

Dealing with the Delawares (Lenni-Lenape)

By Carol Woolridge

Just a little background to begin. King Charles II owed William Penn's father money. Since his father, Sir William, had already died, Penn was granted land in the area soon to be known as Pennsylvania or Penn's Woods. King Charles felt it was cheaper to give him the land, rather than paying him the large amount of money he was owed. Starting in the area soon known as Philadelphia, Penn planned his capital city. The name came from "Philos," meaning brother and "adelphos," meaning love, The City of Brotherly Love.

Penn, who was a Quaker, felt all men should be treated evenly and fairly, which unlike the feelings of many people of the time, included the Indians. Penn met with the Delaware Chief of the Turtle Clan, Tamanend or Tammany, whose name meant amiable or pleasant. He was the leader of the Delaware Valley tribe, and signed a Peace Treaty with William Penn. This treaty claimed that the Europeans and Indians would live in peace, for as long as creeks and rivers run, and while the Sun, Moon, and Stars endure. He and other area chiefs met with Penn and the Quakers near the Delaware River. The Lenape called Penn, "Miquon," meaning "quill."

Penn wanted the colonists to treat the Indians fairly. When he bought land from them, he gave them useful items such as blankets, clothing, cooking utensils and tools. Some settlers gave the Indians rum and liquor, which didn't sit well with Penn, who insisted they shouldn't be given anymore.

When Penn purchased land from the Lenape in 1686, he was careful not to cheat them. He walked the land for a day and a half with the Indians and talked with them as friends. Penn appreciated the land he bought from the Indians, unlike his sons.

Some years later, William Penn travelled back to England. William Jr., son of Penn and his first wife, Guliema Maria Springett, succeeded him as Governor of Pennsylvania. He not only cheated the Indians; he was also unfair to the colonists.

Chief Nutimus was born in 1650. He first met with Penn's Colonial Secretary, James Logan in 1735. Logan, also a Quaker, had written a letter to Thomas Penn, stating that Nutimus owned lands in the forks of the Delaware and Lehigh rivers. A few weeks later after an invitation, Nutimus and a group of his tribe visited Philadelphia. Nutimus gifted Logan with a bag of bullets.

Logan showed Nutimus a false deed from when Penn had earlier bought land fairly from the Lenape. Penn's sons used this fake document to further extend their land purchases. This became known as the Walking Purchase. This started at Wrighttown, Bucks County, Nutimus's hometown and birthplace.

On September 19, 1737, the Walking Purchase began. John and Thomas had hired what they called "walkers" but were really runners. These "walkers" were to speed across the land as quickly as possible. At the end of the first day, only one "walker" remained, Edward Marshall. Rather than walking eastward toward the Delaware as expected, a lone walker headed diagonally to the northwest to take a very large area not agreed upon in the deal.

The Indians were disgusted by the dishonest way they had been cheated of their land. After their Walking Purchase had been completed, the Penns demanded that Nutimus and his Lenape leave the area they'd lost. The Penn brothers, Thomas, John and Richard wanted to use the land to attract new settlers. Nutimus and other groups, or sachems, refused to leave their land.

In the Spring of 1741, Colonial Authorities sent a message to the Six Nation Indian Tribes, asking them to forcibly remove the Munsee Delawares from their land.

This resulted in a Philadelphia conference in 1742. The Iroquois Chief Sanasatego, attended the conference with Nutimus and other area Lenape tribes. During the conference, Sanasatego issued an ultimatum to Nutimus to leave his lands and dragged him from the conference by his long hair. As a result, Nutimus and the Lenape were humiliated by the British and the Iroquois.

Chief Nutimus and Lenni-Lenape travel to Nescopeck

After losing their land in the east, Chief Nutimus of the Unami or Turtle tribe, his family, including his wife, Princess Nutimus, who was the daughter of Tamanend, his son, Chief Netawatwees, and daughter, Helena Killbuck, crossed the state to the west and eventually moved to areas near Wapwallopen and Nescopeck. They were accompanied by 1,000 or so people of the tribe. Nutimus and his tribe traveled the Nescopeck trail in 1742. The homes the Lenape built were longhouses, not the wigwams of the western Indians. Two villages were settled near Nescopeck, the first was one half mile from Nescopeck Creek, where it flows into the Susquehanna. The second village was located about a mile below Nescopeck, on the farm property of Roy Beaver.

Mr. Beaver wouldn't let archeologists dig up Indian remains to examine them or steal artifacts that might have been buried with them. One day while digging a post hole, one of his farmhands dug up an Indian skeleton. They were careful to reinter the body as it was found. Mr. Beaver felt it was bad luck to dig up the bodies, and made sure if any others were found, they were reinterred same as the first.

They were a peaceful people who befriended the whites, until the start of the French and Indian Wars. The Lenape then decided to get revenge for their cruel treatment and loss of land. This series of battles were between 1688 and 1763. The British battled the French and their allies, the Indians.

The French and Indian War, 1754-1763, singularly became the turn of the tide, which resulted in the deaths of many families in the area. Conrad Weiser stated that some of the "Indian" murders were really attributed to the French. The Nescopeck Lenape gave the French support and guided them to their enemies, the British. The French and Indian War ended in 1763 with a British win. The Treaty of Paris called for the end of war.

In 1777, tragedy happened to the Ferdinand Booth family in Mifflinville. Mr. Booth's wife and daughter were abducted by Indians, who took them to Wyoming County then on to the Ohio River Valley. The mother was forced to marry an Indian Chieftain. She was held almost as a prisoner, they feared she and the daughter would escape. After 11 years she was helped by an

Indian trader, who returned her and her daughter to their home. The daughter later married into the Poe family.

On April 26, 1779, the families of Bartley, Ramsey, Christopher Farrow and Joseph Dewey at Fort Jenkins were attacked by Indians. Twenty members of these families were captured. Ensign Thornberry and 20 men pursued the Indians and engaged them in battle, four Lenape were killed and five were wounded, allowing the prisoners to escape and make their way back to the fort.

On May 17, 1779, the Windbigler family and four others were killed on the Mifflin Flats, they were also scalped by the Indians. When their son and daughter came back from Catawissa from getting supplies, they saw the Indians leaving their home at the bottom of Pee Wee Hill.

Later, the Delawares were living between the Allegheny and the Monongahela Rivers, North of Pittsburgh.

Nutimus died in 1756 at the age of 106.