THIS, THEN, IS AMERICA!": *UNTO THESE HILLS* AND APPROPRIATION OF NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY

by

HEATHER L. WHITTAKER

(Under the Direction of Claudio Saunt)

ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to analyze the image appropriation of the Cherokee Indians by the creators of the outdoor drama *Unto These Hills*, which premiered in 1950. The drama was imagined and written by white North Carolinians in the late 1940s, and the majority of actors who performed in the drama for over fifty years were whites painted to look like Native Americans. In 2006, the eastern band of Cherokee attempted to reappropriate their history and culture by hiring Indian playwrights and filling almost all of the roles with Native Americans, Cherokee or not. Both appropriation and reappropriation were parts of larger trends in the United States and other parts of North America.

INDEX WORDS: Unto These Hills, Playing Indian, Cherokee Indians, Image Appropriation, Outdoor Drama, Tourism

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HEATHER L. WHITTAKER

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HEATHER L. WHITTAKER

Major Professor: Claudio Saunt

Committee: Stephen Berry
Pamela Voekel

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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For Matt

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Premiering in 1950, *Unto These Hills,* a play about the Cherokee Indians, added a new chapter to the story of white appropriation of Native American history. The play told the Cherokee's story from a white point of view and greatly increased tourism to the small reservation in Western North Carolina. Though income increased, the play's lack of historical accuracy proved to be a lingering issue. In the early 2000's the Cherokee Historical Association took steps toward improving both the historical accuracy of the play and the number of Cherokee actors employed by the drama. The actions of the Cherokee Historical Association highlight issues that native peoples have dealt with for decades and the actions some groups have taken in reclaiming their history, and the ability to tell it as their own.

Most scholars look to James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* as both the beginning of American literature and as the beginning of white appropriation of Indian images in the United States. The Cherokee drama *Unto These Hills* follows in this tradition. It arrived on the cusp of the wider national movement by Native American groups to gain more rights and autonomy, and the drama itself reflects this change in Indian and white attitudes throughout its many revisions through the decades. The drama's broad appeal and international reach provide the perfect case study for the phenomenon Phillip Deloria has dubbed "Playing Indian."[1] *Unto These Hills* is enormously popular and still plays to audiences every summer. Unlike films that lose

[1] Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

their cultural relevance and—for the vast majority—become kitschy as film techniques improve, the venue of outdoor drama allows for changes and updates to keep audiences interested and returning.

Plays and pageants relying on Indians to tell their story actually have a longer history in North America than even Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales.* The Spanish used drama during their conquests of the Southwest. The conquistadors and missionaries assumed the natives had heard of Hernan Cortes' conquest of Mexico. They hoped that by retelling the episode to the Indian groups through drama, their conquest would go more smoothly.[2] Though not technically a drama—friars would act out scenes to teach the natives about Christianity—the Spaniards did not simply stroll into New Mexico in 1598, but staged scenes from their conquest of Mexico upon their arrival.[3] Franciscan friars aided the Spanish army in their "conquest theatre," and used the subjugation of the natives to fuel their missionary efforts.[4] Though the friars wanted submission to themselves and their god, they allowed Cortes to play an important role in their drama, having him bow before arriving friars, thereby equating them with gods.[5] Seeing their military conqueror prostrate himself showed the natives that even Cortes saw the friars as powerful leaders. The friars needed this show of power to enforce their authority as they would remain in the area with only a small contingent of soldiers.

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[2] Ramon Gutierrez *When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

[3] Ibid., 47.

[4] Richard C. Trexler, "We Think, They Act: Clerical Readings of Missionary Theatre in 16th Century New Spain," in *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Cenury*, ed. Steven L. Kaplan (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1984), 189-227. Trexler states that "in the eminently theatrical entrées of visiting Franciscan prelates into Mexican towns during subsequent decades, Cortés' painterly welcome of the friars would be endlessly repeated. All missionary theatre ended with the Indians on their knees humiliating themselves (*humiliarse*). Franciscan missionary historians saw Cortés' historic act as the keystone of their order's authority over the subject natives." 192.

[5] Ibid., 191-192.

Eventually, native groups conquered by the Spanish began to act out the conquest in their own way and in front of the friars and military officials.[6] This appears to have occurred in a large majority of areas conquered by the Spanish, not just Mexico and New Mexico. In Peru and Bolivia, Indians act out the death of Atahualpa, the Incan king, and perform a dance representing the conquest of the Inca by the Spanish.[7] Though dating the onset of these performances has proved difficult, they played in the twentieth century. These dances and theatrical creations do not tell history exactly as it happened, but show the contemporary hopes and beliefs of those groups acting out the history, hopes of a return of Incan rule, and hopes of vengeance.[8]

In addition to native groups conquered by the Spanish choosing to act out their history, in Mexico, the state chose to use some images of their indigenous peoples to create a modern, cohesive Mexican identity. In 1921, Félix Palavicini, owner of the newspaper *El Universal*, created the India Bonita Contest. His attempts at finding beautiful Indians proved complicated, however, because no one had a firm grasp on what *India Bonita* meant. Many white women sent in photographs of themselves dressed in what a large portion of the country considered traditional Indian dress. Furthermore, the traditional beauty contests always crowned white women, seeing them as the model of feminine beauty. The Mexican state caught onto the possibilities of the pageant late but used it to their advantage. Songs and plays arose inspired by the pageant, varying from the slapstick to the serious. Neither the winner of the pageant, María Bibiana, nor any other Indian peoples were given say in how their image and culture would be used in the

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[6] Ibid., 193-210.

[7] Nathan Wachtel, *The Vision of the Vanquished: The Spanish Conquest of Peru through Indian Eyes 1530-1570* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers Inc, 1977), 33.

[8] Ibid., 50-57.

state's efforts to merge traditional and modern Mexico into a single identity.[9] Along with the pageant, the Mexican state found other ways to use their indigenous populations to create a modern identity. Both the Exhibition of Popular Arts and the Noche Mexicana used people dressed up in indigenous dress and featured native folk arts and foods as a way to introduce more people to the culture. For the most part, the women and men offering food and presenting native crafts were not natives, but whites dressed up, who "played Indian" to serve the purpose of the event. These exhibitions were thought to emphasize authentic Mexico, and the exhibits attempted to perpetuate their use as a new Mexico was forged in the post-revolutionary era.[10]

Using native culture to create a modern identity was not confined to areas of Spanish colonization. By the nineteenth century, the majority of native peoples had been removed from the east coast, and to the white people living there, anything involving Indians appeared as a curiosity. In his American Museum in New York City, P.T. Barnum featured Indians along with their tools of everyday life in his collection. The Indians featured were not always as "authentic" as Barnum claimed, but white men in red face paint. Barnum presented the Indians as a picture of manly savagery, comparing them with the childlike blacks he had in his collection.[11] This idea was not only common at the time, but had been popular among Americans for decades. Wild Indians represented how white Americans—specifically white males—wanted to present

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[9] Rick A. López, "The India Bonita Contest of 1921 and the Ethnicization of Mexican National Culture," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 82:2 (May, 2002): 291-328.

[10] Rick A. López, "The Noche Mexicana and the Exhibition of Popular Arts: Two Ways of Exalting Indianness," in *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940* ed. Mary Kay Vaughn and Stephen E. Lewis (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 23-42.

[11] Paul Gilmore, *The Genuine Article: Race, Mass Culture, and American Literary Manhood*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 86. Gilmore states that "whether white men in masquerade or actual blacks and Indians, the essential racial distinctions made were the same. Blackness was a childlike mask consisting of burnt cork and India rubber; Indianness was savagely real, even when performed by whites."

themselves to the rest of the world, and how they saw themselves as they defeated the British and began to conquer the rest of the country.[12]

In the nineteenth and twentieth century, drama resurged as a popular way to remind people of the "disappearing Indian," and to appropriate Indian history. Beginning in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century and still playing in the twenty-first century, "Los Comanches" tells the story of Comanche and New Mexican relations. Two different versions of the drama exist, one which presents the Comanche and New Mexicans as having the ability to form a peaceful relationship. The other version, perhaps the more truthful version of events, presents a New Mexico overwhelmed by Comanche power. A conquest drama, the latter version celebrates the 1774 victory over the Comanche by Carlos Fernández. Presenting two separate versions shows how divisive the memory of New Mexicans actually was and is. It also shows how New Mexicans thought about the contradictory actions of the Comanche.[13] The Indians would trade peacefully at markets around the territory, but if unsatisfied with their purchases, they would raid other areas to satisfy their desires. While this drama focuses on New Mexican's desire to navigate and understand their complicated relationship with the Comanche, historical accuracy does not appear of high importance.[14]

Most early dramas, in fact, did not attempt to achieve historical accuracy, but worked instead to evoke sensationalized emotions. In the 1820s through 1840s, one of the most popular plays in the nation told the story of King Philip's War. *Metamora; or, the Last of the Wampanoags*, romanticized what many nineteenth century audiences considered the last of the Indians. The drama romanticized King Philip not only in

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[12] Deloria, *Playing Indian*.
[13] Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 86-88.
[14] Ibid.

making him a heroic figure, but in equating him with nature. Edwin Forrest filled the role King Philip, and he made his career off of playing this one particular Indian. Forrest played to sold out audiences up and down the East Coast, except for Georgia which was in the throes of removing the Cherokee whom they looked upon as a menace. To Georgians, removal was the best and only option, and unlike the audiences in other parts of the United States, they were not swayed by any emotive speeches Forrest could deliver on stage. What the play did provide for all audiences was an American identity.[15] In no way did the drama represent the true historical facts, only a past as the Americans wanted them remembered. Though this play does not show in the United States any more, the manner in which it represented and used Indian history was repeated in outdoor drama, films, and various forms of literature throughout the twentieth century.[16]

Perhaps the most popular form of entertainment in the nineteenth century that presented a version of Indian life and culture were the Wild West shows that appeared toward the end of the Indian Wars. While those moving west feared the wild Indians that inhabited the land, Easterners felt the settlers overreacted and exaggerated their stories, recalling the now romanticized stories of their ancestors' interactions with native peoples. Toward the end of the century, as the military subdued these "wild" natives and forced them onto reservations, travelling shows recounting some of the more famous battles, and featuring real Indians who participated in the wars, captured the nation's and the world's

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[15] Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 191-226.

[16] Lepore argues that "In the 1830s and 1840s Edwin Forrest's *Metamora* served as an important vehicle by which white Americans came to understand Indian removal as inevitable, and Philip, newly heroized, became a central figure in the search for an American identity and an American past. An American identity founded on a romanticized Indian required the Indians themselves be 'long vanished hence,'…For Indians' role in American history (even as wartime enemies) to be cherished, romanticized, and fetishized, Indians themselves must exist only in the past, mute memorials…Either that or else they could be far, far away—exiled west of the Mississippi," 224.

imagination. This popularity caused the image of the war-bonneted Plains Indian to come to represent the whole of America's indigenous peoples. The images reproduced from the shows' advertisements carried over onto film and throughout the decades it has proved almost impossible to shed.[17] In general, the shows hired Indians to act out their culture or scenes from recent and famous Indian Wars for paying white audiences. For many of the Indians, working in the shows offered a welcome alternative to life on the reservation. Whereas reservation life brought constant surveillance and unwelcome new ways of living, historian L.G. Moses argues that natives "found in the Wild West shows a means to evoke and even to celebrate their cultures," and that by playing themselves, they could defy the government's wishes.[18] In fact, Indians did not only face government policies forcing them to change their way of life, but "for fifty years, the only place to be an Indian—and defiantly so—and still remain relatively free from the interference of missionaries, teachers, agents, humanitarians, and politicians was in the Wild West show."[19] Many people in America wanted to civilize or proselytize the Indians, or else confine them to reservations or force their children to boarding schools, things avoided when the Indians joined a Wild West show.

While the nineteenth century saw the rise of many Wild West shows, Buffalo Bill's easily reigns as the most famous, both then and now. His show travelled the world, and he hired famous Indians, such as Sitting Bull, to perform. Buffalo Bill's Wild West presented Indians as contemporary to their white counterparts and brought them into the modern day. By using the Indians that actually fought in the battles depicted in his show,

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[17] Joy S. Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000). L.G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians: 1883-1933* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

[18] Moses, 277.

[19] Ibid., 278.

Buffalo Bill provided a small amount of authenticity. He would invite his audiences back stage to meet the Indian performers after the shows, allowing them to see how they lived during their travels and to listen to what the Indians had to say.[20] According to Joy Kasson, Buffalo Bill provided his Indian actors with the chance to take on different roles, allowing them to present their culture as they wanted it to be seen. Buffalo Bill afforded the Indians the chance to perform their own songs and dances as well as their horsemanship. The Indians embraced the showmanship and the business side of the production, choosing to participate and not simply allowing producers to take advantage of them.[21] Regardless of the positives, Buffalo Bill's Wild West set the precedence for how America and the world would view Indians for decades to come, not simply through the dramatizations, but also through the large color advertisements and color programs which recreated some of the staged scenes from the show and permeated American culture.

While *Metamora* used a historical Indian as the main character in the story and Buffalo Bill allowed his Indian actors to present their culture, in most plays and pageants the Indians appeared as secondary characters to the main story. Pageants and outdoor dramas became popular in the early twentieth century across the United States. Mainly, these productions were created and used to promote pride in the people dwelling in the cities or towns where the dramas took place. For example, the Pageant of Paha Sapa told the story of Custer, South Dakota, to audiences from 1923 through 2000. Featuring three sections, the drama told the story of the area from before the arrival of whites through to contemporary time. Paha Sapa continued in the tradition of *Metamora* by presenting a

[20] Ibid. 21, 272.
[21] Kasson, 163.

romanticized view of the natives. The first section of the pageant presented pre-contact Indians as the stereotypical primitive native who made no impact upon the land in which they lived. Instead, white miners wreaked havoc, "raping" the area for its natural resources. Originally, the local Indians—Lakota Sioux from the Pine Ridge Reservation—participated in the drama by presenting their life in the village, including erecting a tipi on stage. This episode slowly dwindled from the script, the narration described Indian interactions with the white settlers of the area, and whites eventually took over the Indian roles.[22]

Artists did find other ways to use Indian history and culture in their works. Margaret Stringfield, a white citizen of Waynesville, North Carolina, turned a poem about the Eastern Band Cherokee into an operetta. The poem, entitled "Occoneechee, Maid of the Mystic Lake," written by Frank Jarrett of Dillsboro, North Carolina, tells the story of two Indian lovers torn apart by removal. Characters in the operetta include Tecumseh, Yonaguska, Will Thomas, and Junaluska, but focused on the invented daughter of Junaluska and her lover Whippoorwill. The *Asheville-Citizen* ran an article detailing the operetta discussed the eastern band Cherokee, instead choosing to focus on Stringfield, her family, and their many accomplishments, especially in music. A melodramatic tone characterized the sections of the article that detailed the operetta and the story of the Cherokee. "The operetta presents vividly that terrible tragedy visited upon the Cherokee in their forced exodus which has no parallel for the weight of grief it visited upon an innocent and loyal people," when Whippoorwill "was seized by the United States forces and carried captive to the Indian Territory, from where he escaped,"

[22] Linea Sundstrom, "The Pageant of Paha Sapa: An Origin Myth of White Settlement in the American West," *Great Plains Quarterly* 28:1 (Winter, 2008): 3-26.

eventually making his way back to Occoneechee.[23] Both the operetta and the newspaper article repeated common stereotypes about Native Americans. Whippoorwill's forced removal occurs just as Occoneechee's father "had been called to the 'Happy Hunting Grounds.'"[24] Her heartbreak leads her to search for Whippoorwill, "following the course of streams loved by her race for their scenic beauty," only to come up empty at each attempt.[25] Only when "she returns again to the scenes of her happy childhood," does she reunite with Whippoorwill.[26] The article did not discuss when and where the operetta would show, if at all, only that Stringfield completed her work. This once again shows that the romantic memory of the Indian was preferred by white dramatists, since the operetta itself focused on an imaginary story, and the press covered its completion only to laud the accomplishments of the author and composer.

Not all outdoor dramas and pageants in the twentieth century that used Native American images and culture were written by whites. According to Linea Sundstrom, these performances tended to be the more historically accurate of the dramas presented, and even the Oglala Sioux spiritual leader Black Elk worked on a project.[27] In 1935, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians commissioned and presented a pageant entitled *The Spirit of the Great Smokies: A Pageant*. This theatrical attempt resulted from the Indians' desire to commemorate "the hundredth anniversary of the Great Removal," but did not

[23] Western Carolina University archives. Newspaper article "Historical Pageantry of Cherokees is Depicted," *Asheville-Citizen,* May 1, 1932.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Sundstrom, 18-21 "These pageants depict Indians not as passive victims but as active players in important historical events. In addition, these performances allowed elders to show children how things were done in the old days and to exhibit their skills in horsemanship, traditional arts, and community organization." 20.

represent the first or last attempt by the Cherokees to present their history and this story.[28] The second version, *Unto These Hills* which focused on Cherokee removal, premiered in 1950 and still plays today. Unlike the versions that followed, *Spirit of the Great Smokies* featured all Cherokee actors. The roles of the white men, including Hernando De Soto, Franciscan monks, King Charles II, and French and English soldiers all went to Cherokees. In *Unto These Hills*, white actors played the majority of Indian roles. Because the pageant did not advertise to a nation-wide audience—the organizers did not fund-raise on a large scale, and the only real work put into the production was costuming—Cherokees playing the roles of Europeans did not create the same problem that white men playing Indians eventually would. This production fit the mold for the traditional pageant, with the story being told in hopes of raising pride in the area.

Whereas *Unto These Hills* drew large crowds and those responsible attempted to benefit the whole of Western North Carolina with the production, *Spirit of the Great Smokies* represented a memorial to the Cherokee ancestors, though open to any spectator and seen as a way to raise funds through tourism. No one pushed for historical accuracy, and in fact the actors did not have any lines. They simply presented themselves in costume on stage acting out narrator's words: "We come before you in solemn ceremonial," explained the narrator, "To celebrate the glories of our past/To honor those who've gone before,/To keep alive within our hearts/The story of the Cherokee."[29]

Though unknown, the Cherokee's original intent for the play appeared to be commemorating the history of their people and how they remembered the major events of their past. This becomes evident in the fact that they did not stage it again until 1937, and

[28] *The Spirit of the Great Smokies* script, 1.
[29] *Spirit,* 4.

then for the last time. Though those responsible for the play did not intend it as a money making scheme, the 1937 performance not only brought in tourism dollars, but encouraged the Cherokee agency to lease "Cherokee commercial properties to white entrepreneurs," among other things to provide the services tourists desired.[30] Though the Second World War postponed plans for a new play, it seems clear that the pageant inspired Ross Caldwell, a local white businessman, to believe that a play put on in Cherokee for the express purpose of bringing in tourists could succeed. Caldwell himself was not of Cherokee ancestry and lived in Cherokee because he had set up a business there some years earlier. With the help of Indian Agent Joe Jennings, Caldwell presented the idea of putting on a play in Cherokee to the board of the Western North Carolina Associated Communities (WNCAC). Their idea eventually took the title *Unto These Hills.*[31] The last lines of *Spirit*—"Out of these brave beginnings has developed the Cherokee schools of today, which are fostering all of the arts and crafts and culture that is truly and distinctly Indian, teaching the young folk pride of race and heritage, and leading the older ones to live wholesome, happy lives"—in a way foreshadowed what the white men of WNCAC attempted to accomplish through their efforts of producing *Unto These Hills*.[32]

Staging a play on the Cherokee reservation was not the original intent of the men who began Western North Carolina Associated Communities. The eighteen men representing eleven North Carolina counties met in 1946 for the purpose of increasing tourism throughout Western North Carolina, specifically focusing on the Blue Ridge

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[30] John Finger, *Cherokee Americans: The Eastern Band of Cherokees in the Twentieth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 100.

[31] Finger, this information is also available in the first *Unto These Hills* souvenir program.

[32] *Spirit,* 12.

Parkway running through the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The founding members of the organization in fact chose the park for their first project. By extending the parkway, they hoped to bring more tourist traffic through the eleven western counties.[33] This extension coincidentally benefitted the Cherokee reservation because more people drove through, spending money on arts and crafts. WNCAC wanted to stage a play in Western North Carolina similar to *The Lost Colony*, which began in 1937 and still plays today in Roanoke, Virginia, telling the story of Sir Walter Raleigh's failed attempts at colonization. George Simpson and Harriet Herring, who wrote a booklet on the WNCAC, opined that "the desire to establish a historical show of some sort was inevitable in the post-war situation in the mountain region," because "regional pride and self[-]consciousness eventually reach this point," and "a historical drama is perhaps the best way to characterize and make known the peculiar appeal of a region to hoped-for travelers and vacationers."[34]

It seems somewhat surprising that this group of white males chose to produce a play about the Cherokee Indians, or for that matter that they saw the story of the Cherokee as the most appealing way to bring in tourists and tell the story of their region. North Carolina and the Smoky Mountain area had white heroes, such as Daniel Boone, that they could have commissioned plays about. In fact, as Kermit Hunter, the author of *Unto These Hills*, observed five years after his drama premiered that "the average person in North Carolina was not really aware that there were Indians in his state."[35] Hunter himself would later write plays about white heroes after the success of *Unto These Hills*

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[33] CHA, George L. Simpson and Harriet L. Herring, *Western North Carolina Associated Communities* (Cherokee: The Cherokee Historical Association, 1956), 14.

[34] CHA, Simpson and Herring, 30.

[35] Kermit Hunter, "The Theatre Meets the People," *Educational Theatre Journal* 7:2 (May, 1955): 129.

sparked a series of other outdoor dramas. This represented a larger trend in the Appalachian region of exploiting culture for monetary reasons. Over the twentieth century "local images and culture have been manipulated and marketed to draw more visitors, regardless of the effects of this process on native residents."[36] This did not refer to the Indians or North Carolina alone, but spanned a great majority of the South, for in Tennessee, as Brenden Martin writes, "the hillbilly attractions of Dollywood continued to perpetuate many of the region's negative stereotypes."[37] Though hillbilly images and folk art would prove popular, for decades after the development of the Qualla Boundary, the eastern band Cherokee would draw large numbers of tourists to the area.

As Philip Deloria has explained, early Americans defined themselves in terms of what they believed they were not.[38] Whereas when colonists identified themselves as English they believed themselves civilized, when they adopted an American identity the Indians served as the perfect reference point, allowing the whites to appropriate Indian history. Eventually this idea would evolve, and whites would appropriate Indian history and culture as a shared identity.[39] In the post-World War II world, Deloria explains, people who attended pow-wows and dressed as Indians in their spare time "transformed a search for authenticity that had been figured around Indians since the turn of the century," and by "playing off popular consensus and racial assimilation, [such people]

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[36] Richard D. Starnes, introduction to *Southern Journeys: Tourism, History, & Culture in the Modern South,* ed. Richard D. Starnes (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 1.

[37] C. Brenden Martin, *Tourism in the Mountain South: A Double-Edged Sword,* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2007), *160*.

[38] Deloria, 3. Deloria looks to D.H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature*.

[39] Ibid., Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1977). Winthrop Jordan states that "the Indian became for Americans a symbol of their American experience…Conquering the Indian symbolized and personified the conquest of the American difficulties, the surmounting of the wilderness. To push back the Indian was to prove the worth of one's own mission…", 99.

nearly eliminated the barriers that differentiated Indians and whites."[40] One does not have to look to pow-wows or people who adopt Indian dress for examples of appropriating history. The Cherokee drama, *Unto These Hills* exemplified the idea of people looking for a singular identity, or as Winthrop Jordan would define it, a "symbol of their American experience."[41] The achievement of a singular identity was confirmed by the spectators *Unto These Hills* attracted and the racial lines the actors crossed. Though others had discussed the idea of a large scale play depicting the history of the Cherokee Indians before the outbreak of World War II, not until 1946 did a plan begin to coalesce. The WNCAC, made up almost entirely white men, chose the Cherokee reservation as the perfect location the play they hoped to put on to increase tourism, even though the play itself did not yet exist. This plan, however, required that the play not only present the history of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, but that it also serve the larger goal of energizing the tourist economy for eleven of the western counties in North Carolina, most of which had not a single Indian inhabitant. *Unto These Hills*, has evolved over its more than fifty-year run, and has been significantly rewritten three times, and used as a way to enrich the lives of the Cherokee and preserve their culture. However, the original play lacked historical and cultural accuracy and simply served the larger purpose of bringing tourists not just to the popular city of Asheville, but to the western part of the state as a whole. The play served as a hook to keep tourists visiting the Great Smoky Mountain National Park or travelling the Blue Ridge Parkway in the region for more than a few hours. Ultimately, the drama about the Cherokee, *Unto These Hills*, served as an example of Deloria's concept of playing Indian, because for fifty years

[40] Deloria,150.
[41] Jordan, 90-91.

it served as a tool of the white community, exploited the Indians and their culture, and allowed the wider American public to associate their own history and the history of America with the devastating story of the Cherokee Trail of Tears. The story became a unifying symbol that the nation as a whole could relate to as a tale not of Cherokee woes but one of human suffering that occurred in the history of the United States, and no longer belonged only to the Cherokees.

CHAPTER 2

UNTO THESE HILLS IN THE 1950'S

"The Cherokee Historical Association welcomes visitors from every part of the world, in the sincere hope that in this absorbing drama of America's past every traveler may come to understand more than ever the importance of common labor toward a common high goal, of unity and brotherhood not only between men but between nations. The theme of *Unto These Hills* is peculiarly appropriate to the world of today. As the temper of a nation changes and moves in various new directions to meet new problems, there is no better place to look for understanding and clarity than the past, where the temper of the present was born. Perhaps in re-examining the mistakes as well as the accomplishments of our forebears in their effort to establish American democracy, the real meaning of democracy can best be found, and the truths that we have always held to be self-evident can best be defined…Through *Unto These Hills, Oconaluftee Indian Village, The Museum of the Cherokee Indian* and other projects, the Association is not only carrying out its original purpose—to perpetuate the history and traditions of the Cherokee Indians—but is also doing much to raise the living standards of the Cherokee and instill in them a greater appreciation of themselves and their race."

–Harry E. Buchanan, Chairman, Cherokee Historical Association, introduction to the 1955 souvenir program.

These words, written by the Chairman of the Cherokee Historical Association in 1955, sum up the attitudes the CHA held regarding their role on the Qualla Boundary. The statement also clearly reflects their awareness of the times they lived in. In the year of the drama's premiere, 1950, Joseph McCarthy informed the public that he had a list of 205 communists within the state department beginning the second Red Scare. That same year, North Korea invaded South Korea, leading President Harry S. Truman to send troops to the Southeast Asian country. Americans lived in fear at the time, scared of communist infiltration as well as the potential of a nuclear attack. At the same time, families began to enjoy the advantages of having increased income. These combined factors led to more cities and companies embracing cultural tourism, especially in the South. Outdoor dramas and theme parks with costumed workers and guaranteed fun for

the entire family and helped boost small rural communities as well as provide the escapism people needed.

In the post-war period and during the Cold War, Americans also needed something to unite them—a way to get past the class and ethnic divisions and present a unified identity to the rest of the world. The story of the Cherokee not only told the history of their ancestors' colonization of the region, but of other well-known American heroes. The well-known story of the Trail of Tears, when told as Hunter did, inspired hope in those who heard the story of the resilient Indians and echoed the spectators' beliefs about white America's history.[1] Although not Cherokee, the majority of viewers believed that as Americans they shared in this story. By "playing Indian," the white audience shared in an American story and thereby reinforced their common identity as Americans. As Kermit Hunter wrote, "the hero of the present-day outdoor dramas is America."[2] Hunter did in fact shape his inspiring story of the Cherokee survival to speak to the larger U.S. population, for the last lines of his play read: "This, then, was the dream of the Cherokee. This, then, is America!"[3]

This chapter discusses the first decade of *Unto These Hills* and its effect on the Cherokee community living within the Qualla Boundary. A poor community, Cherokee did not attract large numbers of visitors prior to the drama. In the tourism boom of the 1950s, white businessmen saw the potential of the small reservation and decided to exploit America's fascination with Indians. Preparing the show for opening day required a great deal of labor throughout the area, and in addition to the other businesses that the

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[1] John Finger refers to the drama as "a monument both to efficient planning and to the postwar 'can do' spirit of enterprise." 114.

[2] Kermit Hunter, "History or Drama?" *South Atlantic Bulletin* 19:1 (May, 1953): 4.

[3] Kermit Hunter, *Unto These Hills* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1950), 99.

popular drama attracted, employment rose on the reservation. While some positives did arise from the production, the CHA had to navigate the racial issues of the day. Though the Association's stated goal was to help the Cherokee people, they appropriated their image and marginalized them in the show and in administrative matters. Because of the political climate of the time and their increased economic situation, the Cherokee accepted the role of the Association in the community.

To take over the reins of the outdoor drama, WNCAC created the CHA. Like WNCAC, "the CHA was clearly a white-dominated organization."[4] Prior to the premiere of *Unto These Hills*, most of the CHA's efforts revolved around raising money and advertising for and producing the play, but by the end of 1951, after the second season had finished successfully, the board had created a list of subsequent projects they felt would benefit the Eastern Band of Cherokees. Though the first two goals focused on supporting the drama, they also aimed for the "building of stalls to provide the Cherokees with a curb market…the establishment of scholarships for Indian students…community improvement awards" and "increased funds for the Cherokee Indian Fair prizes…continuation of the summer school of fine arts and crafts."[5] The CHA seemed to focus mainly on the drama, but they put off certain needs of the cast so as to have more money to put toward their general Indian projects.[6] The CHA took over the responsibility of the WNCAC to improve the condition of Cherokee and increase tourism in the area. As suggested by its quickness to branch out from the drama, and the variety of programs they created and supported, the CHA did not simply intend to promote

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[4] Finger, 115.

[5] CHA archives, William P. Connor, *History of the Cherokee Historical Association: 1946-1982* (Sponsored by the Cherokee Historical Association, 1982), 39.

[6] Ibid.

tourism in Western North Carolina, but to improve the condition of the Indians on the reservation, increase their opportunities to make money, and allow them to enhance their lives while at the same time keeping their culture and history alive. The goals of the CHA went against those of the federal government which had enacted the termination policy in the mid 1940s. Termination policy sought to end the relationship between tribes and the federal government, cutting off all aid and relocating many Indians to urban centers.

Through the actions of the CHA and its goal of creating more jobs for the Cherokee Indians, the number of Cherokee-owned businesses rose. In an attempt to show the general public that it in fact did provide the Cherokees with a valuable service, in the early years it often published information outlining its successes. Within the first four years of the drama, the CHA sent out a brochure informing people that *Unto These Hills* relied upon the community for success, though the data does not always prove impressive. Though the Association claimed that "*Unto These Hills* is part of an overall project to (1) perpetuate the history and traditions of the Cherokee and (2) improve economic conditions in the entire area," the other facts it boasted of showed that the drama employed "158 Cherokee Indians." While the CHA had 232 Cherokees on their payroll, forty-eight of which had roles in the cast, only three Cherokees had speaking roles. The other Cherokees worked out of sight of the audience on the crew or in administrative roles. The Association also prided themselves on the fact that the drama "increased the Cherokee Indian community earnings more than half a million dollars annually," the majority of which was limited the summer tourist months.

Though the Cherokees themselves may not have received a large increase in yearly income through *Unto These Hills*, the CHA did take actions to improve conditions in Cherokee in other ways. Portions of the money earned through the production of the drama went toward other programs the CHA created in 1954. Divided between three four-year college scholarships, student loan funds, and educational, cultural and religious programs, a total of $67,375.95 went towards educational benefits for those on the reservation.[7] The Statement of Projects outlined a wide range of community development programs they hoped to complete with $15,177. Through the various projects, the CHA hoped "to develop community leadership…in each of the six Cherokee communities." In turn, the CHA would help these leaders work toward the "beautification of highways, homes and yards; improvements of gardens and farms." Creating activities and recreational programs for the community to participate in, the CHA gave "[c]ash awards…annually for the best arts and crafts workmanship, agricultural products, and forestry management development." Additionally, "[in] an effort to aid the Cherokee in the development of a local industry for the production and sale of arts and crafts," the Association hired instructors and experimented with modes of production to help increase native production. "Outside manufactured souvenirs and curios sold in Cherokee shops are estimated at a minimum of $750,000.00 annually," serving as a main impetus for the programs.[8] The CHA attempted to improve the situation of the Cherokees themselves and the quality of the reservation. As such, to help the Cherokee with no specific artistic skills or public businesses, the CHA created a curb market for Indians to sell excess fruits and vegetables grown in their personal gardens.

[7] IOD archives, CHA Statement of Projects of The Cherokee Historical Association, Inc. Cherokee, North Carolina, 4.

[8] Ibid., 5.

These improvements and the increased business because of the drama encouraged the Cherokee to support the production for the economic advantages along with an increased "desire for improvement" that arose after the economic benefits of the drama became clear.[9]

Though the CHA supported traditional Cherokee arts and crafts by supporting indigenous production, it did little to correct the gross stereotypes in the outdoor drama. The Indians who met De Soto spoke in broken English, for example. However, to excavate and build the Oconaluftee Indian Village, the CHA, through the Tsali Institute, hired anthropologists from the University of Georgia, the University of Tennessee, and the University of North Carolina to guarantee historical accuracy of the tourist site. [10] Onconaluftee Village presented tourists with the basics of Cherokee life in the eighteenth century. On the site, located beside the Mountainside Theatre, local Indians reenacted their tribe's history. They made traditional crafts, built canoes, traditional weapons such as blow-guns, and cooked as their ancestors did, all while dressed in eighteenth-century outfits. These outfits did not look as most visitors expected. Instead of feathers and animal skins, the Indians working in the village dressed as their ancestors did at the time—as any other pioneer in cotton pants, shirts, and calico dresses. The Indian village proved a stark contrast to the choice of theatrical flair over historical accuracy in *Unto These Hills*.

Anticipation of the play's premiere sparked many projects around the western part of the state that hoped to benefit from the increased tourism. The Reservation itself responded to the WNCAC's attempts to pull in tourists by participating in the creation of

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[9] IOD archives, Letter to the CHA from the Chairmen of the Cherokee Reservation Community Clubs, 7/22/1953.

[10] IOD archives, CHA Statement of Projects, 10.

the Great Smoky Mountain National Park and construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway by building a motorist court which provided visitors with a place to stay. Named Boundary Tree, it acted as the first greeting to tourists taking the main entrance to the park and opened two years prior to the start of the drama. Like many businesses, sales increased in the second year of operation. When *Unto These Hills* opened in 1950, the motor court's profits more than doubled from the year before.[11] Indian agent Joe Jennings' correspondences reveal the original justification for building the motorist court:

> It is obvious that the Cherokee Indians cannot support themselves by means of farming…The best hope of the Indians for an adequate income lies in taking advantage of the tourist trade. Hundreds of thousands of tourists annually pass through the reservation. Many of them would spend one or more nights on the reservation if facilities were available. It is a truism that the longer tourists stay in a vicinity the more money they spend there. At present there are only forty-five rooms in Cherokee available for tourist use.[12]

Not only did the tourist trade aid the Cherokees by improving the income of the various businesses, but it also spurred construction projects. Joe Jennings pushed for the materials required in the building project—lumber, rock, and most of the gravel and sand—and for the construction workers themselves to come from the Cherokee reservation. Jennings pushed for the workers to come from Cherokee partly because "there are twenty-nine veterans now taking training under the G.I. Bill of Rights in carpentry, painting, plumbing and electrical work at the Cherokee Indian High School. It is planned to use this project to give necessary practical building experience to the veterans enrolled in the building trades courses. This experience is needed <u>now</u> as these men are already in training."[13]

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[11] National Archives, Morrow, Georgia, RG 75, Box 1, Series 26, Joe Jennings Correspondences, Boundary Tree Papers. This information came from CPA reports compiled for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

[12] Ibid.

[13] NA, Boundary Tree Papers, RG 75, Box 1, Series 26.

Kermit Hunter signed on to write the play as a way to finish his Master's degree and pursue his life's work but spent little time with Cherokee people in the process. Hunter grew up in West Virginia and attended Ohio State University for his undergraduate college education. The souvenir program the opening year of the drama, 1950, glosses over these facts in Hunter's biography, giving the playwright some authority for taking on this subject by describing him as "a native of what was at one time Cherokee hunting ground."[14] However, Hunter became involved in this undertaking for the play for the money and the recognition, making him more of an outsider than the other white men involved who thought that by doing this project they could help better the situation of the Cherokee and Western North Carolina.[15] He came to the project as a "poet, musician, teacher, [and] playwright," according to the souvenir program. That description also made its way into press releases regarding plays Hunter wrote after *Unto These Hills*, and two articles published later in his life about him and his many achievements.[16] WNCAC and CHA's hiring of Hunter as playwright illustrated the fact that they at no time desired to present a faithful telling of Cherokee history.[17] Some reports even claim that Hunter did not perform his own research on the topic, but was handed information by an English teacher in the area. She had done the research to prove that a successful and interesting play could come out of the Cherokee story.[18]

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[14] CHA, 1950 souvenir program, 2.

[15] CHA, Kermit Hunter had many correspondences with different members of the CHA discussing the increase of salary, whether or not he had been misled about the scope of the project and therefore deserved more money, and on the issue of royalty. In preparation for his death, he advised his lawyer to convince his widow to continue asking for the royalties he made off of UTH.

[16] CHA, IOD.

[17] At the time of his hiring, Kermit Hunter was an M.A. student at the University of North Carolina, and the script ultimately served as his master's thesis.

[18] CHA, letter from Percy Ferebee to Harry Buchanan, 3/9/1964.

Though the play-writing process proved long and arduous—it took months for Hunter, his advisors Sam Seldon and Harry Davis, and WNCAC to come up with the title alone—it apparently did not involve the Cherokee Indians themselves. Instead of talking to the local indigenous population who were descendents of the play's subjects, Hunter relied instead on library research he conducted on the Cherokee, and relied mainly on the work of the ethnographer Mooney who had lived among the Cherokee.[19] He wrote on a topic he believed could encompass all of America, a story that could cause all those who watched to learn about their own history. The Cherokee could never forget the topic of his tale, the Trail of Tears, or the hero of the play, Tsali, who according to Mooney, sacrificed his life to allow the Cherokees hiding out in the North Carolina Mountains to remain. While the play centered on the Cherokee story, white spectators could find their hero in Andrew Jackson. Though records do not reveal whether Hunter used the original pageant *Spirit of the Great Smokies* as a template for *Unto These Hills*, the story followed a similar outline. However, instead of focusing solely on the story of the Cherokees, he wrote a drama that played into America's desire at the time for a unifying thread, a story that fully embodied WNCAC's plan to use the play to increase tourism throughout Western North Carolina, not simply to aid the Cherokee. Because the play ran at night, the majority of tourists had to spend money to stay overnight. Enticing white tourists to spend more time in the area raised business both on the reservation, and in surrounding areas that had tourist attractions.

Hunter's version of *Unto These Hills* did not tell the history of the Cherokee people, but that of the Cherokee's historical encounters with whites. The story that

[19] James Mooney, *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokee* (Asheville: Bright Mountain Books, 1992).

resulted related Cherokee history from contact with the Spanish through the return of Junaluska, the Cherokee chief, who came back from the West on foot a few years after removal.[20] The play opens with the introduction of Hernando De Soto, who in search for gold is led by a Seminole guide into Cherokee country (of course, the Seminoles did not exist at the time of De Soto's entrada). The second scene tells the story of events 250 years after De Soto's arrival, when white Americans had already formed the United States. In this scene, the Shawnee Indian Tecumseh attempts to convince the Cherokees to fight against the Americans, but as the narrator informs the audience, "they had learned that no matter what a man's race or color might be, it is far better to live with him in friendliness."[21] Though the action on stage showed the Indians interacting with one another, their discussion centered on the encroachment of the whites and how best to ensure their survival.

The banal sentiment expressed by the play that races ought to live in friendliness, no matter the particular political or economic inequalities of the time and place, reflected Cold-War attitudes among many white Americans. During and after World War II, minorities fought for their rights domestically. Most prominently, African Americans who had fought for freedom in Europe and Africa returned home to fight for their own freedoms. This struggle became memorialized as the Double V campaign, which stood for victory abroad and victory at home. They were not however the only minorities who had fought and attempted to assert their rights in the United States. In California, Mexican-American teenagers attempting to carve out an identity for themselves in their dress and dance faced abuse, leading to the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943. As World War II

[20] Junaluska died in 1868, and a monument was placed on his grave in 1910 by the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. This predates *The Spirit of the Great Smokies* by only 25 years.

[21] Hunter, *Unto These Hills*, 12.

ended and America became a global superpower, domestic racial politics had Cold War implications.

The United States, in its effort to halt the spread of communism, found itself fighting for the allegiance of non-white peoples around the world. The release of the Truman Doctrine in 1947 resulted in American troops providing emergency relief to any country that wanted to stave off a communist takeover. When America's domestic racial politics increasingly became an embarrassment abroad, leaders sought to mitigate the worst of their segregationist policies. Hollywood movies such as *Broken Arrow* (1950), starring James Dean, explicitly preached a message of racial tolerance. *Unto These Hills* conveyed a similar message.

Much of Hunter's script presented the Cherokee suffering at the hands of the man and the nation that they served, by focusing on their interactions with Andrew Jackson and his policies. This began at Horseshoe Bend, where the Cherokees joined with American forces to battle the Creek Indians, and Chief Junaluska saved Jackson's life. Based on this, the Cherokees held out hope that Jackson would protect them and allow them to stay on their land. The Cherokees in the script continually refer to Jackson as a friend and visit Washington to appeal directly to him for help. Hunter all but ignored the meeting at New Echota, Georgia, where a faction of the Cherokee people illegally signed over rights to Cherokee land in the East to Jackson's representatives, and the fact that the signing of that treaty resulted in Cherokee removal. He chose instead to focus on the grief removal caused and the gathering up of the Indians by United States soldiers. Though the hero of the play, Tsali, appears throughout, focusing on the removal of the Cherokees brought him to the forefront of the story. Because a drunken soldier

accidentally kills Tsali's wife while forcing her to move quicker to a holding pen, Tsali kills the man and flees back into the North Carolina hills with his three sons. The man in charge, Major Davis tells the Cherokee, "All right—I'll make a bargain with you—get those four men back here, and we'll forget about the rest."[22] Davis's reference to "the rest" refers to the other Cherokees hiding in the mountains defying the removal orders. This scene sets the stage for Tsali's martyrdom. The Cherokees that find him inform Tsali of the bargain, and he and his sons choose to allow the soldiers to kill them in return for the Cherokees remaining on their own land. The play ends with a symbolic new birth and the return of Junaluska to his home land. Whereas the original version allowed greater access to white Americans of the time by also telling their story, later versions eliminated the emphasis on Cherokee/white interactions and added more of the Cherokee culture by telling the history of the tribe, their ancient religious beliefs, and their inventions.

Though the play brought in many viewers for years, Hunter ignored historical accuracy and the authenticity of the portrayal of the Cherokee. In a letter to George Stephens, publisher of the *Asheville Citizen*, written a year before the play premiered, Hunter defended his actions. Explaining his thinking about the play's historical accuracy, he wrote:

> I have tried to see this thing mainly as a theatrical production designed to make money, and at the same time express the spirit of the Cherokee. I have no other defense than that for the inconsistencies with history, the over emphasis and under-emphasis in various elements, the choice of certain characters, etc. I hope the committee will realize from the outset that we are well aware of the stretches we have made in places, and weigh carefully the real problem at hand: namely to sell this play to the audience.[23]

[22] Ibid., 75
[23] CHA, letter from Kermit Hunter to George Stephens, 7/23/1949.

He purposefully rewrote the history in order to make his story flow better. Referring in the same letter to the opening act of his play when Hernando De Soto arrives on the Cherokee land and speaks with tribal leaders, Hunter wrote: "As to the Cherokee having gold in 1540, that too is a moot question. Probably they did not, but it is a good way to establish the original strain between the two races."[24] The shortcomings of Hunter's play did not stop at the accuracy of his history. He also chose to misrepresent the Cherokee culture in an attempt to make it more entertaining. Hunter believed that "the Cherokee were not a colorful people. Their tribal customs, their dances, their religion, their dwellings, their activities---all these are decidedly plain in contrast to what the average theatre-goer conceives as being American Indian." He felt that if the drama would only play to audiences from Western North Carolina they could stick to the historical facts, but "[w]hen we propose an evening's dramatic entertainment for people from Minnesota, Maine, Texas, Utah, etc., we must sell the product." For this reason, he "telescoped time, added touches of color which never existed, increased emotional tensions, even altered characters, all in the interest of the people." Despite taking liberties, he and Sam Seldon "concluded that it should be the Indian's play, not the whites, and it is hard to visualize a Cherokee of this era as being really funny. The imaginative elements, the deliberate coloring, therefore, are solely for box office."[25] While the CHA commissioned Hunter to write a play presenting Cherokee history, he nevertheless wanted to change a great many things about the Indians. The letter does not reveal which era Hunter was referring to in discussing the humor among the Cherokees, but overall, the play lacked humor, unless one considers the lines the Indian characters

[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

spoke in stereotypical fashion humorous, such as "White Path is war chief of the Cherokee—White Path joins Tecumseh," or "Tell the pale man to go three moons' journey toward the setting sun. There he will find a land where rivers flow with gold and where arrows are tipped with silver!"[26] The Cherokees did receive better treatment than other Indian tribes, for while the majority of Cherokees spoke plain English, the Seminole and Shawnee almost always used the third person when referring to themselves and spoke descriptively, a stylistic choice known as "Red English." "White chief wants gold!," said one Indian. Tecumseh, known for his eloquence, faired just as poorly: "the white man is like a hungry wolf—he *takes* what he wants!...Tecumseh talks no more. The time has come to fight."[27] Along with denying them humor, Hunter also apparently believed that after several hundred years of contact with English speakers, the Cherokee leaders alone had the ability to speak the language fluently and intelligently. This was how white Americans pictured Indians based on traditional portrayals, and therefore what they expected when they attended the play.

For the most part, audiences responded positively to the show and the message of peace and brotherhood it preached six nights a week. Overwhelmingly, the responses revolved around the excellent quality of the script and the production itself. According to newspaper reviews and letters written by audience members, the beautiful location of the theatre—cut into a mountainside and nestled in the trees—lent a quality to the drama that could not be found at other outdoor dramas. Hunter himself felt that his script conveyed a message of brotherhood, the benefits of living peacefully, and that the message that Christian god could conquer all. Interestingly enough many preachers in the area felt the

[26] Hunter, *Unto These Hills,* 13, 11.
[27] Ibid., 11, 15.

same way. Robert Price, the President of the Central Atlantic States Mission Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints informed the CHA in 1950 that "the influence of this presentation will do much to cement in unity the ties between two great peoples," meaning whites and Indians.[28] Mrs. Corrine Barker wrote general manager Carol White that the show "is a powerful sermon for tolerance and understanding between peoples and races." She "was especially interested to learn that such understanding as the drama portrays has come to the whites and Indians in Western North Carolina, as I was wondering about this very thing."[29] In 1952, the *Greensboro Daily News* published an editorial in which the writer proposed that "all of these dramas have deep religious overtones. Church services enter in some respect into all of them. The dignity, the rights and the worth of the individual, all at the core of our Christian conception, are stressed."[30] While the author of the editorial argued that most church services did not tell as thrilling a story on Sundays, some churches used the story presented in *Unto These Hills* as the basis for their sermons. On March 30, 1952, Lutheran pastor Ray Fisher gave the sermon "The Necessary Cross" in which he presented the story of the drama. Fisher not only shared the "injustices that our country wrought on the American Indians," but the story of Tsali particularly. Fisher told his congregation that "as I sat through those tense moments, I think I got a greater appreciation than ever…of what my Lord was doing for me and all mankind as He made His way toward Calvary."[31] While the CHA focused on

[28] IOD archives, letter from Robert Price, President Central Atlantic States Mission Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, included in Statement of Projects, 34.

[29] IOD archives, letter from Mrs. Corrine Barker, included in Statement of Projects, 33.

[30] IOD archives, transcript of editorial "Good for the Soul," in *Greensboro Daily News* 11/18/1952, letter to CHA from Carol White.

[31] IOD archives, excerpt from a sermon by the Rev. Ray R. Fisher, pastor of Augsburg Lutheran Church, Winson-Salem, N.C. 3/30/1952, included in Statement of Projects, 24.

aiding the Indians economically and culturally, Hunter's script caused responses not foreseen by the Association

Not everyone who attended a performance of the drama gave such positive reviews. Audience members not only came to the show with expectations about what the Indians should look and act like, but with expectations regarding their traditional American heroes. Of all the characters in the drama, the antagonist of the drama, Andrew Jackson, caused the biggest stir. The women devoted to preserving Jackson's home, The Ladies Hermitage Society, attended the drama in July 1952 and shortly thereafter wrote a letter concerning the characterization of Jackson. They based their protests not only on their own experiences, but also on that they had not received a response to a complaint lodged the previous year. Mrs. Douglas Wright penned the 1952 letter which focused on Jackson's physical appearance, the portrayal within the script, and the effect of the representation on the viewing public. Mrs. Wright lauded the drama overall but calls the portrayal of Jackson a "serious flaw." She stated that the Society realized that the drama represented the Cherokee point of view; "however," she continued, "we believe that you have been unjust to Jackson in having him appear as an almost ridiculous character." Jackson only appears in the Horseshoe Bend scene, the battle in which his actions made him a great hero to many Americans. The Society compared the actor's physical qualities and voice to historical documents and finds the actor cast in the role lacking. They worried that "the fact that the play is written from the Cherokee's point of view may not be realized by many who come to the wonderful performance, for this information is not stated in the program or script." "We deplore the way in which you here depicted a national and international hero," Wright concluded, "one who but for his

grave mistake in regards to the Cherokees should be an inspiration to the youth of our country. We fear that you are disillusioning a vast number of these young spectators, by making General Jackson appear as a clown rather than the strong, and often serious character he was."[32]

Hunter responded to Mrs. Wright's letter personally, calling the president a hero, and "hardy pioneer" and telling her that "nothing I could say or do, even intentionally, could ever dim his greatness." Hunter added that the Cherokees were a problem in the 1830s and suggested that Jackson bore little responsibility for removal. Over the first two seasons Hunter had modified the portrayal of Jackson. He explained, "right now he is precisely what the Cherokee believed he was—a harsh man, inhuman, prejudiced and biased, thinking always of white supremacy. If I made him any other way, I would be false to the ideal and intention of UNTO THESE HILLS, which has Indians for the heroes and heroines. The whites are nothing more than ornamentations for the drama."[33] Two years later in 1954, Hunter once again had to deal with Mrs. Wright's complaints regarding Jackson. This time however, Hunter refused to soften his stance. Hunter told her that the problem did not lay in his script, but in the fact that they did not find the right actor for the part. He also attacked her for suggesting that the Episcopal Church had done great things for the Indians "and that therefore we should not continue to point up the white man's ill treatment of the Indians" and "the Indians should begin to forget the cruelty of the past." Hunter focused his attack on the military actions of the Untied States in other countries: "the small efforts of a few church missions, no matter how sincere they may be, cannot make up for murder and robbery and pillage, neither in the U.S., in

[32] CHA archives, letter from Mrs. Douglas Wright of the Ladies Hermitage Society to Kermit Hunter, 7/15/1952.
[33] Ibid.

Korea, or Indo-China." He reasoned with her that Jackson believed, just like Jesus Christ, that all men were created equal. This reasoning showed Hunter's feelings regarding Jackson's motives and his culpability in the matter of Indian removal. Hunter concluded: "I'll make a bargain with you: if the Ladies' Hermitage Association will undertake to do something for the Cherokee in token of the damage our ancestors did to them, I will re-write the whole Cherokee play and make Jackson a great hero." Since the drama remained the same through the twenty-first century, it can only be assumed that no such reparation was made.

The audience most likely did not know about the changes made by Hunter and the costume staff regarding the authenticity of the history of the story and the accuracy of the costumes. They could not, however, ignore the almost entirely white cast acting in the Cherokee roles. The very first production had only three Cherokees actors. They played the roles of Nundayeli, Tsali's daughter; Elias Boudinot, a Cherokee preacher; and the Cherokee Chief in 1540 when De Soto arrived. Hoping to ensure good attendance, Harry Davis, the director, only cast Cherokees in these relatively minor roles because few on the reservation had any acting experience. A white actor even played the part of the hero Tsali, the savior of the Eastern Band of Cherokees. Ironically, the Indian actors joined the white actors in playing Indian, presenting caricatures of themselves.

Whereas when the Indian actors took off their makeup at the end of the night to go home and once again became truly Indian, the white actors had to live like the Cherokee. To house all the actors who had joined the cast for the summer from other parts of the nation, the Indian Agency allowed the CHA to use the old boarding school buildings as dormitories for the cast. The contract the CHA required each actor to sign

specifically stated that because the Cherokee maintained a dry reservation, the actors could not drink any form of alcohol while on the reservation.[34] Because of the lack of activities on the reservation, the long distance to any large city, and the tight schedule that the actors maintained, they began to participate in the summer school programs that the CHA ran with the help of Indian Agent Joe Jennings. The designers originally set up these programs intending to help the local population improve their acting and dancing skills in hopes of earning roles in the drama, and they established classes that taught traditional Cherokee arts such as woodcarving and basket weaving.[35] Joe Jennings had convinced the well known Cherokee artist Amanda Crowe to return to the reservation and teach traditional arts. The actors then participated in the art show, displaying their crafts alongside those of the local participants, with no differentiation between the crafts of the real Indians and those of the white actors.

Despite this seeming equality on the reservation, the reality was more complicated. Though the play preached Hunter's message of brotherhood and equality, not all who visited the reservation were received with open arms. Because of the racial climate of the South in 1950, the theatre consisted of a section for whites and a section for blacks. When segregating public schools, many states classified Native Americans as black. Cherokee students attended school on the reservation and not with the white North Carolinians' children. Since the tourists went to the Qualla Boundary to see the Indians, whites and Cherokee were not segregated on the reservation. For this reason, and because of the message the play preaches, some visitors found the segregated theatre illogical. Mayme D. Win, a black woman, and her family unknowingly sat in the wrong

[34] IOD, actors file
[35] IOD, press releases

section and were eventually escorted from the theatre by two highway patrolmen, wrote a letter of complaint to Hunter. Mrs. Win began her letter by saying "we were thrilled to the Nth degree when the first words were spoken—'And in the beginning there was peace!'" She continued on informing Hunter of her extreme embarrassment and how while waiting for the show to begin a white child had been playing with her grandchild. Mrs. Win found it "so strange that we as Negroes can feed the white man's babies, cook their meals, keep their house clean, grow their cotton, fight side by side with them for our country and be your friends in so doing, yet when the time comes to sit down in the open air to enjoy such a magnificent play as was written by you, we are insulted." She "thought it would be different at the Indian Reservation, and we know there is no segregation there." Her employers, Dr. and Mrs. Davis (the director and his wife), told Mrs. Win that Hunter was "a mighty fine man and that they were sure you did not agree with this kind of treatment, so I am writing you this letter, asking you to use your influence to right this wrong…God is the father of us all, and we all are in the same boat when it comes to being Americans. We all are fighting the same battle for her survival." Mrs. Win's pleas echoed the same message that *Unto These Hills* preached according to Hunter.[36]

Hunter's response to Mrs. Win revealed the fact that while he preached the idea of brotherhood in many aspects of his public life, privately he had no problem with maintaining segregation. He told Mrs. Win that he was not prejudiced and in fact had many black friends, but suggested that staying calm in the face of prejudice would bring the best results. Instead of apologizing to her, he chose instead to preach:

[36] CHA archives, letter from Mrs. Mayme D. Win to Kermit Hunter, 8/28/1950.

> That night at the Mountainside Theatre I felt very badly at first, when you were asked to move to the Negro section, because I knew that it was embarrassing to you. It may be that in time to come we will be able to do away with this kind of segregation. But I am sure that you do not go to any other theatre in the South and sit wherever you please. So, in a sense, you were inviting trouble—not from what the play stands for, or what we are trying to do—solely because you chose to make a point of the race matter. I cannot help but feel that if enough white people sit and watch our show year after year, there will be a definite effect registered on their minds and feelings, and that a combination of things like this show year after year will do more than all the wild hysteria and race bitterness of the past century.

He continued, "you as a Negro have a mountainous task ahead. You must be tolerant. You must not scream for revenge, scream for recognition, scream for your 'rights.'" In ending he told her that Booker T. Washington's way was the best, and that they only called the patrolmen that night because the "entertainment had been rudely interrupted."[37]

Incongruities also appear between Hunter's words and actions when he began to fight for royalties from the production. Though Hunter's concerted campaign to receive royalties from the show began in 1951, as early as 1948 he wrote concerning the promised payment for the writing of the script. When the WNCAC approached Sam Seldon at UNC in regards to writing the script, he suggested Hunter and mentioned that he could do it for his Master's thesis. For this reason, the up-front agreements offered a lump sum with no discussion of royalties. One year into the show however, Hunter found the arrangement dissatisfying and asked for more money. At the time, he had written another outdoor drama and was receiving royalty payments of twenty dollars a night from the show, in addition to having several other offers from around the Southeast to write outdoor productions to improve tourist business. In his arguments to the board he compared himself to "the Cherokee who demanded 10% of the proceeds—as though I were asking for something for which I had no claim or right."[38] In the same letter he told them that they "saw UNTO THESE HILLS as a means of bringing people into Western

[37] Ibid.
[38] CHA archives, letter from Kermit Hunter to Harry Buchanan, 8/15/1951.

N.C. and helping the Cherokee Indians, but I have seen it from the start as a means of re-stating some of the fundamental truths of human existence."[39] Hunter continued on in the letter both preaching a Christian message and playing the victim, implying that he suffered because of the CHA's decisions.

Hunter's claims and his message of brotherhood and peace, in addition to the praises offered by reviewers, tended to make the CHA look like the savior of the Cherokee. However, they too fell into using stereotypes as a means to boost tourism. Despite their lofty goals of aiding the Cherokee, they also had responsibilities to their parent organization, the WNCAC, which wanted to raise money and tourism throughout the entirety of Western North Carolina. For this reason, they accepted Hunter's inaccurate portrayal of the Cherokee because they knew that they had to bring in the tourists to achieve any of their goals. Their acceptance and embracing of this idea, along with their own views on the Cherokee, permeate the souvenir programs they created for sale at every performance. For most of the 1950s, the image that greeted those who purchased these programs was a cover that fulfilled their expectations, not one that aimed for historical accuracy. The program cover from 1950 featured as its cover a black and white photograph of a family of Indians on what appears to be the Trail of Tears scene of the drama. The majority of covers through the 1959 season pictured Indians in feathered cloaks and headdresses, more appropriate for Plains Indians than Cherokees. The crowd pleasing Eagle Dancer served as the other popular cover choice throughout the decade. In many of these pictures, it becomes clear that all of the actors playing Indian roles have thick layers of reddish-brown paint on their exposed skin.

[39] Ibid.

While the covers of the souvenir programs told the story of how the CHA appropriated a specific Indian image to sell a product, the interior pages of the programs told the reader what the CHA desires for them to know. First and foremost, the programs told the story of what benefits the CHA had provided to the Cherokee Indians. A regurgitated list as presented in the Association's Statement of Projects appeared in the program. "Your ticket does many things," it boasted.[40] The list changed every year as attendance increased providing the Association with more money to use for their projects. In 1952, the program featured of Johnson Lee Owle who received the first scholarship from the CHA, telling the reader that he graduated as an honor student and president of his class. He received a four-year scholarship to attend the University of North Carolina where he planned on majoring in drama.[41]

True to its stated goals of increasing tourism to all of Western North Carolina, the Association devoted several pages in their programs to advertising specific tourist places in the area as well as Western North Carolina's natural attractions. Along with colorful pictures of waterfalls, fall foliage, and baby bears, it touted "colorful, scenic Western North Carolina: land of lakes, waterfalls, mountains, and pioneer landmarks. Where its spring summer long…where autumn is a riot of color."[42] As the decade progressed, the pictures focused less on the natural landmarks and more on people. For those spectators who greatly enjoyed the experience of outdoor drama, the CHA began in mid-decade to list the other outdoor dramas, several of which Kermit Hunter wrote. All of these dramas were not in North Carolina however, showing the CHA's willingness to support the entirety of the Great Smoky Mountains region as well as theatre in general.

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[40] CHA, souvenir programs.
[41] CHA, 1952 souvenir program.
[42] CHA, souvenir programs.

In addition to the information on tourist activities throughout the state, the programs also offered educational information on the Cherokee. Hunter wrote the section dedicated to the history of the Cherokee. He divided their history into three main periods. Part one covers their origins and language, Spanish exploration, and white settlement. The second section looked at the Indian Wars and the American Revolution. Lastly, Hunter looked at their removal to the West. The story of the Trail of Tears however went to John Parris, a journalist native to the area. Moving out of the past and into the present, several sections focused on the contemporary Cherokee peoples. In the section devoted to interesting facts about the Cherokee, the program informed the reader that "Indian families reside in cabins up the coves from the Mountainside Theatre."[43] Indian agent and CHA treasurer Joe Jennings wrote an article entitled "Eastern Cherokees Today." Jennings attempts to inform the visitor of the Cherokee's Americanness. He wrote:

> Members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians are free to roam the world and to make their homes anywhere they please. Many of them have roamed the world, some with Uncle Sam's armed forces…The Cherokee mode of life is much the same as that of the rural white people in the area, though there are some differences…The Cherokees are citizens of the county, the state and the United States and exercise the privileges of citizens, including the ballot. In addition to problems of making a living and raising a family which must be met by all people, the Cherokees are solving an additional problem, that of remaining as 'Indian' as they like, of retaining all they value of Cherokee culture, yet feeling themselves in every respect a vital and integrated part of the stream of American life.[44]

Despite Jennings' efforts to carve out a particular Cherokee identity, the play itself presented the image of an Indian dictated by the tourist and the American idea of what native peoples looked like. This image appeared in specific wordings present throughout the program. One article explained, "behind the stage the ageless Smokies run away in ever-climbing tiers, and over it all there is a cathedral silence that distinguishes Eastern

[43] CHA archives, souvenir programs.
[44] Ibid. 1950 souvenir program, pg 29.

America's last primeval wilderness."[45] Words such as "primeval" strip the Cherokee of any humanity, instead assigning them a place among the animals that roamed the forest without leaving any mark of their presence.[46]

The first decade of *Unto These Hills* proved far more successful than anyone involved could have imagined in 1950. Many of the outdoor dramas that opened around the same time closed within only a few years. For the most part those who saw the drama agreed that this production had something special. Kermit Hunter dealt with the vast majority of complaints himself, sparing the Association. Though the Cherokee Historical Association had lofty goals of aiding the Cherokee people, it held a vast array of the common assumptions about the Indians it proposed to help. Not only did the Association treat the Indians as "wards," but it catered to the stereotypes and desires of the tourists. In so doing, the CHA sacrificed historical accuracy for commercial viability. These issues would plague the Association and the drama itself for the next half century.

[45] CHA archives, 1953 souvenir program, 32.

[46] These arguments have been made by several historians throughout the twentieth century including most importantly William Cronon and Richard White, "Indians in the Land," *American Heritage* (Aug-Sept., 1986). William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983). Shepard Krech, *The Ecological Indians: Myth and History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999).

CHAPTER 3

CONTINUATION OF THE DRAMA

"'Unto These Hills' is the drama-story of the Cherokees, misunderstood, forced back into the hills, driven west by military power…and how a handful braved mighty wrath to stay in the Smoky homeland and develop into a race of useful, American citizens. It is a drama of deep human tragedy and the triumph of the spirit of a gallant people. Cherokee means more than just 'Indian'…it means a race of original Americans who fought for American liberty, at Horseshoe Bend in the War of 1812, where they saved the day and the life of a future President who later failed them. It means a race devoted to the soil, to home and school."

—CHA press release 1991

From 1960 through 2005, *Unto These Hills* continued to run almost entirely unchanged. The quality of the drama vacillated over the years as different directors and Kermit Hunter occasionally made small adjustments to the script. Many of the issues that confronted the Association in the first decade of the show continued and additional issues arose. Because of changing attitudes and increased knowledge on a national level, toward the end of the twentieth century, the CHA began to desire more Cherokee participation within the Association and the drama and to produce a more historically accurate production. Through the mid-1980s, Kermit Hunter continued his fight for larger royalty payments, and his increased hostility toward the production and the attitudes of those in charge of the production angered a large portion of the Association. At no time, however, did the CHA change its thinking about the purpose of the drama and the drama's effect on the Qualla Boundary. As the decades passed, the audiences expected more from theatre in general and attendance slowly declined. Complicating matters further, in the late 1990s, Harrah's opened a casino on the Reservation. Arguments ensued about gamblers not engaging in cultural tourism and filling all the

hotel rooms preventing traditional tourists from staying in the area. This fact however made the casino a convenient scapegoat for the out-of-date production.

Regardless of the positive effects the drama had on the Cherokee and the message of peace Kermit Hunter hoped all mankind would embrace, time and again newspaper articles detailed poor living conditions or the fact that the production was not a true picture of how Indians lived and acted. As the United States embraced the material wonders of the capitalist society which emerged in the 1950s, some people were concerned with the economic conditions of those living within the Qualla Boundary. In February of 1961, the *Durham Morning Herald* ran an article describing the poor economic condition of the Cherokees and how they could not compete in a capitalist society. The author's sources—anthropologists from the University of North Carolina who had spent six years living "among the Indians"—reported that "the Cherokees are basically capable people…but many of the Cherokees are frustrated, repressed, resentful of white men, and they stubbornly cling to habits that they mistakenly believe where characteristic of the red men of yore." Though the anthropologists did not describe these characteristics, they added that "once the Cherokee have separated the legitimate Indian attributes from the 'bad' traits they have picked up in the last 100 years, the road to recovery will be apparent."[1] Gulick, like those who described the forests in the area as primeval, made assumptions that mischaracterized the Cherokee.

The Cherokee Historical Association helped the Indians embrace their cultural past, but they also helped them create a product desirable to tourists, thereby allowing them to engage in the marketplace. Many understood this, and in response to the article a

[1] IOD archives, "Big Problem with Cherokee, He no savvy Indian Lore!" *Durham Morning Herald* 2/11/1961. Dr. John Gulick, "anthropologist who directed the Ford Foundation financed study conducted by the Cross Cultural Laboratory of the Institute for Research in Social Science at Chapel Hill."

rebuttal was published the following day. "From Cherokee: Another View" informed readers that "the general economic condition of the eastern band of Cherokee Indians is by no means as grim as anthropologists contend…Instead of an economic crisis, there is an expanding economy. Employment is at an all-time high." The article reported that "there is neither dire poverty nor hunger. The openings of highways and the coming of economic enterprise to the mountains have improved conditions affecting the Cherokees, not worsened them…the Cherokees are on the high road of promise. As a whole, they are no worse off than their non-Indian neighbors."[2] The WNCAC and the CHA had apparently achieved many of their stated goals and improved the economic situation of the area. However, according to some, although the drama aided the Cherokee financially, the CHA took advantage of the situation by using the Indians for financial gain.

In 1972, the clean image of the CHA came into question in a very public way. Richard Maschal, a staff writer for the *Charlotte Observer,* wrote a series of articles on the Cherokee in early 1972. One focused on the tourist industry in the area. Maschal wrote that overall the Cherokee enjoyed the economic improvement provided by the tourist industry. However, he noted "the feeling of some Cherokees is that if the tourist boom is based on the very fact of their being Indian then the Indians should be the principal benefactors. That they are often not causes some resentment, especially in the case of 'Unto These Hills.'"[3] He argued that the tourist activities ran by the CHA (*Unto These Hills*, Oconaluftee Indian Village, and the museum) were managed by whites who received a larger salary than the Cherokee hired to do the manual labor or fill in the

[2] IOD archives, "From Cherokee: Another View," *Durham Morning Herald* 2/12/1961.
[3] IOD archives, *Charlotte Observer* article by Richard Maschal, 2/7/1972.

background scenes. As Maschal pointed out, "the starring roles in 'Unto These Hills' have since the beginning gone to white actors who play Indians with the aid of makeup and it has become a cliché on the reservation that the Cherokees only get in 'on the mob scenes.'"[4] This fact could not be denied. In the twenty-first season of the show, which ran in 1970, a press release from the CHA stated, "[t]his year 80 gallons of body paint were ordered for Indian characters in the show."[5] The costumers did not order the makeup for the white actors only. Even in 1982, to make all the Indian characters look alike, and look good under the stage lights, they applied body paint to all the actors playing Indian. "We paint the shingles on that little house…so they will look like real shingles," wrote Hunter, "We paint the Indians so they will look like real Indians."[6] In a letter supporting his article, Maschal noted that "people on the reservation question how much experience it takes for Cherokee Indians to play Cherokee Indians in an out-door drama about the history of their people. The association had tried to train people…The attempt failed…The reason it failed is because the people resent the patronizing attitude the association has towards them."[7] In the same letter, Maschal mentioned that Mrs. Gwen Owle, editor of the *Cherokee One Feather*, told him that the Indian children were not allowed to swim in the pool built for the cast near their dormitories "because of their dark skin."[8]

Mark Sumner, the director of the Institute of Outdoor Drama—a program through the University of North Carolina which works with over one hundred outdoor dramas across the United States—wrote a letter responding to the *Observer* article in an attempt

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[4] Ibid.
[5] IOD archives, press release file.
[6] CHA archives, letter from Kermit Hunter to William Hardy, 1982.
[7] IOD archives, letter from Richard Maschal to C.A. McKnight 2/11/1972.
[8] Ibid.

to set the record straight about the situation in Cherokee. Sumner admitted that it was a common belief in the area that the drama exploited the Indians for financial gain, and mentioned his concerns that the article would cause the idea to become more wide spread. This point was hard to argue because Maschal had used a booklet outlining the projects and goals of the WNCAC given to him by the CHA for research purposes. Sumner felt that the hiring of more Indians for the drama was a moot point because *Unto These Hills* functioned like any other outdoor drama by constructing facilities for its actors (which included a pool) and hiring outside actors. In addition, Sumner maintained that "although it was the hope of many in the early days that more of the major roles would fall eventually to the Indians, and various methods were tried to assure training, it has not been possible: it probably never will be. I do not blame young Indians for studying law and engineering."[9] Carol White, general manager of the CHA, also attempted to counteract the image of the Association presented by Maschal. White chose to focus mainly on the fact that the CHA provided internships for Indian students with the possibility of full time employment, though very few chose to stay. Furthermore, White argued that the Association went out of its way to give the Cherokee opportunities using the example of the transportation and maintenance contract with the Boys Club. He told Maschal that the maintenance services "could be done at less cost by our own staff, but

[9] IOD archives, letter from Mark Sumner to C.A. McKnight, 2/8/1972. Kermit Hunter wrote a play set to open in 1961 in Louisville that dealt with the founding of the city at Iroquois Amphitheatre. The mayor and the Junior Chamber of Commerce wanted an Indian Village as a publicity and promotional stunt. Hunter wrote to Carol White explaining "This is to be merely a few teepees and eight or ten Indians who can put on full regalia and stand around or do a few dances, talk to tourists, put on a little show several times a day." White responded: "Some of them have gone to Pigeon Valley and to another spot in Kentucky to work in the past years. We are beginning to experience difficulty in getting enough personnel to operate our Village. The Harn Manufacturing Company had during the past year employed more than twenty of our workers and since thy can give them year-around employment, we cannot be compet[i]tive with them. Of course, we are glad to see this type of employment come to the Reservation, because one of the aims of the Association has been to increase local employment." At no point in the correspondences did Mark Sumner or Carol White present this argument to Mashal or his editor. CHA archives, letter from Kermit Hunter to Carol White, 3/15/1961.

by contracting with the Boys Club, we know all employees will be Cherokee" and "the transportation contract pays for the use of equipment and personnel, which otherwise would not be utilized during the summer months."[10] Though the CHA and IOD attempted to counter the article on several points, they could only prove that they provided a great source of income for the Cherokee people. They could not deny that the Indians felt exploited by the white man's use of their history and their image for their own purpose. The play created to aid these people perpetuated centuries of injustice.

The Association perpetuated these feelings of exploitation by casting mainly whites in the majority of roles. For the white actors the chance to gain more experience meant that they had to change their life style for the entire summer. As stipulated by their contracts, all actors had to adhere to the laws of the Reservation. These regulations, combined with the fact that their tight schedules allowed them little time away from the area, meant outside actors spent the majority of their summer within the Qualla Boundary. The white actors not only accepted immersion into a new culture every summer, but changed roles with relative ease from year to year. In a press release for the forty-eighth season of the drama, the CHA boasted that its costumer from the year before, Rebekah Odell, would take the stage playing three different parts: "she'll portray Cofaltechequi, a Cherokee guide; Molly, the storekeeper; and Mrs. William H. Harrison."[11] Though playing more than one part in the same show proved rare in the case of *Unto These Hills,* actors did return to play different roles from year to year. Actor Jack Morrow appeared as the Indian guide, Kontaga, a non-Cherokee Indian, General Andrew Jackson, Junaluska, the Cherokee chief, and the Cherokee martyr hero Tsali.

[10] IOD archives, letter from Carol White to Richard Maschal 2/14/1972.
[11] IOD archives, press release 6/1/1997.

The CHA bragged that "Mr. Morrow has shown his versatility as a performer during the ten seasons he has appeared in the Mountainside Theatre." In Cherokee, where the white actors "became" Indian for a summer, these two actors could take on a variety of roles and be cast to act different roles in the same show. Though this is how the acting profession works, Indians from the reservation auditioned for roles every year, with the majority given to white experienced actors. Casting one actor in multiple roles also eliminated any differences between the various Indian tribes represented within the script. In no way do these facts support the CHA's claims of attempting to advance the Cherokees, but hearken back to the original intention of the play: to increase tourism and business in greater Western North Carolina. In 2005, a Cherokee played the role of the martyr-hero Tsali for the first time in thirty years.

Despite the setbacks the CHA faced in terms of publicity and employment of Cherokees, over the decades, it maintained that aiding the Indians and the reservation motivated the organization. The various letters and press releases the CHA wrote show how its officials thought of themselves. In a letter to theatre critics in 1965, the Production Coordinator claimed that "Unto These Hills has been directly responsible for salvaging ancient Cherokee arts from oblivion," along with improved living, economic status and increased employment.[12] Apparently, the Association's actions also won them international fame, for in the same letter the coordinator wrote that "this spring alone, there has been a Phillipine Legislator studying how the Association has accomplished so much so briefly. And another group of 31 park executives from 17 nations as far-flung as Kenya, Zambia, Australia, Turkey, Peru and Haiti. Their primary interest was how the Cherokee Reservation has developed its natural resources without loss of primitive forest

[12] IOD archives, letter from Anne Hallard to Mr. Atkinson at Critics at Large 7/21/1965.

charm."[13] Though outsiders had differing ideas of the successes of the CHA, members of the Association believed that the continued success of the show nationally would require it to compromise some of its goals. While in 1965 members publically hoped that the young Cherokee actors in the cast would stay with the production and eventually take over lead roles, privately they made adjustments.[14] Two years later, in the search for dancers, director Harry Davis felt that the local talent would serve the show best as understudies and backup dancers. He told the choreographer "in addition to local kids, I hope you can keep in mind some wives of outside company members who might be useable as dancers, and if so, this will help me considerably in budget, and in getting the husbands for actors, where they are badly needed."[15] Moreover, not only did the Cherokees auditioning lack the level of talent desired, "the Cherokee kids now have so many poverty programs and so much easy money available, they have become increasingly difficult to hire and hold in the drama." Because of this, Davis decided "to alter his old policy of not using children of company members."[16] Whereas traditionally the Association hired local Cherokee children over the children of outside actors, other sources of employment, and most likely negative feelings regarding the production, kept the Indian children away from the production.

Economically, the drama and other projects of the CHA improved the situation on the Cherokee Reservation even though the Association itself did not provide much income. In terms of giving older Cherokee culture back to the Indians, one only needs to look at the Oconaluftee Indian Village to find success. On the other hand when it came

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[13] Ibid.
[14] IOD archives, "Indian Drama Grows Its Own," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, 8/15/1965.
[15] IOD archives, letter from Harry Davis to Frank Rey, 2/20/1967.
[16] IOD archives, letter from Anne Mallard Davis to Mrs. Thelma Foley, 5/30/1967.

to culturally educating their wider audience, their efforts did not manage to achieve great success. Despite the countless visitors and audience members, the CHA still had to educate visitors about the culture of the Cherokee. The Association produced a news release in 1997 that stated, "visitors will not find any tepees, but neither did DeSoto when he came through Cherokee territory during the 1540s. The absence of teepees is usually the first surprise at Oconaluftee Indian Village."[17] In all fairness, visitors drove past teepees and Indians "chiefing" for money on their way to the village and museum, but they faced authenticity issues of their own in terms of the drama. Declining attendance led director Peter Hardy to look for ways of reviving interest in the drama during the latter months of 2000, and wrote to the director of the Institute of Outdoor Drama, Scott Parker in regards to his researching Cherokee history. Realizing he might not find another story as good as the Tsali myth to base a play upon, he decided that "if nothing else, I would like to do what we could to make the show more historically accurate…Historical accuracy seems to be o[f] greater importance to people as time goes by, and I think that's a fine thing – particularly since we're trying to reach out to potential audiences through educational programs."[18] This desire for historical accuracy in part arose because during the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, many Americans became more aware of how minorities lived. In truth, it took longer for Native Americans to find success, but the declining attendance reflected not only changing audience tastes, but also the failure of the Association to stay relevant while they continued to present Hunter's aging script.

[17] IOD archives, press release, 6/1/1997.
[18] IOD archives, letter from Peter Hardy to Scott Parker, 11/18/2000.

The CHA, and Kermit Hunter in particular, dealt with the passionate negative responses that the drama incurred in the 1950s, but the 1960s brought with them new problems. In 1962, Carol White became aware that a group of people had charged that *Unto These Hills* preached a communist message. The organization, referring to itself as "a group of concerned Americans," sent letters to the FBI, House Committee on Un-American Activities, Senate Internal Security Sub-Committee, Civic Leaders of the Cherokee, Civic Leaders in Georgia and Tennessee including Congressmen, Senators, V.F.W., American Legion, D.A.R., Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions Clubs.[19] The "concerned Americans" had attended the drama and claimed to "find themes, ideas and dialogue which parallel the Communist line as promoted by the psychopoliticians of Communist World Conspiracy."[20] They based their claims upon books they had read, *I Led Three Lives* by former FBI agent Herb Philbrick, and *Brainwashing* by Kenneth Goff. Goff based his book on training material he had amassed during his time as a member of the Communist Party in America. The "concerned Americans" pointed out specific parts of the play that emphasized communist ideals and offered solutions to the message. First, they pointed out that in the finale of the drama, the narration reads: "The Cherokee Indian wanted peace and brotherhood with <u>all men</u>, and this is also the goal of the United States."[21] All men included "the slavemasters of the Kremlin, dictators and oppressors of over a billion people, the leaders of the Communist Criminal Conspiracy," they observed. "History has proven that 'peaceful co-existence' with these international criminals, only leads to a state of take-over and eventual slavery," they noted.[22] The "peoples of China,

[19] IOD archives, letter from Harry Davis to Carol White, 10/21/1962.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.

Hungary, Cuba, etc., are living in mute testimony of this bitter truth," they continued; "The peoples of Laos, are now in the process of learning the same bitter lesson."[23] Their answer to this perceived problem was that "if the theme of the play developed to show that 'peace at the sacrifice of Liberty' leads only to destruction then it would serve a noble purpose for America and for Freedom."[24] They also listed a series of scenes permeated by communist ideology. Concluding their diatribe, they suggested that "the play could end warning America to maintain her guard, protect her freedom and liberties, inform her people, and not reap the harvest of the false promise of 'peaceful coexistence,' which is currently high on the list of Communist goals."[25] While the "concerned Americans" felt that the drama added to the injustices committed against the Cherokee because of the message, Carol White and Harry Davis (general manager and director respectively) hoped that the letter was a joke. The evidence does not show that an investigation ensued from the letter by any of the involved parties, implying that no one in fact took the claim seriously.

Though this was the only response of its kind, audience response constantly concerned those in charge at the CHA. In 1972, Hunter informed director Bill Hardy that although changes needed to be made to the script, they had gotten good responses from the audience and reviewers overall. By 1980 however, members of the audience began to complain about the skin coloring makeup on the actors. It did not concern them that white actors played almost all of the Indian characters, but that those in charge of costuming had not done hair and makeup to the best of their ability. One audience member wrote, "I thought some of the Indians were dressed for a masquerade rather than

[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

attempting to represent an authentic Indian. Some of the make-up jobs were incomplete. A white spot of skin on an otherwise red-skinned body proved to be distracting. In line with this, several of the Indian wigs were horrible…I could see that the wigs did not resemble human hair at all."[26] Despite this, when the CHA tried to explain their declining audiences, they did not focus on production quality but on the play's message and the audience's emotional response.

The board of the Association approached Kermit Hunter in 1981 asking him to assess the problems with the play. Hunter blamed those who rewrote parts of the script without his input. He wrote that "the play has lost much of its emotional appeal. Unlike the other dramas, which are standard in their scope, this play had the deep emotional involvement of the audience," but the audience began comparing the drama to all the others.[27] Hunter had designed the play "to appeal to that specific audience in the Great Smokies, consisting of two main types: the T-shirt poppa and wife, plus a gang of kids, and the more sophisticated couple in the Great Smokies to see handicrafts, enjoy cool nights, look at scenery, and reflect on the American past."[28] He also felt that the rewrites did a disservice to the Indians, saying "the hero should be DIGNIFIED. The Indians cannot be made clumsy, inept, pleading, childlike. They must have strength and nobility, and the opponents must be…ugly."[29] Though Hunter attempted to remedy the problems he saw within the script, attendance continued to decline.

The CHA, however, would not change its public face. Throughout the decades their press releases described a wonderful production and overwhelming audience

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[26] IOD archives, letter from Ruby Pittman, 6/28/1980.
[27] CHA archives, letter from Kermit Hunter to Carol White, 6/22/1981.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

response. In an article in the *Enquirer-Journal* of Monroe, North Carolina, in 2003, the musical director McCrae Hardy, described the response of the Cherokee who attended the first performance each year. The *Enquirer-Journal* quoted Hardy: "They know the story by heart and they come to see certain parts, like the part where Andrew Jackson gets told off by the chief…They love that part and applaud."[30] According to the article, the Cherokee "snicker knowingly when white men offer to buy their land, and hoot when buffoonish politicians swear that marching 1,200 miles to a spacious Oklahoma reservation is in the tribe's best interest. It quiets only when the tribe is rounded up in stockades and shots ring out."[31] This description, however, shows an audience that did not respond in the same manner as the regular, more diverse audiences. If all the audiences found the show as engaging as the CHA claimed the Cherokees did, they would not have had to worry about declining attendance and changing audience taste. Parker believed that the show was losing emotional impact. "We're losing the reality of the performance," and "while it may be true that we, as audience members had no problem with this kind of presentation some years back, our tastes have changed. We need more reality, believability, in order to get emotionally involved."[32] According to Parker, they lost emotional impact because of how the actors performed the show, for as he saw it, "the performance is becoming more and more melodramatic in style…all of it has become so broad that we don't buy into what's happening."[33] Audience numbers never dropped to a level that threatened the continuation of the drama, and publically, the CHA never described anything but an adoring audience.

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[30] IOD archives, "Casino endangers future of outdoor drama," *Enquirer-Journal*, 6/24/2003.
[31] Ibid.
[32] IOD archives, letter from Scott Parker to Barry Hipps and Peter Hardy, 8/18/2003.
[33] Ibid.

Although the Association did not respond quickly or fully to complaints about authenticity or historical accuracy, the souvenir programs did change in message and look over the decades. Many of the covers continued to feature Indians dressed in clothes covered in feathers and the main Eagle Dancer. By 1990, the costumers had made some of the costumes more detailed, and the cover of the souvenir for that year showed a wedding scene with the bride dressed extravagantly. Changes to how the Association presented the drama and the Cherokee appeared inside the programs, while the front covers continued to feature the same pictures they always had. Throughout the decades small pictures and drawings had been used to adorn the program pages. Whereas in the early decades many of the drawings featured animated Indians, maps, and animals, in later years they focused on representing the drama. If drawings appeared, they represented scenes from the drama itself. For the most part, however, the images shifted from drawings to actual photographs. Many of the new photographs featured people and locations around the reservation, including industries that employed the Cherokees year-round. Other photographs were added that showed historical people and events. These pictures ranged from principal chief John Ross in his old age, to photographs of the CHA meetings that occurred in the early years of the organization as they planned their different projects. Also, the program dedicated a page to pictures of eastern band Cherokees cast in the production. Additionally, the majority of the photographs featured stills from the production. Though overall the pictures showed a shift toward a more realistic portrayal of the Cherokee peoples, the images of the production presented an unchanged drama. The majority of pictures featured the non-Indian lead actors caked in

red body paint, and in none of the pictures does the paint actually resemble any known skin tone.[34]

Not only did the images in the souvenir programs change, but the information they chose to present within the program changed over the decades. Much of the information provided in the programs during the 1950s remained in the programs. These included details on what the Association did with the money earned from the tickets purchased, information on how the eastern band Cherokee lived at present, the history of the Cherokee, and information on the Trail of Tears and Tsali. In 1965, the CHA began to shift their focus to one of educating the public on the history behind the characters featured in the drama. In that year, they added an article on "Sequoyah: Cherokee Indian Genius."[35] The article provides a brief biography of the man who "solely from the resources of his mind, endowed a whole tribe with learning." It included a picture of the Cherokee Syllabary.[36] Three years later, an article on chief Junaluska was added to the program, which described his early life and his return from Indian Territory on foot, but it mainly focused on Junaluska's relationship with Andrew Jackson during the battle of Horseshoe Bend, and his role in fighting the president during the lead-up to removal. The following year, an article on William Holland Thomas was added to the program. Though in the drama his character did not have a large role, Thomas lived with Yonaguska and served as the principal chief of the Middle and Valley Towns of Western North Carolina.[37] After removal he fought in Washington for permission for the

[34] CHA, souvenir programs
[35] CHA archives, 1965 souvenir program.
[36] Ibid.
[37] CHA archives, 1969 souvenir program. Dr. Richard W. Iobst "William Holland Thomas: Champion of the Rights of the Cherokee"

Cherokee hiding in the mountains to stay in the region.[38] The same year, an article on principal chief John Ross was added to the program, telling the story of his life before, during, and after removal.[39] Not until 1977 was the history of Yonaguska added to the program. The majority of changes made to the program in the following years focused on telling different aspects of the Cherokee story. The history lessons provided told the Cherokee role in the Revolutionary War, and eventually included an article on Elias Boudinot, editor of the Cherokee *Phoenix*. Throughout the years authors changed, choosing professors of history over Kermit Hunter to detail the history of the tribe. However, the only information provided by a Cherokee in the program continued to be the chief's article detailing how the Indians lived in the modern world, taken over from Jennings.

Despite the declining audiences and the CHA's belief in the power of their message, they never allowed the drama to be filmed for educational or entertainment purposes. Though filming of the production would have brought in more money and preach their message to a much wider audience, the CHA rejected multiple proposals. The first offer came from the D.A.R. in 1954 for a film distribution on a national scale. While in the 1950s the drama had large audiences and the Association did not want to jeopardize that with producing a film version, in the face of low numbers in 1993, the CHA turned down their biggest opportunity. In November of that year, Rick Stockton, a copywriter with Walt Disney World Marketing Department, approached Kermit Hunter. Stockton's letter addressed the fact that he had seen the show in the early years and again in 1990. He asked Hunter if he had ever considered writing a screenplay and told him

[38] Ibid.
[39] CHA archives, 1969 souvenir program, Gary Gallant, "John Ross: Chief of the Cherokees"

that "I think the story would make a great feature film."[40] Hunter responded confidently, telling Stockton that he had written film scripts and documentaries and that he had considered a film version of the drama. Hunter believed that "it has just about everything a feature film needs, and I feel sure that if it were done by capable people with actors, it could gross at least a hundred million."[41] The CHA, and their focus on helping the Cherokees, presented the only obstacle that Hunter faced in realizing his dream. It is unclear how the CHA responded to the request, but they most likely refused out of the belief that it would hurt the original production and disagreed with Hunter's assessment of the potential gross. In 1995, Disney would have a successful film and create a new Disney princess with their film *Pocahontas,* based on the story of the historical Indian and the myth perpetuated by colonist John Smith.

Hunter's desire to have the drama produced as a film appears to be another attempt to make more money from the drama. He had attempted until the 1980s to receive more royalties from the drama and made it clear in his private letters that he though the CHA's aiding of the Cherokee was a fruitless endeavor. To provide for his wife after his death death, Hunter requested that his lawyer fight for his wife to continue receiving royalties from the show. Hunter believed that had he received what he considered to be adequate royalties he would not have had to teach to make a living. In a 1964 letter, Hunter told Carol White: "I believe I would have become a successful American playwright. As it is, I have written a string of outdoor plays here and there, some against my better [judgment], solely in order to augment my teaching salary." He felt that "the Cherokee show could have, and should have, made it possible for me…to

[40] CHA archives, letter from Rick Stockton to Kermit Hunter, 11/16/1993.
[41] CHA archives, letter from Kermit Hunter to Rick Stockton, 11/20/1993.

have produced some great works of art." "As it is," he complains, "the emphasis has been placed on helping the poor Cherokee, on giving milk and scholarships and Indian fairs – to what avail? What can you honestly tell me has been done, other than to give those people some more of the worldly goods they needed? What will this do for mankind?" Had he received more royalties, he wrote, "I think it is possible…that I could have written some great plays these 14 years."[42]

Hunter specifically blamed Harry Buchanan, explaining that as a businessman Buchanan could not understand how artists made their living. Buchanan saw the drama as a product that the Association had commissioned and paid for, but Hunter requested a one hundred per cent increase in his royalty payment. Because of this, Buchanan became "thoroughly disgusted with Hunter" and refused "to have anything further to do with the script," but Hunter continued working with the Association. Hunter felt that he could demand the same amount of royalties he received from other dramas. Buchanan wrote Hunter directly about his feelings: "in fairness, I…feel the success of your first venture at Cherokee has been largely responsible for the increased royalties you have been able to command on other dramas which you have had written and had produced."[43] Hunter claimed that *Unto These Hills* was not his first drama and that none of the dramas had hired him to write because of the show at Cherokee—an implausible claim. He also attacked the Association:

> The whole situation, after 14 years of complete success at the box office, is a shame and a disgrace to the American theatre. You may be blessing the Cherokee Indians and adding another tourist attraction to western North Carolina, but you have mistreated and thwarted the two people most responsible for what you are showing there every night during the summer…The position of Unto These Hills in the American theatre is hardly worth mentioning, because it is not theatre—it is commercialism, without any regard for

[42] CHA archives, letter from Kermit Hunter to Carol White, 1/16/1964.
[43] CHA archives, letter from Harry Buchanan to Kermit Hunter, 2/18/1964.

> art or anything permanently beautiful. You make a mockery of the very things we tried to say in the script and music.[44]

Hunter's attempts to get more money not only degraded the quality of the drama, but showed his true feelings regarding the Cherokee.

Hunter had to perform damage control regarding a negative article written in a Macon newspaper and reprinted in the Cherokee *One Feather* in 1977. The response Hunter sent to the *One Feather* showed his feelings about what his work accomplished and the Cherokee themselves. Hunter pointed out improvements that occurred in the area since the show premiered, including the expansion of telephone service and the significant increase in the tourist industry. "[T]here are Cherokee working as janitors who get more than the author and composer put together," he observed.[45] Chastising them, Hunter told the Cherokee that "[i]nstead of continuing to lick the wounds of the American Indian you should learn some loyalty to those people who have helped for twenty-five years to bring to the attention of more than six million people the real story of the red man." He reminded them that "[i]t was UNTO THESE HILLS that started it all, or have you forgotten? Perhaps you are too young to know that." In addition, he complained "that in all those years…not one single word of thanks or congratulations or encouragement has ever come…from any Cherokee anywhere…not one word from anyone." Concluding his letter, he informed them that "[a]ll you seem able to do is fan the flames of ill-will, instead of helping to rebuild that stature and dignity and pride of America's forgotten people.[46] Ten years after this letter in 1987, Hunter wrote a letter to the CHA detailing his impressions of Cherokee and the work that had been accomplished

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[44] CHA archives, letter from Kermit Hunter to Harry Buchanan, 2/29/1964.
[45] CHA archives, letter from Kermit Hunter to *The Cherokee One Feather*, 3/30/1977.
[46] Ibid.

in the area. The letter, however, showed Hunter's low opinion of the Cherokee. He wrote that "there was a time when the roads were littered with trash, old cars, shacks, piles of debris, and all kinds of unsightly matter to make the average tourist think the Indians had no pride at all."[47] At the time of his writing however, the change made him proud: "I rejoice in a new sense of pride, a desire to make the tourist delighted to be there. In the end it all amounts to new business and more tourist spending, but besides that it means the people are proud of their homes and their places of business. That means a healthy community. I congratulate the Cherokee and the whole area."[48] Other people also noticed the improvements to the area, including Harrah's.

In 1997, the CHA was aware of Harrah's opening of a casino within the Qualla Boundary, and feared the impending impact upon the cultural tourist draws. Scott Parker read reports that people who visit casinos spend all of their time gambling and ignore tourist sites in the area. He knew that the Association was financially stable but worried that the casino would affect attendance for five years after it opened. This would come right on the heels of their least successful year in terms of attendance. To secure against financial ruin, Parker suggested that they use their current savings to "implement an aggressive program to save the show, than to use it to subsidize a deficit."[49] Per Parker's suggestion, the CHA would use the savings in specific ways. Firstly, they looked at significantly increasing their marketing. Secondly, Parker wanted to increase customer satisfaction. He proposed adding backstage tours, stage combat demonstrations, pyrotechnic demonstrations, musical events in the theatre on nights the drama did not play, and atmospheric entertainment before and after the show. The third way that Parker

[47] CHA archives, letter from Kermit Hunter to Margie Douthit, 1987.
[48] Ibid.
[49] IOD archives , letter from Scott Parker to Ed Henson, Barry Hipps and Bill Hardy, 12/10/1997.

wanted to guarantee no loss of income because of the casino was to speak with the principal chief so the Association could allocate profits from the casino.[50]

It seemed in 1998 that Parker's fears had been realized. When he visited the casino during his trip to the Reservation, he spoke to different guests. He informed Marsha Cameron, Director of Marketing for the casino, that most of the guests he spoke to "didn't know about your afternoon and evening shows…but, they were clearly focused on gaming and less so on other forms of entertainment."[51] Cameron willingly allowed *Unto These Hills* promotional performances at the casino during the day, but Parker wanted more forms of advertisement and felt the need to remind Cameron that the drama "is a very important element in preserving the Cherokee heritage and sustaining and diversifying the tourist economy."[52] Though visitors to the casino booked hotel rooms normally taken by cultural tourists, some positive did come from the business it brought in. The *Times-News* in Hendersonville, North Carolina, reported in 2002 that "as expected, the casino has brought millions of dollars to the Cherokee people and helped them repossess and restore their land customs and heritage. In fact, the Cherokee recently repurchased its long-neglected Kituah Mound, a highly significant tribal site and location of the tribe's first sacred fire."[53] Ironically, the article placed the cultural tourist activities in a secondary role. The casino, however, offered year-round employment along with year-round revenue and per capita payments to each of the enrolled Cherokee on the reservation.

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[50] Ibid.
[51] IOD archives, letter from Scott Parker to Marsha Cameron, 7/14/1998.
[52] Ibid.
[53] IOD archives, "Traditions bloom through tourists," *Times-News*, Hendersonville, N.C. 5/5/2002.

For four and a half decades, the CHA presented a basically unchanged image to the public. The Association took strides to provide the audience with more of the history behind the story. However, the overall attitude toward the Cherokee, and the goals of the Association could not change while the drama remained the same. This was true in part because Hunter harbored negative feelings toward the Indians, and in part because the script itself was too outdated to be taken seriously by a twenty-first-century audience. The original script would play for the last time in 2005. The board of the CHA turned over and informed the director that "after this summer, they're going to look for a Native American director to take over UNTO THESE HILLS."[54] This change would lead to a series of tumultuous years and three new scripts in three years.

[54] IOD archives, letter from Peter Hardy to Scott Parker, 1/14/2005.

CHAPTER 4

REAPPROPRIATION

All Cherokee know that story, one they've never forgotten. Broken in two, torn apart – Half here, half there! We must sing new songs again! And we can, we can! And enter new circles to dance! Shake the shells, and sound the drums!

—Hanay Geiogamah *Unto These Hills*

Through all of this, we as a nation and a people have grown stronger and stronger!
*We live on today as the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. We are **Ni-go-hi-lav Tsa-li-gi**, forever Cherokee!*

–Linda West, *Unto These Hills…a Retelling*

After more than fifty years of wrestling with the issues of authenticity and historical accuracy the CHA decided to have *Unto These Hills* rewritten. New board members of the CHA felt that the play was outdated, which showed in waning attendance numbers, and that a historically accurate drama should feature Cherokee actors. In addition to this, as Linda West, playwright and executive assistant of the CHA, explained, "CHA was looking at a way to attract new visitors to outdoor drama, to spark an interest with a new generation of patrons. And having the Cherokee people more involved in the production was a top goal."[1] The new board's desire to bring more Cherokee into the production worked toward fulfilling the original goals of the WNCAC and CHA. According to Maschal, the original board of the CHA had abandoned any attempts of casting a majority of Cherokee in the drama as less auditioned and participated. Many Cherokee felt that the old CHA held prejudice against them, and therefore they refused to audition or participate in the drama's production. Those who

[1] Email conversation between author and Linda West, Administrative Assistant at CHA and 2008 script writer.

cast the parts had focused more on the quality of acting in the show which had prevented them from hiring the less qualified Cherokee. Additionally, the industry and money that the CHA brought into the area because of the success of the drama prevented some of the Indians from giving up year-round employment to participate during the summer.

For three years in a row the CHA hired three different playwrights to produce three different scripts. Although two of the scripts only lasted for a year apiece, they have retained the same playwright since 2008. While the plays focused on different aspects of the Cherokee culture and took very different points of view in regards to the Trail of Tears—which served as the focus of all the scripts—they all made attempts to prevent a more historically accurate drama. In addition, beginning with the 2006 season, the majority of actors and crew hired by the drama were either eastern band Cherokee or from another Indian tribe. Despite Cherokee attempts to reappropriate their own history, the CHA continually failed to achieve a fully Cherokee product. Their goal of increasing tourists to the area and increasing attendance at the drama took precedence over their desire for historical accuracy. To increase attendance, the drama had to cater to what tourists expected to see.

For the 2006 season the CHA hired Hanay Geiogamah, a Kiowa Indian playwright and director and founder of the American Indian Dance Theater, to pen a new script. Unlike Hunter, Geiogamah had an established career in the theatre when he was hired by the CHA. Geiohamah's concern with negative stereotypes and the alienation Indians face appeared to mesh well with the new goal of reappropriating Cherokee history.[2] In Geiogamah's hands, *Unto These Hills* became an entirely new drama. Not

[2] Hanay Geiogamah, Internet Public Library, http://www.ipl.org/div/natam/bin/browse.pl/A28 (accessed May 22, 2010).

only did the themes change, but he eliminated several of the characters audiences loved, such as Tsali, and added new characters to push the play forward. These new characters were created to show traditional Cherokee culture, including clan spirits, corn mother Selu, great hunter Kanati, and Boogers who both warn the people of things to come and scare the people with their presence. Many of the same stories remained in the script however, including the encounter with Hernando de Soto looking for gold and the Trail of Tears.

While Hunter opened his version with the appearance of De Soto, Geiogamah's play opened to the sound of birds flying, and the lights coming up on Messenger Birds locating the seven clan spirits. After all of the clan spirits—Wolf, Paint, Wild Potato, Bird, Blue, Long Hair, and Deer—gather around the council fire, they voice their concerns regarding the current state of the Cherokee understanding of their traditional dances, songs, and stories. The messenger birds speak to each other recognizing that "the Cherokee people are living in times of great change, of great challenges. All of the people in this world are living in times of great change and great challenges."[3] The birds are aware that the Cherokee people know all of the stories and songs but ask, "why do they not tell them to each other now, or to the young ones?"[4] The clan spirits join in the questions, asking "why are so many Cherokees not dancing…or singing the tribal songs," and note that "our stories are good stories, but how many Cherokees know them?"[5] To answer their questions, the messenger birds and clan spirits beckon Kanati to join them and recall what happened in the history of the Cherokee. At this point in the drama, Kanati begins to serve as the main vehicle through which the main story travels. Kanati

[3] CHA archives, Geiogamah, *Unto These Hills*, 3.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., 3-4.

introduces his wife Selu to the audience, but neither character can be seen by the characters on stage acting out Kanati's memories. This allowed the audience to see the Cherokee Indians as belonging to a living, evolving culture.

As Kanati begins to tell his story he introduces the Boogers. Detailing one of their cultural achievements, he tells the audience that "we Cherokees have given birth to some of the best storytellers that ever lived…These folks go away back in Cherokee history, many centuries into the past."[6] According to Kanati's narration, the Boogers were created as a "way of talking about and debating…concerns and fears." Additionally, "when the Boogers knew there was something important for us to know, they would show up."[7] The Boogers first arrive in the script to warn the people of the arrival of De Soto. While much of the De Soto scene tells basically the same story as Hunter's version, Geiogamah altered the characters themselves. First of all, the Indian serving as De Soto's guide changed from a random warrior to the fictional Queen of Cofitachequi. Secondly, De Soto himself appeared angrier and his men more prepared to fight. One aspect of Hunter's script that Geiogamah chose to emphasize was his message that the Cherokee only wanted peace. While emphasizing the colonizing forces of different European countries following De Soto's arrival, Selu tells the audience that "for over two hundred years we watched them come, all colors, all sizes. The Cherokees tried to not fight with the invaders. We tried to keep peace, to live in friendship and mutual respect."[8]

Geiogamah followed the story of De Soto with the story of Tecumseh. By this time in the script, the Cherokee donned European ways of dress. The Boogers, already

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[6] Ibid., 8.
[7] Ibid., 9.
[8] Ibid., 12

acting like Europeans, look at the Cherokee and state, "my, these Indians are starting to look just like us! It's getting hard to tell them apart from us! They speak like us! They walk like us! They dance like us!"[9] To counter Tecumseh's pleas for aid in his fight against the Americans, the War Chief attempts to reason that their weapons do not stand a chance against the superior fire power of European weapons.

Geiogamah restructured the Battle of Horseshoe Bend scene. Here, Geiogamah eliminated the role of Junaluska and made the warrior who saved Andrew Jackson simply a random warrior. Instead of looking at Andrew Jackson as an American hero who should be treated with reverence, Geiogamah uses the opportunity to foretell Jackson's treatment of the Cherokees during removal. After "Cherokee Warrior" saves Jackson's life, he discusses the event with another warrior:

> Cherokee Warrior: I killed the Creek warrior just before he could scalp Long Knife.
> 2nd Warrior: You saved his life!
> Cherokee Warrior: I'd do the same for any man who is my fighting ally…
> 2nd Warrior: Did he thank you?
> Cherokee Warrior: What do you think?
> 2nd Warrior: No he didn't thank you.
> Cherokee Warrior: I don't think Long Knife really knows what happened. His head hit the Creek tomahawk too hard.
> 2nd Warrior: He doesn't want to know.
> Cherokee Warrior: He's alive. He won't forget that.[10]

The first act ends with the Cherokee leaving on the Trail of Tears. Whereas Hunter saw this as the end of the action, Geiogamah chose to place removal as the center of the drama. Even the construction of the scene created a different message then that of Hunter's script. The scene has few spoken words. It begins with Major Davis giving the

[9] Ibid., 13.
[10] Ibid., 21.

order for the Indians to remove in two weeks, and ends with Kanati singing about removal.[11]

As previously stated, Geiogamah eliminated Tsali from his telling of removal. In Hunter's version, the Tsali story served as a climatic high point in the drama and a with whom the Cherokee and the audiences could emotionally connect. Though it is unclear why, Geiogamah found Tsali controversial and felt that removing him from the script aided the themes he wished to develop. Journalist Michael Beadle wrote that Geiogamah's script was "about moving beyond the view that the Cherokee were a tragic people, doomed to suffer."[12] Geiogamah attempted to help the Cherokee move past being defined by the Trail of Tears, and the *Smoky Mountain News* reported that "it's his goal to empower these communities and show the world what Native Americans can do."[13] Aware of the stereotypes that tourists brought with them to the reservation, Geiogamah stated, that "'we're capable of being theatre directors and soldiers and nurses and doctors. We don't all ride horses. We care about who we are.'"[14] Whereas Hunter's script built toward the Trail of Tears, Geiogamah attempted to take the focus off of the event and in fact he devoted very little of the script to it.

The second and final act takes up five pages of the script, with the opening two scenes featuring only Selu and Kanati discussing the harshness of the winter that the Cherokee faced on the Trail of Tears and the fact that they felt the need to take care of their dead. Act Three shows the Cherokee in Oklahoma. The Boogers reprise their lines

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[11] Ibid., 28-31. The majority of the writing on these pages are stage directions, not lines, and indicate that the messenger birds and clan spirits also come on stage for the removal scene.

[12] IOD archives, news clippings, Michael Beadle "Telling a Better Story", *Smoky Mountain News*, 6/4/2006.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

from earlier in the show about the Cherokee not singing or dancing any longer. At this point, however, the Boogers call the people to dance. The stage directions at the end of the scene indicate that the actors have two torches that "are ceremonially joined as one fire, and then passed by the tribe back to the eastern homeland." As the dancers finish, "the tribes people rejoice in their symbolically having achieved reunification."[15] The fire actually served a significant role throughout the drama, dimming at times of significant challenges to the Cherokee way of life. Concluding the drama, Selu and Kanati invite all the characters to join in a hoe-down/square dance. Corn mother Selu speaks the last lines of the drama. Whereas Hunter ended his play looking forward to a unified America, Geiogamah focused his ending message on the Cherokee and the safekeeping of their culture: "We honor our children. We pass on our history to these young ones. We must help them to learn how to remember. That's how they will know what it is to be Cherokees. Then they will create our future."[16]

Hunter's version presented the audience with a challenge of how to live in the Cold War era. Geiogamah, over a half century removed from Hunter's original writing, spoke to the contemporary political issues that faced Indians. In particular, Geiogamah dealt with how Indian peoples maintain their cultural traditions while adapting to modern American culture. He called on the Cherokee to remember their dances and songs, perform them, and create new ones themselves. Throughout the drama, Geiogamah placed a great deal of focus on the importance of the council fire and the reunification of the two fires when the Eastern Band met with the Cherokee living in Oklahoma,

[15] CHA archives, Geiogamah, *Unto These Hills*, 36.
[16] Ibid., 38.

representing the continuation of one Cherokee culture and the fact that removal did not cause an irreparable chasm between the two groups.

To pass along the cultural knowledge to future generations, the CHA hired Indians to fill other important positions in the cast. These natives included a Pawnee production head, an Ojibwa co-writer, a Seneca composer, and a Wampanoag choreographer. Geiogamah's rewrite required a much smaller cast than Hunter's production. With a total number of fifty-four cast member, thirty seven were Cherokee, and some who had in past years only filled in on crowd scenes moved into major roles. In addition to the changes in casting, the production staff also altered the costuming. Seth, the costume designer and a Nez Perce from Idaho "makes a distinction between 'costumes' and 'outfilts.' The clan spirit designs are 'costumes,' based on supernatural beings from Cherokee mythology while Seth's designs of shirts and pants are 'outfits' worn for social gatherings and re-enactment scenes."[17] Seth went on in the article to emphasize that costumes are worn by clowns and for Halloween, whereas outfits such as he dressed the cast in are realistic.[18] In fact, many of the costumes and dances were based on new details about the historic Cherokee found in the memoirs of Lieutenant Henry Timberlake. Though his memoirs had been available, no one in the CHA or otherwise involved in the drama previously knew of their existence. Not only did they affect the drama but also the Oconaluftee Indian Village. Paula Crouch Thrasher reported in *The Atlanta Journal Constitution,* that Timberlake's "accounts of tribal behavior, rituals, and interaction with one another have been incorporated into daily

[17] IOD, news clippings, Michael Beadle, "The Second Act," Smoky Mountain News 6/7/2006.
[18] Ibid.

storytelling events at the village," while styles of pottery changed with stamped patterns added to them.[19]

The audience response to the show varied. A journalist for the KnoxNews website raved about the show, saying, "it was literate and beautiful to look at. It presented Cherokee culture as a rich and living thing, rather than some dry subject lifted from a fifth-grade social studies text."[20] The CHA told the *Smoky Mountain News* that it had planned to use this script for several years and then have a Cherokee rewrite it, despite the CHA's belief that Geiogamah "adopted a Cherokee perspective of the Eastern Band's own history."[21] As the *Smoky Mountain News* reported, the rewrite also contributed to the move toward more authenticity in terms of the actual presentation because it "included authentic costumes, traditional dance and music and—for the first time ever—a majority of Cherokee actors."[22] Mason's only complaint about the 2006 drama was that it ran for only one season. In addition to the newspaper articles lauding the performance, for the first time since the opening of the show, the CHA admitted the failure that the original show had become in the last decades it played. Newspaper articles at the time recognized that even the Indians themselves no longer took the same pride in the show as they had, and that the CHA had argued they did. One reporter asked rhetorically, "rewritten and restaged? What was not to like about Hunter's long-running crowd pleaser?" The answer came—"apparently plenty if you ever stopped to ask the

[19] IOD archives, news clippings, Paula Crouch Thrasher "18th-century Memoirs Spur Makeover in Cherokee, N.C." *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, 6/4/06.

[20] IOD archives, news clippings, Doug Mason, "'Hollywood writers' revamp the revamped 'Unto These Hills,'" Knoxnews: Fine Arts, 6/15/2007.

[21] IOD archives, news articles, "Unto These Hills changes again for 58th season," *Smoky Mountain News* website 5/30/2007.

[22] Ibid.

Cherokees their opinions."[23] In a mass press release to newspapers throughout the South, the CHA also admitted that attendance had fallen fifty percent since the earlier and more successful years of the production.[24] However, while Geiogamah's show helped raise attendance, an overwhelming majority of audience members found the production disappointing.[25]

Despite Mason's positive opinion, public feedback, as well as the comments by the Eastern Band Cherokees, showed that many found the new script confusing and hard to follow. Throwing the show together at the last minute most likely affected the quality of the production—the Association did not even have time to put together a souvenir program for the show.[26] Geiogamah had chosen to rely on the acting, dancing, and music to tell the story artistically. When he introduced the new mythological characters that had not appeared in the previous version, he relied on veiled references, or did not even explain them at all, such as the messenger birds. From an artistic point of view, the show fit Mason's description, but it did not fit the audience well. Geiogamah also stripped away parts of the show that the Cherokee had viewed as important, such as Tsali and removal.

The CHA replaced Geiogamah the following year with Pat Allee and Ben Hurst, who made their living writing cartoons. They decided to replace Geiogamah because of his inability to fulfill the CHA's expectations. Though he did not inform the press of the reasons for deciding to fire Geiogamah, executive director John Tissue admitted to Scott Parker that Geiogamah "plagiarized text from the old drama and [had] no second act.

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[23] IOD archives, news articles, "Cherokee Drama 'Unto These Hills' revisited," *Crossroads Chronicle*, 6/19/2006.

[24] IOD archives, email from Tim Whitmire to Scott Parker, 7/7/2006.

[25] IOD archives, email from John Tissue to Scott Parker, 6/19/2007

[26] Email conversation between author and playwright Linda West 6/14/2010.

Hanay lifted the second act nearly verbatim from his American Indian Dance theatre shows and we didn't get that version until [two] days before opening!" The accusation of plagiarism did not focus on the script, but the series of dances and "a Cherokee version of the American Indian Dance Theater DRUM CALL" which served as the prelude to his removal scene.[27] Because of Geiogamah's tardiness, the Association considered cancelling the first week of shows.[28] Choosing Allee and Hurst to write the new script showed that the CHA sacrificed its desire for a fully Cherokee story, to use "'veteran Hollywood writers.'" Their credits, however, consisted of mainly children's cartoons such as "Tiny Toon Adventures" and two separate "Sonic the Hedgehog" series. Neither one had any writing credits to their name since 1999.[29] Tissue, defending his choice, wrote to Parker that "Ben and Pat did write cartoons among many other things including the TV show *Taxi* but they also have [ten] years experience writing about Cherokee history. I needed that mix."[30] Tissue did not divulge the details of their work on the Cherokee to Parker or strangely enough to newspapers. Their background in cartoons showed in the very childlike script that played for laughs. The play is more a series of vignettes than a cohesive story with a unifying thread running throughout. Though news reports claimed the second change in the script brought Tsali and Thomas back into the story, the playwrights relegated their part to the end of the play. Whereas Hunter denied the Indians any sense of humor, Allee and Hurst, made the Indians cartoonish, filling the script with bad jokes in English. Unlike Hunter's script that gave attendees something to connect with, the CHA believed that the new version confronted them with too much

[27] CHA archives, Hanay Geiogamah, *Unto These Hills*, 25.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Credits information available through the Internet Movie Database, www.imdb.com.
[30] IOD archives, email conversation between John Tissue and Scott Parker 6/19/2007.

information to digest in such a short amount of time and failed to provide them with "real characters that they could identify with and follow throughout the show."[31]

Allee and Hurst kept many of the additions Geiogamah made to Hunter's script, such as the messenger birds and the clan spirits. As each clan spirit introduced itself to the audience, they described their traditional roles in the community. For example, the Blue Clan were "the caregivers of our people when they are ill," and the Deer Clan were "the watchers of the land and the strongest athletes and runners."[32] Instead of using the Kanati and Selu as narrators, Allee and Hurst used a grandmother and grandfather telling bedtime stories to their grandson and granddaughter, an idea more accessible to white audiences. Allee and Hurst added some new scenes of their own creation. Not only did they also use Lieutenant Henry Timberlake's memoirs, they added him as a character in the script, as the British fight the French in the French and Indian War. Additionally, they lifted the scene from Timberlake's memoirs where he took the Cherokee Ostenaco to meet King George III in London. Timberlake's memoirs detail this encounter, though Ostenaco's speech in the play comes entirely from their imagination. Timberlake wrote only that "Ostenaco's speech on that occasion contained nothing more than protestations of friendship, faithful alliance, &c…I was not conversant enough in their language to translate it; though I understood whatever they said, especially the speech, which I gave word for word to his Majesty."[33] Timberlake saves Ostenaco from making the mistake of offering King George a pipe to smoke and the King readily agrees to keep Cherokee

[31] Email conversation between author and playwright Linda West, April 2009.
[32] CHA archives, 2007 *Unto These Hills*, Pat Allee and Ben Hurst.
[33] Samuel Cole Williams, ed., *Lieut. Henry Timberlake's Memoirs: 1756-1765* (Marietta: Continental Book Company, 1948), 143.

lands free from further white settlement.[34] These changes moved away from Geiogamah's attempts to call Indians to action and preserve their culture, and toward a white centered story like Hunter's.

Allee and Hurst also added the Cherokee Sequoyah to the script. Though they do address his achievement of creating the Cherokee Syllabary, they also play the situation for laughs. In Sequoyah's first scene, Cherokee warriors mock him for his "talking leaves"

> Junaluska: And how go your efforts?
> Sequoyah: My writing system? (sighs) It is proving to be most difficult.
> Junaluska: Well, my friend, I have no doubt you will succeed with the talking leaves.
> Warrior #3: (laughs) Talking leaves? (picks up a leaf) Hello? (to Sequoyah) There must be something wrong with this one. It doesn't answer.
> (Warrior #3 shakes the leaf) Hello?
> Warriors: (laugh)[35]

This scene happens soon before the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, which more resembled Hunter's script than Geiogamah's. Instead of having Jackson saved by an unnamed warrior, Junaluska returns as the future president's hero. Allee and Hurst do not leave the Indians waiting on a thank you from Jackson as Geiogamah did. Instead, in a move reminiscent of Hunter's heroic Jackson, the general readily offers up his gratitude and promises Junaluska that he will remember his brave actions. Sam Houston reinforces this promise, informing Junaluska that he made a powerful friend.[36] As in Geiogamah's script, removal does not play as large of a role as in Hunter's. After soldiers remove a family from their house, white men come in, bag Indian belongings and plan to take over the property.[37] The main focus of removal here, however, does not occur in Cherokee, but in Nashville, Tennessee. White citizens line the streets to watch the Indians pass

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[34] Allee and Hurst, 27-28.
[35] Ibid., 39-40.
[36] Ibid., 43-44.
[37] Ibid., 60.

through their town. Upset by the occurrences, they bring out blankets, food, and clothing, and some begin crying. Kamama, a small Indian child mentions this to her grandmother, who responds "never forget, Kamama, there are always good people, no matter what color they are."[38] Throughout the scene, Cherokees sing the hymn *Amazing Grace*, and "after a few stanzas, all the whites join in. The orchestrated score swells, filling the house and the song is sung in full harmony to a huge dramatic finish."[39] This picture of harmony between the races took the focus off of the impact removal had on the Cherokee people, and showed how the playwrights imagined whites and Indians interacted. The other important story told during removal is that of Tsali, though it is told with much less emphasis. Instead of having Tsali and family hide in the mountains after killing a soldier, Allee and Hurst have Tsali's son kill soldiers while the family hides in the mountains. All of the action takes place off stage and the details are provided before the audience sees Tsali and his family. His sacrifice still serves as the means for the small band of Cherokee who hid in the mountains to remain there.

Along with Geiogamah, many of the people in technical positions did not return to work with Allee and Hurst. To direct the new script, the CHA hired Stephen Michael Ayers, director of Western Carolina University's Professional Acting and Directing Program. Also, as the *Smoky Mountain News* reported, 2007 saw a "new score, new choreography, new set design, new costuming and new cast members – all aimed at conveying a more culturally authentic, historically accurate and Cherokee-centered experience."[40] The Association believed that audiences would overwhelmingly enjoy the

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[38] Ibid., 63
[39] Ibid., stage note
[40] IOD archives, *Smoky Mountain News* online, "Unto These Hills changes again for 58th season," 5/30/07

new production. Advertising that year addressed both the change from Geiogamah's script and the new production. When detailing why they chose to not return to Geiogamah's script, the CHA maintained their standard of not speaking negatively about their past production; when discussing the eventual failure of Hunter's script, they tempered their comments to focus on the lack of historical accuracy and dwindling audiences. Regardless of the troubles the Association had with Geiogamah, in the press John Tissue simply said that he addressed the ideas they wanted to focus on, but was not what they, or their audiences, wanted. The show did increase its attendance by nineteen percent, but the CHA hoped that the new version, which detailed many more aspects of Cherokee culture and Cherokee history, would attract larger audiences and repeat customers.[41]

Very few newspaper articles or other sources exist detailing the success of the 2007 season, but the few that discuss the show do not paint a positive picture. The reviewer that found Geiogamah's piece literate felt that with the return of the traditional stories from the Hunter script present in Allee and Hurst's version brought with it "the trite storytelling, static staging, and grade-school history lessons" of the original show. In summation, he called the drama dull, and ended his review saying "personally…I would rather have watched 'Sonic the Hedgehog.'"[42] Despite this negative review, John Tissue did not worry about negative press, and therefore did not fear the theatre reviewer Terry Teachout from the *Wall Street Journal*. In an email to Scott Parker, Tissue noted that his review would not change his audience. The CHA he wanted to build focused on

[41] IOD archives, newspaper clippings, "'Unto These Hills' (revamped again for new season)," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, 6/3/2007.

[42] IOD archives, newspaper clippings, Doug Mason, "'Hollywood writers' revamp 'Unto These Hills,'" Knoxnews.com (*Knoxville News Sentinel*), 6/15/2007.

authenticity and promoting Cherokee culture, and creating "a show that the Cherokees can be proud of and that can sell tickets."[43] In fact, Tissue definitely had things to worry about when it came to the production, but Teachout's review was for the most part, benign. Teachout argued that the new production resembled a pageant more than a play, and recognizes the amateur level of the majority of actors. While mainly his review focused on giving background details, the heart of his criticism came in only two sentences:

> …the new script…is interesting mainly for the way in which it inverts the Western-movie clichés of the '30s, portraying the white characters as well meaning dolts or Snidely Whiplash-type monsters of greed ("You will bring me your gold or die!"). The dances, however, are splendidly authentic and handsomely costumed, and should you be spending a few days visiting the Smokies, you'll find "Unto These Hills" a painless and pleasant way to learn a bit about Cherokee history.[44]

Teachout's refusal to engage more critically with the show most likely arose from the dullness the Knoxville reviewer described. The overall lack of press coverage perhaps helps to explain why the CHA decided to have the drama rewritten again for the 2008 season. As with the Geiogamah script however, Allee and Hurst's chosen point of view and the age range the resulting show appealed to most likely did not mesh with the CHA's desired goals for the production.

Hiring writers from outside the area failed to provide the CHA with either the script they desired or the portrayal of the Cherokee they found most historically accurate or respectable. In 2008, Linda West, the Administrative Assistant at the Cherokee

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[43] IOD archives, email conversation between John Tissue and Scott Parker, 6/20/2007. In the same conversation, Tissue writes "My board and I are building a new CHA. The new CHA is mission focused and very aware of our product's position in the marketplace. We are no longer mainstream entertainment; we are niche. We still service mostly the Gatlinburg crowd but we have a growing segment of cultural tourists who want more cultural authenticity. We can no longer allow white folk painted red with Texas Dirt and who speak in the third person to tell the Cherokee story. Old CHA cannot survive in today's marketplace."

[44] Terry Teachout, "History Under the Stars," *Wall Street Journal*, 7/6/2007, online.wsj.com/article/SB118368183178258672.html (accessed June 15, 2010).

Historical Association took over writing the script. Like the other playwrights, West is not Cherokee, but unlike the other playwrights, she lives on the reservation and works day to day with the Cherokee people. West combined the useful parts of the scripts, keeping the presentation of clans and returning Kanati and Selu as narrators. The CHA mainly adopted this new script, which underwent a slight rewrite for the 2009 season, for reasons of historical accuracy. Many people relished the fact that West wrote Tsali back into their history, especially because her telling depicts the true facts of the story. Hunter's version of the Tsali story has the hero incited to rage after a drunken soldier accidentally kills his wife while they prepared to move west. According to the website "News From Indian Country:"

> [i]n the latest version, which is much closer to history, it is brought out that Tsali and his family were exempted from the removal because he, like Yonaguska, accepted U.S. citizenship and a 640 acre allotment of land (historical records bear this out and amazingly countless prominent historians of Cherokee history have overlooked this pivotally important fact). This fact flies in the face of countless hackneyed historical renderings of Tsali as just a remote farmer disinterested in tribal politics. What Cherokee in the 1830s was not interested in tribal politics, considering national survival was at stake?[45]

West's version appears to finally separate the goals of the CHA from those of the now non-existent WNCAC. West did not write the new drama with the sole intent of bringing in tourists to stimulate all of Western North Carolina's economy, or to tell a touching story about "America." This play actually told the history of the Eastern Band of Cherokees, complete with authentically traditional dances, not the story of Cherokee/white relations.

West blended parts of Geiogamah's and Allee and Hurst's scripts to create a less cartoonish and more easily comprehendible production. West eliminated the bedtime

[45] Albert Bender, "Unto These Hills: A Retelling – Now a Rescripted Version of Gripping Cherokee Drama," http://indiancountrynews.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5199.

story narration, opting instead to reprise the roles of Kanati and Selu. Unlike Geiogamah, West allowed the characters to clearly identify themselves and to explain why all the other characters on stage ignored them: "I am Selu, the corn mother, and he is my husband Kanati, the great hunter. We are mythological beings among the Ani-Yun'wiya and although our presence is unseen by the eye, we are felt by the soul."[46] The script moves quickly in the beginning, with very little action taking place on stage, but Selu and Kanati introduce all of the clans. Throughout the play however, West emphasized the constancy of the Cherokee and their culture. Although Europeans arrived on their lands and disrupted their way of life, as Selu states, "we remained strong and held onto the ways of our people all the while adapting to the changes we seemed to have no control over."[47] West eliminated the Hernando De Soto scene, choosing instead simply to mention the Spanish conquistador's travels through the area, and his search for gold. She also eliminated the character of Henry Timberlake, and the journey of Ostenaco to London to meet King George III. Instead, after the introductions and presentation of purpose, the play jumps quickly to Tecumseh's plea to the Cherokee to join him in fighting the Americans and subsequently to the saving of Andrew Jackson by Junaluska. West also kept Sequoyah in the script, but eliminated all references to "talking leaves," and instead focused on his success. Selu ends the scene telling the audience that "in five thousand years of recorded history, Sequoyah, was the only person ever to create a writing system without first being literate in some language. Within two years, thousand[s] of Cherokee could read and write their own language."[48] The large majority of West's drama focused on the story of Tsali and the Trail of Tears and the now

[46] CHA archives, Linda West, *Unto These Hills…a retelling*, 1.
[47] Ibid., 3
[48] Ibid., 23.

accepted authentic Tsali story. When soldiers arrive to escort Tsali's family to the barricades, his family informs the soldiers that they are exempt from removal because they applied for citizenship.[49] When they are forced to leave, Tsali's granddaughter attempts to retrieve her dropped doll and the soldiers forcefully move her, causing one of Tsali's sons, Jake, to grab a gun and shoot one of the soldiers. Tsali reacted to protect his land and his family's right to be there; he did not lash out in an uncivilized way to avenge his wife's death. The rest of the Tsali story continues in the usual way.[50] West's version ends with chief Junaluska returning from the Indian Territory, and Kanati and Selu recount the rest of Cherokee history, including the "cruelty of the Boarding School Days where our young people were forbidden to speak the Cherokee language."[51] Despite their struggles, "we've held on to our traditions and our language and today we teach our young ones once again to speak in our language."[52] This message, which pervaded both Geiogamah and West's plays, offers a very different message than that of Hunter's themes of peace and brotherhood.

Though white actors do still take on roles in the drama, the most recent playbills note that aside from only a few white actors playing Indian roles, the majority of Cherokee roles went to either Eastern Band Cherokees or Indians from other federally recognized tribes. The CHA apparently believed that placing any Indian in a Cherokee role would seem more authentic than casting a white man in the role. All of their audience did not respond well to what some perceived as inaccuracies in the show. One family that attended the 2008 show enjoyed the story but found the acting lacking—

[49] Ibid., 39.
[50] Ibid., 39-57.
[51] Ibid., 59.
[52] Ibid.

hiring less talented actors in order to have more Cherokees in the show was a compromise made when the Association chose to put more Indians in the drama. Some of their complaints, however, arose from their ignorance of Indian history: "We thought there would be [a lot] of costumes, dances, etc. But the Indians were dressed in 'pioneer' clothes."[53] Other issues did arise from choices made by the Association. The dissatisfied patron stated on his blog that "it's hard to take a scrawny white guy as an Indian seriously! Some of the actors were true Cherokee, but not all. Some even had extreme Southern accents! Weird."[54] Despite this, West's version of the script remains the choice of the Association, with the only minor changes to improve the quality of the show.

The story of the long history of the drama *Unto These Hills* exemplifies the struggles that Native Americans faced in the twentieth century between finding ways to survive monetarily while maintaining their cultural heritage. In their struggle for survival, they relied on white beneficiaries to carry them through and hopefully land them on their feet. However, because of this reliance, the Cherokees embraced the American caricature of themselves, both every day during tourist season on the main strip of stores, and on the stage six nights a week. They aimed to make money entertaining the crowds of white Americans who travelled to Cherokee to experience "real" Indians, giving the tourists what they expected, including teepees and warriors wearing war bonnets. Only if outsiders travelled further onto the reservation and actually experienced the Oconaluftee Indian Village or the Museum of the Cherokee Indian—both projects of the CHA—could they realize that all Indians do not share the same cultural heritage. Ironically the same people helping to break the stereotype also perpetuated it for over fifty years. Kermit

[53] IOD archives, print-out of LiveJournal blog, 6/24/2008.
[54] Ibid.

Hunter's script did a disservice to Cherokee attempts to preserve their cultural heritage and to families who left the theatre believing what they saw was the truth because they saw it on the Indian reservation. They believed even though earlier in the day they had taken a family portrait with one of the "chiefs" downtown or had bought a basket from a white owned store, not caring that the Qualla Boundary Arts Cooperative sold baskets made by the Indians who lived only a short drive away.

In a way, these families did not arrive on the reservation to experience a different culture. They went to experience a part of American culture, and the story Hunter told—which focused on how Europeans and American heroes interacted with the Indians more than the actual story of the Cherokees as a people—provided them with what they desired. Americans believe they can partake in Indian culture as if it is their own because they believe that Indian culture is their own. *Unto These Hills* proved a product of its time, though the Indians themselves may have gained more control over how the wider population appropriates their images and their history. Philip Deloria explains that everything is marketable in the post-modern world. Through this journey to commodification, identities have blurred, cultural differences have either changed or been forgotten, and Indian culture proves a hot commodity no matter who creates it.[55] Americans often refuse to accept anything other than the homogenized Hollywood image, or the mystic with a special connection to nature. Through the adopting of Indian culture as their own, white America has not allowed the Indians a separate cultural sphere. While little is done for the Indians living in poverty on the reservations, tourists have no problem visiting for a day or two to soak in what they believe to be their cultural heritage, or to spend the weekend gambling their money away, never experiencing the actual

[55] Deloria, 179.

reservation. On the flip side, as history has shown, white America grants native peoples little access to white ways of life. In the late 1960s, the Red Power movement formed in part because of the treatment Indians have received at the hands of whites on and off the reservation. The Indians dealt with imprisonment, beatings, refusal of service or employment, or just simple ostracism. Though Indians have pushed back against the appropriation of their history by white America, perhaps Kermit Hunter's last line, speaks on multiple levels: "this, then, was the dream of the Cherokee. This, then, is America!" Perhaps this line, which appropriates the Cherokee story for all of America in fact prophesies permanence, for even 60 years later, the story of appropriation remains the same. However, as the three revisions show, Native Americans are taking strides to reappropriate their history and culture, claiming a unique cultural identity while adapting to their modern surroundings. This, *now*, is America!

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