

It is easy to think that the history of New Paltz begins with the Huguenots, but our story begins more than 8,000 years ago, long before Hendrik Hudson's journey and generations before the Huguenots settled on the bank of the Wallkill River.

In 1998, Dr. Joseph Diamond, Professor of Archaeology with the State University of New York at New Paltz, established an annual summer field school at Historic Huguenot Street that continues today. Year after year, Dr. Diamond and his students have uncovered thousands of artifacts bearing witness to a rich history that had been previously untold.

Projectile points, clay pottery, mortars, pestles, trade beads, and animal and human remains have all been unearthed. These tangible reminders provide us with the means to develop a sense of place and a deeper respect for those who preceded us.

WHY ARCHAEOLOGY . . . ?

While we know much about what happened during the process of European colonization, we know far less about the people who had lived here for thousands of years before. Archaeology provides us with the only evidence about life in our area prior to European contact. The artifacts uncovered during archaeological investigations provide important clues about the culture and aspirations of the Native People of our region.

WHO WERE THEY . . . ?

It is difficult to define exactly who these people were. The Native People of our region lived in small bands, intermarried and were tied together by their linguistic group and cultural similarities, but they lacked a unifying political structure seen in some other Native Nations. Therefore, we group these people by their language ties and territories.

The native inhabitants of this area have been known by many names. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, small groups of Native Americans occupied the area around what is now New Paltz. The Waoraneks and Warranawankongs are the bands most associated with Ulster County. The Dutch came to call these people collectively the Esopus, which is the term the Native People used to describe the place where they lived.

The Esopus Indians are more broadly defined as members of the Delaware Nation that encompassed most of present-day Delaware, New Jersey, southeastern New York, eastern Pennsylvania, and a small part of southwestern Connecticut. The Delaware Indians are also referred to as the Lenape or Lenni Lenape. Another term, Munsee, refers to the language used in the northern areas occupied by the Delaware Nation. At various times, all of these terms have been used to describe the Native Americans originally from this region.

EUROPEAN CONTACT

Several voyages by explorers led to the first encounters between Europeans and the Native Americans of the Hudson Valley. The diaries kept by crewmen of these voyages record the first interactions between these two very different cultures. For both Europeans and Natives, these encounters were filled with both wonder and terror.

Initial interaction between the Dutch and Huguenot settlers and the Esopus Indians was peaceful and focused on trade, but soon disputes over land boundaries and cultural misunderstandings led to warfare. The two Esopus Wars were short but disastrous for the Esopus. Defeated by the Dutch, ravaged by disease, and vulnerable to attack from neighboring Indian Nations, the Esopus gradually sold their lands and began the long and sad trek westward.

Tracing the history of the Esopus Indians over the next four centuries is difficult because of the number of times they were relocated. Today, significant populations of the Delaware Nation can be found in eastern and western Oklahoma, southern Ontario, and Wisconsin. Individuals with Lenape heritage live in almost every state in the United States.

Historic Huguenot Street exemplifies a cross section of Native American and European interaction. Stratified in the soils of our small village, unearthed and brought to light, is the physical reminder of the contact between these two starkly different, yet equally complex societies. We do not need to dig deep to find our roots intertwined. As we commemorate Hendrik Hudson's voyage and the resulting European settlements in our hills and valleys, let us also remember those who came before.

Susan Stessin-Cohn
Exhibit Curator

Ashley Hurlburt
Curatorial Assistant

May 2009

Before Hudson



8,000 Years of Native American History and Culture

*Based on and inspired by archaeological finds
from Historic Huguenot Street*

We would like to sincerely thank the following individuals without whom
this exhibit would not have been possible:

Mary Abrasley, Katie Bellew, Dr. Joseph Diamond, Karsten Engel,
Richard Heyl de Ortiz, Megan Krietsch, Leslie LeFevre-Stratton,
Anna Mazo, Nina Postupack and the Ulster County Clerk's Office,
P.J. Preuss, Eric Roth, Irene Rizza, Luciano Valdivia,
Kevin Van Kleeck and John Winans



Before Hudson is presented in collaboration with the
Ulster County Clerk's Office and the Senate House, which is operated by
the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.
Supported in part by funds from the Ulster County Clerk's Office, the
DuBois Family Association, the New York Council for the Humanities and
the New York State Education Department's Teacher Center program,



Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this exhibition do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities
Exhibition Introductory Panels printed courtesy of PDQ Printing • New Paltz Plaza • www.pdqbiz.net