

Lewis Henry Morgan and
Ely S. Parker's chance
encounter changed the
course of history.



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MANY LEGACIES

BY ALAN WANG

In 1830, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, calling for the removal of thousands of Native Americans to lands west of the Mississippi River. By 1838, one target for removal under Jackson's successor, Martin Van Buren, was the Seneca Indians, then occupying four reservations in western New York. Under these circumstances, the stage was set for a unique chance encounter.

In 1844, two young men would meet in an Albany book

store: Rochester attorney Lewis Henry Morgan and Tonawanda Seneca Indian Ely S. Parker. Years later, this encounter inspired Morgan to befriend the Senecas and write and publish his classic, *League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee or Iroquois* (1851). He became a renowned anthropologist and for the next three decades his research and writings were published worldwide and would even influence Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx.

Early Life

On November 11, 1818, Lewis Henry Morgan was born near Aurora, New York. Morgan attended the prestigious Cayuga Academy, where he was educated in classical literature and mathematics as a young boy. In July of 1840, at the age of 21, Morgan graduated from Union College in Schenectady, New York, and returned to his hometown of Aurora to establish a law firm, but couldn't find work. With excess free time, he joined a



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In return for Parker's membership, the Grand Order funded his education at Morgan's old school, the Cayuga Academy.

Cayuga Academy classical literary club, known as the Gordian Knot; researched ancient civilizations; and gave lectures to the young students. In January 1843, Morgan wrote a lecture about Anacaona of St. Domingo, a Native American leader, to be given at Cayuga Academy.

Later that year, the Gordian Knot relocated to an abandoned Masonic lodge and changed their club name to the Grand Order of the Iroquois, a hobbyist organization that included a wide spectrum of prominent non-Indians. The members adopted new Indian names and modeled their organization after their understanding of the political structure of the Six Nations of the Iroquois League. At its peak, the Grand Order had

hundreds of members across upstate New York. For some, the Grand Order became a location for socialization and relaxation, but for Morgan, this organization represented his actual interest in the American Indians. By 1844, he became the "Supreme Chieftain" of the Grand Order. Later that year, Morgan left the Aurora club and became part of the Rochester club. By the end of 1844, his side hobby would bloom into a new era of anthropology, ethnology, and even more fields beyond. But first, he would need a little bit of luck.

Parker's World

In 1828, ten years after Morgan's birth, a Seneca Indian boy from the Tonawanda reservation named Ha-sa-no-an-da, or "Leading Name," was born. His mother, Elizabeth Parker, had a dream that he would be "a white man as well as an Indian." At a young age, he adopted the name of a Baptist reverend, Ely Stone, and was known as Ely Parker from then on. In the fall of 1842, when Parker was fourteen, he enrolled in Yates Academy in Orleans County, New York, where he began to master the mechanics of the English language and converted to the Baptist religion. Compared to the rest of his people, Parker's English education was unusually advanced. For this reason, he was soon put to work as the scribe for the Tonawanda chiefs in a determined effort to save their lands.

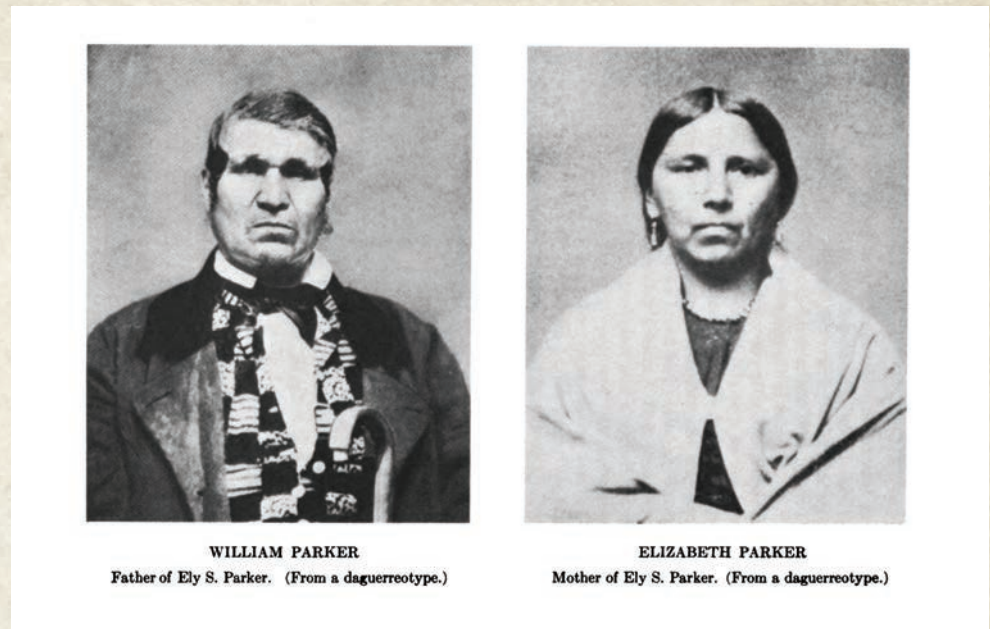
The Crisis

Parker and his Tonawanda Seneca people were faced with a major crisis that began years before the Indian Removal Act. In an 1826 federal treaty promoted by the Ogden Land Company but not ratified by the United States Senate, the Tonawanda Senecas were forced to cede the remaining 12,800 acres of their lands, nearly seventy square miles. Continued pressure from the Ogden Land Company led to the negotiation of a treaty of removal at Buffalo Creek in January 1838, which called for the the Senecas to leave New York State and migrate to Kansas within five years. Even though the "treaty" was the result of bribery and other forms of corruption, President Martin Van Buren proclaimed it legal and its provisions calling for removal went into effect in 1840. The Senecas and their white allies, the Quakers, successfully lobbied for a compromise federal treaty in 1842. In this new federal treaty, formally ratified on May 20, 1842, the Senecas would only be allowed to retain the Cattaraugus and Allegany Reservations, and would have to surrender the Buffalo Creek and Tonawanda Reservations to the Ogden Land Company by April 1, 1846. The Tonawanda Senecas refused to abandon their lands, claiming they were a separate band of Senecas and that none of their chiefs had signed the treaties in 1838 and 1842. Now, it was clear to all observers that the

Tonawanda Indians needed new white allies: influential men with connections in high society and, most importantly, a passion for the Iroquois peoples.

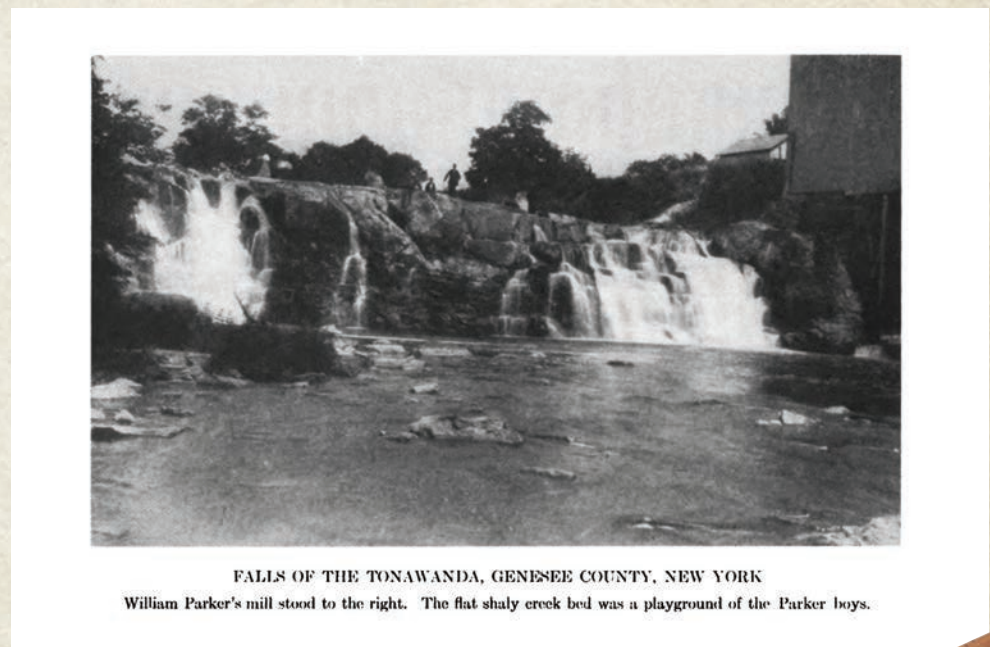
After his chance meeting with Ely S. Parker in the Albany bookstore, Morgan had become more interested in the Senecas, their mores, their religion, their history, and their current plight. Regarding this meeting, Morgan later claimed: "To sound the war whoop and seize the youth might have been dangerous, but to let him pass without a parley would have been inexcusable." After Morgan struck up a conversation with the young Parker, he was offered a chance to meet with Parker's grandfather, Jemmy Johnson, the major disciple of Sga:nyodai:yo (Handsome Lake), the Seneca prophet. Soon, Morgan found himself returning every day to ask the Tonawanda elders for more information. With Parker serving as their translator, Morgan feverishly took down notes and intended to remodel the Grand Order based on what he believed was the structure of the League of the Iroquois.

Upon his return from Albany, Morgan inducted Parker into the Grand Order. It is not clear whether Morgan saw the irony to this induction, but it's evident that Parker was to be an irreplaceable member of the Grand Order because only through him could the door to the Iroquois world be unlocked. Without the Parker family, the members of the Grand Order and Morgan



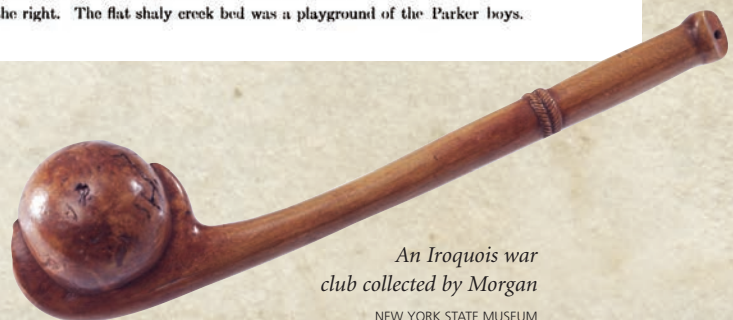
WILLIAM PARKER
Father of Ely S. Parker. (From a daguerreotype.)

ELIZABETH PARKER
Mother of Ely S. Parker. (From a daguerreotype.)



FALLS OF THE TONAWANDA, GENESEE COUNTY, NEW YORK
William Parker's mill stood to the right. The flat shaly creek bed was a playground of the Parker boys.

would not have access to the inner workings of the Iroquois culture. In return for Parker's membership, the Grand Order funded his education at Morgan's old school, the Cayuga Academy.



An Iroquois war club collected by Morgan
NEW YORK STATE MUSEUM

Later that year, Morgan and his colleagues visited the Tonawanda Senecas and learned about the intricacies of Iroquoian culture.

Morgan decided in August 1845 to begin writing an essay about the Iroquois and his correspondence with Parker increased. Later that year, Morgan and his colleagues visited the Tonawanda Senecas and learned about the intricacies of Iroquoian culture. Morgan was hungry for more. He wrote: "There is a vast amount of information still beyond us which we must obtain." However, an ominous deadline was approaching. If no compromise could be made by April 1, 1846, the Tonawandas would be forced to relocate to Kansas, then part of the Indian Territory, and thus Morgan's opportunity to learn more from them would end.

Tonawanda Lands

In January 1846, Parker was called back from Cayuga Academy to assist with the land struggle of the Tonawanda Indians and Morgan and the Grand Order joined the fight. On January 7, 1846, a meeting of the Grand Order was called at Ithaca, New York. From here, a campaign began to circulate petitions across New York State, asking the Senate to nullify the Treaties of 1838 and 1842.

On July 31, 1845, Morgan sent a personal letter to US

Senator Lewis Cass, lobbying for the Tonawanda cause. The next year, in March 1846, Morgan collected a request for congressional action from a mass meeting of people at the Batavia courthouse in Genesee County, New York, that was brought to the capital by Morgan himself. However, the situation seemed grim.

Carrying petitions against removal, Ely Parker was then sent as a "runner" to Washington, DC. As an official delegate, he met with President James Polk and powerful senators such as Henry Clay. The Tonawanda resistance to removal continued well into the 1850s, when they filed a major federal case that had dragged on for years. Finally, in 1857, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the Ogden Land Company derived no power by treaty to forcibly dispossess the Tonawanda Senecas from their lands. The same year, a treaty was signed in which the federal government recognized the Tonawanda Band as a separate Seneca entity, apart from the Seneca Nation.

The Tonawanda Band was allowed to use the money set aside for their removal to Kansas to repurchase 7,500 acres of their reservation, lands they still occupy, paying \$20 per acre to the Ogden Land Company for the "right" to buy their own lands back.

Later Life

The Morgan-Parker connection continued until Morgan's death in 1881. After the publication of *League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee or Iroquois*, Morgan was no longer directly connected to the Tonawandas' legal fight, although he had brought attention to the Iroquois and their plight. He, however, remained close to the Parker family.

Morgan's *League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee or Iroquois* described numerous aspects of Iroquoian life. This milestone in Morgan's life was the first stepping stone toward a career as an influential scholar. Morgan dedicated the book to Parker, writing: "this work, the materials of which are the fruit of our joint researches, is inscribed: in acknowledgement of the obligations, and in testimony of the friendship of the Author."

In 1859, Morgan published *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family*. In it, Morgan made a case for the origin of all races from a common ancestor, based in part on his study of native peoples. After the publication of *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family*, Morgan began developing a new social evolutionary theory. Morgan realized that the Aztecs, for one, did not develop a system involving private ownership of land. To him, this was the mark of an advanced civilization. Based on his earlier social evolution theory, he was now claiming that the ideas of family struc-

Morgan purchased this pipe tomahawk from Ely Parker for the New York State Museum.

NEW YORK STATE MUSEUM



LEAGUE
OF THE
HO-DE'-NO-SAU-NEE,
OR
IROQUOIS.

BY LEWIS H. MORGAN,
CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY; OF THE
AMERICAN ETHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY, ETC.

DESCIT VOX MISSA REVERTI.
Horace De Art. Poet., v. 300.



ROCHESTER:
SAGE & BROTHER, PUBLISHERS.
NEW YORK:—MARK H. NEWMAN & CO.
BOSTON:—GOULD & LINCOLN.
1851.

TO
HÄ-SA-NO-AN'-DA
(ELY S. PARKER)
A SENECA INDIAN,
This Book,
THE MATERIALS OF WHICH ARE THE FRUIT OF
OUR JOINT RESEARCHES,
Is Inscribed:
IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE OBLIGATIONS, AND
IN TESTIMONY OF THE FRIENDSHIP OF
THE AUTHOR

Morgan's *League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee* or *Iroquois* described numerous aspects of Iroquoian life and was dedicated to Ely S. Parker.

THE ARCHIVES
CONNECTION

Records used in researching this article include the Lewis Henry Morgan Collection at the University of Rochester, which contains many of Morgan's letters with Ely Parker and others, as well as Morgan's rich descriptions of Indian life and mores in his extensive journals. The most extensive collection of Parker's correspondence can be found at the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia. The New York State Archives houses the court records referred to in this article. The Union College Special Collections and Archives has an invaluable digital alumni file on Morgan. I would like to thank my teacher, Daniel McBride, and Guilderland High School librarian Melissa Gergen for assisting me with my writing. I would also like to thank my father, Dr. Ing-Nang Wang, for always passionately discussing this topic with me, motivating me to do research, driving me to Rochester to do research, and always providing writing tips.

ture, property, and form of government were actually closely intertwined with one another. In 1877, Morgan published the book *Ancient Society*. Of the four parts in the book, perhaps the most influential one of them all was his "Growth of the Idea of Common Property." In it, Morgan claimed that as a civilization progresses, property inequality rises among different families, and that the government will change to meet the demands of this

increased wealth.

Ancient Society had a profound impact on anthropology, and it was read by many across the world, including Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, who drew upon Morgan's denouncement of private property. Marx referred to Morgan as a "writer who can certainly not be suspected of revolutionary tendencies."

On his deathbed in 1881, Morgan could not have possibly imagined that the culmination of his life's work

would eventually contribute to the ideology of communism. And the roots of this influence trace back to a chance encounter with a Tonawanda Seneca youngster in an Albany bookstore. ■



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