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## Article Title: Angel DeCora: American Indian Artist and Educator

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Article Summary: Angel DeCora (1871-1919) was separated from her family and Winnebago tribal artistic heritages at an early age. She adopted western media for her work but retained subject matter which was considered "Indian."

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Photographs / Images: Angel DeCora about 1906; Portrait of Indian woman by DeCora, probably about 1897 [courtesy of Hampton Institute Archives]; Illustration from "The Sick Child" written and illustrated by DeCora, 1899; Dancing Girls from "Gray Wolf's Daughter," written and illustrated by DeCora; The Indian Nurse, color cover design by DeCora for *The Red Man*, September 1913; "The Indian Today" black and white illustration by DeCora from Judd's *Wigwam Stories*; Illustration by DeCora from *Yellow Star* by Elaine Goodale Eastman; The Winnebago title page designed by DeCora for the *Indian's Book* by Natalie Curtis; First page of Eastman's *The American Eagle, an Indian Symbol*, with illustrations by DeCora

\*\*A Chronology of Angel DeCora is presented on pages 192-196\*\*



*Angel DeCora, Winnebago artist and educator (taken about 1906 at Carlisle Indian School, Carlisle, Pennsylvania).*

**ANGEL DeCORA:  
AMERICAN INDIAN ARTIST AND EDUCATOR**

*By Sarah McAnulty*

Angel DeCora does not fit the stereotyped image of an Indian artist. She was not a beadworker living on the Plains of the United States rendering repetitive, geometric designs onto animal-hide backgrounds, nor was she for most of her life a reservation Indian "discovered" to have artistic talent by a kindly white trader. She was separated from her family and tribal artistic heritages at an early age and educated by white men to become a successful member of the dominant society. She adopted western media for her work as an artist but retained subject matter which was considered "Indian." This combination of elements in her work caused a tension which is evident both in many of her pieces and in her attitude toward her profession.

Angel DeCora was born in a wigwam on the Winnebago reservation in Dakota (today Thurston) County, Nebraska, on May 3, 1871. She was by ancestry part Winnebago Indian and part French. Her Indian name was *Hinook-Mahiwi-Kilinaka* which means alternatively "Fleecy Cloud Floating in Place" or "Woman Coming on the Clouds in Glory" and roughly translates into the English "Angel." Throughout her career she often signed her art work "Angel DeCora."

The DeCora family was of some note among the Winnebago. Angel's grandfather, chief of the Winnebago, was known as Little DeCora among whites and was friendly with the white settlers. When a government attempt to allot Minnesota land to

the Winnebago was disrupted by a Sioux outbreak in 1862, he restrained his tribesmen from joining in the upheaval. Later, part of the tribe was removed from Wisconsin and Minnesota, first to South Dakota and finally to Nebraska. Little DeCora was a leader of the Nebraska segment and remained so until his death at the age of 90 in 1887.

David (Tall) DeCora was Angel's father and the fourth son of Little DeCora. He died in July of 1888, never having achieved the leading role in the tribe that was his by birthright. Her mother was a member of the LaMere family, also prominent among the Winnebago, and had been educated at a convent. After the death of both her parents in the late 1880's, Angel was watched over by her uncle who was a LaMere. Because of her family's prominence and education, Angel DeCora's inheritance was more complex than that of many Indian children.

Angel DeCora had a younger sister, Julia DeCora Lukehart, who, like Angel, attended the Hampton Institute in Virginia. She was a source for information on the DeCora family collected by Thomas Hughes in 1927 for his publication, *Indian Chiefs of Southern Minnesota: Containing Sketches of the Prominent Chieftains of the Dakota and Winnebago Tribes from 1825 to 1865*.<sup>1</sup>

Oliver LaMere, Angel DeCora's cousin, wrote several books and articles concerning Winnebago mythology and legends, including *Winnebago Stories* published in 1928. His article, "Winnebago Legends—the Thunder, the Eagle, and War Clans," was published in *The Wisconsin Archaeologist* of 1922. During his career he was an interpreter, a Winnebago tribal councilman, and vice president of the Grand Council of North American Indians. He was also a member of the Society of American Indians, as was Angel, and came to know and admire her in that context. On the occasion of her death in 1919, he prepared a memorial calendar in her honor.

At the time of Angel DeCora's birth, some of the Winnebago were being resettled in unfamiliar territory; for this reason she may have observed only a few of the older crafts or traditional ceremonies during her childhood. She may have witnessed some of the "old ways," for she wrote of a traditional dance ceremony in "Grey Wolf's Daughter," a story published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1899.<sup>2</sup> She also wrote of a healing or

medicine ceremony in the story "The Sick Child," also published in an 1899 issue of *Harper's*.<sup>3</sup> In a brief autobiography published in the Carlisle Indian School journal, *The Red Man*, she described herself as "a well-counseled Indian child, rather reserved, respectful and mild in manner."<sup>4</sup>

She was enrolled in a reservation school in November, 1883, when Julia St. Cyr, an older Winnebago acting as agent for the Hampton Institute in Virginia, convinced her parents to allow her to go East to the Institute. At the age of 12, Angel DeCora and six other children, boys and girls, traveled for three days and nights by train and arrived in the strange, new world of the Hampton Institute.

In the autobiographical story "Grey Wolf's Daughter," written and illustrated by Angel DeCora in 1899, she records some of the apprehensions that she felt at leaving her family and tribal traditions for the school which was to be her home for the next eight years:

Her mind had been wandering here and there to this and that one of her associates—to one who had been to school, to another who had staid at home and was a thorough Indian, comparing the life of one with the life of the other.

She herself had for a long time desired knowledge of the white man's ways, and now her family had given their consent to her going to school. Tomorrow was to be the first day of a new life in the boarding school.<sup>5</sup>

This statement demonstrates a positive attitude toward education which is not commonly reported in studies of the Indian experience of accommodation.

Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute is located in southeastern Virginia near Norfolk. It was created originally for the education of Negroes, but in 1878 seventeen Indians were admitted to the school, all former Plains warriors who had been captured several years earlier and held as prisoners of the U.S. Department of War at Fort Marion, Florida. They were placed at Hampton through the efforts of Colonel Richard Henry Pratt, who believed that education could transform fierce and angry warriors into "useful and law-abiding citizens."

This was Pratt's first attempt to secure educational opportunities for Indians. He continued his efforts, and founded the Carlisle Indian School at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in 1879. Because the first group of Indian warrior-students were successfully taught the basic tools for survival in the white world, Pratt was able to convince, though not without difficulty,

Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz and Commissioner of Indian Affairs Ezra Hayt to allow small groups of Indian children to be brought to Hampton for training. These groups included Indian girls as well as boys because Pratt believed that "without educated women there is no civilization."<sup>6</sup>

The courses taught to the Indians enrolled at Hampton were basic. Many of the young people did not speak English when they arrived, so teaching them the language was first. The school stressed Christian character building, and according to Elaine Goodale Eastman, "Hampton constantly emphasized training for leadership and the service motive, inspiring the humblest of its children to go back and help their people toward the light."<sup>7</sup> They were also taught the manual arts, such as woodworking, smithing, shoemaking, printing, tailoring, and the like.

Cora Folsom, a Hampton teacher and correspondent for the Indians who followed Angel's career at Hampton with a great deal of interest, described her nature as a child. She said that Angel "was brought to Hampton with practically no education and very few words of the English language. She was pretty, bright, and affectionate, painfully shy and scarcely able to endure the sound of her own voice in the classroom."<sup>8</sup>

It was at Hampton that Angel first showed ability in art and music. Reports of those who knew her at this early date indicate that her interest in the arts arose spontaneously, although her teachers did not discourage it. A water-color sketch of an Indian encampment found in the Hampton Institute archives was probably made when she was a teenager. It is marked on the back as a gift to Cora Folsom. The artistic difficulties evident in the picture, such as the awkward modelling and simplistic perspective, place it as an early effort of an art student. It may picture the most direct memories which she had of her childhood.

It is difficult to determine if there was a particular art teacher at Hampton who took an interest in Angel DeCora as an artist. The fact that many of the original seventeen Hampton Indian "boys" were artists who, at Fort Marion drew pictures of their exploits, may have influenced Hampton teachers to be especially attuned and sympathetic to the artistic tendencies of their students.

Angel remained at Hampton for five years, and then was sent

to Nebraska in response to a government regulation which required Indian students at boarding schools to return home after an allotted five years. Both her father and grandfather died during her stay at home, and so it may have been a difficult time for the 16-year-old girl. She reported in her autobiographical sketch that upon her return to the reservation the old way of life was gone. She was unable to cope with the disintegration of her family. Cora Folsom stated:

A representative from Hampton found her living with her grandmother and very unhappily situated. Old and new customs were at that time strongly conflicting currents, and a young girl had hardly more weight than a leaf between them. It was not easy to get her out from the stronger of these two currents, but it was accomplished and she was brought back to Hampton.<sup>9</sup>

She returned to Hampton in the fall of 1888 and remained there until her graduation in 1891. In this she was exceptional, for few of the Indians then actually completed the course.

Because DeCora had shown talent in music and art, the principals of Hampton decided to sponsor her in a course of musical study at Miss Burnham's School at Northhampton, Massachusetts. It became obvious during her short stay at this school, however, that "her special talent lay in her pencil and brush."<sup>10</sup>

She began her career as an artist when she entered the art department of Smith College in 1892. She earned her college tuition by acting as custodian for the Smith Museum. At Hampton, Angel had been isolated from the mainstream of art education, but at Smith she was introduced to one of the more successful American artists of her day, Dwight Tryon. None of her contacts in the art world were to be of a particularly avant garde variety (i.e., French impressionism, art nouveau, or cubism), but rather were based in the academic traditions of the Barbizon school, American Romantic-Realism, and American Impressionism as seen in the work of her teachers, Dwight Tryon, Edmund C. Tarbell, Frank Benson, and Howard Pyle.

It is difficult to assess which aspects of her Smith art education she immediately adopted and which she rejected because few if any of her works from this period (1892-1896) have been preserved. Only one painting possibly dates from this time, and that is a watercolor sketch. It is necessary, therefore, to judge her adherence to Tryon's style and methods through a retrospective comparison of her later illustrations and Tryon's work.

Dwight Tryon (1849-1925) was a well-known American landscape painter. In the 1870's he participated in several major American exhibitions. In 1885 he began teaching at Smith College and held this position for thirty-eight years. He had studied in Europe from 1877 to 1881 with de la Chevreusse, Daubigny, Harpignies, and Guillemet. Even though the Impressionist movement influenced artists in Paris during his tenure in Europe, he conservatively chose to follow in the footsteps of the earlier Barbizon School.

Tryon's paintings are mood-pieces. According to Nelson C. White: "The great body of Tryon's art is, in its entirety, a chorus in praise of nature. His paintings are the impressions and reflections of the changing seasons and the subtle movement of time from dawn to night."<sup>11</sup> He painted trees, boats, waves, and other elements of nature in a tonal manner. He suggests the form of these things rather than delineating them with sharp, crisp lines.

Tryon influenced Angel DeCora when she was a student. She said, "The instruction I received and the influence I gained from Mr. Tryon has left a lasting impression on me."<sup>12</sup> Her tendency to silhouette figures of people or buildings on a horizontal picture plane with a darkened foreground and a softly lighted background may be a technique learned from Tryon. She probably also gained a broad knowledge of art history from him since his philosophy was that "theory and practice should go hand in hand."<sup>13</sup> In spite of strictness in the classroom at Smith and a well-organized course of drawing from casts, from the model, and from still life, Tryon produced few professional women artists. This may be partially a consequence of his attitude that through his students "as wives and mothers, 'society might be humanized.'"<sup>14</sup> In addition, the fact that society did not encourage women to become professionals in any field made DeCora's efforts all the more adventuresome. She was one of the few of his students who persevered in her attempts to become a professional artist.

Angel remained a reserved personality while at Smith (1892-1896). It is recorded that "her retiring nature added to the difficulty of knowing her."<sup>15</sup> She was in an ambivalent situation at Smith. She was seen as both a typical college girl of the period and as an archetypical Indian princess or queen of the forest,



*Figure 1. Portrait of Indian woman by DeCora, probably made at Fort Berthold in 1897. (Hampton Institute Archives.)*

similar in concept to Longfellow's Nokomis. On the one hand she was encouraged by teachers and others to integrate and forget her "Indianness," and on the other hand her race and achievements made her the object of fellow students' curiosity and admiration.

Upon graduation from Smith in 1896 she went to Philadelphia and the Drexel Institute for further training. Drexel was a center for teaching the art of illustration. Illustrations were exceedingly popular at the time. Contemporary magazines of the era, such as *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, *Leslie's*, *Outing* and *The Outlook* were replete with them in response to the public taste.

Prior to the invention of photoengraving in the 1880's, wood-engraving had been the most practical and common method for the illustration of mass-produced magazines. Aside from being extremely time consuming, the process had placed stylistic limitations on illustrators. The new method made possible the easy reproduction of paintings, drawings, and photographs in a manner which preserved their non-linear character. The process stimulated the field of illustration and was a boon to artists, many of whom were drawn to the field because of the new options and the possibility of a mass audience. Magazines were thought of, according to Walt Reed, as "a purveyor of the finest in literature and art."<sup>16</sup>

Howard Pyle, DeCora's teacher of illustration at Drexel Institute, began teaching there hoping to develop quality illustrators, persons who could tell a story with pictures and incorporate the most sophisticated artistic techniques into their work. He taught at the school from 1894 to 1900, when he began a course of private instruction for specially selected students at his home in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania.

Pyle spent much of his career illustrating children's books of fairy tales and adventure stories, for example *The Wonder Clock* or *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* which dealt with legendary Anglo-Saxon figures. In these, somewhat contrary to his general philosophy of Americanism, he drew heavily on the drawings and paintings of Holbein and Durer. The illustrations have a Neo-Gothic look to them and a richness of detail. Other of his paintings memorialized important moments in the history of the United States. Pyle was able to fit his motif to the subject matter which he was portraying. This ability included such

devices as using medieval script with the Robin Hood pictures. The technique gave the reader the feeling that he was reading a medieval manuscript.

Pyle insisted that his students carefully study every item to be included in an illustration, encouraged them to prepare their work for publication, and was insistent that none of his students' pictures be used in *Harper's* or other current periodicals unless they were, in his judgment, of the highest quality. Pyle's system bore results. Such famous illustrators as Maxfield Parrish, Violet Oakley, Jesse Wilcox Smith, N. C. Wyeth, Stanley Arthurs, and Frank Schoonover developed their talents under his tutelage. In addition to insisting that his students conduct research on each detail to be included in a picture, he also wanted them to allow fantasy to overtake them, so that they would feel as if they were actors in the picture which they were executing. He once commented on a painting of Indians in canoes by N. C. Wyeth, his student: "I like this because you have seen it from an Indian's viewpoint."<sup>17</sup> Pyle, therefore, must have been pleased to have Angel DeCora as his student. Here was someone who would not have to imagine what an Indian's viewpoint would be.

At this point in her career, Pyle directed DeCora to do studies of Indian life. He sponsored a trip to Fort Berthold Indian Reservation for her in the summer of 1897 so she could study the details of Indian life and do drawings and paintings of Indians while in first-hand contact with them. Fort Berthold in North Dakota was home to the Arikara, Mandan, and Hidatsa tribes.

While at Fort Berthold, Angel assisted Anna Dawson, a former Hampton schoolmate and matron for the Indians. Cora Folsom describes the young artist's activities there: "She went about into the homes of the people and did a great deal of sketching and photographing, as well as several large canvasses. Some of the portraits she made there of the old chiefs are of great value as well as beauty" (Figure 1).<sup>18</sup>

Much of her work done under the direction of Pyle has been lost, but several examples appeared in the February and November issues of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* for 1899 (Figures 2 and 3). Following the example which Pyle set, that of writing and illustrating stories to be published, DeCora created two works which are essentially reminiscences of an Indian childhood. The stories "The Sick Child" and "Grey Wolf's Daughter" were published in the issues of *Harper's* mentioned

above. These were her first published works and are early examples of fiction written and illustrated by an American Indian.

The illustrations which accompanied "Grey Wolf's Daughter" and "The Sick Child" show Pyle's influence in that they are more detailed in their conceptions of costume, facial expression and setting than any other illustrations she did. No doubt Pyle encouraged her to focus on memories of her childhood, hoping that her reminiscences would produce more "Indian" pictures. He was also aware of the difficulties in outlook caused by Angel's Indian cultural heritage. He felt that he had discovered a genius in Angel,<sup>19</sup> but he also said of her that, "unfortunately she was a woman and still more unfortunately an American Indian. She was so retiring that she always kept in the background of my classes. When I tried to rouse her ambition by telling her how famous she might become, she answered: 'We Indian women are taught that modesty is a woman's chief virtue.'"<sup>20</sup>

Under the influence of Pyle's teaching methods, her pictures became more linear and contained more ethnographic detail. She specified the individual characteristics of the actors in the scenes she painted. These methods are in contrast to the more impressionistic and soft-edged, tonal qualities which Dwight Tryon had encouraged. If she had followed his lead, her pictures would have been less concerned with telling a story than with evoking a mood by their overall appearance.

During her three year association with Pyle at Drexel, in Chadds Ford, and at his Wilmington headquarters, she became acquainted with several well-known women artists of the day, including Cecilia Beau, Alice Barbour Stevens, and Katherine Pyle. Cecilia Beau was a highly regarded artist, and was teaching in Philadelphia during the time that Angel DeCora resided there. She was elected a full member of the American Academy of Design in 1902, a rare honor for a woman. Later in her career she was commissioned to paint portraits of Clemenceau, Cardinal Mercier of Belgium, and Admiral Beatty of England. Angel was probably encouraged in her pursuit of an artistic career because of her acquaintances with these successful women artists.

While she was a student of illustration, DeCora began to feel a conflict between "Art for Art's Sake" and "Commercial Art." Possibly in an effort to resolve this confusion, she went to Boston in 1899 to study at the Cowles Art School with Joseph DeCamp.

DeCamp retired shortly after her arrival, and so she shifted her studies to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts School where she worked with Frank Benson and Edmund C. Tarbell. Both Tarbell and Benson painted in a relatively traditional manner emphasizing genteel, domestic scenes. Both had attended the classes of Boulanger and LeFebvre at the Academie Julien of Paris. They commonly depicted women or children in their paintings. Benson emphasized the human figure on sunlit landscape and Tarbell created interior scenes where light also played an important part in the picture. The paintings of Benson were reputed to

...have something of the sweetness of the old-fashioned ideals of high bred feminine grace and loveliness, with the breadth and looseness of the modern style of workmanship. His pictures have the refinement of the 18th century English female type with the freedom and vivacity of the 19th century girl.<sup>21</sup>

DeCora entered the Boston school in February of 1900 and was enrolled in a "life drawing" class. She worked there for two years and was awarded an honorable mention in the Concours Scholarships for 1900 and 1901.<sup>22</sup>

Pyle's influence on DeCora's work lessened after she moved to Boston to study with Tarbell and Benson. A tendency to generalize about settings and accoutrements entered her work. The photographic clarity of details was gone. Her work became more impressionistic, possibly because of the influence of her new teachers who utilized looser brushwork and emphasized qualities of light in their work. In spite of a loss of specificity in many details of her paintings, the human faces portrayed remain distinctively Indian and individualized, a characteristic which may be accounted for by the fact that she knew many Indian individuals, although not in native settings.

Despite a desire to avoid painting on commission for book publishers as she had done while a student of Pyle, DeCora was drawn back into the field of illustration while studying at the Boston Museum Fine Arts School. Certainly financial need and perhaps the desire to show her work publicly led her to take up illustrating again. That she approached her career as an illustrator with reservations is evidenced by a statement she made in reference to that career: "Although at times I yearn to express myself in landscape art, I feel that designing is the best channel in which to convey the native qualities of the Indian's decorative talent."<sup>23</sup> This statement was written in 1911 after



Figure 2. From "The Sick Child," written and illustrated by DeCora. From Harper's for February, 1899.

she had been a teacher of native American art at the Carlisle Indian School for some years. She apparently wanted to work as a fine artist, painting landscapes and portraits as her teacher, Dwight Tryon, and her friend, Cecilia Beau, had done, but she also wanted to contribute to the welfare of the Indians of whom she was a representative. These two desires conflicted at times, and were never successfully resolved in her art.

DeCora maintained a studio at 62 Rutland Square in Boston (1899-1903) and later in New York (1903-1906). During this period she produced a series of illustrations for books with Indian subject matter. She created illustrations, title pages and cover designs for Francis LeFlesche's *The Middle Five: Indian Boys at School*, published in 1900; Mary Catherine Judd's *Wigwam Stories Told by North American Indians*, published in 1906; Zitkala-Sa's *Old Indian Legends*, published in 1907; and Natalie Curtis' *The Indian's Book*, published in 1907.

After she became the teacher of Native American Art at the Carlisle Indian School in 1906, her production as an illustrator all but ceased with the exception of a cover for *The Red Man* of September, 1913, illustrations for *Yellow Star: A Story of East and West* by Elaine Goodale Eastman, published in 1911, and several illustrations for an article, "The American Eagle, an Indian Symbol" by Dr. Charles Eastman, published in the Summer issue for 1911 of *The American Indian Magazine*.

## II

Since the majority of DeCora's work as an artist is illustration, it is appropriate at this point to discuss the purpose, style and subject matter involved in it. A comparison will be made between her work and that of other illustrators of the day, especially those who dealt with Indian-oriented images. Also, an attempt will be made to historically place her artistic efforts among other art works which dealt with the image of the American Indian.

An interesting comparison can be made between Zitkala-Sa's purpose in the collection and transcription of Indian stories for her *Old Indian Legends* (DeCora did the illustrations for the book published in 1907), and DeCora's purpose in making visual representations of Indian culture. Zitkala-Sa, a Sioux woman writer, says in the introduction to her book:

While I recognized such a legend without the least difficulty, I found the renderings vary much in little incidents. Generally one (storyteller) helped the other in restoring some lost line in the original character of the tale. And now I have tried to transplant the native spirit of the tales—root and all—into the English language, since American in the last few centuries has acquired a second tongue.<sup>24</sup>

In a sense Angel DeCora was trying to do the same thing in her illustrations—to translate Indian customs and life style into and through western European pictorial traditions. In doing this she matched her pictures to the story being told. In some of the books, each illustration has its own phrase from the story to accompany it. Not all of the illustrations of DeCora's are quite so literal, but most refer to the written material which they accompany.

The subject matter treated by DeCora in her illustrations and designs was consistently concerned with the American Indian or based on Indian designs. If she produced art not related to her heritage, it is not to be found among the examples which were published or are held in the Hampton collections.

An undated example of DeCora's work which can be presumed to be one of her earliest paintings is to be found in the Hampton Institute archives. It depicts a tipi, glowing from a fire within, placed on a treeless, flat landscape. The openness of the space surrounding the house structure is broken by a drying rack with ladder, a woodpile, a wagon, and a horse grazing in the distance. This painting stands alone as an example of her student work and is, therefore, not really a useful key to the discussion.

More commonly, her illustrations picture the transition of the Indian from his own culture to that of the white man, a current event of her day. There was controversy concerning the system of removing Indian children from their tribal environments and training them for industrial or agricultural careers. Colonel Richard H. Pratt, mentioned above, re-stimulated the idea, current in colonial days, of removing young Indians from the reservations and bringing them to boarding schools in the eastern United States to be educated in industrial trades and Christian values. Pratt was opposed by several powerful factions within the government, such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of American Ethnology. Senator Preston Plumb of Kansas opposed appropriations for separate Indian schools because he felt that Pratt was a fraud and a swindler. Other senators were in favor of continuing appropriations for the

industrial schools. Many of the Indians who were educated in Pratt's system remained loyal to Pratt and their school for the remainder of their lives.

Angel DeCora's illustrations and the articles which they accompanied appear to approve Pratt's system. For example, an illustration from the story "Grey Wolf's Daughter" shows the melancholy figure of a young Indian girl looking back at the Indian camp which she is leaving for the eastern boarding school. This picture reflects the sadness of leaving home for the young Indian and appeals to the sentiment of the reader, yet the story indicates that the girl wanted to leave the reservation. The colored frontispiece from Francis LaFlesche's *The Middle Five* (see cover) is even more explicit concerning the fears which Indian children felt upon leaving their families and tribes for boarding schools such as Hampton and Carlisle. The illustration accompanied a text which literally documented LeFlesche's own experience at a mission school:

Leaning against the wall of a large stone building with moccasined feet dangling from a high wooden bench on the front porch, sat a little boy crying. His buckskin suit, prettily fringed and embroidered with porcupine quills of the brightest colors, indicated the care bestowed upon him by fond parents. Boys and girls were at play around the house, making the place ring with their merry laughter as they chased each other among the trees, but the little boy sat all alone sobbing as though his heart would break. A big boy came and sat by his side, put an arm around him, and in a kindly tone said, in Indian: "What are you crying for? Don't cry—I'll play with you and be your friend. I won't let the boys hurt you."<sup>25</sup>

Despite the image of the tearful child, one has the feeling that DeCora and LaFlesche felt that the risk had to be taken, that young Indians should be encouraged to go to school.

DeCora's cover design for the September, 1913, issue of Carlisle's *The Red Man* (Figure 7) is in this same sympathetic and sentimental vein. It is titled "The Indian Nurse" and shows an Indian woman competently ministering to the needs of an Indian patient. The Carlisle Press ran a series of covers showing the Indian making a successful effort at pursuing a "civilized" career and helping his own people by doing so. All of these covers except "The Indian Nurse" were drawn by DeCora's husband, Dietz.

Figure 5 shows one of the full-page illustrations which DeCora did for Judd's *Wigwam Stories* published in 1900. The title of the illustration is "The Indian Today." The picture does not specifically deal with the problems of Indians and education, but it does comment on the transitional Indian. It shows a young

Indian man leaning in the doorway of a log house and wearing, for the most part, the clothing of a white. He has retained his long, braided hair and his native footwear. The expression on his face is one of sadness and boredom. This illustration accompanies text by Judd which states:

A number of the tribes have become much like the White Man, and live in houses and have large numbers of horses and cattle upon the plains or on their farms in the East; other tribes, proud of their ancient customs, still try to live as nearly as possible in the way of their ancestors.

Their love for their nation, tribe and family is very great, and that is one reason why a few of the Indian students become once more Blanket Indians. They cannot endure the taunt that they have forgotten their own people.<sup>26</sup>

Elaine Goodale Eastman's book, *Yellow Star: A Story of East and West* (Figure 6) deals with the conflict, for an educated Indian, between living on the reservation and pursuing a career elsewhere. The tale tells of a young Indian girl brought to a previously all-white school in New England and the prejudice which she encountered and surmounted. Yellow Star, the girl, chooses to return to her people at the end of her high school training. As a field matron she gave the people the benefit of her knowledge of white technology and ways. She finds it difficult to please her people on some occasions and is scorned by the white government employees who consider her "uppity." When given the opportunity to return to New England where she would be welcomed, she says:

Do you know, Ethan, I seem to be two people again, just as in the first months in Laurel, when you teased me about having so many names. . . . I'm pulled two ways at once; I so want to really belong, and I can't tell where I belong! I know now, that I can't do for my people what I once thought I could here on the reservation; and yet isn't it my place?<sup>27</sup>

It is appropriate that Angel DeCora and William Dietz, her Indian husband, did the illustrations for this book. The confusion expressed in the passage above expresses the conflict which they must have felt in their rather tenuous relationship to both the white and Indian worlds.

Another attitude concerning Indians appears in DeCora's work. In addition to her basically hopeful attitude, concerning the power of education to help the Indian adapt to white ways, is her belief that the Indian had designed and applied his art to forms in a manner which contained his own canons of beauty and was valuable. Many of her early illustrations show that she had developed an appreciation through her trip to Fort Berthold and study of ethnological literature of the details of dress and the

structure and design of everyday items made by Indians. The painted leather hide background in one illustration, or the matting and baby cradle in Figure 2 are examples of the incorporation of these ideals into her work. She became even more active as a conservator of these native canons after she began teaching at Carlisle in 1906.

Some of her work presents an extremely romantic, lyrical conception of what Indian life was supposed to have been prior to the white man. "Firelight," a painting used to illustrate an article by Natalie Curtis, has a dream-like quality in the softening of details. There is a surgary charm to it, but little accuracy. It represents an Eden which never existed, but in which many whites and some Indians preferred to believe. Many of the page decorations and initial drawings from Judd's *Wigwam Stories* have the same quality. DeCora, long removed from an Indian life, tended to idealize that past and shroud it in a rosy haze. This tendency to generalize and idealize about Indian subjects was common among both illustrators and painters of her day, according to Van Deren Coke:

Many Indian painters tended to allow pictorial consideration to outweigh cultural facts and painted costumes or pottery from one tribe in association with Indians of another tribe in order to make use of interesting color or pattern arrangements.<sup>28</sup>

This tendency was no doubt reinforced by the public acceptance of art which represented this idealized image of Indian life.

DeCora came closest to a realistic rendering of Indians in some of the work she did while under the influence of Howard Pyle. The portrait studies (Figure 1), done while she was visiting Anna Dawson at Fort Berthold during the summer of 1897, are representative. In these she depicted individual differences in the faces of her subjects and added details of jewelry and dress that distinguish these people from the stereotyped Indian so often found in her work. The experience of first-hand contact with Indians on the reservation enriched her understanding. The main illustration for "The Sick Child" (Figure 2) benefited from the second look. The more specific approach to her subject matter, learned while studying with Pyle, slipped away from her in the years which followed her departure from Philadelphia.

The combination of illustrations and text in Zitkala-Sa's *Old Indian Legends* was an interesting experiment when it appeared in 1901. DeCora's drawings which accompany the Iktomi or Trickster tales included in the book are both humorous and



Figure 3. Dancing Girls from "Gray Wolf's Daughter," written and illustrated by DeCora. From Harper's for November, 1899.

imaginative. This was one of the first times an Indian artist tried to translate legendary or supernatural figures, such as the Trickster, into a non-Indian visual format. DeCora did not pursue a single style throughout her career. Her approach to her subject often changed in response to the purpose for which the finished picture was to be used.

Much of her work was done in a painterly style not notably different from that of other artist-illustrators of her day, and there was nothing distinctly "Indian" about this body of work. In most of her work as an artist or illustrator, DeCora emphasized paint texture through the use of an impasto technique. Three-dimensional space was indicated, although her command of perspective was weak. In the majority of the illustrations the humans or animals figured were presented in a theatrical manner with the emphasis on gesture. They were normally placed well forward on the picture plane, possibly to avoid perspective problems.

Her use of color, in the few examples in which it can be studied, was realistic and descriptive. She painted a school boy's uniform blue if it was supposed to be blue and did not use color in an expressionistic or arbitrary manner. Since the stories she illustrated generalized about Indians, made few references to tribal affiliations or details of dress, housing or craft, and only occasionally dealt with legendary figures such as Iktomi, her illustrations are of a non-specific "Indian" image. In most she was highly dependent on her imagination, on a stereotyped decorative image, which she could have culled from such books as George Wharton James' *Indian Basketry* (1902), or J. B. Moore's Navajo weaving catalog, or from photos and etchings found in Bureau of American Ethnology Reports.

She may also have known of or had seen the art works and illustrations of artists, such as Thomas Moran, Joseph Sharp, Ernest Blumenschien, Irving Couse, and others, who were the nucleus of an art movement centered around Taos, New Mexico. These artists specialized in portrayals of Indian life, and their work was growing in popularity at the time DeCora was a working illustrator. The fact that some of their work was published in *Harper's* and *McClure's Magazine* increases the possibility that DeCora may have used it as a guide or as a source for material. Her distant knowledge of Indian life may have been

reflected in the vague definition of many of the figures and shapes and the lack of specific detail.

The remainder of DeCora's production represents a kind of montage of style and purpose. Indian-style designs were used to decorate title pages, lettering and book covers. Examples include the title page and lettering of Curtis' *The Indian's Book* (Figure 7), the title page and cover design of Judd's *Wigwam Stories*, and a thunderbird design in the upper right-hand corner of Eastman's article about the American Eagle (Figure 8). DeCora consciously chose discrete elements from traditional Indian designs to create these book decorations. She borrowed from Plains beadwork, *parfleche* painting, Navajo and Pueblo pottery and weaving designs, and recombined them. She commonly used elements as triangular forms, stepped pyramids and arrow-like figures. Her designs mimic the symmetry, angularity, repetitiveness, and two-dimensionality of traditional Indian motifs. Several of her works utilize the Thunderbird motif, the type of design which had come to be expected by white people and so has been used often by Indian artisans on items to be sold to the public. Several other contemporary publications on Indian arts and crafts decorated their pages with this type of design meant to evoke an Indian flavor. U. S. Hollister's *The Navajo and His Blanket* (1906) and George Wharton James' *Indian Blankets and Their Makers* (1914) are two examples.

For the lettering of Natalie Curtis' *The Indian Book* (1907) DeCora invented a script evocative of designs found on Indian baskets, woven sashes, pottery, and wooden boxes (Figure 7). Curtis describes her publisher's reaction to DeCora's designs:

So the order was given, but when the pages came back we found to our astonishment that the lettering was not the least like that with which Angel had decorated the Winnebago section. She had invented a different kind of lettering for every Indian picture, and the forms of the letters were composed of motifs from the drawings which they accompanied.<sup>29</sup>

It is important to understand the historical milieu in which DeCora worked. She was certainly not alone in portraying Indians in her illustrations. In fact, the "Indian" theme was very popular in 19th century art, although it had different manifestations. There was also ample opportunity for illustrators and photographers who dealt with Indian or frontier subject matter to publish their work at the end of the 19th century, because, according to Ellwood Parry, "action themes involving

lurking, skulking or attacking Indians, were a consistently popular form of escapist entertainment during most of the nineteenth century."<sup>30</sup>

Art works concerned with Indian subject matter were popularized in the 19th century by George Catlin, who painted Indians in the West in the 1830's. He made over 320 portraits and 200 landscapes and collected artifacts from the various tribes with whom he visited. In the late 1830's and early 1840's, he exhibited his collection of paintings and artifacts in the eastern United States and Europe. The exhibitions were a great public attraction and were well attended. Catlin was more concerned with the veracity of details in his paintings than some of his followers in the field were to be. In proof of his desire to give accurate information concerning Indians, he published his *Manners, Custom and Condition of the North American Indians* in 1841. In a similar vein was the McKenny-Hall gallery of Indian portraits published in 1837.

John Banvard, an inventive artist, created a 2,000-foot-long painted moving panorama of the Mississippi River Valley, which included scenes of Indian life and was first shown in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1846. It, too, was a popular success.

The publication of Henry Schoolcraft's *Historical and Statistical Information Respecting the History, Condition and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States* from 1851 to 1857 and Henry W. Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha* in 1855 stimulated artists in various ways. Schoolcraft's volume encouraged collectors of genuine Indian crafts and ethnologists and photographers bent on preserving vestiges of the fast-fading tribal lifestyles. Longfellow's work, while it suggested the importance of preserving the oral traditions of Indian groups, also inspired poetic visualization of the "noble savage" by such artists as F. O. C. Darley and Thomas Moran.

Even though knowledge of Indian design could have stimulated artists to mimic the two-dimensional, abstract qualities of the native's art, according to Ellwood Parry:

Public comprehension remained a highly desirable quality in American art even after 1900; it is hardly surprising that enormously popular themes, showing Blacks and Indians, continued to be painted in a "Romantic-Realist" manner through the last quarter of the nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup>

An illustrator whose work was contemporaneous with that of DeCora was Frederic Remington. He, like DeCora, wrote stories

and illustrated them; but this is where the similarity stops. He was an easterner who fell in love with the West during the decline of its wilder days. In many of his illustrations he portrays whites against Indians, cowboy against steer, and Indian against nature, essentially in an effort to capture the dramatic collapse of the West. His pictures are full of rearing horses, running horses, and docile horses. His technique emphasized muscle, vigor and action. He viewed the frontier as a man's world and rarely included women in his illustrations. In spite of their dramatic tendency, some of Remington's illustrations were accurate portrayals of Indian customs and dress. Two works offer a contrast to the general theme of his pictures and have relevance here. One is an illustration which he called "Training U.S. Troops in Indian Warfare." Most of the picture is devoted to scenes of militarism, jumping horses, and sparkling uniforms, but in the lower left-hand corner of the composite he has included a sketch of an Apache family peacefully seated in front of a wickiup. Underneath he has written, "The innocent cause of all this pomp and circumstance."<sup>32</sup>

The second exceptional illustration by Remington was a full scale work called "The Twilight of the Indian." This picture shows a strong-looking Indian man plowing a field with the aid of two horses. The background shows a settler's house side by side with a tipi. With few exceptions DeCora's work is almost antithetical to that of Remington. She often portrayed women, a subject he avoided. His figures are extremely active and excited, those of DeCora static, calm, and peaceful. He continually emphasized death and violence, while her emphasis was on the more pacific aspects of Indian life—for example, tale-telling, a women's dance ceremony, and group scenes inside of wigwams. Since many of her illustrations dealt with the transitional Indian, a comparison with his "Twilight of the Indian" is warranted. It is obvious from the way he titled his picture that Remington did not see the life of a farmer as an appropriate one for his heroes of the Plains. In such illustrations as "The Indian Today" (Figure 5) or some of those from *Yellow Star*, DeCora revealed a more ambivalent attitude toward the value of acculturation.

The books DeCora illustrated were primarily directed to an audience of children and contained accounts of Indian customs, transcription of legends, or stories about Indians. The work of other artist-illustrators for this literary genre covers a relatively

wide range of artistic styles. Frederic N. Wilson, for instance, worked from life sketches and photographs of Indians in illustrating *Indian Hero Tales*, the book written by his brother, Gilbert L. Wilson. The two brothers made a study trip among the Hidatsa in 1912 for the American Museum of Natural History. The drawings Wilson made on this trip are in black and white and highly detailed. He drew Indians engaged in every-day activities, such as women hoeing corn, and set these off with smaller studies of individual items useful to the Indian, such as birch-bark bowls, ladles, and other equipment. He also studied the environment of the Indian and included sketches of squirrels, fern, and other natural elements of the Hidatsa surroundings. Even when drawing pictures of Indian myths involving supernatural events, Wilson included ethnographic details which give his portrayals veracity. Some of Wilson's pen and ink studies decorate the pages of Judd's book, *Wigwam Stories*, side by side with DeCora's.

Ernest Thompson Seton, a writer of naturalist leanings, wrote and illustrated books such as *Two Little Savages* (1903) contemporaneously with DeCora's work. Nearly every page of this book had a drawing on it; often the subjects were Indians or little white boys exploring the world of the Indian. Seton wanted youngsters to learn how to make a tipi and how to survive in the wilderness, and so the book contained diagrams to aid in the construction of a tipi. There were full page illustrations as well, and these are similar in style to DeCora's work, although they approach their subject in a more humorous manner.

Other illustrators, such as Edwin Deming, knew enough of Indian life to include a token pot or blanket here or there in the picture to give it credence; but Deming, in his *Little Red People* illustrations of 1899 combined a Southwestern landscape with a tipi and a Navajo blanket to illustrate a story about Winnebago Indians. Deming also used a fairly common technique to picture Indian legends in which a spirit is sometimes an animal and sometimes a person. He had walking, talking animals as the protagonists in his picture-stories. "Little Friend Coyote," a story written by George Bird Grinnell for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* of January, 1901, was illustrated by Deming in this manner.

Other artists who illustrated books of this genre made stylish representations of their subjects, but obviously had only cursory

knowledge of Indians. J. E. Laughlin's illustrations for *Children of the Forest: A Story of Indian Love* (1904), Francis Olcott's drawings for *The Red Indian Fairy Book* (1917), and George Varian's pictures for Eastman's *Indian Legends Retold* (1919) are of this type. The facial features of the actors in the scenes are vaguely Indian. Much emphasis is put on fanciful conceptions of costume and virgin forest setting, and most often than not the Indians look like fairies or wood sprites.

DeCora's illustrations differ in several ways from the pictures discussed above. First, her illustrations often have the look of fully developed oil paintings rather than sketches—perhaps because she was trained primarily as an easel artist. Second, in some cases DeCora dealt with the non-romantic subject matter of the Indian transition; few other illustrators attempted to comment as thoroughly as DeCora on the changes wrought in Indian society by economic and educational forces from outside their traditional background. Third, there is an emphasis on women as subjects. Most illustrators of and writers on Indian life shied away from studies of Indian women, possibly through ignorance of the dress and manner of women, or possibly because most of the stories to be illustrated had male protagonists. Generally they emphasized the flamboyant and exciting activities of the male Indian warrior, hunter or dancer. Her story, "Grey Wolf's Daughter," depicts a woman of amazing strength, a heroine comparable to Sacajaweha. A fourth divergence is DeCora's emphasis on the facial features of the figures in her pictures. Generally her visages look as if she had modeled them on the people she knew and show familiarity with Indians, a quality which is sorely lacking in many of the illustrations of her contemporaries.

A possible explanation for her emphasis was her actual contact with Indians through the educational institutions of the East, through trips to the reservations and through her own self-consciousness. She would have known the Indian face but not necessarily the traditional dress and customs of Indians of diverse tribes. The final and most radical difference between her work and that of others was her use of modified, traditional Indian designs as decorations (illustrations of a sort) on the pages of books. This technique appears, for instance, in the lettering in Curtis' *The Indian's Book*, on the cover and title page border of Judd's book, and later also becomes a strong element in

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*An Illustrated Magazine by Indians*

# THE RED MAN



*Published Monthly by* THE CARLISLE INDIAN PRESS

Figure 4. "The Indian Nurse," color cover design by DeCora for The Red Man, September, 1913. Volume 6, Number 1.

DeCora's teaching techniques. The use of such designs, modified and recombined in most cases, created an aura of "Indianness" in the publications which they enhanced.

It is appropriate to discuss the kind of art being produced by other Indians at the turn of the century. There were few contemporary Indian artists working with western materials, techniques or subject matter. There were the ex-warriors of the Plains who were arrested and incarcerated at Fort Marion, Florida, where under Pratt's guidance they were given colored pencils and paper and allowed to carry on the tradition common among Plains warriors of visually recording their heroic battles, participation in sacred dances and other scenes of past glory. Many of these drawings were sold to tourists in Florida. Some men who remained at home on the Plains also used western artistic materials and produced similar drawings and paintings. In the latter part of the 19th century Jesse Walter Fewkes, an ethnologist, commissioned a group of Hopi men to produce a series of colored drawings of their *katchinas* for his publication on that subject. Although these drawings were done on paper with western materials, they have almost no relationship to Angel DeCora's art work. They were meant to look as aboriginal as possible even though produced by artists using unfamiliar materials. Elsewhere Indians continued to produce native crafts such as weaving, basketry, pottery, and the like; but many of these artistic items were made to be sold to white tourists rather than to be used in the traditional ways in the home of the maker.

It has been suggested that artists trained as DeCora was had no effect on the growth of modern Indian painting.<sup>33</sup> It is my contention that if the schools of painting among Indians which developed later in the environs of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and to some extent in Oklahoma, are regarded as the only focal points of the modernization of Indian painting, then possibly the statement is true. But if the experience of Indians outside of the southwest is considered, several artistically influential Indians can be found, including especially Angel DeCora. A study of their careers is important if only to pinpoint an alternative use of art by Indians at the turn of the century.

There have been few formal, extended studies of the lives, careers and art of individual Indian artists. The models available for my study primarily concern students of Dorothy Dunn or other artists who followed the pattern set by the Santa Fe

movement of the 1920's and 1930's. For example, *Spin a Silver Dollar* by Alberta Hannum is a fictionalized account of the growth of a Navajo artist, Beatin Yazz or "Little No-Shirt" and his discovery by the Lippincotts, traders at the Wide Ruins Post in Arizona. The boy artist is seen in his native context and while this story is charming, it is embellished by fictionalized devices and therefore loses force. *Maria, the Potter of San Ildefonso* by Alice Marriott deals with the career of this great ceramacist of the Southwest. Again, the book is not a formal history of San Ildefonso or of the career of Maria Martinez. The artists discussed in such books as these were for most of their lives isolated from the mainstream of American society or modern art. As Dorothy Dunn says of Awa Tsireh, one of the forerunners of modern Indian painting in the Southwest:

Although fame and citations came to him, the artist seldom journeyed far from his native San Ildefonso Pueblo. Occasionally after he had turned to silversmithing and weaving, he worked for an arts and crafts dealer in Colorado Springs and accompanied him to Florida one winter. But home to Asa Tsireh was the wide valley where the Rio Grande flows past Black Mesa and the upland of the prehistoric Pajaritan Pueblos.<sup>34</sup>

It is impossible to approach the career of Angel DeCora in the manner of the above mentioned works. While she had supporters among whites, much of her career was dictated by her own desire to be an artist. She was not isolated from the mainstream of American society, but was a part of an era in which some Indians were encouraged to become self-sufficient and to assimilate rapidly into the white world. Neither was she totally removed from her Indian background, nor from a situation where she could and did influence the art of other Indians. In 1906 De Cora's artistic career was interrupted by her decision to become a teacher of Native American Art at the Carlisle Indian School. She did not again try to support herself as a free-lance artist until a period near the end of her life. In giving up her career as an independent artist, DeCora was returning to the safety of a school. This sort of change was not and is not atypical of the careers of many artists. Often, finding that his art work is not being accepted and being caught in an economic bind, an artist will follow the well-worn path from fine arts to commercial art and finally to teaching. Carlisle was unique in being an all-Indian school and in this it was probably all the more attractive to DeCora, who had long been cut off from her tribe and Indian affiliations.

## III

In February, 1906, Angel DeCora was appointed instructor of native Indian arts at the Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, by Francis E. Leupp, President Theodore Roosevelt's commissioner of Indian affairs. It was to be one of the most important events in her life.

Natalie Curtis (collector of Indian music and wife of Santa Fe artist Paul Burlin) may have been responsible for introducing DeCora to Leupp and advancing her for the position at Carlisle. Curtis had been an advocate of reform in Indian education, at one time directly asking President Roosevelt that she be legally allowed to record the music of Indian tribes. The President took an interest in the artistic aspect of Indian culture and allowed several reforms to be instituted, albeit token ones. According to Curtis "the singing of Indian songs in the Indian schools came to be not only officially permitted, but encouraged."<sup>35</sup> Another reform was that Angel DeCora was hired as an art instructor for Carlisle and, again according to Curtis, "for a time at least was given a free hand to develop the art of her own race and apply it to the useful industries taught there."<sup>36</sup>

The man who appointed DeCora to her position, Francis E. Leupp, had been a student of Indian affairs and culture long before his appointment as commissioner. He was also a journalist with a knack for persuasive writing. Having earlier worked for the Indian Rights Association, he had a certain foresight lacking in many of those who were put in charge of the lives and education of young Indians. One of his primary contentions was that the art and music of the American Indians need not be totally wiped out in order to convert the Indian to "civilization." He felt that these art forms had value and demanded preservation.<sup>37</sup>

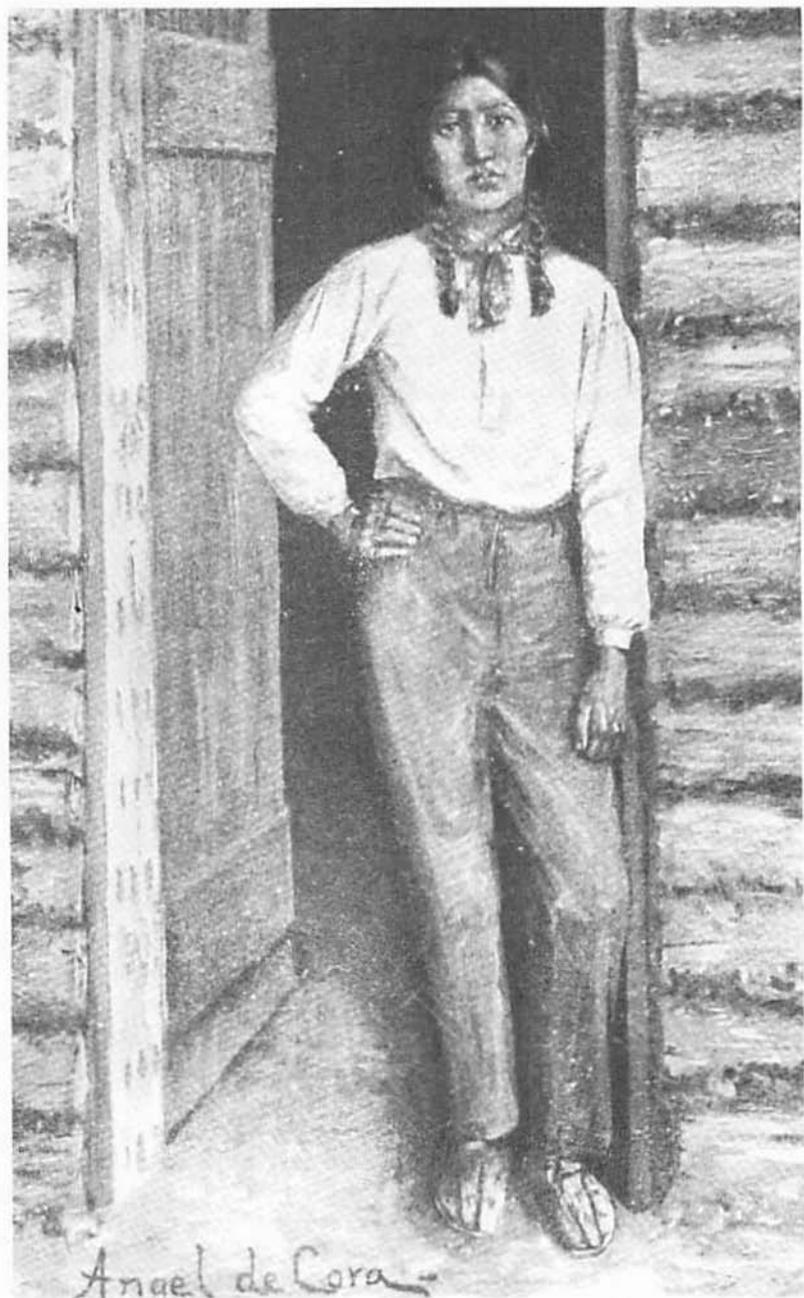
Leupp apparently had to persuade DeCora to take the position, for she was busy and progressing with her own career and was somewhat suspicious of governmental programs and educational systems for Indians. She stated that she would take the position only if "I shall not be expected to teach in the white man's way, but shall be given complete liberty to develop the art of my own race and to apply this, as far as possible, to various forms of art, industries and crafts."<sup>38</sup>

The Carlisle school to which DeCora went to teach was the

prototype for Indian boarding schools throughout the United States. The school was established in 1879 under the direction of Colonel Pratt as an outgrowth and expansion of the work which he had done at the Hampton Institute. Pratt was both an idealist and a military man. The combination of these two characteristics gave him the fortitude to fight government red-tape and to oversee the establishment of the Carlisle School. He hoped that through a controlled exposure to white ways at some distance from family and tribe young Indians could be successfully transformed into people who were not on the public dole and who were like white Americans. The school which he established taught English, and introduced Indians to trades such as printing, tinsmithing, carpentry, blacksmithing, tailoring and shoemaking. The system also provided the opportunity for more advanced training through the "outing." Under this plan students were sent out to live and work with farming families in the nearby Pennsylvania countryside. Athletics was also heavily sponsored by the school, and Carlisle's football team was highly successful for many years. The arts were not scorned by Pratt, but his fear that his students would slip back into Indian ways caused them to be taught in an odd way. Leupp described the teaching of art at Carlisle prior to DeCora's arrival:

The Art Department at Carlisle had been engaged in teaching Indian children, whose own mothers were masters of decorative design, to paint pansies on plush pillows and forget-me-nots on picture frames. It was not the fault of Carlisle that the standard of art in America should resemble the counter of a department store; it was the fault of our whole civilization.<sup>39</sup>

There was a general change in governmental educational policies for Indians when Leupp became commissioner of Indian affairs in 1905. Colonel Pratt was released from his duties as superintendent of Carlisle almost simultaneously with Leupp's appointment. Leupp and Pratt were on opposite sides of the fence concerning many aspects of Indian education, Leupp representing the new wave of thought which Pratt had fought against for years. The new commissioner favored the ultimate abolition of boarding schools distant from reservations. He was willing to continue Carlisle but tried to make it into a center for the advanced training of Indian students who had received their early education nearer to home and tribe. The new superintendent of the Carlisle school, Moses Friedman, stated that the new policy, was "to give breadth to the program. Courses in morals and manners, nature study, and native Indian



*Figure 5. "The Indian Today," a black-white illustration by DeCora from Judd's Wigwam Stories.*

arts have been added.”<sup>40</sup> The installation of Angel DeCora in her position at the school was a token response by the government to the reformers’ demands. DeCora’s approach to teaching the Indian students was affected, despite her desire for a free rein, by pressures from Leupp and the expectations of the bureaucracy. Typical of Leupp’s ideas which DeCora had to adopt were those expressed in the following statement:

The Navajo silversmith, whose work is beautiful as it stands, ought to be encouraged to preserve and expand it. But whereas now it is occupied almost wholly with jewelry and gew-gaws, a shrewd teacher might start the young people of the tribe making the sort of things which command a market in white communities—butter-knives and napkin rings, salt cellars and trays.<sup>41</sup>

To combine the artistry of the Indian with the practical products appealing to the white market was the economic-oriented goal of the Leupp administration. To encourage an Indian student to be an artist just for the sake of art was an impossibility at this time.

During DeCora’s first years as a teacher at Carlisle, she encountered difficulties, although as long as she was supported by Commissioner Leupp and Superintendent Friedman the troubles were not insurmountable. Some of the initial problems were with the students themselves. The pupils, who came from Indian reservations all over the United States, had been taught to shy away from all things Indian. They were unresponsive when she first attempted to broach the subject of their own cultural heritage to them. She says in this regard, “When I first introduced the subject—Indian art—to the Carlisle Indian students, I experienced the discouraging sensation that I was addressing members of an alien race.”<sup>42</sup>

Initially she was forced to resort to the use of Bureau of American Ethnology Reports as aids in the reinstruction of the students. Other materials or teaching aids were not available. She taught the students the varying design systems of Indian groups from the Southwest, the Plains, and the Northwest coastal areas. She held weekly exhibitions of her students’ work in order to encourage them to compete. This is significant because competition was a value highly regarded by whites and was one of the principles which they wished to emphasize in the education of Indians. She made requests to the Bureau of Indian Affairs for examples of old-style Indian art work to use for teaching purposes. The students worked in basketry, pottery and weaving, and in the designing of book plates, textiles, interior

wall decorations and the like. This latter group of projects typified the new ways in which she hoped the students would apply their traditional designs and reflected the general thrust of the government program.

In the nine years from 1906 to 1915 that DeCora stayed at Carlisle, she worked out a philosophy and methodology for teaching art to Indian pupils. The school itself did certain things which aided her in teaching and fostering interest in the native arts.

In 1906 the Leupp Art Studio was built by the students. Funds for the building were raised by the athletic association of the school. It had an art studio, a photography laboratory and a display room in which there was "a large collection of Indian curios, samples of work in burnt leather, in beads and in basketry. There are also fine examples of Indian drawings and paintings, some being of extremely intricate character."<sup>43</sup>

Another aspect of the school's growing interest in the arts was its participation in the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition of 1907. DeCora arranged an exhibit based on the applied art work which she was teaching her students. Francis Leupp described what he saw at the Exposition in the following manner: "The frieze from Miss DeCora's art department at Carlisle was designed and made by Indian pupils, as was also a rug of Oriental weave. Other examples of applied Indian design on picture frames, pillow cases, etc. were furnished by them."<sup>44</sup> Angel DeCora was cited for an award by the judges of the exposition for the work she had done on this exhibit.

In February, 1909, the Carlisle School took another step toward the enhancement and application of Indian art. They began to publish *The Indian Craftsman*, a journal recording the events of the school, containing articles discussing the culture of Indians, reports on progress toward solving Indian medical problems and occasionally an original story written by an Indian student. The journal changed its name to *The Red Man* about 1910 because of confusion with an outside publication called *The Craftsman*. *The Red Man* was enhanced by drawings, colorful covers, fancy lead letters and borders. The art work in the magazine was done by students under the direction of Angel DeCora and later of her husband Lone Star Dietz. Moses Friedman, superintendent of the school, served as its editor and contributed commentary on the activities of various departments

of the school. It was for some time an accurate depiction of life at Carlisle.

There was a distinct change in the content of the magazine in 1914 when Friedman was replaced as superintendent of the school by Oscar Lipps, an appointee of Cato Sells, the new commissioner of Indian affairs. The magazine reflected this political change. It was no longer as experimental and entertaining; there were fewer and fewer student contributions and less information about the students themselves. It became filled with official press releases concerning other Indian schools across the country. Certainly the emphasis on arts and music was diminished. It was replaced by the image of the Indian as a farmer and not as an artist.

In addition to publishing *The Red Man* and fostering art in that way, an attempt to market the applied art work of the students and that of some of the reservation Indians was also undertaken at Carlisle. Friedman and DeCora hoped to obtain standardized and fair prices for the objects. These pieces, primarily rugs made with Indian designs and using an Oriental weaving technique, were advertised in *The Red Man*. The reader was invited to write for information on sizes, prices, and patterns. The high quality of the weaving and the variety of colors was stressed in the advertisement.

It may seem odd that an oriental weaving technique was being taught and used by Indian students, but eclecticism was typical of DeCora's approach to her teaching. She explains her blending of cultural traditions in the following statement.

I studied the Persian art of weaving from some Persians, because I saw from the start that the style of conventional designing produced by the Indian school pupils suggested more for this kind of weaving. We shall use the Navajo method as well, but the Oriental method allows more freedom to carry out more intricate designs. The East Indian and American Indian designs are somewhat similar in line and color, especially those of the Kasak make.<sup>45</sup>

DeCora was probably also aware of the artistic principles forwarded by Arthur Dow in his book, *Composition* (1899). Dow based his ideas of beauty and design on Oriental art. DeCora may have been attempting to use these principles in teaching Indian students.

One final offshoot of the publication of *The Red Man* should be noted. The magazine was entirely printed in the shop at Carlisle, giving the young Indian printers the opportunity to see

their work published, read, and criticized. The pride which they took in the publication was obvious in most issues. For example, many of the covers involved multi-colored printing, and it was a rare issue that contained a print which was blurry, or out of register.

The combination of artistic elements from various American Indian groups and the techniques of Middle East artisans and the attempt by Carlisle to market Indian-made wares did not occur in a vacuum. There was a general movement in the nation and abroad toward an emphasis on handmade articles and folk art. This movement, known as the Craft Revival, began in England in the 1860's. William Morris, closely associated with the Pre-Raphaelites, began to encourage his artist friends to look for sources for designs in their native surroundings rather than depend on what he considered decadent French decorative arts and mediocre industrial designs. The artisans were to apply the natural designs to all forms of objects to be used in the home. Word of Morris' movement reached the United States in the early 1880's, partially by way of a lecture tour given by Oscar Wilde, and found a responsive audience. Since the followers of Morris recognized Japanese art and folk arts as valid aesthetic models and incorporated elements of these systems into their production, it is probable that this attitude opened Americans' minds to the value of American Indian art.

*The Craftsman*, was a reflection of the newly awakened appreciation of the American public for the everyday item which was made by hand and embellished with design. It is probable that *The Indian Craftsman*, the Carlisle magazine, was modeled after *The Craftsman*. The writers of articles in *The Craftsman* presented the Indian as an artist-hero of the age. In one article the writer stated:

These Indian designs, which may be executed at little cost, if hung upon our nursery walls, might show the Indian to our children in a new and better light: no longer as the scalper of men and the murderer of children, but as being of simple life, possessing crafts, arts, a system of morals and a religious faith not to be despised.<sup>46</sup>

The primary region in the United States where native American arts and crafts were forwarded in response to the idea of a Craft Revival was in the Southwest. Traders such as Lorenzo Hubbell, J. B. Moore, C. N. Cotton, and hotel magnate, Fred Harvey, reacted commercially to public interest in native American crafts (particularly Navajo weaving) and to an extent

created public interest in the rugs and silverwork. Lorenzo Hubbell enlisted E. A. Burbank, an artist and friend to paint small pictures of his weavers' best work: "The small pictures were framed and hung on the walls of the rug room where they were referred to by Hubbell's less talented weavers or by customers who wished to buy something 'like' one of the good Ganado rugs of familiar design."<sup>47</sup> Both J. B. Moore (1911) and Hubbell (1902) published catalogs of their rugs, and these booklets were viewed in all parts of the United States. C. N. Cotton is known to have been one of the first of the traders to have made "a concerted, well-planned effort to develop an eastern market for Navajo rugs."<sup>48</sup> Fred Harvey stimulated interest in Indian crafts by showing his great collection in his hotels in various parts of the country.

The books of U. S. Hollister and George Wharton James, *The Indian and His Blanket* (1906) and *Indian Blankets and Their Makers* (copyright 1914), were published in the midst of traders' commercial successes with Indian weaving. These books and others like them added historical information and lent support to those who had begun to see Indian craft work as art.

Commissioner Francis Leupp, the man who initiated and supported the program in native American art at Carlisle, having spent a good deal of time on the Navajo reservation, was certainly aware of the successes which Hubbell and others were having in marketing Navajo weaving. This knowledge no doubt influenced him in planning a program for the Carlisle School. President Roosevelt, without whose approval the Carlisle program in art might never have been started, was also acquainted with Lorenzo Hubbell and the arts of Southwest Indians and enjoyed several visits at Ganado, site of Hubbell's trading post, after retiring from office.

It appears, therefore, that several important government officials were intrigued by the possibility of developing the arts of the Indian at this time and recognized that the public would respond well to craft work and designs made by Indians. They attempted to translate the successes of the southwestern traders in the context of an Indian school, namely Carlisle.

Angel DeCora, as a teacher of art at Carlisle, was forced to work within the constraints placed upon her by governmental goals. Many of the methods which she employed reflected Leupp's desires to combine artistry and practicality and to use

art as a means to economic independence for the Indian. Occasionally, though, DeCora's own inclinations concerning artistic freedom and innovation guided her teaching methods. Natalie Curtis reported a relevant incident in her article on DeCora, "An American Indian Artist." DeCora apparently had left her students with an assignment and on her return discovered that they had not done the assigned work; instead they had woven covers for the handles of the knives which they were to use. She did not condemn nor punish them for their innovation; instead she asked them to teach her the stitch which they had invented to accomplish the task. A group of educators on hearing an account of this incident were scandalized. Only Dr. Felix Adler, who was present at the conference where the story was told by DeCora, could see the value in her attitude toward education. He said to DeCora, "'Young woman, you have taught a lesson not only to your children, but to pedagogues as well.'"<sup>49</sup>

DeCora also was willing to give special attention to individual students to help them understand and integrate their past and present experiences. She recounted a story which illustrated this aspect of her methods:

The following incident occurred in one of my classes. A young man come [*sic*] into my classroom time after time, but did not meet my demands to produce some Indian design. He used to sit there, looking very wistful but could not answer even my first question as to what tribe he belonged to. One day he seemed ready to speak, so I went up to him and asked him what he wanted. Almost tragically he said, "Can you tell me about my tribe?" On further questioning him, I found that he was an Alaskan Indian, but of what band he couldn't tell me. So I took up a book by Dr. Boaz [*sic*] on the Northwestern Indians and began turning the pages. When I came upon some reproductions of the Haida decorations and blankets, he exclaimed with joy, "That's my tribe!" He explained to me then and there something of the family organizations of his tribe, and also made a very beautiful and interesting border design, using the killer whale as the theme.<sup>50</sup>

Angel DeCora was not only involved with art projects and teaching at this time. She also traveled widely, making speeches to a variety of groups concerning her work as a teacher of Indian art to Indians. In September, 1906, she may have been the first of her race to address the International Congress of Americanists at their annual meeting in Quebec. Her subject was "An Effort to Encourage Indian Art." She also spoke before the National Education Association convention held in Los Angeles in July, 1907, and at the Lake Mohonk Conference in 1908. In each instance her subject was the teaching of Indian art to Indians.



Figure 6. "I was only digging medicine," the elf soberly announced. Illustration by DeCora from *Yellow Star* by Elaine Goodale Eastman.

The speeches she gave generally outlined the methods which she used in teaching her classes, and they encouraged the acceptance of the idea of combining Indian design and western technology. Before the Pan-Indian conference in 1911, DeCora suggested:

Indian designs could be used very effectively in brick and slate works, in parquet and mosaic floors, oilcloths, carved wood furniture, tiles, stencil designs for friezes and draperies, applique, metal work, enameled jewelry and page decorations.<sup>51</sup>

The government was anxious that policy-influencing groups such as the Mohonk Conference and the National Education Association should accept their efforts at Carlisle. DeCora was a spokeswoman for these efforts. It is apparent that the government saw the development of modern crafts industries, combined with the retention of ancient designs, as a means to economically uplift the various Indian groups. Instead of totally blotting out existing Indian customs as had been the policy, the government now proposed to build on the craft traditions of Indians and saw their efforts as a way to solve the "Indian problem."

In the midst of all this activity DeCora was married. *The Southern Workman*, the Hampton Institute news magazine, reported the marriage of Angel DeCora to William (Lone Star) Dietz in the early summer of 1908. Dietz had been a student and art instructor at Carlisle and was best known as a football player on their famous team (1910-1912). Born on the Rosebud Reservation, he was part Sioux and part white. His father, William Dietz, was a German railroad engineer captured by the people of Red Cloud, and his mother an Indian woman of the tribe. While Lone Star was a baby, he was taken by his father to Rice Lake, Wisconsin. The elder Dietz remarried and young Long Star grew up believing he was white. When he learned of his origins, he ran away from a preparatory school to the Rosebud Reservation, where he met and lived with his uncle, One Star. From Rosebud he went to the Chilocco Indian School in Oklahoma and later to Carlisle. At Carlisle he developed his talent for drawing and other forms of artwork under the direction of Angel DeCora, whom he had met previously at the St. Louis Exposition of 1904. The student-teacher relationship blossomed into a romance and the two artists were married. Lone Star was twelve years younger than DeCora.

While at Carlisle he did most of the covers for *The Red Man*

and is referred to as a "student artist" in the publication. After their marriage Dietz began to assist DeCora in teaching the art classes. He left Carlisle in 1915, and spent much of the rest of his life either coaching football or working in the arts, including a stint as an art production manager in a New York advertising agency. He tried to establish an art academy in Pittsburgh during World War II.<sup>52</sup>

Following their marriage, the couple traveled to the Sioux reservation, possibly to Rosebud, where Angel visited with the elderly women. She stated the purpose of these visits in a later speech, as follows:

I have visited Indian tribes with the view of getting an insight into the Indian woman's life and her natural tendencies in domestic life; not with the purpose of giving her instruction in the improved methods of domestic science, but to find out the kind of work she does in which she employs her native designs.<sup>53</sup>

It is evident from this statement that DeCora realized that she could learn from the reservation Indians. She used the same open-ended attitude which she demonstrated in her approach to her students.

Dietz and DeCora collaborated on several projects other than teaching and the publication of *The Red Man*. In 1911 Little, Brown and Company published *Yellow Star: A Story of East and West*, by Elaine Goodale Eastman, poet and wife of the Indian leader, Dr. Charles A. Eastman. The illustrations in the book were done jointly by Angel DeCora and Lone Star Dietz (Figure 5). The quality and style of these illustrations make an interesting contrast to the work done individually by either artist. Those in which DeCora had a hand are the only known examples of her work from this period. Several of DeCora's paintings may have been exhibited in a Paris salon in 1910 and may have been done during this time.<sup>54</sup>

At about the same time of the publication of *Yellow Star*, the Society of American Indians was founded in Columbus, Ohio, by college-educated Indians. This organization was the first reform-oriented Pan-Indian movement of the 20th century. Both Dietz and DeCora were members from the inception. DeCora addressed the first meeting of the society on the subject of "Native American Art." Although Dietz's enthusiasm for the group diminished over the years, DeCora's did not. In fact she left \$3,000 to the society in her will.<sup>55</sup>

The organization's "ideological common denominator was the

postulate of a non-vanishing Indian race as a vital element in a democratic and progressive nation. Its organizational format closely resembled that of other American reform organizations."<sup>56</sup> Under the ideological umbrella, Indians like the Reverend P. J. Deloria, Henry Roe Cloud, Rosa B. LaFlesche, Arthur C. Parker and other Indian graduates of eastern colleges who had made a "success" in the white sense, gathered to pool their resources. Their goal was to reform the institutions which government and religious agencies had created to serve Indians. There were some white members of the group, but the Indians wanted to control the organization and clearly took charge of the meetings and publications.

The proceedings of the first meeting which they held in Columbus, Ohio, indicate that they were interested primarily in resolving the ambivalent position of the Indian in American society. They criticized the system for making the Indian "neither a citizen nor a foreigner."<sup>57</sup> Generally the aim of the group was to provide a forum in which Indians could freely discuss the problems that were plaguing them. They hoped to pull reservation Indians into the modern world and to see them as acculturated as they themselves were.

The first conference dealt with a variety of topics including the Indian in agriculture, industry, the professions, the law and the Indian, the issue of citizenship, and landholding policies. In a sense DeCora's plea for the preservation of old art forms and their recombination with modern technology was one of the few speeches which applauded the Indian's past achievements.

Several years later, J. N. B. Hewitt, the Tuscarora anthropologist on the staff of the Bureau of American Ethnology and a member of the society, began a push for the teaching of ethnohistory in Indian schools and the creation of a textbook to accomplish this purpose. During the first meeting DeCora received some support for her historical stance from Arthur C. Parker, the Iroquois historian and anthropologist. He gave a speech on the philosophy of Indian education, in which he expressed his fears that the Indian would be made into a pseudo-white with no conception of his past accomplishments. His desire was to see his race become full citizens of America and to contribute to the progress of the country and humanity in general.

The Society of American Indians was short-lived, dissolving

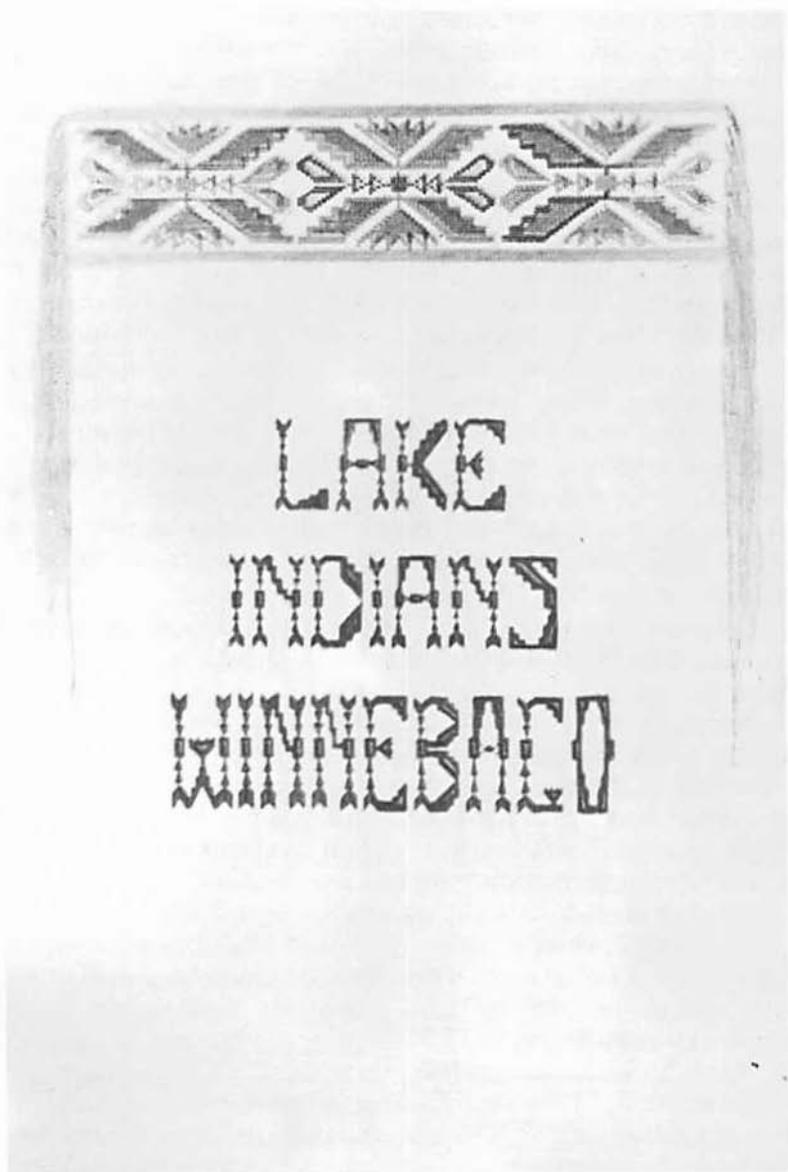
about 1920 for several reasons. Carlisle School, which had been the organizational rallying point, was no longer in existence. Reform groups of all kinds lost much of their influence after World War I. There also began to be a new emphasis on the distinctly tribal cultures. In any case the ideas of the group had not reached the reservation Indians. Many of the members of the society were also initiates of the Pan-Indian peyote church. It was peyotism and not the society which truly united educated and non-educated Indians. For instance, Oliver LaMere, cousin of Angel DeCora, was strongly attracted to peyotism because "it mixed Christianity, Winnebago customs and Pan-Indianism."<sup>58</sup>

The Society of American Indians was a formative attempt by urban Indians to take control of their own destinies and to gain a voice in the white-based institutions which touched their lives and was a forerunner for the Pan-Indian movements which followed. It also stimulated the birth of *The American Indian Magazine*, a publication through which many of the ideas discussed at their conventions were presented to a broader public.

Prior to 1914 when new Superintendent Oscar Lipps was appointed to Carlisle by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Cato Sells, DeCora had the support of important government officials for her programs in native American art. But Commissioner Sells was opposed to some of his predecessor Leupp's programs, including native American development of arts. He cited a practical, social problem—alcoholism among Indians—as his major concern. These changes brought DeCora's work to a halt.

The Indian situation, always particularly vulnerable to political change, had begun to change again. Carlisle School closed in 1917 when it became a World War I army medical center. Angel DeCora and Dietz had left the school earlier. In 1915 Dietz became football coach at Washington State University at Pullman, and his wife resigned her post at Carlisle in December of that year to join him in the West. Their marriage was in difficulty. They were rarely seen together during their last year at Carlisle, and on November 30, 1918, they were divorced in Spokane, Washington.

DeCora wished to work again as an illustrator. In the summer of 1918, however, she worked as an arts and crafts teacher at Camp Oahe, a girls' summer camp started by Charles and Elaine Eastman. She considered creating a program for teaching



*Figure 7. The Winnebago title page designed by DeCora for The Indian's Book by Natalie Curtis.*

American Indian crafts to disabled veterans of World War I but instead ended her career as an illustrator of Devonian fauna for the New York State Museum at Albany.

During the winter of 1918-1919, DeCora became ill with pneumonia. She went to Northhampton, Massachusetts, to stay with a friend of college days, and died there on February 6, 1919, from pneumonia complicated by influenza.

Several of DeCora's lifelong friends and supporters wrote memorial articles after her death. Cora Folsom published a long obituary in *The Southern Workman*. Elaine Goodale Eastman wrote in the *Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians*. Oliver LaMere published a memorial calendar. Natalie Curtis wrote a long article devoted to DeCora and titled "An American Indian Artist" and expressed an appreciation of DeCora's life and work in the following words:

The death of Angel DeCora, the first Indian artist to express in the white man's world what her people might become, should rouse us to a keener realization of the significance of her conviction: "My people are a race of designers. I look for the day when the Indian shall make beautiful things for all the world."<sup>59</sup>

After the initial flurry of suitable obituaries and memorial articles, the world of art and education promptly forgot Angel DeCora's efforts to produce art and to bring cultural awareness to young Indians. In order to place DeCora's ideas concerning education into an historical context, it is necessary to establish what qualities about them were truly innovative and have had continuing impact.

DeCora was not without influence shortly after her death and during her short career as a teacher. A number of students who had worked under her at Carlisle continued on, at least temporarily, in art-related fields. Certainly her husband Lone Star used the lessons that he learned to support himself till the end of his life in the 1960's. Albright College in Pennsylvania, where he coached, has a collection of portraits of local dignitaries which Dietz painted in his later years. In *The Red Man* for September, 1913, John Farr, a Chippewa who graduated from Carlisle after studying with DeCora, was credited with drawing a plan for a New York public library.<sup>60</sup> Thomas Saul and Reuben Charles, both students of DeCora, received Gillespie Scholarships to study illustration and interior decoration at the Philadelphia School of Industrial Art.<sup>61</sup> Isaac Quinn<sup>62</sup> and Anna Miles,<sup>63</sup> also Carlisle students, continued artistic studies

at the Philadelphia School of Industrial Art. Samuel J. McLean,<sup>64</sup> who graduated in 1909, became an "art and penmanship teacher" at St. Mary's Mission near Omak, Washington. No doubt some of these people passed on DeCora's ideas to other Indians. It is also important that a group of eight Navajo silversmiths were brought to Carlisle to gain instruction in design and to learn more advanced technology. These men possibly carried back some of the ideas and techniques which they learned to their reservation in the Southwest.

It has been established through the data presented that Angel DeCora's teaching techniques and the ideas and methods which she developed reflected the first governmental recognition of the importance of Indian artistic traditions to American art. This she combined with practical experience as an illustrator and artist, the knowledge she gained through study of ethnographic objects and photographs and discussion with Indian artists. Because of the intensified awareness on the part of influential government workers of Indian arts and music, the program in native American art was established at Carlisle. Artists and collectors of handmade "curiosities" were also more cognizant of Indian art than ever before. Partially because of the influence of the Crafts Revival, there was a market for the products of Carlisle and of reservation Indians. The Carlisle experiment in teaching Indians the art of their race was the predecessor of many federally sponsored efforts—and Angel DeCora was at the heart of it.

#### IV

Shortly before Angel DeCora was hired to teach at Carlisle, several articles concerning Indian arts and crafts appeared in widely read magazines. Agnes Laut wrote "The Indian's Idea of Fine Arts" for a 1905 issue of *Outing* in which an analogy was drawn between the myths of white men and those of the Indian as expressed in art. She emphasized the basic humanity of both racial groups and asked for understanding and appreciation of Indian work. Many articles of this type emphasized the necessity for Indians to begin making items which would be useful in a white man's home, an attitude which infiltrated the efforts of DeCora at Carlisle and was partially a function of the afore-

mentioned Craft Revival and the efforts of the Southwestern traders. For instance, Margaret Eadie Henderson, in an article concerning the basketry of Northwest Indians, noted that the Indians were making basket "fruitstands, flask-cases with removable tops, photograph baskets, card receivers with beautifully curved pedestals, field glass cases and baskets shaped like Pompeiian vases."<sup>65</sup>

Natalie Curtis was probably the single most influential person in getting the government to institute reforms in Indian educational institutions. She was interested in preserving native American arts, myth, and music and in helping the Indian to adjust to the white culture surrounding him, "not by stamping out all that was native to him in the futile belief that he might thus be transformed into a White man, but by developing his character through the preservation and fostering of all that was valuable in his own distinctive culture."<sup>66</sup> Curtis took her plea directly to President Roosevelt, who made a comment on Indian art which clearly demonstrates the general ignorance about the culture of the Indian: "How many Congressmen do you suppose there are who would understand that there could be such a thing as 'Indian Art'? They will say, 'Another of Roosevelt's vagaries.'"<sup>67</sup>

Charles Eastman, the Sioux writer and student of Indian culture, also wrote several articles explaining Indian art for journals such as *The Craftsman*. His description in "Indian Handicrafts," an article published in *The Craftsman* for August, 1905, was relatively accurate on the arts of his own tribe. He also perpetuated an idea which was common in most discussions of Indians—that the Indian was a "natural" or "born" artist. This attitude also was held by Leupp and DeCora and shows up in the structuring of the Carlisle class.

A speech given at the National Education Association meeting of 1909 by A. J. Flynn emphasized the inborn ability of the Indian as an artist:

The Indian has a natural inclination toward such work. Through long training he has acquired a skilled hand. His outdoor life and the nature of his occupation make him a keen observer. He excels as an imitator. All these emphasize the adaptability of the man to this kind of occupation [*the arts*].<sup>68</sup>

In response to the view of the Indian as a "natural artist," the government planners seized on the arts as an economic "bootstrap" for Indians. Ever since the introduction of this

concept, schools, government officials, and many Indians have seen their traditional arts as a primary tool to be used to gain self-sufficiency. The Carlisle plan was different from the more recent plans which have encouraged tribal art centers and tribal art. DeCora and other educated Indians of her day saw art as one of the resources which an educated Indian could use to facilitate his or her *individual* entry into white society. They did not utilize a tribal orientation; if it was based on one focal point, it was the boarding school and the ideas which were generated there.

While it is true that many Indian children who were coming to the white educational system were raised in homes where their mothers made things by hand and instilled their own aesthetic on these items, DeCora's experience with the boy who had forgotten his tribe implies that some of the children had no more interest and inborn ability in art than the average white child. Howard Fremont Stratton, director of the Philadelphia School of Industrial Art writing on "The Place of the Indian in Art" in 1910, cited two approaches to Indian art used in his time. One was to suppress all that was Indian in students and the other was to encourage the student to produce exactly what Indians were making before the arrival of Europeans. His comment: "Of course neither was right or normal, and either would effectively arrest all rational development."<sup>69</sup> Stratton suggested freedom of intercourse between white and Indian worlds and giving the Indian the advantage of the most modern technical training in the arts. Stratton's ideas were too progressive for the government agencies, collectors, teachers, and artists who were to influence Indian art students for the next forty years.

The reaction of the educated Indian audience who heard Angel DeCora speak at a Society of American Indians conference in 1911 on "Native American Art" provides interesting commentary on the confusion of ideas concerning the future of the art of Indians. Charles Eastman applauded DeCora for her appreciation of the past achievements of Indians because he felt Indians had a great deal to be proud of in their history and that this should not be overlooked in their attempts to integrate their race in the white world. Laura Cornelius, another Indian listener, suggested that department stores selling supposed Indian handicrafts guarantee their authenticity. The only voice raised in opposition was from Horton G. Elm, who said, "Nobody appreciates more than I do that this matter of

Indian art is important, yet at the same time, we as a race cannot all be artists."<sup>70</sup>

The people who listened to DeCora's speech did not truly discuss what she had said. Each offered his or her own observation and ignored many of the rather profound ideas presented by DeCora herself. Only Eastman grasped the significance of her idea of looking backwards with pride before moving forward.

It should be mentioned that there were several other efforts to preserve, save, and perpetuate the Indian art which was contemporaneous with DeCora's work at Carlisle. None of these efforts had the seal of approval of the federal government. In Oklahoma the Mohonk Colony, under the auspices of the Lake Mohonk Conference of the Friends of the Indian and Other Dependent Peoples, worked to stimulate Indian artists. At Laguna Pueblo in New Mexico, Josephine Foard was conducting a project to teach the potters there to glaze their wares to make them more saleable.<sup>71</sup> There was also an Indian Industries League in Boston, Massachusetts. What this organization did is unclear. In addition there was an attempted exhibit of Indian art in 1919 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York. The exhibit planners were thwarted because the American Museum of Natural History felt that their museum should be the place where Indian arts could be shown. Walter Pach, in his 1920 article, "The Art of the American Indian," records the brief history of this undertaking and indicates his regret that the objects could not be taken out of their ethnographic context and shown in a fine arts museum.

In the 1920's the Indian administration moved further and further away from the principles of education established by Pratt. Boarding schools were built closer to reservations and tribalism was strengthened to some extent. The government was now concerned with providing economic salvation for groups rather than for individuals. Arts and crafts industries began to flourish. The Meriam Report, published in 1928 by the Brookings Institute, emphasized the need for development of native crafts industries. It said:

The survey staff had been impressed by the possibilities of the development of native Indian art and its application as an enrichment to our industry. Already possibilities in this direction have been demonstrated by private organizations and activities.<sup>72</sup>

The ideas propagated by the Meriam Report were basically



*Lone Star Dietz who married Angel DeCora in 1908. They were divorced in 1918.*

not so different from those practiced by DeCora and Carlisle, yet the report does not specifically mention her efforts. Because of the government intent to use the arts as an economic panacea, paternalistic regulations were proposed in the Meriam Report to control the quality and pricing of Indian arts. These controls went far beyond those exercised by DeCora in her classroom, for she did not expect all of her students to become practicing artists adding income through crafts to their tribes. She hoped merely to give the students a sense of pride in their own history.

## V

Angel DeCora's early experience set in motion a conflict between choosing a life on the reservation and a life as a student of art. The seed of the idea of being an artist was planted during DeCora's days at Hampton. She received praise and encouragement for her musical and artistic efforts there, and so logically and emotionally chose to follow that path rather than to return to a reservation and tribe which had no place for her.

The life of an artist has never been an easy existence and there are grounds to question DeCora's awareness of the difference between being a student of art and an economically stable

free-lance artist. In any case, she went on to Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts, to continue her artistic training. Smith College's purpose in teaching art to young women was not to prepare them for careers as artists, but to instill in them an appreciation of the arts which they would hopefully pass on to their husbands and children. Angel was not a typical Smith student; she had no family to support her nor the prospect of a suitable marriage upon graduation. She had to fend for herself, so she went to Philadelphia for training in a practical art, illustration. Her old desire to be a portraitist and landscape painter haunted her though, as evidenced by her return to Boston Museum of Fine Arts School. The economics of survival finally limited her choices, and in the end she chose to illustrate and then to become a teacher.

In spite of the short duration of her career as an artist and her general adherence to traditional western European techniques and style, DeCora touched on areas of design which were prophetic of future art. The work in which she used Indian-like script and applied two-dimensional Indian motifs to paper was especially predictive of what was to come among both Indian and white artists.

When DeCora returned to the comforting Indian educational unit of Carlisle, she had a home base again. Because of the added security of being with other Indians, being given responsibility and support of the United States government for the program in native Indian art, DeCora lost some of her ambivalence and blossomed as a spokeswoman for the preservation of Indian culture and as a creative teacher. During this period she also reunited with her Indian heritage through teaching Indian children, marriage to an Indian, trips to various reservations and membership in the Society of American Indians. She had an effect on the future of Indian art through her students who continued to work in the arts and through the speeches she made concerning Indian art.

Although there were efforts by charitable groups, traders in the Southwest, anthropologists, and interested individuals to kindle interest in saving Indian arts and crafts, Angel DeCora was at the center of the first major government-supported effort to do so. The program which she was part of at Carlisle was not only exemplary of Indian art but was a prototype for the much-expanded programs which followed in the succeeding years.

## CHRONOLOGY OF ANGEL DECORA

- 1871, May 3            Angel DeCora born at the Winnebago Agency in Dakota County, Nebraska.
- 1883                    DeCora is taken to the Hampton Normal and Agricultural School in Hampton, Virginia.
- 1887, June 21        DeCora returned to the reservation.
- 1888, November 10    Returned to Hampton to complete course of studies.
- 1891                    Graduated from Hampton and went to Miss Burnham's School in Northampton, Mass.
- 1892                    Went to Smith College to study art under the direction of Dwight Tryon.
- 1896                    Graduated from Smith and went to Philadelphia to study illustration at the Drexel Institute under the direction of Howard Pyle.
- 1897, Summer        Went on art study trip to Fort Berthold Indian Reservation.
- 1899                    Published "The Sick Child" and "Grey Wolf's Daughter," two stories she had written and illustrated, in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* for February and November.
- 1899                    Moved to Boston to continue art studies at Cowles Art School with Joseph DeCamp.

- 1899-1900                      Worked on designs for Indian students to apply to cabinets shown at the Buffalo Exposition.
- 1899-1902                      Maintained a studio at 62 Rutland Square in Boston.
- 1900-1902                      Studied at the Museum of Fine Arts School in Boston with Frank Benson and Edmund C. Tarbell.
- 1902                              Went to New York to open a studio.
- 1900-1906                      Did the illustrations for Francis LaFlesche's *The Middle Five: Indian Boys at School*; Mary Catherine Judd's *Wigwam Stories*; Zitkala-Sa's *Old Indian Legends*; and Natalie Curtis' *The Indian's Book*.
- 1904                              Worked on Indian exhibit at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri.
- 1906                              Appointed by Commissioner Francis E. Leupp to be instructor of native American art at the Carlisle Indian School, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.
- 1906                              Spoke before the Congress of Americanists in Quebec on the subject, "An Effort to Encourage Indian Art."
- 1907                              Participated in the Indian exhibit at the Jamestown Tercentennial and was awarded a prize for her exhibit of Indian art student work.
- 1907, July                      Attended and spoke on native American art at the National Educational Association convention in Los Angeles.

## ON THE TRAIL

### THE AMERICAN EAGLE AN INDIAN SYMBOL

BY CHARLES A. EASTMAN (Ojibwa)

**A**ll nations have emblems or insignia, representing something of their spirit and ideals, and it appears that this custom is of remote origin. In this instance,

as in many others, the poetry and mysticism of untutored man has set its impress upon a later and more material age. We find that the civilized nations of today still use the original coat-of-arms adopted by their primitive forebears, or a modified form of the same. A few have borrowed the emblem of the native inhabitants of

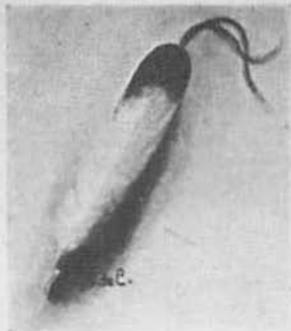
the country which they acquired and upon which they founded their nationality; and among these we should class the United States of America.

The American Eagle is our national emblem, but probably few

know that it is also the sacred emblem of the American Indian. I believe this fact to have been universally recognized among the different



tribes with their wide variations of language and custom. It is true that other countries have adopted the bird as the symbol of power and fierceness, but ours is not the Imperial Eagle of Russia or Austria; we have the best reasons and the sanction of



ancient traditions native to this soil, for investing it with a higher and a finer meaning.

The true significance of the American emblem is religiously set forth

Figure 8. First page of Eastman's "The American Eagle, an Indian Symbol" with illustrations by DeCora.

- 1907, Summer            Visited Pueblo groups and inter-  
changed ideas about designs with  
women artisans there.
- 1908, July                Married William (Lone Star) Dietz, a  
Sioux Indian and student at the  
Carlisle School.
- 1908, Summer            Visited Sioux women artisans on the  
reservation and discussed their arts  
with them.
- 1908, October 21-23    Spoke before the Lake Mohonk  
Conference on native Indian art.
- 1911                      Did illustrations with Dietz for *Yellow  
Star: A Story of East and West* by  
Elaine Goodale Eastman.
- 1911                      Became a member of the Society of  
American Indians and delivered an  
address at the society's first meeting in  
Columbus, Ohio; her subject was  
"Native Indian Art."
- 1914                      Attended meeting of the Society of  
American Indians at Madison, Wis-  
consin.
- 1915, December        Resigned post at Carlisle Indian  
School and left to join Dietz, who was  
coaching football at Washington State  
University, Pullman.
- 1918                      Divorced Dietz on November 30 in  
Spokane, Washington, and returned to  
New York.
- 1918, Summer            Taught arts and crafts at Camp Oahe,  
a summer camp run by Charles and  
Elaine Eastman.

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1918, Fall

Worked as an illustrator of Devonian fauna for New York State Museum.

1919, February

Died of pneumonia and influenza in Northhampton, Massachusetts, age 48.

1919

Summer issue of *The American Indian Magazine*, the publication of the Society of American Indians, has an article by Dr. Charles Eastman which was illustrated by Angel DeCora.

1919, November

An issue of *The Southern Workman* records the fact that Angel DeCora left \$3,000 in her will to the Society of American Indians.

1920, October

An issue of *The Southern Workman* records that a memorial calendar was prepared in honor of Angel DeCora by her cousin Oliver LaMere.

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