



The Heathen School: A Story of Hope and Betrayal in the Age of the Early Republic

John Demos

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The astonishing story of a unique missionary project—and the America it embodied—from award-winning historian John Demos.

Near the start of the nineteenth century, as the newly established United States looked outward toward the wider world, a group of eminent Protestant ministers formed a grand scheme for gathering the rest of mankind into the redemptive fold of Christianity and “civilization.” Its core element was a special school for “heathen youth” drawn from all parts of the earth, including the Pacific Islands, China, India, and, increasingly, the native nations of North America. If all went well, graduates would return to join similar projects in their respective homelands. For some years, the school prospered, indeed became quite famous. However, when two Cherokee students courted and married local women, public resolve—and fundamental ideals—were put to a severe test.

In *The Heathen School*, John Demos marshals his deep empathy and feel for the textures of history to tell a moving story of families and communities—and to probe the very roots of American identity.

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