

Yoder Collects Indian Artifacts

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"If we sell you our land, you must remember that the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also receives his last sigh.

"The white man must treat the beasts of the land as his brothers. I am a savage and I do not understand how the smoking iron horse can be more important than the buffalo that we kill only to stay alive. What is man without beasts? If all the beasts were gone, man would die from great loneliness of spirit. For whatever happens to the beasts, soon happens to man. All things are connected. Teach your children what we have taught our children, that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the

earth befalls the sons of the earth."

From a 1989 "Diary" article submitted by Dr. John A. Hostetler

MATTAWANA (Mifflin Co.)

— These American Indian words have echoed through every Indian artifact lecture that Jonas J. Yoder of Mattawana has ever delivered. In 1853, President Franklin Pierce heard these same words as part of the American Indian reply about the purchase of Indian territory by the white man.

Yoder, who taught school for 40 years and retired at age 59, lectured about his Indian artifact collection as a younger man. Now, at 86, he estimates his collection at more than 3,000 pieces, most found in Mifflin County. His collection was featured in the 1980 "Who's



Yoder, a former teacher, donated his collection so that many children would have the opportunity to see "pieces of history."

Indian's Response To The White Man's Quest For Land

An article in the April 1989 issue of the "DIARY" submitted by Dr. John A. Hostetler provides the Native American's point of view and frame of mind regarding land. It was based on a reply to President Franklin Pierce in 1853. It helps us to better understand the Indians' reaction to the coming encroachment of the white man.

"How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? Every part of the earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and every humming insect is holy in the memory of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man. Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the red man. We are part of the earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the flowers in the meadows, the body heat of the pony and man — all belong to the same family. The shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not just water but the blood of our ancestors. The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father.

The rivers are our brothers, they quench our thirst. The rivers carry our canoes, and feed our children. We know that the white man does not understand our ways. The earth is not his brother, but his enemy, and when he has conquered it, he moves on. He leaves his father's children and he does not care. His father's grave, and his children's birthright are forgotten. He treats his mother, the earth, and his brother the sky, as things to be bought, plundered, sold like sheep or bright beads. His appetite will devour the earth and leave behind only a desert.

I do not know. Our ways are different from your ways. The sight of your cities pains the red man's eyes. There is no quiet place in your cities. No place to hear the unfurling leaves in spring, or the rustle of an insect's wings. And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lonely cry of the whippoorwill or the arguments of the frogs around a pond at night? I am a red man and I do not understand.

The air is precious to the red man, for all things share the same breath — the beast, the tree, the man — they all share the same breath. The white man does not seem to notice the air he breathes. Like a man dying for many days, he is numb to the stench. If we sell you our land, you must remember that the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also receives his last sigh.

The white man must treat the beasts of the land as his brothers. I am a savage and I do not understand how the smoking iron horse can be more important than the buffalo that we kill only to stay alive. What is man without beasts? If all the beasts were gone, man would die from great loneliness of spirit. For whatever happens to the beasts, soon happens to man. All things are connected. Teach your children what we have taught our children, that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth.

Even to the white man, whose God walks and talks with him as friend to friend, cannot be exempt from the common destiny. We may be brothers after all. One thing we know, which the white man may one day discover — our God is the same God. You may think now that you own Him as you wish to own our land; but you cannot. His compassion is equal for the red man and the white. The earth is precious to Him, and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its creator. The whites too shall pass. Contaminate your bed, and you will one night suffocate in your own waste!

But in your perishing you will shine brightly, fired by the strength of God who brought you to this land and for some special purpose gave you dominion over this land and over the red men. That destiny is a mystery to us, for we do not understand when the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses are tamed, the secret corners of the forest heavy with the scent of many men, and the view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires. Where is the thicket? Gone. Where is the eagle? Gone. The end of living and the beginning of survival."

Who in Indian Relics #5" and he has exhibited his collection at Millersville State College and at the Lewistown Library.

He found his first piece, a six-inch stone knife, near Union Mills, Belleville, as a 12-year-old, and the bug bit as he put it.

"In 1972, after the flood, when the waters receded and the sun started to shine, I found 52 in one day," he states. Forty-two years ago, Yoder and his wife Estella moved from Belleville to a farm near McVeytown with fields along the Juniata River.

I never counted, but I donated the 1,008 arrowheads I found in Mifflin County to the Mennonite Heritage Center in Belleville so the youngsters can go and see, and I still have another 800 or so," he said.

And that's just arrowheads. He's also found grooved tomahawks, pestles of different shapes, children's toys such as stone eagles and stone boats, spuds (a stone tool used to peel bark off logs to make canoes), paint pots, and hammer stones. He's even found a vertebra impaled with the arrowhead intact.

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Homestead Notes



As part of his Indian artifact collection, Yoder has this 14-inch bowl that was chipped into a usable shape from one piece of stone. A farmer plowed it up in Centre County.



Jonas Yoder began collecting arrowheads when he was 12 years old. Now at 86 years old, Yoder has more than 3,000 Indian artifacts.