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Chippewa Families: A Social Study of White Earth Reservation, 1938.  
By. M. Inez Hilger.

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contribution. Whether actual or fictive, traditional or instant, these persons have been journeying about North America conducting ceremonial sweat-baths and offering therapeutic guidance to troubled urbanites. Their ministrations and hortations are compounded of Indian lore and the new ecology.

Given the foregoing, I approach books such as this with basic skepticism. I would have been tempted to dismiss it, except for its tone. It offers no panacea, no instant guide to healing, but rather constitutes a record of how one individual has attempted to heal himself with the assistance of several friends and counselors, notably Frank Fools Crow, Oglala spiritual leader.

Moreover the author explicitly disclaims any request for financial payment, for as he wisely writes:

When you ask someone for guidance, or spiritual help, they cannot ask you for money, or even hint for gifts. This is spiritual law. Spiritual power is given to help others, and one cannot make a condition of that help to be any personal gain. (p. 39)

The book is no monograph. By academic standards it is chaotic, sounding as if narrated in free-associational style. The author is self-taught, and his interpretations of biblical passages far from conventional. At moments, the reader perceives an individual who has had a difficult life and has struggled mightily to find equilibrium as a decent, moral, responsible individual. Having arrived at this plateau, he wishes to share his insights with a receptive public.

Chokecherry Gall Eagle makes it clear that the process of healing is extraordinarily difficult and requires years of devout work. Ritual gear—pipes, eagle feathers—may be helpful to the novice, but in the long run will be discarded. His text, therefore, echoes the experiences of the mystics of other faiths who have emptied their lives of belongings and their souls of attachment to all save the divine. Despite the simplicity of phrasing, the text is not for everyone.

*Murray L. Wax*

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**Chippewa Families: A Social Study of White Earth Reservation, 1938.** By. M. Inez Hilger. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Press, 1998. 189 pages. \$12.95 paper.

In 1926, twelve years before Sister M. Inez Hilger published her research on housing and living conditions of the Chippewa people at White Earth Reservation, Congress commissioned the Meriam Committee to survey conditions among the American Indians nationally and to make recommendations for new policy. In February 1928, the Meriam Report emerged, a scathing expose of the sub-standard living situation of the Indian peoples. Seven months of fieldwork by Director Louis Meriam and his staff took them to ninety-five reservations, agencies, hospitals, and schools. They found

shockingly poor conditions in the areas of health, housing, and education. Reform groups in and out of government called for an investigation of the administration of Indian Affairs and for more generous appropriations to improve programs and service for the American Indians.

Coming as it did on the eve of the Great Depression, however, the Meriam Report was put on the backburner. The 1930s saw the nation facing poverty on an unprecedented scale and, while the ensuing New Deal funneled some funds to the reservations, Indians were not a major concern. Approximately three years after publication of the Meriam Report, Sister Inez Hilger, who lived from 1891 to 1977, began her studies and fieldwork on American Indians, centering her research on the Chippewa, the Blackfoot, and the Arapaho.

Hilger, a Benedictine nun, received her master's at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. in 1925 and her Ph.D. in 1939. The first of her publications in the 1930s is *Chippewa Families, A Social Study of White Earth Reservation, 1938*, originally published by the Smithsonian Institute and reprinted by the Minnesota Historical Society in 1992. Strangely, Hilger makes no reference to the Meriam Report, though the report includes details of life among the Chippewa in the neighboring Red Lake Reservation.

In her preface, Hilger states that her purpose is "to discover whether there was any significant relationship between the social status of the families and their housing and living conditions" (p. xxi). Preparing to do the fieldwork, Hilger consulted a 1934 survey of housing compiled by the United States Indian Bureau, showing that most Chippewa lived in tar-paper shacks. Using this survey and other publications from the bureau, Hilger focused on housing conditions on the White Earth Reservation, established in 1867. Hilger's own religious community, St. Benedict's Convent, a sisterhood staffing schools and hospitals in Minnesota and beyond, opened a boarding school at White Earth in 1878. She used the place as a center, on and off, during her research. The reservation, some 255 miles northwest of the Twin Cities, was in painful straits by the 1930s, suffering from decades of exploitation of its people, land, and resources, not to mention the effects of the Great Depression.

In the fall of 1937, Hilger was corresponding with Louis Balsam, superintendent of the Consolidated Chippewa Reservations in Minnesota, asking his assistance in her research. He agreed to monitor her work, providing among other aid needed interpreters, since Hilger did not know the Chippewa language. In a letter to Balsam, dated 10 December 1937, she referred to the economic and social conditions of the reservation, noting that bad housing was simply a part of reservation life. She continued to suggest that if the Natives had better housing, then some of the reservation's social problems would be eliminated. The Meriam Report had stressed the same point some nine years earlier about reservations across the United States.

Hilger resided on the White Earth Reservation from June until November 1938, interviewing one or both parents of 150 families and surveying all but two homes. Her study begins with a short historical summary of the Chippewa people's origins, their coming to Minnesota, treaties with the federal government,

and the effects on the Chippewa of such legislation as the Dawes Act of 1887, the Nelson Act of 1889, the Clapp Act of 1906, and the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. Chapters one and two cover the physical setting, population basis, economic opportunities, health facilities, educational situation, and some social aspects of the reservation—all brief but important as background.

The heart of Hilger's research is found in chapters three, four, and five. She enlivens the writing with anecdotes and dialogue by and about the Chippewa themselves, dividing families by types of dwelling: tar-paper shacks and frame-houses mainly, with a nod to wigwams, bark houses, log homes, and rehabilitation houses. She concludes that the families living in tar-paper shacks were most content with their home and the least willing to change either location or lifestyle. However, while housing conditions were uniformly poor throughout the reservation, Hilger saw a transition occurring whereby many Chippewa were moving toward an acceptance of American standards in housing and living conditions—a hopeful sign to her. Along with many of her peers, Hilger was an assimilationist, believing it best that Indians move into the general population as rapidly as possible.

Although she is objective most of the time, compiling large amounts of data, Hilger's value judgments do emerge periodically. For example, her unfavorable attitude toward common law marriage, as well as the oft-repeated suggestion that Indian youth be guided more firmly toward assimilation and acculturation, make clear that Hilger favors the elimination of some traditional practices in favor of a superior society's ways. But, as seen particularly in chapter four, Hilger also shows some sensitivity to Chippewa customs and the gradual breakdown of traditional social forces. Referring to the loss of control by elders, she writes, "The third generation on the White Earth Reservation stands on the threshold of American civilization from which there is no escape, no turning back" (p. 89). Overall, one gets the impression that Hilger thinks this is unavoidable and good, provided that the youth receive proper introduction into the new social order.

The longest—and to me, the most interesting of the chapters—deals with living conditions for the 150 families discussed in chapter five. Hilger asks: What were the economic resources? Working with the responses, she tries to correlate housing and living conditions. Most often, she finds families living in frame-houses better equipped than those in tar-paper shacks or other types of dwellings—in methods and means of cooking and heating, possession of chairs, washing-machines, sewing machines, wall-clocks, and storage spaces. Her final conclusion on living conditions notes the pervasive poverty of White Earth in the 1930s, and that the frame-house families were more closely following American standards of living than were the tar-paper shack people. In almost all cultural aspects, the latter group was more traditional.

Hilger's final conclusions and recommendations reiterate the poverty of inadequate housing. She calls for assistance to "help those anxious and willing to be shown how they may assist themselves" (p. 147). She believes that families should be consulted and involved directly in constructing or rebuilding their homes. As for improving living conditions, Hilger supports more training of mothers and adolescent girls in homemaking skills, more and bet-

ter education beyond elementary levels, and some off-reservation experience. In these conclusions and recommendations, she is very much in tune with reformers then and now who stress self-help whenever and wherever possible. Scattered throughout chapters three through five are many tables, giving details on size and furnishings of the Indian homes. We find information on the height and number of rooms, types of wall-hangings, kitchen utensils, bedding, and rugs. A few tables denote marital status and religious affiliation, alcohol consumption, and types of reading matter in the homes. Appendices supply such information as the few number of families still speaking the Chippewa language, the number of parents with some formal education, and how many families traveled off the reservation. The amount of detail in the book is impressive and shows that Hilger gathered and itemized data carefully. As stated by Kimberly Blaeser in her introductory remarks, "The tabulated results of Hilger's investigation are a rich resource for anyone wanting specifics; they stand as a concrete catalog of material culture" (xiv).

Hilger's background as an anthropologist and a Benedictine sister surely colors her approach to the research and its conclusions—resulting in occasional stereotypes and a somewhat static view of the people. But on the whole, hers is a solid piece of work, in which an abundance of statistical material is brightened by sketches of the persons she interviewed.

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**David Zeisberger: A Life Among the Indians.** By Earl P. Olmstead. Kent: Kent University Press, 1997. 465 pages. \$39.00 cloth.

In this study, Earl P. Olmstead examines the life and works of the Moravian missionary David Zeisberger from his birth in 1721 in Moravia (present day Czech Republic) until the Gnadenhutten massacre of 1782 in Ohio. The study is divided in four sections that move chronologically through the missionary's life. Although Zeisberger lived until 1808, this book covers the first period of his life. In his previously published *Blackcoats among the Delaware: David Zeisberger on the Ohio Frontier*, however, Olmstead covers the man's life from 1782 to 1808.

In *David Zeisberger: A Life among the Indians*, Olmstead describes the entire Moravian effort to Christianize the Indians, with special focus on the Delaware. Therefore, a better title for the book might have been *David Zeisberger and the Moravian Missionaries among the Indians*.

Part one covers the years between 1721 and 1753. Zeisberger joined the Moravian, or *Unitas Fratrum*, sect when he was a child. Accused of theft on a trumped-up charge, he left Saxony for America in 1738, stopping first at Savannah, Georgia. In 1741, Zeisberger moved to Pennsylvania and made his home on the old Walking Purchase lands along the forks of the Delaware River. Four years later, he began studying for missionary duty. Soon after, Zeisberger and another missionary, Christian Frederick Post, were sent to