

# Curator Writes History of Calu- met Co. Indians

## **BROTHERTOWN INDIANS MI- GRATED FROM NEW YORK IN 1818, CURATOR WRITES**

**Madison**—The century old hamlet of Brothertown, on the east shore of Lake Winnebago in Calumet county, is a community with a fascinating past, a history "that is unique in that it reaches back to colonial New England for its roots"—thus W. A. Titus, curator of the Wisconsin State Historical society introduces one of the most ancient settlements in eastern Wisconsin in a paper just published by the society.

The beginnings of the Brothertown community in what is now Calumet county can be traced as far back as the landing of the Pilgrims on the cold shores of Massachusetts in 1620, Titus points out. There the Brothertown Indians were among the dominant tribes of the Eastern coast. A succession of vicissitudes, however, which forced them gradually farther away from their homelands, finally found them forced to leave New York in 1818. Thus they came to Wisconsin.

"They first occupied lands jointly with the Stockbridges on the lower Fox River not far from Kaukauna," Titus writes.

This arrangement, however, proved unsatisfactory to both tribes, and in 1834 the federal government allotted lands on the east side of Lake Winnebago in present-day Calumet county; to the Stockbridges two townships and to the Brothertowns one township immediately south of the Stockbridge reservation. The Brothertown allotment contained 23,040 acres; on it they built the Brothertown village which preceded the settlement of today.

Titus explains that the two reservation allotments were unique in the history of Wisconsin Indian reservations because they were the only Indian lands given by the federal government in the area between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi river where the soil was sufficiently productive to make farming something more than a gesture. The federal government, apparently, kept the best of the frontier lands for its white citizens, handing to its Indian wards the leftovers.

"The story of the Brothertowns since their coming to the eastern shore of Lake Winnebago is one of

mingled success and painos," Titus continues. "In 1839 they elected to become citizens of the United States, to assume all the responsibilities of that status, and to receive their lands in severalty. Theoretically, this was an advantage to the Brothertowns as it put them on the same footing as their white neighbors.

"The records indicate that the Brothertown group held their land allotments practically intact for two or three decades after their arrival. Then they began to sell their farms to outsiders, mostly Germans, who recognized the intrinsic value of these lands.

"As the Brothertowns spoke the English language and had been Christianized and civilized, it followed that inter-marriages with white people became frequent. In time most of the Brothertowns came to be more white than Indian. That many of them were shiftless and improvement was to be expected; they had back of them generations of ancestors among whom these traits were usually outstanding. Many of this transplanted group eventually found themselves without land and without the money that the land had sold for. Brothertown farmers became scarcer and scarcer; those who remained were likely to be found in the village or in the immediate vicinity."

Titus illustrates the respect which these Indians won from their neighbors by recounting the little known fact that several members of the community were elected to the Wisconsin legislature.

The author also mourns the fact that the records of the Brothertown people, when they were a self-governing group, have been largely destroyed or lost. Their system of adjudication of disputes was unusual, consisting of a board of three "peacemakers" who heard all cases in dispute and called in witnesses to substantiate or refute the statements of the litigants. The "peacemakers," decision were final, Titus' researches show.

Curator Titus expressed the hope that the state historical society will eventually be given the best and largest available collection of Brothertown records and relics in existence, the property of Otto Heller of Brothertown. Heller has been collecting such mementos for many years.

—Post-Crescent.