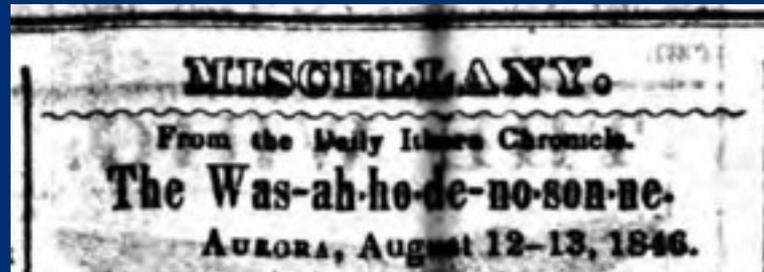


Ely Parker, Lewis Henry Morgan, and the Grand Order of the Iroquois



“The lovely village of Aurora has been for some days of the past week, a scene of most agreeable life and activity. Its features of rural beauty, in themselves, at all times worth a visit, were enhanced by the circumstances attending the Anniversary of the Was-ah-ho-de-no-son-ne”. *Cortland County Whig*, September 3, 1846

What was “Was-ah-ho-de-no-son-ne,” or in English, the Grand Order of the Iroquois?



- **Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-1881) founded the Grand Order of the Iroquois in Aurora in 1843.**
- **It grew out of a literary club that Morgan started at Cayuga Academy in 1841, known as “the Gordian Knot”.**

Lewis Henry Morgan meets Ely S. Parker

- Morgan met Ely in a bookstore in Albany when Ely was sixteen years old. Morgan wrote that Ely came of “the most talented Indian family of the Iroquois stock”.
- Parker heavily influenced Morgan’s interest in and research on Native Americans.
- Thanks to Morgan, both would share a connection to Cayuga Academy.



Ely Parker at about age 12

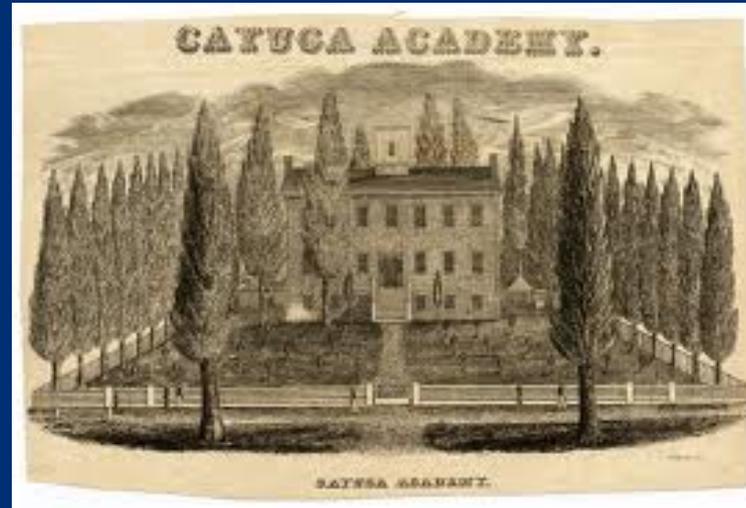
Ely S. Parker



Nicholson Parker, Ely's younger brother, in his early twenties

- Ely was born in 1828 on the Tonawanda Reservation in New York.
- His Seneca name was Ha-sa-no-anda which means “Leading Name”.
- Acted as an interpreter for the Senecas at Tonawanda.
- Thanks to a scholarship from Morgan and his friends, Parker enrolled at Cayuga Academy in 1845.

More about Ely at Cayuga Academy



- **Cayuga Academy in Aurora was famous as a preparatory school; from it, young men went on to college and young women to teach.**
- **Initially, Ely was considered an outsider, but before he left he had earned his classmates' respect as both orator and long-distance runner.**
- **Ely left in 1846 to aid in the Seneca's case against the Ogden Land Company.**

Preparing for the Ogden Land Company case

- In an 1838 treaty the Senecas sold four reservations to the Ogden Land Company with the tribe's promised removal within five years.**
- The treaty was obtained by deceit: new chiefs had been illegally elected and signed the treaty without the approval of the whole Seneca tribe.**
- The Senecas opposed it as well as a second treaty made in 1842. Ely was part of the delegation to Washington to plead their case with President James Polk in 1846.**

Another Parker at Cayuga Academy



*Caroline Parker, later called
"Queen of the Senecas"*

- During this same time, Lewis Morgan was also working to bring Caroline Parker, Ely's sister, along with her friend Sarah Spring, to Cayuga Academy.
- Morgan and citizens of Aurora funded Caroline's and Sarah's year at the Academy (1846) in hopes that both of the young Seneca women would become teachers.

The opening event of the Grand Order took place at Scipio Lodge

- The Lodge was then “dark”; closed owing to the Anti-Masonic movement of the era. However, Morgan was granted use of the building, even of the Lodge room.
- There “On Wednesday [Aug. 12, 1846], a number of the gentlemen representing distant sections of the Institution, together with those resident in Aurora and its vicinity” assembled, and heard an address by “Lewis H. Morgan esq. of Rochester”.
- “It was a theme which was not merely of Interest, but of use, preserving incidents of our history, which but for such effort would soon sink to oblivion”.



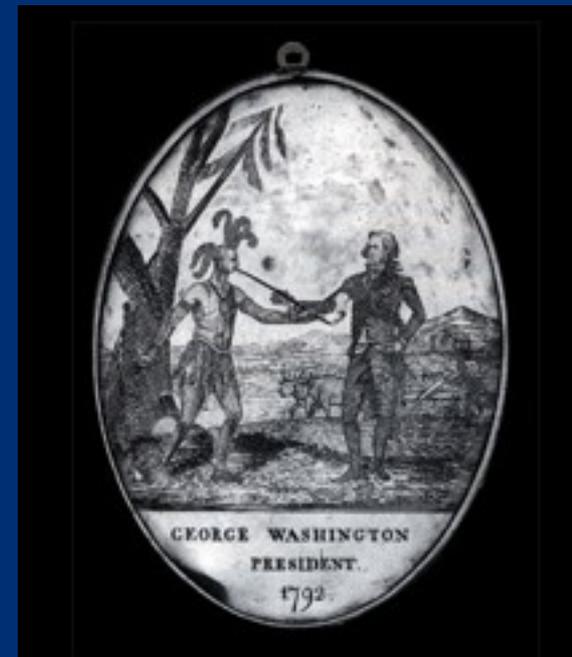
The “Condolence Ceremony”

- **On Thursday, Aug. 13, after a business meeting, the participants gathered for a dinner “spread at the pleasant and comfortable Aurora House [Inn].”**
- **At 11 p.m., under “a veil of broken clouds,” members of the Grand Order, “habited in the costume of the Iroquois,” set off a signal rocket at the Lodge and began their procession to the lawn of Henry Morgan’s home [today called Taylor House].**
- **“The Five Nations appeared to have sprung into life again—Senecas, Cayugas, Onondagas, Oneidas, Mohawks”. Suddenly all fell silent and “a warrior stepped from the line:” Ely S. Parker.**

- **“The medal which he wore was the very one which was given by Washington to Sa-go-ye-wa-tha, English name Red Jacket.”**
- **“Ha-sa-no-anda now bears this medal and his conduct as one intelligently devoted to the interests of his people, proved him an appropriate bearer of a relic so precious. He spoke a few words in his native tongue. The musical cadence of his utterance proved how proper a vehicle of bold or beautiful thought this language flowing from eloquent lips must be”.**

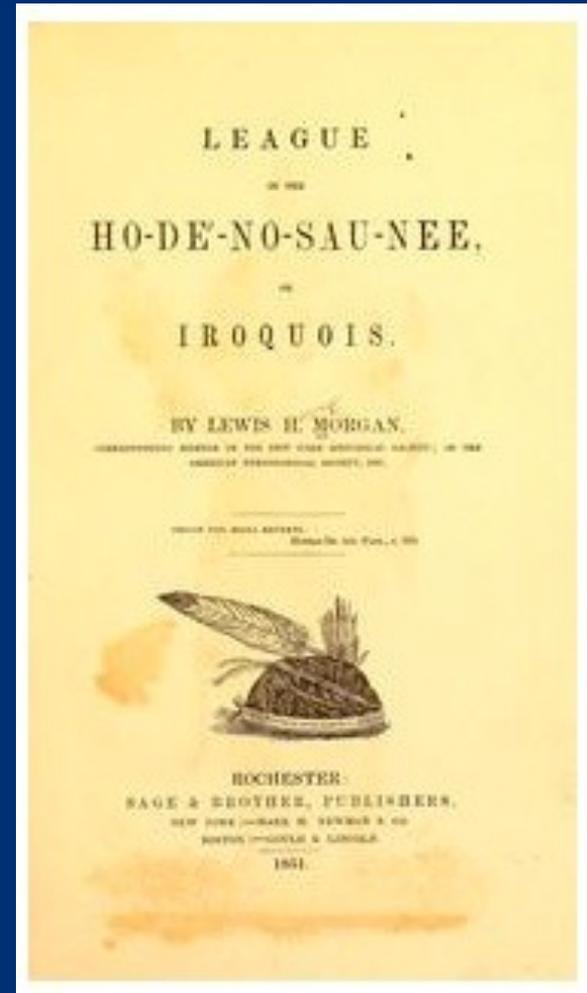


Ely Parker, the grandson of Red Jacket's nephew, was the lifelong holder of the medal, now in the Buffalo Historical Society.

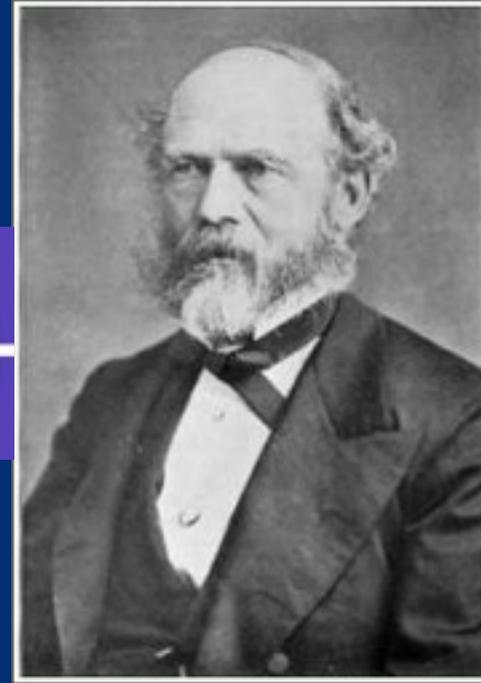


Historical significance of the event

- His addresses at the Grand Order became part of Lewis Henry Morgan's *League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee*, the work that earned him the title “the father of American anthropology.”
- He dedicated the book to Ely Parker, credited with the key role in providing Morgan with valuable information and insights into the customs and culture of the Iroquois.



Credits



By Ross Conlon, Wells '14, with Linda Schwab, Village Historian. The author thanks Dr. James Fairhead, of the University of Sussex (U.K.) for providing the article on the Grand Order of the Iroquois and Chuck Minster for helpful materials and tour of Scipio Lodge.

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