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Shekomeko: The Mohican Village that Shaped the Moravian Missionary World

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Shekomeko:
The Mohican Village that Shaped
the Moravian Missionary World

Senior Project submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
Of Bard College

By Samuel Joseph Dickson

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Introduction

This Senior Project investigates the history behind a weather-worn stone obelisk in the middle of a three-way intersection, south of the town of Pine Plains, 24 miles from Bard College. The stone pillar's barely legible engravings commemorate two missionaries from the Protestant Moravian Brotherhood: Christian Henry Rauch and Gottlieb Büttner, who converted members of the Mohican village called Shekomeko in 1741, which lies in the valley near the monument. In order to understand the stone obelisk that stands in Pine Plains today, we must turn to the Mohicans and their homeland on which the monument is located and consider their central place in defining the contours of this narrative.

Specifically, this Project focuses on how European intrusion dominated and divided the Mohican land, economy, and religious beliefs. Shekomeko is as much a Moravian narrative as it is the story of Chief Shabash's attempt to protect his people from European domination by establishing the Moravian Mission at Shekomeko. Likewise, the Moravians who came to Shekomeko held different, if not utopian ideals than the surrounding British colonists, upturning the societal norms of racial mixing, pacifism, and refused to swear allegiance to the King of England. The story of Shekomeko is the attempt to build a sense of Moravian and Mohican community, one that struggled at times together and at times in opposition amid a chaotic colonial backdrop. Unfortunately for the Shekomeko Village, the communal characteristics that made it stand out from other Missions at the time, simultaneously threatened the

colonial government of New York especially during wartime, going to great lengths to target and disassemble the community built there. Throughout the time that the Shekomeko Mission was active, from 1740-1746, it could be seen as a microcosm for race, religion, and war, in the Northeastern United States in the 18th Century.

Comparatively speaking, the Shekomeko Village is under-examined in the scope of local history and deserves a closer or more compiled study. Aside from the graduate work of Sigrid Kaesemans, many of the secondary-source work utilized in this project did not have Shekomeko as a primary focus. Therefore this work is unique in characterising Mohican adaptation to life in 1740s Northeast through the lense of Shekomeko inhabitants. The project also held a personal connection for me. Despite having both grown up in the Hudson Valley, about eight miles west of Shekomeko, and having an interest in local history, I had never heard of Moravians, Mohicans, or Missions together at Shekomeko until my junior year at Bard College. At public elementary school, my knowledge of Native American History was limited to making dioramas of what life was like for “The Lenni Lenape.” Part of the appeal of exploring the Shekomeko Village was learning about and contextualizing a period outside my purview of local and High school US History. Shekomeko in the 1740s was a midway point of Native American removal in what is currently the Hudson Valley region. More importantly, however the Mohicans presented adaptation in the face of colonization. My research into the Shekomeko settlement gave me context beyond the “Lenape diorama” of my elementary school projects .

CHAPTER 1

Who are the Mohicans?

The Mohicans' destiny will always be tied to their river, the '*Muhhekunnutuk*', or *Muhheakantuck*.¹ They derived their name from their river: '*Muhhekunneyuk*', or "people of the river that flows both ways."² The river is currently known as the Hudson River tidal estuary flowing from Albany, to New York City. "Mohican" was the English evolution of "Mahican" from the Dutch "*Mahikander*."³ Mohican, Mahican, Mahiecan, Muhheakunn, Moheakun, and even Mohegan have all been used to spell the tribe's name.⁴ The Mohicans are also known as "River Indians" due to their traditional livelihood of seasonal hunting, fishing and farming along the Hudson and its tributaries. These tributaries include the *Sankpenak*⁵ now the Roeliff Jansen's Kill, the *Metambesem*⁶ or Sawkill, and the Shekomeko creek.⁷ The latter would play a crucial role in the Shekomeko settlement in Dutchess County, the focus of this project. The Mohicans of Shekomeko were the Wawyachtoc (*Wawayachtoc* - "eddy people" or "people of the curving channel",⁸ locating their particular demonym with the larger

¹ Lisa Brooks, *The Common Pot : The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.), 55. Accessed November 26, 2018. ProQuest Ebook Central.

² Ted J. Brasser, *Riding on the frontier's crest : Mahican Indian culture and culture change*. (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1974), 2.

Note: the Mohican Munsee Websites reads: "People of the waters that are never still."

³ Brasser, *Riding on the Frontier's crest*, 1.

⁴ Shirley Dunn, *The Mohicans and their Land 1609-1730*. (New York: Purple Mountain Press, 1995.) xi

⁵ Edward Manning Ruttenger, *History of the Indian tribes of Hudson's River: their origin, manners and customs...*, (Albany: New York, 1872), 372.

Roeliff Jansen kill was also boundary between Wappingers and Mahicans

⁶ Smith et. al., *History of Dutchess County, New York: With Biographical Sketches of Some of Its Prominent Men and Pioneers, Part 1*. (D. Mason & Company, Dutchess County, N.Y., 1882), 173.

⁷ Ruttenger, *History of the Indian tribes of Hudson's River*, 372.

⁸ World Heritage Encyclopedia, "MOHICANS" WHEBN0000526154 Website. Accessed Dec 10, 2018.

Mohican World and *Muhheakantuck* Traditionally the Metambesem (Sawkill) was the Southern border of Mohican territory, while the northern edge bordered Lake George.

The European vision that the Indigenous residents of North America were a people permanently tied to the land, and who remained sedentary for thousands of years, is a fallacy. European history is characterized by a never-ending series of migrations, invasions and movement of peoples, and so is the history of the Americas to this day. For instance, at the time the Mohican nation was being consolidated in the Valley, the German ancestors of the Moravians were settling in what is today the Czech Republic. As Karen Kupperman articulates in her "International at the Creation" piece, the Americas were international and cosmopolitan even before the Atlantic revolution.⁹ However, starting at the turn of the nineteenth century, Euro-Americans promoted a defeatist language in regards to the *lasting* of Indians seen in the writings of Isaac Hunting, a local who wrote much on Shekomeko: "The Tribes or clans have been broken and scattered. The Indian was an abstraction. His concrete element had gone and gone forever, and his illustration of the bundle of sticks denoting his strength had come to pass. The bundle had been rent and the sticks broken one by one."¹⁰ Manifest Destiny was the justification for historical Native erasure in the past by presenting Native land as unused and thus as being kept from realizing its true potential. A similarly scientifically stilted argument that denies Mohicans a place in modernity a modern day justification of the Jean O'Brien's *Firsting and Lasting* argument. Firstings

⁹ Karen Kupperman, "International at the Creation" from *American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender (U. of California Press, 2002.), 103.

¹⁰ Isaac Hunting, *History of Little Nine Partners: of North East Precinct, And Pine Plains, New York, Dutchess County*. (Amenia: NYC, Charles Walsh & Co., printers, 1897.), 119.

refers to the European thought that they are the first to “civilize” the Americas, while Lasting exclaims that Native Americans have no place in modern society.¹¹ O'Brien notes that the emphasis by scientists on the Beringia land bridge theory works to support Lasting in two ways. First, the idea of the American continent as an empty, uninhabited space; and second, marshalling archaeological evidence, the emphasis on the Beringia land bridge makes Native Americans immigrants -- the first immigrants, but immigrants nonetheless. Thus Mohican ancestors are the first in a series of arrivals to the valley region rather than being the constant center of Mohican life.

The success of the Shekomeko village challenges another firsting argument, that only European institutions could be civilized and contribute to development: "By their every nature and character they can neither unite themselves with civil institutions, nor with safety be allowed to remain as distinct communities. A wilderness is essential to their habits and pursuits."¹² Contrary to that belief, Shekomeko and other mission settlements functioned like many colonial European towns at the time. Shekomeko even flourished for a few years when Mohican residents and Moravian missionaries came together.

Though Mohican ancestors have been on the continent since at least the Pleistocene period, they only migrated to the Muhhekunnutuk valley (Hudson Valley) within the last 700 years. According to tradition, the ancestors of the Mohicans had resided in the west then came to the east¹³, crossed a great river (the Mississippi), past

¹¹ O'Brien, *Firstings and Lastings*, 9, 107.

¹² O'Brien, *Firstings and Lastings*, 49-50.

¹³ Ruttenber, *History of the Indian tribes of Hudson's River*, 45.

the territory of the Allegheny tribe until they settled on the shores of the Great Salty lake (the Atlantic), where they took up the demonym *Wapanachki*,¹⁴ or “the men of the east.” At this point, the Mohicans were a component of this larger linguistic group of migrants also known as the “Lenni Lenape”, who were most concentrated along what the English named the Delaware river. The Delaware River went by other names like South River or *Zuid rivier* in Dutch and even *Delawarefloden* in Swedish. The Mohican’s, southern cousins, the Lenape, called it the “Lenape Wihittuck” meaning “the rapid stream of the Lenape.”¹⁵ Over time, the greater Lenni-Lenape group divided into three tribes: Turkey (Unalachtigo), Turtle (Umani) and Wolf (Munsee or Minsi)¹⁶; each group was geographically stratified along the Delaware river, Hudson river, and other waterways of the East Coast. The northernmost of this regional group of Wolf tribes became the Mohicans, or what the French speaking Canadian tribes called them “Loups” or the “wolf people.”¹⁷ It follows that the language of the greater Lenape group would also split into dialects. For this reason the similarity of the Southern Umani and Northern Munsee dialects would eventually help the Moravians missionaries in Pennsylvania communicate with the Mohicans more easily. It is also worth mentioning that the majority of today's Mohicans in Wisconsin are known now as the Stockbridge-Munsee band. In this way, the Mohicans of the English mission of Stockbridge inherit the legacy of the Mohican people in their name, while Shekomeko did not, the mission lasting only 6 years before its disbanding.

¹⁴ Rutenber, *History of the Indian tribes of Hudson's River*, 46.

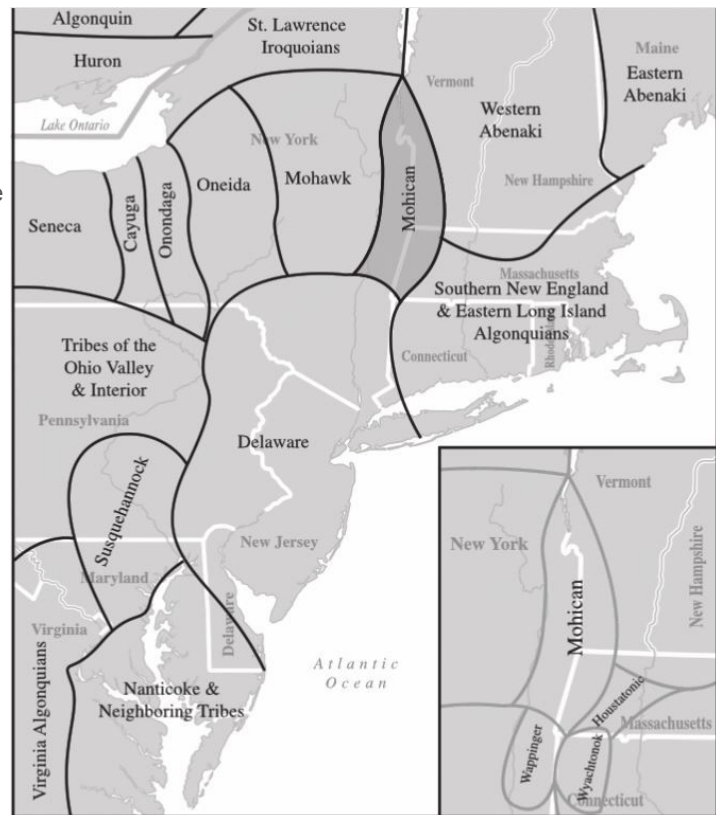
¹⁵ Daniel G. Brinton, *The Lenape and their Legends*. (Philadelphia: 1884), 143.

¹⁶ Allen W. Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York The Seventeenth Century*, (Ithaca: Cornell U. Press) 1960, 3.

¹⁷ Rutenber, *History of the Indian tribes of Hudson's River*, 47.

Map 1 Map of Tribal Territories, adapted from Handbook of North American Indians, ed. William C. Sturtevant, vol. 15, Northeast, ed. Bruce G. Trigger (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), ix, 198. Created by Ryan Kruse.

Wheeler, Rachel. *To Live upon Hope : Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-Century Northeast*, Cornell University Press, 2008. ProQuest Ebook Central.



From Mohawks to Mohegans

The river *Muhhekunneuyuk* (Hudson) was important to the Mohicans and so was their relationship to other Hudson-based tribes. The Mohican ancestors crossed the Mississippi along with the people who would later found the confederation of the Haudenosaunee, “People of the Longhouse.” One of the largest groups, the Mohawk, would become the Mohican’s greatest opponents. The name Mohawk allegedly came from the Algonquian name for the epithet of Man-Eater, while they named themselves

the *Kanienkehaka*, “The People of the Place of the Flint.”¹⁸ The Mohicans told the Dutch that the name of their neighbors to the Northwest, was Iroquois or “the Black Snake People” which they adopted from the French speaking Canadian tribes such as the Huron. The Mohican’s cousins and allies were the Wappingers to the South, who resembled the southern Delaware, more than their Northern Mohican counterparts in terms of lifestyle and language.¹⁹

The Mohicans are more often than not confused with the Mohegan people of Connecticut, whom Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* conflated. This famous book title has lead people to assume that the Mohicans are a defunct tribe, while both tribes are still functioning today. Despite their names meaning “wolf”, the Mohegans were distinct ethnolinguistic group of Pequots, Montauks, Narragansetts, etc. Cooper used the example of a real Mohegan chief Uncas who was active over 100 years before the book takes place in 1757, as the the last remaining Mohican. Additionally, The Pequot War in 1636 and the later King Philip's war in 1676²⁰ pushed many Mohegans, Housatonics, and Pequots east, while the numerous “Fur Wars” with the Mohawks pushed Mohicans southeast towards the Berkshires and the Housatonic valley, where Mohican and Mohegan would cohabitate together.

¹⁸ Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 15.

¹⁹ Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 5.

²⁰ Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 139.

The Intrusion of Europeans

Despite the Mohicans hearing reports of strange White men arriving on the edge of the Great Salt Lake (the Atlantic), the history of the Mohicans did not start out with the 1609 arrival of Henry Hudson upon the *Halve Maen*. Through a series of wars, pandemics, and other European caused misfortunes the Mohicans were pushed southwards to the land around Shekomeko. The Mohicans initially thought the Dutch, and the Europeans that followed were troublesome however, the Dutch settlements and trade would change their livelihoods forever. The main point of Mohican interaction was far up the Hudson at Fort Nassau, now Albany. This site would become a dividing line between the Mohawk territory (the Mohawk River valleys) and the Mohican nation. The Dutch escalated the conflicts between the Mohicans and the Mohawks in the Hudson Valley by opening the fur trade economy in exchange for firearms to the Native Americans in 1624, 1663, and 1683.²¹ Competition between the Mohawk and the Mohicans started a series of bloody intertribal wars that engulfed Rensselaerswyck and the surrounding valley, with Albany, acting as a precarious island in the middle. This was the northern territory of the Mohicans. Eventually tribal conflicts pushed the Mohicans further south and east into eastern Dutchess County New York and Connecticut. Shekomeko is located in the easternmost part of Dutchess County, near what is now Pine Plains, NY.

Despite the changing circumstances and continual chaos that was brought by these pandemics and wars, Mohicans did not disappear, they adapted. Moreover they

²¹ Shirley Dunn, *The Mohican World 1680-1750*. (Fleischmanns, New York: Purple Mountain Press, 2000), 113.

did their best in the European colonial economy, taking up trades such as broom and basket making²² and more profitably, fur trapping for beaver and bear.²³ As a result of participating in the colonial economy with Dutch traders of Fort Nassau Albany²⁴, Mohicans became more and more involved in the fur trade which in turn increased their dependence on European guns, steel, and as both English pastors and Mohican leaders lamented, alcohol.²⁵ The Mohicans took out extensive lines of credit from the merchants for manufactured goods after driven by competition over beaver hunting and territory, the largest being the 1663 Mohawk/Mohican Fur War, thus weakening their disposition. Trading posts made new tools such as iron kettles, cloth, and guns available. The Mohicans entered a period that Shirley Dunn described as “an Age of Debt”²⁶ in which vast quantities of land were sold for relatively small amounts of cash and credit.²⁷ As one disgruntled Mohican lamented, “Many of our people are obliged to hire land of the Christians at a very dear rate, and to give half the corn for rent and the other half they are tempted by rum to sell.”²⁸ In addition to selling more of their land, the chaos surrounding the migrations, plagues, and proxy wars left the remaining Mohicans to question their survival along their river valley, which had changed drastically within their grandparents time.

²² Rachel Wheeler, *To Live upon Hope : Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-Century Northeast*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 9.

²³ Bear Fat was also a staple for the Mohican means for getting through the winter; Dunn, *Mohican World*, 27.

²⁴ Dunn, *The Mohican World*, 101.

²⁵ Peter C Mancall, *Deadly Medicine: Indians and Alcohol in Early America*, (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 102 ; Merritt, Jane T. *At the Crossroads: Indians and Empire on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700-1763*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 2003. 71;

One of the requests of the ‘Four Indian Kings that visited Queen Anne in London was for the Crown to actually enforce the prohibition of alcohol sales to the Mohicans. Dunn, *The Mohican World*, 165.

²⁶ Dunn, *The Mohican World*, 98.

²⁷ Dunn, *The Mohican World*, 137.

²⁸ Brasser, *Riding on the Frontiers Crest*, 30.

While Europeans greatly changed the economic patterns of the Mohicans, they were to affect the Native Americans in other catastrophic ways. Europeans brought many unfamiliar deadly diseases with them, including diphtheria, scarlet fever, smallpox, and measles.²⁹ Hundreds and thousands of Native Americans perished and the number of Mohicans along the river greatly decreased. In the microcosm of the village of Shekomeko, the results were decimating. For example, almost everyone important to Shabash (also known as Maumauntissekun³⁰), died before he became Chief of Shekomeko. This included Shabash's grandmother and former chief, Mammanochqua, who died in the 1683 Smallpox epidemic as well as his uncle. Later, Shabash's father Argoche was consumed by either scarlet fever or smallpox after his brother was born, followed by his sister when he was 8, and lastly his brother Aminnappau in the last great smallpox epidemic in the 1720s.³¹ Shabash's mother, Manhat, was taken prisoner by the Mohawks in 1711 during what the British called Queen Anne's War and was never seen again.³² In the midst of these familial tragedies came the rapid shift into a new paradigm of British Governance, which would challenge the ownership of the only thing Shabash had left: his village.

The change to English dominion from Dutch in 1664 signified the beginning of a greater chokehold on Mohican self-governance. This was accomplished by stifling the Indian platform for debate and litigation with Europeans, then cordoning off the land with European laws and regulations. For instance, Indian conferences were held in the

²⁹ "Origin and Early History", Stockbridge Munsee Community, 2015. <https://www.mohican.com/>

³⁰ Dunn, *Mohican World*, 231.

³¹ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 68. For more on Colonial Epidemics see Patterson and Runge, *Episodes of Smallpox among Native Americans in North America*, 1520– 1898, in addition to the Work of Ann F. Ramenofsky.

³² Ibid.

fort of Albany then inside the courthouse from 1670 onward, almost entirely in the Indian languages with interpreters of mixed background and linguists on both sides to rapidly translate into Dutch. After 1675, Robert Livingston would translate the conferences into English to pass the information on to the regional Governor . The most important meetings were attended by the Governor and the chiefs. They would stand on either side of the courtroom, each in full regalia, from powdered wigs to wampums.³³ More importantly, no agreement could be reached without the exchange of gifts and parcels in deference to Native traditions of hospitality. However, these meetings on Indian affairs fell to the wayside as the 18th century arrived .

The most relevant change in rulership for the residents of Shekomeko, was a law that slipped by unannounced after the exchange to English control. By the 1670s the regulation of the sale of land to Indians by independent brokers, was practically unregulated. The rule of law enacted by the Dutch declared that “all purchasers of land must secure a license from the governor before treating with the Indians” was practically non-existent by 1690.³⁴ This left opportunities for Europeans to openly--and illegally--buy Native American land, without any paper trail for the seller to go into litigation.

The English vision of colonial settlement was the transformation of North America into a parcelled kingdom that would swear oaths to a distant king: not just its citizens or their land, but their religion as well; “New Englanders thought in terms of numbers, contracts, and covenants, whether the commodity was acres or souls.”³⁵ This

³³ Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 212. Wampum is typically held, as well as worn (in the form of jewelry).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 27.

point of view included a spiritual dominion and subsequent founding of a Mission of Stockbridge , Massachusetts in 1737, a day's journey from Shekomeko. The change in leadership in the Hudson Valley from Dutch to English changed the pace and purpose of European Manifest Destiny. The British believed that a Christian God justified an inevitable expansion of Europeans across the continent. In addition to meeting a European consumer demand of beaver pelts like the Dutch traders, the English goal appeared to be a transformation of the land and its people into a simulacrum of the idyllic English countryside. This included the division of land into tracts of tenant farmers and baronial style holdings along the Hudson river into neat parcels of land-- whose borders can still be seen in the Hudson Valley today.

Laws and Land Trouble

By the turn of the 18th century, the Shekomeko settlement was located on a tract of land in a small corner of Dutchess county. The Nine Partners Patent of 1697 was signed in the city of Poughkeepsie, many Mohican and Wappinger notaries and “proprietors” were present for the signing of the Nine Partners Patent. A selection of those names were: “Perpuwas, Sasaragua, Makerin, Memram, Shawanachko, Shawasquo, Tounis (son of Shawasquo), Acgans, Nimham, Ouracgacguis, Tagahams, Seeck, Cocewyn, Mamany, Arye (Seeck's Son), Wappenas, Tintgeme, Ayawatask, Nonnaparee, and Kindtquaw.”³⁶ There was a later subdivision in 1705 of the Nine Partners Patent, called the Little Nine Partners patent. The Little Nine Partners Patent

³⁶ Clifford Buck and William McDermott, "Eighteenth Century Documents of the Nine Partners Patent Dutchess County, New York", *Collections of the Dutchess County Historical Society*, Vol. X, Gateway Press, 1979, 16.

can be traced to British land documents of the time, and had only one Mohican at the signing . For the people of Shekomeko, the Patent’s dubious legality would cause them strife.

The Mohicans of Shekomeko lived on a tiny 300-acre plot shaped like a parallelogram “one mile long nearly east and west and 122 rods wide.”³⁷ As the local historian Huntting spelled it: “The Shacameko village of converted Indians and their burial ground was on and near the boundary line between the Huntting and Smith Farms...south westerly from the Moravian monument.”³⁸ The actual meaning behind the name Shekomeko according to current tribal liaisons is: “Big House.”³⁹ (Other spellings included, Shacemeco, Cheomeco, etc.) As Huntting alleges, “The Shacameko village of converted indians and their burial ground was on and near the boundary line between the Huntting and Smith Farms above mentioned, south westerly from the Moravian monument.”⁴⁰ Of the patentees, those who would benefit most from the Mohican removal were: “the Sackett brothers, John and Richard Jr., whose father, Richard Sr., was one of the patentees of the Little Nine Partners patent.”⁴¹ Of the original signers the former governor George Clinton was one of the original signers.⁴²

³⁷ Huntting, *History of Little Nine Partners*, 23.

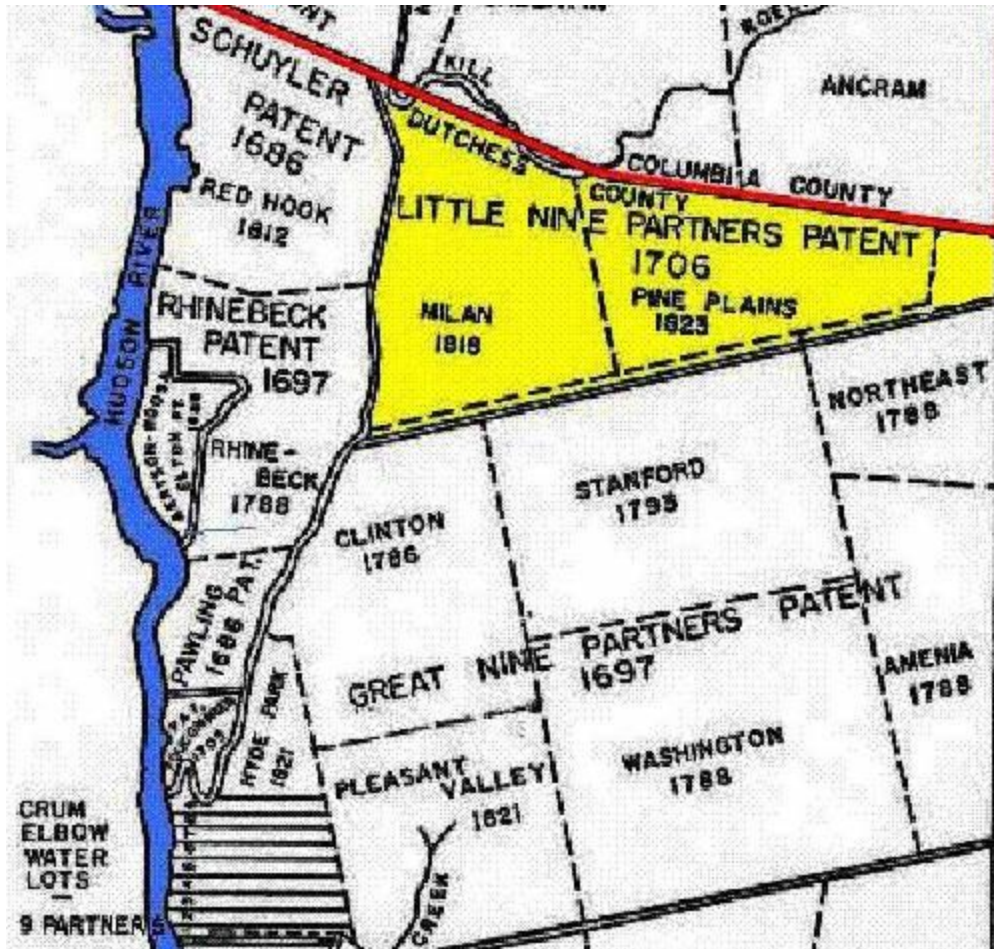
³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Bonney Hartley, Munsee Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Email correspondence Wed, Jan 16, 2019.

⁴⁰ Huntting, *History of Little Nine Partners*, 23.

⁴¹ William Starna, *Gideon’s People: Being a Chronicle of an American Indian Community in Colonial Connecticut and the Moravian Missionaries Who Served There* Volumes, 1 & 2, Ed. Corinna-Dally-Starna, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 17.

⁴² Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 67.



Nine Partners Patent is shaded in yellow. [Courtesy of Dutchess County Historical Society and Lynn Brandvold] “ Little Nine Partners Historical Society <http://sites.rootsweb.com/~nylnphs/Vo/index.htm>

Tensions ran high between the people of Shekomeko and their colonist neighbors, and further increased when the tenants of patentees began to settle in earnest and replicate the tenant-landowner relationship of the English countryside. The Shekomeko settlement Chieftain Shabash, made routine trips to New York City in the Summer of 1740 hoping to gain the money they were owed from the governor for

their ancestral lands. Shabash claimed the majority of the patent-holders who now owned everything around their land, had “never actually paid their father[s] for the land and always trifled with him.”⁴³

Unlike previous land brokerage with oversight from Albany, these land subdivisions were made on an individual to individual basis, with very little in the way of paperwork other than the exchange of deeds. This lack of centralised record keeping and policing of records led to the belief that there was not any official claim of the Shekomekoians to their own land.⁴⁴ It appears these subdivisions in the early 1700s had overwritten the Nine Partners Patent which Shabash appears not to have known about. These questionable land practices appear to have contributed to the eventual end of the Shekomeko settlement. Conversely, the future of the Mohicans of Shekomeko changed forever when Shabash met a Moravian Missionary, Christian Henry Rauch, on the streets of New York in 1741.

The Arrival of the Moravians

To understand how and why a Moravian missionary was in New York, one must look into the background of the Moravians in the Americas. For a series of political, economic, and most importantly, ecclesiastical reasons, Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), the head of the Moravian Brotherhood, came to the conclusion that he and his flock should make the pilgrimage across the sea to what they called the

⁴³ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope* 78.

⁴⁴ Huntting, *Little Nine Partners*, 119.

New World. Thus, the Brotherhood entered their *Sichtungszeit* or “Great Sifting Period”⁴⁵ (1738-52), which became Zinzendorf’s soul-searching period until he found meaning in the Americas with the Native American Indians of Bethlehem. In 1734 the Moravian missionaries first settled in the colony of Georgia, but left due to an unwelcoming colonial environment caught between two rival colonial powers. The pacifist Missionaries left after they refused to help the English fight the Spanish⁴⁶, and



subsequently moved to William Penn’s Experiment of Pennsylvania. In 1740 they settled in Philadelphia.

Within a short time, Zinzendorf⁴⁷ was able to found a

Moravian mission north of Philadelphia with the

Delaware Indians at Bethlehem in 1741 and Nazareth in

1742. The Moravian push to move to America was based

on Zinzendorf’s belief that the “word of Christ in its very

nature is meant to be spread to those who do not know of

it, that all Christians are missionaries.”⁴⁸ The Count disdained the sectarianism that divided Christianity and routinely sent his disciples to live with and worship with other sects. According to the Moravian writings about Philadelphia, the Colonies were a religious paradise of tolerance compared to Europe. Many other Protestant Europeans fled to Pennsylvania, such as the Quakers in 1683 who founded the city of Philadelphia,

⁴⁵ Gillian Lindt Gollin, *Moravians in Two Worlds: A Study of Changing Communities*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 11.

⁴⁶ Gollin, *Moravians in Two Worlds*, 5.

⁴⁷ Portrait: “Zinzendorf” Valentin Hadit, 1755. Moravian Archives. Digital.

⁴⁸ Sigrid Kasemans, *Moravians at Shecomeco, N.Y. (1740-1746): a case study of the missionary theory and practice of the Unitas Fratrum*. (Thesis, Lehigh University, 1992.), 11.

and later the Shakers in 1774. As the Moravian Brother Mittelberger pointed out in his journals when he first visited Pennsylvania in 1740 :

“In Pennsylvania there exist so many varieties of doctrines and sects that it is impossible to name them all. Many people do not reveal their own particular beliefs to anyone. Furthermore there are many hundreds of adults who are not only unbaptized, but who do not even want baptism.”⁴⁹

In addition: “It [Pennsylvania] offers people more freedom than the other English colonies, since all sects are tolerated there. One can encounter Lutherans, members of the reformed Church, Catholics, Quakers, Mennonites or Anabaptists, Herrenhütter or Moravian brothers, Pietists, Seventh-Day Adventists, Dunkers, Presbyterians, New-born, Freemasons, Separatists, Freethinkers, Jews, Mohammedans, Pagans, Negros, and Indians.”⁵⁰

The Moravian purpose for coming to Pennsylvania, besides its religious tolerance, was to convert the Native population. The Moravians bought into the idea that “race” was classified by Biblical terms in that people were comprised of “nations.” The Bible accounted for representatives of the known world, Asia, Africa, and Europe, that were present at Christ’s birth as the Magi. To explain how Native Americans were not mentioned in the Bible took some creative interpretation. Like William Penn, the Moravian classification for Native Americans who they found amicable, was to rationalize that the Indians were the lost tribe of Israel that come to America before the flood separated them.⁵¹ Moreover, the Moravians’ mission in the name of the Lord was to convert the People of the New World to their lost ways. As Kaesemans notes in her work on Zinzendorf, “Whether or not he sincerely believed in the Indians’ biblical

⁴⁹ Gottlieb Mittelberger, *Journey to Pennsylvania*, ed. Oscar Handlin, trans. John Clive (Cambridge, MA 1960) monograph stack. 21.

⁵⁰ Mittelberger, *Journey to Pennsylvania*, 41.

⁵¹ Gollin, *Moravians in Two Worlds*, 31; Merritt, *At the Crossroads*, 10.

heritage, the idea that seems to be implied is that they have a primordial desire for and knowledge of God.”⁵²

The Moravians were part of a Protestant Christian legacy in Europe that was already three hundred years old by the 1700s. The sect’s inception began in the eastern provinces of the Holy Roman Empire, Bohemia and Moravia, which would later be part of the Czech Republic. The Moravian foundation of reformist beliefs, doctrines, and interpretations of the Bible are based on the reformist teachings of Jan Huss and predates the mainstream protests of Martin Luther in 1517 by almost 100 years., Unlike Martin Luther, Jan Huss in 1415 was burned at the stake for his heresy, which helped to ignite the bloody Hussite Wars that tore apart central Europe for 30 years until their forces conceited to a doctrinal agreement with Rome in 1433 and dissipated back into the Catholic Church. Due to the counter reformation in Moravia, and the continuing anti-German, anti-protestant leanings of the Czech majority, the Moravians fled to Count Zinzendorf’s estate in Saxony.⁵³

The Moravian community that eventually came to America in 1734 had previously been reorganized as the Unity of Brethren in 1722 by a carpenter named Christian David. When the Moravians were forced to move from Moravia to Saxony, they took up residence on the estate of a sympathetic Count, Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, to live under his protection. Thus the Moravians earned the title of "Herrnhuter" or “those who live under the lord”, or in this case, under Zinzendorf’s

⁵² Kaesemans, *Moravians at Shecomeco*, 15.

⁵³ Kaesemans, *Ibid*; Starna, *Gideons People*, 2.

roof.⁵⁴ Unlike the previous patrons of the Moravians, Zinzendorf took more of an active role in the leading the Moravians to what he perceived as their destiny to move to the new world. He shaped the way Moravian belief developed and is quoted to this day.

Though the Moravians claimed its origins in the theology of Jan Huss, its catalyzation came from the group known as the Jednota Bratrská, Unity of the Brethren, or Unitas Fratrum, were organized at Kunwald, Bohemia, in 1457.⁵⁵ This group did not concede with Rome; instead it “formally seceded from the Catholic Church and installed its own ministry and episcopacy.”⁵⁶ By the beginning of the 17th century, half of all protestant in Czechia were United Brethren (Jednota Bratrská in Czech). The peace of Westphalia and the defeat of the Protestant Czech forces at the battle of White Mountain ended the 250+ years of Religious Wars in 1648. Though there was peace, the Bratrská disciples were forced to hide, and along with other Protestants, were forced to flee Bohemia. The Moravians survived due to the patronage of powerful and wealthy individuals as was the case with Count Zinzendorf in the United Brotherhood. He would become their protector in Saxony starting in 1727. Previous to Zinzendorf's protection, the bishop John Amos Comenius (1592-1672), who maintained the anti-ecclesiastical beliefs of Jan Huss, kept the sect alive through

⁵⁴ Starna, *Gideons People*, 539.

⁵⁵ Kaesemans, *Moravians at Shecomeco*, 5.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

funds collected for the support of the "Hidden Seed",⁵⁷ as the clandestine members of the Jednota Bratrská were called.

Above all else, the Moravians wanted to create a community according to fundamental gospel catechisms of "loving thy neighbor." They lived communally together, in close proximity if not actually with the flock, along with wives, and children. In the Americas interracial marriage was more common than in Europe, a mark of the Moravian experience in the Colonies. This sense of community went from birth all the way into the grave, where Moravians broke the English barrier of segregation at the time with pan-racial burial practices and baptisms.⁵⁸ However, Moravian society was not all egalitarian; Moravian services were segregated in terms of gender, along the strict means of the "Choir System", that separated their flock upon entering the grave according to gender, but not race.⁵⁹ Additionally, the Moravian Symbol is the Conquering Lamb, a symbol of triumph through non-violence. Like their expulsion from Georgia, their commitment to nonviolence as well as the other religious dogma of race and marriage would ultimately doom the Shekomeko Moravian mission.

⁵⁷ Kaesemans, *Moravians at Shekomeko*, 13.

⁵⁸ Starna, *Gideons People*, 53.

⁵⁹ Gollin, *Moravians in Two Worlds*, 31.

CHAPTER 2

The Great Indian Awakening

By the beginning of 1700s, the Mohicans were faced not only with a political and cultural paradigm shift from their life along the river, but a spiritual one. Mohicans entered a period of what historian Jane Merritt describes as the “Great Indian Awakening,” in which “the Indians of the Northeast Seaboard and interior experienced a force that empowered shattered communities”,⁶⁰ where many Native Americans experienced a period of religious revival and community soul searching. The Indians of the Northeast didn’t exist in a cultural bubble; they were well aware of the Colonial Great Awakening that was transpiring around them, and it was only natural for some cultural osmosis to occur.

Some Native voices thought Christianity acted as a catalyst for change by empowering Indians to reform and revitalize their ancestors’ beliefs against the seemingly hypocritical Christians. These included the Native American Munsee reformer Pupanhank who had little resounding success against mounting a number of Christian Missions sprouting up round him.⁶¹ Another was one of the most famous Native American’s of the Great Indian Awakening, the Mohegan Samson Occum; an itinerant preacher educated by English Missionaries. Despite his early fascination with Missions, Occum moved slowly away from the flat promises of English Christianity to

⁶⁰ Merritt, *At the Crossroads*, 89.

⁶¹ Merritt, *At the Crossroads*, 127.

found Brothertown in 1783, an all Indian Mission in Oneida Territory.⁶² Others leaders such as Shabash, perhaps saw mission life as another way to adapt to the colonial times. By accepting the missionaries and converting to Christianity they could protect themselves from external forces that seemed to make a “traditional” Mohican lifestyle untenable. The Stockbridge-Munsee website interpretation of a conversion to Christianity is that “some Native people , noting that the Europeans seemed to be prospering in this new land, felt that perhaps the Europeans' God was more powerful, and agreed to be missionized.”⁶³

Shabash’s Vision

The evidence for an interest in religion was that Shabash , the chief of Shekomeko, had a religious epiphany. This was recorded as a literal Great Awakening: “He experienced a vision in which a roar of gushing water filled his ears and he saw before him a group of Indians drunk and naked and unable to escape the onrushing water. A voice told him he must give up all wickedness. As the vision continued, a strong light shone all about him, and he heard ‘a noise like the blowing of a pair of bellows’ followed by “a violent blast of wind which dispersed the Indians into the air.” Awakening from the vision, Shabash resolved to leave off drinking, and “from that time he entertained serious thought of religion.”⁶⁴ After his vision and newfound religious awakening, and a year before he met Rauch, Shabash visited Stockbridge on June 17

⁶² Patrick Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*. (Lincoln: U.of Nebraska Press,1994.), 283. For more on Occam see Angela Calcaterra’s *Literary Indians: Aesthetics and Encounter in American Literature to 1920*

⁶³ “Origin and Early History”, Stockbridge Munsee Community, 2015. <https://www.mohican.com/>

⁶⁴ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 316.

1739, to “inform himself in the affairs of religion.”⁶⁵ The journey to Stockbridge would not have been an easy journey for Shabash, being 28 miles away from his home over the rough Taconic foothills. What Shabash would have seen as he entered the town was less of a Mohican village and more of a Modern English town next to the Housatonic River: cordoned off by railed fences, framed houses with shingled next to wigwams.⁶⁶ He would have seen fruit trees in bloom, meadowland full of foreign sheep, cattle and hogs, complete with a saw and grist mills on the river. He would have seen Mohicans in English garb farming English Oats next to Mohican corn fields.⁶⁷ The mission was founded there in 1734 by a British Puritan, Yale educated John Sergeant, who recently moved in with the Mohicans in 1737. Sargent would have met Shabash in the newly completed Mission house that stands today on the street bearing his name. Unlike Shekomeko, Stockbridge had a adjoining British town next to the Mohican village of Wnakhtukhook, and was a segregated place; the British in their village, Mohicans in theirs with a mission. Perhaps this lack of personal autonomy or cultural heritage were the reasons Shabash turned away from Stockbridge. He appears to have kept his interest in religion, however and a chance meeting with a German missionary in New York led to the Moravian Mission’s founding at Shekomeko.

⁶⁵ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 69.

⁶⁶ Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 69.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Rauch Comes to Shekomeko

The establishment of a Moravian mission at Shekomeko was due in part to an accidental meeting between tribal leaders of the community and a young Moravian missionary named Christian Henry Rauch. The duo of Shabash (Mawmauntisskun) and Tschoop (Wassamapah) traveled from Shekomeko to New York City, to see Governor Clinton to collect the money promised for their fathers' land.⁶⁸ They were to meet Rauch by chance during this visit. It was later written that the Moravians saw this meeting as divine intervention or God's destiny. Rauch would eventually establish a mission at Shekomeko. Christian Heinrich (Henry) Rauch, "not two weeks past his twenty-second birthday..."⁶⁹ arrived in New York City on July 16, 1740 from Pennsylvania: "to preach the blood and wounds of Jesus to the heathen."⁷⁰

Unfamiliar with the New World, besides the Moravian compound in Bethlehem, Rauch was a recent emigree from Germany who spoke halting English.⁷¹ He was young and inexperienced, having no idea that Tschoop, Shabash, or Shekomeko existed, or even where to start to find people to preach to. He did find a fellow German Missionary named Friedrich Martin who recently returned from the Caribbean. It was Friedrich who told Rauch that there were two Mohicans from upstate in the city, at the time, but

⁶⁸ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 67.

⁶⁹ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 14.

⁷⁰ Sigrid Kaesemans, *Moravians at Shecomeco, N.Y. (1740-1746): a case study of the missionary theory and practice of the Unitas Fratrum*. (Thesis, Lehigh University, 1992.), 22.

⁷¹ Starna, *Gideon's People*, 532.

that he would be wasting his time with the Shekomeko Mohicans, as many other Missionaries had tried and failed preaching to the heathens.⁷²



John Carwitham, "A Plan of the City of New York"

Manhattan in Maps, 1527-1995. Rizzoli, New York. Orig. 1740/ Rizzoli 1997.

<https://virtualny.ashp.cuny.edu>

In a cosmopolitan city like New York, Shabah and Tschoop must have made an conspicuous pair, even amongst the other Indians visiting. Shabash was taller than most and bore two snake-like tattoos on his cheeks.⁷³ "The snake figures might have signaled Shabash's status as a *pniesesok*, a man who maintained a

special relationship with the spirit being Hobomok, often represented as a serpent, and who thus had special spiritual responsibilities as chief."⁷⁴ Tschoop possessed "a bear like countenance",⁷⁵ barrel chested, ragged and imposing, walking haggardly with a limp.⁷⁶

⁷² Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 70.

⁷³ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 70 "upon the right cheek and temple, a large snake; from the under lip a pole passed over the nose, and between the eyes to the top of his forehead, ornamented at every quarter of an inch with round marks, representing scalps: upon the left cheek, two lances crossing each other; and upon the lower jaw the head of a wild boar."

⁷⁴ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 71.

⁷⁵ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 71.

⁷⁶ Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 60.

According to the collected memoirs of Tschoop and Rauch's diary in the Moravian Archies in Bethlehem, their meeting had a rough start. Rauch's first impressions of Tschoop and Shabash were of them being violently drunk, having walked over 100 miles from Shekomeko only to be short-changed again by the governor of New York on the claims on their father's land. When the fledgling missionary found them sober the next day, he managed to communicate with Tschoop in rough Dutch. Rauch asked whether they would like a teacher to show them the "way out of their blindness and imprisonment to sin", by allowing him to preach to their village, and perhaps in the future, to establish a mission there. Tschoop replied that he had better things to do or "something better than he had hitherto had." Despite their initial disinterest, both Shabash and Tschoop commissioned Rauch as Shekomeko's tentative minister.⁷⁷

Coming to such a quick decision having just met Rauch may have seemed odd, but the pair had recently visited Stockbridge and were considering how they might restructure their village to better thrive in the midst of encroaching settlers. Perhaps if they mimicked Stockbridge's mission their troubles would be alleviated? After agreeing to meet the next day at the New York home of a fellow missionary and Upstate landholder, Martin Hoffman Rausch was rebuked because Shabash and Tschoop did not show up. Nevertheless, Tschoop and Shabash may have reconsidered their plan, as they failed to make an appearance.⁷⁸ Rauch however resolved to go to Shekomeko, and he proceeded to learn the whereabouts of Shekomeko and make good upon his promise.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 71.

⁷⁸ Starna, *Gideon's People*, 6.

⁷⁹ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 71.

Upon arriving at Shekomeko village, a 100 mile journey north from New York City, the young missionary Rauch would have seen a collection of sixteen bark huts, wigwams and perhaps a longhouse or two clustered between two hills and their fallow fields of corn.⁸⁰ Shekomeko was not an old settlement. William Starna, who has written widely on the Mohicans, argues that it was settled for only a couple of decades at most.⁸¹ The population was uncertain, but at most was only 90 people⁸²

The residents of Shekomeko did not get down on their knees and welcome this new outsider as their savior as Rauch, from his diaries, expected. The circumstances at Shekomeko were dire because of food shortages, alcohol consumption, debt, sickness, and hostility from surrounding farmers.

The Mohicans of Shekomeko were described by some visiting Connecticut Indians : “they were like wolves, the worst in all of the country... ”⁸³ and they considered them to be “Worse off out of all the other Mohicans.”⁸⁴ Count Zinzendorf’s 1742 reaction of the the Mohicans seemed at first condescending and dismissive “a confessedly worthless tribe of Indians ... naturally fierce and vindictive and given to excessive drinking...”, but simultaneously “tender hearted, and susceptible of good impressions.”⁸⁵ For the prestige of Shekomeko, Zinzendorf’s opinion mattered, as he was head of the Moravian enterprise in the New World and the man who sent Rauch on his mission. His whim would make or break the founding of a Mission.

⁸⁰ Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 63.

⁸¹ William Starna, *From Homeland to New Land: A History of the Mahican Indians. 1600-1830*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013.), 172.

⁸² Starna, *From Homeland to New Land*, 172.

⁸³ Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 62.

⁸⁴ Dunn, *Mohican World*, 178.

⁸⁵ Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 62.

Rauch, on the day of his arrival, delivered a rousing Christian service to the entire village with Tschoop translating: “that he (Rauch) had come from across the ocean to bring them the news that God loved humans so much that he became a man, lived as all men do, and was nailed to the cross for everyone’s sins. God’s son had shed his blood and died for all sinners, that they might be saved from sin and granted eternal life.”⁸⁶ According to Tschoop’s diary this initial impression of Rauch was something that he would remember for the rest of his life and piqued the interest of his fellow villagers. Nearby farmers that bordered Shekomeko village, who were not named in Tschoop’s diary, but probably included the Hunttings, the Dibbles, the Duels and Smith farms,⁸⁷ feared the Mohicans becoming organized by this European newcomer. They did their best to strain the Shekomeko /Rauch relationship, initially spreading rumors that he had come to sell their tribes’ children into slavery overseas. Some Settlers allegedly went as far as to bribe the Shekomeko villagers with rum to murder Rauch.⁸⁸ Rauch initially did not live at the Shekomeko village. He instead boarded with a local homesteader of Palatine descent, a farmer named Johannes Rau who lived on what is now the anglicised Rowe Road. This homestead was located in what is now Milan, New York. and it was approximately eight miles from the Shekomeko settlement.⁸⁹ Rauch was likely pleased to be able to converse in German, and in exchange for room and board, tutored his children and learned some Mohican phrases from Rau’s eldest daughter Jannetje.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 71 .

⁸⁷ Huntting, *History of Little Nine Partners*, 23.

⁸⁸ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 71.

⁸⁹ Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 62.

⁹⁰ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 87.

Jannetje would go on to marry a Moravian named Mack and help establish the Mission of Pagatowoch in Connecticut.

There is evidence that Rauch used his knowledge of medicine to help some of the residents of Shekomeko with their injuries and illnesses, which must have helped his popularity with the Mohicans. However, this success was also met with hostility, as the collected diaries illustrate that one resident chased Rauch around the pond with a hatchet while drunk, and Tschoop, the man who invited Rauch initially to the village leveled his rifle at him and told him to get out of Shekomeko in a drunken fit of anger.⁹¹ Despite the the Mohicans suspicion of Rauch and periodical violence towards him, the enmity towards his presence in the village wore off over time. Contrary to the rumors spread by nearby farmers, this newcomer did not seek to take their children, their land, or meager stocks of food. Instead, unlike other missionaries they met Rauch, walked 16 miles each day only asking for their attention. In his diaries Tschoop noted Rauch's extreme humility-- unlike missionaries who had preached to him before at Shekomeko.

Tschoop had noted in his journal these missionaries and the lapses in their character: "Once a preacher came and began to explain to us that there was a God. We answered, 'Dost thou think us so ignorant as not to know that? Go back to the place from whence thou camest.' Then again another preacher came and began to teach us, and to say, 'You must not steal, nor lie, nor get drunk, etc.' We answered 'Thou fool, dost thou think that we don't know that? Learn first thyself, and then teach the people to whom thou belongest, to leave off these things. For who steal, or lie, or who are more

⁹¹ Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 61.

drunken than thine own people?' And thus we dismissed him."⁹² Eventually Rauch moved into the village and lived there permanently. Later he was joined by another Moravian missionary by the name of Gottlieb Buttner, and his wife.

About a year after Rauch's arrival, in 1741, Shabash wished to know more about the Moravian Jesus and his wounds, and wished to be baptised.⁹³ Despite their leader's willingness, only a fraction of the Village would be responsive to the Christian preaching. At this time the stores of summer corn had frozen and most of the village was preoccupied searching the woods for food.⁹⁴ The mainstay of Rauch's converts would be mostly the families of those initially interested, with the exception of Tschoop, who was disowned by his own family when he was baptized. Shekomeko was successful enough for Rauch to write Zinzendorf to preside over the baptism of Rauch's converts. Shabash's family was one of the families that later became baptised. Because neither Rauch nor his Moravian missionary brother, Gottlieb Buttner, were ordained ministers, it was necessary for the missionaries to travel with their converts to the Moravian Mission in Bethlehem where Zinzendorf presided. In February 1742 the Shekomeko missionaries set out toward the Moravian Mission at Bethlehem Pennsylvania so that these villagers could be baptised to Christianity: this included Shabash, Seim, and Kiop. Tschoop was lame at the time and could not make the journey in the middle of winter, however he was baptised later in the village. Tschoop wrote a personal letter to Zinzendorf expressing his emotions of Christ: "My first feeling in my heart was from his

⁹² Wheeler, 68.

⁹³ Wheeler, 72.

⁹⁴ Wheeler, 72.

blood and when I heard that he was also the Saviour of the Heathen and that I did owe him my heart I felt a drawing towards him in my heart....”⁹⁵ Tschoop was influenced by Rauch from the start and appears to have believed in the Moravian ideal, and more importantly, expressed his belief in writing to show Zinzendorf both his piety and eruditeness. In travelling with Indians, the party was refused lodging, overcharged for purchases, and ridiculed by locals and passers by.⁹⁶

Upon reaching Pennsylvania, Rauch was Baptized a minister of the Moravian Church by Bishop David Nitschmann on 11 February, 1742 and on the same day, he baptized his Indian companions. Shabash was now known to the Moravians as Abraham, as both were presiding patriarchs, Seim and Kiob became Isaac, and Jacob, both becoming preachers themselves. Tschoop became Johannes or Anglicised as John, after John the Baptist. It is important to note that some Mohicans took European names without committing to Christianity, as seen in the case of the Dutch-influenced Tschoop, who now and again went by Job, even before he was baptized at by Rauch.⁹⁷ Their journey had been rough, but once they returned to Shekomeko, the Mission could begin again in earnest.

⁹⁵ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 73.

⁹⁶ Starna, *Gideon's People*, 7.

⁹⁷ Dunn, *Mohican World*, 270.

Daily Life at Shekomeko

Life at Shekomeko continued to be difficult. Food was short and there was always debts to pay. Nonetheless, the mission thrived, at least in the eyes of the brethren, and there were additional baptisms. In the Spring, the missionaries successfully planted German staples of hard wheat, beets, and cabbage for sauerkraut, somewhat abating the seasonal famines.⁹⁸ Sustaining the village on foreign foodways might also be read as a sign of possible increased conversion and submission to Moravian beliefs. To get through the winters Mohicans relied on the staples of buried corn, dried beans, supplemented with deer jerky and bear fat.⁹⁹ The small size of Shekomeko's plot limited the farming of the "Three Sisters" and curtailed the area of land needed to supply the winter stores, supplemented with hunting. In terms of the changing physical layout of the village, additions were made to house the growing population, including a permanent hut for the Brothers. Other architectural additions were built, including a bread oven and a grind stone. The Village's only horse got stolen, but things improved when Zinzendorf arrived at Shekomeko in mid-August 1742 along with other brethren eager to build up the mission.¹⁰⁰ His coming gave Shekomeko a sense of legitimacy, as Zinzendorf was spokesperson for the entire Moravian ethos and still is to this day.

Shekomeko's most grand design was the consecration of a "leaky" church made of bark and held together by hopes prayers. It was finished by the fall, 1743. According

⁹⁸ Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 63. ; Starna, *From Homeland to New Land*, 172

⁹⁹ Dunn, *Mohican World*, 27.

¹⁰⁰ Starna, *Gideons People*, 89.

to the most committed missionaries, the limitations of the structure itself were offset by the church's purpose and the Church was soon filled with the sound of Hymns.¹⁰¹ With Rauch now ordained, the baptised population of Shekomeko swelled to 47 Christian Indians.¹⁰² Shekomeko would draw increased attention from surrounding Indian villages: Housatonics, Mohegans, Wappingers, other Mohicans and even the distant Wampanoags came to hear Rauch preach. Many Massachusetts and Connecticut Indians had come to Shekomeko from the puritan-majority East to join multi-tribal sermons full of Housatonics, Mohegans, Delawares and one lonely Pequot chief named Mauwehu. Shekomeko would also be the base to found satellite Moravian missions outside of New York-- notabaly Wechquadrach and Pachgatgoch in Connecticut. Each of these missions were on the border with New York State. The later was several hours' walk to the southeast near what is now known as the village of Kent, while Wechquadrach was much closer to the village of Sharon.¹⁰³ Mauwehu would later be baptized Gideon, and would lead the Moravian settlement of Pachgatgoch with Brother Freidrick Post and his Mohican wife Rachel, along with Rauch's assistant Martin Mack, and his wife Jannetje Rau.

¹⁰¹ Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 63.

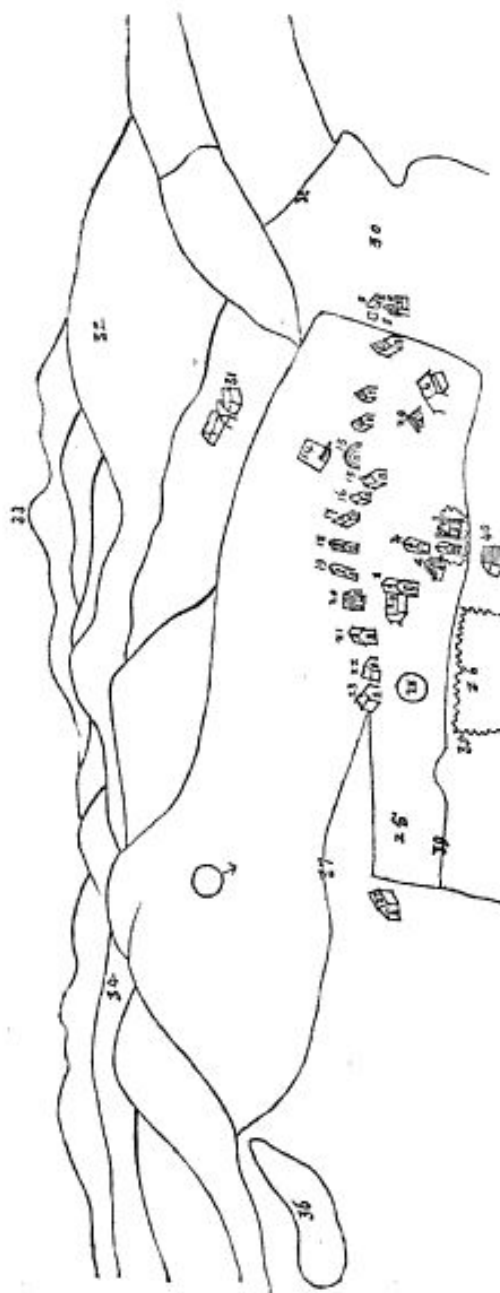
¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Dunn, *The Mohican World*, 229; Starna, *Gideons People*, 8.



Ryan, Kuse. *Map 2 Indian and White Settlements in the Eighteenth Century.*

Wheeler, Rachel. *To Live upon Hope : Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-Century Northeast*, Cornell University Press, 2008.



SHEKOMEKO IN 1745.

From an original drawing in the Moravian Archives at Bethlehem, Pa.

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. The mission house. | 21. Phillip's house. | 31. Hendrysen's place. |
| 2. The bakeoven. | 22. Isaac's house. | 32. Hendrysen's Mountain. |
| 3. The barrack (for hay and grain). | 23. Nathaniel's house. | 33. K'takamatschan, the "Big Mountain." |
| 4. The cellar. | 24. The church. | 34. Robert du Bois' place. |
| 5. The stable. | 25. The missionaries' large field. | 35. The bridge and fence. |
| 6. Abraham's house. | 26. The missionaries' small field. | 36. The small lake. |
| 7. John's house. | 27. Zaccous' house. | 37. The path to the lake. |
| 8. John's workshop. | 28. An old garden. | 38. The fence. |
| 9. Jacob's house. | 29. Abraham's cellar. | 39. The kill. |
| 10. Boaz's house. | 30. The Indian brethren's field. | 40. Ruth's house. |
| 11. Peter's house. | | |

"A Moravian Sketch of Shekomeko in 1745" Moravian Historical Society. *A Memorial of the Dedication of Monuments Erected by the Moravian Historical Society.* (New York, Richardson, 1860)

What set Rauch apart from the other Missionaries who had had little success at Shekomeko was that the Moravians (at first) lacked the colonial agenda of the English and the Dutch. The two Nations had previously attempted to evangelize Native populations but had also upheld a social and gender hierarchy that was prescribed with their teachings. Compared to these state-approved missionaries, the Moravians were outsiders, who didn't seem to have a stake in the colonial geopolitics. Moreover, the Moravians' peculiar pietist faith was an attractive option of conversion for the Mohican people. The Moravians were one of the least iconoclastic and evangelical of the Northeast Christian religions besides the Quakers and other Pietists.¹⁰⁴

Much of the source material (Frazier, Starna, Wheeler) I am drawing from mentions that it is impossible to go examine Shekomeko and not compare it to its neighbor and foil, the English-Mohican experiment of Stockbridge. It is necessary to consider Shekomeko in dialogue with another Native missionary communities because of their juxtaposition between the “right path” the Mohicans were meant to follow per the English and the the lifestyle that the Moravians offered instead.

In the face of pressures faced by settlers and the choice of two imperfect allies; Mohicans found more appeal in the Moravian system because unlike the established English, they seemed more intent on what Rachel Wheeler termed as “Indigenizing and inculturating Christianity”,¹⁰⁵ as compared to Stockbridge. In an attempt at creating

¹⁰⁴ Mittelberger, *Journey to Pennsylvania*, 22.

¹⁰⁵ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 9.

“God’s model village”,¹⁰⁶ the Puritan Minister John Sargent helped co-opt the Mohican village of Wnakhtukhook¹⁰⁷ to become a Mission by 1736. Wnakhtukhook was part of a larger tract of land along the Housatonic river in Massachusetts, purchased in 1724 for £460 (\$106,585 in 2019)¹⁰⁸, three barrels of cider and thirty quarts of rum by another missionary named John Stoddard from the Mohican Chief Umpachene.¹⁰⁹ Unlike Shekomeko, the Stockbridge Mission was adjacent to, but separate from a new English village, and focused on British cultural and moral norms over a Mohican lifestyle. These Mohican Chiefs, Umpachene, Shabash, and Hendrick Aupaumut faced their own host of similar problems: land enclosure, sickness, alcoholism, antagonism with European settlers, over the span of 100 years. Like Shabash, Aupaumut of Wnakhtukhook had a grim vision of the future in waning years of his life, warning the Delaware of the Susquehanna in 1803 of the consequences of not converting to Christianity: “you will become poor, in every respect, and you will be scattered; your villages will be desolated or possessed by a people, who will cultivate your lands....you will become extinct from the earth.”¹¹⁰ The leaders of Shekomeko and Stockbridge were not blind to the European Great Awakening that was transpiring around them. Aupaumut believed that his village’s values and their very lives could be maintained by converting to Christianity and, in a sense, to “Englishness” itself.¹¹¹ That included speaking English, wearing English clothes, living in English style houses, farming English Wheat next to Indian

¹⁰⁶ David J. Silverman, *Red Brethren: The Brothertown and Stockbridge Indians and the Problem of Race in Early America*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 53.

¹⁰⁷ Dunn, *Mohican World*, 55.

¹⁰⁸ Conversion Provided Courtesy of <https://www.uwyo.edu/numimage/currency.htm>

¹⁰⁹ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 17.

¹¹⁰ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 2.

¹¹¹ Silverman, *Red Brethren*, 53.

Corn, and most importantly, fighting in English wars. The call to war of Mohicans to King George's War (known in Europe as the War of Austrian Succession, 1744-1748), was answered by the Stockbridge congregation. Their mission statement was to both convert Natives, and more importantly, “school them in the English ways of Civilization” but without the same rights or respect granted to their white peers.¹¹² Christianity for the missionaries of Stockbridge was meant to be an act of submission, and ultimately control. Native American subservience under God, and more importantly, the Crown, was what the English ruling class wanted, as well as what the homesteaders inland wanted.¹¹³ The warning uttered by Aupaumut decades later may have echoed true to Shabash, however it is important to note that despite the conversion to English Christianity, and doing everything right from the English perspective, the Stockbridge Indians were still removed from their land in the 1780s.

The two missions of Shekomeko and Stockbridge did not live in a complete vacuum from one another: there were frequent visits both to Stockbridge and vice versa. Despite the pretense of neighborly Christian exchange, there was a constant tension between the two missions: Moravians thought the Stockbridge Indians were “civilized but spiritually dead” and disapproved of the John Sargent’s tolerance of light drinking at Stockbridge.¹¹⁴ The Stockbridge Authorities thought the pious nature of the Moravian mission at Shekomeko was too Papist-like for comfort. Stockbridge was not what Shabash had in mind to save his people.

¹¹² Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 3.

¹¹³ Silverman, *Red Brethren*, 97.

¹¹⁴ Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 67.

The Mixing of Beliefs

The Moravian missionaries had to overcome a gigantic gulf of understanding between their vision of Christianity and the tapestry of Mohicans beliefs. “The differences between Christianity, Islam, and Judaism are minor compared to the difference between any one of those religions and the religions of any North American Indian Society.”¹¹⁵ Many Eastern Woodlands tribes held common understandings of the natural world, including as the creation of the world, the sky, and the rivers-- specifically the creation of the the Mohicans river, the Muhheakantuck.

The roots of Moravian ecclesiology (since the time of Jan Hus) was focused on compassion and on brotherhood, as this religion was a social, collective endeavor rather than an individual one (individuality characterized English seventeenth century Puritan engagement with faith). This sensibility could be seen in the Moravian leader and colonial entrepreneur Count Zinzendorf’s decree: "As soon as truth becomes a system, one does not possess it." He distrusted the systematic hierarchical system of both the the Catholic and Protestant Churches.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, Count Zinzendorf helped to develop most of Moravian dogma of the time. He insisted that the social aspects of religion was its holiest, that “Gemeine” or community, links God in heaven with the earth.¹¹⁷ Another core Moravian interpretation was teaching the Bible as a religion of trust, not of true understanding, but trusting a sense of “feeling” instead of rational

¹¹⁵ Elisabeth Tooker, *Native North American Spirituality of the Eastern Woodlands*, (Mahwah: New Jersey Paulist Press 1979), xi

¹¹⁶ Kaesemans, *Moravians at Shecomeco*, 8.

¹¹⁷ Jørgen Helge Bøytler, *Ecclesiology and culture in the Moravian Church*. (PhD Dissertation, University of Aarhus 2009), 106.

thinking.¹¹⁸ This gave rise to the notion in certain circles of preachers (the English and Reformed Dutch Churches) that the Moravians possessed “More Hearts than brains.”¹¹⁹ This “religion of the heart” as Zinzendorf called it, was fixated on “Agape” or the highest rituals of charity and a love of God.¹²⁰ That love of God also was shown through the practice of “Love feasts” to celebrate the life and love of Jesus, expressed in terms of communal Native feasting.¹²¹

This Native expression included a more holistic depiction of God on one’s own terms by co-opting the pre-existing Mohican spiritual beliefs. This included invoking of the “Supreme Manitou” spirit that dwells in the heavens that goes by the name “Waun-theet mon-nit-toow” as well as a version of the devil, “Mton-toow”, over which there was much preaching by the Moravians of being led astray.¹²² However, the most salient points of local Mohican belief and the Moravian desire to find commonalities was the Moravian fixation of the sacrifices of Jesus Christ and the Mohicans’ conception of a lesser Manitou, in the form of a Great Spirit Bear, who would willingly give their life essence to sustain hunters honoring his sacrifice if properly offered respect in their prayers and rituals.¹²³ This coincided with the focus of Moravian theology on the agony of Jesus Christ’s wounds sustained during the crucifixion. They believed that the blood emanating from each of the injuries was the price of salvation for his believers.

¹¹⁸ Gollin, *Moravians in Two Worlds*, 9-10.

¹¹⁹ Gollin, *Moravians in Two Worlds*, 12.

¹²⁰ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 119.

¹²¹ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 117-119.

¹²² Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 96, 117-119.

¹²³ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 97.

The nature of “Great Spirit” was a conscious tactic of Moravian strategy in the New World, as Zinzendorf assured the Delawares of the Susquehanna river that “He was specially and intimately acquainted with the Great Spirit, and asked them to finally permit me and the Brethren simply to sojourn in their towns, as friends, and without suspicion, until such time as we would have mutually learned each others peculiarities.”

¹²⁴ It is important to note that the most successful Christian conversion efforts -- regardless of denomination -- relied on syncretism between Christian belief and the beliefs and practices of indigenous communities. The success of the Moravian’s conversion methods would seem to the British observer too much like the success of their colonial adversaries, the Jesuit order and the conversion of Native Americans in French Quebec. Zinzendorf commented on their similarities: “We did not take the Jesuit or the Franciscan missions as an example, but when we saw that people preached the Gospel in our own German language, and that the heathen were willing to accept it, then we thought: if our equals can do this, we can do it ourselves.”¹²⁵ The Moravians were historically as Protestant as the Anglican Church, having descended from Jan Hus and fighting the Catholic Church for 250 years; however Moravian “sentimentalism” and ecumenicalism would seem “foreign” to the Reformed Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Anglicans around them. Their non-violence, coupled with their equal regard for the Jesuits, would call their Colonial loyalties into question.

¹²⁴ Merritt, *At the Crossroads*, 71.

¹²⁵ Kasemans, *Moravians at Shecomeco*, 46.

CHAPTER 3

The Unraveling of Shekomeko

The Moravian presence at Shekomeko upset surrounding farmers and colonial government . From the beginning the Moravian Missionary presence at Shekomeko appears to have challenged the conventions of English spiritual and racial guidelines. Complaints were brought to the established Authority, the locals concerned that the Moravians were encouraging racial mixing and promoting the “papist beliefs”¹²⁶ of their sworn enemy, the French. Their holistic and ecumenical approach to indigenizing and inculturating Christianity was frightfully similar (to the British observer at least) to the Jesuit orders of Canada. In addition to what is mentioned above, it was also the fact that the Moravians habitation with the Mohicans and the fact that they were also “Continental” made it easier to believe they were secretly Papists.

The Jesuits were banned in the British Colonies because they were explicitly the soldiers of Rome, sent to defeat insurgent, expansive Protestantism. Their conversion of Natives that would serve as auxiliaries for the French Army (due to the population differences between the British and the French, Natives made up the bulk of French forces by the eve of the French and Indian war. The Moravians existed as Europeans outside the norms of British society; living and praying in bark Churches with the Indians, which was seen as undermining the entirety of the English societal norms. The Moravian Missionary experiment at Shekomeko would face even greater hardships with

¹²⁶ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 205.

the start of the War of Austrian Succession (1744-1748), known to the English in the colonies as the War of Jenkin's Ear and later as King George's War. Beginning with the invasion of the Moravian homeland by Prussia in 1740, the war spread to the Americas and began in earnest on June 2, 1744.¹²⁷ Canadian historian Louise Dechêne has referred to this as the "Sixteen Years' War": because what began in 1744 did not end until 1760.

The Moravians had already refused military service in the Spring of 1744 on the grounds of their religious pacifism, which they would have to continually "demonstrate" to the county authorities via their scripture . Since the Moravians already left Georgia because of such pacifist beliefs in 1734, the demonstration did not bode well for the future. The Stockbridge Mohicans answered the call to British arms and were willing to demonstrate their loyalty as citizens of the Crown. The citizenship and allegiances of Shekomeko were much more nebulous. Shekomeko was not aligned with the British, however, not all the inhabitants of Shekomeko took the pacifist route as several unbaptized Shekomeko men went to Stockbridge in 1745, answering their own peoples' summons and wampums of war and left for Massachusetts.¹²⁸ Rumors spread through Dutchess County after the Shekomeko residents failed to appear that hundreds of Indians were congregating at Shekomeko along with stockpiled powder and shot, poised to strike at any moment. The towns of Rhinebeck, New York and Salisbury, Connecticut decided to arm themselves in response. On June 19 1744, a Sheriff led a search party from Rhinebeck to Shekomeko searching for weapons demanding an

¹²⁷ Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 71.

¹²⁸ Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 77.

answer to whether the Mohicans working their corn fields were friend or foe. The search party found only old hunting rifles and that the people in the settlement confirmed that they were “friends.”¹²⁹

The harassment developed in an official capacity when “... a New York constable arrived in Shekomeko bearing a warrant ordering missionaries Büttner, Sensemann, and Shaw to appear before a board of justices the following day [June 20th].”¹³⁰ The long list of complaints and charges include the missionaries’ failure to appear for militia exercises, refusal to swear oaths of loyalty, and the harboring and encouragement of Indian Planning to murder Whites.¹³¹ The Moravian Brothers were marched to a formal trial just North of Poughkeepsie in Filkinstown, presided over by Justice Henry Beekman. The overtones of the trial touched upon the threat of racial mixing and intermarriage between Moravian and Indian, as in the case of Frederick Post and his Mohican wife Rachel. This threat of miscegenation to English civility and the anti-Catholic feelings that simmered against the Moravians, set the jury against the Brothers from the start. Regardless of the overwhelmingly hostile atmosphere of the court, the Brothers were dismissed without any serious punitive measures.

The Moravians had barely returned to Shekomeko for the rest of the Summer of 1744 before they were summoned to appear before the Governor in New York to explain the commotion surrounding the settlement and their relationship with the Mohicans. Despite their previous relationship with Clinton, as well as a written

¹²⁹ Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 72.

¹³⁰ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 205.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

acquittal, Governor Clinton issued a new amendment to British colonial law that would cripple the Moravian's efforts at Shekomeko.¹³² Not wanting to owe a political or moral allegiance, the Moravians never signed to the Act of Naturalization of 1715 when they came to New York, a State considerably more conservative than Pennsylvania. On September 21, 1744 the Act was updated to include a caveat for securing the loyalties of itinerant or "vagrant" preachers, directly targeting Moravians as a result: "an Act for Securing his Majesties Government of New York was signed into law. Proviso 'no Vagrant Preacher, Moravian, or Disguised Papist, shall Preach or Teach Either in Publick or private without First taking the Oath Appointed by this act.'"¹³³ As Wheeler notes, Quakers and other pacifists were exempt from this provision, indicating that the Moravians of Shekomeko were the sole target of this provision,¹³⁴ which now came with threats of fines, imprisonment, and banishment.¹³⁵

In Connecticut, where the Protestant clergy had been watching the growth of the satellite Moravian missions of Wechquadnach and Pachgatgoch, put pressure on the authorities to issue similar degrees in May 1743. Their aim was to provide " 'Relief against the evil and dangerous Designs of Foreigners and Suspected Persons' who were spreading 'false and dangerous doctrines of religion' meant 'to alienate and estrange the minds of the Indians from us [the Protestant ministers].' "¹³⁶

Despite the now resounding order to leave New York, the Moravians did not leave their Mohicans Brothers. Gottlieb Büttner did not leave Shekomeko, for he was stricken

¹³² Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 72.

¹³³ Starna, *From Homeland to New Land*, 175.

¹³⁴ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 206.

¹³⁵ Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 72.

¹³⁶ Starna, *Gideons People*, 14.

with tuberculosis for most of his two years at Shekomeko. Buettner died on February 23, 1745 at 28 years of age, buried at Shekomeko leaving his pregnant wife, grieving followers, and an uncertain future of the Shekomeko Mission.¹³⁷ Before he died, Büttner expressed his concerns about the future of the settlement in late January 1745, writing: “It is reported that they [local officials] are going to take everything away from us; if that is done, all right, then we shall have just as much as our Savior possessed on earth.”¹³⁸ Some two weeks later the congregation in Bethlehem was told that New York’s governor had ordered Büttner, Rauch, and Mack imprisoned.

Life After Shekomeko

After the imprisonment of Rauch, Büttner, and Mack, the opportunities that the Moravians brought forth to their tribe shrunk dramatically. Shabash (Abraham) and Tschoop (Johannes) were forced to make a difficult decision, and considering leaving the land they had fought so hard for. Despite the interdictions, imprisonments, fines, and threats of death, Moravians still lived at Shekomeko, and though they could not preach themselves, they still spread their Word through a loophole in the law: “Not permitted by law to preach or hold services, they turned to their Indian acolytes, in particular Johannes [Tschoop], Isaac, and Jacob, to do their preaching for them” until 1746.¹³⁹ Despite their ingenuity in subverting the law, the War came home to them, with the pillaging of Saratoga by the French on November 28th 1745, with refugees fleeing south past Shekomeko to escape the fighting. This signaled the death knell for the

¹³⁷ Frazier, 73.

¹³⁸ Starna, Gideon’s People, 21.

¹³⁹ Starna, Gideon’s People, 22.

Mohicans at Shekomeko. The attack at Saratoga confirmed the Rhinebeck residents' reason to fear the local Indians. Soon after this attack the local landowners demanded permission from the authorities if they could raze Shekomeko in retribution. The authorities balked and refused their request, but the threat of imminent violence against the Mohican and Moravians forced them to make the preparations to leave in the Spring of 1746.¹⁴⁰ Rauch suggested moving to Bethlehem, but Shabash (Abraham) resisted, as he had struggled his entire life to keep his land. After still not having been paid what he was promised in 1738. Reluctantly, he conceded and left with most of the Baptised Mohicans for the Moravian Mission at Bethlehem. A fraction of its former population remained at Shekomeko and further dwindled as others left for safer locations, like Connecticut, Massachusetts, or Pennsylvania. Unlike the mission in Bethlehem, the Moravian Brothers did not own the land at Shekomeko, if they had, it would have been more difficult to remove them.

Thus, the majority of the Shekomeko village dispersed in early 1746, the people of the village went to different safe havens. Rauch, Tschoop and Shabash and their families went to the Moravian mission settlement in Bethlehem. Tschoop would die and be buried there August 27th, 1746.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Wheeler, 93.

¹⁴¹ Wheeler, 77.



“John Wassamappah Tschoop”

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/8908558/john-wassamapah-tschoop>, April 11, 2019.

Others fled to the already established Moravian mission in Connecticut outside New York jurisdiction. After he was released from prison, after his 2 months sentence, Rauch would visit his apprentice Mack at Pagachawoch (Connecticut). Mack had been sent there earlier in 1744 with his new bride Jeannette/Johannetta Rau, Johannes’s daughter,¹⁴² to assist in running the Mission with the converted Mohicans Rachel and Friedrich Post.

As for Shabash’s hard fought land, “In May 1745, Martinus Hoffman, who a short five years before had kindly directed Rauch to the Indians near Stissing Mountain, “let the Brethren at *Checomeko* know that they should not take anything from their house that is attached or nailed down. He [Hoffman] is one of the partners who are taking over

¹⁴² Starna, Gideon’s People, 8.

the land of the Indians and everything built upon it and pretending it is theirs.”¹⁴³

However, by 1755, Johannes Rau, who housed Rauch and whose daughter married a Moravian had acquired at least a portion of the former Shekomeko land.¹⁴⁴

Eventually it became necessary for the Moravians to abandon Shekomeko for their mission in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. During and after the Revolutionary War, the Moravians and their Native converts would be subject to a colonial frontier massacre by Revolutionary Militia on March 8, 1782 at New Gnadenhutzen Ohio where 96 Christian Indians and Moravians were scalped to death.¹⁴⁵ This was despite their Mohican brothers from Stockbridge fighting on the Militias side. After the American War of Independence, the American colonists would coerce even more tracts of Mohican land,¹⁴⁶ The Stockbridge Mohicans’ land had been sold and they were forced to move to Oneida Haudenosaunee territory by the late 1780s, where they founded New Stockbridge, and were joined by the Munsee Brothertown Indians in 1802.¹⁴⁷ Essentially, the Stockbridge Mohicans were in all regards British citizens, in that they were Christians, served in the Militia, and had access to a court of law (except when it came to selling their land).¹⁴⁸ While this proved initially beneficial to preserving Mohican land independence during British rule after the Revolutionary War, there was no stopping the new Government in its attempts to coerce land from the Mohicans

¹⁴³ Starna, *Gideon's People*, 22-23.

¹⁴⁴ Johannes Rau, who by 1755 had acquired the title to the land on which Shekomeko had been located (uah, *Br. Christian Seidel's Diarium v. seiner Reise u. Arbeit nach u. in Pachgatgoch*, r.15.h.i.b.5.16, 13 May 1755); *Gideons People*, 643.

¹⁴⁵ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 237, 316.

¹⁴⁶ Silverman, *Red Brethren*, 73.

¹⁴⁷ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 316. See Angela Calcaterra's work, *Literary Indians*, for more on the matter.

¹⁴⁸ Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 87.

In 1811, the Indian Affairs Act was a driving force in emptying the East Coast of the last of its Native Americans. Starting in 1818 the United States Government bought more and more of the Oneida tracts of land and the Native Americans of New Stockbridge were “removed to Shawano County, Wisconsin, where they formed the federally recognized Stockbridge-Munsee Community, with the Lenape people--and to this day have a 22,000-acre reservation.¹⁴⁹

Commemoration

After the disbanding of Shekomeko, it is important to note how it is remembered historically. Shekomeko reappears in several epochs that reflect the historiography of both the authors and the period, not just in writing, but in several art forms as well. In the mid 18th century the personal response to Shekomeko was seen in several paintings Zinzendorf commissioned of its peoples. The next period came over one hundred years after Shekomeko was disbanded, in the mid-nineteenth century. At this time both American and Moravians historians started to build memorials to acknowledge their colonial roots, contributing to O’Brien’s Firsting Argument. In the 20th century memorial signs were constructed by the New York State Education Department. The most recent commemoration is in the digitization and revival of Native American history by both historians and American Indigenous people.

In the 18th century after Shekomeko ended, the Moravians immortalized their American Missions in their own way. Zinzendorf was back in Saxony when he heard

¹⁴⁹ Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 3.

news that Tschoop (Johannes), the First Mohican to be baptized at Shekomeko, had died. Having known Tschoop on a personal level, he was greatly moved by his passing. He commissioned Johann Valentin Haidt (1700-1780), a Polish-born Moravian convert to paint *Erstlingsbild* or *First Fruits*. The reason why Rauch looked for Shekomeko in the first place was because the Count had instructed his missionaries to look for *Erstlinge*, for the "First Fruits" in whose hearts the Holy Spirit awakened a desire for Christ."¹⁵⁰ The painting was to commemorate the "harvest" of the fruits of conversion throughout the centuries and the world. Tschoop is given a special place of respect: for being both an erudite preacher and a personal friend Zinzendorf, was painted at the left hand of Jesus Christ. In addition to Tschoop, Zinzendorf incorporated eighteen names of several other such converts that had died into a hymn. The painting would hang in Herrenhut for the next three hundred years.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Kaesemans, *Moravians at Shecomeco*, 15.

¹⁵¹ "Haidt's Painting of the First Fruits, 1747" in *This Month in Moravian History*, No.17 March 2007. Moravian Archives, Bethlehem: Pennsylvania. moravianchurcharchives.org



Johann Valentin Hadit, *Erstlingsbild*. 1747. In *This Month in Moravian History*, No.17 March 2007. Moravian Archives, Bethlehem: Pennsylvania. Moravianchurcharchives.org

While the original *Erstlingsbild* was a prototype, a later version painted from around 1755-60 shows twenty five additional recent converts from around the globe and an even more bountiful harvest of converts of all racial and ethnic backgrounds surrounding Christ. Prominent among these was Rebecca Prothen, a former enslaved woman from the Danish Caribbean, who served as a Moravian missionary in West Africa along with her husband, Christian.¹⁵² Those idealized deceased surround Christ in heaven on his throne in adoration. The painting is currently held at the Moravian

¹⁵² See Jon S. Sensbach *Rebecca's Revival*.

Archives in Bethlehem (and was most recently used on the cover of Rachel Wheeler's "To Live Upon Hope").



Johann Valentin Hadit, *Erstlingsbild*. 1755-60 Moravian Archives, Bethlehem: Pennsylvania.

Moravianchurcharchives.org

Both of these pieces are deeply personal as Zinzendorf was familiar with many of the converts featured in the painting, but Tschoop had made a special impression on him. In the second painting, Tschoop can be seen unobstructed on Christ's left, hand

over his heart, the source of Moravian dogma. The second *Erstlingsbild* shows that even 10 years after Tschoop's death, he still was a revered figure in inner Moravian circles.

It is also worth mentioning that Zinzendorf had another Hadit painting commissioned of himself in the New World, with many of the First Fruits standing in adoration. The rays emanating from the throne of God can be seen shining directly to Zinzendorf's heart, symbolizing and confirming from where his faith emanated. If art depicts true desires, then this painting represented what Zinzendorf wanted out of the *Sifting Time*: to establish missions that expand the Moravian ideal, and the desire to become the title of his painting: a teacher of peoples.



1747 John Valentine Haidt (1700-1780). Zinzendorf as the *Teacher of the Peoples*. Moravian Unity Archives, Herrnhut, Germany.

On Oct 5th, 1859, the Moravian Historical Society commemorated an Obelisk at the center of a quiet three way intersection near the Shekomeko site near Pine Plains New York, dedicated as a memorial to Rauch, Büttner, and two baptized Mohicans, Lazarus and Daniel. The monument harkens back to and invokes a shared sense of history and Moravian accomplishment. Though it is built at Shekomeko, its intention was more of a testament to the Moravians rather than to the Mohicans that lived there. The obelisk is not on the site of the village but is up the road. Presently it is hardly legible, weather worn, and overgrown with lichen.



During this same time period other Moravian monuments to commemorate Moravian missionaries were built at Wechquadnach, near Sharon, Connecticut.

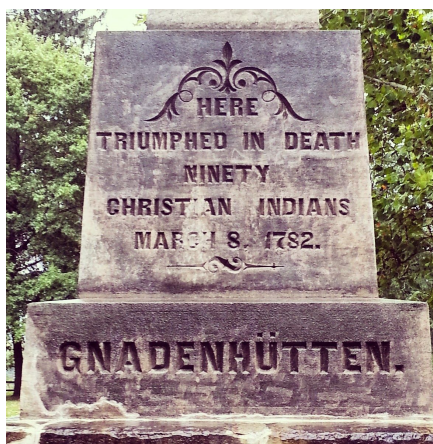
“The Sharon Monument”

<https://hiddeninplainsightblog.com/2014/02/12/>

hidden-nearby-sharons-moravian-monument/



A Moravian Obelisk that specifically references Native Americans was also built at Gnadenhutten Ohio, on which the epitaph reads "Here triumphed in death ninety Christian Indians, March 8, 1782." Dwarfing the Shekomeko Obelisk at nearly 40 feet, the Obelisk was commemorated on June 5, 1872, as a memorial of the massacre there.



“Obelisk memorial erected on the 100th anniversary of the massacre” Taken from a collected history of the Gnadenhutzen Massacre, compiled by the Gnadenhutzen Monument and Cemetery Association, founded on October 7th, 1843 <http://historyinstone.blogspot.com> October, 6th. 2014.

The tone of the historic writing commemorating the monuments is much like Hunttings: incredibly self-aggrandizing of the Moravians and dismissive of the Mohicans:

At a time when almost the last desperate struggle for sovereignty was being maintained by the aboriginal possessors of the soil against the aggressive Anglo-Saxon, his sacred calling was unable to secure him against the opprobrium of the world. The sympathies of his fellow-men were estranged from the cause of Christian philanthropy in which he toiled. His designs were misapprehended, his actions misconstrued, and he himself was reviled for casting his lot with a hated race, around which romance had not yet thrown a halo of glory, that might have shed a world-renowned lustre on his own humble efforts.¹⁵³

The Moravian monuments were characteristic of their time, i.e. Obelisks memorialising the idealized version of the past. However, other non-Moravian monuments were commemorated for different reasons. The Shekomeko monument’s style and cultural implications are similar to the Blackstone monument in Rhode Island commemorating the first White Settler in Rhode island, founder of Boston, and Anglican Clergymen, William Blackstone.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Reichel William Cornelius, *A memorial of the dedication of monuments erected by the Moravian Historical Society, to mark the sites of ancient missionary stations in New York and Connecticut* (Moravian Historical Society: 1860 University of California Libraries 2006), 6.

¹⁵⁴ O’Brien, *Firsting and Lastings*, 56



“William Blackstone Monument” Rhode Island Commerce Corporation,

<https://www.visitrhodeisland.com/listing/william-blackstone-monument/1320/> April 24, 2019

The building of commemorative monuments often using public or church aided money in the mid-nineteenth century was a revisiting of ancestral roots that awakened a desire to connect to this new land, a history where the Natives bequeathed their land to their “rightful” inheritors and disappeared without a trace.¹⁵⁵ The efforts of the monuments were rooted in an erasure of a Native past, as O’Brien notes, the “firsting” of a settler colonial tradition, naturalizing a Euro-American presence into previously Native space and reinforcing the erasure and finality of Native demise. For the Northeast, this experience was idealized, quantified, and effectively spread and maintained through popular works of fiction, such as James Fenimore Cooper’s 1826

¹⁵⁵ O’Brien, *Firsting and Lastings*, xi.

novel, *The Last of the Mohicans*, which paved over history such as the settlement of Shekomeko and its legacy, with a literal “lasting” of the Mohicans. The story of the meeting between the Moravians and Mohicans could be a story of mutual preservation and survival.

Despite the “Firsting and Lasting” monuments there are exceptions, such as the Memorial to the Stockbridge Mohicans in Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx. The memorial was erected in 1906 by the Daughters of the American Revolution to commemorate the Patriot loss in battle of King's Field on August 31, 1778. The Stockbridge Mohican's contingent suffered heavy losses along with the rest of the Army, and they were all buried in a mass grave together.¹⁵⁶

The next portion of historic remembrance occurred in the first half of the 20th century: blue and yellow historic site signs were built as part of a public works program to give precedence to New York State history in a time of economic upheaval and the Great Depression. Such roadside markers are a familiar sight along the backroads of Dutchess county, and across the State.

Down the hill from the Shekomeko monument, in the valley where the actual village used to lie, is a 1940 State Education Department sign that bears no mention of Shekomeko, only the existence of the Bark Church and its connection to the local area.

¹⁵⁶ Starna, *From Homeland to New land*, 198.

Kim Dramer, “Celebrating July 4th in NYC: Remembering the Stockbridge Indian Massacre in Van Cortlandt Park” 07/02/2015



In terms of giving more locality to history, there are some discrepancies when remembering Shekomeko, as seen in this 1935 sign:



Bill Jeffway, *Indian Burial Ground.* April 13, 2016 <https://newyorkhistoryblog.org>

This sign is in the wrong location, as Shekomeko was “15 miles to the southeast” from the actual burial ground of Shekomeko.¹⁵⁷ In addition to the graveyard being nowhere near Shekomeko, there is over a 100 year gap between expulsion of the Moravians from Shekomeko in 1746 and the “Last Burial of Chief Crow” in the 1850s. If any Mohicans remained at Shekomeko that had not gone to Connecticut, Bethlehem, or Stockbridge, they would have been removed with the Indian Affairs Act of 1811. This sign denoting the actual Shekomeko graveyard is unlikely to be correct. The further mention of Chief Crow seems speculative possibly from a later date rather than accurate history. These signs do however recognize and give locality to Shekomeko, commemorating its existence despite the signs’ imperfections.

This last section commemorating Shekomeko coincides with the 21st century digitalization of history, and the revitalization of Native study and agency. The premier example of the reconsolidation and focus on Native Revival is the Stockbridge Munsee Website: <https://www.mohican.com/>. The Website memorialize places like Shekomeko, but not in physical space like the other monuments.

In terms of physical representation for the 21st century, consider the Museum of Natural History diorama from 1919 which depicts a meeting between Peter Stuyvesant and a Lenape delegation in New York City. This exhibit has been change recently to reflect a “reconsideration of this scene.”

¹⁵⁷ Bill Jeffway, “The Mystery of Dutchess County’s Chief Crow” April 13, 2016, *The New York History Blog* <https://newyorkhistoryblog.org>



<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/20/arts/design/natural-history-museum-diorama.html>

Critics long accused such dioramas of depicting “cultural hierarchy, not a cultural exchange.”¹⁵⁸ Instead of simply removing this diorama, the Museum has added additional text asking the viewer to reconsider the exhibit in the historical context in which it was made.

Conclusion

The Moravian Mission at Shekomeko only existed for a short time in the Muhhekunnutuk (Hudson) Valley, adapting to the changing colonial world. It arose and survived, despite harsh conditions, as a space with a shared vision of tolerance and brotherhood between Native Americans and European missionaries. Shekomeko was a

¹⁵⁸ Fota, Ana, “What’s Wrong With This Diorama? You Can Read All About It” New York Times. Website. March 20, 2019

Mohican village first, a Moravian Mission village second, and Shekomeko's history is inherently tied to the relationship of Mohicans to their land, and their attempt to survive on their own terms with the help of the Moravians. In comparison to other eighteenth century Protestant missionaries in America at the time, the Moravians differed in the manner in which they connected with their converts: they learned Native American languages, they lived in the same quarters, referred to the Mohicans as brother and sister, intermarried among them, and were buried in the same graveyards. Unlike the Puritan British Stockbridge Mission, which no doubt was an extremely important site of Mohican history, Shekomeko was a place that existed, at least for a while, outside of the British sphere of influence and conventions. Moravians valued the ethos of community, and Shekomeko was an example of that ethos.

Shekomeko also affected subsequent New York Colonial laws after 1745. The Moravian missionaries did not want to attract attention to their efforts at Shekomeko because of their previous troubles with the British in Georgia. However, their mission proved to be a threat to Anglo-American colonial authorities, so that laws were passed regarding missionaries and religion as a whole and as a result affected the entirety of what would become New York State. The Act of Vagrant Preachers specifically prevented the Moravians from preaching at Shekomeko, thus crippling the Mission and bringing the village to its end.¹⁵⁹ The repercussions of this meant that all missionaries in New York Colony had to sign an oath of allegiance to the British King.

¹⁵⁹ Starna, *From Homeland to New Land*, 175.

Shekomeko was not a remote Mission village in the eighteenth century; it was part of a cosmopolitan transatlantic crossroads. Shekomeko both influenced a renowned Christian European leader, Count Zinzendorf, and also presented a threat to British Atlantic racial order. It proved in a small way to reflect greater world events, including the sixteen years of conflict that took place between British and French settler colonists (in addition too sovereign Indigenous peoples, the enslaved and free people of African descent, and others) in North America. Shekomeko was an outlier that threatened the British racial and colonial order because Moravian pacifism and the refusal to fight for any king. This combined with Moravian theological beliefs of divine racial harmony in regards to non-European converts like the Mohicans, alienated the missionaries from local British colonial authorities and their Anglo-American neighbors who relied on racial distinctions to justify the dispossession and enslavement of Native individuals as well as Africans. King George's War (1744-1748) heightened the tensions between the Mohicans and Moravians and their neighbors, so that those in the Shekomeko community were forced to leave.

Zinzendorf, the leader of the Moravians and a figure who remains central to the Moravians to this day, visited Shekomeko. Shekomeko, by virtue of his visit, clearly was important to the wider Moravian community in the eighteenth century, a point reinforced in the depiction by Tschoop in the painting *Erstlinge*. All these archival fragments explain why the Moravian Historical Society returned a century after the village's removal to erect a monument on land near the village.

Shekomeko is also mentioned in other other various monuments, despite not capturing the full scope of the site or the Mohicans that lived there. Most importantly, though the Mohican-Munsee website claims heritage to Stockbridge, its very existence is part of a heritage to their fellow Mohicans at Shekomeko. The Mohicans of Stockbridge despite converting to Christianity, fighting for the King, and then the Colonists who would form the next Government, did everything expected of them--and still land was still taken away from them!

When I began this project, I did not understand the full scope of Indian removal in its nineteenth century context --more of the southeastern tradition and a vagueness regarding this process elsewhere. Even after the removal from Shekomeko, attacks against Moravians and Indians continued, unabated. Through my research, I learned about the massacre at Gnadenhütten in 1782, in Ohio Territory, where the Anglo-American colonial militia scalped to death 96 men, women, and children as revenge for the destruction of a settler colonial village by Indians who weren't from this community or Christian. Six years before this violent episode, in 1778, Mohicans from Stockbridge were fighting in the Continental Army at White Plains, on the same side as the Militia that massacred their people at Gnadenhütten. In addition, further reading about the Byzantine reality of land laws and land claims and how Mohicans were British subjects under the law *except* in how they bought and sold land was a relevant distinction to learn.

In my initial readings for this project I put Moravians on a pedestal and thought "these were outsiders" and "they don't have a colonial agenda," compared to the English

and Dutch. While the Moravians did not have a government backing their efforts, they had an agenda, insofar as they had a Mission, whose purpose was to convert souls. Converting Native Americans to Christianity was the Moravian's reason for travelling over the ocean during their Sifting Time. For the record, the Mohicans of Stockbridge did "everything right" from a settler colonial perspective --they converted to Christianity, they conformed to English Cultural standards of dress, taking up permanent farming, they fought alongside both British and Continental Armies; the winning side in each circumstance - and yet they suffered the same fate as Shekomeko. By 1818, they were also removed and forced to relocate to Western New York, then Wisconsin where many of the Stockbridge band remain today on their reservation . This research shaped the local history I wanted to explore and the conclusions I came to. While much of Native American history has been left out of school books, there is a vast amount that can still be learned, and the monuments are there to remind us of that.

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Maps and Visual Aids

*All uncited pictures are my own.

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