



First Person Accounts as written by American Indian Students at Hampton Institute, 1878-1923

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ANNA BENDER

Chippewa

1902-1906

Anna Bender came to Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute from White Earth, Minnesota in October 1902. She previously attended the Lincoln Institution in Philadelphia for seven years and the government boarding school at Pipestone, Minnesota for three years. Her mother was Chippewa and her father a white farmer.

Anna wished to be a typist and sought a "general education" at Hampton. After graduation from the school in 1906 Anna continued her studies at Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas. She completed Haskell's Business course in 1908 and found a clerk-typist position at an American Indian boarding school in Chemawa, Oregon. Anna married Reuben Saunders, a boy's industrial teacher, in 1910. She died on September 29, 1911.

ANNA BENDER

The only home I can distinctly remember was the Lincoln Institution in Philadelphia. I do not recollect the trip from my home in Minnesota, where I came with two older brothers John and Charles when I was six years old.

My brothers went to the Education at Home on forty-ninth street leaving me at the girls' school on eleventh street. Here I spent the happy days of my childhood with other children, brought as I had been, from their western homes. October to May we went to school in the city, but the summer months we spent in the country eighteen miles out from Philadelphia and five miles from Valley Forge at a place called Wayne. These days are the pleasantest of all in my memory for they recall long walks through the country with our teachers gathering flowers, picking berries and cherries, and in the fall hunting nuts.

We went to school half a day the whole year around, the other half being devoted to knitting and sewing. We were always sorry to leave the country because we could not climb trees any more.

While we were in the city our teachers used to take us to places of historical interest such as Carpenters and Independence Halls so thus began my early study of History.



We also went to the mint to see how money was coined and to the Academy of Natural Science and Zoological Gardens where we learned many other things of interest and value.

I remained at Lincoln seven years, my brothers having gone home and left me there. During my last year in Philadelphia, I was confirmed by Bishop Whitaker in the St. Luke's Episcopal Church.

I seldom heard from my parents and was so young when I came away that I did not even remember them, so I had no reason for wanting to go home except that other students went to theirs. How miserable I felt when the time came to go! It was to me the leaving of a home instead of returning to one. The trip was very pleasant at first for there was a crowd of us returning, but when we got to Chicago, I was made sad and lonely again by the departure of most of my dear friends. From St. Paul I had to travel all alone, not for very long as my home was about fifty miles from there.

When I arrived at the station, I was met by my mother who had with her my two younger sisters, and two young brothers whom I had never seen. They greeted me kindly but they and everything seemed so strange that I burst into tears. To comfort me, my mother took me into a store and bought me a bag of apples.

As the house was only about a mile from the depot we all walked home through the woods while my sisters tried to cheer me by telling about the places and people as we passed by them, and about the good times we would have together. When we arrived at the house the dog ran out to meet us. He was only a puppy so he began to caper around each one of us, giving me the same welcome that he gave the rest so this was one comfort.

As we gathered around the table later a great wave of homesickness came over me so that I was unable to eat for the lump in my throat, so I put my head down and cried good and hard, while the children looked on in surprise.

When my father returned from work he greeted me kindly but scanned me carefully from head to foot. He asked me if I remembered him, but I had to answer "No". He talked to me kindly and tried to help me recall my early childhood, which proved unsuccessful. At last he told me I had changed greatly from a loving child to a stranger and seemed disappointed which only added to my lonesomeness.

After a time I became acquainted with my sister...

FLORA BROWN

1903

My kind friends: I consider it a great privilege to stand here and look into your faces. I am reminded that if you were to address me personally, the questions would be



where are you from, what kind of work have the Indian women, and what influence have they on the men of their race?

Although I am not of the Shawnee tribe I will confine my subject to the ways and customs of the Shawnee women whose homes I have had the opportunity to visit, for the knowledge I had before coming to Hampton had been gotten from the Shawnee government school in Oklahoma, and my home is near Holdenville Indian Territory.

I always thought that if I had to speak on any subject it would be that of the Shawnee women who have had a sad life. Before the white man brought whiskey, the Indian woman's enemy, into Oklahoma, the Indians had cattle, horses and pigs and the women when they wanted new dresses they went to their husbands and he would sell a horse or pig and she could buy just what she wanted. This happiness lasted until the lands were allotted and towns began to grow up, and instead of having more stores they had saloons. As the Indian men and boys passed by, they would hear the music and out of curiosity went in where they were treated to a small glass of whiskey. It tasted good to those that went in, so they invited others to go until they were not satisfied with this small glass to buy. Very soon afterwards horses, cattle and pigs began to go. Some sold their lands and part of the money went for whiskey. They have a law now which does not let a saloonkeeper sell whiskey to the Indian men, but they still get in some way so that some nights a husband comes home drunk and drives the wife and children out of the house, and she seeks shelter in a neighbor's house.

Sometimes it seems as though some of the women are hardened to it, for one time we were at a war dance and a young man who had been married about two years was very drunk and he lay on the ground and rolled like a hog rolls in the mud. The superintendent took him to the government school and laid him out by the cow lot, and he lay there (until) he was sober. This was in the afternoon and we went again that night and his wife who used to be my classmate at Shawnee came and asked me how her husband was; but she showed no sign of sorrow, for she went into the ring and danced all the time I was there.

When an Indian woman finds it is getting late she leaves her husband if he is drunk, hitches up the horses and goes home; if there isn't any wood chopped, she cuts it and gets supper, the chief thing being cornbread, for her children.

Our cornbread is made different from yours; the woman gets the corn from the field, shells it, and puts the corn in a bucket of water because the water keeps the corn from flying out of the mortar when she beats it with the pestle. She does not beat hard at first, for the first process is to take the skin off the corn. When she feels sure that the skin is off she takes the corn out into a sifter where those that are cracked enough go through while the larger ones are beaten until they are small enough to go through the sifter. The corn goes through the sifter into a large, square, shallow basket where the corn is separated from the skins. Then the corn is beaten into meal. Put some salt into the meal and pour boiling water on it as you stir it until it makes a



thin paste. Then pour it into an iron kettle with coals under it and cover with a lid that has been heated, and put coals on the lid. This is done in half an hour. I ask why the women do not send their corn to the mill to be ground and they tell me that it does not taste as well, for the skins and the good of the corn are ground together.

This story may seem pretty hard to you, but as we look on the bright side of it, these are many things that the Shawnee women have gained, for they see now that they can not go through life easily, they must not marry men who drink, they must leave their husbands anywhere in the road if they are drunk.

Hampton teaches us that we must expect trials and tribulations and so these women having gone through them will come out stronger, for the story of what happy homes they had before whiskey came is always told to the younger ones. When a woman does not notice one who drinks, the Indian men think a great deal of her; and so when more of the girls do this I think this whiskey drinking will go away gradually and the Indian race will stand on its feet as an invincible race.

LENA LUDWICK

The Oneidas of Today

My Oneida ancestors used to assemble about the Council Fires of the Iroquois Nation of New York. They lived in a beautiful valley of the Mohawk River.

About 87 years ago, the Oneidas were urged to give up their prosperous community for a tract of woodland near Green Bay, Wisconsin. At first they were very reluctant to obey this wish of the white people, and consequently many of them stayed. The majority, known as the Christian Indians, left in 1822, headed by Skenandore or Running Deer, the last of the New York Chiefs who played an important part in the French and Indian Wars.

There in the woods, they cut down trees and built houses and adopted a civilized mode of living as they had already done to some extent. One of the first buildings was a little log church, being the first church in Wisconsin.

The first missionary, Mr. Williams, the supposed lost Dauphin of France, the son of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, established an Episcopal Church in 1826. He translated the prayer book and wrote Indian Hymns.

Time forbids to tell you of all the devoted missionaries since, who with their help have changed the whole reservation into a comfortable, religious community as one sees today. From rude log houses are now seen frame houses, brick houses and improved log houses. The people, as a whole, can hardly be called thrifty, nor lazy, as they had to earn their own living, receiving hardly anything from the government. Most of them possess good size farms and some have learned trades by which they earn their living.



The women are busily engaged in beautiful lace-work. One year they earned over two thousand dollars. One Hampton girl built a comfortable house with her savings, another furnished her new house with a set of furniture. One Hampton graduate who learned the lace work here is now in charge of these women who make lace.

The Indians are very much interested in education. Many parents with some misgivings send their children to non-reservation schools, after having completed the course of study at the government school. The majority of the returned students lead useful and respectable lives. Some Hampton students are doing exceptionally well. One is a successful doctor in Milwaukee, another a very efficient nurse and still others who are in the Indian service.

Within the last three or four years, a wonderful change has come in the life of this tribe. The gov't. has given them their full rights of citizenship and they are certainly using their rights in selling their land and property. At first they sold the inherited lands, nearly all uncultivated. Now they are selling their own lands and homesteads. Some have used their money wisely, while some have wasted it in drinking. Drinking is the greatest drawback to the advancement of my people.

Heretofore, we have been protected from a saloon. Now drinking is very prevalent and more thoughtful Indians are watching the outcome with the deepest anxiety, and hoping that new responsibilities may eventually sober them.

This last summer, the reservation was incorporated as Hobart Township, named after good Bishop Hobart. Warrants for the town meeting for choosing of officers were posted at various places. Many who would have had the right to vote did not attend, and later made a complaint because no council had been called. They had to be told that the state did not recognize the Indian Council. Many Indians, however, did attend and a young educated Indian was chosen moderator.

It is understood that within a few years the government school will be changed into a high school for whites and Indians, and day schools will be established. We are hoping that through these schools, many of us who are having opportunities of education, both academic and industrial such as Hampton affords, may be of some service to our people in the future.

LENA LUDWICK

The Oneidas of Today - 1909

My ancestors once lived in the beautiful Mohawk Valley and sat around the Council fires of the Iroquois in New York. About three generations ago, a part of the tribe that had become Christianized and civilized was induced to leave their little farms and homes among their own people and emigrate west to the new state of Wisconsin. Skenandore, or Running Deer, who was a famous warrior during the French and Indian War was our leader.



There in the woods about ... people cut down the trees, built themselves houses and started a small civilized community. One of their first buildings was a little church, the first one built in Wisconsin. Our missionary, Eleazar Williams, was supposed to be the lost Dauphin of France, and the Episcopal Church that he established is today a large and influential body, and people worship in a large stone church that the Indians themselves built with much labor and sacrifice. He also translated the prayer book and many hymns into our language, and these we use today in our service.

Many of my people are prosperous farmers and tradesmen with good brick and frame houses, large barns and prosperous farms. Others are not thrifty, but live in poor house son badly kept farms. All have to work enough however, to support their families because we receive no help from the government. Once a year we receive 44 cents apiece for services our ancestors rendered in the revolutionary war.

Our women are very energetic and hard working. Almost all have learned lace making, and one year earned over \$2,000 by their sales largely to people in the East. One Hampton girl saved enough to build a good house for her family, and another has furnished her four-room house with money made in this way. A Hampton girl is in charge of the lace making, and the disposing of the work.

My people are very ambitious for their children and often make great sacrifices to keep them in school. Nearly 200 have been at Hampton and as many more to other schools. Our physician is a man of our tribe who was educated in the East, and one of our Hampton boys has studied medicine and would practice at home, only there is not enough work for two doctors and so he has gone to Milwaukee where he has a very successful practice among white people.

Quite a number of our educated boys and girls have gone out into the world where the chances are better or the need seems greater. One of the Hampton girls went up into Canada as a teacher, and through her influence several of her students have come here. Another who is a trained nurse, had charge of our hospital for a long time, but is now away down in New Mexico, in charge of nursing in a Government school. Another of our girls has taught for twelve years among other tribes and several others have worked among the more needy tribes, when there seemed no great need of them at home.

Some of our boys are working at their trades at home. One has been our blacksmith with a good shop of his own for years, and the others do what carpentry and painting they can though we are not large enough nor rich enough to support many tradesmen. Our engineers and machinists have to go out among the white people or to the large Indian schools to get work at their trades. One of our boys has been an engineer at a large Government school for ten or fifteen years.

During the last two or three years a great change has come over our people and it is not a change for the better. As a tribe we were protected in our rights to land and property. Lately these restrictions have been removed, and the white people have



rushed in upon us with money and liquor, and the weaker of our people have transferred their last foot of ground to the white people, and are now, not only paupers, but drunkards, dependent upon the tribe for support, or fleeing to their kinsfolk in Canada for help. Some of the better class have sold their uncultivated or surplus land and improved their homes with the money. But so many more have squandered their all in drink and foolish ways that the more thoughtful are watching the outcome with the deepest anxiety.

This summer the reservation was incorporated as a township and named Hobart after our good Bishop. The white people who have bought the Indians' land are coming in to live among us, and our schools must be shared with them. The saloon also has come, and with it a greater anxiety for our young people, and a greater responsibility for us who are educated, and stronger, to understand and to resist.

I went home last year and worked for four months as matron in the Government School. There I learned the great need of a more definite training and have come back to prepare myself for better work.