

YESTERDAY'S
NEWS

JERSEY JOURNEYS

PUBLISHED BY NEW JERSEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY • 52 PARK PLACE, NEWARK, NEW JERSEY 07102

Native American Stories

Long before the first Europeans set foot on the land now known as New Jersey, the area was home to Native Americans who called themselves Lenape (pronounced "lun-NAH-pay"). The Lenape were called the Delaware Indians by the Europeans.

It is believed that the Lenape first came to New Jersey 10,000 years ago. They lived and thrived in this land for thousands of years. They were the local inhabitants who first met Giovanni da Verrazano in 1524, and other Europeans (Swedes, Dutch, English) who came here to explore, trade, and settle. Contact with Europeans had a profound impact on the Lenape—when contact was first made there were probably around 10,000 Lenape in New Jersey; by 1800, most Lenape had left or been forced out of the state or died of European diseases.

The Lenape had no immunity to the diseases brought by the white man (mumps, measles, tuberculosis, smallpox). Death by new diseases and the push westward because of colonial settlements reduced the number of Lenape in New Jersey. The remaining Delaware people moved west and joined with other tribes. Their 1867 agreement with the Cherokee allowed them to buy an area in which to live as Delaware

Indians within the Cherokee Nation. Since then they have primarily lived in Oklahoma (once known as Indian Territory). Currently, there are about 10,000 Delaware Indians. Most are headquartered in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, where the tribal government operates service programs.

While the vast majority of Lenape have not lived in New Jersey for more than 250 years, their "presence" in the state continues to this day. For centuries, thousands of Indian artifacts—arrowheads, axes, human skeletons, pottery—have been unearthed in New Jersey. These items remind us that the ground on which we built our houses, schools, and stores once was the home of the Lenape. We stand where they once stood.

Since, like many Native American tribes, the Lenape had no written language, we can only get a sense of what their lives were like through European accounts and artifacts—the things of everyday life they left behind. European writings about the Lenape offer a very one-sided and sometimes hostile view. Many people have used archeology and artifacts to try to reconstruct how the Lenape lived.

You'd be surprised at how much "history" you walk on each



Peter Lindstrom, a visitor from Sweden, made this drawing of the Indians he found in the Delaware River Valley in the Mid-1600s. *New Jersey Historical Society Collections.*

day. Buried under the ground are the remnants of those that lived here long before your ancestors came to America. And maybe you've seen but didn't think much of a dam-like stone structure in a river—it was actually built thousands of years ago. This issue of *Jersey Journeys* describes some of the tools and structures that the Lenape left behind and how we can use these findings to understand how they lived. ★

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Lenape Fishing Weir on the Passaic

It's a well-known saying that sometimes things hide in plain sight. You may see something and not know what it is or what its purpose is, and walk past it. You may have seen a *weir* but didn't know it. It looked like a bunch of rocks in a river to you. Do you know what a weir is and why it was made?

All along the East Coast—from Maine to Virginia—Native Americans used weirs to catch fish. Weirs are "V" shaped dam structures that could be made from either a netting material or rock. One of the last known existing weirs of its kind in the northeastern United States is located in our state on the Passaic River between Paterson and Fair Lawn. The weir crosses approximately 100 yards of the Passaic River and is nearly six feet in width at any point. Although direct dating of the Fair Lawn/Paterson weir is currently not possible, this weir was probably used by the Lenape for thousands of years.

By studying weirs, researchers have come up with several ideas on how it could have been used by Lenape to catch

fish. This weir is made of boulder and cobblestones, and it has an opening at the point of the "V" called a "sluice." The point of the "V" faces south so that fish moving downstream were forced to go through the narrow opening where they were caught. The main way the weir was probably used was to catch fish in the "V" by dragging a net through the water from about a half mile above the weir, and then tying the net off to the banks of the river. The sluice or opening would have been closed with a "gate," which was constructed of small branches. The fish would be trapped. The Lenape could then spear the trapped fish and throw them onto the bank where they would be cleaned, cooked, and preserved.

Another method of catching fish in the weir involved placing a basket behind the sluice at night. Eels would swim through the

sluice and be trapped in the basket where they would be harvested in the morning. Also, during the migration of the salmon, shad, and striped bass, the Lenape would close the upper part of the weir and then beginning downstream, beat the surface of the water to drive the fish toward the apex. When the fish were inside the "V," a gate, probably made out of weighted nets, was closed. Then the harvesting began.

Currently, an effort is being made to preserve the Fair Lawn/Paterson weir as a National Historic Site. It is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places because of the uniqueness of its structure and because it may give us some information important to New Jersey's prehistory. ★

Source: Internet site: "Native American Fishing Weir." www.bergen.org/AAST/Projects/weir



Using a fishing weir. Courtesy of the New Jersey State Museum.

Excavation Sites: Searching for Signs of Native Americans

For decades, New Jerseyans have been discovering sites where Native Americans probably camped, and artifacts, such as stone axes, used by Native Americans. When we find these relics we remember that we were not the first inhabitants of this land. They are reminders of the peoples who lived here long ago.

Finding actual physical evidence of Native American life helps us learn more about how they lived thousands of years ago and just before their contact with Europeans. Archeologists are scientists who study the material remains—for example, fossils, artifacts, monuments—of past human life and activities. They are the people who work to discover signs of past cultures and use them to better understand how other people lived. Many Lenape sites have been studied and many artifacts have been discovered in New Jersey.

Using excerpts from newspaper articles, just a few sites have been selected to briefly discuss that relate stories of excavations. The New Jersey Historical Society has a number of copies of



An example of people working at an excavation site. Courtesy of the New Jersey State Museum.

newspaper articles that report such findings. There's an excerpt from a September 8, 1955, article that tells of a link to prehistoric Indians discovered at the RCA site in Princeton, New Jersey:

A link of communication between prehistoric Indian people and modern day citizens of New Jersey has been opened up during the past month by archeological excavations. . . . Judging from the types of implements found . . . it has been estimated that this site may have been occupied by Indian hunters making camp sites as

early as 3,000 years ago.

Interesting discoveries indicate that this site was used at different times as a camp, providing an unwritten history of the Indians who occupied the area at different periods. The archaic period (3000 BC or earlier to 100 AD) is characterized by hunters and food gatherers who utilized larger and cruder tools than were used in the later periods. The earliest type of pottery manufactured by the Indians of New Jersey in the early woodland period (100 AD to 350 AD) and cer-

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NEW JERSEY ESTABLISHES FIRST INDIAN RESERVATION

On August 29, 1758, the New Jersey legislature bought 3,000 acres of land near the current day Indian Mills in Burlington County and created the first Indian reservation in America. Governor Bernard named the self-supporting community Brotherton in recognizing the efforts of Quakers who organized the New Jersey Association for Helping the Indians in 1757. The Indians were given unrestricted hunting and fishing rights in the area. They stayed there until 1801 when kinsmen invited them north to join an Indian community in New York.

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tain types of spearheads have also been excavated at the site. Later periods of Indian culture are also well represented at this site, with finds of spearheads, knives, scrapers, and grinding stones."

These items are studied and can be used to figure out what types of foods the Lenape ate and whether they were hunters, among other things. It is through these types of studies that people get most of their information on prehistoric Native Americans.

The *Record's* article of November 9, 1972, tells that beneath the lawns of Ramapo Col-

lege in Mahwah there was once an Indian camp:

George Geils, a teacher of science, archeology, and history in the Ridgewood school system has been digging there for about 10 years and has found between 300 and 400 items. More important, he has identified two separate campsites in the campus area. The sites were undoubtedly used by the native Delaware and Lenape tribes. One site, about 1000 years old, is located on what is now a sewage treatment site. The other camp is about 3,500 years old.

Tools such as hoes, scrapers, hammer stones, hide smoothers,

and pottery have been found, as well as worship pendants and smooth game stones used like marbles. Most of them have been fashioned from obsidian, quartz, jasper, and flint. Geils began digging on the campus because he regarded it as a likely spot for an Indian community, near a good source of water and on a gentle slope.

"I tell you there's nothing like it. You dig up these artifacts which a man fashioned by hand so long ago, and you know how hard he worked at it, and you begin to understand what it was like." ★

DID YOU KNOW . . .

people surveying land in early New Jersey wrote about meeting Native Americans? In John Reading's daily journal from 1715, he often mentions camping and traveling with Native Americans. You can see a photograph of this fragile journal and a transcript of it in the Society's exhibition, *History's Mysteries*.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE SOCIETY

Come visit the New Jersey Historical Society at its new location at 52 Park Place in downtown Newark. See our three exhibitions, *Paul Robeson: Bearer of a Culture*; *History's Mysteries*; and *Up on the Boardwalk, Down by the Sea: Photographs of Atlantic City from the Corbis Collection* and participate in free Saturday Family Programs and School Vacation Programs. These programs are designed for children ages 5 and up accompanied by an adult.

Sat., Oct. 3, 1998, 1 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.

Many Faces One Family—Explore portraits and photographs of families who lived in New Jersey's past with a Society Museum Educator. Then create your own family portrait.

Written by Susan Bernstein

Designed by
Font & Center Press

New Jersey Historical Society
52 Park Place
Newark, New Jersey 07102
973-596-8500



Printed on recycled paper

Sat., Oct. 10, 1998; Available 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Family Self-Guided Activity—Shared moments are lifetime memories. At the front desk pick up a self-guide booklet.

Sat., Oct. 17, 1998—1 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.

Garden State Harvest—Have you ever been cranberry picking? Learn about the Native American and modern harvest of cranberries. Then make your own "pie" out of collage materials.

Sat., Oct. 24, 1998—Available all day at the front desk

Family Self-Guided Activity—Have a hands-on and interactive time while learning together. At the front desk pick up a self-guide booklet.

Sat., Oct. 31, 1998; 12 and 4 p.m.

Halloween Community Family Festival—Celebrate Halloween with NJHS. Tell scary NJ stories and add your story to our Halloween Big Book.

Schedule subject to change; for updated information, call (973) 596-8500, and press "3."

NJHS Hours

Office hours: Mon.–Fri., 9 a.m.–5 p.m.
Public hours: Tues.–Sat., 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Library hours: Thurs.–Fri.,
10 a.m.–5 p.m.; First and third
Saturdays, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.;

Closed Sunday and Monday
Admission to the Society is free.

For more information on Education Programs for grades Pre-K–12, after school and scout groups, family and adult programs, and Teacher Services at the Society, please call the Education Department at (973) 596-8500.

READ ALL ABOUT IT!

The Lenapes. By Robert Steven Grumet. Chelsea House, 1989. This book describes the history, culture, and changing fortunes of the Lenape. Reading level: Grades 3 and up.

Visit a recreated Lenape village at Waterloo Village, Stanhope, N.J. Call 973-347-0900.

A Native American Pow Wow is held annually at Vasa Park, Wolfe Road, Budd Lake, N.J. Call 717-733-0811.

An American Indian Arts Festival is held annually at the Rankokus Indian Reservation in Rancocas, N.J. Call 609-261-4747.

To order a subscription to *Jersey Journeys* call (973) 596-8500 and press "0."

Costs: Large classroom subscription (35 copies per issue, one Teacher's Guide) \$65. Small classroom subscription (25 copies per issue, one Teacher's Guide) \$50. Annual resource packet (2 copies per issue, mailed at year-end) \$25. Individual subscription (1 copy per issue) \$10.

LENAPE LINKS

Ar•ti•fact	an object remaining from a particular period
Cob•ble•stone	a naturally rounded stone bigger than a pebble smaller than a boulder
Ex•ca•vate	to dig out and remove
Im•mu•ni•ty	a condition of being able to resist a particular disease