
The Walam Olum and Dr. Ward, Again

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In a recent article William Barlow and David O. Powell conclude that "circumstantial evidence points to Dr. Malthus A. Ward as the source of Rafinesque's Walam Olum."¹ Barlow and Powell have been so generous in their acknowledgment of my small contribution to their research that it appears illiberal for me to question their argument. I do so now because proof based on circumstantial evidence seems to require the adversary process if truth is ever going to be reached. A defense means little without a prosecution.

Why does it matter? The correct identification of Dr. Ward matters to the extent that the Walam Olum itself matters. More than a generation ago the Walam Olum, a poetic saga which purports to narrate the wanderings of the Lenni Lenape (known to the whites as the Delaware Indians), appeared to some investigators to be a chronological key that might contribute to the dating of Ohio Valley archaeological sites. Hence, with the encouragement of Glenn A. Black, Eli Lilly financed a twenty-year team research project that resulted in the publication of a sumptuous volume by the Indiana Historical Society² which sums up most of what we

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¹ William Barlow and David O. Powell, "The Late Dr. Ward of Indiana: Rafinesque's Source of the Walam Olum," *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXXXII (June, 1986), 185-93.

² [Glenn A. Black, Eli Lilly, Georg K. Neumann, Joe E. Pierce, C.F. Voegelin, Erminie W. Voegelin, and Paul Weer], *Walam Olum or Red Score: The Migration Legend of the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indians; A New Translation Interpreted by Linguistic, Historical, Archaeological, Ethnological, and Physical Anthropological Studies* (Indianapolis, 1954). Also included here is a photographic facsimile of

know about the saga today. The subsequent use of radiocarbon dating in archaeology has obviated this need for the Walam Olum—which had not been very convincing after all—and has caused most archaeologists to view Walam Olum research as a quaint aberration of their past.³

Meanwhile, the Walam Olum has been taken up by other disciplines where its glowing half-life continues to radiate claims and disputations. In literature it has been pronounced an epic “possibly as great as the Iliad,”⁴ and it has figured in a book-length, Whitmanesque evocation of the American past.⁵ Translations of it are reprinted in anthologies of authentic Amerindian writing,⁶ and it is studied by specialists in folklore.⁷ In comparative religion it is cited,⁸ albeit with circumspection, to demonstrate the cosmogony of Woodland Indians,⁹ and it has been argued that Joseph Smith used

Rafinesque’s entire 1833 manuscript. With a title stretching out across the page like a kite’s tail, this valuable study published by the Indiana Historical Society and subsidized by Eli Lilly has neither an editor’s name nor names of the contributors on the title page for convenient bibliographical citation. It will be identified hereafter as *Walam Olum* (1954).

³ Though not himself a contributor to the *Walam Olum* (1954), James B. Griffin gave the most detailed account of the Lilly team research effort in “A Commentary on an Unusual Research Program in American Anthropology,” eighteen pages printed in a handsome booklet issued by Indiana University in 1971 for the dedication of the Glenn A. Black Laboratory of Archaeology. This useful pamphlet, printed without a title page, editor’s name, publisher, date and place of publication, or even page numbers, comes as close to bibliographical anonymity as seems possible.

⁴ Oscar Williams, ed., *A Little Treasury of American Poetry* (New York, 1948), xv.

⁵ Daniel Hoffman, *Brotherly Love* (New York, 1981). Hoffman’s joyful exercise of poetic license makes a plodding scholar verdantly envious. Niggling doubts never impede the poet’s imagination in a section baldly titled “From the Diary of Dr. Ward of Kentucky.” There, in a passage concisely dated June 22, 1820, Dr. Ward treats dying Indians on the White River and gathers specimens of two strange plants (neither of which happens to be an *Hypericum*) “for Professor Rafinesque’s collection.” Returning to the village on July 9, Ward is given the tribe’s “Walam-Olum, a sort of Bible they have written in pictures upon maple shingles,” by the chief. As the pictographs make no sense to Ward, he resolves that “I shall give the bundle to the Professor when, in Lexington, I deliver the botanicals.” *Ibid.*, 159-60.

⁶ For example, see George W. Cronyn, *American Indian Poetry* (New York, 1934); and Alan R. Velie, *American Indian Literature, an Anthology* (Norman, 1979). Wiget’s recent study of the writing of Native Americans uses the Walam Olum to mark “The Beginnings of a Written Literature,” in a chapter having that title. Andrew Wiget, *Native American Literature* (Boston, 1985), 44-69.

⁷ See, especially, Elémire Zolla, *The Writer and the Shaman* (New York, 1973), a translation of *I letterati e lo sciamano* (1969). Several of the printed versions of the Walam Olum as well as some of the secondary scholarship about it are listed in William M. Clements and Frances M. Malpezzi, eds., *Native American Folklore, 1879-1979, an Annotated Bibliography* (Athens, Ohio, 1984).

⁸ See the chapter “Zum gegenwärtigen Stande der Walam Olum-Frage” [The Present Position of the Walam Olum Question] in Werner Müller, *Die Religionen der Waldlandindianer Nordamerikas* (Berlin, 1956), 332-39.

⁹ For example, Josef Haekel, “Der Hochgottglaube der Delawaren in Lichte ihrer Geschichte,” *Ethnologica*, new ser., II (1960), 439-84.

it as a "source" for the Book of Mormon.¹⁰ Largely because of doubts about its authenticity, the only relevant discipline silent about the Walam Olum in recent years has been linguistics.¹¹ Finally, it is said that quite a few Native Americans now look on the Walam Olum as a precious artifact of their ethnic heritage.

The *problem* concerning the Walam Olum text is that all printed forms of it derive from an 1833 manuscript in the hand of Constantine Samuel Rafinesque. Most of the essential details of the Delaware narrative had been told earlier by John Heckewelder,¹² whose writings were well known to Rafinesque. In his own lifetime and since, Rafinesque's veracity has been subject to such calumny and his character to such slander that he probably could sue for libel in a court of law today. Whether justified or not, his unsavory reputation¹³ has led to the suspicion of some scholars that, after reading Heckewelder, he invented the Walam Olum to document

¹⁰ Åke V. Ström, "Red Indian Elements in Early Mormonism," *Temenos*, V (1969), 120-68. Ström's position is disputed in Charles Boewe, "A Note on Rafinesque, the Walam Olum, the Book of Mormon, and the Mayan Glyphs," *Numen*, XXXII (July, 1985), 101-13.

¹¹ Material in this field is being addressed in a chapter I have contributed on "The Other Candidate for the 1835 Volney Prize: Constantine Samuel Rafinesque" scheduled for 1988 publication in Holland by the D. Reidel Company in a volume edited by Joan Leopold about the French Volney Prizes in linguistics. The subject is a 256-page manuscript in Rafinesque's hand, written in French and unknown until it was discovered in Paris in 1982. In this manuscript Rafinesque attempted a complete analysis of the grammatical structure of the Lenape language without ever mentioning the Walam Olum, a document he had had in his possession for more than a decade. The omission implies, in my view, that—far from having invented the Walam Olum—Rafinesque had great trouble achieving a satisfactory translation of it, just as he said.

¹² John Heckewelder, "An Account of the History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations . . .," *Transactions of the Historical & Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society*, I (1819), 1-348.

¹³ Rafinesque alienated many contemporary naturalists by publishing scathing reviews of their books in which he censured them for ignoring his own discoveries. Shortly after his death the botanist Asa Gray and the zoologist S. S. Haldeman each published a review of his life's work in their respective disciplines suggesting that naturalists disregard his publications. He largely was ignored until the 1930s, when revisionists, acting under more elaborate international rules of nomenclature, found that so many of his discoveries had been validly published that they could no longer be neglected. This unleashed a second anti-Rafinesque outcry and led to an attempt at the 1950 Stockholm International Botanical Congress to declare him a non-person, which, however, failed to carry when calmer heads prevailed. Since he had been accused of mental illnesses ranging from monomania to madness—a "lunatic, who wrote botany because he was of unsound mind," declared one botanist in 1948—his writings were subjected to post-mortem analysis by a Boston psychiatrist, Dr. J.M. Woodall, who pronounced their author sane, though neurotic; affirmed that he was a genius; and, what may be most significant in this context, wrote that "I can find no evidence for dishonesty." He concluded that Rafinesque "was not a charlatan inasmuch as there was no conscious desire to misrepresent." Henricus Quatre [pseud. of Leon Croizat], "Rafinesque: A Concrete Case," *Archivio Botanico*, XXIV (1948), 18; Elmer D. Merrill, *Index Rafinesquianus . . .* (Jamaica Plain, Mass., 1949), 54-56, where Woodall is quoted.

his own speculations about the peopling of the New World, which he had been elaborating since about 1820.¹⁴

However, there is also circumstantial evidence to argue forcefully that, whatever else it might be, the Walam Olum is not a Rafinesque hoax. He did not invent it—rather, he was pleased to see it so closely paralleled Heckewelder's account—and he believed in its essential veracity himself. Yet, until reliable correlative evidence appears—evidence from someone contemporaneous with Rafinesque himself—there always will be doubts so long as his is the only testimony available. This is one reason the search for Dr. Ward has gone on so long, and why it is worth continuing the pursuit. Somewhere, lost among forgotten archives, may be a document showing that another person once had the Walam Olum in his hands early in the nineteenth century. Such a person certainly was Dr. Ward, whoever he may have been. However, the correct identification of Dr. Ward, humanly interesting as it is, has little historical significance unless it leads to further documentation of the Walam Olum.

An alternative candidate. Probably for lack of space, Barlow and Powell could not review the evidence supporting another candidate who must be rejected if their identification of Malthus A. Ward is accepted. Nor did they hint at the magnitude of the effort already expended to reach a different conclusion. Some attention to earlier attempts to solve the puzzle of Dr. Ward's identity will at least suggest caution in reaching too-facile a conclusion now.

The search for Dr. Ward began when Daniel G. Brinton decided to reprint Rafinesque's transcription along with the pictographs supporting it in his book *The Lenâpé and Their Legends* (1885), which included his own translation. As the Lilly team was to do half a century later, Brinton devoted much of his attention to the linguistic plausibility of Rafinesque's transcription of Lenape words. He sent copies to "several educated Delawares" and satisfied himself that the Walam Olum was "a genuine native production, which was repeated orally to some one indifferently conversant with

¹⁴ C. A. Weslager has written, "some modern anthropologists reject the Walam Olum, as a fake," but he names none of them because anthropologists have been cautious about putting this opinion into print. C. A. Weslager, *The Delaware Indians: A History* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1972), 80. Surely Rafinesque's reputation in prehistory also was seriously compromised by his indiscretion in providing an introduction to the second edition of Humphrey Marshall's *History of Kentucky*. Writing under the title "Ancient Annals of Kentucky"—which seems to be his only contribution known to most critics—he had forty-odd pages at his disposal to cover a period from the creation of the world to the coming of the whites, while Marshall, who needed elbowroom to trounce his political foes, reserved the remainder of the two volumes for himself. See Humphrey Marshall, *History of Kentucky* (2nd ed., Frankfort, Ky., 1824).

the Delaware language, who wrote it down to the best of his ability.”¹⁵

Was Dr. Ward an indifferent linguist? Not necessarily; in fact, there is no need to attribute to him any knowledge of the language at all. Rafinesque wrote that he had “obtained, through the late Dr. Ward of Indiana, some of the original *Walam-Olum* (painted record) of the Linapi [*sic*] tribe of Wapahani or White River” in Indiana.¹⁶ Farther on he remarked that “these actual *Olum* were at first obtained in 1820, as a reward for a medical cure; and were unexplicable.” That is, nobody known to Rafinesque could understand it; probably he means that Dr. Ward got them in 1820—not that he did—if, in fact, Dr. Ward, and not someone else, was the physician who rendered the medical cure. At any rate, “in 1822 were obtained from *another individual* the songs annexed thereto in the original language. . . .”¹⁷ Therefore, Rafinesque had both parts of the Walam Olum, the mnemonic pictographs and the songs which went with them, in his possession only in 1822.

It has never been sufficiently appreciated that all Rafinesque claimed he got from Dr. Ward in 1822 were 184 pictographs, with the result that Dr. Ward can be only one of *two* sources for the Walam Olum. Nor has any attempt been published to identify the other individual who, in Brinton’s opinion, was “indifferently conversant with the Delaware language.” There is no reason to insist that the text of the songs also originated in Indiana; it may have come from anywhere in the widespread area where there were Delaware speakers. And, perhaps most important, the agent who con-

¹⁵ Daniel G. Brinton, *The Lenapé and Their Legends* (Philadelphia, 1885), 158.

¹⁶ C. S. Rafinesque, *The American Nations . . .* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1836), I, 122.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 151. Emphasis added. How Rafinesque learned to read the Lenape language need not detain us here, but an unfortunate slip was made by the staff of the IMH when they composed the caption that appears beneath the portrait of Rafinesque in the article by Barlow and Powell. There it is said that Rafinesque completed his translation “with the help of two other men and a Lenape-English dictionary written by Moravian missionaries.” Barlow and Powell, “The Late Dr. Ward of Indiana,” 187. This line is a paraphrase of Rafinesque’s statement that “I had therefore to learn the language since [1822], by the help of Zeisberger, Hecke-welder and a manuscript dictionary,” by which he meant their writings and not the men themselves. Rafinesque, *The American Nations*, I, 151. David Zeisberger, a Moravian missionary, died in 1808, but his Lenape Grammar was published during Rafinesque’s lifetime, and Rafinesque journeyed to Harvard to consult his manuscript dictionary of the language that was not published until 1887. John Hecke-welder, also a Moravian missionary, published a glossary of Lenape place names and other linguistic articles in addition to his “History, Manners, and Customs.” He died in 1823, and there is no evidence that he and Rafinesque ever met. Rafinesque’s “manuscript dictionary” was one he compiled himself, probably from these and other sources. Three years before his death he offered it for sale for \$20. C. S. Rafinesque, *Bulletin Nr. 4 of the Historical and Natural Sciences* (Philadelphia, 1837), a pamphlet so rare that only a single copy of it located at the Royal Botanic Gardens Library, Kew, England, has been recorded.

veyed the text to Rafinesque is another possible source of contemporaneous evidence, if he could be identified.

While Eli Lilly provided a concordance for each pictograph in the *Walam Olum* (1954) and wrote a comment on each of them, most critical attention has focused on the Lenape text, not the pictographs. Since this text had been filtered through the imperfect understanding of some unknown person—probably a Caucasian—before reaching Rafinesque, there is greater historical reason to search for his identity than that of Dr. Ward, who only contributed the pictographs. Had Paul Weer been less haunted by Dr. Ward, perhaps he would have done so; that no one has since is even more surprising.

The range of possibilities for who first had the text is somewhat limited by the fact that in 1822 the almost worthless paper money issued by Kentucky banks put a serious crimp in Rafinesque's usual extensive botanizing expeditions; he says that he was able to travel, evidently on foot for the most part, only in the vicinity of Lexington that year.¹⁸ Yet, in Lexington alone there were numerous people whose intimate contact with Indian groups might have netted such a document, among them Dr. Samuel Brown, Rafinesque's Transylvania University colleague, and Thomas Bodley, one of the university trustees.

An even more likely source is the Lexington judge, George Shannon, who had earlier accompanied the Lewis and Clark expedition to the Pacific, and from whom Rafinesque obtained brief vocabularies of four Indian dialects. One of these he called "Chinuc," which, he wrote, was "one of the Lenapian languages of the West, one of the fragments of that vast ancient nation that has spread from the Pacific to the Atlantic." Especially relevant to the *Walam Olum* was Rafinesque's added comment that the Chinooks "appear to be" descendants of the "Ainus of Eastern Asia."¹⁹

Then, too, others visited Rafinesque in 1822. One of these visitors was the English botanist John Bradbury, who had traveled west with the Astoria expedition and was greatly interested in Indian culture and folklore, though nothing in his only book, *Travels in the Interior of America* (1817), hints at his awareness of the *Walam Olum*. And finally, though dead by May 8, 1820, Rafinesque's friend John D. Clifford shared his deep interest in the

¹⁸ C. S. Rafinesque, *A Life of Travels* (Philadelphia, 1836), 65-66.

¹⁹ C. S. Rafinesque, "Languages of Oregon," *Atlantic Journal and Friend of Knowledge*, I (Winter, 1832), 133-34. From Shannon he also got a Mandan vocabulary. *Ibid.*, 132-33. As Rafinesque understood the *Walam Olum*, it narrates a prehistoric crossing of the ancestors of the Lenni Lenape from Asia, over a bridge of ice. But this is a matter of literary interpretation; Brinton understood the same words to imply that the Lenape originated in Labrador.

“antiquities”²⁰ and had collected Indian artifacts for his private museum. Some of his ceramic pieces turned up in Rafinesque’s possession shortly after Clifford’s death, including a ceramic human head discovered near Nashville, Tennessee.²¹ Though the pictographs first came to light sometime in 1820, it is conceivable that Clifford, or one of his acquaintances, had the text all along.

At any rate, Brinton did try to identify Dr. Ward even though he made no effort to discover the source of the text he himself again translated. His search focused on Rafinesque’s equally ambiguous comment in the Walam Olum manuscript itself that “this M[anuscript] & the wooden original” were “procured in 1822 in Kentucky,” by which Rafinesque had to mean an earlier copy of the songs in a manuscript no longer extant, because his own manuscript where the quotation appears is dated 1833. For that matter, the wooden sticks on which the pictographs were inscribed also have never been found, with the result that the 1833 Walam Olum manuscript in Rafinesque’s hand is a recension from and combination of two earlier sources. It was here, too, that Rafinesque penned the name “Dr. Ward” parenthetically at the bottom of the title page of the first volume of the manuscript.²²

²⁰ John Bradbury, *Travels in the Interior of America* (Liverpool, 1817). It is little known that Clifford contributed a series of eight long letters under the general title “Indian Antiquities” to a Lexington periodical. Signed with the initial C., these articles mention some of the artifacts Clifford owned and argue in favor of the theory that the original inhabitants of the Ohio Valley were Hindus. See [John D.] C[Clifford], “Indian Antiquities,” *Western Review and Miscellaneous Magazine*, I (September, 1819), 96-100; *ibid.* (October, 1819), 171-79; *ibid.* (November, 1819), 220-27; *ibid.* (December, 1819), 283-92; *ibid.* (January, 1820), 346-53; *idem*, “Indian Antiquities,” *Western Review and Miscellaneous Magazine*, II (February, 1820), 29-36; *ibid.* (March, 1820), 112-20; *ibid.* (April, 1820), 153-60.

²¹ C. S. Rafinesque, “Three Letters on American Antiquities . . . Third Letter. On Some Alleghawian Implements, etc.,” *Kentucky Reporter*, September 6, 1820. Not registered in Rafinesque bibliographies until the 1982 revision of Fitzpatrick, these letters nevertheless were known to E. G. Squier, who reprinted the second one (“Alleghawian Monuments,” *Kentucky Reporter*, August 23, 1820) in his “Monograph of the Ancient Monuments of the State of Kentucky,” *American Journal of Science and Arts*, 2nd ser., VIII (1849), 1-14. In Squier and Davis’s 1848 work is pictured a human head “of baked clay, found a number of years ago, in a mound near Nashville,” but without attribution. E. G. Squier and E. H. Davis, *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* (Washington, D.C., 1848), 194. Squier had silently lifted this drawing, probably from an unpublished Rafinesque manuscript (“Ancient Monuments of North and South America”) then in his possession but now at the University of Pennsylvania. In it Rafinesque had sketched the artifacts described in his “Three Letters” in the *Kentucky Reporter*. At the time he described them most of the artifacts were in Clifford’s museum, but the ceramic head belonged to Rafinesque and probably came to him through Clifford, who often visited Nashville on business. Among other things, this episode shows that Rafinesque had access to a large area for collecting through Clifford’s widespread mercantile contacts.

²² This title page of the first volume of the manuscript is reproduced in the *Walam Olum* (1954) along with the rest of the manuscript, including the covers of the two booklets containing it. See *Walam Olum* (1954), [5], [7], [79], [81]. Each

Having been unable to identify any physician named Ward in the early medical annals of Indiana, Brinton lit on "an old and well-known Kentucky family of that name" in "the neighborhood of Cynthiana," and decided that "one of these, in 1824-25, was a friend of Rafinesque, invited him to his house, and shared his archaeological tastes"—all of which is no more than conjecture based on a sentence in Rafinesque's autobiography where he says that at about that time "my friend Mr. Ward took me to Cynthiana in a gig, where I surveyed other ancient monuments"²³—and conveniently overlooks the fact that Rafinesque says he got the two components of the *Walam Olum* in 1822. Nevertheless, Brinton concluded that it was in the neighborhood of Cynthiana, "no doubt," that Rafinesque "copied the signs and the original text of the *Walam Olum*"²⁴—presumably both in the possession of *Mr. Ward's* physician relative, who remained unnamed.

There the matter rested until Paul Weer took up the quest as part of the Lilly team effort, which, fortunately, he was able to recount in some detail in his contribution to the *Walam Olum* (1954). As he said, "since this study is primarily a scientific investigation . . . and further researches will doubtless be made, every line of study we have followed has been included here in order that future workers will know what has already been done."²⁵ What was done can be quickly summarized now, and savored at length in Weer's essay.

He and his associates searched every conceivable record which might reveal an Indiana physician by the name of Ward: they pored over records of the medical schools of the time that might have educated him (recognizing at the same time that he might merely have apprenticed himself to an older physician); they examined court and other legal records in Kentucky and census records in Indiana; they engaged the help of both amateur and professional genealogists to ransack the complicated Ward family tree; and they even queried every Ward listed in *Who's Who in America* in the

booklet consists of forty pages measuring 6½ by 7¾ inches. Although there are a few emendations, it is apparent that the manuscript is "clear copy," possibly prepared for publication. In it each numbered verse consists of several phonetically spelled Lenape words followed by an English translation of these words and usually a pictograph, though in a few instances two pictographs are used to express a verse. If the present order of the three elements represents Rafinesque's work methods, it means that he fitted the pictograph to the verse only after he had achieved a satisfactory translation, and this assumption, in turn, implies greater importance for the text (and its unknown agent of transmission) than for the pictographs transmitted by Dr. Ward. Usually listed as belonging to the Brinton Library of the University Museum, the manuscript is now housed at the Van Pelt Library of the University of Pennsylvania.

²³ Rafinesque, *A Life of Travels*, 74.

²⁴ Brinton, *The Lenapé and Their Legends*, 154.

²⁵ For the Weer quotation see *Walam Olum* (1954), 243.

hope of discovering unknown family papers.²⁶ On the face of it, some temerity seems required if one turns up an Indiana Dr. Ward today and supposes that Weer and his assistants never considered him. If they missed Malthus A. Ward, it may be because he did not take his M.D. degree²⁷ until after he returned to New England from Indiana; but, then, he also was not "Dr. Ward" during his short Indiana residence—though, as a healer, he may have been called that.

The upshot of Weer's research was the reluctant conclusion that Brinton had at least stumbled on to part of the truth. For lack of a better candidate Weer settled on Dr. John Russell Ward, a physician almost wholly unknown to fame, who was living in Carlisle, Kentucky—a village nearer to Cynthiana than to Lexington—until 1829, when he moved to Missouri, where he died at Fulton in 1834. When Rafinesque wrote, in 1837, of "the late Dr. Ward of Indiana," there is no question that John Russell Ward qualified as then deceased, but nothing has ever linked this Ward with Indiana.²⁸ Weer's identification hinges on the unproved—and so far unprovable—assumption that it was Dr. John Russell Ward who, visiting relatives (might we now guess, Malthus A. Ward?) in Indiana's White River Valley in 1820, was given some form of the pictographs either by the Delaware people themselves or by some other Caucasian, and that he passed them on to Rafinesque in 1822, the same year Rafinesque obtained the songs. This is a formidable string of assumptions.

Although Weer reported "scientifically" on what he had accomplished, he could not describe fully the unresolved problem that must have plagued him the rest of his days. Even though a Kentucky Ward seemed to be the only likely candidate, Weer could not understand why Brinton—in seeming contradiction of Rafinesque's own words—had located him in Kentucky in the first place. Though Rafinesque said *he* got the Walam Olum in Kentucky, he as firmly placed Dr. Ward in Indiana. The Brinton papers in public repositories gave no hint, but it happened that a cache of papers had

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 243-72. A somewhat more detailed account of this research appears in Paul Weer, "Provenience of the Walam Olum," *Proceedings of the Indiana Academy of Science*, LI (1941), 55-59.

²⁷ Barlow and Powell touch on Malthus A. Ward's medical education in the *Indiana Magazine of History* article but describe it more fully in a 1977 article. Ward had attended medical lectures at Dartmouth College in 1814, then studied under a private preceptor. Being short of funds, he went west to recoup his fortune. He took his M.D. degree in 1823 at the Medical School of Maine after his return. Weer says he studied the records of Dartmouth (which may have been incomplete for non-graduates) but does not mention Maine. Barlow and Powell, "The Late Dr. Ward of Indiana," 186; William Barlow and David O. Powell, "Malthus A. Ward, Frontier Physician," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, XXXII (July, 1977), 280-91.

²⁸ *Walam Olum* (1954), 253-65.

been retained by the family to enable Stewart Culin to write a biography of Daniel G. Brinton. The biography never appeared, and the papers remained in the custody of Brinton's aged daughter at the time Weer was pursuing his research. Weer felt he had to examine these documents.

Anyone who has been denied access to extant unpublished materials which might—just might—illuminate a problem he has mulled over for years knows how easy it is to develop an obsession about them. After all other approaches failed, Weer, with Eli Lilly's support, proposed an elaborate scheme to have the papers examined by a blue-ribbon committee under the supervision of the Metropolitan Museum in New York—a plan approved by Brinton's grandson, but adamantly rejected by the grandson's strong-willed mother. Paul Weer died in 1956 without ever having got a glimpse of the papers.²⁹

Even after the *Walam Olum* (1954) was in print, Eli Lilly was encouraged by Weer's frustrated efforts to continue the search for Dr. Ward, a part of the story not previously told. With Lilly's moral and financial support the late John Fliegel dug assiduously into the mountain of documents, then too little known, at the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, hoping to find there any clue in the records of the Moravian missionaries. He read 25,000 pages of archived manuscripts (many of them in an obsolescent German script) and made 135,000 entries on 30,000 cards, which were later reproduced photographically in a 1,408-page book³⁰—without finding a single reference to Rafinesque, the *Walam Olum*, or to Dr. Ward! With the same source of support, Josephine M. Elliott also completed the ordering of the manuscript collection of the Workingmen's Institute in New Harmony, where it was reasonable to think allusions to Rafinesque or Ward might be found. Calendaring 280 letters which hitherto had not been examined for this purpose, she did turn up six references to Rafinesque but, as these letters covered the period 1831–1837, none to Ward.³¹ Thus it begins to ap-

²⁹ Brinton's placing of Ward in Kentucky is so patently a conjecture that anyone less obsessed by the subject than Weer probably would have let the question drop. However, it is good to report that all but one item of the Brinton papers is now open to inspection at the University of Pennsylvania's Van Pelt Library. The papers were deposited there in 1959 by the grandson, D. G. Brinton Thompson. The Special Collections Librarian, Lyman W. Riley, strongly doubted in 1981 that the three boxes of letters (all addressed to Brinton) and one box of Brinton's own notes contain any references to the *Walam Olum*; however, in truth, they have not been searched for this subject. The only item Thompson retained was his grandfather's Civil War diary. Lyman W. Riley, Philadelphia, letter to author, October 29, 1981.

³⁰ Carl John Fliegel, *Index to the Records of the Moravian Mission among the Indians of North America* (New Haven, 1970).

³¹ Josephine M. Elliott, New Harmony, Indiana, letter to author, September 20, 1981. Her work and Fliegel's should be added to the list of valuable spin-off benefits of the Lilly project described in Griffin, "A Commentary on an Unusual Research Program in American Anthropology."

pear that the hours spent on this subject approximate the time devoted to some of the masterpieces of English literature, and yet the riddle is far from being solved.

A New Candidate. Since neither Weer's defense of John Russell Ward nor that of Barlow and Powell of Malthus A. Ward is wholly compelling, it is worth mentioning the name of one more candidate unknown to all previous researchers in this field. He is named here not because the evidence is any stronger for him but to highlight some issues that have not received enough attention in the case of either of the other two Wards. Moreover, as Paul Weer believed, the more these lines of research are described the greater the likelihood of final success.

Weer mentions, but does not appear to attach any significance to, the fact that Rafinesque wrote in an unpublished list of plant names (now at the American Philosophical Society) "LOPHACTIS, N[ew] G[enus] by C.S.R. I noticed in 1818 this plant on the Wabash, but out of blossom, in 1821 Mr. Ward brought me a fine [cancelled] perfect specimen from White R. Indiana." As Weer says, Rafinesque further corrected his note by penning a "D" over the "M" to make the collector Dr. Ward.³²

While this emendation could represent a correction, it could equally indicate that someone known to Rafinesque as Mr. Ward—possibly his student at Transylvania University—achieved the doctorate and thereafter was given the full honor of his degree by Rafinesque.³³ In fact, there is such a person. William Ward,³⁴ who hailed from Mason County, Kentucky, was a medical student at Transylvania from 1823 to 1826 and was graduated M.D. with a thesis on "Inflammation" on February 20, 1826, just two months before Rafinesque left Lexington for good. Despite Weer's careful work, he overlooked William Ward because he relied too heavily on William

³² *Walam Olum* (1954), 262. Rafinesque published the genus *Lophactis* in 1824. C. S. Rafinesque, "Neophyton, No. IV," *Cincinnati Literary Gazette*, II (July 24, 1824), 28. Mentioning that the plant was very rare in Kentucky, he says that "it has been found near Harmony on the Wabash by Dr. Miller [J. C. Müller]. It blossoms in August." Though Ward is not mentioned here, the perfect flowering specimen could have been brought to Lexington no earlier than the autumn of 1821. This inference helps to delimit the date of one of Ward's trips between Indiana and Kentucky.

³³ Rafinesque was punctilious about "doctoring" those who had earned the distinction. A parallel case is that of G. F. H. Crockett, who while a Transylvania student collected insects under Rafinesque's supervision. Rafinesque refers to him as Mr. Crockett until he was awarded the M.D. in 1822 and as Dr. Crockett after the degree was conferred upon him.

³⁴ Brought to my attention when she was cataloguing the university's notable collection of manuscript medical theses by Transylvania's librarian, Kathleen Bryson, to whom I am indebted for many kindnesses.

Leavy's Memoir,³⁵ which does name many Transylvania students but ends in 1820, three years before William Ward became a student. Nothing more has been discovered about this Ward, especially any connection with Indiana. That leaves him in a position parallel with Malthus A. Ward, for whom no Kentucky connection has been established.

Further, since a Mr. Ward took Rafinesque to Cynthiana in his gig, one may wonder—as Weer did—whether this person was the same as the plant collector whose title was upgraded from Mr. to Dr. As a matter of fact, the gig-owner can now be identified positively. Laid in in a Rafinesque field notebook at the Chester County [Pennsylvania] Historical Society is a loose slip on which Rafinesque sketched a fish and wrote: “Mill Creek near Cynthiana. Aug. 1821. R. Mr Ward.” This was the year before Rafinesque obtained the *Walam Olum*, and he may have visited Cynthiana again, but of the identity of the Reverend Mr. Ward there can be no doubt. He was the Lexington Episcopal clergyman John Ward, who married Sarah, sister of John D. Clifford, Rafinesque's best friend and early patron.³⁶ Whether some related members of the voluminous Kentucky Ward clan were represented in both the learned professions of divinity and medicine has never been investigated, but it should be.

Both Weer and, after him, Barlow and Powell considered Ward's botanical interests of significance, the latter mentioning for the first time that Rafinesque intended to name a species of St.-John's-wort for his acquaintance. *Hypericum wardianum* is a manuscript name³⁷ that never saw publication and, because the species found its place in a genus already named by Linnaeus, probably means Ward was the collector. Rafinesque, who took a dim view of naming plants for

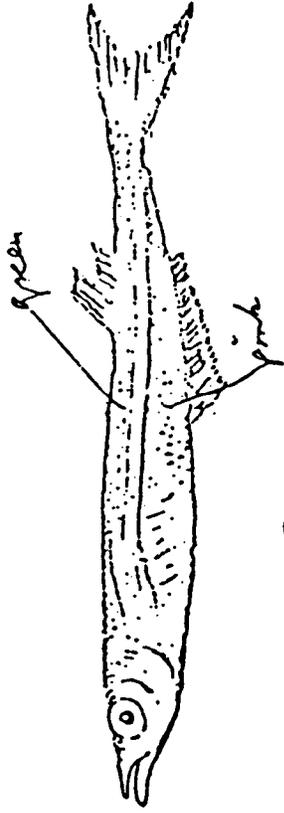
³⁵ William A. Leavy, “Memoir of Lexington and Its Vicinity, with Some Notice of Many Prominent Citizens . . .,” *Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society*, XL (April, 1942), 107-31; *ibid.* (July, 1942), 253-67; *ibid.* (October, 1942), 353-75; *idem*, “Memoir of Lexington and Its Vicinity, with Some Notice of Many Prominent Citizens . . .,” *Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society*, XLI (January, 1943), 44-62; *ibid.* (April, 1943), 107-37; *ibid.* (July, 1943), 250-60; *ibid.* (October, 1943), 310-46; *idem*, “Memoir of Lexington and Its Vicinity, with Some Notice of Many Prominent Citizens . . .,” *Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society*, XLII (January, 1944), 26-53.

³⁶ Hence, Weer erred in writing of Rafinesque and the Reverend John Ward that “no contact between them can be proven.” *Walam Olum* (1954), 255.

³⁷ C. S. Rafinesque to Zaccheus Collins, Lexington, September 24, 1822 (American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia). The belief that Ward was the collector of the plant and not merely a courier who delivered a specimen is strengthened by the fact that an unpublished document in Rafinesque's hand at the American Philosophical Society lists “Plants of Kentucky &c Sent to Europe in 1822 to Several Botanists.” The list includes two species of *Hypericum* sent to Adrian Haworth in England but not *Hypericum wardianum*—probably because Rafinesque had but a single specimen that, as far as he knew, was not of a Kentucky plant.

HYDRARGYRA

THIS DRAWING ESTABLISHED THAT THE "R[EV.] MR [JOHN] WARD" WAS RAFINESQUE'S COMPANION ON AN 1821 VISIT TO CYNTHIANA. HYDRARGYRA IS A GENUS OF KILLIFISHES NAMED BY LACEPEDE IN 1803; RAFINESQUE NEVER PUBLISHED HIS PROPOSED CHANGE OF THE GENERIC NAME.



Zenargyra Raf
Hydrargyra ? viviparus - Mill Creek
near Cynthiana Aug. 1821. R. M. Ward
Sharp teeth. yellow spot on the nose.

“mere friends or by flattery,”³⁸ usually dedicated a new genus to those botanists whose work he wished to honor. As Barlow and Powell have noted, there is no evidence that Malthus A. Ward ever published anything on botany, but, like most physicians of the time, he was keenly interested in it. The same assumption is equally reasonable for Dr. John Russell Ward and, especially, for Dr. William Ward, who we know was a Transylvania student when Rafinesque gave his first course on medical botany in 1823–1824, a course in which he pioneered the laboratory method of instruction by illustrating his lectures with specimens he himself had gathered.

What conclusions should be drawn? In the first place, unless more evidence turns up, William Ward is no better as a candidate than John Russell Ward, and the case that can be made for each of these men is as cogent as the one that can be made for Malthus A. Ward. The strongest evidence for Malthus A. Ward is that he did live in the White River Valley at the right time. Not a shred of evidence, though, has appeared that Malthus A. Ward ever heard of the Walam Olum, that he had much more than a romantic interest in Indian life,³⁹ that he had anything more than a sentimental interest in St.-John’s-wort,⁴⁰ that he ever visited Kentucky, that

³⁸ C. S. Rafinesque, *Flora Telluriana* (4 parts, Philadelphia, 1836), I, 86. This quotation refers to naming the genera of plants in honor of individuals. Among the 2,700 new genera proposed by Rafinesque some were dedicated to very obscure botanists. However, he never included his best friend Clifford’s name in any binomial because John D. Clifford made no contributions to botany.

³⁹ At my request, Lester D. Stephens, professor of history at the University of Georgia, assigned Janet Owens, a graduate student, to scan the fourteen Malthus A. Ward notebooks located there. I acknowledge my deep gratitude to both of them. Searching for anything concerning Indians, she turned up such stories as those about love-sick maidens throwing themselves off cliffs but nothing qualifying as serious ethnology or history. Indicative of Ward’s kind of interest in Indians was a story about a Chippewa warrior whose wife died while their child was an infant. Filled with tender compassion, the warrior prayed with such vigor that milk began to flow in his breasts, and he suckled the baby himself.

However, if Ward’s ethnological interest was romantic, he did have a serious concern with the Lenape language, which would be useful to him in dealing with the White River Delawares. Owens found a page-long description of the grammatical structure of Lenape. It is not clear whether this description was based on original observations or copied from some unidentified source. Such characteristics as the distinction between animate and inanimate modes, the bewildering number of plurals, and the striking characteristic of compounding many concepts into a single word which led P. S. Du Ponceau to label the language polysynthetic—all these were well known by the 1830s. No allusion to pictographs, talking sticks, or anything else implying an acquaintance with the Walam Olum was found in the notebooks.

⁴⁰ Janet Owens found much concerning botany including the practical (phenological signs used by the Indians for the date to plant corn) and the poetic (botanical allusions in literature), as well as some lectures on botany. However, she found no indication that Ward had taken a special interest in the genus *Hypericum*. He did find it worth writing down that, in Germany, virgins pining over their estate stick a sprig of St.-John’s-wort in the wall of their bedchambers on midsummer night. If the plant is drooping the next morning the girl is doomed to spinsterhood; if it is erect she will find a suitor within the year.

he and Rafinesque ever met, or that they ever exchanged letters. His full name appears in none of Rafinesque's published or unpublished writing, and no one has found Rafinesque's name in his.

The most damaging evidence against the candidate of Barlow and Powell is that Rafinesque believed Dr. Ward was dead by 1837 (as, in fact, was true of John Russell Ward), while Malthus A. Ward lived nearly three more decades, until 1863. Throughout an international correspondence among botanists Rafinesque and his acquaintances kept each other pretty well informed about the demise of co-workers⁴¹ because such information might have practical as well as emotional value. In one instance, Rafinesque was able to add the valuable herbarium of Zaccheus Collins to his own shortly after the latter's death. Hence, when he included Ward among botanists "who have fallen victims to their zeal in arduous travels, or from diseases contracted by their labors,"⁴² he likely spoke from some source of information no longer available to us. While Rafinesque was never quite as adroit in English as he was in his native French, it is probable that "the late Dr. Ward of Indiana" means the deceased Dr. Ward, rather than Dr. Ward, lately of Indiana.⁴³

Valuable as it has been for Barlow and Powell to publish their speculations and bring to light another plausible candidate, what their research and all the other efforts to identify Dr. Ward should lead to is the conclusion that the jury is still out. A jury should not rule conclusively, based on the evidence at hand, for any Ward so far nominated. It can only adopt that middle ground once observed in Scottish courts: case not proved.

⁴¹ For instance, he wrote from Lexington to A. P. DeCandolle in Switzerland, "[Frederick] Pursh est mort l'année passée à Montreal." C. S. Rafinesque to A. P. DeCandolle, February 15, 1821 (Archives du Conservatoire Botanique, Geneva).

⁴² C. S. Rafinesque, *New Flora of North America* (4 parts, Philadelphia, [1836-1838]), II, 13. That his knowledge of the circumstances of the death of fellow botanists was reasonably precise is implied by the fact that he goes on to say on the same page that more correctly speaking Frederick Pursh was the victim of alcohol and Lewis David von Schweinitz the victim of tobacco.

⁴³ This question possibly could be settled if Rafinesque had chosen to mention Dr. Ward in the original French version of his autobiography: *Précis ou Abrégé des Voyages, Travaux, et Recherches de C. S. Rafinesque*, edited by Charles Boewe, Georges Reynaud, and Beverly Seaton (Amsterdam, 1987). It was from this hitherto unknown 1833 manuscript that Rafinesque himself translated his book *A Life of Travels* (1836). In the more precise French language he probably would have used *ancien* if he meant former and *défunt* or possibly *feu* if he meant deceased. But no Ward appears there.