Liberty's Kids: Toys, Children's Literature, and the Promotion of Nationalism in the Early Nineteenth-Century United States

August M. Butler

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wm.edu/etd

Part of the American Literature Commons, and the United States History Commons

Recommended Citation
https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-nhek-5705
Liberty's Kids:
Toys, Children's Literature, and the Promotion of Nationalism in the Early
Nineteenth-Century United States

Amelia M. Butler
Grand Prairie, Texas

Bachelor of Arts, Texas A&M University, 2010

A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the College of William and Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Lyon Gardiner Tyler Department of History

The College of William and Mary
January 2014
This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Amelia Mary Butler

Approved by the Committee, January, 2014

Committee Chair
Professor Karin Wulf, History
The College of William & Mary

Visiting Assistant Professor/Susan Kern, History
The College of William & Mary

Professor Elizabeth Barnes, American Studies and English
The College of William & Mary
ABSTRACT

It is easy to see how children influence their own play and education, but they are also being influenced in return. What message have children received historically from their toys and books, particularly regarding their national identity? Were American children encouraged to think of themselves as part of a nation, and if so, how—and when? How was this message conveyed differently than it was to adults?

Toys remained largely the same before and after the American Revolution, in both form and provenance, but they did take on new national meanings, often assigned to them by children themselves. Explicit effort to inculcate nationalism was limited primarily to adults in the early Republic, only appearing in children’s literature and textbooks in the 1820s. These new forms coincided with an increasing interest in children’s education stemming from shifting conceptions of childhood and the egalitarian ideal of American democracy.

Chapter One offers a comparison between toys of the pre-Revolutionary period and the early Republic by examining portraiture, newspaper advertisements, and surviving artifacts. Chapter Two provides a close analysis of two works of children’s literature by the same author, one an earlier, non-pedagogic book and the other a later textbook. Together, these chapters provide a glimpse of the ways in which children were and were not encouraged to form a national identity.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1. Playing American: Toys in the Era of the American Revolution</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2. Reading American: Antebellum Children’s Literature</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This has been a challenging and enormously rewarding year of intellectual growth, and I really ought to thank everyone I’ve met for their part in it. (Don’t worry; I won’t.) Several individuals stand out, however, and I shall try to do their contributions and my gratitude justice in the few words I can put here.

First of all, of course, Karin Wulf, my advisor, who helped me find my topic, pushed me hard to really mine my sources, and made this thesis what it is. Thanks, too, to Susan Kern and Elizabeth Barnes, the other members of my committee and teachers of two fantastically enjoyable classes, for their input on material culture and children’s literature, respectively.

I spent this year apprenticing at the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture—an experience that taught me so much more than how to footnote properly (although that was incredibly helpful) and which I will always remember with fondness. To Gil Kelly, who taught me the proper way to hyphenate “England,” the importance of light-handed editing, and the joy of a mechanical typewriter; to Ginny Montijo, who believed in me; to Meg Musselwhite, who was patient with me; to Kathy Burdette, who understood my frustration; to Fredrika J. Teute, who was so friendly to me; to Shawn Holl, Nadine Zimmerli, and Kaylan Stevenson, who made coffee hour lively and enjoyable; and to Kristen Beales, Lynch Bennett, Bill Smith, and Ian Tonat, my fellow apprenti and dear friends: Thank you, so very much.

So many people helped me on my way to grad school. A humongous thank you to the Drs. Jim and Carolyn Whittenburg, founders of the National Institute of American History and Democracy, who taught me to love history back in high school and who allowed me to maintain my connection to William & Mary over all those years. Thanks also to David Corlett, who helped in that process, and whose friendship today is as valuable to me as his mentorship back then. Molly Warsh taught me how to write a research paper and was instrumental in my admission to William & Mary; thank you so much for all the advice, and for introducing me to both Aromas and the Daily Grind!

Finally, on a more personal note, thank you to the wonderful and encouraging friends I’ve made here. Most especially: Andrea Williams, who went first and showed me how it’s done (and reminded me of the joys of nerddom); Laura Ansley, who made home a place of rest and retreat (and Dr. Pepper); Nichole Lidstrom, whose bravery inspires me daily; Kristina Poznan and Sarah McCartney, examples in school and work. My sister Amanda has shared my dreams and her husband Hunter introduced me to editing. And my ever-supportive parents taught me that nothing is impossible and opened my eyes to the wider world.
To Indira,
Lilith,
and Soren

who make the study of childhood
more than mere abstraction
Chapter One
Playing American: Toys in the Era of the American Revolution

A chubby three-year-old plays with a stuffed animal, moving its limbs and giving it voice. A lithe six-year-old makes deliberate progress through a passage, reading aloud to an attentive teacher. It is easy to see how children influence their own play and education, but they are also being influenced in return. What message have children received historically from their toys and books, particularly regarding their national identity? Were American children encouraged to think of themselves as part of a nation, and if so, how—and when? How was this message conveyed differently than it was to adults?

Toys remained largely the same before and after the American Revolution, in both form and provenance, but they did take on new national meanings, often assigned to them by children themselves. Explicit effort to inculcate nationalism was primarily by and for adults in the early Republic, only appearing in children’s literature and textbooks in the 1820s. These new forms coincided with an increasing interest in children’s education stemming from shifting conceptions of childhood and the egalitarian ideal of American democracy.

Toys and literature are only the most direct and apparent means adults could use to influence children, of course, and thus the examination of such only scratches the surface of possible efforts to nationalize children. However, toys
and literature were specifically targeted toward children in a way that sermons or plays, for example, were not. Toys and literature also offer opportunities for comparison with the present, since these remain two prominent elements of children’s culture. Unfortunately, much of the extant evidence of toys in this period reflects only expensive manufactured and merchandized toys, and literacy was a luxury of the upper classes, so the story I am able to tell in these pages is largely limited to elite—or at least well-to-do—children.

“Nationalism” and “nationalize” are fraught terms, with many possible definitions and manifestations. In these pages, I will define “nationalism” as an awareness of, and perhaps pride in, a distinct identity stemming from a geopolitically defined area; “nationalize,” then, is the conscious effort to instill this awareness and pride in others, specifically children. These are perhaps narrow definitions. Nevertheless, it is a start, and an important start at that. By examining how adults attempted—or not—to nationalize children in the early days of the United States, we can perhaps gain a better understanding of efforts to do so today. It also expands the understanding of the relationship between adults and children in patriotic and nationalistic endeavors.

Before discussing how toys and literature had an impact on children’s nationalism, though, it is important to understand how the concept of childhood—and children’s play—has developed through the ages. It is clear from even a cursory glance at the literature that childhood is a historically dynamic phenomenon. Childhood itself, conceived as a period of life separate from
infancy and adulthood, is a recent development. Prior to about 1750, Europeans considered children bestial creatures that must be quickly molded into miniature and then full adults. Infants' inability to sit upright or control their movements was evidence of this need for strict control, and parents thus placed them in restrictive clothing and furniture. Head wrappings encouraged the closure of the skull, which (they believed) would not happen without this parental intervention.

Swaddling was standard practice for two reasons: It kept the baby's legs straight, which was necessary to proper growth; it also immobilized the child. Crawling was heartily discouraged as a particular expression of children's animal nature, but keeping an infant restricted to one location also allowed its mother to go about her work. Once babies grew out of swaddling clothes, they were dressed—male and female—in long dresses which left their legs free but still made crawling difficult.¹

While infancy was seen as an unfortunately vulnerable but inevitable part of life, there was little patience for a long transition to adulthood. A child who

could walk was a child who could help around the house, and children as young as two or three were enlisted to watch over younger siblings, collect eggs, and supervise animals. Increased age brought increased responsibility, and by six or seven, children were dressed in adult-style clothing and considered full members of the adult community, at least to the limits of their capabilities. Thus a child who had exited "infancy" was ready to be introduced to concepts like nationality and national pride.²

Attitudes began shifting during the Enlightenment. The publication of John Locke's Some Thoughts Concerning Education, which proposed the tabula rasa model of childhood, followed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Emile, a novel promoting free reign for children, reflected changes in society's ideas about childrearing. Parents, previously enjoined to carefully mold their children from infancy, were now encouraged to think that left to its course, nature would produce healthy children. As parenting methods relaxed, slowly, there was less of a rush to move children from helpless infancy to full adulthood.³

Previously, the primary goal of formal education was to prepare free children to function in the adult world. Apprenticeship was one means of accomplishing this, and many children were sent from their homes to live with masters who would teach them an occupation from age six or seven until twenty-one. As the age of responsibility increased, the focus shifted to book learning

² Mintz, Huck's Raft, 23; Calvert, Children in the House, 36-37.
and the early years of childhood became ever more dedicated to school, though this transition would not be complete until late in the nineteenth century.4

Children’s lives were not consumed by education, however. Play was not new, but it began to take on different connotations in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the preceding centuries, because childhood was not a separate period of life, children’s and adults’ activities were not separate, either. Parents understood that their children would learn to be adults not only by observing the behavior of adults, but by participating fully in the adult world. Children ate with adults, worked with adults, and indeed played with adults. Games and play were not considered childish because they were not for children.5

However, as childhood became increasingly separate from adulthood (beginning in the Enlightenment and continuing into the early twentieth century), this began to change. Children now had more time on their hands, and thus played more than adults. As play grew more associated with children, adults played less. Eventually, play would become almost exclusively for children and adults who engaged in it considered “childish.” (The word childish was actually quite rare before about 1700). As adults began to value childhood as a unique

5 Calvert, Children in the House, 49-50.
and essential time in life, a time that should be free from work in order to focus on education, play became characteristic of childhood, and along with play, toys.⁶

Toys have been a part of life since antiquity, but it is important not to conflate continuity with universality. While children have played with toys in some form or another across all times and cultures—Egyptians had balls and board games; Romans played knucklebones and marbles; Ming Chinese rode hobby horses and put on puppet shows—these did not necessarily mean the same things to them. In Renaissance Europe, the windmill or whirligig was a popular toy and a common symbol of innocence or frivolity in paintings, even in such unlikely settings as the hands of the Christ child. Toys, as a significant part of children’s material culture, provide a window into the socialization of children and the values adults attempt to instill in them in any given time and culture. However, like play, toys were not just for children and “children” were not the same in these various times and cultures.⁷

The evolution of the word “toy” is indicative of its changing place in society. Before 1800, it merely referred to any small unimportant thing, a trifle. Adults would regale one another with “toys” (short, amusing stories) or dismiss petty matters or small items as “but a toy.” The word also referred to playthings, but even these were often for adults. Dolls were for grown women, to display the

---

latest fashions; bilbo-catchers required a skill and dexterity that challenged even adults. It was not until the early years of the nineteenth century that “toys” became associated with children in middling and elite culture, due again to the increasing separation between children and adults.⁸

Toys, then, served several purposes for children, and like childhood itself, these purposes were evolving. Toys for infants were primarily utilitarian, used to quiet a baby and promote good health. Rattles are the foremost example of this, typically formed in two halves, one end made of coral and the other containing a set of metallic bells. The bells served to entertain (and thus keep occupied) the child, and the coral was a safe, smooth surface to bite during the painful process of teething. Coral was also believed to possess healing properties and/or ward off evil spirits. Silver and coral, of course, were expensive, and thus these rattles were exclusively for the wealthier classes.⁹

As childhood began to emerge as a distinct, if not discrete, period between infancy and adulthood, toys were targeted increasingly toward this age group. With education as the main focus of this time of life, toys were often educational in nature. A puzzle might teach about the kings and queens of England, for example, or alphabet blocks promote literacy. While adults were beginning to set childhood apart as a more carefree time, they were still very

⁸ Calvert, Children in the House, 48, 50.
⁹ Calvert, Children in the House, 48-49; Ketchum, Toys & Games, 17; Fraser, History of Toys, 15.
aware of the realities of the world they lived in and the knowledge their children would need to thrive in it.\textsuperscript{10}

Toys were not always so straightforwardly pedagogic, however. Education came in subtler forms, which enabled children to mimic adult behavior and thus train for adulthood in society. And because adults performed highly gendered roles at the time, it was not so much a matter of children learning to be adults as boys learning to be men and girls learning to be women. "Children should be treated as children, but as children that are, in a future time, to be men and women," Noah Webster advised. Girls' toys tended to promote domesticity and sedate behavior. Dolls are a prime example of this, as childrearing would be an important part of a girl's life once she reached adulthood—and even before, as she would help take care of younger siblings. Dolls not only trained girls for motherhood, but also demonstrated womanly fashion and comportment. Even just owning a doll was something an adult woman would do. Tea sets are another example of domestic training. Girls' tea sets were identical to adult tea sets, only in miniature. A young girl could thus practice the tasks associated with genteel hosting, which would be important for her marriage prospects and social standing. These are only two examples, but they are perhaps the most salient expressions of domestic training through girls' toys.\textsuperscript{11}

Boys played with toys that emphasized characteristics associated with masculinity at the time, including martial ones. Weapons, whether used to hunt food for the family table or just for decoration to assert one's mastery over his surroundings, were part of a man's world, and boys learned how to use them very early. Toy guns were not manufactured until the nineteenth century (boys were taught how to use the real thing), but miniature swords can be seen on dynastic portraits of European royal children, and Native American boys were given miniature bows and arrows to practice with. Toy soldiers were another martial toy in the boy's arsenal. These not only promoted the soldier as a masculine ideal, but also taught managerial skills. As a boy organized troop movements, he learned how to manage groups of people. Tin soldiers painted in contemporary colors could also teach current events and politics in Europe. While again only two examples, they paint a picture of the way boys' toys promoted culturally construed masculinity.12

Did toys change in ways that reflected the changing and emerging American nation? The biggest change, of course, was that it was now a nation at all. While the process of forming thirteen different colonies into one country was far from over, the people living there were now Americans—in name, if not entirely in spirit. It was the spirit that came under focused metamorphosis in this early national period. How could such a varied population come to feel like they

had something in common, something worth not only fighting for but sacrificing individual interests for?

It was partly accomplished by creating new national symbols and attempting to rally the public around them. Old, royal holidays were replaced with new national ones, just as Christians a thousand years previously had co-opted and repurposed Saturnalia; the trappings remained the same, but the cause shifted. During these celebrations, toasts and speeches were given which promoted nationalism and encouraged each particular locality, state, and region to be the paragon of national virtue for the rest of the country. National feeling grew out of local and regional pride, not in opposition to it.13

By reporting the toasts and speeches coming out of these celebrations, newspapers became an important arm of spreading nationalism. In part because of the shift toward an emphasis on education in the young generally, in part because of the Puritan heritage of the Northeast which had long valued education, the new United States had one of the most literate populations in the Western world. This enabled newspapers to be the first truly mass media, though the geographical reach of individual papers was still quite limited. Those who had not been witness to a certain speech could read about it and absorb the nationalist ideas it propounded.14

Religion was another significant way of promoting nationalism in this period, with the so-called Second Great Awakening doing “more to Christianize American society than anything before or since” even as that Christianity split into ever-finer divisions. Disagree they might have, but American Christians united to decry the threat of Islam during the Barbary conflict, a dispute early in the country’s existence that intimately paired religion and nationalism in the popular imagination, if not official publications. Protestants found solidarity in anti-Catholicism, too, a sentiment grounded in ancient bitterness but justified by nationalist concerns about split loyalties.15

Race was also a powerful element of nationhood, perhaps the one children became aware of earliest. Black and white children often played together, especially on Southern plantations where they grew up in close proximity. Playing the same games, however, did not mean they possessed the same status. White children would often assign their enslaved playmates to the more difficult or inferior role, hitching them to carts or making them play the Indians to the white soldiers. Even when the play itself appeared equal, though, both parties knew that they were not—or were quickly taught so. A black child would never call a white child by his or her first name, for instance, and enslaved

children lacked the manufactured accoutrements that accompanied white play, acquiring their toys and sports gear from nature, their own production, or white castoffs. These differences were obvious to children of both races and promoted the idea of a white America.\textsuperscript{16}

These nationalization efforts and assumptions may have trickled down to the youth, but there were not explicit efforts to engage them. This is not to say that the nation’s leaders were unconcerned about the future generation. The doctrine of “Republican motherhood” urged women to bring up their children as the next generation of responsible citizens, and an emphasis on public speaking in schools was predicated on the idea that self-improvement would benefit the public good. It was general good citizenship, however, rather than specifically American citizenship that was encouraged.\textsuperscript{17}

Did toys change, then, to reflect this rising nationalist spirit? Surviving artifacts, period portraits, and newspaper advertisements provide a fairly accurate and representative—if not complete—picture of the toys available and used both before and after the Revolution. Artifacts are most useful for determining the form and material makeup of toys. Portraits give an idea of who


was supposed to be playing with what, as well as the symbolic value of certain toys. Newspaper advertisements give a sense of what was available for sale, where, and with what else, or at the very least, that toys were something storekeepers bothered to advertise.

There are, of course, limitations to all of these sources. Very few toys from this period survive, for a variety of reasons. One, they were often—especially among the non-elite—made of perishable materials: cornhusk dolls, paper soldiers, clay marbles. Two, as Karin Calvert astutely notes, it is adults who are responsible for collecting and keeping material items for posterity, and so it is their interests and values that are reflected in the things that survive. Three, this was a period before mass production, so there was simply a smaller volume to start with, decreasing the probability of some of them surviving. As adults grew less dismissive of infant and child bodies, as well as more appreciative of childhood as a unique time in life, portraits of children became more realistic and started incorporating the paraphernalia that accompanied their lives. However, items included in portraits are highly symbolic. Newspaper advertisements are perfunctory and businesslike, revealing little about what the items sold meant to consumers.18

These sources also share another limitation: they are almost exclusive to the upper classes of American society. While artifacts may come from all

---

classes, the artifacts most likely to survive are those made of more durable materials, generally bought and not made at home, and it was the upper classes who could afford these manufactured toys. Likewise, portraits—especially portraits of children—were a wealthy family’s purview. And while newspapers were targeted to all classes, advertisements only applied to those who could afford what was being advertised. With these limitations in mind, this project is therefore only able to focus on those who purchased manufactured toys, though their purchases and the advertisements for them would have created and capitalized on the aspirations of the lower classes. I am hopeful that further research will delve into the poorer and more marginalized and how their toys reflected and impacted their values and attitudes.19

In addition to financial disparity, regional differences are another influential factor. Due to the paucity of sources, it is difficult to make any meaningful analysis about regional variations in toys. Regional diversity in almost every other aspect of American life suggests that toys likely displayed it as well, but further research is required.

Prior to the Revolution, almost all manufactured (as opposed to homemade) toys were imported from England, since England was a manufacturing power and the colonies lacked large-scale manufacturing facilities. Thus, colonial children were playing with the same manufactured toys as their English counterparts. Furthermore, English toys were often imported from

German or Dutch toymakers, so children's toys were largely the same throughout Europe and the colonies.\textsuperscript{20}

The majority of newspaper advertisements for toys from this period come out of Boston, though this may be due to variant preservation practices; the majority of surviving newspapers come out of Boston. "Toys for children" or "children's toys" were advertised in long lists of goods from millinery shops, stationery stores, and even a mapmaker. Toys appear alongside fabrics ("Selunes, Tabbys, Callimancos, Worsted Plush, Kersies, Check Linnens, Poplins, Threads of all sorts...Childrens Toys, and sundry other things," "New fashion figur'd Sattin and mode Cloaks and Hats, White persian handkerchiefs lac'd, New fashion scotch pearl Necklaces and Earings [and] a Variety of Toys for Children"), with books and stationery ("best Writing Paper, Press Boards, large & small, Holman Ink Powder, best Dutch Quills...Lexicons, most sorts of Latin Books, a great assortment of Histories, Plays...Childrens Toys of all sorts"), and next to ceramics and cutlery ("China, Glass, Delph and Stone Ware...and a great Variety of Toys for Children," "Tea-Tables and Sconces, Toys and small Pictures for Children"). They do not seem to have been sold at wholesalers or imported with goods like alcohol, tobacco, or food items. Toys generally appear towards the end of these lists of goods, perhaps indicating they were something of an afterthought.\textsuperscript{21}


What is more difficult to account for are the large numbers of homemade toys, which do not show up on account ledgers and are generally less likely to survive. However, there is evidence for such toys as cornhusk dolls, paper soldiers, and clay marbles. English children also had homemade toys, such as rag dolls, and even those who could afford manufactured toys had homemade toys as well, but the distance and effort involved in acquiring manufactured toys in the colonies made homemade ones perhaps more in demand than they were in England.22

Girls' toys accomplished the same task on both sides of the Atlantic. Metropolitan or colonial, little girls were imagined to play with dolls and tea sets and learn to be good wives, mothers, and hostesses. In fact, they were playing with many of the same dolls and tea sets because of the trade relationship between England and her colonies. Colonial girls would have been slightly behind on the latest London fashions because of the delay in shipping goods across the ocean, but once her doll arrived she would be on the same page as her mother-country cousins. Toys, just as much as adult goods, helped to maintain the colonies' cultural ties to the homeland.

Dolls have existed for millennia and retain the same basic humanoid form. Changes generally occur in the material of composition and, if the form lends itself to it, the fashions accoutering the figure. The more expensive dolls in this

[4]: The Boston Gazette or, Weekly Advertiser, June 4, 1754. [4]; The Boston-Gazette, and Country Journal, April 22, 1765, [4]; The Boston Post-Boy & Advertiser, May 18, 1767, [3].
22 Ketchum, Toys & Games, 34-35 (fig. 22), 93 (fig. 86).
period were porcelain and dressed extravagantly in Paris or London high fashion. These, however, were intended for adult women as showpieces, not playthings for little girls. Girls’ dolls might have porcelain heads, but their bodies were usually made of something softer and less fragile. Wax heads were also beginning to turn up, as the malleability of the medium made for more realistic faces. Hair came from a variety of locations, the most expensive being, like wigs, real human hair. Animal hair and spun thread could also serve. Surprisingly, given their supposed role as training tool for motherhood, dolls did not tend to represent infants, though they were often referred to as “babies.” Perhaps this stems from their origin as an adult “toy” for display, or from a general societal disgust for the infant form, or perhaps they were meant to teach skills of deportment and clothing care rather than infant care.23

Homemade dolls were made of different materials, of course. Wooden dolls were quite common, perhaps carved or made from a clothes-peg. Rag dolls were popular on both sides of the Atlantic, composed of spare scraps of cloth stuffed into a doll shape. (These were more likely to be infant forms, and were commonly called “rag babies,” maybe due to the relative ease of forming a swaddled baby than a fully limbed child or adult). Cornhusk and corncob dolls, however, were a more American phenomenon, given the proximity to corn-

23 Ketchum, Toys & Games, 34-35 (fig. 23); Fraser, History of Toys, 17 (fig. 13), 103 (fig. 119). Garland, Changing Face of Childhood, 134.
growing areas. Dolls material makeup served as reminders of class and racial differences that influenced how different girls experienced nation.24

Tea sets for girls were not simply cast-off adult sets, passed on when broken or out of fashion. Miniature tea sets were manufactured specifically for children, otherwise identical and sold alongside their parent sets, indicating that these were very much intended for mimicry and training for adult roles. “Enslaved girls did not own miniature china tea sets,” unless they were donated by white girls who had tired of them. Like their adult counterparts, these miniature tea sets were likely both imported and locally made in the colonies. Imported sets were porcelain or delftware and quite expensive. Local sets were more likely of the cheaper redware, or perhaps silver, though miniature silver sets are much rarer than ceramic. Unlike dolls and other toys, tea sets do not easily lend themselves to home manufacture, but perhaps the presence of ceramics manufacturers in the colonies mitigated the need for a cheaper alternative to imported tea sets. Tea sets, both full-size and miniature, were painted with scenes often depicting classical mythology or otherwise pastoral images. These may have been part of a girl’s education in the classics, though such topics were pressed on boys more.25

Boys had their own sort of humanoid toy: soldiers. Like dolls for women, miniature soldiers were originally a grown man’s possession, a display piece or

24 Ketchum, Toys & Games, 30 (colorplate 11), 34-35 (fig. 22); Fraser, History of Toys, 10 (fig. 4), 12 (figs. 6-7). King, Stolen Childhood, 54.
25 Gray, Old Salem Toy Museum, 6-9 (figs. 1.7-1.13); Ketchum, Toys & Games, 57 (figs. 45-46). King, Stolen Childhood, 54.
perhaps used for displays of tactical acumen. But for boys, in England or her colonies, toy soldiers were a way to enact aggression, learn to think strategically, and practice leadership. Like dolls, soldiers came in an array of materials and production values. The most expensive European soldiers were individually handmade, often of lead, and painted in uniforms accurate to nations currently at war. In addition to maintaining ties to the motherland by importing these, then, parents were also teaching their boys about the politics and current events in Europe. Cheaper but still imported were tin soldiers, starting to be perfected around this time. These were made in mass molds and were much lighter and harder than lead soldiers. Homemade soldiers could be fashioned from clay, whittled from wood, or even cut out of paper. Whatever they were made of, soldiers were a toy that encouraged mastery over a group of people rather than focused care on an individual, as a doll did.²⁶

If girls practiced an aspect of their womanhood by serving tea from miniature tea sets, boys had their adult prop writ small in the form of weapons. Like girls' tea sets, these were not facsimiles of adult objects but the real thing. Colonial boys, and indeed most European boys outside the royal family, did not have miniature swords to buckle on, but they would have small knives and slings, especially rural boys expected to help provide game for the family to eat. Frontier boys in the colonies might even have access to miniature bows and arrows. These weapons did not need to be imported and were easy to make at

²⁶ Ketchum, *Toys & Games*, 84-85 (fig. 78); Fraser, *History of Toys*, 20 (fig. 18), 99-102 (figs. 113, 116-118).
home. Boys, particularly in rural areas, would also be taught to use a full-size firearm relatively early. Guns might be imported, but they were more likely to be acquired from a colonial gunsmith. Guns, mostly used for hunting but perhaps also imagined to guard against Indian attack, taught a boy that he was a provider and protector.27

Other toys were not so strictly gendered. Hobby horses were for both sexes throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, though the head-on-a-stick variety tended to favor boys while rocking horses, especially once they were constructed as a bench seat between two horse cutouts, were considered more suitable for girls (for reasons of dress and later Victorian sexual mores). These could be homemade, but they were more likely imported. Outdoor games with hoops and sticks were likewise available to both boys and girls, though in different variations. Again, boys were assumed to perform the more active version of running with a hoop and driving it with a stick, while girls were encouraged to play fillet (the “game of graces”) while standing mostly still; their clothing also played a role in this. Reports of children injured while playing, by diarists like Samuel Sewall, indicate “that they [boys] were more likely than girls to be allowed or even expected to be out and about, engaging in recreation and work, activities that could be physically demanding and risky.” Hoops were easily acquired in the colonies, from the cooper or carpenter or made at home. Board games and puzzles were imagined to be equally enjoyed by children of both

27 Gray, Old Salem Toy Museum, 3 (fig. 1.3); Fraser, History of Toys, 87 (fig. 100), 105 (fig. 122), 144 (fig. 168).
genders, and these tended to come from England so that “The Royall & Most
Pleasant Game of the Goose” or “The White Horse or Bell and Hammer Game”
gave colonial and metropolitan children a common bond.28

Prior to the Revolution, most toys were either homemade or imported from
England. Toys were only manufactured in the colonies if they were made by a
craftsman who did not specialize in toys; potters or silversmiths might make a
miniature tea set alongside their adult versions. Toys were highly gendered on
both sides of the Atlantic, serving to prepare children for their adult roles in life.

The war interrupted trade with England, and the colonists turned to France
and other European nations to help. Whether they were acquiring toys along
with other goods from these countries is uncertain, though it seems unlikely that
the importation of toys would have been a priority during wartime. The years
immediately prior to and during the Revolution also saw an increased reliance on
homemade goods as part of the homespun movement, an attempt to display
colonists’ ability to exist independently from England. Though making toys at
home was likely an economic necessity—or a hobby—rather than an expression
of independence, it is possible that by severing those close cultural ties to
English toys, children began to grow apart from their English cousins. After the
Revolution, however, trade resumed with England and toys were once again
imported from the former mother country. There were no dedicated toymakers in

Langmuir, Imagining Childhood, 144 (fig. 100), 146 (fig. 102); Ketchum, Toys & Games, 22-23
(fig. 9), 28 (fig. 18), 97-107; Fraser, A History of Toys, 97 (fig. 110), 159 (fig. 189); O’Brien, Story
of American Toys, 19 (fig).
the United States until the middle of the nineteenth century, so until then, just as before the Revolution, toys were either made at home or came from overseas.\(^29\)

Advertisements for toys began to appear in newspapers outside of Boston, from Portland, Maine, to Charleston, South Carolina. More significantly, shops were being advertised that were dedicated to toys or children's goods generally. While some of these advertisements were quite brief and short on detail ("A Variety of Dutch Toys for Children, to be sold at..."), the early nineteenth century saw increasing numbers of toy shop advertisements with lists just as extensive as the millineries' ("too prolix for an advertisement," one asserts). Toys continued to be advertised in lists of goods from millinery or variety shops, too, among the same sorts of goods—fabric, stationery, dishes—as before the war.\(^30\)

Dolls did not change much, but there was perhaps a greater encouragement for girls to play with dolls. Preparation for responsible wifedom and motherhood became very important in an era that promoted "republican motherhood." There was also a move toward enforcing gender boundaries more strictly ("keep within compass"), thus promoting dolls as a more desirable


plaything for girls than outdoor activities like hoops that she might have previously played with her brothers.  

Tea sets went through a controversial period immediately prior to and during the Revolution, as colonists boycotted English tea and bid “adieu to [their] tea-table” in displays of solidarity and defiance. There is no evidence to suggest that little girls emulated their mothers in this, but one can imagine that patriotic parents encouraged their children not to play with toys that would paint them as loyalists. After the Revolution, though tea was never again as popular in the United States as in England, tea lost its treasonous associations and tea sets were once again used to demonstrate gentility. Adult tea sets were even painted with emblems of the new nation—the Great Seal or the flag—but there is no evidence that this practice carried over to the miniature versions, which continued with the generic patterns and pastoral scenes of before the war. One Philadelphia toy shop advertised “curious setts of Tea Equipage, either enamelled, chocolate coloured, or plain” in 1783. Whether these sets were “curious” because of being miniature is unclear though interestingly the advertisement is directed “for the amusement of their children” generally, not specifically girls.

Toy soldiers would have taken on a particular salience for young boys during wartime, though they might have lost their luster as these boys longed to

---

31 Smith, *After the Revolution*, 31-34, 60.
(and sometimes did) march for real. There were no toy soldiers painted in Continental uniforms (there was little enough to call a Continental uniform) but it is no great stretch to suppose boys' imagination could make do. Weapons, too, perhaps became especially important to boys during the war. If a boy was old enough, he would have shouldered arms and gone off to war himself. If not, he would be tasked with taking care of the family while his father was away. Rural families now relied on their sons' hunting and protection, and an urban boy had to be able to handle himself in a fight if he wanted to acquire and retain limited resources available. Weapons thus became less about practicing for manhood and more about performing manhood in the present. After the war, weapons would again be toys for the next generation.\textsuperscript{33}

More important than weapons for a boy's development was learning a trade. The same toy shop that advertised "curious setts of Tea Equipage" also sold "for young Gentlemens amusement...representations of grist mills, fulling mills, paper mills, oil mills, [illegible] mills, and wind mills." In addition to trade, boys' minds were expected to be engaged "in the mechanical, philosophical, astronomical, and botanical systems" for which this store sold "numerous articles...worth of the notice of the curious." A large part of being a good male citizen was being a productive member of society.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{33} J. L. Bell, "From Saucy Boys to Sons of Liberty: Politicizing Youth in Pre-Revolutionary Boston," in Marten, \textit{Children in Colonial America}, 204-216.

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{The [Philadelphia] Pennsylvania Packet or, the General Advertiser}, July 26, 1783, [3].
Other toys remained largely the same through the war, as well. Hobby
horses continued to change, but more in response to safety and aesthetic
concerns than any developments relating to the war or to the separation. Hoop
and stick games evolved little, though the gender divide probably widened as
girls became more aware of the pressures on them to be good republican wives
and mothers. Board games and puzzles continued to be imported from England,
thus preserving American cultural ties with the former colonizer. A particularly
striking example is a puzzle imported in 1790 which taught children the monarchs
of England. Like the New England Primer which continued to teach "Our King
the Good, No Man of Blood," years after independence, children's toys were still
reinforcing the cultural relationship with England long after the political one had
dissolved.35

While toys were not necessarily created with the purpose of promoting
nationalism among children, some children took it upon themselves to imbue
their toys with this message. Josiah Quincy recalled of his school days,
"Characteristic of the spirit of the times," that "the boys had established it as a
principle that every hoop and sled should have thirteen marks as evidence of the
political character of the owner." The racial and religious aspects of national
identity could be enacted through toys, too, as white children fulfilled their role as
benevolent masters and generous Christians by giving toys to African-American

35 Smith, After the Revolution, 73 (fig); The New England Primer Improved, For the more easy
attaining the true Reading of English (Glasgow, 1781).
children. Toys, then, may not have originated nationalism so much as given children a means to express it.36

Though the Revolution interrupted the importation of toys from England, it resumed after the war and toys continued to be both homemade and imported. The types of toys children were playing with did not change much and gender roles were still promoted and reinforced by the toys boys and girls were playing with (though perhaps to a greater degree than before). Toys were still teaching the same lessons, practically and pedagogically, as they had before the war.

However, during the war, toys took on additional meanings due to the circumstances. Tea sets were seen as unpatriotic and loyalist, and so discarded until after the war. Dolls became symbols of republican motherhood, and toy soldiers allowed boys to participate in the war even if they were not old enough to enlist. Weapons took on a seriousness of purpose that elevated them from the toy realm to the adult world for at least a brief period. While changes occurred in children’s toys during the American Revolution, these largely did not last past the cessation of hostilities. Toys in the early national period were the same as toys prior to the Revolution, but they gave children a way to act out their national identity and the values associated with it.

Chapter Two

Reading American: Antebellum Children’s Literature

Toys are not the only way to reach children. A nation’s literature is a window into its psyche, and its children’s literature a reflection of its most-prized values. While toys changed little in the years following the Revolution, in the nineteenth century, American children’s literature began attempting to instill nationalism in its youngest citizens. The works of Samuel Goodrich provide a useful case study of this nationalist children’s literature.

Much like toys, children’s literature was almost exclusively imported from England during the colonial period. The morality tales—both religious and, over time, increasingly secular—of authors such as John Newbery, James Janeway, Dr. Croxall, and Lord Chesterfield were very popular in America (at least among adults who wanted their children to learn the lessons). Even during the Revolution, families continued to enjoy these English stories—though perhaps purchasing a Boston or Philadelphia reprint, rather than a London import. This trend continued after the Revolution, as well, though there were some attempts to “Americanize” these English works; a footnote was added to the classic “Goody Two-Shoes” to decry “the state of things in Britain” and George Washington replaced whales in the New England Primer. Even as English
children's literature evolved, Americans still embraced the didactic morality tales of the previous generation.37

This began to change in the 1820s. The publication of Clement Moore's *A Visit from St. Nicholas* in 1823 marked the first original American literature for children, and the genre quickly took off. Several weekly magazines for children entered publication in the next few years, printed by the likes of Sarah Josepha Hale, Lydia Maria Child, and Samuel Goodrich. These magazines were specifically designed for "transmitting the dominant class's value system to its children."38

In addition to his magazine, Samuel Goodrich wrote hundreds of children's books and school textbooks both under his own name and as a character named Peter Parley. His works, particularly *The Tales of Peter Parley, about America* and *A Pictorial History of the United States*, display both overt and subtle attempts to create a sense of national feeling in children.

37 Rosalie V. Halsey, *Forgotten Books of the American Nursery: A History of the Development of the American Story-Book* (Boston, 1911), 104, 121-123, 140 (quotation on page 123); Frank Luther Mott, *Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best Sellers in the United States* (New York, 1947), 27-32. While Mott presents a fairly straightforward "canon" of best sellers (ix), examining what was selling how many copies when, Cathy N. Davidson takes a more nuanced approach in *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (Cary, N.C., 1988), studying the distribution and readership of these books and what they may have meant to their readers (based on marginalia and references in letters, diaries, and other sources). Like Davidson, William J. Gilmore in *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835* (Knoxville, 1992) is interested in the mentalité(s) of Americans (specifically New Englanders) as influenced and reflected by reading materials, especially how literacy became necessary as commercial interests and printed materials intertwined and spread.

Samuel Griswold Goodrich entered the book publishing business after the War of 1812 and began to turn his hand to writing his own books. He soon concluded that American literature was sorely lacking and determined to fill the void, “confident that American nationalist pride was strong enough to support a native literature.” His confidence was not misplaced, as his books about America (and myriad other topics) sold so well that other publishers capitalized on his popularity by appropriating his Peter Parley character for their own works and even English literature began to adopt the travelogue style of Goodrich’s work. A contemporary reviewer attributed Goodrich’s success to his refusal to talk down to children and his ability to make his topics interesting to young readers. That he was widely read is indisputable; numerous accounts from the late nineteenth century recount the impact of the Peter Parley Tales on not only the writer but also his or her peers. A letter to the editor in one weekly publication mentions a few lines from a Goodrich poem on geography, concluding, “I have no doubt that 1,000 men and women, between sixty and ninety, would stand up and recite in concert all the other verses!” Donald Mitchell, collector of American literature, called Goodrich “that favorite story-teller for boys” and commended him for his ability “which converted the stiff geographic text-books...into lively pictures.” Mitchell recalled “the image of London Tower, which came to me first through the spectacles of Mr. Peter Parley...it abides with me still.” Even Lew Wallace, author of Ben-Hur, remembered Goodrich’s work fondly: “My first book! Ah, how distinctly it comes to me through the years! One of Peter Parley’s.” Goodrich
was hugely influential on children in the nineteenth century, even if he is largely forgotten today.39

As one of the earliest and most widely read authors of American children’s literature, Goodrich proves a useful case study of the nationalistic content of nineteenth century children’s books. In comparing two of his books, one a storybook for young children and one a history textbook for older children, interesting differences emerge but the similarities in their nationalist sentiment are striking.

In 1827, Samuel Goodrich published *The Tales of Peter Parley, about America*, a book intended to “convey to children, under the guise of amusement, the first ideas of Geography and History.” He does not specify a target age for his “little work,” but the syntax is simple, the print large, and the pictures plentiful. He does stress the importance of his work for “the cause of infant education,” and the word “infant” in the nineteenth century tended to refer to a child under seven. Goodrich’s method, therefore, entailed “exhibit[ing] an outline merely...adapted to the taste and knowledge of children” and “connect[ing] these grave topics with personal adventures” that he fabricated. Goodrich was highly conscientious about the “difficulty, and...importance” of writing for children, acknowledging that striking the balance between “language...copious enough” to

capture his subject and “simple enough for the limited comprehension of children” was a challenge. He seems to have met the challenge, however, as this first of his *Peter Parley* books was wildly successful and spawned “a series of works of the same kind on Europe, Asia, and Africa.”

Goodrich’s story extends from pre-conquest Latin America through the American Revolution, though the narrative does not progress entirely linearly. Beginning in contemporary Boston, Goodrich’s narrator (Peter Parley) recounts childhood memories of a less-developed Boston very near to Indian country, into which Parley ventures with a Native American friend of his father’s who then recounts the history of his people before the arrival of Europeans. Child Parley travels to New York where he encounters peoples of various nationalities, prompting him to discuss Columbus’s discovery of America and the subsequent plunder of Central and South America. He then moves on to the settlement of North America at Jamestown, Manhattan, and Plymouth, the increase of these colonies, and the eventual Revolution, in which he played a role in several significant battles (Lexington, Bunker Hill, Saratoga, and Yorktown). Goodrich then ends the book with a long poem summarizing the events outlined, encouraging his readers to “commit [it] to memory, and recite [it] to your friends.”

---


If *The Tales of Peter Parley, about America* was intended to be a child's first book, or at least first introduction to American history and geography, Samuel Goodrich's *A Pictorial History of the United States* was aimed at a decidedly older audience. Published twenty-three years after *Peter Parley* and expressly "For the Use of Schools," *A Pictorial History* is three hundred fifty pages of dense text with, despite its name, few pictures. It fit into Noah Webster's and Thomas Jefferson's visions of American education, an education that would eschew classical languages in favor of more practical knowledge. Webster drew on the educational systems of classical societies, which instilled "an invincible attachment to their country," to stress the importance of education "which forms the general character of a nation." Webster believed that schools should not only teach "the sciences, but may implant, in the minds of the American youth, the principles of virtue and liberty; and inspire them with just and liberal ideas of government, and with an inviolable attachment to their own country." To that end, he suggested that a child "should read books that furnish him with ideas that will be useful to him....He should lisp the praise of liberty." Jefferson agreed, proposing that "the books which shall be used therein for instructing the children to read shall...at the same time make them acquainted with...American history." Though the teaching of these subjects did not really begin until the 1810s, the focus before then being primarily oratory and character development as a path to participation in the public good, Goodrich's *Pictorial*
History fits squarely into the curricular vision that came to fruition in the mid-1800s. It should be noted that Jefferson's and Webster's vision of American education did not necessarily include girls. Prior to the Revolution, and indeed for many years after, female education was largely limited to early grammar school basics and, for the wealthy, "social accomplishments" like music, French, and needlework. Increasingly in the 1820s and beyond, opportunities were opening up to women to study the same subjects as their male counterparts, including history. This is not immediately obvious in Goodrich's text, however, as he uses a generic "he" to describe the students studying his work and focuses on male characters throughout, unlike curricula for girls which often highlighted notable women. Goodrich's textbook may have been used in girls' schools, but it seems—like his earlier children's book—to be intended for boys.

Proceeding more straightforwardly than Peter Parley—there is no frame story or identified narrator—Goodrich tries to strike a balance between what he calls "ethnographic" history (what today's historians would probably call "regional") and "chronological." Relying heavily on character sketches, the

---


establishment of each colony and state, and blow-by-blow accounts of military skirmishes, the text is highly detailed. Accompanied by comprehension questions at the bottom of each page, the book ends with an index appropriate to its role as a reference book more than a narrative.\textsuperscript{44}

The clearest manifestation of nationalism in these Goodrich works is his treatment of Native Americans. Unsurprisingly for his era, he embraces several common myths: the vanishing Indian, the noble savage, the not-so-noble savage, and the childlike Indian. Goodrich was hardly the first to peddle these myths to children; they were woven into the \textit{New England Primer}, for one. Popular literature of the time, such as James Fenimore Cooper's \textit{Leatherstocking Tales}, also embraced these stereotypes, but Cooper's books were not targeted to children. Goodrich, therefore, is merely an example of a national mindset that did not include this particular Other.\textsuperscript{45}

The idea that Native Americans were destroyed, assimilated, or removed from the United States and no longer exist as distinct peoples is one of the most persistent myths about Native Americans. Goodrich regurgitates this notion from the very beginning of \textit{Peter Parley}: “There are no Indians near Boston now; they are nearly all dead, or gone far west over the mountains.” It returns again

\textsuperscript{44} Goodrich, \textit{A Pictorial History}, iv.
towards the end, in the middle of a long section about the great progress of the United States in the previous hundred and fifty years. "Then...travelling was attended with danger, from the Indians, and the wild beasts, that lurked in the forests....How have the wild beasts been subdued? How have the Indians been driven over the mountains?" Not only are Native Americans explicitly linked with "wild beasts," they are also supposed to be entirely gone from civilized America.46

The myth of the vanishing Indian is more subtly addressed throughout A Pictorial History, though one could say that they disappeared from his narrative just as he proposed they did from America, as they receive far less page-time than in Peter Parley some twenty years prior. However, A Pictorial History does, like Peter Parley, begin and end with the vanishing Indian. Before even the first word, the frontispiece depicts a stoically sad "American Indian contemplating the progress of civilization." He wears a feathered headdress and clutches a bow, but his quiver of arrows lies abandoned on the ground next to a pair of moose antlers, a tomahawk, and a peace pipe. He appears to be wearing European-style breeches and stockings, and gazes out at a train passing by a port city with steamships in the harbor. The impression is one of his irrelevance, and it is clear from the caption that this is entirely intentional. Whether or not the reader is supposed to feel sad about it, there is no place for the Indian in this inevitable "progress of civilization." Goodrich follows this up with his last chapter, which, in

46 Goodrich, Peter Parley, 9, 85-86.
addition to an odd musing on the origins of Native Americans and a comparison to bees, concludes with fatalistic finality, “There is, however, a rapid tendency to the annihilation of the aborigines of America, and the substitution of the white race in their stead. Many centuries will not pass before the only remains of the American Indian will exist in the pages of history.”

Related to the vanishing Indian is the tragic Indian, the Native American who might not have been forced out or entirely assimilated, but whose home and culture have been ruined. There is a considerable amount of this in Peter Parley, as the eponymous narrator talks with his Indian friend Wampum about “who has taken your lands from you, and made you miserable?” Wampum sums up his people’s fate with the simple line, “Then the red men were rich and happy; now they are poor and wretched.” Goodrich also treats the conquest of Central and South America this way, relating how “bad and wicked men...shot and murdered the poor Indians” and “took possession of their lands.” Native Americans in A Pictorial History are a bit more nuanced and actually invested with some agency, but there are still incidents of kidnapping, murder, and of course land-grabbing.

The myth of the noble savage is even older than the myth of the vanishing Indian. A Pictorial History gives us Samoset, “tall, straight, and strong,” who came with several others and “sang and danced...in the most familiar and friendly manner.” Massasoit, though “ignorant or savage,” knows enough that he “taught the English to cultivate maize.” Peter Parley’s Indians “go nearly naked.”

47 Goodrich, A Pictorial History, [ii].
48 Goodrich, Peter Parley, 15, 14, 69; A Pictorial History, 43.
“their skin is not white like ours, but reddish, or the color of copper,” and they were very ignorant; they could not read or write.” The noble savage is also very clearly present in Goodrich’s portrayal of Wampum, Peter Parley’s Native American mentor and friend. The boy Parley travels with Wampum to his home, where he experiences such novelties as eating “bear’s meat” with "our fingers" and sleeping “on some bear skins” before going hunting the next morning. Wampum and his son are both skilled hunters, the latter effortlessly killing a squirrel with a bow and arrow and his father downing a deer with an arrow “directly through the heart.” Wampum later kills a bear, not with the small firearm he carries but with a knife. Later in life, Parley reunites with a Wampum embittered by his treatment at the hands of white settlers but still fond of the boy.49

If the two-dimensional portrayal of Native Americans as the noble savage is problematic, the “ignoble savage” is perhaps even worse. While Wampum and his family are clearly sympathetic, Goodrich characterizes North American Indians as “generally unfriendly to the white people, and would often kill them, if they could.” This is in clear contrast to the “poor Indians” of Mexico and South America, who were exploited and conquered by the “bad and wicked” Spanish. Making the native North Americans “unfriendly” gives the English settlers an excuse for fighting and expelling the Indians they encountered.50

49 Goodrich, Peter Parley, 7-8, 12, 17; A Pictorial History, 52-53.
50 Goodrich, Peter Parley, 77, 69.
While Goodrich's portrayal of Native Americans in *A Pictorial History* is generally more complex than in *Peter Parley*, one persistent image throughout is the violent, savage Indian. Narrating the lead-up to the "massacre" of 1622, Goodrich states blandly that "their deceit in war was not so well understood two hundred years ago as now." The massacre is further described as "a work of butchery" and when "peace...was finally made...it was a peace of compulsion" and the Indians "still meditated revenge." Squanto, the savior of the Plymouth colony, is "more artful and cunning than honest." If it is "no wonder they sought revenge for the past" wrongs done to them, those who had done the wrong "excite[d] that savage jealousy, which...vents itself...on all who are white." In the same vein, he later describes in excruciating detail a horrific massacre during the Revolutionary War, concluding that it was "one of those bloody deeds which the Indians are so apt to perpetrate." In a less bloody but equally "savage" incident, Goodrich recounts the story of Israel Putnam being tied to a tree while "a young Indian amused himself by throwing his tomahawk at the tree, apparently to see how near he could throw it without hitting Putnam." Interestingly, he tells the same story in *Peter Parley*, replacing Putnam with himself (as Parley), the tomahawk with arrows, and the tone of weary despair with one of adventuresome mischief. In both cases, however, fear of the savage pervades.\(^5\)

The last myth that Goodrich perpetuates is that of the childlike Indian. Like the vanishing Indian, the idea that Native Americans occupied a perpetual

---

childhood and needed to be socialized by civilized people appeared throughout the *New England Primer* and other texts of the period. Peter Parley is eager to travel to Wampum’s home because of “the excellent sport they had;” he “delighted to ramble in the woods.” It is all a great “adventure” to Parley, a boys’ book lark. In *A Pictorial History*, Goodrich devotes an entire chapter to the simplicity and ignorance of the natives. He states that the Indians “knew little of agriculture” (despite having taught the English how to plant twenty pages earlier) and “of arts and manufactures they barely knew enough to make their wigwams.” Being “natural[ly] indolen[ly]” and “lazy,” they sometimes did not have enough food (though Goodrich fails to draw the parallel to the Jamestown settlers, often accused of the same thing). “They were little affected by external beauty,” like innocent children, and “for amusements, they danced...or sung songs.” Also like children, “their notions on this subject [good and evil and the afterlife] were very crude, not to say confused.” Goodrich seems to be attempting, at times, to correct this myth, for example when he suggests that “some may think the Indians were defrauded by” the exchange of some clothing and utensils for the colony of New Haven. His follow-up to this, however—“the land was really worth nothing to the Indians....Besides, the Indians retained the right to hunt on the land”—just patronizes them more. Goodrich also says of Tecumseh, after a great many laudatory comments on his character, that “with the advantages of civilization, [he] might have attained an enviable fame.”

---

52 Goodrich, *Peter Parley*, 10, 21, 16; *A Pictorial History*, 76-78, 72, 292.
Though Goodrich’s treatment of Native Americans in both of his texts is lamentable, the 1850 *Pictorial History* does attempt a slightly more balanced view. He asserts that the conquest of both Americas “took place in a dark age,” driven by one overarching mistake: “that uncivilized people are heathen, and consequently enemies of God, and whom it is, therefore, right to subdue, enslave, or kill.” He also, as noted earlier, gives some reasonable motivations to violence perpetrated by native peoples, though he still casts it as part of their savage nature. It is hard to tell if *Peter Parley* presents a simpler, more problematic interpretation of Native Americans because it was published earlier or because it is intended for younger children. It seems that the nuance of the portrayal increases with the age of the reader, while the bitter attitude of the later work perhaps stems from the life experience of the author.53

While Goodrich’s treatment of Native Americans is the most pervasive way he designates an Other in these two works, other nationalities do not escape. The Dutch get the worst of it. In *Peter Parley*, they are merely “celebrated as great smokers,” but *A Pictorial History* expands on this characterization, at times rather viciously. They are ineffective at driving out their enemies, eventually “surrender[ing] all their possessions...to the English.” Their government of New Netherland was “bad or defective,” “the progress of the settlement was...exceedingly slow,” and they “accomplished less than the emigrants of any other nation.” “Dutch” even serves as a shorthand for “ignorant”

---

or "uncivilized": “the more enlightened modes of husbandry were almost as little
known...as among the Dutch.”

Goodrich is a bit contradictory about the French. On the one hand,
“Frenchmen are very polite,” but during the “celebrated...Old French War” the
French “endeavor[ed] to do...mischief” (while the English, in contrast, “exert[ed]
themselves to conquer the French colonies”) and “committed the most cruel and
inhuman outrages.” Peter Parley also neglects to mention the role of the French
in the American Revolution. A Pictorial History gives a somewhat different view.
The French and Indian War is started because the “English colonists were
jealous...and their jealousy...ripened into hostility,” and General Montcalm is
eulogized just as much as General Wolfe. The treaty with the French during the
Revolution is given significant attention, as is the Marquis de La Fayette. The
improvement of Franco-American relations in the years between 1827 and 1850
may account for the more complimentary view in A Pictorial History.

Other nationalities appear only sporadically in Goodrich’s works. Peter
Parley sees “some Turks with long beards, red cloaks, and turbans” but they are
not otherwise characterized; neither are the Chinese, about whose country he
says only that it is “where we get tea.” The Spanish are not mentioned as a
whole in Peter Parley, though the king and the conquistadors are chastised for
their treatment of the native South Americans. In A Pictorial History, however,
Goodrich calls Spain “the greedy spoiler” and the Spanish “feeble and

54 Goodrich, Peter Parley, 37; A Pictorial History, 66, 60, 82, 112.
55 Goodrich, Peter Parley, 37, 87-89; A Pictorial History, 119.
effeminate." The riches ill-gotten in America have caused the country to "sink into a state of indolence, ignorance and indifference." Germans, or at least the Hessian mercenaries, "were not only very clumsy, but very inefficient troops." The British largely escape being painted as Others, since they were not in fact Others for most of the history that Goodrich is discussing, but by the end of the War of 1812, Goodrich is beginning to cast aspersions on their character. "Ravag[ing] the coasts," he says, "reflected little credit on the British character...[they] paid so little regard either to the law of nations or to that of honor." It is this transition in the portrayal of the British that is perhaps most indicative of an emerging American national consciousness, separate from a British colonial identity.5 6

An interesting shift occurs in the overarching theme of Goodrich's story between 1827 and 1850. Peter Parley is an unabashed progress narrative, while A Pictorial History actually subscribes to more of a declension model. As with the treatment of Native Americans, it is difficult to determine whether this stems from the differing age of the target audience or Goodrich's increased age and life experience. This difference is deeper than just an elision of complexity or omission of certain details, however, and thus seems to come from a shift in Goodrich's own outlook over time.

The Tales of Peter Parley, about America is from its very start about progress. The second page of text launches into a description of how "Boston

56 Goodrich, Peter Parley, 38; A Pictorial History, 353, 287, 301.
was not half so large as it is now” and the first section is peppered with the phrase “when I was a boy.” Later, he gives an extended description of just how much the country has “flourished and increased” and “how much happier our condition is, than that of our forefathers.” Look at a map, he tells his readers, 

You will see it filled with towns, and crossed in every direction by roads. One hundred and fifty years ago, very few of those towns existed. The land, where they now stand, lay buried in forests. If you were to travel through the country now, you would see fine houses, gardens, orchards, and cultivated fields. Then, their place was occupied by a vast wilderness. Now, there are stages and steamboats, which will carry you rapidly from one end of the country to the other. Then, there were no roads, or very indifferent ones, and travelling was attended with danger, from the Indians, and the wild beasts, that lurked in the forests.

By using words like “buried,” “wilderness,” “indifferent,” “danger,” and “lurked,” Goodrich clearly establishes the past as a less desirable, savage era. In contrast, the present is “filled” with “fine houses,” the fields are “cultivated,” and transportation is “rapid” and convenient. There is no ambivalence about the drawbacks to these developments.57

_A Pictorial History_, on the other hand, sings a different tune. Goodrich is still pretty positive about the advancement of settlement and development, but he despairs of the moral decay that has taken place since independence. Independence may have been “a great boon, but the war brought with it a long train of evils.” He laments the neglect of education during the war as well as the corrupting influence of the army. “The worst evil,” however, “was the introduction of irreligion.” Interestingly, Goodrich rails against not only the influence of the

"atheistical philosophy of Godwin, Rousseau, Voltaire and others" but also the introduction of "foreign fashions, habits, and modes of feeling, thinking, and acting." This is perhaps the most blatantly nationalistic—even jingoistic—he is in either work. There is also a Jeffersonian anti-industrial element to his woes as he decries the rise of "merchandising and manufacture" as well as "speculating and downright idleness," compared to the "industrious, sober, honest and religious people....Engaged in husbandry or mechanics" Americans were "before the revolution."58

Goodrich also engages declension in a subtler way throughout A Pictorial History. In the beginning, his characters are nearly flawless role models. John Smith "was the best man among" the Jamestown settlers; "the good of his fellow-men was the higher motive in his breast." Roger Williams "had a good heart." John Eliot "was regarded, in his day, as somewhat eccentric; but it was chiefly because he was good." George Washington, unsurprisingly, is nigh on deified throughout the text, being "born to save his country" and having "such unbounded influence in the United States." But other Revolutionary and War of 1812 heroes are more human in Goodrich's eyes. Ethan Allen "had great defects of character," being "not always exemplary in his language" which "savored strongly both of profanity and untruth." John Paul Jones "never knew how to command himself" and was "irritable, impatient and impetuous, and harsh." Aaron Burr and Benedict Arnold come off surprisingly well for men often tarred

58 Goodrich, A Pictorial History, 236-237, 236.
with the brush of treason, but both are accused of the sin of ambition. All in all, the heroes of the age of discovery and establishment shine brighter than those of the age of revolution in Goodrich’s textbook.59

Progress or declension, there is a distinct sense of Providence and American exceptionalism in both works. This is mildly evident in Peter Parley with such phrases as “flourished and increased, beyond what has ever been known of any other country.” But with the greater detail of A Pictorial History comes a greater sense of the hand of God in the course of events. Not only was George Washington “born to save his country,” then; Christopher Columbus in “the course of Providence….Was born and trained for his career.” God does not merely direct the birth of great men, however, but also the course of events. An Indian raid during King Philip’s War is stymied by “a sudden shower of rain, as if designed for this purpose, extinguish[ing] the flames.” During King George’s War, “a Power unseen…interposed” with a “violent storm” that allowed a British victory over the French naval forces. “Providence had not designed…that the colonies should always remain the subject of a monarch,” Goodrich opines. “Divine approbation and blessing on the cause” is further demonstrated by the longevity of the signers of the Declaration, though Goodrich believes this might equally be explained by their living with purpose, “mental activity and energy.” Goodrich’s greater emphasis on Providence in his later work may be due to its more explicitly pedagogic nature; as a textbook, A Pictorial History was intended

59 Ibid., 26, 67, 80, 121, 255, 155, 194.
to teach not only history but morality, far more than the light storybook of *Peter Parley*. It may also indicate an increasing religiousness in Goodrich's middle age.\(^6^0\)

One method of communicating or imparting a sense of national feeling is the use of first person plural pronouns ("we," "our," etc.) and Goodrich makes use of this quite noticeably. "Our country," "our frontiers," "our countrymen," territory ceded to us," "our little navy," and "our national history" are but a few examples from *A Pictorial History*. Like Providence, the use of inclusive personal pronouns is far more prominent in *A Pictorial History* than in *Peter Parley*, but Goodrich accomplishes the same goal in the earlier work using a slightly different tactic.

Instead of appealing to a communal sense of nation, Goodrich pitches his younger readers with direct questions about hypothetical situations. "Would it not make you angry," he asks, "if soldiers should come from England, and shoot your dear father or your brother?" He does not leave any room for disagreement, either; "certainly it would," he continues immediately. He also instructs these children to follow in the "noble spirit of your fathers" and "if your country should ever again be invaded by enemies, be sure to imitate the conduct of those who...[had] the ardent desire to protect their country." Goodrich does use "our" once in *Peter Parley*. "Their skin is not white like ours," he says of Native

---

\(^6^0\) Goodrich, *Peter Parley*, 84; *A Pictorial History*, 121, 10, 85, 111, 139, 171-172.
Americans, thus establishing whiteness as a necessary element of American nationalism (and, in fact, of the readers of his book).\textsuperscript{61}

Samuel Griswold Goodrich was enormously influential in the lives of nineteenth-century American children. His works reached an amazingly broad audience in the days before pervasive mass media, and his books were often the first a child would read. As a writer of both children’s books and textbooks, Goodrich had the opportunity to shape the minds of children from infancy through their school years. His works on American history are thus an insightful glimpse into youthful national feeling in the nineteenth century.

Goodrich’s main method of creating a sense of an American nation is through the marginalization of other peoples, particularly Native Americans. He perpetuates the myths of the vanishing Indian, the noble savage, the “ignoble savage,” and the childlike Indian. He also characterizes various European nationalities with brief, dismissive, and essentializing comments.

Goodrich not only makes Native Americans and Europeans distinctly Other; he presents a teleological narrative of American history. This manifests itself as progress in his children’s book and decline in his textbook, but both tell the story of an inevitable United States. This is further heightened by the invocation of Providence, most prominently in the textbook, and the assertions of American exceptionalism.

\textsuperscript{61} Goodrich, \textit{A Pictorial History}, 23, 98, 263, 278, 279; Peter Parley, 102, 134, 7.
Finally, Goodrich uses plural personal pronouns ("we," "our," "us") to convey a sense of shared history. This sharing only occurs among white Americans, however, so that "we" and "us" can be seen as exclusionary just as much as inclusive. He also uses direct, personal questions to the younger readers to elicit emotional ties to historical figures.

Samuel Goodrich, and his alter ego Peter Parley, helped children develop a sense of nationalism in the early years of the American republic. Through Peter Parley's *Tales* and Goodrich's *History*, readers might learn about the (white British) origins of the country in which they lived and were encouraged to see that country as their own, special, superior, and uniquely blessed by God.

How does a nation inspire loyalty in its children, especially a nation so new that its adult citizens—let alone its children—were born in a different country? Toys and children's literature are two significant areas of children's lives, so these would seem to be reasonable methods by which to reach them. However, examination of children's toys before and after the Revolution reveals little substantive change, suggesting that the explicit form and decoration of toys were not ways American adults were attempting to teach their children to feel American. How children used these toys, however, conveyed the lessons they were learning about what it meant to be an American. American children's literature did not really begin until Samuel Goodrich sensed a niche and filled it in the 1820s. His works varied on the degree of their nationalistic content but generally promoted a positive view of the United States, encouraging children to
embrace their Anglo-Saxon heritage and manifest destiny. Thus the
nationalization of children came in the antebellum period and through literature
rather than toys.

The nationalization of children remains a salient, and controversial, issue
today. Stories of schoolchildren refusing to say the Pledge of Allegiance, for one
reason or another, feature regularly in the news and always stir up a cacophony
of divergent opinions on whether or not children should be required to say the
Pledge. History textbooks are also mired in controversy, as efforts to indoctrinate
children into a particular version of America are shouted down (or not). In such a
political and cultural climate, an examination of initial attempts to nationalize
children can elucidate the historical roots of present-day efforts. Further study is
required, of course—What other methods were employed to inculcate children
with nationalist sentiment? When did the nationalization of children become
controversial? Is it in fact controversial, or merely the method?—but at the very
least, it is clear that attempts to nationalize children are nothing new.62

62 David Koon, “A Boy and His Flag,” Arkansas Times, November 11, 2009,
http://www.arktimes.com/arkansas/a-boy-and-his-flag/Content?oid=1013276; Jon Delano,
“Refusal to Stand for Pledge of Allegiance Leads to Lawsuit,” CBS Pittsburgh, April 30, 2012,
http://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2012/04/30/refusal-to-stand-for-pledge-of-allegiance-leads-to-
lawsuit/; Erika Gonzalez, “ACLU Backs Montgomery County Student Who Refuses to Say Pledge
of Allegiance,” NBC Washington, April 25, 2013,
http://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/ACLU-Backs-Montgomery-County-Student-Who-
Refuses-to-Say-Pledge-of-Allegiance-204653571.html. Editor, “Texas School Board Approves
to-know/culture/texas-school-board-approves-controversial-textbook-changes/954/; Kevin Sieff,
“Virginia 4th-grade Textbook Criticized Over Claims on Black Confederate Soldiers,” Washington
Post, October 20, 2010, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-
dyn/content/article/2010/10/19/AR2010101907974.html.
Primary Sources:


The American Weekly Mercury [Philadelphia]. November 7-14, 1734.


The Boston Gazette or, Weekly Advertiser. June 4, 1754.


The Boston Post-Boy & Advertiser. May 18, 1767.


The [Philadelphia] Pennsylvania Packet or, the General Advertiser. July 26, 1783.

The [Philadelphia] Independent Gazetteer.... August 30, 1787.


Charleston Courier. January 26, 1805.

Charleston Courier. February 21, 1805.

Columbian Centinel [Boston]. December 7, 1811.

Columbian Centinel [Boston]. December 28, 1811.

Goodrich, S. G. The Tales of Peter Parley, about America. Boston, 1827.


Quincy, Edmund. Life of Josiah Quincy of Massachusetts. Boston, 1867.


Secondary Sources:


