

A Unique College Nickname or Another White Man's Indian? George Helgesen Fitch and the Case of Siwash College

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IN THE SPRING OF 1993, John McCall, then president of Knox College—a small non-denominational liberal arts college in Galesburg, Illinois—announced that the nickname the college had held for over seventy-five years, Old Siwash, would be dropped and eventually replaced.¹ His decision was based in part on the range of enigmatic meanings that Siwash inferred, from the derogatory French *sauvage* to the more contentious form, as pejoratively applied to Native Americans. As an Indian, a *Siwash* is defined variably, but

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ranges from the “contemptible and inferior,” to a “second rate person not up to the white man’s standards.” More current definitions define Siwash as “a small inland provincial college.”²

McCall’s directive to eliminate this college moniker, as it related to the contemporary movement to eradicate images, logos, and representations of Indianness across the United States, problematized the image of Knox College as Old Siwash. As a result, stories about Siwash—from its origins to its perceived intentions—turned a name-changing process into a veritable Knox narrative.³ Central to this debate is the interpretation of the school’s past as reflected through the fictional writings of George Helgesen Fitch (1877-1915). Fitch graduated from Knox College in 1897 and began an eclectic career as a journalist, eventually becoming a renowned author, humorist, satirist, and Progressive politician. He penned the original stories that served to construct Siwash as a college.⁴

Key to understanding the narrativistic construction of Old Siwash—stories that were initially read as innocuous and humorous depictions of college life at the turn of the century—is an assessment of how this fictitious college was originally constructed by Fitch. In this article, I historically contextualize Fitch’s stories by taking into account what social and ideological precepts are woven into his writings and analyzing from that what Siwash College stood for at a cultural level. As instruments of cultural study, Fitch’s stories can be read for the ideas they communicate about other discourses on life. To that end, while Fitch’s work broadly speaks to issues of gender, race, ethnicity, language, and colonialism, Siwash College also alludes to Indianness, nuanced as this may seem. As a cultural space, this fictitious college offers a metaphorical and allegorical tale on savagery—with the myth of *siwash* as transposed from the French *sauvage*—through the antics of young, white male collegiate ruffians.⁵ To glean from these satirical tales the rise of their related cultural codes, I outline relationships between the supposed origins of the term siwash, its Native and First Nations moorings, Fitch’s life, his socio-political views, and the culture of sport.⁶

My central argument contends that Fitch knowingly, if subversively, engaged the term “siwash” with all of its cultural encodings. Unpacking the historicity of such a specific term is particularly important to the larger work of team naming and mascot issues because not all issues of team naming and representation are self-evident. Institutions with Indian-like monikers do/did not adopt such symbolic identifiers without reasons. Historical research, by design, attempts to tease these reasons out. On the surface, emphasizing a regionalized term with seemingly minimal cultural capital—as is Siwash—appears trivial when compared to the proliferation of more prevalent monikers or teams attached to Indianness such as the Cleveland Indians’ Chief Wahoo, or the University of Illinois’ Chief Illiniwek. However, it is precisely the re-presentation of imagery that makes this case singularly important. While Chiefs Wahoo and Illiniwek offer a visual imagery and iconography that Siwash cannot, Siwash’s diffusion offers another—less visual, but nevertheless empirical—rendering of how ideas that are learned come to “conform to social arrangements that so dominate our organization of experience, that they appear to be inevitable.”⁷ Siwash’s presence offers exemplary evidence of how deeply entrenched and ideologically complex the process of appropriation can be. Additionally, the case of Siwash exposes how institutions take these ideas “to which they give rise for granted, and see them as self-evident and beyond critical appraisal.”⁸ In contrast, deep historical re-readings like

this can help sport historians deconstruct the issue of team naming and work to further unpack the pretexts laden in Indian mascot narratives.

Editors C. Richard King and Charles F. Springwood, in *Team Spirits—The Native American Mascot Controversy* (2001),⁹ confront this contemporary controversy with multiple readings on institutions and their rationale for—as Vine Deloria and others eloquently and metaphorically argue—playing Indian.¹⁰ In each chapter, the author outlines unique reasons given by that institution for engaging Indian play via mascots, monikers, or imagery. In the case of Knox's Siwash, its "uniqueness" exists precisely because of its visually blind and blatant lack of a "real" Indian presence. Still, it is no less unique in terms of its claim to exclusive "rights" and "privileges" that tend to be associated with Native or American Indian identities. Uniqueness, in any representative tale of Indianness as attached to a college's or a university's identity, cultivates an ironic sense of sameness. Arguably, it is the ideological history and social reproduction of these ideas that demand deep critique and in this case open the door to read Fitch's Siwash College as a uniquely "imagined community,"¹¹ and as a streaming narrative that relentlessly engages imperial powers rather than as a visually personified case study.

Roots of Meaning

Though conservative dictionaries date the term *siwash* back to 1852 in reference to Indians of the Northwest coast, a more contemporary and prevalent perception of *siwash* to lexicographers is its definition as "a small inland provincial college regarded as typical of its class."¹² At Knox, however, Fitch's stories quite likely prompted the reiteration of Siwash's use as *slang*—derogatory or otherwise—and, as such, this "corruption" of the term linked it with small provincial college environments. Knox's controversy rested primarily with not only the term's meaning as interpreted by the prevailing college community but whether or not Fitch himself understood the term's manifest possibilities. This was an old question with a new twist. Knox historian, Herman Muelder, specified that where Fitch acquired the term is an "unknown," though it was very clear that at the time of Fitch's writings the term meant savage as derived from the French form and that it contributed to the Chinook jargon and intertribal trade language of the Northwest. While Muelder noted the derogatory application of the term, he also continued to credit Fitch with its designation as "any small provincial college."¹³

As a term, Siwash, as Indian or tribe, is rarely indexed in more recent books or texts on Native American and Indian history or lore. Indeed, references to a Siwash tribe or a specific group of native peoples are rare. Even *A Native American Encyclopedia* published in 2000 fails to cite any reference whatsoever to the term Siwash.¹⁴ However suspiciously regarded, Eric Partridge's *A Dictionary of the Underworld* opens the door to Siwash's pejorative possibilities, defining Siwash as "an unclean or uncouth person" and noting its currency circa 1910. Furthermore, this definition specifies a particular tribe or Native American. Here a Siwash is "an Indian of the Salishan tribe, none too clean in their habits and person."¹⁵ Note that this definition assigns Siwash to a particular tribe rather than associating it more generally with the Chinook jargon, which was spoken by a number of tribes and is often misunderstood as a tribe of its own standing.¹⁶ The Salishan connection pinpoints the location of the Siwash to the Puget Sound region of the Northwest, a

region located relatively near the Columbia River, home to many Chinook tribal members. Regardless of origins, the term Siwash—one word with distinctively multifarious origins and meanings—connoted on one extreme savage-like Indian-related behaviors and denoted on the other the “freshwater”¹⁷ antics of the provincial college environment, at least as most notably known via George Fitch and his alma mater, Knox College.

One Point of “Origin”

To understand the meaning of the word Siwash in contemporary naming debates, such as the one that erupted at Knox in 1993, we must return to its supposed point of origin, which in this case is George Fitch’s Siwash stories. Originally, these stories were produced as serial pieces about a fictitious college that depicted a humorous, yet idolized, notion of college life centered on fun, frivolity, football, and pranks. Fitch wrote the stories as a series of twenty pieces that were printed from 1908 to 1914; most were in the *Saturday Evening Post* and a few were in the *Kansas City Star*.¹⁸ The Siwash stories were taken in widely by the readership of an increasingly literate college subculture. Readers inferred from Fitch’s writings a college life similar to their own, and Siwash was experienced in this context as “anyman’s” college and humorously reflective of everyman’s good old days. Perhaps best known for his “Vest Pocket Essays,” syndicated pieces that were printed in approximately 150 newspapers daily, most readers knew of George Fitch as “the creator of Siwash College and the originator of Ole Skjarsen”—Siwash’s lumberjack football oaf.¹⁹

In Fitch’s first book, *The Big Strike* (1909), Skjarsen, an uneducated Scandinavian lumberjack, becomes the protagonist for a flailing Siwash football team. The heavily accented Norwegian also becomes the brunt of Siwash indifference beyond the gridiron. His accent, social clumsiness—especially with the Siwash “peach orchard”—steerage class persona and oafishness made a behemoth of the newcomer. These traits also made Skjarsen a social outsider unacceptable to his male peers, who touted elite membership to various sordid fraternities. “Tribes,” as Fitch called them, went by satirical titles such as the Eta Bita Pies, the Sigh Whoopsilons, the Chi Yi Sighs, and the Delta Kappa Whoops.²⁰ In *The Big Strike*, Skjarsen, who becomes synonymous with Siwash football pride, also becomes disenchanted by the social predilections of his peers. He chooses to strike against the “old coll.” by withholding his labor from the game against Siwash’s arch-rival, Kiowa, the “uncivilized” lot of behemoths down the pike.²¹ In this particular story, Skjarsen’s failure to “assimilate” to the Siwash culture is only one example of the ideological unrest that subverts the heart of Fitch’s fictitious constructions.

Regarding his prowess as a writer and author, Fitch’s connections to his alma mater kept him amidst the flurries of the literary world as Knox College was home to the founders of the “best of muckraking publications,” *McClure’s Magazine*. *McClure’s*, the New York-based syndicate, was long considered the original muckraking prototype, and employed numerous Knox associates over the years—social critics who attended to the production of political and social reform at the turn of the century.²²

By the prevailing cultural standards, Fitch’s life and work was perceived to have “passed unnoticed by many,” but his own record reflects differently on the quality and reputation of his work.²³ Fitch’s personal log was filled with briefs that expressed his broad appeal to

readers across the country.²⁴ At that time the popularity of the Siwash stories produced reviews that compared Fitch with Owen Johnson—author of *Stover at Yale* (1911)—and his “opulence of mirth” with Mark Twain. As noted in one book review; “Mark Twain is dead, but we still have in this big land of ours a few true humorists—with [George] Fitch and [Owen] Johnson at the head of them.”²⁵ One lengthy critique credited Fitch as a true author and humorist. Other opinions suggested that his Siwash stories reflected a certain “truth” about the affairs of colleges “to any one who’s been at college—not at Harvard, Yale or Princeton, but one of the smaller corporations for the gay pursuit of football, baseball, and semi-occasionally, learning.” The critique added: “[T]he stories of Siwash cannot fail to prove delightful, for they’re true to college life and college spirit even though they do go in for gay exaggeration which at times is very nearly burlesque.”²⁶

Regardless of their relative fame, a salient impression that the Siwash stories embedded in readers’ minds suggested that young white boys in a privileged college environment dominated the entire campus. Thus, the stories were taught through a twisted sort of exemplification where a fraternal “boys will be boys” mentality prevailed.²⁷ (See below illustration.)



Fraternity Brothers. Martin Justice, illustrator. “A FUNERAL THAT FLASHED IN THE PAN,” *SATURDAY EVENING POST*, 18 DECEMBER 1909, p. 7.

The unequal relationship between the Siwash boys and others were so exalted in these tales that raucous male behavior continued with unbridled acceptance. The tales also mythologized the college experience as one humorous escapade after another. Nevertheless to understand the circumstances from which these tales rise, it is necessary to examine the socio-cultural context of George Fitch’s life.

In His Day—George Helgeson Fitch 1877-1915

In general, the period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been widely treated as an era of significance in developing the U.S. cultural imaginary. Sport scholars, including Donald Mrozek in *Sport and American Mentality 1880-1910* (1983), S.W. Pope in *Patriotic Pastimes: Sporting Traditions in the American Imagination, 1876-1926* (1997), and Mark Dyreson in *Making the American Team* (1998), all treat this period as an especially significant historical time in the ideological development of U.S. sport.²⁸ In this time period, these authors argued that sport provided the culture with a common civic language by symbiotically merging sport and politics, which reflected a sense of common values and national identity. Dyreson noted that this era, constructed as the sporting republic, brought together Western republican thought and organized sport ideals, a notion that was cleverly adopted by Progressive ideologues of the time. Theodore Roosevelt, Jane Addams, and William James are all mentioned as examples of civic leaders, writers, and intellectuals who identified themselves as Progressives and worked arduously to incorporate sport and recreation into the political and social process.²⁹

Noteworthy in all of the aforementioned historical accounts is the time period under examination. As a case in point, Dyreson's work focuses almost exclusively on the years between "the centennial celebration of [the] nation's founding and the end of World War I," the time period from 1876 to 1918. Dyreson suggests that during this period, in a general way, "sport became one of the most important institutions to American civilization."³⁰ The sporting republic of this era was attuned to modernist principles of fair play, and national standards were evoked through Progressive arguments about such republican principles as rule by law, public virtue, and definitions of community.³¹

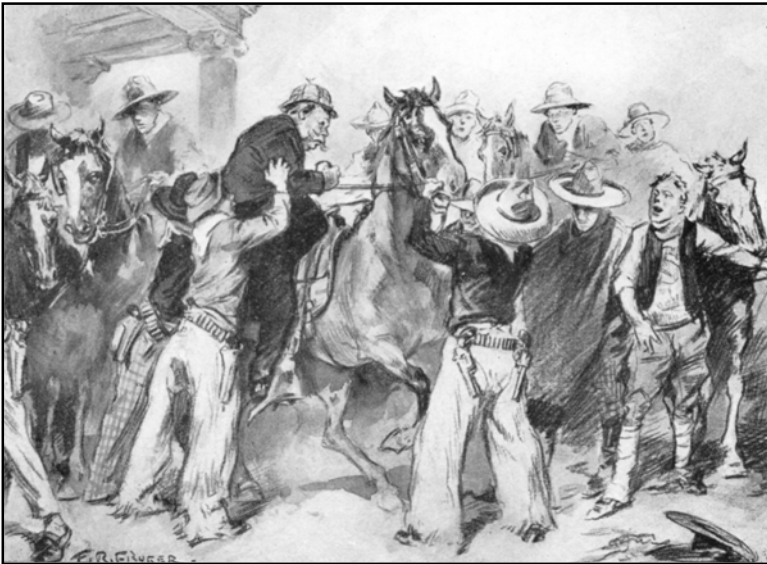
The historical rise of a sporting ideology incorporating republican principles is especially relevant since this significant period of time also encompassed the whole of George Fitch's life (1877-1915). Fitch's own predilections, insights, and political rhetoric were ensconced in a similar vein—a Progressive mindset that ideally catered to issues of public virtue and social justice. However, Fitch and others actually contributed—through a satirical bent on such matters—to a cultural disposition consisting of exclusionary forces that limited rather than expanded social possibilities for diverse populations other than white men of European origins.³² By apparent contrast were the "red men"; noteworthy in terms of Fitch's musings about Indians were his place-related "Vest Pocket Essays." In his syndicated quips on "Oklahoma," "New Mexico," "Massachusetts," "The Mississippi River," and "The Prairies" were references that perpetuated the fear and loathing of the white man for the "red man," especially their assumed inability to utilize agricultural resources, civilize or assimilate.³³

More prevalent in his writings, however, were the ideals of Progressivism and the influence of Theodore Roosevelt. In Fitch's day, Knox College was an institution noted not only for its access to literary notables but also for its historical currency and connection to Abraham Lincoln, the Lincoln family, and the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates.³⁴ During Fitch's tenure at Knox, another debate of notable, albeit collegiate, distinction took place in 1896 between William Jennings Bryan and William McKinley—then party candidates for president. While widespread social issues such as the agrarian economy,

labor relations, and public exposure of graft and political corruption were central to this particular debate, Fitch was playing his own political part by stirring up a successful mock election campaign to organize a third party on campus, the “Federalists”; their candidate was Theodore Roosevelt. In the Knox College student election of 1896, Roosevelt came out the presidential victor, and George Fitch credited himself with recognizing Roosevelt’s potential as future statesman, politician, and figure of national repute.³⁵

Roosevelt was the primary mover behind the reformist Progressive politics that generated sweeping changes across the American landscape in the early 1900s and helped mobilize millions to social activism. The philosophies and discourse espoused by Roosevelt arguably influenced Fitch in two ways: initially as the author of the Siwash stories and other notable pieces and later as a Progressive state legislator. Roosevelt staunchly believed that sport could impact large-scale social reformation; Fitch’s writings, on many levels, echoed this progressive and reformist spirit.³⁶ Nevertheless Fitch’s prolific pieces also advanced colonialist and supremacist tropes—comforting doctrines at the time that exuded a social order for the benefit of the dominant privileged few.³⁷

The injection of Roosevelt’s lore and imperialist imagery into Fitch’s writing cannot be underestimated. (See below illustration.) Roosevelt was a singular topic of one of Fitch’s *Vest Pocket Essays*, and Fitch also wrote about Roosevelt in a piece titled, “Teddie” for the *American Magazine*.³⁸ But more important elements of Roosevelt’s character and ideology are continuous subtexts in *The Big Strike at Siwash* and other Siwash stories, with featured themes predictably set up around manliness, capitalism, labor, and football.³⁹



Hoisting Aboard. F.R. Gruger, illustrator. “COLLEGES WHILE YOU WAIT,” *AT GOOD OLD SIWASH*, (1911), p. 125.

While on the surface Fitch alluded to “manly men” and “mollycoddles” (frequent Roosevelt-like expressions), “Sioux war dances” and “Kiowan barbarians” were also cleverly woven into the fabric of his yarns. In sum, this engendered a college culture that fused sport with social class, race, ethnic and especially gender relations, making evident that Siwash College stood as an important site for the construction of hegemonic solidarity within the context of not only fictitious college sub-cultures but of early twentieth-century America. Consider the social privilege invested in the following characterization, in which Fitch provides a taxonomy of the college’s fraternities and placed the Eta Beta Pies as the superior “tribe” of frat lore. Fitch wrote:

[W]e’re bigger, grander, nobler and tighter about the chest than any other gang. We’ve turned out more Senators, Congressmen, Supreme Justices, near-Presidents, captains of industry, foreign ambassadors and football captains than any two of them. We own more frat houses, win more college elections, know more about neckties and girls, wear the louder vest. . . .

Indeed, when compared to the Sigh Whoopsilons—the fraternity at Siwash that regarded the Eta Beta Pies with the “same tolerance with which the Indians regarded Daniel Boone”—the Eta Beta Pies were the *crème-de-la-crème* of the fraternity system.⁴⁰ Behind the Beta’s and Sigh Whoopsilons were other lesser fraternities, including the Delta Kappa Whoopsilons, the Chi Yi Sighs, and the Fli Gammas.⁴¹

At a deeper level, however, the cultural imaginary of Fitch’s “original” Siwash College delivered tropes deeply imbued with notions of the white man,⁴² subtleties on capitalism according to the gospel of wealth, colonial logic about the red man as evidenced through rhetoric alluding to assimilation and imperialist conquest, and a perpetual reiteration of cultural difference. Moreover, these were themes intimately tied to Rooseveltian ideals such as the strenuous life and muscular Christianity. While this complex web of ideology and social preservation speaks to notions of historical and cultural shaping, readers must also pay attention to contexts and their consequences. As evidenced throughout this article, the illustrators who put images to Fitch’s writings and stories also read into these familiar tropes. As Hayden White cogently articulated, “[E]very representation of the past has specifiable ideological implications.”⁴³ George Fitch’s construction of Siwash College was no exception.

Cultural Appropriation and the Golden Age of Sports

The 1920s served as the decade in which Siwash’s application to and use by Knox took hold, especially in the case of the athletic teams. In 1922, *The Siwasher* served as the college’s literary magazine.⁴⁴ Thus, the affiliation of Fitch’s “Old Siwash” with Knox, its literary legacy and athletic teams—football especially—was established. Here, it is important to understand what happened in the 1920s that marked this decade as the one in which team names proliferated through the guise of underprivileged groups—a critical part of team naming histories.

The explosion of sports and sport teams paralleled the cultural movement of mass production and mass consumption, rooted in the late nineteenth century and flourishing in the twentieth. This movement was also intertwined with a mass-mediated consumer capitalism that projected false ideals about civilization through commerce and advertis-

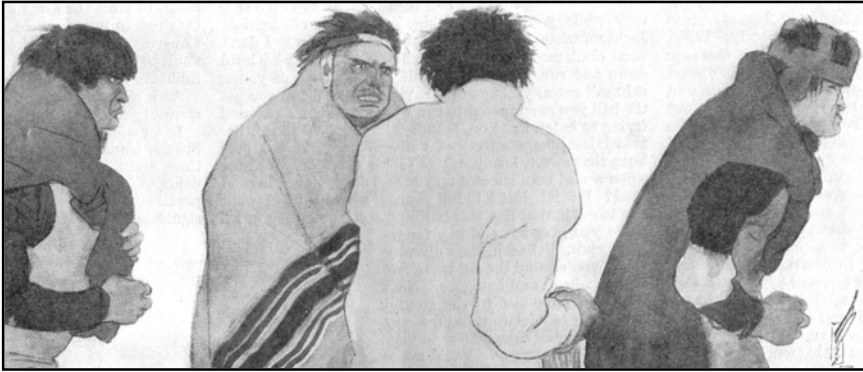
ing.⁴⁵ The sport landscape, just like the consumer landscape but especially through everyday periodicals and newspapers, (re)produced symbolic signifiers and tools that provided recognition and loyalty for consumer groups.⁴⁶ These images work in inverted ways to impute “otherness,” legitimating civilization by sublimating savagery, and advocating progress by denigrating barbarity and primitiveness.⁴⁷



Coach Bost & Ole. Gustavus C. Widney, illustrator. “OLE SKJARSEN’S FIRST TOUCHDOWN,” IN *SATURDAY EVENING POST*, 6 NOVEMBER 1909, P. 17, AND *AT GOOD OLD SIWASH*, (1911), P. 26.

Benjamin Rader simplified this point relative to sporting practices. He described this flourishing “sport scene as a complex set of images, fantasies and myths that yielded, in part, some ‘tough classic western [heroes]’” who were “brave and handsome, killed bad men and Indians, thus dramatically serving the forces of ‘good’ while saving white Americans from the ‘savages.’”⁴⁸ Thus, through the process of capitalism/consumer acquisition, the prevailing dominant and literate culture had conveniently acquired an alternative way to view the Indian as “other.”

A significant part of the relational image that fed into myths about the Indian stemmed from a broad appeal to male spectator sports. Here, again, football was preminent—



Ole's First Touchdown. Gustavus C. Widney, illustrator. "OLE'S FIRST TOUCHDOWN," in *SATURDAY EVENING POST*, 6 NOVEMBER 1909, p. 16.

especially college football. (See above illustration.) Sport's "Golden Age" saw college football rival the popularity of baseball.⁴⁹ Notwithstanding football's rising popularity at this time, no college team created quite the flurry as the turn-of-the-century "Carlisle Indians" of the Carlisle Indian School of Pennsylvania.⁵⁰ Their skill and talent stood the test of time and remained solid in the annals of football history. Arguably, Carlisle football was critical to the easily replicated practice of team naming and of viewing the Indian as "other."

Mediated culture added to this relational image by deeming Carlisle's football team first as an anomaly, then as a novelty, or, to parallel the culture's angst about Indians, as reflective of first the ignoble and then the noble savage.⁵¹ As such, projections of Carlisle were similar to the visual iconography that overlaid the consumer culture of the U.S. in general. Herein, Native American images had become the symbolic means through which the material goods of the culture were sold. The ignoble was conveniently converted into a noble appeal for the market economy. Attached to this transformation was the certitude that goods were sold and loyalty was encouraged by appropriating an imagery or representation. This manipulation allowed the representor to gain power over the represented.⁵²

Knox's appropriation of Siwash exemplifies much of the complexity inherent in the process of imitating and/or replicating a commodified form onto a material cultural package. In Knox's case, however, Siwash's lack of material representation (a mascot) makes the issue more subjective and political than other arguments about objects of commodity culture.⁵³ Yet, what could be more pejorative than attaching a term that is historically prefigured as a racial epithet to a small college?⁵⁴ Here, the relationship between images and consumerism stands out, making evident that Knox's co-optation of Siwash did not occur in isolation from other prevalent cultural practices, and that imitation and replication of ideas are no less property-related, even if non-material.⁵⁵ (See "Siwash Apple Label" illustration, opposite.) Appropriating, or taking from another, is a form of poaching whether or not what is poached is intellectual, ideational material or otherwise.⁵⁶ Siwash, as a name, image, or deprecatory term, did not spring from nowhere. Consequently, insidious within the cumulative Siwash story is the notion of borrowing, hence appropriating. By definition, the term cultural appropriation has been defined as "the taking—from a cul-

ture that is not one's own—of intellectual property, cultural expressions or artifacts, history and ways of knowledge.⁵⁷ Thus, interrogating the history and roots of Knox and other college/team iconographies is as warranted as is the question: what does this imitation and replication mean in relationship to its original form (or to its perceived originators) and to its current subjects?

Fitch was repeatedly linked with the history of Siwash's appearance in the common discourse of the college.⁵⁸ However, absent from this simple framing is the intricate connection of Indian-related names to other teams at the time. Sport sociologist Laurel Davis suggested that one of the earliest references to this practice goes back to 1909 when what is now the University of Wisconsin, LaCrosse had used the nickname "Indians" for its athletic teams.⁵⁹ The proliferation of team naming after Native Americans occurred largely in the 1920s. For example, Chief Illiniwek of the University of Illinois came into being in 1926, and the Miami University (OH) Redskins (and Tribe) found its beginnings in 1928.⁶⁰ Although its roots are (supposedly) born of fiction, Siwash was to Knox what the Indians were to LaCrosse and the Redskins were to Miami and Chief Illiniwek to Illinois: Native-related names appropriated for collegiate teams. As Davis argued, "[T]he use of Native American mascots and other symbols of frontier mythology such as pioneers, buffalo and cowboys, can be seen not only as suggesting ideas related to American nationalism, but



Siwash Apple Label. COURTESY OF <[HTTP://BILLCASSELMAN.COM/CWOD_ARCHIVE/SIWASH_UPDATED.HTM](http://billcasselmann.com/cwod_archive/siwash_updated.htm)> [7 SEPTEMBER 2006].

also suggesting ideas related to hegemonic masculinity.”⁶¹ Thus, Knox is part of a continuum of colonialist logic, and Siwash in this context is the rule rather than the exception.⁶²

Howard Zinn, historian, playwright, and social activist, places the process of naming, broadly yet cogently, in the context of Columbus’ infiltration into the New World:

Columbus called them Indians, because he miscalculated the size of the earth. In [A *People’s History of the United States*] we too call them Indians . . . because it happens too often that people are saddled with names given them by their conquerors.⁶³

The association of Fitch’s Siwash to Knox produced a meaningful and powerful discursive connection between this particular college culture and a much broader cultural ideology intimately connected with colonialism and expansionism. As law professor Rosemary Coombes argued in her cultural critique on authorship, appropriation and the law, naming practices are also an extension of capitalism entwined with the mass-mediated consumerism of the late 1890s that played on civility and savagery.⁶⁴ However, currency and longevity to any practice or social process necessitates repetition,⁶⁵ out of which continued the myth about the historical origination of Siwash.

Ahh, But Those Were the Days

The reading of Fitch as humorous and light-hearted became ever more pronounced in the 1940s and, by this point in time, Knox and Siwash seemed permanently intertwined. The year 1939, however, proved to be pivotal for the Fitch reminiscences about college days. That year, Paramount Pictures purchased the Fitch stories and sent Knox into reminiscent and cinematic history with its production of the film *Those Were the Days* (1940), starring William Holden.

The film’s production jostled with the notion of just where the word “siwash” had come from, and the Paramount studio was intent on having that question answered. Journalist Frank Daugherty, in a special to the *Christian Science Monitor*, wrote: “The studio it seems had been having trouble with the originally intended title [*At Good Old Siwash*].” Daugherty continued:

To the rest of the citizens of the Northwest the word Siwash means a tribe of Indians. To the rest of the country it probably doesn’t mean anything at all—that is, except to alumni of Knox College. So the studio advertised its intention of changing the title of the picture to “Those Were the Days,” or something similar.⁶⁶

At the time of the film’s creation Paramount wanted to make sure it understood the term “siwash” in all its complexities, so it asked Clara Fitch, George Fitch’s widow, just what George had implied in the term. In response to the query about where George acquired the name, Clara reportedly wrote back to the studio that George picked the name because, in part, he thought it was a funny word. More pointedly, as she recalled it, he took the name because students at Knox behaved themselves, in his day, “like a bunch of Siwashes.”⁶⁷ Clara’s explanation again avoided addressing the question so repeatedly posed to Fitch about his work and the origins of Old Siwash. Yet within Clara’s assertion there was a distinct connection to behavior—arguably, wild and savage behavior. (See “Fraternity Brothers with Chair Leg,” illustration, opposite). This is not to say that Para-

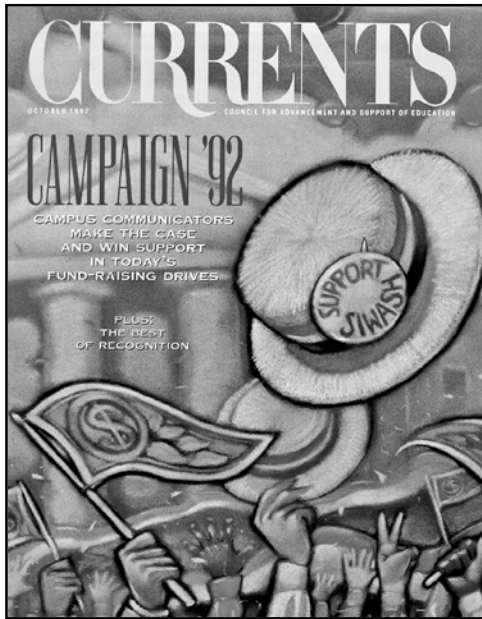


Fraternity Brothers with Chair Legs. Gustavus C. Widney, illustrator. "THE GREEK DOUBLE CROSS," *AT GOOD OLD SIWASH*, (1911), p. 167.

mount read the Siwash controversy of 1940 with complete accuracy either, at least given Daugherty's account. The studio had concluded that the Siwash were a tribe of Indians. Though this point remains debatable depending on the source, Paramount attached Siwash to the Northwest and the term's previous existence and pejorative inklings. This perception was certainly more keen and expansive than what most Knox associates had assumed about Siwash at that time. Indeed, this particular event challenges comments made in the 1993 controversy, during which many died-in-the-wool Siwash advocates argued that never before had the term come under such scrutiny. The controversy surrounding the title of the production *Those Were the Days* provided evidence that such perceptions were simply misinformed.

Closing the CASE: According to *Currents*

Regarding Knox, the catalyst for the debate over whether to "disband" the college's identity as Old Siwash was the publication of the October and November/December 1992 issues of *CASE Currents*, a periodical directed at servicing prospective college students, and admissions and development offices.⁶⁸ The cover of the October issue was illustrative of campaign and fund-raising issues that affect colleges and universities. The illustration mimics a political campaign rally with images of banners and hats. Central to this image is a hat with a button that reads "Support Siwash." (See illustration on following page.) Another illustration in the following issue depicts the gate of a generic university with scripts on the columns of the gates noting: "Welcome to Siwash University," and "Welcome to Anywhere, USA." By playing on the definition of Siwash as "anyman's college," the accompanying story was an essay on higher education that utilized Siwash as a general pseudonym for the college and university experience.



Currents Cover Illustration. COURTESY OF *CURRENTS*, OCTOBER 1992.

In the next issue, January 1993, two letters to the editor were published that questioned this cover story and the explicit use of Siwash. The letters were printed in the section *Word Watch*, under the title “Readers point to ‘Siwash’ as a Derisive Term.” Authors of the letters alluded to the term as linguistically insensitive and racially unaware, in spite of its reference by *Currents* to the more generic “small college” scene. *Currents’* editors regretted any offense and noted the Fitch connection to the term, which in effect allied Siwash to Knox College—“otherwise known as ‘Old Siwash.’”⁶⁹ As a result of this publicity, Knox was served an incisive wake-up call, and so began the more contemporary controversy to reconsider this small college’s collective identity.

By the summer of 1993—just four months after President McCall’s directive—the Knox College Siwash no longer existed, at least in terms of its athletic nickname. Old Siwash would now be known as the Knox College Prairie Fire, though embers continued to burn over the transformation of this collegiate moniker. Most noteworthy in this historical transition is that tradition holds steadfast at Knox where Old Siwash remains a term still associated with the identity of Knox College. Indianness notwithstanding, the allegiance is largely manifested in the college’s current booster club, titled “Old Siwash—Prairie Fire Athletic Club.”

Alternative Readings: From Inland Colleges to Coastal Seawalls

Up to this point, the article has intended to give voice to the narrativistic accounting of Siwash by contextualizing key temporal moments in time: the period encompassing George Fitch’s life, his ensuing Siwash stories and their incorporation into the Knox culture, the time period in which Paramount pictures had adopted Fitch’s tales—turning

them into nostalgic harbingers of college life—and the closing moment of debate when a team name ultimately met its demise.

Yet the Siwash story remains incomplete. What is lacking in the above examination of Fitch's application of the term is found in remnants of the past—out of date dictionaries and post card imagery common at the time of Fitch's earliest writings. Older dictionaries offer rich explanations of the term's past, and antiquated post card images offer a lens into a very different Siwash world than the one constructed by George Fitch. By revisiting the details and discrepancies that emerge from the multiple definitions of the term Siwash over time, it becomes increasingly evident how the term offers itself as floating signifier; a subject, object, or symbol that changes given particular contexts. Though one may argue that it is precisely the term's looseness that allowed Fitch to make up his own rendition of Siwash's meaning, dictionaries and post cards make clear that diverting Indianness is manifestly improbable.

In reflecting on John McCall's rationale that Siwash be disbanded, sources citing the word's origin included Webster's *Third New International Dictionary* (1981), *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989), *New Dictionary of American Slang* (1986), *Western Words: A Dictionary of the Range, Cow and Camp and Trail* (1946), *A Dictionary of Canadianisms* (1967) and *The American Thesaurus of Slang* (1945). Combined, these sources suggest that Siwash was used in multiple ways, as a noun, verb, adjective, and derogatory *slang*. Further, the multifarious definitions of Siwash expressed similar commonalities; Siwash was consistently associated with the Chinook jargon of the Northwest, as derived from the French *sauvage*. By connecting the term Siwash to a more definitive place, an image of people emerges, and as language specialist Rosina Lippi-Green argues it is through language that one of the most salient means of establishing and advertising social identity arises.⁷⁰

The Chinooks were a group of Northwest coast tribes who resided on both sides of the lower Columbia River in the late eighteenth century. As a language, Chinook was "radically different from other language stocks"; as a dialect, Chinook consisted of words from Nootka and other Indian languages. Some sources suggest that a combination of French, English, Russian, and Indian languages contribute to Chinook.⁷¹ The Chinook jargon, however, considered to consist mostly of French and English words, was the trade language—the *lingua franca*—of the traders between Alaska and California.⁷²

Reference to the native Indian is applied in almost all definitions of Siwash, and shades of meaning tend to confirm the word has a pejorative signification, usually with reference to the Pacific Coast and the Northwest. In its widespread application as *slang*, Siwash is an inferior person of unclean habits and/or crude mannerisms; as related to the fictional college in the stories written by George Fitch, it is consistently tertiary.⁷³ Standard reference tools made clear that the interpretation of the word Siwash was consistent, at least as far as its connotation regarding Indians.

But in perusing unusual sources, the rendering of Siwash alters and its pejorative inklings rise to the fore. In *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (1984), Siwash is cited as a noun and is noted as "a mean and/or miserable seaman: Nova Scotia and US nautical; from circa 1840." It further notes:

[Bowen.] "The Siwash is described as the meanest type of Indian." It is a corruption of the French *sauvage*, wild, savage. Common to the Pacific Coast of North America. "I've heard it since 1910" (Leechman).⁷⁴

This entry also lists Siwash as a verb, “To put on the ‘Indian List’ of those to whom intoxicants may not be served.”⁷⁵ Accordingly, the term can be placed both before and shortly after the turn of the century. In Richard A. Spears’ *Slang and Euphemism* (1981), Siwash is defined as “a nickname (usually derogatory) for an American Indian.” It notes: “for synonyms see REDSKIN. [US slang or colloquial, 1900s or before].” As a secondary definition, a Siwash is “any unclean or rude person [US underworld, early 1900s].”⁷⁶ Most of these renderings of Siwash imply a pejorative application around the turn of the century—clearly within the scope of Fitch’s first Siwash story, published in 1908.

As noted above Eric Partridge’s *A Dictionary of the Underworld* also defines Siwash as “an unclean or uncouth person” and notes its currency circa 1910.⁷⁷ Earlier, in 1895, J.A. Costello wrote *The Siwash—Their Life Legends and Tales*, which chronicles the Siwash people.⁷⁸ Costello defines the history of the Siwash as laden in tradition, “as it is with all aborigines.”⁷⁹ As a people, Costello suggests that the Siwash were “descendants of the Dakotahs or some of the tribes east of the great Father of Waters.” He contends that their origin—as is any tribe’s—is a theme for speculation. Often labeled as “Flatheads,” they were a race to whom instinct was superior to thought, whose vocabulary was limited, and whose numbers were small, perhaps less than 900.⁸⁰ Costello characterizes the Siwash as a creature of circumstance, especially climate, which he could never escape “till the last of his race is lost in oblivion.” A Siwash was the “essence of ugliness in human mould,” which seemed to suggest that the humid environment of the Northwest affected his physical well-being. The Siwash’s “mode of life, the almost continual living in a squatting, cramped position in his canim (quarters) from generation to generation, shows in his broken, ungraceful proportions today.” (See below illustration.)



A Siwash Summer and Winter Home. COURTESY OF POST CARD, N.D., DETROIT PUBLISHING COMPANY, PRIVATE COLLECTION OF AUTHOR, NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS.

Siwash Indian Basketmaker. COURTESY OF POST CARD, ©1903 BY LOWMAN & HANFORD S. AND P. CO., SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, POSTED 4 OCTOBER 1905, PRIVATE COLLECTION OF AUTHOR, NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS.



Accordingly, Costello argued that “no matter where the Siwash came from, his past is so remote it will never be known.” His version is specifically male-identified, and he explains this exclusiveness by stating that “the Siwash of Puget Sound is a general term applied to males of all the tribes and the Indians of the entire North Pacific coast.”⁸¹

From these renderings of Siwash, the specifics of a group of people rise, and, limited as the accounts are, the prevalence of the term in myriad sources suggests some evidence of their being. (See above illustration.)

The *Encyclopedia Canadiana* (1975), however, detaches the meaning of Siwash as allied with people and, while dismissive of particular dates, defines Siwash as a word of the Chinook jargon, used to mean an Indian of any tribe, probably a corruption of the French word *sauvage*. It has sometimes been wrongly used to qualify the word “Indian” as though it were the name of a group or family. Although the Chinook jargon has fallen into disuse, this term is perpetuated in the names of numerous geographical features in B.C. [British Columbia]—creeks, lakes, mountains and rocks. Probably the most widely known is Siwash Rock in Burrard Inlet. The term is now used only in a derogatory sense.⁸²

As a people, the Siwash depicted in pictures of the past confirm their allegiance to the Puget Sound region (see below illustration) but hardly exemplify the renditions of savagery and ignobility attached to mythical constructs offered by interpretations of the past. On the contrary, a peaceable and harmless portrait of Siwash as Indians emerge. Indeed, a re-writing of their history may be in order.



Siwash. “61—Puget Sound Indians, (Siwash). Seattle, Washington.” COURTESY OF POST CARD, DATED 23 JULY 1908, PUBLISHED BY RHODES 10 CENT STORE, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, PRIVATE COLLECTION OF AUTHOR, NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS.

As a process, writing is committed to the legitimating of specific ideologies, and Fitch's writings, when read through their satirical bent, turn the Siwash narrative on its head. Satirists by design make a sport of irony via their keen observation and pointed parodies. They hit the mark, and often it hurts. From this vantage point, it is more compelling to take in the idea that Fitch understood Siwash's manifestations, from its Northwest coastal moorings, to Indians as people (as evidenced in post card portraits), to its prominence as a tourist rock outcrop located in Vancouver, British Columbia on the shoreline of Burrard Inlet. Fitch was not only a writer; he was also a traveler and, like many writers and travelers, it is reasonable to assume that he was aware of Siwash's prominence as object, as much as subject. Indeed, his fateful last day was met on a California trip, during which he succumbed to a ruptured appendix.⁸³

Hence, rather than being credited for originating a term that was already well placed within the cultural stead, and more than simply taking an old word and making it work in new ways,⁸⁴ I contend that Fitch confounded identities, and transformed Siwash metaphorically—not from flesh to stone, but arguably from stone to flesh. The prominence of Siwash Rock, the famous pillar along the Seawall Route in Stanley Park, held that cultural cache for many as a tourist rendering even before Fitch's stories gained fame. The rock outcrop stood as a place and a space of transforming culture.⁸⁵

In the case of Fitch's Siwash, as narrative or as satirical fiction—which as a writer was Fitch's choice—naming and making Siwash a particular place was not enough. Gail Sher's, *One Continuous Mistake* (1992), makes a case for this. By borrowing from poetry, Sher takes a cue from T.S. Elliot and writes, "A minor poet borrows, a great poet steals . . . implying that borrowing is a form of appropriation whereas stealing effects a change so fundamental that the object stolen loses its original nature."⁸⁶ Arguably, Fitch did both. While Sher was adamant that "[n]aming, is enough," in the case of Siwash as moniker the



Siwash Rock. COURTESY OF POST CARD, N.D., ORIGINAL IN SEPIA C.1915, PRIVATE COLLECTION OF AUTHOR, NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS.

contrary prevailed; naming, it seems, was not enough.⁸⁷ Indeed, word meaning and symbolic behavior are not at all straightforward. To this end, Siwash as College and Siwash Rock offer a conjectural articulation—a connection that makes a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions.⁸⁸

Why Siwash Rock matters to Fitch's story could be construed as speculative, but what is clear is that its rise to prominence occurred, again, during the whole of Fitch's life. Siwash was not an idea that sprang from Fitch's work solely; it was an entity unto itself and an object that existed and continues to exist in the cultural imaginary and economy. To take in Siwash Rock we meet its force as legend from the Squamish First Nation that envisions this resistant volcanic remnant as the Great Father of Waters. For Vancouverites, but also for travelers, the rock is intended to stand alone as "an immortal memorial to unselfishness in the distant past of the Indian people."⁸⁹ Prevailing tourist renditions claim the famous Vancouver landmark as a symbol of the most sacred of man's vows, cleanliness of fatherhood. In sum, this tall grey column of stone is set as a monument to one man's fidelity toward a generation yet unborn and by the standards of multiple legends, "will endure from everlasting to everlasting."⁹⁰

Concluding the Inconclusive

Like all re-interpretations of already told tales, this account addresses the multiple ways in which histories and their ensuing narratives can be read. In so doing, historical memories and points of reference have been contrasted with popular texts, and notions of tradition have reflected an ever-fragmented representation of reality, indeed, a limited representation of the past.⁹¹ Exposing Siwash's multifarious possibilities by contesting its meaning merged college life with sweeping, albeit innocuous, yet real ideological stereotypes of the American Indian through memories of college days, fraternity, and football privileges. It also merged popular culture with commercial culture. At Knox this fusion was even more insidious and translated into appropriating arguably the least desirable stereotypic qualities linked to an Indian—the savage: a distinctive irony when set against native legends. Fitch's transference would have been impossible unless the contemptible version of Siwash was transformed to "anyman's" (or any) college—the tertiary definition of the word. Thus, the transformation of Siwash at Knox, while never a mascot issue or a big-name place, was still remarkably omnipresent.

Re-telling our past is rarely marked by a solitary truth from a singular source. Siwash's intersection with popular culture is not without consequence. In short, the Siwash narrative makes clear the impossibility of disconnecting ourselves from our past; it also makes clearer the eruptions that are inevitable when socially constructed norms and values are opened up and subjected to scrutiny.

Stories and traditions have ideological consequences that can be understood only in relation to other histories and other traditions. The reconciliation of identity with issues of social justice and equity are no less susceptible in such legacies. Indeed, naming, nicknames and mascot projects will always be contested, even if it is within the guise of its own formation. But to claim a term as one's own and rationalize it as history and tradition without contextualizing the narratives, that is, the spaces and places from which it emerged, renders only a reading of the normative. It fails to challenge the power embedded in

dominant discourses and truth claims that rarely serve justice to any singular story, much less a group of people.

This interpretation of the Siwash stories cannot dissolve the pain of losing part of a legacy deemed vital to one's past, nor should it serve as an apologetic that relieves racial and ethnic imbalances. What it can do, however, is contribute to a deeper and more meaningful analysis of a term by examining one college culture's desire to associate and ultimately disassociate its own identity. At the very least, this Siwash narrative beckons to broaden our understanding about the complicity of social and historic forces with the practice of appropriating team names—names that were never “anyman's” alone.⁹²



¹The word *siwash* will appear in multiple contexts throughout this text. To avoid confusion, I have capitalized the word consistently. To call the reader's attention to its contentious and perverse meanings, I have, on occasion, italicized the term and/or retained the lower case. Siwash College, Siwash, the Siwash stories, and Siwash tales all implicate the term's usage within parameters that are suggested by or through the writings of George Fitch. Fitch capitalized Siwash, signifying it as a proper noun. To Knox College, Siwash is always capitalized and indicates a connection to the college at myriad levels. Knox also refers to itself as Old Siwash or Ole Siwash. Siwash, Old Siwash, and Ole Siwash were also the athletic nickname or team moniker of Knox, but more generally, Siwash sums the collective identity of Knox College.

²The definition of Siwash varies by source; *savage* and small provincial college seem to be the most widely used, arguably in part because of their simplicity and relevance to Knox accordingly. Savage is generally included in primary and secondary definitions of siwash. The tertiary definition, according to many sources, is a small provincial inland college. The range of definitions and their applications, however, are numerous. The aforementioned definitions stem directly from *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: G&C Merriam, 1981). Robert L. Chapman, ed., *The New Dictionary of American Slang* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986) refers to siwash in this form as well. In the pejorative sense, definitions are supported by the *Oxford English Dictionary*; Ramon Davis, *Western Words: A Dictionary of Range, Cow, Camp and Trail* (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1981); and Lester V. Berrey and Melvin Van Den Bark, *The American Thesaurus of Slang* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1945).

³The term “veritable” is intentional. Defined as “being truly called, real or genuine,” the college emblem of Knox is worth calling attention to; it includes the Latin notation *veritas*, meaning “in truth.”

⁴Prior to his premature death in 1915, Fitch also served as the first Progressive state legislator for the 16th Congressional District of Peoria, Illinois.

⁵Jane M. Stangl, “White *Sauvage*: The Collegians and Coeds of Siwash College,” in *Sport, Rhetoric, and Historical Representations*, ed. Linda Fullerton (New York: Palgrave Press, 2006), 71-81.

⁶Jane M. Stangl, “A Century of (Mis)appropriating *Siwash*” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1999).

⁷Beth Roy, *Some Trouble with Cows: Making Sense of Social Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 146-147.

⁸Ibid.

⁹C. Richard King and Charles Fruehling Springwood, *Team Spirits—The Native American Mascot Controversy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

¹⁰Philip Deloria's *Playing Indian* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998) offers an extensive exhumation of this notion as cultural practice. See also Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978); King and Springwood, *Team Spirits*; and Russell Thornton, ed., *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998).

¹¹See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), chap. 1.

¹²Martin Schmitt, "George Fitch's Siwash," *The Call Number*, spring 1957, pp. 12-13. In this context, the term was credited to *Time* magazine in 1947, and supposedly the Chicago *Maroon* made this application respectable by 1948.

¹³Hermann R. Muelder, *Missionaries and Muckrakers: The First Hundred Years of Knox College* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 254. It is interesting to note that in the continuing "traditions" of athletic rivalries, calling opponents derogatory names persists. Knox opponents, even into the 1990s, often referred to Knox, hence Siwash, as "Backwash."

¹⁴See Barry M. Pritzker, *A Native American Encyclopedia: History, Culture and Peoples* (Oxford: New York, 2000).

¹⁵In Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of the Underworld—British and American [Being the vocabularies of crooks, criminals, racketeers, beggars and tramps, convicts, the commercial underground, the drug traffic, the white slave traffic, spivs.]* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1950). Another definition from Eric Partridge, *Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English* (London: Kegan Paul, 1958), reads as follows: "Siwash, siwash (n.,v.). Both *siwash*, an Alaskan dog, and 'to *siwash*', to live like a Red Indian, esp. to travel very light, derived from *Siwash*, an Indian of the N Pacific Coast of America: and *Siwash* itself is Chinook jargon—a corruption of the F *sawwage*, uncivilized, wild (f.a.e.) SAVAGE," (s.v. "siwash").

¹⁶Chinook tribal families are often classified as "Upper" and "Lower" Chinook, depending upon their location on the Columbia River. Member tribes are noted to include: the "Lower Chinook," Clatsop, Cathlamet, the "Upper Chinook" or Skilloot, Cathlapot, Multnomah or Wappato, the Cascade Indians (Watlala), Clowwewalla, Clackamas, Chilluckittequaw, Wishram, and Wasco. See Michael Johnson, *The Native Tribes of North America* (New York: Macmillan, 1999), 174-175.

¹⁷According to Muelder, "freshwater" was the term typically applied to provincial colleges in the 1890s. See *Missionaries and Muckrakers*, 254.

¹⁸Later, Fitch's stories were serialized into three books: *The Big Strike at Siwash* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1909); *At Good Old Siwash* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1911); and *Petey Simmons at Siwash* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1915). Of the original twenty Siwash stories, fifteen were printed in the *Saturday Evening Post* and three in the *Kansas City Star*. Two other stories remain unaccounted for though they appeared in the *Petey Simmons* serial.

¹⁹William E. Simonds and Max Goodsill, eds., *Knox College Bulletin*, suppl., "George Fitch '97," new series 12 (1918): 5, 45.

²⁰Fitch, *The Big Strike*; idem, *Petey Simmons*, 226.

²¹Fitch, *Petey Simmons*, 217.

²²Though the notoriety of *McClure's* was slightly ahead of Fitch's days as a prolific writer, Fitch wrote for *American Magazine* and *Ladies Home Journal*, both offshoots of *McClure's* syndicate. Other literary notables affiliated with Knox, besides *McClure* associates Samuel S. McClure, John S. Phillips, Albert Brady, and John Huston Finley, included Eugene Fields, Edgar Lee Masters, Ida Tarbell, and later Carl Sandburg. See Muelder, *Missionaries and Muckrakers*, 88, 134, 157, 161, 271.

²³Schmitt, "George Fitch's Siwash," p.14. In a society note in the *Woodbine* (Iowa) *Twiner*, Fitch was a veritable "nobody." The article stated: "There is not another newspaper writer in Iowa who does the volume and character of work turned out by the ready and versatile quill of the 'Frolics' man of the *Council Bluffs Daily Nonpareil*. He is as adept at slang as George Ade, as oily in construction as Bill Nye, and a bigger liar than Mark Twain." The daily piece, the "Frolics of the Types" in the *Council Bluffs* paper, was written without credit to Fitch. Consequently, once his authorship became known, Fitch became noted as the "Frolics Man." Newsclipping from *Woodbine Twiner* in Fitch's Scrapbook, n.d., c.1902, George Helgesen Fitch Papers, Manuscripts Collection, Seymour Library Archives, Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois. Other articles alluding to Fitch's prowess are found in Fitch's Scrapbook, pp. 21, 153, 155, n.d., c.1902, Fitch Papers. Included is press coverage from the *Silver City* (Iowa) *Tribune*, the *Treynor* (Iowa) *Record*, the *Keokuk* (Iowa) *Gazette*, the *Britt* (Iowa) *Tribune*, the *Centerfield* (Iowa) *Times*, the *Peoria* (Illinois) *Journal*, the *Galesburg* (Illinois) *Evening Mail*, the *Galva* (Illinois) *News*, and the *Drake* (Iowa) *Daily Delphic*.

²⁴See “Iowa Boy Goes up the Ladder,” *Sioux City (Iowa) News*; “In a Minor Key—It Never Happened Before,” *Chicago Tribune*; “The Big Strike at Siwash,” *Chicago Examiner*; the *Chicago Record Herald*; the *Wilmington (Delaware) Labor Herald*; “The Big Strike at Siwash,” *Albany Journal*; “Speaking of the Harvard-Yale Game,” *Boston Times*; and “George Fitch’s Head Coach,” *Newark News*. All newsclippings found in Fitch’s Scrapbook, n.d., c. 1908, Fitch Papers.

²⁵“In a Minor Key,” news brief from *Chicago Tribune*; “At Good Old Siwash,” book review from *Independent*. All sources found in Fitch Scrapbook, n.d., c. 1911, Fitch Papers.

²⁶“At Good Old Siwash Proves George Fitch, Its Author, a True Humorist,” Fitch Scrapbook, n.d., c. 1911, Fitch Papers. Fitch’s own memorabilia seemed to suggest that he had all the prominent accolades to consider him an author of repute, including praises from “The American Library Association Booklist”—“a guide to the best new books.” Plaudits about Fitch’s work extended from the *St. Louis Times*, the *Philadelphia Telegraph*, the *Los Angeles Tribune*, and the *Journal of Education* (Boston), to papers from assorted American cities: Hartford, Lexington, Detroit, Sacramento, Portland, and Indianapolis, as well as Canada’s Montreal. “What a High Authority Says,” book review from Fitch’s Scrapbook, n.d., c. 1911, Fitch Papers; “A Few Opinions,” news article in Fitch’s Scrapbook, p. 75, n.d., c. 1911, Fitch Papers.

²⁷Arthur Asa Berger, *Narratives in Popular Culture, Media and Everyday Life* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, Inc., 1997), 10-11.

²⁸See Donald Mrozek, *Sport and American Mentality, 1880-1910* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983); Stephen W. Pope, *Patriotic Pastimes: Sporting Traditions in the American Imagination, 1876-1926* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Mark Dyreson, *Making the American Team* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

²⁹Dyreson, *American Team*, chap. 1.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 7.

³¹*Ibid.*, 206-207.

³²*Ibid.*

³³Stangl, “(Mis)appropriating *Siwash*,” 55.

³⁴Knox College, much like the state of Illinois, lays claim to Abraham Lincoln and significant parts of his life. Robert Lincoln, Abe’s son, was a Knox Trustee and Lincoln himself was a member of the upper house of the Illinois legislature that voted for the charter granting Knox its status as a “manual Labor” College in 1837. The current fame most people connect with Knox and Lincoln, however, is that Knox’s Old Main is the sole remaining site of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, of which there were five. Knox College also granted its first honorary Doctor of Laws degree to Lincoln. For Lincoln, this was fittingly his first degree as well. See Muelder, *Missionaries and Muckrakers*, 17, 253.

³⁵Schmitt, “George Fitch’s Siwash,” p. 15; *Des Moines Register and Leader*, 30 March 1913. Recall that Roosevelt became president in 1901 as a result of the McKinley assassination. He was first elected in 1904.

³⁶John Whiteclay Chambers II, *The Tyranny of Change: America in the Progressive Era, 1900-1917* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1980), xv, xviii, 106, 172.

³⁷Patricia A. Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman—Women, Doctors, and Exercise in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), chap. 6.

³⁸Schmitt, “George Fitch’s Siwash,” p. 15. Based on numerous documents it appears as though Fitch idolized Theodore Roosevelt. Fitch had personally saved articles and mementos related to Roosevelt. During his Progressive years, Roosevelt’s waning popularity was quite contrary to the preeminent image portrayed in Fitch’s log, which displayed a 6x4 black-and-white, professional portrait of Roosevelt, accompanied by an invitation from The Periodical Publishers Association of America to a dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York where the Honorable Theodore Roosevelt was featured. See also “The Unholy Alliance,” *Chicago Tribune*, 10 August 1912; “Roosevelt’s Newest Nostrum,” n.d.; “Terms TR Political ‘Dr. Jekyll-Mr. Hyde’,” n.d., all news articles about Roosevelt’s Third Term Candidacy in Fitch Scrapbook-Miscellaneous Items, Fitch Paper; photograph of Roosevelt with dinner invitation, Fitch Scrapbook p. 86, Fitch Papers.

³⁹When Siwash first appeared as a college in Fitch's initial publication of "The Big Strike at Siwash," it was printed in the *Saturday Evening Post* on 30 May 1908, an issue that also contained Steward Edward White's interpretations of Roosevelt's strenuous life. See Schmitt, "George Fitch's Siwash," p. 13. At another level, the themes mentioned here speak to the gendered and colonizing constructions of social life.

⁴⁰Fitch, *Old Siwash*, 49, 137-139, 141, 143.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 141; Stangl, "(Mis)Appropriating *Siwash*," 118.

⁴²Here the notion of whiteness is important in that it is used to dislodge whites from their position of power, and call to question their dis-identification as raced people. Prevailing texts and ideological mechanisms (including books, film, newspapers, magazines) during this time period set up whiteness as simply human, or just human. The notion of whiteness is stressed in this writing so that the reader notes that the representation of people in Fitch's tales were specifically white, unless "othered"; similarly, much of the common discourse at that time disproportionately implies that whites need no label. Hence, whites are the norm, ordinary, commonplace, and prevalent. Moreover, whites are variously gendered, classed, and sexualized, as well. Fitch's Siwash stories set up all other protagonists—besides Ole Skarjzen—as white, masculine, upper class, heterosexual men. See especially Richard Dyer, *White* (New York: Routledge, 1997). See also C. Richard King, "Cautionary Notes on Whiteness and Sport Studies," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 22 (2005): 397-408; as well as Special Issue: "Whiteness and Sport," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 22 (2005).

⁴³Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 199.

⁴⁴The title was altered in 1923 to *The Sigh-washer*, though this designation appears to have been short-lived. The circulation of *The Siwasher*—which included fictional pieces, short stories, poems and plays—continued until 1965, at which point another magazine, *Dialogue*, was introduced. In 1968, *The Siwasher* merged with the *Dialogue* forming *Catch*, the current annual literary production of Knox students.

⁴⁵The term mass-mediated consumerism implies the proliferation of consumer advertising and packaging through the everyday press, i.e., newspapers, magazines, and more widespread periodicals. Relevant here would be the consumption of sport fiction and popular novels that were purchased and consumed, reiterating the message of manliness for boys. Football, especially, assisted "the nation's colleges in developing a masculine image that was consonant with the late Victorian era." See Benjamin Rader, *American Sports*, chaps. 6 and 11.

⁴⁶Rosemary Coombes refers to multiple professional and college teams and how team insignias use the law to "bestow on their 'owners' exclusive rights to circulate these marks in commercial (and many non-commercial) contexts." Thus, team insignias become valuable property and loyal forms of identification for many fans. This exploitation of merchandise provides a significant source of revenue. Coombes uses other examples, like the Frito Bandito, Red Man chewing tobacco, Aunt Jemima, and Sambo restaurants to articulate/illustrate this point. See Rosemary J. Coombes, *The Cultural Life of Intellectual Properties—Authorship, Appropriation, and the Law* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), 185-186.

⁴⁷Rosemary J. Coombes, "Embodied Trademarks: Mimesis and Alterity on American Commercial Frontiers," *Cultural Anthropology* 11 (1996): 210; Ellen J. Staurowsky, "An Act of Honor or Exploitation? The Cleveland Indians' Use of the Louis Francis Sockalexis Story," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 15 (1998): 303-305; and Michael T. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity—A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993), "A Report to the Academy," and chap. 1.

⁴⁸Benjamin G. Rader, *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1996), 134.

⁴⁹Michael Oriard, *Reading Football* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 277.

⁵⁰The Carlisle Indian School thrived under the leadership of legendary Hall of Fame coach, Glenn "Pop" Warner. Carlisle defeated such notable football powers as Yale, Harvard, Penn State, and Army.

⁵¹Oriard, *Reading Football*, 233-243.

⁵²This was the case for other aboriginal groups as well. See Staurowsky, "Honor or Exploitation," 304-305; and Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 13.

⁵³Recall that Knox had no visual representation of a "Siwash."

⁵⁴Coombes, *Cultural Life of Intellectual Properties*, 188. Coombes uses the notion of redskins here (especially the logo of the Washington Redskins), rather than siwash.

⁵⁵However non-material Siwash's image begins at Knox, this article makes clear that Knox's Siwash does become a commodified form, even while absent of a logo or representation that is particularly affiliated with Knox itself.

⁵⁶I credit Rosemary J. Coombes with this notion of "poaching." See Coombes, *Cultural Life of Intellectual Properties*, 1. Indeed, the "honor code" of Knox, another historical legacy of this institution, speaks profoundly to the college's principles about academic integrity and the expectation of doing one's own work, an interesting irony when contextualized with notions of borrowing or appropriating ideas, hence, intellectual material.

⁵⁷This definition of "cultural appropriation" was adopted from the resolution of the Writers' Union of Canada. The Union definition added, "and profiting at the expense of the people of that culture." Ziff and Rao argue that appropriation can occur even in the absence of profit-making. See Bruce Ziff and Pratima V. Rao, *Borrowed Power—Essays on Cultural Appropriation* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 1 and 1n.

⁵⁸To Knox, the term Siwash was considered to be innocently infused into the college's culture by first appearing in a *Student* (newspaper) headline that read—"SIWASH PRODUCES ANOTHER AUTHOR." Letter from John McCall to Knox Community, 3 April 1993. In this report, even the allusion that Fitch named Ole Skjarsen after Arthur Harbaugh, a prominent Knox alum and later professor, has been repudiated and historically relayed as speculative.

⁵⁹Laurel R. Davis, "Protest Against the Use of Native American Mascots: A Challenge to Traditional American Identity," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 17 (1993): 20.

⁶⁰Deborah Lucas *et al.*, "The Redskin Resolution," *The Miamian*, winter 1993-1994, pp. 4-9; and Roy E. Yarbrough, *Mascots—The History of Senior College and University Mascots/Nicknames* (Lynchburg, Va.: Bluff University Communications, 1998), 55. Staurowsky noted, based on a 1995 review of sport organizations in the United States, that over 1600 organizational affiliates use/d Native American symbols, mascots, logos or nicknames. See Staurowsky, "Honor or Exploitation," 304.

⁶¹Davis, "The Use of Native American Mascots," 20. An ironic addition to this Indian-related naming process is that 1909 was the same year that the Indian-head penny ended its twenty-year circulation run (1890-1909). By 1919, however, the Buffalo nickel, which also had an Indian head on the front, began its twenty-year stint of production (1919-1938). See also Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978); John M. Coward, *The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identity in the Press, 1820-90* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); King and Springwood, *Team Spirits*; and Russell Thornton, ed., *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospect* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998).

⁶²When placing the notion of naming within the context of sport and intercollegiate athletics, it is worth noting that well over 1,400 nicknames are included in recent NCAA Blue Book directories. In Ray Franks's *What's in a Nickname? Exploring the Jungle of College Athletic Mascots* (Amarillo, Tex.: Ray Franks, 1982), Franks claims that of all the nicknames at the time of his writing, those related to the American Indian constituted the most significant number of all sport monikers. A close second was names allied with militia or statesmen; for example, the generals, judges, majors, or colonels. From this juncture, the litany of animal-related names, combined with the aforementioned, constitute the bulk of collegial associations. The nickname Siwash was a unique moniker, maintained solely by Knox College.

⁶³Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 18.

⁶⁴Coombes, "Embodied Trademarks," 210.

⁶⁵Coombes, *Cultural Life of Intellectual Properties*, 191.

⁶⁶Frank Daugherty, "Hollywood Looks Back to the Early 1900's," *Christian Science Monitor*, 9 February 1940, in Fitch Papers.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸*Currents* is produced by CASE, an international association based in Washington, D.C. It consists of professional and institutional representatives who work in the areas of fund-raising, alumni relations, and public outreach to advance education. Its membership includes 2,900 educational institutions from the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and twenty-seven other countries.

⁶⁹See *Currents* images, October 1992, cover; November/December 1992, p. 46; "Word Watch—Reader's Point to 'Siwash' as a Derisive Term," *CASE Currents*, January 1993, p. 1.

⁷⁰Rosina Lippi-Green. *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology and Discrimination in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 5.

⁷¹*Dictionary of Indian Tribes of the Americas*, 2nd ed. (Newport Beach, Calif.: American Indian Publishers, Inc., 1993), 1: 285-286.

⁷²Barbara A. Leitch LePoe, *A Concise Dictionary of Indian Tribes of North America* (Algonac, Mich.: Reference Publications, Inc., 1979), 101-102.

⁷³Stangl, "(Mis)Appropriating *Siwash*," 11.

⁷⁴In Paul Beale, ed., *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 8th ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984).

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶In Richard A. Spears, *Slang and Euphemism, [A dictionary of oaths, curses, insults, sexual slang and metaphor, racial slurs, drug talk, homosexual lingo and related matters.]* (Middle Village, N.Y.: Jonathon David Publishers, 1981.)

⁷⁷Partridge, *Dictionary of the Underworld*, 627.

⁷⁸Records show that this book was first published in 1895, though the text from which I gathered information was printed ninety years later: J.A. Costello, *The Siwash: Their Life Legends and Tales, [Puget Sound and the Pacific Northwest]*, (Fairfield, Wash.: Ye Galleon Press, 1986). It is difficult to ascertain what connection Costello had to the Siwash or Salishan. The 1986 text makes it appear as if Costello is an amateur collector of Indian lore. His credentials are not made available in the book, and the book's structure and content is relatively unsophisticated. What is evident is that this text was published four times, each by a different publisher. 1895 is the first indication of its existence; the publisher was Calvert. The book was also produced in 1967, published by Shorey Book, and again in 1974, published by Printers.

⁷⁹Ibid., 10.

⁸⁰Costello notes that the Chinook jargon consisted of approximately 500 words, nearly one-fifth of which were derived from French. See Costello, *The Siwash*, 16. The definition of "Flathead" is included in the more common *American Heritage Dictionary*, and is defined as "one of several tribes of American Indians in the northwestern coast area who practiced head-flattening." This notion is consistent with an earlier connection of the Chinook tribes to the Salishans. A flathead is also considered a member of the Salishan tribe. In its *slang* connotation, a flathead is an imbecile or fool. See *American Heritage Dictionary, Second College Edition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985).

⁸¹Costello, *The Siwash*, 10-11.

⁸²*Encyclopedia Canadiana*, 1975 ed., s.v. "Siwash."

⁸³See Fitch Memorabilia, Seymour Archives; "Press Comment on Fitch's Death," *Galva Weekly News*, 12 August 1915, p. 1. Fitch had been on vacation with his family visiting his sister Louise.

⁸⁴Schmitt, "George Fitch's Siwash," pp. 12-13.

⁸⁵The writer of this post card refers to Pauline Johnson. "Dear Aunt Fannie: This is a picture of Siwash Rock, from which Pauline Johnson's ashes were scattered." E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake) (1861-1913), wrote the Canadian classic *Legends of Vancouver* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1997), first printed in 1911. In *Legends*, she shares the story and mythology of the rock. About Siwash Rock

Johnson writes, "Amongst all the wonders, the natural beauties that encircle Vancouver . . . Siwash Rock stands as distinct, as individual, as if dropped from another sphere" (p. 9).

⁸⁶Gail Sher, *One Continuous Mistake: Four Noble Truths for Writers* (New York: Penguin, 1992), 111.

⁸⁷Ibid., 89. Though "actually," Sher goes on, "it is impossible to steal language [. . . because of our inherent individuality and unique relationship with words]."

⁸⁸An additionally specific example of conjectural articulation around the Siwash stories and lore is the 1999 winner at the American Indian Film Festival, called *Legends swexwisyam: The Story of Siwash Rock*. The film blends the arguably traditional story of Siwash Rock with the contemporary problem of teen pregnancy in Native American and First Nation cultures. See <http://www.onf.ca/trouverunfilm/fichefilm.pph?id+3395&v+h&l+en&exp=> [1 November, 2006]. In yet another account, the Hudson Bay Company, a British trading company prominent in the region in the 1830s, contributed to the distinction between categorizing two kinds of people, the Indians (Siwash) and others. In sum, when left to social constructs of determining to what community a "native" belonged, the Siwash were brandished by savagery and collectively named. Though the peoples of the Puget Sound region were many and diverse, just one treaty negotiated between the Indians and Boston representatives of the white HBC (Hudson Bay Company) was enough to exemplify the tensions and desire for displacement as well as the distinctive fear and loathing of natives. Called the Medicine Creek Treaty, its intent was "rumored" to "transport all siwash to a distant land of perpetual darkness." Bostonians responded to this treaty with joy, and the Indians were apparently satisfied. Local records suggest that at least one white citizen proclaimed that if the Indians and alcohol were removed "this [Puget Sound] would be in most respects, one of the most delightful regions of the country in the world." Note that in both accounts—the contemporary film and the historical treaty—the Siwash are living beings, people transformed by natural and social forces. See Alexandra Harmon, *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities around Puget Sound* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 86.

⁸⁹See http://www.stanleyparkecology.ca/news/library/faq/faq_sirk.htm. [26 October 2006].

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹The notion of ahistoricity, faulty history or amnesia about the past is accented in all of the following pieces related to issues of naming: Wenner, "Real Red Faces," 1-4; Staurowsky, "Honor or Exploitation," 302-303; Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, xv. Taussig suggested that we "pretend . . . that we live facts, not fictions."

⁹²Stangl, "(Mis)Appropriating *Siwash*," chap. 7.