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2010

Review of *Fire Light: The Life of Angel De Cora, Winnebago Artist* by Linda M. Waggoner

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Parezo, Nancy, "Review of *Fire Light: The Life of Angel De Cora, Winnebago Artist* by Linda M. Waggoner" (2010). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 2543.

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*Fire Light: The Life of Angel De Cora, Winnebago Artist.* By Linda M. Waggoner. Norman. University of Oklahoma Press, 2008. xxviii + 355 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95.

In my research on Native Americans artists there have been people I have been fascinated with yet knew little about. One of these was Angel De Cora (1869-1919), a Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) artist I would catch glimpses of in an exhibit at the Heard Museum or find in records on the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition, her art the cornerstone of the Indian Service exhibit in the government building. Fortunately for me and for others interested in the lives of individuals who made a difference in the early twentieth century, as well as for scholars in American history, American Indian studies, and art, we now have a captivating and exhaustive biography of her life by ethnohistorian Linda Waggoner.

In *Fire Light*, Waggoner tells the story of De Cora's eventful life, based on years of meticulous research in a multitude of archives. Beginning with her early life in Nebraska on the Winnebago reservation, Waggoner situates De Cora's childhood in her family past as well as the cultural upheavals affecting Ho-Chunk society in the 1870s and 1880s. She then tells of De Cora's years at Hampton boarding school, analyzing the life of an Indian student, and how De Cora survived, adapted, and even thrived, away from her family and homeland. Unlike most Native American students who returned home, De Cora then lived in the urban Northeast, attending art school, Smith College, and famed illustrator Howard Pyle workshops. Waggoner analyzes De Cora's life as an artist, illustrator, and designer who made a significant impact on the American Arts and

Crafts movement by promoting Indigenous art. De Cora's life story continues with her marriage to the colorful William Dietz, one of the first Native American football stars and NFL coaches, and her work as head of the Carlisle Indian School art department, an Indian activist, and a culture broker.

*Fire Light* is more than just a biography of a fascinating individual. Waggoner, a scholar who has extensively researched and published on Great Lakes Métis history as well as Ho-Chunk culture and ethnohistory, includes an insightful analysis of De Cora's writings, how De Cora's life differed from that of her cousins, and how she negotiated life as an educated Indian artist in a difficult and rapidly changing world. Especially perceptive is Waggoner's analysis of how De Cora dealt with the conundrum of stereotypes about her art as "Indian" and her desire to be seen as a modern artist, an issue that still plagues Native American artists today. I highly recommend this book.

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