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## What's in a Name?: The Connection Between the Native Americans and the Streets of Buffalo, 1802-1857

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*What's in a Name?: The Connection Between the Native Americans and the Streets of Buffalo,  
1802-1857*

By Deirdre Reynolds

On 25 July 1797, Theophile Cazenove, the General Agent of the Holland Land Company, wrote a letter to his agent in the Philadelphia, Joseph Ellicott. Its purpose was to inform Ellicott of his instructions for the upcoming treaty with the Seneca Indians regarding the sale of their lands to the company. Instead of being worded generally, asking to make advantageous deals in the neutral legalese expected by modern corporations, Ellicott was instructed to “obtain [the] Indian title of the greatest quantity of [the] best lands,” and to “[liberate the land] from the Indian claim.”<sup>1</sup> Cazenove’s instructions left little room for doubt: the agent wanted the prime land holdings of the Seneca Indians in order to develop what became known as the city of Buffalo. Though this was a common attitude for land companies of the time, it foreshadowed the future relations between the Indians and the city of Buffalo. What started off as seemingly friendly relations soon deteriorated into mutual hostility and distrust, with both sides struggling fiercely for the right to live on the disputed lands. As this fighting continued over the course of 55 years, various streets in the city were named after Native American names and words in the attempt to both mask the cooling of relations between the two groups and strip the Native Americans of their cultural indigeneity.

Street names are an important link to the history of an area, its values, and what it wishes to emphasize as its heritage. Street names serve as a memorial to the “official” version of history, and as soon as they no longer represent the values the city wishes to highlight, the names are changed for those which do. The evolution of the street names in Buffalo indicate an attempt to

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<sup>1</sup> Theophile Cazenove to Joseph Ellicott, July 25, 1797, Reports of Joseph Ellicott, Buffalo and Erie County Research Library, Buffalo, NY.

mask the tense diplomatic relations between the Native American tribes and the city of Buffalo, and to make the Native Americans irrelevant to the white-dominated world, as seen through the city's formative period of 1802 to 1857.

When discussing the evolution of the city of Buffalo, most specifically in the discussion of street names, the location of an end date is problematic. As the city was founded in 1802, the beginning date is logical, and certainly in the case of street names makes sense. The first logical cut off point is 1830, when the city was incorporated. This is when the city plan was approved by the federal government, and major changes to the city plan rarely occur. However, in discussing the evolution of street names, this end point is rather early on in the historical narrative, and does not take into account the changing government or the effect of the Erie Canal, implemented in 1825 and highly influential until approximately 1880. Also integral to the narrative of the relations between Native Americans and Buffalo and their effect on street names are the Seneca. The Seneca had a tumultuous relationship with the city of Buffalo, and as such there are a number of important dates for them. However, the most important date in terms of land claims is 1857, when the Senecas successfully won a court battle to stay on their reservation, rather than be shipped off to Kentucky and have their reservation appropriated for use by the city. This is the lowest point in the relations between the two groups in Buffalo's early period, so it stands to reason that this is the impetus for many of the street name changes. As such, it will be used as the ending date for the period in question.

Although memorials and street names have existed for many years, only recently have historians begun looking at the correlations between memorials, street names, monuments, and other forms of public commemoration in any serious depth. The objects chosen, in any form, are

used to remember or celebrate a specific part of the society's past. However, although historians throughout the last hundred years have informally addressed this topic, only in the past ten years has there been a more serious interest taken in these topics.

The consensus among most historians is memorials and monuments are named with the needs and desires of the present society in mind, rather than straight history. The editors Daniel J. Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer in their collection of essays entitled *Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space*, state "Ruling regimes...selectively utilize the past as a strategic resource and erect historical monuments...to bolster their international image, shore up domestic support, or placate critics."<sup>2</sup> The selected works deal with public statuary, museums, cityscapes, mental memorials, and alternative forms of memorials such as music and culture. Although dealing with somewhat disparate topics, all the essays share the common theme of public memorials serving to build a national image and to select the history of which the national wants to remember and emulate. The historians in the work are all united in their belief that public memorials are created to elevate the prestige and history of the nation, and that this only occurs in times of nationalistic fervor.

Although public memorials being used to promote a specific national image is not uncommon throughout the developed world, much has been written about American usage of this technique. Art and Architecture historian Kirk Savage believes, as noted in his book *Monument Wars*, that monuments pin down national image, something which is usually experienced as changing every day. Savage argues monuments fix down certain emotions and impressions, thereby giving a timeless feel. However, this is tempered with his equally strong belief that monuments' meanings can change with the times, as national feeling shifts. It is his

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel J. Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer, eds., *Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space* (Duke University Press) 2004, 4.

belief national monuments can adapt with the times, thus staying relevant and continuing their function as a repository of selected history and national feeling. His example is that of the Lincoln Memorial, which was originally built to not mention the tradition of slavery, yet in the late 1900s became the symbol for civil rights.<sup>3</sup>

Monuments and memorials are obvious reminders of history, however, they are not the only reminders. Joseph L. Hemmer Jr., in his essay on “The Exploitation of American Indian Symbols: A First Amendment Analysis,” targets the more subtle uses of public memorials: place names, sports teams, logos, and other similar memorials which the American public does not normally consider. He examines the controversy surrounding the usage of often derogatory Indian symbols and words, and attempts to determine their protection under the First Amendment. He examines both sides of the issue and relates the major arguments for each side. Although not dealing explicitly with how memorials promote a feeling of national identity, his focus of the usage of American Indian symbols and the perceptions given to non-Indians correlate directly on the relations between the two groups and the selective memory on the part of the non-Indians as to how the native peoples are remembered.<sup>4</sup>

It is the combination of these ideas which will be addressed within the paper. The concept of public memorials’ role in commemorating a particular aspect of history, yet changing through time with the society’s needs and values, and what this says about the relationship between two peoples is a topic on which a definitive work has not been written. The connection between public memorials and relations between two countries is a vital component in understanding a society’s history and values. In addition, most works addressing the subject of memorials deal

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<sup>3</sup> Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 124.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph J. Hemmer, Jr., “Exploitation of American Indian Symbols: A First Amendment Analysis,” *American Indian Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2008): 122.

strictly with national and international monuments. An analysis of these memorialization concepts has never been done on a local level. These connections will be examined in the paper through the lens of the relationship between the Native Americans of the Erie and Niagara counties, the Holland Land Company, and its subsequent effect on the names of streets in the city of Buffalo.

The Holland Land Company was an organization which dedicated itself to the purchase of lands on the North American continent. The company focused mainly on the lands in the mid-Atlantic states, almost exclusively in Pennsylvania and New York. The company central office, located in Philadelphia,<sup>5</sup> presided over various agents for their vast tracts of land. The company appointed these agents to oversee the scattered parcels of land being developed into cities and townships. These agents, though technically not in charge of the fledgling cities, were nevertheless the real power behind the scenes. The agents “sold lands, helped to organize towns and counties, planned internal improvements, and exercised a pervasive political influence.”<sup>6</sup> The agents also had to struggle with the course of history: Joseph Ellicott, the agent for the Genesee lands and what became the city of Buffalo, attempted to “hold down taxes on company lands, to endure the difficulties caused by the War of 1812, and guide the course of the Bank of Niagara at Buffalo.”<sup>7</sup> Theoretically, Joseph Ellicott was at the mercy of the orders given to him by Paul Busti, the General Agent in Philadelphia, but in practice Ellicott was given a large amount of freedom and control, with any decisions almost always supported by Busti.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Warwick Bingham, ed. *Holland Land Company's Papers: Reports of Joseph Ellicott*, vol.1, (Buffalo: Baker, Jones, Hausauer, Inc.) 1937, ii.

<sup>6</sup> Ronald E. Shaw, review of *Joseph Ellicott and the Holland Land Company: The Opening of Western New York* by William Chazanof, *American Historical Review* 76, no. 5 (December 1971): 1556.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Warwick Bingham, ed. *Holland Land Company's Papers: Reports of Joseph Ellicott*, vol.1, (Buffalo: Baker, Jones, Hausauer, Inc.) 1937, iii.

The lands purchased by the Holland Land Company in 1797, at the time known as the “Genesee tract,” were acquired from the Seneca tribe, which was the most prominent tribe in the region. The location of these lands, comprised by most of Western New York, were chosen for specific strategic and diplomatic regions. The tract was situated on a major portage point between two great lakes and the border of British-controlled Canada. The proximity to a foreign country and possible control of a major waterway made the Buffalo area a valuable piece of land. Due to this positioning, the Buffalo area was one where many came for diplomatic reasons. It was much easier to confer with the British Canadians from a place with a “middle ground” which could be declared neutral for any negotiations and was easier for the British to arrive at, rather than far off New York City. This tract of land was nominally held by the Senecas, but Roger Morris, a wealthy business man, originally held large parts of this tract, which he had purchased from the state of Massachusetts, the original owners of Western New York.<sup>9</sup> The Holland Land Company, realizing the benefits of this piece of land, bought the Miller lands from him, and thus could negotiate with the Senecas from a more prestigious position, owning much land in the area.

Joseph Ellicott, whom, according to his then-superior Theophile Cazenove, had amiable relations with the Seneca previously, was in charge of negotiating the treaty for the sale of these prized lands.<sup>10</sup> A minor “misunderstanding” nearly derailed the treaty, when a Seneca dissenter began spreading fear into the tribes, but this was resolved after a few bribes to the chieftains, and the Seneca agreed to the Holland Land Company’s terms.<sup>11</sup> The result of this treaty was advantageous to the Holland Land Company, and parted the Seneca from large portions of

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<sup>9</sup> Theophile Cazenove to Joseph Ellicott, July 25, 1797, Holland Land Company Papers: Reports of Joseph Ellicott, Buffalo Historical Society, Buffalo, NY.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Ellicott, *Rapport and Compte de l’Arpentaye du Genesee Par Mr. J.H. Ellicott*, (Buffalo: Baker, Jones, Hausauer, Inc., 1937), 82.

Western New York.<sup>12</sup> The Indians received annuities from the Holland Land Company, and in exchange for their old lands, they were given lands for reservations.<sup>13</sup> The Senecas gave up approximately 200,000 acres of land, minus certain plots set aside for reservations.<sup>14</sup> The Holland Land Company set aside a reservation for each major tribe in the area, including the Connawaugus, Big Tree, Little Beards Towns, Squawkey Hill, Kaounaudeau, Chenushanushangohta, Cataraugus, Buffalo Creek, and the Tuscaroras.<sup>15</sup> The Tuscaroras, being a comparatively small tribe, originally were not allocated a reservation of their own. They petitioned the Holland Land Company directly, and were given one square mile tacked onto the Buffalo Creek Reservation. The Tuscaroras were upset, but the Holland Land Company ignored their complaints, leading the Tuscaroras to reluctantly acquiesce.<sup>16</sup> In general, the reservations were small plots of land along the Genesee River,<sup>17</sup> with the exception of the Buffalo Creek Reservation, being on the Buffalo Creek. The Senecas gave up approximately 200,000 acres of land.<sup>18</sup>

The Seneca nation was strategically located next to the British-controlled territory of Canada and in an important trading and defensive position. As such, white settlers considered the Seneca to be of enough importance to use negotiation to acquire land, rather than simply moving in and taking it as they had done to other native groups. Instead of being seen as a separate nation to conquer and take lands from, the Seneca were viewed as a large land owning corporation, thus requiring treaties to acquire land holdings and titles. They were thought of by

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<sup>12</sup> Joseph Ellicott to Theophile Cazenove, September 25, 1797, Holland Land Company Papers: Reports of Joseph Ellicott, Buffalo Historical Society, Buffalo, NY.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Ellicott to Theophile Cazenove, September 25, 1798, Holland Land Company Papers: Reports of Joseph Ellicott, Buffalo Historical Society, Buffalo, NY.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Ellicott, *Report of Joseph Ellicott for Year 1797*, (Buffalo: Baker, Jones, Hausauer, Inc., 1937), 11.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Ellicott, *Report of Joseph Ellicott for Year 1798*, (Buffalo: Baker, Jones, Hausauer, Inc., 1937), 51.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Ellicott, *Report of Joseph Ellicott for Year 1798*, (Buffalo: Baker, Jones, Hausauer, Inc., 1937), 54.

<sup>17</sup> *The Holland Land Company*, (Meadville: The Tribune Publishing Company, Printers & Binders, 1924), 192.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Ellicott, *Report of Joseph Ellicott for Year 1797*, (Buffalo: Baker, Jones, Hausauer, Inc., 1937), 11.



the Holland Land Company as a business, with different branches and heads owning land and controlling groups all under one umbrella. This misconception most likely came from the settler's racial prejudices, which lumped the various Native American tribes into one large entity. The settlers merely viewed them as an amorphous "other," and did not deem them worthy enough to recognize either their distinctive and separate cultures, or their rights to the land.

Since the Treaty under the Big Tree in 1797, the Seneca tribes have constantly been on the defense against land companies wishing to buy their land titles and develop as much of the land as they can possibly get. However, this was different than most Indian experiences, especially those tribes South of the Mason-Dixon line. In southern states, emigration to the "Indian land" west of the Mississippi River was encouraged, as the official stance of most states declared Indians had "no rights inconsistent with the rights of the states in which they inhabit." While this in and of itself did not deny the Indians their rights to their lands, the popular notion of the states did, which stated that the Indian lands were "granted to them by the state," despite the long tradition the tribes had on their lands.<sup>19</sup> Regarding this long history, the Report on the Removal of Indians presented before the House of Representatives on 24 February 1830 stated there were "temporary" Indian boundaries where natives could live without intermingling with white settlers, but that these boundaries "implied no abandonment of the principle upon which the country was settled."<sup>20</sup> These statements, though seemingly innocent enough, make references to the future of Indian relations to come, specifically reservations and the idea of a Manifest Destiny pushing the white settlers to the western coast and crowding Indians onto ever-smaller plots of land. The president of the United States, Van Buren, was a strong advocate of Indian removal policies, proclaiming in a speech to Congress in December of 1837: "It has been the

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<sup>19</sup> Committee on Indian Affairs, *Removal of Indians*, 21st Cong., 1st sess., H. Rep. 227, 3-5.

<sup>20</sup> Committee on Indian Affairs, *Removal of Indians*, 21st Cong., 1st sess., H. Rep. 227, 6.

fixed policy of this government from the days of the administration of Jefferson, in 1804, to remove the Indians west of the Mississippi.”<sup>21</sup> Toward this end, various federal Indian agencies were created in the early 1800s.

General Dearborn, a Massachusetts Commissioner in 1838 and 1839 investigating Seneca land claims in New York frequently described the tribe as “savages” and seemed particularly incensed when the 1838 treaty was not immediately accepted, which gave the tribe a total of three million dollars and 32 acres per family in the West if they removed themselves within five years to Kansas.<sup>22</sup> Dearborn called the Indians “ignorant...most debased of the human species,” and proclaimed if the treaty terms had been given to New Englanders, they would have gone “to the West with glad and grateful hearts,” but these Indians could not “[appreciate] the generous humanity of the Government.” 41 chiefs signed the treaty, which conveniently created the simple majority needed to pass the treaty.

Foul play, bribery, and intimidation were immediately suspected after the signing of the treaty, and most Senecas refused to leave their ancestral lands.<sup>23</sup> Those chiefs who signed the treaty were immediately relieved of their position, and replaced by new, stronger chiefs who refused to accept the money and leave.<sup>24</sup> This treaty caused a general outcry from the Indians, Quakers, and other supporters of the natives, and led to another treaty in 1842, wherein the Seneca were allowed to keep a little less than half of the lands claimed by the 1838 treaty.<sup>25</sup> The

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<sup>21</sup> Henry A. Homes, *An Account of the Manuscripts of General Dearborn*, (Albany: Weed, Parsons, and Company, Printers 1881), 5.

<sup>22</sup> Henry A. Homes, *An Account of the Manuscripts of General Dearborn*, (Albany: Weed, Parsons, and Company, Printers 1881), 8.

<sup>23</sup> Gilbert J. Pederson, “Early Titles to Indian Reservations in Western New York,” *Niagara Frontier 2* (Spring/Winter 1956-1957): 8.

<sup>24</sup> Seneca Nation, *Constitution*, (Buffalo, 1833), 3.; Gilbert J. Pederson, “Early Titles to Indian Reservations in Western New York,” *Niagara Frontier 2* (Spring/Winter 1956-1957): 9.

<sup>25</sup> Henry A. Homes, *An Account of the Manuscripts of General Dearborn*, (Albany: Weed, Parsons, and Company, Printers 1881), 10.

Native Americans continued this resistance of Indian removal policies, with the end result being two new treaties ratified on 22 January 1857 and 5 November 1857.<sup>26</sup>

Prior to 1857, the Native Americans in the Buffalo region saw their lands being continually bought and sold as whites attempted to expand their idea of “Manifest Destiny.” Their reservations were cut up so as to take away nearly half of the original reservation size, and attempts were made to force removal, causing a legal battle.<sup>27</sup> 1857 was a monumental year for the Native Americans living in the Buffalo area. This year saw a treaty created with the Seneca which saved their lands from developers. On 22 January 1857, the battle between the Seneca and the government of Buffalo, specifically the land Commissioners, was concluded. Although the Treaty of 1842 granted the tribe to keep almost half of their lands, treaties with the government had proven breakable before. There was no guarantee a similar situation would not happen again, possibly when the tribe did not have strong leaders to fight for their rights.<sup>28</sup> The Seneca consequently took their case to court, fighting for the rights to the lands on which they lived. The result of the battle was a definitive victory for the tribe. The Seneca were granted absolute rights to their lands, and it was determined no outside party could have preemptive rights.<sup>29</sup> This was a major victory in favor of the Seneca, and they have retained these lands ever since.

With the Indians placed on reservations, and the treaties signed and legally binding, the Holland Land Company began to sell land to private investors all along the Genesee tract. The planners sectioned off nine lots for private enterprises and three lots for reservations when the

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<sup>26</sup> Gilbert J. Pederson, “Early Titles to Indian Reservations in Western New York,” *Niagara Frontier 2* (Spring/Winter 1956-1957): 9.

<sup>27</sup> Committee on Indian Affairs, *Removal of Indians*, 21st Cong., 1st sess., H. Rep. 227, 6.; Gilbert J. Pederson, “Early Title to Indian Reservations in Western New York,” *Niagara Frontier 2* (Spring/Winter 1956-57): 7.; *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>28</sup> Henry A. Homes, *An Account of the Manuscripts of General Dearborn*, (Albany: Weed, Parsons, and Company, Printers 1881), 10.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

city of New Amsterdam, as it was originally called, was formed in 1802. Most of the city, including the entire downtown area, was controlled by the Holland Land Company.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, the company was the one who had the ultimate authority in creating the streets and their names.

By 1805, the village of Buffalo had 24 major streets, with nine of these named after an Indian tribe.<sup>31</sup> In most cases, these were named for an Indian tribe were laid over old walking paths between tribal encampments, and named for whichever tribe to which the path led. This method of naming appears to be quite haphazard and unoriginal in comparison to the later street names, which were systematically planned and named. These first street names were simply the easiest way to remember where each street was approximately located. In a developing town, it is much easier to name streets around what they had originally been called, and to then change them at a later date. This allows for there to be simple names for inhabitants to use for directions or other purposes, yet a flexibility to change them for better names which more accurately reflect city attitudes. All evidence points to this interpretation: the street names were at first named after various Indian tribes and words, yet only a short while later there is already a notable change to Germanic and Anglicized names. In essence, these original street names, with their Indian words, were simply placeholder names until Ellicott and the other city planners decided on new names to highlight the values and history they wished to present.

The original street names of Buffalo changed as neighborhoods, citizenry, local attitudes, and the size of the city changed. Buffalo underwent a rapid expansion in the early 1800s, thanks in large part to the Erie Canal, which brought much industry to the region. In the period from

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<sup>30</sup> Bureau of Engineering, "Map Showing the Original Subdivisions of the City of Buffalo," (compiled 1905), Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, Buffalo and Erie County Research Library, Buffalo.

<sup>31</sup> "Map of Buffalo Village, 1805," (ca. 1805), Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, Buffalo.

1802 to 1857, the city of Buffalo, as it was now known, added many new streets leading to its new suburban areas, as well as renamed some of the streets in the downtown core.<sup>32</sup> Many street names were changed from ordinary last names of the original owners of lots in Buffalo, or influential figures in government, to Native American tribal names or words. One of the most famous examples is that of Niagara Street. In modern times, it is a highly trafficked street, with many businesses. However, it was originally given the name Schimmelpennick Avenue, presumably after an influential business or cultural figure in Buffalo long forgotten. In 1853, the Buffalo government approved the name change from the German sounding Schimmelpennick to the Indian sounding Niagara.<sup>33</sup>

The government's approval to change a major street name to a distinctly Indian word indicates a growing feeling of guilt on the part of the government for the unfair treatment of the Native Americans in the area. Street names have been shown to be the omnipresent memorial to the history the government wishes to remember, even if the reasons for this commemoration is not due to respect or pride. In Buffalo's case, the changing of street names, an ongoing trend in the second half of the nineteenth century, reflected a way for the government to appear to "honor" the natives, and also a way to further subordinate them. On the surface, the naming of streets seems to be a way of acknowledging the Buffalo area's native roots, but this is not the only factor in the naming. Naming as the tribes as they were pushed out of their ancestral lands and had to fight in court for the right to stay on their appointed reservations further oppressed them. The Native Americans now had no say in their own legacy, which was being further and further marginalized. The Native Americans no longer posed a threat to the expansion of

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<sup>32</sup> Kennedy and Quakenboss, "Map of the City of Buffalo, New York" (ca. 1854), Buffalo and Erie Historical Society, Buffalo and Erie County Research Library, Buffalo.

<sup>33</sup> *Index to Records of Streets, Public Grounds, Waterways, Railroads, Gas Companies, Water Works, etc. Of the City of Buffalo from 1814 to 1896*, (Bureau of Engineering, Buffalo NY 1897), s.v. "street name changes."

Buffalo, so the city officials felt it safe to superficially honor them. By 1857, at least eleven of the original streets in the downtown core were changed to Native American-related names.<sup>34</sup>

In the first half of the century the street names of Buffalo were primarily Germanic and English, with names such as Vollenhoven, Dougherty, or Hamilton. Sometimes streets were named after influential parts of American history, like Lexington, Lafayette, or Liberty. By 1857, these European and American-centric names were changed to the more native sounding Erie St., Seneca Pl., Oneida St., Shawnee Ave., and Mohican Ave.<sup>35</sup> By 1854, 17 out of the 95 streets in the downtown core were named after Indian tribes or related objects, while only 12 were named after English or Germanic names, and the rest named after states or national history.<sup>36</sup> This is a marked change from the height of the tension between the Native Americans in the area and the Buffalo area in 1838, where only 5 out of 26 of the downtown core streets were named after native tribes or words, as compared to 21 Anglicized or Germanic names.<sup>37</sup> Although 1854 saw many more streets which required names, the instances of Native American origins for the names is much greater in 1854 than in 1838. There is a clear trend shown between the Native American relations with Buffalo and the street names of the city.

As tensions mounted and the minimal trust between the two groups eroded quickly, there was a significant rise in the number of Indian-themed streets. These street names did more than simply put an indigenous name on a street sign. This trend helped the citizens of Buffalo and the government to remember the Native Americans, but in a way which was trivialized and irrelevant. As the Seneca faded more and more out of current events with the court settlement,

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<sup>34</sup> Kennedy and Quakenboss, "Map of the City of Buffalo, New York" (ca. 1854), Buffalo and Erie Historical Society, Buffalo and Erie County Research Library, Buffalo.

<sup>35</sup> *Index to Records of Streets, Public Grounds, Waterways, Railroads, Gas Companies, Water Works, etc. Of the City of Buffalo from 1814 to 1896*, (Bureau of Engineering, Buffalo NY 1897), s.v. "street name changes."

<sup>36</sup> Kennedy and Quakenboss, "Map of the City of Buffalo, New York" (ca. 1854), Buffalo and Erie Historical Society, Buffalo and Erie County Research Library, Buffalo.

<sup>37</sup> "Map of City of Buffalo, 1838," Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, Buffalo and Erie County Research Library, Buffalo.

Buffalo no longer concerned itself with its native inhabitants. The Native Americans, such a large presence in the first sixty years of Buffalo's formation, became nothing more than a faint impression of "Indian-ness." On the surface, the government seemed to celebrate the Native American heritage and influence, yet by the Native Americans no longer making headlines, all this did was to push the Senecas into irrelevance and marginalization. The Native Americans were remembered as a name on a street, not as distinct and unique tribes which shaped the future of the Buffalo area. Rather than being remembered as a tribe, they were remembered as an abstract concept, an Indian heritage which had no bearing on everyday life other than the street names in the city.

The Holland Land Company's treaty with the Seneca Nation, the Treaty under the Big Tree, ended with the Seneca and white settlers both reasonably satisfied with the decision. The company got the lands it so desired, and the Seneca money and a guaranteed reservation, sizable enough to house their descendants for hundreds of years to come. However, this era of goodwill and trust was not to last. From 1797 to 1857, a span of merely 60 years, relations between the Native Americans in Buffalo, specifically the Seneca Nation, and the white inhabitants of the area, were started, strained, and in the end soured as the natives felt increasingly threatened. The reservations set up in the original Treaty under the Big Tree in 1797 were parceled off more and more over the years, first by the Holland Land Company, then the Odgen Company, and finally the government of Buffalo. The land companies and the Buffalo government created new treaties with the Native Americans almost every ten years, and used underhanded methods such as bribery and intimidation to achieve their goals. As governmental policy espoused Manifest Destiny in all but name, the public believed the natives did not possibly need as much land as they had, therefore leading to conflict between the two groups. Consequently, the street names

were changed, or in some cases added, to reflect Indian tribes and words. This whitewashing was the government's attempt to sweep its role in depriving the tribes of their lands under the rug. The worse the situation got, the more the government created street names "honoring" the natives. The multitude of street names bearing Native American tribes or words in Buffalo is a direct result of the government's guilt over their treatment of the natives in the area.



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