

Bridging Two Peoples: Chief Peter E. Jones, 1843-1909 by Allan Sherwin

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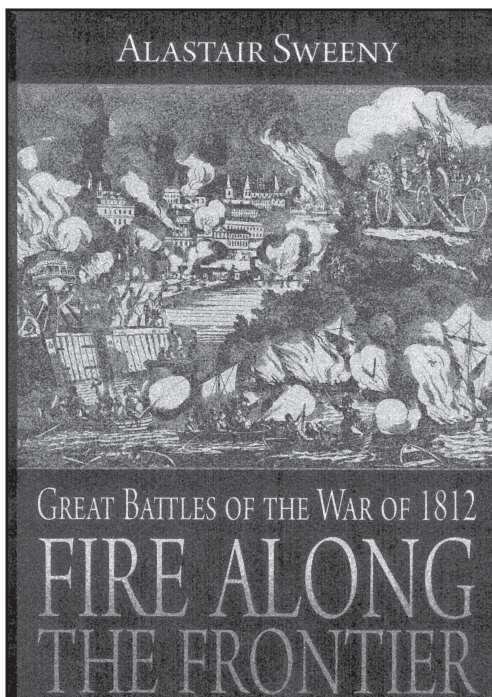
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comb. Macdonough was promoted to Captain and the State of Vermont gave him acres of land. In the weeks and months after the war's end, these gentlemen were hailed as heroes, celebrated at meals in their honor, and were presented with many gifts in recognition of their military accomplishments.

In general, the basic story lines and well-known facts of the major battles of the war are presented. Mr. Sweeny does raise several interesting points: such as those in his

discussion of American expansion and the sense of outrage raised to gain support for it; privateering as one of the prime irritants throughout the war; and the war's resulting monetary drain on the populations of both belligerents as a factor in ending it. Unfortunately, the folksy, unconventional style and numerous typographical errors detract from this effort.

Mr. Sweeny's introduction speaks to inaccuracies that have crept into the body of history through "puffed up" or ignored events and he notes that in the internet age, "it's much harder to twist history and tamper with historical truth." He states, "the best way to remember the dead of the War of 1812 is to tell their story unblemished." With this statement, I agree. I commend the direction of his thought but submit that, however unintentional, his work offers the confusion which he professed not to advance and which I suspect results from inattention, and a lack of familiarity with the basic documents of the war and the existing body of objective historical fact.

I would not recommend "Fire Along the Frontier" as a "must read" for inclusion in any War of 1812 bibliography. For a more accurate and balanced view of the war, I would suggest J. Mackay Hitsman's *The Incredible War of 1812*.

Keith Herkalo

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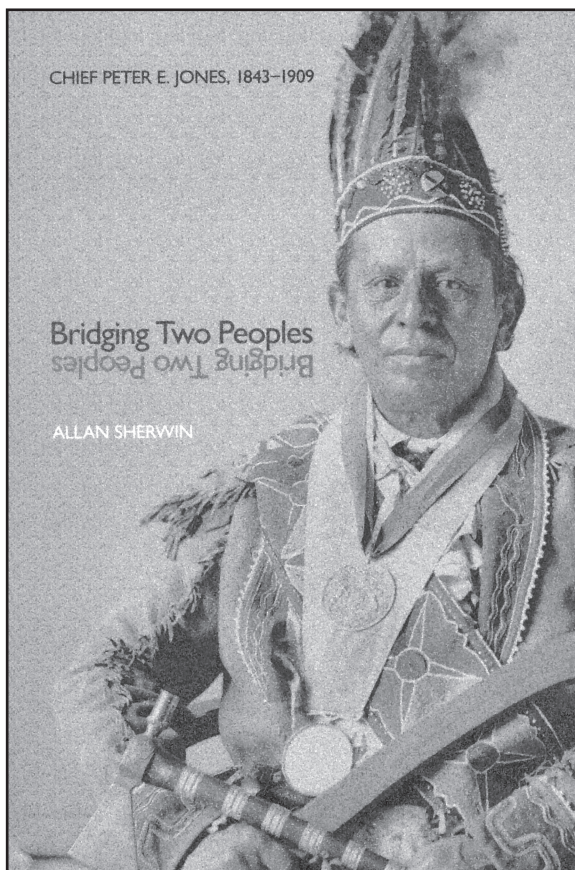
Bridging Two Peoples: Chief Peter E. Jones, 1843-1909

By Allan Sherwin

Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012, 270 pp. \$29.95 paperback. ISBN 978-1-554586-33-2 (www.wlupress.wlu.ca)

Peter Edmund Jones, the third son of the famous Reverend Peter Kakewaquonaby Jones and Eliza Field, was the "first known Status Indian to obtain a M.D. degree

from a Canadian medical school". But what we find as we read through Dr. Sherwin's work is that the practice of medicine was for Jones just a small part of his life.



We learn that apart from being inflicted with poliomyelitis, a disability he overcame, Peter's early life appeared idyllically middle class; the large family lived in a comfortable home with a respected and erudite father and an artistic and sensitive mother and their home, Echo Villa, was often a gathering point for the best of Brantford's society. But this life of piety and privilege came to an abrupt end when Peter Senior died of Bright's disease in June 1856. Peter E. may have inherited his father's extensive library, legal files and cultural artifacts but the family soon struggled with finances. Shortly afterward, his mother chose to marry John Carey, and this hasty and unsuccessful remarriage forced the young boy to leave home. Fortu-

nately, through existing familial and social connections, Peter was able to complete his early studies at a local grammar school.

He began his training as a medical student at University of Toronto but completed his degree at Queen's University in Kingston, earning his license to practice in the fall of 1867. But Peter, who bore a stronger resemblance to his Mississauga father than his English mother, found it difficult to attract patients in the racist climate of the day. Sherwin argues that Jones' unsuccessful attempts to gain a living wage tending to the Euro-Canadians of Hagersville led him to cultivate his Indianess, visiting his grandmother, Tuhbenahneequay, and practicing Ojibwa, his second language and one with which he struggled. Eventually, Jones' efforts paid off and in 1874 his band, the Mississaugas of the New Credit, elected him chief. A year later he became the band's lawyer. At thirty-one, Jones finally received a regular income.

Once established on his reserve, Jones was instrumental in bringing about a higher state of health and standard of living, but ever ambitious, he did not restrict himself to the roles of band doctor and chief. By the late 1870s he became very much involved in aboriginal politics, mostly notably in the Grand General Indian Council, acting as its secretary and treasurer and drafting its first written constitution in 1882.

Middle age found him a tireless advocate for aboriginal rights as Jones worked on land claims and policy revisions, some carried out at the request of Sir John A. Macdonald. Yet most of his efforts met with little results and no remuneration, and his friendship with Canada's first Prime Minister appears one-sided. In December 1885 a frustrated Jones took his politics public, spending every last penny on the production of *The Indian* a monthly 12-page vehicle for his interests, including the *Indian Advancement Act* and the nascent Indian franchise, fishing, hunting

and trapping news, reports from the Grand General Council, archaeology, and strangely, excerpts from Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*. The paper, produced by steam press on the New Credit reserve put out 24 issues and boasted a readership of 15,000 before it was forced to close when Jones ran out of money.

Despite subsequent appointments as the Indian Agent for the newly created New Credit Indian Agency and monies from his stalling medical practice, Jones would spend the rest of his life struggling to make ends meet. These stresses eventually led to the breakdown of his marriage and an escalating alcoholism that robbed him of his agent's position by 1897. Even after selling his cherished collection of ancient curios and cultural artifacts to wealthy buyers and institutions throughout Canada and the United States, Jones died penniless on June 29, 1909. His

death certificate reports that he succumbed to carcinoma of the tongue, a disease that must have made his final years very unpleasant.

There are few shortcomings in this book, and these are mostly matters of style, such as the choppy insertions of facts and trivia that occasionally disrupt the flow of what is otherwise a very readable text. Also, in his zeal to inform, Sherwin is prone to tangents on topics ranging from tuberculosis to taxidermy and this takes his reader away from the narrative at hand. Still, the author succeeds in illuminating the life of this ambitious, earnest, sympathetic and ultimately tragic figure, and in many ways this work is an important addition to First Nations history and a welcome companion to *Sacred Feathers*, Dr. Donald Smith's biography of Peter Edmund's father.

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