

THE INDIAN TOWN SITE AT WASHINGTON BORO

Many years ago an Indian Town was located on the fertile slope of the eastern shore of the Susquehanna river now occupied by Washington Boro, where they lived and cultivated their gardens in Indian manner. Their habitation extended approximately from Lancaster Street southward to Penn Street or to give it in more familiar terms from Joe Wertz's Hotel to Frank Sheric's Store. This was the Northwestern corner of Penn's Manor of Conestogoe, whose northern boundary was the southern boundary of the tract of land granted to Martin Chartier.

Several miles northward was a Shawnee Indian Town at the site of what is now the Shawnee Run, Columbia. By carefully following the distance given by Gov. Evans in the account of his trip in 1707, the Indian Town at Columbia was called Decanoga where he met chiefs of seven Indian Towns. He states: "It was about nine miles from Pequehan."

East of this Washington Boro Indian Town Site, was where the Indian Trader James Patterson was located on the site of the farm buildings of the George W. Anne farm, now occupied by Harry King.

One mile down the river was a prominent Indian Fort which was inhabited by the tribe of Indians known as the Susquehannocks and later known as the Conestogas.

The Susquehanna River at this point is over a mile wide with a number of good sized islands, some of which also show Indian occupation.

The West shore of the river, the Long Level Section of York County was another prominent Indian location, Herman's map of 1665 and other data, show the location of the Susquehannock Fort there, at that period. Its most likely location being on the hill at John Haines. That fort location played a prominent part in the boundary dispute between William Penn and Lord Baltimore and their successors, in their notable quarrel which covered a period of over eighty years.

This Fort is also given on Moll's map of 1720 as the Southeastern boundary of Canada, then claimed by the French:

This briefly gives us the surroundings of where we stand today, before and during Martin Chartier's time.

It is not my topic here to follow Martin Chartier and his band of Shawnee Indians in the several locations which they settled before they reached this section, but to confine myself to this Washington Boro Indian Site only.

I know of no deed nor warrant nor draught nor any other document on which the name nor the location of this Indian Town at Washington Boro is given. The only absolutely correct information we have concerning it is the mute evidence we have from the Indian graves which we meet with here.

These graves are usually two to three feet in depth on level ground and are not reached except in digging foundations or other excavations, while those on hill sides gradually come to the surface by the erosion of the soil or by washes during heavy rains. These are oft times reached by the plow and usually their contents are broken up and destroyed. It is the unusual occurrence when the articles, usually found in Indian graves, are found unbroken.

We find the case here, as we also find it at the several other Indian sites which I have mentioned, graves of an earlier period, showing Indian occupation long before the era of Indian traders, these earlier graves contain only Indian pottery and implements, tobacco, pipes, weapons and orna-

ments of stone of Indian make. Some of these are very rude and of great age and show primitive man had primitive wares. In many of these older graves we also find mussel shells and bones of animals which show the articles of food which were placed with the remains. These and all other articles they believed would be needed by the deceased on their way to their future happy hunting grounds.

It is from the more recent graves we must draw our conclusion concerning more recent affairs. Those containing in addition to the Indian articles, such articles of European origin as glass beads, clay tobacco pipes, iron tomahawks, gun barrels and hoes, brass kettles and bells, scissors, thimbles, jews harps, fish hooks, finger rings and a variety of other articles and trinkets which the Indians received as presents from missionaries, or in exchange for peltry from Dutch, Swedish, French and English Indian traders, and from William Penn and the later proprietaries at their treaties which they held with them. These show at least approximately the time of the most recent Indian occupation here.

Many of these metallic articles are a mere shell of rust. Others have disappeared. Those found fifty years ago are in a much better condition than those found recently. These had by no means been the only contents of the graves, any one familiar with the beautiful Indian beaded garments, ornamental basketry and wood carvings, must know what has been lost. Only the most indistructable articles remain. Some of these are found in local collections here, many others have been sent to large museums or to friends in distant places and their identity is lost. It is unfortunate that we do not have a fire proof museum building to keep them here where they belong for study in the future for those interested in Indian life and local history.

While much of our evidence still is concealed under ground, where doubtless many other graves remain undisturbed, the following will serve to give us considerable light concerning the location and date from which we can draw conclusions concerning the Indian town which had been here.

The older collectors: Haldeman, Zahm, Hiller, Simons, Masterson and Pehlman, all had considerable material from this Indian site. The late Theodore Urban also had many stone implements and beads of shell and bone and glass, found here which are now at the Pennsylvania University Museum. Mr. Urban stated that many years ago he remembered seeing great heaps of mussel shells and animal bones here and that wagon loads of them had been employed as fertilizer. These are usually called "Kitchen Middens." They are the refuse of the food eaten by the Indians, and as their wampum was composed of beads made of shells, it is not unlikely that some of those were made here also.

Along the stream passing through this tract, earlier known as Mill Creek and later as Staman's Run, there had been a huge pebble of Conewago Trap Rock weighing a ton or more on which are deeply grooved Indian inscriptions. This Mr. Urban had transported to his home at Columbia and it can still be seen in the back yard of No. 128 North Fifth Street. Another similar inscription although smaller can be seen on a lime stone rock in this stream East of Joseph Wertz's warehouse.

These inscriptions or petroglyphs somewhat resemble Roman numerals. Whether these were made by Indian labor for the use of early surveyors, as is the case with similar rock inscriptions which appear in other parts of Pennsylvania, or whether they were done by the ancestors of the present Indians or by an earlier race, we don't know but one thing is certain they are distinctly Indian and not European type of workmanship.

The greater part of this tract had been in possession of the Staman family for several generations and that portion of it now in possession of Hiestand Frey was the possession of the late John B. Staman for many years. During

that time Mr. Staman and his sons met with quite a number of Indian graves. One contained a string, about a yard in length, of small copper beads, copper arrow points, three small brass bells, an earthen bowl and stone implements, other graves contained glass beads, iron tomahawks and hoes, a knife, and a flint lock gun of the old Dutch Schnapphan type, of about 1620.

Tobacco pipes, scissors, thimbles, bullet moulds, jews harps and a variety of European articles of the trader period were also found there, also a silver coin, a one-half Ecu of Lewis fifteenth of France dated 1729. In addition to these many stone tomahawks, arrow points, spear heads, pestles, knives, images, fetishes, totems, tobacco pipes and pottery of Indian make were found there, such as are found on early Indian sites else where.

Just recently John W. Keller unearthed several Indian graves on his property, which contained stone implements, earthen ware bowls, an image and several tobacco pipes of **Indian workmanship** and in addition also a brass kettle, iron tomahawks, a knife, a hoe, vermilion and glass beads of the **trader period**.

Near these graves is another chunk of trap rock in which there is a large bowl, which may have been employed by the Indians as a mortar for grinding their grain or for mashing other food products.

During the great floods of May, 1884, and June, 1889, when portions of the surface of the islands were swept away, several Indian graves were uncovered on Big Island, one of the islands at Washington Boro, which also contained glass beads and other trader articles.

During May, 1920, while doing some excavating in the cemetery, which is on this Indian site, J. Harry Miller met with an Indian grave which contained over one hundred glass beads, an iron knife, brass kettle, copper bracelet and Indian pottery and stone implements.

During 1873 John B. Staman uncovered a very unusual grave about twenty feet East of the present Hiestand-Frey dwelling, it contained human remains, an iron helmet, a sword, a pike or spear, an iron tomahawk, a hoe, several two and one-fourth inch cannon balls and an Indian earthenware bowl.

These are by no means all of the Indian graves and Indian and trader articles found on this Indian site but I believe we have given a sufficient number to prove to us that there was an Indian town here. And the European trader articles tell us that this Indian town was inhabited during the Indian trader period.

The European articles found in the Indian graves comprise the same class of articles which we find they received from Indian traders and at treaties for land and peace treaties covering a period of over a century from about 1620 to 1730, so it is difficult to tell the exact date of the period when the Indians lived here and established the exact period of the Indian town.

It would be too long a story to give the items from historic sources showing from whom the Indians received these articles and the dates when they were received and to give a careful study of the various types and dates of European clay tobacco pipes and glass beads and other articles found at these several Indian sites here and by their types establish their date and origin.

It has been stated that the band of Shawnee Indians of which Martin Chartier was the leader lived here, but we cannot prove that they did, nor can we prove that they did not, however we know that Martin Chartier was a Frenchman and that some of the iron tomahawks were long ago known as French axes, also that some of the European tobacco pipes have the Fleurs de lis stamped on them which show that they are French. The above French silver coin of 1729 found by James Staman among Indian articles here would indicate that there was Indian occupation here at that period. If so it was

most likely a Shawnee Town. It was soon after this date that the Shawnees left here.

At the appraisement, after Martin Chartier's death, we find among his effects a list of the same trader articles as those found in the Indian graves here; iron axes, hoes and knives, vermillion, brass kettles and bells and glass beads.

As for the usual contents of the above grave, among the Indian graves, which contained a *helmet, swort, spear, etc. As these were the attire or armor which a Frenchman of Martin Chartier's standing and period would have worn, there is at least reason to suspect that his band of Shawnees lived here on the land adjoining the grant on which he lived, and as Mrs. Chartier was of Indian birth, that these were the remains of Martin Chartier which were found among the Indian graves here where his son, Peter, had placed them among his Indian relatives in 1718 when his father died.

*This helmet can be seen at the Independence Hall Museum, Philadelphia, and a cut and description of it appears in Egle's History of Pennsylvania (1876) page 818.

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The manuscript of Dr. Myers' address was not received in time to be printed in this number and it will, therefore, appear in a later one.

Signed,

EDITOR

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