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TOM QUICK A Pure and Simple Place

There was, of course, a time before the infection overtook Tom Quick.

That much is clear from the few historical records that do remain, says Laurie Streleicki, curator of the Pike County, Pennsylvania, Historical Society. According to a history published in 1894, the Quick family was of hardy Dutch settler stock and had immigrated in 1689 to New York's Ulster County. Forty-four years later, in 1733, Tom Quick Sr. was among the first white men to cross the Delaware River looking for land and opportunity in the wild and rugged green mountains of Pennsylvania.



Quick Senior's Log Cabin

He settled along what later became known as the Vandermark Creek, a muscular, hemlock-tinted stream that still tumbles down over mossy rocks from the Pocono Plateau, cutting through what were then lush forests of chestnut and hemlock and clusters of rhododendron before spilling into the river. Under the laws of the colonial government of Pennsylvania — it was the only colony under the jurisdiction of a single proprietor, beginning with William Penn and passing through his descendants — all a pilgrim really needed to do to claim vast tracks of land was to clear and work 10 acres of it. By all accounts, Quick Senior set right in to work, carving out a small farm and building a mill by the creek bank, planting as he went the seeds of what would later become the village of Milford. As the 1851 book "The Original Adventures of Tom Quick, The Indian Slayer," recounted:

"As soon as Quick had erected a temporary log cabin, he commenced a war of extermination upon the old forests which covered his domain, and in a short time the air was perfumed with the smoke of the fallow fire, and nothing remained on many a goodly acre, except the blackened and charred stumps of the pine, oak, hemlock and their giant compeers. Luxuriant fields of wheat and maize, and rye succeeded, in due time; the log barn of the pioneer was filled to its utmost capacity with the fruits of his industry."

Though the author's prose may have been florid, his facts, historians say, were basically accurate.

At that time, the land that Quick had claimed was indisputably Indian Country. Over the years,

various nations had crossed through the region, the Shawnee, the Seneca, bands of Tuscarora, and according to some scholars, the Lakota may even have wandered through on their circuitous route from the American South to the northern Great Plains. But the heartland of the Munsees of the Lenne Lenape, a nation linked by culture, law and commerce to the great Iroquois Confederation, stretched from the southern shores of Lake Erie east and north to what is now Canada.



William Penn & Indians

The Lenape were, according to almost all histories of the time, a peaceful and friendly people. For most of the fifty years since William Penn had first appeared to press his claim on the colony, the Lenape and the white men who followed after Penn enjoyed a generally good relationship. Penn had been, by the standards of the time, remarkably enlightened and tolerant, and treated the Indians with respect. Even after his death in 1712, the standards he set were generally followed, certainly by the Moravians, the German settlers who had by then crept as far north as the Lehigh Valley, founding present-day Easton and Bethlehem. Though they made it their business to convert the Lenape to Christianity, their approach was far gentler and less destructive in the short run than the methods used by missionaries elsewhere in the colonies. They were still being stripped of their culture and their religion, but it was happening slowly, almost painlessly.

As a result, while the Lenape, who lived in the ancient forests of northeastern Pennsylvania, may have found Tom Quick Sr.'s ways odd, they saw no reason to fear him, and, by all accounts, gave him no reason to fear them.

In fact, the local Lenape and the Quick family became fast friends. According to local legend, in 1734, when Quick's wife gave birth to a son, Tom Quick Jr., their Lenape neighbors celebrated the event, showering the child with gifts and blessings. Historians say there is little reason to doubt the story.

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