

LIFE AND LEGENDS
of the
IROQUOIS INDIANS

*A catalogue of an exhibit of
water colors painted by*

Ernest Smith
(Gaon-yaih)



Descriptions by
Arthur C. Parker, Director

**ROCHESTER MUSEUM
OF ARTS AND SCIENCES**

16. The Indian and the Pygmies

A wandering hunter found a band of starving pygmies (Jungaoh) to which he gave a squirrel. It was large enough to feed and to save all of them.

17. Learning Rituals from the Pygmies

In gratitude for the food supplied by the kind hunter, the pygmies taught him their magical rituals and told him how to organize a secret society that would insure good fortune and health.

18. The Thunder God and the Serpent

Discovering a Horned Serpent, the Thunder God drenches him with streams of lightning.

19. The Hail Spirit

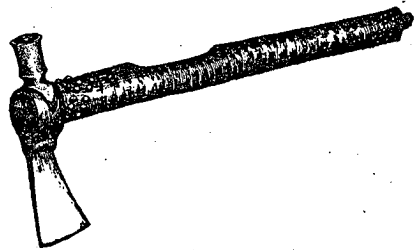
The Hail Spirit cannot be seen but he hurls his frozen pellets with devastating force. Hail storms do not last long because Hail Spirit's pot soon becomes empty.

20. Spring Overcomes Winter

Winter rules the earth until Spring comes and then there is a contest that lasts long and with intermittent success on the part of both. At length Spring throws a pot of blackberry juice upon the icy form of Winter and overcomes him. "There is no frost, no ice, no snow when the blackberry is in blossom."

21. Carrying Faggots

Women carried faggots from the edge of the forest to the hearth. Towns were called "Ganunda" or *hills*. Thus, the faggot gatherer often had to carry her load up the slopes of steep hills.



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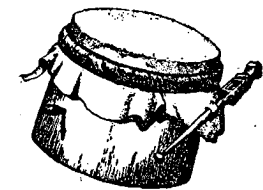
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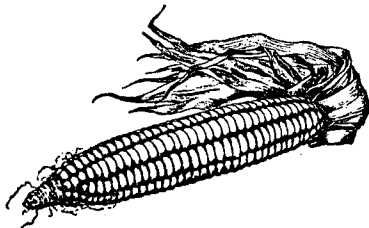
LIFE AND LEGENDS of the IROQUOIS INDIANS

AN exhibition of twenty water-colors depicting ceremonies, legends and crafts of the ancient Iroquois, interpreted by Ernest Smith of the Tonawanda Reservation. The Indian artist is self-taught. These paintings were completed during the past three years as a W.P.A. project maintained under the direction of the Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences.

Note that the costumes are typical of the period 1750-1850 and form the basis of the Iroquois dress today when costumes are ceremonially worn. Since the public is not acquainted with Iroquois dress, the Iroquois showmen most frequently wear the costumes of the Plains Indians.



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1. My Master Exhales Fire!

A legend tells of a faithful dog who, having noticed that his master breathed smoke and exhaled fire, told the prowling wolves and carnivora that enemies would be consumed should they attempt to injure him. While using this argument the dog was not quite sure that the fire and smoke would not burn his master.

2. Weaving a Basket of Ash Splints

Baskets were made in quantities by the Iroquois Indians who employed them as articles of trade. The picture shows the ash log, the beater which loosened the annular rings of the wood, the color pots and the basket in process. The log cabin in the background is typical.

3. Death March

Ceremonial dances to appease and to console the spirits of the dead were held upon stated occasions, women having a leading part in the rites.

4. Lunette

This lunette represents a mask with turtle shell rattles on either side, the belt (chain) of the friendly covenant above, surmounted by "sky domes" with the celestial and the terrestrial trees, above which is the sun. The artist designed this for an ornament over the council house door.

5. Mask (exhibited with lunette)

The healing mask has a legendary name which means "He-who-defends-them." It is believed to be a representation of a pre-human wind spirit whose services were enlisted by Hawenu (the Great Good Voice) for the service of mankind.

6. Washing Corn

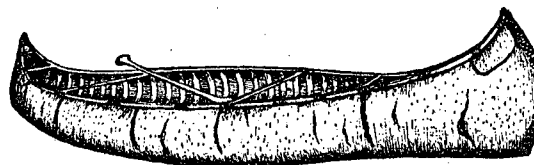
The white corn of the Iroquois was used for their hominy, their bread and their gruels. The hard, ripened kernels were boiled in a wood-ash solution until the hulls became loosened, when they were washed off in a special basket. To the Iroquois maize was a sacred plant which must be propitiated by ceremony and treated with respect.

7. The Gluttons (A legend)

Temperance in all things was an Iroquois principle. Gluttons were threatened with the appearance of Sadodawkwus, a lean ogre who spooned out their vitals and devoured them.

8. Two Women Carrying Water

Water was frequently carried for considerable distances in order to gain the real or assumed benefits of a favorite spring.



9. Heno, The Thunder God (A legend)

Heno, the thunder god was the enemy of evil spirits and of monsters for whom he had a special dislike. His flint-tipped arrows made the lightning, though at times it leaped from his eyes or throat; his voice was the thunder's roar.

10. The Flute Player (A legend)

The Iroquois flute was used for special occasions, among them for the charming of a maiden and the gaining of magical power and information. This picture represents an uncle playing at random in order to determine the fate of a favorite nephew. Legend tells that the flute began to speak of the nephew's peril.

11. The Sacrificed Maiden (A legend)

A captive maiden imprisoned upon a lonely island was rescued by the Horned Serpent who ordered her to direct him with a wisp of grass to prevent the Thunder God from hearing her voice or seeing him. Thunder hated the horned serpent.

12. The Hand of Scorn

Gossips who told artful lies about their acquaintances were visited by a flying hand of scorn, a mummified hand whose touch spelled death. The picture shows the hand warning a woman who had spoken evil of another.

13. The Eagle Charmer

The Iroquois trapped much of their game by means of covered pits. This picture shows the ceremonial trapping of a "sky eagle" by a medicine man who wishes its heart for the "Little Water Medicine," a magical compound. The eagle scenting the deer is charmed by the drumming of the medicine man and falls prostrate.

14. The Frost Spirit

The Frost Spirit is revealed when he strikes the trees with his war club. He is called Hah-t'ho, and his body is formed from clear ice. His breath forms the snapping winter mist when the temperature is below zero.

15. Stone Giant Woman (A legend)

There were both female and male giants, the most terrible being the Stone Giants. A boy, being pursued, tricked a giantess to lick his stone hatchet, thus giving it power. Escaping while she still pursued, he struck a rock with his now magic hatchet, splitting it open. The giantess not knowing that she, herself, had given the power, now thought the boy too strong to attack.

