

Before beginning any actual research, I had determined that I wanted to write about Indian Removal in the 19th century United States for my final capstone paper. This may have been slightly misguided on my part as I had based my decision on my passing familiarity with the subject and its apparently neat fit with the course topic: Perpetrating Genocide. There seemed to be little original thinking required of me and as a result my initial thesis was both shallow and uninspired. My professor, Dr. Mark Roseman, was able to recognize this quickly but unfortunately could not offer much assistance as he was unfamiliar with my proposed research topic. He directed me to one of his colleagues, Dr. Christina Snyder, who graciously shared the titles of several books and journal articles that could help me draw out and refine a new, more interesting topic. It was then that my exploration of the IU Libraries' resources really began.

I found that everything that Dr. Snyder recommended to me was readily available through the IU library. This was the real starting point of my research as I now had the knowledge base to parse out an original research topic. From there I moved on to search for other works by the authors of the works that Dr. Snyder recommended. Theda Perdue was one of them and as happens is an expert on the Cherokee and their removal. I would go on to use several sources written by Perdue in my project but one of her other edited books in particular, *Cherokee Editor: The Writings of Elias Boudinot*, caught my attention. Boudinot's name had turned up previously and he presented an intriguing figure, a man caught between white and Cherokee identities who made an abrupt transition from an advocate against removal to an advocate for removal. I could not access Perdue's book since it was checked out at the time but a search on IUCAT and OneSearch turned up numerous books and scholarly articles related to Boudinot. Among them was Theresa Strouth Gaul's *To Marry an Indian*. This book stuck out as being potentially helpful since it collected a large number of primary sources, in this case letters, in one place. However, it did not seem directly applicable to questions about removal save for the central role of Elias Boudinot. The gears in my mind began turning at that point though and I remembered what I had

learned about miscegenation in the 19th century southern United States in previous classes and how false accusations of rape in the Reconstruction era led to lynching as a form of racial control. The letters collected by Gaul showed a real hostility by Northern whites towards the possibility of a white woman marrying a Cherokee man, surely it could be argued that such a situation could have increased support for removal. I ran some more searches of the IU Libraries database hoping to turn up more resources on white-Cherokee intermarriage in the 19th century but had no luck finding anything substantial outside of Elias Boudinot's marriage. There was not enough material for me to write a 20-page paper on intermarriage and removal alone so I expanded my focus to include other forms of Cherokee acculturation.

Once again I recalled something I had learned in an earlier class and found a way to relate it to the general reading I had been doing about Cherokee Removal. Poor white Southerners in the early 19th century were having difficulty preserving their status and latched on to racial identity harder than ever to compensate. I consulted with Dr. Wendy Gamber on where she had pulled that information from and she sent me off with another list of books on race and Jacksonian democracy. Frustratingly, it seemed that no one had written on my exact choice of topic, the effects of acculturation on Cherokee removal. There were even fewer primary sources available that directly supported my thesis. But I realized that if there were, what I was doing could hardly be called original research. From there on I began to pursue a "no stone unturned" strategy. I began expanding my searches of the IU Libraries database to find even marginally relevant sources I could make valid inferences from. I consulted the sources that my sources cited and looked for other sources that cited them. I examined the books stocked near the ones I was searching for that had promising sounding titles and descriptions. With my research topic, carefully targeted searching would only get me to a certain point, sheer brute force reading took me the rest of the way. Anything I turned up was at least worth a skim and even the sources I did not end up citing provided me with valuable information that helped guide my thinking.