

Some Famous Indian Artists

It would be impossible for even the best informed student of the North American Indian to make generalizations that would fit all the tribes associated with Iowa history. There were differences in language, religion, customs, and laws. These differences were frequently quite marked, even among the tribes constituting a single Linguistic Stock, Family, or Nation, such as the Algonquian, the Siouan, or the Iroquoian.

Thus, approximately half a hundred tribes made up the Algonquian Linguistic Stock, or Family, or Nation, three designations which can be used synonymously. Those most intimately associated with Iowa were the Sauk, Fox, and Pottawatomie but the Menominee, Kickapoo, Mascouten, the Illinois branch of the Miami, and, of course, the mighty Chippewa or Ojibway Indians, should all be included in the Algonquian group. Because these tribes were associated primarily with the Great Lakes and Upper Mississippi Valley, it has become customary to refer to them as the Woodland or Canoe people, to distinguish them from the Siouan Linguistic Stock, who are generally called the Plains Indians, and whose chief means of locomotion was the horse.

Since the Siouan, or Dakota Linguistic Stock, Family, or Nation is well-represented on the back cover of this issue of *The Palimpsest*, and since they once lived and ranged over all of what is now Iowa, tribes most intimately associated with the history of the Hawkeye State should be noted.

Heading the list would be the Iowa Indians, who gave their name to the Iowa River, and through it to the State of Iowa, as well as to Iowa County, Iowa City and Iowa Falls.

Next must be listed the Winnebago, who because of their association with the Green Bay area, were called by the French the Puants, or Stinkers. The residence of the Winnebago in Northeastern Iowa, even though it was for a scant dozen years, gives this particular tribe an unusually strong association with historic Iowa.

Some eleven other Siouan tribes were more or less associated with the story of Iowa, namely, the Oto, Missouri, Omaha, Ponca, Osage, Kansas, Quapaw, Sisseton, Wahpeton, Yankton, and Mandan. In some instances these latter appear on the Iowa scene only through clashes with their deadly enemies—the Sauk and Fox.

The list of artists who achieved fame through their paintings of the Indians is an impressive one. Indeed, the best efforts of both foreign and American artists have been challenged to record accurately the Indian dwelling in his native haunts. Heading the list one must place George Catlin,

who during a period of eight years between 1829 and 1837, left a rich storehouse of over 600 pictures, many of which have been reproduced both in black and white, and in color, in the various editions of his *North American Indians*. Since Catlin traveled along the Eastern and Western borders of Iowa, he delineated through his brush and the printed word, many of the Indians associated with Iowa history.

Another rich source on the American Indian is the work of Karl (Charles) Bodmer, a talented Swiss artist and engraver who accompanied the German explorer, Maximilian, Prince of Wied, as he traveled up the Missouri River in 1832-1834. The chronicle of Maximilian's exciting adventures on the Missouri forms a part of Reuben Gold Thwaites' *Early Western Travels*, the Bodmer engravings making up an entire large atlas to supplement the 32-volume set.

Beyond these one might mention Rudolph Kurz, who traveled among the Indians of the Missouri between 1846 and 1852. By the time Kurz arrived Indians had become fearful and suspicious of artists because cholera and other ills had befallen them following the visits of Catlin and Bodmer. However, Kurz made a substantial contribution to our knowledge of the Red Man.

Seth Eastman, an experienced army officer, was another artist who left unusual and outstanding pictures and portraits of the Indians associated

with Iowa and the Upper Mississippi. Although identified primarily with the Fort Snelling area, Eastman saw military service in various sections of the United States from Florida to Texas. In addition to his artistic work along the Upper Mississippi, culminating in escorting the Winnebago from Iowa to Minnesota in 1848, Eastman did illustrations for Henry R. Schoolcraft's monumental 6-volume *History and Statistical Information Respecting the Indian Tribes of the United States*. Between 1867 and 1870 he painted Indian scenes and views of Western forts for the Capitol in Washington.

An important source of pictorial information on the Indian was housed in the Indian gallery of the War Department. It was from this Department that Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall secured the 100 portraits, in color, with which to illustrate their 3-volume *History of the Indian Tribes of North America, with Biographical Sketches and Anecdotes of the Principal Chiefs* (1836-1844). The above mentioned Indian gallery (later housed in the Smithsonian Institution) was an important source for this type of documentary and illustrated work. The Smithsonian gradually acquired material from various government departments and agencies that became of immense value to such firms as the American Tobacco Company in producing "Indian Life in the 60's," which they copyrighted in 1910. Among

the outstanding portrait artists of Indians was Charles Bird King, whose paintings form the majority of those reproduced in McKenney & Hall's work.

Lest the list become too long, we will close with James Otto Lewis, a Philadelphia-born artist and engraver, who went West with Governor Lewis Cass of Michigan Territory in 1820, and who was employed to paint portraits of Indians for the United States Government between 1823 and 1834. Lewis was present and painted the picture of the Grand Council of 1825 at Prairie du Chien which created the Neutral Line in Iowa between the Sauk and Fox on the South and the Sioux on the North. The picture has been used several times in the State Historical Society's publications.

In closing, one might suggest some of the panorama artists like Henry Lewis, who made their personal contribution by sketching the Red Man in his native haunts. The main purpose of this discussion, however, is to reveal the numerous authentic sources that were readily available to Allen & Ginter or the American Tobacco Company in preparing their colorful advertising cards for eager Young Americans around the opening of the 20th Century.

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