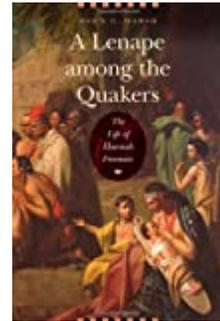




Dawn G. Marsh. *A Lenape among the Quakers: The Life of Hannah Freeman.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014. xii + 213 pp. \$27.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8032-4840-3.



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She “almost forgot to talk Indian”: A Lenape Woman in Eighteenth-Century Chester County, Pennsylvania

In 1797 Moses Marshall, a justice of the peace in Chester County, Pennsylvania, examined an elderly woman known as “Indian Hannah alias Hannah Freeman” to establish her right to be supported by the Overseers of the Poor (p. 16). To qualify she needed to prove long-term residence in the county, so her examination documented the different places in Chester County as well as in Delaware and New Jersey where she had lived in the course of nearly seventy years. While not an autobiography in any sense, the two-page document is the nearest we can come to charting the life of a woman of the Lenni Lenape or Delaware nation in the eighteenth century. Dawn Marsh, assistant professor of history at Purdue, has used it effectively to tell the story of the Brandywine band of the Lenape as well as that of the woman remembered on a historical marker as “the last of the Lenni Lenape Indians in Chester County” (p. 179).

In Marsh’s new book, we learn from Hannah Freeman’s narrative that substantial numbers of her people continued to live alongside expanding European settle-

ments. They maintained the custom of moving from a winter camp on the lower Brandywine to a summer location upstream where they planted corn and other crops. Hannah was born in March 1730 or 1731 in a Cabin on William Webb’s Place in the Township of Kennett (p. 77). Her extended family, grandmother, aunts, father, and mother used to live in their Cabin at Webb’s place in the Winter and in the Summer moved to Newlin to Plant Corn (p. 189). This continued for some years. Two younger brothers were born in Kennett. But at an unspecified date, “The Country becoming more settled the Indians were not allowed to Plant Corn any longer” on their land, which was now surveyed and patented by others. About the same time, her father left his family and went to Shamokin. The rest of the family “continued living in their Cabins sometimes in Kennett and sometimes at Centre [in Delaware]” until 1764 (p. 189).

The two massacres of the Lancaster County Conestogas in December 1763 made Freeman and her family refugees, as “they being afraid, moved over the Delaware

to N. Jersey and lived with the Jersey Indians for about Seven Yearsâ (p. 189). According to Marsh, their flight suggests that the Paxton Boysâ outrage was intended and understood primarily as a warning to people like Hannah Freemanâs family to leave the province. Nevertheless, on their return to Chester County in 1770 or 1771, they resumed their old way of life. After her motherâs death around 1785, âshe went to live with her Aunt Nanny at Concord and staid with her all winterâ (p. 157). From that time on she lived with Quaker families as a domestic, âsewing &c.,â sometimes for wages, sometimes merely for room and board (p. 160). After five years she returned to Aunt Nannyâs âbut having almost forgot to talk Indian and not liking their manner of living so well as white peoples,â she went back to work in their houses (p. 190). Now growing old in the 1790s, for three years Hannah Freeman âmade her home & worked sometimes for her boardâ with the Samuel Levis family (p. 162). At this time and perhaps earlier she made baskets for sale. Until she came to Chester County Court in 1797, âshe ha[d] been moving about from place to place making baskets &c. and staying longest where best usedâ (p. 190).

This is not the first time Hannah Freemanâs story has been toldâMarshall Becker published her 1797 examination with extensive commentary in 1990. Although Becker drew on his own expertise in Lenape history, he used the source as a window into the life of a laboring woman who was also a Lenape.[1] His important article complemented Lucy Simlerâs work on landless âcottagersâ in Chester and Lancaster counties and rural labor in general.[2] Dawn Marsh builds upon this earlier work by placing Freemanâs life within the broader context of Lenape and Pennsylvania history. With enough detail to answer the readerâs questions but not so much as to lose the thread of the narrative, *A Lenape among the Quakers* is readable and informative. One of the most interesting sections (pp. 164-178) deals with Hannah Freemanâs

posthumous fame as âthe last of her raceâ and the way her story was used to depict benevolent whites and obligingly disappearing Native Americans. Though there is no index, the author has also provided an exhaustive bibliography, and excellent maps make locations clear to readers unfamiliar with Chester County. However, in her enthusiastic retelling Marsh occasionally exaggerates. It is not true, for instance, that Lancaster County was ever âbeyond the reach of Pennsylvaniaâs authorityâ or that âthe governance and leadership of these backcountry communities fell into the hands of their own Presbyterian ministersâ (p. 101). Further, some footnotes dealing with crucial points in Hannah Freemanâs life cite only âAlbert Cook Myers Collection, Chester County Historical Society.â It would be helpful to know whether weâre dealing with a contemporary source or a newspaper clipping from 1930 in that collection.

Notes

[1]. Marshall J. Becker, âHannah Freeman: An Eighteenth-Century Lenape Living and Working Among Colonial Farmers,â *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 114 (April 1990): 249-271.

[2]. Lucy Simler, âRural Labor and the Farm Household in Chester County, Pennsylvania, 1750-1800,â in *Work and Labor in Early America*, ed. Stephen Innes (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Lucy Simler and Paul G. E. Clemens, âThe Best Poor Manâs Country in 1783: The Population Structure of Rural Society in Late Eighteenth-Century Chester County, Pennsylvania,â *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 133 (June 1989): 234-261; and Lucy Simler, âThe Landless Worker: An Index of Economic and Social Change in Chester County, Pennsylvania,â *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 114 (April 1990): 163-199.

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