form. In a broader sense, the replacement of Speeches and its transcriptions by Talks and Thoughts suggests that oral culture was being steadily eclipsed by the written media favored by the Hampton educators.

A note here on the student authors who have been and will be quoted extensively throughout the paper: Many of the articles in Talks and Thoughts are unsigned and/or untitled. In these cases the authors obviously remain anonymous. Sometimes the unsigned articles are clearly written by the newspaper's editorial board, in which case I indicate this either in the text or the citation. Furthermore, some authors and editors designate their tribal affiliations, while others do not. I identify them as they identified themselves, including the tribal tag when given.

Editorial board, untitled, Talks and Thoughts (May 1886).
In that vein, *Talks and Thoughts* was founded partly as a step in the process of learning English; the students were advancing from the initial focus on spoken English to the task of writing it. The paper was viewed as a component of their education, as one of the first issues indicates:

We Indian students (in Hampton Normal School), thought it would be good for us, to try and help ourselves in some way; so we proposed to get a paper up, that will help us to improve (or exercise) our minds. We know we cannot use the present language perfectly well, but we would like to show you that we are trying very hard to speak the English language, and we hope that you will “Lend us a Hand” in this.\(^4\)

Cora Mae Folsom, the newspaper’s (white) faculty editor, appears to have allowed the syntax and punctuation to go at least somewhat uncorrected so as to represent the actual level of the students’ language skills.\(^4\) Many of the letters and articles of early *Talks and Thoughts* began similarly asking for the reader’s understanding and patience because of language difficulties. With this imperfect level of English evident and acknowledged in the initial issues of *Talks and Thoughts*, improvement was sure to follow, thus exhibiting to the readership the rising capabilities of the Indian students and the validity of the Hampton educational system. In fact, the quality of the writing in *Talks and Thoughts* did improve over the years, although not entirely due to the efficacy of Hampton’s methods. Rather, as the Indian program grew, more students entered Hampton having studied other schools and thus were better linguistically


\(^4\) In Folsom’s unpublished memoirs, she mentioned the collaboration of faculty and students on *Talks and Thoughts*, “whose editors, managers, and contributors were all Indians but were assisted by some of their teachers.” See Folsom, *Indian Work at Hampton*, Folsom Box, Hampton University Archives.
equipped. As the Indian School’s population peaked between 1883 and 1902, with at least 120 students attending during those years, *Talks and Thoughts* had a larger student base from which to select its editors and contributors.

In starting a student newspaper, the Indian students logically looked toward the campus’ main newspaper, the *Southern Workman*, as their model. Indian affairs had been covered—often in disproportionate detail and volume—ever since Armstrong’s plan to introduce the first group of prisoners to Hampton. Indian students started contributing to the campus paper as early as 1880, when James Murie began writing and setting type for what would become a regular monthly column.46 His column accompanied articles by Armstrong and his staff, letters and contributions by current and former black students, and news stories picked up from other papers from around the country.

The goal of the *Southern Workman* was to promote Hampton to donors and allies and to defend the school’s mission in the face of criticism from detractors. Initially, Armstrong edited the newspaper himself and continued in this capacity with help over the years from staff like Ludlow and eventual *Talks and Thoughts* faculty editor Folsom. His immediate priority upon founding the school newspaper in 1872 was to build a considerable circulation. One of the first issues offered the following incentives:

Terms: ONE DOLLAR a year IN ADVANCE. To Clergymen and School Teachers Seventy-five Cents in advance.
Each number will contain not less than three illustrations, will furnish a variety of choice reading, will tell what is going on in the world and will aim to

46 James Murie, “From an Indian,” *Southern Workman* (March 1880).
please and profit both old and young.

All are invited, the young especially, to ask by letter, questions on any subject upon they wish information....

*The Southern Workman should enter every hamlet and cabin.*

*Agents are wanted in every county and town in the South. Liberal terms are offered to all who aid in circulating the paper.*

To every church which shall send us one hundred one dollar subscriptions for “The Southern Workman,” we will send a beautiful communion set costing twenty-five dollars.

We will give a handsome Bible costing thirteen dollars to any church or society which shall subscribe for fifty copies....

To aid in building churches we will return twenty-five dollars in cash for every one-hundred one dollar subscriptions; or $18.75 for seventy-five subscriptions; or $12.50 for every fifty subscriptions.47

Only one month earlier, after issuing a similar call for subscriber contributions, the *Southern Workman* already was making its national focus clear: “WE trust our many friends who have sent us articles for publication will none of them take offence if they do not see their publications in print. We aim to publish such articles as will be of interest to the whole people, and therefore are compelled to omit much that is merely of local importance.”48

Within a year of its inception, the *Southern Workman* reported that “the journal has won for itself the interest of eleven hundred subscribers, while its total circulation has run up to fifteen hundred, a record which is satisfactory for the past and encouraging for the future.”49 It promised to capitalize on the strengths apparent from its first year of existence: numerous illustrations, its value as a means of communication for northern employers and southern blacks


49 Unsigned (presumably editorial board), untitled, *Southern Workman* (Jan. 1873).
searching for work, helpful agricultural advice for readers from the manager of the school farm, stories and poems for children, and news pertaining to the state of education and "the great work of civilization." In addition to the dollar subscription price, the *Southern Workman* asked for contributions from "friends of the paper" of five or ten dollars in order to increase its circulation. The length of the paper, which started at eight pages, soon grew as large as sixteen pages, though sometimes reverting to eight during the summer months. Always a savvy businessman, Armstrong clearly recognized the importance of an attractive product. Special attention was paid to the physical appearance of the paper; in 1878, the *Southern Workman* reported that "The two-page supplement will become a four-page cover, and the paper, stitched or pasted, with cut leaves, will present a new appearance and contain more matter."

With its substantial audience, the *Southern Workman* attracted paid advertisements from both North and South. In 1882, ad space for a single square cost $1 for a month ($9 for year), while a full column cost $9 for a month ($70 for a year). Ads included work solicitations, land sale notices, and insurance pitches. The paper served Hampton’s financial needs by issuing pleas for printing jobs and work contracts for Hampton’s workshops as well as promoting the publications of the Normal School Press. By 1883, the *Southern Workman* boasted a circulation of three thousand, only half of whom were paying subscribers (one-third, one-third,

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50 Ibid.

51 Unsigned (presumably editorial board), untitled, *Southern Workman* (Dec. 1878).

52 Ibid.

as teachers, graduates or clergymen, paid a reduced rate). The editorial board reported in 1883 that the newspaper has, some years, very nearly paid for itself, but does not now, not that the paid subscriptions have fallen off—they have constantly though slowly increased—but because the editions, and some of the other expenses, have been increased to add to the value of the paper and spread interest in the causes it represents. Its total cost to the school, above receipts, is about $500 a year. By the special appeals it makes for objects outside of Hampton Institute,—in graduates’ letters, letters from Tuskegee, and others,—it brings in more than that sum every year for the help of these teachers and workers allowed to state their case in our columns.54

The *Southern Workman*, while not financially profitable, nonetheless provided a forum for espousing the school’s educational and racial viewpoints, and also plugging the program and its various components potential donors and customers. It is not surprising, then, that the July 1886 edition of the *Southern Workman* introduced *Talks and Thoughts* in its Indian section with the following promotion:

“Talks and Thoughts” is the name of a little sheet written, edited and printed by Hampton Indian students. The June number contains a letter from the Indian graduate who is preparing to study medicine at Dartmouth, the Washington speech of another student, interesting letters from two of the girls, and other characteristic things. The little paper may be obtained for a year by sending twenty-five cents to Walter Battice, Hampton.55

*Talks and Thoughts* filled a niche and was advertised appropriately by the flagship paper to attract a core audience of current and former Indian students (now back, for the most part, on

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54 Unsigned (presumably editorial board), *Southern Workman* (Jan. 1883).

55 Unsigned, “Indian Happenings,” *Southern Workman* (July 1886).
their respective reservations and eager for news).56

*Talks and Thoughts* aimed to connect former and current Indian students with a means of communication between the Hampton campus and the reservations. Accordingly, letters from ex-students were solicited and comprised a major portion of the four-page newspaper, while articles by the editors and contributors were designed to inform their distant “friends” of campus events. Letters from ex-students often urged the current students to persevere in their studies at Hampton, and recounted the trials and tribulations of their own experiences at the school, but always with an assurance that the benefits outweighed the costs. One letter-writer, describing his encounter with whites on the reservation, recounted in rough English what often happened once an Indian’s land-lease expired: “When the time is up, you are kicked out, and he will tell you to get there [sic] you Injun. I don’t want no more of you, I have get [sic] all you had. It is good to have an education, then you can read and learn the ways of the whites. As for me, I haven’t got much education, but I would like to see that white man that could cheat me on a bargain. I have held office in this town. I have been constable and assessor.”57 Such letters from ex-students testified to the value and potential application of the skills they might acquire at Hampton.

The publication of a steady stream of “encouragement” letters, while genuine, must also

56 I have not been able to determine the extent to which black students on campus read *Talks and Thoughts*. One would expect that at least those working in the printing office would have taken an interest in it. The small circulation of the newspaper indicates that it could not have been distributed to all the students on campus. However, paper-sharing and communal copies probably increased the number of potential readers.

57 Unsigned letter, *Talks and Thoughts* (June 1888).
be considered in relation to the objectives of the newspaper, which sought to illustrate the advancements of the Indian students and sanction the goals of the school. The inclusion of "encouragement" letters, and by inference the exclusion of any material contradicting the supposed value of Hampton must have figured into the content of *Talks and Thoughts*. Although the paper circulated mainly among current and former Indian students, it was also used by Hampton to update scholarship-givers on the progress of the individual Indian students they were sponsoring. Articles published by the pupils in the newspaper were viewed as evidence of academic progress, and some donors wished to read about the activities taking place at the school. Thus, *Talks and Thoughts*, like the *Southern Workman*, had adequate reasons to give a positive image of Hampton, its mission, and its ultimate impact.58

As the sole faculty editor of *Talks and Thoughts* (and sometime editor of the *Southern Workman*) for its entire twenty-one year duration, Folsom had the duty of making sure that the newspaper kept up its positive, progressive image. It is doubtful that she would have encountered much resistance on the part of her Indian students, as they were similarly inclined to publicize the merits of their education. The mechanisms of her oversight are no longer evident, but it seems likely that she would have been ultimately responsible for ensuring that the newspaper did not stray from its intended purpose. Editor Wallace Springer confirmed as much in a 1906 address to the readership: "*Talks and Thoughts* was published first in 1886

58 The same goes for *Talks and Thoughts*, too, of course— it had to prove its own worth, often with printed letters complimenting the paper, i.e. "It makes me glad to see the Indians here try so hard to write when it is a new and hard thing to do" (Oct.1887).
by the Indian students and has ever since been their literary work, though under the censorship and direction of the school.”

Under this direction, *Talks and Thoughts* focused on the potential for Indian advancement and integration rather than any need for confrontation and autonomy. Perhaps the most recognizable evidence of this trend is the relative silence of *Talks and Thoughts* about two subjects of importance to Indians around the country, the Ghost Dance religious movement and the related massacre at Wounded Knee. The Ghost Dance movement began in 1889, when a Paiute shaman called Wovoka had a vision that he “went to heaven and saw God and all the people who died long ago.” His vision, and likely his ambition, determined that he communicate his experience to others upon his return to earth, and Wovoka began ardently preaching a message that synthesized elements of Christianity and Indian beliefs. Historian Robert Utley recapitulated Wovoka’s message:

> If the Indians followed [God’s] commandments, as preached by Wovoka, they might join their ancestors in heaven and enjoy the Utopia that Wovoka had seen. To bring about this millennium, they must be industrious, honest, virtuous, peaceful. In fact, although not stated, they must follow a code of conduct almost identical to the white man’s Ten Commandments.... In addition to adopting these moral precepts, Indians must perform at stated intervals a dance that God taught Wovoka. It was this “Ghost Dance” that became the most spectacular and widely known feature of the religion.

Wovoka backed his visions with elements of magic and prophecy. On one occasion, he

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brashly predicted that ice would flow down the Walker River in mid-summer. An attentive audience was convinced of his divine mission when they witnessed ice floating at the proper time and place, not knowing that Wovoka's adopted (white) brothers had secretly dumped blocks of ice upriver in order to help him fulfill his promise. At other times he was able to accurately, and perhaps more legitimately to predict great rains during droughts.

Word of Wovoka's visions spread quickly throughout the Dakotas, speeded by the inclination of Indians to travel by rail to reservations other than their own. Wovoka's message had undeniable appeal to the hungry and abused tribes bristling under reservation rule; Wovoka promised to regenerate the earth, replenish its resources, and bring back the dead. By praying and dancing the Ghost Dance, Indians could catch a glimpse of paradise before its arrival. Through song and dance, they would work themselves into emotional frenzies in which they would "die" momentarily and briefly behold what lay in store for the Indian race. The Ghost Dance religion fused Christian morality with Indian forms of expression, thus satisfying pressing needs for its participants.

As the Ghost Dance was appropriated by various tribes, its message evolved and changed. The Sioux version did not incorporate the passivity of Wovoka's teachings. According to the Sioux, the whites "have treated the Indians very bad all the way through," and therefore the Messiah would "exterminate the whites by some phenomenon in the spring of

\[62\] Ibid., 65.

\[63\] The Ghost Dancers are a good example of one Indian group that fits into the category of "synthesizers" that I mentioned in the introduction of the paper. Hampton Indian students were also synthesizers of culture, but more thoroughly committed to a fuller acculturation.
The Sioux contempt grew as land deals with the federal government proved to be flawed and exploitative, and rations dropped despite promises from Indian agents to the contrary. The Sioux invested the Ghost Dance with militant properties, as a "Ghost Shirt"—a cotton or muslin garment painted with figures and symbols—that supposedly would deflect bullets and arrows of the enemy became the standard costume to accompany the dance. Utley wrote that the Sioux dancers "drew courage from the conviction that no longer were the [U.S. soldiers] to be dreaded. The Sioux apostles had perverted Wovoka's doctrine into a militant crusade against the white man. Now they had removed any reason the faithful might have to fear open conflict with the white man."

However, as skirmishes between Ghost Dancers and the Indian agents' enforcement officers broke out, the Sioux would soon find out that the Ghost Shirts did not have the desired magical effect. Prominent among these clashes was the December 16, 1890 battle between Sioux Chief Sitting Bull, a Ghost Dance leader, and the authorities. In the early hours of the morning, the reservation police—all Indians under the employ of the Indian agent—arrested Sitting Bull outside of his cabin. When his closely-quartered followers realized what was happening, they crowded around the police, until one Indian named Catch-the-Bear fired on the officers. In the ensuing melee, Sitting Bull and several companions were killed, as were a few of the policemen. The war to stop the Ghost Dancers had begun.

_Talks and Thoughts_ did not offer any account of the event, despite the fact that both

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64 Ibid., 73.

65 Ibid., 87.
the preceding momentum of the Ghost Dance movement and the outbreak of fighting were hot topics in the mainstream newspapers.\textsuperscript{66} It was only well after the fact, in March 1893, that a broken-English letter by former student C.T. Ramsey described the shootout between Sitting Bull and the police:

Dear Friends— I am very anxious to tell you about Sitting Bull, and I will tell you all I can. You ever hear from Sitting Bull?

....[The police] found him in one of the houses. They wanted to... take him outside but he said he wouldn’t go. Soon as they talked to him like a gentleman and after that a little while all those who love the Ghost dances, they all come round. But the policemen don’t want to say a mean word because they want fight. But one of the Indian came right straight, and try to kill one of the Police-men, but he couldn’t. Next time he make fire, the Policemen then they all at once make fire and drop about six men, policemen and S.B. and two or three beside S.B., those all got shot right where they stand.

Ramsey not only blamed the Indians for starting the fight, but also credited the police with especially conciliatory behavior.

The only other mention of the Ghost Dance religious revival came six months earlier, when the editorial board of \textit{Talks and Thoughts} (Sioux Joseph Du Bray and Wyandotte Lizzie Young) displayed a brief opinion that contradicted Ramsey’s later account:

The daily papers say that white settlers in Indian Territory have been demanding soldiers to protect them, just because some of the Indians were having a Ghost Dance, there is no danger in the Indians’ dancing, it is not a sign that they are going on the war-path as the settlers \textit{pretend} to think.

We think that the white settlers want soldiers so that they can provoke a fight with the Indians and end it as usual, present a big claim for damages

\textsuperscript{66} In Utley’s portrayal of the press coverage he repeatedly referred to the ubiquitous presence of press corps on and around the reservations throughout \textit{The Last Days of the Sioux Nation} (119, 127, 139).
against Uncle Samuel.67

Here the Indian editors drain the Ghost Dance of its overtly resistant, even confrontational qualities, instead choosing to depict the Indians as harmless victims of white advance.

The massacre of the Sioux at Wounded Knee by U.S. forces on December 29, 1890 in response to the perceived danger posed by the Ghost Dancers marked the culmination of the violence. Federal troops had intercepted a large contingent of Indians led by the defiant but not belligerent Chief Big Foot. With soldiers surrounding them, the Indians were asked to surrender their weapons—a sign to them that they would not, as promised by their captors, be returned to the reservation, but rather sent to jail. During the reluctant submission of arms, with tensions on both sides rising, a young Sioux warrior discharged his weapon into the air. Suddenly a small group of Indians—defying the larger group’s apparent intention to surrender peacefully—removed hidden weapons from beneath their blankets and opened fire. Wounded Knee erupted into battle, with gunfire raging and heavy artillery bombarding the Indians. Fighting was not restricted to a well-defined battlefield, as Indian soldiers rushed into the tepees and cabins of the adjacent village for cover. Women and children fled from their houses, often intermixing with scampering Indian soldiers. U.S. officers commanded that troops only shoot at “bucks” (men), but in the chaos of battle soldiers and bullets did not prove so discriminating.

With an estimated 153 dead and 44 wounded, many of them women and children, the

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67 Dubray and Young, untitled, *Talks and Thoughts* (Sept. 1892).
Indians had been routed by federal forces (25 dead, 14 injured). Several newspaper reporters were present, and quickly their stories were wired off to their respective editors.

Utley summarized the national coverage:

Before [the reporters'] eyes had unfolded the biggest news story yielded by the Indian frontier since the Custer disaster fourteen years earlier... [The] next morning people everywhere read of the bloody encounter between Big Foot's band and the Seventh Cavalry.

Starved for news of the "Sioux War" that in more than a month had failed to produce any excitement, the nation's press gave full press to Wounded Knee. Few journals exhibited moderation in their editorial judgements. One segment of the press portrayed the battle as a triumph of valorous soldiers over treacherous Indians plotting another Custer affair. The other vented outrage on a regiment that, thirsting for revenge since the Little Bighorn, had wantonly slaughtered gentle Indians and had found particular glee in butchering helpless women.

In the midst of competing and incongruous interpretations, would Talks and Thoughts, headed by Sioux co-editor John Pattee, wish to add its own appraisal of Wounded Knee?

Apparently not, although it seems impossible that students (among them a substantial number of Sioux, who Armstrong deliberately recruited to Hampton as evidence that education could pacify even the most resistant Indian tribes) would be unaware of or unconcerned.

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68 I use Utley's figures, although it should be noted that other scholars differ in their estimates and evaluations. Mooney, for one, attributes the bloodshed largely to insubordinate and brutal U.S. soldiers, despite orders from the high military command not to fire upon civilians. Mooney's numbers for deaths at Wounded Knee are also higher than Utley's.


70 According to Brudvig's calculations, 501 of the 1,451 Indian students who attended Hampton were Sioux (Lakota or Dakota). That means that over one-third of the projected readership might have indeed had a very strong interest in active, or at least significant, coverage of the Ghost Dance and Wounded Knee. See Brudvig, "Bridging the Cultural Divide," Appendix A.

Another reason to believe that Talks and Thoughts readers would have been eager for the
Additionally, one of Hampton's own ex-students, Sioux Andrew Fox, had not only taken part in the Ghost Dance he had become Sitting Bull's interpreter and secretary.71 Folsom later reported in the records of Hampton ex-students of another pupil, Sioux George Estes, “During the trouble with the Ghost Dancers in '90 and '91, he wrote us a very interesting sketch of the affair, giving the song and illustrating the costumes by drawings of his own.”72 Yet, for reasons not clear, his work never found its way into Talks and Thoughts, despite clearly having passed through the hands of the newspaper's faculty editor.

In March 1891—less than three months after Wounded Knee— the newspaper reported “A Pleasant Visit from Sioux Chiefs” to the Hampton campus without so much as a passing reference to the recent bloodshed in Sioux territory.73 Either the student contributors of Talks and Thoughts did not deem Wounded Knee and Ghost Dance worthy of extensive coverage and commentary, or more likely, the newspaper did not wish to take the initiative of becoming a forum for discussion of Indian resistance. In either case, Talks and Thoughts remained quiet on national issues that implied the need for autonomous Indian political action.

newspaper to cover the events of the Ghost Dance is that a number of their readers—and not just from Hampton—may have actually been Ghost Dancers. Later in this paper, I offer evidence that the Indian students of the Carlisle school were routine readers of Talks and Thoughts, of whom Utley has this to say: “Many Carlisle graduates turned up... painted and draped in blankets, as active participants in the Ghost Dance.” See Utley, The Last Days of the Sioux Nation, 36.

71 Twenty-Two Years Work of the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute (Hampton, 1893), 338.

72 Ibid., 437.

73 Unsigned, untitled, Talks and Thoughts (March 1891).
CHAPTER V

Tracing the Dawes Act through *Talks and Thoughts* and Thomas L. Sloan

If *Talks and Thoughts* was careful not actively to cover potentially incendiary national issues, the opposite held true for stories from around the country that supported Hampton’s institutional mission. The Dawes Act, endorsed and in part designed by Armstrong, was exactly such an issue.

The Dawes Act intended to give incentives for individuals to cultivate land or ultimately (and less lucratively) cede it to whites. The passage of the act in 1887 marked the culmination of a long drive toward the privatization of previously communally-held Indian lands. As early as 1805, in a treaty with the Choctaw, the federal government began the practice of reserving tracts of land for individuals for which patents were often later issued. By 1885, over 11,000 patents and 1,290 certificates of allotment had been issued by the government to Indians through treaties and laws. The Dawes Act was not the first law designed to transfer land to private hands; in 1862 Congress passed a bill providing special protection for Indian allottees, and in 1875 a law permitted Indian homesteading privileges. By the time the Coke Bill (1881) and then the Dawes Act took precedence in 1887, the land-in-severalty movement had


solidified into the formal U.S. policy for assimilating Indians.

While the major impetus behind such legislation was economic, social concerns were a close second. Both advocates and antagonists of Indian affairs during the nineteenth century largely believed that "civilization" was linked directly with private land ownership. Many Indians had much to fear from any privatization directed by the government, since allotment would be exercised largely outside of the various tribal systems of land control that depended on kin, status, and communal power structures. On the other hand, some Indians had much to gain from land distribution that did not take these factors fully into account. While many Indian groups expressed hostility to land reforms, Indian agents--the tribes' supposed links to policy makers in Washington--were generally pressured to endorse the conditions of the Dawes Act as public opinion consolidated in favor of its passage.\textsuperscript{76}

The division of land on an individual basis only furthered the decline of traditional power structures on the reservations. Certainly there was potential for a new Indian elite to prosper in the radically changing situation on the reservations. But whoever these were to be, they would have either to sustain or to overcome the pre-existing tribal hierarchies, and also to fend off the whites who were eager (and often successful) to appropriate Indian lands. The Hampton Indians were a group with this potential; English, literacy, and agricultural training were, after all, the strengths of Hampton's program. Yet Hampton's Indian students were, ironically, often the most disposable of their respective tribes' populations, since "traditionalist" tribes reluctant to

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 5.
turn their children over to insistent Hampton recruiters often relented by agreeing to send their orphans.77 One Indian agent, after withholding rations in order to prod Indian parents to send their children to a boarding school, soon received more than the necessary quota of students. “But I afterward learned,” he admitted, “that there was not an orphan child over five years of age left in the camps after this conscription.”78

Thomas Sloan, a “mixed blood” orphan Omaha Indian from Nebraska, exemplified the type of meteoric rise that was possible for an educated and ambitious Indian under the new terms set out by the Dawes Act.79 Sloan arrived at Hampton in 1886 after a rambunctious past that saw him bounce from school to school and eventually enlist in the U.S. Cavalry, followed by a tour in the Navy. Sloan quickly excelled at Hampton, where he became the president of the Indian Boys’ Council and eventually graduated as the valedictorian of the 1889 class. He

77 Brudvig, “Bridging the Cultural Divide,” 67. Recall also that girls were much less likely to be sent to Hampton because of their usefulness on the reservation; men, no longer needed as warriors, were more available.

As mentioned above, orphans were more likely to be given to up recruiters than parented children when traditionalist tribes were targeted. However, when tribes more inclined toward active assimilation decided—in the face of dwindling alternatives—to send their children off to receive the white man’s education, they often sent the sons and daughters of tribal leaders. These two divergent strategies help explain why boarding school campuses often had such broad representations of Indian social hierarchies. In any case, my argument is that the Indian students who came to Hampton pursued a strategy that sought change, but on the condition of fair terms.

78 James McLaughlin, quoted in Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (Washington, D.C., 1884), 56.

79 Sloan was an orphan in the sense that his parents had both died. He did not, however, grow up in an orphanage; his grandmother raised him on the Omaha reservation in Penders, Nebraska. I am reconstructing his background mostly from the documentation available in his student file at the Hampton archives, which consists of newspaper clippings (sometimes not fully cited by the compiler), school records, and personal correspondence.
also served as the manager for *Talks and Thoughts* and contributed frequently. Sloan’s articles are of special interest because of his preoccupation with legal issues, particularly the Dawes Act, which being debated and passed during Sloan’s time at Hampton.

Sloan’s first article in March 1887 endorsed the Dawes Act enthusiastically:

> This bill practically breaks up tribal organization and liberates the Indian. Under tribal government the sacred right of home was not the blessing of an Indian; beside [sic] he has been subject to punishment by law, but not had its protection.... As it is known that the ownership of a home securely protected makes a prosperous community, we will hope to see an improvement in the Indians.80

Sloan’s evaluation of the bill was tempered by his jaundiced view of the history of Indian-U.S. legal relations. He qualified his positive assessment of the Dawes Act with a reminder of the injustices of the past: “A great many time Indians have made treaties with the United States government, these treaties were declared to be the highest law of the land and yet it did not secure them their rights.... These many broken promises have brought them misery.”81

Sloan eagerly accepted the terms set out by the Dawes Act and suggested that Hampton’s Indian students were aware of and receptive to its contents:

> At Hampton Indian School, are a number who recognize the law which has passed was the work of honest Christian men and women who have worked unceasingly to have law passed which would give the Indian his rights, protect him and make a man of him. Here the day will be celebrated by the Indian students and their friends.82

80 Thomas Sloan, “The Day We Celebrate,” *Talks and Thoughts* (March 1887).


Sloan and his colleagues at *Talks and Thoughts* further recognized Hampton in conjunction with other Indian schools as leaders in the crusade for land reform, noting in the same issue that public sentiment in favor of the Dawes Act had to be aroused, “and this has been pushed forward by the Carlisle and Hampton schools, as well as by the many Indian Associations.”

In a later *Talks and Thoughts* article, Sloan still affirmed the value of the Dawes Act, but he now passed judgement on the problems that had already become evident in its administration. Sloan’s style was simultaneously didactic and editorial. He began by summarizing the process by which Indian land has come under the control of the U.S. government:

This [situation] arises from the legal position of the Indians coming down from the discovery of America to the present time. The position that a title must come from some government which has laws giving title to the land recognizing it. This the Indians did not have, only recognizing the right to the land as it was controlled by force of arms. The different governments settling America claimed all the land of which they took possession in the name of their kings or queens in whom all title rested.... They granted to their subjects large tracts of land, giving at the same time permission to extinguish Indian right by purchase or conquest.... The United States government does not allow any of its citizens to extinguish the Indian title.

In linking the Indians’ claim to land with that of colonial governments through titles rather than force, Sloan advocated Indian legal rights within an acceptable bourgeois framework. He then shifted his attention to the implementation of the law, arguing that the U.S. government should consult Indians before passing laws regarding land transactions, and should additionally bear the

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83 Unsigned, untitled, *Talks and Thoughts* (March 1887).

cost of surveying the land instead of charging those expenses to the Indians. Sloan did not oppose the idea of Indian lands being legally appropriated by the government and then sold to settlers, but he insisted that “the land be taken and paid for [italics mine]. The best solution of this question seems to be legal rights for the Indian, the same as white people or others.”

Sloan’s interest in the Dawes Act and the law did not end with his departure from Hampton and Talks and Thoughts. Sloan turned down a scholarship to Yale Law School, choosing instead to work as an Indian agent in his native Nebraska, where he studied law at night with the aid of a local lawyer, Hiram Chase, whom he remunerated by sweeping and cleaning the offices. He joined Chase’s practice upon admission to the bar, while simultaneously working on the Omaha reservation.

In his capacity as Indian agent, Sloan oversaw the implementation of Dawes Act land redistribution in his district. His tenure was marked by controversy as he attempted to broker the disputes over land that sparked inter-tribal rivalries and gave rise to tensions between Indians and whites. While he was administering the law on the reservation, Sloan was also processing his own claims for land based on his one-eighth Omaha heritage. He claimed that he was entitled to a portion of the land belonging in common to the Omaha, but some leading “full-blooded” Omahas disputed his claim and objected by bringing a lawsuit against him.

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85 Ibid.
They argued that Sloan was retroactively seeking land that had already been partitioned under the terms of an 1882 agreement, and furthermore that Sloan's (long deceased) father and grandmother had already received an allotment in Nevada under an 1830 treaty, therefore excluding him from any additional land allotments.88

By this time Sloan was already a capable and well-reputed lawyer, and he won his case in October 1899. Sloan successfully argued that he was of Indian origin, he had resided on the reservation since his return from school, and that he had a legitimate right to land equal to that of any "full-blood." The case set precedent for other Indians of mixed descent who wished to lay claims to tribal land.

Despite his disputes with local Indians, Sloan was becoming nationally known as a defender of Indian rights and claims. He distinguished himself by becoming the first Indian ever to argue a case before the Supreme Court. He also continued to work in the publishing industry, writing and serving as editor-in-chief of American Indian Magazine and performing chief-counsel duties for American Indian Tepee. In these publications and others he often espoused ideals similar to the ones he professed in Talks and Thoughts many years earlier. In 1913, he urged once again in the Quarterly Journal that Indians be consulted during, not after, the legislative process:

When something is to be done under the general guise of some good for the Indian, he is the last person to know about it. Yet it is their property; they are affected most by any change, but they are the last to learn about it and are not consulted as to what might be best in reference to the land.... We are having

88 Ibid.
these lands administered in a manner that is a shame and a disgrace to a civilized nation."^{89}

Sloan’s argumentation, however, showed an evolution in his thinking since his Hampton days. In 1887 Sloan had written of the passage of the Dawes Act, “Let all Indians and their friends rejoice, for the Indian is now declared a man."^{90} By 1913, he had inverted that rhetoric:

Men, through political accident, and most likely through business failure preceding it, are placed in positions of arbitrary power. They evolve new theories, discover latent powers, old and new wrongs and remedies for all.

No man in Washington, neither the head nor the subordinate, can know the conditions of the man or his opportunities or his capabilities. The Indians are individuals and are not bound directly or controlled by any set of rules and regulations which may be promulgated by the Secretary of the Interior. The present system is not making men and women. There is a lack of development of the man in dealing with the Indian."^{91}

Sloan’s words clearly alluded to Armstrong’s insistence that his students, far and above book learning, embrace the characteristics of manhood that constituted personal agency in white society. But, as Sloan indicates, whereas many Indians honored the code of manhood, whites wishing to defraud them of their land often did not. Assimilation, at least under these terms, looked more like second-class citizenship as long as the players involved in land distribution did not adhere to a common set of principles.

But Sloan himself was not above criticism. When he was nominated in 1912 for the

\[^{89}\text{Sloan, "The Administration of Indian Affairs," Quarterly Journal (Jan.-Apr. 1913), clipping in Student File, Hampton University Archives.}\]

\[^{90}\text{Sloan, "The Day We Celebrate," Talks and Thoughts (March 1887).}\]

\[^{91}\text{Sloan, "The Administration of Indian Affairs," Quarterly Journal (Jan.-Apr. 1913), clipping in Student File, Hampton University Archives.}\]
powerful position of Commissioner of Indian Affairs, his morality was called into question by some observers, most notably the *New Republic*. In an aggressive and largely unsubstantiated series of articles, the *New Republic* accused Sloan of using his self-designated "protector of the Indian" status to commit fraud and other improprieties. Foremost among the charges was that Sloan had set up an intricate scheme to strip a portion of a $20,000 inheritance from the rightful beneficiaries of an old, sick Indian woman.\(^\text{92}\) As the story went, Sloan convinced the dying woman to adopt a child and will her the land (of $20,000 value) in lieu of the woman’s relatives. When she died, Sloan then made contracts with both the child and the relatives in question and offered them incentives to share the inheritance with him; in this way, Sloan secured himself a portion of the proceeds no matter which party won the impending litigation. The land was eventually returned to the original heirs, with Sloan receiving a percentage of the claim as their legal representative.

The *New Republic* further charged that Sloan’s nomination as Indian Commissioner was the result of a secret alliance with a supposedly corrupt Assistant Indian Commissioner, Frederick Abbott.\(^\text{93}\) Abbott had reportedly coveted the position for himself, but the temperance lobby opposed his nomination. Abbott then allegedly threw his considerable weight behind Sloan, who was the vice-president of the Society of American Indians and a


viable candidate because of his native background. Sloan garnered support among some, but certainly not all, Indian coalitions, many of whom backed his rival Edgar Meritt, the chief lawyer for the Indian Service. Abbott pushed for Sloan, according to the *New Republic*, in exchange for a promise that he would be retained as Assistant Indian Commissioner.

The commissionership never materialized for Sloan because Cato Sells emerged from the various contenders to win the post. Sloan nonetheless maintained a high profile as an outspoken advocate of Indian rights, eventually rising to become president of the Society of American Indians. Despite the suggestions of corruption, he continued to think of and proclaim himself an advocate for Indians, and it seems that he retained a good deal of influence in his capacity as a talented attorney and prominent citizen.

Sloan's story is too specific and spectacular to be representative of the diversity of Hampton students' experiences, but it does demonstrate some of the complexities of the period. Although education was more of a luxury than a right--albeit often an unwelcome one--for most Indians in the 1880s, it was not uncommon that orphans like Sloan found their way into boarding schools. Once at Hampton, perhaps via previous educational stops, Indian

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95 The jury is out on Sloan, who had another critic in Hampton graduate Susan La Flesche Picotte. LaFlesche Picotte (sister of the aforementioned *Talks and Thoughts* co-editor Margaret La Flesche) was the medical doctor at the Omaha agency during Sloan's tenure. A well-respected Indian rights activist herself, she accused Sloan of unscrupulous land deals on several occasions. See Susan La Flesche Student File, Hampton University Archives.
students could study for a career and acquire valuable skills to which their counterparts on the reservation did not have access. As the Dawes Act and other forces broke down traditional rule on the reservations, Hampton students often proved best prepared to deal with rapid change. Sloan showed how far an ambitious, well-educated Indian could rise in American society.

Sloan also epitomized the various uses to which a Hampton education could be put. While certainly influenced by his earlier experiences in other schools, the cavalry, and the navy, Sloan was also probably affected by Hampton’s vigorous support for the Dawes Act. During his time at the school, he virtually parroted Hampton’s official position in his *Talks and Thoughts* articles. However, after leaving Hampton, Sloan modified his opinion of the Dawes Act, turning against the inherent paternalism endorsed by his alma matter and Armstrong. The general had promised that manhood, character, and utility would eventually make the Indian a vital and equal member of white society. What he hadn’t told the Indians, however, was that many whites would not abide by the same morality. With Indians fast losing control over the land, Sloan saw that Hampton’s promises did not always hold true off of the idealistic campus.

Sloan translated his one-eighth Indian heritage into a professional and personal identification centered around a definitive sense of “Indianness.” White society played a large part in projecting this label onto Sloan— one article, for example, stated that Sloan “is a man of wide experience, even if he is an Indian” — but he capitalized repeatedly on this ethnic identity,
even to the point of exploitation, according to his detractors.\textsuperscript{96} Whatever his motivations, Sloan negotiated a path that turned his marginalized racial status into a valuable asset.

\textsuperscript{96} Unsigned, "Indian Lawyer After High Place," (Dec. 1912), clipping in Student File, Hampton University Archives.
CHAPTER VI

*Talks and Thoughts* as a Space for Indian Assertions of Identity

Sloan’s early writing in *Talks and Thoughts* on the Dawes Act may or may not have been directly influenced by Hampton’s institutional philosophy, but it seems clear that his opinions were permitted to be printed in the school-sanctioned newspaper because, at the very least, they coincided with the administration’s official viewpoint. Sloan’s stopover at Hampton was a means to personal wealth and professional success, but it was also one step in the ongoing process of self-definition that would later see him oppose aspects of the Hampton ideology that he once endorsed. *Talks and Thoughts* was both the vehicle of his expression and a stepping stone to subsequent writing and publishing endeavors.

Whereas Sloan took time to develop a calculated (and perhaps self-serving) defense of Indian rights, some *Talks and Thoughts* authors used the newspaper itself as a platform for defining and defending Indian identity. This sometimes meant confronting or resisting dominant white perceptions and beliefs. To what extent such resistant or confrontational writing was consciously permitted by faculty editor Folsom is not known, but the newspaper’s relative abstention from engaging issues such as the Ghost Dance and Wounded Knee suggests that such subjects were not to be broached in explicit terms. The medium favored more subtle approaches, as Indian students had to skirt the line between an acceptable amount of racial
pride and unacceptable condemnations of present or previous white behavior.

In order to vent frustrations at being treated as “savages” by campus visitors, Talks and Thoughts issued multiple articles exhibiting, but not fully articulating, discontent at their treatment. In April 1899, the paper told the following story: “Last summer a large party of visitors came to one of the Indian recitation rooms. It happened that the teacher gave a signal for all to rise preparatory to going to other rooms. The visitors did not notice the signal, but when all the students rose so suddenly they were frightened. They gave one cry and fled in great disorder.”

The September 1887 issue recounted similar incidents:

On the 22nd of last month a great many people visited the school and all seemed anxious to see the Indians. As our manager was slowly picking over the type, with his stiff finger and thumb... he heard someone say “There is an Indian!” Looking up he saw a man and woman watching him. Their look was one of utmost curiosity and our manager was abashed by being looked at in this manner and turned hastily to his work. The couple watched him for three or four minutes which felt like him to an hour.

Two young couple [sic] passing the Wigwam stopped, one said “this is the Indian’s [sic] house.” “Let us go in said a young man.” Oh! no I am afraid” said the young lady. At last they ventured near the door, but hearing a sudden noise within they turned and hastily left the premises.

On another occasion, Talks and Thoughts reported that one of the Indian students used his role in the school play Hiawatha to upbraid the uncomprehending audience in his native tongue; only the teacher and the few other Lakota students realized that he had called his onlookers “fools” who “only sit there and smile.”

97 Talks and Thoughts often included stories that poked fun at whites’ preconceptions of them. In an article from the Feb. 1893 edition, an Indian girl answered a white woman’s “Can you speak English?” with a cynical, “No Miss, I can’t speak a word of English.”

98 Unsigned (presumably editorial board), untitled, Talks and Thoughts (Sept. 1887).
In *Talks and Thoughts*, frequent historical narratives (as opposed to reports of campus happenings) provided space for communicating otherwise unacceptable opinions. The unspoken ideology of Hampton was that Indians, in the words of Indian Commissioner T.J. Morgan, “should hear little or nothing of the wrongs of the Indian, and of the injustice of the white race. If their unhappy history is alluded to it should be to contrast it with the better future that is within their grasp.” However, *Talks and Thoughts* refused at times to adhere to this principle. An article entitled “Custer Massacre” from December 1888 revisited the site of an American myth, only to debunk it by telling the story from the Indians’ point of view. It began,

> When I was a small boy I saw General Custer and his army at Yankton, then the capital of Dakota. Nearly every day we little fellows would go down to the camp and look upon the soldiers with childish wonder. The talk of the whole town was about killing wild Indians. Like all white boys, or any color of boys for that matter, that hear stories about killing Indians, I joined in the cry, though I was a little Indian myself.

The narrator then related to the reader, “I wish to give a brief sketch of this so-called Custer Massacre, as it was told to me by a person who engaged in it, and who is now a good and faithful student of this school.” He went on to characterize Custer as not only the blatant aggressor but also as an incompetent field commander: “It seemed a sin and a folly to order men to stand before such unfavorable odds. The soldiers were so rapidly shot down that at last some found that discretion was the better part of valor, and retreated without order, and the consequence was disastrous in the extreme.” This account of the events challenged the widely-

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accepted notion that Custer bravely fought to the last death rather than retreat or surrender.\textsuperscript{100}

The author described the battle in seemingly objective terms, acknowledging both the tremendous odds against the outnumbered white soldiers and Custer’s deservedly fierce reputation. And he confirmed that not a single white man survived the battle and ensuing retreat. He concluded by confronting Hampton’s “civilizing” crusade indirectly:

I shall here say that it was cruel that all should be killed. And I am sure that had it not been for the reckless young men who entirely composed the Indian force, the result would have been different. Yet, again when cheeks almost burn with shame I think of the hard and cruel treatment that our poor ancestors were subjected to, and were driven from their land, their homes, and from the graves of their fathers and mothers without mercy. Can anybody wonder then that an uncivilized and ill treated and despised nation should do what a civilized and Christian nation did not do? Can this sad destruction of an aggressive army be justly called a massacre?

In its eloquence and calculated defiance, “Custer Massacre” shows how Indian students, often cooperatively, used the education gained at Hampton’s (and white donors’) expense to constitute a voice that united Indians from different tribes in common cause.

Furthermore, Indians from other schools in different parts of the country could identify and express their solidarity via student newspapers; \textit{Talks and Thoughts} was distributed at the Carlisle and Haskell Indian schools, and their respective papers (especially Carlisle’s \textit{Indian Helper}) were available to Hampton students.\textsuperscript{101} In August 1887, the \textit{Talks and Thoughts}

\textsuperscript{100} Robert Utley, \textit{Cavalier in Buckskin: George Armstrong Custer and the Western Military Frontier} (Norman, OK, 1988).

\textsuperscript{101} Other Indian newspapers that were cited in \textit{Talks and Thoughts} included \textit{Pipe of Peace} (Genoa, Nebraska), \textit{Indian’s Friend} (a Piegan publication from Philadelphia), and \textit{The Prison Trusty} (Lansing, Kansas).
editorial board remarked:

The *Indian Helper* now comes regularly to our exchange table and is read with pleasure by many of our students. There are so many familiar names that it is like a letter from home.... It is pleasant to read the camp items, how the students enjoy themselves in camp away from the rush of crowded school life, it will rest them so that they will return to their studies and work with fresh vigor.

Students could read about how their former classmates were coping after a transfer to a new school, or more generally compare their respective situations.\(^{102}\) Additionally, the papers sometimes borrowed and ran articles from each other, and occasionally would address one another directly to offer thanks or to take note of a particular article or detail.\(^{103}\) The June 1893 edition ran two excerpts from other newspapers side by side:

The reason why so many people think the Indian is worthless is because he has had no chance to develop until late years, into anything but a wild Indian. The establishing of schools has worked a wonderful change in the nature of the Indian,--*Pipe of Peace*.

When it does not take a man all summer to do a credible piece of work, he is beginning to be of some value to his employer. One of the printers will seize hold of a job; receive directions; remember every word that is told him without asking to have it repeated; the job grows; it is up; proof taken; proof corrected one the press; it is printed; it is delivered to the party ordering, and said jobber stands ready for another, and all this with a thoughtful interest sure to win success,—*Indian Helper*.

While obviously limited, this discourse added a new affiliation, if not group identification, to the local and tribal ones that preceded its development.

By expanding the scale of pan-Indian discourse, the Indian school newspapers gave

\(^{102}\) See, for example, unsigned, untitled, *Talks and Thoughts* (Nov. 1895).

\(^{103}\) See, for example, unsigned, untitled article from *Indian Helper* in *Talks and Thoughts* (Sept. 1887).
their readers a sense that they were not alone in their struggles. In February 1893, the editors of *Talks and Thoughts* encouraged a fellow publication with a printed compliment: "The *Industrial School Courier* of Kearny, Nebraska, shows that New York and Hampton are not the only places where good printing is done." *Talks and Thoughts* also highlighted the existence of Indian-language newspapers, as it did in September 1892: "*Anpao Kin* (Day Light) is the title of a church paper in the Sioux language, published at Sioux Falls, S.D."

However, despite overtures of pan-Indianism, tribal distinctions still remained vital and recognized. Editors’ names in *Talks and Thoughts* almost always carried tribal tags, which served to individuate the contributors but also attested to the way in which the publication brought them together in the proud effort to be the first Indian newspaper.

Indeed, these efforts met with substantial success; *Talks and Thoughts* grew from four to eight pages, and, during the peak years of Indian student population at Hampton (beginning in 1892), eventually included paid advertisements. The advertisements were local—druggists, dry goods, barber shops—indicating that the local circulation of the paper was large enough to attract commercial attention. The newspaper’s format changed dramatically, as the traditional masthead logo—"*Tahenan upi qa ounkiya biye, --Come over and help us*"—was replaced by a new quotation from a well-known source each month.104 These included "What’s brave, what’s noble, lets DO it" (Shakespeare), "Self conquest is the greatest of virtues" (Plato), and "Let the past be past.-- Forward, March!" (perhaps Armstrong himself). The editors

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104 The reader may recognize this as the Massachusetts Bay seal; the Puritans envisaged the local Indians issuing the plea, "Come over and help us," or "*Tahenan upi qa ounkiya biye."
explained the departure:

We wanted to take this motto off, not that we are tired of it, but because we wish to print a new motto at each publication of our little paper which change, we think, will improve the heading of its little page.... We omit the Indian print, that our readers may get our thoughts in the English language, which the Indian finds so difficult to master. We do not mean that we can lay aside our Indian language all at once, for well you know, how we love the language in which we have grown up, but we wish you to know that we realize the need of the English language, and that we are trying very hard to master it, in order that we may soon be traveling the white man’s road, and likewise, may help to build up the kingdom of One who has so graciously placed us here.105

The Hampton institutional ideology is obviously present in all of the quotations, even the original logo, suggesting not a change in emphasis so much as a desire for a fresher, more dynamic product. English remained both the medium and the product, with an attentive audience monitoring the progress of the Indian students not only through the coverage of events but also through their articulation and presentation in the newspaper itself.

In hopes of improving its interest to readers, Talks and Thoughts reformatted itself strategically. Illustrations and engravings, and later photographs, began to appear for the first time in 1893, and the front page was reorganized to make space for them at the cost of articles and letters. With eight pages available for most issues during this time, editorial remarks were shifted to a less prominent position on the fourth rather than second page. Instead of simply asking readers to send in the twenty-five cents postage for a year’s subscription, Talks and Thoughts began offering special incentives to increase circulation. In September 1893, under the monthly motto of “a Penny Saved is a Penny Earned,” the paper promoted a new rate in

boldface, "ALL NEW SUBSCRIPTIONS.... TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS OFFER
AND RECEIVE THE PAPER FOR FOUR MONTHS FREE." Later in January 1894, *Talks
and Thoughts* placed alongside its other paid advertisements, "BOYS AND GIRLS! Do you
want to make a little pocket money? Get 10 new subscribers for TT [Talks and Thoughts].
Send us their names and address and $2.00, keeping the extra 50 cents as your commission."

Behind such marketing techniques, the paper entered its most prosperous decade. At
one point in 1895, "To induce some new friends to take the paper," they advertised, "*we will,
for thirty-five cents in stamps, give you a year's subscription to our paper, and send
postpaid a fine half tone engraving of Gen. Armstrong.* This engraving is a good copy of
one of the General's best photographs, and is printed on heavy board, 10 x 12; suitable for
framing. Price of the picture alone, postpaid is 25c. We trust this offer will appeal to many of
our old students."106 The paper, depending on the numbers of subscribers in a given year,
happily expanded to eight pages when fiscally possible.107 The school welcomed the
blossoming paper into its panoply of fund-raising efforts, and in July 1895 *Talks and
Thoughts*’s editors informed readers that "In order to bring the case of Hampton Institute
before our friends, an unusually large number of our paper has been printed this month. Many
copies will be sent to Boston to be distributed among the Christian Endeavor delegates that will
attend the Convention."

Financial incentives accompanied continued appeals based on the worthiness and

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106 Advertisement from editorial board, *Talks and Thoughts* (Jan. 1895).

107 Editorial board, untitled, *Talks and Thoughts* (July 1895).
uniqueness of *Talks and Thoughts*. Although still envisioned as a “letter to home” for the ex-students, the newspaper drew on its singularity as “the only paper for which only Indians write” to become an authoritative voice on Indian issues. In a supplement to the December 1902 edition, the paper requested, “We want some good old Indian stories such as our older people know. The white people write them in their books but they do not always get them right. We wish you would get them for us just as they ought to be.... We do not care anything about the English or spelling, we only want a good story or letter.... We have several hundred white subscribers to our paper and we want to interest them and at the same time interest you.”

Ethnographic material thus satiated the demands of the white “cross-over” market while entertaining the predominant Indian readership.108 These stories and myths served a dual purpose: first, they could be collected and told properly by members of their own culture, and secondly, readers—especially Indian readers—could extract meaning from their content and apply it to their respective situations.109 In his article “How the Bear Lost Its Tail: An Old Indian Story,” Iroquois student Chapman Scanandoah opened his narrative by stressing the common origins of all tribes: “It may seem rather strange, come [sic] to inquire about this story among the different tribes of Indians. We seem to know it so alike, even if we do speak

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108 In *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago, 1993), Richard H. Brodhead shows how “high”/middlebrow magazines like the *Atlantic Monthly* in the late-nineteenth century often included articles of local color, not unlike the ethnographic pieces of *Talks and Thoughts* during the same time period. * Talks and Thoughts* editors may have been picking up on this fad.

109 For examples of these historical/ethnographic pieces with likely practical applications, see “How to Walk Straight,” *Talks and Thoughts* (May 1892); “The Spider, the Panther and the Snake: An Indian Fairy Tale,” *Talks and Thoughts* (Oct. 1892).
different languages. This story must have happened when we spoke the same language."\textsuperscript{110}

Even where myths differed among tribes, Indian writers expected Indian readers to be a captive and comprehending audience.

Perhaps more subtly, articles and letters telling history from an Indian perspective drew out comparisons between positively depicted pre-colonial times and somewhat bleaker post-colonial realities. Various articles lament the diminishing numbers of buffalo as the result of white encroachment and exploitation by calling attention to their plentitude and utility in former times (i.e., "Buffalo were still numerous then, while to day [sic] there are but few running wild").\textsuperscript{111} Some Indian students openly mourned the loss of uniquely Indian knowledge. In an article signed simply "Lakotah," the author wrote,

> Most, if not all, wild Indians have only nine months or moons in a year.... ‘In ye goode olde times’ it was rare to find an Indian who did not know the names of the months as well as Hampton Indian knows the a b c; but now only the old men and women can tell the names of the months, and then they have to scratch their heads and look up towards the sky a long time before they are able to do even that.\textsuperscript{112}

"Lakotah" made clear the costs involved in the adoption of Armstrong’s scheme, as Indian students turned themselves, like Sloan, into middle-class land-holders and professionals.

Another student, Alex Estes, quoted an old Indian chief in order to point out one facet

\textsuperscript{110} Chapman Scanandoah, "How the Bear Lost His Tail: An Old Indian Story," \textit{Talks and Thoughts} (Feb. 1893).


\textsuperscript{112} ‘Lakotah,’ “How Some Indians Tell Time,” \textit{Talks and Thoughts} (Dec. 1894).
of Indian knowledge being eclipsed by white influence: "Indians are ignorant of all things, but they can remember things very well, but a whiteman [sic] has books and he go by that. But if you take all the books away from him and took him out to a prairie and left him there, he will be wandering about not knowing where he came from till he find a piece of paper which will surely bring him back from where he went."\textsuperscript{113} Such traditionalists showed how Hampton and schools like it were destroying the native cultures. Indian students also made references to the diminishing physical capabilities of Indians as they became acculturated; Samuel De Fond commented that "In winter times... [Indians] will go out in the cold without any clothes on and chase buffaloes. It seems though they can endure the cold more at that time than they do now."\textsuperscript{114}

Not all students wrote so positively of Indian cultures. DuBray criticized various Indian customs:

Before the Indians become civilized, they use to have foolish accustoms [sic]. I will tell you a few of them.

.... If you go to an Indian woman and ask her, What is your name, she will not tell you, but will pointed [sic] at her husband and tell you to ask him.

A lady has no right to get mad at her oldest brother. If a young lady get mad at her brother, the young man will go out where nobody see and kill himself.\textsuperscript{115}

DuBray’s article, although especially pointed in its condemnation of certain aspects of Indian culture, nonetheless was standard in the sense that he promoted the value of the “civilized”

\textsuperscript{113} Alex H. Estes, “Fond of Red Things,” \textit{Talks and Thoughts} (Oct. 1886).

\textsuperscript{114} Samuel De Fond, “Old Indian Ways,” \textit{Talks and Thoughts} (Oct. 1886).

\textsuperscript{115} Joseph DuBray, “Indians’ Accustoms,” \textit{Talks and Thoughts} (June 1891).
white culture into which Hampton Indians were quickly moving.

Despite the conscientious editorial and marketing tactics of the students, by 1904 *Talks and Thoughts* began to show signs of distress. Advertisements had already been completely absent for a few years and editions had shrunk to four pages after the temporary eight-page expansion. Campus involvement in *Talks and Thoughts* seemed problematic, and summer issues were consolidated, with editions covering two months rather than the standard one because not enough students remained at Hampton to set type and edit. Even when the school year restarted in 1904, September and October had to be published as one issue. The Indian population was still strong at Hampton (it would not drop greatly until 1912, when federal funding for Indian pupils was cut), and graduates should have been accumulating in numbers off campus. Nonetheless, pleas for subscriptions became more desperate. In 1906, Managing Editor Wallace Springer frankly addressed his readers:

*[Talks and Thoughts*'] mission has been to keep the returned students in touch with the school and to remind our friends that we are doing what we can toward helping ourselves.

Our work is becoming increasingly confining and it is often difficult to get suitable material for our paper but we do not want to give up after twenty years of struggle.

Our subscription price is small, only enough to cover the expenses of publication. With every renewal card we have to pay one cent in postage besides the cost of the card and we therefore ask our friends to be as prompt as possible in renewing and so save us this extra expense. We also want to increase our subscription list and we would be glad if our friends would help us in finding new subscribers.¹⁶

Springer alone handled the editorial duties, and it seems probable that he was also

overburdened with the collection and organization of copy for the newspaper. The reasons for falling subscriptions are not clear, but no matter what they were the school apparently had no intention of supporting the paper if it could not remain solvent.

Faculty editor Folsom also was likely tiring of her role, and it was she who ultimately wrote the supplement announcing the dissolution of *Talks and Thoughts* in October 1907. She explained:

Year by year the student’s work has increased and his hours of leisure diminished until now the effort of filling the paper with suitable material has become too great a burden upon those responsible for it, so great that it seems best now to relieve them in the only way possible—that of discontinuing the paper altogether.

*Talks and Thoughts* is proud of the fact that it has paid its own way from the first and closes its career with no record of debt.

Its list of subscribers is as small as it has ever been and many of its subscriptions are about to expire; therefore this seems as good a time as any to make the change.

The *Southern Workman* will publish articles by Indian writers from time to time, and will add to its local and returned student columns the news that has usually found place in Talks and Thoughts....

The Indians at Hampton wish to thank their many friends for their long-continued interest and practical help. Many of these friends have taken the little paper since its beginning and two or three hundred of them for years. Kind and encouraging letters have come from them, and its with a real pang of regret that this pleasant connection is severed.

The *Southern Workman* did indeed include sporadic correspondence and articles by Indians but remained largely an administrative rather than a student publication, including Indian student writing for more strictly publicity purposes. Only two years after *Talks and Thoughts*’s demise, a new student publication named the *Hampton Student* was founded to cover the student body at large. For the first few issues, the *Hampton Student* kept a separate “Indian Happenings”
section and denoted the presence of an “Indian” editor on the masthead. By 1910, however, this section had disappeared, not to resurface again—just briefly—until 1915. Only occasionally were Indian events or concerns specifically addressed other than to comment on the Indian baseball or basketball teams.

Little evidence remains to tell of the disappointment that *Talks and Thoughts*’s departure caused, but one Indian School administrator noted in a 1909 report of her trip to some of the Midwestern reservations, “a great many spoke of *Talks and Thoughts* and mourned that it was no longer published. It was looked upon as a letter from home, while the *Southern Workman* [now] contains as little of personal interest and is as far above the heads of most that only a small number can at-all [sic] to take it.” For the ex-students of Hampton, a vital link to their former home had been lost. For current students, the means of communication that *Talks and Thoughts* had previously provided now left them more isolated and they were unable to benefit from the advice, encouragement, and examples that letters from former Hampton students offered. From the administration’s point of view, a valuable exercise in English and the printing/newspaper trade was lost, as was one facet of the fund-raising operation. For better or worse, the Indian students associated with *Talks and Thoughts* learned one of Hampton Institute’s hardest lessons: that a product’s value, however noble its intentions, ultimately depended on the laws of the marketplace. No subscribers, no newspaper.

CONCLUSIONS

When considered within the context of its production, *Talks and Thoughts* reveals the reciprocal relations of power at the Hampton Indian School. Here Indian students negotiated in an often disadvantageous social terrain and marketplace to sustain a unique publication for twenty-one years. Whereas blacks at Hampton, Tuskegee, and other schools may have had the critical mass of numbers, wealth, and connections to sustain a national communication and a sense of identity, Indians apparently did not. With so many heterogeneous tribes, and students scattered throughout the country, the mission of promoting “civilization” and defending native interests was difficult. And, in the case of *Talks and Thoughts*, impossible. The newspaper had searched for a way to keep current and former Hampton students connected, while also reaching out to other Indian schools via cross-distribution and the sharing of articles. In some cases there was a limited print dialogue between editors. Indian students and graduates of Hampton and other schools could trace the progress of their class, cheer one another’s advances, challenge the deprecation of their efforts by ignorant whites, and sustain a sense of common purpose, even as they dispersed to reservations throughout the country.

Indian students arrived at Hampton with diverse backgrounds and varying capacities for assimilation in white society. The school curriculum was logically designed to reform them through education and vocational training based on white models and needs. Indian students
learned a trade within a system that sought to put them to work in trades that would make them productive, economically independent members—albeit often marginalized ones—in white-dominated society. Hampton's institutional ideology was founded in force, as it acquired its students from the recently and reluctantly defeated tribes of the Plains. But the process was both cooperative and dialectical; Indian students had much to gain at Hampton, and they actively contributed to its success via the newspaper and other mediums. As *Talks and Thoughts* shows, the students took at least partial control of their product in order to create a medium of communication for addressing Indian concerns and connecting a growing community in transition.

The rigors and challenges that Hampton's institutional ideology implied with its white prescriptions for distinct indigenous cultures had the effect of isolating Indians within a strict racial category. The Indian students certainly felt the limitations and preconceptions with which whites approached them. In *Talks and Thoughts*, the Indian students of Hampton—partly as a remedy for their social condition—began to envision themselves as part of a larger, pan-Indian community that aspired to professional success. Hampton pushed for acculturation, but it also encouraged Indian students to occupy a leadership status similar to that of Hampton's black "talented tenth"—that small group that was intended to leave Hampton with all the tools necessary to educate the entire race. The newspaper united this nascent Indian community of pioneers under the auspices and sponsorship of Hampton Institute. *Talks and Thoughts* contains the material and intellectual efforts of the Indian students, and displays the difficulty of their tasks. The results, still visible today, reveal an elaborate process of cultural negotiation.
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