

Housing in Oneida

The first houses that the pioneer Oneidas built were made out of logs roughly hewn. They had small windows, and one door. They were mostly one-room log cabins. A log cabin can be built in a little while, so that it was not long before the first settlers had their living quarters. Later they all built larger log houses. Timber was very plentiful, and they owned a sawmill together, and so they all had their logs sawed into lumber to be used for roof and window frames. A log house can be made very warm by plastering up all the cracks inside and outside. There is usually an attic, but was used for sleeping quarters. They used to sleep on the floor, as bedsteads were not available.

2. Some of the Arceidas were handy at carpenter work, and besides building a large house, they made their own furniture. They made chairs, cupboards, and tables, and benches and some even made rocking chairs. After they had settled here about ten years they started to build frame houses, or if their log house seemed too small they put a frame addition to their log house and covered the logs with siding. They usually white-washed the interior walls of the log house. The houses were divided into four or more rooms on the first floor, and may be two, or even three rooms upstairs.

The typical Arceida house is a log house partitioned into 2 rooms on the first floor, and 2 rooms on the second floor. One of the rooms on the first floor is used for a kitchen and usually the family ate in

in the kitchen. The furnishings consist of an extensive dining room table, some plain chairs, a cook stove, and one or two cupboards, and a wood box. The other room is used for a living room, a place to receive company. The furnishings consist of several good rockers, a library table, a large heater, fur braided rugs spread here and there on a clean bare floor, a few pictures on the walls, and possibly a day-bed with a cretonne covering. The windows have curtains made of cheap material, and some even have shades.

After the first settlers were here ten or more years, they mostly all built large frame houses, some had basements, made of stone, and some only had stone foundations. They also built large frame barns. Some of their old houses are now occupied by white people. Some of the houses have been remodeled

* like my grand father's place, now owned by Henry Smidtz, (the town chairman). These buildings were not painted, never the less the buildings stood for many years, because they were made of ^{the} best lumber.

When the Arcebas became wards of the government, they were restricted from cutting timber, unless they got a special permit from some government official, or from the chiefs, and later from Indian policemen.

The Arcebas were no longer at liberty to do as they pleased. If they settled any where they had to clear the land, and put it under cultivation.

They could cut the timber to build their houses, but as long as they could not sell any of ^{the} timber, only by special permit, they could not make any money from the timber, ^{to buy wine etc.} so that is why that generation built

smaller log houses. Later they were allowed to sell wood during the winter months for their subsistence.

5. Some of the Aencidas built such large houses that they were never able to complete them. Some were never plastered or painted.

When the Aencidas were permitted to sell an inherited land, they improved their homes with the proceeds from the sale of their land.

After the year 1904 or 1905 the Aencidas were permitted to transfer their trust patent, to a fee simple patent which gave the title holder the right to sell their land, or to mortgage it.

Most of the Aencidas took advantage of that. Some sold their land, and some borrowed money, and mortgaged their land. Those that sold their land did not always get a very good price for it, many of those who had received a 25-acre allotment, sold their allotments. Some of them used the money towards putting improvement on their parents' property, or they bought live stock, mostly cows. At this

time every Onaida farmer was interested in dairy-farming because there were cheese factories located on the Onaida reservation.

Before the Onidas became taxpayers, they did not keep their cattle and horses in a pasture, but were free to roam around the farms had such small cultivated lands that they could fence that easily with a rail fence. The young horses would go in herds, and graze here and there where there was a clearing. The cows went in the woods to eat, and sometimes they came home at milking time, or if they went to look for them they would listen for the tinkling of the cow-bells, and could easily find them wherever they are. But when the white people began to settle here the Onidas had to follow the same laws, or regulations as the whites. So they had to begin to put their cattle in a pasture with a good fence around.

7
it.

I think that I would not be over estimating if I said that about 50% of the Onida people would appreciate a good modern home, with all the modern conveniences. 25% of the Onidas would prefer a good automobile than a ^{modern} home, and 25% would not appreciate to be in a better circumstance than they are now.

The majority of the Onida women would appreciate all the modern conveniences in a home. Such as refrigerator, electric cook stove, vacuum cleaner, electric iron, electric washing machine, electric sewing machine, ^{and} electric bread or cake mixer. If a woman has a large family, she would appreciate a large modern house, if she has a small family a four-room house with a bath room would be appreciated. The old women ^{of about 80 years} would not appreciate any modern equipment.

8. They would be afraid to even turn on the electric switch on any of the appliances. They would feel more safe to do their work with the equipment they are used to.

The majority of the women would like to have good modern furniture in their homes such as bed-room suit, living-room suit, and dining room suit etc. I don't know of any one who would prefer sleeping on the floor, if they could possibly have a bed. The old people all enjoy sleeping on a comfortable bed.

The living room of a typical Onaida home is about 14' x 12' size of a room, may be a little larger and it may be a little smaller. The furniture now is usually all bought from the city, but most of it may be used furniture, or it may have been new when bought. The living room is a place where the members of the family stay, when at leisure. The

9 men will read and smoke in the living room. The women will sew in there, and if they have a radio, they will sit in there while they listen to the radio. They usually entertain their visitors in this same room. As one goes in through the front door one will notice that there are curtains and shades on the window, and there may be a chair by the door belonging to living room set, and a rocking chair, and a lounge, or studio couch; there may be one or two other chairs, and there will also be a library table or center table, covered with a table cover. One will notice a few books, ^{children's school books, or} and a daily paper on the table, and a sewing machine may be in this room also. A heating stove or Hestrola will stand a little ways from the wall, but not exactly in the middle of the room. The floor may be covered with a few small

children's library along with

rugs, or it may be covered with linoleum. If they have a radio, it may be one that can be placed on the table, or on a stand. One will also notice a few framed pictures hanging on the walls. Some of the pictures may be enlarged pictures of a deceased relative, or the picture may be of some pretty scenery. Occasionally one will see a piano, or an organ in the room, or an old victrola. The living room is usually swept, and dusted every day - if not, the room does not have a tidy appearance. The arrangement of the furniture in a room is not always the same. Each family may have a different arrangement.