

A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN INDIAN PORTRAIT

PHOTOGRAPHY IN OKLAHOMA, 1869-1904

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This thesis studies the style of Native American portrait photographs of William S. Soule (1836-1908), John K. Hillers (1834-1925), and William E. Irwin (1871-1935), who worked in Oklahoma from 1869 to 1904. The examination of the three men's work revealed that each artist had different motivations for creating Native American portrait photographs, and as a result, used a distinct style. However, despite the individual artistic styles, each artist conformed to Native American stereotypes common during the nineteenth-century. The thesis includes a discussion of the history of the area, photographer biographies, a stylistic analysis of the photographs, and how the images fit into American Indian stereotypes.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Often when modern-day individuals read books about Native American history, the texts are illustrated with historical photographs. Many of these pictures show individual portraits of American Indian leaders, whereas others illustrate Native American lifestyle through activities, clothing, and environment. This thesis considers the work of three early photographers – William S. Soule, John K. Hillers, and William E. Irwin – who created photographs of Native Americans living in Oklahoma from 1869 to 1904. Each photographer created his images under a unique circumstance and used a distinct style. Today, photographs created by Edward S. Curtis are perhaps the most famous and recognizable of this type. Curtis’ career was based around his *North American Indian* project, in which he attempted to “preserve, through his photographs and ethnological notes, the customs and legends of the North American Indian” in a twenty-volume book.<sup>1</sup> The photographer and self-proclaimed ethnologist traveled throughout the country to create this record.

However, the images he created were not always historically accurate, and in fact, often reflected his own idea of the “Native American.” For example, Curtis carried standard Plains Indian costumes to dress members of whatever tribe he studied, regardless of the group’s own traditional clothing. Other examples of his attempts to

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<sup>1</sup> Barry Gifford, *The Portable Curtis: Selected Writings of Edward S. Curtis* (Berkeley: Creative Arts Book Company, 1976), ii.



create an image include cropping individuals who did not fit his image out of a picture.<sup>2</sup> Many times he scratched European details from the original negative to make the scene appear more ethnologically correct in his mind.<sup>3</sup> On more than one occasion he created costumes for various Indian tribes to wear in order to recreate native ceremonies, thus assuring that his American Indians appeared as Noble Savages.<sup>4</sup>

He also used many field assistants, leading many scholars to question the authorship of his images. Throughout his career Curtis relied on field and darkroom assistants to help complete the photographs for the *North American Indian* project. These people were given little or no credit for their work.<sup>5</sup> Although Curtis' work fits a common stereotype and is noted for its formal beauty, it is not the focus of this discussion.

Before consideration of the work of Soule, Hillers, and Irwin, an exploration of the nature of portraiture, the Native American stereotype, and a historical background of Oklahoma is necessary. Art historian Richard Brilliant defines portraits as "works of art intentionally made of living or once living people by artists, in a variety of media and for an audience."<sup>6</sup> Portraits appear in paintings, sculptures, prints, and photographs. Regardless of the medium, a portrait is a representation of an individual, and a portrait image can affect the perceived nature of the individual.<sup>7</sup> Brilliant further explains:

Portraits reflect social realities. Their imagery combines the conventions of behavior and appearance appropriate to the members of a society at a

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<sup>2</sup> Christopher M. Lyman, *The Vanishing Race and Other Illusions: Photographs of Indians by Edward S. Curtis* (Washington, D. C., Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982), 63.

<sup>3</sup> Lyman, 72 and 106.

<sup>4</sup> Lyman, 68.

<sup>5</sup> Lyman, 62-63.

<sup>6</sup> Brilliant, *Portraiture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 8.

<sup>7</sup> Brilliant 8.

particular time, as defined by categories of age, gender, race, physical beauty, occupation, social and civic status, and class.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, portraits show more than simply a physical likeness; they reveal social values and conventions.

Before William Henry Fox Talbot and Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre's individual announcements of photographic processes in 1839, only the wealthy could afford portraits. Considered luxury items, painted or sculpted images represented an individual's status and endured as a physical reminder of an important person. Cameras, the new mechanical technology, made portraiture available to a much larger audience: the middle class. The low cost and wide availability of photographic portraits to this new consumer audience helped empower the middle class and raise this group's economic and political importance.<sup>9</sup> During the nineteenth century, individuals enthusiastically made portraits of themselves while at the same time collected pictures of friends and public figures. These images, reminders of family and friends, also allowed unknown people to become as familiar as an intimate friend.<sup>10</sup>

Just as nineteenth-century Western societies collected images of notable individuals, they also gathered images of unfamiliar or exotic cultures. Portraits of men and women living in foreign lands, including India, Japan, Brazil, and the American West were popular subjects to collect. Photographs of distant people and places added adventure to nineteenth-century collections and at the same time served the needs of

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<sup>8</sup> Brilliant, 11.

<sup>9</sup> John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 37.

<sup>10</sup> John Pultz, *The Body and The Lens: Photography 1839 to the Present* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 17.

anthropologists and ethnographers.<sup>11</sup> These scientists used photographs to categorize bodies of people and ultimately justify colonization and rule over indigenous people in various foreign countries.<sup>12</sup>

To the nineteenth-century mind, the unique landscape and indigenous peoples of the Far Western United States were exotic.<sup>13</sup> Photographs of Native Americans brought this “foreign” culture into the Anglo home. However, photographers were not the first people to record the American Indian. Two distinct traditions in American Indian painted portraiture had been established for some time: studio portraits of Indian leaders and images documenting Native homes and lifestyles. The work of Charles Bird King, who served as Washington, D.C.’s resident Native American painter from 1822 to 1842, embodied the first tradition. King painted American Indians leaders during special visits to the capital. His sitters wore their best clothing and King placed them in the front of the picture to document what he believed were fading American Indian cultures.<sup>14</sup>

The work of George Catlin illustrates the second tradition in American Indian portraiture. Catlin, like King, believed the indigenous cultures were dying and needed to be recorded for posterity. To accomplish this task, he visited a number of tribes living in Missouri and the Southern Plains from 1830 to 1836.<sup>15</sup> Catlin created paintings from the

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<sup>11</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 19.

<sup>12</sup> Pultz, 20-24.

<sup>13</sup> Bradley B. Williams, “Photography in the American West: Victorian Overtones” *Journal of the West* (January 1994), 85.

<sup>14</sup> Brian W. Dippie, “Representing the Other: The North American Indian,” in *Anthropology and Photography 1860-1929*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 132; Andrew J. Cosentino, “Charles Bird King” in *The Dictionary of Art* 18 (Williard, Ohio: R.R. Donnelley Homestead Book Company, 1990), 64.

<sup>15</sup> John C. Ewers, “The Emergence of the Plains Indian as the Symbol of the North American Indian” in *American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children: A Reader and Bibliography*, ed. Arlene Hirschfelder, Paulette Fairbanks Molin and Yvonne Wakim (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1999), 15.

sketches he made while living among the people in their home environments. He displayed his paintings in an Indian Gallery, his own traveling exhibition, a popular attraction to audiences in the United States, London, and Paris. In addition to the Indian Gallery, his 1841 book *Manners Customs and Condition of the North American Indians* described his travels with words and engraved reproductions of his paintings.<sup>16</sup> These works inspired a generation of artists to travel west and explore Indian cultures on their own. Others copied Catlin's paintings directly and sold their work to publishers for book illustrations.<sup>17</sup>

A recognizable stereotype from these traditional representations of Native Americans developed. Based on the Plains Indian, Anglos assumed that all indigenous people lived in tipis and wore full-feathered headdresses and buckskin clothing.<sup>18</sup> These images became so ingrained in the collective American consciousness, that the public accepted only the Plains Indian as true "Native Americans." As a noted scholar wrote, "images that do not meet our expectations disturb our sense of reality. People do not seem to be Indians unless they match our ideas of appropriate dress and appearance."<sup>19</sup> To create these stereotypes, artists costumed their subjects in buckskin dresses, pants, and moccasins decorated with beads, quills, and feathers to make them seem "Indian."<sup>20</sup> The use of pose, including the standing figure with a stoic, knowing stare, and props such as

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<sup>16</sup> Ewers, 15.

<sup>17</sup> Ewers, 16.

<sup>18</sup> Richard W. Hill, "Developed Identities: Seeing the Stereotypes and Beyond," in *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian*, ed. Tim Johnson (Washington D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 140-141.

<sup>19</sup> Hill, 145.

<sup>20</sup> Hill, 157.

weapons to show a “bloodthirsty” and dangerous individual also helped create an image of the Plains Indian.<sup>21</sup>

Within this general stereotype, specific types also emerged. Perhaps the most identifiable stereotype is the nostalgic “Noble Savage.” A noted scholar describes the Noble Savage as a representation of a vanishing human species, worthy of emulation. They are often “frozen in history as an artifact who can be appreciated philosophically and aesthetically, but who has no present political reality.”<sup>22</sup> Individuals placed in the Noble Savage category are seen often as harmless and needing guidance, like a child. As a result of this naiveté, the person becomes converted to civilized culture and ultimately assists members of the dominant culture fulfill their destiny.<sup>23</sup>

The antithesis of the Noble Savage is the “Ignoble Savage.” This stereotype is completely negative, and people placed in this group have no redeeming qualities. As described by Scott B. Vickers, the Ignoble Savage “lacks a recognizable psychological reality, that is, has no motivation for his or her actions, emotional content, coherent thought process and speech, personality, bodily self-awareness, cultural context, humor, or spiritual condition, or soul.”<sup>24</sup> The lesser individual demonstrates uncivilized manners and living habits. For example, they are often described as “murderous,” “primitive,” “naked,” “heathenish,” or “devilish.” To show these “less than human” qualities of

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<sup>21</sup> Dippie, 134.

<sup>22</sup> Scott B. Vickers, *Native American Identities: From Stereotype of Archetype in Art and Literature* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 4.

<sup>23</sup> Vickers, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Vickers, 5.

indigenous people, artists exaggerate skin color or caricature racial features thus emphasizing the “inferiority” of the subject.<sup>25</sup>

Two other related sub-categories of the Noble Savage stereotype are the “Indian warrior” and “chanting medicine man.” The former is often revealed in depictions of Native Americans with representations of fierce men, often holding weapons. Although Native American culture did respect and honor warriors, many times staged portraits actually demystified the warrior through their complete fabrication instead of glorifying the individual.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, the image of the chanting medicine man depicted a person with unexplained mystical powers. These men were influential among their own people because of their spiritual position and despised by Whites for the same reason.<sup>27</sup> Artists represented both of these stereotypes through the use of costume, props, and pose to create widely recognizable figures.

The stereotypes discussed above describe common images of male Native Americans. However, photographers also used American Indian women as subjects for portraits. Today, it is more difficult to find descriptions of female Native American stereotypes, as most of these women remain anonymous. However, one author describes images of American Indian women who appear maidenly, demure, and sexually available for White men as part of the “Indian princess” or “Indian maiden” stereotype.<sup>28</sup>

Like photography, other forms of entertainment influenced the widespread acceptance of Native Indian stereotypes. Perhaps the best example is the popular Buffalo

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<sup>25</sup> Vickers, 5.

<sup>26</sup> Hill, 155.

<sup>27</sup> Hill, 143.

<sup>28</sup> Cornel Pewewardy, “Why One Can’t Ignore Pocahontas” in *American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children: A Reader and Bibliography*, ed. Arlene Hirschfelder, Paulette Fairbanks Molin and Yvonne Wakim (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1999), 172.

Bill's Wild West Show, which was performed throughout the United States and Europe from 1883 to 1916. William Frederick Cody (popularly known as Buffalo Bill) used Plains Indians including Pawnees, Sioux, Cheyennes, and Arapahoes in his famous traveling program to illustrate the history of the West.<sup>29</sup> The production's highlight was an American Indian fight in which Cody defended the Deadwood Mail Coach from Native American attackers. Audiences accepted Cody's Indians as accurate representations of the aggressive Indian disposition.<sup>30</sup> In reality, historical accuracy had no part in the production; the show existed to entertain, and employed and reinforced the Plains Indian stereotype to do so.<sup>31</sup>

Popular novels also codified a stereotype of the American Indian. More than any other author, James Fenimore Cooper established the American Indian as a significant type in world literature.<sup>32</sup> Knowing little about indigenous cultures, Cooper wrote stories exemplifying the nineteenth-century misunderstanding of different tribes and customs. The Native American characters in his books, including *The Last of the Mohicans*, first published in 1826, are both villains and heroes, in keeping with the popular viewpoint of the day: savage and noble savage.<sup>33</sup> Other authors, including Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and his romantic poem *Song of Hiawatha*, published in 1856, used the American Indian to create successful novels and poems.<sup>34</sup> Important to this study is the fact that the illustrated versions of this and other literary texts used Plains Indians as the

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<sup>29</sup> Ewers, 19.

<sup>30</sup> For detailed information see Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knoph, 1978), 100.

<sup>31</sup> Hill, 148.

<sup>32</sup> Berkhofer, 93.

<sup>33</sup> Berkhofer, 93.

<sup>34</sup> Berkhofer, 95.

prototype, many borrowing heavily from paintings and prints by George Catlin.<sup>35</sup> The visual representation combined with the written word further engrained the stereotype in the White mind.

Pictures taken by photographers who lived in Indian Territory, and those who traveled to the area specifically to photograph American Indians, used the same stereotypes and strategies to create the popular image. Such staged pictures lacked cultural understanding and, instead, constructed images revealing the photographers' social norms and ideas more than the sitters'. The wide availability of the photographs brought the American Indian into the intimate and safe space of the home and helped to tame the "savage" Indians for a curious and scared American public. Although the photographs depict people with strange costumes and surroundings, they are pacified in their photographs and never appear threatening. Instead, "They are enveloped in a romantic stillness and removed in time."<sup>36</sup>

William Stinson Soule (1836-1908), one of the first photographers to create Native American portraits in present-day Oklahoma, photographed many noted American Indian leaders. Few details of his early life survive, but before the Civil War he worked in his brother John's studio in Boston. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Soule volunteered for service in the Union Army, declaring "photographer" as his occupation.<sup>37</sup> After his official military service, he opened his own photographic studio in Chambersberg, Pennsylvania, where he took advantage of the popularity of the *carte de*

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<sup>35</sup> For more information see Ewers, 17.

<sup>36</sup> Hill, 141.

<sup>37</sup> William S. Nye, *Plains Indian Raiders* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), viii.



*viste*, small pocket-size portraits, among soldiers and veterans. After a fire damaged his studio in 1867, he moved west.<sup>38</sup>

First, Soule filled a vacant clerk position at Fort Dodge (Kansas) and photographed in his free time. Then, in 1869, he obtained a position as official post photographer at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, a new post designated to be both Indian Agency and Military Headquarters for the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache tribes. While there, he recorded the construction of the fort and maintained a commercial studio in the trading post. His studio mainly produced portraits of army personnel and occasionally those of Indians.<sup>39</sup> With the aid of his brother's Boston studio, he distributed the photographs further to an eastern market. Soule advertised his images of famous Native Americans as late as 1891, sixteen years after they were taken, a demonstration of the continued popularity of the subject and the lasting profit from the glass plate negatives of indigenous peoples.<sup>40</sup>

Soule used the wet-plate collodion photographic process. When using this technique, a photographer placed a mixture of guncotton, alcohol, and ether (collodion) on a glass plate sensitized with silver nitrate. After being exposed to light through the aperture of the camera, the photographer developed the glass plate while wet.<sup>41</sup> The photographic image appeared by placing the glass negative over albumen paper (light-sensitive paper made by placing egg white and silver nitrate over the surface) and

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<sup>38</sup> Nye, *Plains Indian Raiders*, ix.

<sup>39</sup> Nye, *Plains Indian Raiders*, x.

<sup>40</sup> Russell E. Belous and Robert A. Weinstein *Will Soule: Indian Photographer at Fort Sill, Oklahoma 1869-74* (The Ward Ritchie Press, 1969), 18.

<sup>41</sup> O. Henry Mace, *Collectors Guide to Early Photographs* (Radnor, Pennsylvania: Wallace-Homestead Book Company, 1990), 94.

exposing it to light.<sup>42</sup> By combining the wet-plate collodion process with albumen printing, a photographer could make numerous prints of the same quality from one negative.<sup>43</sup> The resulting photographs show sharp focus, good contrast in tonal values, and a rich brown color. Soule mounted his American Indian photographs in the form of cabinet cards and sold them in the trading post individually or in albums.<sup>44</sup>

Soule typically produced his photographs in the studio with the sitter placed before a backdrop. He included other props such as a couch, blankets, tree stump, and rugs to create ambiance in his photographs. His American Indian subjects wore their finest clothing, including hats, army jackets, blankets, jewelry, medallions, and beadwork.<sup>45</sup> Soule posed his figures according to the conventions of the day, including profile, frontal, and three-quarter busts, as well as seated and standing full-length poses. Most of his figures have a solemn expression. However, as mentioned earlier, this may have been the fault of restrictions imposed by early photographic processes that required people to hold still for up to twenty seconds.

A picture of prominent Kiowa leader *Sa-tant-ta (White Bear) Kiowa Chief*, exemplifies Soule's portraiture style of enhancing the public persona of this sitter through framing and pose (Figure 1). Satanta sits in front of a plain background with his body turned to the left and head facing forward. He wears an army jacket, vest, knife, and

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<sup>42</sup> Naomi Rosenblum, "Photography" in *The Dictionary of Art* 24 (Williard, Ohio: R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company, 1996), 648.

<sup>43</sup> Mace, 94.

<sup>44</sup> The typical size for a cabinet card is a 4" x 5 1/2" image placed on a piece of 4 1/4" x 6 1/2" cardboard. Kathleen L. Miller, "The Cabinet Card Photograph: Relic of a Gilded Age," in *Photography in the West* – 2, ed. Peter E. Palmquist, (Manhattan, Kansas, Sunflower University Press, 1979), 29.

<sup>45</sup> Nye believes the natives chose their best clothing for the portraits; however, more current scholars believe Soule had greater influence on his sitters' costumes. See Nye, *Plains Indian Raiders*, xii; William E. McRae, "Images of Native Americans in Still Photography," *History of Photography* 13 (October/December 1989): 329-31; Joanna Cohan Scherer, "You Can't Believe Your Eyes: Inaccuracies in Photographs of North American Indians," *Exposure* (Winter 1978), 14.

medallion, traditional symbols of authority, suggests his position as a leader. The use of the light background against the dark uniform and hair further emphasizes the man's presence esplacing his figure in high relief. The pose and framing in Soule's photograph follow the established Native American portrait traditions mentioned above.

Another photographer who distributed his images of tribes living in Oklahoma Territory to an Eastern market was John K. Hillers (1834-1925). Unlike Soule, who learned his trade in the East, Hillers' first contact with photography came when he was employed by explorer John Wesley Powell for the second Colorado River Expedition of 1871-73. He learned the art of photography from E. O. Beaman, the official expedition photographer, who became ill and abandoned the trip. After employing several other people, Powell appointed Hillers chief photographer, due to his pleasant personality and adequate skill.<sup>46</sup> During this expedition, Hillers recorded the natural landscape and indigenous people in the area. Because of his photographic ability and strong friendship with Powell, Hillers became an employee of the United States Government's Bureau of Ethnology, and subsequently of the Geological Survey. These positions allowed him to continue photographing Indians until his retirement in 1900.<sup>47</sup>

Although most of Hillers' Native American photographs focused on tribes living in southern Utah and Arizona, he also photographed in Indian Territory. In 1875, he made a special trip to present-day Oklahoma specifically to photograph American Indians for the Bureau of Indian Affairs' booth at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition held in Philadelphia. Although he used the same wet-plate collodion method, his personal style

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<sup>46</sup> Don D. Fowler, *Photographed all the Best Scenery: Jack Hillers's Diary of the Powell Expeditions* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1972), 11-12.

<sup>47</sup> Scherer, 8.

of showing dramatic figures in a landscape differed greatly from Soule's. Because of his use of framing, and line, his photographs appear more romantic and entrenched with the stereotype of the "Noble Savage."

An example of the photographs Hillers produced during this time is *Big Mouth, An Arapaho Chief—now a farmer. Lives near Ft. Reno I. T., 1875* (Figure 2). The individual from the Arapaho tribe, dressed in a breechcloth and moccasins, appears before a dramatic rock formation. The composition centers the man in the picture frame; his body faces forward and his head turns left in a three-quarter profile. This figure's gaze does not engage the viewer and as a result he appears as a mere object or the wistful romantic subject. Resting on the rock, with his feet firmly planted on the ground, Big Mouth appears inextricable from the nature that surrounds him.

William E. Irwin (1871-1935) also worked in Indian Territory in order to accommodate the photographic needs of the Chickasha, Oklahoma community after the 1887 Dawes Act opened the land for non-Indian settlement. Irwin moved to Chickasaw, Indian Territory in 1892 (present-day Oklahoma), and opened a photographic studio. There he formed a partnership with Jack Mankins and the two ran the studio together until Mankins' death, circa 1895. Irwin made both American Indian and White portraits and also recorded several Texas hunting trips. His American Indian images included group and single portraits of women, children, and men dressed in indigenous costumes with studio backdrops.

The subjects in Irwin's Native American photographs appear slightly more relaxed than Soule's or Hillers' perhaps due to the dry-plate method he used, which resulted in considerably shorter exposure times. In this new process, the glass plate was

coated with a silver bromide emulsion that dried before exposure. Dry plates were available commercially and purchased through a supplier.<sup>48</sup> The new process permitted two printing techniques called “printing out” and “developing out.” In the first, print paper coated with gelatin-silver-chloride emulsion was placed beneath the glass negative then exposed to light like the older albumen technique. “Developing out” methods used paper coated with silver bromide, which allowed artists to make enlargements by projecting the negative.<sup>49</sup>

Like Soule, Irwin created portraits mainly in the studio and he used a painted backdrop, wicker chairs, rug, and other studio props. He manipulated formal photographic elements such as lines, shapes, and framing devices to support a general interest in presenting Indians as passive and romantic. The full-length portrait of *Gertrude Three finger*, a Cheyenne woman, exemplifies this style (Figure 3). Here a seated woman wearing a highly decorated three-skin dress, rests her arms on the wicker chair. Because the pose follows the direction of the chair and allows a full display of her dress, the photographer highlighted the costume’s importance in the photograph. Another formal element important to the style of the photograph is the central framing of the figure in the middle ground, which, according to art historian John Pultz, distances the viewer from the individual.<sup>50</sup> By fully revealing the girl’s distinct facial features, the dramatic light from the right also contributes to the romantic mood in the picture.

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<sup>48</sup> Brian Coe and Mark Haworth-Booth, *A Guide to Early Photographic Processes* (England: The Westerham Press, 1983), 22; Naomi Rosenblum, *A World History of Photography* (New York: Abbeyville Press, 1989), 442.

<sup>49</sup> Coe, 22.

<sup>50</sup> Pultz, 23. The image available for reproduction from the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries differs from the original cabinet card. The copyprint changes the appearance of the image by re-framing the figure close to the picture frame. The original card shows an

Because Irwin used such dramatic light contrasts and a pose that intentionally displayed the dress, he revealed the costume as the subject of the photograph rather than the individual woman. Irwin sold these images in his studio as cabinet card souvenirs of Indian Territory and, thence, to a national market. This photograph appealed to the popular image of an Indian maiden and allowed him to sell copies and earn Irwin a healthy living.

#### Statement of the Problem

This thesis analyzes the style of American Indian portrait photographs produced in Oklahoma between 1869 and 1904 by William Stinson Soule, John K. Hillers, and William E. Irwin to show three stylistic approaches to Native American portraiture.

#### Methodology

This thesis uses a stylistic methodology, as demonstrated above in the introduction, to demonstrate the individual artistic styles of William Stinson Soule, John K. Hillers, and William E. Irwin. Close examination of these pictures shows three stylistic approaches to photographic images of American Indians in Oklahoma during the Indian Wars and after widespread white settlement in the area. The date span of 1869 to 1904 represents the period of activity of the three photographers included in this thesis.

This study is based on two books: Terry Barrett's *Criticizing Photographs: An Introduction to Understanding Images* and Sylvan Barnet's *A Short Guide to Writing about Art*. The texts provide a definition of photographic style and explore the manner in

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empty backdrop behind the figure's head and sides, and reveals a larger portion of the fur rug beneath her feet.

which artists make conscious choices in their construction of images.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, the artist's assembly of subject and materials helps to create a style and construct an intended meaning. Writing specifically on photography, Barrett believes a photographer's style is based upon "what subjects he or she chooses to photograph, how the medium of photography is used, and how the picture is formally arranged."<sup>52</sup> Taking this into consideration, this author defines style as a combination of the conception of the subject matter, the arrangement of formal elements, and the photographic technique.

In this study the formal elements of each picture include the line, shape, tone, light, background, focus, point-of-view, as well as the framing and positioning of the subject.<sup>53</sup> The photographic process and printing techniques are other elements of form important to photographic artists. When seen consistently in a number of photographs, the formal features mentioned above combine to reveal a general style of each artist.

Information for this thesis was collected from a variety of sources. The Fort Sill Historical Archives, Fort Sill, Oklahoma, holds the most data available on William S. Soule. I visited the archives in February, 1998, and examined copy prints of portrait and landscape images in the collection. In February, 2001, I visited the University of Texas at Austin Center for American History and examined an original album of Soule cabinet cards. Although I saw only one photograph that is discussed in this thesis, the opportunity to see other authentic cabinet cards revealed the photograph's tones and

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<sup>51</sup> Sylvan Barnet, *A Short Guide to Writing About Art, Fourth Edition* (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1993), 74.

<sup>52</sup> Although Barrett's book instructs critics, his comments on looking and writing about photographs are relevant to this study. Terry Barrett, *Criticizing Photographs: An Introduction to Understanding Images*, 2d ed. (Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1996), 32.

<sup>53</sup> Barrett, 27.

subtle details. I consulted all published books and journal articles on Soule as secondary source information.

The Oklahoma Historical Society owns the images Hillers displayed and sold at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. In order to see the original mountings, tone, and textures not visible in reproductions, I examined these works in March, 1999. Many of the pictures in the collection remain unpublished. I also viewed Hillers' landscape photographs in the Amon Carter Museum in February, 2001. There are several books and journal articles focusing on Hillers' life and work, all consulted for secondary data sources.

I also gathered information on Irwin photographs in Oklahoma. No monograph, article, or other publication exists on the work of William E. Irwin. However, Chester Cowen, Photographic Archivist at the Oklahoma Historical Society, has been studying and collecting archival material on Irwin for ten years and is an expert on the subject. His research includes an extensive collection of cabinet cards, interviews with Irwin descendants, numerous Irwin advertisements, and memorabilia. An enthusiastic supporter of this thesis, Cowen shared his research with me on several occasions. This included phone conversations in November, 1996, and personal interviews conducted in Oklahoma City in March, 1997, and March, 1999. Cowen has not considered the stylistic question for Irwin's images; therefore, this thesis does not interfere with his research.

I gathered other primary information by viewing the William (Ed) Irwin Collection at the Amon Carter Museum of Art, Fort Worth, Texas. This collection of over 140 glass negatives contains many portraits of Native American men, women, and children in traditional costumes. I examined the study prints from the negatives available



for scholarly research at the Amon Carter Museum in September, 2000, and gained knowledge of the variety and scope of the pictures he created. In addition, I visited the Western History Collection at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, in September, 2000, and February, 2001, to study their collection of over two hundred Irwin cabinet cards. This examination revealed the subtle tones and textures produced by the dry-plate method, which differs from the wet-plate technique.

#### Review of the Literature

Numerous journal articles explore the inconsistencies between photographic images and actual Indian tradition. These articles explore the ways photographers dressed, posed, or included props to satisfy their own or the market's vision, of the Native American. Each work of scholarship helped me to look critically at the three artists' photographs. Bradley B. Williams' "Photography in the American West: Victorian Overtones" discusses various types of photographs taken in the West and how the images reflect the Victorian culture of the time. Williams' focus is broad, and includes cultural attitudes about western photographs, as well as consideration of landscape and portraiture images made throughout the West. This thesis considers works created in Indian Territory, a more focused scope than the article.

The article "Early American Anthropologists as Photographers of North American Indians" by Judith Luskey examines a selection of Indian photographs taken by early anthropologists from 1873 to 1900. She includes a description of the establishment of the Bureau of American Ethnology, founded by John W. Powell, and the types of photographs created for the collection during that period. She also discusses the work of

John K. Hillers. This thesis elaborates on the style of the photographs he produced in Indian Territory.

Joanna Scherer's "You Can't Believe Your Eyes: Inaccuracies in Photographs of North American Indians" describes various photographers' attempts to change the appearance of the Native Americans with costume and studio props, distorting the view of Indians for commercial purposes. The photographers studied included Alexander Gardener, John K. Hillers, Major Moorhouse, and William Soule. The article focuses on using the anthropological records in a correct manner. Scherer believes photographers controlled the look of their image by dictating clothing Indians wore and also by manipulating the final print. Scherer cautions readers to study photographs carefully before assuming any historical truths. She discusses John K. Hillers' photographs made in Northern Arizona at an earlier date under the direct guidance of John Wesley Powell. The article further evaluates Soule's work claiming the artist changed the costume of the sitter to produce a stereotype. This thesis applies some of Scherer's ideas in a discussion of the style of the pictures both photographers made in Indian Territory. Margaret B. Blackman reached similar conclusions in her article "Posing the American Indian."

William E. McRae's article, "Images of Native Americans in Still Photography," outlines different types of American Indian images and how the photographers who made the pictures were influenced by stereotypes. McRae discusses Soule's work as manipulative and romantic, catering to the audience who purchased the images. He discusses other photographers including William Henry Jackson, Alexander Gardner, and Edward S. Curtis. He cautions viewers to examine photographs closely and not accept any image as reality. McRae's work studies images made throughout the country and

this thesis focuses the discussion to a specific area, a helpful topic to scholars studying photography, Native Americans, and the history of Oklahoma.

Other books that examine the general subject of Native American photography include *Grand Endeavors of American Indian Photography* by Paula Fleming and Judith Luskey. This book looks at the masterworks of American Indian photography in an attempt to raise the photographs to the level of art. Nancy Hathaway's *Native American Portraits 1862-1918: Photographs from the Collection of Kurt Koegler* looks at images in a private collection that date between the Civil War and World War I. The introduction of the book describes the curiosity about the American Indian, a history of frontier photography, and includes biographies of a number of photographers who worked throughout the United States. John Pultz's *The Body and the Lens: Photography 1839 to the Present* examines a wide variety of photographs with people. Chapter one specifically addresses portrait photographs and their wide popularity. Pultz gives important stylistic descriptions of nineteenth-century images of non-European people. This book was useful in seeing how images reveal power relationships between photographer, sitter, and the consumer audience.

“Developed Identities: Seeing the Stereotypes and Beyond” by Richard W. Hill, Sr. in the book *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian* gives a detailed discussion of the development and proliferation of the Native American stereotype in photography. I consulted the essay as a key to establish a definition of several “types” common in Native American images.

Other scholarship worth considering includes the following books. *Portraiture* by Richard Brilliant looks at the nature of portraiture throughout time. He discusses how

portraits are made and received by viewers. *Indian Lives: A Photographic Record from the Civil War to Wounded Knee* by Ulrich Heisinger gives an historical account of Native American images. Lucy Lippard's book *Partial Recall* gives a post-modern interpretation of Native American images and their reception by Natives and non-Natives. This book contains a long introduction by Lippard and several essays by Native Americans. *The White Man's Indian* by Robert F. Berkhofer provides an overview of the development of the Native American image in literature, painting, photography, and popular culture.

The current literature surrounding American Indian portrait photography illustrates trends in portraiture throughout the period studied. This thesis is more specific than most of that literature, because it concentrates on a single region – Oklahoma – and a limited time span – 1869 to 1904. As a result, it contributes a concrete investigation to the general body of research on imagery of Indians.

## CHAPTER TWO

### WILLIAM STINSON SOULE

William S. Soule (1836-1908) made photographs of prominent leaders of Native Americans living in Indian Territory during the turbulent time period immediately after the United States Civil War. Study of his work reveals that the artist used formal elements to create photographs that supported the perceived public image of his individual subjects.

Before addressing William Stinson Soule's photographs of American Indians, it is necessary to provide some historical background on the region now known as Oklahoma. Included in the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the land was part of a larger area that composed the westernmost boundary of the United States of America and was reserved for Native Americans. At the time of the purchase, several Native American tribes including Osage, Quapaw, Wichita, and Caddo made their homes in the area. Kiowa and Comanche tribes also lived on the Western border of the region. These tribes would soon share their land with tribes forced out of their homes in the Eastern United States.

As western expansion continued, Anglos unwilling to coexist with indigenous peoples put pressure on them to move to the West. As early as 1812, Indian tribes were given land in Indian Territory in exchange for their Eastern homes. This area included land in modern Oklahoma and Kansas. The Five Civilized Tribes—Cherokee, Creek, Seminole, Choctaw and Chickasaw nations—accepted land in the West at this time. The

United States Government considered these Native Americans cooperative and willing to fulfill official agreements.<sup>54</sup>

In 1830, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act and, after being signed into law by President Andrew Jackson, expelled remaining Native Americans from the eastern United States. This new law strengthened the U.S. Government's power to act on provisions stated in various treaties. President Jackson appointed three commissioners to the Stokes Commission to oversee the tribes' movement to Indian Territory. Headquartered at Fort Gibson, Indian Territory (now Kansas), the Stokes Commission settled American Indian land disputes and, more importantly, acted as a liaison between tribes already living in Indian Territory and the newly placed Five Civilized Tribes. During the 1830s, through the work of the Stokes Commission, the Five Civilized Tribes moved from the East to Indian Territory.<sup>55</sup> After settling, the United States Government and religious leaders encouraged the tribes to establish farms and schools and to embrace Christianity. These indigenous peoples prospered because they complied with these requests.<sup>56</sup>

Not all Native American tribes who lived in Indian Territory cooperated with the United States Government and the federal military increased its presence to subdue hostile resistance. During the 1850s, with the help of the Stokes Commission, Indian

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<sup>54</sup> The U.S. Government followed the same system as the British to deal with Indian tribes: they treated each tribe as an independent community. Tribal citizens were not considered members of the United States; rather, they were part of the tribal nation. As such, they were exempt from U. S. laws and subject to various tribal laws. Arrell M. Gibson, *The History of Oklahoma* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 34.

<sup>55</sup> Gibson, 40-3. The removal of Eastern tribes to Indian Territory is beyond the scope of this thesis. For more information see Angie Debo, *A History of the Indians of the United States* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984).

<sup>56</sup> Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West 1846-1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 59.

Territory experienced a building boom of military forts, especially in present-day Oklahoma. Forts served a dual purpose as a home for troops fighting hostile Western tribes and for the Indian agent. Appointed by the President of the United States, the Indian agent served as commissioner to the tribe. An agent's duties included negotiating peace treaties between the U. S. Government and other tribes, distributing federal funds to tribes, and reporting the general happenings in Indian Territory to the President.<sup>57</sup> In 1855, the government and the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes signed a lease allowing new immigrant groups including Kiowa, Comanche, Wichita, Caddo and others to relocate to their land.<sup>58</sup> The influx of new people and customs on such a small land area (now Southern Oklahoma) created tension. Migrating tribes did not want to give up their nomadic lifestyle and Anglo settlers found it difficult to live with roaming tribes. This transfer of population and new lifestyle resulted in many conflicts between Native American people and army personnel in the region.

At the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, relations between the U. S. Government and Native American tribes completely changed. Many members of the Five Civilized Tribes owned slaves and ran plantation farms. The Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes unanimously supported the Confederate movement. However, the Cherokees, Creeks and Seminoles split their support, with half of each tribe siding with the Union cause and half supporting the Confederacy.<sup>59</sup> All Union troops stationed in Indian Territory moved East to fight the War, leaving the area open for Confederate incursion. Strategically, the South needed the Western land connection in Indian Territory for food and weapon

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<sup>57</sup> Gibson, 61.

<sup>58</sup> Gibson, 60-2.

<sup>59</sup> Utley, 72-3.

supplies and for troop reinforcements.<sup>60</sup> In 1861, the Confederate government encouraged American Indians to enter the battle against the North, with varying degrees of success from tribe to tribe.

Ultimately, the majority of Indians who entered military service joined the Southern troops. After fighting several battles against the North, and against tribes who supported the Union, these Native American troops suffered defeats. More than just a military defeat, the Civil War destroyed Indian homes and livelihoods. Native American infighting weakened inter-tribal relationships. Peace treaties following the War forced Indians to abandon slavery, surrender their lands, and allow railroad companies to cross tribal lands. By 1867, treaties assigned new reservations and reduced the size of Indian Territory to that of present-day Oklahoma.<sup>61</sup>

The increased number of Native Americans living in Indian Territory and the weakened state of the Five Civilized Tribes elevated tension in the area. Native American cultural values that exalted war, war heroes, and simple revenge possibly added to the anxiety. Inadequate food rations, decreasing buffalo herds, and the unfamiliar and restrictive lifestyle imposed by the reservation system all acted as catalysts for increased American Indian hostility toward White settlements. Massacres, kidnappings and property loss were rampant during this time. Settlers petitioned the army for help and protection. In an early attempt to subdue the hostilities in Texas and Indian Territory, Congress organized a gathering of American Indian leaders. In October 1867, over five thousand Native Americans attended a meeting held in Medicine Lodge,

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<sup>60</sup> Gibson, 64-5.

<sup>61</sup> For more information see Gibson, 71-95; Debo, 168-214.



Kansas. Indian commissioners and a military attachment from the Seventh Cavalry also attended this historic event.<sup>62</sup> The treaties proposed at the meeting required that indigenous peoples stay on reservation land and permit railroads to be built through the Plains. In return for this cooperation, American Indians would receive protection against White hunters and receive amenities such as schools and churches. Although most Native American leaders opposed the treaties, they finally agreed and signed.<sup>63</sup> However, these official documents did not stop the problems in Indian Territory.

In 1869, when Ulysses S. Grant took his oath of office, the U. S. Government initiated a new Native American program known as Grant's Peace Policy. Under the advice of Colonel Ely S. Parker, Grant chose a non-violent approach to Indian affairs. His stopped making treaties and appointed religious leaders (mostly Quaker) to convert indigenous peoples to Christianity in a peaceful manner.<sup>64</sup> These efforts had no more effect than previous solutions.

In the midst of the post-war Reconstruction conditions and heightened military presence, photographer William Stinson Soule (1836-1908) first entered Indian Territory in 1867. Born in Turner, Maine, on August 28, 1836, Soule grew up on a farm. Few details of his early life survive, except the knowledge that during the 1850s he worked with his older brother in a photography studio in Melrose, Massachusetts.<sup>65</sup> When the Civil War began, he enlisted in the Massachusetts volunteer infantry. Soule fought in

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<sup>62</sup> Debo, 218-20.

<sup>63</sup> Utley, 116.

<sup>64</sup> Utley, 131-33.

<sup>65</sup> The preface to this book gives a detailed and possibly the most complete biography to date on the photographer. Among other research Nye conducted personal interviews with Lucia A. Soule, daughter of the photographer. Wilbur Sturtevant Nye, *Plains Indian Raiders* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), viii.

several major Virginia campaigns and was wounded in the battle of Antietam. He recovered in a field hospital at Keedysville and, ultimately, was transferred to a base hospital at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. When his health returned, he re-enlisted in the Invalid corps and worked in an office under the command of Major General William S. Hancock.<sup>66</sup>

After the Civil War, Soule established a photography studio in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania where he specialized in making portraits of returning Civil War veterans. This experience allowed Soule ample opportunity to develop his technical skills in the wet-plate photography process. In 1866 or 1867, a fire damaged his Chambersburg business. The loss of property combined with poor health possibly may have inspired him to move west. While traveling, he applied for a position at Fort Dodge, Kansas, a new post on the Arkansas River. The trader John Tappan hired Soule as the chief clerk in the fort's store.<sup>67</sup>

During his spare time, Soule photographed local interests including towns and people. It seems likely that he made most—if not all—of his Cheyenne and Arapaho images during his stay at Fort Dodge.<sup>68</sup> The details of Soule's next move are unclear; possibly, he moved to Fort Sill, Indian Territory, to secure a steady job. In December, 1868, Soule may have accompanied General Grierson on a reconnaissance mission. Historian William Nye believes several surviving Soule photographs of Grierson and his staff at Medicine Bluffs were made at this time. In 1869, Soule became the official post photographer at Fort Sill, and was primarily employed with documenting the successive

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<sup>66</sup> Nye, viii-ix.

<sup>67</sup> Nye, ix. The journey to Fort Dodge is recreated in Chapter 6 of *Plains Indian Raiders*.

<sup>68</sup> Nye, x. Nye states few of the Soule photographs can be definitely identified from his Kansas period. The images are dated by the geographic location of tribe and photographer.

steps of the new post's construction.<sup>69</sup> These photographs are currently on file at Fort Sill and provide a visual record of nineteenth-century fort construction techniques. Soon after the completion of the Fort Sill trading post, Soule established a photography studio in the main building. He maintained this facility for six years and concentrated his business on portraits of officers, soldiers, and civilians. During this time, he also persuaded indigenous people to sit for portraits which he sold in the trader's store.<sup>70</sup> In fact, the majority of surviving Soule images consist of Native American subjects.<sup>71</sup>

Soule created his photographs by using the cumbersome wet-plate technique typical of the era. This process used a solution of collodion that was made by dissolving gin cotton in alcohol ether and mixing it with potassium iodide. This solution, combined with silver nitrate to make it light-sensitive, covered a glass plate. It became the "negative" when exposed in the camera while still wet. Photographers used special albumen paper (paper coated with egg white and silver nitrate) to print the images from the glass negative. The resulting brown image was achieved by placing the exposed glass over the paper and exposing it to light. During the 1860s, tinted albumen paper, which produced tones from gold to rich purple-brown or sepia became popular.<sup>72</sup> Soule mounted his pictures on cardboard in the cabinet card format for individual sale to people who visited the trader's store. He also placed photographs in albums and sold them as

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<sup>69</sup> Nye, x.

<sup>70</sup> Nye, x.

<sup>71</sup> Gillet Griswold, "William S. Soule Photographs: A Preliminary Survey" (Fort Sill, Oklahoma: Fort Sill Museum, 1959, photocopied), 3. This unpublished survey attempts to identify existing photographs by William Soule during his western period.

<sup>72</sup> Naomi Rosenblum, "Photography" in *The Dictionary of Art* 24 (Williard, Ohio: R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company, 1996), 648-649.

sets. Soule sent some of his glass plates to his brother who sold prints in his Boston art store, mainly to students and schools in the Boston area.<sup>73</sup>

This frontier photographer gained national attention in 1868 with his photograph of a dead hunter. Published in *Harper's Weekly* the image, *Scalped sheep herder. Killed near Fort Dodge, Kansas, June, 1869*, taken soon after the hunter's death, showed two soldiers examining the victim's scalped body. The caption accompanying the image read:

On December 7 (1868) Mr. Ralph Morrison, a hunter, was murdered and scalped by the Cheyennes within a mile of Fort Dodge. Wm. S. Soule, an amateur photographer chief clerk in Tappin's Trading Company, took the picture. The officer is Lieutenant Reade, 3d Infantry. John O. Austin, Chief of scouts is on right. The photo was taken within an hour after the killing.<sup>74</sup>

Whether this publicity helped Soule's reputation as a photographer in eastern cities, cannot be determined.

In 1874, after a trip to Washington, D.C., Soule became engaged and returned to Fort Sill only to collect his belongings. Unfortunately, a business associate had taken all of his possessions except a photographic album and the Indian portrait negatives.<sup>75</sup> Soule moved to Philadelphia with his bride and later relocated to Vermont. In 1882, the couple settled in Boston, where he established the Soule Art Company with his brother. William soon purchased his brother's interest and became the sole proprietor. He ran the business for eighteen years and sold prints from his frontier experience throughout his career.<sup>76</sup>

One part of his successful business was a line of celebrity cabinet cards which he sold

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<sup>73</sup> Nye, xii. The Oklahoma Historical Society photography collection includes evidence that Soule used a stereoscopic camera also.

<sup>74</sup> Griswold, 18.

<sup>75</sup> Nye, xiii.

<sup>76</sup> Nye, xiv.

throughout the country via catalogs.<sup>77</sup> Soule may have included his photographs of Native Americans as part of the catalog selection.

While Soule lived and worked at Fort Sill, an army base with an Indian Agent in charge of the Kiowa, Cheyenne and Apache (three of the most fierce tribes in the area), he photographed many leaders of both raiding and peaceful Native American tribes.<sup>78</sup> Formal elements in Soule's photographs consistently reveal his individual style and intention to show the "perceived" public persona of the Native American people with whom he associated.

His photograph of the Kiowa Indian *Sa-tant-ta (White Bear) Kiowa Chief*, c. 1870, (Figure 1) exemplifies his style. In this portrait, the viewer's eye rests on Satanta's face which is the central focus of the photograph. Light shines directly on the man and creates sharp contrasts between the background, face, and the clothing. In this three-quarter portrait, Satanta sits at a slight angle while turning his head toward the camera. The pose makes this a more personal interpretation of the sitter. The picture frame crops the sitter's body to suggest his large stature; and his location in the immediate foreground puts him in the viewer's space.

The framing and pose of the figure also draws attention to Satanta's clothing. He probably owned the military jacket, medallion necklace, and leather knife case he wears, and these elements enhance the individuality of the picture. Historian William E. McRae reports that as a tribal leader, Satanta possibly received a full United States military

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<sup>77</sup> Kathleen L. Miller, "The Cabinet Card Photograph: Relic of a Gilded Age," *Journal of the West* (January 1989), 37.

<sup>78</sup> Russell E. Belous and Robert A. Weinstein, *Will Soule: Indian Photographer at Fort Sill, Oklahoma 1869-74* (The Ward Ritchie Press, 1969), 16. Soule also created images of Indian encampments and other field locations, not unusual subjects for photographer assigned to record the construction of Fort Sill.

uniform as a gift.<sup>79</sup> Art historian Janet Berlo believes that, "...in their fascination with new types of cloth and styles of clothing, Native Americans demonstrated the same very human interest in new ideas about dress" as European people.<sup>80</sup> A Kiowa leader dressed in a uniform was not unusual at this time. What is striking, however, is Soule's lighting that illuminates the medal and articulates the deep lines and undeniably Native American facial features of his sitter.

Important for this study is the fact that Satanta is a familiar historical figure and historical information about his life survives. Born around 1807, Satanta was a noted Kiowa leader and recognized as the second Kiowa chief. He was known as a fierce warrior who led many raids and war parties during his lifetime. Some referred to his ability to capture an audience while speaking in public and called him the "Orator of the Plains." In 1867, he was the second person to sign the Medicine Lodge Treaty, and although he did not keep the provisions outlined in the treaty, the event brought his name into prominence with both Native American and military leaders.<sup>81</sup> During 1871, he led raids into Texas and massacred several Anglo settlers. After one tragic incident, he was arrested and he spent the next several years in prison before he committed suicide in 1876.<sup>82</sup> Because Boston newspapers published letters from Indian Agents reporting on

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<sup>79</sup> William E. McRae "Images of Native Americans in Still Photography," *History of Photography* 13 (October-December 1989), 326.

<sup>80</sup> Janet Catherine Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips *Native North American Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 29.

<sup>81</sup> Belous, 59; James Mooney *Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1979), 207.

<sup>82</sup> Belous, 59; Mooney, 206.

events from the region, news of Satanta's arrest, and the subsequent Tribal Council at Fort Sill, received substantial attention in the East.<sup>83</sup>

Knowledge of this biography changes the way viewer sees the photograph. The aggressive militaristic clothing, weapon, and pose reinforce the man's reputation. The costuming, combined with close framing, and lighting emphasizing Satanta's dark skin, suggests the image of the "Ignoble Savage," who presents a clear danger to civilized society.<sup>84</sup> Soule created an image of the aggressive leader in keeping with the way Satanta was discussed in newspapers across the country.<sup>85</sup>

Another full-length Soule photograph shows the Kiowa leader Satanta around 1870 (Figure 4). Again, natural light bathes the subject from the front and highlights the distinct facial features of the man. In this picture, he wears a cotton shirt, a blanket around his lower body, and snug leggings. He wears the one-piece cuff moccasins with

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<sup>83</sup> Three examples of this are: J. M. Haworth, "Letter From the Indian Agent," *Boston Evening Transcript*, 3 September 1873, p. 2; Gainem Lawton, "Indian Affairs – Official," *Boston Evening Transcript* 9 September 1873; "The Release of the Kiowa Chiefs" *Boston Evening Transcript* 16 September 1873, p. 4.

<sup>84</sup> Scott B. Vickers *Native American Identities: From Stereotype of Archetype in Art and Literature* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 5.

<sup>85</sup> Reporters were not the only people to write about Satanta. Mooney's book, *Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians*, a detailed anthropological study of the Kiowa tribe's historical pictographic records, used Soule photographs to illustrate the text. Important for this study is the fact that this respected anthropologist interpreted the photographs for his readers. For example, he described Satana as a "brave, forceful, untamable savage" and believed the photograph reveals these personality traits. The authoritative opinion of a published scientist validated the public perception of the man seen in the picture. James C. Mooney, *Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians* (Seventeenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, reprint Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979), 206.

Two other books published during Soule's lifetime that include his images are: Thomas C. Battey *The Life and Adventures of a Quaker Among the Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969) first published in 1875, and Lawrie Tatum *Our Red Brothers and the Peace Policy of the President Ulysses S. Grant* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), first published in 1899. Each book has a unique purpose and the inclusion of Soule portraits enhances and supports each of the written texts. Thomas C. Battey's book is a compilation of diary entries describing Indian camps, Native customs and daily events seen by the author. His text reveals his opinions toward the Native Americans—he felt loyal toward the people he taught and at the same time saw them as hopeless barbarians. Tatum selected three Soule photographs, Kicking Bird, Satanta, and Satank for his memoir. The text does not refer to the photographs directly but they accompany the narrative that recounts Satanta's imprisonment at length. The portraits enhance the public image of Native Americans described in the text.

the distinctive forked tongue typical of the Kiowa tribe.<sup>86</sup> His loose, unadorned hair is also in keeping with Kiowa traditional style.<sup>87</sup> The man's pose and lighting purposefully emphasize details in the clothing, including his moccasins, blanket, chest medallion, and bandanas—all items that were most likely owned by the sitter. The placement of the bow, arrow, and quiver give some variation to the verticality of the pose. Although we do not know whether Satanta owned the weapon he holds in the picture, its inclusion and prominent position is probably meant to add a sense of danger.

In contrast with the three-quarter portrait, this full-length portrait shows Satanta sitting before a scenic backdrop with trees and a lake. This highly staged setting adds a artificial sense of wilderness to the picture. Again, the subject takes up the entire picture frame and creates a unsympathetic image of the Native American leader that is further enhanced by the weapon and false setting. The obvious staging, meant to secure Satanta's position as an Indian warrior, actually mocks the reality and conforms to the Ignoble Savage stereotype.<sup>88</sup>

In both photographs, Soule's prominent inclusion of costume details and attributes that suggest aggressive behavior follows the stereotypical image of the "warring Indian" chief. In this context, the widely acknowledged fact that Native American "male leaders gained notoriety through their confrontations with White settlers or Soldiers" further accentuates the tantalizing threat of the portrayed Native American

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<sup>86</sup> Josephine Paterek, *Encyclopedia of American Indian Costume* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), 118 and 452.

<sup>87</sup> Paterek, 118.

<sup>88</sup> Richard W. Hill "Developed Identities: Seeing the Stereotypes and Beyond" in *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian*, ed. Tim Johnson (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998.), 155.



warrior.<sup>89</sup> In the first image, we see Satanta dressed in a military costume, which immediately evokes associations of battle. In the full-length picture, he holds a bow and arrow—actual instruments of war. Both of these images contain threatening elements which visually support Satanta’s aggressive public persona reported in newspapers across the country.

Soule’s photographs of people from other Native American tribes show the same technical skill and attention to photographic detail he afforded his pictures of the Kiowa leader. His c. 1873 image of *Horse-back, Comanche* (Tuh-huh-yet, Nau-qua-hip, Champion Rider), for example, again uses the technique of closely framing and centering the body in the picture (Figure 5). The figure sits at an angle, with his head facing to the right. Although the head turns to the right, the eyes look forward and maintain contact with the viewer. This eye-contact engages the viewer and gives a sense of life to the portrait.

Light and framing are also important formal elements in Soule’s portraits. *Horse Back*’s body fills the picture frame. This position, close to the picture plane, creates a direct interaction with the viewer. Like Satanta’s three-quarter portrait, *Horse Back* appears as a strong individual but in this case less aggressive. Bathing the sitter in light emphasizes his dark skin and hair against the pale background.

Clothing again adds a sense of realism in the photograph. *Horse Back* wears a vest, calico shirt, neckpiece, and woolen blanket partially draped around his shoulders.<sup>90</sup> His right hand crosses the body and appears at ease. An object, possibly a stick or bow,

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<sup>89</sup> Hill, 143.

<sup>90</sup> During the reservation period the U. S. government distributed one suit of clothing (pants, shirt, coat – which was often made into a vest by Comanche) to each Comanche man. Paterek, 106.

rests under his right arm. The man does not hold, or even seem to notice, the object. An elaborately beaded purse covers his right hand. Again, the man makes no attempt to handle the bag, despite the obvious attention and sharp focus given to the purse by the photographer. Although Comanches did carry pouches that were often beaded and fringed, as in this example, it is impossible to know whether Horse Back owned these articles.<sup>91</sup> His body language, especially the hands which make no contact with the object, suggests that he did not; however, the prominent and deliberate placement of the bag in the composition shows the photographer felt it was an important visual detail in the image.

Like Soule's other sitter, Satanta, Horse Back was a noted Native American leader. A representative of the Noconee Comanches, Horse Back signed the Medicine Lodge Treaty and was generally friendly to the whites.<sup>92</sup> Highly regarded by army personnel, he spoke for Satanta's release from prison. Later he became one of ten chiefs for whom houses were built at Fort Sill in 1876, although he never lived in one.<sup>93</sup> As in Soule's image of Satanta, biographical information about Horse Back may affect the viewer's reaction to the photographer's representation. His costume, consisting of cotton shirt, vest, and blanket, is perceived as non-aggressive. In fact, the placement of the blanket over Horse Back's shoulders, and the purse over his hand disables the use of his arms. He becomes tied to White acculturation and the stereotype of the Noble Savage. He appears as an Indian converted to civilization but needing further assistance to

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<sup>91</sup> Comanche used pouches to carry powdered paint, sewing materials, or objects sacred to the owner. Paterek, 106.

<sup>92</sup> Belous, 112.

<sup>93</sup> Belous, 112.

become part of society.<sup>94</sup> Through the use of these formal elements, Soule portrayed Horse Back's more conservative public persona in his photograph.

During his residence in Indian Territory, Soule also made photographs of Native American women. Many of these women remain unidentified and are portrayed differently than Native American men photographed by Soule. Although Soule portrayed American Indian leaders as Noble or Ignoble Savages, according to the individual's reputation, his photographs of women align with the popular stereotype of the "Indian maiden" and represent the women with negative connotations.

A portrait of an unidentified Cheyenne woman is an example of this style (Figure 6). This woman, reclining on a blanket, wears a traditional Cheyenne three-skin dress decorated with cowrie shells, as well as moccasins and a neckband. She reclines on a couch covered with decorative textiles. Soule used line and pose to create a generalized view of the Native American woman. The curve of her body, beginning with her head and continuing through the figure to the bent knees and feet permits a full view of her clothing and body and suggests her availability. Her facial expression contradicts her sexy pose which places her on display. Soule represents the Cheyenne woman as an idealized "Indian princess," available to men.<sup>95</sup>

An interesting photograph, *German Sisters, Cheyenne Captives*, survives as one of Soule's few portrait photographs of Caucasian women (Figure 7). This picture directly

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<sup>94</sup> Vickers, 4.

<sup>95</sup> Soule also created photographs of unclothed Native American women in similar poses. These pictures are much more sexually suggestive; they clearly represent the Indian woman as uncultured and sexually available. McRae feels Soule catered specifically to Eastern tastes by creating these photographs. McRae, 330-332; McCornel Pewewardy, "Why One Can't Ignore Pocahontas" in *American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children: A Reader and Bibliography*, 2d ed. Arlene Hirschfelder, Paulette Fairbanks Molin and Yvonne Wakim (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1999), 172.

contrasts with his images of indigenous women and aligns with his style of representing the public perception of the sitter. Two young women wearing similar dresses appear before a neutral background. The standing figure on the left positions her arm on her sister's shoulder. This gesture visually links the two bodies. The form of the seated girl continues the line as she turns her body toward her sister. Furthermore, the slight sway in the standing girl's body connects the two figures and creates a complete circular line. By using these simple gestures in this photograph, Soule illustrated a public perception of women who supported each other through an ordeal.

This photograph survives in an album of Soule photographs of Native Americans in the American History Collection at the University of Texas at Austin Libraries. This was the only picture of a Caucasian person in the book. This suggests that as captives the German women assume exotic traits, similar to the Indians with whom they lived. In fact, they participated (willingly or unwillingly) in the Native American lifestyle. However, Soule's photograph does not represent the women as Noble Savages or Indian Princesses. Instead, Soule showed the women's civility through the connected pose, which emphasizes their mutual support and strength for each other through their ordeal. Although they lived with Native Americans, they were not part of the culture. Viewers can accept the women's adaptation into Anglo society, a task impossible for a "Noble Savage" to achieve.

The frontier photographs of William S. Soule convey the individual personalities of Native American leaders. This distinct style—as seen in his use of pose, line, framing, and attention to clothing—evokes an already established public persona. When his sitters were not celebrities, he used a more stereotypical and generic style (as seen in his images

of American Indian women). Regardless of the subject's fame, Soule's pictures adhere to an already known public image, or stereotype, of the Native American to suit the tastes of his Caucasian audience.

## CHAPTER THREE

### JOHN K. HILLERS

Following William Soule's (1836-1908) departure from Indian Territory in 1874, John K. Hillers (1834-1925) entered the area to photograph indigenous people. His artistic training as a landscape photographer influenced the style of the photographs he created. The formal elements he used in his personal style create a romantic image of the Native American in Indian Territory.

Hillers was born in Hannover, Germany in 1843, and emigrated with his family to the United States at the age of nine. The family settled in New York City where John spent his childhood. When the Civil War began, he enlisted in the New York Naval Brigade, but later transferred to the army.<sup>96</sup> He served in the army a total of nine years and even reenlisted after the Civil War ended. During his service he rose through the army ranks, reaching sergeant by the time of his discharge in 1870.<sup>97</sup> That same year, he accompanied his brother west to San Francisco.<sup>98</sup>

Through a chance meeting, John K. Hillers became a leading frontier photographer of his time. In 1871, the famous explorer John Wesley Powell (1834-1902), the first man to navigate the Colorado River successfully, needed an additional crewman for his second expedition in the area. Powell met Hillers in Salt Lake City and hired him as a boatman.

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<sup>96</sup> Don D. Fowler "Photographed All the Best Scenery" *Jack Hillers's Diary of the Powell Expeditions, 1871-1875* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1972), 9-10.

<sup>97</sup> Don D. Fowler *The Western Photographs of John K. Hillers "Myself in the Water"* (U.S.A.: Cultural Resources Consultants, Ltd., 1989), 16.

<sup>98</sup> Fowler, *Photographed*, 9-10.

Hillers' transition from boatman to chief photographer of the Powell expedition took place during the 1871 river trip and the following year. Powell hired E.O. Beaman, a professional photographer from New York City, to make photographs during the expedition. Cumbersome photography equipment made it necessary for the photographer to hire an assistant. Beaman's equipment—large format camera, portable darkroom, chemicals, and large glass negatives for the collodion wet-plate process—weighed nearly a ton. Powell appointed his cousin Walter Clement (Clem) Powell for this position.<sup>99</sup>

Hillers' interest in photography began during the river trip and Frederick S. Dellenbaugh, a member of the expedition, encouraged the attraction. Hillers volunteered to help Beaman with his equipment and in return Beaman taught Hillers how to use the camera. When Beaman left the expedition in 1872, he was replaced by Utah photographer James Fennemore, who also guided Hillers with his photographic technique. Hillers soon replaced Walter Clement Powell as the assistant photographer and became head photographer when Fennemore left the group due to illness.<sup>100</sup>

An 1873 addition to the expedition heavily influenced Hillers' development as a photographer. For political purposes, Powell convinced famed American landscape painter Thomas Moran to join his team in the Southwest. Moran's earlier work with the Hayden Survey in the Yellowstone area helped the scientist's public image immensely. In 1872, Moran's sketches helped to sway Congress to pass the National Park Bill, which made Yellowstone the first national park in the world.<sup>101</sup> This historic event of establishing a specific area to remain undeveloped helped set a precedent for land

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<sup>99</sup> Fowler, *Photographed*, 10.

<sup>100</sup> Fowler, *Photographed*, 10-11.

<sup>101</sup> Elizabeth C. Childs, "Time's Profile: John Wesley Powell, Art, and Geology at the Grand Canyon," *American Art* 10 (Spring 1996), 21.

preservation in the United States. After this time, other unique areas of land became part of the park system.

Powell, well aware of the reputation and public authority of Thomas Moran, needed someone to help his project politically. Elizabeth Childs explains the importance of landscape painting for nineteenth-century scientists:

Employing an artist to paint the Grand Canyon could help legitimize Powell's endeavors by linking fine art with that of elite science. Painting offered public celebration, commemoration, poetic commentary, and the aura of uniqueness in a way that the survey photography could not. Painting also opened the doors to elite social and political spaces – gallery shows, museums, the halls of Congress – the domains of the educated and the powerful.<sup>102</sup>

Paintings helped raise the status of the scientist's field work by bringing it to the public eye. A professional artist also supplied illustrations for journal articles, a necessity for creating enthusiasm for scientific endeavors at the time.<sup>103</sup> Powell had much to gain by employing a famous painter on his next survey.

Moran joined the Powell expedition as an artist with his own professional agenda. *Appleton's*, *Aldine's* and *Scribner's* magazines commissioned the painter to create illustrations from his Colorado River trip for their popular publications. Although his graphite sketches are detailed representations of the Southwest, he did not contribute to the scientific purpose of the geological survey.<sup>104</sup> Moran, Hillers, and the group geologist, Almon Harris Thompson, went on several excursions together, including exploring the regions known today as Zion National Park and the Vermilion Cliff.<sup>105</sup> The painter and photographer worked well together and shared their talents. For example,

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<sup>102</sup> Childs, 21.

<sup>103</sup> Childs, 21.

<sup>104</sup> Childs, 9 and 22.

<sup>105</sup> Childs, 22.



Moran helped Hillers pose local Paiute Indians in artistic arrangements for photographs.<sup>106</sup> Certainly, one can assume that Moran also aided the budding photographer's composition technique with the landscape. Conversely, Moran relied on many photographs taken by Hillers to form the details of the paintings he created in his studio.<sup>107</sup>

An example of Hillers' landscape photography from this period is *Three Patriarchs, Zion Canyon, Utah* (Figure 8). This albumen print shows three large rock cliffs, desert plants, and a small river. The foliage and the natural "V" shape of the land are centered to subtly reveal the flowing water. The diagonal lines created by the shrubs in the foreground lead the eye to the center of the picture. The undulating creek in the central foreground vertically cuts the horizontal lines of the rock stratification. This grand vista reveals much about the desert landscape including foliage, rocks, water, and geology in general. The artist's chosen point of view, a low position in the foreground, emphasizes the grandness of the scene. Viewers look up to see a geological formation that suggests majesty and respect.

Light also plays an important part in the photograph. The sun shines directly from the right of the picture, creating long shadows on the inner canyon walls. These shadows reveal the depth of the mountain, while the light emphasizes face of the cliffs. The light also creates sharp contrasts between the dark tones of the shrubs in the foreground and the lighter tones seen in the rock cliffs in the background. These contrasts further emphasize the canyon walls and the starkness of the landscape. The

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<sup>106</sup> Gaell Lindstrom, *Thomas Moran in Utah* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University, 1984), 5; Judith Luskey, "Early American Anthropologists as Photographers of North American Indians," *Visual Resources* 4 (1988), 361.

<sup>107</sup> Lindstrom, 5.

light also reveals desert textures; for example, the smooth texture of the rock opposes the rough desert foliage and clearly illustrates the variety of flora and fauna in the landscape. With the placement of the camera, light, and lines, Hillers created an image of a varied and majestic landscape. Hillers' style fulfilled the purpose of the photographs. He illustrated the geological conditions of the landscape and created a majestic scene available for purchase and reproduction.

When the 1873 expedition concluded, Powell was unable to obtain more funding from Congress. As a result, Hillers traveled to San Francisco to visit his brother. Following this visit, Hillers accompanied Powell on a lecture tour of various cities in the East and the Midwest. He worked as the projectionist for the lectures and showed "Views of the Canyon Country and Its Inhabitants."<sup>108</sup> Powell gave three lectures—"Canyons of the Colorado," "The Ancient Moqui Towns," and "Indian Life Beyond the Rocky Mountains"—but combined them in several ways and under various titles. In some cities, Powell gave a single lecture, and in others, two or all three of them.<sup>109</sup>

Soon after their lecture tour, Powell became involved in the organization of the Indian Exhibit for the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia.<sup>110</sup> During the nineteenth century, inventors and scientists showcased their new work to the general public at expositions in Europe and America. In 1876, the United States' centennial year, Philadelphia hosted an exposition highlighting progress made during the nation's first

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<sup>108</sup> Fowler, *Western Photographs*, 54.

<sup>109</sup> William Culp Darrah, *Powell of the Colorado* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 213.

<sup>110</sup> Fowler, *Western Photographs*, 60.

one hundred years of independence.<sup>111</sup> Event organizers included an area devoted to Native Americans.

The planning of this American Indian exhibit began as a very ambitious project in 1874. Robert Trennert explains:

[W]hen the United States Centennial Commission authorized the Smithsonian Institution and the Office of Indian Affairs to create an Indian exhibit, it was hoped that a better understanding between the two races would result. Spencer F. Baird and John Wesley Powell of the Smithsonian Institution assumed general responsibility for the display. Both men expressed great sympathy for the Indian and worked hard to create a factual exhibit, "Illustrative of Indian Life, Character and History."<sup>112</sup>

The Indian Office directed its agents to secure artifacts from indigenous peoples "now or recently in use, including weapons, utensils, dwellings, dress, photographs, and etc."<sup>113</sup> Their goal was to have "a series of objects illustrating the habits, customs, peculiarities, and general condition of the various tribes, and also of such relics of their predecessors as may be procurable."<sup>114</sup> The scope of the exhibition was from the prehistoric to modern day, and, as a bonus, the Smithsonian added the objects gathered for the exposition to its permanent collection. This fact enhanced enthusiasm for collecting items from indigenous cultures.<sup>115</sup> Baird and Powell organized ethnological expedition groups to obtain objects for the display. Scientific groups traveled to California, Alaska, Puget Sound, the Southwest, and other locations to gather objects both unusual and everyday.

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<sup>111</sup> Advertisements to help raise funds for the exposition are seen in papers as early as 1874. See "Centennial" *Boston Evening Transcript*, December 2, 1874.

<sup>112</sup> Robert A. Trennert, "Popular Imagery and the American Indian: A Centennial View," *New Mexico Historical Review* 51 (July 1976), 221-2.

<sup>113</sup> Trennert, "Popular Imagery," 221-2.

<sup>114</sup> Robert A. Trennert "A Grand Failure: The Centennial Indian Exhibition of 1867," *Prologue* (Summer 1974), 119-20.

<sup>115</sup> Trennert, "Grand Failure," 120.

Originally, the Native American exhibit planners intended to include actual tribal members in a living display. Organizers envisioned an American Indian camp outside the Centennial grounds with one hundred representatives from various tribes. Native American participants would demonstrate their “natural lifestyle” to visitors. However, due to the excessive cost the plan changed at the last moment.<sup>116</sup> As a result, photographs and artifacts alone represented indigenous cultures to the visiting public.

In May 1875, John K. Hillers traveled to Indian Territory to photograph the Plains Indians. His journal, dated from May 1 to June 10, 1875, details the journey.<sup>117</sup> Hillers strategically planned his visit to coincide with the meeting of the General Okmulgee Council. The Council, established in 1870 by the United States government, attempted to organize an intertribal government in Indian Territory that met annually.<sup>118</sup> The occasion of the Okmulgee Council brought together important tribesmen from across Indian Territory to a specific area.<sup>119</sup> Fortunately for Hillers, this event coincided with his needs to photograph representatives from numerous Native American tribes in a short time.

During this visit, Hillers created two sets of photographs. He gave one set to George Ingalls, agent of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and former member of the Powell expedition. The other set he took back to Washington, D. C. for the exposition.<sup>120</sup> The photographs in the former set contained images of the Five Civilized Tribes, buildings, and natural landmarks. These pictures show indigenous people in Caucasian style

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<sup>116</sup> Trennert, “Popular Imagery,” 222-223.

<sup>117</sup> Fowler, *Photographed* is the published diary of John K. Hillers which covers the time period 1871 – 1875. His description of his assignment to Indian Territory is found on pages 157-171.

<sup>118</sup> Curtis L. Nolen, “The Okmulgee Constitution: A Step Towards Indian Self-Determination” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 58 (Fall 1980), 279.

<sup>119</sup> Fowler, *Western Photographs*, 60-61.

<sup>120</sup> Fowler, *Western Photographs*, 60-61.

clothing living in brick houses. The latter photographs, used in Philadelphia, contained “wild Indians” in traditional Native American garments.<sup>121</sup> The photographs Hillers selected to display at the national exposition show Native American stereotypes widely accepted by Caucasian society.

Hillers’ travels began at Muskogee, Indian Territory on May 6, 1875 and continued for six weeks. His journal entries reveal an exhaustive travel itinerary that included the towns of Wewoka, Fort Gibson, and Kickapoo. Unlike Soule, who lived in a dangerous and mostly unsettled part of Indian Territory, Hillers merely visited a small eastern portion of the region that had been settled for some time. His interactions with Native Americans were much different and less intimate. However, because he knew Indian Agent George Ingalls, Hillers received introductions to prominent members of the local community. As a traveling photographer on special assignment from the Smithsonian Institution, Hillers carried all of his photographic equipment and had no permanent studio. Hence, this contributed to the use of the natural landscape as a backdrop. During his time in Indian Territory, Hillers took pictures of individuals, including local White and Indian residents and group portraits of Okmulgee Council attendees. He also photographed important architectural structures, many times including a group portrait with the building.

The photographs Hillers took during this relatively short stay in Indian Territory reveal his personal style. Upon his arrival, he made many pictures of prominent Native American individuals from May 10-14, 1875. One example of his portrait photography work in Indian Territory is *Big Mouth, An Arapaho chief—now a farmer, lives near Ft.*

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<sup>121</sup> Fowler, *Western Photographs*, 61.

*Reno I.T.* (Figure 2). Big Mouth poses in front of a dramatic geological formation. He is centered in the picture's composition. His body faces forward and his head faces left in a three-quarter profile, while balancing his body on the edge of the rock by resting his feet on rocks below.

Big Mouth wears a fitted breechclout, hip-length leggings, and moccasins.<sup>122</sup> He further adorns himself with a medallion on his bare chest, bracelets on both wrists, and two armbands. He cradles a pipe (from which hangs a beaded and fringed purse) in his left arm. This clothing style was typical for Arapaho men. In fact, it is questionable whether Arapaho men wore shirts before the Anglo influence and they often carried rectangular bags decorated with fringe and beads.<sup>123</sup>

The position of the man's body creates a sharp triangle, a form that repeats in the natural angle of the rocks in the background. He places his feet firmly on the ground, solidifying his placement in the landscape. As Big Mouth looks into the distance, disengaged from the viewer, he becomes part of the solid rock formation. Hillers reinforced the Noble Savage stereotype through the pose and clothing of the sitter.

Another photograph of Mok-ta-vi-ints, *Starving Elk, south Cheyenne Chief. Is now in Citizens dress, Olkmulgee I. T.* (Figure 9) is the same as the portrait of Big Mouth. The placement of the arms, legs, hair, pipe and bag against the same rock formation is identical; only the angle of the head changes. Starving Elk wears a fitted breechclout with flaps and leggings, hairpipe breast-plate, and beaded moccasins. His hair braids are tied with hairpipe and leather. Careful inspection reveals that he holds the

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<sup>122</sup> Josephine Paterek, *Encyclopedia of American Indian Costume*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), 453 and 456.

<sup>123</sup> Paterek, 88 and 90.

same pipe and purse as Big Mouth. This suggests the objects were handed around to several sitters regardless of tribe.

Both pictures of Starving Elk and Big Mouth use a slightly lower point of view. Hillers placed the camera below the figures, further distancing the viewer from the subject. This low point of view also gives the men a romantic existence in their natural surroundings. Because they appear above the viewer and look away, they become part of the interesting and majestic landscape.

Hillers posed at least four people, possibly more, in an identical position and setting. The photographer found this experience interesting enough to relate to his brother in a letter:

Here I found six Cheyennes who had just left the war path, all strappen [sic] big fellows. I took them among the rocks and set them up as food for my camera. I stripped them to the buff, not a stitch on them except a breach clout [sic] and succeeded in making pictures of them all.<sup>124</sup>

His diary reveals that he purposefully manipulated his subjects' costumes and environment for the sale of his picture. By asking the men to appear in an exotic state of undress and in a landscape, he created an image of the Noble Savage.<sup>125</sup> Attendees of the Philadelphia Exposition anticipated seeing Native Americans in various states of "savage" undress, displaying "Indian" objects.<sup>126</sup>

Hillers identified both of the Native American men in a separate inscription on each card board mounting. *Starving Elk, south Cheyenne Chief. Is now in Citizens dress Olkmulgee I. T.* states the Starving Elk's position in his tribe as chief, and possibly his

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<sup>124</sup> Fowler, *Photographed*, 166.

<sup>125</sup> Scott B. Vickers *Native American Identities: From Stereotype of Archetype in Art and Literature* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 41.

<sup>126</sup> Bradley B. Williams, "Photography in the American West: Victorian Overtones," *Journal of the West* (January 1994), 92.

position in an Anglo government group. The texts, which suggest the men's civilization and acculturation in Anglo society, contradict the visual image in the photograph. The text included on Big Mouth's photograph reads *An Arapaho Chief—Now a farmer, lives near Ft. Reno, I.T.* Again, Hillers mentioned Big Mouth's position as a leader in his tribe, as well as his occupation as a farmer, a respectable profession that the United States Government encouraged American Indians to pursue.<sup>127</sup> Although each man holds a pipe, implying his peaceful desires, they both appear uncivilized, due to their nakedness. Because Hillers manipulated the image by asking the men to remove their shirts, (noted in the above quote) to make them appear "savage."<sup>128</sup> The artist intended to show a familiar image, therefore diminishing their place in White society, as suggested by the photographs' accompanying text.

*Cheevers, Comanche Chief, a good farmer and stock raiser Ft. Sill I.T.* (Figure 10) is a similarly engaging photograph in the series. This is a full-length image of a man standing in a field. Cheevers stands slightly to the right in the composition and faces left in a three-quarter view. He wears a long-sleeved, white striped cotton shirt that hangs to his thigh and is a similar length to traditional Comanche animal skin shirts.<sup>129</sup> A vest covers his shirt, and leggings with a knee-length flap breechclout cover his legs. His face is framed by the long hair prized among the Comanche.

A dark tonal quality pervades this photograph. In fact, viewers cannot see the transition between the prairie grass and Cheevers' feet. The dark tone of the grass is varied by its own texture. The light sky area, left blank due to the wet-plate camera's

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<sup>127</sup> Angie Debo, *A History of the Indians of the United States* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 224.

<sup>128</sup> Williams, 92.

<sup>129</sup> Paterek, 104.



inability to register blue, reinforces the darkness of the ground. These tones and textures help Cheevers appear as part of the field with his legs rooted in the ground and his body becoming part of the grass.

Line plays an important formal role in the image. The verticality of the man directly intersects the great expanse of the field. Hillers silhouetted the figure against the earth and sky. In addition, the unclear focus created by prairie winds gives a romantic and timeless feeling to the photograph. Through the use of vertical lines and focus, Hillers showed the vastness of the land while simultaneously focusing on the detail of the subject. Because Cheevers stands in the middle ground of the picture, and does not engage the viewer with eye contact, he appears distant and non-confrontational.<sup>130</sup> He becomes part of the landscape.

The identification that Hillers included on the final product reinforces the Noble Savage stereotype of an individual with a “subservient yet honorable character.”<sup>131</sup> The words “A good farmer and stock raiser” found on the cardboard mounting describes his natural place in the field, his profession, and position in society. Even though the text represents the individual as a civilized, non-threatening member of society with whom eastern citizens could identify, his image suggests he is a part of nature needing guidance from the dominant culture.<sup>132</sup> This romantic image of the Noble Savage stereotype, created by the use of point of view, focus, and line, shows the man’s unbreakable connection with the landscape and a distinct style in Hillers’ photography.

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<sup>130</sup> John Pultz, *The Body and the Lens: Photography 1839 to the Present* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 23.

<sup>131</sup> Vickers, 4.

<sup>132</sup> Vickers, 4.

Contrasting with these photographs of Native American men is the photograph *Crossing Stream on Large Fallen Sycamore* (Figure 11). This picture of John F. Brown, General J. P. C. Shanks, and an unidentified boy, shows Anglo men in a landscape in a completely different formal style. Hillers used the lines of the fallen trees, which recede diagonally across the picture frame to draw the eye to the central focus of a large number of trees in the background. The dense foliage of the branches surrounds the men and the viewer focuses on the patterns created by the trees. This point of view, also from below, adds further majesty to the photograph.

The position of the figures standing on the fallen tree is also very important. The two White men stand on either side of the Native American boy. Each man has a knee raised, and an outstretched arm on another tree. The men stand in a position of power and dominance. Even though they appear small in proportion to the trees, their body language suggests that they are conquering the land. In contrast to this, the young Native American boy stands erect, and does not move. He has no power over the landscape.

Another representative picture in Hillers' Indian Territory series is *Graduating class 1875 of the young Ladies Seminar* (Figure 12). Hillers included a detailed description of the photograph on the mat: *Graduating class 1875 of the young Ladies Seminary, near Talleguah. Building cost \$45,000. Erected by the tribe in 1857, with their own money and supported by them.* The two-story brick building—complete with five chimneys, a dome, and a colonnade—dominates the picture. The building is framed on either side by the foliage of two trees and appears as a confirmation of European superiority over nature.

Students of the academy stand against the building to suggest the size of the structure, a tactic often seen in Hillers's photographs of the Grand Canyon. To indicate the size of the building and possibly the graduating class, Hillers placed seven finely dressed women across the middle-ground of the picture. Their position, near two young trees in the field, gives them an important presence in the photograph, reveals their individuality in dress and appearance, and gives scale to the building. Two of the women even hold books that act as visual references to the building's use. However, this same technique also makes the women appear as additions to the landscape. Because the grass covers their feet, they seem like flowers growing in a garden, planted and cultivated, not "wild." Like Cheevers, viewers see the girls but only as a part of the landscape.

This photograph depicting Native American women dressed and attending school as Anglo women, illustrates the philosophies of the day for educating Indians. Nineteenth-century educators believed that enveloping American Indian children in Anglo studies destroyed all undesirable tribal culture.<sup>133</sup> Educational reform leaders, who designed programs rooted in Christian ideals, assumed that "Indians, once having discarded their savage lifestyle, were capable of joining American society as the White man's equal."<sup>134</sup> However, new scientific theories promoting racism relegated the Native American to the fringes of society, rather than the mainstream.<sup>135</sup> Therefore, by showing Indian women as students in a White school, yet positioned away from the viewer, Hillers represents the prevailing educational philosophies of the day which preached acculturation but did not deliver equality.

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<sup>133</sup> For a detailed discussion see Jacqueline Fear-Segal "Nineteenth-Century Indian Education: Universalism Versus Evolutionism" *Journal of American Studies* 33 (1999), 323.

<sup>134</sup> Fear-Segal, 323.

<sup>135</sup> Fear-Segal, 324.

Hillers used strong vertical lines throughout to create an upward movement in the photograph. For example, each girl standing in the middle-ground repeats the verticality of the trees and colonnade on the porch. The chimneys and dome on the building extend the verticality ever further. The lines give the picture a sense of solidity that is enhanced by the sheer massiveness of the brick building.

The frontal camera angle creates a distance between the viewer and the girls who stand in the middle-ground and background of the picture. Although this point of view was necessary to include the entire building in the picture frame, it excludes viewers from participating in the scene.

The pose of these figures in a natural setting recalls Hillers' training as a landscape photographer. The bodies appear to be part of the natural surroundings and are always placed in scenic or visually interesting locations. Because he was a traveling photographer and did not have a studio readily available, he surrounded his subjects with the land; they become part of a view rather than individuals emphasized and isolated from a larger setting.<sup>136</sup>

At the Philadelphia Exposition, Hillers' photographs were exhibited in the Government Building with other objects gathered by people who had taken expeditions to investigate Indians. Objects of archeological and ethnographic interest from tribes across the country packed the hall in a Victorian exhibition style. Exhibit organizers displayed objects in cases or on tables very close together and also covered the walls from floor to ceiling with artifacts. Powell and Baird attempted to demonstrate contemporary

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<sup>136</sup> This is also true of the images taken in 1873 of the Ute and Paiute tribes during the Colorado River expedition.

American Indian life by including costumes and personal decoration from a variety of indigenous peoples.<sup>137</sup> The exclusion of didactic information left visitors with no means to make sense of what they saw. In reviewing the exhibition, newspaper and guide book writers did not see the diversity of Native American lifestyles, and instead they expounded upon the barbarity.<sup>138</sup> Because many people considered the photograph to be scientific evidence, these visual images helped solidify the stereotypes seen by the public and the press. Historian Robert Trennert believes the photographs' placement amongst a collection of interesting, yet outdated, objects helped confirm the public belief that Native Americans held no place in American society. Indian cultures seemed barbaric in comparison to the progressive displays seen in other Centennial Exposition displays.<sup>139</sup>

The exhibition ended with a series of photographs by William Henry Jackson and John K. Hillers. Hillers's photographs included portraits of the Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Pawnee "strappen big fellows" from Indian Territory, as well as his Hopi and Southern Paiute pictures taken three years earlier in Utah. However, his photographs of the Five Civilized Tribes taken during the Indian Territory excursion were not used, possibly due to space restrictions, lack of interest in the subject, or maybe they appeared too civilized. Audiences received Jackson's and Hillers' photographs with much enthusiasm; additionally, magazines and exhibition guide books made note of their work. Over eight million visitors attended the 1876 Exhibition and viewed the photographs of indigenous

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<sup>137</sup> Robert A. Trennert, "Popular Imagery" 223; Fowler, *Western Photographs*, 79.

<sup>138</sup> Trennert, "Popular Imagery," 223.

<sup>139</sup> Trennert, "Popular Imagery," 224.

peoples. Exhibiting in the Centennial Exhibition helped establish both men as leading photographers of Native Americans and the West.<sup>140</sup>

The photographs of the Western landscape and its inhabitants John K. Hillers created while employed by the Geological Survey remain important as historical documents. The surviving images of Native Americans from his short and unusual assignment to Indian Territory reveal the artist's stylistic reliance on his training as a landscape photographer. Hillers' use of pose, focus, line, and point of view distance the viewer from the subject, while simultaneously giving the subject a sense of majesty similar to his landscape photographs. The people in his Native American photographs taken in Indian Territory appear as part of the scenery rather than individuals. This style perpetuates an understanding of the American Indian, especially the Plains Indian as "savage" or "reformed" already commonly established in the public perception.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Fowler, *Western Photographs*, 79.

<sup>141</sup> Brian W. Dippie, "Representing the Other: The North American Indian" in *Anthropology and Photography 1860-1929*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 136.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### WILLIAM E. IRWIN

William E. Irwin (1871-1935), the final artist examined in this thesis, created images of Native Americans living in Oklahoma at the turn of the twentieth century. A trained portrait studio photographer who owned several successful businesses, he created images that are technically sound and visually appealing. Careful inspection of his photographs reveals that the artist used a distinct and consistent style when photographing American Indians.

Because of the twenty-year time span between John K. Hillers's work in Indian Territory and that done by William E. Irwin, it is essential to explore historical developments during the era. Soon after the summer of 1876 and the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, changes occurred in Indian Territory. Between 1879 and 1901, population growth and land transfers took place in the area now known as the state of Oklahoma. With the Indian Wars being fought in the Dakotas and Southwest, many new tribes relocated to the Oklahoma area. However, members of Native American tribes were not the only people moving into the region. White settlers coveted the valuable homesteading land reserved for Native people. In 1879, a ten-year process to open unused Indian lands for white settlement began. By using a new interpretation of the Homestead Act (1832), supporters claimed that unassigned lands in Indian Territory were public domain and could be settled as such. In an attempt to raise Anglo awareness of the "available" lands not being farmed or homesteaded by indigenous cultures, the Boomer political movement began. "Boomer" leaders, including Elias C. Boudinot, wrote articles

and lectured about the subject throughout the East, however, only an act of Congress could change the law.<sup>142</sup>

In addition to formal written protests, Boomers tried to invade the unsettled land. In 1879, Charles C. Carpenter organized a group of homesteaders who attempted to enter Indian Territory and illegally claim 160-acre lots. When members of the Five Civilized Tribes protested to federal officials, the United States Army thwarted the Boomers' endeavors at homesteading. After this initial effort to claim the land, David L. Payne organized several camps of homesteaders known as the Oklahoma Colony along the Kansas border. Colony members paid dues and lived in organized groups.<sup>143</sup> During the next several years, Oklahoma Colony associates invaded Indian Territory—attempting to stake land claims. Although members never successfully gained land, each raid brought more publicity to the movement in Eastern newspapers and to members of Congress.

Boomer agitation initiated a series of Congressional bills, each intending to use the unoccupied land while keeping the “best” interests of the Native American inhabitants in mind. Finally, in 1887, in response to the constant public clamor for opening the unassigned lands, one of these bills became law. Senator Henry L. Dawes of Massachusetts proposed a bill to Congress that would give American Indians their own land and open new lands for homesteading. At that time, Native American reformers praised the Dawes General Allotment Act as the key to making indigenous cultures productive citizens of society. The basic elements of the law

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<sup>142</sup> Arrell M. Gibson, *The History of Oklahoma* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 97.

<sup>143</sup> For a complete account of the Oklahoma land openings see Stan Hoig, *The Oklahoma Land Rush of 1889* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1984).



authorized the President to cause the Indian reservations to be surveyed and classified for farming or grazing. Each head of family could receive 160 acres of farmland, each single adult male 80, and each child 40; for lands suited mainly for grazing, the amounts could be doubled.<sup>144</sup>

Although individual Native Americans received a portion of land, the United States government held the title for twenty-five years to ensure that Caucasian settlers did not acquire the land under false pretense. After four years, the government assigned lots to any American Indians without a chosen section of land. Also, Native Americans who accepted allotments automatically became U.S. citizens subject to the civil laws of the land.<sup>145</sup> Following American Indian land distribution, the Secretary of the Interior reviewed the unassigned acreage and opened it to white homesteading. The government intended income from the sale of surplus reservation lands to benefit various Indian tribes.<sup>146</sup>

After the passing of the Dawes General Allotment Act, government officials followed the law and reviewed American Indian land holdings throughout the country, distributed land to individuals, and opened the remaining acreage to white settlement. On the day and time specified by the proclamation, hundreds of people ran to find new land plots of their own. Inevitably, the demand for land greatly exceeded availability, and many hopeful homesteaders were left without.

After the initial run for the Unassigned Lands, other portions of Oklahoma were redistributed. From 1889 to 1901, twelve areas became available to white settlers by run,

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<sup>144</sup> Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West 1846-1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 213-4; Angie Debo, *A History of the Indians of the United States* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 326-331.

<sup>145</sup> Utley, 214-215.

<sup>146</sup> Utley, 214-215.

lottery, or allotment. In a short period of time, land holdings of indigenous cultures decreased significantly while the general population of the area increased dramatically.<sup>147</sup>

Professional photographer William E. (Ed) Irwin took advantage of Oklahoma Territory's new growth. Details of his life are sketchy, but some information has been pieced together from his photographs, newspaper articles, and information available at institutions that hold Irwin collections.<sup>148</sup> Born in 1871 in Red Oak, Missouri, and raised in Texas, Ed Irwin learned the art of photography from J. H. Hurl of Goldenwide, Texas in 1893. Following his training as a studio photographer, he moved to Chickasha, Indian Territory, where he opened a photography studio.<sup>149</sup>

Around 1895, Irwin formed a partnership with a man named Jack Mankins and the two ran a studio together called the Blue Tent Gallery. These men actually owned two successful photography businesses in Duncan and Chickasha. The *Duncan Banner* reported:

Photographers. This line is ably and satisfactorily filled and presided over by Messrs Irwin & Mankins, with a first class art studio at this place and Chickasha, and have, by their work, come into special favor with the people of the two places. Their scenic views are of a type that impresses the visitor at their studio. The engravings contained in this paper were photographed by these artists. Their cabinet work does credit to the art, the work being of the highest grade. A visit to their gallery will convince you that it would be useless to go elsewhere to beat them in fine work.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Gibson, 103-105.

<sup>148</sup> This includes the Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas, Western History Collection at the University of Oklahoma, Norman, and information gathered by Chester Cowen, Photographic Archivist, Oklahoma Historical Society.

<sup>149</sup> Thomas Vaughan, "A Guide to the Photographic Archives of the Bisbee Mining and Historical Museum," *The Cochise Quarterly* 19 (Summer 1989): 27.

<sup>150</sup> *Duncan Banner* (Duncan, Oklahoma), 20 September 1895, 5.

The article favorably reviews the artists' work and mentions their good personal relationships with the townspeople. Information in the Oklahoma Historical Society lists Irwin & Mankins as the sole photographers in Chickasha at this time.<sup>151</sup>

The January 16, 1896 issue of the *Chickasha Record* announced "The Blue Tent gallery has pulled stakes and gone to Texas. Mr. Irwin is a good artist and his return at some future time will be welcomed."<sup>152</sup> An inscription on a cabinet card in the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, cites the Irwin & Mankins studio working in Richmond, Texas. These reports suggest that Irwin ran photography studios in several towns.<sup>153</sup> He located his main residence and studio in Chickasha from 1893 to 1904. In November, 1898, Irwin & Mankins advertised again in the *Chickasha Express*: "One dollar gets you one dozen pictures at Irwin & Mankins this month only."<sup>154</sup> On July 27, 1900, the *Chickasha Express* reports the wedding of Mr. Irwin, popular photographer, to Lillie Allen. The article mentions that Irwin had been "a resident for the past five years, and is highly esteemed as a thorough gentlemen."<sup>155</sup> A few days later the paper reported the Irwin family moved to a farm "two and one half miles west of this city. Mr. Irwin will continue business at the same old stand in the photograph line but will reside on his farm."<sup>156</sup> In the 1900 census records, Irwin is listed in Chickasaw Indian Territory

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<sup>151</sup> Chester Cowen, Oklahoma Historical Society, personal interview with the author, March 1997.

<sup>152</sup> *Chickasha Record* (Chickasha, Oklahoma), 16 January 1895, 8.

<sup>153</sup> The chronology in the Ed Irwin artist file at the Amon Carter Museum says Mankins was "killed by Mexicans" dissolving the partnership. The exact date of his partner's death is therefore in question.

<sup>154</sup> *Chickasha Express* (Chickasha, Oklahoma) 17 November 1898.

<sup>155</sup> *Chickasha Express* (Chickasha, Oklahoma) 27 July 1900, 8.

<sup>156</sup> *Chickasha & Duncan Express* (Chickasha, Oklahoma) 8 October 1901, 5.

as a photographer.<sup>157</sup> These newspaper articles show that Irwin actively advertised his business and was an important member of the local community.

By locating his photographic studio in Chickasha, Irwin took advantage of a sizable town population as well as traveling railroad passengers. Two railroad lines ran through the city. The Oklahoma, Kansas, Texas railroad ran north and south through the territory and had small spur lines that connected Chickasha to the western town of Anadarko. The Burlington Northern railroad ran northeast and southwest through the area. By advertising regularly in area newspapers, Irwin met the needs of residents as well as the souvenir demands of the railroad traveler.<sup>158</sup>

Unlike Soule and Hillers, Irwin used the dry-plate photography method. This new technology, introduced in the early 1870s, was not widely manufactured or used until after 1881.<sup>159</sup> Unlike wet-plate negatives, to which photographers manually applied a wet solution of collodion, machines coated gelatin dry-plates with the substance to provide an even layer of the chemical on the plate. Manufacturers sold these plates ready-to-use, thereby eliminating much of the cumbersome photographer's equipment necessary for the wet-plate process.<sup>160</sup> The dry-plate method also allowed photographers to make images and develop them at a later time. The printing process used with the new technology allowed the image to be contact-printed and mounted as a cabinet card or

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<sup>157</sup> NARA 1900 Census Indian Territory: Microfilm reel 1848 Chickasaw Nation, Chickasaw City page 42b.

<sup>158</sup> Approximately 35% of Irwin's images in the Amon Carter Museum collection are Native American. In the Western History Collection, 40% are Indian. Hunting scenes appear in the next largest quantity, followed by miscellaneous images—including landscapes and family portraits.

<sup>159</sup> O. Henry Mace, *Collectors Guide to Early Photographs* (Radnor, Pennsylvania: Wallace-Homestead Book Company, 1989), 160.

<sup>160</sup> Brian Coe and Mark Haworth-Booth, *A Guide to Early Photographic Processes* (England: The Westerham Press, 1983), 22.

enlarged for other purposes.<sup>161</sup> Stylistically, the dry-plate method produced sharper images, deeper sepia tones, and a glossier finish to the paper.

Many of Irwin's existing images of Native Americans reveal the artist's fascination with the attributes and romantic "image" of the American Indian, rather than the individuals that sat for the photograph. Costume, in particular, appears to have been the artist's the central focus. *Gertrude Three finger, Cheyenne* (Figure 3) is a typical example. A wicker chair with a blanket hanging from the side, props used repeatedly in Irwin photographs, create a context for the sitter. Her body follows the position of the chair, as she sits at the same right angle and her head turns directly toward the camera. Gertrude's right leg, positioned prominently on the fur rug below, reveals the detailed beadwork in the knee-length moccasins. Similarly, by posing Gertrude with her arms resting on the chair, Irwin provided a full display of the elk's teeth and fringe in her dress.

Gertrude wears a traditional three-skin Cheyenne dress decorated with an unusual amount of fringe – under the arms, on the side, and at the bottom of the dress.<sup>162</sup> Additional ornamentation includes elk teeth in three horizontal rows across the dress and three vertical rows over each shoulder—another common feature of Cheyenne dresses.<sup>163</sup> She wears other typical Cheyenne accessories including a leather belt with silver buckle, beaded bag, and conchas.<sup>164</sup> Her moccasins are traditional boots trimmed with geometric

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<sup>161</sup> Mace, 162.

<sup>162</sup> Josephine Paterek, *Encyclopedia of American Indian Costume* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1993), 100 and 454.

<sup>163</sup> Paterek, 101.

<sup>164</sup> Paterek, 103.

beadwork.<sup>165</sup> This prominent display of the woman's costume reveals it as the subject of the picture. An inscription on the original cabinet card in the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, reads "Gertrude Three Finger dress trimmed with elk teeth value \$500.00."<sup>166</sup> The garment's prominent placement in the picture shows the sitter and photographer knew of the value of the garment, and possibly, for that reason, chose the costume as the focus of the picture.

Irwin used various studio techniques and background to emphasize the "Native" features of his sitter—her "Indian-ness." The figure is at the center of the picture frame—in front of the unembellished studio backdrop. The girl's face and shoulders are highlighted against a dark background. This framing technique draws attention to the sitter's head and body and, in this case, contrasts the girl's dark hair with the light background, to further emphasize the subject. Her pose, with outstretched arms and feet on the rug, creates a sharp, solid, triangular form. This formal element, emphasized by the sloping shoulders and arms resting on the chair, a pose which opens up the body and helps focus the eye on it. The horizontal lines of the beadwork and the fringe across the front further enhance the diamond-shaped form and descending movement in the composition.

The exceptional surface of the photograph reveals Irwin's technical skill and knowledge of the photographic medium. The smooth texture and slight glossy finish of the albumen print reveal many details in the image including the girl's smooth skin and the textures of the dress, rug, and chair. The sharp contrasts of the sepia tones in the

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<sup>165</sup> Paterek, 101.

<sup>166</sup> Inscription on cabinet card in the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries.

background against the dark tones of the dress create additional visual patterns to complement the sitter's costume in the picture.

Irwin combined formal portraiture elements—including solid lines, dramatic tonal contrasts, and central placement of the figure to create an image of a strong solid woman. However, these techniques also emphasize her clothing, thereby transforming this individual into a type—the Plains Indian maiden.<sup>167</sup> Irwin's composition emphasizes Gertrude's costume rather than the woman herself as the subject of the photograph.

The photograph of *Annie Berry, Kiowa Woman* further illustrates Irwin's portrait style of American Indian women (Figure 13). This woman, identified as part of the Kiowa tribe, stands erect with both arms placed behind her head, in an uncommon gesture. Her head turns slightly to the left and her eyes gaze in the same direction. Like Gertrude, she stands before a plain backdrop. In this case, however, the lightest part of the background shines to the right of the head, opposite to the light from the left. Again, the figure's placement in the neutral background accentuates her dark hair and skin.

Like Gertrude, Annie wears a three-skin dress, typical of many Plains Indian tribes including the Kiowa. It is highly embellished with fringe – along the arms, across the bodice, in the middle of the skirt, and along the side seams.<sup>168</sup> Six rows of elk teeth are attached to the dress in a horizontal pattern. Because the woman raises her arms behind her head, the viewer's eye rests on the fringe of the dress sleeves and bodice.

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<sup>167</sup> This pose could be interpreted as sexual. McCornel Pewewardy, "Why One Can't Ignore Pocahontas" in *American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children: A Reader and Bibliography*, 2d ed. Arlene Hirschfelder, Paulette Fairbanks Molin and Yvonne Wakim (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1999), 172.

<sup>168</sup> Paterek, 116-118.

Pattern and line are important visual components in the photograph. The implied vertical lines in the picture produce a downward motion. Starting with the part in the girl's hair, the line travels down the body to the fabric belt. The fringes repeat these vertical lines across the garment's bodice and skirt—effectively locking the figure in place and denying any movement in the portrait.

The framing of the figure fills most of the picture space. Her dress sleeves almost touch the edge of the frame, but her legs are cut off below the knees. This is a disturbing feature because her gesture highlights details of the dress, which is certainly continued in her hem. In this case, Irwin's framing adds to the woman's inability to move and dramatically emphasizes the stereotype of "savage Indian," who appears, in this case a captive.

Like the photograph of Gertrude, the formal elements in the composition, including pose, line and lighting highlight the features of the costume. However, in this case, their combination creates a more sexually suggestive image. This is, in fact, a very vulnerable position; Annie cannot move freely and appears as a captive. Irwin eliminates her individuality to show his image of an Indian princess—beautiful and sexually alluring in this stance.<sup>169</sup>

The two pictures of Annie and Gertrude are representative of Irwin's typical photographs of Native American women. The artist's use of static poses, neutral background, and central framing of the figures eliminates the individuality of the girls and focus on the uniqueness or exotic quality of the costume. Both Gertrude and Annie

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<sup>169</sup> Pewewardy, 172.



appear as idealized Indian maidens, in a static, unreal moment in time – available for the pleasure of White men.

Irwin's stylistic choices for his photograph of his wife, *Lillie Allen Irwin*, are unlike those evident in the images of Native American women discussed above (Figure 14). For example, Lillie sits in a much more informal position on a metal chair placed with the back toward the viewer. She sits in profile with one arm resting on the back of the chair and holds a half-opened fan in her hand. Although one arm rests in her lap, the other is positioned in a way that hides much of her dress. The sharp, dramatic lighting also contributes to a distorted view of the clothing as the glare washes away the details. Unlike the American Indian women who were carefully positioned to reveal all details of their costume, Lillie's pose hides her body.

The body's position also creates an active "S" curve that begins with the white ruffles in the hat and continues through the body to the flowing hem of the skirt. Irwin carried the line further in the picture by placing the light-colored fur rug in the left corner of the picture. Although the woman appears pensive and still, the active line creates graceful motion in the portrait.

The studio backdrop includes a painted interior on the left that further contributes to the active dynamism of the photograph. The light comes from the sitter's left and produces a sharp contrast between the back of her head and the light that shines on the face of the woman. This bright illumination draws the eye to the figure so that the viewer concentrates on her instead of the hidden dress. The combination of pose, lighting, and background suggests that she is a respectable woman.

These three pictures illustrate that Irwin used different, distinct styles to portray Native American and Caucasian women in portraits. When photographing Indian women, he used static poses and neutral backgrounds to focus attention on the costume and dress of the women. Portrayed as timeless figures in an unchanging world, the represented girls fulfill the established stereotype of an Indian maiden. In contrast, the Caucasian woman—posed in an active position, with dramatic lighting background—is depicted as a proper member of her society.

Another image typical of Irwin's American Indian portrait style is *Essapunnua, (or John White Man) a Comanche medicine man* (Figure 15).<sup>170</sup> This half-length portrait shows Essapunnua from the waist up wearing a polka dot cotton shirt, vest, and a sheer kerchief tied around his neck. Two long braids, tied with ribbons, hang in front of his shoulders. A third scalplock hangs from the crown of his head.<sup>171</sup> He gazes directly at the camera with a serious facial expression common in all nineteenth-century photographs.

Once again, Irwin posed the Native American man in front of a neutral backdrop which eliminates all suggestions of time and place, and also contrasts sharply with the dark, patterned clothing.<sup>172</sup> Essapunnua's body is centered in the picture frame and fills the entire space horizontally. The close placement of the figure to the picture frame gives

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<sup>170</sup> The Irwin artist file at the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries identifies the figure as "Essapunnua (or John White Man), a Comanche medicine man holding a feathered gourd rattle. He is wearing a cloth shirt, vest and kerchief. His braids are bound with yarn and a double chain of beads is attached to a hair lock. He was a member of the Anadarko Indian Police."

<sup>171</sup> Paterek, 468. In this case, it is decorated with beads.

<sup>172</sup> John Pultz, *The Body and the Lens: Photography 1839 to the Present* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 24.

the man a strong presence in the picture and is enhanced by his eye contact with the viewer.

Light shining from the figure's left washes over his face. This technique accentuates facial details like wrinkles and also de-emphasizes the backdrop. More importantly, the light reflects off feathers in the gourd rattle to distort the object. In this picture, light creates and distorts details to achieve the artist's desired effects.

Line also plays an important role in the composition. Similar to Irwin's figures of Indian women, static vertical lines fill the image. The most prominent line in the figure begins with the sharp part in the hair and travels downward through the nose to the shiny buttons in the vest. The descending movement of the scalplock and braids on both sides of the figure further enhances the central line. The sloping shoulders and arm gives the body a heavy triangular shape. These implied vertical lines create a solid, unmoving figure. However, the large stick decorated with feathers and a gourd fills the space on the sitter's left and breaks the sharp verticality of the picture. This detail is the only element that is out of focus and on a diagonal in the photograph. By adding this unfamiliar object on the left, Irwin creates an element of exoticism and wonder to the otherwise static figure.

A barely discernible badge pinned on the left side of the vest is another important visual clue. This police badge, symbolizing the man's profession, is hidden between the braid and feathers in the rattle. Because Essapunnua wears the badge prominently on his vest, its lack of visibility in the photograph raises many questions about Irwin's stylistic choices and intentions. The issue of why such an important personal symbol was almost completely blocked from view is important. Questions of choices made by sitter and

artist arise. Possibly, the photograph illustrated another attempt by the artist to reinforce a traditional Plains Indian stereotype, otherwise accomplished with the hair, costume, and rattle. Or, conversely, perhaps the sitter preferred to highlight his position as a Native American religious leader over his secular profession. Although important, these questions will probably never find an answer.

Technically, *Essapunnua* represents the high quality of the other Irwin images discussed above. Stylistically, the photograph of the Native American man is in keeping with that of *Gertrude Three finger* and *Annie Berry, Kiowa Woman*. The subject of the photograph is the stereotype of the Native American man which Irwin accomplished with the use of vertical lines, a neutral background to contrast shapes and textures, lighting, and focus. These combined elements reveal the artist's conception of the Noble savage "appreciated philosophically and aesthetically, but who has no present political reality."<sup>173</sup> The sitter's unmoving, yet imposing, posture and the unusual object he holds suggest an indeterminable, underlying power. This description fits the stereotype of the "chanting medicine man" described by Richard Hill as a sub-type of the Noble Savage.<sup>174</sup> *Essapunnua*'s pose and clothing reveal his underlying power but, viewers cannot determine the extent of his strength.

Irwin's photograph of his brother *Marvin E. Irwin*, illustrates his portraiture style for an Anglo man (Figure 16). Although this half-length view seems common for the time period, its style contrasts directly with the image of *Essapunnua*. The most dramatic difference is the placement of the body on a slight right angle, with the head turned

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<sup>173</sup> Vickers, 4.

<sup>174</sup> Richard W. Hill, "Developed Identities: Seeing the Stereotypes and Beyond" in *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian*, ed. Tim Johnson (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 143.

forward to face the camera. He gazes toward the camera and shows a traditional nineteenth-century stoic facial expression. This pose creates an active diagonal line, beginning with the right corner of the head and traveling to the left part of the chin. The line turns to the right at the white shirt collar and follows the edge of the vest to create a sharp “V.” The square shoulders and the angled placement of the arms repeat the diagonal lines in the body. Lighting further enhances these active lines in the picture. By shining the light directly on the left side of the face, Irwin created a shadow that covers the entire right side of the face. This technique enhances the details of the sitter’s face and adds a sense of drama to the photograph.

The framing of the figure is another an important stylistic element in this picture. Marvin Irwin sits away from the front of the picture frame to allow for a noticeable area of backdrop surrounding the sitter. In fact, the blank backdrop fills one-third of the picture and continues in a small space along the figure’s sides.

These two seemingly simple portraits of men further illustrate that Irwin created a specific style for Native Americans in contrast to that which he used for with Caucasian individuals. The lines used in Native pictures are static and unmoving. Irwin used active lines that are enhanced by dramatic lighting in his Caucasian portraits. Although he used similar body views, he chose different framing methods. For example, the Anglo man placed at a distance from the picture frame appears friendly; the Native American, on the other hand, is shown up-close and appears confrontational. Irwin’s depictions of American Indians enforce stereotypes mentioned above. Sitters wear interesting Plains Indian clothing, but have no place in society or, if they do, the photographer chose to conceal it in order to create a familiar image that would sell.

Irwin concentrated on Native Americans during the beginning of his career, from about 1893 to 1904, at which time he moved to Bisbee, Arizona. His surviving photographs of indigenous people include group and single portraits of women, children, and men dressed in Native American costumes posed in front of studio backdrops. Irwin also produced candid shots of American Indian life including tipis, trading posts, and children. Sometimes frontier photographers, including Irwin, focused on their white clientele, making pictures of Native Americans as a side interest. Many times, Indian photographers made these pictures at no cost to the sitter. These photographs, reprinted in the form of cabinet cards and distributed to a wider Caucasian audience as souvenirs of Indian Territory, supplemented the professional's income.<sup>175</sup> Indeed, many Native American glass plate negatives survive today because of their value after the initial contact with the sitter.

Irwin sold his photographs of Native Americans in his studio as souvenirs for travelers to Oklahoma on the railroad or other area visitors. Throughout his career, he advertised the pictures in newspapers and promoted his work as the best in the area. An 1895 example reads: "If you want to see the largest collection of Indian pictures ever exhibited in this country go to the Blue Tent Gallery, next door east of Petti John's drug store."<sup>176</sup> And similarly in 1900: "Get your Souvenir Indian pictures at Irwin's Photo Gallery. The largest collection in the Indian Ter."<sup>177</sup> He consistently and actively advertised the Indian photographs available for sale to a wide public. The selection of Indian tribes represented in photographs included Kiowa, Apache, Chickasaw, Papago,

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<sup>175</sup> Chester Cowen, Photographic Archivist, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, phone interview with the author, October 31, 1996 and November 12, 1996.

<sup>176</sup> *Chickasha Record* (Chickasha, Oklahoma) 14 November 1895.

<sup>177</sup> *Chickasha Duncan Express* (Chickasha, Oklahoma) 16 October 1900, 3.

and Cherokee.<sup>178</sup> This financial interest directly influenced the stereotypical style, as he wanted to create recognizable images that would sell.<sup>179</sup>

In 1903 Irwin liquidated his merchandise to prepare for a move.

We are making preparations to leave Chickasha and in order to work up our large stock of photo goods before leaving, will make pictures at greatly reduced prices for the next 30 days at Irwin's Studio.<sup>180</sup>

In search of a healthier climate for his sickly wife, Irwin moved repeatedly in 1904—relocating first to Silver City, New Mexico, then settling in Bisbee, Arizona. Irwin operated his photography studio in Bisbee for eighteen years, recording town happenings, residents, and their homes.<sup>181</sup>

Sometime during 1922, Irwin moved to Douglas, Arizona to be closer to his mining investments. According to his obituary, Irwin purchased a cattle ranch in Silver City, New Mexico which he operated until about 1932. In 1935, Irwin suffered an attack of appendicitis while traveling to a mine near Douglas. He was in the hospital for several weeks before he died. He is buried near Stafford, Arizona next to his wife.<sup>182</sup>

William E. Irwin created Native American portraits that appealed to a wide audience and that could be easily marketed as tourist souvenirs over an extended period of time. Because the photographs of American Indians could be reprinted in multiples and sold as copies, the photographer carefully constructed a familiar image for tourists, an image that could potentially last for a number of years. By creating images of Native

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<sup>178</sup> This list details images found in the collection of the Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas and the Western History Collection at the University of Oklahoma, Norman.

<sup>179</sup> Joanna Cohan Scherer, "You Can't Believe Your Eyes: Inaccuracies in Photographs of North American Indians. *Exposure* (Winter 1978): 7.

<sup>180</sup> *Chickasha Duncan Express* (Chickasha, Oklahoma) 3 April 1903, 4.

<sup>181</sup> Tom Vaughn, *Bisbee 1880-1920: The Photographer's View* (Tucson, Arizona: Isbell Printers, 1980), xi.

<sup>182</sup> Carol Roark, Assistant Curator of Photographs, October 1984, Amon Carter Museum Irwin artist file.

Americans that were so similar to each other, he made a type already commonly known to his white clientele—the male Noble Savage, frozen in the past, and the female Indian maiden, available visually and otherwise.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

The images made by William S. Soule, John K. Hillers, and William E. Irwin in present-day Oklahoma from 1869 to 1904 illustrate three different circumstances in which photographs of Native Americans were created. Because of circumstances surrounding the inception of the photographs, each artist used a distinct personal style created through the arrangement of formal elements in the photographs. Each of the three photographers made an image, familiar to his society, to sell in the market. The pictures were something desired by the public and conform to social norms through their overall composition and style.<sup>183</sup>

William Soule, who lived in a dangerous area during a turbulent time period, happened to be in the right place at the right time to photograph well-known Native American celebrities. He used pose, props, and framing to emphasize the widely circulated public persona of his sitters. For example, by showing his subjects with objects characterizing aggression, as described in the photographs of Satanta, he enforced a common image of the Ignoble savage or “bad Indian” common at the time. As mentioned above, Soule sold his cabinet card images in Boston, long after leaving Oklahoma, visually solidifying the public image of the Indian individuals throughout the country.

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<sup>183</sup> Richard W. Hill, “Developed Identities: Seeing the Stereotypes and Beyond,” in *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian* ed. Tim Johnson (Washington, D.C. Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 145.

In contrast, John K. Hillers' brief visit to the most settled portion of Indian Territory during a special event influenced the portraits he made. His excursion there during the annual gathering of the Okmulgee Council allowed the artist to photograph a wide variety of Native American tribes in a short amount of time. The stylistic choices he made, including pose, clothing, point of view, and framing, to create these photographs of tribal leaders and young women, demonstrate his fabrication of the stereotype of the Noble Savage. Because he created these photographs as support materials for other ethnographic items in the 1876 Centennial Exposition, the images were actually viewed as scientific documents of people living in Indian Territory and helped confirm the already established public bias.<sup>184</sup> Significantly, photographs he made of American Indians acculturated in the Anglo culture placed the individuals in the Noble Savage stereotype, due to their careful fabrication as part of the landscape. These images of men and women posed outdoors reveal his personal artistic style as a landscape photographer and his conception of the Native American in the landscape.

Photographs taken sixteen years later, after the wide Anglo settlement of the area by Indian Territory resident William E. Irwin, illustrate the technical advancements of the photographic medium. Also trained as a studio photographer, he created images that show strong compositional placement of the figures to reveal the detailed costumes of his subject. As an artist, Irwin chose these positions to display fully his sitters' clothing, a technique demonstrating his interest in costume. These poses place Indian men and women in the long-established stereotypes of the Indian Princess and Indian Medicine

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<sup>184</sup> Robert A. Trennert, "A Grand Failure: The Centennial Indian Exhibition of 1876" *Prologue* (Summer 1974), 118-129.

man. As discussed above, his portraits of American Indians directly contrast with his photographs of Caucasians.

Ironically, despite the nineteenth-century public vision of Native Americans, as Noble Savage, Ignoble Savage, or Indian princess, their actual living conditions were much different from their public stereotype. As mentioned above, indigenous peoples were removed from their homelands and placed in Indian Territory directly following the Civil War. The United States Government decreased the lands designated for their homes as the Caucasian population increased in the area. At the same time, religious reformers tried to abolish Native American culture by implementing European educational theories on the Indian children. Yet during this same time of Anglo domination and reform, the public wanted to see the “traditional” or “real” Native American in a Plains Indian costume. Each photograph discussed above complied with this public demand for various stereotypes.

This author’s research discovered many unanswerable questions pertaining to the style and situations of each photograph made. For example, we will possibly never know how much influence the Native Americans had on their photographs. In some cases certainly, they decided what pieces of clothing they would wear in the picture. Yet other cases document the direct control of the artist over costume and details. To what extent American Indian individuals contributed to the choices of pose and backdrop is a topic of further study.

Another subject raised by this study is the use of the photographs during the nineteenth century through today. Exploration of the continued use of the photographs in books would show how the images intentionally or unintentionally support and spread a

negative stereotype of the Native American. This author found several Hillers and Soule images a book used to show historical representations of costume.<sup>185</sup> Granted, these photographs do contain the record of how the individual looked at a specific moment in time. However, the overall representation of the individuals shows a cultural bias. Therefore, the question arises of how these images, as accurate historical representations in scholarly books, propagate long established stereotypes. Along these same lines, issues surrounding the interpretation of visual images placed within written texts also evolve.

Furthermore, as discussed above, the Plains Indian stereotype is traditionally seen as the accurate representation of the American Indian. However, each of these photographers used members of Plains Indians tribes as their subjects. Thus raising the question of how pictures of people from a highly stereotyped indigenous group further spread the common view to other tribes outside of the Great Plains.

In conclusion, viewing the portrait photographs created by William Soule, John K. Hillers, and William E. Irwin, made over a period of time in Indian Territory before and during the settlement of the area, shows three individual artists' approaches to photographing American Indian portraits. Although each photographer used a distinct and recognizable style, each artist conformed to established nineteenth-century stereotypes of indigenous peoples.

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<sup>185</sup> See Josephine Paterek, *Encyclopedia of American Indian Costume* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994).

## ILLUSTRATIONS

1. *Sa-tan-ta (White Bear)*, William S. Soule, c. 1869-1874, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries.



2. *Big Mouth, An Arapaho chief-now a farmer. Lives near Ft. Reno I.T., John K. Hillers, 1875, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Oklahoma Historical Society.*



3. *Gertrude Three finger, Cheyenne*, William E. Irwin, c. 1893-1904. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries.





2. *White Bear (Satanta), second chief of Kiowas*, William S. Soule, c. 1869-1874, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries.



5. *Horse Back, Comanche*, William S. Soule, c. 1869-1874, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries.



6. *Cheyenne Woman*, William S. Soule, c. 1869-1874, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries.



7. *German Sisters, Cheyenne Captives*. William S. Soule, c. 1869-1874, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.



8. *Three Patriarchs, Zion Canyon, Utah*, John K. Hillers, 1872, Amon Carter Museum albumen silver print P1975.103.12.



9. *Starving Elk, south Cheyenne Chief. Is now in Citizens dress, Olkmulgee I.T., John K. Hillers, 1875, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Oklahoma Historical Society.*





10. "Cheevers" Comanche Chief. A good farmer and stock raiser Ft. Sill, I.T., John K. Hillers, 1875, Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Oklahoma Historical Society.



11. *Crossing Stream on Large Fallen Sycamore*, John K. Hillers, 1875, Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.





12. *Graduating class of 1875 of the young ladies seminary near Tahlequah. Building cost \$45,000. Erected by the Tribe in 1857, with their own money and supported by them. John K. Hillers, 1875. Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Oklahoma Historical Society.*



13. *Annie Berry, Kiowa Annie, William E. Irwin, c. 1893-1904, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries.*



14. *Lillie Allen Irwin*, William E. Irwin, c. 1893-1904,  
Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma  
Libraries.



15. *Essapunnua, (or John White man) a Comanche medicine man, William E. Irwin, c. 1893-1904, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries.*



16. *M.E. Irwin, bust portrait, William E. Irwin, c. 1893-1904, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries.*



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