



THE STORY OF THE
BLACKFOOT INDIANS

A BRIEF HISTORICAL SKETCH OF
THE BLACKFOOT INDIAN NATION

BY

DR. CLAUDE E. SCHAEFFER

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THE BLACKFOOT INDIAN EDUCATIONAL PORTFOLIO

(SECOND EDITION)

The second edition of this unusual portfolio contains faithful, full-color reproductions of 24 famous Blackfoot Indian paintings by the late Winold Reiss, and an authentic account of the Blackfoot tribe written by Dr. Claude E. Schaeffer.

The Blackfoot reservation adjoins Glacier National Park in Montana, and each summer members of this proud tribe encamp at Glacier Park Station, the eastern entrance to the Park. They are exceedingly gracious to visitors as well as to artists and writers who visit the Park.

In Browning, Montana, headquarters of the Blackfoot Indian Agency, is the Museum of the Plains Indian. The museum, only a few miles from Glacier Park Station, includes dioramas depicting the early life of the Blackfoot.

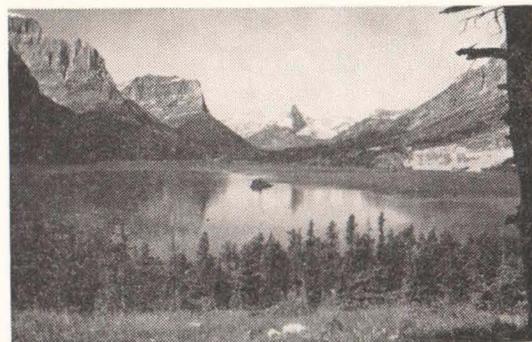
A great many inquiries are received both at the Park and the Blackfoot Agency for information and pictures. Art students, high school and college students, librarians, teachers . . . many, many people have said they would like to know the real story of the Blackfoot tribe. This portfolio was designed to meet these demands.

Enchanting Glacier National Park, which the government bought from the Blackfoot tribe in 1895-1896, became a National Park in 1910. It is one of the world's great attractions . . . a scenic wonderland that thrills many thousands of visitors annually.

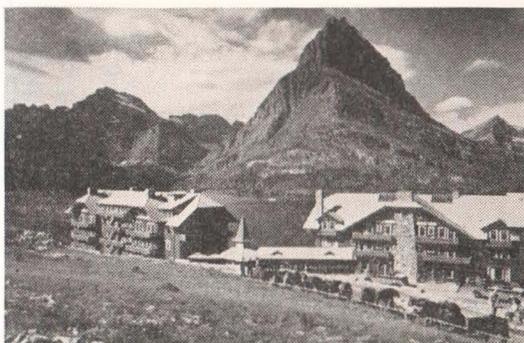
Blackfoot Indian portraits are from Great Northern Railway Company's collection of original Reiss paintings and were made available by Great Northern for reproduction in the second edition of this portfolio. It is dedicated to those who are interested in Glacier National Park and its neighboring Blackfoot Indians.



Blackfoot Indians in colorful native costumes meet Great Northern's streamliners and welcome visitors to Glacier National Park in the Montana Rockies.



Lofty mountains crown the beauty of Upper St. Mary Lake in Glacier National Park. St. Mary is considered to be one of the Park's most beautiful lakes.



Many Glacier Hotel, on Swiftcurrent Lake in the very heart of Glacier National Park, is the starting point for an endless variety of scenic enchantment for hikers and horseback riders.



Prince of Wales Hotel, in Canada's Waterton Lakes National Park, adjoins Glacier National Park in Montana to form Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park.

THE STORY OF THE BLACKFOOT INDIANS

THE BLACKFOOT INDIANS of the early 19th century have been well described as "the most potent and aggressive military power in the northwestern Plains." White trappers of the period were aware of this fact and only the most venturesome tempted Blackfoot war parties by entering their territory along the Upper Missouri. A century and a half, however, has changed all this. Today as one rides by Great Northern Streamliner or car through the Blackfoot Reservation en route to Glacier National Park, the descendants of those same warriors can be seen peacefully tending their cattle.

The Blackfoot tribes once claimed a vast area of land in what is now Montana and Alberta. Over a century ago their territory, bounded on the west by the Rocky Mountains, extended from the North Saskatchewan River to the headwaters of the Missouri and present Yellowstone National Park. This region which is twice the size of New England, is unparalleled in natural beauty. Forests of both conifers and deciduous trees extend from the lower slopes of the snow-covered mountains down into the valleys and along the streams. Berry bushes and edible plants occur in widespread abundance. Formerly the country teemed with game. There were mountain goat and bighorn in the high country, deer and elk in the valleys, antelope and most important of all—buffalo (bison) in vast herds on the grass-covered plains.

The three tribes of the Blackfoot Indians, the Piegan, the Blood and the Blackfoot proper formed, with their allies the Gros Ventre and Sarsi, a sort of loose confederacy. The Blackfoot groups spoke a common language — a dialect of Algonkian — shared the same customs, intermarried and often went to war against their common enemies. At the same time they were politically independent with each having its own chief and its own sun dance, the great, annual religious ceremony. The earlier home of the Blackfoot has not been definitely established but some students believe that they, like their linguistic cousins, the Arapaho and Gros Ventre, once lived far to the east, perhaps somewhere around Lake Winnipeg. Over the last two centuries they gradually moved south and west to their present territory in Alberta and Montana.

Prior to the introduction of the horse, the only domesticated animal of the Blackfoot was the dog. This animal was employed to transport the Indians' household equipment by means of a crude drag (travois) consisting of two poles strapped to the animal and dragging on the ground behind. Lacking boats the Blackfoot were forced to swim or wade across streams, towing their goods on crude rafts made of lodge covers and brush. The horse, of course, was unknown in the New World until brought here by the Spaniards. Once introduced in the Southwest it spread quickly, along with the Spanish riding gear, throughout the Plains and probably reached the Blackfoot around 1750. The strange, new animal soon supplanted the dog as the beast of burden and even the children became skilled equestrians. Thereafter the mobility of the Blackfoot greatly increased in hunting and warfare.

Formerly the Blackfoot practiced no agriculture, except to cultivate a little tobacco each year for ceremonial purposes. With the coming of the fur traders and their commercial tobacco, this custom was soon abandoned. The women gathered wild fruits and berries, collected edible plants and dug wild turnips and other roots. But the people subsisted largely upon the products of the chase and followed the life of nomadic hunters. Little or no use was made of fish, which were abundant in the plains' rivers. Supplies of dried buffalo meat were prepared in fall to last through the long, tedious winter spent in some protected spot along a stream. In summer the people moved frequently in pursuit of the buffalo herds.

The principal weapon of the hunt was the bow and arrow. The bow was usually of ash, sinew-backed and of the double-curve variety. It was about three feet long and equipped with a sinew string. Arrows were made of feathered shafts of serviceberry or willow, tipped with points of stone, bone or antler. The bow and arrows were carried in a quiver made of otter or cougar skin. Warriors, however, resorted to the use of the lance, war-club and knife, augmented by the round, buffalo-hide shield and, at times, hide armor.

The common and most productive method of hunting was the communal drive. This involved driving the herd of buffalo or antelope between two rows of shouting hunters converging towards a precipice, over which the stampeded animals plunged to their death. Less frequently the animals were impounded by driving them between converging lines of rock piles into corrals made of wooden posts. After the introduction of the horse these methods were abandoned in favor of the chase by mounted hunters.

The Blackfoot diet consisted largely of meat, especially that of the buffalo. Meat was prepared by boiling it in a paunch or in clay or rawhide vessels by means of hot rocks, broiling over coals or roasting on a spit or in a hole. Roots were baked or pit-roasted. Chokecherries were pulverized, dried and stored in bags. Buffalo meat was preserved by cutting it in long strips and drying it upon racks. It was then pulverized upon a rock, mixed with fat and berries and stuffed into hide bags. Such "pemmican" was highly nutritious and kept for long periods. Fire was generated by means of a wooden drill and transported in a buffalo horn fed with punk.

One of the most characteristic features of the nomadic Blackfoot tribes was the skin lodge. It was a conical structure consisting of four main poles of pine or spruce sloping inward and meeting near the top, about which were arranged in a circle a varying number of other poles. Over this was stretched the cover of dressed buffalo skins attractively decorated with figures of certain animals or birds, to which legend ascribed the lodge's origin. The cover was fastened to the ground with stakes or stones, and an aperture with adjustable flaps remained at the top as a smoke hole. A fire burned in the center of the lodge, around which the occupants reclined or slept on skins. Protection against cold drafts was provided by decorated leather linings affixed to the lower portion of the lodge poles.

The Blackfoot made no basketry, although they did weave crude fish traps and backrests of willow rods. Bags and pouches were made of skin. Cooking vessels were fashioned from a paunch, a hide, or a crude undecorated variety of pottery. Food was served in receptacles of wood, horn and skin. Spoons were made of buffalo or

mountain sheep horn. Native tools included hafted stone hammers and mauls, antler wedges, awls and scrapers of bone, knives of chipped stone and elk antler drills.

The clothing of the Blackfoot was made from the skins of deer, elk, mountain sheep, antelope and buffalo. Men wore a breechclout, leggings extending to the hip and a fringed shirt ornamented with trophies and decorative bands over the shoulders and down the sleeves. Women wore knee-length leggings and a sleeveless dress extending to the ankle, provided with cape-like shoulder pieces falling loosely over the arms. Both men and women wore robes made of buffalo skins and moccasins with hard soles. Men reserved their full costume for winter use, wearing little more than the breechclout and moccasins in summer. On special occasions they donned the feather headdress. Children sported small replicas of their parents' costumes but more often wore little or no clothing.

Long ago Blackfoot women did not devote much care to dressing the hair. In recent years, however, girls and matrons have worn it in two braids; old women hanging loose, confined by a band above the forehead. In either case it is carefully parted in the middle. Men, in contrast, seem to have given considerable attention to their hair. Formerly the young men often wore a lock of hair down over the forehead to the tip of the nose. Others braided it into a long queue behind. The medicine-pipe men rolled their long hair up into a thick knot, which was secured with clay to lie above the forehead. Nowadays the old men continue to wear their hair in braids, which are carefully tended. Many older men and women still paint the face, usually with red earth pigment, while some women use it to trace the part of the hair. Formerly the face and arms of both men and women were occasionally tattooed with simple designs. For ornament the Blackfoot wear earrings of bone or shell, and necklaces of bear claws and bone beads.

The Blackfoot ornamented various articles of household or personal use by incising, painting and embroidery with porcupine quills, or later, glass beads. As a general rule women used geometric designs and painted them upon robes, lodge linings and rawhide containers; men painted animal and human forms upon their shields and drums, religious symbols upon their lodge covers and covered their robes with picture writings extolling their war deeds. Quill and beadwork were done in geometric designs upon various articles of clothing.

In the division of labor the men hunted, fought, cared for the herds and made weapons. It was considered a disgrace for a man to carry wood or water, put up a lodge pole, use a travois or cook food at home. These tasks were performed by the women, who also dressed the skins, made their own clothes and most of those used by men. They made most of their own utensils and gathered wild roots and berries. While the men usually did the butchering, the meat on arriving at the lodge became the property of the women.

The three Blackfoot tribes were each divided into a number of social units, called bands, which were named after some peculiarity common to the group as a whole. Among the band names of the Piegan were Lone-fighters, Don't-laugh, Black-patched-moccasin, etc. Long ago it apparently was forbidden to marry within one's band, but this ban has been relaxed for many years. A wife was considered to belong to her husband's band as were the couple's children. At times, however, a man would

join his wife's band, providing the material and social advantages were greater there. In winter the bands scattered out for economic reasons but came together in summer to hunt and trade. At this time they camped in a definite order in the camp circle.

In each Blackfoot band there were a number of head men who achieved their status by entertaining well, relieving the wants of the poor and performing brave deeds in war. The head men were expected to preserve peace within the band. Should a dispute arise between band members, one or more of them stepped in as arbiters or even police officials, if the occasion required. In the adjustment of such cases the head men proceeded by tact and persuasion. For persistent misconduct a method of formal public ridicule initiated by the head men was usually sufficient to bring the offender to terms. In case of trouble between members of different bands, the head men of each band attempted to bring about a settlement. One of the ablest among the head men came to be regarded as the band chief. Such a chief, who acted as spokesman for the head men in council, rarely ventured to act without their approval. Similarly, there was a head chief for each of the Blackfoot tribes, whose main function was to summon the tribal council.

In the large summer camps the men's societies were subject to the orders of the head chief and on such occasions seem to have exercised the functions of the head men of the bands. When such camps were formed the head men of the bands were merged into a council and the societies became their executive and police agents under direction of the head chief. When there was danger certain societies were detailed to guard duty, especially at night. As the chief aim of a summer camp was to hunt buffalo, and the success of a general hunt depended upon individual cooperation, the discipline was devised to that end. The head chief gave out orders for making and breaking camp, and rules and punishments were announced. Thus a man found running buffalo without orders might have his clothes torn off, be deprived of his arms and his horse's ears and tail cropped. Should he resist, he might be quirted and his hair cropped. His lodge and personal property might be destroyed. However, these were extreme measures, it being regarded as best to get along by persuading wrong-doers to desist.

Girls were closely watched among the Blackfoot and were usually married soon after puberty. Young men, unless they had distinguished war records, were not permitted to marry until some years later. It was customary for young men to wait along the paths leading to water or wood-gathering places in order to talk with their sweethearts. Such casual acquaintances sometimes led to permanent unions — the girl simply accompanying her lover to his parents' lodge. Usually, however, negotiations were carried on between the fathers of the couple or between the father and his prospective son-in-law. If successful, the next step was the exchange of presents, inasmuch as the preferred mode of marriage was by purchase. Thus the bridegroom was expected to give horses and other gifts to the bride's parents, and though presents were often sent with the bride the bridegroom must return at least twofold.

The formal marriage ceremony was simple—the couple taking their proper places in the lodge and assuming immediately their domestic life. There were no restrictions as to the number of wives a man might have. Economic conditions were such, however, that many men kept but a single wife and few ventured to support as many as

five. Normally the first wife was the real or head wife ("she who sits beside him"). The sisters of a wife were spoken of as "distant wives." If a man proved to be a good husband, he might be given the "distant wives" in turn, though there was no compulsion.

A mutual taboo of avoidance existed between a man and his mother-in-law. He could not look at her or even speak to her. The same restriction was binding upon her. Each was warned by a third person if about to enter a lodge where the other was present. If either offended, he or she must make a small present to the other. There were socially accepted ways, however, to remove the taboo.

Practically all relatives by marriage among the Blackfoot were forbidden the least reference to sexual matters. Thus a man would not relate obscene tales of Old Man, etc. in the presence of his brothers-in-law nor their immediate relatives. A curious exception to the above was that a man and his "distant wives" were expected to engage in bold and obscene jests about sexual matters. It would seem as though these women were thus placed in the category of real wives.

Divorce apparently was uncommon as it was looked upon not only as disgraceful but expensive. The chief grounds for divorce from the man's standpoint were laziness and adultery. For these or other causes a man could turn out his wife, who then returned to her relatives until another marriage could be arranged. In the latter event, particularly, the man demanded return of the property given for her at marriage. A woman in the case of cruelty or neglect might abandon her husband. The latter's family opened negotiations and attempted to bring about a reconciliation. The wife either agreed to another trial or could seek another husband.

Before childbirth the prospective mother dressed in old clothes and discarded her bracelets and other metal ornaments. As the hour drew nigh she retired to a lodge somewhat apart and was attended by other women. Sometimes a medicine woman was called, who usually administered medicines supposed to assist delivery. The patient held to a pole of the lodge, an attendant grasping her around the waist. When delivered she was laced up with a piece of skin as a support. Men avoided the birth lodge for a time so as not to weaken their medicine and war powers. The father could enter, but at some risk. The newborn baby was rubbed with grease and red paint and wrapped in a soft skin. Later it was laced within a baby carrier — a tapered skin-covered board with a round, beaded top. Parents never beat their children, but punished them infrequently by a dash of cold water or a forced plunge.

When the child was several weeks old, its father selected and paid some prominent person, usually a man, to give it a name. The namer asked to have a sweat house built, which he entered often in company with the father and his friends. Prayers were there offered by the namer. The name conferred may have been based upon a valorous deed of the namer, such as Takes The Shield, or it could have been that of some long dead person of great distinction, such as Little Dog. It was believed that the name carried with it some power to promote the well being of the child upon whom it was bestowed. Thus if the child turned out to be sickly, its name was changed. Men often assumed new names, usually in commemoration of some worthy deed. Nicknames, often of a derogatory nature, were frequently given and often superseded the true name.

Adoption was quite prevalent among the Blackfoot and was marked by a simple ceremony. Persons of any age or nationality could be adopted into a family. Formerly a man losing a son might adopt a young man from his own or other bands, or even a captive to fill the vacant place. From the first, children were taught to respect all the taboos of the family medicine bundles. Boys were taught by their fathers to shoot the bow and arrow, to hunt and to ride and care for the herds. Girls at an early age were taught their household duties by mothers and grandmothers. Friendships often developed among the boys as intimate as relations between brothers, and lasted into adult years. There seemed to have been no ceremonies at puberty for either sex.

Children enjoyed a great many games similar to those of white children. Among these were tag, hide-and-seek, jump-the-rope, stilt-walking, hobbyhorse, coasting, ball games, racing and shooting contests. Playing for stakes was a favorite exercise among men, especially in connection with the hand game. This was played with two marked sticks or bones. The contestants were divided into two sides, each of which encouraged its players with songs and drumming. Two men hid the sticks in their hands and one of the opposite side guessed where they were. For a wrong guess the side surrendered a tally stick. When all the counters were lost, so was the game. Horses, guns, robes, etc. were wagered on the outcome.

When all hope for a sick person was given up, he was painted and dressed in his best costume. Formerly, when a person died in the skin lodge, it was used as a burial lodge or else abandoned, as the Blackfoot believe the ghost of the deceased haunts the spot. Now, one near death is occasionally taken from a house to a lodge, so that it may not be necessary to tear down the building. After death the body was formerly wrapped in a blanket or robe and within a few hours was placed upon a scaffold within a tree or upon a hill. Now the Blackfoot bury their dead in the ground. Weapons and pipes were buried with warriors; root-diggers and cooking utensils with women. At death there was great mourning among the women, who gashed their legs and often their arms. Their hair was cut short, a practice often followed by the men.

The earlier Blackfoot believed that the deceased's ghost travelled to the spirit world, called the Sand Hills. There the dead were said to live like human beings, have lodges, horses and other possessions. Everything that had been buried with a person was taken to the Sand Hills. In former times it was customary to bury the dead with plenty so that the ghost would not be in need later. Ghosts are still much feared by the Blackfoot.

The Blackfoot appear to have had a vague belief in a controlling spiritual power pervading the entire universe. This power was manifested in a wide range of natural phenomena, including animals, birds, rocks, trees, mountains, streams, etc. Many of these spirits, particularly birds and animals, appeared to men in visions or dreams and became their guardians, assuring their success in life. Certain spiritual beings, such as the Thunder, the Moon and the Morningstar assumed greater prominence than others. Above all, however, stood the Sun as the greatest and most universal power. The giving of pieces of cloth or, in fact, any object to the Sun was a common religious duty. Such objects were placed upon hills or hung in trees after formally announcing the offering, singing the Sun-offering songs, and performing other rites. From another aspect, however, the Sun represented a personal god with the Moon

for a wife and the Morningstar for a son.

It was the aim of every Blackfoot to establish relationship with this divine power of the universe. Native belief held that if one followed the correct formula, the power would appear in some human or animal form and make a compact with the individual for good fortune during his lifetime. Usually a youth put himself in the hands of a native priest, who instructed him to pray and fast in a solitary spot until a dream or vision was obtained. This experience resulted in the conferring of one or more songs, the imposition of certain taboos and the designation of an object such as a feather, shell, skin, etc. to be carried and used as a charm. The Blackfoot made extraordinary use of these charms or tokens—several of which formed a little medicine bundle. A man rarely engaged in any serious undertaking without carrying and appealing to these spiritual tokens.

In addition to these small, personal charms, there were more pretentious bundles of sacred objects, which were seldom opened and only used upon certain solemn occasions. The best known of this type, perhaps, was the Medicine-pipe bundle, which was opened at the sound of the first thunder in spring. Even larger and equally as important was the Beaver bundle, which appears to have been associated with tobacco planting and the calling of buffalo. Painted lodges, decorated with revealed designs, were each associated with distinct rituals and a bundle with accessories. Sacred shields, ornamented according to visionary instructions, provided supernatural protection in battle. Men's headdresses and costumes of unusual types, as well as unique types of weapons, also acquired the status of medicine bundles. A special development characteristic of the Blackfoot was the buying and selling of these bundles by individuals at handsome sums. Much of the social life of these people centered about the transfer of these spiritual properties, with the appropriate songs, prayers, dances, feasts, etc.

The Sun Dance was the most important ceremony among the Blackfoot. It was held nearly every year in August for a period of from seven to ten days. The performance was initiated by a woman who vowed to give it as a sacrifice in return for a heeded prayer in time of great danger. During several days of preliminary observances the people moved in stages to the sun dance site, the sacred woman began her fast, the buffalo tongues were cut, and each day the hundred willow sweathouse was built. On the fifth day the sun pole was erected, the dance lodge built, the sun dance bundle opened, prayers and offerings made to the sun, the virtuous women made their declarations and the sacred woman concluded her fast. The concluding period was devoted to the rites of the weather dancers, the dancing of the societies, the blessing of the medicine pipes and finally, the breaking of camp.

The Blackfoot medicine men or shamans were simply those men and women who had received important visions and exhibited the supernatural power thus acquired. Some were thought to have been invulnerable, or at least, to have possessed unusual ability to recover from wounds. Many were skilled in sleight of hand and used this ability to impress people. In general, their powers and functions differed according to their visions. Some, skilled in charming animals, directed hunting drives; others, with special powers for raiding and warfare, were much sought after by youths anxious to distinguish themselves. Still others specialized in divination and prophecy.

Certain shamans devoted themselves to the curing of disease. The common modes of treatment included hot applications, bleeding, poultices, lancing and sucking out the offending cause through a reed. Disease was attributed to the malevolent act of a ghost or the violation of a taboo.

Among the Plains Indians, as we have noted, important regulative duties were exercised by certain men's societies partly military and partly social in character. For the Blackfoot and several other tribes the societies were arranged in series so that ordinarily a man passed from one to the other in order, thus automatically grouping the members according to age. The functions of the "all-comrades," as they were called, were primarily to preserve order in camp, on the march and during the hunt; to punish offenders against the public welfare; to protect the camp by guarding against enemy surprise; to be informed as to the movements of buffalo and, secondarily to cultivate the military spirit by inter-society rivalry, and by their feasts and dances to provide social recreation. In addition, ritualistic performances of those societies comprising elderly men seemed to have been, in part, religious ceremonies.

Hostile relations between the Blackfoot and their enemies were largely initiated and maintained by unceasing raids made by one upon the other for horses and other spoils of war. The traditional enemies of the Blackfoot were the Crow and Shoshoni to the south, the Assiniboine and Cree to the east and several Plateau tribes, which crossed the Rockies to hunt buffalo upon the plains. Among the Blackfoot, as among other Plains tribes, individual prestige was largely based upon war exploits. Further, these exploits were arranged in order of importance according to a conventional standard. Thus first to touch an enemy — the most important feat among the Crow — was subordinate among the Blackfoot to the capture of his weapons, horses or ceremonial equipment. Similarly, taking the life of a foeman was less important than seizing his gun. Any Blackfoot who performed a sufficient number of these recognized deeds was signalled out, as we have mentioned, for special honors. He might be called upon to name a child, as well as perform special services in ritualistic and social affairs. For these he would usually receive gifts.

Among the Blackfoot, raids on enemy camps were made either to secure 1) horses and other forms of wealth, or for 2) killing and taking scalps for reasons of revenge. Although one type of raid differed in detail from the other, here we shall describe the horse raid. The leader of the raiding party was usually an experienced man, whose past success in capturing horses and returning without loss of party members inspired confidence. Usually such a warrior would organize a raiding party and invite his friends to accompany him. Most parties consisted of from 4 to 12 men, most of whom were poor youths who wished to advance themselves socially and materially. Not only the leader but each raider carried his own war medicine to protect him from harm and insure good fortune in his dangerous undertaking. The warrior's weapons consisted of bows and arrows and guns and knives. Scouts, wearing skins of wolves, explored the country ahead of the raiding party. Upon locating the enemy camp, they determined its size, number of horses, etc. and returned to their party with the news. Guided by the scouts, the party travelled by night until they reached a well concealed position overlooking the camp. Usually the raid for horses was made at daybreak by the bravest and most experienced warriors. They

cut loose the choice picketed horses and stealthily led them and the loose horses from camp. It was not unusual for a successful raiding party to thus take as many as 40 to 60 horses on a single raid.

The return homeward was made at a much faster pace than the advance. A quick getaway was necessary if the raiders were to escape with their spoils. For the first 2 or 3 days and nights the raiders rode steadily, switching from one mount to another as their horses tired. At the first resting place after leaving the enemy camp the captured horses were distributed among the party. This was the responsibility of the leader, who tried to make the distribution as equitable as possible. Upon nearing the home camp, the raiders, if successful, stopped, painted themselves, decorated their horses and moved towards camp, shooting in the air to announce their return. All the people of the camp came out to greet them. It was customary for successful raiders to present horses to friends and relatives at this time. Such generosity was considered praiseworthy and a step toward band or tribal leadership.

By a series of treaties with the United States beginning in 1855, the Montana Blackfoot (Piegan) relinquished all their lands except for their present reservation, where they have continued to reside. The disappearance of the buffalo around 1880 deprived them not only of their primary food supply but also of their principal source of clothing, shelter and utensils. As the result of war, disease and starvation their numbers were reduced in 1885 to 2000. For several decades thereafter they were to undergo a very serious period of adjustment.

In succeeding years, however, the condition of the Piegan has greatly improved. To support themselves they turned largely to farming and cattle raising on the reservation. Their population increased rapidly, until it has reached 7200 in 1957. Most of the Blackfoot now speak English, with the native language being preserved only among the older Indians. The skin lodge has been replaced by the frame or log house. The Piegan today dress much as people in other rural communities, with the old style buckskin garments reserved for ceremonial wear. All Indian children now attend public schools on the reservation. The title of "chief" no longer carries with it any authority, while the council of head men has given way to the modern Tribal Council, composed of thirteen elected officials. And most other phases of the old life are now but memories in the minds of elderly Blackfoot.

WINOLD REISS

The late Winold Reiss long ago dedicated his artistic talents to creating an authentic pictorial epic of the North American Indian. The hundreds of unique and colorful portraits of the Blackfoot and other Indians, which he produced during his distinguished career, present a masterful saga of the proud race. His intense interest in racial type and character and his un-failing eye for the decorative aspects of his subjects, are manifest in every one of his paintings and pastels.

Indianologists have commended the Reiss studies of the aborigines for their ethnological accuracy and the knowledge of custom and folklore which they display.

Born in the Black Forest of Germany, young Winold received his early art training from his father, Fritz Reiss, a well-known painter of the day. In common with many other German boys whose imaginations had been stirred by the translations of the James Fenimore Cooper novels, the lad became deeply interested in the Indians of North America. To paint them became his ambition.

Emigrating to America in 1913, Reiss introduced to his adopted country a modern style of decorative art which, although widely accepted on the Continent, was virtually unknown in the United States. Eventually, many who sought modern decorative art which also carried an authentic American note, commissioned him to carry out their ideas. The Crillon Restaurant, which he decorated in 1920, was the first large scale demonstration of the decorative possibilities of the newly-introduced art form. Since that time, Mr. Reiss became one of the outstanding pioneers in the introduction and popularizing of the modern decor which harmonized so perfectly with American architecture and taste.

Mr. Reiss' first Blackfoot portraits were painted in the winter of 1919, the year in which he was inducted into the tribe and given the name Beaver Child. Year after year thereafter, the artist returned to the reservation or to adjoining Glacier National Park in the Montana Rockies to paint his favorite subjects. A prolific worker, he painted hundreds of strikingly realistic Indian portraits during his great career. He conducted a summer art school in Glacier National Park for several years during the 1930's.

In the summer of 1943, during a three-month period, he painted 75 portraits.

To make his headquarters nearer the life and the people he loved and admired, Mr. Reiss moved from the East to Carson City, Nevada, but before he could settle in his new home, he died on August 29, 1953. With appropriate ceremony, the ashes of Beaver Child were scattered by his friend Bull Child on Blackfoot lands near his beloved Glacier National Park.

The Reiss Blackfoot portraits have become universally known through the attractive calendars annually published and distributed by Great Northern Railway since 1928.

DR. CLAUDE E. SCHAEFFER

Dr. Schaeffer's professional work in the American Indian field began over 25 years ago, when, while taking graduate training in anthropology, he carried on studies of the aboriginal life of the Flathead and Kutenai Indians of Montana.

In 1935-36 while in the service of the United States Office of Indian Affairs, he observed at first hand the establishment and progress of tribal self-government among the Confederated Flat-head tribes.

He was employed for a number of years by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, and there had an opportunity to become acquainted with the Seneca and other tribes of the Atlantic states. He left Pennsylvania to become director of the Museum of the Plains Indian at Browning, Montana.

During seven years residence on the Blackfoot reservation, Dr. Schaeffer's curatorial duties brought him into frequent and friendly contact with many of the subjects of Winold Reiss' paintings.

He has published a number of studies on the Kutenai, Black-foot and other Indian tribes of the United States.

Dr. Schaeffer left Montana in 1954 and is the present curator of the Oregon Historical Society in Portland. He holds degrees from the universities of Washington and Pennsylvania.

"The present account of Blackfoot life," Dr. Schaeffer writes, "is based largely upon the studies of Wissler, McClintock and others. With the passing in recent years of the few surviving Indians who once hunted the buffalo, we must turn increasingly to the writings of these earlier observers for our knowledge of Blackfoot life and history. The loss of the elderly Blackfoot is no small one."

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Selected References on the Blackfoot Indians

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