North American Indians in the Great War
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University of Nebraska Press

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Introduction

I would go right now if they asked me.

—Arthur Elm (Oneida), twenty-one, Oneida, Wisconsin
1st Machine Gun Company, 127th Infantry, 32nd Division

Joseph K. Dixon, photographer, author, and Indian advocate, met Arthur Elm, Oneida Indian soldier, on March 27, 1919, at the Greenhut Debarkation Hospital #3 in New York City. Elm was recovering from wounds sustained at the battle of Cierges, France, during his service in the U.S. Army in World War I. Dixon, working to document Indian soldiers, was immediately impressed with Elm and interviewed him at some length. Dixon introduced the interview in his notes by remarking: "It is said that the Indians have no sense of humor. Listen to his testimony as he humorously told me how he lost so much blood that when they got him back to the hospital they gave him a transfusion of blood from the veins of an Irishman and the veins of a Swede, both of them orderlies." At this point Dixon let Elm take over and continue without interruption:

> After this, I didn't know what I was. I was a mixture of Indian, Irish and Swede. The infusion was in the chest and leg. The swelling was pretty bad. That went down. I got better and feeling that I was an Indian again. I went back to the front. Then it was that we landed in the battle of Juvingney [Juvigny].
>
> I was a member of the 1st Machine Gun Co. Battalion, 127th Inf., 32nd Division. At Cierges, we were the first ones in the battle. We took the town. I found a place where I could plant my machine gun. We had skipped a few Germans and they fired from our rear. That was where I was wounded.

At Cierges, we came to hand to hand fighting. I accounted for two and felt that the world was a damned sight better without them.

Juvingney was the hardest battle I was in. The advance was terrific. I was looking for a good position for my machine gun. I climbed up a rise of ground. Just on the outside of the steep slope, I ran into three wounded Germans with their legs all covered over. One of them was an officer. All three had Red Cross bands on their sleeves. I saw them just as they were in the act of throwing hand grenades at me. "Potato mashers" we called them. I rushed up to them and stuck my bayonet through all three of them. I felt that if they wanted to play dirty, I could play dirty too. Then we got down low to escape machine gun fire, stayed there two days, spent the time in sniping.

In the Argonne fighting, we were upon the front line. Our men had been without grub for two days and they were fighting like mad.

Volunteers were called for to go back through a continuous fire, and bring up food from the supply station.

I volunteered, as I always did. We were given, the sergeant and myself, a compass and a map. We had to dodge shells, crawl through thick, heavy brush and great tangles of barbed wire and watch for bombs from airplanes. We finally found the supply depot. We were told that they had orders to furnish us with a cart and mule. We had to wait for two hours. When finally we got our mule, loaded the cart and were ready to start. An airplane signaled to their artillery and they dropped a shell right on top of us. The mule and cart were blown to atoms, and all I could see was beans and tomatoes flying through the air. Two men were killed. I was left standing where the cart was, unhurt. The sergeant jumped behind a tree. We had nothing to take to our boys.

We saw a pile of boxes just beyond us covered with brush. We walked up to it and found an M. P. guarding a pile of boxes containing prunes and peaches. We told him our story. How the men were fighting with nothing to eat, and asked him to let us take a couple of boxes of prunes. He refused. Said they were for the men when they came out. The airplane seeing movement signaled again and a shell was dropped about 100 yards beyond us.

The M. P., not being used to bursting shells, ran into a dugout. The shell had exploded before he got there, but he kept on running just the same. While he was in there, we each took a box of prunes

> and started off for our lives. He came out and discovered us. He yelled at us and threatened to shoot. We hid behind the trees and got away. When we reached the lines, we found our Division had moved. We met a captain of a battalion, who asked us who we were and where we were going. We told him how we had been back for food and how we had stolen the prunes. He said: "You will not find your lines. My men have had nothing to eat. Open up your boxes and let us have them."
>
> I said "all right." It was not long before a crowd of men gathered about us, eating the prunes. They were soon all gone. The captain told the sergeant-major to take our names, that we deserved a recommendation and that he would send our names into regimental headquarters for a D. S. C. [Distinguished Service Cross].
>
> The military police knew my name and the name of the sergeant with me, and he reported us to headquarters, so that headquarters had two reports—one for distinguished service and the other for stealing prunes. So we had to pay for the prunes—we lost the D. S. C.

In his notes on the interview Dixon wrote, "I say 'damn such an M.P.'" Elm continued his narrative:

> In the Argonne, I heard a wounded man groaning. We waited until dark. The shells were bursting and the machine guns rattling, through these we dug our way through the barrage, which still continued. We crawled through the barbed wire until we found an American wounded. We took him out. My pal and I in looking for our outfit got lost. My pal was killed as we were on the return trip. We charged a machine gun nest, with two gunners. I killed one, my pal killed the other, but he lost his life at the same time. A sniper in a tree put a hole in my shoulder. Then I played possum. I dropped. The sniper came down. A German officer came running up toward me.
>
> I had only one shot in my revolver. He thought I was dead and he turned me over, and as he turned me I shot him through the head. Then I ran. Came back the same way. Passed a barn. Heard a click of the machine gun, directing the fire on Americans who were making the attack. They were concealed in a fox hole, all camouflaged. I had no gun. A revolver, but no ammunition. I saw a pile of grenades. I grabbed one. Pulled the fuse, and as I ran along, I dropped it in the hole. I stood behind a tree until it exploded. There was nothing left of them.

Dixon interjected with a question for Elm: "What do you think of Army life?" Elm responded:

> It ain't a bad life. Some guys kick about it, but I don't see if they are true Americans why they kick. Army life has got to be hard. You can't make heaven out of it.
>
> As I came into the port of New York on the "Antigone," a guy on the boat called out, "Who wants to re-enlist?" He meant it as an insult to the Army. I felt it was a pretty dirty remark. He didn't appreciate the kind of country he is living in, or the kind of country we have been fighting for.
>
> Just such guys will hinder the Government from raising 500,000 volunteers for the standing army. All the hardships I had, marching, hunger, danger, etc., I don't want any reward for it. I made the Dutchman pay for it.
>
> I reported for sick call only twice during the whole time that I was in France. No use. They would only give you iodine or pills.
>
> When we put over a barrage, it thrilled my heart. It thrills a fellow's heart, all right.
>
> I knew of a Winnebago Indian in the 128th, who had two sons with him. He was killed at Chateau Thierry drive—2nd battle of Marne—name of Foster.[1]
>
> I knew John Sky, Odanah, Wisconsin. Machine gunner in 127th Inf. He was the best gunner in the outfit. He could set up a gun in less time than anybody else. During a counter attack, Cerges [Cierges], he kept the gun going until it was red hot. The German attack broke down, but they located his gun and a shell mashed gun and gunner.[2]
>
> The 127th Inf. machine gun company was full of just such men. Most of the Indians I know were in that Machine Gun Company. They liked it. Figured that it was more effective than the rifle.
>
> I was over in Alsace, supposed to be a quiet sector. Went out on a combat patrol. Took two dozen hand grenades along. There was a canal in N M L [No Man's Land]. The Germans came over the Canal during the night, July 2nd. We let them come, and then gave them a dose, when they were 50 yards away. We let fly hand grenades until all that was left of them went back. I remained throwing mine like a baseball. I was base B team third base. Then I got back and the Germans took three prisoners. To talk about a quiet sector

> was a joke. We wouldn't have won the war in 50 years if trench warfare had continued.

Elm concluded the interview by showing Dixon the bugle on which he had played the cease-fire on November 11, 1918. He commented: "I couldn't believe it. Some of our men cried for joy."[3]

More than twelve thousand Indians served in the U.S. military in World War I, despite the fact that many of them were not U.S. citizens at the time and did not enjoy the benefits of enfranchisement.[4] Anthropological and historical studies of the American Indian experience in World War I have been limited.[5] In those studies that do exist scholars have generally argued that military service was beneficial for Indians, contributing to their efforts toward attaining U.S. citizenship and producing a new "tier of leadership."[6] These arguments are based largely on historical data such as newspaper articles and the records of government agencies.[7] While anthropologists conducted limited research with American Indian servicemen following World War II, there were no systematic, scholarly studies of Indian soldiers or sailors in World War I, either in service or on their return.[8] There were, however, at least three attempts shortly after the war to document Indian military service. One was Joseph Dixon's work, supported by businessman and philanthropist Rodman Wanamaker. The other attempts were by two government agencies, the Office of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Army's Historical Section. (See the appendix for a detailed discussion of all three sources.)

Each attempt was made for a specific reason. The Office of Indian Affairs (sometimes referred to as the Indian Office, and the precursor of today's Bureau of Indian Affairs) gathered general information on Indian servicemen as part of its ongoing effort to keep track of Indian people, especially those who were successfully moving into the larger society.[9] These records were solicited to support the U.S. government's policy of integrating and assimilating Indians into mainstream American life.[10] Following the war the U.S. Army's Historical Section also documented the experiences of Indian soldiers, especially the role of Indians as scouts.[11] It did so to support the prevailing image of the Indian as warrior, particularly suited to the scouting role.[12] The Office of Indian

Affairs data is thus much more extensive in the number of veterans documented and the time period covered. The army records offer, by comparison, only limited information on fewer soldiers, focused specifically on their wartime experiences.

For his part Dixon was especially interested in the cause of U.S. citizenship for Indians, and his documentation, including questionnaires, interviews, letters, and photographs solicited from Indian veterans and their families, was gathered to support this cause.[13] Consequently his records illuminate the struggle for Indian citizenship, and the confusion surrounding citizenship status for Indians, in the early decades of the twentieth century. Further, this set of records, collected between 1917 and 1926, is the only one that provides an Indian viewpoint on their experiences during World War I and immediately thereafter. Dixon's documentation, housed at the William Hammond Mathers Museum of Indiana University, includes information on 2,846 individual Indian servicemen. These records, previously unpublished, thus offer a rare opportunity to hear directly from Indian veterans themselves regarding their experiences in the war and their frustrations with the U.S. government.

In 1900 American Indians were at the nadir of their population, decimated by disease, warfare, colonization, and the effects of 150 years of U.S. federal Indian policy. Indian lands had been reduced through government efforts toward removal and the establishment of reservations, then further reduced through the allotment process.[14] Many Indian children had been forcibly taken and sent to federal boarding schools, which stripped them of their language and culture and failed to provide many of them with meaningful alternatives.[15] Indian people had limited access to health care and economic or educational opportunity and few rights to practice their traditional ways of life.

The very real population loss of Indian peoples, and the no less real threats to Indian cultures, meant that in 1900 American Indians were virtually a "vanishing race." This was certainly how most of the larger society viewed them. Indeed, the drama of Indians as the vanishing race could be found in the work of writers, painters, composers, and photographers, who used the theme of the disappearing Indian to lament the passing of the wilderness and the triumph of civilization. Edward Curtis's monumental twenty-volume work of prose and photographs, *The North American Indian*, was well under way by the time of World War I, and Joseph Dixon himself had been actively engaged in photographing the "vanishing race" since 1908.[16]

Dixon, along with many other advocates for Indian rights, saw U.S. citizenship as the greatest hope for Indians, who were ultimately doomed to extinction or assimilation. Enfranchisement would allow them a greater say in their own individual affairs and greater participation in U.S. society. Individual allotment of Indian lands, it was believed, was one way to achieve this, breaking up tribal holdings and tribal governments so that Indian people could be assimilated into the larger society.

Indian people themselves were increasingly calling for enfranchisement, and their participation in World War I was one way they chose to demonstrate their eagerness to defend their country and their ability to take control of their own affairs, without government supervision. Military service, for Indians, was also a way to uphold the longstanding warrior traditions that are integral to many tribes.

Dixon was a controversial figure during his lifetime, and his work remains controversial. He began as simply a photographer of American Indians but became one of the leading Indian-rights advocates of his day, seeing himself as the primary champion of Indians and their struggle for U.S. citizenship. In his efforts to document the vanishing race and then to help that race achieve enfranchisement, Dixon amassed some ten thousand photographs of Indian people across the United States and some twenty-eight hundred records of Indian servicemen in World War I, including questionnaires regarding their military service. His real and lasting contribution rests not in his advocacy, or in his own bombastic and argumentative prose, but in this data he collected, beginning with his photographs and ending with his documentation of Indian veterans.

Like any data, of course, Dixon's records must be contextualized and interpreted. This study thus presents the experiences of American Indian veterans in World War I and upon their return home, using the words of the veterans themselves, as collected by

Joseph Dixon. In his lifetime Dixon was not able to complete his work on Indian veterans, and his records have languished, unexamined even by researchers who have used Dixon's photographs of veterans. Dixon's documentation, however, can add significantly to our understanding of the experience of American Indians in World War I, particularly given its immediacy and individuality. His records came primarily from the veterans themselves, or from their families, while other records, such as those collected by the Office of Indian Affairs and the Historical Section, represent the data-gathering efforts of government agencies and lack the personal view of the Indian warrior experience in World War I and its aftermath.

Dr Joseph K. Dixon, Leader of the Expeditions to the North American Indian

—Joseph K. Dixon, The Vanishing Race

Joseph K. Dixon was born in Hemlock Lake, New York, a small town south of Rochester, on December 8, 1856. He grew up in Kansas, where his father, Adam Dixon, commanded the 3rd Brigade, Kansas State Militia. Dixon himself graduated from William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri, in 1879, with a Bachelor of Arts degree.[17] He trained as a minister, receiving his divinity degree from Rochester Theological Seminary, in Rochester, New York, in 1883.[18] He served in several Baptist churches over the next twenty years—in Auburn, New York; Philadelphia; Boston; and London.[19] He married and had two children, Rollin and Alice. His son later joined him in his work with American Indians. He divorced sometime in the early 1900s and left the ministry.

Dixon had been involved in photography for some time, entering his work in amateur photography contests even when he was a divinity student. In 1904 Dixon went to work for the Eastman Kodak Company, doing public relations work in the United States, England, and Germany to promote amateur photography. He accompanied the "Kodak Exhibitions," which included displays of up to 164 enlarged photographs, demonstrations of Kodak equipment, and lectures by Dixon. His own photographs were part of the exhibit, along with those of other amateurs and some professionals, including Edward Steichen and Alfred Stieglitz.[20] Two years later Dixon left Kodak and joined the Educational Bureau at the John Wanamaker store in Philadelphia, lecturing on history, literature, nature, and various educational topics.[21]

In 1908 Dixon's duties expanded when Rodman Wanamaker, the eldest son of the department store's founder, decided to finance a photographic expedition to the Crow Reservation in southern Montana. Dixon led the expedition, making photographs and films for his store lectures. The Wanamakers had a longstanding interest in American Indians; the elder John Wanamaker had financed collections of Indian artifacts for the University Museum at the University of Pennsylvania.[22] Both Rodman Wanamaker and Dixon were convinced that they were making a record of a "vanishing race."[23] Indeed, as noted earlier, many of their contemporaries shared this view, and other artists and photographers mounted their own expeditions to capture the passing of the "noble red man."[24]

Dixon and two photographic assistants—his son, Rollin, and James Bartlett Rich—spent three months at Crow in 1908 (see figure 1). Their primary project was a film entitled *Hiawatha*, using Crow actors, which became a staple presentation for many years to schoolchildren visiting the Wanamaker stores in Philadelphia and New York (see figure 2). Dixon also made photographs for other lectures, including scenes of animals, daily life at Crow, ceremonies, and portraits. Dixon and his assistants also staged and filmed a reenactment of the Battle of the Little Big Horn, which did not become part of Dixon's educational series, apparently because it did not meet his expectations.[25]

Dixon's second expedition was undertaken to photograph the "Last Great Indian Council," a gathering of Indian leaders from some fifteen tribes, arranged by Dixon. He was again accompanied by Rollin Dixon, along with two other photographers. The Indians came together in 1909 at Crow Reservation and spent several weeks in traditional activities, all photographed by Dixon (see figure 3). Many of these photographs were used in his book *The Vanishing Race*, which also included Dixon's descriptions of Indian life and the text of speeches given by the chiefs in council (edited and probably embellished by Dixon).[26]

Dixon and Rodman Wanamaker planned to build a memorial to the vanishing Indians, including a museum for Dixon's photographs. The U.S. government supported this plan and provided a site on Staten Island. Groundbreaking ceremonies were held on February 22, 1913.[27] Many government officials and local dignitaries attended, along with thirty-two Indian chiefs, who symbolically raised a large American flag and signed a "Declaration of Allegiance" to the United States (see figure 4). According to Dixon, the flag raising and the signing of the declaration had a profound effect on the Indians present. He quoted one as saying, "We never before have felt that we were part of this country."[28]

Indeed, American Indians in 1913 were not generally considered U.S. citizens, although some had obtained citizenship, primarily through the allotment process. Begun in 1887 with passage of the General Allotment Act, allotment, as noted earlier, was intended to break up tribal land holdings into individually held parcels. Following a period of trusteeship by the U.S. government, Indian allottees were to receive their allotted lands in severalty, along with citizenship.[29] The allotment policy was designed to eliminate tribalism and to promote individual Indian land ownership, thereby making Indians more like whites and capable of joining them as citizens. In reality, however, the allotment policy failed to lead to citizenship for many Indians, instead serving primarily to move Indian lands into the control of non-Indians.[30]

The success of the memorial ceremonies led Dixon and Wanamaker to plan a third photographic venture, an "Expedition of Citizenship." In addition to making documentary photographs, they planned to have tribes across the country reenact the flag raising and the signing of the Declaration of Allegiance, promoting the cause of Indian citizenship.[31] Dixon described himself in 1913 as "Dr. Joseph K. Dixon, leader of the expeditions to the North American Indian to perpetuate the life story of these first Americans."[32] This third expedition, however, moved beyond simply documenting the vanishing race to advocating for Indian rights.

Arrangements for this expedition were more complicated than for previous ones. Dixon and his party traveled by special train car, equipped with a photographic darkroom, as well as facilities for sleeping and cooking. Rollin Dixon served as one of his father's photographers, along with two others, and a stenographer transcribed the speeches at the flag-raising ceremonies. Major James McLaughlin accompanied the expedition as a representative of the Department of the Interior. Dixon and company visited eighty-nine reservations, presenting American flags to 169 different tribes over the course of their six-month 1913 expedition. The flag ceremonies and declaration signings were filmed and photographed, to become part of the collection to be housed at the Indian memorial (see figure 5). Dixon also continued to make portrait and landscape photographs, as he had on all his previous photographic expeditions.[33]

Dixon's interest in securing citizenship for Indians is what led him to campaign for greater Indian involvement in the U.S. military. In a letter to his sponsor, Rodman Wanamaker, Dixon noted his reasons why Indians who enlisted in the military should be granted citizenship: "If a man is willing to lay his life on the altar of his country, he should, in all fairness have the privilege of becoming a part of that country, sharing its privileges, possibilities and obligations."[34]

Even prior to the United States' entrance into World War I, Dixon was corresponding with members of Congress, urging that Indians be recruited as border guards to patrol the U.S.-Mexican frontier during the Mexican Revolution and its aftermath. In 1917 he testified on behalf of Representative Julius Kahn's Indian Cavalry Bill (HR 3970), which provided for ten or more regiments of mounted Indians to serve as part of the regular army. Dixon also attempted to enlist the support of various tribal leaders for the bill, although this never materialized. The Indian Cavalry Bill eventually died in committee, after strong opposition to its segregationist tendencies from the War Department and Cato Sells, commissioner of Indian affairs.[35]

Once the United States became actively involved in World War I in 1917, Dixon pointed out that Indian recruits could take the place of U.S. border guards, freeing the latter up to fight in Europe.[36] In a series of lectures in Pennsylvania and New York, Dixon harangued the U.S. government for keeping Indians disenfranchised and denying them the chance to serve.[37] He was quoted following one lecture as saying: "Is it not time to clear our own land of autocracy before we attempt to wipe autocracy from the map of Germany? Isn't our treatment of the Indian too autocratic and too despotic? Have we not interned a whole race of people—not for a period lasting during the war, but for life?"[38] In an effort to discredit the U.S. government's use of Indians, Dixon actually downplayed Indian enlistment and service in the military, stating, "It has been said that 5,000 of them are now in various branches of the service, but investigation has shown that there is no record of this fact at the Indian bureau, and, in my opinion, it is nothing but a piece of political camouflage."[39]

Following the war Dixon completely reversed himself on this point, instead emphasizing the number of Indians in military service, especially those not considered citizens. His estimate for Indian soldiers and sailors in the Great War now rose to seventeen thousand.[40] Dixon's efforts and those of other Indian advocates were partially rewarded when, on November 6, 1919, Indian veterans were granted the right to petition for citizenship. At the same time Dixon continued to press for the creation of separate Indian military units. Acculturation, he argued, would follow military service. He addressed the House Committee on Military Affairs on January 28, 1920, in support of legislation to incorporate one or more divisions of Indian soldiers into the reorganized U.S. Army. Despite Dixon's testimony and additional legislative efforts by Representative Kahn, however, no provisions were made for all-Indian divisions.[41]

In addition to lobbying for legislation, in 1919 Dixon began his last major project on behalf of American Indians and citizenship: he undertook documentation of the military service of all Indian men through photographs and personal testimony. Eventually he planned to publish the documentation in a book entitled "From Tepees to Trenches," which he hoped would aid in the cause of Indian citizenship.[42]

Dixon thus spent over half of 1919—from February to June and again briefly in September—interviewing and photographing Indian soldiers and sailors still in active service, in military hospitals, on ships, and in camps (see figure 6). His visits were confined to East Coast military bases, including hospitals in Washington DC, New Jersey, and New York; the navy fleet on the Hudson River;

and debarkation camps in New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts, where soldiers were awaiting their return to civilian life. He worked alone on this project, contacting military officers, taking photographs, and making notes on individual servicemen. He compiled his notes into eight books, with an eye toward a single, final volume. Dixon's photographs and notes from this effort document 186 servicemen.[43]

As noted earlier, later in 1919 and continuing through 1920 the U.S. Army's Historical Section was also collecting information on American Indians in the military, gathering data from approximately fifty of the one hundred army division historians. This resulted in records on 1,204 men, including name, tribe, branch of service, education, and sometimes comments from commanding officers. Dixon incorporated 1,174 of the Historical Section's records on individual servicemen into his own documentation.[44]

Possibly unsatisfied with the army's project, however, Dixon decided late in 1919 to expand his own information-gathering efforts. He sent out questionnaires to Indian veterans, asking them to comment on their service, their citizenship status, and any additional experiences they might have had in the war. He utilized his own contacts with Indian people on various reservations, Indian agents, school personnel, and Indian-rights organizations to distribute the questionnaires and have the information returned to him. The first set of questionnaires, which went out in early 1920, stressed that Indians themselves must provide the information in order for the record of their service to be complete.

By June 1920 the Office of Indian Affairs had also become interested in cooperating with Dixon. His questionnaire was then redesigned with a new cover letter, dated June 25, 1920. It included the names of John Barton Payne, secretary of the interior, and Cato Sells, commissioner of Indian affairs.

Dixon's papers include 1,361 questionnaires. Veterans themselves completed 485, with another 27 filled out by family members. Indian agents, teachers, or other government employees completed another 849, often in batches for all the veterans on a particular reservation. In addition to photographs, interviews, and questionnaires, Dixon's files contain information from other sources, such as letters from individual soldiers or their families, lists of veterans from various reservations, lists of Indians who received military decorations, and newspaper clippings on Indian servicemen. In total Dixon's own documentation covers 1,672 men, with an additional 1,174 records compiled by the U.S. Army's Historical Section.

This book utilizes Dixon's records to explore the willingness of American Indians to serve in the U.S. armed forces; their battlefield exploits; and their experiences as scouts and runners, roles to which they were assigned more often than other soldiers. It examines the realities of Indian veterans who were wounded or killed in battle and the experiences of those who did not see combat. Most important to understand about American Indians' service in World War I, however, is their frustration upon their return home. Dixon's documentation presents their confusion over their citizenship status and their desire to gain the full rights of citizenship.

The chapter headings are quotations from Dixon's papers or from Indian veterans themselves; each is cited in the chapter itself. All quotations are reproduced verbatim, including misspellings and grammatical errors. Where errors might lead to confusion for the contemporary reader, I have added clarifying information in brackets. Where missing words or punctuation might lead to confusion, I have also added bracketed clarification. Otherwise the language herein comes from the veterans themselves or from families and friends who helped to document their service.

I first encountered the work of Joseph Dixon as an undergraduate volunteer at the Indiana University Museum, now the Mathers Museum at Indiana University. I went to Indiana to take courses in its museum studies program, but even before I began the coursework, I wanted to work for the museum to gain experience in the field I had chosen. Dr. Wesley Hurt, the museum director, asked me about my interests, and I explained that I wanted to work with North American Indian collections. He took me to see the Dixon photographs, and I began doing basic archival and conservation work with them, sleeving the photographs and cutting mat-board supports for the glass negatives. I found myself captivated by this collection of thousands of images of Indian people, some from my own Oklahoma Cherokee tribe, many more from tribes I had only heard of, and some from tribes whose names I had never heard.

I spent the next five years working in one capacity or another with the Dixon photographs. Dr. Hurt, Curator of Collections Peter Gold, and Curator of Exhibits David Schalliol found funding for me as a work-study student, as a graduate assistant, and finally as a project researcher on a grant to catalog and make copy negatives of all the Dixon materials. I eventually helped curate an exhibit on Dixon's photographs and wrote my master's thesis on his portrayal of the "vanishing race."[45]

Even after I had earned a master's degree in anthropology from Indiana University and gone on to work as a curator in other museums, I continued to be involved with the collection, serving as a consultant to the Indiana University Museum and to other museums with Dixon materials. When film footage from Dixon's earliest photographic expedition turned up, I worked with the Smithsonian Anthropological Archives to document and interpret it.[46]

It was not until I had returned to graduate school in anthropology at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee and chosen American Indian powwows as my dissertation topic that I began to consider Dixon's materials on Indians from World War I.[47] I had not cataloged that part of the collection under the original grant funding, and I had largely ignored it since that time. As someone who grew up during the Vietnam War, my experiences with and feelings about the U.S. military were largely negative. It was through my participation in powwows, however, that I saw the vital role that Indian veterans play in these community celebrations and came to appreciate fully the sacrifices of all veterans, and particularly American Indian veterans. I determined to return to Dixon's photographs and look more closely at his pictures of soldiers and sailors from World War I.

In the summer of 1992 I received a minority fellowship from Indiana University that allowed me to return to campus, teaching one class and devoting the rest of my summer to Dixon's World War I materials. What I found first was a relatively meager collection of a couple hundred photographs of Indians still in service in 1920, photographs that I had described in my master's thesis as having "a dreary sameness." What I found next was the rest of the documentation—questionnaires; letters; and interviews that Dixon had collected to use in his proposed book, "From Tepees to Trenches." These first-person accounts from Indian veterans moved me to tears, to laughter, and to wonder that I had neglected them to this point. I spent the summer copying and organizing the records, presenting a paper on my findings at the annual meeting of the American Society for Ethnohistory, held at Indiana University that fall.

Over the next several years I conducted additional research into the existing records of Indian military service in World War I—at the National Archives, the Carlisle Archives, the archives of the War Department, the Newberry Library, and back at the Mathers Museum. Additional questionnaires from Dixon's files had also been found at the museum, bringing the total number of Indian veterans documented there to 2,846.

It has been an honor and a privilege to read the stories of these Indian warriors. It has been especially gratifying to me to be able to connect Indian people of today with the records of their fathers and grandfathers who served in World War I. I offer this volume in tribute to all American Indians, men and women, who serve their nations—both the United States and their own tribal nations—and protect their people.