

From
Appleton Crescent
August 22, 1923

Oneida Indian Credited With Saving War Transport

BY W. F. WINSEY

A lone Indian on board one of Sherman's transports, carrying soldiers, horses, cannon and other munitions across an arm of the sea, was once given credit by the commanding officer at the culmination of a terrific storm for having saved the vessel from foundering and the soldiers from premature graves at the bottom of the sea.

The transport weighted down to the water's edge with its precious cargo of American soldiers and munitions invaluable to the country in its crisis, had left the harbor in a calm under the cover of night with no omen in sight that the winds were massing their forces and were to let them go in typhoon formation for a spirited foray over land and sea.

When the transport was well on its way, the storm broke. The placid, level sea was lashed into fury. Waves mountain high burst up from the depths and raced in tumbling avalanches toward the shore until broken up by others from another direction into dashing whirlpools of elemental commotion. Each lunge of the vessel from the crest of a wave to the bottomless pit below seemed to be the last. "Will it ever rise again?" was the question each soldier was trying to decide for himself in his own way and in the privacy of his own thoughts. The deck was awash as if it were no more than a plank under a Niagara. The casks and large number of cannon to be used on the morrow had broken from their moorings, and after raising consternation and havoc on board had crashed singly and in numbers through the frail railings and plunged into the sea.

DEFEND AN INDIAN

In this uproar and crisis, a subordinate officer of the doomed transport stumbled against an Indian clinging with one hand to a support, and with the other hand elevated toward the storm and the fury of the sea. As the Indian could not speak, connectedly in English, Snabodoy knew whether he was appealing to the great Manitou, or

to some other ruler over winds and storms, and the destinies of red men and white men, or whether by magic or incantations he was attempting through his own personal powers to placate the anger of the elements and thus save the human life and the treasure on board. The perplexing thing was that no one on board knew him in any other capacity than that of a United States soldier from Green Bay who had enlisted in the 32nd infantry for service during the period of the war. His name standing alone meant nothing. It was only William Schuyler.

This Oneida Indian thus surprised in the midst of some kind of fervent ceremonies was accosted by the officer and immediately brought into the presence of the commanding officer of the vessel.

After some explanations that really served as an introduction, the hopeless officer addressing himself to the unknown red man, inquired: "Are you an Indian?"

"Yes," came the laconic reply.

"Where do you live and where did you enlist?" came the doubleheader.

"Green Bay, Appleton," replied the Indian.

"An Indian on board. Thank Heaven we are saved," exclaimed the reviving officer.

NO INDIAN IS DROWNED

The officer and the Indian were faithful to the popular belief that no Indian is ever drowned and that his mere presence on board a vessel is conclusive evidence that even through raging seas and typhoons, a vessel so honored, is bound to reach port.

And in so far as his vessel was concerned the officer was right for the transport reached its destined harbor in safety with its freight of United States soldiers, and no more attention was paid to the Indian who saved the day, except when deeds of unexampled bravery on subsequent battlefields made veterans stop in their tracks to wonder, admire and extol.

William Schuyler, the hero of the Sherman transport, was born on the Oneida reservation 84 years ago when the place of his birth was all wild country, big game, thick brush

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and big trees and when there were only a very few houses in Appleton.

When the lad reached ten years, he and his mother, never dreaming of civil conflicts and shipwrecks used to pick raspberries about their teepee and start off in the evening to market the berries in Appleton. They camped at night by a tiny fire along the way and bright and early the next morning they were selling berries. Mr. Schuyler deplors the fact that the reservation now yields no berries for home consumption or for sale. They returned home the second day to repeat the process of picking and selling. In season a large number of Oneidas were engaged in berry picking.

The Schuylers had two other sources of making money or getting money for their products in Appleton. These were maple sugar and baskets.

SOLD BASKETS HERE

An Indian woman in practice could make 25 baskets a day. A day's product was sold in Appleton at \$1.25 a dozen. A part of the year the Schuylers used to keep the boy busy selling baskets. He usually carried a dozen baskets to town and to keep him interested in his work, the mother gave the boy one-half the money taken in.

In spring the Schuylers always made maple syrup and sometimes sold a surplus of 800 pounds in Appleton. In early days Mr. Schuyler says there was an abundance of maple trees in the reservation but there are none left now that the Indians can use either for sugar-making or firewood. "It is pitiful," says Mr. Schuyler, "the way the timber and the raspberry bushes have disappeared." There was a saw mill two miles from their home. For \$6.50 a thousand, paid by the mill, the Indians denuded the reservation of pine trees. Other timber went in other ways, to the extent that a wild bird or animal can scarcely find a place to rest and an Indian cannot find a stick to burn.

Mr. Schuyler, aside from the time spent in the berry and basket business and in civil war service, has "farmed it" all his life. From 12 years to 21, he worked on a farm for Albert Cook, near Freedom. Although he always had hope of getting something for his work, his parents drew all his wages, and he never got a cent, he says.

During his early life, Mr. Schuyler was a mighty hunter and the reservation, he says, was filled with game, little and big. Although an Indian is never guilty of killing more game than he needs for immediate consumption nor of killing to satisfy a lust for blood, Mr. Schuyler says that he has killed 80 deer and 4 bears. One of the bears, he disposed of in hand-to-hand conflict, his sole weapon, a club. He says in explanation of his extensive killing that the white folks used to like deer meat and used to pay him well for shooting a deer.

War Veteran



WILLIAM SCUYLER

BOUGHT A CAR

As the head of a farm of 45 acres, Mr. Schuyler says he was fairly successful until a son of modern tendencies induced him to sell the farm and invest the money in a big up-to-date car. "We kept the car pounding along night and day for a time," says Mr. Schuyler, "and had a big time before we had enough. It nearly ate me up, pension and all. We finally sold the car for \$100 and with that and the money I saved from the selling price of the farm, I bought the 9 acres I am now living on."

Although as a cradler in early days, Mr. Schuyler says he could cut eight acres of grain in a day and keep three binders busy following him, he has never worked harder than he has this season clearing his land, planting his crops and keeping the weeds down.

Mr. Schuyler, though not a big man, was a mighty strong one in his younger days according to his account. As an example of his marvelous strength, Mr. Schuyler says that on the day of his enlistment in Appleton, a large number of recruits were trying singly to lift and carry off pieces of an old cannon, weighing 850 pounds. Some boys failed to raise one end of the fragment from the ground, others succeeded in raising one end slightly, and a few were able to rear the thing on end and balance it. By picking up the cannon and carrying it clear of the ground, Mr. Schuyler beat all other contestants.

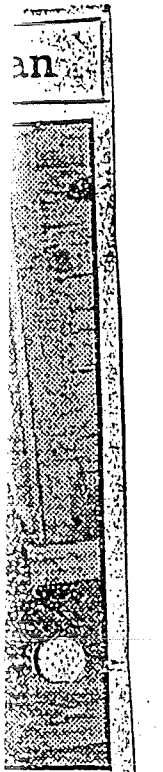
Endowed by thousands of experience in self preservation Indians are, with the cunning fox, the eye of an eagle, the sense on the trail of a wolf, the fighting instinct of a tiger Mr. Schuyler gave a good account of himself in the sharp, bloody battles of Sherman on his march to the sea. On one occasion, the crown of Schuyler's cap was shot away and his coat was pierced and plowed seven bullets and he was stunned and knocked down by the impact of a bullet that struck him in the chest above the heart. As not bleeding and apparently fatally wounded when he recovered from the shock, he picked himself up and discovered that the bullet had struck a brass plate on his chest through which cross straps passed. He turned it into a cup the size of a drinking cup. Cursing the man who shot the rebel who was out close to his hide, brains and he flew into action fiercer than ever to get revenge for him. It was the top of a victory for his country. William Schuyler and his were members of that little...

Endowed by thousands of years of experience in self preservation, as all Indians are, with the cunning of a fox, the eye of an eagle, the endurance on the trail, of a wolf and the fighting instinct of a tiger Mr. Schuyler gave a good account of himself in the sharp, bloody battles fought by Sherman on his march to the sea. On one occasion, the crown of Mr. Schuyler's cap was shot away, his coat was pierced and plowed with seven bullets and he was stunned and knocked down by the impact of a well aimed bullet that struck him full in the chest above the heart. As he was not bleeding and apparently not vitally wounded when he recovered from the shock, he picked himself up and discovered that the bullet had struck a brass plate on his chest through which cross straps passed and turned it into a cup the size of a drinking cup. Cursing the marksmanship of the rebel who was cutting so close to his hide, brains and heart he flew into action fiercer than before to get revenge for himself, of top of a victory for his country.

William Schuyler and his father were members of that little patriot

band of 180 Oneida Indians that early in the Civil War, came to Appleton and enlisted for the period of the war. William Schuyler enlisted in the 32nd Wisconsin but was later assigned to the 16th Wisconsin. Of that 180 that went out, only 80 came back. William Schuyler lost his father near Louisville, Ky., and his brother near Richmond Va. Of that 180 Civil War veterans, only 5 now remain to tell the story of their deeds to their children and grandchildren.

William Schuyler is still sturdy and active and the way he can dance a horn pipe is a wonder to the audience he has entertained.



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