

# A Picture of Progress

Samantha Kidder and Abigail Carper

Senior Division

Group Exhibit

Student-composed word count: 500

Process paper word count: 500

## **Process Paper**

It becomes easy to desensitize ourselves when learning history, especially in schooling; we become obsessed with the importance of facts. Amidst the dates and big names, we lose the value. Throughout this process, we have sought to define the value of history. We were not looking for a numerical impact or the story that affected the most lives today, but rather untainted reality. To us, history is when people are affected, whether positively or negatively, when forgotten and remembered. And so, we searched for a topic that demonstrated the complex relationship between history and individuals. Our aspirations rest in telling an untold story, in honoring representation, and realizing our world is more shaped by individuals than dates.

Our topic for this year rises from Idaho foundations. In the 1890s the Dawes Act took effect, bringing allotment to the Nez Percé reservation in Idaho. With allotment came Jane Gay, who arrived in Idaho exposed only to traditional Euroamerican ideals towards race and gender. Her perceptions of these ideals were twisted in the years 1889 to 1893 through her relationship with the Nez Perce. After leaving Idaho, Gay challenged perspective in the chronicles of her inner conflict, creating a literary masterpiece with revolutionary photography. She titled her work *Choup-Nit-Ki: With the Nez Percés*.

On our exhibit we emphasize imagery. In the present and past, images serve to define the subject in one moment. Euro-technology, specifically photography, enabled the justification of assimilation by defining the Native Americans as ‘savage’ or ‘civilized.’ While the identity of the Nez Perce was societally confined to this rhetoric, Gay presented fluidity. She broke this representational barrier in acknowledging their humanity and contradicting existing imagery. We

represented her work on our exhibit and media, allowing space for the subjects to reclaim their integrity. Gay's photographs and writings find historical value and impact as they serve to dispel the rigid Native identity, honoring this people for all they endured and overcame.

*Choup-Nit-Ki* remained within Gay's family until 1951, when the work was donated to Radcliffe college. Its complex publishing history, consistently creating versions that only discuss Alice Fletcher, only recently revealed a full digitized copy of *Choup-Nit-Ki*. This copy's rarity in public mind and research allowed us to truly act as historians. We came to our own conclusions after reading the primary sources, building our historical argument on new foundations. While it was a challenge to uncover a local topic with little precedent, we were ecstatic to be creating, analyzing, and reporting new research. One of the amazing opportunities we were able to have, was to go to the Idaho State Historical Society and physically hold Gay's papers. The emotions we experienced here cannot be expressed. The greatest privilege of historians, our personal mission and passion, is to know a past person and time so intimately. We feel that in choosing a topic that required true investigation we became historians in our own right; transport ourselves, and we hope our audience, through time and history, to an untold story.

## Annotated Bibliography

### Primary Sources:

“An Act to Provide for the Allotment of Lands in Severalty to Indians on the Various Reservations (General Allotment Act or Dawes Act),” Public Laws, 49th Congress, 2nd Session, National Archives, 8 February 1887,

<https://www.archives.gov/historical-docs/todays-doc/index.html?dod-date=208>.

As demonstrated by our exhibit, breaking a barrier can exist mentally, legislatively, or socially. Jane Gay challenged and personally broke all three of these barriers. This primary source, the Dawes Act, deeply reflects the public perception of the Nez Percé and the power of representation. From this source, we pulled both a photograph of the handwritten act and direct quotes. Overall, this primary source describes the barriers inherently faced by Gay and the Nez Percé and was crucial to our development of the background section.

Beeton, “Complete Etiquette for Ladies: A complete guide to visiting, entertaining, and travelling, with hints on courtship, marriage and dress,” 1876.

Historians face the dynamic challenge of time. Not only in attempts to break the barriers between the audience and a moment they never experienced, but in presenting contributing factors that were once habitus: we chose our topic based on this challenge. This guide, published in 1876, efficiently uses space while representing culture for Caucasian women in the late 1800’s, specifically Jane Gay. The societal expectation, centered on the ideals of the title, opened a catalyst through time for us as researchers which we aim to present to our audience.

Curtis, Edward S. “The North American Indian, being a series of volumes picturing and describing the Indians of the United States and Alaska.” New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1970



(c. 1907-20). Edward S. Curtis Collection, Library of Congress,  
suppl.<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/search/?st=grid&co=ecur>.

The depth to which Gay processes and exposes the humanity, struggle, and emotion within each of her subjects creates a stunning collection. To fully appreciate her work, it was imperative we understood the photographic climate and the project image of Native Americans. Edward Curtis is a famous photographer who devoted many of his years to capturing Natives all throughout America. While there is historical recognition that he romanticized, locked in time, and saw the Nez Percé as either ‘savage’ or ‘civilized,’ his work still defines an ‘Indian’ for many. This collection of Native Americans, including Nex Percé, is acknowledged at the bottom of our exhibit in the ‘Exposing the Native Image.’

“Edward S. Curtis Collection,” American Women: a Library of Congress Guide for the Study of Women's History and Culture in the United States. Library of Congress, published 2001.

[https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhhtml/awpnp6/curtis\\_coll.html](https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhhtml/awpnp6/curtis_coll.html).

This collection, provided by the Library of Congress, cemented our representation of Edward Curtis and his photography of Native Americans. Specifically we furthered our ‘Exposing the Native Image’ impact in using the Library’s analysis and description of his work.

Gay, Jane. “Author’s Note,” Draft Scrapbook, Idaho State Archives: Box MS671. Letter 1. Pg. 1-6.

While in previous years we have completed topics with a large international scale, we wanted to see what new challenges and opportunities a local topic would offer. After reaching out to an archivist with the Idaho State Historical Society, Ms. Danielle Grundle, we were offered personal interview time. During this meeting, Ms. Grundle explained that there are files we were able to access from the museum. In a most surreal moment, we were lead to a viewing room where we got to hold and examine Jane Gay’s original draft of her scrapbook. National History Day is a love of ours for many reasons,

for the research process, privileged we are to learn about someone so intimately, and to physically open a door through time. To hold her documents, see the pencil scratches and errors and edits, brought us back to the moments where Gay was reflecting on her time in Idaho. As these documents are not digitized, we gained exclusive information on her thoughts and presented this to our audience.

Gay, Jane. "Choup-nit-ki," Jane Gay Dodge Papers, 1861-1951. A-20. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University. Cambridge, [iiif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:3463914\\$35i](https://www.iif.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:3463914$35i).

Jane Gay's papers hold a complex publishing history, as such her work is misconstrued and improperly documented. When we discovered this source, through a paper trail at the Boise State University library, we were ecstatic to see a fully digitized version of her completed scrapbook, *Choup-nit-ki*. Showcased on our exhibit as our most prevalent primary source, we are thankful to be able to base our research on the work itself. The raw quotes, along with her handwriting and illustrations, allowed us to further draw the author out from behind the photographs and story.

Gay, Jane. "E. Jane Gay Photograph Collection," Idaho State Historical Society, <https://idahohistory.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16281coll20/search/searchterm/Jane%20Gay>.

Jane Gay's digitized scrapbook has just recently become accessible, as such browsing the log and pages can be difficult. The Idaho State Historical Society has digitized some of her photographs into a searchable database (a project in the working we got to see behind the scenes when we traveled to the museum to meet Ms. Grundle.) We chose many of the photographs to place on our exhibit and highlight in our media slideshow from this collection.

Gay, Jane. "With the Nez Perces: Alice Fletcher in the Field, 1889-92." Bison Books, 1987.

In terms of our research, *Choup-Nit-Ki's* complex publishing history allowed us to truly act as historians. The scrapbooks Gay created were kept within generations until 1987. This primary source, the scrapbook stripped of photographs and handwriting, is an abridged version of Gay's workings. Titled "With the Nez Perces: Alice Fletcher in the field," this version removed most of Gay's commentary and artistry, focusing on Fletcher's allotment work. Many of our secondary sources are based on this work, and are not capable of fully distinguishing Gay. Today we have the recent ability to access a digitized version of her scrapbook, along with exclusive artifacts at the Idaho State Archives, allowing our own historical analysis to be created. We feel we were able to play the role of historian in seeking out new sources while also corroborating our theories.

Hanks, Steve. "A legion of protesters stand their ground as first of two megaload shipments of oil refinery equipment is halted," The Salt Lake Tribune, 8 August 2013, 8:56 pm.

<https://archive.sltrib.com/article.php?id=56711030&itype=CMSID>.

Native Americans face the barriers placed by misrepresentation on and off the reservations today. They must continuously fight for their way of life, one that was altered by Euroamerica and is still being encroached on, portraying the connection from Gay's time to now. This photograph was taken in 2013 as Nez Percé protested on a state highway that passed through their land. Gay's photographs acknowledge injustice, and we believe should be published to further bring representation and knowledge of what these people must still fight for.

Jackson, Andrew. "'Indian Removal': President Andrew Jackson's Message to Congress," Our Documents, 1830, [www.ourdocuments.gov/doc\\_large\\_image.php?flash=false&doc=25](http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc_large_image.php?flash=false&doc=25).

President Andrew Jackson's speech, given in 1830, demonstrates the political and social atmosphere of the 19th century. The rhetoric and sentiment used in his presentation to

Congress, urging action to assimilate the 'Indians,' define an entire people synonymously to pests and vermin. As leaders' words often give light to the people's minds, it was a crucial cornerstone in the development of Native eradication. This is the progression we developed through our 'Desire for progress,' side of the exhibit. Native Americans became a problem that needed to be solved, and without correct representation, America passed the Dawes Act that sent Gay to Idaho.

McNeel, Jack. "Idaho's Nez Perce Reservation," 1 June 2018, Idaho Senior Independent, <https://idahoseniorindependent.com/nez-perce-reservation/>.

While Native American life has been irreversibly altered, their perseverance must also be honored. New waves of Nez Percé awareness and education are preserving their life in their fight to retain their unique identity. It is fundamental to comprehend when reading our exhibit that the representation denied to the Nez Percé never took away their value and strength: they have overcome barriers on their own. Gay's work does promote a method to undermining societal racism, and can alter perceptions outside of the reservation to continue honoring their strength.

Nast, Thomas. "On the Plains - War Whoops and scalps," Harpers Weekly, Library of Congress, 8 November 1877, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3a03620/>.

This brief pictorial narrative, of an "Indian on the plains," illustrates the representation of Native Americans. Both today and then, images serve to project identity in one instantaneous moment. The power represented here shows how Euro-technology and communication altered America's perspective of Native American. Displaying this on our exhibit reveals the role media played, and the image of association to the Native Americans. This is what Gay's photographs and writings served to dispel, and why they hold power today.

Nez Perce Tribe Information Systems Department, "Who we are," Historic Collection, <https://www.nezperce.org/>.

The Dawes act provided the circumstances for economic and cultural loss seen in the Nez Percé today, a grasp the past holds on reality now. The negative and racist imagery that enabled the Dawes act is still prevalent. We used a statement from the tribe called “Who we are,” to conclude our entire project and contrast stereotypes. The representation Gay documented in her photographs carry the validation and acknowledgement of the real Nez Percé individual, and of the assimilation they endured.

“Opening Sale of Lots,” The Grangeville globe, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Idaho State Historical Society, 24 November 1909, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86091099/1909-11-24/ed-1/seq-7/#date1=1836&index=1&rows=20&searchType=advanced&language=&sequence=0&words=Nez+Perce&proxdistance=5&date2=1922&ortext=&proxtext=&phrasertext=nez+perce&andtext=&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1>).

Our mission throughout our research, throughout creating the exhibit and choosing sources, was to not forget the true value of history. We didn’t want to be lost in the sea of facts and numbers our world tells us is so important, we instead anchored ourselves to specific people, stories, and quotes. From this 1909 advertisement, we viewed the commodification of Nez Percé land. We gathered this newspaper with quotes from Jane Gay and secondary sources to show the practical application of the legislation and allotment.

“Pamphlet: What a Cake of Soap Will Do,” Procter and Gamble, Ohio, Cincinnati. National Museum of American History, ca 1883, [https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah\\_688596/](https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_688596/).

There exist abhorrent realities in each splice of history. In our attempt to connect the audience and ourselves to Jane Gay, we required both a visual and verbal path. This pamphlet illustration and poem details the instant recognition and association of Native Americans to ‘savages,’ and provides greater context around the Dawes act and the purpose of allotment- “*to clean America.*” This source is our foundation for

understanding the slippery slope society takes to create stereotypes, and why Gay's photography and literary representation was barrier breaking.

PBS, "Out of the Shadows," Season 2 Episode 6, PBS: IDAHO EXPERIENCE, 18 July 2019, <https://www.pbs.org/video/out-of-the-shadows-lqqsj9/>.

This was our first encounter with Jane Gay. This small local documentary, categorized as a primary source due to its narration and film composed of primary interviews and sources. Due to the resources available, an abridged version of Gay's work that contained only sections on Alice Fletcher, this film did not express the true extent of her work. What truly caught our hearts though, as historians and NHD competitors, was the explanations from present Nez Perce who discussed what allotment documentation means to them, their identity, and their heritage. We felt that the liberty she provides in her capture of their assimilation would be a privilege and challenge to present, even though this film didn't highlight Gay or this connection.

### **Secondary Sources:**

Bell, Morgan F. "Some Thoughts on 'Taking' Pictures: Imagining 'Indians' and the Counter-narratives of Visual Sovereignty," *Great Plains Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2011, University of Nebraska Press, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/23534587](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23534587).

Consciously creating the background, narrative, and impacts (with only 500 of our own composed word count) is a challenge we appreciate through NHD. We want to use the most impactful words to efficiently display information, and so we used this secondary source, a paper by Morgan Bell, summarizing the historical and current effects representation in photography has on Native Americans. This provides greater value to the work of Jane Gay.

Burns, Ken. "The Outcome of Our Ernest Endeavors," *PBS: Public Broadcasting Service*, 2001, [www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/program/episodes/eight/ourearnest.htm](http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/program/episodes/eight/ourearnest.htm).

This secondary source served as a foundation for our research. We began our understanding of Gay by desperately looking for any factual sources. As her story isn't widely known or publicized, despite having the famous director Ken Burns, we found primary sources scarce and secondary sources containing bias without factual background. This overview, guided by those few who are experts on Idaho allotment, contained documented events and accounts discussing Alice Fletcher, Gay's companion in Idaho, and served to expand our keyword search to find further sources. It is important to note that this is based on the abridged version of Gay's work published in 1987, centralizing the focus on Fletcher, and does not include most of Gay's commentary or photography.

Caroline, Carley D. "LETTERS FROM THE FIELD: ALICE CUNNINGHAM FLETCHER IN NEZ PERCE COUNTRY, 1889-1892 ." *Northwest Anthropological Research Notes*, 2001, [static1.squarespace.com/static/5a3be988017db211a8409aea/t/5af1dc96575d1fc82c44399e/1525800115512/Cunningham 35.1.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a3be988017db211a8409aea/t/5af1dc96575d1fc82c44399e/1525800115512/Cunningham+35.1.pdf).

This secondary source provided us with historical corroboration. We used this work throughout our exhibit to provide the conscience yet emotional descriptions we needed to display the story of Jane Gay. It referred us to primary sources and other websites we were able to use in our research, while consistently producing historically accurate facts. The timeline of Alice Fletcher's life allowed us to verify which events occurred, and in what order, based on the diaries and contributions of others outside of *Choup-Nit-Ki*.

"The Dawes Act," Nebraska Studies, NPR Stations, [www.nebraskastudies.org/1875-1899/the-dawes-act/](http://www.nebraskastudies.org/1875-1899/the-dawes-act/).

This short article by NPR advanced our education on the legislative processes behind the Dawes Act. Shown on our exhibit as development for allotment, the crucial understanding that this act was created from prominent American values cements the viewer in a different reality. While it provided us with a greater appreciation to Gay for

challenging the majority and world she lived in, it also created a realistic connection to a time period past.

Grundle, Danielle. Personal Interview. 7 February 2020.

As NHD researchers, we have been ecstatic to open ourselves to a local topic. The unique challenges of few secondary resources and incredible opportunities has revealed more of the historical process to us. We are genuinely thankful to Danielle Grundle with the Idaho State Historical Society who gave us exclusive access to documents and research at the museum. Jane Gay was originally uncovered by local Idaho historians who traveled to D.C and New Hampshire, unraveling her story and finding her full scrapbook after over 20 years of research. Many of the documents they've collected haven't been published outside of the archives, and as such much of the previous workings on Jane Gay are incomplete. We were able to view both Gay's rough draft to *Choup-Nit-Ki* and Ms. Gundles's draft to a full collection of Gay's photos. Being able to meet someone who both is a historian and passionate towards Gay was such a invigorating experience. While we were not able to include any of her work-in-progress on our board, her guidance connected us to this time and person long past: a privilege only historians get.

Harding, Wendy. "Migratory Subjectivity in E. Jane Gay's *Choup-nit-ki*, With the Nez Percés," *European Journal of American Studies*, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejas.11038>.

Jane Gay broke barriers of race, sex, and social class, and she did so in style. Her scrapbook, put together after her time in Idaho, is a historical treasure. This source gave us the terminology to describe and appreciate both the literary genius (for her time and now) and the artistic depth to which she illustrated and represented the Nez Percé. Her clever method of splitting her persone to represent conflict is presented on our board through this secondary source written by Wendy Harding.



Hirschfelder, Arlene. Molin, Paulette F. "I is for Ignoble: Stereotyping Native Americans," Ferris State University, Jim Crow Museum, 22 February 2018, <https://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/native/homepage.htm>.

Images hold power within a society. While they can never take away an individual's humanity, they often diminish the contributions and inherent value in the eyes of the majority. This secondary source exemplifies how images form stereotypes that hold root in a society for generations after they're produced. Still, there exists racism founded a hundred years ago. This accentuates the importance of publishing and acknowledging Jane Gay's work, as her representation could be used to break these bonds.

Marshall, Christine. "Jane Gay Dodge Papers," 1882-1951; item description, dates. A-20, folder #. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge.

Jane Gay's complex documentation of herself and the low critical acclaim has created a trap of historical misunderstandings. This source allowed us to conclude Gay's life under the section "The Author." Furthermore, though not presented on the exhibit for clarity, the difference between Emma Jane Gay (the photographer who traveled to Idaho) and her namesake Jane Gay Dodge (Gay's niece who assisted her with the scrapbook.)

"Native American History: European Perceptions," Native American Voices, Digital History, Accessed through: Internet Archive's Way Back Machine, 28 December 2011, [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/native\\_voices/nav2.html](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/native_voices/nav2.html).

This archived website demonstrated the 'contrasting stereotype' of fascination and hatred towards Native Americans. Much of history is surrounded by controversy, which can make our representation of yesterday a confusing web of ethics. In intentional balance and placement, we distanced both the viewers and ourselves from the pejoratives and personal implications in respect. We wanted to create a step ladder for others to process what the primary sources are truly meaning. Thus, it plays a crucial role in transporting us back to the 1880's, and viewing the era and projected image of Native Americans as a whole.

Picotte, Tristan. "The True Impact of the Dawes Act of 1887," Partnerships with Native Americans, 7 February 2017,

<http://blog.nativepartnership.org/the-true-impact-of-the-dawes-act-of-1887/>.

Secondary sources are incredibly valuable to us as researchers. Being able to glean from previous opinions and connections enabled us to build onto historical and personal theories, rather than tear down or contradict knowledge. This source summarized the intentions of the Dawes act, and how it was presented as solvency to the 'Indian Problem.' This served to finalize our own conclusions drawn from the presented primary sources.

Simonsen, Jane E. "The Cook, the Photographer, and Her Majesty, the Allotting Agent: Unsettling Domestic Spaces in E. Jane Gay's *With the Nez Perces*," *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory*, Volume 58, Number 2, Summer 2002.

Jane Gay was a complex woman. The very way in which she recorded herself, and the complex publishing history, makes knowing Gay impossible (even when ignoring the century separating our lives.) She masked herself in her literary devices, and choosing her as a project was daunting. This paper assisted us in our illustration of the Cook and the Photographer, at the top, middle section of our exhibit, as the author focused on the distinguishing of the two.

Smith, Deanna. "Historicism: Anthropological Theories," Contributors: Scruggs, Joseph. Berry, Jonathan. Lewis, Thomas. *Anthropology*, 24 April 2017, [anthropology.ua.edu/theory/historicism](http://anthropology.ua.edu/theory/historicism).

As we accumulated information on Gay and the Nez Perce we never wanted to leave out key information, or to leave our audience confused. We used this source to concisely define our anthropological term that gave foundation to the beliefs of yesterday. To present a cohesive story, as our audience is separated by time, culture, and beliefs: allotting the room to Evolutionism and New Historicism provide the rationale and societal context necessary to knowing why the Dawes act even occurred. We aim to fully

envelop ourselves as researchers in the time of our subject, to analyze why actions were taken and how this draws parallels to today, and secondary sources are incredibly valuable to us in doing so.

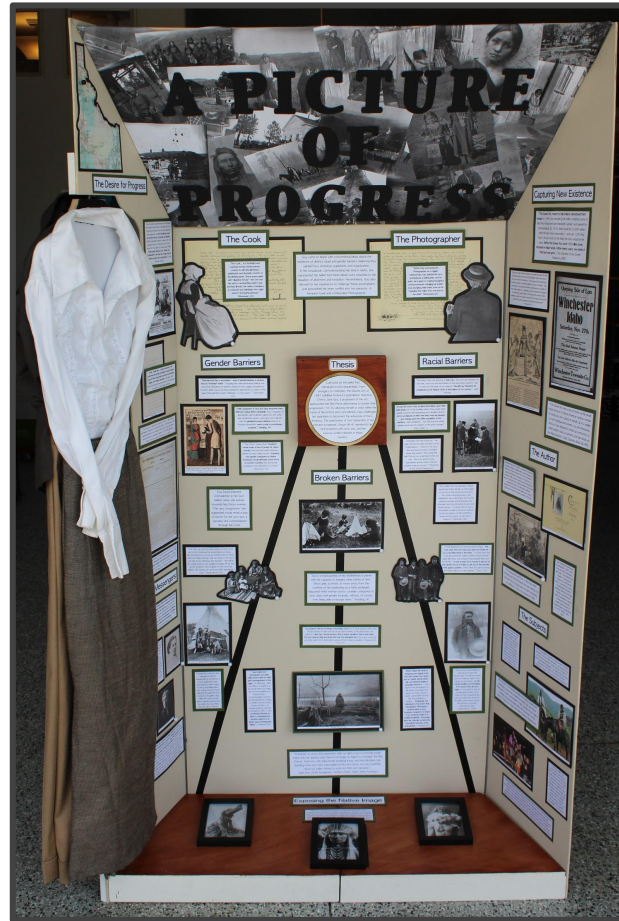
Tonkovich, Nicole. "Parallax, Transit, Transmotion: Reading Race in the Allotment Photographs of E. Jane Gay." University of California, San Diego, 13 July 2015, MELUS: doi:10.1093/melus/mlu012.

As highschool historians, we understand the importance of corroborating our own analysis and interpretations with other sources, ones based both on objectivity and subjectivity. This paper from Nichole Tonkovich, with the University of California, uses quotes directly from Gay's scrapbook to support her conclusion that Jane Gay existed within a state of transit, represented in the Cook and Photographer. This allowed us to gain confidence in our own analysis, and also to use her efficient explanations to thoroughly cover the topic.

# Exhibit Entry Information

<b>Title:</b>	A Picture of Progress
<b>Name(s):</b>	Abigail Carper and Samantha Kidder
<b>Division:</b> (Junior/Senior)	Senior
<b>Individual/ Group:</b>	Group
<b>Number of Student Composed Words on Exhibit:</b>	500
<b>(Optional) Link to Any Audio or Video on Exhibit (no more than 3 minutes total):</b>	<a href="https://vimeo.com/421792838">https://vimeo.com/421792838</a>

# Picture of Entire Exhibit



## Picture of Exhibit Headboard



# Thesis/Historical Argument

Cultivated by the belief that individuals evolve sequentially, from savagery to civilization, the Dawes Act of 1887 solidified America's assimilation objective. Jane Gay, a self-taught photographer, traveled to the Nez Percé reservation in Idaho to witness the allotment process. By allowing herself to exist within the frame of discomfort and contradiction, Gay challenged and broke representational barriers of the Nez Percé people. Her intimate scrapbook *Choup-Nit-Ki: With the Nez Percés*, vividly illustrates her confrontations with race, sex, and her historical photographs that influence the Nez Percé image today.

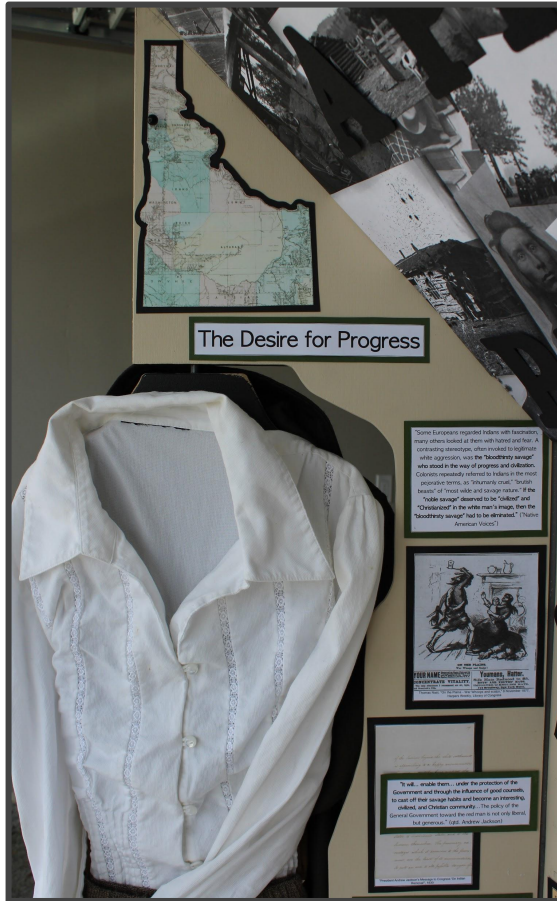


# Picture of Left Panel of Exhibit





# Picture of Left Panel of Exhibit

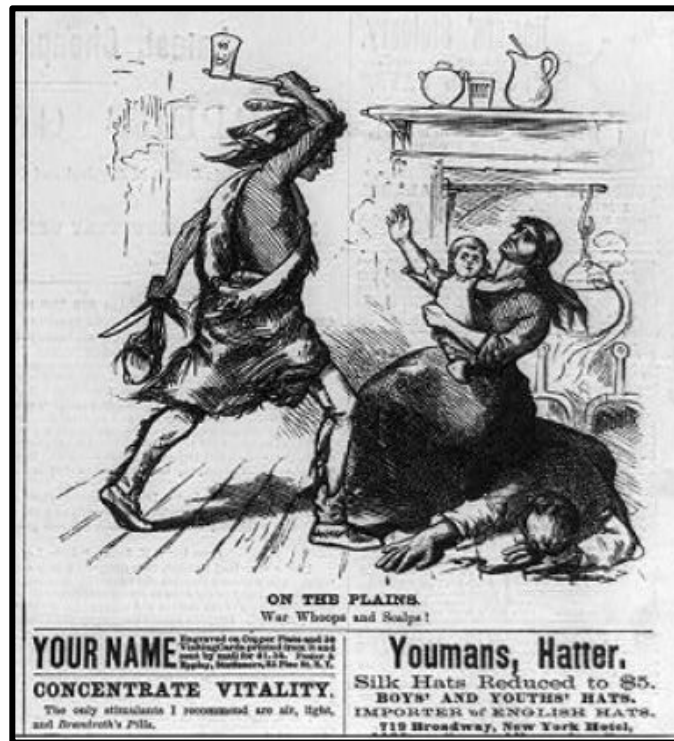


## [The Desire for Progress]

"Some Europeans regarded Indians with fascination, many others looked at them with hatred and fear. A contrasting stereotype, often invoked to legitimate white aggression, was the **'bloodthirsty savage' who stood in the way of progress and civilization**. Colonists repeatedly referred to Indians in the most pejorative terms, as 'inhumanly cruel,' 'brutish beasts' of 'most wilde and savage nature.' If the **"noble savage' deserved to be 'civilized' and 'Christianized' in the white man's image, then the 'bloodthirsty savage' had to be eliminated.**" ("Native American History: European Perceptions")

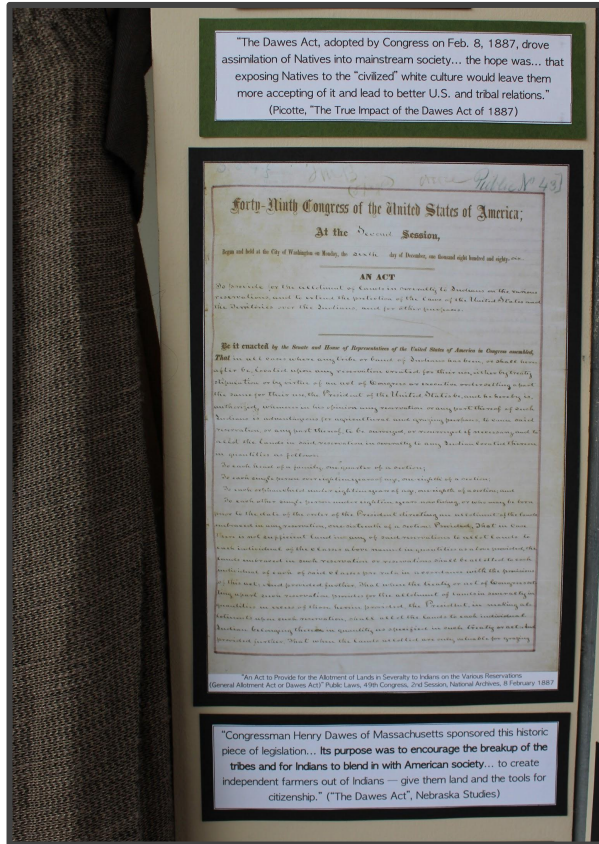
**"It will... enable them...** under the protection of the Government and through the influence of good counsels, **to cast off their savage habits and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community...**The policy of the General Government toward the red man is not only liberal, but generous." (Jackson, "Indian Removal")

# Left Panel 1 of 3: Photographs



Thomas Nast, "On the Plains - War Whoops and scalps," 8 November 1877

## Picture & Text on Left Panel of Exhibit 2 of 3



## [The Desire for Progress]

"The Dawes Act, adopted by Congress on Feb. 8, 1887, drove assimilation of Natives into mainstream society... By granting citizenship to those who took the land, the hope was... that exposing Natives to the 'civilized' white culture would leave them more accepting of it and lead to better U.S. and tribal relations." (Picotte, "The True Impact of the Dawes Act of 1887")

“Congressman Henry Dawes of Massachusetts sponsored this historic piece of legislation... **Its purpose was to encourage the breakup of the tribes and for Indians to blend in with American society...** to create independent farmers out of Indians — give them land and the tools for citizenship.” (“The Dawes Act,” Nebraska Studies)

**Amidst societal desire for progress, the allotment process symbolized an evolutionist bias and degradation of the Native American image. Jane Gay's work on the reservation, from 1889 to 1892, forced her to confront the contradictions and conformities of her life. Her memoir *Choup-nit-ki: With the Nez Percés*, written years later, personifies stereotypes and emotion to reveal the new perspectives and broken barriers Gay herself reached.**

# Picture & Text on Left Panel of Exhibit 3 of 3



## [The Messengers]

**"In 1889... two Eastern women arrived at the Nez Percé reservation in Idaho determined to implement the Dawes Act. Her companion was Jane Gay, a sometime poet who had learned the art of photography to document their time with the Indians. They had come, they believed, to 'save' the Nez Percé from themselves -- by dividing up their land and making them homesteaders."** (Burns, "The outcome of Our Earnest Endeavors")

Alice Fletcher was employed for ten years by the Bureau of Indian Affairs as a Special Indian Agent to carry out allotment on Indian reservations under the Dawes... Allotment entailed three objectives: 1) to register every Nez Percé man, woman, and child; 2) to grade the reservation land as to agricultural or grazing; and 3) to allot land to each registered Nez Percé." (Caroline, 56)

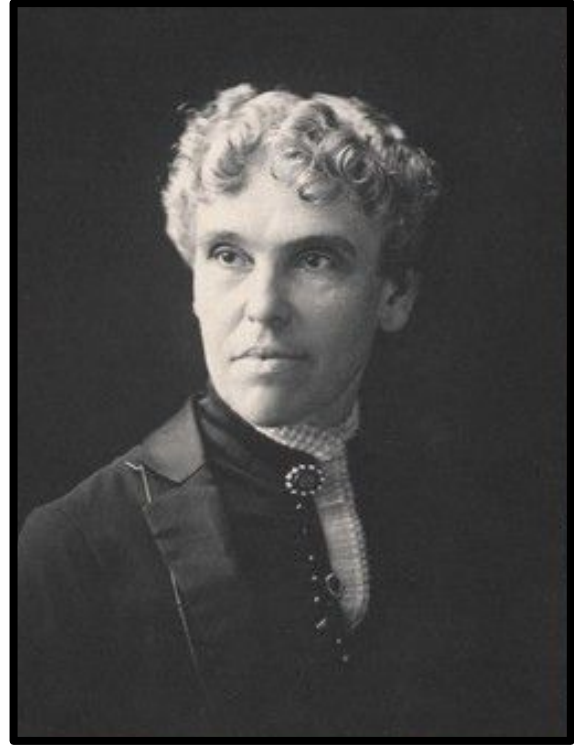
"E. Jane Gay was there unofficially, having failed to obtain a government appointment as the party's photographer. Besides tending to Fletcher's domestic arrangements... **Gay made photographic records of Fletcher's activities, the land, and its inhabitants. Several years later, with the collaboration of her niece, Emma Gay, E. Jane Gay compiled a selection of her correspondence and photographs into an epistolary memoir entitled Choup-nit-ki: With the Nez Percés...** Innovative features like the shifting focalization, the splitting of the writing subject into multiple personae, and the comedy of contradictions challenge conventions governing genre and gender and destabilize the fiction of unitary identity on which life writing is traditionally based." (Harding, 1)



## Left Panel 3 of 3: Photographs



Gay, "Her Majesty- The Allotting Agent," *Choup-nit-ki*




Gay, "The Author," *Choup-nit-k*

# Picture of Center Panel of Exhibit


### The Cook

The Cook is a character who is often overlooked in the history of the American West. He is the one who feeds the pioneers, the soldiers, the miners, and the cowboys. He is the one who keeps the fires burning and the food coming. He is the one who is responsible for the health and well-being of the entire community. He is the one who is often the first to notice a problem and the last to be heard from.




### The Photographer

The Photographer is a character who is often overlooked in the history of the American West. He is the one who captures the moments of the pioneers, the soldiers, the miners, and the cowboys. He is the one who keeps the memories alive and the stories going. He is the one who is often the first to see a problem and the last to be heard from.




### Gender Barriers

Gender barriers are the obstacles that women face in the American West. They are the barriers that prevent women from participating in the same activities as men. They are the barriers that prevent women from being taken seriously. They are the barriers that prevent women from achieving the same level of success as men.




### Racial Barriers

Racial barriers are the obstacles that people of color face in the American West. They are the barriers that prevent people of color from participating in the same activities as white people. They are the barriers that prevent people of color from being taken seriously. They are the barriers that prevent people of color from achieving the same level of success as white people.




### Thesis

The thesis of the exhibit is that the American West was a place of opportunity and challenge for all people, regardless of their gender or race. It was a place where people could make their own lives and create their own futures. It was a place where people could overcome the barriers that stood in their way and achieve their dreams.

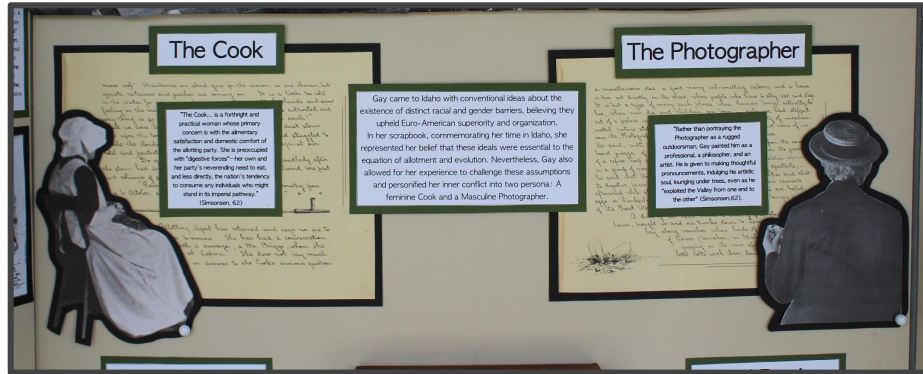


### Broken Barriers

Broken barriers are the obstacles that have been overcome in the American West. They are the barriers that have been broken down and the paths that have been opened up. They are the barriers that have been broken down and the paths that have been opened up. They are the barriers that have been broken down and the paths that have been opened up.



# Picture & Text on Center Panel 1 of 4



## [The Cook]

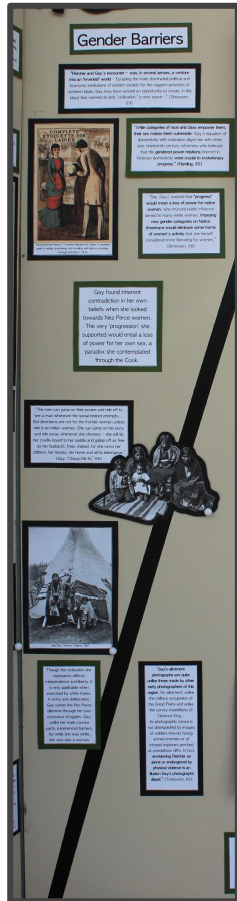
“The Cook... is a forthright and practical woman whose primary concern is with the alimentary satisfaction and domestic comfort of the allotting party. She is preoccupied with ‘digestive forces’—her own and her party’s neverending need to eat, and less directly, the nation’s tendency to consume any individuals who might stand in its imperial pathway.” (Simonsen, 62)

**Jane Gay came to Idaho perceiving only conventional ideas about distinct racial and gender roles, believing they upheld Euroamerican superiority and organization. After leaving Idaho, Gay used her encounter to twist perception and perspective. Through a collection of letters, memories, and commentary, called *Choup-nit-ki*, Gay chronicled her inner conflict with the Nez Percé image into two persons: A feminine Cook and a masculine Photographer. In this scrapbook, she portrays a crucial transition in thought through exposure and discomfort.**

## [The Photographer]

“Rather than portraying the Photographer as a rugged outdoorsman, Gay painted him as a professional, a philosopher, and an artist. He is given to making thoughtful pronouncements, indulging his artistic soul, lounging under trees, even as he ‘exploited the Valley from one end to the other.’” (Simonsen, 62).

# Picture & Text on Center Panel 2 of 4



## [Gender Barriers]

"Fletcher and Gay's encounter... was, in several senses, a venture into an 'inverted' world... Escaping the male-dominated political and economic institutions of eastern society for the rugged campsites of northern Idaho, Gay may have sensed an opportunity to create, in this place that seemed to lack 'civilization,' a new space." (Simonsen, 59)

"While categories of race and class empower them, their sex makes them vulnerable. Gay's equation of domesticity with civilization aligns her with other late-nineteenth-century reformers who believed that the gendered power relations inherent in Victorian domesticity were crucial to evolutionary progress." (Harding, 35)

"She [Gay] realized that 'progress' would mean a loss of power for native women, who enjoyed public influence denied to many white women. Imposing new gender categories on Native Americans would eliminate some forms of women's activity that she herself considered more liberating for women." (Simonsen, 58)

**Gay found inherent contradiction in her reality when she looked towards Nez Percé women. The very 'evolution' she viewed as progress entailed a loss of power for her own sex when pushed upon the 'lesser' culture. Gay uses ironic observations from the Cook to portray this flaw in her own society.**

"The men can jump on their ponies and ride off to see a man whenever the social instinct prompts.... But diversions are not for the frontier woman unless she is an Indian woman. She can jump on her pony and ride away whenever she chooses... she will tie her cradle-board to her saddle and gallop off as free as her husband; freer, indeed, for she owns her children, her horses, her home and all its belongings." (Gay, "Choup-Nit-Ki," 65)

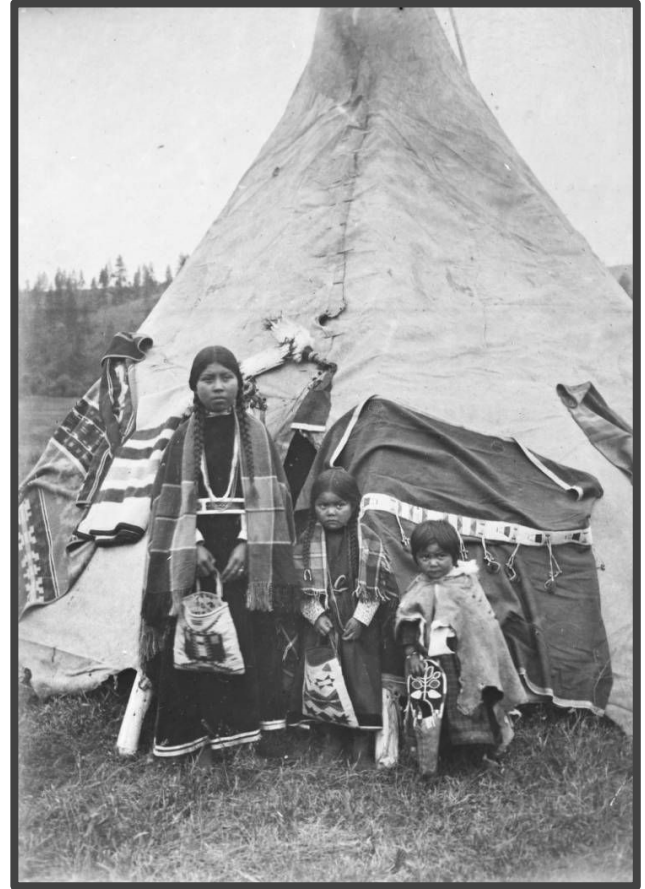
**"Well... here we are and it is lonesome, it is queer, and the longer we stay the queerer it grows. Our energies are worn out in trying to get a start. There is no fulcrum whereon to rest a lever, no reliable data to be found. We are in an irresponsible world, where everything hangs in the air -- and the air is full of ominous rumors." (Gay, "Choup-Nit-Ki," 17)**



# Center Panel 2 of 4: Photographs

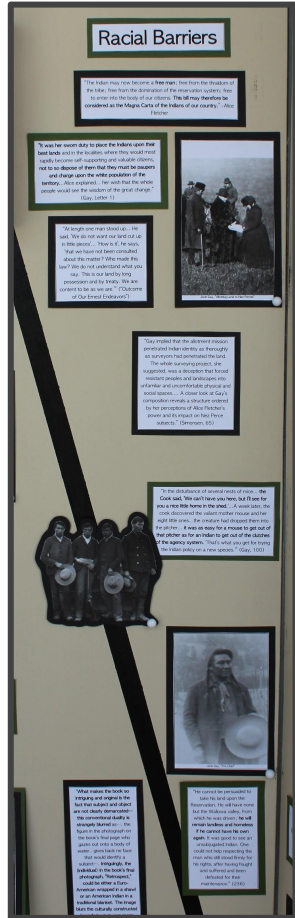


Gay, "Nez Perce Indians and sick children," Idaho State Historical Society



Gay, "Women, children, tipis," Choup-Nit-Ki

# Picture & Text on Center Panel 3 of 4



## [Racial Barriers]

"The Indian may now become a free man; free from the thralldom of the tribe; free from the domination of the reservation system; free to enter into the body of our citizens. This bill may therefore be considered as the Magna Carta of the Indians of our country." (qtd. Alice Fletcher, Burns)

**"It was her sworn duty to place the Indians upon their best lands** and in the localities where they would most rapidly become self-supporting and valuable citizens, **not to so dispose of them that they must be paupers and charge upon the white population of the territory...**Alice explained... her wish that the whole people would see the wisdom of the great change." (Gay, "Author's Note")

"At length one man stood up... He said, 'We do not want our land cut up in little pieces...How is it', he says, 'that we have not been consulted about this matter? Who made this law? We do not understand what you say. This is our land by long possession and by treaty. We are content to be as we are.'" (Gay, "Author's Note")

**"Gay implied that the allotment mission penetrated Indian identity as thoroughly as surveyors had penetrated the land. The whole surveying project, she suggested, was a deception that forced resistant peoples and landscapes into unfamiliar and uncomfortable physical and social spaces... A closer look at Gay's composition reveals a structure ordered by her perceptions of Alice Fletcher's power and its impact on Nez Perce subjects."** (Simonsen, 65)

"In the disturbance of several nests of mice... the Cook said, 'We can't have you here, but I'll see for you a nice little home in the shed.'...A week later, the cook discovered the valiant mother mouse and her eight little ones...the creature had dropped them into the pitcher... **it was as easy for a mouse to get out of that pitcher as for an indian to get out of the clutches of the agency system. 'That's what you get for trying the indian policy on a new species.'**" (Gay, "Choup-Nit-Ki," 100)

"He cannot be persuaded to take his land upon the Reservation. He will have none but the Wallowa Valley, from which he was driven; he will remain landless and homeless if he cannot have his own again. It was good to see an unsubjugated Indian. One could not help respecting the man who still stood firmly for his rights, after having fought and suffered and been defeated for their maintenance." (Gay, "Choup-Nit-Ki," 236)

# Center Panel 3 of 4: Photographs



Gay, "Allotting Land to Nez Perces," Idaho State Historical Society



Gay, "The Chief," Idaho State Historical Society



Gay, "Carlisle and Chimawe Students from Lapwai," Idaho State Historical Society

# Picture & Text on Center Panel 4 of 4

## [Broken Barriers]

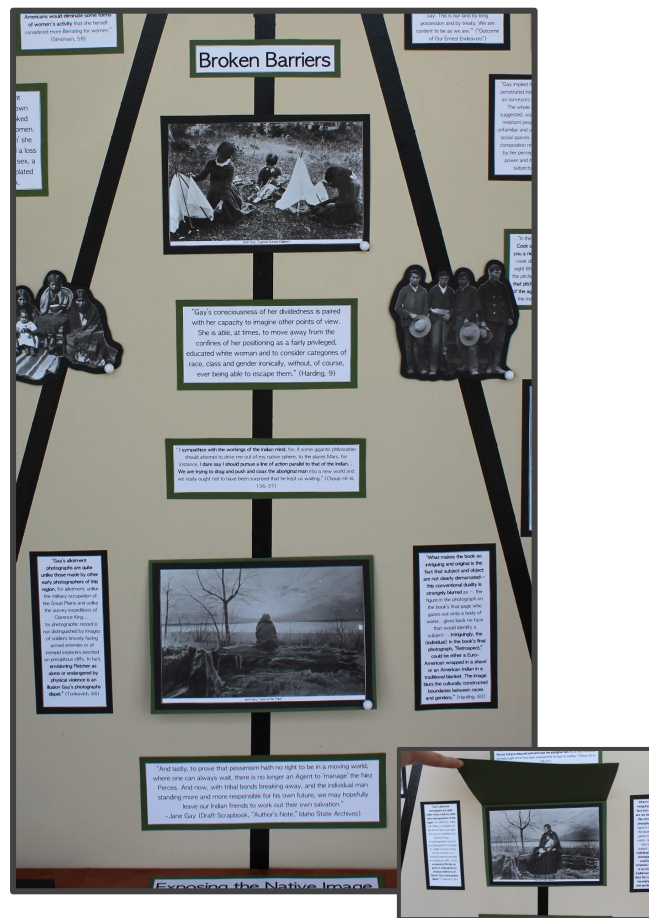
"Gay's consciousness of her dividedness is paired with her capacity to imagine other points of view. She is able, at times, to move away from the confines of her positioning as a fairly privileged, educated white woman and to consider categories of race, class and gender ironically, without, of course, ever being able to escape them." (Harding, 9)

"I sympathize with the workings of the Indian mind, for, if some gigantic philosopher should attempt to drive me out of my native sphere, to the planet Mars, for instance, I dare say I should pursue a line of action parallel to that of the Indian... We are trying to drag and push and coax the aboriginal man into a new world and we really ought not to have been surprised that he kept us waiting." (Gay, "Choup-nit-ki," 136-37)

"Gay's allotment photographs are quite unlike those made by other early photographers of this region... Its photographic record is not distinguished by images of soldiers bravely facing armed enemies or of intrepid explorers perched on precipitous cliffs. In fact, **envisioning Fletcher as alone or endangered by physical violence is an illusion Gay's photographs dispel.**" (Tonkovich, 66)

"What makes the book so intriguing and original is the fact that subject and object are not clearly demarcated—this conventional duality is strangely blurred as.... the figure in the photograph on the book's final page who gazes out onto a body of water.. gives back no face that would identify a subject.... **Intriguingly, the [individual] in the book's final photograph, 'Retrospect,' could be either a Euro-American wrapped in a shawl or an American Indian in a traditional blanket. The image blurs the culturally constructed boundaries between races and genders.**" (Harding, 60)

"And lastly, to prove that pessimism hath no right to be in a moving world, where one can always wait, there is no longer an Agent to 'manage' the Nez Perces. And now, with tribal bonds breaking away, and the individual man standing more and more responsible for his own future, we may hopefully leave our Indian friends to work out their own salvation." (Gay, "Author Note")





## Center Panel 4 of 4: Photographs



Gay, "Allotting Land to Nez Percés," Choup-Nit-Ki

## Center Panel 4 of 4: Photographs (continued)

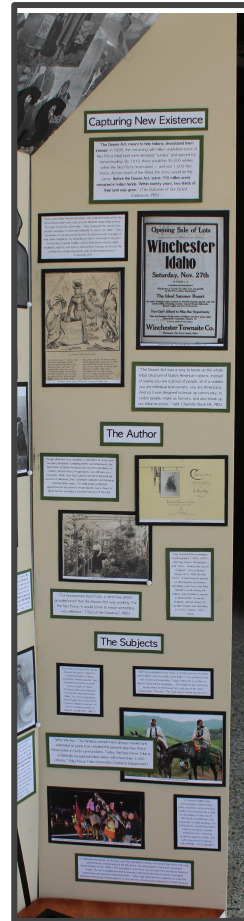


Gay, "Retrospection," Choup-Nit-Ki

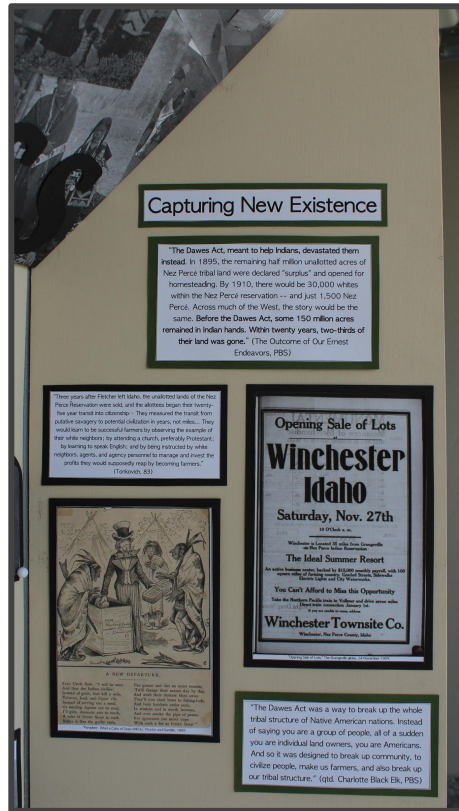


Gay, "Indian Madonna," Choup-Nit-Ki

# Picture of Right Panel of Exhibit



# Picture & Text on Right Panel 1 of 3



## [Capturing New Existence]

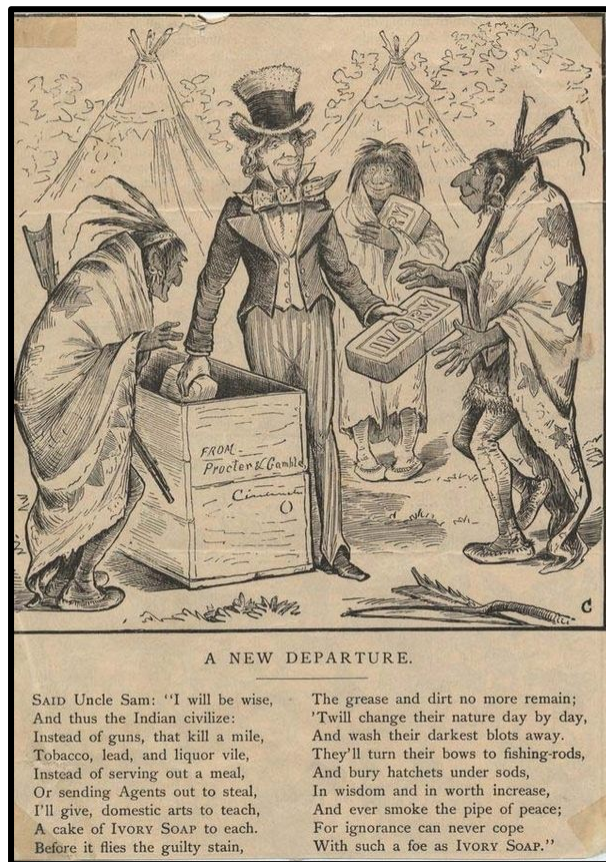
**"The Dawes Act, meant to help Indians, devastated them instead.** In 1895, the remaining half million unallotted acres of Nez Percé tribal land were declared "surplus" and opened for homesteading. By 1910, there would be 30,000 whites within the Nez Percé reservation -- and just 1,500 Nez Percé. Across much of the West, the story would be the same. **Before the Dawes Act, some 150 million acres remained in Indian hands. Within twenty years, two-thirds of their land was gone.**" (Burns, "The Outcome of Our Ernest Endeavors")

"Three years after [leaving] Idaho, the unallotted lands of the Nez Perce Reservation were sold, and the allottees began their twenty-five year transit into citizenship... They measured the transit from putative savagery to potential civilization in years, not miles... They would learn to be successful farmers by observing the example of their white neighbors; by attending a church, preferably Protestant; by learning to speak English; and by being instructed by white neighbors, agents, and agency personnel to manage and invest the profits they would supposedly reap by becoming farmers." (Tonkovich, 83)

"The Dawes Act was a way to break up the whole tribal structure of Native American nations. Instead of saying you are a group of people, all of a sudden you are individual land owners, you are Americans. And so it was designed to break up community, to civilize people, make us farmers, and also break up our tribal structure." (qtd. Charlotte Black Elk, PBS)

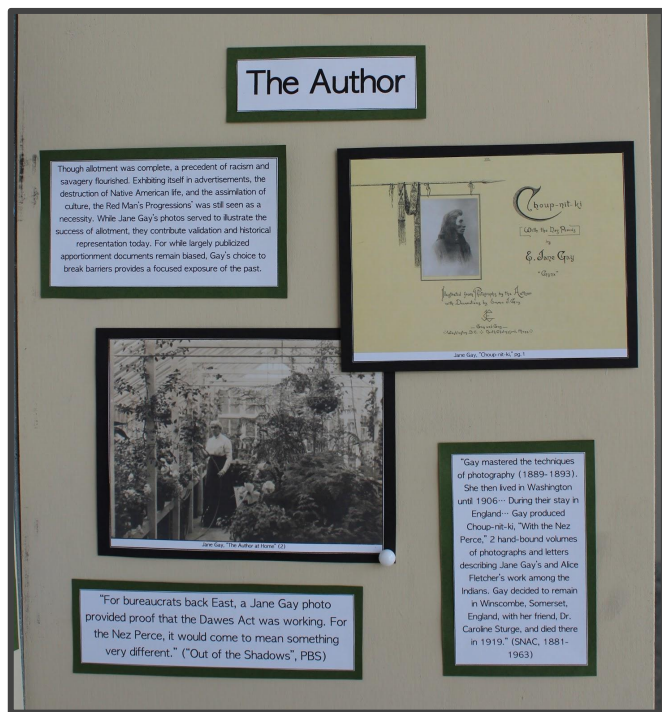


# Right Panel 1 of 3: Photographs



"Pamphlet: What a Cake of Soap Will Do,"  
Procter and Gamble, 1883

# Picture & Text on Right Panel 2 of 3



## [The Author]

**With allotment complete, a precedent of racism and savagery flourished. Exhibiting itself in advertisements and assimilation; the Native American identity became rooted in misrepresentation. Gay's choice to break barriers through representation provides a focused exposure of the past that bleeds into the value of today.**

"Gay mastered the techniques of photography (1889-1893). She then in England... produced 'Choup-nit-ki, With the Nez Perce,' 2 hand-bound volumes of photographs and letters describing Jane Gay's and Alice Fletcher's work among the Indians. Gay decided to remain in Winscombe, Somerset, England... and died there in 1919." (Marshall, 3)

"For bureaucrats back East, a Jane Gay photo provided proof that the Dawes Act was working. **For the Nez Perce, it would come to mean something very different.**" (Out of the Shadows," PBS)

## Right Panel 2 of 3: Photographs



Gay, Choup-nit-ki, Sequence 558

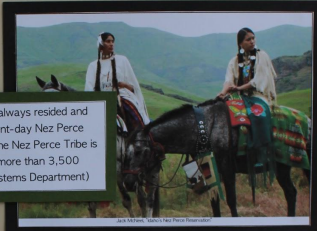
# Picture & Text on Right Panel 3 of 3

## The Subjects

"Soon after its inception the camera became the primary vehicle for producing images of Native Americans. Without question, late nineteenth and early twentieth century images of Native Americans have been integral in forming the stereotypical ideal Indian. For many immigrants, these images have frozen North America's indigenous people, not only in a timeless past but, in essence, outside time." (Bell, 1)

"With the assimilation of so many, a certain amount of culture and tradition was lost within some tribes – a by-product of the loss of land and separation. Today, there are a number of dead or dying Native languages... This might be the most long-lasting effect of the Dawes Act, and one of the more unfortunate." (Picotte, "The True Impact of the Dawes Act")

"Who We Are: The Nimiipuu people have always resided and subsisted on lands that included the present-day Nez Perce Reservation in north-central Idaho. Today, the Nez Perce Tribe is a federally recognized tribal nation with more than 3,500 citizens." (Nez Perce Tribe Information Systems Department)



A common belief in the contemporary United States often unspoken and unconscious, implies that everyone has a right to use Indians as they see fit... This sense of entitlement, this expression of white privilege, has a long history, manifesting itself in national narratives, popular entertainments, marketing schemes, sporting events, and self-improvement regimes. (Hirschfelder, "I is for Ignoble")

In challenging the barriers of her time, Jane Gay developed a literary monument that honors the trials, perseverance, and humanity of the Nez Percé. Her photography is the most meaningful documentation of the 1889-1903 assimilation, and sets a new precedent for the Native American image. Her acknowledgment that Euroamerica altered the Nez Percé forever contradicts stereotypes and exposes misrepresentation. Today, Gay still empowers audiences to meet the individuals affected by societal barriers of race and sex, in lasting acknowledgment of their humanity.

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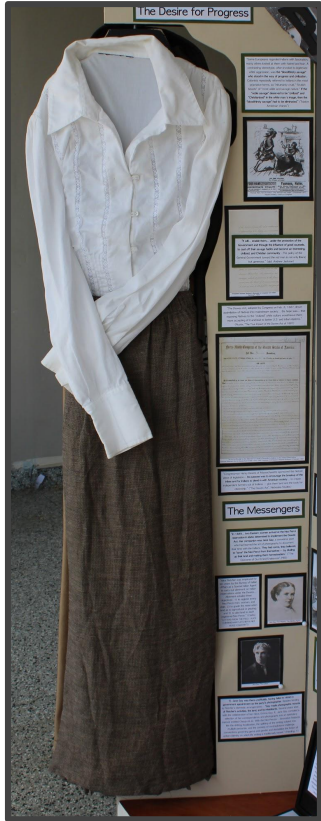
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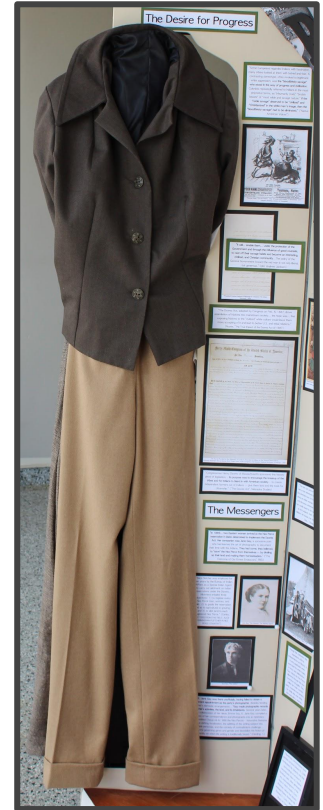


# Picture & Explanation of Interactive Elements on Your Exhibit

(You can include images and descriptions of parts of your exhibit that invite the viewer to engage with the exhibit beyond reading the text or looking at an image. Delete this slide if you don't have interactive elements on your exhibit.)



During her compilation of *Choup-nit-ki*, Gay produced photographs of herself as the Cook and the Photographer. As these two personifications of emotions and stereotypes were the instruments used to break barriers of Nez Percé representation; we found it paramount to acknowledge them visually. This section of the exhibit is to be spun by the viewer, symbolizing the divisiveness and artistry to which Gay challenged perspective.



# Picture & Text on Table in Front of Exhibit

(Delete this slide if you don't have anything on the table in front of your exhibit.)



## [Exposing the Native Image]

While her photographer companions, famously Edward S. Curtis, categorized the Nez Percé as simply assimilated or 'savages,' Gay reveals the untainted reality of the allotment. Instead of manipulating her audience through distortions, Gay introduces conflict they would've experienced if they had been on the reservation, revealing the identity of the Nez Percé to be much more complex than the popular 'Indian' image would allow.



# Picture & Text on Table in Front of Exhibit

(Delete this slide if you don't have anything on the table in front of your exhibit.)



Curtis, "Atlumhl-- Koskimo," The Library of Congress,  
The North American Indian, 1914



Curtis, "Haschezhini--Navaho," The Library of Congress,  
The North American Indian, 1904



Curtis, "A typical Nez Percé," The Library of Congress,  
The North American Indian, 1910



# Picture & Text on Table in Front of Exhibit

(Delete this slide if you don't have anything on the table in front of your exhibit.)



Gay, "Carrying the Baby," Idaho State Historical Society, Nez Perce Reservation, Lewis County, Idaho



Gay, "Joe Kentuck." Idaho State Historical Society Nez Perce Reservation, Lewis County, Idaho. 1904

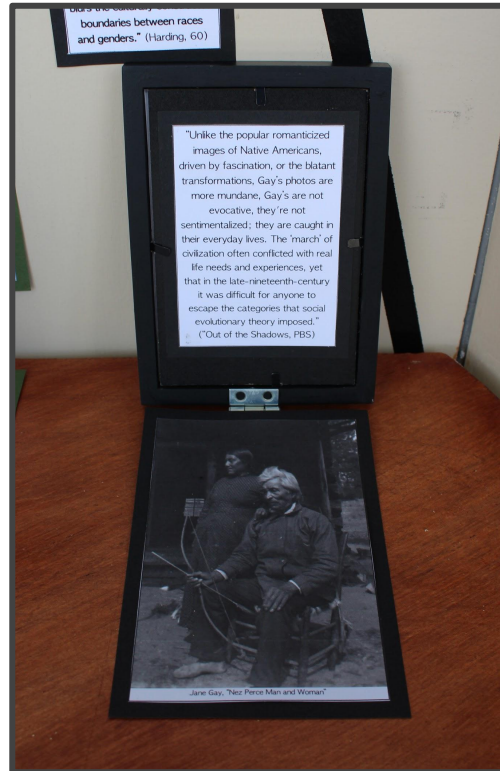


Gay, "Nez Perce Man and Woman," Idaho State Historical Society Nez Perce Reservation, Lewis County, Idaho. 1891



# Picture & Text on Table in Front of Exhibit

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## [Left Picture]

"Numerous commentators have pointed out how Edward S. Curtis manipulated his subjects and their surroundings to produce a romanticized vision of a Native American past, often eliminating any acknowledgment of the ways in which modern Euro-American culture had already reshaped Native American life." (Edward S. Curtis Collection, Library of Congress)

## [Right Picture]

"Unlike the popular romanticized images of Native Americans, driven by fascination, or the blatant transformations, Gay's photos are more mundane, Gay's are not evocative, they're not sentimentalized; they are caught in their everyday lives. The 'march' of civilization often conflicted with real life needs and experiences, yet that in the late-nineteenth-century it was difficult for anyone to escape the categories that social evolutionary theory imposed." ("Out of the Shadows, PBS)