

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,

Reply to "Education" UNITED STATES INDIAN SERVICE,  
13213-1908.

Subject:  
Day schools for  
Oneida Reservation  
in lieu of boarding  
school.

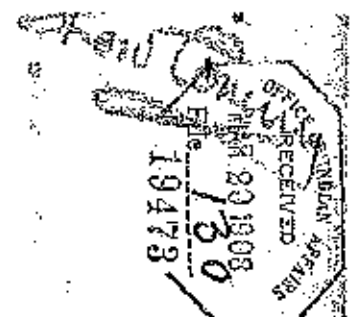
Oneida Indian School,  
Oneida, Wis., March 16, 1908.

The Commissioner of Indian Affairs,  
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

Replying to Education, 13213, as above, I have the honor to state that the problem presented to me is a very difficult one, and should not be decided without a full consideration of all the questions and interests involved.

Up to the present time something over 500 applications for patents in fee have been filed, covering about 20,000 acres, which with the sales of inherited lands already made, released about 25,000 acres from the trust patents, all subject to taxation whenever the proper machinery for such taxation is provided. Only a part of this land has been sold, although the probability is that the greater part will be sold soon, and as yet but few families of white people have moved on to the reservation, and it will be some time, possibly five years, before any considerable white settlement is made on the reservation. Many of the tracts released from the trust patents by patents in fee or otherwise are small and settlements can not be made until larger tracts can be acquired by consolidation of purchases from the various owners. In the mean time the Oneida children must depend upon the Government schools, day, boarding and non-reservation, for their education.



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As previously reported, there are but two localities not provided with day schools, Government or mission, where the homes are close enough to warrant the establishment of day schools.

One of these is district No. 2, already provided with a suitable building belonging to the Government, and the other is in the eastern part of the reservation, on the De Pere road, where a site is reserved on the NE/4 of the NW/4 of section 23, T. 23, R. 19, but on which there is no building. There is sufficient population in each district to support a day school, and both have had such schools, which were discontinued on account of small and irregular attendance. In response to an inquiry by Supervisor Allen, the Attorney General of Wisconsin states that the compulsory law enacted four years ago with especial reference to Indians in Wisconsin, does not apply to day schools, as that law particularly provides that attendance shall be compulsory at schools where board, clothing and tuition are furnished by the United States. I am therefore powerless to compel attendance at such schools, and past experience, both prior to my supervision when there were at one time five such schools, and during my supervision when the number has varied from two to none, the attendance has been extremely irregular, and except in district No. 1 has been productive of but little good. Lack of good roads and bridges has something to do with this, and however desirable a complete system of day schools may be, and the desirability is conceded, it is quite evident to me that the same irregularity will continue so long as the power to compel attendance is lacking, and perhaps until a better system of roads and bridges can be had.

I do not look for any great demand from the parents for such day schools now, as they expect to send their children to the non-reservation schools as soon as the boarding school is closed, and by the 1st of September probably 50% of my present pupils will be enrolled in the training schools, and probably 75% before Christmas.

Disclaiming any personal interest in the matter, and I trust I am broad minded enough to state the case fairly even if my personal interests were concerned, and fortunately they are not, there are certain conditions which I think should be considered.

I believe that the Onaida people, as a whole, do not make any claim that anything is justly due them from the Government on account of claims relinquished without just consideration, although they state that some vague promises were made to them at the time of the allotment that assistance would be given them in various ways, which mostly failed to materialize. They have yielded quite freely to the persuasion of school agents, representing to some extent the Government, and for the past twenty years the reservation has been pretty well drained of young people, and the material progress of those remaining has been limited to the efforts of the older people, with very little assistance from their children.

We have a large number of children, lacking one or both parents whose only home during immaturity is in the boarding school.

For various reasons, mainly the swampy character of a large part of the reservation, roads are poor and when the creeks are high and the frost is going out it is impossible for children

to attend day schools, even if the schools are reasonably close to their homes. These are the conditions as reported by the parents, and as they have come under my observation during the eight years I have been in charge of the Oneida schools.

As often stated, the Oneidas are self supporting and have been so for many years except as to school which have been furnished. However, a large number of allotments, perhaps half the total number, are in swamps or low lands, often in lots too small for individual use, and the land will not and can not come fully into use until the small tracts can be sold and consolidated so that the owners can afford to drain and develop the land. In the mean time the Oneidas are land poor; they have plenty of land but can not develop it properly, and if the education of their children is left to them, as it will be if the boarding school is closed now, the majority of the children will either be sent to nonreservation schools or remain at home without schooling.

I can not escape the conclusion that the welfare of the children requires that the boarding school be maintained for a few years at least.

It may be added that the Oneidas claim with some justice that they have always been a loyal people and sent a large quota of soldiers to the Union army in time of need; that at various times they have surrendered to the United States their interest in a princely domain in Wisconsin, amounting at one time to 2,500,000 acres, and later their interest in nearly two million acres in Kansas was disposed of without consulting them and only paid for after a long and expensive suit, and they do not consider that

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they are asking anything out of reason when seeking to have their school continued a little longer until they get accustomed to their new conditions.

Very respectfully,

*Joseph L. Stout*

Superintendent.