

AMOS H. GOTTSCHALL (1854–1938)

Marietta, a small Pennsylvania Dutch town on the Susquehanna River, produced two remarkable men. Samuel Haldeman (1812–1880) became one of America's outstanding naturalists. To him, Marietta was "a wondrous universe." Amos Gottschall (1854–1938) couldn't wait to leave.

At ten, he walked thirty miles to a larger town, returning ten days later. Then he jumped a freight, explored Philadelphia and neighboring cities, spent a night in a jail cell with a Union deserter, etc., etc. All before he was twelve.

At sixteen, he became a copyist in Philadelphia. On the side, he learned typesetting. Then, at seventeen, he headed West: 5' 4", without funds, legally a vagrant. By his own account, he conned, charmed, survived.

According to one report, he killed a man in a bar, then fled west, waiting out the event on the Sioux reservation in South Dakota.¹ This incident goes unmentioned in any of his several autobiographies.

Itinerant Printer

For the next fifty years, he worked as an itinerant printer at thirty-seven newspapers (his count), mostly in the West. In between, he clerked, 'canvassed,' anything. He neither drank nor smoked. When tempted, he thought of Mother. When endangered, he appealed to God's help. He went everywhere armed.

He attributed his childhood fascination with Indians to a great-grandmother, Barbara Haehlin, born in Pennsylvania in 1753. When Indians attacked her family in 1755, she alone survived (Gottschall 1876). Raised as an Indian, she escaped, then wed Ludwig Gottschall when she was thirty-one. His father disapproved. In his will he called Ludwig "my disobedient son." Was Barbara 'tainted' by her captivity? We know only that her tales of captivity became family legends.

Amos had his own tales. On his first visit to the Sioux, he told how they caught several Poncas stealing ponies, mounted their heads on poles, and danced "hideously painted ... lit up by the glare of a blazing fire." In a later version, he kept the paint and fire, but reversed the Sioux and Poncas.



Fig 1 Amos H. Gottschall with Blackfeet, Bow River, Alberta, British America. Photo, courtesy Jane Gottschall, San Jose CA.

Obviously, he saw much. He must have. His presence among the Sioux between the Wagon Box Fight and shortly after Custer's "Last" offered extraordinary opportunities. Yet, in hundreds of pages, except for chance details, we learn little. He remained unobservant, unreflective, unreliable. He thought the way he wrote:

The young squaw was the finest type of Indian beauty I ever saw; but I trust my lady readers will not doubt my assertion when I state that I am not near so much an admirer of female beauty, as I am of female kindness of heart, mildness of voice and manner, depth of

mind, modesty of dress and deportment and a total absence of that loud, loose, giddy, gossiping tongue, that will ever repulse and disgust, no matter what the attractions of face and form may be (Gottschall 1881: 110).

Railways

The Trans-Continental Railroad, 1869, linked oceans. Railroads, anxious to sell land, offered journalists free passes. Gottschall qualified. His wanderings took him as far north as Vancouver, as far south as Mexico, and ultimately to every state, save one.

In 1876, aged twenty-two, Gottschall established Gottschall Remedies: salves, worm pills, a pill called *Life Essence* and, especially, *Liniment*:

DIRECTIONS FOR INTERNAL USE to relieve gas or wind pressure, stir one Teaspoon in a cup of sweetened hot water. For relief of minor headaches hold mouth of bottle 2 inches from nose and inhale up into head only. For minor muscular strains, minor neuralgia and non-poisonous insect bites apply with cotton sponge.

To supplement his printer's income, he rode to the "end of the line," then walked to Indian camps. There he sold *Gottschall's Liniment*, 53% alcohol. This remedy bypassed laws prohibiting the sale of alcohol to Indians. "In the early days I sometimes entered Indian villages at considerable risk ... rudely received until a better acquaintance and ... my business among them became better known " (Gottschall 1909a: 7).

Haldeman & Gottschall

At the 1876 Centennial in Philadelphia, Samuel Haldeman exhibited stone celts found in Pennsylvania. Gottschall, then 22, told of examples he'd seen lying about in Sioux villages. Haldeman asked him to collect for him, even to excavate for him. He did. But where Haldeman collected "for a public purpose," Gottschall collected for profit.

Between 1871-1921, he crossed the continent eighteen times, with eight additional trips to Indian country between the Mississippi and the Rockies.

On these journeys I secured ... implements and antiquities, traveling thousands of miles ... with a team, camping outfit, weapons, photographic material² and [sometimes] one companion, but, especially in the earlier days, alone, on foot.

[My purchases] were conveyed safely to some border settlements and from there ... shipped home ... [most] were modern, yet ... the Indians soon learned I wanted ancient [things] and made an effort to procure them for me (Gottschall 1909a: 4).



Fig 2 Amos H. Gottschall with Comanche warrior. Photo, courtesy Jane Gottschall, San Jose CA.

At one point, he had “27 mounted salesmen.”³ By his reckoning, he visited 130 tribes, trading posts, reservations, many repeatedly. These trips provided unparalleled opportunities to collect significant specimens and record timely impressions. He did neither. Instead, he commissioned souvenirs and recorded fluff. Traditional objects entered his collection only by chance.

At the time Gottschall traded with Indians, the Bureau of American Ethnology published, free of charge, magnificent reports on various Indian tribes. I found no evidence that Gottschall availed himself of these or other serious studies.

Modocs

In 1864, the Modocs, a tribe near Klamath Falls, Oregon, ceded most of their land to the United States. When the government failed to provide rations, Kintpuash (Captain Jack) and followers fortified themselves in what is now the Lava Bed National Monument. The Modoc War, 1872–1873, saw the Army storm “Captain Jack’s Stronghold”, hang him, then negotiate.

At the World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893, Gottschall exhibited loot from this siege (rifles, bows and arrows, cannonballs still loaded with black powder), along with Modoc baskets and tools, “collected in the 1870s by

Pennsylvania banker Amos Gottschall.”⁴ Kenneth and Edith McLeod, Klamath Falls, purchased his display. Ultimately, the McLeod Collection totaled 7,6444 artifacts. In 1998 the Klamath Tribes acquired it for \$415,000, plus shipping cost.⁵



Fig 3 *Gottschall's Liniment*. Photo, courtesy Jane Gottschall, San Jose CA.

Harlan Gottschall Dies

In 1900, Harlan Gottschall, sixteen, accompanied his father on one trip and sketched Indian life. His father hoped Harlan would take over the collection: keep the best, sell the rest. But, at seventeen, he died of tuberculosis. His father took his body from Santa Fe to Harrisburg. The two now lie beneath a large marble tombstone, simply, boldly marked: GOTTSCHELL.

Unsatisfied with his own, one-room schoolhouse education, Gottschall insisted his remaining sons attend Harrisburg Academy, then college. All became professionals.

In 1909, he placed the bulk of his collection on the market, in three catalogs. The “best pieces” composed Collection 1. Those “less fine” constituted Collection 2. Bulk souvenirs and handicrafts (1836 miniature canoes, 1677 war clubs, 2089 beaded moccasins) became Collection 3. Each specimen bore an identification tag and price, written in a small, clear hand.

Collection	Pieces	Wholesale Price
1	2,753	\$28,979.00
2	2,131	\$19,339.30
3	41,503	\$140,832.42

Except for rare pieces, none were made for Indian use. Neither function nor belief lay behind most. The vast majority were souvenirs, commissioned in bulk and exchanged for “tonic.” No buyer appeared.

Gottschall donated, in Harlan’s memory, 3793 items from Collections 1 and 2 to the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, valuing them at \$50,000 then equivalent to over half a million today. He stored Collection 3.

Religious Publications

He and his family then lived in a large, brick, row house (old Pennsylvania style), in Harrisburg, a block from the Susquehanna River. In the backyard stood a small brick building. There Gottschall printed and published.

A Collection of Familiar Hymns (1894) sold well. So did *Visions of Heaven and Hell* (1902, 1909a). *Abolished Rites, or Spiritual, not Ceremonial Worship* (1909b) enjoyed eight printings.

Visions of Heaven and Hell, “gleaned from various works,” reprinted visits to the World Beyond, including that of Miss D, as recorded by the Rev. Robert Young, missionary in a British colony, 1841. Young said that Miss D. remained in a coma a week, then opened her eyes and said, “Mr. C is dead.”

This was remarkable. Mr. C, a “very wicked” neighbor, was presumed by all present to be still alive. But it was soon determined that, a half hour earlier, he died tying a shoe. Miss D said she saw him in “the burning pit,” along with “the socially prominent Miss W,” who also died that week. Miss W’s besetting sin was love of money. But now, robed in “a garment of gold on fire,” her shrieks appalled.

During Miss D’s visit to Heaven, she saw Mr. B, who had died while she was in a coma. A regular churchgoer, Mr. B now enjoyed the company of prophets, martyrs, missionaries. Miss D’s celestial guide conducted her to a special

observation point. There she watched acquaintances approach “Earth’s edge.” Some rose, others fell. Her observations and predictions, personally delivered upon her return, produced at least one “unchristian temper” in that British colony (Gottschall 1902).



Fig 4 Advertisement for Gottschall Remedies. Photo, courtesy Jane Gottschall, San Jose CA.

Medicine Man

The old medicine man prospered. Ads for *Gottschall's Liniment* graced barns and boulders throughout rural America. Yet patent medicine reform also prospered. In 1915 Gottschall Products Corporation closed.

Hospitalized briefly, he divorced his wife and married his nurse. In 1921, at 67, he went west again, crossing the Southwest desert, then traveled up the coast. He returned with nothing. It was, he declared, over: “The making and use of Indian handicraft being now a thing of the past, the time cannot be far distant when they will be absolutely unobtainable (Gottschall 1938: 7).”

A fourth catalog appeared in 1924. It offered 42,312 pieces. Estimated retail value: \$213,850.30. Essentially, this was Collection 3. It failed to sell.

In 1929, George Heye purchased from the Academy of Natural Sciences for \$7000 over 50,000 specimens, including 3793 Gottschall pieces. Heye took everything to New York, selected what he wanted, then shipped the remainder back to Philadelphia. It remained on the floor of a warehouse, until 1942, when the

Academy donated what was left to the University Museum. H. Newell Wardell, resigned from the Academy over this incident (Wardle 1929, 1942).

Just before he died, Gottschall issued his fifth and last catalog: 40,257 specimens for \$53,462.58; with an estimated retail value of \$213,850.30. This was simply Collection 3, reduced in size, increased in value. It went unsold.

He died at eighty-four. The next year, 1939, his widow consigned the collection to Ira Reed of Perkasio, Pennsylvania. Reed opened an Indian store in Philadelphia and for eight years used this collection for stock, selling to hobbyists. The University of Pennsylvania Museum bought a few items for their sales desk.



Fig 5 Empty bottle of *Gottschall's Liniment*. E. Carpenter Collection. Photo, C.F. Feest.

Ira Reed

Among Reed's regular visitors was Frank Speck, a local ethnologist. Speck liked to handle specimens bargain for old pieces, then mail them back to the tribe from which they came.

In 1947 Reed closed his shop and bought a motel on Lake Champlain. The Plains material alone filled two bays of a barn. This included several thousand beaded moccasins stiff with age. During the motel's off-season, Reed ran a mail-order business, shipping to Boy Scouts and hobbyists. Hobbyists liked to dress as Indians, creating new costumes or reworking Gottschall ones.

Reed transferred the Northwest Coast material to the Blue Totem Antique Shop, Delaware Water Gap. It filled a double garage. Included here were hundreds of mass-produced, painted mats and woven hats. The later were sold to teenagers as 'beanies.'

Winter months, Reed toured New England antique shops. Baskets and beadwork bearing Gottschall tags seemed everywhere in the 1960s, priced from \$5 to \$30 maximum. Julius Carlebach, a dealer in tribal art, acquired from Reed dozens of Pomo baskets preserved in naphthalene-filled 50-gallon drums.

James Luongo

James Luongo, feather supplier to the millinery trade and proprietor of the Plume Trading Company, sold Indian kits to Boy Scouts, hobbyists, whoever. Reed arrived one day with a van filled with Gottschall material. This became the Plume Trading Company Indian Museum in Monroe, New York. Luongo sold excess material from a shop on Lexington Avenue. The shop became a rendezvous for Indian hobbyists. They transformed Gottschall souvenirs into unrecognizable showpieces, often bringing top prices at auction.

Luongo closed his shop and retired to his museum. About 1980 he sold what remained (about 2500 pieces) to the Osaka Ethnographic Museum, Japan. George Terasaki, a New York dealer/collector – who, with Norman Feder, catalogued everything – arranged the sale. Most items came from the Southern Plains, but others ranged 'from Ocean to Ocean and from the Lakes to the Gulf.'

Edmund Carpenter

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Notes

Edmund Carpenter never knew Amos H. Gottschall personally, but had a long acquaintance with his collection.

¹ John Witthoft, Pennsylvania State Archeologist, interviewed Gottschall's second wife, in 1957. I asked Witthoft's widow, Dr. Bonita Freeman-Witthoft, if notes of that interview survived, but received no reply.

² Jane Gottschall, San Jose, California, has forty-nine photographs taken by her grandfather. She also has an identification list for approximately 300 photographs made between 1896-1900; an empty bottle of *Gottschall's Liniment*; and an ad for Gottschall's tonics, salves, liniment, and cough medicine; and various specimens. The Library/Photo Archives, Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe, New Mexico, has thirty-seven Gottschall photographs, plus two contact sheets, donated by her, 1961. There must be many more Gottschall photos awaiting identification.

³ Letter to Alvin Gottschall (grandson), dated 1945, now in the possession of Jane Gottschall, San Jose, CA.

⁴ Archives, Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe, NM.

⁵ Mail Tribune (Medford, OR): <http://www.mailtribune.com/archive98/jan98/11798n1.htm>