

originally envisioned this scene unfolding in a basement, in consultation with Jack Brubaker, we revised the scene to occur outside in the yard behind the workhouse. Initially, none of us welcomed the change. Alvitre used the late change to reimagine the scene, transporting it from the physical to the metaphysical. As the falling snow absorbs the scene, figures transform into the loose beads of a broken wampum belt, the symbol of European-Native American diplomacy. A recurring visual metaphor, wampum beads are paralleled by colonial brickwork, which Alvitre renders meticulously—almost oppressively—throughout the narrative.

In shaping and reshaping *Ghost River*, Francis, Alvitre and I have labored to be faithful to historical materials and the recollections of our partners, but we have also sought to leverage the unique affordances of the graphic novel. For example, although historians know that the Conestoga people had a wampum belt commemorating the 1682 Shackamaxon Treaty—the same one commemorated in Benjamin West’s famous painting, *Penn’s Treaty With The Indians*—we don’t know precisely where it was kept and when it was taken from their possession. (By all accounts, it was collected by a county sheriff.) We have chosen to dwell in the gaps in historical records, to “imagine what might have happened,” in the words of Saidiya Hartman. By placing the wampum in the ashes of Conestoga Manor, we seek to emphasize the Paxton murderers’ betrayal of Penn’s peaceable principles and to challenge the mythology that West had sought to promote just five years after the Paxton murders.

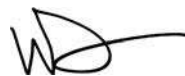
As the editor of this volume, I opt to identify this book as a graphic novel rather than, say, a visual history, to foreground the novelistic features of this story. Whereas a visual history might dwell on historical actors and incidents, a graphic novel allows us to particularize and humanize, to entertain different ideas of temporality, and to forge new connections across time and space. The *Minutes of the Provincial Council*, which name the 20 victims of the Paxton mob, have been widely available since the early-1800s. But reading a list of names fails to convey the human cost of this tragedy. For example, Sheehaes wasn’t some historical figure: he was a parent, an elder, and a source of fortitude in his community. The form of the graphic novel allows him to exist in the same form—pictures—that we reserve for loved ones.

The structure of *Ghost River* also serves to make the past present. On one page, the reader waits in the barracks with interned Lenape; on the next, they examine the historical records of internment with the creative team at the Library Company. Time itself mirrors the meandering Susquehanna River, carrying the reader backward and forward between

past and present. Much of that past is documented in history books, such as an almost cinematic scene in which traditionally pacifist Quakers take up arms to defend Philadelphia. Other moments chafe against our very sense of historical time. It’s no mistake that *Ghost River* opens with an origin story, as narrated by the Lenape elder named Tantaque.

In this volume, you will find everything you need to navigate *Ghost River*. Immediately after this introduction are brief artist statements from Alvitre and Francis. The remaining pages are divided in two halves. The first portion of this book is devoted to the graphic novel. The second half is comprised of interpretative materials. Readers will find contextual essays on graphic representations of Native Americans (Michael Sheyahshe), the rich visual materials available to researchers (Judith Ridner), and the handwritten records that give voice to both settlers and indigenous peoples (Scott Paul Gordon). The next section collects reproductions of historical materials implicitly or explicitly referenced in *Ghost River*. Readers may continue to explore the developmental process by referencing excerpts of the final script, annotated with the comments related to significant revisions. Educators seeking to integrate this volume in classes will find a multi-part lesson, keyed to Common Core standards, as well as a list of additional print and electronic resources. Suffice it to say, there is far more interpretative material than could be printed in this graphic novel, readers are highly encouraged to use both the digital edition, *Ghost River* ([ghostriver.org](http://ghostriver.org)), and the Library Company’s standalone digital history project, Digital Paxton ([digitalpaxton.org](http://digitalpaxton.org)), to continue their journey. Finally, this volume seeks to make visible the many contributors who made this project conceivable, including, notably, The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, without whose support this book would not be available.

In a recurring voiceover, Francis cautions, “History is complicated. Violence is simple.” History is complicated, not only because there are many facts to learn, but because the past is continually written and rewritten. With each successive generation, we decide who we want to be by asserting who we were and who we are. In this sense, history is neither neutral nor contained, but a self-consciously political act of negotiation and renegotiation. Just as the future unfolds through a series of actions, history ought to be understood in the present perfect tense: past events have present consequences. Thank you for helping us to imagine new futures born of the histories in this volume.



Will Fenton, Editor