

**DAVID ZEISBERGER'S
HISTORY OF
THE NORTHERN
AMERICAN INDIANS**

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David Zeisberger's History of the Northern American Indians by David Zeisberger & Archer B. Hulbert & William N. Schwarze

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OHIO STATE ARCHAEOLOGICAL
AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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PREFACE.

The History of the Northern American Indians herewith made public by The Ohio State Archæological and Historical Society appeared originally in the regular Quarterly publications of the Society for January and April, 1910. The unique interest and value presented in this manuscript of David Zeisberger is such that the members of the Publication Committee of the Society felt they could in no way better subserve the purpose of the Society than by producing this historical material for its patrons and the general public. Some two years ago the Society learned of the vast and rich storehouse of original manuscripts preserved by the Moravian Church at its national headquarters in Bethlehem, Pa. Visits by members of the Ohio Society to Bethlehem revealed the extent of the historical lore there on deposit. Concerning the records preserved in the Moravian Library at Bethlehem, an article by Prof. Hulbert appeared in the QUARTERLY of The Ohio State Archæological and Historical Society for April, 1909, Volume XVIII, page 199. Much of the material in this library consists of the journals, diaries and records of the Moravian missionaries to the American Indians, recounting their indefatigable and self-sacrificing labor among the copper-colored savages of Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, Michigan, and even Canada. These recitals for thrilling romance, religious devotion and incomparable privation are second only to the Relations of the Jesuit Fathers.

Perhaps the Ohio State Archæological and Historical Society never rendered a more valuable service, in its purpose to secure and preserve original historical data, than it has rendered in the present publication. The Zeisberger Indian History is more than a contribution at first hand to early Ohio chronicles; it not only throws new light upon the character and customs of the aborigines, but it imparts such an additional fund of knowledge to the period in question that it gives in no slight degree a new coloring to some phases of previously accepted history.

The Library authorities of the Moravian Church, at Beth-

lehem, generously granted permission to the Ohio Society to translate and publish, under agreed conditions, such portions of the Moravian Archives as might be selected. For this inestimable privilege the officials of the Ohio Society hereby express their appreciation and gratitude. For the work of editing and annotating the translations the services of Prof. Archer B. Hulbert were secured. How successfully he has accomplished his task the notes following the text of the manuscript amply testify. The Society is also most fortunate in securing the services of the Rev. William Nathaniel Schwarze, Librarian of the Moravian Archives and Professor in the Moravian Theological Seminary, as the translator of the manuscripts selected for publication.

E. O. RANDALL,

*Secretary and Editor Ohio State Archaeological
and Historical Society.*

April 1, 1910.

DAVID ZEISBERGER'S HISTORY OF THE NORTHERN AMERICAN INDIANS.

INTRODUCTION.

The present volume reproduces the manuscript written in German by the Moravian hero-missionary, The Reverend David Zeisberger, at his mission home beside the Muskingum River, in Ohio, in the years 1779 and 1780.

Though there is extant a most excellent biography of this noble man, *The Life and Times of David Zeisberger*, by Bishop Edmund De Schweinitz (Philadelphia, 1870), very little is popularly known of him.

In the center of the old Black Forest of America, near New Philadelphia, Ohio, a half-forgotten Indian graveyard lies beside the dusty country road. You may count here several score of graves by the slight mounds of earth that were raised above them a century or so ago. At one extremity of this plot of ground an iron railing incloses another grave marked by a plain marble slab. The grave is David Zeisberger's,— Moravian Missionary to Indians in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and Canada for fifty active years, who was buried at this spot at his dying request, that he might await the Resurrection among his faithful Indians. His record is perhaps unequalled in point of length of service by the record of any missionary in any land.

On a July night in 1726 a man and his wife fled from their home in Austrian Moravia toward the mountains on the border of Saxony, for conscience' sake. They took with them nothing save their five-year-old boy, who ran stumbling between them, holding to their hands. The family of three remained in Saxony ten years. Then the parents emigrated to America, leaving the

son of fifteen years in Saxony to continue his education. But within a year he, too, took passage for America, and joined his parents in Georgia, just previous to their removal to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

The lad soon became interested in the study of the Delaware Indian language among the natives of that tribe living along the Susquehanna, and at once showed proficiency. Appreciating his talent, the fathers of the Moravian Church determined to send the young man to Europe, that in the best universities he might secure his training. He went as far as New York. There, just as his ship was to sail, he pleaded with tears and on his knees to be allowed to return to the woods of Pennsylvania and the school of the red men there. The words of the wise were overcome by those of the youth, and an earnest soul, as brave as it was earnest, was saved to a life of unparalleled service and devotion.

On returning to Bethlehem, Zeisberger joined a class that was studying the Iroquois tongue, the language of that powerful nation which practically controlled, by tomahawk and threat, all the territory between the colonies and the Mississippi. Soon the looked-for opportunity of visiting the Iroquois' land came, and the young student (who had been enrolled in the class of candidates as *David Zeisburger, destiniertes Heidenbote*) was told off to accompany the heroic Frederick Christian Post. This was in the dark year 1745, only a few months previous to the outbreak of the old French war. The youth was now in his twenty-fourth year.

In February of the next year after these two men entered the shadow of old New York, the report was circulated in New York City that two spies had been captured among the Iroquois, who were guilty of attempting to win that nation over to the French. Such a charge at this time was the most serious imaginable, for the contest for the friendship of the Iroquois between the French on the St. Lawrence and the English on the Atlantic had become of great importance. Upon that friendship, and the support it guaranteed, seemed to hang the destiny of the Continent. The rumor created endless consternation, and the

spies were hurried on to Governor Clinton. Their trial resulted in imprisonment for six weeks, until the two were freed by an ordinance passed by Parliament exempting the missionaries of the Moravian Church from taking oath to the British Crown. Such was Zeisberger's first experience.

Back to the Iroquois land journeyed the liberated prisoner, and for ten doubtful years, until 1755, Zeisberger was engaged in learning the languages of the various tribes of the Six Nations, and in active missionary service. His success was great. Perhaps in all the history of this famous Indian Nation there was no other man, with the exception of Sir William Johnson, whom they trusted as much as they trusted David Zeisberger. Cheated on the one hand by the Dutch of New York and robbed on the other by the agents of the Dutch and the English, the Iroquois became suspicious of all men; and it is vastly more than a friendly compliment to record that in his mission-house at Onondaga, they placed the entire archives of their nation, comprising possibly the most valuable collection of treaties and letters from colonial governors ever made by an Indian nation on this continent. But war now drove the missionary away, as throughout his life war was ever to dash his fondest dreams and ever to drive him back.

Between 1745 and 1750 Zeisberger labored in New York, at Shamokin in Pennsylvania and in the valley of Wyoming; in 1750 he went to the Iroquois land with Cammerhoff; he then visited Europe but returned immediately and was a resident at Onondaga until the old French war opened in 1755; he was at Friedenshütten in 1765 and 1766; in the year following he crossed the mountains for the first time and met the Delawares on the Allegheny River; in 1768 and 1769 he was stationed in western Pennsylvania at Goscligoshünk, and at Lawanakhannek in 1769 and 1770; in the latter year his work carried him to the Beaver River; a year later he advanced to the Muskingum River in Ohio where the three well-known Moravian mission stations were built, Gnadenhütten, Lichtenau and Schoenbrunn; from now until 1781 he lived among the Delawares, though visiting the savage Shawanese in the Scioto

on at least one occasion; in 1781 his mission was broken up by the British renegades and the missionary was driven with his flock to Sandusky. Now, in 1781, begins the *Diary of David Zeisberger*, edited by Eugene F. Bliss (Cincinnati, 1885) which has been the only work published in English of Zeisberger's.

The record of Zeisberger's resolute faithfulness to the remnant of his church from this time onward is almost incredible. Like a Moses he led them always, and first to a temporary home Macomb County, Michigan. From there they were in four years removed by the Chippewas. The forlorn pilgrims now set sail in two sloops on Lake Erie; they took refuge from a terrible storm in the mouth of the Cuyahoga River. For a time they rested at a temporary home in Independence Township, Cuyahoga County, Ohio. Famine drove them in turn from here. Setting out on foot, Zeisberger led them next along the shore of Lake Erie westward to the present site of Milan, Erie County, Ohio. Here they resided until the outbreak of the savage Indian War of 1791. To escape from this Zeisberger secured from the British Government a tract of land twelve miles long and six miles wide for the Moravian Indians beside the Grand River in Canada. Here the pilgrims remained six years. But with the close of the Indian War, it was possible for them to return to their beloved home in the Tuscarawas Valley. The United States had given to the Moravian Church two tracts of land here, embracing the sites of the three towns formerly built, containing in all twelve thousand acres.

Back to the old home the patriarch Zeisberger brought his little company in the year 1798. His first duty amid the scene of the terrible Gnadenhütten Massacre was not forgotten. With a bowed head and heavy heart the old man and one assistant gathered from beneath the dense mass of bush and vine, whither the wild beasts had carried them, the bones of the ninety and more sacrificed Christians, and over their present resting-place one of the proudest of monuments now rises. For full ten years more this hero labored in the shadow of the forests where his happiest days had been spent, and only as the winter of 1808