

The Robert E. Gard

READER

To Change the Face of America
From writings by Robert E. Gard

Part 2: Robert E. Gard, Folklorist and Story-Collector

The Robert E. Gard Reader: To Change the Face of America, From Writings by Robert E. Gard.
Eds. Margo Gard Ewell and LaMoine MacLaughlin. Cleveland, Ohio: MSL Academic Endeavors, 2010.

EISBN: 978-1-936323-01-2

This digital edition was prepared by MSL Academic Endeavors, the imprint of the Michael Schwartz Library at Cleveland State University, 2014.



PART II

ROBERT E. GARD

Folklorist & Story-Collector

*I went forth seeking tales; to me the old
Are the fearless oracles of literature.*

*The old ones have made the stories;
A man's hands tell how he misses his work.*

From Wisconsin Sketches

AVALANCHE

FROM *Johnny Chinook*

The Crow's Nest Pass, according to legend, received its name as a result of a great battle between the Indians of the Blackfoot Nation and the Crows. The scene of this battle was entirely obliterated by the greatest land slide ever known in the Rocky Mountains.

On the morning of April 29, 1903, a C. P. R. westbound freight train crawled slowly through the Crow's Nest Pass, through the little mining town of Frank, and past the dim, massive shape of Turtle Mountain. The time was just after four o'clock.

To the boys on the train the trip was routine. The sounds were just the same; the dim, cold light was normal for the time of year. In the caboose Sid Choquette, the brakeman, was thinking that he'd be glad when the sun came up, for the air was cold and damp.

In Frank the bartender at the hotel had just finished cleaning up. He'd had a hard night. He was going home to bed—just as soon as he got rid of a lone drunk who was hanging around. The barkeeper sighed, put on his hat and reached out his hand for the drunk's collar.

Down the street, Sam Ennes stirred in his bed. For some reason he was uneasy—couldn't sleep. He struck a match and looked at his watch. The time was seven minutes past four. He lay down again, pulled the bedclothes over his shoulders. He shut his eyes, but in a minute he flicked them open again and lay there in the darkness. He strained his ears to hear the breathing of his wife. From another room, one of his daughters coughed.

In the Frank coal mine the night shift was getting ready to layoff. The nineteen men were tired, dirty, ready to quit. They plodded toward the mine entrance. One of the men noticed that the mine horses were acting very nervous. He was too tired to care.

In the Leitch household, the baby was crying.

At ten minutes past four hell broke loose in Frank. The whole top and north side of Turtle Mountain slid with a terrifying roar directly down into the Crow's Nest.

The freight had just passed the mountain when the avalanche struck. The startled crew, looking back as the train bumped to a halt, heard a sound louder than the loudest thunder and saw what they thought was a heavy gas or fog rising from mountain and town. To their surprised eyes, the town of Frank seemed to have completely disappeared. The crew gathered at the rear of the train, huddled together silent, awed by the sudden tragedy.

It was Sid Choquette, the brakeman, who first remembered the *Spokane Flyer*. The express was shortly due to speed through the Pass on its way to the coast. The men could guess, as they looked back, that the C. P. R. tracks lay covered by stone many feet deep.

There was only one thing to do, and Sid did that thing.

He started back toward Frank, over the slide with pieces of rock still hurtling down from the mountain. The dust was so thick he couldn't see what lay ahead. Some of the stones were as large as boxcars, but Sid went right ahead. He arrived in time to flag the *Flyer*.

Sam Ennes, who couldn't sleep, suddenly found himself pinned under the jagged timbers of his home. Desperately Sam pushed at the weight that held him down. After a terrible struggle he got free. His legs were torn by the nails in the boards. His face was bleeding from many cuts.

Somewhere he could hear his children crying.

He began to frantically search in the ruins. He found the three girls first, then his wife. They had miraculously escaped serious injury.

Suddenly Mrs. Ennes began to shriek that the baby, Gladys, was missing. They searched in the dust-filled darkness, and then Mrs. Ennes found the baby buried in slime and mud. Believing that the child was dead, Mrs. Ennes stumbled toward the faint light in the Maclean house beyond the stricken area. When she arrived, she discovered that the baby was alive and not even scratched. Mrs. Ennes herself had a broken collar bone.

In the mine the workmen reached the entrance. They found it blocked up tight. Believing that it was just a small cave-in, the men turned and went West to another smaller exit. The horses remained in the mine.

When the miners finally got outside, many of them knew they would never see their homes and families again. A number of the houses were buried over 100 feet deep.

In the Leitch house three children escaped, while three others and the parents were killed. One of the children, a baby, was completely unharmed. It was found on a huge rock that had been pushed quite a distance along by the slide.

The unharmed people of Frank wondered what had brought the catastrophe

upon them. Some said it was a volcano, others that it was an earthquake. Many thought it was a mine explosion or a great quantity of gas suddenly released.

That the side of Turtle Mountain, which seemed so friendly and protective, had simply slid down on the little town crouching under its shoulders did not occur to many, those first few hours. Tales of a visitation for sin were heard, and to the drunk leaving the barroom this seemed likely. He started to run—no one knew where.

Help was rushed to Frank—not that there was much anyone could do. The dead were already buried. The living were in mortal terror that the rest of the mountain would come smashing down.

Many of the passengers on the westbound train held up by the slide tried to walk across to the train waiting on the other side. They found their shoes cut to pieces, their clothing ruined by the limestone dust. A *Calgary Herald* reporter on the scene wired his paper: “To traverse two miles of boulders, some bigger than a railway coach, tossed into piles and ravines, is a task that tries a strong man, well shod. For people with thin shoes, unaccustomed to mountains, the trip is almost suicide. I had a suit of clothes ruined by the white lime, my boots were cut to pieces, and my physical system is a wreck that calls for at least a week’s recuperation. Editor please note.”

The slide had occurred on Wednesday morning. On Saturday Frank was a deserted village. A committee, including the mine inspector, crawled up the side of Turtle and reported that they had seen large cracks, newly formed, which led them to believe that the slide would reoccur. This report, backed up by the statements of Engineer McHenry of the C. P. R. that he had kept careful watch on Turtle Mountain for most of a day and had seen the mountain creeping, convinced the remaining citizens of Frank that they should vacate. Most of them went to Blairmore.

For nine days a careful watch was kept. At the end of nine days, when no further general slide had occurred, Premier Haultain decided the citizens of Frank could return if they so wished. Many did return to live most of the summer in terror. Finally there was a smaller slide in September. The slide, according to the *Calgary Herald*, was never really reported. The Frank citizens feared the report would “damage the town commercially.”

One of the touching incidents connected with the story concerns the horses imprisoned in the mine. All but two of the men escaped fairly easily, but all the horses stayed in the mine.

When the rescue party managed to clear the main slope, some twenty-nine days later, they encountered a depressing sight. All but one of the horses had died of starvation and thirst. The animals had gnawed the mine props and the wood on the cars in search of food.

The remaining horse was fastened between a car and the side of the

entrance. He was very weak—almost gone. The horse was given a few drops of water and brandy.

He lifted his head. The party left in search of blankets to keep the horse warm since they could not move him. As they went they heard the horse neigh faintly several times. ‘When they returned ten minutes later, the horse was dead. Old-timers say the horse died of a broken heart. He thought he was being left alone in the mine.

The greatest slide in the Rocky Mountains was the result of a combination of causes. There had been a mild earthquake in the region in 1901 which may have been a factor. The fact that large chambers had been opened up in the mine was thought by some to have caused the disaster.

Turtle Mountain, however, is peculiar. It is of limestone: overthrust upon shale, sandstone, and coal beds. The whole thing is an unusually weak mass of rock. There is some reason for believing that the slide can happen again, but Frank folk, apparently, are not worrying.

Passengers on the C. P. R. are amazed at the desolation still to be seen. The railroad now runs right on top of the slide. It took 4,000 Japs a month, working twenty-four hours a day, to rebuild the railroad.

When they were clearing up the debris for the railroad, it was necessary to use quantities of dynamite. The blasting caused snow to fall in the middle of May. Newly born calves on ranches in the Frank area smothered and died as a result of the snow.

For weeks the Frank school was used as a morgue. Parts of a human body would be found, and a jury empaneled to try to make identification. This was not often possible.

Most of the eighty persons killed that terrible morning were buried at the moment of death. Some were not, and they lie in a grave near Frank, with the following inscription on a common stone:

**Here Lie the Remains of Some of
the Victims of the Frank Slide.
April 29, 1903.**

The Frank slide has become a tragic legend of the Canadian Rockies.

INTRODUCTION

FROM *The Romance of Wisconsin Place Names*

The names of places lie upon the land and tell us where we are or where we have been or where we want to go. And so much more.

The names of places tell of those who came before us, of the ancestry of our ancestors, sometimes of their hopes and dreams, sometimes of what they saw when they came or what they hoped their children would see.

The names of Wisconsin register the peculiarities of her history. The first Europeans here were French—Nicolet, Marquette, Joliet, and later the French trappers and backwoodsmen—and Wisconsin is rich in names of French origin.

The first wave of settlement in Wisconsin came about two centuries after settlement of the eastern seaboard. These immigrants in the first part of the nineteenth century, coming largely from southern New England and the Middle Atlantic States, brought names from their former homes, names already old in New York State, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Connecticut. By 1848 New York had contributed 120,000 settlers to Wisconsin, New England 54,000, Pennsylvania 21,000—to say nothing of those who came from Virginia, Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland and Delaware.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, new Americans from northern Europe—Germany, Holland, Scandinavia—were leaving their mark upon the land, and naming places after towns and villages they had left behind them.

And always the Indians were there, and had named the land before the white man came. Driven out of the East, tribes found refuge in the wilderness that was then Wisconsin—and drove other tribes still farther west. Names from a dozen different tribes, some of them passing through French orthography to reach their present form, still cover the land. And since the settlers were not skilled etymologists, the meanings of these Indian names are often difficult to come by. Many other names are translations of the Indian names—to the best of the white man's limited linguistic ability.

In the second half of the nineteenth century came the lumbermen—and the railroads. Every lumber camp had to have a name (many of them now vanished), and every railroad siding and station (many now abandoned as the rail lines vanish).

It has been a pleasant task for us to compile this book of Wisconsin place names. They reflect so much of the state's tradition, settlement and flavor. All around, on every side, the appeal of Wisconsin echoes and reechoes in its names: girls' names, early settler names, classic names, presidents' names, Bible names, names that were supposed to be something else, forgotten names, nostalgic names supplied by homesick immigrants, geographic names, names from wars, from other cities and places, from feats of strength, from heroes, from friendships, lovers, dreams, from railroads, poetry and humor.

The place names of hamlets, crossroads, villages, townships, cities, counties, lakes, streams—all are monuments to someone's imagination, courage, strength, will power, kindness or devotion.

Wisconsin names are uniquely of the state and reflect its character.

Wisconsin, we believe, has a different look, a feel, a character, which always makes one know that he is coming home almost the moment he crosses the Mississippi on the west, or crosses the Illinois line on the south. There is a special feel, a homeness that is Wisconsin. Mainly, perhaps, it is the look of the land, as though a kindly Providence created a special setting for a special people. For the descent of the glaciers from Labrador and Hudson Bay modified the land, leveled off the hills in places, filled depressions. And occasionally erosion left a landmark, or a whole series of strange stone formations, and when a settler saw these things he said: Castle Rock, or Tower Rock, or Elephant Mound, or Steamboat Rock, or Ferry Bluff.

Settlers followed the land, and the formation of the land. They settled on the kind of land where they thought they would find happiness and prosperity. In the hills, the hill people of Norway, Switzerland, Wales, Germany and other far countries tended to settle, and they called the places New Glarus, Caledonia, Wales, Berlin, Vienna, New Holstein. Sometimes the settlers chose land for its flatness and fertility, and they sprinkled the crossroads and the meeting places with poetic names, or names of joy, or personalities, or hope: Black Earth, Belle Plaine, Cornucopia, Spring Valley, Star Prairie, Mount Hope.

We see all the periods of the state's history and settlement in the names. It was Marquette who first wrote the name of the great river of the state, calling it Meskousing, from which eventually came Wisconsin. Rene Menard left St. Esprit and La Pointe. The Voyageurs Eau Pleine, Eau Claire, Eau Galle, De Pere, La Baie Verte, Lac Vieux, Desert, Butte des Morts.

We believe that the place names are cherished today more than ever. As evidence, note the recent story of Winneconne, meaning "the place of skulls."

(An Indian battle once took place around there.) The Winneconne folks are very proud of their name and their town. Some time ago Winneconne, by some unthinkable chance, was left off of the Wisconsin road maps.

The Winneconne Chamber of Commerce under the dynamic leadership of its president, Mrs. Vera Kitchen, immediately organized the community for action. For if the village no longer existed, “fishermen could not know where to fish, industry would not know where to locate, employees could not know where to work.”

Even poems were written about the situation:

Wisconsin must have had a mental lapse,
To take Winneconne off the highway maps.

A contest was started on “how to put Winneconne back on the map with the winner to receive a wonderful all-expense week-end in Winneconne.”

Governor Knowles tried to smooth the ruffled feathers of the irate citizens. He told them that the name would certainly be on next year’s maps. The Winneconne folks immediately made Knowles the chairman of the nationwide contest.

The winners of the contest were two Wisconsin girls residing in Washington, D.C. who suggested that Winneconne “secede and declare war.”

Secession days were observed by officials with an appropriate program in



**Settlers
followed the
land, and the
formation of
the land.**

the forgotten city on July 22–23, 1967, with the Winneconne navy, airforce and army standing by.

A “Declaration of Independence” was issued by the village president, James Coughlin. A sovereign state was declared, and a toll bridge over Wolf River was established to collect revenues for the new state. Later in the day the toll bridge was freed. Adequate funds had been easily collected to operate the new state... about \$7.00.

At 4 P.M. of the first day of independence, a phone call was received from Governor Knowles suggesting a negotiated return to Wisconsin. The next day, at 12 noon, the negotiations were concluded, and Winneconne rejoined the State of Wisconsin in a flag-raising ceremony.

Many names are now forgotten. Dane County is dotted here and there with plats of imaginary cities whose locations are lost and whose very names have passed out of memory.

Superior City, Van Buren, Dunkirk Falls, Clinton, City of the Second Lake, City of the Four Lakes, Middletown, Troy and Beaumont, all were deprived of their hope of greatness.

Superior City, on paper, contained nearly 500 blocks. It had a wonderful location, lying as it did on the east bank of the Wisconsin River, among the bluffs, valleys, gullies, rattlesnakes, and ravines of four sections in the north part of Dane County. Provisions were made for the State Capitol which, of course, was to be located in the middle of this great metropolis. Capitol Square was bounded by Broadway, State, Wells and Taylor streets. Another public square was reserved for a park. A lot of Easterners invested and lost their stake. In the great city of Superior many lots were actually owned by renowned figures such as Daniel Webster and Henry Clay.

But present or forgotten the place names of Wisconsin are always with us. They are in our present and their roots are in our past.

DOC WATSON

FROM *Down in the Valleys*

Old Doc Watson was a vet around here, and once got a call to go up to Fish Brothers who had a sick horse. Well, when Doc got to the Fish place he found a big party goin' on, and the horse was lying there too sick to move, and they was havin' a big party all around the horse. Them Fish boys never let nothin' stand in the way of havin' a party, and Doc he took a look at the horse and seen he was about to cash his chips, so he says to the Fish boys, what have you give that horse? Well, the Fish boys wasn't ones to keep anything they had from a friend, and the old horse had sure been a good friend to them boys. So they says, well, Doc we give him everything we had except beer. And Doc says, hell, this horse ain't sick. This horse is drunk, boys. And he says, well you've give him everything else, so you better give him some beer. And that was just what the old horse needed, a big long drink of homebrew, and he staggered up to his feet and off went the Fish boys and the old horse, staggerin' and singin' like to beat hell, and old Doc shook his head and says to himself that he had sure learned something about doctoring horses. Just what it was he learned I never knew, but Doc sure knew because he took plenty of that same kind of medicine himself. You remember old Doc?

THE KICKAPOGIANS

FROM *Down in the Valleys*

The Kickapoo River. It rises in Monroe County near Wilson. Through Vernon, through Richland, through Crawford, it moves easily on sunlight, bank-touching its journey south; stronger when the clouds are rain-hostile. Always it finds the Wisconsin at Wauzeka.

For generations the River sounds have joined human sounds. All of this: man and nature, is known as Kickapoo Country. It is beautiful and the people vastly individualistic; and on the Kickapoo River, of an August afternoon, drifting down in a flatbottom boat, quiet, no talking... the birds above singing in the overhanging branches, or in deadfalls toppled from the mud banks. Cows in the shade of groves or of a lone oak... sound of a far cowbell. It is peace; and a solitude that draws strength and meaning from the past.

And the River, responsive to rain and to man, has shaped lives in the pattern of the farming along the bottoms, and has ordained a particular way of looking at things. I've heard the Kickapoo folks talking at Ozzie's tavern at Wauzeka; or up at the Red Apple Restaurant at Gays Mills; or at the Older Folks Club at Soldier's Grove. Talkin' about their favorite subjects: the Kickapoo and Kickapoogians.

Folks around here understand what it means to just stand and look out over the land. These people are still kind of dreamers, practical though many of 'em are too, and they appreciate a great view. These farmers know what it means when you say save nature. They're not so much scholars of ecology; but they are ready to pitch in and make the land as good as it can be. These folks are truly amazing. They set great store by local things. Oak wood for instance. Old Mister Sander, when he was ill some time ago and spent a lot of time settin' beside the stove, said that he never could get warm with anything except good Kickapoo oak wood. Nothin' else would warm him through.



*For generations the River sounds have
joined human sounds...*

But this country sure does raise memorable characters! Only in the Kickapoo could there be a fellow like Tom Price.

Tom Price was a farmer who lived over by Boscobel. He was very well known, and was often appointed to serve as an executor on deceased people's estates. When the time came for Tom to give a final accounting of an estate, he would say to the lawyer, Well, I didn't know *you* were one of the heirs! He said that because he thought lawyers' fees were so high.

Tom was once down by Bridgeport and he was comin' home from there and he stopped for a drink or two. Well, he got mixed up and started drivin' up the railroad track rather than the road. Sometimes after a few you can naturally do things like that. Tom had a new Roadmaster Buick which was the biggest and fanciest car that Buick made in those days. Well, old Tom saw the train

acomin' and just before it got to the Buick, Tom jumped out and ran away. Just left his new car standin' there on the tracks. Never even looked back. Course the train came along and busted the Buick all to pieces, but by that time Tom was near town and when he got to Boscobel he roused the Buick dealer out of bed and bought a new Roadmaster, just the same color and everything, so Tom's wife wouldn't know what happened to the other one. Tom was foxy that way. He was also very scared of his wife.

Tom was said to possess some God-given traits as a mediator and was a kind of country Solomon. He was just like a barrel of oil poured over a dispute, if he wanted to be. Could settle most anything and smooth anybody down. When people over in the Kickapoo got into any kind of trouble they would call up old Tom. Judge was an Irishman named James Cullen, and he was a good friend of Tom's. Well, once old Tom was called down to court to listen to a fellow's sorry plight and he realized that it looked pretty dim for the guy. The judge did too, and they were talking... (course the Judge should never have been talkin' about the case before it came up, but he was. That's the way they do it sometimes out in the Kickapoo). The Judge says to Tom, Tom I guess we ain't gonna be able to help Jake. You see what the law says. Ah, but Jimmy, Jimmy, Tom says, the law is just what we're tryin' our best to get away from. Quit talkin' about the law! Let's just put it on an Irish basis! Tom was a character. Never drove on anything but the left hand side of the road. Was contrary that way. His wife wouldn't ride with him either. She was too smart to ride with old Tom.

THE ONEIDAS

FROM *This Is Wisconsin*

West of Green Bay, Highway 54 runs through a hilly area that has a soft, romantic look, or it did one misty day when I came up over a hill to the village of Oneida.

I was interested in the Oneida Indians, partly because they were the group led by that strange man, Eleazar Williams, from central New York to a new home in Wisconsin. At the top of a hill above the village stands a large, stone Episcopal church, with a smaller parish hall across the road, and here I sought someone who could tell me about the Oneidas, something of their history and their lore, and perhaps, if anybody cared nowadays, something of the relationship between the tribe and Eleazar Williams.

In the CAP office, which is in the parish hall, a pleasant Oneida lady answered my question instantly. "Oscar Auchiquette," she said.

"Where is he to be found?"

"Start out on 54 back toward Green Bay. Go about a mile. You'll see an icy road off to the left. Down in the valley you will see Oscar's house, next to a log cabin which is very old. I will see whether Oscar is at home."

She called, but Oscar's line was busy. I was soon to discover that Oscar Auchiquette is one of the busiest men in the whole region. His phone is hardly ever quiet.

I found the neat white house set beside a 150-year-old cabin, and in the yard I found Oscar himself, ruefully looking at the injured door of his car, which he had recently banged against a tree. He is a sturdy man in his late sixties with fine eyes and a clear, loud voice.

I said merely, "I want to talk to you about the Oneidas," and he replied, "I'm happy to see you. Come in. It is very important to talk about the Oneidas. We want many people to know about our tribe. I have tried very hard to keep its history alive."

We went into Oscar's living room in which there are many comfortable chairs. I sat in one near the telephone so I could hand it to him when it rang, for Oscar has a game leg and cannot rise easily. The phone rang a lot—all kinds of requests for Oscar to come to this meeting or that, or inquiries about the evening course that he is teaching in the Oneida language, or messages from the Green Bay Human Rights Commission. But we got a lot said, anyway. I just let Oscar talk.

"I am happy to have this opportunity of relating some of the history about the Oneida nation, in the state of New York as well as Wisconsin. It is very important that the history of the Oneida nation be made public. This would help to change the attitude of some of the white people toward us Indians.

"Let us go back to about 1390, and even before. Now before 1390, as far as I know, we were known as the Iroquois. In 1390 Hiawatha organized the five nations, and since then we Oneidas have been known as the Onaya people. Onaya means stone.

"Originally the Oneidas were Mohawks. But the Mohawks divided into two groups—one group was Mohawk, the other was the Stone People. The name for Stone People was Onaya, but this was mispronounced by the French as Oneidas. Some called us 'standing stone people.' The stone is granite, supposed to be a sacred stone with us.

"The Oneidas were a member group of the Iroquois. The Tuscorora Indians were admitted into the league in about 1720. After that we became six nations. The other nations were the Senecas, the Mohawks, the Oneidas, the Onondagas, and the Cayugas.

"Now we come to Eleazar Williams and his part in the history of our people. He was raised in eastern New York State, up on Lake George, by an Indian family—Mohawks—by the name of Thomas Williams. One day, so we Oneidas have heard the story, two white men came to this Indian couple with a little baby boy. They made arrangements for this couple to take care of the baby. That's about all we know about that early experience of the little boy, but he was very sick and the Indian couple cured him of his illness. They had another son as well, but this adopted boy was made to believe that the Indian couple were his real parents.

"The two boys were sent to school, and the Williams boy wasn't as interested as the new boy in schoolwork. The real son went back home to his parents. Eleazar Williams stayed in school, and no doubt became very well educated. Then in the War of 1812 Eleazar Williams was in the services of the United States, and he was in command of six hundred Iroquois; of this six hundred there were twelve Oneida women who fought in the War of 1812.

"Williams, who spoke the Mohawk language fluently, was also very much interested in religion, and in 1818 he became the missionary for the Oneida

You notice the many fruit trees here now.



nation. He was the only white man, if we must call him that, who was interested at all in educating the Indians. He was a very religious man, and in about 1819, he became a missionary. He taught the Oneidas the Bible and he taught them in their own language, because he was able to speak Mohawk fluently; Oneidas can understand Mohawk.

“The older generation were really well versed about the Bible, because they were taught in their own language, and at the same time, Williams taught the Oneidas English.

“Now the Ogden Land Company of New York was then interested in the lands owned by the Oneida nation in eastern central New York State around Oneida Lake. That is a beautiful part of the country, and the Oneidas were proud to be the owners.

“I have a copy of the claim that we would like to have against New York State. There are about five or six million acres that we feel we were much underpaid for. We only got seven hundredths of a penny an acre for some of it, and the Ogden Land Company turned right around and sold the Oneida lands for many times as much. We do have a claim pending in the Indian claims commission, but we also have a contract with a group of attorneys at Syracuse, New York, who would like to sue the state of New York, and they are now asking the federal government to represent the Oneidas against the state of New York.

“Through the treaty of 1794, known as the peace treaty, friendship treaty with the Tuscororas and Oneidas; and we have fought in every war this country has ever had, on the side of the United States. This is very important for people to know, the great record the Oneida nation has for its fellow men, the white men. They fought for them, with them, in all the wars. I doubt that there is another nation that has the record that equals that of the Oneida nation. If the

public could only know the history of the Oneida nation, I think they would be proud of us, as well as we Oneidas are proud of our history.

“Now then, the Ogden Land Company was interested in the Oneida lands, and in those days we had nine chiefs for the Oneida nation. Since Eleazar Williams was their missionary, he also acted as interpreter in business affairs for Oneidas. The Oneida nation would not sell their lands in the state of New York, but the Ogden Land Company and other real estate men were interested in purchase and did everything they could do to discourage the Oneidas from remaining in New York. They wanted the Oneidas to move to the state of Wisconsin. I don’t know how they got the information that they should move to Wisconsin, but the Indians were told that in Wisconsin there was all kinds of game. In fact, since Eleazar Williams was the chief interpreter, he did agree with the chiefs that they didn’t want to move; but life got more and more miserable, so finally Eleazar Williams, as I understand it, did advise the chiefs that maybe it would be better if they did move to Wisconsin. But first, he said, the Oneidas must look at the land and see just what kind of a deal they could make here in Wisconsin.

“In 1820 the first group of chiefs came with Eleazar Williams to Wisconsin and talked with the Menominee Indians and the Winnebagos, who owned the strip of land from the Milwaukee River to Iron Mountain, Michigan.

“It was agreed that the New York Indians would purchase five million acres from them. Here the history becomes cloudy. No one knows who made the agreement or took the money that we are supposed to have received from the Ogden Land Company and paid to Wisconsin Indians. Who handled the money? The government, the Indians, or Eleazar Williams? Who paid that money to the Menominees? There is no record. No receipts. I wish to say here that I am supposed to be the walking encyclopedia about Oneida history, but I can find no record of who received the money from the Oneidas.

“I am not sure whether the government was represented when we sold our land to the Ogden Land Company. Then, Eleazar Williams was accused of being bribed by the Ogden Land Company and persuading the Oneida chiefs to purchase land here in Wisconsin, and move to Wisconsin.

“Later, Eleazar Williams was excused of this blame. The chiefs themselves decided it was better to move here to Wisconsin, so in 1823 the migration really took place. The first chief who came with the group had the Indian name of Skanandoah. His name would be Elija Skanandoah; so he and Eleazar Williams led the first group out here. I have somewhere the exact figures of the first Christian party. They were all Episcopalians.

“Now let me go back on Christianity, to 1390, when there never was a white man here in our country. At that time the five nations believed in religion. They believed in superhuman power. Why? Because they had a name

for God: 'He Who Holds the Skies.' They had six seasons at which time they gave thanks to He Who Holds the Skies for all the things that grew here in our country. And they also believed in forgiveness and repenting, or forgiveness for all the things they might have done. They all form a circle and hold hands and ask Almighty God to forgive them. I want to make this very clear that there never was a white man here, for they already had religion before a white man ever stepped in our country.

"So when Eleazar Williams became missionary in 1819, the Oneidas had long ago accepted this white man's religion.

"In 1702 some of the Oneidas were converted to the white man's religion. You must know that not all the Oneidas were Episcopalians. Some had refused to accept Christianity and remained pagans, but in 1823 even those accepted Christianity and were converted to be Methodists. So the second group that came to Wisconsin in 1823 were Methodists.

"These Christian parties were known as the Orchard Parties. The Oneidas were great in planting fruit trees; that's how they came to be called 'Orchard Indians.' You notice the many fruit trees here now. So in 1823 the Oneidas came to Oneida and settled here in Duck Creek. The first Orchard party settled in the north end of the reservation of eight by twelve miles, as was set aside in 1838. That was the final agreement made in 1838, even though we had purchased five million acres. We ended up with land eight miles wide by twelve miles long. The first group naturally settled on the north end. The second group came later and had to settle the south half of the reservation. There had been a friction between these two groups, the Methodists and the Episcopalians, because the Methodists felt they were given the leavings of the reservation. To this day it shows up a little here and there in the generation in their seventies and eighties, and there are some still living at this age. And this feeling comes from these old generations. Some of the young generation don't know anything about this, but I notice it, since I have been holding office for the Oneida tribe since 1934. Every now and then I hear that this friction still exists.

"I meet so many government officials, and it is news to them to know that we have two groups here that do not work together as they should.

"In 1823 we had Eleazar Williams for our missionary. I wish to give him credit. There never was another white man interested to educate us Indians. He set up the Oneida Mission Day School where he taught up to about fourth grade. Eleazar Williams was with us until about 1845, and during this time he taught the Oneidas religion and music. He was well versed in music, and he had made some translations. He taught many religious hymns of the Episcopal church. Oneidas are musically inclined. And recall, singing may have been the only means of recreation at that time. He got good attendance. The Indians gathered here at the church and exchanged news and opinion; we have quite a

number of Indians here who have very good bass voices—I think this is lacking with the white people. We can sing really well, and we can sing loud!

“Now we still have wakes here. It used to be that the corpse was brought back to the home where we have the Indian wakes. This was carried on in a very nice religious way. So now nobody speaks out loud. It is all in a whisper to show their respect to the deceased and his family. They do not knock at the door when they come to the wake in the evening; they walk right in. A chairman is appointed for the evening. He calls on different ones to make a speech, and it is always about the Bible. Also we are not to say anything unfavorable about the deceased’s way of life. We must only talk about the pleasant things that he did.

“As to our singing, it is all Bible words, and we truly believe in our faith. We’re not only using it as a cover. Some of the religious hymns that we sing were translated by Eleazar Williams into the Oneida language. One is the ‘Te Deum’ used as a sacred hymn for the Oneidas. It is only used on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter and on Bishop Day. In 1939 a folklore project was set up here, sponsored by the University of Wisconsin. Since I was one of the two who were considered the best spellers in phonetic alphabet in our language, I was selected to make the transliteration from the Oneida Indian hymnbook written in Mohawk sounds, which was carried from New York to Oneida. In 1940 I made the translation into the new alphabet.

“Eleazar Williams was our missionary from 1823 until about 1848. He died at Hogansburg, but his corpse was brought back to Oneida here and buried near our church in about 1950. The Oneidas quarried the stone for our church, native limestone. My father was a foreman in quarrying the stone. I think that right here is a great record again for the Oneidas, but not a thing is said about the work of the Indians. The priests are given all the credit for what has taken place here in Oneida. It is the Oneida Indians who were responsible for civilizing our own people. Williams was the only white man, as I’ve said, who really helped us get education.

“In 1848 Williams left us, and others took his place. Always, one or two get a superior education, and by 1870 we did have some well-educated persons, but instead of helping us they defrauded quite a few. In 1887 the Allotment Act became law; through two Oneida Indians and others, the law went through so that the reservation of 65,000 acres was broken up and allotted to individuals. Those who were not twenty-one received around twenty-six acres, and those older received forty acres if single; a married couple received ninety acres.

“Now this land was still held in trust by the federal government; in other words, it was exempt from taxation. Again these educated Oneidas worked with the superintendent and managed to get another bill passed in Congress whereby the heirs of a deceased person could sell his allotment. In 1906 this act

really began to decrease our tribal lands, because much of the land could then be sold to white people.

“From 1823 on, the Oneidas were self-supporting through hunting. The women did the garden work. The men provided the meat.

“In 1918 the government made a taxable deed, except for a few who were old or uneducated, whereby the individual owners were able to mortgage, sell, or do otherwise. Immediately they started mortgaging their land and forgetting to make payments. Quite a few acres were sold for taxes. The white men took advantage of it and paid the back taxes and took the land; after four years they could get what is called a tax title deed. Some Indians mortgaged their land for a team of horses, which maybe were supposed to be four years old and turned out to be eighteen years old! The real estate men of Green Bay and West De Pere really took advantage and laid low for Indian lands. One eighty-acre section was sold, I think, for eighty dollars.

“In 1918 the Oneidas lost a lot of tribal lands. Finally many Indians were left with nothing. Then they went up north, around Tigerton, where they could cut cordwood for maybe a dollar a cord, and that’s how they made their living. They started to move out of Oneida, because there wasn’t any more game or timber. This migration started soon after 1918.

“In 1929 it was reported that the Oneidas were ninety-nine percent landless. In other words, we might have had about 100 acres of tribal-owned land. In 1934 the Indian Organization Act came into being, and we had factions here who were very excited and said that they were going to take shotguns, round up all the white people who had taken over the Oneida land, and march them down to Green Bay. The tribal chiefs were not recognized after 1900 by the Indian bureau, so there was a self-made chief who was telling the Oneidas that under the Indian Organization Act the government was going to move them out of Oneida, up north somewhere, where there were rattlesnakes. ‘If you accept the Organization Act you will be moved.’ But that was not true.

“Actually, under the Indian Organization Act, the government will buy land wherever the Indians wish to live; later on we accepted the act, and we have our own government. We have been able, also to get back about twenty-five hundred acres owned by the tribe and exempt from taxation. We assign this land to individual Indians. Also, we own some land inside the city limits of Green Bay, and we want to work with Green Bay to better ourselves. We want to create employment for our people, and to show that we are a dependable people with a great tradition.

“I don’t know what Eleazar Williams would think if he saw us today. We have only a few Oneidas who can do bead work. Only one lady can make the husk rug out of cornhusks. We have a group of Indian dancers, but they were taught by white people, a priest who only wanted to satisfy his own curiosity. We

make the Indian corn bread from white Indian flint corn. I have a mortar here with which we hand-grind our corn. One lady bakes corn bread one day a week.

“And when the wild geese fly high, we Oneidas think it will be very cold weather; when they fly low there will be a mild winter. I told a senator from Oklahoma that when a robin sings there will be rain before twenty-four hours, and there were a few other things I told him. I said, ‘The only things which we Oneidas cannot forecast, nor tell, is when the federal government will pay us our claim!’ That must have been twenty years ago, and we still didn’t get our claim, but the money is now set aside for this five-million-acre claim; maybe, some day, the Oneidas will be again a landed people.

“I only wish that Eleazar Williams was here now. He would be helping us to fight our battles and to give us even better education.”