

Indigenous Peoples of the Susquehanna Valley

People arrived in the Susquehanna Valley near the end of the last Ice Age, more than 12,000 years ago. They lived a nomadic lifestyle, hunting and gathering foods. The domestication of plants around 1000 A.D. enabled native peoples to live in villages along the Susquehanna River. They were the area's first farmers, growing corn, beans, squash, and tobacco. They also developed an extensive network of footpaths and engaged in far-reaching trade.

The arrival of Europeans caused many changes. Around 1575, the fur-trading Susquehannocks took control of this area. By the 1690's, however, they were dispersed by their enemies and eventually joined with other refugee peoples to form the Conestoga Indians. The Conestogas declined until a group of frontiersmen annihilated the last of them in 1763.

"The Indian Fort Sasquesahanok" from the map "a New Map of the North parts of America claimed by France"
— H. Moll geographer, 1720.
Courtesy York County Heritage Trail



www.baygateways.net

Lancaster - York Heritage Region
Susquehanna River Water Trail

This project was completed with generous financial contributions from the following project partners:
National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Gateway & Water Trails Network
Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, Gaming Section & Heritage Parks Program
Lancaster County Planning Commission

East Designer Township
Middletown Borough
PA, Maryland LLC
Susquehanna
Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation
The John N. Senger Company
The John N. Senger Company

Imprints from these early inhabitants still remain. Archaeologists have unearthed thousands of tools, adornments, and pottery, as well as evidence of large villages along the Susquehanna River.

Most intriguing are the carvings on rocks (petroglyphs) in the Susquehanna River. Years ago, more than 1,000 petroglyphs could be found from Columbia to Conowingo, MD. These carvings included images of birds, animals, and humans. More than 300 petroglyphs still exist on rocks a short distance below Safe Harbor Dam.

A photo of petroglyphs on the exposed riverbed of the
Susquehanna below Safe Harbor Dam.
Courtesy Paul Nevins, Conspicilla Chapter 28, SPA, Inc.



Human effigy from a
Susquehannock Indian site.
Courtesy The State Museum of Pennsylvania
Historical & Museum Commission

