

# The Nanticoke Indians In Lancaster County

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**F**OR a number of obvious reasons the Nanticoke Indians have occupied but a minor part in the Indian history of Lancaster County and references, by historians, to their activities here have been very few as well as meager in detail.

That such should be the case is not surprising for the Nanticoke were not native aboriginal Lancaster County Indians, as were the Susquehannocks, but migrated here from another locality. Undoubtedly another reason why the tribe has never been given more prominence locally was because their various sites in Lancaster County were not located on the beaten paths of Indian travel, trader's routes nor earliest pioneer's, nor were they ever located along the paths that led to Penn's dream of a Manor among the Indians in southwestern Lancaster County. No doubt an equally important reason for the paucity of historical reference to the tribe was because they were a friendly, peaceable tribe who lived quietly adjacent to their pioneer neighbors and were not identified in the various Indian uprisings during their stay here. Their departure from their final site in Lancaster County, as compared to the spectacular extermination of the Conestogas, was accomplished quietly and occasioned but passing comment.

However, in spite of the foregoing statements, there are a number of equally good reasons for believing that the Nanticoke were located in Lancaster County and especially on this site, in what was originally Cocalico township, in very considerable numbers.

With the small amount of authentic literature on the subject it is no easy matter to prepare a paper that will stand the test of historical scrutiny, and with that thought in mind this paper is presented in the form of a little narrative rather than as an attempt at preparing a document that might be of any particular historical value. In order to make the narrative at all presentable some local Indian tradition will be interwoven with the established facts, the traditions will in each instance be referred to as such while the statement of facts will be accompanied by the proper historical reference.

While traditions often may be given only scant weight, yet in many instances they are true and have contributed, in no small way, in the making of history. The traditions presented in this paper are only such as are related by 4th and even 7th generation descendants of the original settlers or grantees of land on this site, and have come down through the years from one gener-

ation to the other as prized, almost sacred, memories of the Indian inhabitants of this section and are from sources which we believe makes them unimpeachable.

The early explorers in America recognized two large, distinct tribes of Indians, those situated in the Great Lake region of Canada and the Finger Lake region of New York and known as the Huron-Iroquois Confederacy, the other great tribe occupied the land east of the Alleghany mountains, the region along the Hudson river, a large part of New England, the Middle Atlantic States and parts of Maryland and Virginia, this tribe was known as the Algonquin nation and it is of the latter tribe that the Nanticokes were a branch. There has been a great deal of confusion in the names of the various Indian tribes inhabiting the eastern part of the United States and the Nanticokes are often referred to as Ganawese, Piscataways and Conoys and were probably the parent stock of the latter tribe. The Nanticokes as well as the Conoys or Ganawese came from Maryland, the latter being a smaller tribe and were last seated in that state near the head of the Potomac, but were allowed to settle in Pennsylvania on guarantee by the Conestogas and the Shawnees for their good behavior, and they located at Dekanoagah, also called Conejoholo, near the present site of Washington Boro, removing at a later date to Conoy Town. Hanna in "The Wilderness Trail" calls those who originally located on the Susquehanna, "Conoys (or Piscatawese or Ganawese)" and continuing refers to the Nanticokes as being closely related to the Conoys. Heckewelder recognized the same confusion of names and says they spoke nearly the same dialect.

The Nanticokes were originally inhabitants of the great peninsula lying between the Delaware and Chesapeake Bays, or on what is now referred to as the Del-Mar-Va peninsula. They were early subjugated by the Onondagoes of the Five Nations or Iroquois Confederacy, and according to Lossing emigrated from their native peninsular home into Pennsylvania about the year 1710.<sup>1</sup>

The earliest reference we have been able to disclose relative to any activity of the Nanticokes in the affairs of Lancaster County is that found in the Colonial Records describing their presence in 1707 at a council with Gov. Evans held at Dekanoagah about nine miles from Conestoga.<sup>2</sup> The tribe at that time was evidently still located in Maryland for one of the Nanticoke spokesmen in addressing the council presented a belt of wampum in behalf of the Governor of Maryland. That the Nanticokes had at that early date acquired an understanding of the English language is evidenced by the statement that "Indian Harry, by order of the Conestoga Sachemaes, spoke in English to the Nanticokes, who all understood that language."<sup>3</sup>

Mombert states that the Nanticokes from Maryland made frequent visits to Conestoga and some settled near it.<sup>4</sup> This is the first reference we have to the Nanticokes having taken up a residence within the confines of our county and corresponds chronologically to the exodus of the tribe from their native heath.

Authors of Lancaster County histories almost unanimously refer to their next residence as being at Tulpehocken, not far from Womelsdorf in Berks County, and to a little later residence at two sites in Lancaster County, namely, Lehey in Warwick township and Indiantown in Cocalico township, where we are gathered today.

The site of the Nanticoke settlement at "Lehey" has been definitely established as being located on the Levi S. Reist farm.<sup>5</sup> The tract is situated in eastern Warwick township close to the village of Disston and the farm is now owned by Diller Groff. Disston (Millport) is located about midway between Rothsville and Oregon and the site on which Lehey was located came into possession of the Reist family from the John Wistar grants. The settlement here has never been studied to any great extent but it appears probable that it was a transient village site and was not occupied for a great length of time. It was a beautiful location for an Indian settlement and is fairly rich in Indian relics, indicating that it was more than a mere encampment but rather a settlement which was maintained for a variable length of time, only to be abandoned for a more desirable location.

While the site of "Lehey" is undoubtedly proven the *time* of its occupation has not been established and is open to conjecture, and it is at this point that we should like to give liberty to our imagination for a few moments, if such liberty may be allowed the writer of a narrative, and try to trace the movements of the tribe before it arrived at Tulpehocken.

Referring again to the statement of Mombert that the Nanticokes settled somewhere near Conestoga, he does not indicate how near nor how far from that point the settlement may have been located, but even assuming that it might have been close to the point where the Conestoga Creek empties into the Susquehanna River, it requires no great stretch of the imagination to picture the Indians following the course of the Conestoga to a point where the Cocalico Creek joins the former stream. This particular junction is located a few miles northeast of the village of Oregon and is commonly referred to as the "Forks." Immediately adjoining the "Forks" is a beautiful high tableland, of large dimensions, level, yet perfectly drained, and a site to be gloried in by even the most fastidious Indian. While this site has never been referred to in the Indian histories of Lancaster County, yet we love to picture the Nanticokes making this spot a temporary abode in their

migrations in attempting to establish a more permanent settlement. Furthermore the site at Le hoy would be in a direct line in the movement towards Tulpehocken. The ground adjoining the "Forks" is probably the richest section in Lancaster County in supplying relics of Nanticoke origin and has been a source of a great deal of inspiration to relic hunters, both amateur and professional. Another fact that would lend weight to the supposition that this spot was probably the site of an Indian settlement is that the ford on the old Peter's Road is located but a few hundred yards from this site and the settlement was more than likely a stopping and trading point for the famous Indian trader, Peter Bazaillion. While we have no intention of trying to fix the foregoing as the site of a Nanticoke settlement, yet we feel that it would only follow a natural sequence of events in the movement of the Nanticoques towards their more northerly home, and we offer it only as a suggestion that might be used by some future investigator.

The Nanticoques were given permission to locate in the Tulpehocken Valley<sup>6</sup> in Berks County where they remained for some years until the encroachment of large numbers of German settlers from Schoharie in New York State caused them to abandon that location, according to various authorities in about the year 1721 to 1723 and locate at Indiantown in what was then Cocalico township.<sup>7</sup> With later divisions of counties and townships the site of Indiantown may now be stated to be in Clay township in Lancaster County. This spot may be described as being located about two miles north of the old and justly famous Horseshoe Pike and lies east of Durlach, southwest of Schoeneck and northwest of Lincoln.

It is upon the site in Indiantown that we are assembled today, and as we look over this beautiful expanse of fertile land sloping gently southward from the Mt. Airy ridge, we may realize what a wonderful spot the Indians chose upon which to locate. That the number of Indians here was quite considerable may be inferred from the fact that the size of their tract is stated by Lyle<sup>8</sup> to have been 500 acres, yet it may have been considerably larger, for the grant from the Penns to Henry Carpenter, who came into possession of the plot at an early date, included 700 acres, the bulk or all of which was probably used by the Indians. That the site here was ideal may be determined by anyone who cares to take the trouble to look over the plot. Located near the foothills of our own Furnace Hills, which are little more than 1½ miles north of the site and which must have furnished game in abundance, the hunting grounds were conveniently situated. Nearly through the center of the tract flows a stream of beautiful, clear water, in addition there is a spring head near the northern border of the tract from which issues an abundant supply of elegant drink-

ing water. To the southwest at a distance of only a few miles is the Middle Creek and at approximately the same distance to the east and southeast is the Cocalico Creek, so that insofar as game and fish were concerned the Nanticokes no doubt had a plentiful supply. It was not necessary for them to confine their activities to hunting and fishing for the land upon which they were located is some of the most fertile in all northern Lancaster County, and the descendants of the earliest settlers still tell of the farming operations of the Indians, if such they may be called, on what the German settlers called the "Grube Land," or literally the hoeing land of the Indians.

For generations this particular locality has been known to the residents of northeastern Lancaster County as Indiantown, the name having come down through the years from the time of the earliest settlers. The stream which traverses this tract is known as Indian Creek, and the Mennonite Church which is located on the site is known in the official records of the denomination as the Indiantown Mennonite Church. Just below the southeastern border of the tract is a well defined cave which, according to local tradition, was frequented by the Indians and this cave is still referred to as the Indian Cave. The old mill located on the plot is known as Stober's Indiantown Mill.

The plot which is referred to locally as the "Indian land" is the tract which was granted by John, Thomas, and Richard Penn to Henry Carpenter under date of May 9th, 1734, consisting of 700 acres and located in Cocalico township in Lancaster County. The deed is recorded in Patent Book A, Volume 6, page 300. The Penns came into possession of the land by having it ceded to them in the great treaty of 1718. Under the terms of this treaty the Delaware Indians ceded to the Penns all the land lying between Duck Creek on the south and the Lechay Hills (South Mountains) on the north and between the Schuylkill River on the east and the Susquehanna River on the west.

While Lyle states that the plot covered 500 acres, yet the consensus of opinion among descendants of the earliest grantees is that the "Indian Land" included the whole grant of 700 acres. It may be interesting to note that Henry Carpenter paid the Penns 140 pounds in cash and under the terms of the grant was required to pay annually one English shilling for each 100 acres of the tract. We are presenting herewith a semi-diagrammatic draught of the Carpenter tract in order to illustrate in a crude manner the general plan of the plot as well as to give the approximate location of the several spots referred to in our narrative. This sketch is not presented as being entirely accurate, but since it has been prepared we have received from the Department of the Interior a copy of the original grant from the Penns to Carpenter and hope to secure an exact draught of the plot at some future time.

On December 21st, 1743, the tract was divided by Henry Carpenter into two plots of 350 acres each, one being deeded to his daughter, Mary, the wife of Daniel Ferree, and the other to Salomea Wistar, daughter of John Wistar and granddaughter of Henry Carpenter.

Much of the land in the eastern part of the tract was sold in smaller plots to other grantees, among them being Conrad Mentzer, Peter Feather and Henry Feather, as well as a number of others. Part of the land on the southern part of the plot was sold to Bernard Feather.

The western and larger portion of the tract came into possession of John Carpenter, a great portion of it reverting to him because of the lack of lineal Carpenter heirs. This plot consisting of 369 acres together with an additional tract of 66½ acres at the north was bought from John Carpenter by Abm. Brubaker on February 29th, 1788, for the sum of 3,400 pounds. Some idea of the increase in land values may be formed by comparing the price of land in 1734 and 1788. In 1734 Henry Carpenter paid 140 pounds for 700 acres while in 1788 Abm. Brubaker paid John Carpenter 3,400 pounds for 435½ acres, 369 acres of which were contained in the original plot. In 1789 Abm. Brubaker divided the plot into four parts, one part to each of his sons, Jacob, Abram and Daniel and the fourth part to his son-in-law, Michael Eberly.

Much of the land of the eastern part of the grant is owned by the various Stober, Zartman, Shirk, Gehman, Hehnly and Brubaker families, while a great deal of the western part is owned by descendants of the Brubaker and Eberly families. The land on which the Indiantown Church stands was donated by Abm. Brubaker, a son of the Abm. Brubaker who purchased the land from John Carpenter.

The Nanticokes had pioneer neighbors at an early date, among them being the Hibshman, Steis, Miller and Feather families, and as early as 1730 the widow Eberly with a family of nine children settled little more than a mile from the western boundary of the Nanticoke tract. It was not many years after the Nanticokes took up their location at Indiantown that they received new neighbors within a distance of 3 or 4 miles, for the Seventh Day Baptists were already at this early date beginning in a small way to locate in the vicinity of Ephrata.

In spite of the proximity of an ever increasing number of settlers on all sides of them the Nanticokes seemed to be on friendly terms with them during all the years of their residence here, and descendants of the earliest settlers often refer to stories bearing out the friendly relations existing between the settlers and the Indians. Lyle states that while the Nanticokes were at their greatest power they had to be constantly on the defensive against the

Susquehannocks or Conestogas, but that statement evidently refers to an earlier date for we have been unable to unearth any evidence showing that they were intractable or in difficulties with either Indian or white inhabitants while located in Lancaster County. So far as we can discover there is only one record of any of the Nanticokes being in the clutches of the law, that cited by Eshleman,<sup>9</sup> in which it appears that one of the Nanticokes was confined in the Lancaster jail in 1751 for abusing a white girl, but that on proper representation he was released.

An episode that would help to substantiate the statement of the friendly feeling existing between the Indians and their white neighbors is a cherished tradition that has come down through a long line of Eberly families. It is related that some time after the tribe had left this locality one of the old chieftans of the tribe died. A number of the Indians prepared his body for burial and then placed it in a crude coffin made of the bark of a tree to bring it back to the burial plot of his kin. Upon arriving here they went to the home of Jacob Eberly and rapped on the window, telling Eberly that they brought the old chief, whom he knew, back to the Nanticoke burial ground and invited Eberly and his family along to the funeral, a wish with which they willingly complied. The Jacob Eberly referred to was the great grandfather of Mr. Amos Eberly, of Durlach, who represents the 7th generation of the Eberly family located adjacent to the Indian tract and the latter relates the story as he used to hear his grandfather tell it when he was a boy.

In connection with the burial ground of the Nanticokes it is supposed, according to local tradition, to be located on the farm of Mr. Ed. Huber, somewhat northeast of the point at which we are assembled, and a short distance beyond the little woods on the property. There is also mention of another burial plot on the farm of Allen Stober.

The site of the main village is supposed to have been some distance northward from the burial ground and to have been located on the property now occupied by Mr. Lyman Hehny. There is another site referred to as having been located a little to the south of the spring situated considerably farther north than the first mentioned site. Both locations have points that would commend them as village sites and it is probable that both may have been occupied either at the same or different times.

That the Nanticokes were given a good deal of consideration in early colonial affairs is indicated by frequent references to their presence at councils at different sites in Lancaster County.

We have referred to their presence at the council near Conestoga in 1707. Rupp states that Nanticokes were present at the council at Conoy town in July, 1732, but indicates that they were

a few of those who had remained living among the white settlers in Maryland and were on their way northward.

The Colonial Records<sup>10</sup> state that the bulk of the Nanticokes moved to the mouth of the Juniata in 1748. That the Nanticokes at this time probably outnumbered the Conestogas is indicated in the Colonial Records<sup>11</sup> which in the report of the great treaty held at Lancaster in that year states that among a list of a large number of tribes represented the Nanticokes were present while no mention is made of the presence of the Conestogas.

While the bulk of the tribe is reported to have left Indiantown during the year 1748, yet according to Lyle<sup>12</sup> there were still some scattered families located about this site as late of 1758.

Just what were the determining influences that caused the Indians to leave this tract is rather uncertain, but it is reasonable to believe that the encroachment of an ever-increasing number of settlers became annoying, just as it had at Tulpehocken. It is also to be remembered that the number of Indians in Lancaster County was dwindling rapidly by this time and there was a more or less constant movement of various tribes to the Juniata and the West Branch of the Susquehanna so that it is probable that this migration also influenced the Nanticokes in deciding to get into closer proximity with some other tribes. The supply of game at Indiantown was also becoming smaller and harder to get, this is borne out by a local tradition which appears to be logical. Several hundred yards north of the old mill situated on this tract and about the same distance west of the site of the original Brubaker homestead now occupied by Monroe Hehnly, there is a marked depression, the outlines of which are still quite distinct, on the southern slope of the hill. The tradition as handed down from the early settlers states this to have been the "deer pit." Grain was sown about the depression and when this sprouted and became green it served to entice the deer to graze there and make it easier for the Indians to shoot them.

Just as environment and events determine our mode of living today so it determined the activities of the Nanticokes after leaving this site, for during the fifteen years succeeding 1748 they saw more activity than they did during all the years since they came into Pennsylvania. Their new location placed them well out on the frontier in close contact with other tribes and along the line of Indian travel and Indian unrest, just prior to and during the French and Indian War. During the next decade we find them spoken of as being at scores of points along the several branches of the Susquehanna, now up in Northeastern Pennsylvania, then up in Tioga or in Bradford. Sometimes located with Delawares, sometimes with Mohicans and at other times with the Minsies.



As early as October, 1748, Bishop Watteville, son-in-law of Count Zinzendorf, visited Wyoming and found it inhabited only by Nanticokes and by but a small number of them, the Shawnese who lived there, having probably gone to the Ohio or to the vicinity of Great Island. In 1755 Andrew Montour in reporting his journey up the North Branch of the Susquehanna says he was "as far as where the Nanticokes live." In 1756 according to Hanna in the "Wilderness Trail" they were reported about 32 miles above Wyoming at Tunkhannock on the Susquehanna, in company with some Delawares and under the noted Delaware chief, Teedyuscung.

While they were, during these years of Indian unrest and uprisings, often in bad company, yet they seemed to have remained loyal to the English for they do not appear to have been accused of perpetrating any of the atrocities which were so common during those years. They are even reported in one instance as being in a party on a relief expedition to the besieged Fort Edward, but were ordered back before they reached the fort.

We have incidentally mentioned the old mill located on the Indian tract, and while it naturally has no connection with the earliest history of the plot yet in its hey day it occupied a very important position in the affairs of this community. The mill still stands towards the northern part of the tract along the road leading from Durlach to Schoeneck, it is located not far from the spring several times referred to in our narrative and its wheels were, until a very few years ago, turned by the waters of Indian Creek.

In the early days it was owned by the Erbs and Hirschbergers and in later years has been known as Stober's Mill. This is undoubtedly the Hirschberger's Mill from which were issued the checks or notes, one of which is in the possession of our numismatist friend, Mr. C. H. Martin, and referred to in his article presented to this society some time ago.

In the Colonial Records the Nanticokes are again referred to as being present at the treaty at Lancaster in 1757.<sup>13</sup> Whether those present were some of the few who remained on this site, or whether they came from their new site on the Juniata is not stated. Eshleman<sup>14</sup> states that the tribe was represented at the Great Treaty held in Lancaster in August, 1762. In spite of the fact that this treaty lasted three weeks and was the largest ever held at Lancaster there is no mention made in the report of the treaty of the presence of the Conestogas. This fact is rather noteworthy inasmuch as there were 557 Indians present from the various tribes assembled.

In so far as we have been able to determine this is the last reference to the Nanticokes, as a tribe, being identified with any

activities in Lancaster County. The tribe came into our borders unheralded and left unsung but their having been here has left cherished memories, memories which have lived on through the years among the descendants of the early settlers and tell better than words can tell that even in those early days the relationship between pioneer and Indian was almost ideal.

In concluding this rambling narrative we wish to acknowledge our indebtedness to the authorities cited and to express our thanks and appreciation to all who have assisted in its compilation. In this connection we wish especially to thank our octogenarian friend, Rev. Abram Brubaker and his son, Phares Brubaker, who represent the fourth and fifth generations of Brubakers on this plot, for valued assistance and information. We also wish to express our thanks for similar assistance to Mr. Amos Eberly, of Durlach, who represents the seventh generation of the Eberly family who located adjacent to this tract in 1730.

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