

Tom
Elm
From
SK-
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There were twelve chiefs at one time for the Oneidas. These chiefs were chosen by three mothers of clan, that is each clan like the bear, the wolf, and the turtle each had a mother and these mothers chose the man who was considered worthy of the office. But those who were entitled to become chiefs ran in families like the King of some nations. If he dies some one of his sons or close relative would be entitled to be King and it was the same with chiefs but these mothers had the authority to choose which one, like if the oldest of the sons was not worthy in some respect they had a right and power to chose who they thought was best fort he office in that family. These chiefs were highly honored by the people and they were obeyed by all. There was one instance long ago when Oneidas use to play Lacross games. Men from one side of the Duck Creek would play against men of the other side, and this was a very interesting game because each side wanted to win. They played at a place near the Methodist Church. Two men who were opposing each other got to quarreling over the game and they had a fight. The rest of them just looked on because if one from either side took any part why his opposing partner would grab him so they let them have it out. The only man was this chief Daniel Bread who went right to the first and told them to stop and they both stopped right there. They obeyed their chief immediately. This Daniel Bread got to be a great chief although he was not a descendent of a chief and was not in line to become a chief but he was very wise and had good ideas for dealing and transacting business for the Oneidas. The Head chief whose name was Cornelius took much interest in Daniel Bread and they became great friends, so the Head chief told the other chiefs about this man being so wise and asked them to take him in because they could be

benefited by his wisdom.

The other chiefs agreed to take him in, and they called a great gathering of the people to ratify his admission to become chief and all the people approved of it. After this Daniel Bread was called {Oneida}, in Oneida which in English would mean, a pine tree grown in from without. Other great chiefs as Elijah Skenandore who was a chief when he died but no one ever took his place. The last chief chosen by the mothers was Cornelius Hill was after wards became a minister of the Episcopal Church. Cornelius Hill was still chief when the Oneidas started to take up more civilized or white man's ways so this chief was slowly but gradually cast aside. The people chose a sachem and councilors and the chief was not listened to any more. The sachem and councilors became the rulers in place of the chiefs. The chief role and power became exhausted I would say about sixty years ago or a little better. As the Oneidas were becoming more civilized and were taking up more of white man's ways, they soon did not have much faith in the sachem and councilors and it seemed that people did not listen to them and did not want any thing to do with them. The Government then had the agent and superintendent of the Oneida Boarding School to have what were called Indian Police. They chose one man to be chief or captain police. And there were twelve other men who were under this chief police, but the agent was over them all. When the agent wanted some thing he send word to the chief police and the chief police notified any police who was in the neighborhood of any thing that the agent wanted. These police were in force for many years up to about the time the Government school closed and it was about this time that the people began talking about townships. This went on for a few

years also, and after a while most of the Oneidas were in favor of Township. So this last change was made by the Government when police were put in force to rule the Reservation. But before this it was the people who seemed to be out growing the customs or rules when they cast aside the chief power and rule, and put in place the sachem and councilors. It was as a result of them taking on the white man's ways or becoming more civilized. The clan of Oneidas as I remember them were gradually becoming forgotten and for some time it was not talked of by any one, so the younger generation do not know what clan is or what clan they are. There were three of these clans, one was the turtle, the wolf and bear clans. The turtle clan of people were called Oneida ([Oneida]). It would seem that this would mean in English they dragged along in the bottom. The wolf clan of Oneidas are called ([Oneida]). This to the write, seems to mean, in Oneida they bark often or easy to bark. The bear clan of Oneidas are called ([Oneida]). This in English seems to the writer, to mean, they grow big, or they are big. The true or right meaning of those names are not known by Oneidas of today but it seems to be a told. Toward the last of the period when people thought much of the clans, they use to rather make fun of clans and they acted like they did not believe there was such a thing as clan, and if a man who they know was in such a clan did some wrong which people talked about, they would say wee, its that ([Oneida]) again which mean that he was in the turtle clan. They would say this in kind of a sneering way to make fun of the man. That would be like saying, that turtle clan done that again. But in the olden days they thought so much of their clan and they had rules that a man of a clan would not be allowed to marry a

girl of the same clan but he must marry some one of another clan. They were strict about things like that.

Tom said, I could not understand or make out at what stage we Oneidas are now, because we are getting Annuities, every year from the Government, that would seem that we're still wards of the Government and we have the Tomah Indian Agent who seems to be over us, but we are classed as citizens and paying taxes. And how long are we going to stay like this. Tom was told that the administrations change every so many years, and that each administration had different platforms and different ideas and rules. They make different laws and appropriate money for other lines of business. Like this administration which made the New Deal, and the next, might do away with all that.

Tom was asked what changes took place in the ways of Oneidas from the time he remembers as a child up to the time he grew to be a young man. He said one change that I have noticed was that when I was a boy the old Indian use to be more for telling stories. As soon as a bunch of men would get together they would start telling stories and that's all they did talk of. But now the men do not do that. If a bunch of men now would come together any where they would talk of the things they were doing, where they are working and the conditions of their work, and of their gardens of field, or [], how they got them, how much they paid. They talked of trips, and all that kind of talk, but they do not tell stories. So that has been [] in the ways of Oneidas. This is taking up the ways of white man.

Long ago I remember that the Government paid some thing like eight or nine hundred dollars a head to three families of Oneidas. These families asked the Government to pay them

off of what it had promised them long before this, so when they asked they were paid off. They were suppose to quit all claims and rights of the Government. These families were to move out of the Reservation and become full fletched citizens of the United States. It seem that the government had promised that when ever Oneidas wanted to become citizens it would give them a start by giving so much money, but they had to sign off any claim the Oneidas may ever have, and also the rights of the Oneidas, and that they must move off the Reservation. The members of those families never moved off but those who are still living are not getting this annuities which is still paid to the Oneidas. This was what they called final settlement.

July 2, 1941 The chiefs always preferred dark suits of good broadcloth and nearly all of the chiefs got to be old man so they did not work a any thing. They all had some younger men or boys to do the work there was, on their places so they hardly ever had to change or put on clothes for work. They were nearly always rather dressed up. There were only a few of these chiefs who were still able to work. The ages of chiefs when chosen to become one did not make much difference. I know the last chief who was chosen was about thirty years old or less. The mothers of these clans who chose the succeeding chief in case of death of any chief, made a final decision as to who would be the next chief in that family or in that line. When they chose a man they would then call a gathering of the whole tribe for whom they are suppose to work. They would gather to honor the new chief and ratify or consecrate or initiate him and a great feast would be prepared in his honor. So al the people will have a hand in his initiation. The mothers of each clan who had the right

to choose a man for a chief had authority to console a chief who may have done something which a person of his high standing should not do. They were the mothers of the chiefs of their clan and they are in power to tell him what not to do in the way of disgrace. These mothers are called in Oneida ([Oneida]) which in English means, women who look after the kettle. They call them this because they are considered women who look after the interest and well being or welfare of the tribe. The work and traditions or the welfare of a tribe are thought to be, like it were packed in one solid kettle of which these mothers are looking after. The twelve police who took office to replace the chiefs were probably in that number because of being twelve chiefs. The Government put these police in force through the agent who was at the Government school. The Hill family of Oneidas who belong to the turtle clan were always tricky and thought that they were better than other people on account of them being in that clan. The other clans did not think any different of other clans but they always made fun of them who were in the turtle clan. This Daniel Bread was dead when I started to remember things so I do not know any thing good or bad that he did for the Oneidas. It was said that he was wiser than other chiefs so when any thing came up for the chiefs to decide he would be more posted on the questions and if there was transactions to be made here in Oneida or at Washington he would be chosen by the other chefs to make the deal and in this way he had a chance to make the deals in his favor, or if any money was to be paid to the Oneidas he would see to it that this was kept a secret and all the cash would stay in his hands. It was after I was grown up and he had died that I heard men talk of him, they told all that he had done which was not found out

until he had died. The Oneidas found out that there were certain claims which were supposed to have been paid to the tribe but it never reached them. He was a wise man so he could have the other chiefs or the whole tribe to give him authority to bring the money which he should have distributed among his people but he kept it all to him self. He seems that he had other stories to tell them when he came back, but he never mentioned that he had brought the money with him. They also talked of a strip of land which runs from the town of Ashwaubenon, including the town its self, which they said was part of the reservation and that it was sold by this Chief Daniel Bread. This was all in the woods then and no one knew about it for a long time. Also the north east corner of the Reservation. This should have been a square corner but now there is a strip taken out right at the corner which could be seen on the map. This was another piece of land which they said was sold by this chief Daniel Bread. It was no wonder that this man was so rich for a while. He built a great big expensive house and in a few years he burnt down. He started to build another house just as big and had it finished up. It was at this place where all the picnics and celebrations were held for many years but this house also burnt down. So the wisdom of this chief did not do much good to the tribe, because he was doing this business in a underhanded way and did not tell the truth to the tribe and also kept the proceeds of the transactions eh made for them. In order to be worthy of honor by the Oneidas a man must be just, he must be honest, he must have equal respect to all people, he must be wise and alert to the traditions of the tribe and he must have moral respect for himself and his conduct. When he has all these qualities he is worthy and is

honored by the tribe. This is practically the same as with white people, when at elections they vote for a man whom they trust to work for them, because they know that he is capable and honest and will work for the welfare of all people. The Indian word or name for chiefs is ([Oneida]) which translated in to English would mean, the big men. They call them this because chiefs are thought to be big men that is they are high in standing. They are wise and hold big offices. There were men who were not chiefs that dressed like the chiefs with these expensive clothes but of course every body knew that they were not chefs. There was a man whose name was George Webster was one of them that wanted to be dressed different or better then others but he had got a uniform coat and cap like the conductors wear on trains. George worked on the section for some time and he got acquainted with these conductors. One of them gave him a uniform coat and cap. He quit working on the section then he use to get on the trains and made believe that he was a conductor or a breakman. When the train came to Oneida he would step on the platform and say (All-a-Board). The real conductor would laugh at him but he did not mind being laught at. He would help the people to get on. They would let him ride on the train for nothing because he was helping them but they made a joke of it. The line of chiefs from the start has changed to the third generation and those who now would be entitled to become chiefs are like Richard Powless who is a descendant of a man whom they called ([Oneida]). This name translated to English would mean, he who layed on his back. The old chief Elijah Skenandore was called in Indian ([Oneida]). This name would mean he with the long house. His descendant now would be McKenzie Skenandore and Nelson Skenandore. This Daniel Bread

would have no descendants at this time. I do not know what was the English name of the chief ([Oneida]). This ([Oneida]) at the end of each name means that they are dead. In Indian this name would mean, he held her on his lap. His decedent would be Louis King. Then chief Cornelius Hill was called in Indian ([Oneida]) which means the big medicines, his descendant would be Marshall Hill.

This Cornelius Hill was not a descendent of any chief but he was chosen by the mothers because they thought he would fulfill the requirements which are asked for, to become a chief. He had all the qualities a man needed. He was a good man he was able, he was wise, he looked after the interest of Oneidas, and he had good education and all Oneidas looked to him as an honorable man. He was chosen for these reasons but he was like Daniel Bread the chief whom they called ([Oneida]) which as it was told before, meant a pine tree that grew in from without. It was the same with Cornelius Hill because he was not in line of descendents to become a chief. There were no other chief before him whose name would be Hill.

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WPA - 1940

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