

The Wapanachki Delawares and the English; Their past as Viewed by an Ethnologist

Author(s): Frank G. Speck

Source: *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 67, No. 4 (Oct., 1943), pp. 319-344

Published by: [The Historical Society of Pennsylvania](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20087623>

Accessed: 11/02/2011 08:31

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=hsp>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



*The Historical Society of Pennsylvania* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*.



THE  
Pennsylvania  
Magazine  
OF HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY

---

*The Wapanachki Delawares and the  
English; Their Past as Viewed  
by an Ethnologist*

STUDIES in the Indian background of American history have entered a new phase. It is that of ethno-history. We have been told much that was unintentionally misleading by early writers on the eastern tribes, who saw these people and interpreted their ways of life through eyes dominated by European standards and traditions. Later writers repeated the views of their predecessors. These misleading interpretations were common with relation to the Delawares and related tribes of the Chesapeake and Delaware Bay country and to those of southern New England. To most readers, the statements made by pioneer historians belong to a period of the past which has closed its annals for almost two centuries, so far as these concern the native peoples who have been gone that length of time from their original haunts. To the ethnologist, however, many of the records are only reminders of customs and traditions still current among descendants of these tribes now residing in Ontario and Oklahoma. To him it matters little that they are some hundreds of leagues from their erstwhile homes on the Atlantic seaboard. It may indeed seem incredible that elderly people among the Delawares, and others in these distant regions, believe in teachings, perform

ceremonies, and recite stories and legends of the country about the Delaware Valley, carried westward and northward by their ancestors during the flight from European aggression. The ethnologist, therefore, places on record his findings as revealed through experience with the people themselves—otherwise they lack a spokesman.

One of the first ethnological historians to express surprise at the tenacity of tradition among the Delawares was Daniel G. Brinton. In the early nineties this pioneer in research became aware, through his associate, A. S. Anthony, an educated Delaware of Canada, that a fugitive band there held memories of places and events transpiring in Pennsylvania. These, when written down from the dictation of living Indians, sounded like excerpts from writings of the Swedes, the Dutch and the English adventurers of several centuries ago. There is indeed something strangely persistent about the national heritage of any people driven by adversity from their ancient domains. The heritage may be nourished through pride of origin, in the belief that it proves the dignity of their culture—the credit for which their enemies have denied them after defeat. Within the inner circles of family and tribe the old life of the ancestors is a frequent topic of discussion. Never written down by them for alien eyes, never proclaimed from the stump to exalt the past of a now obscure people, the oral heritage lingers solely in the fireside world of old Indian groups. It is revealed only to their intimates.

With these remarks in mind, the writer undertakes to approach this theme from an angle little viewed in historical literature. Something of the history of the eastern tribes—first, of their later story on the western Plains, and then of their earlier life on the Atlantic Slope—will be told in terms of the culture and traditions of their present descendants. Only in this way can we discover the Indians' side of the story, which will add to and sometimes correct the views which historians have usually based simply on the records left by white observers. Then a note will be added to explain why ethnologists think the Indian viewpoint so important. In order to make this clear, certain questions often raised about Indians in general will be noted, and then the answers usually given will be contrasted with those that ethnologists now find more convincing. The latter feel that the whole question of historical contacts between Indians and their white conquerors must now be reopened. The discussion which

follows, however, relates only to the Algonkian tribes originally found on the Atlantic seaboard, and chiefly to those known—for reasons to be noted—as the Delawares.

The Delawares have always enjoyed a kind of distinction among the tribes with whom they have come into contact. Not only in the great family of people did they merit a certain respect due to their seniority as “grandfathers” of men, but also in minor traits that marked their status as a people of force. Some of these observations on Delaware distinctiveness have not appeared in print, others have been but rarely noted in accounts that have escaped general attention. Here are some of the traditional points culled from notes taken during conversations with old people, who recite them with the amusement that seems characteristic of persons hearing flattering stories concerning themselves. Note the candor of the legends of tribal prowess, told with a chuckle of mirth not lessening the vanity implied in their recital.

As a subdivision of the Delaware Nation, a group called the Munsee are reputed to have been characterized by possessing a spirit of greater belligerency than wisdom. Easily provoked to violent means of deciding their affairs, which was perhaps a credit to them in times of early hostility toward the Iroquois and the whites, they are remembered today among the other Oklahoma Delawares as being slovenly in dress and appearance. For instance, the latter declare that the Munsee wore leggings not well enough sewn to conceal their nudeness. For this indifference to dress they suffered a certain lack of esteem in times of peace. Their rating was not high in council and deliberation. So much for endotribal hearsay concerning the Munsee.

We hear of something akin to terrorism spread among the Indian nations of the Far West, after the Delawares had crossed the Mississippi to found their settlements on the Plains. Tradition in Oklahoma mentions the fear inspired by the Delawares in forays as far as the Rocky Mountains; fear of their wandering parties of raiders who penetrated to the fastnesses inhabited by the Utes and Paiutes of Colorado. It was through the experiences gained by generations of Delaware war-trained men possessing firearms and ammunition obtained from traders in Kansas in the 1840's, that their small

parties were invincible to the remote tribes beyond the frontiers. These Delaware parties were composed of hardened fighters, the result of a century of conflict begun in Pennsylvania and continuing through the strife period centering about Fort Pitt and later Sandusky. From peace-loving dwellers in the Delaware Valley in the era of Swedish occupation and through the time of William Penn, the Delaware Nation had been transformed into a military body ready to struggle for its own existence in territories defended by their native owners. Having suffered expulsions, burnings, broken agreements, deceptions and massacres provoked by the vicious but nobly interpreted land-lust of settlers in the East, they had learned the lessons involved in such transactions. Most of the Nation had been converted to Christianity, many of its families had European family surnames, some were literate, and intermatings with whites had been frequent. They knew and practiced commerce, had acquired the economy of European colonists, wore their garb, spoke their language and understood the white man's dominant obsession for power and wealth. They had gained experience in national policies through being duped into war alliances with contending empires, from the time of first contacts with Europeans, and with the Iroquois. In every deal of the political game they had paid the wretched penalty of losers. Alcoholism had taken a hold upon them which they could not control. Experts in the use of firearms, they had become dependent upon the supplies of white traders for ammunition and equipment. In short, they had become civilized in the European sense.

This means that the Delawares had acquired a peculiar status by the middle of the nineteenth century when they entered the western Plains. They appeared on the frontiers of the Indian nations of the Plains and the Rockies, equipped and motivated much as the whites had been on their own frontiers a century before in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York. In fact the Plains tribes regarded them as white men because of their dress, manners and motives. Their association with whites as experienced scouts and defense units for wagon trains and regiments added to the impression conveyed to the Plains Indians that the Delawares and the whites were one. Fear and deep distrust of their transformed red-skinned "brothers" was the universal outcome. The foregoing remarks should be borne in

mind in perusing the anecdotes dealing with the Delawares in the period of their later history beyond the Mississippi.

Among the scouts employed to safeguard emigrant wagon trains across the central and southern Plains was a Delaware chief, Black Beaver. His name was outstanding in frontier chronicles. He was government interpreter at conferences with the Comanche, Kiowa and Wichita tribes on the Red River in 1834. His services were constantly required by the government and were invaluable to military and scientific explorers of the Plains and Rocky Mountains. He was the most intelligent and most trusted guide in nearly every one of the transcontinental expeditions until his death in 1880. So runs the published notice of his life. His name is connected with narratives of Delaware courage repeated among his tribesmen in Oklahoma, some of which seem factual and others legendary.

Whether Black Beaver was a member of the Delaware party referred to in the following anecdote is open to question. It is told that on one occasion a company of a dozen Delaware scouts found themselves surrounded by a large war party of Ute or Comanche. The former took a defense position in a mountain defile, forming an enclosure of their horses and carts to withstand the enemy's charge. The Ute war party numbered over a hundred mounted men armed only with bows and arrows, and they apparently took the Delawares to be white men invading their domain. Outnumbered ten to one, the Delaware scouts withstood a series of charges by the enemy circling their position. Although without drinking water, the Delawares held out all day. So deadly was their fire that most of the attackers were put out of action, and the rest finally fled. When night descended the Delawares made their escape from the place on foot, all their horses having been killed. Witapanoxwe, the narrator, had heard this account from the families of some of the participants in the affair.

A legend is widely current among the Delawares which further illustrates their boast that other tribes avoided them in scouting parties, for the reason that they were dangerous as possessors of firearms. Sometimes, curiously enough, enemy tribes were warned of the proximity of the Delawares, by the scent of the particular smoking mixture the latter used. Air currents drift in streaks for distances across the prairies. The odor of the mixture known as

kelekenikkan, the Delaware equivalent of the familiar term kin-nickinnick, differs from that of straight tobacco or the mixtures favored by other tribes. The Delawares blend one third portion of dried sumac leaves and two thirds of tobacco. The use of this mixture they regard as a custom peculiar to themselves. Mentioned by Zeisberger a century and a half ago, and by Catlin in 1841, they are still fond of smoking it in pipes today. When their hunting and scouting bands traveled the Plains they were identified from afar by the scent they left in the air. Indians in other regions, by the way, associate a peculiar odor with different peoples, especially with the whites, whose natural odors are unpleasant to them. Another instance is that of the Labrador Indians, whose constant exposure to camp fire smoke from birch and spruce wood betrays their presence at some distance. Somewhat more pleasant is the case of the Maine Indians, who use sweet-grass in basket making, and so absorb the odor of the plant in their persons and possessions—whence its nickname, “Indian perfume.”

An episode in the life of the Delawares which is said to have occurred during the turbulent period of frontier history, subsequent to their emergence on the Plains, illustrates the behavior credited to them by bordermen. It refers to a small party of Delaware rovers who found themselves facing death by thirst and hunger in a desert near the Rockies. They became so reduced that they had to kill and devour their horses. They seemed doomed to perish. All at once, there appeared a white man, presumably a gold-seeker. He joined their party and shared his water and food with the starvelings. But the relief was of short duration. That night the Delawares discussed the situation in their own language. They decided to kill and eat the white man to restore their strength. One of the Indians, however, opposed the plan, saying that he had heard that human flesh would not relieve hunger, but would make them sick. He had heard that it tasted too salty. His counsel, however, being overruled, the deed was done and the victim's flesh cooked and divided among those who would accept it. They all became violently sick except the man who refused to eat. Those who survived this foray and its consequences returned eventually to Kansas, where the Delawares were then located, and related the adventure. It probably occurred in the 1850's or 1860's, according to the narrator who had heard it told by

one of the survivors of the expedition. It is quite possibly a true story, since cases of cannibalism—under stress of famine, in the heat of conflict, and also as an absorption rite—are on record for the Atlantic Slope tribes of early times.

So much for the later experiences of the Delawares on the western Plains. Behind these lay the whole cultural heritage of a people. One way to approach this is to consider, first, the matter of their tribal names. From the beginnings of historical documentation certain tribes of the North Atlantic Slope have been referred to as Wabanaki, or some variant of that name. On many old charts of the region, this proper name, in recognizable form, appears spread across parts of northeastern Pennsylvania and northern New Jersey. The early missionaries, Moravian and Catholic, used the name at times as they heard the natives refer to themselves in broad terms. Its form in literature varies from Wonbanaki and Abenakis (French pronunciation), Abenaki, Wabanaki (English equivalents) to Wapanachki (German Moravian mission spelling), and Wampanoag (Puritan New England rendering). Over forty variant spellings are listed in early and late accounts of the region, derived from the originative dialects of the general Algonkian linguistic stock and from the different European spellings. The term, no matter what its local form may be, denotes "Sunrise land," whence "East land" or "Easterners." The proper name has a deeper significance in the minds of the Indians themselves than a mere geographical bearing. To them it marks the original unity of origin shared by those small bands. It is, furthermore, invested with a prestige due to the original occupation of the region. Along these lines, the following discussion is intended to note the significance for historians, and to show what historical perspective is revealed in its application to the Delawares.

The writer has participated in discussions of the meaning of the designation "Wabanaki" with old Indians among tribes from eastern Canada to Oklahoma. They recognize it as a generic appellation. The basic element of the term is waban, "dawn." This being conjoined with aki, "land," denoted that part of the world their ancestors knew which was first lighted by the sun rising above the eastern sea. To their minds it was and is a symbol of the antiquity they lay claim to as the first people to have come eastward across bodies of



water and settled down at the edge of the land nearest the rising sun. It seems to have acquired for them the prestige of priority as first inhabitants of the Atlantic coastal front. From east toward west is the direction in which the living pursue their course. For in the scheme of native thought life follows the orbit of the sun. This vital principle of philosophy underlies the thought of all those Algonkian-speaking divisions which assert their right to the Wabanaki group name. They constituted a great family of "Orientals" of the western world, as the literal meaning of the term indicates. As we shall soon see, the concept of age is associated with the East and the point where the sun rises. The older forms of life dwell in the East. Hence the people of the East or Sunrise are progenitors of others who are younger. So emerges the concept that Wabanaki implies the relationship of grandfathers to the other tribes. And a system of relationships with tribes arises, in which they arrange themselves into a huge family graded according to generations from the grandfathers down.

To venerate age is a maxim common to all Indians of America, to a degree not exceeded among any known people of the world. The status accorded to them as "grandfathers" accounts for the unity and pride of the Delawares, in their relations with the Indians of the Mississippi Valley. To the Delaware Nation, which by mid-eighteenth century, had incorporated most of the Mahican from the Hudson and the Munsee, falls the renown of having carried the name and prestige of the Wapanchki to the western Indians. Why the Delawares should have claimed to be the "grandfathers" of other tribes who likewise called themselves Wabanaki, is a question for which neither history nor ethnology seems to offer explanation. The fact remains that they were so acknowledged by their own group lineage and by their unrelated contemporaries of early and later times. The social universe around them came to be classified under a system of consanguinity of tribes, which was commented upon by writers of the colonial period. The European sense of relationship possessed no pattern of international kinship corresponding to what was encountered among the Indians here. This perplexed the white settlers. The explanation of historical derivation seemed plausible to most of the writers who attempted to discuss it. Their descriptions of the natives, their efforts to theorize upon origins and aboriginal

migrations recognized the grandfather, uncle, nephew and brother (younger and older) relationship which was acknowledged among the tribes of the East. Historians are too familiar with the records left by colonial observers to require quotations here. Since we are dealing with the contemporaneous native sources of information, rather than with the European authors of early times, the following transcript of notes made among the modern Delawares of Oklahoma and Ontario is inserted.

The Delawares were designated as "grandfathers" by such western and northern tribes as the Shawnee, Sauk, Kickapoo, Chippewa, Ottawa, and Sioux. Also by the Potawatomi, Fox, Peoria, Menomoni, Iowa, Tonkawa and Winnebago. The Delawares reciprocated by addressing these peoples as "grandchildren." The Delawares viewed the Nanticoke, Mahican, Munsee and Iroquois, on the other hand, as "brothers." At the time the missionary Heckewelder wrote, just before 1800, some changes were indicated in these ratings. He gave the relationship of the Nanticoke and Mahican to the Delawares as grandchildren, whereas the modern conception, as noted, is that of brothers. The relationship of the Wyandot, Seneca and Cherokee to the Delawares of late historic times is that of nephew to uncle. A status of equality is denoted by the use of the brother term of address. White people are so classified by the Delawares in the great human family. Negroes are termed "elder brothers" by them as being the strongest of all "races." In such a manner the Wabanaki accorded tribes and peoples about them a familial rating, in which they assumed a primogenity that seems not to have been contested. The idea of a biologically related animate universe, in which they found a place of dignity, is further expressed in the idea that spirits, celestial bodies, physical forces, animals and even forms of vegetation were included in the kinship cycle. This point has never been emphasized in the essays of historians and literary writers, who have discussed the depth of "nature worship" in aboriginal thought without referring to factual testimony.

One of the principles of the Delawares and of other tribes of the "Grand Old Algonkian Family," was to accord kinship to individuals and groups they loved. This was done by adoption into the family under names denoting relationships appropriate to their age and social status. It is a practice still observed among them. A friend is

endeared by being addressed as brother. It denotes equality as well as affection. The connection goes back to a common fatherhood, just as though there was a real blood relationship. To the native Indian, such a bond admits no possibility of deception or of breaking asunder. An oral declaration of brotherhood becomes a pact that means a guarantee of confidence and cooperation that is seldom broken. The writer, like many ethnologists who have had long and intimate contact with eastern Indians, can testify to the integrity of the brotherhood bond.

This pattern of filial relationships was deeply woven into the fabric of Algonkian and Iroquois life. A survey of treaty negotiations between these peoples and the colonial officials reveals the frequent use of allegory indicating that the Indians wished to assume the brotherhood bond with both whites and alien native nations. We can from this late day only surmise the fidelity which motivated the Indians in their oft-repeated terms in calling white officials "brothers" and governors and proprietors "fathers"—in accordance with their sense of equality or superiority to those addressed. A majority of historians have accepted these expressions at their face value, as intended to open the way for harmony between the natives and European aggressors. From the viewpoint of an ethnologist, the writer is convinced that Indians used these terms with complete sincerity. Honesty of heart is a sentiment that comes slowly, and Indian orators ceaselessly emphasized their willingness to believe in the white man's word and to imitate his creeds, once the latter's actions bore out his professions. The use of wampum memorials also exhibits the depth of sentiment invested in the term "brother." On the whole it would have been contrary to all that their religion taught, had the eastern, treaty-making chiefs used the word "brother" with any perfidious intent. On the whole, they viewed a voluntary brotherhood pact as an inviolable agreement.

The interpretations of these pacts by our European forebears, however, was another matter. It is clear that they regarded the Indian protestations of brotherhood with a sense of satire. Steeped in the devious diplomacy of Europe, they framed their political courses in conformity with their own strategic purpose and advantage. It was consequently easy for the natives to see perfidy in the agreements entered into by the whites under the signature of

brothers. It was easy for the whites, on the other hand, to play with the natives as children, rather than in terms of a brother relationship which they were loath to admit with people of a different color and background. Only saints could accept "heathens" and "savages" as brothers.

As we proceed to analyze early relations between Indians and the white colonial administrators, another attribute of the Wabanaki mind comes under consideration. It is the tendency to assume humility in the presence of others. While characteristic of the formal procedures of many peoples, the guise of humility was especially characteristic of the Delawares. It may seem strange that the same tribes could combine assumed seniority and prestige with a mien of humility. But one need not go far into European history to find its parallel. As for the Delawares and their Wabanaki kindred, the published records we have abound in professions of human weakness and humility amid the harsh conditions of existence. The Indian of the forest seems to have realized the rigors and uncertainties of life to the full. Scarcely a sermon, lecture or prayer translated from the original tongue opens without a profession of the following states of feeling: "We are pitiful in our pleading"; "Truly I am very feeble myself to instruct anyone"; "Pitiful me"; "I am truly thankful, my kindred, I am happy that I stand in our Father's path. . . . I am truly humble, for me it is unbecoming in the extreme, pitiful as I am. . . ." Thankfulness for blessings of subsistence is blended with a humility which is expressed formally in beginning and closing speeches. Deep tones of genuine religious sentiment pervade the almost poetic forms of expression that make up Wabanaki rituals, especially those of the Delawares, which are the best known.

An illustration of an honest attempt to accord elder brother relationship to Europeans is afforded by the Delawares as early as about 1720. The Indians clearly believed that a state of mutual brotherhood would promote harmony between themselves and the whites. Following the transfer of authority over their affairs from the Dutch to the English, and the final stage of their conquest by the Iroquois, the proud Wapanachki who inhabited the Delaware valley as the Lenape ("Native men"), surrendered their identity by taking over the name of the river derived from the family De la Warr. Thenceforth they appear in the annals of Pennsylvania history as the

Delawares. That the action was hardly acceptable to some of the more conservative natives, is shown by the persistence of the old name among those who lived on through over two hundred years of conflict with whites, as they were pressed westward from Pennsylvania through Ohio, Indiana and Kansas to Oklahoma. In the last named state, at the present time, some two thousand descendants—domiciled in a corner of the old Cherokee Nation—preserve the identity of the Lenape Nation. The writer receives mail from tribal leaders who still sign themselves as of the Lenape Nation. Other migrants who reached Canada as adopted affiliates of the Six Nations Iroquois, however, are officially listed and enumerated there as Delawares.

The Nation at large, nevertheless, having relinquished its original name, relinquished in some degree its social and political entity. Why did the Lenape Indians give up their national name for one of European origin? Scant attention has been given to the significance of this action on the part of the Lenape. Some writers have accorded it no more than a sentence. To many historians and ethnologists, the use of the dual name has been a source of perplexity. To the natives, however, the action was of momentous significance. It validated the motives they avowed in cementing the bond of brotherhood, when they formally addressed the white people as brothers and instituted a fraternal relationship to be respected by both. They might have expected the Pennsylvanians to meet the action by assuming the name Delawares. Had the latter been inclined to do so, frontier history might well have been different.

But, unhappily, the meeting of the two peoples on a common ground of fraternal unity was never realized. Each side blamed the other. The Delawares accused their "brothers" of greed and perfidy by spoken word; the whites accused the "savages" of treachery and barbarism in the written records of the times. Whatever the verdict may be from our softened, modern perspective, the Delawares must be credited with the behavior pattern of humility. A psychologist may see this as a defense mechanism, as an outer manifestation of duplicity, as treaty-making officials frequently did by reference to their own predetermined values of conduct. But an ethnologist often finds himself vindicating the motives of non-literate peoples whose side of the case has never been fairly presented. Reviewing the cir-

cumstances as they appear in colonial records, and measuring them against the cultural background of the Delawares as we now are beginning to fathom it, the writer asserts his belief in the complete sincerity of native leaders. They applied the terms "brother" and "father" to the English as an overture of peace, that they might live and prosper together in the valley.

Before closing this topic, mention may be made of another instance when an Algonkian-speaking tribe on the colonial frontier took for themselves a name and identity patterned after the English. The Chickahominy Indians, dwelling above Jamestown on the Chickahominy River, voluntarily adopted in 1613 the proper name *Tasautessu* ("Those who wore trousers"), to indicate their change to English ways. This was related by Captain John Smith. Virginia historians have pointed out that this move was intended to promote amity with the English and to sever their relations with the Emperor Powhatan. We learn through the descendants of the tribe still living in the old home region, that the change of name was coordinated with the adoption of Christianity—brought to them by intermarriage between a Calvinist fugitive and one of their maidens. But again it happened, unfortunately, that "Those who wear trousers" failed to secure themselves the peace and equality for which they hoped in vain.

New names for Indian tribes were sometimes introduced for reasons other than those noted. Conversion to Christianity was often a cause of such changes. From the late seventeenth century to the mid-eighteenth came a harvest of souls resulting from missionary efforts among the Indians of southern New England. To facilitate their instruction in religion, these peoples were congregated in mission stations forming new centers of social and economic development. Their earlier unities as tribes became dissolved under the control of mission administration. Collective names were chosen which were evidently intended to create a Christian brotherhood among Indian saints. These names were symbols of ideal sentiments supposed to imply the reclamation of the bearers from "barbarism." The renaming of communities of converted lambs had begun early in eastern Massachusetts. In John Eliot's missions, converted families of Nipmuck, Wampanoag, Massachusetts and Nauset had been congregated under the name of Praying Indians. Strife and violence

caused by English aggression resulted in King Philip's War and doomed the mission effort. The chain of friendship being forged under Puritanical principles of Christian brotherhood was broken, and the Praying Indians resumed their tribal names.

During the century following, a new evangelical wave swept through the colony. The sweepings of native convert populations from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, and from as far east as the tip of Long Island, accumulated to found a new tribal unit carrying the label of Brothertown Indians. Its constituents were Mohegan, Pequot, Nehantic, and small bands from the Connecticut valley—Narragansett, Wampanoag and Montauk. They organized as brothers in Christian harmony, and as such they still exist as a tribe in Wisconsin. A major segment of the old Mahican Nation, dwelling along the upper Hudson, constituted itself into a mission tribe in the Berkshires at Stockbridge in western Massachusetts, and gradually adopted the official name of Stockbridge Indians. Under this geographical eponym they continue on the records as migrants to Wisconsin—but no longer as Mahican.

To return to the Delaware peoples, it may be noted that they also were influenced by Christianity. This was true, for example, of the Munsee tribes, who wandered into the region lying between the Hudson and the Delaware valleys. Coming under the sway of Moravian missionaries in the early seventeen hundreds, they joined with evangelized Mahican and Lenape from Pennsylvania, and acquired the Germanic pseudonym of Moravians. Here again, the whites, now the missionaries, were responsible for the renaming rather than the Indians themselves. The ties of brotherhood in name, agreed upon by both parties, became fixed appellations for the missionized element of distinct but culturally related bands of Algonkians in the colonies. These ethnic composites started new tribal bodies down the path of history bearing English or German group names indicative of their adoption of European ways of life. The conservatives of the old element either stayed in their ancestral territories or emigrated north and west to cast their lot with Indian nations beyond the frontiers. Where the old tribe-names survived, it was they who preserved them.

The very fact that some tribesmen adopted new names, while others preserved the old, has been confusing to historians and other

readers. The question naturally arises: why do specific tribes appear under an English as well as an Indian proper name? Why, for instance, should some of the Munsee be "Moravians," some of the Mahican be called "Stockbridges," and some of the Massachusett, Wampanoag and Nipmuck be termed "Praying Indians"? Incidentally a similar development took place in the mission area of Southern California, where native group names were replaced by those of patron saints allotted them by missionary priests; to wit, the Diegueños, the Luiseños, and the Gabrielinos. The mission era in the New England and the Middle Atlantic States is a historical mosaic of romance, tragedy and frustrated hopes no less alluring as a theme for literary treatment than that of Southern California. Its significance, however, has not as yet been realized by Americanists competent to exploit its possibilities. It is by no means negligible on account of its coldness!

Perhaps by this point, it has already been made clear why ethnological as well as the usual historical approach is necessary in order to really understand Indian history. Ethnologists have already learned the merits of the usual historical approach to their studies of American natives, and are "getting up" on their history. The historians, having tried the resources of published matter, should now be led into the society of living groups of men, the descendants of those first met by the writers of history in the times of early contact and conflict. Investigations among the living sometimes confirm the early accounts, sometimes contradict or correct them, but they always deepen the understanding of motives behind the nature of men's actions.

The characters of Indians who staged the acts in the drama of history in eastern North America has been endlessly portrayed as possessing certain qualities much the same over wide areas of the continent. This can hardly have been true of the colonial past any more than it is in recent times. Cultural historians realize that long inherited ideas and habits may persist through long periods, even after far-reaching changes in economy and religion. Not only must ethnologists caution against the use of data recorded from a specific area being extended over distant and often distinct culture types, but they also require that regard be given to likelihood of continuity



of impulses and motives in the life history of each group. To explain motives and manners of even tribal divisions of the same linguistic stock, the one by the other, is risky and misleading. The Algonkian groups of northern New England had a different outlook upon life and its problems as well as upon their environment from those of southern New England. Yet they spoke closely related tongues and were of similar physical types. Those of the Middle Atlantic Slope were again different in their cultural and idealistic make up. It is needless to add that in estimating the Iroquois a still different ideology must be reckoned with. Hence, as noted, this essay deals exclusively with the Algonkian inhabitants of the eastern woodlands adjacent to the Atlantic coast, where the first European settlements were founded and the first accounts of the aborigines were written.

The narratives of the times, many of them scholarly, describe events and offer explanations of their causes and motives involved which raise endless, often unanswerable, questions in the minds of ethnologists. A curious-minded and intelligent public plies the field explorer among Indians with innumerable queries. To do them justice would require writing or lecturing with a feverish haste while the memory of facts and impressions is clear and to the point raised. A survey of such inquiries as recalled by one who has received them and pondered over them will reveal something of their character. They show the discernment of thought among laymen, and specialists in historical pursuits. Here are some of them selected as typical from a long file. They seem to be evoked by a comparison of Indian custom and behavior placed upon record by the early writers, with what is currently observed of Indian character and customs of recent times. They seem to say, "Did the old accounts distort conditions then existing, were their authors ignorant of them, or have times altered both the basic setups of Indian character and European understanding of character?"

Why did the eastern Indians not progress in European ways of "civilized" life? Why did the Christian missions wane, the populations disband and many of the converts revert to "barbarism"? Why did the Indians not live and prosper with Europeans, sharing the prosperity of colonial development? Why were they not enslaved by the whites? Why did most of the tribes become extinct? Why did they continue to war against each other in the face of European in-

vasion, when they came to realize that their doom was sealed by their disunity? Why did they change allegiances with overseas powers so readily? Why did they trade away their birthrights to the land for worthless beads, baubles and rum? Why did they demand repeated payments for land once disposed of and signed away by deeds? Why did they give and later take away: "Indian givers" in the American vernacular? These are some of the questions of a political nature.

Others concern the cultural characteristics, social and personal, of the native peoples. For example, the following: Why did they resort to massacre of women and children in their war forays? Why did they torture captives? Why did they indulge in drunkenness? Why did they force their women to drudgery? Why were they described as loose in moral relationships? Why did they retreat to the wilderness to avoid labor when its wages and the morale of work showed profitable results to the whites? Why were they regarded as lazy? Why did they continue to be improvident in financial matters? Why were their languages so diverse in type and so complex in grammar as described? Why were they so imbedded in superstition? Why did they develop decorative art in so many lines? Why were they so aesthetically expressive and "picturesquely romantic"? Why was the Indian portrayed as a stoic? Why was he taciturn? Why did he lack humor? Why was he withal so proud? Why was he so tenacious of his customs and traditions? Why did he harbor revenge? Why did they choose to segregate themselves from white society? Why did they refuse for so long the blessings of Christian salvation? Why did the Indian contract European diseases so readily? Why did so many of them adhere to absurd folk beliefs when surrounded by sceptical whites? How did their medicine men come into knowledge of so many cures and herbals? How could performance of miracles of magic be credited to their conjurers? And finally to conclude the galaxy of questions, someone asks, "Why did people say and believe 'There is no good Indian but a dead Indian'?" Yet, a poet proclaims: "Lo, the poor Indian!"

This array of questions can scarcely fail to provoke a smile. But they are not childish questions. Neither were the early whites who wrote about the natives, childish observers. But they almost always viewed the Indians in terms of the European or American standards

of the time in which they wrote. Such judgments, examined by the more critical students of later generations, appear unavoidably tinged by personalities. Objectivity, dispassionate or methodic, could not exist in the background of earlier chroniclers who penned their accounts of Indian characters as men of a different culture and "race." There were, indeed, exceptions. Some writers were tolerant of alien mores and avoided absolute decisions about individuals and tribes whom they could not know at first hand. Some were deliberately, even hatefully, denunciatory of all Indian "barbarians." Some were sentimentalists, others liberals. In regarding the total mass of historical literature available on the tribes in the seaboard colonies, it will be found that historians have regularly put the questions listed above to themselves and voluminously answered them.

But what had Indians to say about all this? In printed documents they were, and still are, mute and strangely silent, except in broken sentences. None from their ranks clears his throat and arises to answer the questions or to refute their implications with a power to influence the public mind approaching that of the printed page of history. Apologetic explanation is spurned by Indians possessing the Indian mind. Kudos is a lacking trait of their character in associations with strangers.

Since the Indians will not, or cannot, speak for themselves, what may the ethno-historians—those who know both the usual history and also the present traditions of these people—say for them?

Let us return to consideration of the question category of a previous paragraph. Many of these queries must continue to stand unanswered. Others will yield to some understanding, even though they cannot be completely answered. The historian—now in company with the ethnologist, both having become ethno-historians for the time in a common pursuit—may draw his data on the living from experience with almost any of the surviving groups dwelling between the Maritime Provinces and the Delaware and Chesapeake Tidewater counties. Indian bands still survive in the Atlantic Slope area bearing historic tribal surnames, tracing descent from those former ethnic groups of non-literate culture whom "life has knocked down and sat on." Their inconspicuousness in census enumeration and on population charts is something to be accounted for and corrected when social statistics over the country come to be revised for

accuracy. The unenumerated community groups entitled to classification as Indian will total over twenty-five, and their population estimates reach over four thousand all told. Aside from those bodies, mostly composed of the nuclear elements, who migrated to the West, there are three tribes of the Wabanaki proper situated in Maine, the Penobscot, Passamaquoddy and Malecite, some stragglers in New Hampshire, three loci of Wampanoag and Nauset settlements in eastern Massachusetts and two of Nipmuck in the central part of the state, and a sizeable company of Narragansett descendants in Rhode Island. There are four communities of Montauk, Shinnecock, Poosepatuck and Matinecock on Long Island (two of them occupying state-administered Indian reservations). There are Scatticook-Mahican on a similar reservation in western Connecticut, Mohegan and Pequot in the eastern counties. Farther south there are Nanticoke survivors in Delaware, Potobacco in Maryland, Potomac, Rappahannock, Pamunkey, Mattaponi, Chickahominy and Nansamond in the bay country of Virginia. These are tribes emphasized in the annals of the early South. They possess characteristics that mark them off as ethnic groups apart from the Old World populations, light-skinned and dark, that overwhelmed them two centuries ago. Since the old Indian continuity of thought and feeling has been a continuous legacy among some of the old people of the Delawares in Oklahoma and Canada where they have found refuge, we may also use them as types for investigation and analysis of the Indian mind of the past. The several thousand Delawares, the contemporary residue of the old nation of the colonies, represent for us the type characters of their Algonkian kindred encountered by the English from New England to Virginia. And so the ethno-historian contemplates them.

The Indians of the East are a people reconciled to their fate wherever it has left them to enjoy the freedom they crave from social, political and religious exploitation by the alien "race." They resent dominance by others, being staunch believers in their own ability to manage their affairs. They are deliberate of mind in making decisions affecting their interests. Deliberation is slow to produce results in action. Their methods of reaching conclusions of importance have always been, and still are, ponderous, irksome and unnecessary in the opinion of whites. Indians are accordingly re-

garded as conservatives if not reactionaries, and so treated by time-accounting officials. They are slow to answer direct questions, slow to give utterance to opinions not based upon mature thought. They favor discussion of matters with others whose ideas are respected, and listen to counsel without interruption or argument. These traits of bringing-up are seldom understood by whites. The aged are held in profound respect for their experience in the ways of life and their accumulated knowledge of fact. The impulsive energy of youth is usually discounted.

Among other attributes as marked in the present as in the past by those dealing with Indians is their reflectiveness of mind. Contemplation of nature, celestial bodies, the winds, clouds, storms, snows, the changes of season and length of day, the relations of time and space provide animated topics of discussion with real observation and grasp of meaning behind them intruding incessantly upon the practical chores of daily life.

That the old-time Indians were given to such reflections we know well from early accounts dating from Jesuit times to the era of the Moravians. The ethnologist living with modern scions of the historic tribal philosophers anywhere among the Wabanaki people finds himself in an atmosphere of learning so far as natural history is concerned. To watch the phenomena of nature, to explain them through the lore of the past, to interpret them as carrying out the plans of the Creator, is an important part of life's business. While indulging in these reflections work stops, duties are neglected and time is lost, as many will say, and the people are denounced as lazy and improvident. Beliefs handed down or quoted from the sayings of others become convictions of truth in their minds. Even today with little of the formerly abundant animal life around them to observe, the Indian men are eloquent in themes of plant and animal folklore. Their world is still one in which friendly yet mysterious nature is a moving force in human environment. Fire and water are held in reverence as something with spiritual possibilities despite the generation or two of Christian teaching and country schooling which they have received. To ramble in woods, swamp and clearing is more than a recreative pastime with such folks today and it was so with their forebears. There is a tendency among whites to call the beliefs of native people superstition when they concern the unseen realm of

forces, natural or supernatural. Indians are then superstitious from first to last. So do poets express themselves emotionally. Educated Indians of the present reserve their credulity for sayings and beliefs handed down with the fidelity of Christian sectarians, to the astonishment of all sceptics. They are, however, experts in rationalizing them.

The Indian, we find, is decidedly sensitive. He suffers deeply under ridicule of his people's past beliefs and culture. He can never be ashamed of them himself since he knows their depths, but he senses that whites regard them as absurd and barbaric because they were evolved in paganism. To proclaim their breadth as poetic imagery comparable to the classics would require an attitude of apology and an assertiveness of which he is by nature incapable. Accordingly he remains taciturn among strangers who can know his ancestral culture only superficially. He meets pure curiosity as an underlying approach to familiarity with either silence or sarcasm. This creates animosity among both parties. It led to tacit hostility in the past, it leads to separation at the present.

The statement that the Indian is "naturally revengeful" has met wide circulation in literature dealing with all tribes. The statement is open to serious question as it is worded in specific reference to tribes of the East. It can not be applied without modification to certain native tribal mores of the eastern area. The writer has found himself baffled by an attempt to correlate the assertion with the social behavior of those Algonkian groups inhabiting the northern forest zone. Their behavior as regards this point may be as aboriginal as some of their other culture characteristics. If this is true, we must hesitate in writing down "naturally" revengeful and choose some other interpretation of the term. Revenge is an acquired attribute of conduct in any culture. It was probably truly recorded as a developed social trait of certain eastern tribes. Yet for all there is a break in the evidence of the past and its succeeding period. With the saying of the Indian's revengefulness there goes the implication that it was taken in blood payment. The implication may have become a dominant tone in the meaning given to the word in descriptive accounts of some tribes. It only remains to be said on this matter that the form of revenge known and practiced by eastern Indians in general as a virtue of personal conduct is revenge by

avoidance of the presence of an offender. "The Indian never forgets an injury" is patently a truth. He remembers it, and avoids permanently further contact with the perpetrator. He deprives the latter thus of every advantage of his own association and that of his sympathizers. That "he never forgets a favor" is also just as true. And, the ethnologist may add, he comes back for another, a counterpart in another sense.

Yet it may be admitted that it remains a difficult matter for an ethnologist to harmonize the revenge-spirit of early Indian times with the lack of evidence for it among Indians of our generation. In the annual religious ceremony that marks the new year among both the Iroquois and the Delawares the participants of the rites who expect to derive the blessings from spirit forces are taught to forget wrongs and to make up for the coming year period. Some say that the soul-element of one who dies harboring enmities is burdened with them on its journey over the Milky Way leading to the sky level where dwells the Creator. This is an old belief. In short, it seems observable that modern Indians sulk and avoid association with those who offend them as a means of taking the proverbial revenge.

The old Indian property concept has been a source of misunderstanding among historians, and will remain so for some time. The communal "ownership" of fixed and movable possessions is assumed in literature as a basic principle of all Indian economy. Correct only in part for all in the East, it calls for a different approach and method of explanation as manifested among the Wabanaki peoples. The rights of land holding were inalienable from families and groups for as long as they existed. Concisely this meant to the natives at the time of first white European occupation that no sales were permanent. So-called land transfers made by them to purchasers covered only the rights of use for residence and subsistence as long as the parties concerned lived and were satisfied with the terms of compensation. There is much more to it which cannot be discussed here, and much that students of the subject do not as yet understand. This much, however, lets light upon the oft-repeated complaint of colonial administrators and land-purchasing settlers against Indian methods of disregarding the articles of land sales and cessions. The Indians often demanded repayment for closed deals; they demanded return of disposed property; they declared invalid the terms

of agreement to which they had previously affixed their marks. By Europeans such behavior was held to be a violation of legal usage. They did not understand, or if they did they were not ready to concede the native principle that land ownership in the absolute could not be transferred perpetually from the people who were placed in their seats by will of the Creator to dwell there forever, that only the right to use it could be bestowed in return for presents received by its occupants. Here the legal concepts of the Old World and the New came into conflict. Alterations in the meaning of property could not be made to effect compromise without uprooting the traditions of both parties. Compromise was impossible. Enforcement of treaty and transfer agreements was sought by the whites without further parley, and resistance was summarily raised by the natives. Each side accused the other of violations of principle, substantiated by its own views on the matter.

Indians are still "Indian givers," they still retain old notions of reciprocal responsibilities in property which still fail to coincide with those of whites. They are therefore borrowers, whence "beggars" in the esteem of economic individualists about them. The natives, those who are not completely "civilized" in thought, console themselves by harboring distrust toward white people's motives, maligning the mass character as grasping, unscrupulous, and subtle in methods of acquisition, contentious over possessions and insatiable hoarders. The ethnologist hears with a smile many more adjectives than these applied to the usurpers of their domain by Indians in all settlements. These adjectives are their "revenge." It seems hard for the people to eradicate from their minds the traditional concept of a freer communal ownership based upon social need. What did the garage owner think of his Wabanaki friend to whom he had generously offered financial aid if needed, when he came in one day asking for a loan of five hundred dollars and returned it the next? The Indian laconically explained that he had made the request to test the sincerity of the offer.\*

Another persistent question has been: Why did the Indians in their raids brutally slay white children and women? One answer comes from old men of the tribes, who explained it as one of the

\* Marjorie Rawlings relates a similar anecdote of a Florida cracker in her *Cross Creek*.



practices of total warfare in vogue among the aborigines of the times. That this did not appease the feelings of their European contemporaries may well be assumed. There is, however, another aspect of the matter to be derived from records of the time, of which the writer was unaware until it was recently brought to his attention by an accredited historical investigator. Through correspondence with Charles Edgar Gilliam an insight into historical events in Virginia is revealed. The following quotation is taken from his manuscript: "As I find no evidence of the Indians molesting a white child or woman in Virginia prior to the sack of Apamatuk in 1611, I feel that the refusal of Dale to recognize the Indian custom granting immunity from physical violence to women, children, and chiefs in warfare was the real turning point that shaped Indian-white relationships in the Colony of Virginia quite definitely for at least 100 years thereafter. And why someone else has not noted this Indian queen for her part in so important a phase of colonial history is beyond me. It must have aroused the Indians—especially since Queen Oppussionuske had, only a few years before, seen the same mores invoked by the Indians to spare the life of Smith, because Pocahontas by her rash act convinced the grand council that Smith was a Chief man, and entitled to the protection of this mores. At least that is what I consider the Indian *law of the case* against him, as I interpret the narrative of what is popularly styled *The Rescue of Smith by Pocahontas*. After the sack of Apamatuk no white woman or child was safe. I am satisfied that the Indians shaped their conduct toward the whites in Virginia largely on account of this incident." One can but say in comment upon Mr. Gilliam's explanation that it is ethnologically valid and historically plausible.

In suggesting that Europeans were primarily responsible for having introduced certain atrocities into Indian warfare, Mr. Gilliam's thesis corresponds with conclusions which other critical students have drawn from the early sources. Dr. G. Friederici some twenty-five years ago revolutionized thought concerning Indian-white relationships in the struggle for possession of the colonies, by disclosing that examination of the archives showed the origin of scalping in North America to lie with Europeans. Lucrative scalp bounties on Indian enemies—men, women and children in proportioned payment

—offered by magistrates of colonies from New England to the Carolinas were instigators of the practice not hitherto recorded among native customs at large. Recently, moreover, a dissertation by Dr. N. Knowles has brought out testimony proclaiming a similar origin for the torturing and burning of captives so prevalent in war practices of the eastern tribes of the historic period. These essays have hitherto been overlooked by historians. Of course, some of the platitudes of history perpetuated in secondary accounts are correct. Those which are not are now gradually being recast in an effort to inject realism into the story of our past.

As for the atrocities of war attributed to the natives of the East, the ethno-historian may pause in his ultimate verdict on their origin. He may resort to evidence supported only by observation or authenticated sources. That the barbarities mentioned were retaliatory actions patterned after the performances of whites is not an inference to be hurled back to critics and cavilers. In the present mythologies of the tribes under consideration, the modern anthropologist takes the view that reference may be expected to customs in vogue among the people before the coming of the whites. There is nothing in the content of recorded mythologies involved upon which to base a contention that the practices in question were pursued in antiquity. And to say that the eastern Indians of today manifest a degree of affection for children and the aged, and accord to women a peculiarly important status in the home and in society, would be to weight the discussion with a platitude. These observations have often been made by ethnologists. Whatever evidence now seems most plausible, the facts of early and late observation remain and this question stands open.

These partial answers to certain of the questions listed will show how ethnologists find the traits of the past retained—with a capacity for explanation—by modern Indian groups of the East. Some of the questions have been treated with reserve, for it is an assured fact that what is written here will be seen by Indians who are responsible for the answers put down. The writer anticipates hearing some of the reactions evoked by his comments, when these are put in print by one who speaks in behalf of the silent.

To go farther in this vein would no doubt seem to many readers

like indulging in argumentation framed to exonerate the character of quondam enemies of our civilized order, even to robbing the cultural character of the whites of its aristocracy. But the modern ethnohistorian has become a realist looking at history with dispassionate sentiments and will not barter his candor in interpreting data for the price of admission to the Brahmins.

*University of Pennsylvania*

FRANK G. SPECK