

CLINTON COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY CEMETERY GUIDE

NATIVE AMERICAN GRAVESITES

Native American settlement in what is now Clinton County goes back thousands of years. In that time, countless persons have died. Owing to the difference in culture and the hostility between Native Americans and European settlers, we have very fragmented records of those who resided here, and oftentimes the final resting-places are only discovered when ground is disturbed for other purposes.

The following is a listing of Native American Burial Sites in Clinton County which have become known to the Clinton County Genealogical Society. The graves reported here are those which have been made known to CCGS. There are, undoubtedly, many more of which we have no knowledge, and which might be obtained through other sources, or as yet remain undiscovered. The bracketed numbers before each site indicates the Schadt identification number for each site.

[062] There were several Native American graves in the hillside along Big Plum Run Road in Dunnstable Township, near property owned by Jean Fisher, not far from the Weise homestead.

[063] Several Native American skeletons were discovered in the area of Liberty, Dunnstable Township, when the canal was opened, about 1833.

[113] A grave was discovered in 1820 on the McCloskey Farm at Reed Hill, Lock Haven [Woodward Township]. A hunter accidentally discovered it when his dog chased a rabbit into a crude shelf of rocks. Pushing through the ledge, he came into a tomb-like place and found himself staring at a mummified Indian woman in a sitting position. Her clothing although deteriorated was heavily beaded with ornaments which indicated she might have been an important woman of her tribe. Even more unusual was a kettle of European design, some bottles, and buttons with a London stamp, which were found near the woman's remains. Also, a large Indian burial mound once stood on Water Street.

Meginness writes of the Reed's Hill site as follows:

"There were a number of graves also located on what is known as Reed's Hill, or the picnic grounds. As early as 1820 one of these graves or tombs was opened. It was accidentally discovered by a hunter whose dog chased a rabbit into a ledge of rocks. An examination showed it to be a shelving rock walled up with rough stones around its outer edge, so as to form a small chamber or tomb. Removing part of the rude wall and peering beneath the rock, the hunter found himself confronted by an Indian woman in a sitting posture, very much resembling a mummy. Her clothing, although falling into shreds, showed that it had been richly decorated with beads and trinkets, which indicated that she had been a woman of some note in her tribe. Near by were a kettle of European make, several bottles, and gilt buttons, the latter bearing the stamp 'London,' which showed that the corpse did not possess great age."

[114] Burials were found opposite the mouth of Bald Eagle Creek in Lock Haven.

[131] A woman and child are buried, one at the feet of the other, on Pine Mountain, Wayne Township, under a gravestone marked with an arrowhead. A Native American from Ohio came to visit this site as late as 1910.

[135] Native American graves were discovered at the site of a Susquehannock village in Pine, Wayne Township, in 1971. The *Lock Haven Express* chronicled the dig in its issues of 5 August 1971 and 3 September 1971. The bones of two children and two adults were located on the site, which was located off Fetters Lane in Wayne Township.

[136] Indian graves were documented near the McElhattan Reservoir in Wayne Township by students from Lock Haven University in the 1960s or 1970s.

[137] About a dozen graves were found in a circle in a field, near the Stech-Simcox Cemetery and in the vicinity of the old Fort Horn, at McElhattan, Wayne Township. This was probably on the site of what had been known as Pattersontown, opposite the mouth of Chatham's Run, and may be connected with the site known as the Old Pioneer Cemetery.

[140] Indian graves are supposed to be scattered about the Great Island, covering Dunnstable and Woodward Townships, which was the scene of many legendary battles. An Indian burial ground for the villages on Great Island and the nearby vicinity was found a little to the west of Dunnstown in a grove of wild plum trees. No one knows how long it had been used but the supposition was that it might have been used for burial for many centuries. A Seneca Indian named William Dowdy came from the New York reservation to visit Dunnstown in 1878. He epitomized the aged Indian coming back to visit the scenes of the past, and after seeing them, folded his blanket in true Indian fashion and left never to return.

Meginness writes of the above, in his Historical Journal, as follows:

"The regular Indian burial ground for the Great Island and neighboring villages was situated a short distance west of the village on the Dunnstown site, and on the east side of Clinton Harbor, in a grove of wild plum trees. Here it is probable that many Indians are buried. How long it was used no one knows. It might have been in use for centuries, and through its portals hundreds of graves may have passed to the 'happy hunting grounds.'"

[141] Graves were discovered on the Isaac Packer farm, located at the intersection of Croak Hollow Road and Farrandsville Road, now the Jim Hanna farm. This area is in the heart of the Monseytown Flats on the western end of the township, where the famed Muncy tribe is said to have had extensive settlements along the river. In May 1872, Isaac Packer found six Indian skeletons in a mound near Ferguson's barn toward Queens Run, along the river bank, while leveling it to improve his farmland. In 1877, while farming on this place, Mr. Packer discovered the skeletons of two Native Americans, one of them with a clay pipe in his mouth.

The *Clinton Democrat* of 18 Oct 1877 reports what happened next:

WHAT TO DO WITH THE INDIANS. – It is a troublesome question, and no one has successfully suggested what use to make of these bothersome and bloody aborigines. Mr. ISAAC A. PACKER of Woodward township has raised a cornstalk sixteen feet high. It was eight feet to the first ear. Perhaps you

can't see what this has to do with "what to do with the Indians?" Just wait awhile, if you please. There was an old Indian burial ground on Mr. P.'s farm in Monseytown. He exhumed the bones therefrom, ground them up, and fertilized the ground on which this corn grew. Therefore, you see, in reply to the inquiry "what are Indians good for?" you have the answer, "good for raising corn!" And the problem is solved of "what to do with the Indians" – grind 'em up to manure corn! Of course, the successful application of this remedy (on which there is no patent) involves the old story of catching the hare before you cook it! But with that Mr. Packer has nothing to do. He is only responsible for telling "what to do with the Indians" to make them useful. He leaves to General Howard the duty of catching the redskins before they are ground up.

Although the modern reader no doubt finds this account appalling and remarkably discriminatory, it reflects the reality of what occurred with this burial ground, and the response of the local press. As such, it is presented verbatim, for the reader's interpretation. Other accounts indicate that Mr. Packer retained the clay pipe.

[151] The grave of a Native American was opened in 1873 at the mouth of Hyner's Run in Chapman Township.

[152] A grave was found in digging the canal lock at Lock Haven.

The Clinton County Times, July 26, 1912, reports:

Last week while some workmen were digging under a large locust tree at Paddys Run, near Renovo, the remains of a skeleton were unearthed and it is thought that they were the bones of an Indian chief. The bones were only a short distance under the ground and being on an elevated spot and under the tree gives reason to suppose that some noted Indian was interred there. The vicinity of North Bend was the headquarters of a large tribe of Indians and it is highly probable that over a century ago a band of Indians conducted the solemn burial rites at that place.

- The Clinton County Times, May 24, 1912, reports:

FOUND SKELETON

Workmen Uncover Bones While Digging Foundation for New Fredericks Building.

Considerable excitement and speculation was occasioned last Friday when workmen engaged in digging the foundation of the new Fredericks building at the corner of Main and Jay streets uncovered the bones of a skeleton in one of the closets. The bones were imbedded in the earth and immediately the local sleuths endeavored to attach the unusual circumstance to some mysterious murder.

The bones were in a good state of preservation, although part of the skull had been destroyed. The entire skeleton was found and the bones tenderly laid aside until the coming of the coroner. As the find was noised abroad it was recalled by some of the older inhabitants that a physician who lived in the building which formerly occupied the site had owned a skeleton which was destroyed in a peculiar manner and it developed that Dr. J. H. Hayes, who at one time had his office in the building had buried the skeleton.

In connection with the finding of the skeleton, an interesting reminiscence of earlier days in Lock Haven was brought to light. Dr. Eldred, a rather eccentric physician, occupied an office across the street in the Klise building and had a barn nearby. His son was a practical joker and with other companions decided to play a joke on a well known colored man who has since passed away. The doctor possessed a skeleton and young Eldred secured this and fastened it to the rafters in the barn immediately over the ladder leading to the haymow.

When the darkey went to get some hay for the horse, the rope was released and Mr. Skeleton fell in a heap on the frightened man. The bones rattled horribly and with a blood-curdling yell, the darkey ran frantically from the barn, thinking surely a ghost was after him. It was a long time before the colored man would venture into the barn again and the incident occasioned a great deal of fun for all but the darkey.

- It is reported that Chief Shinn, for whom Shintown is said to have been named, and who was probably here before 1790, is buried in a spot slightly west of the village, and that his gravesite was covered over when a ravine was filled in during Route 120 reconstruction some years ago.

Clinton County Times, Oct. 18, 1912

Found Skeletons

Considerable excitement was aroused at Renovo last Wednesday, over the discovery of several human skeletons by the workmen who were making the excavations for the Masonic Temple. Two entire skeletons and later two skulls were found about two feet from the surface. There was nothing to show the date or manner of burial. Physicians think the bones had been buried about 200 years ago by their condition. One of the skulls contained a perfect and complete set of teeth. During the building of the P. & E. canal a great many of the workmen died and were buried near the site of the P. & E. station. The great age of the bones seems to prove that they were not the remains of one of these workmen.