

How an American Indian Became Rich and Famous

By William G. Hill

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Many lessons here for those belonging to minority or persecuted groups. The following story was told to me many years ago by my downstairs neighbor John Moon. I was a young child then. Johnny's principles of survival and success have always stayed with me and formed a vital part of my own personality. I would like to share them with you. Hopefully you can use these ideas to prosper.

As a little kid, around the time of World War Two, I lived with my grandma in an apartment building inhabited by many entertainers. There was the family headed by a gypsy violinist, a famous magician, and a whole bunch of radio script writers. Everyone in our building was what we then called "show business personalities." There were Vaudeville act families who used to do one night stands on stages throughout the English speaking world, radio announcers, and some strip tease "artists." Last but certainly not least were my very special friends downstairs, "The Four Queens." Each of them had an interesting tale to tell. If I live long enough, I shall write my autobiography and re-tell all their stories. But for now this is the tale of how an American Indian I knew Became Rich and famous.

Some of what I remember could just be tall tales told to amuse a little kid. But as I went over Johnny's story in my mind lately, it

had the smell of authenticity. Many details I relate here could be researched. You can decide for yourself what, if anything, you want to believe. But one thing I am sure of is that “Johnny Yellow Moon” was an alias. Johnny Yellow Moon said he was a full-blooded American Indian of the Blackhawk tribe. At least, I think he said Blackhawk. I will refer to his tribe, whatever it may have been, as Blackhawks.

Johnny spoke of a happy early childhood living the traditional life of a Native American. When he was even smaller than my age then, he started getting mentored by a “Backward Man” who was one of his father’s several “wives”. Backward Man was somebody very special. He was the tribe’s shaman or medicine man. Backward Man was also the best horse-rider in the tribe, but he always rode backwards. In tribal matters he did everything backwards, dancing, tree climbing, shooting bow and arrow, you name it...The horses he rode went forward, in the usual way. But Backward Man sat on them facing backwards! He could also ride on the side of the horse so as to make himself invisible, or pass himself under the belly of the horse and come up on the other side, still facing the opposite direction of the way his horse was galloping. He danced and taught everyone in the tribe how to sing

traditional songs, dance and play gongs, wooden trumpets, and the tom-tom.

Johnny told me (remember I was only a six-year-old) that his teacher, Backward Man, was what the white people would call “strange”. He explained that an Indian like him would “marry” another man instead of a woman. In his early life, to be “backward” was to be one of the most important members in the tribe. A Backward Man was not a warrior who would fight, but he was considered maybe more important than any brave.

Backward Man had to memorize and retain the tribal history (they didn’t have books), and create the costumes and choreography for ceremonies and celebrations. He planned and directed all the tribe’s social events, pow-wows, and pageants. He generally supervised and looked after all the women of the tribe, and spoke for them. He arranged for meetings with other tribal leaders, and sometimes conferences with the white man, where he, with his superior knowledge he was able to translate both French or English to his tribal lingo.

He was also the chief cook; the teacher of artisans who made jewelry, clothing or masks. He was on hand to assist with child births and was in charge of correctly performing all the

exceedingly important rituals needed to please the Gods. In peacetime, which in his day was always, he would also be the chief's most important counsellor.

Johnny said that he felt quite special and honoured that Backward-Man had chosen him to be his successor, and was teaching him to become a Backward Man too...I remember often saying to my parents, "I'm going downstairs to visit the Four Queens." They didn't think it was odd or dangerous. They would just tell me to come back when it got dark outside so I could have dinner with my own family and not be a "moocher." My dad had told me to be a good listener and always ask people, "Tell me the story of your life." He said I might learn something that way.

So I just knocked on neighbors' doors and at one time or another, as a little kid, I visited everyone in our apartment building. I never failed to ask them to tell me the story of their lives. I heard some doozie stories. Johnny's was my favourite.

THE FOUR QUEENS

Johnny Yellow Moon was one of them. They called themselves that, and as a little kid, I just assumed it was the name of their

former vaudeville show business act. My building seemed to be a place where some fading entertainers came when they retired...My childhood friend Mr Moon I knew as a long retired Chinese Herb Doctor. Yet he had been a famous American Indian, perhaps the most famous of them all.

Getting back to Yellow Moon's story of his own childhood.

Before the "black days, for his tribe" Johnny learned how to ride a horse backwards, perform all kinds of Indian magic tricks, and help his mentor, Backward Man treat his people for any sickness or injury. He learned the universal hand-sign-language of all the North American Indians, plus several Indian languages.

Backward Man taught young Johnny history, cooking, English and some French.

BLACK DAYS FOR THE BLACKHAWKS

Johnny Yellow Moon was under twelve years old when there was some dispute with white settlers who were attempting to occupy tribal lands. These lands were guaranteed to the Blackhawk Tribe by treaty – first by the French, later by the English, and again by

the Americans. The Blackhawks themselves had always been peaceful and neutral.

Johnny told me how these offending white settlers were first approached by emissaries of the tribe in a peaceful, conciliatory manner. The settlers beat them up. When the next delegation arrived, the white men tortured, scalped and killed several unarmed Blackhawks. They stole their horses.

Next, the Chief and several of his members sought redress from the white lawmen in the nearest town – but the Blackhawks too were ridiculed, rebuffed, beaten up and finally, their horses were also stolen out from under them. Thus humiliated, they were told to get out of the area and go west. The hostilities escalated when a gang of white men in hoods with Ku Klux Klan insignia raided the Blackhawk village, setting it on fire; killing more men, women and children. The tribe counsel though, realizing it was probably going to be hopeless and suicidal, authorized a retaliation raid on the original farmers who had settled in what were clearly ancestral Indian lands.

These farmers had stolen Indian ponies in their corral, and as you recall, they had killed several unarmed Indians who had come bearing gifts – to peacefully negotiate in the Indian style. This

murder of emissaries who had come under a flag of truce. This gave the Indians, from their point of view, the right to kill the offenders, burn their farm and reclaim their horses. And that's what they did.

Inevitably, the United State's Army was called in. After a few skirmishes, all the Braves (younger men) of the tribe were surrounded and driven back onto a plateau that later became known to the Indians as "Starved Rock." Without food or water, helpless and out of ammunition, and outnumbered by fifty to one, they were weakened until finally they were all picked off by army sharpshooters.

That, Johnny said, was the unknown battle of Starved Rock. One of a hundred battles where Indians were systematically slaughtered. Johnny's father and all his living relatives were among those killed before the deportations. The surviving Blackhawks, now just a few old men, women and children were herded like animals and "relocated" to reservations in the far west or Florida. Once their trek started, wise old Backward Man told Johnny it was better if he escaped and tried to live in the white man's world. As an Indian orphan in an alien society, he would,

from that day on, always be a fugitive. No Indian could ever become an American Citizen.

Backward Man said, if Johnny could make his way to any Chinatown and offer to work for free doing anything, he could probably pass for Chinese and escape the genocide. And so, Johnny Moon had to go underground, and later leave his native country entirely.

Johnny Yellow Moon left the tribe, took the Chinese name Johnny Moon. After an epic hike, he ended up in Chicago's Chinatown. There, a fugitive at the age of 13, he became apprentice to and informally adopted by a Chinese Herbal Medicine man.

Like his original mentor, Backward Man, his new Chinese teacher was not attracted to women, in a physical way. Johnny was soon to discover that in Chicago there was a sort of fraternity of young men of all races who hung out together and supported each other. These men were mostly artists and creative people without any of the mainstream prejudices. They were all just trying to be productive in a dangerous world, a world of people who thought and acted differently. But I get ahead of my story.

The Chinese Herb Doctor taught Johnny about Chinese medicine and all things Chinese for several years. Johnny Moon also became reasonably fluent in Mandarin. He made himself very valuable to his boss and became a well known kid in Chinatown, his new community. He didn't fool any of the Chinese that he was Chinese, but whites accepted that he was Chinese. His true identity as a fugitive Indian who should have been confined to a reservation was a well kept secret.

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

In Chicago in those days there was also a small French population with many half-breed Indians who spoke French at home. They were descendants of French trappers and their Indian squaws. They participated in all walks of life as Americans. Johnny was very happy to establish that some were half Blackhawks. He made many friends. Within a few years had a new extended underground family in Chicago.

Johnny had learned a small amount of French from Backward Man. In Chicago, he befriended these young French speaking half-breed teenagers, and went – along with a Chinese contingent – to the local Catholic school. There, he learned to read and write

in both near perfect French and English. He learned the Catholic Catechism from the Nuns and passable Latin.

At this point, Johnny was leading a sort of a double life. He was John Moon, Chinese to white people, and Johnny Yellow-Moon (a part Blackhawk Indian) to his new French-Indian friends. To have been a pure Indian would have been a criminal offense, like being a Jew in Nazi Germany. But in the multi-racial melting pot of Chicago, circa 1885, he was just another kid of indeterminate origin. Americans in those days never needed or used identification papers. At the age of about 15, he heard of and began attending weekend classes at the Chicago Art Institute. These classes were free. Funded by some of the newly rich Chicago aristocrats, the Chicago Art Institute still exists. Nearby, at the entrance to Grant Park, is a monumental bronze equestrian statue of none other than Johnny Yellow Moon, spear in hand, astride a war-pony. This statue is one of the most famous sculptures in the world. It is pictured in most art history books. How did the statue get there? Read on. This story gets exciting.

Johnny as a teenager concentrated his talents on drawing, sculpture, and ballet dancing. One of the teachers noticed Johnny's beautiful and muscular body. The dance teacher suggested that he could make decent money posing as a live nude

model for art and sculpture classes at the art institute. This he did. In the following months he became a popular model, a sought after friend and a compadre of many of the art students. Among his new friends were the cream of Chicago society, both young boys and girls.

In his tales to me, of course, Johnny never went into any detail about his sex life. As I mentioned I was only around six or seven. Sex was not something I had any interest in or knowledge of.

In Johnny's story, the sexy parts, if there were any, were always glossed over and very general. Like "we became good friends." Looking back, I think that Johnny's sexual orientation was not a major thing in his life. He was an Indian. That was the given. He didn't want to marry and have kids. Like most men of that period, despite his preferences, eventually he did marry and even have children!

As a teenager he confided in me that after he learned about Art History, he wanted to be a "great person" like Leonardo da Vinci – to become very successful in the creative arts. He decided at an early age to be rich and famous, and remembered by history. He saw his future fame and fortune as being related to art. He could have taken over his mentor's small Chinatown herbal medicine

shop, but gradually he drifted away from that life to become part of the much more exciting Art Institute scene.

The fact that he was still technically a fugitive escaped Indian did not restrict his activities in any way. He had a cover story: He was a half Chinese orphan abandoned by his mother in Chinatown.

Whatever the other half was, he didn't know it. But Johnny was a good boy, kept a low profile and was never arrested or questioned on his background.

I asked him, if at any time in his life he wanted to get even with the white people or the Yankee government, who had murdered his parents and stolen their land. I will always remember his answer: "There was nothing to be gained by revenge or looking back. I wanted to be somebody, to accomplish something... I needed to find my niche. What would revenge get me?"

Backward Man said as I left him, "if you are ever tempted to seek revenge, start by digging two graves. The soldiers who killed my family and deported my people were fulfilling their destiny.

Hating and seeking revenge can not bring anything back to the way it was."

JOHNNY’S PLACE IN HISTORY UNFOLDS

Johnny didn’t know that he would soon be recreating his tribe’s decline and decimation for a world audience. “The Wild West – The Way it Was” was about to be made into a road show by “Buffalo Bill Cody.” This show would be taken all over the world and create perceptions that would last forever. Johnny’s role in history was about to unfold rapidly: At the Chicago Art Institute in those days, the very best artists and dramatic performers in the world were imported for brief stints as teachers or coaches. Many of the students were the artistic offspring of the very rich. These kids were encouraged to become artists, musicians, and to gain the culture that their nouveaux riche parents usually lacked.

One of these art students was Jimmy Fraser. Born in Minnesota, Fraser grew up in the Dakota Territory, immersed in Native American lore. His father was construction boss for the Northern Pacific Railroad. In 1890, when he was 14, Fraser’s now wealthy family moved to Illinois where young Fraser took sculpture classes at the Art Institute of Chicago.

In 1891, Fraser met and became best friends with Johnny Yellow Moon. They visited the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893 together. Both were greatly impressed with the touring “Buffalo Bill” Wild

West Show. The young boys sought out the cast after the show, and even met Bill Cody, the impresario. Johnny told Buffalo Bill that he could gallop horses backwards and do Indian horse tricks. He proceeded to do a short demonstration. Cody was very impressed and said, "Anytime you want a job with our traveling show Johnny, come and see me." Fraser and Johnny Yellow Moon had discussions about the plight of the American Indian. One of them had the idea for a monumental sculpture of an exhausted Indian on a weary war pony, with spear downcast. The message of the projected statue was that there was no hope for him or his race. The End of the Trail was a title they both immediately agreed upon.

This sculpture came together as a small clay model in an art institute classroom. It was a gaunt, downcast Indian and his pony, without hope, utterly defeated – literally and figuratively at the end of their trail. Johnny was the model and the main inspiration for this statue. It was to become one of the most famous sculptures in the world. The small scale model received praise at the Art Institute. Fraser was told that as long as his family could afford to give him the very best training, why not go to Paris to perfect his technique by studying with one of the great masters? All the great sculptors of the era, Rodin, Augustus Saint-Gaudens,

and Frederic Auguste Bartholdi were all living and teaching in Paris.

The creation of *The End of the Trail* was really the beginning of the trail for Johnny Yellow Moon. It signaled the start of a new life of success and prosperity. Johnny, a fugitive and an outcast in America for two reasons, was about to find his niche abroad in a career of popularizing and selling nostalgia. His ‘product’ was *The Wild West of Noble Savages and Daring Cowboys* – an era that had already passed and was *Gone with the Wind*. He had turned his unlucky background as a Native American into an asset, a “portable trade.”

THE TRAIL LEADS TO PARIS

Fraser invited his best friend, Johnny Yellow Moon, to accompany him to Paris to help him translate, settle in, and to stay with him in his apartment. Neither passports nor identification documents were needed to travel in those days. Once in Paris, Johnny found part-time employment once again as an artist’s model at the *École des Beaux-Arts*. He was muse, companion and assistant to Fraser, the wealthy young Chicago scion.

JOHNNY INFILTRATES THE HIGHEST CIRCLES OF FRENCH SOCIETY

Johnny also had his own life in Paris. He attended art classes, performed in plays and pantomimes, and got “in” with the Paris artistic crowd. As an exotic, handsome young man, he fitted right in and was invited to all the best parties and social events. Money was no problem as rich friends provided clothing, apartments, transportation, gifts, and all sorts of odd jobs.

Over the following years in Paris, Johnny perfected his French, made many solid friends, and had an off-again on-again relationship with Fraser. But in general, they always remained on friendly terms. Fraser too was moving in the higher circles of French society. The elite of France and the international set in Paris paid Fraser handsomely to have their portrait busts done in marble or bronze – a fashionable thing to do at the time.

Fraser did good work in Paris, sold a great deal of it, and within a few years won an important prize as the Best Young American Sculptor in Paris. This led Augustus Saint-Gaudens (the most famous American sculptor of the era) who was on the

prize-awarding jury at the École des Beaux-Arts to take Fraser into his own successful studio as an apprentice.

THE SAINT-GAUDENS GOLD DOUBLE EAGLE

Saint-Gaudens, in addition to monumental sculptures, had created many designs and coins for the USA Mint. His studio's "Gold Double Eagle" is one of the most unique and beautiful coins ever produced in America. It is more of a medal than a coin.

Unlike most coins, the St. Gaudens Double Eagle will not stack. The high relief of the sculpture on the coins made it impossible for them to be placed in columns. When stacked they tip over. As a result, the USA mint made very few High Relief Double Eagles. Thus, because of their beauty and rarity, they became the number one American gold collector's coin. A superb Saint-Gaudens \$20 gold piece, the Ultra High Relief 1907, contains about \$400 worth of gold. But it will fetch up to \$1.5 million at auction.

Saint-Gaudens was an American sculptor resident in New Hampshire (USA), with a studio in Paris. He introduced his apprentice, Fraser, to his good friend, Teddy Roosevelt who was soon to be the president of the United States. This in turn lead to

Fraser being awarded many important commissions – among them the official portrait bust of President Teddy Roosevelt.

A few years later, Fraser designed for the USA mint, the Indian-Head Buffalo Nickel. This famous coin circulated between 1913 and 1938. It is arguably the coin collector's most popular, mass produced American coin ever. It is so popular that the USA mint even put out a commemorative replica edition in 2005. And guess whose face appears on the coin? Need a hint?

Yes! Johnny Yellow Moon. But that event came later in our story. In this part of our tale Johnny is still in Paris.

THE BELLE EPOCH

In Europe it was 'La Belle Epoch' – a golden age of prosperity, technical progress, tolerance, free trade, and very low taxes.

Relatively tiny Europe has sent its armies across the world to create colonial empires. Vast wealth and booty flowed back into Europe.

The brightest and best natives of the colonies were brought back to learn the white man's ways and trained to help administer the Empire. They were accepted and respected (much more so in

France than in England). If they chose not to settle in France, the natives frequently returned home with white French wives. At that time, new ideas in art, architecture and fashion all seemed to emanate from Paris. Paris was the centre of the creative world. It was much more of a melting pot than America ever was.

Johnny Yellow Moon was part of this lively scene – one of those popular young men about town without any personal fortune who lived the good life. But Johnny had not made a name for himself. At least not yet. The “Turn of the Century” was approaching, but had not yet arrived.

JOHNNY JOINS THE WILD WEST SHOW

His best friend and main benefactor, Fraser, was about to leave Paris. By coincidence, the Wild West show he had seen in Chicago was touring Europe. Johnny went to ask Buffalo Bill about the job he once promised.

Johnny was hired on the spot and rapidly took on ever increasing duties as costume designer, performer, choreographer, and general factotum. Johnny, on his own initiative, helped design programs, posters and all kinds of souvenirs to be sold as part of

the Wild West show. It was agreed that a percentage of the concession profits on products he generated would go to him.

All those years later, when he told me the story of his life, Johnny still had a trunk full of Wild West Show do-dads for me to marvel over. He even gave me a poster and some trinkets that would probably be quite valuable today. Unfortunately, in all my own moves these treasures were lost long ago. With Johnny's help the Wild West show became more authentic. Everyone agreed it was a much better experience for the audience. Many famous people of the day performed in this show. The Indians even won a few of the mock battles like Custer's Last Stand. Native Americans whooped, hollered and attacked stagecoaches. Cowboys and Indians showed off their roping and riding skills. Calamity Jane shot cigarettes out of the mouths of fellow performers. The Reitmeister (riding teacher) and choreographer of the show was a native American Indian, Johnny Yellow Moon.

The Wild West Show was a big hit in the USA, and an even bigger success in Europe. Every monarch of the day came to see the show – usually more than once. It was performed from California to New York, and in Europe, from London to Rome – and all points in between.

THE MYTH OF UNITY, PEACE AND BROTHERHOOD

This elaborate colorful Wild West pageant created and presented a myth shared by all Americans. It was a myth of unity. Buffalo Bill's show enacted this myth in simple terms with stirring patriotic music. At the end, the cowboys and Indians came together to take bows and share the applause.

Buffalo Bill did not merely represent the evolution of the west and the closing of the Frontier. His show was the Wild West, in his own mind and in the minds of countless others. Like the violent video games of today, in his Wild West Show there was plenty of fake blood and flying bullets – but at the end of the day, it was all smiles and brotherhood, just good clean American fun. Stirring music played and all the dead Indians came back to life and took a bow. The reality was of course something else.

WAS THE WILD WEST SHOW AN ACCURATE REPRESENTATION?

Buffalo Bill's portrayal was a troubling one. The presentation of the Wild West, with the proliferation of so much product placement, marketing and advertising gimmickry demonstrates difficulties in accurately rendering a 'show-biz' version of any history or culture.

It did not begin to explain the complicated relationship between the settlers and the Native Americans. It was just a show. Johnny Yellow Moon probably never imagined the lasting power his myths and the Wild West stereotypes had on the imagination. The images and legends born in this show still penetrate popular culture to this day. Modern western entertainment, rodeos, cattle drives, and most cinematic portrayals all exhibit the influence of the Wild West Show.

Meanwhile, the techniques of merchandising toys, posters, dolls, action figures, food, clothing and souvenirs are not a recent innovation of Disneyland. The Wild West Show originated such marketing in the 1890s.

Johnny Yellow Moon, the Indian, who could have been a victim, chose a path of independence. It made him a wealthy and free,

international man instead of a dead indian. He left a trouble spot and found opportunities.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MONEY?

Buffalo Bill made a fortune and squandered it. Johnny Yellow Moon was only a junior partner but when they finally folded their tent in 1908, Johnny had enough set by so that he was financially independent.

He had made his own personal fortune in the concession stands – by marketing Cowboy and Indian Food, ‘authentic Indian war bonnets,’ cowboy hats, key-chains, action figures and souvenirs. Some were cheap and some were expensive. There was something for every budget. As a linguist and man of the world, once the show closed down, Johnny knew everyone who was anyone in Europe. He could live wherever he pleased. His apartment in Paris became a stopping place for wealthy Chinese, Americans, and many other foreigners.

Among the visitors who came after the demise of the Wild West Show was his old friend Fraser the sculptor. Fraser now had

another idea... Johnny's face would be on an American coin that Fraser had been commissioned to design for the USA Mint.

And so it came to pass that his likeness was soon to be in every American's pocket – on the Indian Head, Buffalo Nickel (five American cents).

BACK TO FRASER'S CAREER

In the meantime, while Johnny Yellow Moon had been touring, getting rich and riding the wave of the Wild West Show, Fraser was hitting the big time as an artist. He did many portrait sculptures of American society figures on commission, but Fraser always felt that he would be remembered for his sculpture. The End of the Trail. He made many versions of that early Art Institute clay model.

A WEST COAST VERSION OF THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

If only it could be appropriately cast in bronze, perhaps on the scale of Bertholdi's Statue of Liberty' dreamed Fraser...He

visualized it greeting all the arriving ships in the Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. The West Coast after all, was the End of the Trail – the place where the frontier had ended.

Everyone believed that Pacific Expansion of Imperial America was to begin therein California. To Fraser, the bittersweet defeat of the Indians represented the triumph of civilization over primitive people. His statue would become the West Coast version of the Statue of Liberty! But such a statue would have cost the equivalent of many millions of dollars in today's money. Fraser could not afford to do it himself. His main clients, industrialists and politicians, had deep pockets to pay for portraits of themselves. Local governments would pay for Dead White Americans to be immortalized in heroic stance. But why an Indian?

Wealthy bankers and Robber Barons could and did pay Fraser large sums for themselves or their wives to be immortalized in bronze or marble. But was there any constituency who wanted to pay for a mammoth statue of a dejected Indian on a dying horse? Nobody. At least not back then. Now, a hundred years later, there are replica statues of “The End of the Trail” in many public parks and other places. But back to our story and the good old days.

EUROPE HEADED FOR WAR

The turn of the Century had come and gone. Life was good, but things were changing. A non-white nation had, for the first time, soundly defeated a European nation in war. In 1905, Japanese forces won a victory over the Russians. Restless, plundered colonies all over the world were starting nationalist movements.

Germany, cheated in the Colonial sweepstakes, was dominated by Kaiser Wilhelm, a man with a shriveled arm. To assuage his inferiority complex, the Kaiser began developing and producing new and fearful weapons of war: The modern Battleship was invented and called: Dreadnaught. So too was the U-Boat.

Next came equivalent oversized land weapons like “Big Bertha” cannons that could explode and destroy any target with precision – even over the horizon and 50 kilometers distant.

Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany was also jealous of his royal British cousins, who occupied a much bigger place on the world stage than he did. The drums of war were beaten by him in Germany. By 1910, a deadly arms race was on. It had been so long since a war had been fought in Europe, that most living people had no memory of how terrible it could be. Germans especially, looked

upon a future war as something healthy – a way for them to get some spoils of Empire.

For Americans, Europe was far away, and in any event, every American of the era agreed that the USA should not take sides in any European war – but should remain neutral. “No entangling Alliances!” said all the politicians. Profit was to be made in selling material to both sides. Meanwhile, life went on as usual for almost everyone including Jimmy Fraser in New Hampshire and Johnny Yellow Moon in Paris.

WORLD WIDE RECOGNITION

Fraser had an idea. He would make a full sized plaster model of The End of the Trail and enter it in a contest at the San Francisco World Fair of 1915.

In 1914, the Great War had started in Europe. As predicted, American neutrality brought in huge orders for guns, ammunition, weaponry, petrol, ships, and raw materials of every type. American Industry expanded at its fastest ever pace. More millionaires were created than at any other time or place in history. Politicians fell all over themselves proclaiming that the

USA would become Fortress America – ready to defend, but never again to take sides or participate in a European war.

What was to have been a World's Fair became more of an exposition for the neutrals to show off their wares, weapons and newest inventions.

There was a contest to choose a fitting West Coast equivalent of the Statue of Liberty. Naturally, Fraser entered. To everyone's surprise, possibly because it represented the unhappy result of conflict, Fraser's heroic-scale plaster model of his "The End of the Trail" sculpture won the first prize gold medal at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco of 1915.

It became an instant icon and has since remained the artistic encapsulation of the sad fate of American Indians at the hands of advancing white people.

In 1894, when Fraser had completed his first original model of "The End of the Trail," American civilization had stretched across the large North American continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. Most white Americans believed the frontier period was not quite over. The American "jingoists" of the day believed that Canada and Mexico would be annexed. Progress (meaning

further expansion of the American Empire) they thought, was inevitable.

This was expressed in the popular concept of Manifest Destiny. This meant that white Americans would inevitably rule over all of North and South America and much more. Many colonies or “protectorates” were going to be added – like Panama, Puerto Rico, the Philippines and Samoa. Popular opinion was that America would pick up the pieces after Old Europe imploded. The Europeans would destroy each other and after the World War, America would emerge as the superpower.

WILD WEST NOSTALGIA

By the turn of the century, most Americans viewed Native Americans with some slight nostalgia. They were a part of the past – a once noble, but now vanishing, race. There was no place for any un-assimilated Indians in the twentieth century. But individual Indians were now free to prosper on the white man’s terms – if they could.

Teddy Roosevelt came out in favor of a more benevolent policy towards America’s native peoples. He authorized large amounts

of federal money to be spent on conserving (in photographs, recordings and in museums) the remaining vestiges of pure Indian culture. The well known photographic folio books of Edward S. Curtis were federally subsidized. [See: American Memory from the Library of Congress] The idea was that Indians would disappear into the American “Melting Pot.” But they would be nostalgically preserved in art, photographs and literature. At least that was the common wisdom of the period.

Popular literature, especially in Europe, portrayed Indian people as “noble savages.” Many poems and dime novels with American Indian themes were written and eagerly consumed. Fraser’s *The End of the Trail* reflects this legacy: a nineteenth century Indian warrior defeated and bound for oblivion. The legend of the brave warrior, noble in defeat, frozen in time. An American icon. That icon was Johnny Yellow Moon.

Johnny Yellow Moon did not dwell upon the higher philosophical aspects of the tragedy of his people. He re-visited the reservation where the remnants of his tribe now lived. Although he was by inheritance and custom, the Backward Man of the Blackhawk tribe now, and the last official repository of his tribe’s history, language and traditions, he was above all, a practical man. After a few visits, he realized he could not identify with or rejoin his old

tribe. For him, there was no point in fighting or forming protest groups. The Indian wars were over. Indians who claimed ancestral lands in those days would be ignored or worse. “You can’t go home again,” Johnny told me, wistfully.

NO LOST CAUSES FOR JOHNNY

Johnny had long ago separated himself from what he considered a lost cause, and had learned how to gain prestige and make money in the white man’s world. He was very good at developing and selling “back end” nostalgia products that could be marketed to the sort of people who came to the main event – be it a Wild West show or an international exposition.

Unlike in France, where men liking the company of other men was actually fashionable. Johnny’s priority was survival in a world where just being an American Indian was something that could have got him confined to a reservation which was nothing less than a large concentration camp. It was no less a prison for being called a reservation. Johnny had no plan to return to the USA or to his people there. For him, America was far less free than France was.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE INDIANS WHOM JOHNNY YELLOW MOON LEFT BEHIND?

Confined to reservations and ravaged by disease and starvation, the Indian population declined dramatically. By 1890, the native indigenous population had been reduced from about seven million (when the white man arrived), to under 250,000. Remaining Indian children were forced to attend federally supported boarding schools. The USA replaced their language and traditional tribal values with “American culture and shared values.”

Women were placed as domestics, and invariably became pregnant by their white masters – the American melting pot at work. The “Redskins” outside of reservations, along with Blacks, were last hired, and first fired. The men (apparently due to genetic predilections) were unusually susceptible to alcohol addiction. America wanted to preserve the myth but get rid of the Indians. And it did. There is probably not one purebred Native American Indian left in the USA today.

There were once seven million red Indians. 97% of them were eliminated by 1900. Big Brother’s Blue Cavalry and the Big Biz Cattlemen of those days did the hatchet job.

The experience of the Blackhawks and our hero, Johnny Yellow Moon who survived, shows the importance of not fighting the system, but rather, keeping a low profile and having a good cover story.

THINGS GET BETTER FOR THE INDIANS

Things did not get better for most Indians until World War Two, when war industry jobs (and being drafted into the military services) brought a degree of prosperity and greater equality to all the minority groups in the USA.

But by then Johnny Yellow Moon was dead and buried. He had made the choice of separating from a doomed group, to seek freedom and make his fortune on the international scene.

It turned out that, when Johnny Yellow Moon was a child, “Buffalo Bill” himself, had actually hunted down and scalped Indians. But old enmities didn’t matter to the two business men. They had a profitable relationship for many years. Maybe that’s show business. Maybe nothing else matters as much as survival and looking after yourself.

BACK TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

For business reasons, Johnny Yellow Moon visited the San Francisco World Fair in 1915. His return to America was partly to escape the war in Europe, and also to help Fraser raise money for his statue.

His expertise in marketing paid off again. At the fair, thousands of small scale reproductions of “The End of the Trail” were manufactured for the World’s Fair and sold to tourists from all over the world. With the merchandising skills of Johnny, an idealized version of his image and that of the “vanishing Indian” was widely reproduced in postcards, lithographs, and prints... “The End of the Trail” was endlessly replicated in curio and miniature form. He arranged for the “End of the Trail” concept to be transformed first into a novel and then later a silent film.

Both Fraser and Johnny made serious money and were set for life. But there was still not nearly enough to pay for a giant version of the statue in bronze. Even if there had been, they both had to agree it would not be good business for either of them to personally pay for and donate a statue for a public park.

So they tried their best to get the government in Washington to erect an “Indian Memorial.” Without the war, it probably would

have been done. But the main argument against it was the new demands of the Great War (World War One) raging in Europe. Copper for bullets and brass for shell casings (the ingredients of bronze) were in great demand.

American exports of War materials commanded huge prices. There was no time to divert tons of valuable war commodities into a statue. Then too, the American Army – which ran the nearby base at San Francisco's Presidio – had made it clear that even in peacetime, they didn't particularly care to fund a statue or even remember the Indians they had systematically slaughtered. Instead, as the result of Fraser's lobbying and high recommendations from Saint-Gaudens, the U.S. Army did commission Fraser to do several heroic-pose sculptures of American military heroes. But no Indians.

None were of the size and scale Fraser had hoped for his magnum opus. The last work before he died was a realistic bronze of General George Patton in full military regalia. It is located at the US Military Academy, West Point. But his dream of a big bronze "End of the Trail" was never funded until long after his death. And it never made it to Golden Gate Park. It was and still is in Visalia, California. Another version is in the Main Rotunda of The National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in

Oklahoma City. A smaller version is in Chicago, outside, near the Art Institute.

JOHNNY YELLOW MOON'S CHILDREN

Johnny headed back to Europe. While World War One was still raging, he apparently married a European lady he had met while touring with the Wild West Show.

He didn't have much to tell me about her – although from a picture he showed me, she was white and pretty. They had children, and when the children came of age (or possibly before that), Johnny left her and moved in with an aristocratic Frenchman.

Johnny was to be forever estranged from his wife and children. He told me nothing about them. During the years after the Great War, like so many Americans of minority groups, he found it refreshing to live in France where if anything, his being non-white, “different” and wealthy was an advantage. He was an important person in France. In the 1920s Johnny's aristocratic French partner died. Depressed, Johnny later returned to Chicago for a while where it was that he told me his life story. But

deciding that France was more hospitable, he eventually returned to his adopted home.

Eventually, when Johnny died, his estate passed to children and grandchildren who never knew him. They were only vaguely aware that he was an American Indian.

Johnny Yellow Moon always preferred to keep a low profile. He never sought publicity for himself. He believed in staying in the background and not attracting attention.

He lived to a normal old age. No one who knew him in his later years suspected that his face (as a much younger man of course), was on every 5c coin in the USA, or that his face and form was indeed that of the forlorn Indian on the war pony at the “End of the Trail” – one of the most important icons in the Western World.

And now, dear reader, this tale is complete. It is the “End of the Trail” for us today anyway. We hope you have learned some valuable lessons to apply in your own life. Many lessons here for those belonging to minority or persecuted groups.

Au revoir and Good Luck.