

2-28-1973

## In Pursuit of Dancing the Indian Way: Part II

Mark G. Thiel

Marquette University, [mark.thiel@marquette.edu](mailto:mark.thiel@marquette.edu)

2073

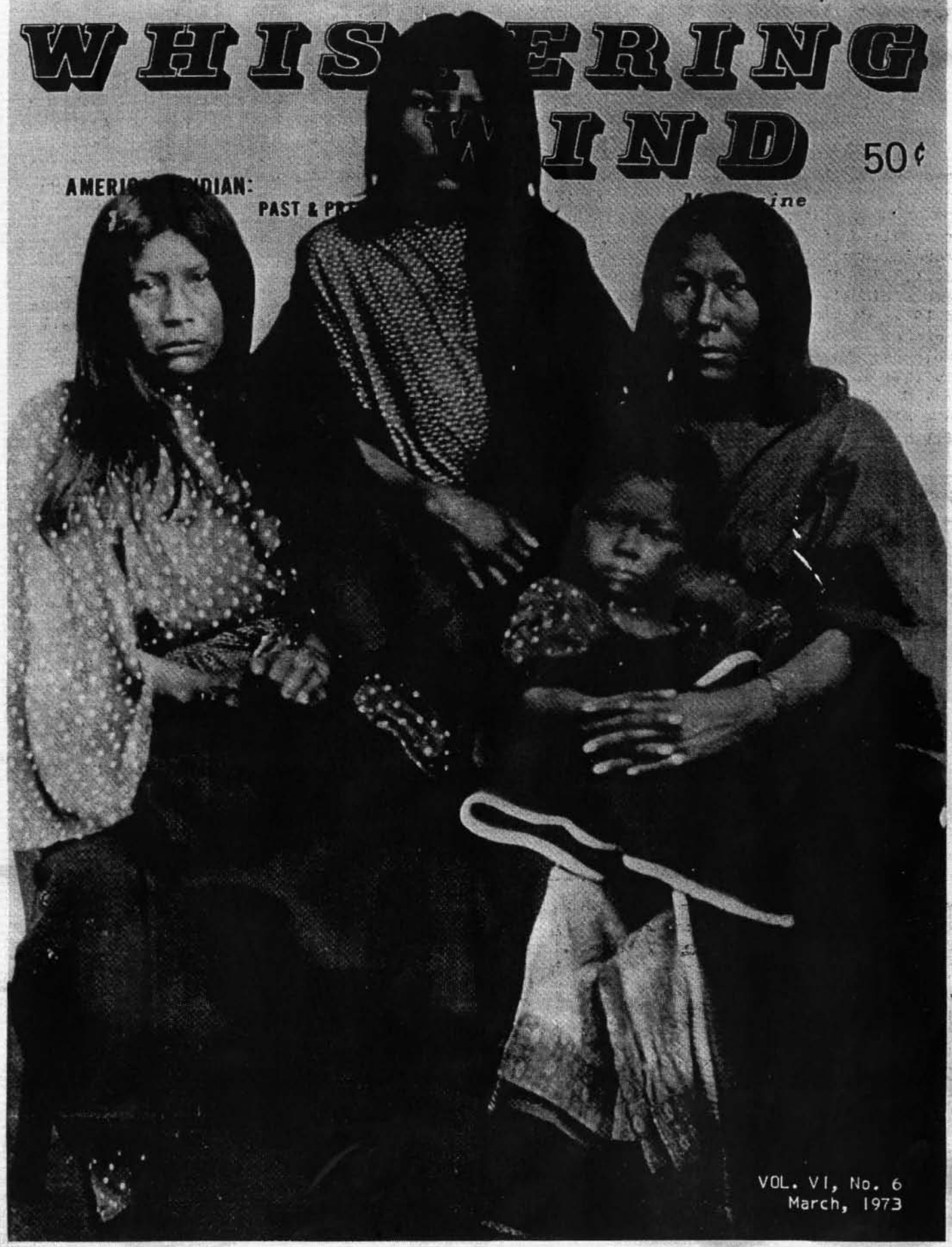
# WHISPERING WIND

50¢

AMERICAN INDIAN:

PAST & PRESENT

Magazine



VOL. VI, No. 6  
March, 1973

# Staff

## EDITOR :

Jack B. Heriard

## ASSOCIATE EDITORS:

Sid Dingman  
Edward H. Doleac III  
Darlene Heriard  
Rex Reddick

## CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:

Forest Luc  
John Ross  
Will T. Nelson  
Mike B. Ellis  
Steve Ledbetter  
Tommy Parker  
John P. West

## PHOTOGRAPHY:

Dick Madaus  
Tom Kelly  
Joseph Kazumura

## ART DEPT.

Terry Robinson  
Bruce Guraedy  
Bill Brewer  
James Mewes  
Robert Ellis

## REPRESENTATIVES:

Sid Dingman,  
Warrensville Hts., Ohio  
Tommy Parker,  
Flemington, New Jersey



# WHISPERING WIND Magazine

AMERICAN INDIAN:  
PAST & PRESENT

## TROT DANCE SONGS

### "TROT DANCE SONGS of the PONCA"

Songs & Translations by Lamont Brown  
Text by Jay Railey & Jack Heriard

4

## LIHA NEWS

7

## MIRROR BOARDS

Photo Feature by Tom Kelly  
Boards Constructed by Mark Bilich, Sr.

8

## "IN PURSUIT OF DANCING THE INDIAN WAY"

Part II by Mark Thiel

10

## POWOW DATES

12

## CLASSIFIED ADS

15

WHISPERING WIND Magazine is published monthly except July and August by the Louisiana Indian Hobbyist Association, Inc. WHISPERING WIND Magazine is the official publication of the Louisiana Indian Hobbyist Association, Inc. and is sent to all members of LIHA as a part of their membership.  
SUBSCRIPTION RATES: \$3.50 per year (10 issues); \$6.00 for two years. Outside of the U.S., please add an additional \$1.00 per year for postage. Contributions to WHISPERING WIND Magazine in the form of articles, drawings or photos may be sent to WHISPERING WIND Magazine and become the property of WHISPERING WIND Magazine. WHISPERING WIND Magazine reserves the right to edit all material contributed.  
Printed in the United States of America. © Jack B. Heriard, 1973. Established: October, 1967.  
Second class postage paid at New Orleans, Louisiana. Advertising rates sent on request. Address all correspondence to: 4778 Pauline Drive, New Orleans, Louisiana 70126.

The Louisiana Indian Hobbyist Association, Inc. is a non-profit, state chartered organization created to educate the general public in the true customs, traditions, dances and crafts of the American Indian; to establish high standards of dancing and crafts among its members as well as bringing to all LIHA members the customs and traditions of the American Indian through monthly publications. Membership in L.I.H.A. is open to any individual regardless of residence. Membership is \$3.00 per calendar year. Family rates are available. Membership entitles each individual member to all rights and privileges as set forth in the LIHA Constitution and by-laws as well as a subscription to WHISPERING WIND Magazine for the duration of membership. Current membership year ends December 31, 1973.  
Registered address of LIHA, Inc.: 4412 Lefkoe Street, Metairie, Louisiana 70002. Address all correspondence to: LIHA; 4778 Pauline Drive, New Orleans, Louisiana 70126.

The views expressed in WHISPERING WIND Magazine are not necessarily those of the advertisers.

# IN PURSUIT OF DANCING

grabhill photo



pine ridge agency, 1891

photo by dick madaus



driftwood, texas 1971

## THE INDIAN WAY

### PART II

by *Mark Thiel*

#### Close-up of a Local Development

**I**n Wisconsin the Native people have a relatively strong mark on the native land and their presence is quite noticeable in a number of areas. Numerous place names of communities, counties, roads, rivers, and lakes are of Native origin. There are a number of reservations and Native communities across the state. Some of these groups, most notably the Wisconsin Winnebago, hold dances that are open to the general public. This substantial Native impact is magnified and exploited by the large tourist industry. In tourist areas like Hayward and Wisconsin Dells, Native dances are performed to attract tourist dollars. The 1972 official highway map illustrates this point. It contains pictures of Indians, canoes, teepees, and a picture of Stand Rock, location of the famous Indian ceremonial.

This Native impact has also contributed to the non-Indian interest in Native arts and crafts. This non-Indian interest is predominantly found in the urban areas where it has been fostered via such "grass roots" promoters organizations as the Boy Scouts. One such urban area is Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

In Milwaukee, the "Indian lore" movement as it was called began as a result of the initiative of W. Ben Hunt. In the late 1930's the local Boy Scout leaders wanted a craft program to teach their troops. Hunt, at leader training sessions, introduced a Native American Arts and Crafts program. The craft program was a big success and the scout leaders were pleased at the great variety of Native crafts and the flexibility this allowed. Interest grew and as a result scouts and leaders interested in "Indian

## IN PURSUIT OF DANCING THE INDIAN WAY

lore attempted Native dancing and began founding Indian dance hobby clubs. This enthusiasm even reached the television screen in the early 1950's. An enterprising "Order of the Arrow" scout leader became the M.C. of a local children's show. Known as "Chief White Buck", this show featured traditional Indian children's stories and cartoons. The program became quite popular with the young people of Milwaukee. The growth of the hobbyist movement in Greater Milwaukee resulted in the founding of the Wa-Ba-Ski-Wa Fair by Hunt and others. From 1948 through 1963, it was an annual gathering of hobbyists who came together for a weekend of camping, dancing and dance contests. People pitched teepees, sellers of crafts, costuming, and Native foods set up stands. In its "hey day", the early 1960's, hobbyists came from Chicago and other areas of the Midwest.

In the late 1950's, the Milwaukee area hobbyists discovered the social dances of the rural Wisconsin Winnebago. The major dances are held at the tribal powwow grounds in Black River Falls, with others being held in Pittsville and Wisconsin Dells. According to one hobbyist, he was greatly impressed by his first visit to a Native dance which was "Black River". He was impressed by the enthusiasm of the dancers, their beautiful costumes, and the singing which gave him the urge to dance. He found the people to be friendly and he also met other hobbyists.

As a result of positive experiences like "Black River", hobbyist attitudes towards dancing were revolutionized. Until now the hobbyists were ignorant of what was Indian singing; they had been dancing strictly to the beat of a drum. Having seen an actual dance, comprehension and interest grew. The quality of their dances increased and the

number of hobbyists attending Winnebago dances grew.

The contemporary Wisconsin Winnebago are descended from the northern bands of the tribe that insisted upon remaining in their homeland. Today their communities are located from Wittenberg on the northeast, to LaCrosse and the east, and to Wisconsin Dells on the south. The largest community is located in Black River Falls.<sup>15</sup> This nation of 2,000 people traditionally has maintained a strong tribal identity of common language, kinship, culture, and friendship, despite their not having a reservation. According to one traditional person, the Winnebago have retained a strong identity because they have more successfully kept missionaries out of their communities than have other Wisconsin tribes.

The Black River powwow is a manifestation of Winnebago determination to retain their identity. This old traditional dance retains elements from the traditional dance "Herucka"<sup>16</sup> and has incorporated elements from Western tribes and elements from industrial technology. The setting resembles a small county fair with a central dancing area surrounded by fry bread and beadwork stands and camping areas. The atmosphere is unhurried and allows the people to behave in their own manner. This dance also attracts numerous people from other tribes.

Duties on the powwow grounds are handled in the traditional manner, according to clan membership. The Buffalo clan handles announcing; it is in charge of the public address system and providing the M.C. The chief's family feeds the people, and provides maintenance and sanitation for the grounds.

The dancing takes place in the afternoon and evening within a circular dance area, approximately eighty feet in diameter. Surrounding this is the seating, underneath an arbor of boughs. In the center of the dance area is the "drum pit"; a circular area under an arbor for drums, singers and sound equipment.

The songs and dances are predominantly of the war dance type. Both old traditional and new songs are used. Since most singers are from Wisconsin and vicinity, songs are predominately Winnebago, Menominee, Chippewa, and Mesquakie. Songs from western tribes may also be sung, especially by younger singers. In addition to the war dance songs, there are traditional Winnebago specialties; the Snake Dance and Green Corn Dance.

....continued on p.13

### *About the Author*

Mark Thiel is a student majoring in sociology and anthropology at the University of Wisconsin in Stevens Point.

His interests in Indian dancing and culture originated in childhood and were stimulated by the Boy Scout movement and the Order of the Arrow. Through a friend of the late Ben Hunt, Mr. Thiel was introduced to the powwow circuit and began learning about the way of life of Wisconsin Indian people.

Presently Mr. Thiel is active in the Indian student organization in Stevens Point and is concentrating his studies in Indian culture. His manuscript, IN PURSUIT OF DANCING THE INDIAN WAY, was written for a course on Indian cultural change and for solving questions that the author had encountered in his associating with Indian people.

The style of war dancing and costuming of the men and boys has a strong Sioux influence. The costume is a variation of the feathers outfit, which has the "roache", a headpiece made with porcupine hair, and the "bustle", circles of feathers attached to the back of the neck and around the back of the waist, as the prominent pieces. Slow dancing resembles walking, "an when they really get going" dancing is a rapid flamboyant style.

The dancing of the women has maintained more of its traditional character. Costume are basically a blouse skirt combination, either of buckskin or cloth, or they may simply dance with only a long fringed shawl. Often their style of dancing is a swaying walk.

It is interesting to note that throughout the history of Indian-White contact, non-Indians have been accepted into Native society with relative ease.

"When white adults, and especially children, were captured in the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries by many different groups of Indians and lived



among them in daily intimacy, the apparent ease with which these individuals adjusted themselves to Indian culture(sic)".<sup>17</sup>

In traditional quarters this same ease of acceptance continues today. Hobbyist informants state that Native Americans often gave them words of advice and encouragement to dance and that they always felt accepted at the Winnebago dances.

Despite this ease of adjustment for non-Indians, conflicts do arise, often as a result of ignorance, arrogance, or insensitivity. One non-Indian informant sold a sacred medicine bag to a person who thought he was buying only a pretty pouch. The buyer began wearing it and was soon assaulted by an angry group of Indians. An Indian informant told of a time when a group of Boy Scouts, with no knowledge of dance customs insisted upon dancing when they were not supposed to. The people handled the situation by simply ignoring them. Another non-Indian told of an experience when a special family song was being sung and only the members of that family were supposed to dance. He happened not to be keeping his eye on his two year old son who began dancing with that family. He unsuccessfully tried to get his son's attention and became very embarrassed. Then the son of the Bear Clan chief came over and said, "That's okay, today he is my son." And holding the boy's hand, they together danced the remainder of the song.

As a result of favorable experiences with Native people at the rural powwows, the Milwaukee hobbyists founded the Hayluska Society (1961-1967). It was an idealistic organization that was founded for the purpose of promoting Indian-White friendships and understanding through the use of Indian social dances. It began as an all-white club but gradually it became integrated with one half of the membership being Indian. One portion of the Milwaukee Indian community was hostile towards the hobbyists; others were skeptical of associating with the hobbyist at first. One Native American informant stated that before his first experience with hobbyists, he did not know that such a movement existed. When he was attending his first hobbyists dance his host was especially hospitable. He became suspicious and suspected that this white man wanted something from him. He commented that the hobbyists had good costumes, but they did not know the dance songs—they danced only to the beat of a drum.

In its "hey day", the Hayluska powwows drew crowds of Indians and non-Indians

