

From: The Indian History of an American Institution - Native Americans and Dartmouth

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*** Chapter two deals with Samson Occom*

(a few other chapters mention him in passing...)

Chapter Two

SAMSON OCCOM AND THE INDIAN MONEY, 1765–75

IN THE LETTERS he wrote to Eleazar Wheelock, Samson Occom routinely referred to himself as Wheelock expected he should, as “your worthless servant” and a “poor Indian.” Yet, despite enduring the prejudices and conditions that stifled the lives of Indian people in eighteenth-century New England, Occom achieved prominence as a scholar and preacher. He crossed the Atlantic, drew crowds, and moved in high places. He was a tribal leader and later in life a tribal builder. He never set foot on the Dartmouth College campus, but his name is everywhere: Occom Pond, Occom Ridge, Occom Commons, the Samson Occom Chair in Native American Studies. Portraits of him hang in Baker Library and in the Native American Studies Library. If the College were given to honoring its luminaries with statuary, Occom would surely deserve a statue or bust to accompany those of Eleazar Wheelock, Daniel Webster, Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase, and Thaddeus Stevens. He was, in effect, Dartmouth’s first development officer.

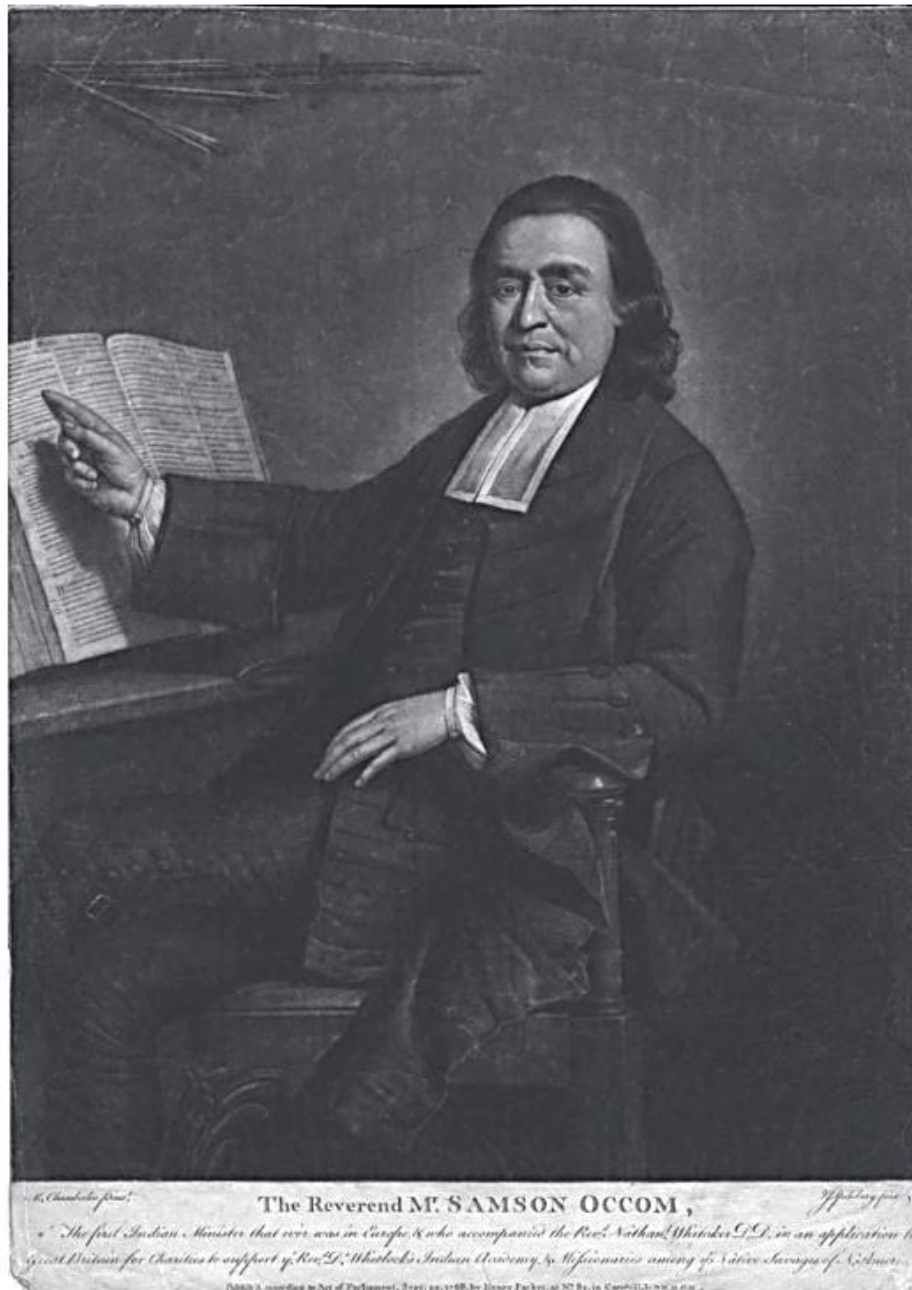
As Moor’s Charity School grew, Wheelock needed even more money. Within a few years of opening the school, he was thinking about moving. It would be “much for the advantage of the school to remove it,” he wrote in 1757, “perhaps some hundred miles.”¹ As the number of students increased and space in Lebanon became tight, he began to make plans. In 1763, with Britain’s victory in the French and Indian War secure, he wrote “A Proposal for Introducing Religion Learning, Agriculture, and Manufacture Among the Pagans of America” and submitted it to General Jeffery Amherst, the British commander-in-chief in North America, and to the Marquess of Lothian. He proposed

That a Tract of the late Conquered Land, 30 or 35 Miles Square, conveniently Situate in the Heart of the Indian Country, be granted in Favor of this Design, that every third

Township be given and so Secured to the Indians, and their Heirs, that it may not be in their Power to Sell it to the English—That a large Farm of Several Thousand Acres of and within sd Grant be given to this Indian School—That the School be an Academy for all parts of useful Learning, part of it a College for the Education of Missionaries School Masters, Interpreters &c, and part of it a School for reading and writing &c.

Such a project, said Wheelock, would “convince the Savages of the sincerity of our Intentions,” as well as win their friendship and “render our cohabitation with them safe for us.” British North America was preoccupied with the war against Pontiac at the time, and Amherst told Wheelock it was not in his authority to dispose of the lands Britain had conquered from France.² But the idea of building a new college in Indian country persisted, and the search for funding became urgent.

Wheelock looked across the Atlantic and looked to Samson Occom to help raise the money for a new school. The idea was not his. The English preacher George Whitefield, a regular transatlantic voyager, suggested it to Wheelock on a couple of occasions. So did Rev. Charles Jeffrey Smith in March 1764: “When the Indian War is a little abated would it not be best to send Mr. Occum with another Person home a begging?” he asked; “An Indian minister in England might get a Bushel of Money for the School.”³ Occom was the ideal choice: educated, intelligent, and a minister, he was a model of what Wheelock’s schooling could accomplish—given the right level of funding. Nathaniel Whitaker, pastor of a church in Norwich, Connecticut, was selected to accompany Occom. Leaving his family once again, Occom set out on a two-year voyage. He and Whitaker sailed from Boston two days before Christmas, 1765. After a six-week ocean passage (about average for the time; the westward voyage took even longer), they traveled inland to London and arrived there the first week of February. They met up with George Whitefield, who introduced them to William Legge, the Earl of Dartmouth (“a Worthy Lord indeed,” Occom noted in his diary), and took “unwearied Pains to Introduce us to the religious Nobility and others, and to the best of men in the City of London.” Occom also got a taste of the less elegant aspects of life in eighteenth-century London. Taking a walk on his first Sunday evening in the city, he “Saw Such Confusion as I never Dreamt of—there was Some at Churches Singing & Preaching, in the Streets some Cursing, Swearing & Damning one another, others was hollowing, Whestling, talking gigling, & Laughing, & Coaches and footmen passing and repassing, Crossing and



Samson Occom. Courtesy Dartmouth College, Rauner Library.

Cross-Crossing, and the poor Begars Praying, Crying, and Beging upon their knees.”⁴ He met King George III and the archbishops of Canterbury and York, saw the sights (Westminster Abbey, the Tower of London), made the social rounds, “and found many gentlemen well Disposed towards our Business.”⁵

Britain had seen American Indians before — Pocahontas, a string of kidnap victims, Cherokee, Creek, Iroquois, and even Mohegan delegates all crossed the Atlantic before Occom.⁶ But Occom was the first Indian minister to visit Britain and he was a hit. He began preaching, and he attracted large congregations, although he was disturbed to hear he was being mimicked on the London stage. He and Whitaker stayed in London until August, left on a four-month tour of the west of England, returned to London, and then headed north via Liverpool to Scotland, where they preached in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and other towns. In all, Occom delivered more than 300 sermons. The bishops of England apparently were not impressed: “they never gave us one single brass farthing. It seems to me that they are very indifferent whether the poor Indians go to Heaven or Hell,” Occom wrote after he returned home.⁷ But others felt differently. “It was Right to send over Mr Occum, as a Specimen of the benefitt of ye School,” one minister in Bristol wrote Wheelock; “As far as I hear he pleases in every Town & city — So much Simplicity appears in the man: So honest, guileless a Temper, with Seriousness in his public Service; So well he speaks in publick, & So well he acts in private among his friends & mankind, that he engages their hearts. May you be as successfull in training others to the ministry as you have been in him!”⁸ Occom and Whitaker raised £9,497 in England and an additional £2,529 17s. 11d. in Scotland. It was “the largest amount collected through direct solicitation by any American institution in the colonial era.”⁹ Occom and Whitaker each received £100 for their services. Meanwhile, without Occom to provide for them, his wife and family were in dire straits and appealed to Wheelock for help, which he provided.¹⁰

Wheelock considered several sites for the new school, and a number of people made suggestions.¹¹ Nathaniel Whitaker suggested North Carolina rather than a northern location where the land was harder, and more expensive “& the Winters so long that they eat up the Summer.”¹² Wheelock himself favored the Wyoming Valley around the northeast branch of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania. He was a member of the Susquehanna Company, a joint-stock company formed in 1753 by Connecticut land speculators who believed that Connecticut’s colonial charter, which granted sea-to-sea

rights, entitled the colony to the Susquehanna Valley. Once the French and Indian War was over, the Susquehanna Company was determined to settle the Wyoming Valley immediately, "to the Amount of a Thousand families and Upwards." Settlers from Connecticut moved into the area, building cabins and planting fields. But Pennsylvania contested Connecticut's claim to the region, the Delaware chief Teedyuscung and the Iroquois both protested against the invasion, and the British government tried to restrain the settlers, fearing they would provoke another Indian war. Wheelock hoped Sir William Johnson in his dealings with the Indians might make provision for setting up his school with three or four towns "of the better sort of people around it," somewhere in the vicinity of the Susquehanna River, and said he would gladly move there with the school, as would several other ministers, "men of known honesty and integrity and such as Love Indians." Gideon Hawley, writing from the Iroquois town of Onoquaga, wished Wheelock well with his school but doubted "whether you will live to see it on that land." The Indians knew from experience that English actions were self-serving and could "discern through all our hypocritical pretences to the contrary," he warned; "the more acquainted Indians are with white people, even professing Christians, the more prejudiced they are against our nation & the more averse to their getting a footing in their country." Sir William warned Wheelock against any kind of settlement in the Susquehanna country because the Indians "are greatly disgusted at the great Thirst which we all seem to shew for their Lands."¹³ Whether or not Wheelock recognized himself in Hawley and Johnson's descriptions of hypocritical land grabbers, the region was volatile and the ground was contested.

In 1768, Johnson met with 3,000 Iroquois at Fort Stanwix (present-day Rome, New York) in a treaty council to negotiate moving westward the boundary between Indian and white settlement that had been established at the Appalachian Mountains by royal proclamation in 1763. Wheelock sent a couple of missionaries to this council to try and secure a tract of land in the Susquehanna country. Sir William said they "busied th[emselves] verry much on the pretended Score of Religion," hoping to persuade the Oneidas not to cede the Susquehanna country but to keep it "for the purposes of Religion." The missionaries' arguments in private with the Indians, "& the Extraordinary private Instructions of Mr. Wheelock of wch I am accidentally possessed would shew them [the missionaries] in a very odd Light," wrote Johnson. Wheelock tried to distance himself from these maneuverings by referring

to the “Wild, distracted, stupid, head long Conduct of Mr. Jacob Johnson,” one of the missionaries, but Sir William, who became the biggest landowner in the Mohawk Valley, knew a Yankee land speculator when he saw one.¹⁴ Wheelock did receive the offer of a site in Pennsylvania in 1768, but by then he was already looking up the Connecticut River.

English colonial authorities had had their eyes on the upper Connecticut for some time. In 1752, Theodore Atkinson, secretary of the province of New Hampshire, had reported that plans were afoot to settle “*A Tract of the finest Land on the Continent, call'd by ye Indians Co-os.*” Coos, Cowass, or Koasek, meaning “where the white pines are” or “white pine place,” was an important Abenaki community located on the oxbow of the Connecticut River near present-day Newbury, Vermont. Rich soils, game-filled forests, and plentiful harvests of trout and salmon made it an attractive place, and the Abenakis cleared and cultivated extensive cornfields. Cowass was also a crossroads of trails and waterways. The French established a Jesuit mission there early in the eighteenth century and Indians, French, and English all recognized the strategic importance of the site. “I really believe, if we do not settle it the French will, for ’tis the main passage made use of by the Indians from Canada to this country,” said Atkinson. When the English spoke of Cowass, they meant more than the immediate area of the Abenaki village: “’tis the cream of the country, the Intervale land on both sides of the river for 30 or fifty miles successively in many places a mile wide, where at first you have little to do but Plow, it being generally clear like a salt marsh & but about 40 or 50 miles Distance from many of our new settlements.”¹⁵ The northern limit of English settlement at the time Atkinson wrote was Fort Number Four, located near present-day Charlestown, New Hampshire. Hearing that the English had plans to build a fort at Cowass, Abenakis went to Fort Number Four and announced in no uncertain terms that “for the English to settle Cowass was what they could not agree to. And as the English had no need of that land, but had enough without it, they must think the English had a mind for war, if they should go there.” Faced with Abenaki resistance and the imminent threat of war with the French in Canada, the English shelved their plans for Cowass.¹⁶

But ten years later everything had changed. Britain’s victory over France deprived the Abenakis of allies in their struggle to hold back the English and opened the valley to a flood of settlement. New Hampshire governor Benning Wentworth issued grants for about 50 townships east of the Connecticut River and another 150 on the west side in what is now Vermont. In 1761

alone, 78 new townships were granted, including Hanover, Lebanon, Hartford, and Norwich, in “the New Country Commonly known by the general Name of Cohos.” Between 1760 and 1774, 100 new towns were settled in New Hampshire and 70 in Vermont. The non-Indian population of northern New England increased from perhaps 60,000 to 150,000 in fifteen years, and the number of settlers in the upper Connecticut Valley jumped from a few hundred to several thousand.¹⁷ The region fit Sir William Johnson’s criteria for the site of an Indian school: not too remote from the Six Nations, who “have a strong Aversion to sending their Children far off,” but a reasonable distance east of the Hudson and “sufficiently out of the Way, so that their Parents can neither divert them from their Studies or corrupt them through bad Example.” The lands offered by Governor Wentworth would do nicely.¹⁸

Wheelock favored a location in the Cowass region, and the English Board of Trustees approved it. In 1768, Wheelock appointed Rev. Ebenezer Cleaveland of Gloucester, Massachusetts, and one of his own parishioners, John Wright, to make a tour of the Cowass country and report on suitable sites. The infant towns in the upper valley—Charlestown, Hanover, Haverhill, Lyme, Orford, Piermont, Plainfield, Hartford, Hartland, Norwich, Thetford, and Newbury—competed to attract the school. Some offered handsome grants of land, others in-kind subscriptions. Wheelock chose Hanover: it was a day’s travel closer to Connecticut than Haverhill or Newbury; it was centrally located on the river, convenient for transportation and for communication with Portsmouth, Lake Champlain and Canada, and “as near as any to the Indians.”¹⁹ It was also thinly settled, without established political cadres with whom he would have to deal. Hanover had originally been chartered to grantees from Connecticut in 1761 and was first settled in 1765. On December 13, 1769, Governor John Wentworth (who had succeeded Benning, his uncle, two years before) signed the charter for the new college. He assured the Board of Trustees that the College would do more to “civilize the Indians & spread Christianity among them than any other public or private Measures hitherto granted for Indian Instruction.” He also believed that it would win the Indians over to Britain and do more to prevent Indian raids on the northern frontier “than the best Regiment of Troops that could be raised.” In Wentworth’s opinion, the new college was “the most noble, useful, & truly pious foundation now in America.”²⁰

The charter itself is worth a close look. After a lengthy preamble reviewing Wheelock’s educational efforts for Indians, the success of the Occom-

Whitaker fund-raising tour, and the suitability of an upper valley location “for carrying on the great design among the Indians,” the charter declared:

KNOW YE, THEREFORE that We, considering the premises and being willing to encourage the laudable and charitable design of spreading Christian knowledge among the savages of our American wilderness, and also that the best means of education be established in our province of New Hampshire, for the benefit of said province, do, of our special grace, certain knowledge and mere motion, by and with the advice of our counsel for said province, by these presents, will, ordain, grant and constitute that there be a college erected in our said province of New Hampshire by the name of Dartmouth College, for the education and instruction of youth of the Indian tribes in this land in reading, writing, and all parts of learning which shall appear necessary and expedient for civilizing and christianizing children of pagans, as well as in all liberal arts and sciences, and also of English youth and any others. And the trustees of said college may and shall be one body corporate and politic, in deed, action and name, and shall be called, named and distinguished by the name of the Trustees of Dartmouth College.²¹

The phrase “and also of English youth and any others” was significant. Although it might appear to have been added as an afterthought to the mission of Indian education, in fact, it was the other way around. Wheelock’s first draft of the charter said Dartmouth was being founded to educate “Youths of *the English* and also of the Indian Tribes.” Then, in historian James Axtell’s words, “he remembered that several thousand British benefactors had given thousands of pounds to a charity school primarily for Indians, not white colonists, and he scratched out the reference to English youth and added it at the end of the passage as if to indicate their subordinate position in his grand design.” The charter also stated, more explicitly, “that without the least impediment to the said design, the same school may be enlarged and improved to promote learning among the English.”²² As the SSPCK noted later, the charter made no mention of the fund under its care that was intended solely for “maintaining and educating Indian youths.”²³

In August 1770 Wheelock gave public notice in New Hampshire and Connecticut newspapers that “My Indian charity school . . . is now become a body corporate and politic, under the name of DARTMOUTH COLLEGE” and that he hoped “soon to be able to support by charity a large number, not only of Indian youths in Moor’s charity school, which is connected and incorporated with the College, but also of English youths in the College, in order to

their being fitted for missionaries among the Indians.”²⁴ Indians would continue to attend Moor’s Charity School, but Dartmouth students, it seemed, would be white. Wheelock had his college, but he was losing interest in his great design.

He had been suffering from poor health for some time. As his letter to Sarah Simon showed, he had also become increasingly frustrated by the cultural resistance and resilience of his Indian students—what he called backsliding and what later boarding school officials like Richard Henry Pratt referred to disparagingly as “returning to the blanket.” Wheelock’s Indian students did not appreciate the sacrifices he made for them, he complained. He was disillusioned with the students he’d had, and frustrated in his efforts to get others.

Things had been going badly with the Iroquois. In the spring of 1768, one of the Oneida boys at Wheelock’s school “was taken With Vomiting Blood,” and doctors feared he might bleed to death. Even when the bleeding stopped, he was left “in So low a state that his Life is now almost despaired of.” An Oneida named William Minor, or “Little William,” died at the school—“a pretty Little Boy,” Wheelock said, and “the first Indian Scholar that has died at my House.” Another, Mundius, was “raised from the Gates of Death” after a long illness, but his parents came and took him home that summer. The next year, Oneida parents pulled their children out of Wheelock’s school after hearing rumors of mistreatment.²⁵ The situation was not much better in Mohawk country, where Molly Brant remained angry at Wheelock and Sir William Johnson grew cold to Wheelock’s entreaties for assistance in recruiting Iroquois students. In 1768, Wheelock had written:

I apprehend it will be most for ye general good of ye design before us, and what indeed of necessity at present, yt ye Mohocks to whom I first sent Missrs & Schoolmasters, should be wholly neglected, as those places are reserved for, and are daily expected to be supplied with Missrs, from home. And many have learnt to despise any but such as come from ye great Minister almost as big as ye King. I hope soon to have a supply of my own pupils, & such as are promising—I find by experience yt English Youth must have ye lead at present.²⁶

The “great Minister” was William Johnson, who had grown increasingly hostile to Wheelock’s Congregationalism, his educational goals and methods, and his land speculation. Johnson was a member of the Church of England

and Anglicans became strident in their denunciations of “the stupid Bigots” Wheelock sent as missionaries into Indian country; one warned Johnson that “Wheelock’s Cubs” were “wicked eno’ to kindle a Civil War.” Johnson withdrew his patronage of Wheelock’s grand design.²⁷

Wheelock insisted on sending his son Ralph to Iroquois country as an emissary and recruiting officer. It was not a good choice. The only surviving son from Wheelock’s first marriage, Ralph suffered from epilepsy so severe that it seems to have led to dementia. Wheelock thought highly of his son’s ability to deal with Indians, but in reality Ralph was totally unsuited to the job and tried to compensate for his inadequacies with bluster. He assumed a domineering attitude and was subject to fits of temper as well as seizures. On one occasion he berated Oneida chiefs for not jumping at his father’s offer to send teachers and preachers: telling them “they must take the Consequences and go to Hell their own way,” he stormed out of the council.²⁸ Needless to say, few Iroquois students came to the new school.

In August 1770, Wheelock, his wife and family, his black slaves, and about thirty students, some driving cattle, traveled up the eastern bank of the Connecticut River to Fort Number Four and then on to Hanover. The location was ideal, Wheelock thought: “the situation is on a beautiful plain, the soil fertile and easy of cultivation. The tract on which the college is fixed, lying mostly in one body, and convenient for improvement.” But it was still “wilderness,” and the Hanover Plain was covered in stands of white pine. He had brought laborers to erect buildings, and they set to work felling trees and building crude log huts. He had an eighteen-foot-square log cabin built for himself and huts for the students.²⁹ David McClure, who had graduated from Yale in 1769 and had taken charge of Moor’s Charity School, moved with the school to Hanover, where he found “the appearance of all things was new & wild.” He taught the school “in a large log house, near the center of the present green,” and also tutored at the College, which he described that first year as “intended for a temporary affair, & run up in a hurry.”³⁰ The first educational structure—the Old College—was built between 1769 and 1771; Commons (College Hall) was constructed between 1770 and 1774. As Dartmouth began its second year, Wheelock announced in the press that he had “the fairest prospect in a little time to be able to support an hundred Indian and English youths upon charity, and all with a view to the first and grand object of the Institution, viz., the spreading the blessed gospel of the Redeemer among the savages.”³¹



Woodcut depicting Dartmouth's founding. *Courtesy Dartmouth College, Rauner Library.*

Unlike other colonial colleges, Dartmouth was not just a school for young gentlemen. The sons of the elite were not attracted to Wheelock's college in the woods, where students studied the Bible and the classics but were also expected to contribute to the upkeep of the school and prepare themselves to teach Indians to farm by performing manual labor, working in the fields, and cutting timber. Catalogues of the students at Dartmouth and Moor's Charity School in 1771 and 1772 listed several Indians "on charity" and preparing for admission to the college,³² but there were no Indians in Dartmouth's first, tiny, graduating class; nor would there be for six years. Four students graduated at the first commencement in August 1771: John Wheelock and Samuel Gray, "independent students," and Levi Frisbie and Sylvanus Ripley, both "educated for missionaries among the remote Indians." David McClure, who attended, found it "pleasing to see the solitary gloom of the wilderness give place to the light of science, social order & religion." The next day the ministers present ordained David Avery, prior to "his immediate departure as a missionary to the Indians" to work alongside Samuel Kirkland in Oneida country.³³ Wheelock continued to take Indian children at Moor's Charity School and continued to insist—as he wrote to David Towsey, a Stockbridge Indian father who wanted to send his sons, aged three and seven, to be educated: "My heart's desire is if possible to spread the great redeemer's name thro' this whole land, that all the poor benighted nations may all become partakers of the great Salvation."³⁴ Wheelock took Towsey's older boy, Benjamin, and advised Towsey to wait until the younger one was ready for school. But he had changed his mind about training Indians to be missionaries, and he had no intention of making Dartmouth an Indian college.³⁵

Samson Occom saw what was happening and he called Wheelock on it. Formerly Wheelock's devoted student, Occom was furious at Wheelock's misuse now of the funds Occom had worked so hard to pry out of English and Scottish hands. He may also have been displeased that the school he helped to found was better placed to educate Abenakis, who had sided with the French in recent wars, than this own Mohegan people, who had been allies of the English. These were dark days for Occom. His health was poor and he was struggling to support a large family. He evidently found solace in drink on at least one occasion and Wheelock magnified and publicized it as a fall into intemperance. Then, in February 1771, Occom's eldest son, eighteen-year-old Aaron, who had been in and out of Moor's Charity School, died, leaving a pregnant wife.³⁶ Occom's relations with Wheelock grew strained and finally

snapped. Wheelock had written Occom in January, expressing great sorrow at his former pupil's "repeated" fall, and told him that unless his repentance was very public and evident to everyone, "your usefulness is near at an end where you are." Wheelock wanted him to leave Mohegan and go to Iroquois country. Switching to Dartmouth, Wheelock said: "I hope in a little Time you will have opportunity to see scores of your Tawney Brethren nourished by the Breasts of this Alma Mater." For Occom, it was finally too much. The letter he wrote to Wheelock merits quoting at length:

I am very jealous that instead of your Semenary Becoming alma Mater, she will be too alba [white] mater to Suckle the Tawnees, for She is already aDorn'd up too much like the Popish Virgin Mary. She'll be Naturally asham'd to Suckle the Tawnees for She is already equal in Power, Honor and Authority to any College in Europe. I think your College has too much Worked by Grandure for the Poor Indians, they'll never have much benefit of it,— In So Saying I Speak the general Sentiment of Indians and English too in these parts. . . . I verily thought once that your Institution was Intended Purely for the poor Indians with this thought I Cheerfully Ventur'd my Body & Soul, left my Country my poor young Family all my friends and Relations, to sail over the Boisterous Sea to England, to help forward your School, Hoping, that it may be a lasting Benefit to my poor Tawnee Brethren, With this View I went a Volunteer—I was quite Willing to become a Gazing Stock, Yea Even a Laughing Stock, in Strange Countries to Promote your Cause— We Loudly Proclaimed before Multitudes of People from Place to Place, that there was a most glorious Prospect of Spreading the gospel of the Lord Jesus to the furthest Savage Nations in the Wilderness, thro your Institution, We told them that there were So many Missionaries & So many Schoolmasters already sent out, and a greater Number woud soon follow. But when we got Home behold all the glory had decayed and now I am afraid, we shall be Deem'd as Liars and Deceivers in Europe, unless you gather Indians quickly to your College, in great Numbers. . . . Many gentlemen in England and in this Country too, Say if you had not had this Indian Buck you woud not [have] Collected a quarter of the Money you did, one gentleman in Particular in England Said to me, if he hadn't Seen my face he woudnt have given 5 happence but now I have 50£ freely— This one Consideration gives me great Quietness.³⁷

If Wheelock saw any legitimacy in Occom's complaints, he never admitted it. Instead, he took umbrage at what he doubtless considered insubordination and ingratitude. He replied to Occom: "I thought my dear sir you had fully known my object to be the Indians which has been invariably the

same from the first. They are also the first object in the charter.” He justified the shift to educating English boys for missionary work as the policy that would ultimately be of most benefit to the Indians: “Dartmouth College is and invariably has been and will be as long as any Indians are left primarily designed for them, and the presence of white students only serves to make the project more effective.” He hoped soon “to be able to support an hundred Indians and youths designed for Indian service on charity.” Although “My heart is broken and spirits sometimes almost overwhelmed with the behavior of some I have taken unweired [unwearied] pains for,” Wheelock was determined to continue, working for them as long as he lived, “and I believe in so doing I am unto God a sweet savor of Christ, though they all perish after all that can be done to save them.”³⁸ Occom expressed interest in seeing the college Wheelock had built with the money he raised, but Wheelock did not encourage such a visit. Occom complained that Wheelock had stopped writing; Wheelock complained Occom had not treated him as a friend. Their correspondence petered out and “their 31-year relationship ended in mutual silence.”³⁹

Wheelock also had to do some explaining to Lord Dartmouth and other English trustees who expressed concerns similar to Occom’s. Reminding Wheelock that the funding was for the express purpose of “creating, establishing, endowing and maintaining an Indian Charity School,” they could only “look upon the charter you have obtained and your intention of building a college and educating English youth, as going beyond the line by which you and we are circumscribed.”⁴⁰

The few Indians who were at the College were far from happy. Daniel Simon complained that he had little time for studying because he was required to do so much work, which was not what he understood the purpose of the school to be: “What good will the Charity money do the Indians?” he asked; if they were expected to work to pay their way, they could just as well go somewhere else for their education. “Wo unto that poor Indian or white man that Should Ever Com to this School, without he is rich.” Daniel was anxious to get on with his education and if he could not do it at Dartmouth, he told Wheelock, he’d go elsewhere. Daniel stayed, and graduated in 1777, but his was a common complaint.⁴¹ Like all students everywhere, Daniel also sometimes found that rowdy fellow-students made studying difficult. In the winter of 1773, he, a Stockbridge Indian named Peter Pohquonnapeet, and two non-Indian students complained to Wheelock about “the Indians that Lives in the room

against us" (who were probably Mohawks from Kahnawake) who interrupted their studies by "hollowing And making all manner of n[o]ise."⁴²

Wheelock had not yet totally given up on the Iroquois. He sent David Avery to the Oneidas in 1772 to gauge their attitude toward his missionaries and sending their children to Dartmouth. The Oneidas had pulled their children out of Wheelock's school three years before and had no intention of letting them return. "Our father is really to be pitied!" said a headman named Thomas, referring to Wheelock. "He resides yonder at a great distance, in the woods as well as we, & knows nothing what is done & doing here among us Indians. There he sits & thinks — & longs to have all the Indians become an holy people — & does not conceive or imagine any great obstacles in the way, because his heart is so full of benevolence towards the Indians, & thinks that they must view his good designs in the same light as he does." Oneida headmen at the village of Kanowalohale (present-day Vernon, New York) were less charitable: "English schools we do not approve of here, as serviceable to our spiritual interest," they said; "& almost all those who have been instructed in English are a reproach to us. This we supposed our father was long ago sufficiently appraised of." In fact, the Oneidas were "despised by our brethren, on account of our christian profession. Time was when we were esteemed as honorable & important in the confederacy: but now we are looked upon as small things; or rather nothing at all." Ralph Wheelock's speech carried no weight with them, they said, and Eleazar Wheelock had not taken the time to get to know the Indians' minds before he sent out his missionaries: "And so his missions have turned out a mere sham, & all in vain." That year, Wheelock sent Ralph to Onondaga, the central council fire of the Iroquois League, in a final effort to win back the Iroquois. The Onondagas were even more forthright than the Oneidas in expressing their views about Wheelock's schooling. Shaking Ralph by the shoulder, they told him they knew only too well the methods the English used to teach Indian children. "Learn yourself to understand the word of God, before you undertake to teach & govern others," they said and then, which Wheelock must have hated to hear, "learn of the French ministers if you would understand, & know how to treat Indians. They dont speak roughly; nor do they for every little mistake take up a club & flog them."⁴³ In February 1772, two Narragansett former students, John Matthews and Abraham Simon, went from Hanover as emissaries to Tuscarora country. They returned in June bringing word that the Tuscaroras too "had determined to have no English schools among them."⁴⁴

Dartmouth's missionary outreach remained ambitious but its recruiting efforts came up short. In May 1772, David McClure and Levi Frisbie "were ordained at Dartmouth College to the work of the Gospel Ministry." McClure preached in College Hall on the Sunday before their departure to the Indian nations of western Pennsylvania and "those distant & savage tribes beyond the Ohio [where] no missionary from New England had ever gone!" Wheelock asked God's blessing on this mission "& on all the labors of Missionaries to spread the knowledge of the true God & Saviour among the heathen." The SSPCK funded the mission.⁴⁵

Frisbie fell ill at Fort Pitt (present-day Pittsburgh) and McClure carried on alone. His journey was a case study of what often happened when missionary assumptions and attitudes encountered Indian realities and responses. Reaching the Delaware villages in the Muskingum Valley in September 1772, McClure was hospitably received by the Delaware chiefs, Netawatwees (a.k.a. Newcomer) and Killbuck. They granted him an audience with the Delawares' tribal council. Through his interpreter, McClure spoke of his long journey and his mission, and offered to stay with the Delawares "a considerable time . . . to teach them the way to happiness & heaven."⁴⁶ The Delawares listened politely and said they would think about it. They thought about it for almost two weeks.

During that time, McClure made observations on Delaware government and culture, bemoaned their drinking habits, their vices, and the workings of clan vengeance, introduced them to the concept of the Sabbath, and tried to preach the Gospel. After McClure preached on the second Sabbath, the speaker of the Delaware council, whom McClure recognized as "a very sensible and thoughtful person," engaged him in a theological debate that anticipated Red Jacket's famous rebuttal of missionary endeavors half a century later:

you have told us that we must receive what is in the book (meaning the bible). We believe there is one Almighty *Monetho*, who made all things; he is the father of the Indians and of the White People. He loves one as well as the other. You say, he sent you that book a great while ago. He has not sent it to us. If he intended it for us, he would have let us know it, at the same time as he let you know it. We don't deny that the book is good and intended for you, and no doubt, when you want to know what you should do, you must look into that book; but the Great Monetho has given us knowledge here, (pointing to his forehead) & when we are at a loss what to do, we must *think*.

The other Delawares waited to hear McClure's answer. "It was a deistical objection, founded in the pride of erring reason," wrote McClure, "and more than I expected from an uncultivated heathen." He offered several arguments but the Delaware remained unreceptive and finally declared: "The white people, with whom we are acquainted, are worse or more wicked than we are, and we think it better to be such as we are than such as they are." Stuck for a rebuttal, McClure could only admit that the frontier traders they knew were indeed not Christians; "If you want to see christians you must go to Philadelphia," he said weakly, referring to the Quakers.⁴⁷

A couple of days later, the speaker gave the council's decision, in what McClure aptly described as a laconic answer: "My brother, I am glad you have come among us, from such a great distance, & that we see each other, and rejoice that we have had an opportunity to hear you preach. Brother, you will now return home & when you get there give my love to them that sent you. I have done speaking."⁴⁸ In other words, thanks for stopping by. Convinced he was in "a frontier of depravity," where the whites were as savage as the Indians, McClure saw no prospect of bringing the gospel to the heathen and headed home. "I am sorry," he wrote Wheelock from Fort Pitt, "I can give you no more favorable Idea of those Poor Savages, who are running with madness the downward Road." McClure and Frisbie returned to Dartmouth in the fall of 1773 after a journey that took them sixteen months and 4,268 miles (by McClure's computation) but yielded no students.⁴⁹

Less than a month later, Wheelock sent McClure and Sylvanus Ripley on a fund-raising tour of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. The Old College was intended for temporary use until a more permanent structure could be built of brick or stone (Wheelock argued that it was not feasible to house Indian students in a combustible wooden building because of their propensity to be careless with fire!) and Wheelock wanted to see a new building before he died. The state legislature had granted only \$500, and he knew "the gentlemen in England & Scotland" would be reluctant "to forward much of the money, (collected for the purpose of christianizing the Indians, and committed to their care) for the purpose of erecting a large & costly building." McClure's fund-raising tour was not very successful. Construction of Dartmouth Hall did not begin until 1784 (and it was not completed until 1791).⁵⁰ Nevertheless, McClure was a good servant of the College. He served on the Board of Trustees for twenty-three years and was awarded an honorary doctorate of divinity.⁵¹

With no Indians students to be expected from Iroquoia or west of the Appalachians, Wheelock turned to Canada. The Mohawk community at Kahnawake, near Montreal, the Abenaki community at St. Francis, now Odanak, on the St. Lawrence, and the Huron community at Lorette near Quebec had grown up around Catholic missions. Their warriors had fought as allies of the French and, in numerous raids against settlements in New England, had carried off English captives—usually women and children—whom they adopted into their societies. The most famous example was Eunice Williams, daughter of the minister at Deerfield, Massachusetts, who had been captured along with her family during a massive Indian and French raid on the town in 1704; she was adopted into a family at Kahnawake, married a Mohawk, and spent her life there, refusing all efforts to get her home.⁵² Cultural crossings were not uncommon on the frontier. David McClure met English captives living with Indians when he was at Pittsburgh. Like Benjamin Franklin, Hector St. Jean De Crèvecoeur, and others who commented on the phenomenon, McClure tried to make sense of it:

There is an unknown charm in the Indian life, which surprizingly attaches white people; those especially who have been captivated in early life. Whether it is, that uncontrouled liberty, which is found among savages, or that freedom from all anxiety and care for futurity, which they appear to enjoy, or that love of ease, which is so agreeable to the indolence of human nature, or all these combined, the fact is established by numerous instances of english & french captives, who have resisted the most affectionate and inviting alurements to draw them, and chose to spend their days among their adopted Indian friends.⁵³

As many as 1,600 people were taken captive from New England between 1677 and 1760. Scholars disagree about the numbers who “went Indian,” but over the years the Indian communities on the St. Lawrence adopted and absorbed many English captives, and produced children of English ancestry.⁵⁴ Wheelock believed that Indians with “English blood” would make better students. Though they were born among the Indians, and shared their vices,” he wrote, “they appear to be as sprightly, active, enterprising, benevolent towards all, and sensible of Kindnesses done them, as English Children commonly are.”⁵⁵

In 1771, “an Indian (named Michael) from Caghnawaga, near Montreal, happening to come to Hanover just at that time, was entertained with care, and sent home in high spirits, promising to commend the school to his

tribe.”⁵⁶ There is no evidence that Michael ever returned for an education himself, but he was clearly winned and dined in the expectation that he would send other Mohawk students from Kahnawake. In addition, Wheelock sent recruiters more than two hundred miles by canoe and forest trail to the villages on the St. Lawrence. In the summer of 1772, Sylvanus Ripley and Lieutenant Thomas Taylor of Claremont, New Hampshire, who “had long been a captive with the French and Indians in those parts, and was well acquainted with the customs of both,” traveled to Canada “to obtain a number of likely Indian boys to receive an education here upon charity; or which I rather chuse if it may be the children of English captives, who were taken and naturalized by Indians and married among them.” The two recruiters returned with ten children — eight from Kahnawake and two from Lorette (Lewis and Sebastian Vincent). Two of the Kahnawakes, John Phillips and Thomas Stacey, were sons of white captives. (John Phillips’s father had been captured in New York as a boy, now went by the Mohawk name Sanorese, and had married a woman from St. Regis with whom he had eleven children. Thomas Stacey’s father, John, had been captured as a boy in 1756, married a Kahnawake Mohawk woman, and now ran a trading post at Kahnawake.) One of the Kahnawakes seemed to Wheelock to be “near thirty Years old.” Wheelock thought the young men from Lorette were “endowed with a greatness of mind, and a thirst for learning,” but things did not go well with the Kahnawakes: “after I had cloathed them decently, they soon began to discover the Indian Temper, grew impatient of Order and Government in the School, shew’d a great Inclination to be hunting and rambling in the Woods.” Four of the Kahnawakes were dismissed within a year. Wheelock himself went recruiting to Canada, as did Levi Frisbie in 1773.⁵⁷

When Thomas Kendall traveled to Kahnawake in 1773 “to give them the offer of sending their Children to the Colege with me to learn to read & write,” he had to overcome Catholic influence and Indian hesitancy. “It appears that the Devils Castle must be stormed before it can be taken,” he wrote, “for they have two Priests in this Village.” The Indians held a council to consider his proposal: “they Seem to be a People of surprising understanding of things & never set about any thing before they have wayed the matter in their own minds.” Kendall had to be careful not to appear too eager, but he found encouraging prospects in the Indian boys he worked with: “I have my hands full mending their pens & seting their Coppys & hearing them read,” he wrote, “all the while I endeavour to appear as indifferent about their com-

ing to learn as I can[,] knowing that if I appear over fond they will be backward. They learn very fast both to read & write.”⁵⁸

Wheelock also dispatched Thomas Walcutt to St. Francis. Walcutt, who was born in Boston in 1758, had been sent by his widowed mother, Elizabeth, to Moor’s Charity School when he was twelve with the intention that he should become a missionary. David McClure took young Thomas under his wing and thought him a personable and promising youth. The “rising College is well fixed, settled & under comfortable Circumstances for so new a Country,” McClure assured Elizabeth. Wheelock was untiring in his efforts to do something for “the tawny Inhabitants of America,” and Thomas could be “an instrument of everlasting good to his fellow Men & a light to enlighten the Gentiles & spread the honor of his Name among the heathen.”⁵⁹

Unfortunately, Thomas was not a good student. Wheelock told his mother that although he had talent and the makings of a scholar, “he is so fickle, heedless, & inclined to trifling, that I fear he will be ruined if he should continue with me.” What was more, Thomas was “very cunning and artful to excuse himself and very apt to forget his promises of amendment.” He needed a steady hand, and Wheelock recommended apprenticing him to a farmer until he was sixteen or seventeen, at which point “Providence permitting, I will take him again upon trial.”⁶⁰ A stream of correspondence ensued, with Elizabeth imploring her wayward son to buckle down and grow up; he should make the most of his opportunities, think about the family’s reputation, and consider how much good he could do if he improved his learning “and god gives you grace for the poor ignorant indians.” Thomas’s elder brother, Benjamin, wrote saying much the same. Thomas was not a good correspondent at the best of times and on the few occasions he did write home his letters looked hurried and distracted, with multiple scorings out, which further dismayed his mother who urged him to write clearly and more often. She was concerned about his soul, she said. She also sent him half a dollar and some ribbon for his neck and hair.⁶¹

It looked for a time as if Wheelock would expel Thomas, but Thomas redoubled his efforts in a bid to be admitted to Dartmouth. In September 1773, he told his mother that he had completed his year’s studies and “entered the College on condition that I improve the vacation in studying,” which meant he would not be coming home to Boston in the fall unless he postponed entering the College for another year.⁶² He mentioned that there was some talk of his going to Canada the next year with James Dean to learn Indian lan-

guages; then he crossed it out—he doubted anything would come of it. In fact, Dean set out for Canada with Kendall in May 1774; Thomas went with Levi Frisbie in June.⁶³ Anticipating a mother's concerns as her son set out to live far away among the Indians, Frisbie wrote to reassure Elizabeth. Thomas would be guaranteed an education when he returned because he would know Indian languages and be better equipped for missionary work. Frisbie could not say for sure when Thomas would come back, "but undoubtedly when he has gained a competent knowledge of some one Indian Tongue, which considering his Youth and Memory will not take him a long time." There was no doubt that this was the best thing for Thomas: "I think Providence seems to point out such a Method and I hope you will be enabled to rest the Matter entirely with God, and give your Mind No anxiety about it." Frisbie promised to do his utmost to befriend Thomas.⁶⁴ With Boston in prerevolutionary upheaval and a son leaving for Indian country, Elizabeth hurried off a letter: "keep your collar Close and your Lungs warm," she told Thomas, who was never a very healthy young man.⁶⁵

In September, Thomas wrote to his mother from St. Francis. Setting out from Dartmouth in mid-June, he had walked about seventy miles to Crown Point, then carried on down Lake Champlain to Montreal. After trying a couple of Indian towns, it had been decided he should go to St. Francis. He was now living there, comfortably "in English fashion," he assured his mother. James Dean had recruited some boys in the village and would soon be heading back to Dartmouth. Thomas hoped to be home next August after he had learned Abenaki. "I am Very Well Contented with my Condition and Hope my dear Mother Wont Give Herself any Uneasy Thoughts about me but Commit me to the Hands of God that is able to Take Care of me as Well Here as if I were in the Poor Afflicted Town of Boston."⁶⁶

When Dean returned to Canada in March 1775 he carried a packet of letters for Thomas. Classmates urged him to do God's work. Narragansett Daniel Simon told him his heart was with him and that things were going on as usual at Dartmouth.⁶⁷ Things were not going on as usual for the Walcutt family, however. Thomas's mother and his sister, Lucy, had moved to Hanover from Boston, where "things are Very Dark." Elizabeth was working as caretaker of the Indian boys at Moor's Charity School: "Mr. Dean Can inform you how I am imployed here taking Care of the Boys in the Character of a mother and they Learn very well," she wrote. She looked forward to seeing Thomas soon and hoped he had learned the language and done God's work

among the Indians. "Present my Respectful Regards to his majesty gill and Lady and tell them that their Son with the other Boys Lives with me and I am their mama and give my Love to all their parents."⁶⁸ "His majesty gill" was Joseph Louis Gill, the chief at St. Francis. Gill was the son of two English captives from Massachusetts who had been adopted into Abenaki society and converted to Catholicism. Gill's first wife was killed when Robert Rogers's New Hampshire Rangers had attacked and burned St. Francis in 1759. Nevertheless, Gill sent his son and nephews to Dartmouth with Dean. Eleazar Wheelock's letter, written the same day as Elizabeth's, was decidedly upbeat and obviously intended for Abenaki parents. "The Boys from St. Francis are all well and behave very well," he said; "they love the School and make good proficiency." They were quite contented and had not said a word about going home, except for a couple who said they wanted to bring more Abenaki boys to Dartmouth. After Elizabeth and Lucy arrived, "your Mother undertook to be a mother to them — and she has taken the best care of them to Comb their Heads, mend their Cloaths &c.&c. they love her as they do their Eyes." Jacob Fowler, Occom's brother-in-law and a former pupil of Wheelock, was teaching at the school. Teachers and students shared the same lodging: Fowler and his wife in a room at one end; the Indian boys in the middle, and Elizabeth and Lucy Walcutt in a room at the other end. "You may tell the Boys Parents of this & that their Children want for nothing we can do for them," Wheelock wrote. "Our State is very happy indeed here — Love, peace and Joy reign Triumphant." Wheelock urged Thomas to bring more boys back with him if there were any likely prospects.⁶⁹

In the spring of 1772, Wheelock had only five Indian students in Moor's Charity School, all of them from New England; by 1773, he had fifteen or sixteen, and by the end of 1774, "upwards of twenty," mostly from Canada. The gathering clouds of revolution threatened to interrupt future missions, but McClure remained optimistic "that the numerous Tribes of Savages will yet reap lasting benefit from that pious & charitable Institution."⁷⁰ As anthropologist and linguist Gordon Day noted, it was the beginning of a long relationship: "for the next 80 years boys from St. Francis made up over half of all the Indians attending Dartmouth and preparatory schools with Dartmouth funds."⁷¹

In the summer of 1774, New Hampshire historian Jeremy Belknap visited Dartmouth. He dined with Wheelock and after dinner took a walk down to the river, where he "observed a tree where the bark was cut off, the figure of

an Indian painted, which was done by one of the Indian scholars." He visited all the Indian students, "most of whom could speak good English," although one little boy "was so shy that he would not be seen." Belknap also attended the examination of Joseph Johnson, "an ingenious, sensible, serious young man," who was Occom's son-in-law.⁷² Johnson was examined by six ministers during commencement and granted a license to preach the Gospel, "with a principal View to the Benefit of his own Nation." He preached in College Hall and then headed off to Mohawk country, but before he left he sent his wife, Tabitha, 5 dollars by his friend Daniel Simon, "for your relief, and Comfort, and a Token of my Sincere regards, and love for you, and a Sign to let you know that the lord hath verily prospered me."⁷³ With Johnson licensed to preach and Jacob Fowler teaching Indian students, there was still a Mohegan connection, and an Occom family connection, if not much of a Mohegan student presence at Dartmouth.

A summary of expenses for the years 1767–75 indicated (rounded to the nearest pound) £1929 spent on missionaries, £834 on schoolmasters, £4,258 on Indian Youths, £3,000 on English Youths, and £3,200 on labor and materials.⁷⁴ But the proportion of Indian to white youths was shifting dramatically. When donors voiced concerns about the diversion of funds from Indian education to English youth, Wheelock responded that he would run the Indian school and Dartmouth College as parallel institutions, but in practice he drew on funding for the former to develop the latter. By 1775, he had spent all of the money Occom raised in England, mainly in building Dartmouth College. The SSPCK kept a tighter grip on its funds, however, and held Wheelock to a strict accounting so that the money designated for Indian education went to Indian education. They did not approve of shifting his recruiting efforts northward to bring boys from Canada, "a measure which is but little conducive to the great purpose 'of evangelizing the Heathen.'"⁷⁵

Correspondence between Dartmouth and the SSPCK on the issue of the funds continued intermittently for the best part of a hundred years. Frustrated by the difficulties of recruiting and retaining Indian students, successive Dartmouth presidents suggested other uses for the money—to educate pious young men for the ministry, to fund professorships, to pay teachers' salaries, or for the general upkeep of the College. But the SSPCK would have none of it and insisted that the fund be used for its intended purposes.

Scottish money, raised by Samson Occom and controlled by the SSPCK, kept Dartmouth in the business of educating Indians.

