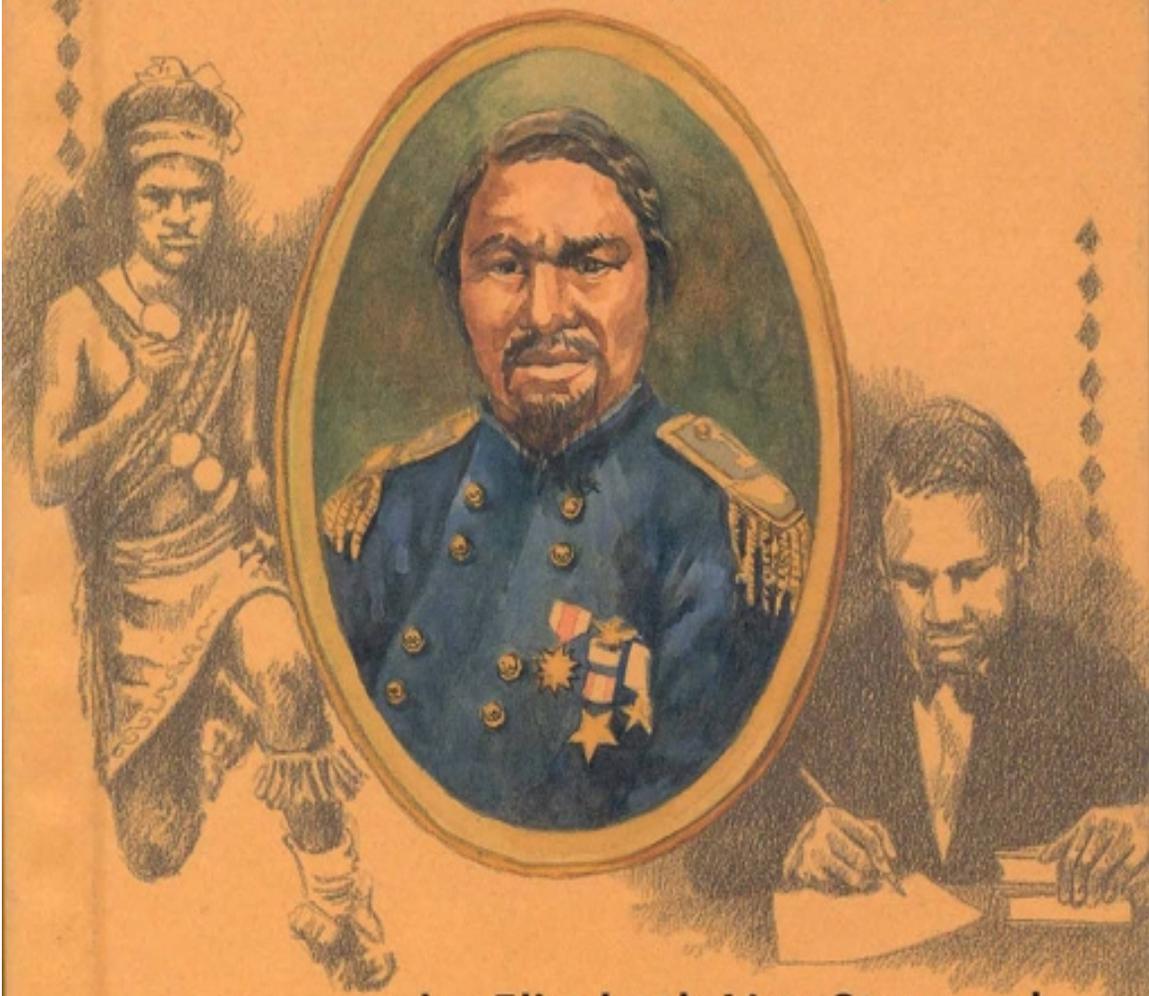


Seneca Chief, Army General

A Story about Ely Parker



by Elizabeth Van Steenwyk
illustrated by Karen Ritz

A Creative Minds Biography

**Seneca Chief,
Army General**



Seneca Chief, Army General

A Story about Ely Parker

by Elizabeth Van Steenwyk
illustrated by Karen Ritz

A Creative Minds Biography

Seneca Chief, Army General
Electronic book published by ipicturebooks.com
24 W. 25th St.
New York, NY 10010

For more ebooks, visit us at:
<http://www.ipicturebooks.com>

All rights reserved.

Text copyright © 2001 by Donald and Elizabeth Van Steenwyk
Family Trust
Illustrations copyright © 2001 by Karen Ritz

Originally published by Carolrhoda Books, Inc.
A division of Lerner Publishing Group

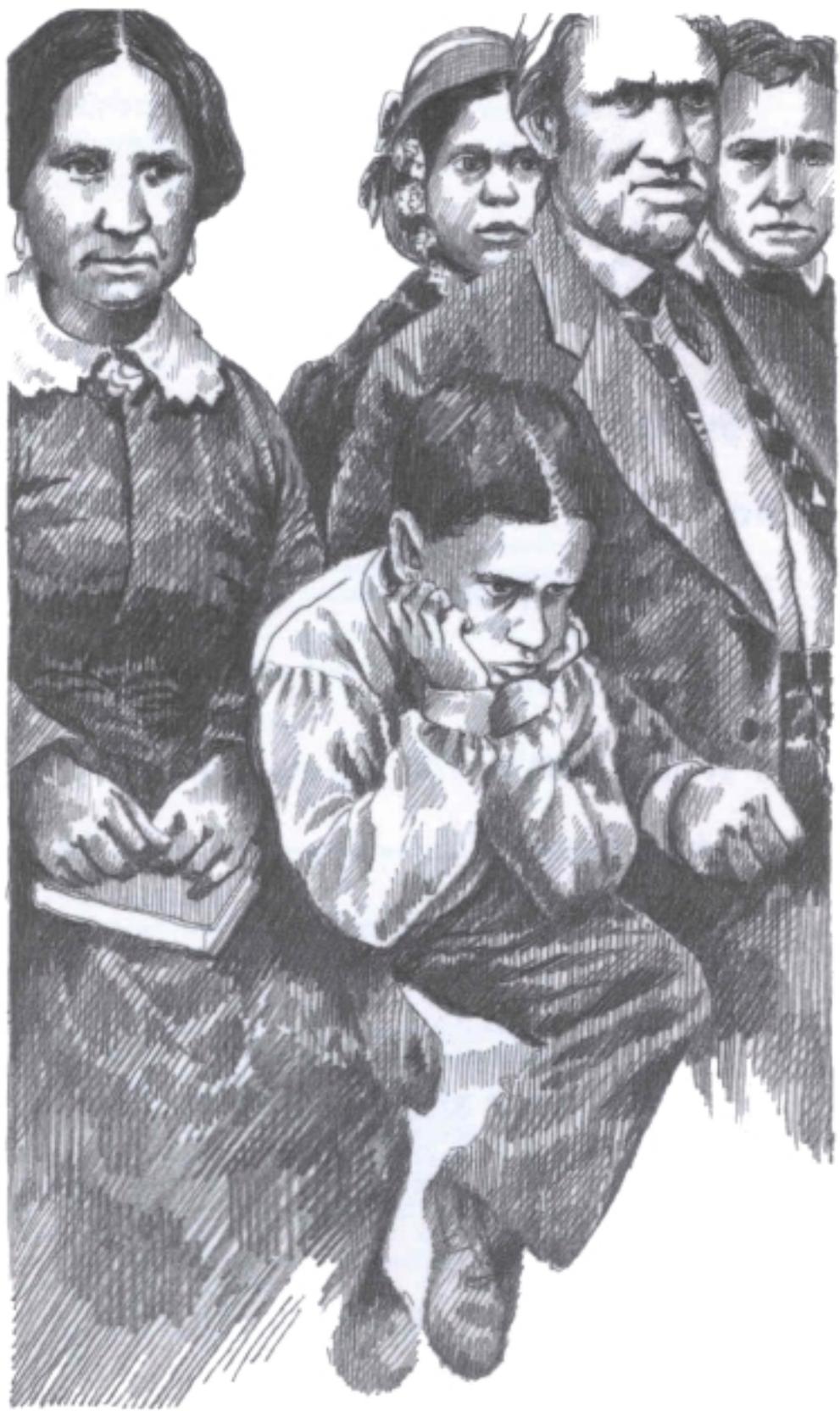
No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

e-ISBN[XX]

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available.

Table of Contents

The Broken Rainbow	8
A New World	18
Citizen of Two Worlds	26
A New Direction	34
The White Man's War	42
An Indian General	58
Bibliography	73
About the Author and Illustrator	74



The Broken Rainbow

Ten-year-old Ely Parker couldn't hold still. Sitting in church with his parents and listening to a preacher made him fidget. Besides, the preacher spoke English. When Ely chose to listen, he knew only a few words. He had attended a Baptist mission school for a while. There the lessons were taught in English. But when Ely returned to his parents' home, he forgot the little English he'd learned. He spoke only the soft sounds of his native Seneca, leaving the white man's language in the white man's school.

Ely longed to go outside and chase deer, go fishing, or race the wind. He looked around. Had

anyone noticed how distracted he was? Many Seneca Indians were present on this day. The church was on their reservation, and many had adopted the Christian religion of their white neighbors. But they had not forgotten the ways of their ancestors.

Suddenly, one of the Seneca leaders stood up. The preacher, startled, stopped talking. Everyone watched as the Indian leader turned and pointed at Ely! The elder told the boy to translate. He wanted Ely to change the white man's words into their native tongue.

Ely stood up, walked slowly down the aisle, and faced the congregation. Maybe the elder thought Ely remembered English from school, but Ely hadn't paid attention to his lessons. He didn't know what to do. The preacher began to talk again, then waited for Ely to translate the words from English to Seneca.

Ely began to sweat. He felt his face turn dark with shame. His parents, his brothers and sister, his friends, and the elders waited for him to speak. But he couldn't. He couldn't say a word.

Ely Parker fainted.

Later, no one scolded him. No one laughed or made fun of him. His parents, William and Elizabeth Parker, understood that he was not yet ready for what had been asked of him. Elizabeth raised her children by the teachings of her great-grandfather Handsome Lake. He said that children learned by watching and listening to older people in their families. They learned nothing from harsh words or spankings.

Elizabeth Parker deeply loved all her children. But she knew that Ely's life would be different from the lives of his siblings. Four months before his birth, she had had a dream. She saw herself in the middle of a raging winter storm. Then the sky opened, and the clouds were swept back. Across the sky, Elizabeth saw a rainbow that was broken in the middle. It reached from the reservation to the Granger farm, the home of a white man who represented the United States government to the Indians.

When she awakened, Elizabeth had to know the meaning of her dream. So she went to ask the *djisgadataha*, or dream teller, to explain the dream to her. He said that Elizabeth would have a son whose life would be divided like the rainbow. The boy would be born on the reservation and would be a peacemaker for his own people. But he would also live in the white man's world and take part in war. When he died, he would be buried on land that had once belonged to his ancestors.

Four months later, in 1828, Elizabeth and William Parker became the parents of a baby boy. The child never learned the exact date of his birth. His parents named him Hasanoanda, or "Leading Name." His father had taken the family's English last name, Parker, from a British officer who had been adopted by local Indians.

Elizabeth carried her new baby in a cradleboard on her back as she worked. She tended maple trees in the early spring, taking the children into the woods with her. There they boiled down sap to make syrup. Elizabeth also

shot raccoons and rabbits and large birds to feed her growing family.

The Parkers lived in a two-story house on the Tonawanda Reservation in New York. The Seneca and the other five nations that belonged to the Iroquois Confederacy had once lived in a much larger area. Then, in the 1600s and 1700s, many Europeans came to live in North America. These new settlers claimed or bought most of the Iroquois land. By the 1800s, fewer than four thousand Indians lived on four small reservations. The Parkers and their relatives lived on one of them.

The lower floor of the Parkers' home had but one room, which was furnished with wooden benches. There the family ate, using dishes made of bark and wood. The Parkers loved to share their meals with Company. They called out "*dadjoh*," or "enter," to everyone who passed the house. Hasanoanda soon understood why people enjoyed coming to visit. Elizabeth was known all over the reservation for her fried bear and venison steaks. Always generous, she usually had a kettle of food warming over the fire.

People also came to listen to William Parker and his brothers talk about farming and milling. And the Seneca elders came to tell the fables they had learned from their ancestors. Everyone sat by the fire as the adults took turns speaking. One might tell of huge buffalo that tore down forests. Another would describe monster mosquitoes or giants made of stone.

The elders also shared their wisdom. They often repeated the teachings of Handsome Lake, Hasanoanda's great-great-grandfather. He believed that in order to live with their white neighbors, the Seneca must understand them. "So many white people are about you that you must study to know their ways," he had once said. Hasanoanda learned, too, about Red Jacket. Red Jacket was his mother's great-uncle. A famous speaker, he had received a medal from George Washington. It was a treasured gift.

Hasanoanda's imagination was stirred by what he heard, although his eyes grew heavy with sleep as the hour became late. Once in a while, the guests stayed all night. Then they rolled up in blankets and slept by the fire until

morning, when Elizabeth began to pound corn for breakfast porridge.

As Hasanoanda grew, Elizabeth kept her dream and her great-grandfather's teachings in mind. She sent her son to the Baptist mission school to learn more of the ways of white people. He studied spelling, geography, and arithmetic. Only one thing stayed with him from the mission school—his new first name, Ely. A teacher, the Reverend Ely Stone, had given it to him. But most of Ely's book learning flew away like an eagle in the sky.

Ely's parents decided he needed more education after he left the mission school. When he was ten, they sent him to an Iroquois settlement on the Grand River in Ontario, Canada. There he learned more about outdoor life. Ely became skilled at using a gun, shooting a bow, handling a canoe, and crafting wood. He learned to track a deer over leaves and follow the trail of a snake.

In Canada, Ely grew tall and strong and became a teenager. But he felt more homesick each day. He missed his mother's cooking. He

missed playing with his friends and younger brothers. And he missed the stories his relatives told around the fire. When Ely heard the Iroquois talk about his ancestors—Red Jacket, Handsome Lake, and the Seneca leader Cornplanter—he longed to go home even more.

Finally, one day when Ely was about thirteen, he walked away from the Iroquois settlement. He didn't tell anyone he was leaving. He simply headed home, a distance of about one hundred miles. If he was afraid, he told no one that either. With his newfound knowledge of outdoor life, he began his trek through the forest. He traveled along streams and through meadows, heading east to the Tonawanda Reservation. His steps were swift and sure.

In Hamilton, Ontario, Ely met some British officers. (At that time, Canada was a British colony.) Hoping to make friends, he tried to talk with them in English. But he found he knew even fewer words than on that day in church. Yet he knew enough to understand that the British soldiers were making fun of him. They were telling jokes at his expense.

Ely Parker grew more determined as each step carried him closer to home. Never again would he be caught unable to speak or understand English. The white man's world was all about him, just as Handsome Lake had said long ago. Ely would enter it prepared.



A New World

Home again, Ely returned to the mission school. He studied hard until he felt ready to go on to a more advanced school. In the fall of 1842, he entered Yates Academy, twenty miles from home. The school was only a year old but already had two hundred students. Ely was the only Native American there, so he had to speak English all the time. “I feel myself crazy, in getting the two languages mixed into my head,” he told his new classmates. But soon he could write English as well as speak it.

Ely joined a club called the Euglossian Society. The members liked to listen to speeches, and he liked to give them. He quickly

became one of the club's favorites. When word got around on campus that Ely was speaking to the society, their meeting room overflowed with listeners.

At home on the reservation, the Seneca chiefs heard how easily Ely spoke the white people's tongue. Though he was only fourteen years old, they named him their interpreter. Ely began to write official papers for the Seneca. He also witnessed, or confirmed, the signature marks that the chiefs made on their letters to the United States government.

It was an important time for the Seneca, who were facing a terrible problem. They were going to lose their land. In 1838 some Seneca chiefs had signed a treaty. They agreed to sell their reservations to the Ogden Land Company and move to new homes in the western United States.

Later, the Seneca claimed that some of those chiefs had been elected illegally. Others had been bribed or confused by whiskey. In spite of these claims, the United States Senate voted to make the treaty a law. Unless something could

be done, Ely and his friends and relatives would have to leave Tonawanda by April 1, 1846. They would be forced to resettle far away or become homeless.

In 1844 Ely went with elders from the reservation to Albany, the capital of New York. The elders wanted Ely to tell the governor about the risk to the Seneca land. Ely worked with the elders for long hours, but he sometimes escaped the routine to visit stores in town. One day he was visiting his favorite bookstore. There he met a white man named Lewis Henry Morgan. Morgan was studying the lives of Indians in New York, so Ely invited him to meet the rest of the Seneca in Albany.

Ely's talk with the governor didn't help the Seneca, but his friendship with Lewis Henry Morgan grew. Morgan spoke with Ely and the elders each day, taking notes about their way of life. After Ely left Albany, he and Morgan wrote letters to each other. They began discussing Ely's education and future.

Ely's work as an interpreter took time away from his education. Still, his three years at Yates were some of the happiest of his life. He made several close friends and even began a romance with a white girl named Mary. Their friendship became the talk of the town.

Ely planned to take Mary for a buggy ride on the Fourth of July. When the day came, people filled the town's porches and stood on street corners. Everyone wanted to see if Mary's family would allow her to be seen in public with an Indian. Ely and Mary enjoyed their ride, but her parents quickly took her out of school. She did not return.

Soon after Ely finished at Yates in 1845, his friend Lewis Henry Morgan visited the Tonawanda Reservation. They went to a three-day meeting of the League of the Iroquois. More than five hundred Indians attended. New sachems, or league chiefs, were elected to lead the people through the struggle for the land. The elders made speeches. They reminded the people that Iroquois leaders of the past had predicted that those who sold land would be punished. The



Indians became even more determined. They would not sell their land to anyone.

Ely thought he needed still more education, so Morgan helped him enter Cayuga Academy in Aurora, New York. At a time when few Native Americans were welcomed into white society, Ely was becoming more and more at home in this new world. But he was determined to maintain close ties with his people. He would enter Cayuga as a “son of the forest,” he said. He would not forget his years on the reservation and in the Canadian wilderness.

Ely was pleased to learn that the academy occupied the hunting grounds of his ancestors. When he wasn't studying or going to class, he walked in the hills. He looked for arrows and charm stones, rocks that medicine men used to coax illness and bad spirits from a person's body.

Ely's studies presented no difficulties for him. But some of the students did. They resented him simply because he was an Indian. Some even picked fights with him. As Ely wrote in his diary, he “returned blow for blow.” The fights

were “bad business,” he added, “but it could not be helped.”

Ely had little time to pursue his studies in the next months, however. He became more involved in the struggle to save the Tonawanda Reservation. White settlers were already buying plots of reservation land, and something had to be done quickly to stop them. In January 1846, Ely traveled throughout New York. He asked people to sign petitions supporting the Seneca. He spoke to everyone who might be sympathetic to their cause.

The next month, Ely made his first trip to Washington, D.C. His mood was dark and angry. He hated the American capital, the home of the government that threatened his people. He wrote in his diary that he was afraid his race would soon “be lost to the memory of man.”

Ely returned to Cayuga Academy. But within a month, the Seneca leaders called for his help again. They asked him to return to Washington. Ely realized he could not be a scholar and an interpreter at the same time. He left the academy for good. Filled with

confidence, the eighteen-year-old prepared to go back to the capital. This time he was actually looking forward to the trip. He was going to meet the president of the United States!