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Postcolonialism and native American geographies: the letters of Rosalie La Flesche Farley, 1896–1899

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As the privileged daughter of the last traditional chief of the Omaha Indians, Rosalie La Flesche Farley acted as business manager for the Omaha during a period of changing land tenure and scandalous land loss. The letters I examine here discuss the spaces of colonial relations into which Rosalie was tied during the allotment, selling, and leasing of Omaha land in the late nineteenth century. While there is an acknowledged ‘problem’ with a postcolonial interpretation of US historical geography, a postcolonial analysis of Rosalie’s writing allows for a measure of understanding about the numerous conflicting, obviously distraught, but ultimately personally advantageous spaces of ‘Indianness’ she occupied. The gendered and racialized spaces and subjectivities she occupied were products of American colonialism and her strategies of survival within it.

The La Flesche family has occupied a prominent position in historical and historical geographical works on the Omaha Indians. This is due in large part to the controversial role that their patriarch and last traditional chief, Joseph La Flesche (Iron Eyes), played during the period of Euro-American expansion onto the American Great Plains during the mid- and late-nineteenth century. Much of the literature on the Omaha stresses that they responded as archetypal assimilationists to American expansionism – which Olund (this issue) helpfully frames as a way of erasing the legacy of conquest from American political discourse. Reformers, missionaries, politicians, and others considered the Omaha the most ‘progressive’ of Indians. But it was in their attempts to secure title to their land and avoid deportation to Indian Territory (Oklahoma) that initiated the splitting of their reservation into individual allotments of farm land years before the 1887 Dawes Act mandated it. La Flesche family members were the first of the Omaha to receive allotments, which, in 1881, were supported by perhaps only one-fourth of the people.
Following Joseph’s lead, the La Flesches assimilated into the dominant Anglo culture more quickly than other Omaha. Joseph established his own village for his ‘progressive’ followers, which his detractors derided as ‘the village of make-believe white men’ (Figure 1). He led his group in building frame houses, starting farms, adopting Christianity, and sending his children to reform schools. The La Flesches were an American-educated, prosperous family amidst the collectively declining situation of most Omaha.

Rosalie La Flesche Farley (Figure 2), one of Joseph’s (and his first wife Mary’s) children, is less well known and much less studied than three of her siblings who rose to relative prominence in US history – Susan, Susette, and Francis. In this paper I draw attention to letters that Rosalie wrote to her brother Francis (Frank), during the years 1896–1899 when she lived and worked with the Omaha on the reservation and he worked for the Department of Interior’s Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in Washington, DC. With the help of Alice Fletcher, Indian reformer and anthropologist, Francis was appointed clerk in the Indian Office and from that position helped monitor and conduct Omaha business in Washington.

Working from the reservation, Rosalie influenced and often directed Omaha land

FIGURE 1 Village of Make-Believe White Men on the Omaha Reservation. Pen and ink copy by F.W. Miller of a sketch made by an Omaha man for the New Orleans Exposition, 1885. Joseph La Flesche’s house is the large one within the marked plot to the center-right of the image. Sketch reproduced courtesy of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University
transactions. The letters I examine here provide an important testament to the complex, contentious deals taking place over Omaha land, as well as to Rosalie's and the La Flesche family's highly fraught positionings amidst this process. These letters tell part of the story of conflicts that arose over the splitting of Omaha lands into individual allotments, and especially of the leasing or selling of what quickly became recognized by a host of factions (including land speculators, policy makers, BIA agents, Omaha leaders, judges, town builders, cattlemen) as prime ranch and farm land, ripe for capitalist development.

Unlike her sisters and (half-)brother, who were educated at schools in New Jersey and Virginia, Rosalie had no formal American education beyond the Presbyterian Mission school on the reservation, although she would likely have had a formal Omaha education. Nonetheless, she rose to a prominent position among the Omaha, primarily as bookkeeper and business manager. Rosalie became 'the banker, the go-between, the chief financial officer of the tribe'. She kept separate accounts for individuals and the Omaha as a whole. With her husband Edward Farley, an Irish immigrant with less formal education than herself, Rosalie managed the communal pasture, the 'surplus' reservation...
land left over after individual allotments were made in the 1880s. She also served as
distributor and accountant of funds that were earned from sales or leases of land or that
had been donated by eastern philanthropic organizations.¹¹

Since she spoke fluent English and moved in numerous Omaha and Anglo-American
social contexts, on and off the reservation, Rosalie’s house became a meeting place for
many while she served as interpreter. Among her frequent houseguests were influential
Omaha men, Alice Fletcher, and other eastern Indian reformers such as Sara Kinney of
the Connecticut Women’s Indian Association.

Rosalie left a small but significant body of written records about colonization of the
American Great Plains. Four sets of her unpublished writings are found in the much larger
group of La Flesche Family Papers archived at the Nebraska State Historical Society.¹²
While her two diaries document her everyday domestic life, such as her many
housekeeping and child-rearing duties, her letters document the extensive social and
spatial relations into which she was tied in her business dealings. As businesswoman, she
corresponded frequently with Alice Fletcher, her brother Frank, and other bureaucrats
in Washington, DC. She also wrote letters, documenting both personal and business
affairs, to her sisters when they were back East lecturing or at school, and to her sons,
as they began leaving home to attend school.¹³

Rosalie’s letters, all written from her farm, are terse and packed with details about
leases on Omaha land, conflicts over land purchases, payments received, and impending
litigation. Rosalie wrote to Frank for both ‘official’ government advice for handling these
matters as well as for his personal, unofficial advice. Her documentation of specific
conflicts and issues provide insights into a number of land disputes, and their
contribution is substantive. These letters speak of her efforts to prevail upon her family,
other Omaha, encroaching white squatters, local businessmen, and numerous
government officials in the allotting, selling, and leasing of Indian land. Perhaps more
than anything else, though, these letters provide a unique opportunity to hear the voice
of one influential Indian woman who was caught amidst a range of competing cultures,
economies, and patriarchies.

In this paper I attempt to make sense of how Rosalie negotiated the many social spaces
and subjectivities through which she manoeuvred. I begin by first outlining the spaces
of colonial relations into which she was embedded with the federal allotment and leasing
programs, and the local texture these took on within the Omaha Reservation by the time
she came of age. This provides a context for examining extracts of Rosalie’s letters that
detail several of her involvements. In the last section of the paper I consider the
fruitfulness of a postcolonial approach in analysing Rosalie’s self-representations in her
letters, and how one might assess her actions – for which, not incidentally, she absorbed
a great deal of criticism. I pay particular attention to the gendered and racialized social
and spatial relations to which Rosalie was tied, and interpret them as products of
American colonialism.

My purpose in all of this is two-fold. I am implicitly interested in bringing Rosalie’s
own voice to the forefront in discussions of colonial land dispossession and changing
land tenure for the Omaha. There remains a pressing need to continue ‘writing women
in’ – especially women who represent minority cultures and ethnicities – to such
historical geographies of North America. To do so requires reaching beyond 'public' or published documentary sources to the women's private sphere of letters and diaries, the significant genre of literate women's self-expression in the nineteenth century.

Secondly, I am more explicitly concerned with demonstrating how a postcolonial approach might enable a fruitful interpretation of these archival materials and, by implication, of other Native American historical geographies. Rosalie's story is ripe for postcolonial analyses; she occupied numerous conflicting, obviously distraught, but ultimately personally advantageous, spaces of 'Indianness' in late nineteenth-century America. With Olund, I would caution that assimilationist 'successes' such as hers, though, must not be allowed to efface or wash over the larger processes and products of American colonialism.

**Allotment, leasing, and the Farley pasture**

The historical geography of Omaha land dispossession is complex and would be difficult to outline in even a book-length work, let alone in an abridged version here. Several works approach that task. At the macro level, an all-too-familiar sounding series of events, including decimation by white diseases, shrinkage of a land base through forced treaties with the US government in 1854 and 1865, liquidation of more land in 1871 to raise capital, the destruction of buffalo herds and wild game, and removal to an approximately 150 000-acre reservation in present-day north-east Nebraska, left the Omaha deeply factionalized and distressed by 1880. To exacerbate matters, a bill was then pending in Congress to forcibly remove the Omaha, like their Ponca neighbors, to Indian Territory.

To counteract the threat of removal, the Omaha, with the assistance of Alice Fletcher, brought a petition before the 1881 Congress that specified the amount and location of Omaha lands then under cultivation. In response, the 1882 Congress passed the Omaha Allotment Act, which permitted allocations of the reservation in severalty and patents were issued for individual land holdings. By 1884 formal allotments had been made to 1194 Omaha, involving 76 810 acres. (See Figure 3.) Throughout this process, the Omaha served, as it were, as an early test case 'proving' the success of allotment to those who wished to view it this way, despite the severe economic collapse taking place on the reservation, which the BIA and Congress ignored as they formulated the Dawes Act.

The Omaha were quickly pressured by land speculators and settlers to lease or rent their land, and they did so long before Congress made it 'official' federal Indian policy. Although the Dawes Act prohibited leasing during a 25-year trust period, governmental rules and restrictions on leasing became increasingly liberal. While allotment derailed the threat of removal, the whole system led to serious abuses and was fraught with threats, coercion, and cheating. With no clear title or property rights, and prevented from mortgaging allotted land in order to acquire the capital necessary to make improvements, many Omaha were simply forced into leasing arrangements and lived off the rent of their lands. The reformers' ideal of the assimilated, self-sufficient Indian farmer did not, for the most part, materialize. By 1892, 90% of the Omaha had leased all or part of their allotments and had in fact moved off of them, 'getting by' on rent money.
FIGURE 3  Omaha Reservation and Vicinity, ca. 1880. Reprinted from *An Unspeakable Sadness: The Dispossession of the Nebraska Indians* by David J. Wishart with permission of University of Nebraska Press. © 1994 by the University of Nebraska Press.
Thousands of acres remained after individual allotments were made on the reservation from 1882 to 1887. One of Alice Fletcher’s contributions to this process was in ensuring that this land would be held in common, to be cultivated and leased and rented, while being saved for future generations’ allotments (rather than the more typical case of selling this surplus land at $1.25/acre). Fletcher proposed a cooperative grazing program for the common pasture. This pasture was the primary stage on which Rosalie and Ed Farley’s business dealings with and for the Omaha were played out, and about which Rosalie wrote in her letters.

After 1892 the Indian Agent was made officially responsible for granting leases, but a ‘middleman’ was to be appointed to oversee the upkeep of the pasture, put up fences, manage the cattle, handle business transactions, and collect rents. At the end of the year the manager would deduct expenses, and then split any resulting profits between himself and the Omaha. Ed Farley in 1884 applied for pasture manager and was awarded a 20-year lease on 18,000 unallotted acres at an annual rate of $0.04/acre. As Omaha were given preference and allowed to lease for longer periods of time, most of Ed and Rosalie’s negotiations actually stood in Rosalie’s name, with Ed designated as her agent. However, they worked together handling the pasture, eventually developing it into a large business operation that was making profits by 1889, and paying out several hundred dollars to the Omaha annually. Rosalie and Ed continued to renew leases and expand their operations, but the cattle business eventually grew to depend more on a feedlot than grazing on open pasture.

From the beginning the pasture was wrought with difficulties, and it led to a long succession of lease disputes and legal battles for Rosalie and Ed. Apparently, Ed had been profitably managing the pasture – he had 5000 head of cattle on the range by 1888, was introducing new strains into the Omaha herds, and was among the first in the region to introduce winter feeding. While Rosalie and Ed made a profit and increased their acreage, their successes produced numerous complaints from Omaha as well as from outsiders who wished to take over the common lands. Many believed that Rosalie and Ed took more than their share of Omaha profits. Even Rosalie’s sister, Susette, claimed that Ed mismanaged the cattle ranch and cheated her people. As one La Flesche family biographer put it,

The pasture became big business; but, through the years, it was beset by controversy, envy, intrigue and underhanded dealings which almost led to a small scale civil war. It meant success to the Farleys but it was dearly bought as balanced against the labor, the misunderstandings, the slander and suffering it brought to Rosalie and Ed.

Whatever the ‘truth’ of the situation, many people wanted to challenge Ed and Rosalie’s control and use of the pasture, and did so.

**Rosalie’s letters**

The 12 extant letters that Rosalie wrote to her brother Frank from 1896 to 1899 speak to the transformation of land tenure on the Omaha reservation and strategies Rosalie and others adopted to survive it. Small portions of the letters describe social events on
and off the reservation, but they mostly focus on business, legal, or political transactions. The letters seem intended to keep Frank (and others such as Alice Fletcher) abreast of the proceedings on the reservation, and name the involvements of nearly 40 different individuals. Rosalie also detailed to Frank the specific banking transactions she made on behalf of individuals. Some of these transactions apparently involved Frank’s own allotment (e.g., 14 July 1897), but she also documented the names of individuals who made payments on loans, or who were behind on their payments (e.g., 7 June 1896).

Rosalie’s letters, written in English, often ask advice of Frank or of others occupying higher levels of the federal Indian bureaucracy, and they express gratitude for help rendered. Though it is unclear to which event(s) she was specifically referring in her first letter, dated 5 April 1896, for instance, she wrote that, ‘We know this much[,] if Miss F[letcher] had not gone to the office in my behalf our answer woul[d] have been “No” at the very star[t]’. A few months later Rosalie wrote to Frank again after controversially but successfully obtaining a new set of leases on Omaha land that would be put toward ‘agricultural purposes’. Her letter read:

Will you please inclose in envelope and direct to [Major Larraber, of the US Bureau of Indian Affairs] or hand to him? Am glad you told me to do this as I have been wanting to [write to him] ever since I received your last message but did not know whether it would be just the thing to do. I would indeed feel guilty if I forgot those to whose earnest efforts I was indebted for the favorable ending of my undertaking. Capt. sent the leases to me Wednesday. (9 July 1896)

In her (prior) letter of 7 June 1896, she had ensured Frank that the ‘Council signing the lease [referred to above] was in accordance with the act of Congress Oct 1894 authorizing the leasing of tribal lands for farming purposes for five years etc.’.

Rosalie’s letters demonstrate a woman well versed in both Native American and Anglo-American law, the encroaching jurisdiction of one over the other, and her attempts to put both to use for her own purposes. In another letter to Frank, dated 28 October 1897, she declared that,

Always when I come up against anything you hear from me.

The Agent – Capt. Mercer has sent me a notice to appear before him the 5th of Nov. in a case brought before him ... to establish heirship or ownership to the ‘Oldest grandmothers’ land,’ and I write in haste to ask you if the Interior Department had made any rulings in cases of this kind? [A]nd could you send me a list of authorities that will apply in this case?

In these ways Rosalie’s letters make explicit the possibilities open to her for directing affairs with and through her friends in Washington, and the manner in which she was helped by them. Her letters contain many such references: ‘Am so glad to hear Miss Fletcher will speak to some of the members of the Board of Indian Commissioners, this will help so much ... [W]e will soon have to push the matter’ (22 January 1897), and in a letter dated 14 July 1897: ‘... in regard to the Sloan case ... You know how it is. I must move carefully in this matter but will do everything I can in a quiet way’.

Rosalie’s letters make reference to a series of lawsuits in which she became embroiled over the common pasture. In 1890, Rosalie had obtained a lease for 2632 acres (for 5 years, renewed each year for $0.25 an acre). In less than a year a lawsuit was brought
against her in Federal District Court charging that the lease was fraudulent. William Peebles, a white land speculator, would-be Indian Agent, and recurring opponent of Ed and Rosalie for rights to the common pasture, was behind the lawsuit. He charged that the Omaha had not authorized the Agent to enter the agreement (there were, in fact, fewer than the required number of Omaha signatories), and that the lease was delaying allotment and therefore hurting the Indians. Peebles and his group of white speculators from the town of Pender, Nebraska, encouraged squatters and others, who otherwise would not be entitled to allotments, to lay claim to unallotted lands in hopes of buying them later (that is, leases would be withdrawn if the land was allotted). Peebles was determined to nullify Rosalie’s lease on the common pasture, and he attempted several strategies to do so, including telling the Omaha that he could arrange for a better deal than Rosalie’s.

Peebles’ lawsuit was defeated on appeal when it was found that he had forged Indians’ names on a document that named him as their representative. Later, Rosalie brought a counter-suit of conspiracy against Peebles, arguing that because he advertised that pasture land was soon to be allotted, no one was interested in renting it and Ed and Rosalie lost business. During the conspiracy trial, each juror was asked whether the fact that Mrs Farley was an Indian would in any way affect their decision. ‘They all said they did not [hold any biases], yet in his summation, Peebles’ attorney appealed to racial prejudices, reminding the jurors of every atrocity ever committed by Indians.’

Rosalie eventually lost the case, though the original jury could not find a verdict against her and asked to be excused. Three years later the Supreme Court of Nebraska reversed the earlier decision, asserting that conspiracy had in fact been proven and that squatters should be removed.

Disagreements among Indian agents, Peebles and other land speculators, and Omaha allottees led to years of further litigation and conflict on the reservation. Rosalie and Ed’s troubles with the pasture did not end with the Peebles’ conspiracy trial. In 1896, a petition (the ‘Fontenelle petition’) was circulating, charging that Rosalie and Ed were not paying the Omaha enough for the new leases. The petition attracted sufficient attention that the Indian Affairs office sent a representative to investigate possible discrepancies, but none were found. Detractors claimed, though, that this was due simply to Frank La Flesche’s involvement in interpreting the representative’s report. In her letters Rosalie was concerned to prove that her leasing practices were fair, her operation was productive, and that the Omaha were receiving a competitive income from them:

Big Omaha said he thought it so absurd for those kicking against the lease – Fontenelle & followers – to claim they were not getting enough for the land leased to me when thousands of acres under pasture east of Bancroft ... they are leasing this spring to parties for farming purposes for .50c an acre for the first two years and .75c for the three years, and taking it in trade at a big price, and this is allotted land.

About 7000 acres now broken and 4000 acres in flax and corn. 180 teams at work plowing and seeding. It will be all broken inside of three weeks. (7 June 1896)

Rosalie’s letters suggest a woman who depended on the support of her brother and others in Washington, but who was also determined and enterprising on her own when
dealing with Omaha men, local land speculators, or Washington officials. Her letter to Frank of 9 July 1896 describes her negotiations with a group of local men who had made investments in the newly leased land:

The contract I was to sign was sent up to me Monday ... Mr McNish read it over three times to me and explain[ed] matters to me. ... I still hesitated telling them that I wanted you to see the contract, that at the first reading I saw that they had protected their interests enough, and I wanted to be sure that mine were protected also in every way, that I expected to sign but did not wish to be hurried.

They were here all afternoon and read it over and over to me and talked each paragraph over ... They told me I must have confidence in them, that this contract should have been signed by me before a dollar of theirs was invested but they had so much confidence in me so let it go till the lease was approved, and went right ahead and put their money into the undertaking trusting to my honor, now that the rental had to be paid asked me to sign before they advanced any more money. That when you come I could have you read it and if you thought they were taking undue advantage of me in any way they would be willing to modify or fix any of the paragraphs objected to. All there really is about it is that they are to advance the money this first year to run it. This money will be paid back out of the proceeds out of the land. I am to have one third of the profits, after this year ... I did not wish to be unreasonable so signed it. I hated to as I thought you and my friend ought to see it first, but our friend Mr Rice of the Citizens Bank saw the contract and said he could see nothing wrong in it.

Most of Rosalie's letters discuss the legal or political status of lease applications and allotments. One letter mentions Peebles' campaign for position of Omaha Indian Agent, to which Rosalie was vehemently opposed. She told Frank that 'it is good to know you will look out about Peebles, we may defeat him after all' (22 January 1897). (Peebles was not appointed.) As Peebles had encouraged squatters to lay claim to unallotted Omaha land, in another letter dated 25 February 1897 Rosalie quoted correspondence from the Indian Agent Beck, who was aligned with Rosalie and against Peebles and his sympathizers among the Omaha (but who himself was also mired in leasing irregularities35),

I sent a letter to Capt. about the persons on the land covered by the lease and this is what I have received from him. Madame: ... Your communication of the 16th., inst., received. I have taken steps to eject the persons illegally occupying the land leased by you and communicated the information to your Attorney before receiving your letter.

In addition, much of Rosalie's writing aligns with reformist rhetoric promoting Omaha assimilation into Anglo culture via the model of the self-sufficient Indian farmer. In a letter of 25 September 1899 Rosalie portrayed Ed as a man working against the 'idle landlording' mentality that many assumed to be the cause of Omaha social decline:

Walter came out to tell Ed he was going to lease the old place to som[e] men in Iowa for 5 years for stock raising but Ed advised him not to. [He told him that] he could raise stock himself there [a]nd make it pay. [S]o he has given it[t] up.

Some of Rosalie's last letters (of 1899) also speak of the eventual allotment of the remaining communal lands as per an amendment to the 1882 federal legislation. This amendment allowed for additional allotments to be made, mostly to women and children who had been left out of the original proceedings. But because the available land was
now considered finite, children born after 1893 would be excluded. Documentary evidence shows that Frank La Flesche wrote to Rosalie at the time and suggested that since there would not be enough land to go around, that she should ‘quietly and quickly’ file papers for her own children’s allotments.\(^6\) For this he said that the Indian Council at the time wanted him removed because he had helped Rosalie and Ed ‘swindle the Omahas’.\(^7\) At the time of the later allotments Rosalie described events then taking place on the reservation:

We went over yesterday [to the Council meeting]. Special Agent read conditions under which allotments were to be made. Wajapa and Noah thought best to let it come, so when it was put to them they agreed to let it come. \([O]\)f course they were many who really did not understand, I told Noah so but he said ‘It does not matter let them go’. He said ‘It will strike some of our children but it will strike them just as hard, they wanted the land allotted let them have it’. Mathewson had Chase do the interpreting, and he blundered through it shamefully . . .

I happened to stand near Chase & helped him out more than once in putting the Indian into English. Mathewson said, ‘Now we will go out side of building & count those who want the land allotted as they pass out.’ This was done. [The allotting agent] said he would report at once to Washington\([.]\) After the count was over, here came Nebraska back into the building saying he would like a few words with the Special Agent. Said he had been very favorably impressed with the conditions \([r]\)ead to them, but understood outside that the children they wanted it for were to be left out. He was told he was too late with his question, his face was a funny looking one, when he finally took it in. He has two under six so has Chase, & a good many others who have been clamoring for allotment. Walter looked pretty \([b]\), I felt so sorry for him. Susie took it easy, said ‘Let them have the land allotted & be done with it. My children will be left out but it will not hurt them’.\(^8\) (10 May 1899)

In other correspondence of Rosalie’s, such as a letter to her son Caryl, dated only ‘1899’, she described in detail the ensuing allotment process:

The Allotting Agent is camped out . . . we heard he was going to allot in Sec. 7 where we want land so we drove over there only to find him out allotting between Winnebago and Omaha Agency. We waited for him to get in all afternoon and just as we were coming away near sun down he got in to camp. He told us when he allotted out where we want land he would let us know.

Two of Rosalie’s diary entries also describe her attempts to secure some of the later allotments. On 4 October 1899 she wrote that she ‘went to Pilcher place and waited all afternoon for [the allotting agent], said he would let us know when he was ready for us’. In a letter dated two weeks later, on 18 October, she added:

[The agent] told me he came to allot the land to the children and took down their names and beneath each name the description of the land. Said we could change the children around if we wished. I showed him the tract Ed had taken for the children and said it was as Ed had given it to him said as far as he knew there was no one claiming the same tract – clear for our taking.

[The agent] gave them drawing of the land.\(^9\)

All but one of Rosalie and Ed’s eight surviving children were born before 1893, thus they were secured individual allotments. The children of many other Omaha, including some of Rosalie’s immediate family (such as Susan’s), though, were not.
Discussion: postcolonialism and the case of Rosalie La Flesche Farley

Rosalie’s letters raise some provocative questions about American colonial encounters. Hopefully, bringing her letters to this forum suggests (or will suggest) some value in incorporating women’s spaces, biographies, voices, careers, and contributions into historical geographies of North America and elsewhere. There remains a pressing need to provide an antidote to the ‘Great Man’ tradition that continues to dominate North American historical geography and thus structure thought and inquiry. Questions of epistemological orientations, narrowly defined subjects of study, available evidence, and research methodologies remain at the forefront of producing more critical and polyvocal historical geographies. Meanwhile, though, we need also to think very carefully about how we recover women or other silenced voices in historical geography, and for what ends. What are we learning about gendered subjectivity, for instance, and how it informs an understanding of Euro-American expansionism and Native American land dispossession?

Insights provided by postcolonial studies can aid in interpreting Rosalie’s life and writings. However, in attempting to situate her and her texts specifically within North American historical geography, one immediately confronts something of a closure around the concept of postcolonialism in the US that has only very recently begun to be addressed. Significantly, postcolonial critics and geographers of Native Americans have yet to find much common ground. A substantial literature in North American historical geography traces American expansionism and colonial consolidation of a sort. Yet such works take little advantage of the insights and concepts that have come to be associated with postcolonial thought.

By contrast, and in line with other British commonwealth countries that share a history of British colonialism, Canadian geographers of First Nation’s peoples have often adopted postcolonial theories and language. Some enthusiasm for postcolonialism is evident in US Native American geography, with several studies undertaken over the past ten years taking up postcolonial projects – identity claims mired in issues of Native ‘authenticity’; reconquest through place naming; pan-Indian ecology claims; and colonial representation and resistance. Yet, this represents a tiny fraction of that subfield.

American studies scholar Amy Kaplan, and after her Peter Hulme, C. Richard King, John Carlos Rowe, Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt, and others discuss the ‘problem’ of postcolonialism in the United States. What can now be considered ‘orthodox’ postcolonial studies focus on the processes and products of European colonialism and imperialism, while American colonial and imperial relations, the ‘American empire’ itself, has remained nearly invisible within this theoretical orientation. As Kaplan points out, there remains ‘a resilient paradigm of American exceptionalism’ – an ongoing denial of American colonialism and imperialism within postcolonial studies. Castle’s recent anthology of postcolonial discourses, for instance, promises to ‘regionalize’ works coming out of that field, yet no sustained reflections about US colonialism or imperialism within the United States appear in his book. Instead it focuses on places that are by now familiar
case settings for postcolonial critiques – India, Africa, the Caribbean, British settler colonies, and Ireland.

Postcolonialism in an American context is complicated by a number of factors. One is the contradictions inherent in the ‘post’ of postcolonialism (which, though, are by no means unique to the United States). Another is the popular narrative of heroic Americans who fought a war of independence from Britain and who have thus been seen by many as producing an inherently anti-colonial state. When an American ‘empire’ (of the European sort) is recognized, it is typically only insofar as US imperialism extending to ‘distant’ colonizations of places such as the Philippines and Puerto Rico.

I am in agreement with Rowe, however, who argues that the United States’ experience might best be considered one in which the rhetoric of an ‘anti-colonial’ revolution against the ‘old world’ was used to justify its own imperial expansion both against the European powers on the North American continent and in the practice of its own violent internal colonization. And in fact, studies on ‘internal colonization’ of ethnic minorities and Native peoples have a long genealogy in American Studies, since the 1950s if not before. King further argues that the postcolonial paradigm clearly applies to the US simply because such internal colonization occurred in the US and its aftermath has everything to do with American identities, institutions, and idioms.

It seems essential to keep in mind that with its historically explicit economic, strategic, and political expansionist policies throughout its history, colonialism in the American context, as compared with its European counterparts, has always been ‘close to home’. Study of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century internal national consolidation and incorporation of different territories, peoples, languages, and currencies into a ‘nation’ has formed one branch of an American postcolonialism that does not rely on a linear or chronological (twentieth century) frame. A number of American studies and/or ethnic studies scholars consider the US ripe for such study, especially of the sexist and racist foundations of the American nation. They approach this primarily but not exclusively through the study of literary texts.

Thus while Krupat might argue that there simply is no ‘post’ to Native American colonization, Singh and Schmidt assert that Native American and other ethnic fiction in the US reads much like other ‘postcolonial literatures’ and thus must be included among them. They refer to the ‘textual moods, styles, and tendencies’ of this literature, and the fact that they display the familiar tropes of postcolonialism: double-consciousness, mobility, hybridity, diaspora effects, and ‘third spaces’ that are neither assimilationist nor ‘otherness’.

Rosalie La Flesche Farley’s life and writing exhibits a complex of gendered and racialized subjectivities and social spaces that American colonialism brought into being – those ‘tropes of postcolonialism’. A postcolonial approach here, then, would infer, among other things, the usefulness of unsettling essentialist identity constructs deployed in colonial contexts. My specific intervention suggests that postcolonial approaches to studying relations of difference in the context of Omaha land dispossession challenges self-evident claims to American national identity and notions of progress and stability embedded in them. As a starting place, then, postcolonialism’s consistent and self-conscious sensitivity to the complexities involved in making assumptions and claims
about ‘Indian identity’ is essential. To approach archival sources such as those left by Rosalie La Flesche Farley requires, as a first step, a substantial opening up of categories such as victims and villains, colonizers and colonized.57

Importantly, though, one must also situate Rosalie’s writings within the model of American ‘internal colonization’ outlined above, with the caveat that the colonial spaces she occupied were themselves fragmented, fraught with a range of competing cultures, economies, and patriarchies. The effect was both a limiting and opening up of possibilities for agency and action on her part.

Her letters capture one voice among many whose perspectives have heretofore been left out (and which earlier American studies’ scholars such as Berkofer did not, for the most part, consider). Postcolonialism’s consistent and self-conscious sensitivity to colonial discourses focuses on the representational and cultural politics involved in the production of knowledges about and by colonial underclasses.58 Among the goals of such work is the decentering of European thought and discourses, and highlighting the opposition or resistance to ‘the whole colonial syndrome’ as read from colonial texts.59 With these goals also in mind, one might ask how Rosalie strategized her own and her peoples’ survival during this peak transitional moment in changing land tenure on the Great Plains.

Rosalie died in 1900, at age 39 years, with one child still under the age of three. She had not been well for years, suffering from frequent headaches, colds, and inflammatory rheumatism.60 After her death a town named ‘Rosalie’ was settled on the reservation. It is the only place named after a member of the La Flesche family. Her obituary was published in The Omaha Bee, and ran in part:

Mrs Farley never severed her relations with the tribe ... [she] was one of its most influential personages. Old Iron Eye was a keen, strong man and although he left ... other children, his mantle fell on his daughter Rosalie. She was a woman of rare business qualifications ... conducted large enterprises successfully ... But her influence among the Omaha was not due to sagacity, she was an earnest Christian woman who ... persistently and unselfishly sought to induce the tribe to accept the benefits of education and Christianity. She was the resource of the poor, the sick and the improvident, her life was a benediction, truly she was one of the most remarkable women of the state.61

As both her letters and this newspaper obituary attest, Rosalie occupied a shifting set of social and spatial positions on the reservation. This obituary, while praising Rosalie as one of the ‘most remarkable women of the state’, acknowledged her business abilities as well as her embodiment of civilized, selfless, Victorian womanhood. It draws out her complexly layered identity as not only a ‘progressive’ Indian who had adopted Christianity and the ‘moral authority’ of female white culture, but also as a successful woman entrepreneur.

Rosalie was seen during her lifetime as a ‘progressive’ Indian, not only willing to adopt land tenure reform and agricultural practices imposed by the federal government, and exploit the American legal and political systems to suit her own ends, but also succeeding at both better than most. Reform rhetoric of the day such as that articulated by Alice Fletcher posited the hope that successful, prosperous Indians such as Rosalie might emerge. Yet it seems that her experiences might be more plausibly viewed, to reverse Audre Lorde’s famous dicum, as a partial dismantling of the master’s house using the
master's tools. After all, the quintessential Jeffersonian agrarian farmer served by federal policies such as the Homestead Act (upon which the Dawes Act was modeled) needed to be, above all, of 'pure' European descent. Like both her father and her mother, Rosalie was a 'mixed-blood' (with a French paternal grandfather and a maternal grandfather who was a Caucasian doctor with the US army), and she herself married an Irishman. As Sarah Carter and many others have suggested in other contexts, such intermarriages produced progeny who subverted the social order to the extent that they could not be considered 'legitimate heirs to a European inheritance'. Rosalie's potential inclusion in 'nation' was always mediated by her potential transgressiveness as 'savage Indian' in such colonial spaces as courtrooms: witness again William Peebles' attorney attempting to win the conspiracy case Rosalie had brought against him by reminding the courtroom jury of totally unrelated Indian–white conflicts.

Rosalie successfully competed, possibly at the expense of others in her community, in individualized, capitalist production of Omaha land while adopting American-style Victorian codes of respectability and material values. That she personally prospered amidst the serious decline of many of those around her requires an examination of the range of possibilities open to her to occupy colonial space. The small set of letters examined here can provide a window into the larger social and spatial dynamics of colonialism, and the racialized and gendered subjectivities that they produced. Rosalie's writings point to numerous sites of accommodation, appropriation, complicity, and resistance to American expansionism.

While Rosalie traveled to argue her land cases at the state as well as national level, and also traveled to a limited degree for pleasure, most of her life was spent on the reservation, doing business and raising her family. Her letters show the extensive reach of colonial space into which she and other Omaha were thrust, providing one eyewitness account of them. The reservation itself was, of course, a product of American colonization in the first instance, bringing the likes of Alice Fletcher to Nebraska and forcing the Omaha to deal with a colonial hierarchy at numerous local, regional, and national scales. Looming large were numerous Congressional Acts that threatened forced removal, then forced allotment, then de facto forced leasing, and ultimately forced allotment of the common pasture. All of these measures simply sped disintegration of Omaha land. And yet, Rosalie and Ed were among those who managed to staunchly stay put.

At the very least Rosalie's letters demonstrate her close connection to and even manipulation of the federal Indian bureaucracy and its functionaries, including her brother Frank. They show the manner in which she educated herself on legal and political matters through it in order to make the best of a deteriorating situation. Her letters attest to the successes she enjoyed obtaining and maintaining leases on the common pasture, and the personal struggles involved in doing so. To Frank she confessed that, 'I still hesitated telling them I wanted you to see the contract, that at the first reading I saw that they had protected their interests enough, and I wanted to be sure that mine were protected also in every way.' Leasing the pasture personally profited Rosalie and Ed, but it also protected the land from the likes of William Peebles and other white speculators.

In this sense Rosalie's letters demonstrate her resistance to further encroachment of Omaha land by white settlement. Rosalie's letters make clear the pressure she endured
from speculators to take over this land, and how she managed to strategically adopt her legal status as Indian when it brought her business advantages, but allow for her own Anglicization when it suited her other purposes.

Rosalie presented herself as someone who conducted business fairly and productively, arguing that the Omaha were receiving a competitive income from the leases she obtained (e.g., letter dated 7 June 1896). But her statements must be viewed from within the context of increasing insecurity that the Omaha faced in general. Her description of the final allotment of the common pasture, of both her own pre-emptive measures and the dreaded discovery by others that they were among the property-less (letter dated 10 May 1899) posits the deepening fractures among the Omaha produced by colonial imperatives. This process further pitted Rosalie against other Omaha in competition for the land. Rosalie's shrewdness here does not appear as 'properly' Indian but thoroughly Anglicized in its individualism. Complaints that she acted in her own best interests rather than for those of the group rely on a discourse of 'proper' Indianness, a discourse itself produced by colonialism, which she also transgressed when it suited her or was demanded by the situation. Her (and her family's) actions on many levels caused divisiveness among the Omaha; to many, they were antithetical to anything resembling the protection or survival of the group as a group. By all accounts Rosalie wanted to retain the common pasture, but detractors argued that this was simply for her own personal gain, rather than to preserve tribal commonalities, welfare, or identity.

Rosalie's 'progressiveness' must also be viewed through a lens that takes into account the gendered racialized differences of the colonial spaces she occupied. She was a member of a well-connected, elite Omaha family whose social hierarchies both preceded and were entrenched by American colonial expansion. Such social positioning gave her access to people, institutions, and rhetorical outlets that most other Omaha women likely did not enjoy. She became transactor of business via her privileged family connections, and the fact that her letters survive at all, in English, attests to the rather exceptional position she occupied. It would prove more the exception than the rule that Rosalie as a woman conducted business with and for the Omaha, and in that sense much of her life and writings speak to the strong similarities between the crosscultural patriarchies that she also negotiated.

The archive offers Rosalie's self-representation as an Anglicized, 'civilized' woman. Her letters demonstrate the many accoutrements of the dominant culture's gendered roles and relations that she took on, no doubt influenced by the American education she received from the Presbyterian missionaries installed on the reservation. Theirs and other reform policies centered on turning their downtrodden Native sisters into properly pure, self-sacrificing 'moral guardians' of their households as well as successful 'domestic engineers' (i.e., housewives). Rosalie in many ways embodied the reformer's 'success story': the Anglicized Native woman.

Rosalie's letters portray a woman who pursued power, livelihood, and personal success; she presented herself as enterprising but always a 'gentlewoman'. The proper gentility and deference she showed her brother and others might in fact have facilitated the businesswoman persona she also displayed. One might interpret the power and success she enjoyed in business negotiations as deriving from her abilities to adopt and maintain
acceptable bourgeois womanhood. Her letters demonstrate her attempts to downplay her own self-interest, for example, in arguing instead that her actions were ultimately intended for the general uplift of the Omaha. Consider again her (25 September 1899) letter describing her husband’s efforts at persuading his fellow Omaha to work his own land, rather than lease it to outsiders from Iowa.

But Rosalie’s gendered racialized identity is not that straightforward, either. If middle-class Anglo culture at the time measured women’s status by a domesticity that complemented men’s productive movement into the public capitalist sphere, Rosalie’s life and writing transgressed the boundaries of that femininity. Her self-image teeters on the proto-feminist, ‘new woman’ of the late nineteenth century, as she spoke and wrote for many Omaha men (e.g., letter dated 10 May 1899) as well as her husband, and in numerous other ways entered the masculinized spheres of business, politics, and law, both Native American and Anglo American.

She could never, on the other hand, fully embody the position of bourgeois ‘career’ woman of nineteenth century Europe or America either. While the latter might have been considered marginally acceptable in this role if they simultaneously maintained their proper femininity, Rosalie’s situation was quite different. She may have adopted some of the same markers of femininity for much the same reasons white women did – to ease the potential transgressiveness of movement into masculine spheres. Yet the risks associated with adopting markers of white bourgeois femininity might have been considerably greater and the stakes higher for her in the colonial space of the reservation: consider again her letter dated 9 July 1896 and the palpable pressure she felt negotiating a complicated leasing contract alone with land-hungry men of the dominant culture: ‘I did not wish to be unreasonable so signed it’.

In any case, adopting a particular gendered identity may not have been a straightforward strategy on Rosalie’s part. In some ways her story might not be too unlike those of other Native women forced to choose among alternate patriarchies, in their attempts to make the best of their individual circumstances (if not to simply survive).64 Carter, for instance, argues that on the Canadian prairies in the 1890s, Native women were portrayed as dangerous, promiscuous threats to white settlers and community builders. In this way they provided a contrast against which white settler women’s femininity could be, literally, invented.65 Rosalie too, it seems, might always have been negotiating something akin to this underlying ‘savage menace’ threat.

Late nineteenth-century North American colonial encounters tended to produce such oppositional representations of Native women – good ones and bad ones – as well as setting them both in opposition against Anglo women. Rosalie mediated colonial spaces and subjectivities that cast her a long way from either the ineffective, innocent ‘princess’ image of Native women or the masculinization of the Indian ‘squaw’, the two most popular representations of Native American women in the nineteenth century.66 She is also quite distant from the more sympathetic portrayals of Omaha women that point to the relative power and prestige they enjoyed via their more traditional roles in Indian societies.67 Yet such representations were never far from popular discourse even well into the 1890s, and undoubtedly served to frame all of Rosalie’s interactions as well. How her adoption of Anglicized femininity might have mediated her relations with other Omaha
men and women beyond those described in these letters is difficult to speculate about, although again her family's privileged social standing in the community would be the place to begin in doing so.

I would conclude by observing that Rosalie La Flesche Farley responded to American colonialism in ways that ensured the comfortable survival of herself, her family, and her many descendents. The town named after her still stands today. She was in many ways an exceptional historical figure. I find her purposeful self-education, her business shrewdness, and her unwillingness to be intimidated very appealing. Her appeal, though, is of course complicated by the situation of those she left behind in her business dealings. Like the stories of other Victorian women who used their class positions to advance their own personal status and rights, Rosalie's story grates uncomfortably against present-day anti-sexist and anti-racist sensibilities. A postcolonial approach to the study of her letters, though, allows a measure of understanding about how the gendered and racialized spaces and subjectivities she occupied were products of an American colonialism that to this day is producing few winners on the Omaha reservation.

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Notes


2 Joseph La Flesche (1822-1889) was the son of a wealthy French trader and an Omaha woman. He was adopted by the previous Omaha chief, Big Elk, and in that way came into his chieftainship rather than being born into it, which stirred controversy amongst many Omaha. Joseph married Mary Gale (1826-1908), daughter of a US Army surgeon and an Omaha woman, in 1843. Between 1848 and 1872 Joseph had eight children, five with Mary (including Rosalie) and three (including Francis) with his second wife, Tainne. He was a practicing polygamist, with likely a third wife as well.

3 E. Olund, 'From savage space to governable space: the extension of United States judicial sovereignty over Indian country in the nineteenth century', Cultural geographies, this issue. This literature includes, for instance, C. Milner, II, With good intentions: Quaker work among
the Pawnees, Oto and Omahas in the 1870s (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), and Green, Iron Eye's family. Controversy surrounding Joseph was exacerbated by his close association with Presbyterian missionaries who worked with the Omaha from 1840 onward. Because Joseph believed that dominance by white culture was inevitable, he devoted his energies to education. 'It is either civilization or extermination', he claimed. As quoted in Wilson, Bright Eyes, p. 70.


5 See Milner, With good intentions, p. 154; also Mark, Stranger in her native land, p. 113.

6 Susan was the first Native American woman to become a doctor. Sara Kinney, president of the Women's Branch of the Connecticut Indian Association, met Susan through Alice Fletcher, and subsequently provided the means for Susan to attend the Philadelphia Woman's Medical College. Susan graduated from medical school in 1889, and then returned home to become a physician for the Omaha. She devoted a great deal of her energy to campaigning to state and federal agencies for better health care for Indians. P. Pascoe, Relations of rescue: the search for female moral authority in the American West, 1874–1939 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 7–10, 125ff.

7 Susette (Bright Eyes), a writer, speaker, and champion of Indian rights, gained national and international recognition while she was on a speaking tour of the East Coast and Europe publicizing the forced removal of Ponca to Indian Territory. Susette, Thomas Tibbles (a white Indian reformer and newspaperman whom she later married), Standing Bear (a Ponca chief), and her half-brother, Francis, engaged in many speaking engagements over several years, and it was largely from Susette's popularity that East Coast philanthropists and reformers, including Alice Fletcher, became involved in the 'Indian cause'.

8 Francis received a law degree in 1893 at National University, collaborated with Fletcher on many projects, and ultimately became a noted author and ethnologist with the Smithsonian Institution, writing and lecturing on Omaha and Osage customs. He also served as Fletcher's assistant when she began setting up the land allotment program in 1882. Ramsey, 'Francis La Flesche'.

9 For a complete biography of Fletcher see Mark, Stranger in her native land. Fletcher began work with the Omaha in 1881, with the La Flesche family serving as her host on the reservation. She developed a close relationship with them, especially with Francis.

10 Green, Iron Eye's family, p. 104.

11 Rosalie married Farley in 1880; she was 19 and he 30. He apparently first came to the reservation as an organ salesman and sold Susette an organ for her classroom. Rosalie and Ed had 19 children, two of whom died at birth. When Rosalie and Ed first married they lived at the Presbyterian Mission where they both taught school. Later, they moved to a small house on the reservation near the Agency. Still later, in 1884, they built a house on Rosalie's allotment just south of the reservation line near the present town of Bancroft, Nebraska.

12 The many Omaha archival materials housed at the Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) include: The La Flesche Family Papers; Correspondence of Rosalie La Flesche Farley, 1887–1899, Series 9; Diary of Rosalie La Flesche Farley, 1898 (microfilm), Series 11; Diary of Rosalie La Flesche Farley, 1899, Series 2; Correspondence of the Farley Sons, 1889–1917, Series 4; Correspondence of Francis La Flesche, 1886–1923, Series 1; Correspondence of Alice Cunningham Fletcher, 1886–1921, Series 3; Alice Fletcher and Francis La Flesche, 'The Omaha Tribe', Twenty-seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1905–06 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1911). A number of other letters and unsigned fragments in Rosalie's handwriting survive in the La Flesche Family Papers, but since she transcribed letters for her


47 Kaplan, 'Left alone', pp. 11–17.


49 If the concept of post-colonial is strained by continuing colonial or neocolonial relations in the former European colonies, it is perhaps more so in an American context. In the US, formal decolonization and nationalist independence movements of the twentieth century – which arguably initiated the identifiable field of postcolonial studies – have little relevance, at least on the surface. But the problems and limitations of the linear or chronological approach to ‘postcolonial relations is, again, not restricted to the United States. Furthermore, there are critics who align the mid-twentieth-century resistance movements in the US with other decolonization movements. Gayatri Spivak, for example, asserts that the civil rights struggles of African Americans, Chicano/as, and Native Americans can be considered ‘postcolonial’, as these movements were modeled on third world liberation struggles (as discussed in Sharpe, ‘Is the US postcolonial?’, p. 105). The ‘after’ of the colonial in the US context to Sharpe, on another hand, are the neocolonial relations that currently intersect with global capitalism and international divisions of labor, especially with decolonized nations. These theorists, then, collectively focus on the postwar international context in their critique of a US postcolonialism, as opposed to the ‘internal colonization’ model of racial and ethnic exclusions of the nineteenth century and earlier.


51 See, for instance, R.F. Berkhofer, *The white man's Indian: images of the American Indian from Columbus to the present* (New York: Vintage, 1978); R. Drinnon, *Facing west: the metaphysics of Indian-hating and empire-building* (New York: New American Library, 1980); R. Slotkin, *Regeneration through violence: the mythology of the American frontier, 1600–1860* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973); and J. Tompkins, *West of everything: the inner life of Westerns* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). As Rowe (*Literary culture and US imperialism*, p. 6) points out, these scholars have shown that American ‘manifest destiny’ that enslaved African Americans and systematically annihilated Native Americans was an imperialist project relying on hierarchies of race, class, and gender that were as ‘arbitrary, rigorous, and inherently violent’ as those employed by European colonizers.

52 King, *Postcolonial America*, p. 3.


54 See, for example, Singh and Schmidt’s collection, *Postcolonial theory and the United States*. Rowe (*Literary culture and US imperialism*, p. 23) asserts that a ‘canon’ of American
postcolonial literatures is not yet evident, however.

55 A. Krupat, 'Postcolonialism, ideology, and Native American literature', in A. Singh and P. Schmidt (eds), *ibid.*, pp. 73–94, quote from p. 73.


57 Two recent texts that have provided comprehensive background to Omaha land dispossession that I have frequently cited in this paper both assume rather unproblematised Omaha identities in their works. Wishart prefaces his *An unspeakable sadness* by stating that the Omaha suffered an across-the-board 'loss of subsistence, a loss of history, and a loss of identity' in the face of American expansionism. And according to Boughther (Betraying the Omaha), two positions were available to the main protagonists involved in leasing and allotting of Omaha land: 'victim' or 'villain'. Obviously, neither of these positions quite captures the experiences and agency demonstrated by Rosalie La Flesche Farley.

58 Much postcolonial work in this area since E. Said's *Orientalism* (London: Kegan Paul, 1978) has focused on issues of 'representation' and/or 'resistance' in colonial discourses, mainly but not exclusively read from written texts. Also see E. Said's *Culture and imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1983).

59 Hulme, 'Including America', p. 12.


61 *ibid.*, p. 118.


64 For a recent example, see N. Schuurman, 'Contesting patriarchies: Nlha7pamux and Stl'atl'imx women and colonialism in nineteenth-century British Columbia', *Gender, Place and Culture* 5 (1998), pp. 141–58.

65 Carter, *Capturing women*.


husband, father, and other Omaha who were less proficient in English, I discuss only those that contain her signature.

Much of this correspondence survives in the NSHS collection. Materials I do not substantially discuss are Rosalie’s two diaries, dated January to December, 1898, and August to December, 1899. While small portions of the diaries inform the content of Rosalie’s financial affairs, they consist mostly of routine day-to-day activities such as her sewing and cleaning, family social events, and the weather. Also in her diaries, though, are detailed accounts of purchases she made for the house or farm, and rent and boarder payments she received. Rosalie also wrote to her sons while they were starting out as university students, 1899–1900. These letters focus on family news and student life.

For a discussion of this continuing need as evidenced in recent feminist historical geography works, see K.M. Morin and L.D. Berg, ‘Emplacing current trends in feminist historical geography’, Gender, Place and Culture 6 (1999), pp. 311–30.


Wishart, Unspeakable sadness, p. 237.

Boughter, Betraying the Omaha, pp. 115–17.

The first (1891) leasing law stipulated that only those physically incapable or too old to work the land could lease it. This was amended in 1894 to include anyone with a nondescript ‘inability’ to work the land (a stipulation later retracted, then again reinstated).

McDonnell, Dispossession, pp. 43–59, and Boughter, Betraying the Omaha, pp. 134–42, provide helpful discussions of changing leasing laws and their terms (fees, acreages, maximum lengths, etc.).

Boughter, Betraying the Omaha, p. 139. The whole system led to serious abuses, with Indian Agents themselves often encouraging deals that personally benefited themselves or their friends, or local ‘land sharks’ leasing lands from Indians for next to nothing and then re-leasing them to settlers at huge profits.

Before allotments, white ranchers had been allowed to graze cattle on reservation land by paying a fee to the Agent (although many white squatters simply staked land for their own use, with no regard for the Indians’ claims). Their cattle roamed free, often encroaching on the Indians’ cultivated fields. After allotments, fences would be built and Omaha would be allowed to graze their cattle on the communal land at no charge while outsiders would be required to continue paying a fee.

Green, Iron Eye’s family, pp. 77–88.

Ibid., pp. 90–92.

Ibid., and Wilson, Bright Eyes, pp. 355ff.

Boughter, Betraying the Omaha, p. 107.

Green, Iron Eye’s family, p. 89.

My editorial changes to Rosalie’s letters are marked in brackets. References to individual letters are by date within the text.

These mostly but not only involving her own sons or other family members. In one letter, for instance, she described the machinations involved with the Indians asking permission from the Agent to hold a pow-wow (14 July 1897).

For the nuances involved in such designations, see Boughter, Betraying the Omaha, pp. 146–52.
This letter refers to a family dispute over 80 acres of land named in a will over which Rosalie was executor.

According to Wilson, *Bright Eyes*, pp. 301, 369, Tom Sloan was a lawyer who worked for Indian reforms, and also was one who had made claims on land leased to Rosalie. In an immediately subsequent letter dated 27 July 1897, Frank wrote to Rosalie saying he thought that the Sloan case had been settled. The matter was not easily solved, however; in a letter dated over two years later, 1 September 1899, Frank informed Rosalie that the Agent asked to have some Omaha money set aside to defend the Sloan case. Shortly after that, on 4 December 1899, Frank wrote to Ed saying that Tom Sloan offered to pay the asking price ($2.50/acre) for a parcel of 'his and my land', and that Frank was considering letting Sloan have it.

Boughter, *Betraying the Omaha*, p. 145.


At one point a battle ensued over law enforcement jurisdictions – with the county sheriff arresting the Indian police and the police arresting the sheriff. Boughter, *ibid.*, pp. 142-57, see especially pp. 147-48.

*ibid.*, p. 149.

As quoted in *ibid.*, p. 155. This refers to Francis La Flesche to Rosalie Farley, 23 January 1898, Correspondence of Francis La Flesche, 1886-1923, Folder 3, Series 1, La Flesche Family Papers, NSHS.

Francis La Flesche to Rosalie Farley, *ibid*.

Hiram Chase was one of the attorneys hired by the Omaha to fight an extension of the 25-year period in which payments for leases could be held in trust by the federal government. Nebraska (Simon Hallowell) was also on the committee fighting the extension. Wajapa was cousin to and supporter of Joseph La Flesche, and as Olund points out (*Cultural geographies*, this issue), he was one of the Omaha who testified before the Senate. Noah Leaming was Rosalie's brother-in-law, husband to her sister Lucy.

Correspondence of the Farley Sons, 1889-1917, Folder 1, Series 4; Diary of Rosalie La Flesche Farley, 1899, Folder 1, Series 2; La Flesche Family Papers, NSHS.

See Morin and Berg, *Emplacing current trends*.


See, for instance, M.G. Hannah, *Space and social control in the administration of the Oglala