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## Publisher's Note

*Opinions Throughout History: The Environment* is the fifth title in the new *Opinions* series from Grey House Publishing. Single, in-depth volumes are designed to follow the path of public opinion on current, controversial topics as they have evolved throughout history. Each volume includes a range of primary and secondary source documents, including newspaper and magazine articles, speeches, court decisions, and other legislation. These documents are accompanied by expert commentary and analysis to guide the reader through the process of understanding how the subject of each document contributed to, or is a reflection of, changing attitudes on important issues of public interest.

### ***Arrangement***

Following this Publisher's Note is a detailed **Introduction** that discusses the effect of human activity on Earth's environment and the polarized opinions about this complex issue. The constant tension between parties who profit from industry and development, and environmentalists who warn of irreparable damage to the planet is explored through the lens of the social and political process. Next is a comprehensive **Timeline** of significant events related to environmental history and regulation, from antiquity to 2018.

The 28 chapters that follow give a detailed account of significant environmental events, beginning with the ecological alteration of the Delaware River Valley before the first European settlers and ending with President Donald Trump's rollback of environmental protection policies. Topics covered include the advent of the railroad, which accelerated both expansion westward and the destruction of forests by the "Timber Barons," resulting in calls for conservation and the establishment of the national park system. The Industrial Revolution, which caused severe pollution and a growing pile of disposable

products that still affect us today, also brought about the first pollution laws and eventually led to the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency. The protection of endangered species and the formation of non-governmental organizations to combat environmental harm stand side-by-side with corporate-sponsored efforts to discredit the scientific data on global warming and other environmental issues. Although the first land and timber use regulations were passed in the Colonial era, the history of environmental protection in the United States reveals a pattern of ignoring evidence of environmental degradation whenever it conflicts with the need for housing, energy, and employment, or with the profit of those who finance such development. The Dust Bowl and the Pacific Garbage Patch are presented as two arguably preventable disasters. As severe weather and other ramifications of environmental problems become more frequent, the need for international cooperation is discussed.

Most source documents are reprinted in their entirety, and are clearly distinguished throughout the text by a shaded title bar. Often, the document is broken up into sections to better demonstrate the points discussed in the accompanying commentary, detailing its significance and how it reflects the ongoing tension between opposing opinions in America.

Each chapter starts with a valuable Introduction and list of Topics Covered, and ends with a Conclusion, Discussion Questions, and Works Used. The text is further enhanced throughout by photos and other images, quotations, and sidebars. Footnotes referenced in the text begin on page 625.

New to this edition are a number of detailed descriptions, called “Environmental Moments” that support points mentioned in the text. For example, we’ve included the story of Julia Hill, who lived in a tree “Luna” for two years and prevented its destruction.

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The work concludes with the following back matter:

- **Notes:** A comprehensive list of footnote citations from each chapter, in order of appearance;
- **Primary & Secondary Sources:** A complete list of the documents reprinted within the text, fully sourced to help the reader with further research;
- **Glossary:** Terms frequently used when discussing environment issues;
- **Historical Snapshots:** A broad overview of political, social and cultural developments that offer understanding of the political and social climate from colonial times to the present;
- **Bibliography** and detailed **Index** complete the volume.

### ***The Opinions Throughout History Series***

Recently published titles are *National Security vs. Civil & Privacy Rights*; *Immigration*; *Gender: Roles & Rights*; and *Drug Use & Abuse*.

*The Environment* kicks off the 2019 *Opinions Throughout History* series. It's followed by *Social Media Issues*, the *Death Penalty*, and *Voter Rights*.

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## Historical Timeline

<b>Antiquity:</b>	Indigenous Americans begin the process of mass agriculture, cultivating maize and other crops on large scale farms.  Humanity begins domesticating animals and transporting them across the oceans.
<b>1000 BCE:</b>	Ancient Assyrian kingdom establishes the world's first game parks.
<b>1100:</b>	Indigenous agriculture causes mass pollution in the Delaware Valley.
<b>1200s:</b>	Kublai Khan establishes the first game conservation programs in Asia.
<b>1607:</b>	Jamestown Colony is established.
<b>1620:</b>	The Plymouth Colony is established.
<b>1626:</b>	Plymouth Colony establishes America's first timber conservation law.
<b>1630:</b>	The Massachusetts Bay Colony establishes forest protection laws.
<b>1639:</b>	Newport, Rhode Island, establishes first game conservation law.
<b>1642:</b>	Plymouth colonist Joseph Jenks creates America's first scrap yard.
<b>1681:</b>	Province of Pennsylvania establishes the "one acre for five" rule for conserving forests.

### ***Introduction***

The ecological impact of pre-industrial indigenous societies in America and growth of large-scale agriculture started the erosion of America's natural habitats, a process that continues today. During the Colonial Era, European intellectuals created two depictions of the native people of North America: dangerous savages and noble ecological shepherds. Neither depiction captures the true diversity of Native American cultures, but reflects varying attitudes among white Americans regarding how the growth of European American societies impacted Native Americans.

The primary document for this chapter is a speech attributed to famed indigenous leader Chief Seattle but actually penned by a white man seeking to build interest in conservation by reflecting on the ways in which European American culture was damaging America's ecosystems.

### **Topics covered in this chapter include:**

- Native American ecology
- Solid waste pollution
- Agriculture

### **This Chapter Discusses the Following Source Document:**

Clark, Jerry L. "Thus Spoke Chief Seattle: The Story of an Undocumented Speech." *Prologue Magazine*. National Archives. Spring 1985, vol. 18, no. 1.



## Pre-American Ecology Environmental Alteration is Addressed (1100–1854)

In 1100, the Delaware River in Pennsylvania was bustling with farms. Though most of the agricultural settlements on the banks of the river were small, there were many, and they represented a variety of Native American cultures, whose farmers primarily grew maize (*Zea mays*), one of the world's oldest domesticated crops. Maize is derived from a wild grass species called “teocinte,” which is now extinct, but which grew in Central and South America around 10,000 years ago. Ancient horticulturalists selectively bred teocinte to increase the size of the plant's “ears,” each of which contain rows of kernel.<sup>1</sup>

Maize (and its ancestor, teocinte) grows in grasslands, a type of ecosystem dominated by grasses and herbaceous plants that became an essential environment for human agriculture. Certain grassland environments, like the African savannahs and the North American plains, are the product of various types of destruction. Browsing animals, like elephants, deer, and antelope, strip, fell, and defoliate trees and bushes that would otherwise grow to create forests. Fire, also an important element in the creation of grassland



Cultivation of maize in an illustration from the sixteenth-century Florentine Codex, by Gary Francisco Keller, via Wikimedia.



Teocinte (top), maize-teosinte hybrid (middle), maize (bottom), by John Doebley, via Wikimedia.

habitats, occurs during times of drought, killing seedling trees and covering the ground in ash. This makes the environment hostile to many forest species, but provides the perfect fertilizer for grasses and other herbaceous species.<sup>2</sup>

Early human agriculturalists, like the Native American farmers along the Delaware River in 1100, imitated these same destructive processes to create their own

fields for cultivation—practicing “slash and burn” agriculture, whereby farmers remove trees and burn remaining vegetation to fertilize the soil for planting. Thus, the ongoing process of mass environmental alteration began.

A 2011 study found that between 1100 and 1600 farming in the Delaware River valley created a 50 percent increase in soil erosion and sediment runoff into the river. Investigations of this debris revealed maize kernels and fragments of burned vegetation, which researchers linked to the expansion of maize agriculture. It is estimated that these Native American farmers removed as much as half of the forests surrounding the river, which left its banks more vulnerable to erosion and led to runoff that filled the waterways with pollutants.<sup>3</sup>

### **Native Environmentalists**

The European settlement of North America resulted in the destruction of Native American cultures across the United States, resulting in a lingering dichotomous view of native cultures as alternately savage and inferior or as noble and spiritual. Despite the historical tendency to view Native Americans as living in an utopian society before the advent of Europeans, American environmentalists seized on the “noble savage” stereotype as a symbol of the perceived possibility of ecological balance. The early



environmental movement reflects the social angst and uncertainty that accompanied the decline of professions like pastoralism and subsistence farming. It also represents the very gradual evolution of popular ideas about the value of nature.

One of the earliest, and most famous, examples of the “noble savage” concept is found in a speech allegedly delivered by Chief Seattle of the Duwamish and Suquamish people of the Puget Sound region to Isaac Ingalls Stevens, governor of Washington Territory. Chief Seattle delivered the famous speech around 1855 in what became the city of Seattle. It is often reprinted in books about Native American culture and environmentalist philosophy, and became a cornerstone of the indigenous environmentalism concept. The following 1985 article from *Prologue Magazine* by Jerry Clark discusses the origins of the Chief Seattle speech and how it spread through American popular culture.



The only known photograph of Chief Seattle, 1864, via Wikimedia. Although Chief Seattle's speech about the early destruction of the environment by European settlers is frequently quoted, the accuracy of the translation is uncertain.



# THUS SPOKE CHIEF SEATTLE: THE STORY OF AN UNDOCUMENTED SPEECH

By Jerry L. Clark

*Prologue Magazine*, Spring 1985, Vol. 18, No. 1

## Source Document

Did Millard Fillmore install the first bathtub in the White House? Did Betsy Ross make the first American flag at the request of George Washington? Did Pocahontas save the life of Capt. John Smith? Most Americans, whose knowledge of the history of their native land is sometimes sketchy, would answer yes to the above questions. The historian would answer definitely not, probably not, and maybe, respectively. The journalist H. L. Mencken concocted the Millard Fillmore tale during a slow newsday during the 1920s; the Betsy Ross story rests on dubious evidence; and Pocahontas was only eleven years old at the time that Captain Smith (not always known for his veracity) claimed she rescued him from the headman's axe.

While this article has nothing whatever to do with Millard Fillmore, Betsy Ross, or Pocahontas, it is concerned with a somewhat similar episode which remains present in the American mythology. The following oration, supposedly spoken by an Indian chieftain in 1855, has surfaced in today's world and has been used to justify and fortify current

attitudes regarding the treatment of the first Americans and the natural environment in the United States. Since these words have been used for propagandistic and polemic purposes, a closer examination of the historical and literary origins of old Chief Seattle's catechism of woes and wrongs done to the American Indian and his world is in order.

Such an analysis must begin with consideration of the oration allegedly spoken by Chief Seattle, patriarch of the Duwamish and Suquamish Indians of Puget Sound, to Isaac Ingalls Stevens, governor of the Washington Territory, in the year 1854 or 1855, at the site of the present metropolis of Seattle:

Yonder sky that has wept tears of compassion upon our fathers for centuries untold. . . . The son of the White Chief says his father sends us greetings of friendship and good will. This is kind of him, for we know he has little need of our friendship in return because his people are many. They are like the grass that covers the vast prairies, while my people are few: they resemble the scattering trees of



continued

a storm-swept plain. . . . There was a time when our people covered the whole land as the waves of a wind-ruffled sea covers its shell-paved floor, but that time has long since passed away with the greatness of tribes almost forgotten . . . . When the last Red Man shall have perished, and the memory of my tribe shall have become a myth among the white man, these shores will swarm with the invisible dead of my tribe, and when your children's children think themselves alone in the field, the store, the shop, or in the silence of the pathless woods, they will not be alone. . . . The White Men will never be alone. Let him be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not powerless—Dead—I say? There is no death. Only a change of worlds.

In addition, Chief Seattle allegedly wrote the following letter to President Franklin Pierce in 1855:

The Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land. . . . But we will consider your offer, for we know if we do not . . . the white man may come with guns and take our lands . . . . How can you buy or sell the sky—the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. Yet we do not own the freshness of the air or the sparkle of the water. . . . Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. . . . When the buffaloes are all slaughtered,

the wild horses all tamed, the secret corners of the forest heavy with the scent of many men, and the views of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires, where is the thicket? Gone. Where is the eagle? Gone.

But were these words actually articulated by an otherwise obscure Indian more than a century ago? Old Seattle's sonorous and evocative phrases still reverberate today. This is in [sic] interim report on a search for their origins.

The sentiments expressed in the speech attributed to the old chieftain are consonant with those held by persons disturbed by the destruction of the Indian world by the development of the American frontier. The attitudes reflected in the letter ascribed to Seattle are in harmony with those professed by individuals upset at the damage to the natural environment perpetrated by our industrial society. The words of this Indian spokesman have been frequently quoted to a wide audience via the newspaper and television media. The Smithsonian's "Nation of Nations" exhibit includes a portion of Seattle's supposed speech for the benefit of the thousands of tourists who visit our nation's capital each year. Despite its popularity, this affirmation of Indian eloquence may not be founded in historical reality.

## “Thus Spoke Chief Seattle: The Story of an Undocumented Speech” continued

The National Archives, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Library of Congress each year receive numerous requests for the original text of the statements attributed to the old chief. The United States Information Agency has received similar inquiries from persons and institutions in many foreign lands. Unfortunately, no one has been able to locate either the letter or a reliable text of the speech.

The purported letter by Chief Seattle to President Pierce is very likely spurious. Among other charges, it denounces the White Man’s propensity for shooting buffaloes from the windows of the “Iron Horse”—a remarkable observation by Seattle, who never in his lifetime left the land west of the Cascade Mountains and thus never saw a railroad and may never have seen a buffalo, either. A letter from an Indian in 1855 concerning Indian policy and directed to the President would have required the usual nineteenth-century red tape. It would have to pass through the hands of the local Indian agent, Col. M. T. Simmons; to the superintendent of Indian affairs, Gov. Isaac Stevens, to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs; to the Office of the Secretary of the Interior; and eventually to the President.

A search of the records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior in the National Archives and the presidential papers of Franklin Pierce in the Library of Congress has not uncovered even a trace of such a letter. It has not been found among the private papers of Pierce in the New Hampshire Historical Society. It is known that Seattle was non-literate, so yet another person must have written the alleged message—yet no source for the text of the 1855 letter has ever been discovered. Thus this widely distributed document can safely be considered an unhistorical artifact of someone’s fertile literary imagination.

The historical Chief Seattle was the head man of the Duwamish and several other related small bands of Indians inhabiting the shores of Puget Sound. In 1852, a tiny American settlement was established near Alki Point (“By and By” in the Duwamish language), and the settlers named their village Seattle after its Indian patriarch. In March of 1853 the territory of Washington was carved out of the Oregon country, but it was not until October of that year that the new territorial governor, thirty-five year old Isaac Ingalls Stevens, arrived in Olympia, the capital city.

## About the Author

Micah L. Issitt is an independent scholar, historian, journalist, editor and author. He is the editor of H.W.Wilson's *Reference Shelf*, a series of contemporary issues. Recent titles include: *Alternative Facts, Post-Truth & the Information War; The South China Seas Conflict; Artificial Intelligence*; and *Immigration*. He has written the following *Opinions Throughout History* volumes from Grey House Publishing: *National Security vs. Civil & Privacy Rights; Immigration; Gender: Roles & Rights*; and *Drug Use & Abuse*. Issitt has also written extensively for several Salem Press series, including *Careers In, Defining Documents in World History* and *Defining Documents in American History*.

His other books include *Hidden Religion* from ABC-Clio and *Hippies* from Greenwood Press, and he has written hundreds of articles for a variety of encyclopedias and reference works. Issitt lives and works in Saint Louis, Missouri.