

David Sterandooe
DePee, Wisconsin
October 22, 1978

Interview conducted
by Lawrence M.
Hauptman

(1)

I met Mr. Sterandooe at his home on the Oneida Reservation. He is a man of around eighty years⁺ of age - in a state of depression because of a recent death in his family. He is the last survivor of the WPA Oneida Language & Folklore Project, 1938 to 1941. He fondly remembers the project after showing him one of Robert Ritzenthaler's photos of the project members found at the ~~the~~ Milwaukee Public Museum. "We were transferred from other WPA projects." He says that the project was "welcomed relief." The project, which was conducted indoors, was "better" than other WPA projects. It didn't require "outside physical labor" in the harsh Wisconsin winter. "It put bread on the table, & we were glad to have a paying job." Mr. Sterandooe considered the project his "greatest achievement." The Indians understood the importance of the project from the first.

(2)

Sterandooe
interview
continued

Ruth Baird
Ashwaubenon, Wisconsin
October 18, 1978

interview
conducted by
Lawrence M. Hauptman

I got lost trying to find house - ended up near Lambert Field. Oneidas told me that "I have no sense of direction, despite my driving a cab in NYC, I finally arrived around 8:30 A.M. Mrs. Baird, a truly impressive person - speaks precisely & with great authority. She is the leader of the Oneida Singers, she tells me that they sing throughout Wisconsin in the Oneida language. She invites me to accompany her on Sunday to church where they will be

singing. I accept her invitation.

Mrs. Baird is a wealth of knowledge. She told me that the Oneida Singers still use the ~~WPA~~ hymnal produced by the WPA Oneida Language & Folklore Project - OSCAR ARCHIGUETTE'S doing. I realized there was a deeper significance of this project than merely the stories.

I showed her a copy of a photograph showing Oneidas gathered at her home in Milwaukee in the 1950s. In the picture was her husband.

(3)
identified the photo as a meeting on
Oneida business - Indian Claims Commission
case, annuities, attempts by feds to
terminate Oneidas.

Mrs. Baird told me she was the
first baby delivered by Dr. Rosa Minotak
Hill & spoke affectionately about the
doctor, her work & her family. Mrs. Baird,
a politically savvy person, said that Norbert
Hill ~~was~~ owed much to his mother's work
among the Oneidas. Mrs. Baird, no doubt,
would have been an Oneida clan mother in
the days of old.

Melissa Cornelius
Oneida, Wisconsin
October 21, 1978

Interview conducted
by Lawrence M.
Hauptman

(1)

I met Melissa Cornelius at her home near the Oneida library & post office complex & civic center. I told her that Cliff Abbott suggested I speak to her. Her memory was failing and there were signs of senility. Yet, I could easily see that I needed to meet this extraordinary lady. She told me she attended Caelisle Institute in the 1890s, meaning she was about 100 years old when I spoke to her!

She told me that she was punished for speaking "Indian" at Caelisle. After a student received 13 demerits, you were physically punished. She then talked to me glowingly about Dr. Rosa Minoka-Hill & that she was part of an adopting ceremony involving Dr. Hill in the 1940s. She told me that she remembered Dr. Hill making home visits to the Oneidas. Her "boy" Norbert was at her side.

(2)

Cornelius
interview
continued

Andreasen Cornelius
Oneida, Wisconsin
October 21, 1978

(1)
Interview
Conducted by
Lawrence M. Hayston

I made a brief visit to see
Andreasen Cornelius. He was on the Tribal
Business Committee in the early years (1930s)
He described the poverty at Oneida in
the period of the IRA. No land. People
travelted to drift back because there was no
work in the cities (Milwaukee, etc.). Emphasizes
organization & leadership of ^{Moses} ~~Martin~~ Wheelock.
People had been divided. Described Willie Fat
"always carrying books." People "couldn't
eat dreams." Decided IRA best
alternative at the time. Little
to lose. Wheelock was a Carlisle-
education Indian who pushed IRA.

(2)
Interview
of
Andreasen
Cornelius

Loetta Webster & Clifford Abbott
Sacred Heart Center, Oneida,
October 18, 1978 Wisconsin

Interviews
conducted
by
Lawrence
M. Haytman

Went to see the present Oneida
language program housed at the Sacred
Heart Center after my visit to
Ruth Baird. The vast complex in the
center of the Oneida Reservation is
"owned" by the Catholic Diocese of Green
Bay. Every Oneida I meet says that
it was illegally taken by the Church
in cahoots with BIA local agent "Haet"

around World War I. Thelma Mc Lester
says that Minnie Kellogg tried to
save it for the Oneidas at that
time, but she failed. There are
present attempts by the Oneidas to
get it back according to
Norbert Hill & Goady Mc Lester. At
the present time, there is a canopy
in the basement. There are Oneida
offices in the building, including
the Oneida language program.

Met Loretta Webster & she graciously ⁽³⁾
showed me the three volumes of
stories from the WPA Oneida
Language & Folklore Project of the
1930s! She told me that the Oneidas
still have a commitment to
language instruction. She lets me
peruse WPA stories — incredible
material here — unique — stories on
language, historical events, folklore,
medicine, food recipes — wow!

Spent several hours reading this material. ⁽⁴⁾
Much different from WPA Indian-
Pioneer History of Wisconsin at
the University of Oklahoma &
the Oklahoma Historical Society.
Much better source — Oneidas
interviewing Oneidas, not
whites interviewing ~~Indians~~
Indians. ■ Some of stories
funny. Other stories — boarding
school — tragic indeed (e.g. Oscar

Archignette at Flandreau + punishment (5
for writing in his own book)

Cliff Abbott appeared. He +
Loetta Webster described the present
project - goals, how it differed from
1930s project, problems caused by
Lounsbery's changes in the orthography,
the problems of ^(not enough time, outside pressures) teaching it, I told
then that I knew Dick Christjohn +
was aware ~~of the problem~~ that he was
making language tapes (with Jack Campisi)
at SUNY New Paltz to send to

Cliff Abbott then introduced me to (6)
Amos Christjohn + Marie Hinton,
brother + sister, the best speakers
of the Ojibwa language in the community,
who are working with the Ojibwa
children for language preservation +
retention. Asked Abbott about program -
told me the difficulties of language
retention - fewer + fewer speakers;
~~the~~ Ojibwas do not use the language on
a daily basis; some Ojibwas opposed to
language program since they don't believe

language could be saved anymore; others ⁽⁷⁾
say you must learn English to
survive; still others, some elders,
do not like Lounsbury's newer
orthography and are resistant to it.
Abbott told me to ^{make sure to} speak to
Melissa Cor-elius before I leave.
One of the great Oneidas according
to Abbott.