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Oneida Lives: Long-Lost Voices of the Wisconsin Oneidas. Edited by Herbert S. Lewis with the assistance of L. Gordon McLester III and a foreword by Gerald L. Hill. Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2005. 425 pages. \$75.00 cloth; \$29.95 paper.

There are moments in which history seems to repeat itself and enlightens us to the sense that the world is not as linear as we sometimes foolishly make it out to be. History can speak to us if we are open to listening to what it has to say. Sometimes, it can jump right up and show itself when all hope of recovering it has been lost. This is precisely the situation that led to this compilation of materials concerning the Oneidas of Wisconsin. The history had gone away, but at the time when it may have been needed most, it arose again to fill in some of the blanks and give us a clearer, more original sense of who the Oneidas were around the beginning of World War II, and thus who they are today as well.

Oneida Lives is a collection of interviews that were undertaken among the Wisconsin Oneida in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The early nineteenth-century collection of “all things Indian” should come as no surprise to anyone, but this particular collection is unique and offers insights into Oneida history and identity that is difficult if not impossible to find anywhere else. As part of a project entitled the Oneida Ethnological Study of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), these interviews were undertaken primarily out of social consciousness in order to provide jobs for some Oneidas at a time when they, like the rest of the country, were suffering from the consequences of the Great Depression. Interviews were conducted by Oneidas, of Oneidas, and were meant to engross the larger areas of history, ethnography, and autobiography. All of the notebooks containing this important cultural material (there were 167 in all) were eventually stored away and lost, forgotten, and left to lie in wait, until they were eventually recovered by Herbert Lewis, inconspicuously stored away in the basement storeroom of the anthropology department at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

So what can we learn from this collection of ethnographical and autobiographical materials? What becomes quickly obvious is that this collection offers the reader a strong sense of Oneida identity just after the turn of the twentieth century, and the kind of sense that only comes from directly speaking with people. It is likely that most, if not all, of the Oneidas talking through this text are no longer with us, but their lives and words are finally able to live on through this collection. What also becomes clear is that by the turn of the century Oneidas in Wisconsin were strongly assimilated, and one of the focuses of the texts (based on the selections chosen from the larger group because the editor felt they were the most “interesting and compelling”) seems to be to try to give the reader an understanding of how they were still understanding themselves as “Oneidas” at this time—how the sense of identity was being maintained, passed on generationally, and constantly reformulated in the face of great social, cultural, political, and spiritual unrest and upheaval.

In order to achieve this end, the text focuses primarily on some of the important stages of Wisconsin Oneida history—the loss of significant amounts

of land after the allotment process, the move to a primarily market economy, and the aftereffects of missionization and the introduction of Christianity, to name a few. The notions of loss and poverty are palpable throughout the text, yet there is also a sense of community, shared values and identities, and a will to survive that permeate the text and remind me of other groups who have maintained and refashioned their identities out of such challenging circumstances (West Virginia mining communities immediately come to mind). The envisioning of this distinct sense of identity is possible because of one of the unique aspects of the collection of the WPA texts: the interviewers, as well as the interviewees, were all Oneidas, many of whom were older, non-English speakers simply talking to others of their own community and documenting what was said. There was no “outsider” involved, and so the texts read as more “knowing conversation” than as responses to presented questions. The reader gets a sense of intimacy in these interviews that is virtually impossible for an outsider to achieve without significant time spent in a community, and for that reason this collection must be seen as a unique piece of scholarship.

The interviews are arranged somewhat topically and give the reader a sense of Oneidas who are just working and getting on, as best as they could. The lives of these individuals are made readily available, especially in the longer texts (some are dozens of pages in length, others may be only a few pages long), and we are able to piece together a larger sense of what issues Wisconsin Oneidas were dealing with at this important historical time, both within and outside the community. In the very first text, which is the story of Ida Blackhawk and covers nearly forty years of her life reminiscences, the reader is introduced to the notions of loss and decline that were an important part of Oneida history at the time. Yet the text is also peppered with optimism and hope that the people had survived, and will continue to do so, despite all the hardships. The stage is quickly set to document the changes that Oneidas had undergone, and were still undergoing, while also documenting the ways in which they resisted these changes, adapted themselves culturally and socially, and responded to the world outside of their social and cultural borders.

Early on the text focuses primarily on the issue of land, which was certainly a critical one to the Wisconsin Oneida community at the time. Like many other Native communities, they lost a significant amount of the land they had received through the General Allotment Act of 1887 (Dawes Act) because of deception, poor choices, and unfamiliar cultural practices, such as the paying of taxes. In the 1930s and 1940s they were just beginning to see the consequences of this land loss—poverty, depression, an influx of outsiders, and a lack of political clout to make their issues and presence known. Throughout the first half of the collection these issues arise over and over again in the narratives, giving a clear idea that the Oneida sense of self at the time was strongly connected to the land, and that the Oneidas had concerns about how they might end up if nothing was done to halt the rapid loss of land they saw happening around them.

The remainder of the text deals with a variety of personal and community issues. Many Wisconsin Oneidas experienced life in the boarding schools, and through their memories of these events we see the interviewees become aware,

sometimes painfully, of the types of changes this caused, both in themselves and in the community, which they only saw on an occasional basis. There are narratives that give us a sense of the experiences of Oneidas working in the larger cities of the Midwest; of marriage, family, and the changes that were going on within the homes; and of the experiences of children, who were being exposed to new ideas and concepts on an almost daily basis, and who barely had time to digest what was going on around them. Altogether, these varied personal reflections create an image of the Wisconsin Oneida as people who were under great social and cultural stress at the time, but who were also active in their responses and still maintained a sense of what it meant to be Oneida despite all of the hardships and changes.

If there is one area in which the collected texts seem to be lacking it is in the presentation of the Oneida spiritual identity, as it existed at the time. As a scholar of religion I was intensely interested in seeing how Oneidas had responded to Christianity, but there were only small glimpses of that throughout the text and mostly as vague memories of how things “used to be.” Perhaps this can be attributed to the selections chosen by the editor or perhaps because Oneidas were so strongly assimilated at the time that they had little need to talk about religion. Whatever the reason, it is the one place in which the text seems to be silent about Oneida identity, and it leaves one wanting to know more.

Oneida Lives is a critically important text for the study and understanding of this particular tribal group and also for a larger understanding of issues that Native Americans were facing in America just before World War II and how identity is worked out in Native communities, both then and in the present. What is wonderful about the text is that the voices are primarily allowed to stand alone—they are not edited out, and we get a sense of really listening to the past, of hearing the voices of Oneida ancestors, and of having a more intimate sense of their lives, both good and bad. In that, this collection is a valuable find for Wisconsin Oneidas as they work on their own sense of history and identity and for anyone who wishes to broaden their understanding of the human spirit and its specific social and cultural response to history. History is made up of millions of small stories, and this text provides us with a few more gems as we work to fill in the picture more accurately.

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Peoples of the Plateau: The Indian Photographs of Lee Moorhouse, 1898–1915. By Steven L. Grafe. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. 221 pages. \$39.95 cloth; \$29.95 paper.

After the cover photograph pulled me to this impressive book it must be said once again, in spite of the neutrality of scholarly objectivity, that the American Indian people are blessed with an immense amount of natural beauty. Their presence alters the environment with a grace that even brightens the unfair