

Dustin Beall Smith

The Invisible Dead

And when the last Red Man shall have perished [. . .] these shores will swarm with the invisible dead of my tribe. [. . .] The White Man will never be alone.

Attributed to Chief Seattle in 1854

At the time of my birth, in April 1940, my grandfather sent my mother—his youngest daughter—a letter in which he expressed the hope that I would inherit the spirit of my famous ancestors. One of the ancestors he had in mind was my great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandmother, Hannah Emerson Dustin, born Hannah Webster Emerson on December 23, 1657, in the frontier village of Haverhill, Massachusetts. Hannah spent the first thirty-nine years of her life in relative anonymity. At age twenty she married Thomas Dustin, of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and over the next nineteen years she gave birth to eleven children, three of whom died of natural causes.

Then, on March 15, 1697, one week after her twelfth child, Martha, was born, a band of approximately twenty-five Indians (a ragtag mix of Nipmucks and Penacooks that included women and children) attacked Haverhill, looting and burning the homes of Protestant settlers. Twenty-seven people, well over one-third of the town's population, died in the attack. The dead included thirteen children. Hannah, along with her newborn infant, Martha, and her fifty-one-year-old midwife, Mary Neff, were dragged from the Dustin residence and taken captive. Thomas, who had been working in a field behind their cabin at the time of the raid, managed to shepherd eight of the couple's nine children to the safety of the nearby military garrison on Packer Hill, but he could do nothing to protect Hannah and baby Martha.

Fearing reprisal by the militia, the raiding party retreated from Haverhill with thirteen hostages in tow. Smoke from the burning town had alerted other settlers, making stealth essential to the retreat. When little Martha began to bawl with hunger, one of the braves yanked the infant from Hannah's arms, grabbed the child by her ankles, and brained her against the trunk of an apple tree. This accounts for (if it doesn't entirely justify) what Hannah did several weeks later.

The Indians and their hostages continued on foot through the woods, heading northwest toward the Merrimack River. During the twelve-mile journey that first day, thirty-nine-year-old Hannah trudged along wearing only one shoe. Everything conspired against her progress—the muddy ground, patches of swampland, pockets of deep snow—not to mention the taunting and prodding of the captors. Several other hostages, unable to keep up, were killed and scalped on the spot, their bodies left for scavenging animals, as baby Martha's had been.

The first of the French and Indian Wars was coming to a close. The Indians (who had recently been converted to Catholicism) thought of their captives as slaves and of themselves as masters. Assuming they could reach the safety of New France (now Canada), they planned to strip the hostages naked, forcing them to run a gauntlet of tomahawk-wielding men, women, and children. Even if Hannah and Mary were to survive the gauntlet (many didn't), it was understood that their master would then sell them to the highest bidder—probably a French priest who would try to convert the women to Catholicism. For Hannah's master, whose name remains unknown, there was both sport and profit to be gained by keeping the women alive, which may explain why he seems not to have been worried that traveling with these two particular women—Mary, who had lost her husband to Indians sixteen years earlier, and Hannah, who now assumed her whole family had died in the Haverhill raid—was like traveling with two rattlesnakes in a basket.

For fourteen days and nights, the Indians led their captives in a circuitous route, north along the river, closer and closer to New France. Hannah was plagued with painfully engorged breasts and, according to at least one account, still bleeding from her womb. She clung quietly to her Protestant faith. ("In my Affliction, God made His Word Comfortable to me," she would later write.) Her master forbade her and Mary to pray, even though he and the other "popish" Indians prayed aloud in Latin, three times daily.

He informed Hannah that he himself had once been accustomed to praying in English but that now he found the French way better.

Hannah patiently awaited her chance to escape, secretly plotting to steal one of the Indian children—a boy—as payback for Martha. She also cultivated the friendship of a fourteen-year-old fellow captive, Samuel Lennardson. Sam's master, a brave named Bampico, had snatched Sam from his family in a raid on Worcester, Massachusetts, one year earlier. Sam had acquired hunting skills from Bampico and had come to enjoy living as an Indian. But, as the days dragged on, Hannah's maternal talents began to engender a profound homesickness in the teenage boy. Sam would soon become the third rattlesnake in the basket.

On March 30, fifteen days after the Haverhill raid and seventy-five miles closer to New France, the Indians and their captives arrived at the confluence of the Contookook and Merrimack rivers, just north of what is now Concord, New Hampshire. The watery intersection served as a staging area for Indians. Canoes, which were considered communal property, sat on the riverbank, free for the taking. It was here that the Indians split into two parties, roughly half the band continuing upriver on foot, hoping to encounter a larger war party—a rendezvous they had narrowly missed the day before. They took all but three of the hostages with them.

Hannah's master, along with Bampico, three Indian women, and seven Indian children, remained behind to guard Hannah, Mary, and Sam. They decided to camp for the night on Sugar Ball Island (now called Penacook), a two-acre sugar bush in the middle of the Merrimack River. They made the short crossing to the island in four or five canoes. The island's existing wigwams and fire pits facilitated their preparations; kindling and tomahawks lay scattered about. Hannah's master informed her that he planned to catch up with the larger war party the following day. Then he shouldered his flintlock rifle and relaxed his guard.

Late that afternoon, as the sun dropped behind the island's bare-limbed sugar maples, Hannah plotted their escape. First she and her cohorts would have to dispatch five adults and six of the seven children. She persuaded Sam to ask Bampico how best to kill a man with a tomahawk. Bampico, eager to teach his young protégé, answered Sam's question by pointing at his own temple: *Hit him here, hard.*

When Sam returned to the women with this information, Hannah whispered her plan of attack. Each of them was to find and conceal a

tomahawk then wait until midnight, when the Indians would be sound asleep. They would have to kill their captors quickly, beginning with the two men. Hannah assigned specific victims to both Sam and Mary and let them know which boy was to be spared. It fell to Mary to kill the boy's mother.

I picture Hannah tossing more kindling on the fire and pulling a shawl around her shoulders, and I can hear the waters of the swollen river gurgling in the evening air. I have always marveled at the resolve she brought to her dilemma. She knew her enemies, and when "God's word became comfortable" to her, she felt certain she would be able to accomplish the awful deed. Such clear resolve is what her master seems to have lacked. Having once been a devout Protestant himself, he had stayed in the house of the famous Reverend Rowlandson of Lancaster, before finding employment as a mercenary with the French, who then pressured him to convert to Catholicism. His head must have been swimming with foreign allegiances. Whether he and Bampico were drinking British *cyder* or French *rhum* on the night of March 30 is not clear. But my guess is that both men must have been utterly exhausted trying to maintain their dignity atop the shifting cultural and religious sands. Too exhausted that night, in any case, to post a guard. Too distracted to recognize that Hannah's quiet determination masked a primal urge for revenge; or that midwife Mary's passivity belied her recent resolve to kill Indian women and children; or that Sam's choice to sit by the fire with two older women of his own race—rather than chew the fat with the braves—signaled a newfound need to go home.

Around midnight the three captives crawled out from beneath their bedding to begin their grisly work. Sam probably whacked Bampico on the temple, a blow that would have instantly damaged the temporal lobe of his brain, the region that controls hearing and speech. Hannah killed her master in a similar fashion. Mary valiantly hacked away at the mother of Hannah's replacement child, but the badly cut-up woman somehow escaped in the darkness with the little boy. (She and her child later joined the larger band of Indians; her fate is described in another captive story.) Hannah and Sam may have shared in the killing of the remaining two women. Most accounts imply that Hannah finished off the children by herself.

The whole business could not have lasted more than a minute or two. There would have been a lot of thrashing and jerking in the night—punc-

tuated by the muffled *thwacks* of tomahawks cleaving flesh and bone. Taken out of sleep so abruptly, the children may not even have had time to cry out. The peaceful sound of the river would have taken over again by the time Hannah gained possession of her master's flintlock and tomahawk. She and Mary and Sam gathered a few provisions, carried them to the shoreline and scuttled all but one of the birch-bark canoes.

As they were easing the surviving boat into the swift and chilly current, it occurred to Hannah that no one back home would believe their story. She decided to return to the scene and scalp the Indians—all of them. Bampico had taught Sam how to take scalps. Now Sam showed Hannah how to make the first crescent-shaped cut, high on Bampico's own forehead, right at the hairline—and how to yank the scalp back with each subsequent slice.

Hannah wrapped the bloody mementos in a piece of knitted cloth that the Indians had stolen from her loom during the initial raid. Then the three of them returned to the canoe, shoved off from the shore, and glided quietly down the Merrimack River toward Haverhill. Sleeping in shifts, they returned home without incident in several days.

Three weeks later in Boston, Hannah received a twenty-five-pound bounty for her share of the ten scalps. Mary and Sam received twelve pounds, ten shillings each. The Reverend Cotton Mather witnessed the reward and recorded the details of Hannah's story in his *Magnalia Christi Americana*. Sam returned a hero to his hometown of Worcester. Hannah resumed her family life with Thomas and their eight surviving children and built a new house on the ashes of the old one. At age forty she gave birth to her thirteenth child, Lydia.

Hannah died in 1729, at age seventy-two. Nearly a century and a half later, in 1874, a permanent monument honoring her bravery was erected on Penacook Island. She can be seen to this day, holding her left arm high in the air, brandishing a fistful of scalps. Another statue, depicting her in a long dress and wielding a hatchet, is one of Haverhill's modern-day tourist attractions. It stands at the edge of GAR Park, a startling reminder that Haverhill was not always the peaceful and thriving metropolis it has since become. Artifacts of Hannah's captivity—her one shoe, her master's flintlock rifle and tomahawk—are on display in Haverhill's public library. Her story has survived despite a good deal of moral scrutiny, perhaps because it portrays a time when Indians and whites held nearly equal sway on the

eastern edge of the continent, each side having something to offer the other; each side able to dish out its own brand of cruelty and barbarity. Even today Hannah's story seems safely cocooned in moral inevitability. That she trespassed on the sacred ground of motherhood by killing children can be explained away by pointing to her belief that her own family had been murdered. What today might be thought of as lawless revenge was, to the Protestant ethic of her day, God's justice: if Indian raids were part of God's plan, so too was her escape from captivity—at whatever cost. Her captors certainly shared that ethic, albeit with a Catholic slant, and “justice” has served as justification, ever since.

Henry David Thoreau, after recounting Hannah's story in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, avoids any moral judgment. Writing in 1839, 142 years after Hannah's captivity and nearly four decades before her monument was built, he muses: “This seems a long while ago, and yet it happened since Milton wrote his *Paradise Lost*. [. . .] From this September afternoon, and from between these now cultivated shores, those times seemed more remote than the dark ages” (261).

The French and Indian War, a series of battles fought between England and France on American soil, continued for another sixty-six years after Hannah's escape—until the decade before the American Revolution. Haverhill was attacked again while Hannah was still alive, but the marauders avoided the Dustin house. Apparently her decision to scalp her victims had made her something of an Indian herself, and her fierce reputation acted as a kind of talisman—Big Medicine, so to speak.

In any case, there was safety enough in her household to assure that her thirteen-year-old son Nathaniel would grow up to wed Mary Ayer, whose son John Dustin would wed Mary Morse, whose son Timothy Dustin would wed Eunice Nutting, whose son Moody Dustin would wed Lucy Cowles, whose son William Dustin would wed Sarah Bentley, whose daughter Lucy Jane Dustin, after marrying Seth Revere, would give birth to my maternal grandfather Clinton Tristram Revere, at whose artificial knee I first heard Hannah's story.

C. T., as my grandfather Revere was called, lost his right leg, at age twenty-two, to a grizzly bear during a Wyoming hunting trip in November 1890. The way he told it, a member of his hunting party shot a bear cub, and the cub's angry mother mauled C. T. before anyone could shoot the bear. C. T.'s

companions carried him out of the woods and into town, where his leg was sawed off above the knee in a makeshift operation that took place on a bar top in some backwater saloon. He said the bartender gave him “god-awful rot-gut” to kill the pain.

My mother, born Harriett Winn Revere, was the youngest of C. T.’s four children. By the time I came into the world, he was already an old man. He wore a prosthesis made of wood, held tight to his leg stump by a strap that went around his waist and over his shoulder. I clearly recall standing, at age five, next to his leather armchair in the book-lined study of his Westfield, New Jersey, home, listening to the story of the bear attack and the tale of Hannah Dustin. He told a sanitized version of Hannah’s story; all the Indians were fierce braves, and there was no mention of selling scalps. I remember fingering his crude knee-joint, the outline of which was visible beneath his pants leg.

Even then, at age seventy-seven, C. T. was a robust man, still ambitious and full of life, the way you want a grandfather to be. Wire-rim spectacles added to his powerful aura, suggesting an active intellect. He had been born in San Francisco in 1868 and attended public schools there. Both his parents, native New Englanders, had died when he was twelve, and he and his brother, Charles, were left in the care of an abusive, pipe-smoking grandmother. One day, at age fourteen, after his grandmother slapped him too hard, C. T. ran away from home—for good. Like many self-made men of that era, he left a murky trail on his way to success. It is likely that he attended college, since he emerges first as a newspaper man—a drama critic and drama editor for *The Washington Post*. By then he had married Harriett Winn, who hailed from Savannah, Georgia. C. T. and Harriett had their first of four children, Anne, in 1903.

In his capacity as a journalist, C. T. befriended a stockbroker named Daniel J. Scully, known on Wall Street as the King of the Cotton Market. As a consequence of this friendship, C. T. applied his considerable rhetorical skills to defend the structure of the free-market economy. Eventually, he himself became a broker and a partner in the firm of Laird, Bissell, and Meeds, whose office was at 120 Broadway in New York City. He soon became known on the street as King Cotton’s Boswell and the Shakespeare of the Cotton Market, a reputation that resulted chiefly from a series of essays published in a newsletter called *Cotton and Other Problems*. C. T. used this venue to hold forth on all manner of political, economic, and philo-

sophical issues. The newsletter was widely read and admired, even by people who cared nothing about cotton but especially by readers who admired C. T. as a “patriot”—a euphemism in those days for “anti–New Dealer.”

On December 29, 1890, about a month after C. T. lost his leg to the grizzly bear and at a place not too distant from the scene of the amputation, the U.S. Seventh Cavalry fatally gunned down 153 mostly unarmed Sioux Indians in an episode that would later become known as the Massacre at Wounded Knee. The dead included sixty-two women and children. This shameful event, which took place in the newly declared state of South Dakota, marked the end of armed Indian resistance to the white man’s presence on the Great Plains, effectively removing the last barrier to westward expansion.

Whether twenty-two-year-old C. T. Revere was still in the region at the time of the massacre, I can’t say. But I know for a fact that a twenty-two-year-old Sioux Indian named John White Wolf was summoned to the bloody scene right after it occurred. The young man, attracted by an offer of warm clothing and insulated boots, had recently signed on as a policeman at the nearby Pine Ridge Indian Agency. Among the wounded he helped evacuate that day was a fourteen-year-old girl named Alice Waters, whose parents had been killed in the massacre. John married Alice soon afterwards, at the request of her uncle. At some point the couple converted to Catholicism, and over the course of the next half century, John and Alice raised their children and grandchildren in the harsh environment of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, a 2,778,000-acre tract in southwest South Dakota noted for its Badlands. They lived peacefully on a portion of land allotted to John by the U.S. government and survived, at least in part, on government-issued commodities.

In his later years John White Wolf became a tribal chief. His wise advice about tribal matters was eagerly sought by other members of his tribe, as well as by U.S. government officials, just as my grandfather’s advice about the fluctuations in world cotton prices was sought by investors in the commodities market. In the spring of 1940, at age seventy-two, White Wolf embarked on a road trip to Washington, DC, with three fellow chiefs. The four men were scheduled to testify before a congressional committee with regard to the upcoming fiftieth anniversary of the Massacre at Wounded Knee.

At noon on April 12, 1940, twenty-two hours before I was born, John White Wolf was relaxing on the lookout deck of the restaurant at Grand View Point, in Pennsylvania. Gazing eastward, in the direction of Gettysburg, where I now live and teach, he would have been able to see across seven counties and into the states of Maryland and West Virginia. Maple buds were beginning to redden in valleys where the grass was already green; small patches of snow still clung to wooded hilltops. Back home, on the Pine Ridge Indian reservation, this month was called the Moon of Red Grass Returning.

It cannot be said with any certainty what White Wolf had to eat for lunch that cold spring day—no autopsy was ever performed—but a hot dog is a good bet; it would have been easy on his dentures. At the coroner's inquest four days later, the driver of White Wolf's car, Frank Short Horn, forty-two, would testify from his hospital bed: "We stopped on top of the last hill, the last big hill, I don't know the name, the boys had coffee and lunch there."

The two other "boys" were Thomas Fast Horse, fifty-six, and Arthur Bone Shirt, sixty-eight. The four Indians had been driving from Pine Ridge for almost a week. That morning, they had left the town of Ligonier, Pennsylvania, thirty-five miles to the west, after resolving a persistent steering problem. The Lincoln Highway east of Ligonier is a tedious stretch of road that includes a steep climb to an elevation of 2,464 feet. As they crested the top of that last big hill, the four men would have seen before them the famous S.S. Grand View Hotel and Restaurant, a scaled-down replica of an ocean-going steamship, perched precariously on the rocky mountainside.

It is possible that when John White Wolf saw this preposterous construction, he let out a reflexive "Aho!" and that his exclamation was echoed by his companions, as when some truth is uttered in a sweat-lodge ceremony. But whatever amazement or mirth a mountaintop steamship might have occasioned in the mind of the four Plains Indians, there was nothing funny about the ninety-degree turn just ahead or the sharp descent that followed it.

Short Horn nosed the 1936 Ford Tudor sedan into one of the restaurant parking spaces in front of a cliff-side stone wall. The four men stepped out and stretched, no doubt aware of the impression they were making on other travelers. Though attired in street clothes, they wore beads and head-

bands, and they looked exactly the way old Indians from the Plains were supposed to look—flat-faced, weather-beaten, ruddy.

Standing on the lookout deck, White Wolf did not need the tourist map to know that the nation's capital lay quite some distance beyond the visible horizon, but he might have been surprised to learn that Gettysburg could not be seen from where he stood. He and the boys hoped to visit the Civil War battlefield before day's end. Of course he knew firsthand about battlefield carnage. He had no idea how he was going to describe to Congress his tribe's encounter with the U.S. Seventh Cavalry at Wounded Knee, but he would not be at a loss for details: women and children huddled in bloody heaps and scattered along a winding gulch. A baby sucking at its dead mother's breast. Frozen flesh and blood strewn like cobwebs across the hard mud and dry grass. And then that eerie, silent snow that had come out of nowhere and covered everything. Maybe he would quote Black Elk, the famous medicine man, who had called the massacre "the end of a beautiful dream."

White Wolf couldn't say that he had fully registered the horror then, at age twenty-two. He couldn't say he had processed it yet, fifty years later. Ten U.S. Army soldiers had received Congressional Medals of Honor for their murderous deeds that day. Why then, today, did some small part of him thrill at the prospect of testifying in Washington and perhaps even meeting President Franklin D. Roosevelt? Why was he, like Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, Red Cloud, and Big Foot before him, agreeing to yet another "dialogue" with the *wasichu*? It was the fate of the vanquished, of course. His appearance before the Committee on Indian Affairs promised to be a workaday bit of government propaganda. House Resolution 953 sought to "liquidate the liability" of the United States for the massacre. He and his fellow Lakotas could expect to be called in front of the committee at 10:00 a.m. and dismissed before lunch. Keeping the memory of Wounded Knee alive would help his tribe obtain reparations from the government. On the other hand, by resurrecting the pathetic defeat of his people, he risked trumpeting their insignificance. The entire Sioux nation did not now number as many souls as were wasted in a single day at the Battle of the Somme, in 1916. Who in 1940 cared about 150 dead Indians in a ditch? Just two decades earlier, the trenches of Europe had absorbed the blood of more than eight million men.

The four Indians browsed the gift-shop displays of international crafts.

Bone Shirt purchased an authentic Mexican sombrero. White Wolf, who had promised his grandchildren patent leather shoes and Keds, kept his spending money in his pocket.

After lunch and coffee, they returned to the car, and Short Horn took the wheel again. White Wolf stepped aside, allowing Bone Shirt to crawl in back, followed by Fast Horse. Both men settled in, taking advantage of the padded armrests and the roominess afforded by the bustle-back luggage trunk. I can almost see White Wolf as he eased himself onto the front seat, unhappy perhaps that the seat springs poked at his buttocks through the corded upholstery.

Short Horn hit the starter button and pumped the floppy accelerator pedal. When the V-8 engine caught hold, he depressed the clutch, and with wide swings of the floor-mounted stick shift, finally found reverse. He waited while a trailer truck that had just topped the hill whined down and around the bend in low gear, followed closely by two cars. Then he released the emergency brake, backed out into the road, shifted straight into neutral and coasted downhill to save gas.

Divided by a single white line, the Lincoln Highway dropped steeply from Grand View Point for about a quarter of a mile, then curved sharply to the right, passing close by a stone building used as a shot factory during the Revolutionary War. It was the first of many such nine-degree slopes and sharp curves and one of the reasons Short Horn would later say, "This is the worst road we ever came to."

Watching Lincoln Highway unfold before him, White Wolf would have had time to consider the arc of his life. The Massacre at Wounded Knee had brought John and Alice together, defined their lives, really. Alice still bore scars on her left leg and back, which she obligingly showed her grandchildren whenever they asked. John might well have reflected that this mission to Washington was the consummate act of his life. On the other hand, he might have thought nothing of the kind. He might simply have taken a nap.

The road was like a roller coaster now. The whining trailer truck never got out of first gear and the driver was braking constantly, leaving behind a wake of diesel smoke tinged with the odor of hot rubber. At the top of each rise, Short Horn edged over the centerline for a better look ahead, but all he could see was another impassable stretch. It had now taken about fifteen minutes to go two-and-a-half miles. At this rate, they wouldn't get

to Gettysburg until after dark. Roads were never this congested on the reservation. You could really step on it out there.

They started into a big dip. Short Horn hung back, waiting for the truck to make the grade up ahead. Then he floored it and crested the next hill at forty miles an hour, only to find the opposite lane crowded with west-bound traffic. They headed down a gentle slope bordered on both sides by pasture. Short Horn was tempted to kill the engine and coast, but he didn't want to miss a chance to pass. The highway curved right, then left, then rose and dropped so sharply his stomach felt queasy. Then it descended into the shadow of a large hill on the south side. Another right, another drop, another left, and another drop. Hawks lost altitude this way if they weren't in a mood to dive.

One more stomach-flutter dip in the road, then a leveling-off. The car directly behind the trailer truck pulled out first, and the second car followed, close on its tail. Both cars managed to scoot past the truck and squeeze back in line just before the next turn. Short Horn was forced to wait. He checked the odometer. They'd been stuck behind this truck for four-and-a-half miles already; he was feeling pressured to make a move.

Pulling close behind the trailer, he wove in and out, warming up for the next chance to pass. He noticed looseness in the steering again and was going to mention it to White Wolf, but the old man was staring grimly ahead, as though he already knew.

At exactly 4.7 miles from Grand View Lookout, the road curved sharply left and then leveled out across the valley. This was it, now or never. Short Horn veered into the oncoming lane and floored it. At the same time, the driver of the trailer truck shifted into high gear, speeding up. Short Horn clutched the steering wheel, fighting the sedan's tendency to oscillate sideways. He was halfway past the trailer when the real trouble began: three hundred yards ahead, a flatbed pickup, carrying a horse, popped up from a dip in the road.

Seeing the pickup, the trailer-truck driver gave ground. Short Horn eased up too, unintentionally boxing himself into the left lane. In a panic he floored it again. Thomas Fast Horse sat forward suddenly, gripping the back of White Wolf's seat. The driver of the approaching flatbed, Calvin Leonard, recognizing instantly that whoever was headed his way was out of control, skidded into the guardrail and tried to jump from his vehicle on the passenger side. The horse in back reared up against its ropes. The

Indians' sedan, going sixty now, cleared the trailer truck with room to spare, but instead of cutting back into the right lane, it swerved left, slamming hard into the flatbed's left front fender. The collision came midway back on Bone Shirt's side of the car, pounding him against his armrest. White Wolf was thrown hard against Short Horn. The car then caromed across the road and smashed into the south guardrail. White Wolf, rebounding against his now dislodged seat, somehow managed to hang on as the vehicle clipped three guardrail posts and tore out forty feet of steel cable. Then the car leapt the shoulder and flipped. As White Wolf tumbled with the momentum of the event, his head struck the windshield, a split second before the vehicle severed a telephone pole and slammed into a concrete abutment.

Four members of a road crew, working in front of Colvin Wright's place, several hundred yards to the east, dropped their scythes and ran toward the accident. Someone in the house called the police and then dialed the Pate Funeral home for an ambulance. Thomas Fast Horse was found unconscious, jammed against his side window. Arthur Boneshirt, his ribcage crushed, lay heaped on the ceiling of the overturned car, the Mexican sombrero flattened beneath him. Frank Short Horn hung upside down, his pelvis wedged between the flattened steering wheel and the seat, his collarbone snapped, blood gushing from a head wound. The V-8 engine was racing, the rear artillery-spoke wheels spinning madly, like a wind-up toy. Gasoline dripped from the ruptured fuel line. The trailer-truck driver, Harvey Rummell, held a small fire extinguisher at the ready while Calvin Leonard, ignoring his own minor injuries and those of his neighing horse, crawled through the driver's window and flipped the ignition key to "off." Then he and Rummell removed White Wolf from the passenger side, using his dislodged seat as a litter and placing it along the shoulder of the road. The deep lacerations on White Wolf's face, scalp, and neck would have to wait until the ambulance arrived.

Across the highway, to the north, a tree-topped knoll rose above a cow pasture. A rivulet called Burns Creek, swelling with snowmelt from the Allegheny Mountains, traversed the pasture and narrowed into a culvert beneath the highway where White Wolf sat. Though a few curious cows stared at the overturned car on the highway, most of the pastured dairy herd had returned to grazing on the fresh grass or drinking from the creek, their dull-brown backs turned orange by the sun.

It was 1:29 p.m.

White Wolf, still breathing, was taken to Timmins Hospital by ambulance, along with Thomas Fast Horse, who lay on a stretcher next to him. Frank Short Horn, Arthur Boneshirt, and Calvin Leonard were driven to the hospital in Officer Rowan's patrol car. Dr. N. A. Timmons stapled and sutured White Wolf's torn-away scalp, bandaged what was left of his nose, and dressed the deeper neck wounds. But he didn't bother to x-ray the badly fractured skull. A nurse washed and set aside the old man's shaved-off gray hair.

John White Wolf never knew that he was dying in the town of Bedford, where fifty years earlier the *Bedford Gazette* had printed "The Happenings of the Year Eighteen-and-Ninety," a listing in which the only mention of a "wounded knee" was that of one George Stoler, who suffered a gun shot in the knee on the ninth of December, leading to his death on the tenth. And it is just as well that he never saw the headline in the *Gazette* on this very day, April 12, which announced the near-completion of a section of the Pennsylvania Turnpike meant to replace the treacherous stretch of Lincoln Highway.

The sun was still up, barely visible through the trees on the hospital grounds, when John White Wolf's heart stopped beating. The same setting sun my grandfather might have glimpsed from the backseat of his chauffer-driven car on his way home from Wall Street, on the very evening my mother went into labor with me, in Boston, Massachusetts.

Take old Lincoln Highway nine miles west of Bedford, and you'll encounter the straight stretch in the road. The highway is wider now—the shoulders delineated in white—but the pavement still crests over the culvert, just as Officer Rowan testified back in 1940.

If you turn onto the only side road, as I did recently, you'll find a place to pull over a few hundred feet from the crash site. Roll down the car window and listen for a moment to the surprising quiet of the countryside. Get out and stretch. That's Burns Creek meandering toward you from the west, wending its way through a mixed stand of maples and oaks before it runs beneath the side road and cuts sharply south toward the large culvert under the highway. You'll be able to make out the concrete abutment from here, and, in the stillness of the place, you'll have no trouble imagining White Wolf's overturned sedan atop it, its rear wheels spinning madly. A few cows, descendants perhaps of the herd that witnessed the accident, may be

standing in the creekbed on the far side of the highway, their legs static and bronze in the sun and clearly visible through the culvert.

Shut your eyes and wait. If you hear behind you the unmistakable sound of bovine hoofs making their way over rock and dirt, you'll probably assume, as I did, that some curious cow is climbing the embankment to check you out. Take in the sound (take it as a blessing) and when the animal has stopped moving and is quite still, turn suddenly and open your eyes. If you're lucky, as I was, you'll see not a cow, but a large buffalo gazing back at you through a fence, its dark eyes set wide in its low-hung, massive head; its arched backbone communicating both weariness and power. For an instant, it won't matter that there is a rational explanation for this—that a young Pennsylvania farmer named Richard Darrow has purchased the pastureland on this side of Old Lincoln Highway in order to graze his small herd of American bison. For a brief moment, your encounter will need no elucidation, and the animal will seem more like spirit than flesh. Which is why, later, it probably won't surprise you to learn that while Richard Darrow's wife, Ann, sells Native American crafts from her shop just down the road, neither she nor her husband have heard of an Indian chief named John White Wolf, killed in a car wreck near the old Colvin Wright place—now the Darrow place—way back in 1940.

WORK CITED

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