

This Place Matters

Native American history at site of Haldeman Mansion

By Tina Mark

This Place Matters to the native people. The land on which the Haldeman Mansion was built has been the home of Native Americans for thousands of years. It was originally the site of a Prehistoric Native American settlement (a late woodland culture Susquehannocks) roughly between the years 1500 and 1550 A.D. Archaeological excavations made on the north side of the present Mansion, conducted by W. Fred Kinsey III (director emeritus of the North Museum, Lancaster, PA) and Jeffrey R. Graybill (1971) uncovered evidence of a former double-walled stockade, two burials, storage pits and a midden. This property had been intermittently occupied for more than five hundred years.

More than a century later, a second Native American Settlement, known as Conoy Town (1718 to 1743) was established on the same property. It served as a kind of refuge for small bands of natives who had become displaced from their original homelands to the south due to the Indian Wars. State Archaeologist Barry C Kent has excavated portions of the Conoy Town settlement and established a well-documented record of its former existence (Kent 2001; also see Landis, 1933).

Nearby, a small trading post, founded and operated by French trader, Peter Bezaillon, exchanged goods with other colonial towns located farther east. What was once known as “Old Peter’s Road” ran from Conoy Town to Moor’s Mill, in Downingtown, Chester Co, PA. (Ellis & Evans, 1883, p. 748). Bezaillon’s trading post was dismantled, following his death in 1742.

Now once again the grounds come alive with Native Peoples as they come together here in May to share their life ways during Conoytown Education Day.