

WHITE, RED,

The Wyandot



AND BLACK

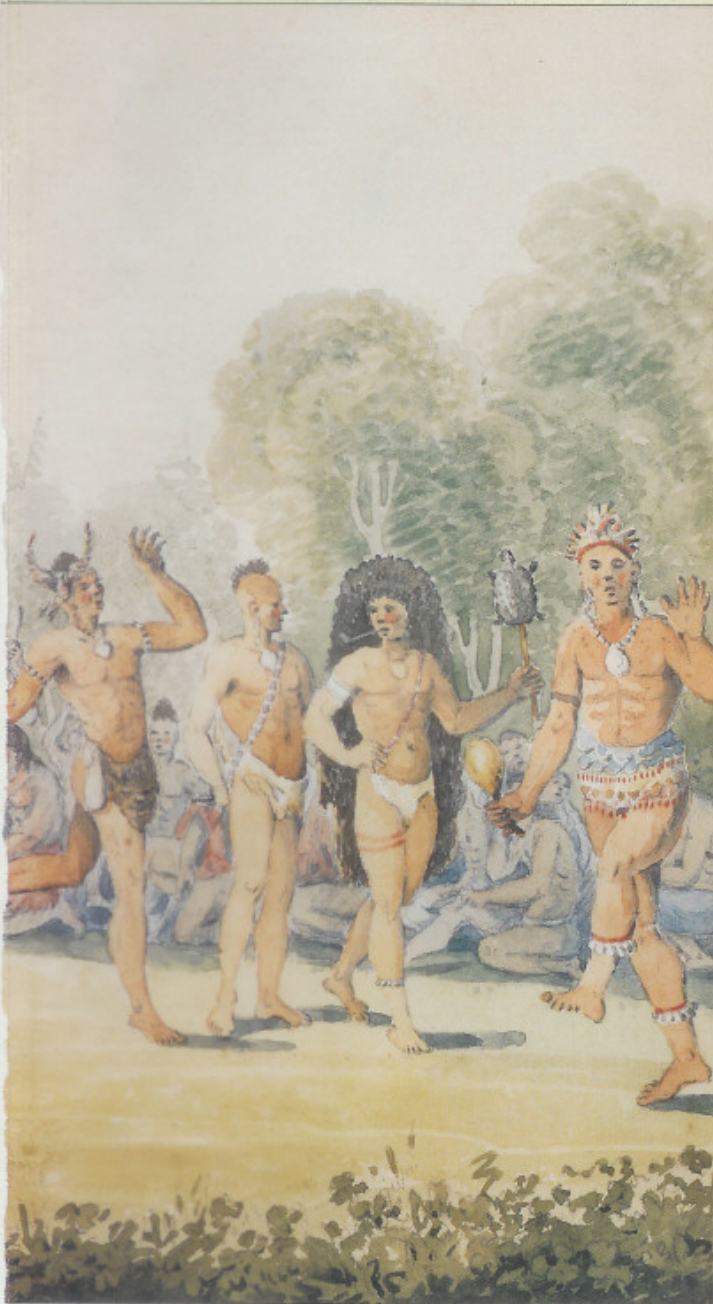
Mission at Upper Sandusky

by Donald L. Huber

MONONCUE, CHIEF SPEAKER of the Wyandot Nation, arose to address the missionary: "I do not doubt," he said, "but what you state faithfully what your book says...[but] ours is a religion that suits us red people, and we intend to keep and preserve it sacred among us, believing that the Great Spirit gave it to our grandfathers in ancient days." The missionary replied that the Christian gospel is intended for all human beings. Since "you certainly consider yourselves a nation composed of human beings ...then you may rest assured that this gospel will be preached not only to you, but to all nations of Indians; and not only Indians, but to all nations under the Heavens, before the end of the world shall come."

Thus was joined at Upper Sandusky during the winter of 1817 the question that faced all Native Americans whenever they came into close contact with whites: What about the white man's religion?

The Wyandots who pondered this question were descended from refugee bands of Hurons and Tionontati who had once lived on the eastern shores of Lake Huron. The refugees had survived a double disaster of epidemic disease followed by defeat in war in the seven-



Dance for the Recovery of the Sick by George Heriot.
Water color on paper, 6 7/8 x 11 3/4 inches, 1805.
Art Gallery of Windsor, Ontario

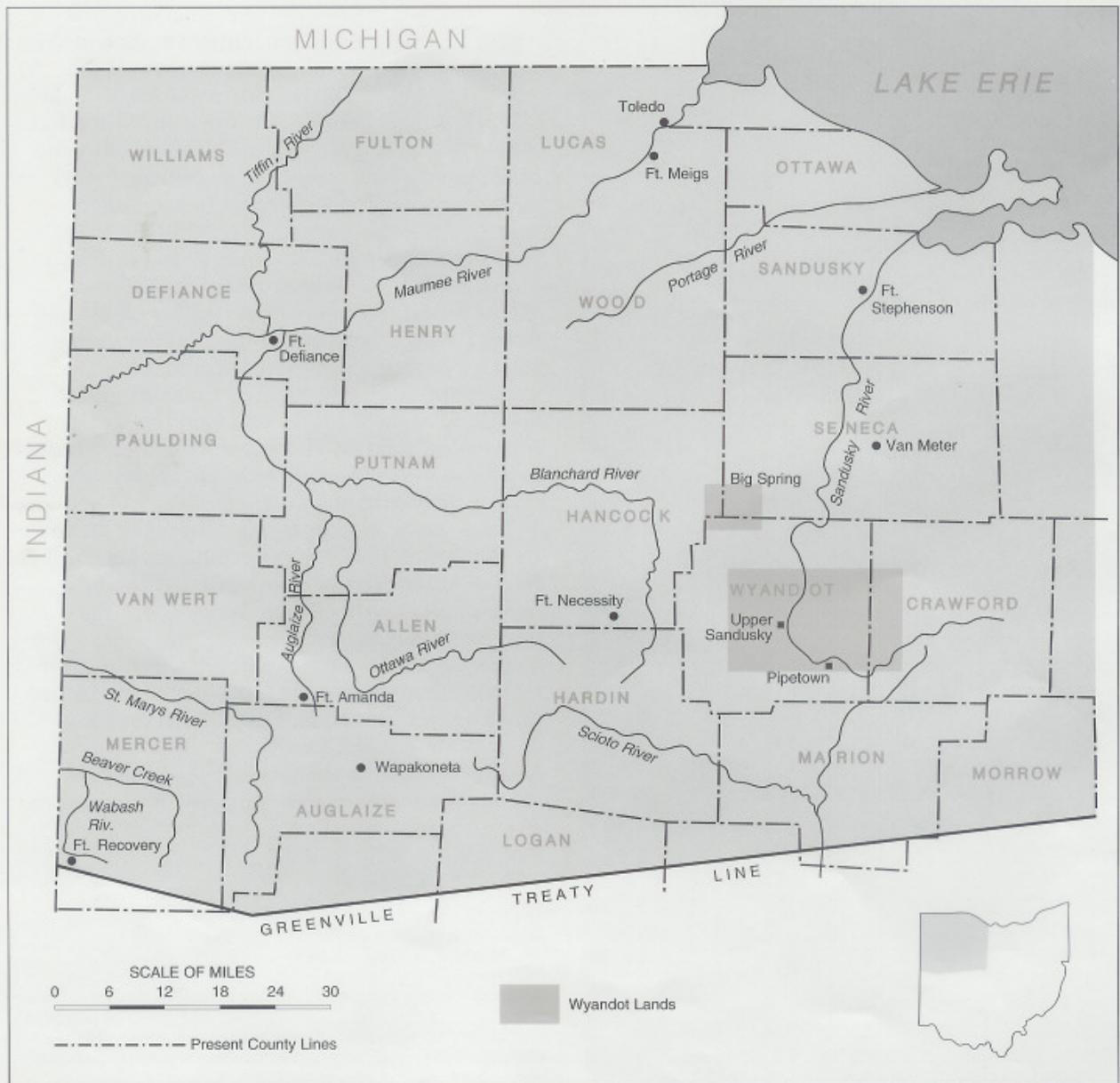
Wyandot Indians living on the Upper Sandusky reservation were asked to abandon their traditional lifestyles, including practices that Methodist missionaries equated with witchcraft. These Canadian Hurons, closely tied to the Ohio Wyandots by blood and culture, were observed performing a healing ceremony.

teenth century. As a consequence, the amalgamated tribe had left its ancient homeland; by 1671 it had settled at Michilimackinac, which was the principal fur trading center of the Great Lakes region.

In 1701, as part of the intrigue surrounding the rivalry of the French and English for the Great Lakes fur trade, the Wyandots were persuaded by the

French to move south to Detroit. Soon, they were hunting in northwestern Ohio; by the late 1730s, they had a village on Sandusky Bay. When the French and English went to war in 1754, the Wyandots sided with their longtime trading partners; after the French defeat, they joined with Pontiac in his effort to drive the British from the region. After 1776, however, they sided with the British against the American colonists, whom they feared would flood into the Ohio region.

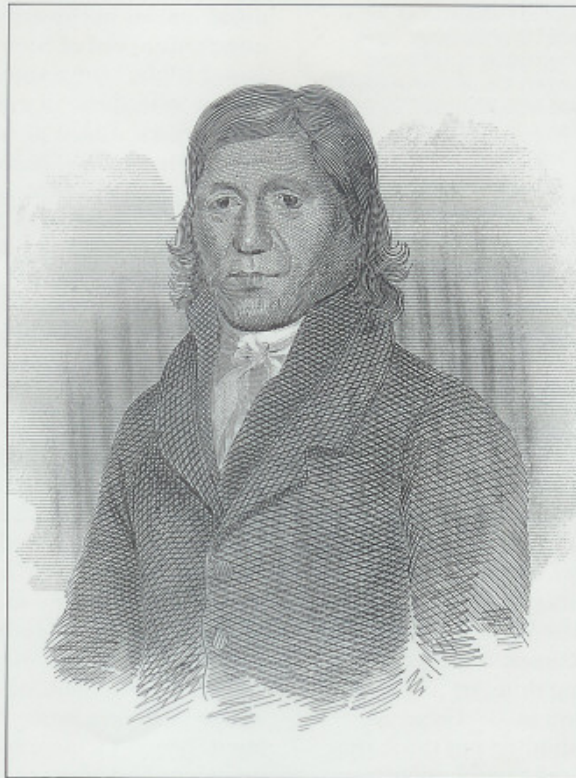
A treaty signed at Fort Meigs in 1817 created a large Wyandot reservation known as the Grand Reserve. It covered much of what is now Wyandot County.



Indian wars ended in the region only when General "Mad Anthony" Wayne decisively defeated the tribes at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794. From that time on, Indians in Ohio had little choice but to accommodate their conquerors. During the War of 1812, the Ohio Wyandots, under the leadership of Tarhe ("the Crane"), supported the American cause. After the war most of them were brought together at Upper Sandusky to live on what was known as the Grand Reserve, a 144-square-mile tract that centered on Upper Sandusky in the heart of present Wyandot County. Smaller bands were located on reserves at Big Spring (near the Grand Reserve), in Michigan Territory, and in Canada. From that time onward, they were forced to significantly alter their traditional way of life.

Hunting declined, and they became increasingly dependent on agriculture and government annuities. No longer able to manage their own political affairs, they came under the constant oversight of agents and sub-agents appointed by the American government. The Sandusky Wyandots were a people in traumatic transition when they encountered the self-appointed Methodist missionary, John Stewart.

John Stewart was himself no stranger to hardship; his biographer remarked that "on earth his lot was one of poverty, persecution, and extreme adversity." The record of events in his early life is sketchy, and parts of it may be apocryphal, shaped by chroniclers more attached to the cause of religion than to that of history. The son of free African-American parents, Stewart grew up in Powhatan County, Virginia, where he learned the trade of blue dyeing. In 1813 he decided to move to Marietta. On the way across the mountains, he was robbed of all his earthly possessions, a misfortune that plunged him into the depths of depression and that led to drunken binges during which he several times contemplated suicide. Even after he was successful-



Mononcue was a respected Wyandot chief who, despite an initial resistance to the missionaries' message, eventually became a licensed Methodist preacher. Reverend James Finley praised the chief's oratory, insisting that "few could stand before the overwhelming torrent of his eloquence."
Ohio Historical Society

ly established as a dyer at Marietta, his depression continued. One evening, while out walking, he chanced on a Methodist prayer meeting. Although his devout Baptist parents had warned him about the "shouting Methodists," Stewart entered the meeting and found himself among friends who were able to address his sense of sinfulness and separation from God. At a camp meeting soon afterward, he finally found the inner peace that had been missing from his life.

A few months after his entrance into the Methodist church, Stewart experienced a vision in which a voice said to him, "Thou shalt declare my counsel faithfully." The vision included a strong implication that he was to leave Marietta for a ministry toward the northwest. Since this indicated

Indian territory, he interpreted it as a sign that he was to preach to the Indians of northwest Ohio.

Acting on this conviction, Stewart left Marietta in the autumn of 1816. Moravian Indians at Goshen on the Tuscarawas River, who learned of his intentions, took him to a Delaware village called Pipetown on the Sandusky River, where many of their relatives lived. As few of the inhabitants of Pipetown could speak English, and Stewart knew no Delaware, there was little communication at first. Indeed, when the Indians began to dance during his first evening in the camp, Stewart feared they were planning to kill him. Having survived to the end of the dance, he decided to break the ice by singing a hymn. When he finished, one of the Delawares said, in English, "Sing more." Music was thereafter one of his most effective ways of communicating across linguistic and cultural barriers. When an interpreter was finally located, Stewart explained why he had come. The Indians listened politely and invited him to stay. But he felt that this was not yet the place to which he had been called; having heard of the Wyandot reservation nearby, he obtained directions and made his way there.



This crude woodcut of John Stewart is believed to have been created in 1865 and based on the recollections of a long-time Wyandot County resident.
Harry E. Kinley Collection

William Walker, Sr., an Indian department employee living on the Grand Reserve, feared that Stewart was a runaway slave and interrogated him closely. Satisfied as to his truthfulness, Walker sent him to the cabin of a black man, Jonathan Pointer. Pointer had been cap-

tured as a child and raised by the Wyandots. He was not overjoyed to meet the newcomer, but agreed to interpret for Stewart. For a long time, he prefaced his interpretations with disclaimers — “These are not my words, but his,” or “You must not think that I care whether you believe or not” — and only gradually became a willing ally in the work.

Having secured both the approval of William Walker and an able if somewhat reluctant interpreter, Stewart labored through the winter of 1816–17 to explain Christianity to the Wyandots. He was not starting from scratch. During the French period, Jesuit missionaries had worked among them. Several families owned silver crosses and rosaries and considered themselves Catholics, although a full generation had passed since they had had extended contact with the Jesuits. These persons knew of the Christian Bible, and some of them still made an annual pilgrimage to a church in Canada. There had also been short-lived contacts with Protestant

missionaries in the early 1800s. One of the first questions asked of Stewart was whether his was a “good Bible,” since some of his teachings did not square with those of earlier missionaries. To put his questioners’ minds at ease on that point, Stewart had the trusted William Walker attest to the authenticity of both his Bible and his hymn book.

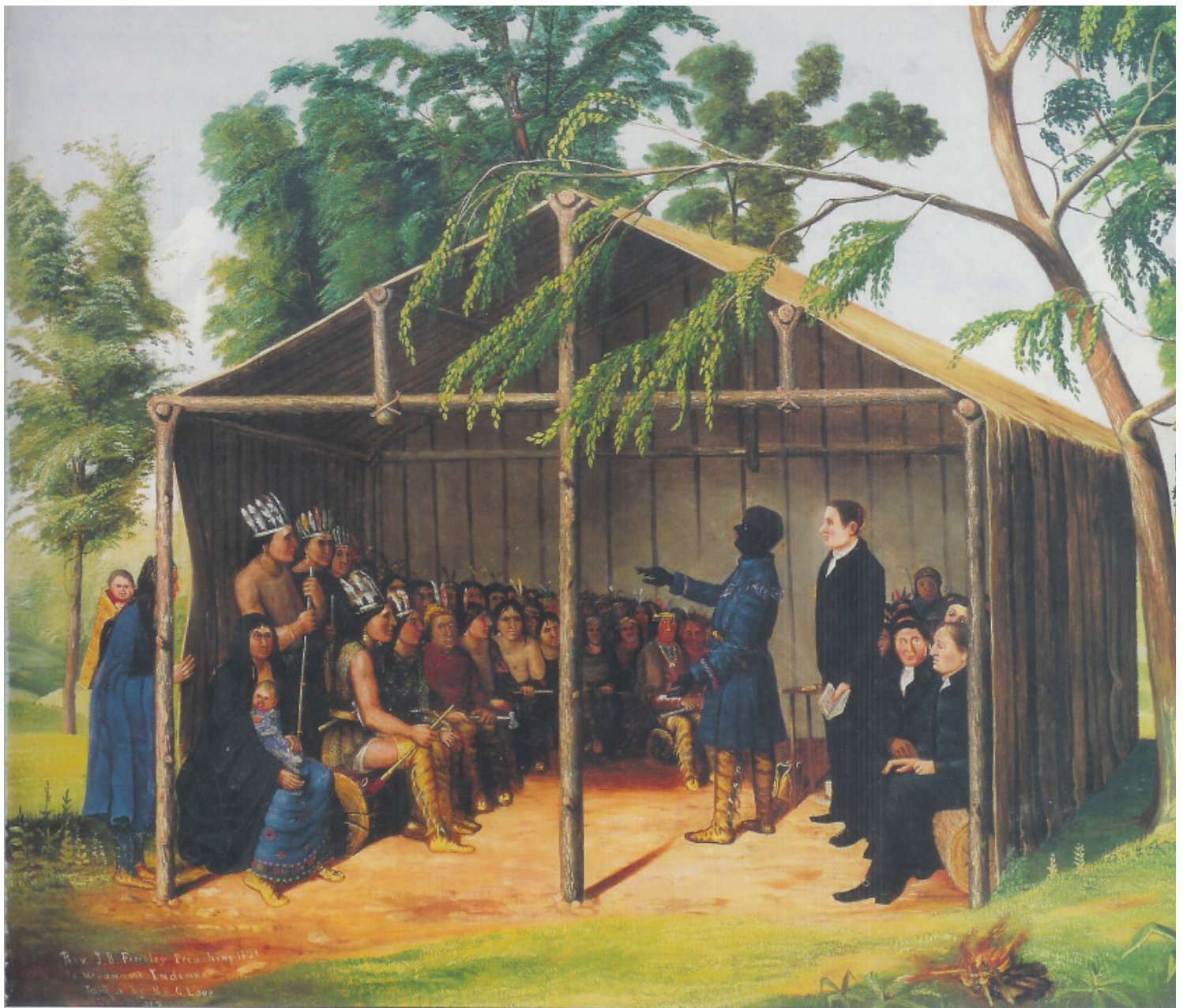
The early months of Stewart’s labors on the Grand Reserve were replete with theological debates with the Wyandots. The Indians’ perspective was influenced not only by their traditional religious beliefs, but by the more recent teachings of a series of charismatic Indian prophets. Some of the questions discussed included: Is Christianity a religion for all people, or just for whites (and their black slaves)? Has the Great Spirit not set up separate religions for each of the human races? Indeed, are there not different gods for each race? How can the message of the Bible be intended for all people, when so many cannot read? Why did Jesus appear so far from here if we were meant to believe? What is wrong with our old Indian customs, that they should be abandoned for white ways and new forms of worship? And the Catholic party asked: What is wrong with venerating Mary and the saints? According to Stewart’s biographer, “at almost every meeting there was less or more disputing between Stewart

and some of the principal men of the nation.”

The disputes were not all theological. White traders, concerned about the teetotaling Stewart’s growing influence with the rum-loving Wyandots, accused him of being a runaway slave and suggested that the tribe would be punished for harboring him. When that stratagem failed, the traders pointed out that Stewart was a self-appointed missionary with no official ecclesiastical standing. That much was true, for Stewart’s connection with the Methodists at Marietta provided no authorization for his missionary activities. These criticisms began to have their effect on the chiefs, who at one point seemed about to expel him. William Walker

James B. Finley was in his early forties when he began ministering to the Wyandots. *Ohio Historical Society*





Rev. J.B. Finley Preaching 1821 to Wyandott Indians by Nathaniel B.C. Love. Oil on canvas, 27 1/2 x 36 inches, 1886. Wyandot County Historical Society

intervened, however, promising to protect Stewart as long as he behaved honorably. While there was never again any serious threat of expulsion, battles between missionaries and traders became a perennial feature of reservation life. The missionaries saw the traders as immoral exploiters of a captive people, while the traders saw the missionaries as naive do-gooders.

By February 1817 Stewart had converted some Wyandots. At a prayer meeting held that month, there were “extraordinary occurrences” among the Indians similar to those that often occurred in revivals among whites or blacks at that time. Some people fainted. Others cried out in

This painting recreates the first sermon given by Finley to the Wyandots, delivered in the council house that predated the stone mission church. The black interpreter, Jonathan Pointer, is shown translating Finley’s words. Love based the painting on the reminiscences of Henry Peters, who was an eyewitness and is seated immediately behind Finley. Just above Peters, John Stewart faces the viewer. Wyandot chiefs present included Mononcue, Sumnumdewat, and Between-The-Logs.

loud voices. An old woman jumped up, clapping her hands and proclaiming “that what the preacher said, was all true” and “that God, for Jesus’ sake, has forgiven all [my] sins.” Alarmed by the prospect of numerous conversions, tribal leaders countered with an elaborate dance and feast to convince the people that their traditional beliefs were better. Stewart attended and was disappointed to find some of his converts participating in activities, “which did not seem to comport with the profession of [Christian] religion.” Nevertheless, prospects for the growth of Christianity in the tribe seemed excellent. Even the eloquent Mononcue expressed interest in joining the church, if only he would be allowed to continue to paint his face.

Stewart was absent from the Grand Reserve for a few weeks in the spring of 1817. Upon his return, another round of disputations began, this time with those who had been away in winter hunting camps during his previous stay. Chief Two Logs was especially vigorous in defense of dancing and feasting. He said Indians were not like whites who could not have “any public amusement” without an orgy of fighting and drunkenness. Indians showed only peace and good will to each other in their feasts, which should be proof enough that they are pleasing to the Great Spirit. Two Logs also objected to the fact that a black missionary was present among the Wyandots. Egged on by the traders, he insisted that Stewart’s presence in the village brought disgrace to the tribe. (Other free blacks in the area lived in their own village, called Negro Town.) One of Two Logs’s followers claimed to have had a vision in which “the God of the red people” warned her not to listen to Stewart. When he heard of this, Stewart promptly went to the woman and “informed her that he did not believe her, as there was no such being as a distinct God for Indians — that there was but one God, and he created *White, Red, and Black* people.”

Once more stung by the charge that his ministry was irregular, Stewart applied to the Mad River circuit of the Methodist church for a license as a



Between-The-Logs, born at Lower Sandusky (now Fremont) about 1780, participated in the struggles against American expansion in the 1790s. An excellent memory and speaking ability soon led to his appointment as a “chief-speaker” for the Wyandots. He remained friendly to the Americans during the War of 1812 and later represented the tribe before officials and congressmen in Washington, D.C.
Ohio Historical Society

local preacher, which was granted to him in March 1819. The circuit now began to take some responsibility for the work, as nearby preachers volunteered to assist Stewart.

The appointment of a resident missionary marked the next significant development. The Treaty of Fort Meigs in 1818 had called for a mission to be established, and, to this end, a section

of reservation land had been designated for support of a missionary. Some of the Wyandots suggested that Stewart be settled there. The chiefs balked, perhaps partly out of lingering feelings that they deserved better than a poor, black preacher. They did allow Stewart to settle on the land temporarily, however, and adopted him into the tribe, thus making him eligible for a portion of the Indians’ government annuities.

The Methodist hierarchy proceeded fitfully. In August 1819 the Ohio Annual Conference officially recognized the mission, and Reverend James B. Finley was appointed superintendent of the district that encompassed it. Still, a resident missionary was not appointed. During the next two years, the Methodists supported John Stewart’s work as a local preacher and assigned the reservation to circuit-riding missionaries, much as they did white communities. In November 1819 Ebenezer Zane, a mixed-blood grandson of Tarhe, hosted the first quarterly conference of the mission at his home on the Mad River. Attending were Finley, Stewart, missionary Moses Henkle, and about sixty Indians representing various shades of opinion concerning Christianity. Finley preached his first sermon to the Wyandots at this conference and felt it was well received. (Indian courtesy often misled white preachers on this score, but Finley’s perception

Our Father } Sum-moi-ah — { Our Father
 Which is in heaven } we-ron-ge-antain-to { in Heaven
 Hallowed be thy name } ta-an-man-de-ke
 a-saugh-shin-dotai-yaktak { Mighty name holy
 Thy Kingdom } a-sa-ooch
 Come } sur-ree-wom-mah-... { Come your power
 Thy will } a-sone-de-o-rai-a-vest-... { be done all your will done
 be done } in earth
 In earth } as it is } the same
 as it is } in heaven }
 Give us this day our daily bread } ant-ta-men-te-a
 taw-won-koute } { every day give us our living
 da-na-tah-que }
 forgive us our debts } tam-mu-ta-rak } { take pity on us
 as we forgive those who owe us }
 du-mai-ar-rite } { forgive us what we owe
 as we forgive those who owe us }
 tis-u-ta }
 han-dee }
 ock-hu-ter-hak }
 di-u-ye-rite }

from us all
 evil
 our
 power
 the triple suppletive
 of down

For ever } { Nam-ta-o-tre waw-taugh } { without end
 Amen } { Saugh — } { All the truth

Mon-dot. oon-tran-doise. doia-de-sasus.
 tut-tante

Wyandot prayer Delivered or Spoken by
 Susus.

(So-sau-haw-sprunkaw (Saplanlin))

At Finley's urging, fellow Methodist missionary Charles Elliott worked on a Wyandot grammar and vocabulary. His translation of the Lord's Prayer into Wyandot survives. Ohio Historical Society, Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center Library

Among Finley's greatest achievements on behalf of the Wyandots was convincing Secretary of War John C. Calhoun, who supervised Indian affairs, to donate money toward a permanent mission church from war department coffers. Finley raised the remaining funds from a private source. In 1887, Franklin H. Halbedel, a carriage painter at a local buggy works, made an oil painting of the Wyandots gathering for a morning service at the church. The original, which now hangs in the Wyandot County Museum, was the source for this 1919 lithograph. *Ohio Historical Society*

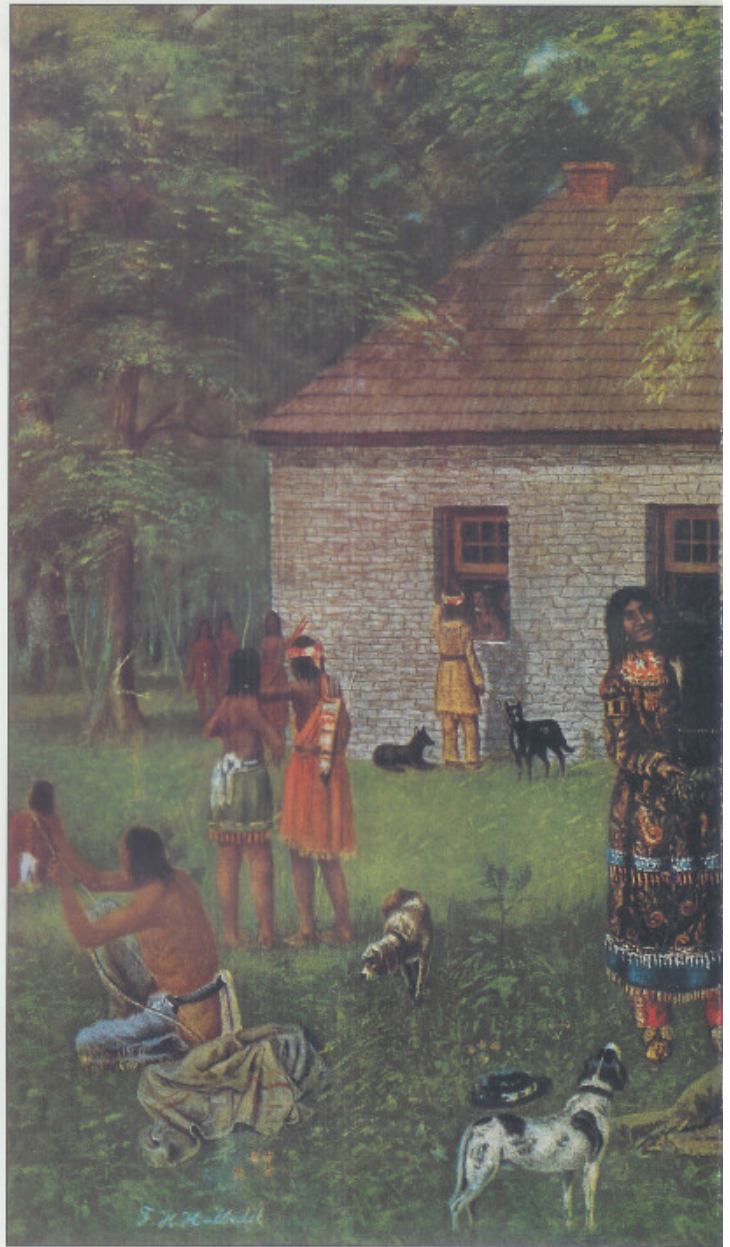
seems to have been accurate.) There followed personal testimonies by both preachers and Indians. Several Wyandot chiefs — Between-The-Logs, John Hicks, Scuteash, and even Mononcue — indicated their intention to follow the teachings of the missionaries.

The complicated arrangements made in 1819 did not work very well. Finley was in charge, but was seldom present in Upper Sandusky. The appointed missionary, Moses Henkle, resided on Buck Creek in Clark County, and Upper Sandusky was but one charge on his extensive circuit. Stewart made little progress in organizing the Indians into a more formal church, although he did conduct some baptisms and weddings. Finley felt strongly that both an organized church and a school were needed but considered Stewart unequal to the task. Government officials seem to have expected a resident missionary to be appointed and were puzzled by the various half-measures of the peripatetic Methodists. As Finley noted, the result among the Wyandots was that "some held on their way, others were added, and some returned to their former habits."

Finley increasingly argued that a resident missionary was needed and stressed the idea of a school, which he insisted was necessary if Wyandot children were to have any chance for success. Such a school would be founded on the manual labor principle; in addition to the "three Rs," the children would learn farming and housekeeping skills. Above all, the school would teach Christianity.

The Wyandot chiefs and their female counselors met in council in July 1821 and approved Finley's plan. They promised to encourage their children to attend the school and said that they would allow the children of "our white friends who live among us" to attend as well. They asked for a resident missionary, "a man who loves our nation; that loves us and our children; one that can bear with our ignorance and weakness." Their request was signed both by Christian chiefs and by those who still adhered to the traditional religion.

In August 1821 the Ohio Annual Conference appointed Finley himself the first resident mission-



ary to the Wyandots. He was a particularly good choice, both because he was already known to the Wyandots and because he was an experienced backwoodsman. As a boy growing up in Kentucky and Ohio, he had been "so passionately fond of the gun and the woods, and Indian life, that my parents feared I would go off with the Indians and become connected with them." But Finley went on to study medicine, classical literature, and — after his conversion at the famous Cane Ridge camp meeting in 1801 — the Bible. His multiple skills would now be



put to good use on the Grand Reserve. On October 8, 1821, he set out from his home in Greene County for the Wyandot reservation; with him were his wife and Miss Harriet Stubbs, who had volunteered to teach in the school.

Finley set to work to build shelter for the little mission family with the help of a hired hand. He worked, he later remembered, "until the skin came off the inside of my hands." The cabin was finished on the day of the first snowfall. Through the winter, the two men labored to prepare building materials

for the school, while the women took care of the household duties and taught several Indian children in their home. By summer, the mission settlement was prepared for its ongoing work; the school was completed in July. Finley was proud that all of the work had been done by the whites. He did not intend to repeat the mistakes of missionaries who had abused Indian labor and so had turned their prospective converts against Christianity. "We did not," he remarked in his autobiography, "make the Indians our hewers of wood and drawers of water."

After the Wyandots' removal, the stone mission church was briefly used by a white congregation and then abandoned. By the 1870s it lay in ruins. *Ohio Historical Society*

Like John Stewart, he made a habit of treating the Wyandots with respect.

Stewart, who was then living at the nearby Big Spring reserve, was also employed in teaching, but his health was precarious by this time. He was largely confined to his house, as some "pulmonary affliction" (probably tuberculosis) progressively worsened. Nevertheless, he taught school and preached as he was able until his death on September 17, 1823. A biographer remarked that, thanks to Stewart, "Mr. Finley had not many difficulties to encounter among the Wyandotts." When "the doors of the visible church" were opened, "a large number was ready and willing to come in."

And come they did. Finley was an effective preacher, given to plain speech and down-to-earth

illustrations of his doctrines. He made frequent trips to Big Spring and occasionally traveled to Detroit and Canada. He also visited nearby Indian tribes and settlements of whites. Most of the Wyandots attended his meetings during his early months in Upper Sandusky, whether out of growing conviction or simple curiosity it is hard to tell.

After several months Finley decided that it was time to organize a formal Wyandot congregation. In their present state, as he said, "when any one did wrong, he left without any trial or censure; and any one came in and enjoyed the ordinances of the church without any formal admission; and so they came and went at pleasure." When Finley proposed to "bring them under proper discipline," he found little enthusiasm for the

When Nathaniel B.C. Love became pastor of the Methodist congregation in Upper Sandusky, he convinced church officials to sponsor the restoration of the mission church and cemetery. He poses with his two sons in the cemetery after the rebuilding was completed in 1889. *Harry E. Kinley Collection*



Finley was required to keep a careful accounting of both income and expenditures during his time as superintendent of the Wyandott mission. Ohio Historical Society

Money Received for the Support of the Wyandott Mission
for the Year commencing September 24 1827 -
Sept 24 1827 Four Drafts on the Missionary Society \$250 each \$1000.00
Oct 11 " Of James Gilbreth Balance from last year 296.60 1/2
Money received of James Gilbreth from there 40.50
Paid into the treasury myself for a horse ready for use 20.00
Total 1400.00

Received of James B. Kinley Superintendent of the
Wyandott Mission for the Support of the Mission during
the year which has just ended the sum of \$1978.47 1/2

to Wadges Coy 150.00
heads and
and produce 26.00
of Kerkman 1.00
of Beavertown 4.00
Amount \$1978.47 1/2
James B. Kinley

An account of Money expended for the use and support of the
Wyandott Mission for the past business year -

Date	Description	Amount	Date	Description	Amount
	Paid out by James Gilbreth for the last Conference and before my arrival at the Mission -			Amount brought forward	135 11 1/2
	To Isaac Walker for 2 1/2 of flour	3 62 1/2		100 of flour	25 00
	To a stranger for 2 00 of flour	4 00		5 lb of Candlerwick	50
	To the blacksmith for garden seeds	1 37 1/2	Oct 11 1827	Paid J. B. Kinley for a Rifle	12 00
Oct 1 1827	Boat of John Rees in Lebanon	14 75		Paid J. B. Kinley on account of cattle sold Jas Gilbreth	10 00
	52 1/2 lbs of Linsey at 3 1/2	52 50		Paid William Wood for work	6 37 1/2
	10 1/2 " of Butter at 50	5 25		Paid at the National Store for two barrels of flour	7 00
	21 1/2 " of Casinet at 56	12 09 1/2		Bought a horse with the advice of the Superintendent	28 00
Oct 8 "	Boat of Sister Johnson in Wilmington	2 50	Oct 23 "	Paid W. Rees a balance due him for meat & fish	4 31 1/2
Oct 10 "	10 Pair of Sacks at 25	250		Paid for Nails	25
	Boat of John Reynolds at 10	10 00	Oct 24 "	Paid for Soap	25
	62 1/2 lbs of Mashin at 15	4 35	Oct 30 "	Paid for Hacks for lime	2 13 1/2
	29 " " at 15	3 30	Oct 31 "	Paid George Johnson for mowing my people from Milledown	20 00
	33 " " at 10	3 30		Expenses attending the growing of my family	1 87 1/2
	11 " " at 12	1 32			
	72 1/2 " of Linsey at 3 1/2	29 81 1/2			
	Linsey for Wrappers	17 1/2			
Oct 11 "	Boat of Reynolds & Kerkman	19 12 1/2			
	51 lbs of Linsey at 3 1/2	19 08			
	Boat at the National Store & barrels of Salt at 1/4	19 08			
		135 77 1/2			

project. Some said it was "too much like making slaves of them" to put their names on a piece of paper and expect them to follow the strict rules. Especially onerous was the prohibition against alcohol. Many pleaded for leniency on this point, saying that "if a man did not get drunk, it was no crime." But Finley was unyielding and began to solicit names for Methodist classes. At Big Spring, he signed up twenty persons who promised to abide by the entire Methodist Discipline. At Upper Sandusky, his first

efforts resulted in a class of only ten — but among them were four chiefs: Mononcue, John Hicks, Peacock, and Between-The-Logs. The situation of Between-The-Logs was especially poignant, for he had long borne the guilt of having murdered his wife while drunk. From John Stewart he had received the assurance that God would forgive even this heinous sin; now, Finley recalled, "he [became] the first man who joined society, the first who turned his back on their old heathen traditions."



A re-dedication ceremony was held on the grounds of the restored church and cemetery in September 1889. Today the building and grounds are maintained by the John Stewart United Methodist Church of Upper Sandusky. *Harry E. Kinley Collection*

The only Wyandot who attended the 1889 re-dedication service was Margaret Grey Eyes Solomon. Generally regarded as the last full-blooded Wyandot to live in Ohio, she had attended Finley's mission school as a child. The seventy-three-year-old matron was asked to participate in the ceremony and responded by singing "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" in her native tongue. Within a year, her funeral was held in the church; hers was the last Indian burial in the cemetery. *Upper Sandusky Community Library*



Organization of Methodist classes rekindled the animosity of the traders. The traders occasionally attended Finley's meetings, and he made it a point to denounce their lucrative commerce in "ardent spirits," knowing that the Wyandots valued plain speech and face-to-face confrontation. The traders criticized Finley in turn, as they had Stewart. Ironically, the traders now accused Finley of usurping Stewart's place; Finley answered by pointing to the steady support that the church had given to Stewart since 1820, including the purchase of sixty acres of land adjacent to the reservation "with the patent obtained in his own name." He shrugged off rumors that the traders were plotting to kill him and after a while even helped the Wyandots open their own store so that they could buy goods at more favorable prices than those charged by the traders.

The next few years saw the steady progress of the mission under Finley's leadership. The school, supervised by a committee of Wyandots, prospered. As it grew, a second teacher, tribal member William Walker, Jr., was added. A farm was established to supply the missionaries and the school. Here, the boys were taught white farming methods, while the girls learned spinning, weaving, sewing, cooking, and other household skills. More and more Wyandots joined the church. By the time Finley left the mission in 1827, the classes included approximately 300 members under the leadership of Wyandot class

leaders, exhorters, and stewards. The Methodist Discipline was as strictly adhered to as in white churches, a fact that continually surprised visitors.

This is not to say that all was sweetness and light. A sizable portion of the tribe remained adamantly opposed both to Christianity and to certain aspects of white civilization. They continually tried to play off the government sub-agent against the missionar-

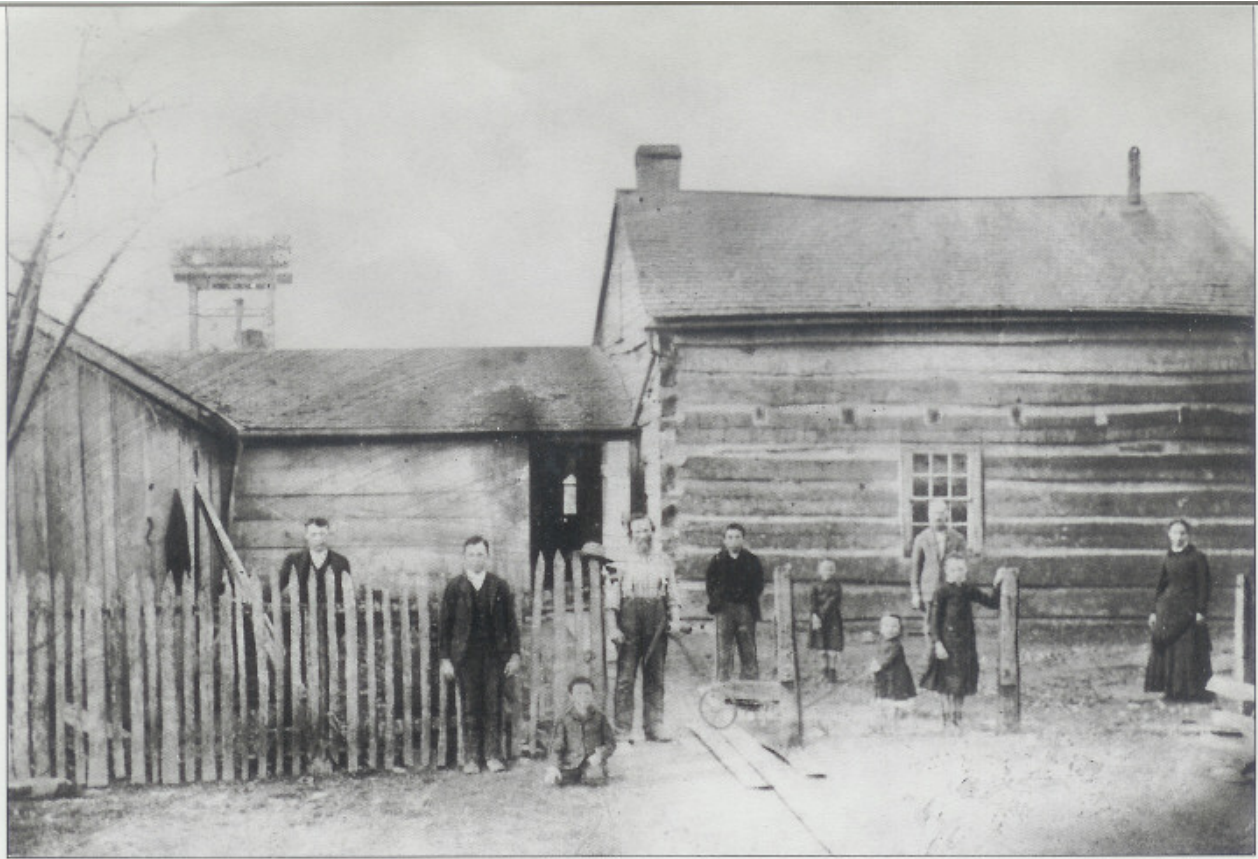


This map of the Indian reservation in Wyandot County was likely prepared upon the Wyandots' departure in 1843. The cabins of a number of the Wyandots who figured in the story of the mission are identified. *Ohio Historical Society*

ies and otherwise fomented unrest. The head chief, De-un-quot, who was Tarhe's successor, never changed his mind about Christianity. "I have listened to your preacher," he said on one occasion. "He has said some things that are good, but they have nothing to do with us: we are Indians, and belong to the red man's God." Another time he said, "This religion may go into all the houses on this reservation, but into mine it shall not come."

By the mid-1820s, religious pluralism was a fact

of life among the Ohio Wyandots, slightly more than half of whom were enrolled in the Methodist society. A smaller group had "halted between two opinions." Nominally Christian, they did not seek formal church membership. Others included both those apathetic to religion and those devoted to preserving the old ways. Generally speaking, the "praying Indians" went to class meetings and Sunday worship, adopted plow farming, replaced their smoky wigwams with chimneyed cabins, and moved steadily closer to white definitions of civilization. The "traditional Indians" continued to hold their dances and feasts, practiced slash-and-burn agriculture,



Early maps of the Wyandot reservation locate White Wing's "Hewed Log House" on Tymochtee Creek. The house and attached outbuildings, virtually indistinguishable from those built by white settlers, were photographed about 1896. *Stanley Baker Collection*

roamed as far as possible on their hunts (often in defiance of the government and of their white neighbors), and mourned the passing of their time-tested ways. Their one major concession to the mission was that many of them did enroll their children in the school, thus tacitly acknowledging that their old way of life was probably doomed. Finley and his successors were careful to treat the traditionalists with courtesy, although arguments with them were frequent. Visitors to Upper Sandusky noted that the traditional party contained a higher percentage of full-blooded Wyandots than did the Christian party, among whom mixture with other tribes and with whites was more common.

The crowning material achievement of the Wyandot Mission was the construction of its church building. Until 1824 worship was held in the council house, a large pole building covered with bark. It was adequate in summer but was too cold and drafty in winter, when the small school building was used. The chance for a more satisfactory arrangement arose when Finley made a trip to Washington to report "on the state of the mission and Indians in general." After a brief audience with President James Monroe, Finley met with John C. Calhoun, secretary of war, whose department had charge of Indian affairs. Calhoun was favorably impressed by developments on the Grand Reserve and allocated

Indicative of the strong acculturation of the Wyandots were numerous tribal members of mixed race. "Mother Stanley" was representative of those living in Wyandot County in the late nineteenth century. *Harry E. Kinley Collection*



Ken Wicks Birmenstott, Photographer

\$1,333 of federal money for the building of a church. When the Wyandots heard of this grant, they set right to work on the project. Finley himself designed the building. John Owens and Benjamin Herbert of Delaware were hired as stone masons. Indians and whites labored side-by-side to quarry the stone, cut the timbers, cart the materials to the site, and erect the building. The "plainly finished" stone church was thirty by forty feet; Finley hoped that it would stand, "for a century to come." After it was completed, all Sunday services and quarterly meetings were held there. Sometimes tents were pitched, and the grounds became the site for a camp meeting.

Although the Ohio Wyandots were almost a textbook case in successful acculturation — one measure of their economic progress was the operation of a gristmill that they built with government assistance in 1820 — the adaptation did not lead to long-term peace and prosperity. Their biggest problem was the steady pressure that the United States government and their white neighbors put on them to abandon their reservation altogether. As early as the 1820s, government agents were suggesting removal of the tribe to west of the Mississippi. Clearly, many whites in Ohio would not rest until all Indians were removed from the state. The whites argued that it made no sense for a band of only 600 to 700 Indians to occupy a reservation of several hundred square miles, only a few thousand acres of which were under cultivation. Racism, no doubt, also played a part.

Finley and his successors consistently supported the Wyandots as they resisted removal. In February 1825 Finley wrote a strongly worded letter to the War Department, in which he insisted that "the long disputed question about civilizing the savages, was settled" as far as he was concerned. The Wyandots had lived up to every expectation that the government had of them; it was now the government's turn to keep its word. He went on to argue that the Wyandots would shortly "be well prepared to be admitted as citizens of the State of Ohio." Talk of removal, he argued, was designed "to discourage and throw all our plans and prospects to the ground." Although the removal question died down for a time, it became the shadow that hung over all subsequent events on the Grand Reserve.

The Wyandot Mission soon became well known, far beyond northwestern Ohio. In addition to government officials who were necessarily aware of its work, the Methodist church publicized its prospects and sought the help of the larger church in meeting its needs. Several missionary societies in the East regularly sent funds or material goods. In the 1820s, the Juvenile Finleyan Missionary Mite Society of Baltimore, an organization of children, annually sent more than \$200 to the mission. In

1826 the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church invited Finley, Mononcue, and Between-The-Logs to attend its annual meeting in New York City. At the conference, Finley and the Indians told of the progress of the mission and asked for continuing support; an offering of more than \$700 was received on the spot. From New York, they made their way to Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington before returning to Ohio.

Finley ended his six years as resident missionary in 1827, although he was district superintendent with general oversight of the mission for another two years. Subsequent missionaries were able men who mainly continued Finley's policies. During the tenure of James Wheeler (1839–43), the removal issue finally came to a head. Despite widespread cynicism about the probable outcome — as one Wyandot chief remarked, "there is no land or swamp so poor, but white men will want it" — the Indians felt they really had no choice, and, one by one, the eastern tribes had made the best deal they could and departed for the West.

During the 1830s, removal was under constant discussion among the Wyandots. William Walker, Jr., led a party of chiefs to Kansas to look at land. In general, the more acculturated Christian party was opposed to removal, while the traditionalists favored it, hoping that the new location would be far removed from whites. The missionaries consistently opposed removal, attributing the whole idea to white greed. When Wheeler became missionary in 1839, another round of negotiations was underway. By this time, even many of the Christian Wyandots were tiring of the struggle. Government pressure, deprivations by nearby whites, and internal dissension took their toll, and in 1842 the tribe accepted the latest government offer. In return for all of their Ohio lands except three burial grounds, "on one of which stands a stone meeting house, well-finished and enclosed within a handsome fence," the Wyandots were to receive 148,000 acres of western land, a \$17,500 annuity, payment for the improvements on their Ohio land, and payment of the tribal debt of \$23,860. The treaty was signed March 17, 1842. The tribe was given one year to arrange its departure.

From March 1842 until July 1843, wagons were built, harnesses made, and other preparations concluded. The remains of John Stewart, which had been buried on his own land in 1823, were moved to the cemetery next to the church. On July 12, 1843, a procession of 120 wagons and buggies left Upper Sandusky, following an emotional service at the church during which Squire Grey Eyes, a Wyandot preacher, spoke the official farewell. "Here our dead are buried," he said. "Soon they shall be forgotten, for the onward march of the strong White Man will not turn aside for the Indian graves." 