

## 4. “SMALL RACES” OF THE MIDDLE ATLANTIC

*Isolated communities throughout the region have preserved their Native heritage through centuries, usually without official encouragement or recognition.*

The preservation planning regime requires that each property must be considered in terms of its larger cultural and historical context. An obvious context for the subject property is the post-contact history of Native American populations in Delaware, not previously treated by the planning process. While creation of a new planning context is not appropriate in a site-specific study, some information is necessary in order to place the site in its own proper historical milieu.

In this chapter we will review available information on Native American communities in the Middle Atlantic region, with emphasis on the Delaware communities. In the next chapter we will examine the history of the Kent County community and its relationship to the residents of Bloomsbury.

At least two tenants on the Bloomsbury property, John Sisco and Thomas Conselor, are known to have been members of a local Native American remnant population often misnamed “moors” or “high yellows,” historically centered around the town of Cheswold in Little Creek and Duck Creek hundreds of Kent County. Two of the European-American owners, Patrick Conner and Francis Denney, were identified with these people through close business and personal relationships. Another family on the property, the Loatmans, also are related to the local Indian remnant community.

From the end of the seventeenth century, until the last decades of the nineteenth century, no Indians were legally identified in Kent County government records. Census, tax, and school records contain no record of any race other than black or white during nearly two centuries (Heite and Heite 1985).

Before the United States census of 1790, there was no legal requirement in America to classify everyone by race, and there was no generally-accepted standard for

racial identity. Racial designations appear in the record only on an *ad hoc* basis, determined for each occasion. The Constitution required a decennial census, that would identify whites, slaves, free persons of color, including everyone except “Indians not taxed.” Indians not taxed were those who lived on reservations set aside by the U. S. government or by the colonies before the Revolution.

Taxed Indians were enumerated in the census together with African Americans under the classification of “free persons of color.” Some were classified as white. Because there were no reservations in Delaware, where untaxed Indians would reside, an Indian could be either black or white, but not “red.” Many were called “mulattoes,” an ambiguous term that encompassed any nonwhite person, regardless of ancestry. The 1800 census of Delaware (the 1790 returns having been lost) did not list any person identified as an Indian.

For thirty years before the Civil War, increasingly strict laws controlled the actions of blacks and mulattoes, who were considered likely to foment rebellion against slaveowners. Because Delaware was a slave state, these restrictions were relatively onerous. A few well-off Indians challenged the restrictions in court, but failed.

After the Civil War, Indian people were able to obtain limited separation of their schools from the black school system, but official recognition of individuals as Indians escaped them until the twentieth century.

Indian people clearly have been living in the area since contact, but their ethnic identity has been systematically erased or concealed from the public record for centuries. It is generally not possible to find individuals who were unequivocally classified as Indians in the public record after about 1700. On the other hand, it is possible to identify

community of people who have maintained a tradition of Indian descent. These communities have maintained internal cohesion through three centuries of European domination and official denial of their Indian identities. The two Indian communities in Delaware and a third community centered around Bridgeton New Jersey maintained strong social ties throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Today about 1,500 families belong to a regional Nanticoke-Lenape organization in Kent County and across the river in New Jersey (Nanticoke-Lenape 1996: 9). An unknown

number of families belong to another organization in southern Delaware.

Official silence concerning race during the eighteenth century has complicated the historian's task of making a racial or cultural identification of these people during a critical period in their history, and the time when this site was occupied. The concept of "race" presents some problems to the historian. If "race" is defined by genealogy, or pure descent from the core population, very few people can be classified as belonging to a single race.



Figure 15

Detail of the 1719 Senex Maryland map

This Maryland map varies little from the Augustine Herman map issued a generation earlier. The project area (arrow) is shown as virtually unknown territory, inaccurately located on a shrunken Delaware Bay shore. Even the heads of Delaware rivers were claimed by Maryland. Indian tribes were still identified on the New Jersey side of Delaware Bay near the project area. Native-descended populations have intermarried across Delaware Bay throughout recorded history.

If, on the other hand, a “race” is defined as a self-defined community who intermarry freely and share cultural traditions, then a person’s “race” is easy to define, regardless of individual genetic makeup.

For purposes of census and enforcement of discriminatory laws, race in America has been defined by yet a third standard, which is the subjective opinion of the person keeping records. In the case of Indians living in a society where everyone was either black or white, subjective racial assignments varied through the spectrum.

While the house at Bloomsbury was standing, the economic, legal, and social status of the local Native American community was slipping from a largely undifferentiated white or “not black” designation to a status legally indistinguishable from free Negroes. Partly as a consequence of this change in designation, native people became poorer, less literate, and almost invisible.

This isolation and alienation had its beneficial effects, however. During nearly three centuries, Indian remnant communities managed to retain their separate identities, some social structure, and the oral heritage of a native ancestry.

#### ISOLATE GROUPS = INDIANS?

Racially ambiguous communities, sometimes collectively called *isolates* or, in former times, *tri-racial* isolates, are found throughout the United States, but they are best known in the upper South. These groups typically are self-defined and are recognized by the larger communities that surround them. Sociologists, anthropologists, historians, and genealogists have studied these “small races” from several complementary points of view.

The first published overall survey of isolate groups in the upper South was a sociological study by Brewton Berry, *Almost White* (Berry 1963). The most recent scholarly study is a genealogical survey by an historian (DeMarce 1992, 1993). Published scholarly accounts of individual communities are appearing regularly (Cissna 1986). Some

studies are fragmentary and others remain unpublished (such as Segal 1976), leaving the field wide open for future researchers.

Genealogical and anthropological scholarship has shed light on the isolates’ origins, but researchers generally recognize that much basic data must yet be gathered before the subject can be adequately understood (DeMarce 1993:39). Before the advent of modern DNA studies, there were several attempts to quantify in genetic terms the racial makeup of the isolate groups (Pollizer 1972) by looking at gross perceived racial characteristics.

As details have fallen together, it has become apparent that the isolate groups are, in fact, remnant Native American communities that have remained outside the official system of recognized tribes.

#### REMOVALS

Almost immediately after the beginning of colonialization, the European and Native communities recognized the need to keep space between themselves.

Among the first laws issued by the English under the Duke of York was a law forbidding freedom of worship for Native people (Linn 1879:33):

*“No Indian whatsoever shall at any time be Suffered to Powaw or performe outward worship to the Devil in any Towne within this Government.”*

The same law, however, required settlers to help fence Indians’ corn fields against wandering cattle, and to compensate Indian farmers for crop damage from settlers’ cattle. Strong liquor was not to be given to Indians, except for medicinal purposes.

#### Figure 16 (Facing Page)

This map of Virginia and Maryland was published just before the Winnesocum uprising of 1742. Indian towns are shown in the area now recognized as part of Sussex County. Note the wavy line representing the disputed boundary of Pennsylvania and a shrunken Delaware with Maryland.

A New Map of  
**VIRGINIA,**  
 and  
**MARYLAND.**  
 By H. Moll Geographer.

■ Plantations.  
 ▲ Indian Houses & Plantations.  
 C. for Creeks.



By about 1718, some of the Southern Maryland Piscataway had moved north and established Conoy Town on the Susquehanna in Pennsylvania, near the present Bainbridge. To this location came other Piscataway from the present Washington metropolitan area, as well as other Maryland Indians. They began to join other tribes in doing business with the Pennsylvania colonial government. By 1742, there is mention of Nanticokes among them (Cissna 1986:192-193).

1742 may have been the defining moment in the history of Native Americans on the Delmarva. In that year, a group of traditionalists gathered in the Pocomoke swamp at a place called Winnesockum to plan a massacre that was thwarted. Within a few years, traditional Indian towns (Figure 16) and their inhabitants had “disappeared” from the Delmarva landscape. The history of this upheaval, or last gasp of a society, is yet to be written (Weslager 1943).

In the next year the main body of the Conoy and Nanticoke moved upriver to the mouth of the Juniata, following advice from the Iroquois with whom they had become associated. By 1753, the Nanticoke and Piscataway (Conoy) were being treated as a single people. During the Revolution, 120 Nanticoke and 30 Piscataway took refuge at Fort Niagara.

Thereafter some went to Canada, while others left to join the Lenape in the Old Northwest on the trek that eventually took them to Oklahoma (Cissna 1986:193-200). Lenape emigrants took the traditional religion with them, and it survived into the twentieth century (Kraft 1984) in Canada and Oklahoma. During the migration period, people moved back and forth, between the emigrant communities and the East Coast homelands. Limited communication was sustained, along the route, certainly for several generations after each move.

## INDIANS WHO STAYED BEHIND

Today’s isolate communities descend from the people who lived along the East Coast when the first Europeans arrived, although the

tribal labels attached to groups today are not necessarily the ones their ancestors carried. The Sussex County Nanticoke community, for example, may in fact contain significant numbers of Choptanks, Assateagues and Gingaskins (Weslager 1943:142).

More than a hundred identifiable tribal groups are not recognized by the Department of the Interior. Most surviving Native Americans along the eastern seaboard live outside the “recognized” or “reservation” system. Without government recognition, tribal groups have had little success in asserting their Indian identity. Ironically, the “citizen” or “non-reservation” Indians, descendants of members of “removed” tribes who did not emigrate, probably number more than 115,000 (Porter, ed., 1986:2).

Indians in the east are here because their ancestors consciously masked their native culture. During the removal period, Indians who chose to retain their traditional way of life were packed off to a sequence of distant reservations. Those who chose to stay in their home territories adopted European ways and acculturated as quickly as possible. Rather than live on tribal reservations, they acquired land in the European tenure system, and became landowners indistinguishable on the record from their white neighbors.

The late John Witthoft suggested that, in the Penn colonies, native groups survived on the personal manors of the Proprietors, which were effectively baronial estates exempt from local political forces (Witthoft 1994; Porter, ed., 1986:73). There was a manor, called Frieth, on the upper reaches of Duck Creek, in Kent County, Delaware, immediately northwest of the area where the progenitors of the Cheswold community lived during the eighteenth century.

Those who stayed behind gradually adopted characteristics of the dominant society. The rate of acculturation never has been measured. Nor have scholars been able to determine how much of Native culture survived, or for how long (Porter, ed., 1986: 27).

Because it was not legally or socially possible to proclaim Indian identity, remnants

## Postcontact Nanticoke and Lenape chronology

(Boender 1988, Davidson 1991, Adams 1995; Horle 1991)

- 1570, August 5: Don Luis, a Christianized Indian, set off from the Spanish fort at Santa Elena on a voyage to his Chesapeake homeland, accompanied by the Jesuit Vice-Provincial
- 1659, 29 July: Choptanks and related groups agree to a treaty with Maryland.
- 1666: Somerset County, Maryland, formed, including Nanticoke lands now in Delaware.
- 1669: Dorchester County, Maryland, formed, containing nearly all the reserved Choptank lands.
- 1676: Bacon's rebellion in Virginia, resulting from native dislocation and friction between natives and Europeans.
- 1682: John Puckham, Indian, was baptised and then married Joan Johnson, "mulatto" granddaughter of Anthony.
- 1698, October: The Maryland council set aside the Chicacoan reservation for the Nanticoke. The Puckamee village on the south bank of the Nanticoke was simultaneously abandoned and claimed by settlers
- 1698: A "mulatto" was ruled to have no African ancestry in Sussex County.
- 1705: By treaty the Nanticoke tayac was declared to be subject to the Maryland Council's supervision. Virginia defines the term "mulatto."
- 1711, January: Askecksy reservation, 1,000 acres, was set aside for the people called Indian River Indians by the Maryland authorities; by 1742, only 400 acres remained in Indian hands.
- 1711, 3 November: Broad Creek reservation was set aside by the Maryland legislature for the Nanticoke.
- 1712: Ashquash, the Nanticoke tayac at Chicacoan, abdicated and moved to Pennsylvania, joining the Susquehannocks.
- 1719: Choptanks retreated to a small tract called Locust Neck.
- 1742: Nanticoke and visiting Seneca gathered at Winnasocum, an island in the middle of Pocomoke Swamp, possibly for the purpose of planning an uprising.
- 1744: Conrad Weiser reported Nanticoke living in the Susquehanna valley near the mouth of the Juniata in Pennsylvania; Nanticoke in Maryland petitioned the legislature for permission to leave and join this community.
- 1748: William Cambridge "mulatto," received a patent for 60 acres (expanded to 128 in 1754) within the former Askibinikansen Indian town, which lay north of the present town of Snow Hill, Maryland (Figure 16).
- 1753: The "Indian Town" tract in Worcester County, 69 acres, was patented by James Milles.
- 1757: Nanticoke attempted to select a new tayac, but chose Peter Monk, who proved to be an Assateague instead. After they discovered their mistake, George Pocatus was chosen. Nanticoke delegates visited the Eastern shore to invite the remaining Indians to join them in Pennsylvania.
- 1758: Two identified Indians were listed in a Sussex County militia muster roll, James Westcote and Nathan Norwood.
- 1761: Governor Hamilton of Pennsylvania wrote to Maryland authorities requesting permission for the Nanticoke to remove to Pennsylvania.
- 1767, July: A delegation from the Six Nations visited Annapolis, requesting permission to remove the remaining Eastern Shore Indians. In return, the three reservations were to be surrendered; some families moved. Most of the surviving Maryland Indians chose to stay.
- 1768: Chicacoan, Maryland, reservation was declared vacated, but a woman and two children remained at Broad Creek, now in Delaware, continuing the Indian occupation so that it could not be declared vacant under Maryland law.
- 1793: Led by Moravian missionaries, refugee Lenape from Ohio established a settlement at Fairfield, on the Thames in western Ontario, which was destroyed in 1813 by United States troops.
- 1812: Gingaskin reservation, on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, is abolished and the land is distributed among the tribal members
- 1852: A delegation of Nanticoke from Grand River, Ontario, visited the Maryland legislature to seek compensation for lost reservations on the Eastern Shore.

were called "mulatto" or even "negro," but more often "colored." Until 1830, free nonwhite communities were tolerated or ignored in most localities by the dominant European culture.

Race and status are indefinite and internally contradictory in colonial records. John Oakey is an illustrative example. He patented a tract he suggestively named "Mulatto Hall" on Blackwater Creek in Sussex County in 1684. This is the earliest racial reference among the community's documentary history. Oakey had served as a county constable, indicating that he was recognized as a

full member of European-American society, whatever his racial origin.

He was in Somerset County, Maryland, as early as 1662, when he was claimed as a headright in a land claim (Shearer and Schaeffer 1993). He was associated in many of his legal and business dealings with members of one of today's recognized Nanticoke families in Sussex County, but we still do not know his origins.

Unfortunately for later historians, racial labels during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are confusing, nonexistent, or contradictory.

## DEFINITIONS OF ISOLATE GROUPS

During the entire first half of European-American history, there was little or no incentive to legally define the precise racial origin of a person who was otherwise culturally indistinguishable from the European-American community. Before the Revolution, only Virginia and North Carolina legally defined race in terms of ancestry.

Although it is today taken to mean mixed black and white, the word “mulatto” in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries generally applied to anyone with dark skin who was not a Negro. In the West Indies, the term was applied also to mixed black-Indian individuals. Another meaning was a person who was “half-Christian,” born of a union between a Spaniard and a non-Christian. In one 1709 example, a person was described as both a mulatto and an Indian (*Oxford English Dictionary* 1971). Definitions in Delaware official documents were no more precise (Heite and Heite 1985).

The Virginia law of 1705 defined the child of an Indian as a mulatto, but it stated that the child, grandchild, and great-grandchild of a Negro would be a mulatto legally. For Indian/white unions, the taint of mulatto status would disappear when the issue of such a union married a white person. For Negro/white unions, the taint was effectively permanent. While the progeny of Indian/white unions mated among themselves, Virginia law would identify the offspring as mulatto. Maryland had a similar definition, which was not explicitly stated (Cissna 1986:204-205).

The Pennsylvania Assembly set terms of service for [white] indentured servants whose indentures could not be found. Those who came into the colony without papers would be assumed to serve five years if they were between seventeen and twenty-two years old [later changed to sixteen and twenty-one] , or until the age of twenty-two if they were under seventeen (Linn 1879:153, 237).

The law, which at first was disallowed by

the Crown, would not apply to Africans. A taint of African blood would therefore significantly alter a servant’s status. In this regard, “mulatto” status was legally independent of any African connection, as the case of Jacob Frederick illustrates.

In June 1698, a “Molattoe Boy” named Jacob Frederick complained to the Sussex court that “hee Came Not of nigroe Parentage,” and therefore could not be held as a slave for life. Frederick argued that he had been bound as an apprentice for a term, and could not be held as a slave for life under Delaware law. He succeeded in his plea, but in 1704 he was again in court, sentenced to twenty lashes and six weeks of additional service to his mistress for beating John Morgan. Frederick was a witness in 1709 for the defense when Samuel Dickinson was accused of horse stealing (Horle 1991: 1049, 1195, 1291).

The Maryland state historic preservation plan assumes that Native Americans ceased to exist in the colony at some time. A research questions in the plan is, “Why did indigenous Native American populations largely disappear from Maryland after European settlement began?” In fact, they are still there, but they were consistently missed by contemporary authorities and later historians, largely because of the misleading “mulatto” tag (Maryland Historical Trust 1986:282).

Modern historians have retroactively applied the narrower modern, black-mixed, definition of “mulatto” to the historical records. A recent state-sponsored study of “free blacks” in the Eastern Shore of Maryland included documented Indians, among the black population, as a result of misunderstanding the term “mulatto” in the public records (Davidson 1991).

Indians and other nonwhites were lumped in early census records as “free persons of color,” interpreted frequently by historians as “blacks,” thereby obscuring all the nuances encompassed by that category.

Public policy in the southeastern states was essentially biracial. One was either white or nonwhite, which meant black. Native American remnant groups fought for recognition as a separate race outside the biracial system throughout the

segregation era, sometimes successfully (Williams, ed., 1979:23).

Between the Revolution and the Civil War, racial definitions became more detailed and more important, as legal restrictions on nonwhites became progressively more oppressive (Mencke 1976:8). Those who were defined as Negroes or mulattoes found their civil rights eroded, while Indians were forced off their land and into the west. Racial definition became a matter of survival. After 1831, in response to the perceived threat of the Nat Turner rebellion, the slave states, including Delaware, passed restrictive laws forbidding nonwhites to own arms, to congregate, or even to attend church, except under white supervision.

There have been many legal and traditional definitions of the term "Indian." A Census Bureau definition calls anyone an Indian who is registered in a federally recognized tribe, or who is one-fourth Indian. The Bureau of Indian Affairs defined an Indian as a person entitled to its services, and the Public Health Service definition is different still. As little as 1/256 Indian blood has been recognized as conferring tribal rights (Berry 1963: 7). Each state and locality where Indian remnant groups reside has produced a new solution to the problem of defining them.

Legally many attempts at defining race are obsolete, of course, because race no longer defines a person's access to voting, schooling, marriage partner, or public facilities. Released

Nanticoke and Cheswold Lenape surnames

Bass	Butcher	Cambridge
Carney	Carter	Clark
Coker	Conselor	Cott
Dean	Drain	Durham
Greenage	Han[d]sor	Harmon
Hughes	Jackson	Johnson
Kimme[y]	La Count	Loatman
Miller	Morgan	Mosely
Munce[y]	Norwood	Puckham
Ridgeway	Read(Reed)	Coursey
Sammons(Salmon)	Saunders	Seeney
Sisco(Francisco)	Sockum	Songo
Spark[s]man	Street[t]	Thompson
Wright	(Directory begins on page 345)	

from the spectre of legal repercussions, researchers can now ask questions that previously would have been taboo, even inside the community.

A Native American remnant on Indian River in Sussex County, Delaware, formed a tribal corporation in 1921, and laid claim to the name of Nanticoke (Weslager 1953:30), even though they probably include descendants of many groups, including the Assateagues.

The state of New Jersey legally recognizes Lenape organizations in Burlington and Cumberland counties. (Kraft 1986:241-243). A group known as Nanticoke-Lenape Indians of New Jersey, incorporated in 1978, includes many families from Kent County, Delaware. (Leni-Lenape Council 1996). The organization includes about 1,500 families today.

For centuries, families have moved and married easily across Delaware Bay, so that today they are genealogically a single community. New Jersey member families are descended in part from Sussex County Nanticoke who moved across the bay to escape Jim Crow laws. Among the emigrants was Levin Sockum, whose trial had first legally labelled the Nanticoke as mixed with the Negro (Fisher 1895). Weslager reports that Lydia Clark is said to have admitted that she lied in return for payment from a jealous white neighbor whose store competed with Sockum's (Weslager 1943:37). Other families moved from Delaware to Canada around this period and intermarried with local Native families in their new homes.

Delaware legally recognizes an organized Sussex County Nanticoke tribal group, which contains individuals with near relatives in Kent County and New Jersey communities that are not legally recognized by state or federal authorities. The three communities are genealogically indistinguishable.

THE CHESWOLD ENCLAVE

A new wave of Indian awareness in Kent County has been enhanced by the organization of a tribal corporation. Group



members have responded by researching their family histories and their ethnic identity.

The first hurdle facing researchers is the issue of historical, legal, and documentary ambiguity. Racial isolate groups share a lack of documentary history, a legendary past that is impossible to verify, and a tradition of reticence about their true origins. All these problems will confront anyone studying the Kent County “moor” community.

The name “moor” is not particularly favored by the community it designates, since it denotes North African or Iberian origins for people who consider themselves both culturally and genealogically Native Americans.

A separate identity for the Kent County community can be documented genealogically as early as the first half of the eighteenth century, when free persons were not customarily identified by race in the public record.

Members of the group already were marrying among themselves during the first identifiable generation. Separate racial or group identity consciousness is implied by the genealogical facts, but not explicitly stated on the official record, during the eighteenth century.

Progenitors of the community appeared in the Kent County records without racial identification, generally literate and financially well off, by 1693. Over the next century and a half, their descendants declined in wealth and status. Perhaps most significant was the decline in literacy among the community. Male literacy was a powerful indicator of a household's economic prospects (page 59). In those days before free public education for all races, literacy was a commodity that required disposable income and, preferably, access to schools. A poor family in the backwoods, unable to reach or afford access to private schools, had few prospects of improvement.

Scharf's *History of Delaware* states that group members claimed that the Kent County community began about 1710, maintaining a

separate society from the start. (Scharf 1888: 1124).

By the time Thomas Conselor died in 1739, the families had already begun to intermarry. His will indicates that Conselor's daughters had married a Butcher and a Francisco (Sisco), both “core” families of the community.

William Handsor was the first documented Indian migrant into the Kent County community. He patented Jolley's Neck, on Chance's Branch of St. Jones River, in 1737. When he died in 1768, he left effects that speak of a decidedly prosperous life, including a sword, a fiddle, shoemaker tools, and carpentry tools.

Historians have never definitively established the origins of the community. Weslager (1943:74-78) traces the Hansor family to Aminidab (born 1688), son of Aminidab (born c.1664) and Rose Hansor. His will, dated 1717, mentions his brother Samuel and his daughters Ann and Mary. His aged parents were still living, and his father was his executor. William is presumed to be his son, but this presumption is based only upon later documents in which he is associated with Samuel.

In 1716, a William Handsor owned land in Indian River Hundred, and was listed as white, or at least not black. If this is the same William who later lived at Jolley's Neck, he could not have been the son of the younger Aminidab, who was only 29 in 1716.

The elder Aminidab Hansor is said by some sources to have been the illegitimate son of Mary Vincent (born c. 1650), an English girl of fourteen, and a servant called Aminidab “Haw” of Nandua Creek, Virginia (Deal 1993). Actually, they appear to have been unrelated, but very closely allied.

Mary and her husband John Oakey (born c. 1640) had a son named John, born about 1669, and a daughter Mary, as well as a son named Aminidab Oakey.

Aminidab [Hanger or Hamsworth] the elder was a witness in 1685 to a power of attorney that was part of the conveyance of 775 acres called “Cheat” on Indian River to William Burton of

Accomac County, Virginia. The Oakeys and the Handsors helped John Barker bring Burton's cattle from Virginia to the Sussex County Burton property in 1687, and testified at length when there were allegations of rustling (Horle 1991:433, 606-608). Mary Oakey was also a witness of the will of John Burton, who left a legacy to Aminidab Handsor.

Other "core" families appear in the Kent County record around the same time, about a generation after some of the same names first appear in Sussex County documents. Where origins can be traced, each original "core" family can be identified as coming from Sussex, or having close relatives there. Even in Sussex, less than a third of the community surnames appear in the court records before 1710 (Horle 1991).

When racial labels began to appear consistently in the public record, early in the nineteenth century, members of the community were arbitrarily assigned such labels as "mulattoes" or "free persons of color" and sometimes "Negroes." There was absolutely no consistency among the record keepers when it came to reporting race.

Members of Delaware's Kent and Sussex "moor" or Indian racial isolate communities have been known by a bewildering variety of labels over the years. Labels have shifted, depending upon the era and individual points of view. It is useful to analyse the meaning behind these labels, remembering that they reflect observer bias.

Some Delaware community members evidently retained connections with the Indian families that had moved away. In 1892, a Philadelphia newspaper reported that a man of the Cheswold community born in 1811 had lived as a young man among Lenape emigrants then living in Indiana (page 66).

The 1800 manuscript census is the oldest official extant documentation of an attempt (the 1790 census being lost) to define everyone in Delaware by race. Three categories of nonwhite people were identified by the federal enabling law: Indians not taxed, free colored persons, and slaves. In each hundred, the local census taker

applied his own criteria. The census was tallied differently in each county, too. In Sussex County, the tally contains a list at the end of each hundred's list titled "Free Negroes & Mulattos & C," while in Kent, the letter "N" was placed after certain names.

The ambiguity is well illustrated in the project vicinity by the cases of Elizabeth LaCount and Mary Durham.

Mary, widow of Isaiah Durham, is listed in the 1800 census of Little Creek Hundred as "N" with only free persons of color in her household. When she married John Sisco, also listed as "N" in the census, her surety on Isaiah's estate, a white man, demanded to be released from his bond because she had married a mulatto! Clearly Mary was perceived as belonging to a "superior" racial group, above the mulatto Sisco, while in another record both are described as negroes. In the 1800 census, Isaiah's brother William Durham is listed as white, or at least not nonwhite. His sisters married members of the Sisco (Francisco), Conselor, and LaCount families, who were listed as "N."

Thomas LaCount married Letitia Durham, sister of William, in 1789. Elizabeth [Letitia?] LaCount is listed without the "N" after her name in the Duck Creek census, with only free persons of color in her household. Samuel LaCount appears as white in the Mispillion Hundred census of 1800.

During the period of racial tension before and after the Civil War, the outside community tended to lump nonwhite minorities among Negroes and "colored." The "moors" responded by withdrawing from the system.

When Delaware began offering free public education in 1829, it was reserved for the white population. Benjamin Tharp was engaged to set up the districts, and his field notes have survived at the Delaware Archives. Tharp counted the households and allocated them to districts, each of which was to be served by a one-room school. No black households were counted, and neither were the Native American families.

Creation of a public school system led to a monopoly of literacy reserved for whites alone, while private schools were dissolved or absorbed.

## RACE PERCEPTION AMONG REMNANT COMMUNITIES

<i>Year</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>identified as</i>	<i>source</i>
1684	John Oakey.....	mulatto? .....	his patent to Mulatto Hall
1747	John Ridgway .....	mulatto .....	St. George Chapel baptism
1758	Daniel Norwood .....	brown Indian .....	muster roll
1758	Nathan Norwood.....	brown .....	muster roll
1758	James Westcote.....	brown, occupation "Indian" .....	muster roll
1760	Abraham Siscoe.....	Nanticoke .....	delegation to Pa Governor
1768	Bowen son of Nathan Norwood .....	mulatto .....	St. George Chapel baptism
1771	Saunders & Mary Oakey.....	mulatto .....	St. George Chapel baptism
1773	Joseph & Ann Sammon.....	mulatto .....	St. George Chapel baptism
1782	Charles Francisco (Sisco).....	white .....	state of Delaware census
1800	William Durham.....	white .....	Little Creek Hundred census
1800	John Francisco (Sisco) "N" .....	negro .....	Little Creek Hundred census
1800	Mary Durham, widow, "N" .....	negro .....	Little Creek Hundred census
1806	John Francisco (Sisco) .....	mulatto .....	court petition
1810	Esther Francisco(Sisco).....	free woman of color.....	her probate
1813	Thomas Consealor.....	mulatto .....	Benjamin Coombe accounts
1820s	Noke Norwood.....	copper-colored .....	Judge Fisher's article
1827	Nathaniel Clark.....	Colored man of Indian race.....	Passport declaration
1831	James Hansor .....	Indian complexion.....	Passport declaration
1839	Jesse Dean.....	colored man .....	his will
1841	Daniel Coker.....	free yellow man .....	his deed to land
1853	John Dean.....	of Indian descent .....	Passport declaration
1892	John Sanders .....	self-identified as an Indian .....	newspaper interview
1895	Cornelius Hansor.....	Indian or Moor .....	Judge Fisher's article

signatures on official documents.

Literacy is important for a family's short term and long term economic survival. Male literacy is vital in a business and legal environment, but female literacy ensures a family's future because mothers teach reading and writing to children when schools are not available (Murray 1996). Thus paternal illiteracy may limit a family's immediate prospects, but maternal literacy determines the next generation's prospects.

After the Civil War, Delaware reluctantly instituted free public education for nonwhites on the biracial model, which originally excluded the possibility of a third racial school

Academies in Dover, Camden, Newark, Middletown, and other towns became public schools with a strict color line. There was no longer employment for private teachers or for the less formal schools that might have been less racially exclusive.

Apprenticeship was traditionally a way to ensure that a son would be taught a trade as well as basic arithmetic and literacy. The exact terms of an apprenticeship indenture depended upon the child's parentage. When a poor orphan child was bound by court order, the master seldom was obliged to provide education. On the other hand, well-off parents often negotiated apprenticeships with education included for their children. Girls and black boys seldom were indentured with an education requirement. Eventually Delaware law allowed masters to pay their black apprentices a fee in lieu of education (Hancock 1974). Clearly, assumption that education would be rationed on a racial basis.

For whatever reason, the Cheswold community declined in status and literacy during the first half of the nineteenth century, as measured by

system. Public education in Delaware for blacks began in 1868, over bitter white objections. A separate system for blacks emerged after a segregationist white element threatened to keep their children from school rather than attend classes with nonwhites (Hoffecker 1974:52-63).

A few "moor" or "Indian" schools eventually were established within the colored system, but only at the elementary level. Some went without education rather than attend segregated black schools; others moved away to less segregated states, or sent their children to schools in unsegregated jurisdictions (Heite and Heite 1985).

## RELATIONSHIPS AMONG GROUPS

The Kent County community is genealogically intertwined with the self-declared Nanticoke Indian group in Sussex County, and with a similar group in Cumberland County, New Jersey. Most Kent County "moor" families have close relatives in both places. The term "moor" is distasteful to most community members, and is being replaced usually by "Indian" or "Lenape" instead.

“Isolate” groups have not been isolated from one another. Circumstantial and anecdotal evidence, not yet verified by broad-scale research, points to a long interrelationship among the various groups over centuries. Some migrations can be traced in the documentary record (Deal 1988:299), connecting communities across the Delmarva Peninsula.

Members of the same lineages, settled in different areas, were known by different racial labels. Even inside the small state of Delaware, descendants of the same individuals might be categorized in several racial communities (Blakey 1988), depending upon their ancestors’ perceived willingness to intermarry with white or black neighbors.

Recent researchers have tallied family names among the various isolate groups in the South (DeMarce 1992; Kennedy 1994), in attempts to roughly assess the amount of intermarriage among them. While admitting that the surname list is a crude and unreliable, measure, the results may point a direction for future researchers.

Since these surnames may be relatively common in the community at large, it is dangerous to identify them as evidence of interrelationship. However, they may serve as clues for future migration research. Nearly every work on racial isolates contains surname lists, which are useful for searching the genealogical literature. As the stigma of “inferior” racial status has waned, and concurrently Indian ethnic pride has increased, there has been considerable genealogical work directed toward identifying the Native American remnant groups.

Most recently, even the most tenuous claims to reservation status have been advanced by groups hoping to cash in on federal laws permitting reservation gambling casinos. The gaming phenomenon has not touched Delaware, but native self-awareness flourishes independently of it.

Modern descendants of these people have organized themselves into the Lenape Indian Tribe of Delaware, headquartered at Cheswold. They have attempted to obtain state

OCCURRENCES OF SURNAMES	
<i>Nanticoke / Moor</i> Surname	<i>Found also among</i>
Bass	Nansemond in Virginia
Clark	Redbones of Louisiana, Lumbee
Carter	Northampton County, Va. Pamunkey of Va. Lumbee
Coker	1906 Oklahoma Lenape roll
Greenage	Canada
Handsor	Canada
Harman (Harmon)	Northampton County, Va. Nansemonds, South Carolina Brass Ankles Pamunkey of Va.,
Johnson	Northampton County, Va Person County N. C. Indians, Lumbee of N.C., Redbones of Louisiana, Lumbee
Mosely	Melungeons of Tennessee Lumbee of N. C.
Morgan	Lumbee
Driggers (Roderiguez)	South Carolina Brass Ankles
Driggus	Lumbee
Drighouse	Gingaskin of Northampton County, Va.
Sanders	Lumbee
Sammons	Canada
Songo (Shongo?)	Chickahominy of Virginia Seneca
Street	Canadian emigrant Nanticoke
Francisco (Sisco)	Gingaskin of Northampton County, Va. New Jersey highlands Emigrant Nanticoke

recognition, most recently through Senate Joint Resolution of the 137th General Assembly. This move failed to pass the State Senate after other Indians objected.

### SUSSEX COUNTY NANTICOKE

On Indian River in Sussex County, Indian awareness has a longer history among a closely-related group.

Even though the main body of the Nanticoke tribe of Sussex County is said to have emigrated to Pennsylvania and eventually to Canada after 1742, a remnant group identifies itself as a branch still in place on Nanticoke ancestral ground. These people are historically and genealogically related to the Kent County remnant around Cheswold who choose to identify themselves as Lenape.

The Nanticoke during the seventeenth century were a powerful tribe, who received tribute from

communities as far afield as Northampton County, Virginia. In times of unrest, they appear to have been a magnet for refugees and malcontents of all races from other parts of Delmarva and beyond.

Maryland colonial authorities established reservations in the present western Sussex County, Delaware, and nearby Dorchester County, Maryland. Nanticoke and Choptank people complained that these reservations did not actually protect them against encroachment from land seekers and wandering livestock. Eventually the friction became too great; seasonal subsistence migrations were not compatible with the more sedentary European ideas of land ownership and subsistence.

In 1742, Nanticoke participated in an abortive uprising that precipitated retaliation threats from the authorities. Faced with further restrictions on their traditional activities, many of the Nanticoke decided to move north. Eventually a Nanticoke remnant settled among the Six Nations in Canada, where they retain an identity today (Porter, ed., 1986: 139-147).

Frank Speck, an anthropologist who studied the Nanticoke in Delaware and Canada, concluded that in 1748, when the Nanticoke emigrated, they left behind some of their people in Delaware. He identified the Sussex County remnant as an authentic Nanticoke community, even though their documented connection with today's Canadian Nanticoke tribe is tenuous (Cohen 1974:219). Only one family name [Street] is found both among the remnant groups in Delaware and the emigrant community.

In April 1762, Maryland officials reported that about 120 Indians still lived on reservations. These people, almost certainly Nanticoke, reportedly lived in good relations with their European-American neighbors, and no longer traded with other Indians. This is the first documentation to indicate that the people who stayed behind were merging into the larger population (Cissna 1986:209).

Their public identity as an Indian tribe

was relatively recently revived; indeed, a member of today's Nanticoke chiefly family was the first to challenge in court their right to be identified as Indians.

In 1855, Levin Sockum sold powder and shot to his son-in-law Isaac Harmon, another "person of color." Sockum was charged with violating a law that forbade supplying firearms to Negroes and mulattoes. Harmon and Sockum both denied any Negro ancestry. The prosecuting attorney confirmed that the two men had no hint of Negro appearance (Fisher 1895, 1929). The charges may have been politically motivated, since the two men were the wealthiest members of their community, and among the largest landowners in the hundred. They eventually came to own the area now occupied by the core of the community (Porter, ed., 1986: 154-156). Harmon left 700 acres when he died.

A relative of the two men, Lydia Clark, claimed to be the last full-blooded Nanticoke. She testified that Harmon's ancestor was an enslaved African who had married his white mistress. The half-breed offspring of this union, Lydia Clark testified, had intermarried with some of the remaining Nanticoke. As a result of her testimony, the "moor" and "Nanticoke" communities were subsequently identified as tri-racial (Berry 1963:135-138).

Judge George Purnell Fisher, who as a young man prosecuted Harman and Sockum, wrote an article titled "The So-Called Moors of Delaware," for a newspaper in 1895, which was reprinted by the Public Archives Commission in 1929. This article supported the Lydia Clark testimony of a tri-racial origin, even though he declared from his own observation that Harmon was "a young man, apparently about five and twenty years of age, of perfect Caucasian features, dark chestnut brown hair, rosy cheeks and hazel eyes; and by odds the handsomest man in the court room, and yet he was alleged to be a mulatto."

He also described Noke Norwood, an old man who had lived north of Lewes during the third decade of the nineteenth century, as "a dark copper-colored man, about six feet and a half in height, of splendid proportions, perfectly straight black hair (though at least 75 years old), black eyes and high

LITERACY AND PROSPERITY  
IN THE CHESWOLD POPULATION EARLY GENERATIONS  
BASED UPON PROBATE RECORDS AT THE DELAWARE PUBLIC ARCHIVES

Year of death	Name of Deceased	Was he literate?	Name of Widow	Was she literate?	Value of inventory
1732	David Francisco				£27/1/6
1748	Thomas Francisco		Patience	no	£18/16/6
1767	William Handsor	yes	Sarah	no	£71
1780	William Conselor	yes			£65/4/0
1786	Daniel Durham	no	Ellinor		£116/19/6
1788	John Durham	no			£233/7/6
1791	John Francisco	yes			£942/6/3
1793	Whittington Durham	no	Ruth	no	£132/10/3
1795	Thomas Durham		Mary		£103/6/3
1796	Thomas LaCount		Hester	no	£39/1/1
1798	Charles Francisco	yes	Elizabeth	yes	£706/5/2.5
1797	William Durham	yes	Mary	no	£129/12/3
1800	Isaiah Durham		Maria	no	£195/11/10
1801	Daniel Durham	yes	Nicey (Unity)	no	£185/11/0
1801	Elijah Conselor	no	Hannah	no	£501/17/4
1810	Benjamin Durham		Elizabeth	no	\$250.39
1815	Daniel Durham	no			\$161.06
1811	Jeremiah Conselor	no	Elizabeth	no	\$656.895
1839	Jesse Dean	yes	Rebecca		\$576.12
1864	Elisha Durham	yes	Priscilla		\$352.03

and treated as whites. Indistinguishable from their neighbors, they were half-hidden to history.

In north-central North Carolina, the racial designation of several related families has been traced. In 1750, they were generally listed among the white settlers, although other families were listed as mulattoes. By 1762, closely related people were shown on the same lists as either white or mulatto. By 1771, a member of the group was identified as black, while others were not identified racially, which usually meant white (DeMarce 1992:21). In none of the cases were individuals

cheek bones.” According to Judge Fisher, Noke Norwood was held in high esteem by his community. He was also Lydia Clark’s brother (Weslager 1943:35).

“Noke” Norwood may have been the same person as “Noble” Norwood, who is listed in the 1800 census of Indian River Hundred as having three “colored” in his household.

The Nanticoke descendants around Indian River Hundred, led by the Clark family, formed the present tribal corporation in 1921 (Weslager 1943:91).

## THE NORTH CAROLINA LUMBEE

The experience of a North Carolina Indian community closely parallels the history of Delaware’s remnant groups. The Lumbee, centered in Robeson County, now have a population estimated at nearly forty thousand (DeMarce 1993).

During the Colonial period, the Lumbee of North Carolina were referred to as Indians

identified as Indians.

From 1835, North Carolina Lumbee were legally defined as “free persons of color.” Soon after the Civil War, the North Carolina Lumbee publicly insisted upon their Indian designation, which they received and continue to defend. During segregation, the Lumbee of Robeson County were entitled to a separate school system (Sider 1993:32).

Like the Delaware community, opinion among the North Carolina group is divided on the subject of historical tribe names that should be used. They are divided between people who call themselves Lumbees and others who call themselves Tuscarora, even though they might be closely related, even siblings (Sider 1993:4). In both states, modern tribal names reflect different historical notions of identity that may not be totally grounded in fact.

## MELUNGEONS

In the Southern Appalachians, from West Virginia to Georgia, are dark-skinned

people called Melungeons, whose eighteenth-century ancestors reportedly claimed to be Portugese, even though they bore English and German surnames.

Like the other isolate groups, these people first became evident as a distinct community in the public records during the middle years of the eighteenth century. They are found throughout a wide region, and a few have tried to identify themselves as Indians. Most have tended to merge into the European-American community.

The group's home territory is in East Tennessee, along Newman's Ridge in Hawkins County, where they lived forty years or so before 1844 (DeMarce 1993:31).

Certain Melungeon family names came from other areas. The Bowling and Collins families, for example, may descend from Saponi families of the same names that lived in Orange County, Virginia as late as 1742-1743 (DeMarce 1992:11).

Some have joined the Lumbee or the Cherokee, and in some localities are recognized as Indians. In the current generation, a Melungeon research group has formed to seek answers to questions about origins (Kennedy 1994). The notion of Portugese ancestry, formerly dismissed as folkloric, has recently been reexamined with more respect (Deal 1993). Surnames with known Iberian connection, including Francisco and Driggus, are found among other isolate communities, but no genealogical connection to the Melungeons has been documented.

## CONNECTICUT'S LIGHTHOUSE

In Connecticut, there is a small remnant group whose ancestors were called the "Lighthouse" people. They trace their ancestry to an eighteenth-century Narragansett man name Chaugham and his English-American bride who fled to the mountains to avoid her parents' displeasure (Feder 1994). Their descendants formed a distinct group that did not fit into the neat racial categories demanded by government statistical tables.

During the generations when the Chaugham family lived together in a community, they were called by a variety of ethnic labels, according to Feder's recent history of the group (at the pages cited):

<i>Year</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Source of appellation</i>	<i>Page</i>
1788	Indian	James Chaugham deed	85
1800	"other free persons"	Federal census	96
1810	"other free persons"	Federal census	96
1830	"free colored persons"	Federal census	99
1842	Mohegan	marriage certificate	102
1848	Creole	town vital records	104
1858	"nearly white"	town birth records	105

Lighthouse descendants no longer reside in a closed community, but they continue to recognize their separate nature. After merging into the larger community nearly a century ago, descendants kept the stories alive, assisted by occasional press and literary attention. Because race was never a legal issue in Connecticut, segregation laws do not affect the dynamics of Lighthouse history.

Like other eastern non-tribal Indians, the Lighthouse people became "other free persons" for the census. In their case, however, they were able to assert and keep their Indian identity.

## NORTHAMPTON COUNTY, VA.

Racial segregation and legal nuances of race played a major role in the history of minority populations in Northampton County, Virginia.

Virginia law, beginning in 1705, defined a person's racial status in terms of African admixture. After 1873, Virginia law defined anyone with Negro blood as "colored," and declared that Indian status could not be extended to colored persons. As late as 1975, any taint or suspicion of Negro blood was enough to classify a person as "colored," except Indians living on the Pamunkey and Mattaponi reservations, who could

have as much admixture as one Negro great-grandparent (Porter, ed., 179-180).

Northampton is the southerly of the two Virginia counties on the Eastern Shore. Its racial history is unique. By the first decade of the nineteenth century, politicians were circulating claims that all the Indian blood had dissolved into the black population. This argument was politically necessary to force dissolution of the local Indian reservation, but it has been repeated uncritically by historians for two centuries.

Ralph Whitelaw, historian of land titles in the Eastern Shore counties, concludes for example, that "Today, their blood remains only as a mixture with that of the Negro race." (Whitelaw 1968:20). This statement still is repeated as a cultural and genealogical epitaph for the Indians of the Eastern Shore of Virginia (Rountree 1972:3).

During the seventeenth century, there were families identified as Negro whose backgrounds and surnames appear to indicate Iberian cultural, if not racial, origins. Among these "Negro" families were people named Rodrigus (Driggus or Drighouse), Ferdinando, and Francisco (Sisco), as well as such non-Iberian names as Payne and Harman. The possibly Portugese surnames have been interpreted to indicate a Dutch connection, since the Dutch were contending with the Portugese in Brazil and Angola. The name Francisco also was found in the "Negro" population of New Amsterdam (Breen and Innes 1980: 69).

All three races lived intimately together, both inside and outside bondage or wedlock, during the seventeenth century in Virginia's Eastern Shore. Servants or former servants, who might have been either African, Native American, or some mixture, not infrequently mated across racial lines. White servant women often married or bore children by fellow servants of other races (Deal 1993).

In the Eastern Shore counties of Virginia, settlers' relationships with the natives differed from the rest of the colony. Debedeavon, the "laughing king" of the Accomack, welcomed young Thomas Savage

and granted him a substantial tract in 1620 near the present county seat town of Eastville.

In 1640, the tables were turned, and surviving Virginia Eastern Shore Indians were given a 1500-acre reservation, which shrank to 650 acres when it was actually conveyed to them. The tract, Gingaskin, apparently included some of the acreage that had been given twenty years earlier to Thomas Savage (Whitelaw 1968: 281-286).

Gingaskin was never an important village. When the powerful Nanticoke of lower Delaware plotted to poison wells of the English and drive them from the Peninsula, the Gingaskins' King Tom carried a roanoke tribute to the Nanticoke and spied on European settlers.

The Gingaskin tribe of Indians dwindled and became destitute. Their neighbors considered them a nuisance, and charged that they had become mixed with the local black population. Trustees were appointed to protect them, and finally in 1786 the tribe petitioned the Virginia legislature for relief against encroachments. In 1792, the Virginia General Assembly ordered the Indian town land to be divided among surviving members of the tribe. This was finally accomplished in 1813, after a second law was passed. The 690-acre tract was divided into 27 lots that were allocated to the surviving tribal members, among whom were people named Drighouse and Francis, which may be corruptions of Driggus and Francisco (Whitelaw 1968: 286).

A few allotments were sold immediately, but by 1830, half the reservation remained in the hands of the tribal members. That year, the Nat Turner rebellion occurred in Southampton County; the remaining Gingaskin sold their land and some joined the northward migration.

## MARYLAND INDIAN FAMILIES

The Cheswold community during the late eighteenth century was in touch with Native families from the Eastern Shore counties of Worcester and Somerset. One known contact, the Puckhams, is one of the few that can be identified



with a seventeenth-century Maryland Native American ancestor.

John Puckham, an Indian, was baptised in 1682 and married a “mulatto” named Jone [Joan] Johnson shortly thereafter. The name Puckham may be an anglicized version of the name of his village, in northern Somerset County, probably now Sussex County, Delaware.

Their sons, John and Richard, aged 13 and 10, were bound as apprentices in 1699. Apprenticeship for a child’s minority was a child-rearing option open to white orphans, seldom if ever to African-American children. Voluntary apprenticeship to a white master may be taken as an indicator that the child was not African.

During the eighteenth century, Puckhams appear without racial designation on the public records in Stepney Parish of Somerset County. Abraham Puckham was called a “planter” in 1723 and was married to a transported white felon named Honor Norgate. This was not the family’s only documented white liaison; at least two Puckham females had illegitimate children by white men in Somerset County. It can be determined from the tax rolls that Richard Puckham’s wife was either white or mulatto, and not black (Davidson 1991:32 - 37).

Even though their only documented non-white liaison was the “mulatto” Joan Johnson, eighteenth-century Puckhams have been grouped by historians with free blacks, possibly because later members of the family were classified as free persons of color. Matthew Puckham, called a carpenter, sold his Maryland farm in 1771 (Davidson 1991: 37). A George Puckham was among the “Indians” named in connection with the Winnesockum conspiracy of 1742.

Matthew apparently moved to Kent County and joined the Native American remnant. A Matthew Pucherm, “free negro,” appears in the St. Jones Hundred tax records in 1782, while Matthew and Richard Puckham were listed in Broadkill Hundred without racial designation. These almost certainly are the Matthew and Richard who were in Somerset

County a few years earlier, and who have been identified as free blacks by Davidson (1991).

Puckhams joined the Kent County Indian community at about the same time. Among the accounts in the 1782 estate settlement of Thomas Murphey [who also had married into the community] were Ellinor and Ephraim Puckham. Ellinor Puckham witnessed John Durham’s will in 1788.

In 1815, Hugh Durham administered the estate of Rachel Hansor in Kent County. The sureties for his bond were Angelica Loockerman and Susan Durham, who was Rachel’s daughter. The two heirs, who shared equally, were Susan Durham and George “Pookham,” an heir-at-law who must have been either a son or a son-in-law. Some of Puckham’s descendants, who are commonly identified as black by the surrounding community, continue to claim their Native ancestry (Roth 1997: 14-22)

In 1748, according to Davidson, a free “mulatto” named William Cambridge Hunt, later known as Wiliam Cambridge, patented land that had been part of the Askibinakansen Indian town (Figure 16, page 49) near the present settlement of Taylor Gate in Worcester County. The Indian town tract had been occupied during the same decade, and may still have harbored some Indian remnants; another patentee on the town lands was Samuel Collick, also identified as a “mulatto” (Davidson 1991:82).

Cambridge died in 1787, leaving a widow, two sons and a daughter. The family sold their Worcester County farm in 1801. People named Cambridge were part of the Cheswold community by 1813, when Mary Cambridge received a payment from the estate of Benjamin Durham. A miller named Frederick Cambridge is recorded in a probate account doing business with members of the community about 1841. Later, a William Cambridge married Mary Dean, daughter of Hester Carney and Jesse Dean, who was the great grandson of John Durham.

Benjamin Cambridge of Worcester County is an example of the racial ambivalence of the 1800 census enumerators. He is listed in 1800 as a white person with one juvenile white male and a

slave in the household. In the 1810 census he was identified as a free Negro with three free nonwhites in the household. By 1820 the Cambridge family is missing from county census returns.

Even though Davidson included the Cambridge, Collick and Puckham families in his study of “blacks” on the lower Eastern Shore, circumstances indicate a probable Indian origin for all three families. Some descendants of these families today consider themselves to be African-American, further complicating genealogical attempts to isolate their Indian ancestors.

Small patents to “mulattoes” for former Indian land may actually represent distributions of assets among resident Indian families who were legally “mulattoes” under Maryland law. The dissolution of the Askibinakansen Indian town may provide insights into the origin of remnant communities.

A person of Native American descent was an “Indian” as long as he lived on a reservation, or stalked deer in the forest for a living. Once the “Indian” took up a regular land holding, went to church, and used money, he became a “mulatto,” as these cases illustrate. The best illustration of this perception is the 1758 muster roll reference to James Westcote, whose occupation was listed as “indian,” without racial reference in his description.

The name Driggus, associated with people of color throughout Delmarva, provides an example of the racial confusion in the records. Today many people named Driggus classify themselves as African-American, but historically the name has occurred among all races.

A Driggus family is reported as white, or at least not nonwhite, in the 1800 census for Murderkill Hundred, Kent County, Delaware. Davidson lists the Driggus family of the lower Maryland shore as blacks, but the same name, spelled Drighouse, was a major component of the Northampton Indian tribe when the reservation land was distributed in 1812.

All probably were descended from

Emanuel Driggus (Rodriguez). He and his first wife, Frances, came into the Virginia colony as bondservants. She died before attaining her freedom and he was free in 1660. His second wife, Elizabeth, was white. Emanuel’s pedigree is unknown, but his name suggests he may have come from a Portugese or Spanish colony. He certainly was never considered to be a slave for life.

His grandson, Azaricum, died a well-off slave-owning planter in 1738. Azaricum, or Rica, Drighouse was apprenticed to a farmer who was obliged by the indenture terms to pay for two months of schooling a year; such provisions were common in white children’s indentures. Clearly, then, Rica was not regarded as a Negro by the local officialdom (Deal 1988: 289).

The name evolved into Drighouse in some areas, including the Indian reservation, and Driggus in other areas. Members of the family, including the ones who lived on the Indian reservation, were called mulattoes or negroes in Virginia and Maryland records, and recent historians have chosen to identify all as black (Deal 1988: 275-283). The family later is found in the Cheswold community.

## OTHER MARYLAND REMNANTS

South of Washington, D.C., in the Maryland countryside, is a community known as “Wesorts” or the Brandywine community, who may descend from the indigenous Piscataway, Accokeek, Wisoos, Wannys, or Moyaone (Segal 1976:15, 16). They claim mostly Native American ancestry and carefully avoid social relationships with blacks, as do most remnant groups.

Unlike most isolates, Wesorts are traditionally Roman Catholic. Among the first white settlers of the area were Jesuit priests whose mission was devoted largely to converting the natives. English communicants of St. Ignatius Church during the seventeenth century bore surnames, such as Proctor and Harlan, found today among the “Wesorts.” The history of this community repeats, in remarkable detail, patterns observed among the Cheswold group and others.

The six “core” family lineages already were thoroughly intermarried by the end of the eighteenth century. During the early period of their recorded history, Brandywine families were associated with distinct localities, mostly swamplands around the fringes of European communities. Another nine family names joined the group after 1870 (Sawyer 1961:2).

Documentary research has linked the modern colony with the Piscataway remnants who stayed behind during the removal period. The Piscataway, as an organized tribe (sometimes called the Conoy), moved away from Southern Maryland and joined the Nanticoke. Those who remained in Southern Maryland did not reappear on the record immediately. When they reappeared, they were identified not as members of a tribe but as individuals (Cissna 1986).

Piscataway removal began around 1699, with a move to Conoy Island, on the upper Potomac, whence they moved up the Susquehanna, deep into the Pennsylvania frontier. Thereafter they were identified with the migrant Nanticoke faction, eventually settling in Canada.

Like so many similar groups, the modern Wesort families appear first as a recognizable population in the records by 1720, when they were identified as mulattoes. They also found themselves, during segregation, assigned to Negro schools, which they frequently refused to attend. In order to maintain the boundary between themselves and surrounding populations, Wesorts condoned marriages among relatively close relatives as preferable to exogamy (Sawyer 1961:57).

Names found among the Piscataway people are not repeated among the other isolate groups, although there are Proctors among the families in Canada that originated among the Nanticoke-Lenape community in Delaware. Some common names are Proctor, Savoy, Harlan (Harley), Swann, Newman, Linkins, Gray, Mason, Queen, Thompson and Butler, who refer to the whole population sometimes as a “family” of people (Cissna 1986).

Their group name is said to derive from a statement that there was a difference between “we sort” and “you sort” of people (Segal 1976:85). Public self-identity as an Indian remnant group has come gradually. Phillip Proctor, who took the name Turkey Tayac, worked to gain recognition for his people as Indians; he lived an outdoorsman’s life and discussed his heritage with whomever would listen (Hurley 1979).

## HISTORICAL QUESTIONS

Native American remnant groups exist in all parts of the Middle Atlantic, but their historical records are nearly invisible. Historians have tended to uncritically accept old racial labels, so that the history of these people has been masked. Some writers, notably Deal (1988) and Davidson (1991), have swept the study of local Native Americans into “black” history, continuing a long tradition of misperception.

There is, clearly, a need for in-depth revisionist histories of the Native American remnants. A few steps have been taken along this path, by genealogists, by tribal organizations, and by a few academic historians whose points of view are neither afrocentric nor eurocentric (Roundtree 1990).

In the present project, Bloomsbury provides an opportunity to study in detail the domestic situations of people who may or may not have inherited their Native American ancestors’ food preferences, hunting methods, handcraft skills, or religious beliefs. The project also provides an opportunity to examine the society of a neighborhood where people from three racial backgrounds met and interacted.

Archæologists often are reluctant to seek evidence of ethnicity in material remains. Small tools and other surface indications of culture may or may not betray deeper-held beliefs and inheritances.

Community is an equally elusive concept, not necessarily visible in the physical record. One mark of community might be similarity of housing, as was demonstrated in the Mosely community on McKee Road (Heite 1993).

While genealogy is an excellent tool for defining community, other historical research methods can be employed. For example, probate records contain names of witnesses, bondsmen, and people who bought items at the estate sale. These individuals, in the aggregate, are part of

the community, who reappear in association with a defined group of other individuals.

These techniques were employed in this project (Chapter 26) to define the social context for Bloomsbury's inhabitants.

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*Times*, Philadelphia, May 19, 1892<sup>1</sup>

**KENT COUNTY'S MOORS**

**A CURIOUS DELAWARE COMMUNITY  
AND ITS HISTORY**

**LENI LENAPES OF TO-DAY**

Leni Lenapes they claim to be but perhaps there is another side of the story. What a tradition of the countryside says.

Every American knows that his country is a very big one and that what he calls "the American people" is a conglomeration of nearly every race and nation on the face of the earth, but he seldom realizes that, in hundreds of places, scattered here and there all over the land, there are to be found hundreds of colonies of peculiar races, families or tribes, many of which were planted long before the Revolution, that have preserved through many decades the habits, peculiarities of mind or physique, often the very language of their ancestors.

It was lately the good fortune of the writer to discover one of these little communities within three hours' ride of Philadelphia, and he promptly interviewed every neighbor and every "oldest inhabitant" who seemed likely to prove a source of information in regard to it. It was in the vicinity of the village of Cheswold, in Kent county, Del., that a certain race or clan of people were heard spoken of under the name of Moors. They were described as having a light brown complexion, sharp or clean-cut features, eyes usually blue and hair in many cases of a distinctly red tinge. There was no difficulty in finding the house of one of them. The master received us civilly. He was about the color of a dark mulatto, apparently about 50 years of age and his bushy whiskers were streaked with gray. His iron-gray hair was nearly straight, with a slight wave running through it, and his eyes were a dull bine. Except his color he had none of the

characteristics of a negro, and might otherwise have been taken for a well-bred white American.

"There are a great many of our people scattered about here," he said, "but really I don't know much about our origin. Most people call us mulattos, but we are really nothing of the sort. I don't know just what you would call us, though. My father's grandfather was a Frenchman and his wife was an Indian squaw; my own grandfather and my father married among their own people. I never bothered about the matter myself, and never thought it made any difference to any one where we came from. But I'll tell you where you can find out as much about it as anyone knows. You go to see old John Sanders. He's pretty old, and has lived about here nearly all his life, and probably he can tell you more about it than anybody else. But I'm not sure that he can tell you much, either. I can't read or write myself, and I have to carry everything in my head, so I don't try to put anything in it that I am not likely to have a good deal of use for. Perhaps I may have heard something about my foreparents, but if I have I've forgotten it. If I had been one of your reading and writing people I suppose I would have had it all down on paper long ago."

Though he asserted his inability to read and write, his language was excellent, and he spoke with the intonation and pronunciation of a well educated man. There was none of the usual negro thickness of tongue and mouthing of words among them, and their fluency of speech and clearness of enunciation might be envied by half the white men one meets.

John Sanders' house was found after a walk of about a mile over such perfectly level country as only Delaware can show. The old man was at home, and was glad to see visitors. He must have been a remarkably fine-looking man in youth, and has not yet lost all pretensions to good looks. Though he is 80 years of age, he walks as straight as

ever; his eyes are clear and strong, his voice full, and his straight black hair, thick and heavy, is only slightly streaked with gray. Our modern American curse of baldness has passed him by, and he might easily pass for thirty years younger than he is. And his [...damaged...] a lean face, broad forehead, high cheek-bones, and prominent but thin nose, with a downward curve.

"I'm afraid I can't tell you much about our people," he said, "but you are welcome to the little I know. No, we are not Moors, neither are we mulattos. We are Indians, and we belong to a branch of the great Delaware Nation, which used to hold all this country from New York to Cape Charles. Down in Sussex county, on the backbone ridge of the Peninsula, the head waters of two rivers come close together - one of them, the Nanticoke river, flows west into Chesapeake Bay, and Indian river, the other, flows east and empties into the ocean; and it was at the place where these two rivers rise that our clan had its chief seat, and it is still the centre of our people. When this part of the country was first settled by the white men most of the Indians were either killed or driven away to the West and South, but some of our people clung to the soil; they settled down, adopted many of the ways of the white men, and lived in peace and friendship with their despoilers. In time they adopted the names of their white neighbors, and the principal names in our tribe are now Harmon, Norwood, Sanders, Street, Ridgeway, Jack, Mosley, Durham and Hughes - all unmistakably of English derivation. They settled all over the country in squads in the same way. Ypu can find them almost anywhere if you know how to look for them, and in Acomac and Northampton countis, Va., at the extreme lower end of the peninsula, there are any numver of them.<sup>1</sup> And down thre, they have kept more to themselves than they have elsewhere, and they look and live more like the Indians did when I was a boy. I am 80 years old, and I can remember a good way back."

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<sup>1</sup> Transcribed from a copy provided by Mrs. May Belle Bordley.

"I was born in 1811, not two miles from here.<sup>23</sup> My father, while a boy, was bound out to a man named Jefferson, who brought him up here from Sussex, so that I claim kindred with the old families down there. He settled here and lived here all his life; so did I, except some years that I spent out West, mostly in Indiana. At that time there was quite a large colony of Indians living along the Wabash river, near Peru, Indiana, and they were much lighter in complexion than our people here.<sup>4</sup> I can remember the time when our people about here all lived together in a squad; but now it is as if a tornado had struck them, and they are scattered all over the country. At that time they used to intermarry; they would have nothing to do with either whites or blacks, and kept entirely to themselves. I suppose it was later intermarriages that caused the tribe to diminish so fast in number; there were a great many more of us fifty years ago than there are now. But after they came to be so few they became more or less mixed up with other races, so that now they might be called almost anything; they are like Jacob's cattle – some white, some black, and some ring-streaked. We older ones are pure-blooded, but the younger generations have got badly mixed. "But we still keep much to ourselves, and when we marry outside the tribe it is usually with some one whiter than we are. Most of us belong to the Methodist Episcopal Church and we have our own church buildings and government Little Union Church,<sup>5</sup> near here, has members of all races and colors, but our own Manship Chapel<sup>6</sup> doesn't admit any but our own people. Others may come as often as they choose and are quite welcome and a good many do come, but no strangers are

admitted to membership or can have any voice in the management. A number of years ago the Methodist Conference succeeded in taking one of our churches from us, down in Sussex,<sup>7</sup> but our people immediately built another for themselves with the Methodist Protestants. That is why we want no strangers to join our church here; that occurrence was a lesson to us. A few years ago the conference cited us for trial because we refused to admit the black people to membership, but we proved to them that it had always been the custom for whites and blacks to have separate places or worship, and that we, as not being either, had always had our own churches, though in the old days we always had white men to preach to us. When they saw the ground we took and that we were not going to be forced to submit to them, they quietly dropped the whole thing and didn't allow it to really come to trial. Ever since then we have gone on our own way quietly, and nobody has said a word to trouble us. "My father and mother and all my foreparents were Indians. There are not many of the pure blood about here now, though there used to be a great many. It is strange how people have forgotten about us. Sixty years ago every one knew who and what we were; there never was any question about it, and no one ever thought of taking us for Africans. Look at me!" said the old man as he drew himself up to his full height of six feet two inches. "Do I look like a negro?" He certainly looked like almost anything else. "Well, all our people looked like me then. None of them were ever slaves; we were as free as the whites, and every one knew it. But since that time most of the old families have either died out or moved away. The people about here now are all newcomers. Of course they knew nothing

about us and never troubled their heads to inquire. There were plenty of mulattos about and the newcomers thought every one with a dark skin must be a mulatto. So they don't know any better. Of course we feel ourselves superior to the negroes and mulattos and generally hold ourselves aloof from them and we would prefer not to be confounded with the useless mulatto lot that are found loafing everywhere. But we have become accustomed to it and don't mind it so much now, for it really doesn't matter much what you call a man, provided you don't call him a thief or a liar.

"I really don't know how we came to be called Moors. I have heard, though, that a good many years ago a family of genuine Moors settled somewhere in this part of the country, but I have never seen them, and never heard anything more about them. They certainly had no connection with our people, who are the ones usually known by that name. But if the story is true, the newcomers about here, whom I spoke of, may have got us confused with them, or attached their story to us.

There are quite a number of families by the name of Moor or Moore living about here, and this village used to be called Moorton until a few years ago. But the Moore families are mostly white people and none of them have ever been connected with us in any way, and I never heard whether the village was so named on their account or ours. Probably it was on theirs, for the settlement, the original one, is a pretty old one and must have got its name long before we were ever called Moors, and while our descent was well known. In my young days we were called 'planters.' We belonged to the Delaware tribe of Indians, but I don't know what was the name of our clan,

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<sup>2</sup> This assertion is startling in light of the contentions by whitelaw, Deal and other, that the separate Indian identity had disappeared from the Eastern Shore of Virginia almost a century before this article was written.

<sup>3</sup> This may be the same John Saunders who married Martha Dean, daughter of Hester Carney and Jesse Dean, Jr.

<sup>4</sup> The Lenape settlement along the Wabash River, in theory, was to be vacated under the 1818 treaty of Saint Marys. Since Mr. Sanders was only 7 at the time, he may be referring to people who stayed behind in central Indiana after the tribe removed to Missouri. See Weslager, *The Delaware Indians: A History*, page 351. In spite of the removals, many Native American people stayed in the Wabash.

<sup>5</sup> The Fork Branch or Little Union church (Plate 8) was established as a branch of the Little Creek Methodist congregation about 1850, and the present church was built in 1883. For a history of Fork Branch community, see Louise and Edward Heite, *Fork Branch/ duPont Station Community*, Delaware Department of Transportation *archaeology series* 37, 1985.

<sup>6</sup> According to Scharf, *History of Delaware*, page 1119, "Manship African M. E. Church is located at Bishop's Corner, and was built about 1830. In 1876 a very neat building was erected, and the old name of Sutton's Chapel was changed to Manship Chapel, in honor of Rev. Andrew Manship."

<sup>7</sup> Harmony M. E. Church in the late 1870s split racially, leading to establishment of Indian Mission M. P. Church, originally Johnson's Chapel, in 1881. See Zebley, *Churches of Delaware*, pages 297, 298, and Weslager, *Delaware's Forgotten Fok*, page 90.

probably nobody does now. But I know that our last chief was buried somewhere in the neighborhood of Millsborough, in Sussex County, and I have heard that when they were building the railroad from Lewestown down to Snow Hill, in Maryland, they had to dig through the place where he was buried, so they took up what was left of his bones and buried them somewhere else. He must have died more than a hundred years ago, for we had no chief when my father was a boy.”<sup>8</sup>

But sons of the toil tell yet another tale, which they claim to have received from their forefathers. And these men say that about the middle of the last century there dwelt in Ireland a lady of more or less noble blood, with certainly a large amount of property, whose temper was a match for her own fiery locks. And that this same temper of auburn hue led her to quarrel with her family and indulge in an

animated “discussion wid sticks” in the course of which the fair lady’s relatives used such forcible arguments as to disgust her with her present surroundings. So she converted all her property into a portable form as soon as might be, and fled her away to the far West of those days. What is now known as Sussex county, Delaware, was fortunate enough to find favor in her eyes, and the goods she brought with her to the Land of Promise were quickly exchanged for an extensive tract of land. In due time the land was cleared, houses



**Plate 8**

**Little Union Church**

Little Union Church, Fork Branch, was one of the centers of the nineteenth-century community. It now houses a revived local tribal organization.

and barns built and all was ready for the vast crops that were certain to repay a slight amount of cultivation. But the country was new and sparsely settled; every free man had a tract of his own and found it more profitable to farm it for himself than to become a day laborer on the lands of another man. So, in default of other labor, she did as her neighbors had done, and she imported large numbers of negroes ... [mutiltated] ... as my informant expressed it, who was soon promoted to the position, first, of “driver” or

clan so intermarried for so many generations, that they have now as fixed racial characteristics as any race or tribe in the world. Yet there are still some prejudiced ones among their neighbors who stubbornly refuse to forget that their Saracen blood was imported by way of the Congo, and who consider these “American Moors” as of exactly the same race and racial standing with the mulattos whom the “Moors” themselves despise so heartily.

“field boss” afterward of overseer of the whole plantation. The nearest white neighbor lived miles away. Milady was still young enough to feel that “it is not good for man – consequently for woman also – to be alone.” The color line and race antipathy were not as strongly marked as they are in our own day; and before many years were flown Madame had married her big “Congo nigger.” The population increased, both on the plantation and in the neighboring country, and as the country filled up the people became accustomed to seeing dark brown boys and girls with the red hair and blue eyes that they had inherited from their Celtic ancestress. They kept much to themselves, affecting to despise the other negro population. Some of them married white husbands or wives, and the whole

<sup>8</sup> The Delaware portion of the Breakwater, Frankford and Worcester Railroad, a branch or extension of the Junction and Breakwater, was built in 1874 between Georgetown and Selbyville. See John Hagman, *Rails along the Chesapeake*, page 34. Another story, published by Scharf (1888:21) states that bones were found in an ossuary along a small stream a mile from Laurel by men digging fill for a mill dam early in the nineteenth century. Old persons of the neighborhood allegedly reported on this occasion that the departing “last of the Nanticokes” (of circa 1748) had reburied their dead here before moving to Pennsylvania.