

FIRST SETTLERS OF OLD LYONS FARMS

by

The Staff of the Hillside National Bank

November 1, 1961



MY THANKSGIVING

by

DR. WILLIAM RANKIN WARD SR.*

I am thankful for life and for the joy of living.

I am thankful for the daily task and the strength to perform it.

I am thankful for friendships and for the companions who journey with me along life's pathway.

I am thankful for the many opportunities for helpfulness to those who are in need.

I am thankful to know that if I do my part the world will be a trifle better for my having lived in it.

I am thankful for the beauty that surrounds me and for the majesty of the Universe of which I am a part.

I am thankful for my home and for its untold blessings.

I am thankful for my citizenship — for its privileges and for its obligations.

I am thankful for a consciousness of the goodness of God and for a vision that reaches beyond the grave.

For these things I am thankful.

*This is the second selection written by Dr. Ward which we have reprinted in one of these leaflets. The first appeared December 1, 1959, and dealt with his visits to Bethlehem 50 years earlier. For many years, Dr. Ward was the beloved "horse and buggy" doctor of Lyons Farms. He later was honored as "the most outstanding citizen of the City of Newark."

While Thanksgiving is generally considered to be the first Pilgrim holiday in the new world, it is known today that the Indians customarily celebrated the success of their crops at a ceremony and feast at the close of the harvest season at about the same period.

It is for this reason that we have selected this little study of the Lenni Lenape Indians who roamed the hillside, open meadows, and marshy swamps along Bound Creek on the North and the Elizabeth River on the South.

The Lenni Lenape Indians according to the tradition had three small camp sites within the boundaries of today's Hillside and a larger camp site in adjacent Weequahic Park, Newark. In addition to the camp sites, it is believed that most of the old roads in this area also originally were Indian trails which linked the Arthur Kill with the Minisink Trail.

The camp sites now completely obliterated by regrading are believed to have been located in the vicinity of Long and Liberty Avenues under the present Liberty Avenue overpass for State Highway 22; in the vicinity of Ogden Way near the banks of the Elizabeth River and finally near the old Tichenor homestead in North Broad Street.

None of these sites has been authenticated by the Archeological Society of New Jersey, but popular tradition places them at these locations.

The Long and Liberty Avenue site has been named by several of the original teachers at the Hurden-Looker School, while the late George C. Woodruff, Hillside's historian, supported the Ogden Way site. In both cases Indian arrowheads and tools are reported to have been found in them.

The late Police Sergeant Horace V. Tichenor supplied the tradition of the camp site at the family homestead. He said his grandfather, Frederick F. Tichenor based the claim upon the number of persimmon trees found on the property and opposite it in the Evergreen Cemetery. The Indians used the fruit of the tree for food and tossed the seeds near their camp sites causing more trees to take root and grow.

Dr. Dorothy Cross of the Archeological Society of New Jersey points out that the fact that the campsites are not listed by the society does not

mean they did not exist. It only means that nobody bothered to record objects found at them at an earlier date before the terrain was changed.

PARK SITE

A large camp site is known to have been located in Weequahic Park in the area presently used by the grandstand, according to the society's records.

Another Indian landmark is Divident Hill in Weequahic Park which served as the traditional boundary line between the Raritans to the South and the Hackensacks to the North. Both groups were members of the Unami division of the Lenni Lenape Indians in the state and used the turtle symbol. The Lenni Lenape Indians were members of the Algonquin Nation.

Dr. Charles A. Philhower of Westfield, a well-known Indian authority, states the section was a network of trails. One of these followed the route of Salem Road, Union to Conant Street in Hillside and apparently joined the road traveling to Elizabeth.

Two trails originated in Newark and traveled along today's Broad Street to Clinton Avenue to Elizabeth Avenue. At Meeker Avenue the trail split to go around the great swamp. One branch continued directly South up the "long hill" or "upper road to Elizabeth" passed Divident Hill and along Elizabeth Avenue to North Broad Street where it rejoined the "lower road."

The "lower road" branched off Elizabeth Avenue along Meeker Avenue to Dayton Street to Lower Road to North Broad Street.

The great swamp was considerably larger than Weequahic Park today. It began at the "old pond" near the Hillside National Bank and followed the old pre-glacier age valley Northward toward Meeker Avenue. A pleasant stream known as "Weequahic Creek" to the Indians and Bound Creek to the white men flowed out to the Arthur Kill giving the Indians access to the sea in their birchbark canoes.

Just as today when the conditions are right hundreds of seagulls may be observed on the lake or in Evergreen Cemetery, the section abounded with wild game, birds and fish. Ducks, sandpipers, pigeons, teals, terns, herons and gulls were plentiful. Also found were deer, bear, chipmunks,

squirrels, beaver, muskrats, rabbits, opossum, moose, turkeys, partridge, quail, skunk, coyote and woodchuck.

In addition to the persimmon trees already mentioned there were horse chestnut, hickory, oak, birch, sassafras and sycamore trees. In the famous New Jersey meadows nearby stood a beautiful cedar forest which was destroyed by a great fire early in the Nineteenth Century.

INDIAN FOODS

The Indians at their harvest feasts ate many foods which we consider ours today. Among these were sweet potatoes, popcorn, baked beans, brown and corn bread, corn fritters, succotash, cranberry sauce, buckwheat cakes, maple syrup, root beer, lima beans, squashes, tomatoes, cashew nuts, pecans, hickory nuts, peppers, eggplants and tapioca.

They doctored their sick with herbs later adopted by the white men such as tansy tea, sips of quinine, arrowroot, sarsaparilla, rhubarb, snake-root, wintergreen and sassafras.

The number of the Indians in the state when the white men arrived varies. Some believe it was as high as 5,000, others state they doubt if it ever went beyond 2,000.

One of the best known of the Indian chiefs was Oraton of the Hackensacks. As chief of the "grandfather tribe" or "real people" he was sought as a peacemaker when the Dutch massacred some Indians in New Amsterdam in 1643 and the Indians retaliated.

He is mentioned several more times as mediator in disputes and he is believed to have been the first person to insist upon a prohibition of alcoholic beverages in the state. He began seizure of brandy and other liquors from the Indians in 1662. It is generally believed he resold the liquor to the Dutch over whom he had no control.

The Indians' price for land increased after the sale of Manhattan Island to the Dutch for the reported \$24 worth of blankets, muskets, wampum, knives and pottery in 1626.

The Dutch paid the Raritans \$60 in goods for Staten Island in 1661, while the group of Englishmen from Long Island who purchased the Elizabethtown area from the Raritans gave \$350.70 worth of goods in 1664

Robert Treat's party was met in 1666 by a group of unfriendly Hackensacks when it attempted to land in the Passaic River in Newark. The negotiations for the purchase from Oraton took more than a year. The formal deed was finally executed in 1667 after the Oraton apparently had died. The selling price for the 62 square miles was about \$12 a square mile.

The Indians rapidly adopted European methods of doing things such as hunting, fishing and farming. They copied European styles of clothing making theirs in buckskin. They replaced shell beads with glass beads made in Europe as decoration. They began to use European materials for tools.

They intermarried with the early white and Negro settlers and succumbed easily to the diseases the white men brought with them and to alcohol after Oraton's prohibition was lifted.

The constant westward movement of the white settlers deprived them of their hunting and fishing lands.

About 100 families were moved to the first Indian Reservation in the country at Brotherton, later renamed Indian Mills, in 1758. The experiment was unsuccessful and in 1801 when only about 100 Indians were left, the group voted to join their relatives at New Stockbridge, Lake Oneida, New York.

This group consequently moved on to Green Bay, Wisconsin in 1822 and a portion of it may be found on reservations in Oklahoma today where it joined the Cherokee Nation and another portion may be found in Ontario, Canada.

Thus today only an occasional spearhead, arrowhead, tomahawk, bannerstone ax or piece of broken pottery may be found at a new excavation to remind us that the Indians once traveled here.

Besides leaving many of their foods, they have left place names such as Weequahic meaning "head of the cove," Passaic meaning "valley," Watchung for the mountains, Hackensack for their main village site, Raritan, Rahway, Amboy and Hoboken as other place names and such words as canoe, wigwam and tobacco.

It is interesting to note too that Tamanend, the Indian chief who sold his land to William Penn, gave his name to Mount Tammy at Dela-

ware Water Gap and the same name to Tammany Hall in New York City.