

**"Helen of Colorado":
Helen Hunt Jackson, Colorado Springs,
& the Making of an Indian Activist**

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"H. H.," the popular post-Civil War poet, essayist, travel author, and novelist whom we know as Helen Hunt Jackson (1830–1885), is now most recognized by historians for her passionate advocacy of American Indian rights. As a travel essayist, Jackson had an uncanny ability to become a "writer of place" wherever she moved and settled, though she saw moving as a healthier state than settling. Colorado Springs and the state of Colorado still recognize her as one of *our* great literary figures. California also claims her as a near-native writer of that state. Yet she fit most appropriately *native* in New England, amongst the literati of New York and Boston, and she began her travel writings with European adventures. Remarkably, Jackson's literary life moments that intertwined her with each locale occurred in less than 2 decades near the end of a tragically brief life. She died 2 months short of her fifty-fifth birthday. Even in death, burial, and re-burial, however, Helen Hunt Jackson became "Helen of Colorado." Here she literally remains.

For each locale, Jackson characterized the scenery, architecture, flora, fauna, culture, and personalities in winning ways for her readers. This alone, when concerning Colorado, would offer a worthy reason for Jackson's listing as one of its "extraordinary women" and writers. H. H. also nourished, in Colorado, however, an ability to be struck by difference, to be flexible toward change, and to be passionate for *making a* difference and *bringing about* change. Biographers usually consider her awareness of the 1879 lecture tour by Ponca Chief Standing Bear in Boston and New York to be the turning point that made Jackson an Indian rights reformer.



Helen Hunt Jackson, ca. 1885. *Helen Hunt Jackson Papers, Part 1, Ms 0020, Box 10, Photo 1, Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College, Colorado Springs, Colorado.*

Nevertheless, a catalyst can only cause a reaction when reactive elements are in place. Key elements of Jackson's earlier life, such as her New England roots, personal losses, and publishing expertise, prepared her for an explosion into reform. Among these elements, Jackson's transformative period in 1870s Colorado Springs gave her a marriage with freedom for travel, provided her a home base and a boost of healthy energy, introduced her to neighbors who marched to different drummers, enabled her deeper reform vision, aroused her most aggressive opponent, and suggested her first weapons of war. Colorado Springs exerted more influence on the timeless aspects of Jackson's life than it realizes.

In *Bits of Travel at Home* (1878), Jackson described her own changing mind, and how it broadened in reference to Colorado Springs. She identified parallels between falling in love with and deciding to marry her Colorado Springs friend, William Sharpless Jackson, at the same time that she fell in love with Colorado Springs.

I once said of a face, at hasty first sight, "What a plain face! How is it that people have called it handsome? I see no single point of beauty in it."

That face afterward became in my eyes not only noble, fine, strong, sweet, but beautiful. . . . Again and again I try to recall the face as I first saw it. I cannot. The very lineaments seem totally changed.

It is much the same with my first impression of the Colorado Springs. I shall never forget my sudden sense of hopeless disappointment at the moment when I first looked on the town. It was a gray day in November. I had crossed the continent, ill, disheartened, to find a climate which would not kill. There stretched before me, to the east, a bleak, bare, unrelieved, desolate plain. There rose behind me, to the west, a dark range of mountains, snow-topped, rocky-walled, stern, cruel, relentless. Between lay the town—small, straight, new, treeless.

"One might die of such a place alone," I said bitterly. "Death by disease would be more natural."

To-day that plain and those mountains are to me well-nigh the fairest spot on earth. To-day I say, "One might almost live on such a place alone." I have learned it, as I learned that human face, by heart; and there can be a heart and a significant record in the face of a plain and a mountain, as much as in the face of a man.¹

The Roots of a Moral Reformer in a Mourning Healthseeker

"Helen Hunt Jackson," is the modern, popularly accepted name for the writer, the one that scholars have agreed to use. She was born Helen Marie Fiske in Amherst, Massachusetts, on October 14, 1830, to Reverend Nathan Fiske, Professor of language and philosophy (variously Latin and Greek, moral philosophy and metaphysics) at Amherst College, and Deborah Waterman Fiske, both intensely devout, orthodox Congregationalists. As loyal descendants of Calvinist Puritans in academic environments, they imparted strong moral and ethical codes, supported missionary efforts, and came from a tradition of moralizing privately, publicly, and in print. Yet they were loving parents, leaving their daughter more freedom of choice than they might have intended.

It is a notable pattern among independently prominent women of earlier America that they were sometimes the eldest daughters of men whose only sons died young, or who had no sons, only daughters. These fathers endowed their inspirational and educational attentions on these daughters to a greater degree than they might have done, had there been sons. The most obvious example of this from Jackson's era is woman's rights activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Of Nathan Fiske's four children, the two boys died as infants and Helen was the eldest. He schooled her closely and monitored her studies even as she attended boarding schools. Thus Helen was already armed to pronounce judgments on humanity articulately and in print. She also lived within the reaches of abolitionism, temperance, and women's rights, although none of these sparked her reform fires. Indeed, she self-consciously hung back on anti-slavery

and openly eschewed advocacy for women's rights because of her conviction that women held rightful power in the domestic sphere (and because she gained satisfying rare power working side-by-side with men already). She was acutely aware, nonetheless, of these reform movements and seemed poised for her own to come along.

Representing another influential social history pattern, Jackson was haunted by death and the scourge of her century, consumption (tuberculosis). Her mother died of a most conspicuously prolonged case, when Helen was only 13 in 1844. Three years later, Helen's father traveled to the Holy Land to overcome his consumption but died there of dysentery. It was common belief that children of consumptives would inherit the disease, or at least be more susceptible to it, and thus needed behaviors and treatments to help prevent it. Helen experienced staying home to help her mother and being sent away to avoid the disease. Later in life, despite clearly espousing domesticity, she also believed she should travel to escape consumption. Conflicting beliefs that consumptive women should remain in-valid at home rather than travel, and that they should maintain their domestic surroundings while ill, were the ambivalent truths of Helen's mother, Deborah Fiske's, life. Fiske's letters made so revealing a story of one woman's struggle with the burdens of invalidism, that medical historian Sheila Rothman made Fiske the case study of a chapter in her social history of tuberculosis.²



Deborah Waterman Vinal Fiske (1806-1844), Helen Hunt Jackson's invalid mother, who planned for her own death by training and documenting guidance for her daughters. She left Helen forever worried about her own hereditary health. From *Ruth O'Dell, Helen Hunt Jackson* (New York: Appleton, 1939), courtesy of descendant Ruth Davenport.

Deborah Fiske had lost her own mother to consumption before she was two and thus was shuttled to relatives during childhood. Throughout her life she received the spectrum of treatments and attentions due someone expected not to thrive. She then suffered during pregnancies, lost two baby sons, and thus raised her two daughters in the full expectation of her own early demise. Deborah searched unsuccessfully for letters from her own mother that might connect her with the woman she never knew. So, she wrote letters to replace herself for her own daughters and to continue their guidance after her anticipated death. Helen received loving but intense training in religious and moral discipline, as well as domestic duties, lest her love of books overtake her love of the needle. Deborah even meticulously prepared her girls for deathbed scenes and for living as submissive long-term guests in other people's homes. Yet, rebellious little Helen was not "able to contain her rage as her mother's coffin was lowered into the ground."³



Helen Marie Fiske (Hunt Jackson), circa 1847. She spent most of her adolescent years in full mourning dress. *Helen Hunt Jackson Papers, Part 1, Ms 0020, Box 13, larger album, Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College, Colorado Springs, Colorado.*

Picture the orphaned girl, in perpetual mourning clothes, going from relative to school to relative. She was not the dutiful and pleasing guest, especially when hosts attempted to force her submission to strict Congregationalist precepts during her resentful mourning for her mother. She also suffered alarming sore throats and coughing.⁴ Yet, like her mother, she finally found kindness in one home, and then found a husband. She married Army Corps of Engineers Lieutenant Edward Hunt 5 years after her father's death, in 1852. She cast herself into domesticity with mid-Victorian relish. Yet her first son, Murray, born in 1853, died at 11 months of a brain tumor.



Helen M. F. Hunt with her second son, Warren Horsford Hunt, "Rennie," ca. 1856. Rennie died in 1865, completing Helen's loss of her entire nuclear family. *Helen Hunt Jackson Papers, Parts 1, Ms 0020, Box 10, Photo 9, Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College, Colorado Springs, Colorado.*

She had a second treasured son, Warren Horsford Hunt, "Rennie," in 1855. Edward Hunt, however, spent most of Rennie's childhood stationed at outposts that they believed would jeopardize Helen's health. In 1863, Edward was killed in an accident with a naval explosive device he had invented. Less than 2 years later, 9-year-old Rennie died of diphtheria.

As literary biographer Kate Phillips notes in hers, the most detailed Jackson biography, Jackson was acutely aware that she had "spent her entire adolescence in full mourning dress," and then, after a brief interlude of happy marriage, wore it again and again. Rennie's death was a

"catastrophe" from which "she would never entirely recover."⁵

This type of situation led notable mid-19th century women into careers in literature or reform, where they might dedicate their time, energies, and passions, as well as earn incomes.⁶ Helen Hunt went to Newport, Rhode Island, for a respite that lasted 6 years, including travels to Europe. At Newport she met author Thomas Wentworth Higginson, better known for also mentoring poet Emily Dickinson. Higginson mentored the young widow Hunt into publishing her poetry and other writings. He was a sensitive proponent of equality for underdogs, having been an intense abolitionist, officer over African American Civil War troops, and woman's rights advocate. Through him, Jackson re-connected with her childhood Amherst neighbor Dickinson. Higginson was married to an invalid wife and, according to most biographers, had a mutual but unconsummated affection for Jackson. With his help, Jackson built a "support network"

for herself that grew exponentially as she delved into literary publication.

Yet ill health overtook Helen Hunt by 1872, perfectly timed for healthseeking flights west. To recover, she took up the call of California. In the early 1870s, California was the established western mecca for healthseekers. Colorado boosters were preparing to compete with every claim they could make, legitimately or illegitimately.⁷ Jackson's friend, travel writer Bayard Taylor, like many published contemporaries, lauded California's glories first, then Colorado's a few years later.⁸ Jackson's first trip to Northern California inspired the writer into many essays, but her attitudes toward the Native Americans there vacillated between disgust and romantic "noble savage" representations, not displaying the sympathetic realism she would exhibit after Colorado Springs and Standing Bear.⁹

Returning east, Jackson again became ill. Her sore throat apparently turned to diphtheria and she was too ill to write in early 1873. She became thinner and her hair started to gray.¹⁰ Jackson's fluctuating health that seemed so affected by circumstance and location was not unusual for Victorian American ladies. Sorting out the genuine ailments from what might have been the psychosomatic, hypochondrial, or appropriate to woman's sphere is difficult and perhaps unfair in hindsight. The best Colorado Springs example of this dilemma might be Queen Palmer, wife of the founder and an arrival to Colorado Springs contemporary with Jackson. Later locals frequently mocked Queen's "heart condition" that took her further away from her husband and Colorado Springs, ever closer to luxurious English living.¹¹ Yet more recent discoveries of her personal correspondence and re-evaluation of her condition and early death have made historians more sympathetic.¹²

Biographer Phillips noted that Helen Hunt Jackson mentioned "in her extant correspondence . . . her personal health troubles more than any other subject."¹³ While Jackson did not die of tuberculosis, she certainly had every reason to believe that she might. Following the medical explanations available at the time, she traveled seasonally and landed in the most recommended health resorts. She also reveled in travel,

built her career and income writing about it, acknowledged its helpfulness for her understandable depression, and used it as a statement of her independence. Thus is ill health, and upon the recommendation of an old Amherst physician and her own research, Helen Hunt felt "irresistably impelled" to plan a trip to Colorado Territory.¹⁴

Helen Hunt Jackson Reborn in Colorado Springs

When the popular writer H. H. came to Colorado Springs for her health in 1873, it is a tie whether the environment or William Sharpless Jackson—whom she married in 1875—offered her more curative powers for her next (and final) decade. In either and both cases, Colorado Springs provided her with the rejuvenation and inspiration to ignite her as a reformer in 1879. As quoted from *Bits of Travel*, she was not favorably impressed with the town or scenery at first. Her pessimism and sarcasm were so strong that one cannot help but attribute the positive change to finding a new, special friend at her Colorado Springs Hotel.

Will was a younger man by 6 years, of humble Quaker upbringing, yet he was already well-established in fortune and position as the vice president of General William Jackson Palmer's Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. He had supervised the construction of the line from Denver to what would become Colorado Springs in 1871. He was also a major investor in the new town and its institutions. The couple took meals together in the hotel, then carriage rides into the scenery of the area. Suddenly Helen loved that scenery. As she wrote to a dear friend,

It is a strange thing in the life of a woman organized as I am, and who has had the experience that I have,—that the only man who has compelled her to seriously think of marrying should be a plain, unvarnished, comparatively uneducated business man. . . . He rests me and I trust him to the *core*, which is what I have seldom felt of any man. . . . he is truth, and uprightness itself . . . and he has won me to care for him by so slow a winning, that I am persuaded it must last.¹⁵

They were married in a Quaker ceremony at her sister Ann's house in New Hampshire in 1875. Next the couple set about remodeling and decorating their own home in Colorado Springs. Will had purchased the corner house at 228 East Kiowa Street before their marriage. Helen now loved the local scenery so much, especially her favorite peak, that they remodeled the house to give her a view of Cheyenne Mountain.¹⁶

Helen Hunt Jackson, who still wrote as H. H., became one of Colorado Springs' most passionate and literary boosters. In *Bits of Travel at Home* (1878), she described herself as a "lover" of Colorado Springs. It stood up well in comparisons to New England towns, she purported, and its founders were dedicated to temperance. The "dry and rarified air" was healthful, of course. There were "myriads of flowers" for her endless, rapturous descriptions. To the east lay a "sea-plain." To the north was the "Divide," with a "lake whose shores in June are like garden-beds of flowers." To the west were the sacred mountains, especially her favorite, Cheyenne, where she would hike and ride to discover nature's specimens, and where she wished some day to be buried. She called Cheyenne Canyon one of the "nine places of divine worship" in Colorado Springs. The other eight were all churches.¹⁷

She wandered through "the lovely nestled nook of Manitou and up the grand Ute Pass" to South Park. She noted judgmentally the "poor, desolate, mistaken, discouraged 'Colorado City,'" a town bypassed by General Palmer's similar disapproval when he brought the railroad and founded Colorado Springs. She boasted of the fine people settled nearby, such as author Grace Greenwood and Englishman Dr. William Bell. She gloried in the experience of gathering wildflowers, as would tourists and locals for decades, never realizing they were removing the seed population from the future.

When we drive down from "our garden" [in Cheyenne Canyon] there is seldom room for another flower in our carriage. The top thrown back is filled, the space in front of the driver is filled, and our laps and baskets are filled with the more delicate blossoms. We look as if we were on our way to the ceremonies of Decoration Day. So

we are. All June days are decoration days in Colorado Springs.

Most meaningfully, considering the source, she testified to the area's healthfulness. "Asthmatics *must* come here. It is a sure cure for that. Bad throat and lung troubles are invariably helped if not cured. I believe half the people in this town are *one lungers*." She added, "I have grown so stout and strong in Colorado you will not know me."¹⁸

Ripe for a Cause

In 1990, historian Valerie Sherer Mathes pinpointed Jackson's metamorphosis into an Indian rights advocate. She identified the moment as the late October-early November 1879 visit by Ponca Chief Standing Bear and his party to Boston and New York. Sponsored by Omaha editor Thomas Tibbles and encouraged by sympathetic General George Crook, this delegation traveled to seek support for their plight. They had suffered great losses from removal to Indian Territory and arrest for trying to return to their Nebraska homeland to bury the dead. There is no question that Helen Hunt Jackson, visiting Boston and New York for such uncontroversial literary events as the 70th birthday party of her friend Oliver Wendell Holmes, surprisingly leapt to action on behalf of the Ponca, and then the Indian plight in general, as her new life's work. She immediately wrote articles for multiple eastern newspapers defending Standing Bear's position with outrage at his treatment. Beginning research into government documents in the Astor Library, she attacked Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz for statements in his 1878 Report. This led to a war of words between them in print. Thrilled that the secretary would even answer her, Jackson reveled in the power to effect change she seemed to have, as investigations of the Ponca situation went forward.¹⁹

In 1993, even after seeing Mathes's conclusions, one literary analyst, Carol Schumde, noted, "why Jackson, at the age of forty-nine, suddenly devoted herself to the cause of the American Indian has been essentially inexplicable to her biographers."²⁰ Schumde went on to analyze Jackson's two novels published

under the pseudonym "No Name": *Mercy Philbrick's Choice* (1876) and *Hetty's Strange History* (1877). Both novels involve heroines who, with good intentions, keep secrets or tell lies, living hypocritically, until redeemed by public honesty and selfless dedication. Schumde delineates how Jackson's 1879 research uncovered the hypocrisy and corruption of Indian policies and their perpetrators, instilling in Jackson so much moral indignation that she could burst forth on a "truth-telling mission" under her known "H. H." identity, redeeming herself from any insincerity or secrecy in her own life.

Medical historian Sheila Rothman, in 1994, wrote that "living in Colorado Springs gave Helen a political mission. Beginning in 1877 and continuing until her death in 1885, she championed the rights of Native Americans."²¹ Thus Colorado Springs' influence on the turning point was a given for Rothman. In 2003, the more intimate literary biography by Kate Phillips explored Jackson's personal observations from her Colorado Springs home in 1877–1879. Phillips's close study of Jackson's personal life made her development toward activism understandable rather than abrupt. Thus Phillips's interpretation helps us connect Colorado Springs and its own Indian history with the radical attitudes toward it that Jackson exhibited when she suddenly became an activist.

In *Hetty's Strange History* (1877), Jackson portrayed a childless, older wife who came to believe that she should die soon so that her husband could marry a younger, prettier woman who could give him a family. This scenario was autobiographical, of course. In 1877, Jackson was acknowledging to herself that she would probably not have children again. She wrote to her sister Ann that she hoped her health would overtake her in "six or eight years" so that she would "get out of the way (I trust!) in time for him to have his babies by a second wife."²² Jackson did, indeed, die in 8 years, leaving Will to marry and have children with his second wife, Helen Banfield, sister Ann's daughter and thus Jackson's niece and namesake. Interestingly, however, Hetty of the novel faked her own death to relieve her unromantic husband of herself and years later was reunited with him only to learn that he had loved her all along, as Jackson hoped was true of Will.

Thus 1877–1879 appears to have been an important transitional period for Jackson, perhaps when her mind and passions became fertile ground for the reform spirit that could fill an emotional void. Kate Phillips summarizes this mood usefully. Jackson took a stronger interest in other people's children—advising Ann's and writing young people's stories and *Nelly's Silver Mine* (1878), a novel of Colorado. She unfortunately heard that Thomas Wentworth Higginson, whose invalid wife had died, married a younger woman. Jackson again suffered from bronchitis attacks but now blamed the extremes of Colorado weather for not being as healthful as she had thought. Somewhat imprisoned, she finally realized that her Colorado Springs neighbors were not as enlightened as herself and her New England friends.

Now "many local residents had begun to consider her haughty, and to gossip about her fame, her earnings, her unusually liberal religious beliefs, and her frank enjoyment of champagne, wine, and sherry. . . ." ²³ According to Phillips, Jackson was "bored by her surroundings," "restless," and frustrated by Will's inexpressiveness and insistence that he could not travel away with her for extended periods as she proposed. He was, however, magnanimously loving and supportive when they agreed that she should travel East, perhaps again to Europe, for even a year, to get out of her "rut" and "come back to me . . . with a new mucous membrane & with all the old cobweb washed away—only a clean sunlight of love and trust left in their stead," Will wrote. ²⁴

The Colorado Indian Wars of Helen Hunt Jackson

Soon after Jackson arrived in the East, the Thomas Tibbles Standing Bear Tour fired her new passion. Phillips determined that Jackson probably heard Standing Bear first on October 29. ²⁵ Jackson's dedication to do what she could for the plight of Indians became her new life's work. She had previously avoided being "a woman with a hobby," the way she derided those with causes to her friend Higginson. ²⁶ From this moment on, however, she compared herself to the abolitionists whom she could now understand. Everything she had experienced, everything about her character, all of her energies had a clear

purpose. She described it with wonderment in letters to Will, Higginson, and others. The more she heard and researched, the more certain she was that this was it, this was a cause so morally commanding that nothing mattered more. She proceeded to use her writing skills, publishing contacts, and the reputation of "H. H." for the benefit of her new war on U.S. Indian policy. As rhetorician Stephen Collins has identified, she was creating her own "rhetoric of humanization" to counteract the long history of dehumanizing Indians. ²⁷

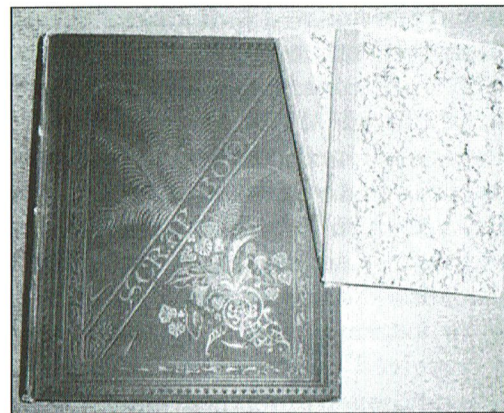
Having relished her high-level editorial battle with Secretary Schurz as though he was her vanquished arch-enemy, Jackson made two revealing choices in her next targets. Without seeing into the future, Jackson attacked what modern Colorado historians identify as the two most conspicuous instances of Colorado's controversial treatment of the Indians within its boundaries: the Ute Removal of 1879–1880 and the Sand Creek Massacre of 1864. Perhaps it was not remarkable that first she would so immediately address the "starving Utes" of western Colorado. Their fate was news of the moment. The government was withholding promised rations from them after the Meeker Massacre. That dramatic turn of events occurred when, after much mishandling and ill-will, leaders of the White River Utes had killed their misguided agent, Nathan Meeker, the other white men, and kidnapped the white women and children from the agency. All of Colorado Springs had been reading *Gazette Telegraph* reports of the continuing saga and speculations about the degree of suffering of the women hostages. Jackson focused, however, on the injustice of punishing the Ute population for the crimes of the few. Her independent research led her to the same interpretations of right and wrong that most scholarly historians make today.

Worst of all, perhaps her neighbors thought, Jackson hit upon an example much closer to home than the White River Utes. Only one paragraph into her editorial, called "The Starving Utes," she opened the Pandora's Box of her home state's history: Sand Creek. On November 29, 1864, Colorado Volunteers under Colonel John Chivington launched a surprise attack on Cheyenne and Arapaho lodges at Sand Creek, where Governor John Evans and federal officers had told them they

could camp safely. The reported losses and sufferings of women and children led to four different official investigations of the events. Even today, there are Coloradans who disagree about whether to call it the Sand Creek Massacre or the Battle of Sand Creek, although, since 2000, its location has been designated the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site.

"I wish to tell the American people a few of the atrocities which Colorado white men committed upon Indians only fifteen years ago," Jackson announced. In one phrase she condemned "Colorado white men," incorporating any who were there in 1864, which, of course, Will was not. "In June, 1864, Governor Evans, of Colorado, sent out a circular to the Indians of the Plains . . ." she began, reciting the Sand Creek narrative as many a modern historian would tell it today. She had found the testimonies of participants, given during the several official investigations. One after another she quoted atrocity stories of murder and mutilation perpetrated on innocents, all under the guise of punishment for previous attacks on whites. "Shall we apply the same rule of judgment to the white men of Colorado that the Government is now applying to the Utes?" she asked.²⁸

Among the Helen Hunt Jackson Papers at Colorado College Special Collections are two notebooks of her handwritten examples and statistics from this research, all Sand Creek related. Along with a scrapbook of the clippings, these are all that remain in the collection as evidence of this particular aspect of the work. Apparently, no other single event filled a notebook with Jackson's emotional scrawl as did Sand Creek.²⁹ It does not seem possible that Jackson suddenly realized Sand Creek's importance without any foreknowledge of it. Colorado Springs was a small town, "where everyone knew everyone else," and the Jacksons worked and socialized with "the white men of Colorado" who remembered Sand Creek. Most notably, the Jacksons' neighbors included the Howberts. Irving Howbert had served with the troops at Sand Creek. He also served, as a business and railroad man, with Will Jackson at times. Almost 30 years after Helen Hunt Jackson was gone, Howbert wrote his memories and opinions as the defense of "the Battle of Sand Creek" that stood as the only locally conceived truth for the region's history until the 1960s.³⁰ Howbert did not mention



Helen Hunt Jackson's notebooks (right) of handwritten research on the Sand Creek Massacre and scrapbook of clipped and pasted letters to the editor about Indian policy, including exchanges with William Byers. Photo by Katherine Scott Sturdevant taken courtesy of Colorado College Special Collections.

Jackson or her views in his books.

Jackson wrote to Will, "All this Indian business I should have known nothing of, at home—& even if I had—could not have consulted authorities."³¹ Thus she had a true Eastern, "outsider's" view, perhaps without realizing it, that there would be no authorities on Sand Creek in its own vicinity.

It seems likely, however, that Jackson heard of Sand Creek when in Colorado Springs, perhaps dismissing it along with her increasingly dismissive attitude toward some of her neighbors. It is difficult to imagine, considering her intense moral outrage, that she did not shun Irving Howbert if she knew, or wince each time she thought of the names of her beloved locations: *Cheyenne* Mountain and Canyon, or *Kiowa* Street. Yet Jackson might have been unaware of her neighbors' involvements. "The ignorance of everybody on the subject is simply astonishing—my own included—till six weeks ago, & even now I am only beginning," she wrote to Will.³² Certainly she did not hesitate to assault Indian-hating once she found it. Will expressed some concern during her exchanges with Secretary Schurz that she attacked Schurz too personally, became too sentimental about Indians, or should not go near the controversial topic of the Meeker Massacre. The Jacksons agreed that their neighbors had no sympathy for Indians and appear to have avoided discussion with them. Jackson reminded Will he was a Quaker and again compared her cause to anti-slavery. Will came around to supporting his wife's cause wholeheartedly.³³

More remarkable than had she aroused Irving Howbert or some other Sand Creek veteran, Jackson was amazed to attract letters-to-the-editor responses of none other than William Newton Byers, the founding editor of Denver's *Rocky Mountain News*, and perhaps the most determined booster for Colorado that ever was. Byers, Jackson's age and a founder of Omaha, had arrived in the 1859 Gold Rush to help found Denver. He proclaimed Colorado's virtues for settlement at every turn by every means available. His correspondence also reveals that he espoused removal or extermination of the Cheyenne and Arapaho because he perceived them as such barriers to settlement, financial success, and even statehood.³⁴ Byers had directly witnessed the results of Indian attacks in the region and did not hesitate to use the popular dehumanizing terminology for Indians. As editor, postmaster, and Chamber of Commerce founder, Byers played interesting roles in Sand Creek. When, in June 1864, a family named Hungate was killed, reportedly by Arapahos, their bodies were displayed in his post office, assisting his "yellow journalistic" efforts to engage Colorado's population in demands for war on the Cheyenne and Arapaho. Collaborative with Governor Evans and Colonel Chivington, Byers was a regular influence on the ensuing events and controversies. It was also a potential responsibility of the editor to educate Colorado with the results of all of the hearings against Chivington and Sand Creek, but Byers, of course, would not so enlighten the territory.

In his responses to H. H. for the *New York Tribune*, Byers applied his "practical knowledge" of Sand Creek to refute every aspect of H. H.'s research and conclusions, including the investigation documents, which represented "a certain selfish purpose . . . to break down and ruin certain men." (This was also Irving Howbert's interpretation of the investigations.) "If 'H.H.' had been in Denver" at the time, Byers repeated, she would have seen the results of Indians' savagery. Emotionally, relying on his own impressions and opinions rather than documents, and not hesitating to use personal attack, he recited his recollections of the events. He concluded, after also assaulting the issue of the Utes, with "His [Nathan Meeker's] life and the honor of his aged wife and virgin daughter are gone, and 'H. H.' is the champion of fiends who wrought the ruin."³⁵ Jackson found

Byers "astounding," and, after another Byers reply, "pitiful and at the same time audacious" in his repeated "lies."³⁶ Even the *Tribune* editor started to characterize Jackson's responses to Byers with bias: "'H. H.' Takes a Final Shot at Mr. William N. Byers," or "'H. H.' Scores Another Point."³⁷ What is, indeed, astounding, from a Colorado history perspective, is that these two individuals landed in this amazing war of words about Sand Creek. Jackson was so proud of it that she reproduced most of these letters as an appendix to *A Century of Dishonor* the following year.

The Indians' Harriet Beecher Stowe

Helen Hunt Jackson most admired Harriet Beecher Stowe from among her contemporary women in literature. She most wanted to be like Stowe, especially to do for Indians what Stowe did for slaves by writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In an 1884 composite photograph, "Eminent Women," Jackson stood central and Stowe sat in the foreground (see page preceeding the bibliography in this volume). Even as Jackson took on editorial battles, she planned her book about the history of American Indian policy. "This morning, the first thing that came into my mind as I waked," Jackson wrote to Will, "were the words 'A Century of Dishonor'—as if someone spoke them aloud in the room . . . I think I could do it in three months or less: I believe it would be a noble work to do . . . I feel 'led' towards it."³⁸ Jackson did write it by May 1880, and also saw President Rutherford B Hayes appoint a commission that offered reparations and a choice of reservations to the Ponca. *A Century of Dishonor: A Sketch of the United States Government's Dealings with Some of the Indian Tribes* (1881) did not bring about acclaim or reform as she hoped it might, however. In her "Author's Note," she had hoped that people, learning of the cruel truth, would "rise up and demand [fair play] for the Indian."³⁹ Even though she hedged a comprehensive history by using title words such as "sketch" and "some," it was path-breaking nonfiction, ahead of its time for historical reporting. It was her first book to blatantly bear her name. She and Will delivered copies to Congress bound in red cloth with the words from Benjamin Franklin, "Look upon your hands! They are stained with the blood of your relations."⁴⁰

In 1881–1882, Jackson traveled through Southern California on assignment for *Century Magazine*. This was her long-planned first trip to document the Spanish mission system. Exhibiting some of the harsher judgments of a social reformer, she described some San Diego Indians as “miserable, worthless beggars, drunkards, of course, and worse.” She saw them as in desperate need of help, however, and, even more directly than usual, was prepared to be that help. She believed there was “a grave danger of continued Indian massacres.” In another flurry of persuasive letters, she campaigned for and won a paid position as a Special Commissioner of Indian Affairs in Southern California. She built a team for herself and traveled through her district in order to write her report. Written from Colorado Springs, the public response to her report was another disappointment.⁴¹

Jackson also wrote about Sand Creek again, but this time as an aside in fiction, a short story for *Atlantic Monthly*. “Aunty Lane” (1882) was a pioneer woman who, among other remarkable experiences, could remember living in Denver when she “saw the men ride back from the massacre, Indian scalps hanging at their bridles, and other tokens of their barbarities, too horrible to be mentioned, proudly displayed.” Jackson interceded with her own opinion responding to Byers’ example about the Hungates. Aunty Lane “had also seen, a few days before, drawn in an open wagon through the streets of Denver, the dead bodies of some white settlers, murdered by Indians; but the first savagery did not, in her eyes, justify the second.” Jackson named the Sand Creek Massacre as the incident, and wrote that it was “one of the most fiendish massacres the world ever saw . . . in which unarmed, friendly men, with the United States flag flying over their lodges, were shot down in cold blood; women were killed, outraged, and indecently mutilated; babies, half killed and left to die.”⁴² Thus the author made multiple attempts to tell the stories only to be frustrated that they did not ignite reform.

Finally, Jackson determined that only a great novel would accomplish Indian reform on a par with what *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* had done. She wrote *Ramona* between December 1883 and March 1884, as if “possessed.” In the romantic tragedy of a California Indian girl raised by a Spanish family on their rancho, and losing

her Indian lover, Jackson hoped she had woven so much Indian reform wisdom that she would win the public outcry for which she had striven. The book was a success both serialized and in sales, but was not another *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in effect. Over time, after Jackson’s death, it became the mainstay of California literature that romanticized the “halcyon days” of the Spanish ranchos and missions. It inspired several film versions, a popular ballad, and an annual pageant. No California history class or textbook would skip over Jackson. Though she had chosen Colorado over California in her own health seeking during the tourist boom of the 1870s, her writing did more for California tourism in the long run than for Colorado’s. From that coastal state’s perspective, she became Helen of California. She died there, in San Francisco, but ever frustrated that she had not been the Indians’ Stowe. She had not caused a revolution for Indian rights, but literally died trying. On her death bed she wrote to Grover Cleveland asking him to read *Century of Dishonor* and act upon it.

Although Jackson’s illness and death were premature and unexpected, in many ways she had been preparing for death all of her life. Her working frenzy that began in 1879 exhibited urgency and coincided still with chronic ailments. In 1884, she was suffering from symptoms of menopause, bronchitis, and perhaps the stomach cancer that seems to have killed her. On June 28, she



Helen Hunt Jackson looking ill, grey-haired, and mournfully clothed, circa 1885. Like her mother she prepared for death, planned the lives of those she would leave behind, and maintained her writing and responsibilities until the last minute possible. William S. Jackson Photograph Collection, PP85-30s, Part 3, Folder 1, Photo 4, Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

fell down her stairs at home in Colorado Springs and broke her leg, laying her up and seeming to drain much of her life's energy. Being Helen, she traveled for her health, to Southern and then Northern California when she thought Southern had given her malaria. She also considered a camping trip with environmentalist John Muir. Diagnosis and urgency eluded the doctor so that he and she did not recognize the severity until late. Will made it to her side, however. The doctor also concluded that her consumptive inheritance had contributed to her health issues. Most difficult for her and Will was the "wasting away" effect of her disease that was so similar to a tubercular decline. She died on August 12, 1885.

Local Legacies: Planting Helen in Colorado Springs

Jackson had busily documented her wishes. These included posthumous publications, the burning of private papers, and recommending to Will that he marry her niece Helen, who had come to visit after a "nervous breakdown" and been a guest-hostess in their home while Jackson traveled. She left her property to Helen so that it would descend in her mother's family. She gave precise instructions about many of her treasured possessions, notably any remembrances of Rennie. She asked niece Helen not to wear mourning black. Although she was first buried in San Francisco, Will carried out his wife's plans for her reburial in Colorado Springs. She requested to be carried up Cheyenne Mountain in an open wagon with kinnickinnick over her and laid on her favorite camping spot amongst the trees. This was "'the spot I love best in the whole world.'" ⁴³

Jackson's California legacy reflected *Ramona*. Her Colorado Springs legacy is more personal. Will remained a community leader and married niece Helen Banfield, whose emotional state led to her own suicide in 1899 after one of her seven children, named Margaret from a request of Jackson's, died an infant. Another of the seven, Helen Jackson, became a popular community institution. Helen Hunt Jackson's gravesite became a Mecca for her fans. As color postcards claimed, "it was her desire that tourists visiting her grave should deposit two stones on the heap that forms her monument and take one away as a

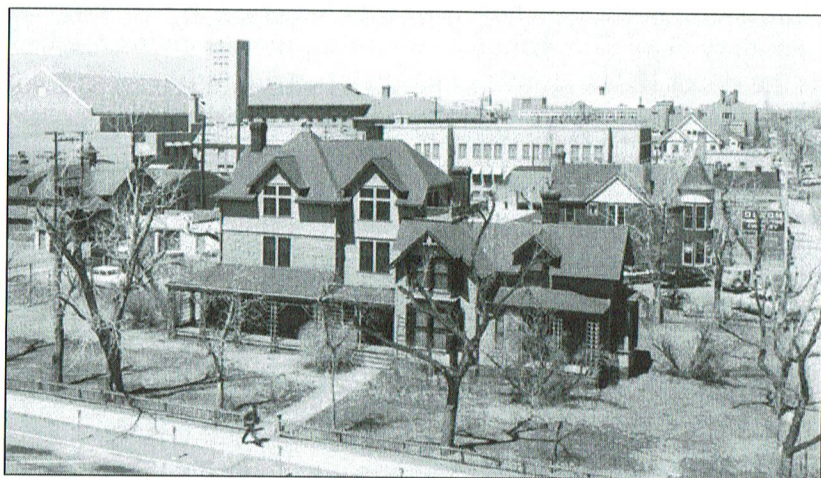
souvenir. . . . From the top of Seven Falls, in South Cheyenne Cañon, to Helen Hunt's grave is a distance of three-fourths of a mile. There is a good trail, and one can either walk or ride a burro to this spot."⁴⁴ A Colorado Springs resident described visiting the grave and her words were published in Illinois and New York: "her grave is covered with kinnickinnick, a trailing vine which grows abundantly there. . . . The back of 'H. H.'s' writing desk at her old home is profusely covered with the kinnickinnick vine which clings to her grave."⁴⁵ Indeed, Jackson's grave (near "Helen Hunt Falls") was too much of an attraction and, especially after a new Seven Falls owner charged admission, the Jackson family moved her remains to Evergreen Cemetery. The Cheyenne Mountain location remains marked as the *site* of Helen Hunt's grave.



Helen Hunt Jackson's grave near Seven Falls became such a popular tourist attraction that it occasioned many varied postcard pictures of the cairn from every imaginable angle. This one also has an inset of her portrait (upper right) and of her Kiowa Street house (lower left). Printed on the back are instructions to carry two rocks up and take one back home. Jackson's later grave in Evergreen Cemetery bears a very plain stone, perhaps in keeping with her husband's Quakerism. Postcard courtesy of Katherine Scott Sturdevant.

Perhaps it is fitting that, having been swept up and swept west by the tourist and health seeking booms, Jackson would become a tourist attraction herself, in both Colorado Springs and

California. Her Kiowa Street house fell to urban renewal, but three rooms of it, furnished with her things, were reconstructed in the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum. There was a small town named Ramona next to Colorado Springs, and a luxurious Ramona Hotel in nearby Cascade. The Helen Hunt Jackson Papers and a Southwest Studies program at Colorado College pay homage to her significance. She was in the first group inducted into the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame. Even when booster-editor William Byers edited a Colorado dictionary of biography, he dedicated the appropriate pages to laud Helen Hunt Jackson.



Will and Helen Jackson's house at 228 East Kiowa Street not long before it was lost to urban renewal. Compare to the earlier postcard inset (page 147), the Pioneers Museum exhibit (page 165), and the mantle of the exhibit interior (page 117). *Stewarts Commercial Photographers* photograph from *Special Collections*, Pikes Peak Library District, (013-1085).

It was Amherst's Emily Dickinson who characterized Jackson in a most relevant way for her Colorado Springs connection. Jackson had admonished Dickinson to publish her poetry in her lifetime, which of course she did not. Dickinson appreciated Jackson's magnanimity in calling her a great poet. Dickinson wrote a sympathy letter to Will. "Helen of Troy will die, but Helen of Colorado, never," were her oft-quoted words. "Dear friend can you walk, were the last words I wrote her. Dear friend I can fly – her immortal (soaring) reply."⁴⁶

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Notes

1. H. H., *Bits of Travel at Home* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1878, 1880 ed.), 224.
2. Sheila M. Rothman, *Living in the Shadow of Death: Tuberculosis and the Social Experience of Illness in American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 77-127.
3. *Ibid.*, 126.
4. *Ibid.*, 169-171.
5. Kate Phillips, *Helen Hunt Jackson: A Literary Life*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 16.
6. First coming to mind are Sarah Josepha Hale, who, after her husband's death, and left with a large family to support, became the editor of *Godey's Lady's Book*, and "Mother" Mary Harris Jones, who, after the loss of her husband and four children in a yellow fever epidemic, became the ardent campaigner for laboring classes. Both were Jackson's contemporaries.
7. See J. Valerie Fifer, *American Progress: The Growth of the Transport, Tourist, and Information Industries in the Nineteenth-Century West* (Chester, CT: Globe Pequot Press, 1988), 255-267.
8. Phillips, 80, 109.
9. *Ibid.*, 164-168. See also Valerie Sherer Mathes, *Helen Hunt Jackson and Her Indian Reform Legacy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 38-39.
10. Rothman, 173.
11. See especially Marshall Sprague, *Newport in the Rockies: The Life and Good Times of Colorado Springs* (Athens: Swallow Press/Ohio University Press, 1961, 1987).

12. See especially Chris Nicholl, "'My Darling Queenie . . . ' A Love Story" in Tim Blevins et al., eds., *Legends, Labors & Loves: William Jackson Palmer, 1836–1909* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Pikes Peak Library District, 2009), 69–81.

13. Phillips, 19–22.

14. Jackson quoted in Rothman, 172–173 and Phillips, 168.

15. Jackson to Charlotte Cushman quoted in Phillips, 170–171.

16. The contractors for building the house had been Joseph Dozier (who later became the grandfather of author Frank Waters) and Winfield Scott Stratton (who later became the Cripple Creek millionaire).

17. Quotes are from "Colorado Springs" chapter, *Bits of Travel at Home*, throughout. On Cheyenne Mountain and Canyon, see also Katherine Scott Sturdevant, "'Beloved Mountain': Helen Hunt Jackson and 'Cheyenne,'" *KIVA Magazine* (Fall 1997) Colorado Springs: Cheyenne Mountain Heritage Center. On the floral obsession of Jackson and early Colorado Springs, see Edwin Bathke and Nancy Bathke, "Alice Stewart Hill, Colorado Springs' First Wildflower Artist: Her Family & Her Friends," in this volume.

18. Helen Hunt to Moncure D. Conway quoted in Rothman, 174.

19. See both Mathes, *Helen Hunt Jackson* and Valerie Sherer Mathes, ed., *The Indian Reform Letters of Helen Hunt Jackson, 1879–1885* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998).

20. Carol E. Schmudde, "Sincerity, Secrecy, and Lies: Helen Hunt Jackson's No Name Novels," *Studies in American Fiction* 21 (Spring 1993), 1.

21. Rothman, 174.

22. Jackson to Ann Banfield, March 20, 1877, quoted in Phillips, 209.

23. Phillips, 220.

24. William Jackson, to Helen Hunt Jackson, August 1879, quoted in Phillips, 220–221.

25. Phillips, 223 and 328n.

26. Jackson to Higginson, January 17, 1880, quoted in Mathes, *Indian Reform Letters*, 84.

27. See Stephen Collins, "Helen Hunt Jackson and the Rhetoric of Humanization," in this volume.

28. H. H. (Jackson), "The Starving Utes," *New York Tribune*, January 31, 1880. Note that I am using and comparing the same letters as they appear in several sources. Foremost is Jackson's scrapbook of the original clippings (which appears to date to the time) "Scrap Book," BK2, Helen Hunt Jackson Papers No. 0020.7, South Vault, Colorado College Special Collections. Jackson reprinted most of the letters as

an appendix to her still-in-print book, H. H. (Helen Hunt Jackson), *A Century of Dishonor: A Sketch of the United States Government's Dealings with Some of the Indian Tribes* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1881). Another source is Mathes, *Indian Reform Letters*, which offers the surrounding private correspondence and commentary as well.

29. Jackson, Sand Creek Notebooks, 2 vols., labeled "Mrs. W. S. Jackson Brevoort Hous," Folder 3–8, Box No. 0020.3, Helen Hunt Jackson Papers, South Vault, Colorado College Special Collections.

30. For the small town comments, see Vesta W. Tutt, "Alice Bemis Taylor" in this volume. Irving Howbert recorded his experiences and viewpoints about Sand Creek, the investigations, and the aftermath in *Indians of the Pike's Peak Region* (Glorieta, N.Mex.: Rio Grande Press, 1914, 1970) and *Memories of a Lifetime in the Pike's Peak Region* (Glorieta, NM: Rio Grande Press, 1925, 1970).

31. Jackson to William S. Jackson, December 19, 1879, quoted in Mathes, *Indian Reform Letters*, 49.

32. Jackson to William S. Jackson, December 29, 1879, quoted in Mathes, *Indian Reform Letters*, 66.

33. Phillips, 228–229.

34. William N. Byers and Family Papers, Western History and Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library.

35. William N. Byers, "The Starving Utes, A Reply to the Questions Asked by H. H.," *New York Tribune*, February 6, 1880.

36. Jackson, to Whitelaw Reid, February 22, 1880 and February 29, 1880, quoted in Mathes, *Indian Reform Letters*, 99, 110. See again Stephen Collins, in this volume.

37. Whitelaw Reid in headers for Jackson, "The Sand Creek Massacre," *New York Tribune*, February 28 and "A Small Matter to Murder an Indian," date unreadable, Scrap Book, Colorado College Special Collections.

38. Jackson to William S. Jackson, December 19, 1879, quoted in Mathes, *Indian Reform Letters*, 49.

39. Jackson, *Century of Dishonor*, Author's Note.

40. Mathes, *Helen Hunt Jackson*, 33–37.

41. Evelyn I. Banning, "Helen Hunt Jackson in San Diego," *Journal of San Diego History* 24 (Fall 1978), 457–467.

42. Helen Hunt Jackson, "Aunt Lane," *Atlantic Monthly* (May 1882) 616.

43. Jackson quoted in Phillips, 272.

44. Postcard, "Helen Hunt's Grave," author's collection.

45. Unknown, "Mrs. Helen Hunt Jackson's Grave," *New York Times*, April 18, 1886.

46. Emily Dickinson, to William Jackson draft, quoted in Phillips, 274.



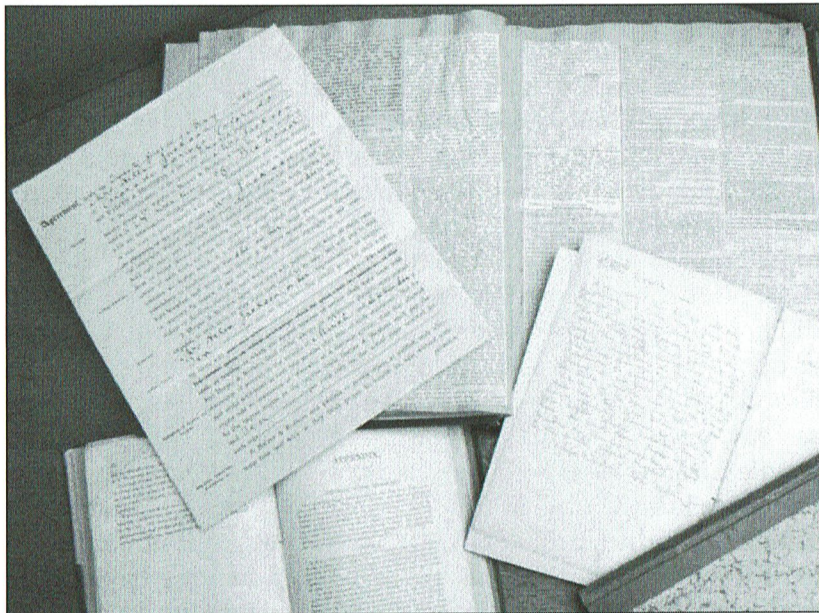
A painting of Helen Hunt Jackson. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division
Washington, D.C., (LC-USZ62-51087).

Helen Hunt Jackson & the Rhetoric of Humanization: Creating a Rhetorical Space Between Traditional Feminine & Masculine Spheres in the Late 19th Century

Stephen Collins

Helen Hunt "H. H." Jackson would be faced with a challenge unlike that of any of the other women activists of the 19th century. Helen Hunt would defend Native Americans against the actions of the United States government, first, in a series of editorials published in the *New York Tribune* from 1879 to 1880, particularly addressing the massacre at Sand Creek in Colorado in 1864, and then in her seminal work in defense of Native Americans, *A Century of Dishonor*, in 1881. In raising the issue of the mistreatment of Native Americans, Hunt operated at a distinct disadvantage compared to other social justice reformers and activists at the time. Unlike oppressed slaves in the South or oppressed women throughout the country, who were both championed by women in the 19th century, Native Americans did not appear to most white Anglo-Americans to be in any way as oppressed as those groups. If anything, they appeared to be less victims and more perpetrators. Whites perceived Indians as "savages" who at their best might be converted into some servile Christian condition and at their worst were nothing more than base killers of the men, women, and children moving west under God's divine Providence. Helen Hunt, thus, not only had to deal with the challenges facing a woman moving beyond the traditional feminine sphere of influence and into the much more traditional masculine sphere of public action, but she had to overcome a deep and residing bias against Native Americans. This chapter will focus on Hunt's response to those challenges as she worked to become one of the most vocal advocates for Native Americans in the 19th century. In particular, this article will focus on a selection of the 1879–1880 editorials which ran in the *New York Tribune* specifically in 1880 between Helen Hunt and William H. Byers.

Among the challenges facing Hunt was that advocacy on behalf of Native Americans flew in the face of a strong sentiment against indigenous peoples in the United States. That sentiment was fueled by attitudes and discourse which effectively marginalized and dehumanized Native Americans. According to James Waller in *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing*, some of the factors contributing to one people's ability to kill another include "us-them thinking" and moral disengagement. The latter includes the creation of a moral justification, the dehumanization of victims, and the euphemistic labeling of evil actions.¹ A brief account of these factors is warranted.



Documents courtesy of Colorado College Special Collections, counter-clockwise from lower right: two Sand Creek notebooks, scrapbook of Sand Creek/Utes editorials, publishing contract with Harper Bros. for *Century of Dishonor*, early edition of same turned to appendix of reprinted editorials. Photo by Katherine Scott Sturdevant.

Us-them thinking creates an artificial bifurcation between two different peoples that highlights differences, marginalizes similarities, and creates distance between people. Whereas rhetoric often seeks to create commonality and shared experience, the rhetoric of us-them thinking tries to do exactly

the opposite. It seeks to divide by selecting the reality upon which it chooses to focus. That reality stresses difference almost exclusively. As Kenneth Burke, a 20th-century rhetorical theorist, pointed out in *Language as Symbolic Action*, our understanding of reality often involves choices whether conscious or unconscious: "Even if any given terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a *deflection* of reality."² Us-them thinking works diligently to deflect attention away from similarities between people when framing reality. As the thinking goes, the less similarity one group has with another, the less need that group has to care for the other. Conversely, anyone wishing to combat us-them thinking needs to *select* similarities between people when framing reality.

The formulation of a moral justification creates a space in which people can operate within an ethical framework, thus indemnifying them against any actions which would otherwise be perceived as immoral and unacceptable. So William N. Byers, editor of the *Rocky Mountain News*, who responded to H. H.'s scathing indictment of Colorado troops' behavior in a letter to the editor, set out a moral justification for the attack at Sand Creek which would include in part a reference to the killing of the Hungate family earlier in 1864:

If "H. H." [Helen Hunt] had been in Denver in the early part of that Summer, when the bloated, festering bodies of the Hungate family — father, mother and two babies — were drawn through the streets naked in an ox-wagon, cut, mutilated and scalped — the work of those same red fiends who were so justly punished at Sand Creek. . . . I think there would have been one little word of excuse for the people of Colorado.³

Byers went on to write in the same editorial that half of the homes on the Platte River stood "desolate" that summer and that "H. H." should have seen the "tithe of the tears that were caused to flow."

Dehumanization makes it easier to kill people by reducing them to a lower and more easily killed form of life. Colonel John

M. Chivington, who led the attack on Sand Creek, purportedly told his troops to kill even the children in the Indian camp, because "nits make lice." Euphemistic labeling of evil actions ensures that people will not have to face up to the realities of the killing in which they are engaged. The "ethnic cleansing" of Kosovo and the "final solution" of Hitler gave little indication of the violence committed against the people of Kosovo or the Jews in Europe. The less any group has to think about the reality of killing, the easier it is to do. Each of these factors helped shape the negative perceptions held by Anglo-Americans.

Although Helen Hunt would simultaneously have to build up the image of Native Americans while overcoming the entrenched negative perceptions of her time, she also had to deal with the cultural constraints placed upon women during the 19th century. The range of opportunities available to a female activist to gain a voice and articulate a stance toward an issue of social justice was limited. As the moral priestess of the household, it was a common view at the time that a woman should remain in the home, untarnished by the ways of the world whenever possible, thus maintaining her moral purity. Paradoxically, this same moral purity was the catalyzing agent for women's purposeful, albeit slow, encroachment into the world. As the vessel of moral purity in society, it was the woman of the house who not only raised her children morally and rejuvenated her husband's moral wherewithal each night when he arrived home, but also made the most appropriate social commentary of the day. She occupied a high moral ground which ultimately gave her an effective *a fortiori* argument (an argument by degree) for her intrusion into the realm of social justice criticism: if a woman is the most pure, moral force in our society, then there is no better person to speak out on issues of morality.

Several noteworthy examples stand out of women reaching beyond the bounds of the home to comment on issues of moral concern, most notably Lucretia Mott, Angelina and Sarah Grimké, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Sojourner Truth, Francis Willard, and Ida B. Wells. Their persuasiveness depended necessarily upon the rhetorical tools which male critics could least successfully

countermand. Whenever possible women tried to rely upon the authority of Biblical citations—which they could readily quote in their position as moral priestess—and on the testimony generated by men of considerable and usually unquestioned credibility including that of the founding fathers. They also placed a great deal of value on their own experiences whenever possible which was problematic for anyone other than another woman to refute. In appropriating those experiences of womanhood, women built inductive arguments, one specific example at a time, until they had made the intended, generalized claim. They also wielded deductive argument with great skill on the assumption that if you could not deny the premises of an argument, then you must accept the claim that resulted from those premises. The validity of deductive argument existed, at least in theory, independent of the sex of the individual making the argument.

None of this is to say that women did, indeed, make the great strides that they wanted to make at the time, with the possible exception of Harriet Beecher Stowe and her publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Even the best deductive arguments and well-constructed syllogistic reasoning could not sway the judge and jury during Susan B. Anthony's trial for voting in a presidential election in 1872. What many of these women did do, however, was lay out the arguments and persuasive appeals which would eventually make a difference. As Thomas Paine had laid out the talking points and arguments for independence which patriots would use throughout the thirteen colonies, the disseminated arguments and appeals of women would multiply in their own 19th-century "viral" way, through newspapers, women's societies, speaking engagements, and conventions.

Helen Hunt, thus, not only had to overcome the predominantly dehumanizing images of Native Americans at the time, but also the constraints placed on women who sought to shift issues of morality into the much more masculine sphere of public policy. Her rhetorical efforts at crafting her message would do both. In formulating a feminine rhetoric that selected a reality emphasizing the experiences of women and children, Helen Hunt would keep humanizing images in front of her readers as she laid out in graphic, testimonial detail the

atrocities committed at Sand Creek. By citing the testimony of men in a well reasoned, rational, and non-emotional manner, Helen Hunt appropriated a masculine voice and, even if just temporarily, occupied the more masculine sphere normally denied to her sex.

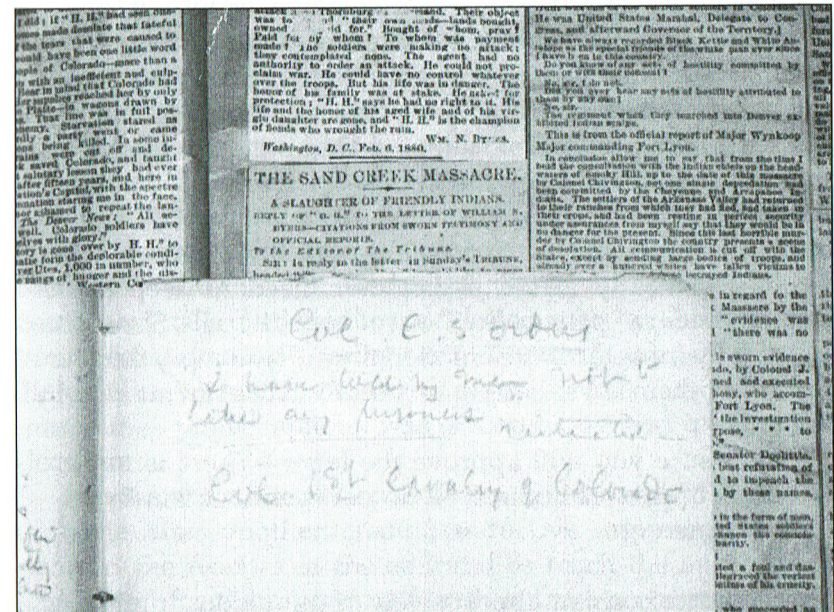
A strong focus on the women and children killed at Sand Creek did more than create a sympathetic pathos toward Native Americans. It also broke down the us-them dichotomy that made Native Americans look different than their white counterparts. Additionally, it served to humanize each of the victims that "H. H." highlighted in her editorials. Helen Hunt was careful to select testimony which described the hardships facing Native American women and children, particularly on, although not limited to, the day of the attack. The testimony selected showed women and children in very vulnerable and very human terms. One citation used by Helen Hunt came from the report of the Indian Peace Commission in 1868:

It scarcely has its parallel in the records of Indian barbarity. Fleeing women holding up their hands and praying for mercy were shot down; infants were killed and scalped in derision; men were tortured and mutilated in a manner that would put to shame the savages of interior Africa.⁴

In one instance, she cited an account told to one of the members of the Senate Committee at the time of their investigation:

One of the squaws had escaped from the village, and was crouching behind some low sage brush. A frightened horse came running toward her hiding place, its owner in hot pursuit. Seeing that the horse was making directly for her shelter, and that she would inevitably be seen, and thinking that possibly if she caught the horse, and gave him back to the owner, she might thus save her life, she ran after the horse, caught it, and stood holding it till the soldier came up. Remembering that with her blanket rolled tight around her, she might possibly be

taken for a man, as she put into the soldier's hand the horse's bridle, with the other hand she threw open her blanket enough to show her bosom that he might see that she was a woman. He put the muzzle of his pistol between her breasts and shot her dead: and, afterwards, was "not ashamed" to boast of the act.⁵



Jackson's notes on Sand Creek with the resulting letter to the editor from her scrapbook suggest that she made a conscious choice to focus on a local Colorado example. Courtesy Colorado College Special Collections. Photo by Katherine Scott Sturdevant.

In another citation, Helen Hunt quoted the testimony of Major Scott J. Anthony who was in charge of Ft. Lyon to the southwest of Sand Creek and a willing participant in the attack in November of 1864.

There was one little child probably three years old, just big enough to walk through the sand. The Indians had gone ahead, and this little child was behind following after them. The little fellow was perfectly naked, travelling in the sand. I saw one man get off his horse at a distance of about seventy-five yards and draw up his

rifle and fire. He missed the child. Another man came up and said: "Let me try the son of a b-----, I can hit him." He got down off his horse, kneeled down, and fired at the little child, but he missed him. A third man came up and made a similar remark, and fired, and the little fellow dropped.⁶

The testimony selected by Hunt also worked on several other levels. First, it cited men close to the events surrounding the attack, thus limiting in part criticism of her based upon her sex. She reported and framed male testimony, temporarily moving outside of her own feminine sphere. In a letter written to Whitelaw Reid, editor at the *New York Tribune*, immediately after William N. Byers' first response to her editorials, Helen Hunt was clearly aware of her own need to keep a more feminine side, a "personality," out of her editorials. She seemed to paint Byers as the more emotionally inflammatory debater of the two of them as she sought to press Reid to print her rebuttal:

I am sure you will approve the letter—There is not a word of personality in it—I do not even mention Byers by name.

The letter consists almost solely of quotations from the *sworn testimony* given before the Committees on the S[and] C[reek] Massacre: and of quotations from the Secretary [sic] own Reports of the Dept. of the Interior.

I am sure as Byers letter was so direct & gross an attack on me & my statements you will allow me the privilege of an immediate defense of both[.] [Helen Hunt's emphasis.]⁷

Her remarks have a pointed sense of irony to them. If her conscious decision to not be emotional and not show "personality" seemed to be a masculine effort, then by unstated inference, Byers' efforts were more emotional and traditionally feminine. Hunt was certainly aware that her editorial efforts had a masculinizing effect which suppressed her more feminine

and much more typically emotional side. In a letter written to her husband just over a month before her editorial exchanges with Byers specifically on Sand Creek, Hunt commented on the recent editorial exchange she had with Secretary of the Interior, Carl Schurz in December of 1879:

I can hardly tell you the praise I am getting for the *manly method* in which I have stated things—the *quiet tone*—the *repression*: all this is part of the inspiration which is at work on me—for it is *not my temperament to work that way*.⁸ [Emphasis added.]

In a revealing moment later in the same letter, Hunt indicates a much more familiar and feminine way she would discuss the matter with her husband if they were not apart: "I wish I could have talked all this over with you with my arms around your neck & kissing you between every two words."⁹ Clearly Helen Hunt's choice to move temporarily into the traditional masculine, public sphere was a conscious and purposeful decision.

Second, the presentation in Helen Hunt's editorials of one example after another created inductive arguments which allowed the readers of the editorial to reach the appropriate conclusion for themselves rather than have a woman state it directly and in a more masculine manner for them. As Karlyn Kohrs Campbell has noted in *Man Cannot Speak For Her*, inductive argument was one of several characteristics of a feminine, 19th-century rhetoric:

[Concerning a feminine construction of rhetoric,] It will tend to be structured inductively.... It will invite audience participation, including the process of testing generalizations or principles against the experiences of the audience. Audience members will be addressed as peers, with recognition of authority based on experience . . . and efforts will be made to create identification with the experiences of the audience and those described by the speaker.¹⁰

Although women activists such as Susan B. Anthony used deductive argument because of its reliance on premises which could be very difficult to refute if an argument was well planned, the inductive argument simply required the sharing of multiple examples on areas where women had experience and then passively letting readers or audience members draw their own conclusions. Thus, a woman could not be accused of telling a man what to think. He could reach the conclusion for himself. Although Helen Hunt did not use inductive arguments exclusively, they did predominate in her editorials, showing a female social activist encroaching upon masculine rhetorical techniques while still utilizing less direct methods more appropriate at the time for her gender.

Third, by focusing on the experiences of women and children at Sand Creek, Hunt was operating well within the realm of her own female sphere of experience, thus locating her editorials closer to the appropriate moral scope of her 19th-century womanhood. Noticeably lacking from her editorials is any lengthy mention of atrocities committed against men. Although this might have been a conscious choice to focus on more emotionally shocking and persuasive examples of atrocities against women and children, Helen Hunt's credibility might have suffered if she had placed much emphasis on the experiences of men on that fateful day. Comments directed toward the experiences of Native American men at Sand Creek would have likely been seen as presumptuous on her part and outside of the realm of her experience and expertise; as a woman, however, Hunt could speak much more freely about the experiences of fellow women and the children within their charge.

A final note is necessary concerning the adoption of a voice within these editorials. Helen Hunt, in claiming her own dual feminine and masculine voice for these exchanges, also claimed a voice for Native Americans as well, one which would work to counter euphemistic labeling and also work to re-humanize perceptions of Native Americans in the Anglo-American community. The opening of her January 31, 1880, editorial shows that she recognized in the *New York Tribune* the presence of what James Waller would later call euphemistic labeling:

To the Editor of the Tribune,

SIR: In your capital editorial note this morning, you say: "The two most serious hindrances in a satisfactory solution of the Indian question are Indians and white men. Any problem is embarrassing when one of its factors is addicted to scalping men, torturing women, and braining children.["] The problem becomes still more embarrassing when "one" of the "factors" has no way of making known to the people what the other "factor" has done to him."¹¹

Helen Hunt called attention to the word choice, "factor," to describe the parties involved at Sand Creek and especially the lack of voice from the Native American side of events. The use of "factors" to describe the parties in the conflict took away personal conceptions of humanity. In the process, the use of the euphemistic term, "factor," reduced the culpability of Anglo-Americans, who had a much clearer and more predominant voice in their culture. Today we see this form of analytical calculus in the use of such terms as "collateral damage" in times of war. As "factors," Native Americans without ready access to the public forum were reduced to a non-human, voiceless entity. Hunt thus claimed, albeit presumptuously, a voice for herself and all Native Americans although she did so as a self-appointed surrogate.

Helen Hunt's 1880 editorial debate against William N. Byers in the *New York Tribune* is significant for how it simultaneously sought to humanize Native Americans in the eyes of Anglo-Americans while struggling to give her a voice outside of her traditional, feminine sphere. Her fight to express that voice created an ambiguous, dualistic space between the feminine and masculine spheres through which she could move as she created and crafted her arguments. Her ability to do so showed a determined resourcefulness on her part to move as much as she could between both the feminine and masculine spheres of her time. In the process, Helen Hunt left her mark not only on 19th-century feminist rhetoric, but also on American history.

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Notes

1. James Waller, *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing* 2nd ed. (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2007), 198-212.

2. Kenneth Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1966), 45.

3. William Byers, "'The Starving Utes': A Reply . . ." *New York Tribune*, February 6, 1880. Note that quoted editorials are available in the appendix to H. H. [Helen Hunt Jackson], *A Century of Dishonor: A Sketch of the United States Government's Dealings with Some of the Indian Tribes* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1881) and "Scrap Book," [Mark Twain's Patent Scrap Book c. 1878] BK2 Helen Hunt Jackson Papers No. 00207 South Vault, Colorado College Special Collections.

4. H. H., "The Sand Creek Massacre: 'H. H.' Takes a Final Shot at Mr. William N. Byers and His Account of the Affair," *New York Tribune*, February 28, 1880. See note 3 above for locations of these editorials.

5. Ibid.

6. H. H., "The Starving Utes: More Questions for the People by 'H. H.' What White Men Have Done and Are Doing to Indians in Colorado," *New York Tribune*, January 31, 1880. See note 3.

7. Helen Jackson to Whitelaw Reid, February 22, 1880, in Valerie Sherer Mathes, ed., *The Indian Reform Letters of Helen Hunt Jackson* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 99.

8. Helen Jackson to William S. Jackson, December 19, 1879, in Mathes, 50.

9. Ibid.

10. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her*, Volume I: *A Critical Study Of Early Feminist Rhetoric* (New York, N.Y.: Praeger, 1989), 13.

11. H. H., "The Starving Utes: More Questions for the People by 'H. H.' What White Men Have Done and Are Doing to Indians in Colorado," *New York Tribune*, January 31, 1880.



The Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum contains a reconstruction from Helen Hunt Jackson's 228 East Kiowa Street home. The rooms are decorated with Jackson's original furnishings. Photo by Diana Francese.