

# CONOY INDIAN TOWN SITE MARKED

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

CONOY INDIAN town site, and the termination of "Old Peter's Road," so named for Peter Bezaillon, the Indian trader, near Bainbridge and the mouth of the Conoy creek, were appropriately marked on Sunday, October 15th, 1933, by members of The Lancaster County Historical Society and by residents of that section of the county. The weather was well-nigh perfect. It was, indeed, a glorious October afternoon. The atmosphere was warm and somewhat hazy, and the foliage on the surrounding hills a veritable riot of color. Nature seemed to have donned her richest garb in honor of the interesting occasion. Professor Herbert H. Beck, of Franklin and Marshall College, president of The Lancaster County Historical Society, presided at the ceremonies. The idea of marking the site originated in the mind of Mrs. Bertha Cochran Landis, corresponding secretary of the Society. The unveiling was attended by a large number of people.

The boulder to which the bronze plate is attached, was found in the Conoy creek near the old mill and stone bridge, at the place where "Old Peter's Road" crosses the creek, by Benjamin Landis who resides near Bainbridge. It is the fourth marker erected in Lancaster county by the Historical Society as a memorial to the American Indians—our earliest inhabitants, presumably. The bronze tablet, from the studio of the James H. Matthews Company, Pittsburgh, was placed on the shaft by the Haldy Marble and Granite Works; and the stone was dressed and put in position by the J. E. Baker Company, of Billmyer, Pa. It is more than five feet high, tapered at both ends, and having much the same shape as an Indian arrowhead. The tablet bears this inscription:

"In memory of / the Conoy or / Ganowese Indians / who lived here from about / 1718 to 1743 / and / Peter Bezaillon / 1662-1742 / noted French trader and / Indian interpreter whose trail / to this place known as / Peter's Road / was used as a boundary line of / five of the original townships [Map of Peter's Road through

Northern Lancaster County] Marked by The Lancaster County / Historical Society / 1933."

The tablet, draped with an American flag, was unveiled by Miss Anna Engle, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Engle, of Lemoyne, and John Haldeman, of Haddon Heights, N. J., descendants of the early white settlers in this section.

Professor Beck delivered a brief address of welcome. He stated that in the near future the J. E. Baker Company would erect a stone wall around the plot on which the shaft is erected; and that the Farm Women's Society, No. 8, will plant the enclosure with prostrate juniper.

I. Scott Smith, treasurer of Lancaster county and chairman of the committee in charge of the program, spoke briefly of the Conoy Indians whose tents formerly clustered along the Susquehanna at this point, and expressed his deep appreciation of the efforts of the members of The Lancaster County Historical Society and others who assisted in making this monument possible.

General Edward C. Shannon, lieutenant governor of Pennsylvania, addressed the assemblage as follows:

"While courage and faith in the part which this beautiful Susquehanna country of ours was destined to play in the centuries to come, are abundantly manifested in the stories of the people we are honoring here to-day, what must impress us most is the evident desire to make homes that was uppermost in their longings. As I have listened to these learned addresses, the result of so much painstaking research amid limited resources and in a restricted area, the thought has come to me that it was, after all, the domestic hearthstone that these folks sought along the banks of our life-giving river.

"Peter Bezaillion, the trader, came to Pennsylvania while William Penn was in the midst of his activities; and the Conoy Indians brought their teepees from the Potomac while Anne was queen. Early in his wanderings Bezaillion saw the advantages of a home on the lower Susquehanna, and the tribesmen made straight for the rich bottom land that offered livelihood and safety beside the same waters. In all the vicissitudes and successes of his adventurous career it seems to me that the Frenchman was thinking of a quiet fireside hereabouts. Negotiations of the Conoy Indians with

the authorities of the Province at Philadelphia and their embassies to the chiefs of the great Federation, all aimed to the confirmation of their right to live, and live in peace, near where we are this afternoon.

"The homing instinct is to be noted in great invasions and it has been a force in the mighty migrations of man. It burns in the breast of the explorer as well as the man who travels with his merchandise as the ultimate object of his toil and striving and journeying; it also calls to the savage and makes him seek friends.

"It required courage in the Conoy Indians to leave the lands to the south and come into the valley where the Iroquois had vanquished the stalwart warriors who had amazed Captain John Smith; and it was faith that led them to believe that here they would be able to live, and live well, and encouraged them to accept the terms of the all powerful northern sachems. They must have seen something in this valley beyond hunting and fishing. Homes here probably meant tranquillity and contacts bringing benefits in their train.

"Earlier traders had not left the best of reputations in their expeditions from the Delaware to the Susquehanna, and there had been many upsets in tribal affairs when Bezaillon started with his goods to traffic with the Indians. It was risky business and he faced not only local raiders but the great war parties that were continually traveling between the New York lake country and the lands of the Catawbas. European rivalries were causing men to work upon the prejudices and pride of the Iroquois; and the playing with the chiefs who were to drench the Blue Ridge country in blood some decades later, had begun.

"We can not praise too highly the courage of the Englishmen and Frenchmen who started out from Penn's town, or even earlier, into this country; and even if we do have to overlook some of their methods and their personal conduct, we owe them much for bringing to our forefathers information as to the characteristics of the tribes and the glorious future that awaited civilization along the banks of the Susquehanna. These men who built up relations with the clans of famous and warlike tribes were pioneers of empire as well as trade. If they were after big profits from the fur traffic they also opened many a way which in years to come was

trodden by the settlers who caused these lands to blossom and to furnish Pennsylvania with men and women who adorned its history. They had the courage to go where danger was beside the trail, and the faith to take out rights to lands which made them a part of the country.

"The roll of such men as Bezaillion and his companions, is all too little known in our day. It has been obscured by those who came after them and who have given their names to towns and ferries and areas, and, in some cases, thrust them aside, deprecating their ways but profiting by their example and experiences. Bezaillion early established himself as a man daring and trustworthy in trade; and in spite of occasional difficulties (including prison and heavy bail because of birth or religion) there is plenty of evidence of calls upon him for service in official dealings with the Indians among whom he had traveled, traded and tarried. He stood well with the Proprietary officials and the agents of the Penns, the merchants and the financiers of Philadelphia, with Harris, and others, who were making their mark. The mere fact of his connection with the Michel exploration for ore, at a time when national feelings were beginning to run high, speaks well of the confidence reposed in his knowledge, ability and fidelity. For all its ups and downs, his life must have been a valuable one for the Province and of intense interest to himself.

"One of Pennsylvania's noted historians speaks of this region in the opening year of the eighteenth century as the frontier of Pennsylvania; and as early as 1704 Bezaillion rendered the notable service of warning the provincial authorities of a prospective descent of the Iroquois upon the Shawnee. This is a matter of record in colonial annals, and I refer to it here because it shows the weight attached to the reports of the trader, and the wide extent of his contacts at a time when such movements might mean the wiping out of white settlements as well as disturbance of the red neighbors whom officialdom was endeavoring to keep quiet in order that the march of civilization could get under way.

"Early maps of our county show Peter Bezaillion to have become a part of recognized business. The road marking the boundary of the five original townships is known as 'Peter's Road.' It was the trail he often trod to and from Philadelphia, and it led to

the land he patented on the banks of this river long before Washington was born, and which he must have thought of as home.

"The name 'Conoy' is inseparably connected with our county, and it is interesting to note, in speaking of 'Peter's Road,' that westward across the Susquehanna from the Indian town ran a road linking up with the famous Paxton Trail, the fur traders pathway between the posts of Steelman and John Harris, which was known, for years after Bezaillion ceased his activities, as the 'Conoy Road.'

"Mr. Chairman, it is a fine thing that you do here to-day. As an officer of this Commonwealth, I am glad that steps are being taken to perpetuate the memories and names of people who figured so much in our part of Pennsylvania; and I am sure the State Historical Commission and the educational authorities will join me in appreciation of the research which made certain the facts and the enterprise which erected this memorial. Owing to the state of the finances, the Commission has been compelled to curtail its marking of noteworthy sites,—milestones on the march of civilization across Pennsylvania,—and it is to the honor of historical societies, like yours here in Lancaster, and in other counties of our State, that they have taken up this valuable work.

"Personally, I am only too happy to add my praise to that of my fellow-citizens for the efforts being made to bring to the notice of our people, and to the education of the rising generation, what Pennsylvania has done.

"Many times before to-day, I have expressed the hope that the young people of Penn's Commonwealth might be given the opportunity to learn more of what their State has done for the Nation, of the men and women who laid so well and strong the foundations to make this great Commonwealth what it is to-day. If we lack in our textbooks it is just such celebrations as this, recalling across more than two centuries the memory of people who dwelt here and wrought well; and the service of heroic pioneers whose noble endurance has made our great State a source of pride to all who live within its borders that will show what we need to teach. Let us have more commemoration of the men and things that created Pennsylvania!

"I congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, upon the happy occasion to-day, and I feel confident that its example will go far through

Pennsylvania, increasing interest in our history and stirring us to be worthy of the best that is in us, and responsive to the call of the past for good citizenship and love of country."

The principal address was prepared by David H. Landis, of Windom, Pa., an authority on the Indian history of this locality. After a few introductory remarks by Mr. Landis, his paper was read by Professor Beck. It consisted of a detailed history of the Conoy or Ganowese Indians, and of Peter Bezaillion, the Indian trader. He also described and defined "Old Peter's Road," over which Bezaillion traveled from his trading post in Chester county. This road led west from Compassville, a small village near the line dividing Chester and Lancaster counties, to Pequea and Springville, then turned north for a distance and then west again. It marked the boundary line between the five original townships, dividing Leacock from Earl, Manheim from Warwick, and Hempfield from Warwick. Reaching a point near the present junction of East Hempfield, West Hempfield and Rapho townships, the road passed through Mount Joy, then by Donegal Springs, and ended at the ford across the Susquehanna, at the present site of Bainbridge.

Esah-pa-wishe (Chief Half Moon), a Rapahoe Indian who resides near Lancaster and who was educated at Haskell Institute, Kansas, spoke upon the customs and habits of the Conoy tribe and discussed the characteristics of the race in general. He took exception to the widespread theory of anthropologists that the Indians are descended from the Mongolian race, declaring, probably with truth, that their origin is a problem which will never be satisfactorily solved.

He was attired in tribal costume, the principal feature of which was a headgear, with feathers of the Golden eagle, a species once common in Lancaster county but extinct for many years. He also exhibited a trader's pipe more than 150 years old, the bowl of which was carved with the figure of a hatchet.

Marcel Verneuil, the French consul, stationed at Philadelphia, expressed pleasure at the tribute paid to his countryman, Peter Bezaillion, and remarked humorously: "It seems that the French are again discovering America,"—referring to his ignorance until now of the French pioneer in Lancaster county.

Among others who spoke briefly were Hon. A. Boyd Hamilton, president of the Dauphin County Historical Society and also president of the Federation of Historical Societies; Capt. H. M. M. Richards, president of the Lebanon County Historical Society; Prof. Hiram H. Shenk, former state archivist and an authority on Pennsylvania history; and Rev. Dr. George P. Donehoo, former state librarian and an expert on Indian lore, who collected many Indian relics during a visit to the Conoy section twenty-five years ago.

The Bainbridge band furnished music throughout the program, and the proceedings were made audible to the large crowd by amplifiers. Rev. Kirby M. Yingst, pastor of the Bainbridge Lutheran church, offered the invocation, and Rev. L. B. Brubaker, pastor of the Ludwig M. E. church, pronounced the benediction.

The committee in charge of the unveiling ceremonies consisted of: I. Scott Smith, chairman, Mrs. Bertha Cochran Landis, Hon. B. C. Atlee, D. B. Landis, H. Frank Eshleman, Esq., Bernard J. Myers, Esq., Mrs. Frank T. Thurlow, Mrs. David H. Landis, Mr. and Mrs. Henry S. Hiestand, Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Shock, Dr. Harry Bender, J. E. Vandersloot, H. H. Brandt, Mrs. B. F. Hoffman, Mr. and Mrs. Abner H. Risser, J. E. Baker, William Mundorf, P. G. Engle, Mr. and Mrs. John P. Schock, Mrs. Rhoda Grove, Miss Verna Peck, Miss Katie Hipple, Miss Anna Keller, Rev. Kirby M. Yingst, Rev. L. B. Brubaker, A. G. Heisey, Tilghman Ebersole, Albert Ebersole, D. J. Eckman, Henry B. Haines, Mrs. Charles P. Abraham, Miss Pauline Garber, Fred B. Smith, Miss Gertrude H. Haldy, C. H. Martin and Herbert H. Beck, president.