

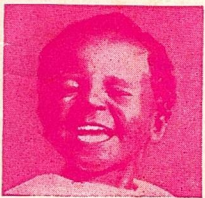
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MISSIONS

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A CHINESE BANDIT

How would you like to meet him on the Yangtze River?

In this issue

HELD UP TWICE
BY THE SAME BANDITS

By Clarence G. Vichert of West China

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This is not a story of the Lost Tribes of Israel but of a vanished tribe of Indians

The Lost Tribes

By COE HAYNE



The Brothertown Indians of Wisconsin, survivors of the lost tribes, who returned greetings to their kinsmen in New England

The chronicle of the Brothertown American Indians and their trek from New England into New York State and finally to Wisconsin, where they eventually lost their identity as a people

FROM the top of the attic stairs of her little home on the shore of Lake Winnebago my hostess brought the book of her people.

"Some antique hunters came to our village," she said. "They asked me to sell this record book to them. I would as soon part with my life."

Mrs. Lura Fowler Kindness has lived to see many changes take place in the fortunes of her people, the Brothertown Indians of Wisconsin. But the decades are few over which her memory reaches compared with the long history of her people that the records yield. This Indian woman, who obligingly assisted me to gather some of the facts recorded in this story, is a direct descendant of Hermon Garret (Wequashcuk), a famous sachem of the Niantic Indians. There are no Indians living whose tribal relationships with the whites can be traced farther back into American history than can hers. From her doorstep in

Brothertown, Wis., begins a trail that takes one back in imagination to the days when the acquisitive colonist began his sad dealings with the red man. Only here and there was this trail of tears relieved by a show of human sympathy, a deed of kindness, a reaching forth of the hand of brotherhood by a multiplying white race toward a vanishing people.

Our story has to do with two Indians, Samson Occom and David Fowler, two friends as close as David and Jonathan.

One day in 1743 there came to the doorstep of Eleazar Wheelock, a Congregational pastor at Lebanon, Conn., a Mohegan Indian youth, named Samson Occom. He desired to remain with the minister a few weeks in order to obtain enough knowledge to read the Bible and explain some of its passages to his people. The Mohegan was a recent convert in the Great Awakening



Mrs. Lura Fowler Kindness, holding the ancient record book from which Coe Hayne compiled the facts in this article

under George Whitefield, famous evangelist from England.

Samson Occom proved to be so apt a pupil that his sojourn with the pastor was extended to four years. He was prepared to enter Yale College, but could not enter because his eyes failed. So he went

as a missionary to the Montauk Indians on Long Island, among whom he had already formed acquaintanceships through fishing trips. He established a school for them and made his home with an Indian who had the English name of James Fowler. In the Fowler home was a daughter, Mary, with whom Samson promptly fell in love. Shortly thereafter he married her. In that home, also, was David Fowler, who became his friend.

In 1759 Samson Occom was ordained to the Presbyterian ministry with the intention of becoming a missionary to the Cherokee Indians. But because they went to war against the whites, his plan was frustrated.

In May, 1763, Samson Occom and David Fowler, as missionaries under Congregational and Presbyterian auspices, went on horseback into New York State to the country of the Mohawk and Oneida Indians. David returned with three Indian boys for the Charity School conducted by Eleazar Wheelock at Lebanon. For several years David Fowler went back to the Oneidas to teach school. During these extended sojourns he wrote frequently to his friend, Eleazar Wheelock. His English was graphic as may be seen in the following portions of two letters written in 1765, in which he expressed his longing for a wife:

I have been treated very kindly since I came to this place. . . . I find it very hard to live here with-



The old Narragansett Indian meeting house at Charlestown, Rhode Island

out the other rib. . . . I believe I shall persuade most of the men to labour next year. They begin to see that if they cultivated their lands, they would live better than they now do by hunting and fishing. . . . It is very hard to live here without the other bone. I must wash and mend my clothes, and cook all my victuals, and wash all the things I use. This is exceeding hard. I sha'n't be able to employ my vacant hours in improving their land as I should if I had a cook.

On July 26, 1766, David Fowler set out from Lebanon with Hannah Garret, who had been attending the Indian Charity School, to visit her parents in Rhode Island. She was an Indian girl of distinguished lineage, being the descendant of Hermon Garret, the Niantic sachem to whom reference already has been made. She had consented to marry David. He was accompanying her to her home for that purpose. After the wedding, the couple journeyed to Montauk, Long Island, to visit David's parents. The Congregational minister, Eleazar Wheelock, had clothed the bridal pair and had furnished much for their housekeeping. So they set out for the Oneida country "with a good pair of horses, a horse-cart, clothing for two years, a set of carpenter's tools, and some necessities for housekeeping."

During the same year Samson Occom was sent to England, at the suggestion of George Whitefield, as "a living sample of well-directed endeavors to Christianize the Indians." His public appearances created intense interest wherever he went. As a public speaker he won the respect of all classes. The leading pulpits of the different denominations in England, Scotland, and Wales were open to him. Lord Dartmouth became his patron and president of the Board of Trustees of the funds contributed for Wheelock's Indian School at Lebanon. He secured a contribution from King George III for the advancement of the Christian education of the American Indians. His pleas for assistance netted \$60,000. When the school was removed to Hanover, New Hampshire, and there established as a college it was named Dartmouth after its distinguished patron.

When Samson Occom returned to New England he joined other Indians, among whom was his friend David Fowler, in leading large migrations of destitute New England Indians from their little reservations in Rhode Island, Con-

necticut, and Long Island to the Oneida section in New York. A large tract was obtained from the Oneida Indians by treaty. The Stockbridge Indians of Massachusetts joined in this movement, which began in 1776 and culminated in 1795.

The new settlement in the Oneida country was called Brothertown and was composed of the remnants of six New England tribes: the Narragansetts (Charlestown Indians) of Rhode Island; the Stoningtons or Pequots of Connecticut; the Mohegans, Farmingtons and Niantics, also of Connecticut; and the Montauks of Long Island. Under the guidance of intelligent Indian men, Brothertown formed laws to govern its inhabitants. Because the community was made up of refugees and because a welcome had been extended by the Oneidas, the name unanimously chosen for the town was highly appropriate.

However, the Brothertown Indians did not long enjoy undisputed possession of the land allotted to them. Through sharp practices white farmers acquired long term leases. Before 1810 the white men were occupying half of the tract. The operation of Indian-made laws often conflicted with the laws of the State. The proximity of white settlements and the easy acquisition of alcoholic liquors had their deadly effects. As early as 1817 the Brothertown Indians began to seek another home. Disappointed in an Indiana venture, they joined the Stockbridge Indians in the purchase of two million acres from the Winnebago and Menominee tribes of Wisconsin but were prevented from taking possession of the tract. After ten years of uncertainties, the Brothertowns, with government sanction, were given a tract of land composed of one township (23,040 acres) on the east side of Winnebago Lake. To the Stockbridge Indians was allotted an adjoining township. In 1839 the Brothertown Indians became citizens and attained title to their lands in fee simple. During the subsequent years they gradually lost their identity as a people. Many have intermarried with the whites. Lonely graves mark their one-time abiding place. Their homesteads have passed into the hands of the whites.

Thomas Commuck, a Brothertown Indian, historian as well as a pioneer, wrote in 1890:

Here in Wisconsin we have taken our last stand in Calumet County trying to imitate our white breth-

ren in all things except their vices. Here we have resolved to meet manfully that overwhelming tide of fate which seems destined in a few years to sweep the Red Man from the face of existence.

After a century and a half of separation the Brothertown Indians of Wisconsin communicated with their red kinsmen in New England. They were the remnants of the six tribes that still reside on or near their ancestral lands in Rhode Island and Connecticut, territory from which in 1676 King Philip and his dusky warriors had been driven out. In July, 1934, a large number of New England Indians responded. They had gathered at the old Narragansett church in Charlestown, R. I. Some wore the old-time regalia in honor of their ancestors. Here they framed greetings to be sent to their kinsmen in Wisconsin. Several representatives of the Rhode Island Baptist State Convention were present. "In behalf of the Indians in the east in general, we send tribute," said the Narragansetts in a message adorned by such words as "fellowship" and "brotherhood."

A month later (August, 1934), at the invitation of the Wisconsin Baptist State Convention,

a score of Indians met with more than 1,000 whites at Brothertown, Wis. The meeting was held in a grove on the east shore of Lake Winnebago, near the old-time landing place of the Brothertowns. Here they received the message from their brothers on the Atlantic Coast. In reply they sent the following:

We wish to acknowledge your kind and courteous greeting, which was delivered to us, the few remaining members of the Brothertown Indians, upon this the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the Baptist church in our present state, Wisconsin. In the acknowledgment of your welcome greeting, we, the Brothertown Indians, regret that you could not have met with us upon this memorable occasion. As brothers and sisters to you, and to members of the Narragansett, Mohegan, Pequot, Montauk, Niantic and all tribes of the New England states, we take this opportunity to return to you our most hearty greeting. That this renewed friendship may be maintained and fostered throughout the future years is the wish of your sincere friends, the Brothertown Indians.

Thus was celebrated the founding of the first Baptist church in Wisconsin.



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