

Indians Sold Bayonne For More Than Manhattan

The original owners of Bayonne proved to be shrewder wheelers and dealers than their counterparts who sold Manhattan Island for that famous \$24.

Bayonne's original inhabitants, the Hackensacks of the Delaware confederacy, held out for more than three times the purchase price of Manhattan and they got it.

Bayonne sold for 80 fathoms of wampum — about \$73.50, plus a half-barrel of strong beer, 12 small kettles, a double kettle, two blankets, six guns, and 20 fathoms of red cloth.

First Welfare Plan

The Indian deed to Constable Hook was signed in 1664 by Oratamin, the chief of the Hackensacks. His domain included all of present Hudson County, Essex County, and the southern part of Bergen County.

The Delawares, who traveled in small groups, hung their bonnets in Bayonne as often as any place else; and they originated the idea of welfare programs on the peninsula.

When they were hungry they used whatever food came to hand, and they expected others to do the same when the hunting was lean. Those who had food shared. The others regarded it as simple justice, for next month they would be giving and the benefactor sharing.

The Delawares (who called themselves "Lenni-Lenape" — "original people") lived in temporary wigwams, often built in pits two to three feet deep. A single flue ventilated the wigwam and let out the smoke of cooking fires.

Their beds were matted fibers

or leaves, and they sometimes lived in community lodges, structures of a semi-permanent nature, measuring 60 to 100 feet long by 20 feet wide.

The Delawares bore little resemblance to the Western-type movie Indian. Their costumes were less ornamented and they did not ride horses. Because birch bark was scarce here, their canoes were made by burning out tree trunks.

They camped at Constable Hook, and at what are now 5th, 8th, and 22nd Streets on the Newark Bay shore, according to

the American Museum of Natural History.

The Delaware Indian proved very helpful to the early settlers here, guiding them over forest trails, that would later become roads. He taught them to raise corn, beans, squash, and methods of making basketry, mats, pottery, and leather.

Became Warlike

However, white settlers and their strange ideas about private property eventually proved the undoing of the local Indians.

One of the tribe was killed for plucking a peach from an orchard, owned by a Dutch

settler. The tribe lost its peaceful ways at the news.

They started on a warpath that lasted for seven years and stretched from Weehawken to Staten Island. Quick forays against the isolated settlers took place, but superior firepower and the increasing number of settlers on the west bank of the Hudson began to turn the tide in favor of the settlers.

The tribe continued to be sporadically troublesome until the Revolution, but the heart of their resistance to change was broken in 1655, the conclusion of the Peach War.