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The “Untamable Savage Spirit”: American Indians in Colonial Colleges

* There is a low population of American Indians in higher education.
* American Indians resist higher education that aims to transform them.
* The British wanted to propagate Christianity to the natives who had been lost in the grip of the devil. Education was their way of civilizing the Indians.
* There were multiple attempts like by the Virginia Company of London. They failed mostly because of funding issues.
* Dartmouth was founded for natives, but the college became increasingly inaccessible to them due to the lack of support from the founder.
* Even after the war in the 16th century, Indian religion remained. Indians’ cultural persistence and resistance to English influence made the Indian college movement difficult. Indians did, however, convert to Christianity where colonial populations were high and native populations were low.
* Some Indian slaves were forced into college.
* In the 1740s, there was a switch. The once-resistant New England Indians were found to be more susceptible to missionary work.
* Those who did attend college were generally very young. Those students experienced culture shock and were left susceptible to diseases.
* Missionaries tried to take all the Indian out of Indians. This made the students sad, and many returned to their tribes after graduating if they had not already died or escaped.
* Youth in Indian communities did not receive as harsh punishments as they did in schools for wrongdoings. For example, the children’s hands were hit in school to the point of swelling.
* The structure of schooling left little time for carefree activities, making the Indian children want to go home even more.
* Indian converts ended up in a position where they were not accepted by the English or the natives. This made the converts fall into destructive behavior to cope with alienation.

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* Colonial Colleges were used for patriotic oratory and served as barracks for hospitals during the American Revolution.
* In the late 1800s, groups were formed to preserve the old colleges. During this time, there was also a growing respect for the colonial connection. As time passed, even when new buildings were added to colleges, they were made to look old.
* Colleges’ emphasis on their colonial roots helped with fundraising, admissions, and academic standards of honor and imitation. Colleges of all ages with try to include the heritage into their ethos.
* Anglophilia. Colonial colleges were successful because they incorporated the Oxford-Cambridge ideal. That ideal was to keep the students close together in their daily lives. Another ideal was having a university grant a degree for the students who studied in its colleges; American colleges used to only have separate individual colleges that were not united by a university. American colleges also received little donations compared to the universities in England.
* When trying to copy England’s quadrangle-building approach, American colleges faced issues due to lack of money.
* Colonial colleges did not like how England universities had little space for research, how the libraries were more for aesthetic purposes than knowledge, and how students did not pursue scholarships.
* American colleges used an external board (with a president) rather than giving the power to faculty.
* From the beginning, American colleges relied on tuition payments, donations, and good record-keeping to operate. They also relied heavily on fund-raising. They would try to keep tuition low and use financial aid to attract applicants.
* Religion was important in college, but religious freedom was not easily given. Rhode Island was an exception as it granted religious freedom. Other colleges were Protestant.
* Devout donors were propelled by the idea of giving Christian education to the “savage” American Indians. College officials would also try to turn flexible wills towards getting funds for themselves. Some donors also donated to have a higher chance of going to heaven.
* Salaries for instructors were usually low. Only presidents were paid adequately.
* There were admissions requirements, but most colleges would fully obey them since preparatory education for college was unreliable.
* College students made up a very small part of the population, and only a few students completed their degree. Those who completed it were seen as rising to a position of power and responsibility in adult life.
* Most work was done orally as paper was a commodity.
* There was a conflict between students and faculty about food, limits on student activities, and the curriculum.
* Most colonial colleges listed students by social rank and distinguished them by their robe as well. College of Rhode Island was the only one that listed the students in alphabetical order.
* Most college students were privileged, wealthy, people who were expected to be serious about their education and their religion.
* By the Revolutionary War, colleges had moved from religious orthodoxy to secular learning and leadership.
* Colleges founded grammar and Indian schools to increase enrollment and their resources. Indian schools ultimately failed. There was also no commitment of education for black people and women.
* Having a degree did not mean one could have a profession. Students would often have to learn outside the classroom in the form of apprenticeships to work towards a profession.
* The American Revolution allowed colleges to be beneficial in the sense that they provided educated people to serve as leaders and soldiers, and their buildings were used as hospitals and barracks. But colleges themselves took a hit because funding stopped, often leading to their closures.