

New York State Archeological Association

THE BULLETIN

November 1955

Number 5

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Let's Get On With Our Work

An Editorial

Relations between the amateur and professional camps in New York archeology are certainly not what they should be. On the face of it, the situation appears absurd. Which, of course, it is.

Both amateur and professional have too much need for the other to sell one another short. As we see it, both have played important roles in New York archeology. The literature of the work in this state bears this out. Recorded by professionals in the main, as it probably should be, it is based on a considerable amount of work performed by the amateurs. This is also probably as it should be since, among active workers, amateurs far outnumber the professionals, in number if not in man-hours.

So far as the professionals are concerned, we in New York have the best. On the other hand, the majority of the active amateurs are competent and faithful workers. In fact, many are a credit to the field--- do work which is hard to surpass. Primarily, the difference between them and the professionals is that the latter are paid.

Though absurd, our plight is very real. Humans being what they are, it is not hard to comprehend the manner in which such relations come about. Our situation has certain similarities to one which crops up regularly in industry between production and research personnel. The former, according to his academic colleague, resists new ideas and developments to the point of distorting and withholding data pertinent to processes and procedures; calls for technical assistance only after his own bumbling efforts fail. The research group, on the other hand, is considered too preoccupied with high-fluting ideas to be concerned with daily problems; ready to trumpet its virtues, and pursue the limelight.

Of course there are two sides to this, as to our story. Thus it is not our concern to establish blame for this round-robin. It would seem, though, that the answer is the application of some basic, shall we say, Dale Carnegie principles of behavior -- on the part of all. The point we want to make is that the situation is not healthy -- it stifles incentive, hinders progress -- and needs to be corrected.

Here is exactly the sort of problem that comes within the purview of the Association. We proclaim to promote archeological and historical study and research, and cooperate in effecting wider knowledge of New York State archeology. The responsibility of the Association is clear.

There is no place for bickering or personal aggrandizement. Let's get on with the work which needs to be done, with the amateur sharing the credit with the professional, and the former inviting the latter to study finds, advise about technique and the like.

### Ninth Conference on Iroquois Research

The usefulness of the informal research conference for exploring some central theme, for identifying new research problems, and for reporting research accomplished was again achieved October 14 -16 when students of the Iroquois Indians of New York and Ontario met for the ninth time in ten years at Red House, New York to discuss the theme of "Exploring Ways of Achieving Cooperation in Anthropological Studies in the Northeast." This theme provided a vehicle for discussing state and local relationships in archeology, professional and amateur responsibilities in archeology and ethnology, the roles of local and regional museums, the relationships between universities as training centers and the opportunities provided by the conference for field work. The conference was limited to 35 invited participants, who had recently contributed to the advancement of Iroquoian research, of whom 28 attended. The Red House conferences are traditionally family affairs and until the rains of this year, the glorious autumn weather has made these week-ends a pleasant outing. For the continued use of the administration building and quarters of the Allegany State Park, the conference is again indebted to Charles E. Congdon, chairman of the Allegany State Park Commission and to M. H. Deardorff of Warren, Pennsylvania, who was host at the "doings" of the Very Little Water Society.

The annual Iroquois Conference owes its inspiration to the late Professor F. G. Speck and has from the beginning been organized and chaired by W. N. Fenton, who this year was assisted in planning by W. A. Ritchie and C. E. Gillette. The conference has no formal organization and no regular members. The attendance comprises mainly anthropologists, many of whom are part time workers in archeology, ethnology, language and history - the only prerequisite being an active and contributing interest to some phase of Iroquoian studies.

The agenda included a discussion of state and local relations led by John Witthoft, Pennsylvania Museum Commission; Professional and Amateur Relations led by William A. Ritchie, State Archeologist; Museum and University Relations, Professor Irving Rouse, Yale; Ethnologist and Indian, Anthony F. C. Wallace, Pennsylvania; and the Structure of Support, W. N. Fenton. This discussion lasted throughout Saturday and was actively engaged in by everyone present. Those who did not have a chance to say all that occurred to them in meeting carried on in small groups far into the night. On Sunday morning we heard from the "new voices" in Iroquoian research who were introduced by Wallace. These included Jacob Gruber, Temple University, on a study of artistic styles in Iroquois masks; Miss Clara B. Richards, Cornell, on a study of women's roles at Onondaga; David Landy, Department of Social Relations, Harvard, on child rearing practices of the Tuscarora; Mrs. Anne-Marie Shimony of Yale, on the longhouse communities of Six Nations Reserve, Ontario.

The chairman summarized the high points of the conference as follows:

1. The need had been identified for an archeological extension service from the New York State Museum and Science Service to local societies, schools and collectors of New York antiquities.

2. The present type of conference on the theme of improving state and local relationships in antiquities of New York should be repeated at the local level, and such additional conferences are contemplated.

3. Sentiment favored education and diffusion of professional scientific knowledge to the use of legal sanctions to prevent vandalism of sites and it was held that an antiquities act would be unworkable.

4. National universities like Yale and Toronto encourage research by state and local museums but must evaluate these programs in the light of national responsibilities. And, it is recognized that Iroquoian studies in archeology, ethnology, and linguistics have provided part time research opportunities for the faculties and field training of graduate students.

5. It was evident that in arriving at an over-all program for the conference one must know the number of students available in the universities of the area and what parts of the program each university would assume. There is a need to identify a few solid projects in language, social relations and political organization, personality studies, archeology and linguistics to show how the main concept of conservatism can be studied in relation to change using the Iroquoian field as a laboratory.

6. From the new voices came the suggestion of a clearing house of research in progress and in the recent past so that young scholars might make their choice to approach the field in an intelligent manner.

These discussions followed the presentation of one solid paper which was appropriate to the theme for the conference and was delivered this year by the Very Rev. Thomas Grassmann of the Mohawk-Caughnawaga Museum at Fonda, New York on "The Excavation of Historic Caughnawaga." Father Grassmann's talk was illustrated by slides and highlighted, very appropriately, excellent cooperation between professional and amateur scholars in a local setting.

Of the conference, this year, two things can be said: the conference identified a new field of research in the area of Indian education which is in the trend of the times when education and anthropology are finding common research interests. In the selection of the theme and in the candor with which it was discussed the conference had touched one of the significant problem areas in the organization of scholarship: How foster good communications between national, state and local levels of the community of science without control flowing from the top; and how provide the amateur, part-time scholar with a sense of full participation.

W. N. Fenton  
Assistant Commissioner, New York State  
Museum and Science Service

### Chapter News

Auringer-Seelye - Activities of this chapter have been varied. Digging has continued at the Harris site. Earlier in the season two members presented an illustrated talk on this site at Whitehall, the fee for which was presented to the Crandall Library for the purchase of books on archeology. Several members visited the Mohawk-Caughnawaga Museum as guests of the VanEpps-Hartley Chapter. Speakers at regular meetings have included Father Thomas Grassman and Henry Wemple, Dr. Francis F. Lucas, Dr. Wm. A. Ritchie, and Elmer Rowley.

(BFH)

Long Island - Exhibits have been actively maintained at the high school in Southold and at the museum building of the Long Island Historical Society in Riverhead. Plans are underway for erection of a suitable chapter headquarters building. Steps are being taken to acquire ownership of an important site, to prevent its being covered by new building developments, so that it may be worked and studied. Excavations near East Hampton revealed some interesting items, including a hearth. Searches for surface material have resulted in discovery of a new shell spread near the shore of Deep Hole creek.

The following were elected at the annual meeting held October 9<sup>th</sup>: Mrs. Dorothy Raynor, President; Dr. Haven Emerson, Vice President; Stanton Mott, Treasurer; John H. Husing (1285 Pacific Street, Brooklyn, 16), Secretary.

(JHH)

Mid-Hudson - A one-room school building in Rhinebeck has been acquired for use as a chapter house. A theater benefit was conducted to pay the rent, and a bee to paint the roof. An undisturbed site near Rhinebeck has been worked by the membership all season. About 55 foot squares have been completed and several hundred artifacts have been recovered. Another year's work is expected, and a paper is hoped for.

Six cases of local material, recently found, were exhibited at the Dutchess County Fair. Biweekly lab sessions, slated for this season's program of meetings, were to have started in late October.

(MGC)

Lewis H. Morgan - A selection of material from the collection of Charles F. Wray is on exhibit at the Royal Ontario Museum of Archeology, Toronto. The material is on display in six wall cases and covers and depicts the transition of Seneca artifacts from about 1550 to 1687.

The success of Mid-Hudson Chapter's participation at the Dutchess County Fair last year prompted Morgan Chapter to try its hand at the Monroe County Fair in August. Two cases of archeological materials and maps were exhibited in the Grange Building. The purpose of the display was to acquaint visitors with the fact that something is known of the area's prehistory. It was believed that the extent of occupation in this region is not appreciated by the general public. Labels indicated the interpretation which can be obtained from careful excavation and records.

Donald Cameron served as chairman of the exhibit committee, which included Charles Wray and Alfred Guthe. Thomas Hewett, Jr., Albert Hoffman and William Carter assisted in attending the exhibit whenever possible. The results obtained from this venture will be studied to determine whether the program will be repeated.

On October 1st over 30 members met at the prehistoric Iroquois site known as Fort Hill, north of LeRoy. Members came from as far as Geneva, Dansville, Belmont and Lockport. Several interesting specimens were recovered. Most came from two shallow pits which, viewed horizontally, were oval in shape. The bottoms were rounded and the sides sloped outward and upward to the surface. The inventory includes bone fish hooks, needle fragments, awls, and fragments of cut wolf-jaws. The latter include the maxillary and mandibular portions. The most common points were the narrow isosceles triangle, but some side-notched points and one fragmentary broad-stemmed point, were also found. They appeared archaic in type, which indicates either the Indians were collectors, or this is evidence of an earlier occupation. Pot sherds provided interesting information since the decorations were strongly suggestive of a western affinity. Further comparative study is required for determination of definite cultural relationships. However, cursory examination indicates resemblances to pottery from the Reed fort site at Richmond Mills and some of the Neutral sites in Western New York.

(AKG)

Van Epps-Hartley - Organized digging has continued on the Chapin site. Mohawk Township. The Snowicz and Rice's Woods sites have also seen activity. All of the known sites in Eastern New York are being recorded by a site locations committee, under Earl Casler. A project to establish a file of all known collections is being conducted jointly with the Mohawk-Caughnawaga Museum. This will provide a ready reference for workers who wish to study the widely-scattered material. Weekly work and study sessions are held each Wednesday at the museum.

Frank Ridley, Toronto, addressed the annual meeting on June 26th. He related his study of the archeological material in the Lake Abitibi region of Ontario. Father Thomas Grassman reported on the progress of the Caughnawaga village site. Officers elected were. Henry Wemple, President; Clarence Van Der Veer, Vice-President; Edward J. Sheehan (Old Court House, Fonda), Secretary; Wayne S. Arnold, Treasurer. Trustees, with terms to expire in 1956: William Marvin, Dr. Vincent J. Schaefer, Katherine M. Strobeck. The meeting and luncheon was attended by 74 persons, members and guests.

(EJS)

In the Next Issue - More abstracts of papers presented at the 1955 annual meeting - by Roy Latham and Charles Wray. "The Science of Anthropology and the Iroquois", by W. N. Fenton. A letter by Fr. Jean Pierron, written in 1667 at Ile de la Motte, Lake Champlain; heretofore unpublished.

A Statistical Analysis of Trade Axes<sup>1</sup>  
Kenneth E. Kidd. Royal Ontario Museum of Archeology, Toronto

One of the functions of a board study of trade goods is to determine if these materials can be used in establishing a more accurate chronology of historic sites than at present exists. Several categories of goods offer possibilities in this regard, but to judge from their abundance and wide distribution, iron axes would seem to be one of the most promising. It is also observable that such axes vary greatly in size, shape and other characteristics, thus enhancing the possibility of their having evolved over the years to their present shape. To test the theory, however, it was first necessary to find a series sufficiently large to be statistically reliable, and of course also carefully documented as to site and excavation. The only series which approached these requirements was that of Charles F. Wray of West Rush, N. Y., which he collected from the historic Seneca sites of the Genesee Valley. Mr. Wray kindly permitted the analysis to be made, and my best thanks are due him for his cooperation.

Axes from four of these sites (Factory Hollow, 1590-1615; Power House, 1630-1650; Dann, 1650-1675; and Rochester Junction, 1675-1687) were examined, but the useful number from each never exceeded fifteen. Since these numbers are too small for the results to be valid, the analysis can only be said to indicate trends. Each specimen was measured in seven dimensions, and these in turn reduced to percentage ratios, as follows: (1) length of blade/length of axe; (2) width of blade/ length of blade; (3) width of head/length of axes; (4) width of head/width across neck; (5) width of head/width of blade; (6) width of neck/width of blade; and (7) width of socket/length of socket. The seven resulting indices were then examined for conformity and the corresponding conformities from one site compared with those from the others. Bearing in mind the statistical unreliability of the samples, the best that can be said is that the following "trends" are visible in the group: Axes believed to have been made previous to 1650 are inconsistent as to ratios 1, 2 and 6, but consistent as to 3, 4 and 5. Axes made after 1650 are inconsistent as to ratios 3, 4, 5, and 6, but consistent as to 1, 2 and 7. Again axes made previous to 1650 lie at the low range of variation with regard to ratios 4, 6 and 7, but at the upper end with regard to ratios 2, 3 and 5; contrariwise, those made after 1650 lie at the lower end of variation in ratio 1, and at the upper end with regard to ratio 7. Specimens from the Dann site, about the middle range of our period, seem to be more variable than the late Rochester Junction axes, especially in regard to ratios 4 and 7.

It will be apparent that definite and direct comparison of iron axes will not yield informative results; in other words, it may never be possible to measure one of them and be able to say as a result that it belongs in such and such a date bracket. Certainly at the moment and with such small numbers of documented specimens available, all that can be said is that certain characteristics tend to stand out in chronological groups of axes, such as certain consistencies and clustering of indices. Much more work on far larger groups will have to be conducted before such tendencies can be translated into specific, isolable facts.

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1. Presented at the N. Y. S. A. A. annual meeting, 16 April 1955.

A Prehistoric Site Near Phelps<sup>1</sup>  
Rosemary Mann                      Lewis H. Morgan

Two burials were recently excavated on a previously-worked site. They were about four feet apart, and each contained an adult female skeleton in flexed position, facing east. The contents of burial 1A, which was 14 inches in depth, were in poor state of preservation, including the ground flat molars. Burial 2A was 16 inches deep, and contents were also badly decayed, and included the skeleton of a small child about two years old. No grave goods were present.

About 40 feet to the south several black pits were unearthed. Apparently refuse pits, they contained animal bones, pot sherds and two large beads. The latter are in the author's possession.

The site is identified as prehistoric Iroquois, probably Cayuga. The first extensive work was by Mr. Harry Darling of the Margaret farm, and yielded nine burials. Their contents were also in bad state of preservation. Descriptions of these graves follow:

No. 1 - Large skull facing south. Roots of teeth in upper jaw very rotten. Lower jaw missing. Only one arm bone found nearby. Depth 10 inches. Slight trace of charcoal. Light, sandy soil on clay hard-pan.

No. 2 - Located 33 feet south of the above; depth 14 inches. Body covered with 18 stones, some 8 by 12 inches, but mainly common field stone. Bottom of grave covered with small rock.

No. 3 - Very little of skeleton present; pelvis and femur intact. A plow had disturbed this burial.

No. 4 - A stone-covered burial. Depth 14 inches. The bones were in fair condition, flexed, body facing north. Skull to pelvis 40 inches; knee to pelvis 23 inches. Right hand at point of chin, left hand resting on knee. Notes: Infer left 1 and 2 bicuspid, first and second molar gone -- sockets completely closed.

No. 5 - Stone-covered, south and west walled. Large stone over the head. Body flexed, facing west, hands under face. Depth 13 inches. Head to feet 33 inches.

No. 6 - Depth 14 inches. Bones badly decayed. Flexed body facing east, on left side, hands under face. Body 17 by 39 inches. Skeleton of a small middle-aged individual.

No. 7 - Condition very poor; skull facing north. Position flexed. Depth 12 inches.

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<sup>1</sup> Presented at the N. Y. S. A. A. annual meeting, 16 April, 1955.



No. 8 - Disturbed by plow; 10 inches deep. Trace of femur.

No. 9 - Disturbed by plow; 12 inches deep. Pelvis and one femur present.

Teeth taken from one of the graves showed traces of pyorrhea.

An interesting find was a pile of rock piled in layers to a depth of 13 inches, in extent about 40 by 62 inches. No artifacts or trace of fire or charcoal. Could this be a monument or altar for the burial plot?

Dr. Ritchie, who was excavating at the Sackett farm near Canandaigua at the time, examined the burials.

Some Seneca Songs from Tonawanda Reservation<sup>1</sup>  
Charles E. Bartlett Castile, N.Y.

In the study of the culture of the American Indian, the ritual and social songs occupy a prominent place. Each hour of the day and every event in the life of the individual or of the community had its own song. To the average inquiring mind, not unduly conditioned by Hollywood, the songs of the Southwest Indians, for example, have become synonymous with their cultures. The Eagle dances, the Harvest dance and Buffalo dance of the Pueblos are even seen today on television. The great tourist attractions of the Gallup intertribal ceremonies in New Mexico, the Cherokee fair and public dances in the South have become pleasant and colorful "musts" for the traveler.

This great popular revival in Indian lore has not yet reached our own Iroquois people. This is unfortunate. Their ceremonies, rituals and songs as well as the artists who perform them suffer no loss in prestige when compared with those of other areas and tribes in America.

The fortuitous geographic locations of the Indians of the Southwest have helped preserve unchanged to the present day much of the culture and songs of the people. For the Iroquois, however, the fortunes of war and political strategy have tended to change and destroy their culture. Scattered and separated for a century and a half, and their reserves in most cases adjacent to heavily populated areas, the Iroquois find today the longhouse rituals losing their age-old flavor. Some singers, by remarkable vitality and resistance to modern longhouse trends and outside influences, have preserved the old ways. Chief Joseph Logan, George Buck, "Billy" Buck, Simeon Gibson and Charles Van Every, all of Six Nations Reserve, Canada; Albert Jones and Chauncey Johnny John of Quaker Bridge, Allegany; Roger Lay of Cattaraugus; Jesse Cornplanter of Tonawanda; these, with a very few others have become the last repository of this phase of the old way of life.

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1. Subject of a talk presented, with tape recordings, before Morgan Chapter, 16 December 1954.

Some efforts have been made to preserve certain rituals and social songs on records and tape. Notably Dr. William Fenton, while with the Smithsonian, made many recordings at Six Nations Reserve and at Allegany reservation in the thirties and early forties.<sup>2</sup> His exhaustive survey of the Iroquois Eagle or Striking dance and his conclusions that it was derived from the Calumet people have satisfied all but some of the Indians themselves.

To get at the original sources of these old songs is becoming a major problem. Very few of the strong voices that once "echoed upon the hills" are left. In the last few years Simeon Gibson, Charles Van Every, Joshua "Billy" Buck and Chauncey Johnny John, all have taken their song bags on the Last Trail; songs that never will be heard again -- songs that can now never be recorded.

### We Embark on our Project

To help preserve some of the remaining portion of this Iroquois culture was our main objective then, as we headed toward Tonawanda and Jesse Cornplanter one cold winter night.

One must wander off the main highway #5 at Batavia, and after passing through Oakfield and South Alabama, negotiate the nearly hidden turn at Basom, before finding the entrance to one of the last strongholds of Iroquois culture.

A New York state highway sign "Tonawanda Indian Reservation" marks the boundary, but the fields stretch broad and fertile and cultivated as on the adjoining private lands. As in any American community, the houses range from the very modern to the weather-beaten. Most are small and most are neat and well-kept. Many a baffled tourist has stopped to inquire the whereabouts of the Indian reservation only to find he is in the middle of it.

But turn right just beyond the bridge over Tonawanda creek and follow the winding road. Here close crowding underbrush, trees and swampland around an occasional log house create a subtly changing atmosphere to welcome you to the longhouse of the Tonawanda Band of the Senecas. Within sight of the glowing lights of Buffalo reflected on the cold winter sky, you may still see the age-old rituals of Ga-ih-wa-no-wus-qua-go-wah, the Mid-Winter festival. This, the Supreme Ceremony, is the great religious festival of the Longhouse People. From this longhouse, messengers set out in the early dawn to warn the faithful of the approaching days of ritual, feasting and dancing. And here, by the entrance, the haunting notes of a clan dream song rise upward to the Creator, as in days of old.

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2 Songs from the Iroquois Longhouse Album #6;  
Seneca Songs from Coldspring Longhouse Album #17.  
Available from the Division of Music, Library of Congress

To this modest single story structure with the cook-house close by, come the messengers and delegates to the Central Fire at Six Nations convention time. Here is the longhouse that stands at the center of the tenuous web of the spirit that welds together the faithful who adhere to the teachings of Handsome Lake. To it they come for the "rubbing of antlers" ceremony to welcome visiting dignitaries; for the farewell ceremony that speeds them on their way; for a festival of planting or of harvest, or an evening of social dances and songs. From its cook-house fire rises the fragrant tobacco smoke as the Faithkeepers send centuries-old rituals skyward to *Ha-wen-ne-yuh*, "Creator of all things".

At the very center of the ceremonies, the rituals and the social dances, we find the longhouse singers. These artists must know every nuance and innuendo of the intricate rituals, for their voices are the medium that explains, directs, exhorts and brings meaning to the listeners.

According to long-established custom, singers who perform at longhouse functions are asked to do so by the clan matron, one of the Faithkeepers, or a person delegated to be in charge. Since no singers appear without this invitation, one can expect of them complete and proven mastery of the medium.

Jesse Cornplanter's reputation as a longhouse singer is well supported. At Onondaga he is famous for the Great Feather dance and for the well loved social dances. The late Charles Van Every, of Six Nations, once said, "I like to sing on the bench with Jesse" (i.e. the long bench, traditional place of honor in the center of the longhouse occupied by singers in ceremonies). At Newton, Cattaraugus, Cornplanter's version of the old songs is usually conceded to be correct. At Tonawanda, O-sto-weh-go-wah, Feather dance, the great religious dance of the Iroquois, has long been his particular forte.

Cornplanter, called Ha-yonh-wonh-ish, of the Snipe clan, was born on Cattaraugus reservation. His father, Edward Cornplanter, was all his mature life a Faithkeeper and prophet of the longhouse and from earliest times taught his son the old songs and rituals. Hours upon hours were spent in teaching not only the songs, but the manner in which they must be sung. And the son likes to recall the cold pre-dawn chill of winter as he heard his father So-son-do-wah sing the Dream song of the Wolf clan that opened the Mid-Winter festival. As the boy learned, so did his father before him, always at the side of some great singer who taught by example and patient, endless repetition. Thus, when Cornplanter speaks into the microphone that he will sing the Woman's dance, the old version, the tape carries for posterity the songs passed down from generation to generation, guarded and unchanged with that integrity that distinguishes the older Iroquois singer.

The songbag of Jesse Cornplanter is filled to overflowing with the old songs -- the rituals and social dances numbering over a thousand. Among them is a special group of songs collected from his father and throughout his own lifetime. These are the Ga-ne-ho or show songs, a special group connected

to neither ritual nor social dances. Beloved by all Iroquois, they have been harvested from Indian shows and pageants. Welcome songs, council fire songs, songs of war and peace, of trailing and hunting, songs devoted to games, dancing and comedy, this collection of Ga-ne-ho songs may be unique, as the taped collection numbers 32 in all.

Some word of explanation should be given concerning the phrase "singing in the old way". Over the years singing societies were formed on each reservation. These societies, composed of outstanding singers, preserved the old songs, and individual members were encouraged to compose new ones. These were tried out and the best ones survived to be sung again and again. These were sung not only on the home reservation but were traded on visits to friends and relatives. When "Billy" Buck, for example, sang Stomp dance at Grand River, Canada, or on a visit to Tonawanda, he brought out his own songs which he had accumulated. These, of course, were songs to his liking and could include vintage songs handed down or ones of more recent composition.

The tools used by the Seneca singer are few. The cowhorn rattle is a modern version. Originally it was a bark cylinder enclosing a few chokecherry pits, with a handle carried through the cylinder and anchored by two round wooden discs closing the cylinder at each end. This gave way to a buffalo horn rattle similarly made and more recently to the cowhorn. A modern variation is the use of lead shot or steel ball bearings in place of the cherry pits. The turtle rattle has been used for centuries. The whole carapace and plastron are utilized with the head and extended neck reinforced to form the handle. Cherry pits are traditionally used to provide the rattle. Shells from eight to ten inches in diameter are preferred. The singers sit astride the bench, facing each other, clasping the turtle rattle with both hands. The turtle shell is beaten edgewise against the bench top providing the rhythm. To be heard plainly above the resultant pounding in Great Feather dance is a prime test for a good singer.

The water drum was originally a hollow basswood section with the open end covered with leather secured by a fabric-wound hoop. A small round opening in the side was plugged with a whittled hardwood peg. This allowed water to be poured into the drum to the proper level. The drum, with the exception of the large ones used for the Feast for the Dead, is small and easily held in the span of the palm and fingers of the hand. Modern drums may be half a wooden keg. Canadians prefer the small end for the drumhead, while on Tonawanda the reverse is true.

The water drum when not in use is laid head side down to keep it wet. A dry drum usually results in severe checking or, in a keg drum, the staves warping and collapsing. A mouthful of water is added daily. A hickory stick, split part way down, is used to tighten the drum head. A corner or edge of the leather is placed in the split and the stick rotated with sufficient pressure to increase tension and tune the drum. A good drum is the result of ingenious and clever workmanship, and is highly prized.

In use, the drum is held with the spread fingers and palm of the left hand and lightly tapped, with the thumb and forefinger of the right hand providing a fulcrum for the stick. The drumstick is slender and not more than 8 or 9 inches in length. It is delicately and patiently carved and has notches on the opposite sides of the handle into which the thumb and finger fit at the precise center of balance. Properly used the drum is struck with only moderate force. Too heavy a stroke muffles the tone which has a typically liquid quality and carries incredibly long distances.

### Recording Begins

When we first approached Jesse Cornplanter with the idea of recording not only social songs and dances but the longer and less often heard rituals, our reception was less than enthusiastic. But continued councils finally led to a fuller understanding of the project and his enthusiastic co-operation.

The recording was begun in the spring of 1953 and has continued to the present time. Just as there is a time that is seemly and proper for telling the old, old legends of the longhouse, so there is a suitable time for singing. That, of course, is during the long winter evenings. Then is the time when the singer's head is filled with the long song-sequences and they burst from the throat without effort or strain. Jesse Cornplanter is in his sixty-sixth year but his voice is ageless. Being the great artist that he is, he is not without the artistic temperament. At times he has sat lonely and brooding when the songs would not come. Most of the time he was eager and ready to sing for hours on end and was, if anything, more refreshed at the end than when he started. The social songs are sung according to the singer's whim, but some of the ritual songs must be sung in the same sequence each time, and the sequence once begun must be finished. This can be an exacting and straining process as when the ceremony of Des-wa-den-yon runs to 61 songs. Other rituals may run to 90 or more.

The taping was done, with very few exceptions, in the snug comfort of the Cornplanter home, a few steps from the longhouse. Some experimental work was done at the microphone to balance the rattle or drum with the voice, but once begun; the recordings were never edited or reworked. To avoid any errors that might have occurred through language barriers, the singer introduces each group of songs with his own descriptive words.

### Social Dances

The dances are performed in the evening, usually following the great festivals, Great-Ritual or New Year's festival held in the winter month of the moon of Nis-ko-wuk-nih; in March at the Maple festival; in May at Seed-Planting festival; in June during the Strawberry festival to the first fruits of the season; in September at the Green Corn festival; at the final harvest season or Great Thanksgiving festival. Social dancing is also the chief entertainment during informal gatherings at the longhouse at any time of the year.

The name "shuffle dance" early given these dances is more descriptive of the dances than a specific name. In the longhouse today these social dances are immensely popular and each evening at festival time sees men, women and children participating. A striking feature to the eyes and ears of the unaccustomed onlooker is the invocation given before the dance. Purely social though these gatherings are, the Iroquois feel it only fitting that a Faithkeeper return thanks to the Great Spirit before the festivities begin. After the invocation, a singer rises from the side benches and leisurely begins the introductory song which is characteristic of the dance-song group to be performed. The length of the dance depends usually on the repertoire of the leader, and a good-natured rivalry seems to exist over leading the songs. Many singers' reputations carry from one reservation to another and a good singer is known as a stomp or corn dance singer. Of course, he is usually expected to lead (by invitation) in his specialties in whatever longhouse he happens to be.

By the time the introductory song is finished the leader usually has two or three dancer-singers joining him. Setting the rhythm with the horn rattle, the leader slowly swings into the dance. He is followed by the others, single file, and leads them in counter clockwise rotation around the longhouse floor. Just as each dance has its characteristic introduction; it also has a distinctive ending to each song. The initiate, without observing the dance, can tell which one is being performed. Dancers of both sexes and children too, join in or drop out as inspiration guides them. As the leader ends the song with the characteristic vocable, the line of dancers moves slowly along at a walk awaiting the next song.

Some of the shuffle dances such as the Green Corn dance are moderately slow in rhythm. Some, like the Stomp dance or Ga-da-shote, are faster with a definite sharp heel beat. Others like the Joined Hands, or Peace dance, have a slow, stately rhythm with the rattle struck into the palm of the hand to emphasize every other beat.

The songs consist of vocables, rather than intelligible words or sentences. Each set of vocables is woven into a complex pattern of tones and rhythm by the singer's voice. Usually the leader sings the first phase of each song alone, and upon repeating it, is joined by the others. Thus each dancer knows in advance what song is to be sung and may join in if he wishes.

By way of illustration, these are the vocables of the introductory song of the Green Corn dance:

<u>Yo-wah-ji-nee</u>	(sung by leader alone)
<u>Yo-wah-ji-nee</u>	(sung by leader and group)
<u>Yo-ho-wah-ji-nee</u>	
<u>Yo-wah-ji-nee</u>	
<u>Yo-wah-ji-nee</u>	
<u>Yo-wah-ji-nee</u>	
Yo-o-o-o	Ho-o-o-o (Corn dance song ending)

This is the first song of the Green Corn dance:

Yo    Yo-wi-nee    (sung by leader)

Way-hah    (sung by group)

This is sung six times and followed by the

Green Corn dance ending: Yo-o-o-o    Ho-o-o-o

There are other types of social dances. Of these the Pigeon dance, the Fish dance and the Raccoon dance are called the original Indian jitterbug, and are so akin to our Charleston step as sometimes to defy distinction, though the steps antecede it by hundreds of years. Others, such as the Goose dance have varying characteristic steps and are danced in pairs.

Whether it be the short, simple step of the shuffle dance or the more elaborate of the social dances, one must hear the songs and the beat of the singer's voice blending with the horn rattle, see each shoulder in the long line lifting as one to the rhythm, to appreciate the artistry involved.

#### Ga-da-shote or Stomp Dance

This dance, is one of the first Iroquois dances of recorded history, was called the "trotting dance" by the French and early explorers. Jesse Cornplanter of Tonawanda claims this was used by leaders of war parties in days of old. Neither drum nor rattle was used. On the march the quivers were stacked much as modern soldiers stack their arms around the camp. The leader, to instill enthusiasm for the day's run, or to relax the warriors during the evening lull, would start the chant with a few simple vocables. Each set carried a specific response, usually by the second man in line. The vocal effect was fast and rhythmic, to which the single file of dancers responded with short, quick steps and a sharp slap of the heel against the ground. Except at certain intervals, no pronounced or exaggerated bodily movements were used. As the songs progressed, the leader, followed by the dancers in unison, would sway the body sideways and down ward. Since the dance was called the same in each of the Iroquois dialects, it became known as Ga-da-shote or Standing-Quiver dance. Today it ranks as one of the most popular of the social dances and is always the first dance performed in the evening. It is danced as in the long ago, without rattle or drum, and requires complete mastery of vocal rhythm on the part of the leader.

In one of our recordings, made under actual dance conditions, Jesse Cornplanter leads the Stomp dance, and the responses are given by Kidd Smith, a Seneca associate of many years. So successful has been the bond between teacher and pupil that, at times, it is impossible to detect when one voice stops and the other begins. Here is internal evidence of how one singer conscientiously copies not only the song from the instructor, but also the exact phrasing, timbre, and rhythm.

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### Much Work Yet To Be Done

There is urgent need for much more basic material to be recorded and digested before definite conclusions as to song origins, etc., can be made. Such a study most properly is a field for the ethnologist and archeologist. But even to the non-professional, puzzling questions crop up. For instance, an interesting comparison can be made between the Green Corn dance songs recorded in 1954 at Tonawanda and the same songs recorded in 1941 at Six Nations Reserve by Fenton.

They present striking differences. The rhythm from one is less pronounced. The vocables, while basically the same, are softer and slurred so much so that, with added notes here and there, the songs would appear to have only an accidental similarity. A century and a half continuous occupation on two widely separated reserves would naturally account for some slight differences. In addition, the Canadian singers are Cayuga, the others Seneca. Moreover, George and "Billy" Buck are almost as well known and popular on Tonawanda, as they are on Grand River. Yet, Cornplanter says "they sing them that way – different from our singing." Is it possible that as some singer in the past gained in popularity, he tended to develop and sing in his own distinctive way, forgetting that as he taught these songs to a new pupil; the changes remain with the new pupil? Thus, small variations from one generation to another could lead to striking differences. Certainly, in the beginning, the songs were the same.

Unexpected proof of the integrity between Cornplanter father and son was revealed when the phrasing and notes heard on a Columbia recording of 1906 and sung by a group of Seneca Indians were duplicated precisely by a 1954 tape labeled "Farewell Song" or "Funeral Chant". This was one of a group of songs sung in the Hiawatha pageant at the turn of the century. Edward Cornplanter, among others, had a prominent part in the production. The opposite side of the same recording is a song sung by a group of Seneca children and that too is duplicated on the 1954 tape. Jesse Cornplanter introduces the two songs by saying they were used in the Hiawatha pageant, and he sings them today in show work exactly as his father taught them to him. Since the show was at its height in popularity in 1906, it does seem possible that the recording was made by Cornplanter senior and others in the group. Unfortunately the record is not available for the son to hear.

No amount of description can convey the true impression one gets from seeing and hearing the longhouse ceremonies with the accompanying singing and dancing. And it is cause for deep regret that another ten or fifteen years may see the old longhouse ways disappear.



Similarly no amount of text can adequately convey the quality of an Indian singer's voice. Certain it is that no paleface with his voice trained by schoolroom singing can even come close to imitating it. Repeatedly we have heard Ha-yonh-wonh-ish sing with just enough volume to comfortably fill a room, and without changing the timbre, sing so that every person in a packed longhouse can hear him. An increase in volume does not mean a metallic forcing tone we whites are so accustomed to. Always, regardless of volume, the voice of the Seneca singer retains its soft liquid quality. How regrettable it is that no young singers are taking their allotted place on the singer's bench. And how wise is our friend Jesse Cornplanter, soldier, artist, author and singer when he says, "let's get them down, so that others who come after me may not forget the old ways of their fathers before them". We can only hope that others, too, may be working to preserve for posterity the old voices that "once echoed upon the hills".

### The Recordings

That some of the pleasure which has been ours in listening to these Seneca songs may be shared with others is our fondest hope. The tapes, particularly the social dance songs are in possession of the author who hopes they may soon be made available to others interested. The recordings, all by Jesse Cornplanter, to date include:

Corn dance Songs	9 songs	Horn rattle
.... <u>Ga-da-shote</u> , Stomp dance	8 songs	Voice alone
Seneca Pigeon dance	5 songs	Horn rattle
Women's dance, old version Newtown	10 songs	Water drum
Raccoon dance	15 songs	Water drum
Fish dance	5 songs	Water drum
Holding Hands dance	5 songs	Horn rattle
<u>Wa-sa-a-se</u> War Dance, Introduction and	4 songs	Water drum
Ga-ne-ho or show songs, with manuscript of songs	32 songs	Water drum

The following tapes recorded and technically in the author's possession, belong to the Longhouse People:

Seneca ritual songs, Newtown version - by Jesse Cornplanter

O-sto-weh-go-wah, Great Feather dance - complete, turtle rattle at the Wind - or  
Dawn song - Wolf clan Dream song sung at Mid-Winter festival; bench.  
voice alone

Handsome Lake Ga-na-o-e Song with message in Seneca; voice alone

Handsome Lake A-don-weh with last message from the Prophet; voice alone.

Go-nay-o-onh Drum song Thanksgiving festival; introduction song with  
Thanksgiving song and invocations; voice and water drum.

Des-wah-dey-nyonh; Ka-enh-nonh Complete ritual - 61 songs with manuscript; voice with  
water drum.

Yaie-on-dah-tah Complete ritual, 97 songs; voice with water drum.

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