3 / Seattle Illahee

In 1858, hearing that indigenous people had been trading gold at forts on the Fraser River north of Puget Sound, hopeful hundreds ventured into the Fraser's deep canyons, home to the Stó:lō and Nlaka'pamux peoples, in search of the yellow metal. Within a year, more than twenty thousand prospectors, many of them American, had overrun the Fraser. Unattached women were few and far between in the diggings, and life there was a heady mix of longing and libido. Folk songs on the Fraser included a randy little ditty about a place on Puget Sound known for its good food and good women. Sung in a mixture of English and Chinook Jargon, it painted a vivid, if vulgar, picture of Seattle's attractions:

There'll be mowitch [venison]
And klootchman [Indian women] by the way
When we 'rive at Seattle Illahee [Seattle country].
There'll be hiyu [many] clams
And klootchman by the way
Hiyu tenas moosum [Many "little sleeps" (sex)]
Till daylight fades away.
Kwonesum kwonesum cooley [Always always run]
Kopa nika illahee [To that place]
Kunamokst kapswalla moosum [To steal sleep together]
As the daylight fades away.
Row, boys, row!
Let's travel to the place they call Seattle
(That's the place to have a spree!)
Seattle Illahee![1]

While magazines and newspapers enticed overlanders to Puget Sound with stories of arable land and a salubrious climate, "Seattle Illahee" was another kind of public relations altogether, and likely did as much to establish Seattle's reputation throughout the Northwest as any emigrant handbook.

That the miners sang of Seattle Illahee is fitting. On a literal level, it was the name of one of the town's primary economic ventures: the Illahee was a brothel staffed mostly by Native women, many of them most likely from British Columbia. On a more symbolic level, however, *illahee*, a Chinook Jargon term meaning "country" or "place" or "home," suggested a truth about everyday life in early Seattle: it was as much an indigenous place as a settler one. David Kellogg, who arrived in Seattle in the 1850s, could have told you that. Decades later, he described early Seattle as "a very small village, really more Indian than White!" It was a place where Indians dominated the young urban landscape. "Along the beach stretched the shanties with the inevitable canoes," wrote Kellogg, "some hauled high onto the beach and covered with mats while the smaller ones lay idly at the water's edge, ready for immediate use. Every polackly [night] the singing and pounding in the shanties was the mighty orison."[2]

During its "village period," an era stretching from the Denny Party's move to Little Crossing-Over Place in 1852 to the coming of the railroad in 1883, Seattle was indeed a Native place. Indigenous people came to town throughout those decades both to continue longstanding traditions and to make bids for inclusion in urban life. Perhaps most importantly, they came to work, and Indian labor would facilitate much of Seattle's early development. It would also challenge federal Indian policy, as civic leaders enacted Indian policies of their own that often ran counter to the ambitions of a weak national government. Well after the treaties and the "Indian War" that would erupt between some settlers and some Native people in 1855 and 1856, the presence of Native people in town continued to shape civic politics, as Indians became signifiers of urban disorder in the eyes of many of Seattle's leading citizens. Seattle Illahee was a perfect name for a place where indigenous people—both as participants in the town's successes

and as scapegoats for its problems—were at the core of life on the urban frontier.

WHEN NEW SETTLERS ARRIVED in the little mill town on Elliott Bay, they were often shocked by the large numbers of Duwamish, Lake, and Shilshole people in and around Seattle. Alonzo Russell came in 1853 and recalled years later that "like any boy of fourteen my first impressions of Seattle were of the Thousands of Indians standing by." Caroline Leighton, the wife of an early customs collector, came in 1866, and in a florid diary entry from April of that year wrote "the frogs have begun to sing in the marsh, and the Indians in their camps. How well their voices chime together." She also described a small stream of freshwater that cascaded down a gully into the lagoon at Seattle. Once, that stream had been a water source for the longhouses of Little Crossing-Over Place. Fifteen years later, the stream still served Native people, as they came to town and replaced Little Crossing-Over Place with a bustling new community that existed alongside, and enmeshed with, the Bostons. Only a "small and insignificant village" in the eyes of 1859 arrival Dillis Ward, Seattle was dominated by indigenous people, who made it their own, using the new proto-urban venue, with its connections to new trade networks, new forms of political and spiritual power, and new audiences, to enact and even enhance economic, political, religious, and social traditions. Continuous streams of both water and history flowed here.[3]

All around the fledgling town, Indian people insisted on inclusion in settler society. When a wedding united the Mapel and Van Asselt families in 1862, Seeathl and several hundred of his people arrived to observe the festivities along the Duwamish River. After dinner, the newlyweds stood on display while Native men and women filed by to look at them. Afterward, Seeathl and others began a celebration of their own on a sandspit at the mouth of the Duwamish, and Mapel recalled that "all that was good in the power of the spirits was called upon and invoked as a blessing for Henry Van Asselt." More than simply the marriage of two settlers, the wedding was a meeting of two cultures, with both making a performance out of it. In allowing the Indians to gaze "in awe"

at the "white Klootchman," the settlers defined themselves as superior newcomers in a land of primitives. Meanwhile, in their finery and solemnity, Seeathl and his retinue similarly defined themselves as high-class people. And the Mapel–Van Asselt wedding was not unusual; indigenous ceremony was a key element of Seattle's urban scene during its first decades, linking Native tradition with new circumstances. Caroline Leighton described a gathering to sing and dance spirit powers on the Seattle shoreline in 1866:

> A little, gray old woman appeared yesterday morning at our door, with her cheeks all aglow, as if her young blood had returned. Besides the vermilion lavishly displayed on her face, the crease at the parting of her hair was painted the same color. Every article of clothing she had on was bright and new. I looked out, and saw that no Indian had on any thing but red. Even old blind Charley, whom we had never seen in any thing but a black blanket, appeared in a new one of scarlet.

This example of Native people maintaining traditional cultural practices in the new setting of a mill town is a powerful challenge to the notion that Seattle's Indian history was coming to a close. When half the town showed up dressed in red, it was clear that Seattle was still a good deal indigenous.[4]

But if some indigenous people pursued traditional ceremonies in town, others came to Seattle to access the new spirit power that lived there: Jesus Christ. One Native woman named Sally, said to be a sister of Seeathl, was well known around town for her church attendance and in fact strove to build friendships only with churchgoing white women. Meanwhile, Ben Solomon, born at Little Crossing-Over Place before the longhouses were abandoned and the wild roses took over, became a figure in the local Roman Catholic congregation and after his first communion built a chapel near the large Native towns on the Black River south of Seattle.[5]

Weddings and other ceremonies offered venues for cultural encounter in Seattle, but all too often the collision of indigenous religious observance with the norms of settler society highlighted the differences

between Seattle's two peoples. For many pioneers, Native ceremonies in town created lasting and deeply unsettling memories. David Kellogg recalled vividly the year 1862, for example, when he heard that a "Klale Tomaniwous"—a Chinook Jargon term that Bostons typically translated as "black magic"—was going to take place along the waterfront. Arriving at a small house made of cedar-bark mats and lumber from Henry Yesler's sawmill, Kellogg witnessed the initiation of a man known as Bunty Charley; "the pounding against the roof with poles and on the circle of stones around the fire was deafening," Kellogg recalled. The proceedings soon moved outside, with participants tossing Charley's rigid body into the air and spraying it with mouthfuls of what appeared to be blood. Soon after, Charley began behaving like the Bear power that had possessed him, walking on all fours among the driftwood before shambling off toward the river. The next morning, he was seen in town wearing the badge of his new status: a dusting of white duck down on his head and shoulders. This was a traditional initiation into a secret society, and its staging on the Seattle waterfront was in keeping with the ritual's logic. Such practices were not just religious rituals but social performances, designed specifically to shock and impress observers and to cement the status of the secret society's members. It certainly worked in Kellogg's case. "Holy smoke but it was a sight," he wrote years later, his shock still resonating decades later.[6]

The ducks that provided Bunty Charley's dusting of down likely came from the Duwamish River's estuary, which had been the source of other such emblems of status for centuries. But like new kinds of spiritual power, novel objects that could express social standing—old blind Charley's scarlet blanket, for example—could now also be procured in Seattle. Indian people visited Louisa Boren Denny to buy strips of silk cut from old dresses, and she reminisced that the men in particular "looked very fine with them around their waists, knotted at the side." Meanwhile, Native women made use of that most cherished of pioneer symbols, the patchwork quilt, to highlight the status of their menfolk. Another Denny kinswoman described how the Indians' quilts of blue and pink on white groundwork were made into shirts, and how "when dressed in a pair of blue trousers and with a bright red scarf tied around

his waist and a gaudy red bandanna handkerchief . . . around his head, his feet encased in bead-embroidered moccasins, a siwash was a 'hyas tyee' (very fine chief)." Indigenous women were also regular patrons at C. C. Terry's store, where they bought tin cups to beat into ornaments, and it was not uncommon to see them dressed in hoopskirts and carrying parasols. As commerce with places like San Francisco grew in the 1850s and 1860s, such consumer goods provided yet another reason for indigenous people to visit. Along with dentalium-shell chokers and blankets woven from mountain-goat wool, now hoopskirts and parasols purchased in town could reflect their owners' prestige.[7]

Prestige and power could also be found in meetings of the mind between settler and Native leaders. In the 1850s, for example, Saneewa, a Snoqualmie headman from an important indigenous town at the foot of the Cascades, came every autumn with his family, his ponies, and his dogs to camp in Arthur Denny's pasture. Like Seeathl, Saneewa saw Denny, arguably the most powerful man in town, as a strategic ally, but the relationship was mutually beneficial. As the leader of a community located at the western entrance to the lowest pass across the central Cascades, which Denny coveted for a wagon road, Saneewa provided crucial information about the route through the mountains. A few years later, Denny would be among the surveyors to map what they called Snoqualmie Pass. And as for Saneewa, many of his people and their descendants were able to remain in the valley where they had always lived, rather than removing to reservations, in part because of the relationships they built with settler "headmen" like Denny. Here, urban and indigenous ambitions coincided, with trips to town reinforcing one Native leader's territorial prerogatives while also facilitating the opening of new routes for American settlement of the region.[8]

Hoopskirts and duck down, ponies in pastures and wedding parties near sandspits—each of these things highlighted the ways in which settlers and Indians encountered each other as indigenous men and women participated in town life during Seattle's first decades. Social status, religious observance, and political alliance were all part of the urban indigenous frontier on Puget Sound and offered means for Native men and women to participate in urban society. But throughout Seat-

tle's village period, each of these reasons for coming to town was overshadowed by another: Indians came to Seattle (or, in some cases, never left the place that became Seattle) for jobs. As they contributed to the town's economy, they would prove all too well that Seattle's Indian history was nowhere close to ending. Indeed, indigenous people saw Seattle as more than a settler community: it was *their* community, since they had been partners in its creation. The question was what, if anything, the Bostons, their civic leaders, and their federal government were going to do about it.

In the early-morning hours of 26 January 1856, the U.S. Navy's sloop of war *Decatur* opened fire on the *illahee* called Seattle. Its targets were not the fifty or so white residents huddling in a tiny blockhouse at the corner of Front and Cherry; rather, the *Decatur* was gunning for the estimated one thousand "hostiles" in the woods behind town. They had come from indigenous communities in southern Puget Sound and the far side of the Cascade Mountains to sack Seattle, traveling down the old trail from Lake Washington to Little Crossing-Over Place and taking up positions beyond the cleared yards at the edge of town. They had already burned many outlying homesteads and now seemed about to raze what little existed of central Puget Sound's urban potential. Throughout the day, settlers and marines exchanged fire with the attackers, and by ten o'clock that evening, the enemy had retreated back to Lake Washington. No bodies were ever found, but some settlers estimated that as many as two hundred Native warriors had died; among the settlers, one man and a teenage boy had been killed. In less than twenty-four hours, the "Battle of Seattle" was over.[9]

Enshrined in local mythology as the ur-travail of early Seattle—a violent inverse of the Chief Seattle Speech—the Battle of Seattle is like countless other events held to have occurred in what historian Patricia Nelson Limerick has called the "empire of innocence," in which blameless white pioneers earn honor and success by surviving threats from nature, Indians, or a corrupt government. But what on its surface might seem like a showdown between savagery and urbanity was in reality a much messier affair, illustrated by a map of the conflict drawn by the

Decatur's Colonel George S. Phelps. It shows a handful of streets and landmarks such as the blockhouse and the hotel belonging to Mary Ann "Mother Damnable" Conklin; above and to the right are the "hills and woods thronged with Indians." But at the edges of the little town, we also see two clusters of cross-hatchings—almost like Plains tipis—representing Indian encampments. On the slope above Henry Yesler's mill sits "Curley's Camp," and the other, named "Tecumseh's Camp," stands across a dirt street from Mother Damnable's. Distinguished from the Native attackers, these were indigenous people who had come to Seattle, but not to destroy it. Many of them had come to build it.[10]

Let there be no mistake: without the labor of Indians, Seattle would have been stillborn. As lumbermen and laundresses, hunters and haulers, indigenous men and women made the city possible. But at the same time, their presence also brought the needs of an "embryonic town" into conflict with the larger aims of federal policies designed to segregate and manage Native communities. Civic leaders challenged the remote federal government and created a local Indian policy based on the needs of urban communities like Seattle and predicated upon a weak federal presence in the region. Not everyone felt that "Siwashes" belonged in town, though, and a series of legal restrictions placed on indigenous people reflected settlers' deep ambivalence about the place of Indians in urban life. As at Alki Point that first winter, the presence and persistence of Indians simultaneously facilitated and challenged Seattle's urban ambitions.

Seattle's indigenous workers included the men employed at Henry Yesler's sawmill, the primary engine of commercial development for the first two decades of the town's existence. In the early 1850s, nearly every white man in town worked in the mill, but its output of some eight thousand board feet of lumber on a good day required the additional labor of Native men. Edith Redfield, an early settler, described sawmills like Yesler's as "little kingdoms, a law unto themselves . . . here white men, Indians, Chinamen, and Kanakas [indigenous Hawai'ians] worked side by side and boarded at the Company's cook-house." Indians and settlers may have worked and boarded together, but Natives also had particular contributions to make. John M. Swan recalled how

indigenous men, seasoned by regular bathing in the Sound, were well suited for rafting lumber out to arriving ships. Remembering the loading of the *Orbit* for the San Francisco market, for example, Swan recalled that "several of us that were looking at them were shivering with the cold." Indian mill workers were especially crucial during the Fraser River gold rush, when, in the words of settler William Ballou, "workmen could not be hired for love nor money on Puget Sound" as settlers hied off to the diggings. And as Indians carted sawdust away from Yesler's mill, they dumped it along the shoreline, filling the lagoon of Little Crossing-Over Place and destroying the flounder fishery for which it had been known. Indigenous labor, then, obliterated an indigenous place.[11]

Mill work was only part of the contribution Indians made to Seattle's livelihood. With supplies hard to find or outrageously priced, settlers depended on Native subsistence networks to survive. J. Thomas Turner told historian Hubert Howe Bancroft a quarter century later that whites in early Seattle "awaited upon the ebb and flow of the tides for their principal food . . . we were largely dependent upon the Native inhabitants . . . for our potatoes and food products of forest and Sound." Jane Fenton Kelly, the daughter of a Duwamish Valley family, recalled that Native people made domestic life possible among the marshes and dense timber:

> Mother would send us out to watch for a canoe and we would hail them and give them a written order to the grocery man. He would fill it, and they would bring it out to us. They charged twenty-five cents or "two-bits" as they called it, for each article they brought, large or small. I can remember after we were on the homestead one-half mile up the hill, an old Indian by the name of Jake carried a five-gallon keg of New Orleans molasses to us and charged us but twenty-five cents.

In this way, the duck nets and salmon-drying frames of Seattle's indigenous geography fed its immigrant population. The arrangement benefited Indians as well; hunters who brought mallards and other waterfowl to white families were typically paid a quarter dollar for each bird. These coins, along with pelts of bears and other animals, often changed

hands on "whiskey boats" that plied the Sound with cargoes of flour, tobacco, beads, and liquor.[12]

Indigenous work went beyond mill labor and subsistence provision; Indians participated in almost every aspect of the Seattle economy, successful or otherwise. They packed hundreds of barrels of salmon for David "Doc" Maynard in the fall of 1852, a venture abandoned after the fish spoiled before arriving in San Francisco. They used traditional methods to render dogfish oil, the primary lubricant for sawmill equipment in Puget Sound until the 1890s. Native men cleared land and helped build homes on the slopes above Elliott Bay, and Native women did the washing within those homes. Indians paddled the canoe that carried the U.S. mail, and shoreline-hugging "Siwash buggies," as canoes were sometimes called, were often the only way to travel from one place to another. And of course there were the women celebrated by the ditty "Seattle Illahee." We can now only imagine the mix of limited opportunities and male coercion that led those women and girls from British Columbia or elsewhere to the Illahee, but their contributions to the economy and reputation of Seattle easily rivaled those of Yesler's mill employees. With the exceptions of banking, American-style medicine, and a handful of other settler-dominated vocations, Indians made Seattle work in the 1850s, and their efforts helped settlers distinguish "good" Indians from "bad." Walter Graham, whose Lake Washington farm had burned during the Battle of Seattle, nonetheless recalled that the Indians he knew were "good workers" and that one had worked for him for three years.[13]

But if settlers and Indians forged everyday relationships through work, tensions between indigenous people and the newcomers could also flare into violence. Well before the attack on the town in January 1856, violence between Indians and whites had been a regular, and deeply distressing, occurrence. One such case was that of an Indian called Mesatchie ("Wicked" in Chinook Jargon) Jim, who killed his Native wife near Seattle in 1853. As punishment, Luther Collins and several other settlers lynched Jim on Front Street. That lynching precipitated the slaying of a white man named McCormick near Lake Union; in return, two more Native men were hanged in town. Such

spirals of violence took place when indigenous notions of justice, which often mandated retaliation, coincided with a powerful strain of vigilantism in settler society. That same year, preacher's wife Catherine Blaine recorded a similar cycle of killings that took the lives of two white men and as many as a dozen Indian men, inspiring settlers to organize a militia to take care of the "problem" Natives. Had cooler heads not prevailed, the militia's offensive against indigenous people would have taken place, not out in the woods or on a river somewhere, but right in the heart of town where the Indians in question were staying. "We feel considerably alarmed for ourselves," the consistently timorous Mrs. Blaine wrote, and her anxiety reflected that of many of her neighbors, Boston and Native alike.[14]

Compared with the attempts at understanding that had taken place at Alki Point only a few years earlier, these events illustrate just how dry the tinder was as more settlers moved in on indigenous lands near Seattle. And, in fact, many settlers did connect white emigration to violence, if only to blame each other. Recalling the Mesatchie Jim case, for example, mill owner Henry Yesler described the effects of "lower class" emigrants on Indian-white relations, noting that "whenever there was trouble it was the fault of some worthless white man." In what would become one of the most important patterns of conflict in Seattle in the coming decades, Yesler identified class as a key element of race relations. Tensions between the "law and order crowd," represented by Yesler, Arthur Denny, and other civic leaders, and the "worthless," less orderly elements of urban society would shape life in Seattle for years to come. While Yesler blamed interracial violence on the wrong kind of emigrants, many indigenous people knew that low-class settlers were only part of the problem.[15]

And so within just a few short years of Seattle's founding, both settlers and Natives were calling for a new sort of order. That new order came in the form of treaties designed to mitigate interracial violence by creating new boundaries between white and Indian communities and settling—pun intended—the question of indigenous title to the land. Much of the run-up to the signings took place in urban outposts. Seattle was the site of one such proceeding on 12 January 1854, when Isaac

Ingalls Stevens, the new territorial governor and Indian superintendent, introduced himself and the treaty process to more than a thousand Indians and some ten dozen settlers gathered in front of Doc Maynard's office. One year, ten days, and many speeches later, Seeathl and other headmen signed the Treaty of Point Elliott.[16]

In towns throughout Puget Sound, settlers celebrated the treaty process; one Native elder, in a particularly eloquent choice of words, described Seattle settlers' reaction to the treaty as "hooraying." There was some cause for optimism among Indians as well. Among other things, the treaty ensured that indigenous people would have the right to camp, hunt, fish, and harvest berries and roots at the "usual and accustomed stations and grounds." But despite the promises of the treaty, few Indians were hooraying. In fact, significant factions in Native communities on Salt Water and beyond took offense at the treaty agreements, and some did not hesitate to express their indignation. In late 1855, for example, a shaman named Chaoosh visited David and Louisa Denny at their cabin on Lake Union after a government "potlatch" at Tulalip north of Seattle. Enraged at the agent's offers of cheap needles and strips of blankets, he warned them that whites were few in number and could be easily wiped out. The condescending gifts, paltry compared to what could be found in any town's shops, only added to growing Native outrage at the hubris of the Bostons.[17]

As tensions grew, urban settlements, beachheads of the American invasion of Puget Sound, were obvious targets for the indigenous uprising that seemed increasingly inevitable. In response, white officials began with what seemed like the most obvious first step: removing Indians from the towns. Indian agent Michael T. Simmons, however, found that doing so was no simple task. A month before the attack on Seattle, after several attacks had already taken place elsewhere in the region, Simmons reported finding among Seattle's indigenous residents "a strong determination . . . not to cross over to their reservation. . . . I informed them that they must go over or they should receive nothing. Finally they obeyed my wishes and those of the head chief." Removal, however, could not only not prevent war but might actually lead to it; Henry Yesler and several other Seattleites, for example, warned that forc-

ing Indians onto the reservations "was to all appearance tantamount to a declaration of war against them."[18]

But many did not leave, and, in fact, when the Battle of Seattle finally came, it was Indians who saved the day and the settlement. On the eve of the conflict, several hundred Native people remained in and immediately around the town, including Curley, who had close connections both with Henry Yesler and with Leschay (Leschi), a Nisqually militant who was allegedly organizing the attack. Curley met with Leschay to call for peace, but the warrior would not be swayed. And so, along with several other Duwamish people and a number of white men who lived with Indian women, Curley brought warning of the attack to the settlers, giving them just enough time to make haste to the tiny blockhouse. Connections between settlers and Native people, forged through everyday life, had saved Seattle. (Leschay would be hanged in 1858 for the murder of an American soldier, a highly controversial punishment that divided settler opinion and ultimately resulted in Leschay's unofficial exoneration in 2004.)[19]

Despite the role that "friendlies" had played in mitigating the attack by "hostiles" on Seattle, once the smoke had cleared, settler leaders quickly labeled all Indians potentially dangerous and renewed their efforts to get Indian people out of town. For settlers unfamiliar with the complicated alliances and enmities that linked indigenous communities in Puget Sound, segregation seemed the way to proceed, especially with territorial newspapers warning that "the savage war-whoop, as it were, [is] at the doors of every town and settlement within our borders." But it was as difficult a task now as before the attack. In July 1856, for example, Henry Yesler, now Indian agent for the Seattle area, reported to Governor Stevens that a number of Native people were fishing, clamming, and harvesting berries at Salmon Bay. Yesler also wrote of two Indian families who were still in the "off-limits" area of Lake Washington because one of their men, mortally wounded by a faulty musket, wanted to die and be buried on his *"illahee."* Meanwhile, George Paige, another Indian agent, complained that Doc Maynard had been treating Native people like Seeathl's churchgoing sister Sally and filling prescriptions for them without first applying to Paige for authorization.

Their faith in traditional medicine shaken by epidemics, some indigenous people saw visiting American doctors as a way to stay alive. (That is, if they could get past Duwamish Valley settler Luther Collins, who shot at Seattle-bound Indians so often that it merited a letter of complaint from one naval commander to Governor Stevens.)[20]

Work remained the primary reason Native people stayed in town after the attack, and Paige complained about this issue more than any other. His threats to withhold government rations from Indians living in town fell flat, as they were "mostly in the employ of whites, consequently etc. do not require feeding." The source of the problem, Paige wrote, was the "intermedling" businessmen who needed workers; Doc Maynard was particularly guilty of having "tampered" with the agent's charges. This was ironic, considering that Maynard had complained about the very same issue only two months earlier when he briefly served as an Indian agent. While overseeing the relocation of Seattle's indigenous residents to remote West Point in the late summer of 1856, Maynard was confronted by Henry Yesler, who "wanted a portion of them to work for him & it would cause him much trouble to go to the said encampment after them." Enlisting the support of Arthur Denny and other town leaders, Yesler convinced many of the Indians to stay put and encouraged others to come in from the Lake Washington backcountry. Those who did follow Maynard's orders, referred to by Yesler and Arthur Denny as "fools," struggled through a series of brutal winter storms on the exposed and isolated spit. The reservations were no better. In November 1856, an Army captain at the Muckleshoot Agency in the Cascade foothills wrote to his superiors on behalf of Duwamish headman William that "on the reservation, they were furnished with a little flour daily by the Indian Agent, Page [*sic*], that they could get no clams there, and the consequence was that many died of hunger, and unless a number had gone to their old ground to procure Salmon, they should all have died on the reservation." The point had been made: life in town was better for Indians, just as Indians in Seattle were often better for the town.[21]

By the end of 1856, it was clear that agents' efforts to vacate indigenous settlements in and around Seattle had not worked. Four separate

bands of Native people remained in the Seattle vicinity at the end of the year. One small group of thirty or so, under the leadership of a man known to settlers as Cultus ("Worthless") Charley, was camping just north of town along the beach, and more than a hundred remained directly across the bay at Herring's House. Meanwhile, Curley's band of forty had settled in behind Mother Damnable's in the heart of town. And even Native people who had gone to the reservations would return, if only seasonally; by midsummer of 1857, some three hundred Indians were camped at the mouth of the Duwamish River opposite Seattle, likely at an ancient settlement and stockade called Little-Bit-Straight Point.[22]

By not moving, Native people continued both to play a central role in Seattle's fledgling economy and to vex many of their non-Indian neighbors, and the tensions between these two facts were expressed in a series of policies enacted in Seattle during the 1860s. The first came in 1865, when Seattle officially incorporated. Among the first ordinances passed was one decreeing that "no Indian or Indians shall be permitted to reside, or locate their residences on any street, highway, lane, or alley or any vacant lot in the town of Seattle." But it also demanded that "all persons having in their employ any Indian or Indians within the corporate limits of said town shall provide lodgments or suitable residences for the said Indians during the time of said employment, on, or immediately attached to their own places of residence." Signed by Charles Terry, Ordinance No. 5 tried to codify a middle road between segregation and integration. Set alongside ordinances dealing with taxes, sidewalks, and magistrate fees, the "Removal of Indians" ordinance—which was really only about the removal of certain kinds of Indians and the retention of others—highlighted just how central Indians were to urban life on Puget Sound.[23]

A second ambivalent document appeared a year later, in 1866, in the form of a petition protesting a proposed reservation for Duwamish Indians along the Black River south of Seattle, the "inside" place that gave the Duwamish their name. Citing that the sixteen Native families living there had been "justly and kindly protected" by the settlers, the 156 signatories—virtually every white man in King County—argued

that a reservation would be an "injury . . . to the quiet and flourishing settlements along the Black and Duwamish rivers." Moreover, it would be "unnecessary to the aborigines and injurious to your constituents." Indigenous people working in town or living along the river were one thing; for Arthur and David Denny, Henry Yesler, Doc Maynard, and the other petitioners, the imposition of a reservation close to Seattle was quite another. The settlers preferred their own system of managing Indian-white relations, and so the proposed reservation was never established, an outcome that would have significant consequences for Duwamish legal status decades later.[24]

The absence of a federal government capable of consistently enforcing its own Indian policies, along with the necessity of Indian labor, meant that the people of Seattle—settler and indigenous alike—had to craft their own strategies for dealing with each other in the first years of the town's existence. Men like George Paige tried to enforce reservation policy, while others like Henry Yesler actively thwarted it, and still others like Doc Maynard seemed to change strategy depending on their circumstances. Meanwhile, some indigenous people like Seeathl went along with the treaties and left Seattle, while others like his sister Sally insisted on continuing to come to town. And still others such as Leschay were driven by the American government's proposals to try to burn the settlers' urban outpost to the ground.

In later years, it would be this last indigenous strategy that would most commonly be used to explain why Seattle seemed to stall in the years after the "Indian War." Arthur Denny, for example, painted a bleak picture of the Battle of Seattle's long-term effects, noting that "those who remained . . . were so discouraged, and so much in dread of another outbreak, that they were unwilling to return to their homes in the country . . . as a consequence it was years before we recovered our lost ground to any great extent." Certainly, burned homesteads on the outskirts of town had frightened some settlers away, but other forces—the Fraser River gold rush, an economic depression, the Civil War, and the lack of a railroad—did more to retard Seattle's growth during the 1850s and 1860s than the brief indigenous uprising. And in fact, much of the growth that did take place during those lean years was thanks to

Indian labor. In the form of logs shipped, fish caught, laundry washed, and mail delivered, Native people had kept Seattle from becoming yet another failed urban vision. But even as the "woods thronged with Indians" faded into clear-cuts and memories, indigenous people remained a threat to many Bostons' visions of urban destiny—if not from outside Seattle, then from within it.[25]

Seattle made its television debut during the Vietnam War, when *Here Come the Brides* first aired on 25 September 1968. With its theme song claiming "the bluest skies you've ever seen are in Seattle," *Brides* fictionalized one of Seattle's most beloved stories—the importation of dozens of white women to Seattle during and just after the Civil War—for a national audience. It was inspired by the story of Asa Shinn Mercer, twenty-five years old and the newly elected president of the territorial university. Of all his accomplishments, Mercer is most remembered as the entrepreneur who brought eleven unmarried women to the men of Seattle in 1864. Mostly Unitarians from the industrial town of Lowell, Massachusetts, the women, who would come to be known as "Mercer Girls," either married white bachelors or became schoolteachers. Lauded for his effort, Mercer brought a second installment, of thirty-four "girls," in 1866. Their story, fraught with just the right mix of adventure and romance, has been part of Seattle's place-story ever since. The 1960s television version was a balm against the growing horror of televised war in Southeast Asia, and in the 1860s, the real Mercer Girls were a balm as well, not against the horrors of that decade's own terrible war, but against something that seemed more immediately threatening to many settlers: the mixed-race world of Seattle Illahee.[26]

When he went to the cities of the East seeking young women, Asa Mercer went with a blessing in the form of a letter of recommendation from William Pickering, Washington territorial governor. Both Mercer and Pickering saw this as a missionary enterprise; in a circular distributed ahead of his visits, Mercer cautioned that "we only wish a class of emigrants who will improve the religion, morals, and tone of society in the T[erritory]." Mercer, and by proxy certain elements of Seat-

tle society, were not interested in recruiting the East's urban rabble; rather, they wanted upstanding young women who could serve as social housekeepers, transferring the civilizing institutions of marriage and education to the savage West. As women signed on, the travails ahead worried many of their families; some wrote letters describing the "ignorance, coarseness, and immorality" of Seattle and claiming that Washington Territory was "the last place in the world for women." In a sense, they were right: Seattle was a far cry from Lowell or New York. When those first eleven women disembarked from the sloop *Kidder* on 16 May 1864, they joined an ongoing struggle to establish urban order, and not surprisingly in Seattle Illahee, indigenous people were at the center of the debate. What was at stake, at least in the minds of some Seattleites, was the town's very survival.[27]

As he traveled through New England and New York, Mercer described the challenges American civilization faced in the Northwest. He was particularly concerned about relations between white men and Indian women, which purportedly threatened the moral tone of a place where, according to one settler, "it required a combination of all the towns . . . to muster enough white women to make up three of four sets at a dance." With those demographics, the companionship of Native women, like the labor of Native people more generally, was part of everyday life in Seattle and had been since the town's beginning. The story of early Seattle is the story of intimate encounters. "Indian Jennie," a niece of Seeathl, married African American settler John Garrison "according to the Indian custom" in the 1850s, around the time that Matthew Bridges married his Native wife, Mary, who had been born at Little Crossing-Over Place. Rebecca FitzHenry was born in town to a white father and Duwamish mother in 1862. Six years later, the Duwamish woman Kalaeetsa gave birth to her son Charles, whose father was settler Michael Kelly. Mill owner Henry Yesler recalled how many unmarried white men working in local sawmills had Native women as companions, and Yesler himself had fathered a child named Julia with the fifteen-year-old daughter of Curley, despite the fact that his wife, Sarah, was still alive and well and living in Ohio. Through these new relations, a whole generation of mixed-race children called Seattle their *illahee* by the 1860s.[28]

For Asa Mercer and others, this was a dire problem in need of fixing. Minister's wife Catherine Blaine wrote home in 1853, for example, about the doomed marriage of a settler named Joe Foster to Betsy, the granddaughter of Seeathl. Infamous for being "unkind" to his wife, Foster's behavior eventually led Betsy to hang herself in their small house in town. Her Indian relatives demanded the body for burial, while Foster pleaded with settlers to allow her to be interred in the town cemetery. They acquiesced, but Blaine's husband refused to officiate at the funeral, which was attended only by a few "squaw men" and their Native companions. "Now, what a situation he is in," Catherine Blaine penned to her kin back East, "with his little half-breed child and despised by whites and hated by the Indians. . . . He is, I believe, the son of a minister and well brought up." Blaine's portrayal of the Foster family's tragedy is telling. While clearly identifying Foster's abuse as the proximal cause of Betsy's suicide, it also hinted at a deeper problem in the minds of many Seattleites. On an urban frontier with few white women, settler men could be "tempted" into liaisons with indigenous women, and even a minister's son could be dragged down into the chaos that miscegenation brought. In another letter, Blaine bemoaned "the degradation men bring on themselves" in Seattle through their relationships with Native women, who were "but little better than hogs in human shape." The children of such unions were a problem as well in the eyes of some Bostons; settler and historian Charles Prosch condemned mixed-race couples for "giving birth to a class of vagabonds who promised to become the most vicious and troublesome element in the population." The situation seemed to threaten the whole region; according to missionary Charles Huntington, race mixing cast a pall of "moral darkness" over Puget Sound, against which the Mercer Girls shone as beacons of light.[29]

Asa Mercer's importation of white women was just one means of rectifying the problem; the law was another. In 1855 the territorial legislature had passed the Color Act, which voided solemnized marriages between whites and Indians in Washington State. Three years later, that law was amended to nullify all *future* interracial marriages as well, and in 1866 the legislature would enact a new Marriage Act denying even

common-law legitimacy to indigenous-white relationships. Meanwhile, Superintendent of Indian Affairs W. W. Miller published an editorial in the *Washington Standard* in 1861 calling for an end to the "degrading" practice of "open prostitution and concubinage" between settlers and Indians, which was "so utterly subversive of good order." Revealing that there were also economic motives behind such a call for order, the 1866 Legitimacy Act barred mixed-race children from inheriting their father's estate if children existed from a previous marriage to a white woman. Unless white control of land and political power was protected by legislative means, many proponents of miscegenation laws feared that thousands of acres would be handed down to a generation of "mongrels" and that the "half-breed vote" would prove an embarrassment to ambitions toward statehood. (During his tenure in the territorial legislature, for example, Arthur Denny himself would advocate tirelessly against giving mixed-heritage people the vote.) For all their scope and number, though, the laws were often difficult to enforce; historian Charles Prosch complained that during the 1860s and 1870s it was difficult to find jurors and attorneys who did not have Indian family members and who were not therefore "in sympathy with the delinquents." Just as the presence of Indians thwarted some settlers' urban visions, everyday life in Seattle Illahee resisted the "civilizing" efforts of racist laws.[30]

As moralizers fretted and lawmakers legislated, life went on in Seattle Illahee, including at the namesake Illahee itself. Opened in 1861 by John Pinnell, who had previously run brothels on San Francisco's Barbary Coast, the Illahee appeared the same year that Superintendent Miller's miscegenation editorial appeared in the local press. It was one of the largest buildings in Seattle, with a dance floor, a long bar, and a series of private rooms. Described in the 1870 census as "Hurdy-Gurdies," the Indian women employed there (few if any of them from local tribal communities) were also called "sawdust women" after the Illahee's location on the fill that had obliterated Little Crossing-Over Place and its lagoon. One typically pious memoir described "bawdy houses" and "squaw brothels" resounding with the "the frantic cries of those whose sin had brought them to the verge of madness and despair," sug-

gesting that such institutions were well known even to those who would never consider darkening their doors.[31]

On the streets and alleys south of Mill Street, the mad houses (another nickname for establishments like the Illahee), saloons, and gambling parlors of Seattle were known collectively as the Lava Beds, a name with both infernal and libidinal connotations. In Seattle's new place-story, the "sawdust women" were the antitheses to the "Mercer Girls," and the mad houses stood in opposition to the orderly world north of Mill Street. Even the landscape reflected the difference: prim houses among cleared woods on the hills versus shanties on the sopping tideflats. At the same time, the Lava Beds fueled the urban economy, and despite all their moral outrage, critics of the Illahee lived in a town whose growth was driven by the engines of "moral darkness." Asa Mercer, John Pinnell, and "their" women represented a kind of urban symbiosis; after all, it was not far from one side of Mill Street to the other.

Never mind symbiosis, though: to the enforcers of moral authority in Seattle, the Lava Beds and the people who frequented them were threats to urban order. For newspaper editors, Christian religious leaders, and others, the presence of Indians in Seattle seemed to threaten not just the town's moral fiber but its very existence. Native people and the settlers who "sided" with them—for this struggle was very definitely perceived as having two sides—were portrayed as having the potential to quite literally destroy Seattle. Two vectors of destruction, almost apocalyptic in their scope, were of particular concern: disease and fire. In the minds of many influential Seattleites, both contagion and conflagration had their origins—and scapegoats—in the town's mad houses and sawdust women. Long after the Battle of Seattle, it seemed that indigenous people could still sack the place.

The earliest extant text printed in Seattle, dating from 1872, is a handbill warning of an impending visitation by the dread smallpox, which remained a potent reality in Puget Sound a century after its first terrible appearance. This was especially true in the filthy, congested cities Americans and Canadians had built. In the early 1860s, for example, another wave of Comes Out All Over had traveled from town to town, arriving in Seattle from San Francisco via Victoria, British Columbia.

As before, indigenous communities bore the brunt of the microbes, which killed hundreds (if not thousands) of Indians in 1862 alone. Native people were at a loss as to how to stop it. Settler Joseph Crow, for example, recalled the unsuccessful efforts of a Native doctor to heal patients in a house at Front and King Streets on the Lava Beds during an outbreak in 1864—after which the doctor, his skills now seen as useless, disappeared. But if Indians were the primary victims of epidemics, they were also the primary scapegoats. Between the lines of the handbill warning of disease lay powerful ideas about race, sex, and urban destiny.[32]

In January 1876, for instance, two Native women died of smallpox in Seattle. What to us seems like a small outbreak inspired the *Seattle Daily Intelligencer* to decry a much more pressing issue: the traffic in "miserable prostitutes" by men like the "vile wretch" who had brought the two women from Victoria. And so when a Native woman died of smallpox in a building south of Mill Street and another was found to be infected, the press placed the blame squarely on the residents of the Lava Beds and their supposed moral failings:

> It is not generally deemed advisable to mention the presence of this loathsome disease in a city, but we believe that to be . . . an injustice to the public, who should be seasonably apprised of contagion in any quarter and thus be enabled to guard against it. Aside from this, we have another reason for alluding to the subject, and that is to call immediate attention to the necessity of our city authorities taking prompt steps to provide for the care of other cases, which must occur from exposure to this, and to adopt some stringent regulations relative to allowing any Indians from British Columbia and elsewhere, to be landed at this port, or to visit or reside in this city. As yet nothing has been done in the way of preventing these filthy animals from visiting our city at will, and bringing . . . what may become a pestilence in our midst.

Adding "beastly squaws" and "filthy animals" to a racist lexicon already inhabited by "sawdust women" and "squaw men," the editorial also posed a central question about urban progress: were Seattle's legal and medical establishments mature enough to deal with this crisis? Law enforcement were still in its infancy and Bostons still regularly died during

epidemics; those facts, combined with still-fresh memories of vast mortality among the Indians, put very real fear in the hearts of settlers. If ecological imperialism—the introduction of new species like smallpox to new worlds like Salt Water—had made Seattle's founding possible, the fear now was that it could unmake it as well.[33]

In response to this new outbreak, the city council ordered the mayor to pass laws preventing the spread of contagion to other Seattleites. If the official urban powers could not deal with the problem, the *Daily Intelligencer* warned, other forces might be brought to bear. Concerned citizens, the paper suggested, might, "regardless of our authorities so-called, take the matter in their own hands and adopt that vigorous course in the premises which is needed." The heated rhetoric of the *Daily Intelligencer* reflected the near hysteria that swept Seattle during smallpox visitations. In March 1877, for example, some "evil disposed person" raised the standard of contagion, a yellow flag, in the window of a tenement on Mill Street. The paper described what happened next: "several timid persons . . . plunged off the sidewalk into the mud, and shied away like young fillies in their first hurdle." Even a false alarm, as this turned out to be, could disrupt town life.[34]

Meanwhile, real outbreaks continued. In May 1877, Mayor Gideon Weed, a physician by training, received a report of smallpox at Salmon Bay. He went to investigate and discovered that one Native woman had already died. Her relatives had buried her, burned her clothing and bedding, and then "quit the locality," but Weed located them the next day along the Duwamish and had them placed under armed guard in a "pest house" on the ridge between Seattle and Lake Washington. Their fate is lost to history, but the incident was a great boost to the reputation of Mayor Weed, who was lauded in the press as having done "much more than could even have been asked or expected of him in that official capacity." It also inspired a new policy: during smallpox outbreaks, the police would prevent all Indians from entering Seattle "so far as is practicable." But quarantines and exclusion did not prevent Native communities from carrying more than their share of smallpox's burden. In the twelve months leading up to July 1877, for example, there were eighteen cases of the disease in Seattle, twelve white and six Indian; nine of

the whites recovered while only one Indian did. More indigenous people living in and around Seattle died in the next twelve months; the encampment at Smith's Cove was hit particularly badly. Settlers discovered a number of Indian bodies there, buried in shallow graves with their broken guns. Not long after, the remains of a man identified as "the son of Old Moses" were found jammed in a trunk north of town, spurring another round of vaccinations among settlers who "may have fooled around the tainted spot." Although smallpox was heading into decline as a major cause of mortality among both Indians and settlers, it remained on many Bostons' minds in the late 1870s as one of the gravest dangers presented by indigenous people in the urban landscape.[35]

Smallpox was one danger; fire was another. In the nineteenth century, fire was perhaps the ultimate urban fear: again and again, cities throughout the industrializing world had experienced devastating fires that often changed the course of their history in profound ways. In Seattle Illahee, fears of fire combined with anxieties about Indians to spawn a second apocalyptic discourse. In short, many settlers—and in particular, those in charge of the newspapers—were convinced that Native people were going to burn the town down. One 1878 editorial, for example, described the Lava Beds as a "tinder box, all primed and charged as it were, and ready to explode without a moment's warning in a wholesale conflagration." After a "narrow escape" in September, the *Daily Intelligencer* posited that "in time of peace it is best to prepare for war" and called for the building of water tanks and the hiring of night watchmen to patrol the Lava Beds and Indian camps. But for some, the best way to deal with the fire danger was simply to get rid of the Native encampments on the flats near Main Street. Not only were their inhabitants "an element too indecent to be tolerated within the city limits," said one editorial, but their bonfires threatened the "whole business portion of town." "There is also an old 'siwash' shanty situated further down the reef, and near the old Pinnell house," the article continued, "which should be razed to the ground and occupants driven off to the reservation where they belong." The author then demanded that the chief of police take responsibility for keeping Indians out of the city; if he did not, the result was sure to be catastrophic. Once again, the

danger was not just material; it was also moral. Never mind that other Native people lived in town as family members and employees; it was these "threats" who warranted the most public attention and who became an integral part of the young city's new place-story.[36]

In the end, neither of the fires that swept Seattle—one in 1879 and the "Great Fire" of 1889—had anything to do with Indians. The first started in a middle-class hotel, and the second, which destroyed most of the business district, began in a cabinetmaker's shop. Other fires, meanwhile, targeted Indian people. On the night of 7 May 1878, for example, someone burned down the Illahee. The *Daily Intelligencer* celebrated the blaze, which "swept off a fusty obstruction to progressive improvements in that quarter." "Citizens and firemen stood about watching the fire," one settler recalled, noting that "not a pint of water was thrown upon the fire, nor an effort made to save any part or article." Throughout Puget Sound, laws and torches became weapons in the battle between two urban orders, one symbolized by the Mercer Girls and the other by the Lava Beds. In the decades to come, two competing urban visions—an "open town" that actively encouraged its red-light district and a "closed town" with zero tolerance for vice—remained at the core of Seattle politics. What would be forgotten in the future, though, was that such debates had their roots in earlier conflicts over the role of Native people in town life and over who belonged in this new place called Seattle.[37]

Sometime in the 1870s, a Chinese man named Ling Fu was brought before Judge Cornelius Hanford in Seattle's courthouse, accused of not having the proper citizenship papers. Facing deportation, Ling Fu argued that he did not need to carry papers: he had been born on Puget Sound. To test him, Judge Hanford quickly shifted his inquiry into Chinook Jargon, which had become nearly as common as Whulshootseed or English in Puget Sound country. "Ikta mika nem? Consee cole mika?" (What is your name? How old are you?), he demanded of Ling, who in turn replied, "Nika nem Ling Fu, pe nika mox tahtlum pee quinum cole" (My name is Ling Fu, and I am twenty-five years old). Clearly surprised, the judge responded,

"You are an American, sure, and you can stay here." He then turned to the bailiff and decreed, "Ling Fu is dismissed."[38]

Ling Fu's brief trial symbolizes the ways in which settlers—Boston, Chinese, and others—had been transformed by their life in Seattle Illahee. Accounts of Seattle's "village period" are full of settlers speaking Chinook Jargon and sometimes even Whulshootseed; of white men and women learning indigenous subsistence practices from their Native neighbors and employees; and of people from places like Illinois and Ireland, Gloucester and Guangzhou, learning to accommodate Indians' insistence on participation in urban life. Nearly thirty years after Seattle's founding, Native people were still in town, and their participation in urban life had changed the Bostons as well. The mad house known as the Illahee might have been destroyed, but the larger Seattle Illahee, in which indigenous lives were woven into the urban fabric, remained, even as Seattle stood perched on the brink of an urban revolution.