

## [Henry Mitchell, Indian Canoe Maker]

ORIGINAL MSS. OR FIELD NOTES (Check one)

PUB. Living Lore in New England

(Maine)

TITLE Henry Mitchell, Indian Canoe Maker

WRITER Robert Grady

DATE WDS. PP. 25 to31

CHECKER DATE

SOURCES GIVEN (?) Interview

COMMENTS

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Maine

Living Lore

Old Town - 25 Maine 1938-9 1938-9

(Mr. Mitchell's home is right next to the school house of which Henry in the janitor. As we passed the brightly lighted school I noticed that Henry was inside industriously sweeping the [floor?]. Knowing that his duties wouldn't keep him there very long I continued on to the house where I found Mrs. Mitchell and her daughter listening to the radio in a sleeping room off the kitchen. The living room is on the opposite side of the kitchen.) R.G. "Ah,

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good evening, Did you think I wasn't coming back?" Mrs. Mitchell: "Well, we wandered what had become of you. Henry said you had a telegram from Mr. Ellingwood the last time you called and that you were vendering if you were going to get fired. I'm glad that didn't happen." R.G. "So am I. You see there were a few points remaining to be cleared up." Mrs. Mitchell: "Come right into the other room and take off your things. Henry will be back in a short time and he'll be glad to talk with you again."

(Mrs. Mitchell busied herself getting the overcoat and mittens off the small boy who was with me while I looked over a small out line.) R.G. "Do you know, Mrs. Mitchell, if Henry was acquainted with Jim Thorpe? Mr. Howe asked about that." Mrs. Mitchell: "I don't think he was - not very well, anyway. But I was. You see henry finished at Carlisle a few years before Thorpe became famous. He knew Mount Pleasant and [Exendise?], though, who were very good [ayers?] even if they didn't get as much publicity at Thorpe received. But he can tell you more about that. I was more interested in the girl's activities. We lived in large dormatories 26 and we could select any course of training that interested us. Some of the girls studied dressmaking and some trained for careers as nurses. Almost any trade and a number of professions would be learned there. Some very good dressmakers were turned out at Carlisle.

Henry took up pattern making and carpentry. After he left the taining school he worked in the pattern rooms of railroad shops in Pennsylvania and Derby, Maine. He worked as a carpenter when he came back here, both before he went into the canoe shop and during dull seasons. He worked on the postoffice, the bank, the Strand Theater, and several other very good buildings in Old Town.

"Mr. [Wheelock?], who conducted the famous [Wheelock's?] Band while we were at Carlisle, paid us a visit last summer. It seemed good to see him again.

"Henry generally worked in the railing room at the canoe shop. That shop has certainly helped the Indians a lot - so many of them work there in the summertime. Almost every

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one who works there has a canoe, and it is quite a sight to see all those canoes coming across the river when the men are coming over to lunch or when they're returning from work in the afternoon.

"My husband tried working in the pulp mill over there, but it didn't agree with him - especially the night work. A tried working in the woolen mill, at specking, but that didn't agree with me. I could do the work in the school house in the summertime when it is not so hard, but I wouldn't attempt it now. Every one of these rooms has to be swept with dustbane every night, and that is not easy. I think that is Henry outside there now. I'll tell him you're here."

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Henry (entering room): "Well, well: we thought you weren't coming back. I'd been over to Old Town several times to the postoffice and so forth, but I never saw you. Hello, fatty! (to the boy) What is you real name, anyway, sonny? Jim, Jo, or is it Pete? You better come over here away from the heater. It's too warm there for you." Mrs. Mitchell: "I'll have to leave you people: I have a date. (She was joking) We are rehearsing for a play we're going to give over here on February 13, for the benefit of the church. A play to help the church is an annual event over here. This one is called Mother Jone's House Party, and I'm to be Mother Jones. Here are some parts I've written out. I'll have to get them typewritten. Would you like to [look?] them over? It's a kind of musical play." (There were about six sheets of manuscript containing names of players, names of songs and singers, and sketches showing the arrangements of furniture on the stage.) R.G. (After Mrs. Mitchell had left): "Henry, you wife said she thought you didn't know Thorpe very well. Is that right?" Henry: "That's right. When I was at Carlisle he was there, but he was hardly more than a boy. When I was finishing he was in what would correpond to the grammar grades of a public school. You see Carlisle wasn't exactly like the colleges that have only four year courses. Thorpe happened to play in an age when maximum mount of publicity was being awarded athletic heroes. No body can detract from his prowess: he was an outstanding all around athlete and a fine football player as well. I always liked that story Knute Rockne told about

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him. As I remember it Thorpe was making big gains around one end of the line and Knute hollered at him to try his (Rockne's) position. Thorpe obliged him by doing so, and twice stopped him cold, but on the next play, Knute said something like an express train hit him, and after Thorpe came running back from the goal line he slapped Rockne on the back and said, 'that's right, Knute, be a good boy and let Injun run.'

"Old Carlisle men, however, will never forget such greats as Mount Pleasant, Dillon, Exendine, Hudson, Rogers, Johnson, and others I might mention. (As Henry spoke of these he looked up at a picture of a Carlisle team that hung on the wall.) That tall chap on the end is Charles Rogers. The little fellow sitting in the center of the front row is Frank Hudson, famous drop kicker and quarter back. He became a bank clerk in Pittsburg. When Hudson left, his place was taken by James Johnson, who is standing next to Rogers. Johnson is a dentist now in Porto Rico. It was Johnson who tucked the ball under Dillon's jersey in that Harvard game when Dillon ran for a touchdown. That was funny. Indians were running in all directions on the field, and I guess the most of them, except Dillon, were tackled by Harvard players who didn't know who had the ball.

"I always felt sorry that Carlisle was discontinued, but the government must have had good reason for that action. Maybe the greater number of Indians are in the west and [Haskell?] is better placed geographically. The first year men at Carlisle weren't allowed to leave the grounds for some reasons, but after that first year they could travel if they wanted to. Carlisle is sixty miles northwest of Harrisburg.

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"I studied carpentry and pattern making there, and although I worked in the pattern shop of the Baldwin Locomotive Works, in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, what I learned in school didn't help me much there. All they wanted us for was the ball team. They had a rule that only bona fide workers in the plant could play on the team, and that is how I came to be in the pattern room. There were 10,000 workers in that plant. The ball players worked two hours in the forenoon and two in the afternoon. At nine in the morning the superintendant would

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come around and wink at us and say, 'All right boys.' Then we'd go out the back way to the ball diamond which was located on the grounds. We practiced from two to four hours a day, and we played four games a week.

"Those were wooden patterns of machine parts that we made. They were painted black and stamped with a white number on the end. They were used in the moulding department, but I was never in there and I don't know much about that part of the work. In some parts of that plant nobody but the regular workers were allowed. There was a spy scare here once: a Japanese was accused of trying to get the secret of a new car wheel.

"When I played in the band [but?] there I guess we played about everything. Band music generally runs to marches, patrols, overtures, and so forth. Sousa's marches were always popular with us, but I can't remember that we ever played any of E. T. Paul's compositions. I always liked the William Tell Overture and the Poet and Peasant March.

"The most of my time in the canoe shop was spent in the railing room. I've often been sorry that I didn't take up paddle making: they work the year around. When I started railing we got \$15.00 a week. The rails are put on after the canoe is covered with canvas 30 and filled, but before the color coats. The only difference I can see in the work now is that they use better tools and consequently they work faster. Screws, for instance, can be driven in much quicker with an automatic screwdriver than with one of those you turn by hand. About all they can't do quicker is nail driving. That is done just the same as always. After I worked on canoes for a while they put me down on flat bottom boats and then on motor boats - putting on rails, decks, and combing. They used electrically driven tools down there almost exclusively. Even the little circular hand saws were run by electricity. I got about \$4.40 a day on the boats.

"They seem to be replacing all us fellows over fifty with younger men. I suppose they have a right to employ any one they want to, but it's rather hard on the older workers. I'm lucky, maybe, to have this little job at the schoolhouse, but it's hard to meet living

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expenses on that salary. It costs us \$12.00 a week to live, and that job pays only ten. The baskets we make help a little, but not enough. There isn't much profit in making baskets and ornaments compared to the work that goes into them. Those war clubs, for example, have to be [dug up?], cleaned, scraped, carved, and polished. The totem poles look to be easy to make, but nobody makes them around here. You have to be something of a sculptor, and it isn't every kind of wood that can be used. Birch, for instance, will crack. They generally use balsa wood, but I guess poplar can also be used. If you think they're easy to make, just try one. About everything else in that Indian store except the totem poles is made over here. I don't know exactly how many types of baskets we make, but we make them for a lot of different purposes, including wood, pack, and boy scout baskets, jewelry and sewing baskets; hampers and fish baskets; clothes, potato, pack, and bushel baskets.

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"I haven't any keen dissatisfaction and about the only ambitious I have left are to be able to keep on working and earning a living." R.G. "If you could change the present laws that relate to Indians so that the latter would have the same [status?] as whites, would you do it?" Henry: "Well, that's a hard question to answer - there are so many sides of it to consider. The young people might favor the idea, but the old people would oppose it. I don't think we'd enjoy any more advantages than we do now if we could vote as citizens. Probably there are some people over there (in Old Town) who wouldn't want us on that side: they'd think all we wanted to be was town charges. Off hand I'd say that I'd feel inclined to let well enough alone. There is the law I'd like to change, though, and that is the one that allows low class whites to marry our girls and move over here with us. This is supposed to be an Indian reservation, but there are fifteen of those fellows over here now, and as many girls who have married Indians. Those girls probable have to get married, but after they have been over here for a year or two, they start to find fault with us. What did they come over here for if they didn't like the place? Would any of those fellows who marry Indian girls take them over there to live with them? They don't do it. There were some

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famous exceptions, maybe - John Smith and Baron Castine - but they were real men. No Indians would object to Indian girls marrying men like Smith or Castine, but we don't like to be absorbing so much riff raft. And I guess nobody'll blame us for that.”