

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

Hannah Freeman: An Eighteenth-Century Lenape Living and Working Among Colonial Farmers

Biographies and autobiographies of Native American women of the colonial period are extremely rare. Such accounts provide perspective to, and details about, the ancient cultures of North America which have all but vanished. The brief autobiography provided by Hannah Freeman (ca. March 1731-March 20, 1802), the last identified Lenape in Chester County, Pennsylvania,¹ predates by nearly one-hundred years the earliest Native American life story now known.² Although

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¹ "The Examination of Indian Hannah, alias Hannah Freeman" is dated July 28, 1797, and believed to have been written by Moses Marshall (manuscript No. 1221 at the CCHS). This document was produced by Dr. Marshall from notes taken during an interview with Hannah Freeman. This "edited" version is approximately the same length as his original transcription, but with the events of Hannah's life placed in chronological order.

² See Gretchen M. Bataille and Kathleen M. Sands, *American Indian Women: Telling Their Lives* (Lincoln, 1984), 10; and Rayna Green, "Native American Women," *Signs* 6 (1980), 248-67. The story of Cockacoeske, who ruled the Pamunkey from 1656 until her death in 1686, can be found in Martha W. McCartney, "Cockacoeske, Queen of the Pamunkey: Diplomat and Suzeraine," in Peter H. Wood, Gregory A. Waselkov, and Thomas Hatley, eds., *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast* (Lincoln, 1989), 173-95.

this manuscript account is quite sketchy, it provides a sound basis for reconstructing the life of an eighteenth-century rural, Lenape woman laborer.

Considerable folklore regarding Freeman's life has accrued over the past 150 years. Indeed, the legends concerning her activities have become far more numerous than the events that can be corroborated from the sparse documentary record—her autobiographical statement and two related contemporary documents.³ Many of the stories still told about "Indian Hannah," as she is popularly called, recall actual events in her life, but most of them are probably derived from stereotypes relating to Native Americans in general. Most often these tales reflect the image of a "generic" Indian, ignoring the cultural differences among these many Native American people. In addition, these legends seem to work from the assumption that the Lenape, who were a foraging people, were horticultural, like the Five Nations or the nearby Munsee and Ciconicin. To describe Hannah Freeman's life, then, is to distinguish the Lenape from their Native American contemporaries who led lives in the eastern woodlands area, differing from accounts offered by anthropologists and historians who have insisted upon similarities among virtually all Native American peoples in the mid-Atlantic region. Understanding Hannah Freeman's life, therefore, depends not only on decoding the historical documents, but also in extricating data about the Lenape as distinct from information about their neighbors.

The best sources of information relating to Hannah Freeman are her brief autobiography, as told to Moses Marshall, and an edited version of this narrative dated July 28, 1797.⁴ In that year Marshall served as an overseer for the poor of Chester County. Freeman's

³ Marshall J. Becker, "Legends of Indian Hannah: Squaring the Written Accounts with the Oral Traditions," *Keystone Folklore*, in press. This text includes transcriptions of both the Moses Marshall account of Hannah's "testimony" ("Examination &c of Indian Hannah") and Joseph Barnard's "Kindness Extended" of May 1, 1798, which is the subscription agreement for the upkeep of Hannah Freeman. All of these documents, plus copies of the newspaper accounts which relate largely legendary information, are in the "Hannah Freeman" file at the CCHS.

⁴ See note 1 for details of Hannah's autobiography. Spurious information often mixed into her story is reviewed in Becker, "Legends of Indian Hannah"; and also in the anonymous newspaper account, entitled "Indian Hannah's Birthplace," which appeared in the Sept. 7, 1925, issue of the West Chester *Daily Local News*.

autobiography “was taken in order to determine which township was liable for her support under the poor laws” rather than from any academic interest.⁵ The first version of this account, a direct transcription of Hannah’s “testimony,” is unedited and lacks chronological arrangement, in keeping with texts taken from oral narrative. The version published here (see note 1) is a second document that carries the same date as the first, but edited, thus making it a revised and augmented version. Verification of the sequence of events recounted in these documents and elaboration on the contexts within which Hannah’s life was lived have been the principal goals of this research. This reconstruction of her life derives its general outlines from these accounts.

The Examination of Indian Hannah, alias Hannah Freeman (July 28, 1797)

The Examination of Indian Hannah, alias Hannah Freeman Who saith that She was born in a Cabin on William Webb’s Place in the township of Kennett about the year 1730 or 1731. The Family consisting of her Grandmother Jane Aunts Betty & Nanny. her Father and Mother used to live in their Cabin at Webb’s place in Kennett in the Winter and in the Summer moved to Newlin to Plant Corn— She was born in the Month of March. The Family continued living in Kennett & Newlin alternately for several years after her birth as She had two brothers born there younger than herself. The Country becoming more settled the Indians were not allowed to Plant Corn any longer her father went to Shamokin and never returned. the rest of the Family moved to Centre in Christiana Hundred, New Castle County and lived in a Cabin on Swithin Chandler’s place they continued living in their Cabins sometimes in Kennett and sometimes at Centre till the Indians were killed at Lancaster soon after which, they being afraid, moved over the Delaware to N. Jersey and lived with the Jersey Indians for about Seven Years after which her Granny Jane, Aunts Betty and Nanny her Mother & Self came back and lived in Cabins sometimes at Kennett at Centre at Brinton’s place and at Chester Creek occasionally as best suited. This mode of living

⁵ J. Carroll Hayes to Albert Cook Myers, Aug. 29, 1925, Albert C. Myers File (CCHS).

was continued till the family decreased her Granny died ab[ove] Skuykill her Aunt Betty at Middletown, and her Mother at Centre, her Mother died about the time Tho^s Buffington's first wife died. Soon after her Mothers death which was in the Fall she went to live w^h her Aunt Nanny at Concord & staid with her all winter she then returned to Centre and lived a little while at Swithin Chandler's (may be two months) then went to White Tho^s Chandler's in N. Castle County where she lived about two years worked at Sewing &c and received 3/6 per week wages. from there to Black Tho^s Chandler's where she staid about three Years Sewing &c and rec^d wages or Sheets for her work. She then went again to Swithin Chandler's for a few weeks & rec^d 3/6 per week wages she worked a few weeks in some other places at Gideon Gilpins &c. then went to her Aunt Nanny at Concord but having almost forgot to talk Indian and not liking their manner of living so well as white peoples She came to Kennett & lived at W^m Webbs worked for her board sometimes but got no money except for baskets, besoms &c. She lived at Sam^l Levis three years that is made her home & worked sometime, Rec. for her board no wages, but made baskets &c. Since this time She has been moving about from place to place making baskets &c and staying longest where best used but never was hired or rec^d wages except for Baskets &c but at Centre amongst the Chandlers

Hannah Freeman's life story provides a clear description of an adaptive strategy shared by at least seven of her direct kin (see Fig. 1). The narrative suggests that other Lenape adjusted to the settlers encroaching on their territory by becoming, in some way, part of colonial society. This accommodation, however, was only one of the many ways in which the Lenape responded to expanding colonial settlement.

Hannah Freeman's life also is important because it appears identical to that of unmarried women of European descent. Aside from the period in the 1760s when Native Americans in the Delaware Valley were threatened by anti-Indian mobs, Hannah Freeman's day-to-day life resembled the lives of other rural women who chose not to marry, or who had married men without property or failed farmers. Her association with just such people in the Chester County Poor House at the end of her life suggests the considerable size of this landless population. Hannah Freeman's story, therefore, is not simply a dem-

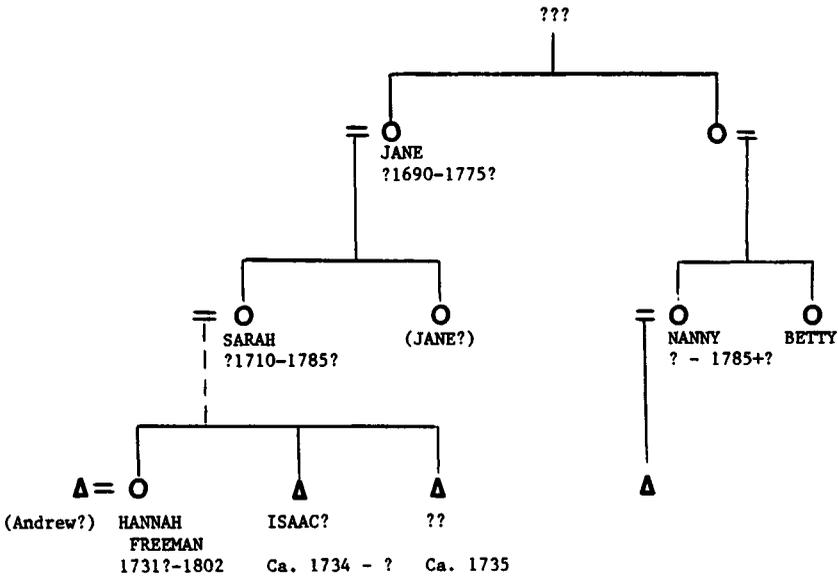


Figure 1
Genealogy of Hannah Freeman

onstration of one aspect of the acculturation process of Native Americans in Pennsylvania. It also is the story of the laboring poor in this area during the second half of the eighteenth century.

Hannah Freeman was born in March 1731 (Old Style), in a cabin on the property of William Webb in Kennett Township, Pennsylvania.⁶ Hannah's mother, Sarah, is noted frequently, but her father appears only once in the three contemporary texts (see note 1). The origin of the family name of Freeman is unknown.⁷ Hannah's parents

⁶ The ambiguity of dates at this period, and particularly in March 1731, derive from several sources having to do with calendrical adjustments and changes in ideas regarding the beginning date for a new year (March 25 or Jan. 1). Rather than deal with the many facets of the problem, I have chosen to append a question mark to the stated date.

⁷ This property is believed to have been near a point on the east side of present-day Pennsylvania Route 52, north of the Baltimore Pike (U.S. Route 1) to the east of Longwood Gardens. Kennett Township abuts the northern, curved boundary of the modern state of

lived in a cabin on Webb's place during the winter but moved to Newlin (Township?) each summer to plant corn, possibly joining with their kin at the summer encampment of one group of Lenape who might have separated from the Brandywine band.⁸

By the time of Hannah Freeman's birth in 1731, her mother and other family members resided among the colonists on a permanent basis, having detached themselves from the local Lenape band, now

Delaware. This adjacent area of Delaware was the Newcastle County of William Penn's colony and the same county name has been retained.

The Webb property where Hannah was born was situated slightly north of the long abandoned Native "town" of Quenomysing, in or near the great bend of the Brandywine River near the modern border with Delaware. Quenomysing is believed to have been the name of a Lenape summer station occupied by the Brandywine band of Lenape in the score of years before 1701, when they relocated their summer encampment to the woods near present Northbrook. They came to Northbrook until about 1720, when they shifted still further upstream. By 1731, the year of Hannah's birth, the Brandywine band was summering near present Glenmoore, some 15 miles north of Kennett.

"Thomas Freeman, an Indian" is listed as one of the three interpreters in a treaty of July and August 1740: *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, 1735-1746* (Harrisburg, 1851), 4:434, 443. A manuscript account of the burial of a Lenape suicide in June of 173(?) notes the presence of "the Swedish Clergyman Tom Freeman, an educated young Indian who had become a classical scholar": as cited by A.R. Dunlap and C.A. Weslager, "Contributions to the Ethno-History of the Delaware Indians on the Brandywine," *Pennsylvania Archaeologist* 30, No. 1 (1960), 18-21. His relationship to Hannah Freeman, as any other information about him, remains unknown.

A reference to "Rich^d ffreeman the Indian . . ." dating from July 26, 1665, is cited in William H. Browne, ed., *Archives of Maryland: 1636-1667* (72 vols., Baltimore, 1885), 3:531, and indicates that he is one of the "friend Indians" who were to be quartered "in the roome of the one of Leiu^t Bogues men & th^t M^f Trueman veiw his Cropp & building & that his Crop be tended as other the Soldiers are tended by the hund^d & his housing built" while he was in the service of the Maryland colony in the wars against the "Cinago Indian" [Seneca] as allies of the Susquehannock. See Barry C. Kent, *Susquehanna's Indians* (Harrisburg, 1984), 46-48. This suggests that Richard Freeman was an acculturated individual who had an "Indian" ethnic identity. His specific cultural affiliation remains unknown.

The name Freeman was often taken by manumitted slaves, as indicated in the example provided by Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York, 1976), 76. In the American colonies of this period, natives from "hostile" cultures often were enslaved, but the family of Hannah Freeman was not likely to have been enslaved at any time. Natives, freed slaves of African descent, and other individuals often took this name to indicate their free status in this context where slaves and bonded servants were common. The given name "Hannah" appears to lack any indication of class or ethnicity, since it was then used by whites and blacks of all classes.

⁸ Marshall J. Becker, "The Lenape Bands Prior to 1740: The Identification of Boundaries and Process of Change Leading to the Formation of the 'Delawares,'" in Herbert C. Kraft, ed., *The Lenape Indian: A Symposium* (South Orange, 1984), 19-32.

commonly identified as the Brandywine band. From Hannah's account, it appears unlikely that her mother was an active member of this band, which in March would have just gathered at their summer station to enjoy the benefits of the spring fish runs.

The bands of Lenape traditionalists still resident in southeastern Pennsylvania were barely able to maintain their old ways. After colonial settlement grew more dense, "the Indians were not allowed to Plant corn any longer" (e.g., not able to come and go as foragers must in order to utilize available resources, as well as to grow some maize at their summer stations). Since the 1660s each of the Lenape bands had been relocating their summer stations, where they did grow some corn, further inland in advance of the spread of colonial farms. By 1730 all the Lenape bands occupied summer stations close to the headwaters of the streams feeding the Delaware River, in areas blocked by the mill dams from the fish runs which the Lenape traditionally had relied on for spring food, and far from the best places along the Delaware where they could collect abundant summer resources. The inland winter hunting grounds continued to provide abundant resources, but their summer encampments along the streams feeding the Delaware River were almost useless since colonial dams and farming activities had altered the environment. By 1735 all of these traditional bands had shifted their summer stations to the Susquehanna drainage. These Lenape, maintaining their foraging traditions, reacted to the spread of colonial farms by withdrawing to open areas where the available resources enabled them to continue their cultural patterns. The principal trading post for these people was at Shamokin (modern Sunbury, PA). Thus, when Hannah's father departed, possibly with the members of the Brandywine band known to have left by 1735, he was said to have gone to "Shamokin."⁹

⁹ This strategy for cultural survival used by most of the Lenape bands is described by Marshall J. Becker in "The Okehocking Band of Lenape: Cultural Continuities and Accommodations in Southeastern Pennsylvania," in Frank W. Porter, III, ed., *Strategies for Survival: American Indians in the Eastern United States* (Westport, 1986), 43-83. Other "modes of adjustment" or "adaptive strategies" also are discussed in that paper. See also Becker, "Lenape Land Sales, Treaties, and Wampum Belts," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (hereafter, *PMHB*) 108 (1984), 351-56; Becker, "A Summary of Lenape Socio-Political Organization and Settlement Pattern at the Time of European Contact: The Evidence for Collecting Bands," *Journal of Middle Atlantic Archaeology* 4 (1988), 79-83; and

Hannah Freeman and her near kin were among the many Lenape who had gravitated toward and made a living among the members of colonial society. This relationship probably began with Hannah's grandmother Jane, if not before, and suggests that her family had long ceased direct interaction with the nearby band of traditional Lenape.¹⁰

Quite probably Hannah's immediate family had been members of the Brandywine band of Lenape, but at the end of the seventeenth century realigned themselves into the orbit of the Quaker colonists in this area. As early as 1640, when the mainstream Lenape bands began to move their summer stations inland away from colonial settlements, individual Lenape appear simply to have remained behind in a working relationship with farmers settled along the frontier. Through time, the shifting frontiers left these Lenape engulfed by colonial society and culture. Although they continued to maintain

Becker, "Lenape Population at the Time of European Contact: Estimating Native Numbers in the Lower Delaware Valley," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 133 (1989), 112-22.

¹⁰ See Becker, "Legends of Indian Hannah," for a listing of her kin. Evidence for at least two Lenape males living, and dying, among the colonists in this specific area of southeastern Pennsylvania appears in "The Journal of Andreas Hesselius 1711-1724," *Delaware History* 2 (1947), 63-118; and also in Nils Jacobsson's *Andreas Hesselii anmärkningar om Amerika 1711-1724* (Uppsala, 1938). Since we have so few clues to the lives of these marginal Lenape who were living among the colonists while many of their kin were still maintaining traditional foraging patterns only a few miles away, note should be made of these accounts. These articles refer only to the burials of these individuals, dating from 1716 and 1722, respectively. Both burials were made in the area which today is Wilmington, Delaware, and both individuals originally may have been members of the Brandywine band of Lenape from which Hannah also may have come. The two descriptions conform to the mortuary pattern known from the contemporary Montgomery Site (ca. 1720-1733) located at the headwaters of the Brandywine upstream from Wilmington. See Marshall J. Becker, "Lenape Archaeology: Archaeological and Ethnohistoric Considerations in the Light of Recent Excavations," *Pennsylvania Archaeologist* 50, No. 4 (1989), 19-30.

One of these burials had been made among the settlers and the other may have been made a bit further inland in a burial area being used by a traditional Lenape band. The general data regarding these burials are important because they demonstrate the proximity and interactions of Lenape and colonists during this period. Some Lenape were resident in the newly settled areas, while others were maintaining traditional foraging patterns which brought them, each summer, to the immediate fringe of this zone which the colonists had managed to clear for farming. The Lenape male buried in 1716 near Wilmington had ceased to live among his people many years before, possibly about the time that Hannah Freeman's family had separated from the band of Lenape living along the Brandywine.

some interaction with their kin, people like Hannah seem to have preferred the relative stability of agrarian life to the rigors and uncertainties of foraging. The group acculturated to the extent that some members might have married into the white colonial society.¹¹ It seems likely that when Hannah's brothers matured, like most other Lenape males born among the colonists, they chose to join their foraging kin on or beyond the frontier. There the male role was more clearly defined and their status more secure than it would have been had they remained as impoverished laborers among the colonists.

The Lenape followed bloodlines according to matrilineal descent, a pattern of social organization in which children became members of the kin group of their mother (and mother's mother, and so forth). Hannah's father, therefore, would not have been born into her mother's kin group, but would have "married in" from another band (band exogamy). Because of the matrilineal descent pattern, Hannah's father's influence over Hannah's life would have been limited, for her affiliation was with her mother's kin.¹²

Prior to the time that Hannah's father decided to relocate "to Shamokin," two younger brothers had been born. The only other male kin of Hannah who are noted in the records are the husband and the son presumably of her Aunt Nanny. The autobiography also offers direct information on four female kin (see Fig. 1). Several other people are mentioned in various secondary sources, but the accuracy of these accounts cannot now be demonstrated. For example, no person by the name of "Andrew" appears in the autobiography, but an anonymous letter to the West Chester *Village Record* in 1824, responding to a published account in that same paper (but now not identifiable), provides this name in association with Hannah. Although for the most part such newspaper accounts may be discounted, this is the only item sufficiently proximate in time and probability of contents to be worth noting. The newspaper account mentioning Andrew, relating its author's own recollections, indicates that forty-

¹¹ Marshall J. Becker, "Pre-Penn Settlements of the Delaware Valley: Lenape, Dutch, and Swedes in the Delaware Valley in the Seventeenth Century," *Pennsylvania Genealogical Magazine* 32 (1982), 227-34.

¹² Marshall J. Becker, "The Moravian Mission in the Forks of Delaware: Reconstructing the Migration and Settlement Patterns of the Jersey Lenape during the Eighteenth Century," *Unitas Fratrum* 21/22 (1987), 83-172.

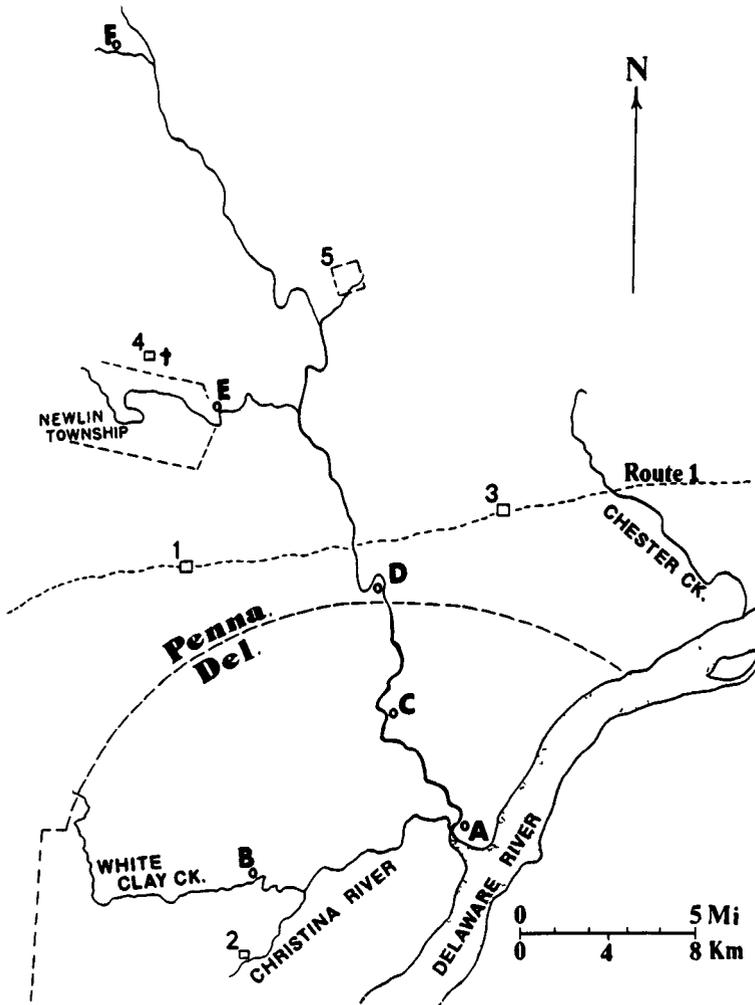
five to fifty years previously, or about 1775-1780, there were some wigwams in Kennett near Webb's tavern and close to the Marlborough line. This would place Webb's tavern near Old Route 1, or possibly on the William Webb property where Hannah was born. Supposedly resident in those wigwams, according to the 1824 account, were "Andrew, Sarah, Nanny, and Hannah, who about this time they left their habitation, and settled in Birmingham, and I think the three first mentioned died while they were located there." This letter also mentions that Hannah lived in a log house near Brandywine on the land of Humphrey Marshall, a fact verified by contemporary accounts. This letter further refers to an "Indian" boy named Isaac, said to have lived in Kennett about 1745, a boy who might have been Hannah's brother.¹³

Hannah's various relocations during the course of her life reflect the lifestyle of colonials who did not own land but who worked as day laborers (as Hannah did when she worked for William Webb) or were provided with food. After her father's departure, the other family members moved to Centre in Christiana Hundred (New Castle County, now Delaware), where they lived in a cabin on Swithin Chandler's property. They alternated residence from Centre to Kennett until 1763, when a number of events far to the west caused her and several of her kin to leave the area in which she had spent all of her young life.

The formal end of the Seven Years War in 1763 led to a new phase in disturbances along the colonial frontiers.¹⁴ The former native allies of both the French and the British were resisting a surge in colonial expansion by attacking settlers along the frontier. This generated widespread hostility to all Native American people. To the north beyond the Lehigh River, the Native Americans who had become Moravian converts, most of whom had come from New Jersey, sought refuge as a group in Philadelphia. The small, peaceful group of Conestoga who were settled near the Susquehanna (near modern Lancaster) was massacred in retaliation for Indian depredations. This threat to even those Native Americans who had become settled,

¹³ "For the Record," *Village Record*, Feb. 11, 1824 (copy on file at the CCHS).

¹⁴ See Chester Hale Sipe, *The Indian Wars of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, 1929); and Randolph C. Downes, *Council Fires on the Upper Ohio* (Pittsburgh, 1940).



Hannah Freeman's World: Brandywine Creek in southern Chester County, Pennsylvania, and northern New Castle County, Delaware. This area was the traditional hunting ground of the Brandywine band of Lenape, whose summer fishing stations after European contact are indicated (A-F). The Swedish Fortress Christina, built in 1638, was located near the earliest known example of these stations, at Hopokehocking (A).

Lenape Summer Stations:

- A. Hopokehocking, ca. 1620-ca. 1640
- B. Unknown, ca. 1640-ca. 1660
- C. Unknown, ca. 1660-ca. 1680
- D. The Big Bend, ca. 1680-ca. 1701
- E. Northbrook, ca. 1701-ca. 1720
- F. Montgomery Site, ca. 1720- 1733

Locations noted:

- 1. Kennett (now Kennett Square)
- 2. Christiana
- 3. Concord (now also Concordville)
- 4. Embreeville (where H. Freeman was buried)
- 5. West Chester

striking so close to home, led Hannah and four of her kin to leave the now questionable security of Chester County and take refuge in New Jersey. Probably her Quaker employers arranged for these Lenape women to live among Quaker kin or compatriots in the security of New Jersey.¹⁵

Hannah's "family" was part of a small group of Lenape who lived in southern New Jersey for seven years, returning about 1770, after the frontier had become more peaceful. What Hannah and her kin did while in New Jersey is not clear. They likely did not live among the Indians there.¹⁶ More probably her skills and willingness to work must have found her a niche, though not a permanent place, among Quakers.

After their return from New Jersey, Hannah, and perhaps other returnees, lived "at Kennett at Centre at Brinton's place and at Chester Creek occasionally as best suited." Hannah's mother is noted as having died at one of these locations. Her grandmother died above Schuylkill, and Aunt Betty died at Middleton, suggesting that these two women did not live with Hannah after 1770. After the death of her mother (about 1785?), Hannah went to live with Aunt Nanny at Concord for the winter. She then returned to Swithin Chandler's farm at Centre and stayed for about two months. The dates which I have assigned to her subsequent moves are in a relative chronology fixed only to the estimated date of her mother's death: 1785.

¹⁵ An outstanding study of the problems of the post-1763 period and anti-Indian activities is deftly presented by Alden Vaughan, "Frontier Banditti and the Indians: The Paxton Boys' Legacy, 1763-1775," *Pennsylvania History* 51 (1984), 1-29. Of considerable importance to the story of Hannah Freeman is Vaughan's observation that the killing of Native Americans also pitted Presbyterians against Quakers, and that New Jersey was one of the few colonies in which such crimes were vigorously prosecuted.

¹⁶ The aboriginal population of southern New Jersey, linguistically related to the Lenape, was culturally quite distinct. The Native Americans who were still there in 1763 were by far the most acculturated members of this tradition and far more similar to Hannah Freeman in their life-style than were her Lenape kin who had relocated to the frontier and beyond where they could continue their foraging life-style. See Marshall J. Becker, "The Forks of Delaware, Pennsylvania during the First Half of the Eighteenth Century: The Migration of Some 'Jerseys' into a Former Shared Resource Area North of Lenape Territory . . .," *Abhandlungen der Völkerkundliche Arbeitsgemeinschaft* (Nortorf, West Germany) No. 55 (1987), 48-61; Becker, "Native Settlements in the Forks of Delaware, Pennsylvania in the 18th Century: Archaeological Implications," *Pennsylvania Archaeologist* 58, No. 1 (1988), 43-60. See also Becker, "The Moravian Mission in the Forks of the Delaware," 110-17.

Hannah moved to Thomas Chandler's farm in New Castle County, where she did sewing and other chores for about two years (ca. 1786-1788?). This Thomas Chandler, called "White" Thomas Chandler, paid her wages of 3s./6d. (three shillings sixpence) per week. She then moved to "Black" Thomas Chandler's, where she did sewing for about three years (ca. 1788-1791?). Here she was paid in wages or in "Sheets" (perhaps woven cloth). Subsequently, she returned to Swithin Chandler's place for a few weeks, receiving "3/6 per week wages" and then continued on to other locations such as Gideon Gilpin's house, staying rather short periods at each.

It seems likely that these relatively brief stays reflect local labor conditions (i.e., the need for short-term help) rather than Hannah's age or possible infirmities. After a series of such working situations, Hannah returned, about 1792 or 1793, "to her Aunt Nanny at Concord but having almost forgot to talk Indian and not liking their manner of living so well as white peoples She came to Kennett" and boarded at William Webb's. While there, she worked for board only, but was paid "for baskets, besoms &c." How long she lived in the Webb household (ca. 1792-1793) is not known, but she subsequently relocated to the household of Samuel Levis, where she spent three years (ca. 1793-1795?). After leaving the Samuel Levis household, she moved "about from place to place making baskets &c and staying longest where best used but never was hired or rec^d wages except for Baskets &c but at Centre amongst the Chandlers."

In her declining years Hannah Freeman rarely received a wage, but she generally worked only for room and board. Only among the Chandler family was she provided with something beyond her basic keep, apparently in the form of baskets which she could then sell or barter. The identification of each of the many farmers for whom she worked together with the locations of their farmsteads would point to the specific area within which Hannah Freeman operated and would provide more precise dates for these various activities.¹⁷ Never-

¹⁷ In later life Hannah was reputed to have lived in a cabin one-half mile southwest of Northbrook (Newlin Township), on the road from Northbrook to Unionville. This would have been about eight miles from the place of her birth, and close to the area where the Brandywine band of Lenape were summering from about 1701 until about 1720. The record in the Chester County Poor House book lists her as a resident of Newlin Township, either

theless, the essential pattern of her economic pursuits is clear, as is the general decline in this activity as she was approaching seventy years of age.

As we now are beginning to understand the many ways used by individual (or groups of) Lenape to adjust to their contacts with members of colonial society, so are we also beginning to learn about independent women workers during this period of history. Studies of Native American women generally depict them only within the context of their traditional societies, with the pattern of behavior of each woman conforming, on the whole, to that expected of the respective social groups.¹⁸ On occasion, we find Native women as independent agents, such as fur traders.¹⁹ They also appear at the other end of the economic spectrum as slaves.²⁰ However, these all are brief accounts that offer little information about the roles of these women.

reflecting her place of birth or perhaps her residence there in the 1790s, when she lived among the people who provided for her in her old age. Her residence there might now be corroborated if some of her many employers, and subsequently her caretakers, could be shown to have lived in that area (see Marshall J. Becker, "Hannah Freeman and Her Friends," typescript manuscript in the "Hannah Freeman" file at the CCHS). At present the specific locations of most of the farms of the many people she worked for remain unknown.

The shift from paying Hannah for labor to providing her with a place to live in which she could do other kinds of work may reflect changes in her ability to do hard labor. As a maker of brooms and baskets, she still could earn a living. The cash value of such items at that time as well as the length of time needed for the task is indicated in the diary of Benjamin Hawley, now in the manuscript collection of the Sol Feinstone Library of the Bishop's Mill Historical Institute in Edgemont, Pennsylvania.

Hawley lived in Chester County (1703-1782) and kept a diary which now offers us an outstanding view of farm life at that time. On Jan. 29, 1771, in his sixty-eighth year, Hawley recorded that "I made a besom" (a broom of twigs), suggesting that most of the day may have been spent at that task. On March 19, 1780, he relates that he spent "most of the after part of y^e day Day making a broom"; and the entry for the following day reads, "finished a broom." Wages at that time for even unskilled labor were in excess of two shillings per day, so a rough estimate of the value of these products can be generated.

¹⁸ Rayna Green, *Native American Women: A Contextual Bibliography* (Bloomington, 1983); and Becker, "The Okehocking Band of Lenape," 75. Mary Maples Dunn, "Women of Light," in Carol Berkin and Mary Beth Norton, eds., *Women in America* (New York, 1989), 114-36, notes the unusual tolerance of the Quakers for unmarried women. This also may have been a factor in Hannah Freeman's success as a worker in this area of the colonies.

¹⁹ James Logan, "James Le Tort's Debts to Indians," vol. XI, p. 4, Logan Papers (Historical Society of Pennsylvania).

²⁰ Evidence for Native Americans held as slaves in Pennsylvania, and elsewhere in the



Figure 2

A female doll in full-length Lenape costume (ca. 1800-1840). This doll and a series of associated miniature artifacts were identified in January 1990 by the author. They appear to be the earliest known examples of Lenape dress. Furthermore, this doll, along with her male companion doll, may represent the earliest known tangible examples of costume from this region. Reproduced by permission from the collections of the Lund University Historical Museum (Sweden). Photograph by Birgitte Ginge.

The data regarding Hannah Freeman suggest that she was a live-in employee. Her ethnic origins do not appear relevant to her employment situation. Thus, it is possible to examine her life both from

northern colonies, is extremely rare. A single example appears in an estate inventory (Joseph Haines and Jacob Kirk, appraisers [1734] "Inventory of the Goods Chattels . . . of Joseph Elgar Deceased," Will No. 509 [CCHS]) which includes the item "Old Indian philis £5: two Old Horses £5." The estate was settled thirteen years later (Mordecai James and Jno. Churchman, witnesses [1747/8] "Settlement of the Estate of Joseph Elgar," manuscript filed with Will No. 509, see above), probably after the children were grown, with appropriate deductions made from the original total for various expenses. Among these deductions appears the note: "and also for the Death of the Indian Woman Philis." Philis may have been a New England Native American child sold into slavery after King Philip's War. A

the viewpoint of her birth as a Lenape who had adjusted to a life-style within colonial society, as well as that of her status as an independent woman in the labor force during the second half of the eighteenth century.

In order to evaluate Hannah's position in rural society, some understanding of a colonial woman's life is useful. Information about the plight of other rural poor, illiterate, and landless women of southeastern Pennsylvania and northern Delaware recently has been recovered by Joan Jensen.²¹ In this agrarian region butter- and cheese-making were among the "industries" that helped to make Philadelphia so vital during this period. Highly productive farms required considerable labor and absorbed a great number of single women workers. Hannah Freeman, however, worked more as a short-term, live-in helper, doing the things that day workers did in urban situations.²²

great number of Native Americans were sold at that time in Massachusetts, which would tally well with the age of "Phillis" in this account. No Native Americans from the lower Delaware Valley are known to have been enslaved at any time.

²¹ Joan M. Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850* (New Haven, 1986). Jensen's study of women in the Philadelphia hinterland discusses the problems of getting records on tenants, inmates, and other landless women, none of whom appear to have been literate. The advantages of such a skill in this context are not certain.

²² The life of many urban working women in the late eighteenth century can be described through data recovered from the diary of Elizabeth Drinker. Elaine Crane, "The World of Elizabeth Drinker," *PMHB* 107 (1983), 3-28, has used this journal to define four categories of female household workers in Philadelphia from 1766 until 1806, an interval coincident with most of Hannah Freeman's working life. Although Drinker lived in a major urban area, her diary is useful for identifying concepts regarding employment opportunities for women at that time, particularly those who lived in the household. The four categories are as follows: bound servants indentured for a stipulated period (in years); self-employed individuals working as live-in maids; short-term live-in help (e.g., wet nurse, help with ill person); day worker (doing sewing, ironing, whitewashing).

As an urban woman of means, Drinker always needed lots of help (five or six people working for her at any one time), both because she ran a large household and because labor was cheap. See *ibid.*, 15; and Sharon V. Salinger, "Send No More Women": Female Servants in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia," *ibid.*, 107 (1983), 30. These servants, often treated like family, were sometimes treated as if they were "owned" (Crane, "The World of Elizabeth Drinker," 18), an ambivalence not unlike that found on slaveholding plantations. In fact, Drinker had several black servants, but color was less significant than class in determining how this mistress viewed her help.

Short-term live-in help are described by Faye E. Dudden in *Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown, 1983), who suggests that the "hired girl" concept, referring to a woman from the community employed for a short term to

The variety of job opportunities in rural Pennsylvania suggests the considerable range of working situations available on farms that directed products to the urban market or to export.

Hannah Freeman's memory of being paid cash, in addition to receiving room and board as a live-in worker, reflects the inflationary years during and after the American Revolution. Significant in identifying Hannah Freeman as a laborer is the fact that in the years after 1770 she received wages of three shillings sixpence per week, in addition to room and board. While toward the low end of the existing wage scale, this pay was similar to that received by live-in maids in Philadelphia over the years from about 1767 until 1795. The rate of payment to her was commensurate with wages paid to women in the rural labor force at that time. Apparently, her Lenape identity did not count against her.²³

That Hannah Freeman, as well as other Native Americans, was not the target of economic discrimination based on ethnic background also is suggested by the act of 1757 passed in New Jersey for the

produce goods (such as cheese or butter), or to help in birth, death, or illness, had changed by 1830, but her data derive from urban contexts. Dudden believes that during the decade from 1820 to 1830 a transition was made to the use of "domestics" (household servants) who lived in as an underclass. The Drinker diary demonstrates that such people were employed long before 1820, and all these categories of household workers (except for the indentured class) lingered in rural areas, and still are with us today.

Guy de Maupassant's *Clochette*, in nineteenth-century France, came once a week to mend the linen (a daily worker). American equivalents could be found in every state into recent memory, and may exist in some variant forms today. Certainly itinerant, live-in female workers survived in Hannah Freeman's own Brandywine Valley at least into the 1890s. Henry S. Canby, born and raised in Wilmington, Delaware, described his home in a semi-autobiographical work: Canby, "Home in the Nineties," in his *The Age of Confidence* (Philadelphia, 1934), 28-38. This home is described as typical of Wilmington's "first families" of the 1890s, but also seems to reflect a style common in the East well into the twentieth century.

²³ Comparative wage data is difficult to determine since most of the comparative information comes from urban Philadelphia. Crane, "The World of Elizabeth Drinker," 16, notes that in Philadelphia an unskilled live-in female servant could earn 2.5 shillings per week in 1766, but that by 1806 the rate was 7.5 shillings (\$1.00 Pennsylvania). A skilled servant was earning 8 to 9 shillings per week in 1790. Billy G. Smith, "The Material Lives of Laboring Philadelphians, 1750-1800," *William and Mary Quarterly* 38 (1981), 163-202, indicates that pay was quite high in Philadelphia and supports Crane's observations regarding rising costs during this half century. While noting that a woman who washed and cooked could earn 2s./6d. per day as a day worker, Smith also points out that costs for room and board quickly consumed these wages.

raising of a regiment of 500 soldiers to fight in the Seven Years War. This act declared that "so many able Bodied Freemen, or well affected Indians shall be raised by this Colony," and that all were to be paid the same bonus and provided the same rights of service. Further revealing of attitudes toward the Native American population at that time are the positive images dominating post-Revolutionary war period portraits (characterizations) of local Native Americans.²⁴

With her Lenape kin long gone from the area and her immediate family deceased or elderly, the prospects for Hannah Freeman's old age seemed to depend on public charity. Care for the poor in Chester County dated back at least to the beginning of the eighteenth century, when two overseers were appointed in each township to provide these services. What constituted legal residence was a problem from the beginning. An act of May 31, 1718, ordered "paupers" to wear a "Badge or Mark" of cloth on the right shoulder with the letter "P" to indicate "pauper" and also letters which would identify their county or city. The difficulty in identifying which township held the responsibility to support such paupers led to the establishment of a county poor house. "Among the papers of our court are filed numerous depositions of paupers, recounting the various places at which they had lived, which were taken to show their legal residence."²⁵ The

²⁴ Bernard Bush, comp., "Laws of the Royal Colony of New Jersey 1746-1760," *New Jersey Archives* (8 vols., Trenton, 1980), 3:455. See also Samuel Neville, *Acts of the General Assembly of the Province of New Jersey* (Paterson, 1761), 2:120-30; and Robert Secor, "The Significance of Pennsylvania's Eighteenth-Century Jest Books," *PMHB* 110 (1986), 268-69.

²⁵ This reference to the Chester County Poor House appears in J.S. Futney and Gilbert Cope, *History of Chester County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1881), 403-6. The development of workhouses or poor houses in both Europe and North America marks not only the shift from rural to urban society, but also the shift from religious to secular support for the indigent: see Emil Frankel, *Poor Relief in Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, 1925). In Belgium, for example, "beguinage" houses were being established in the 1700s, as distinct from the convents and other religious establishments which had served these purposes. There, women seem to have been the principal occupants.

Important sources of information regarding early policies concerning the poor may be found in three documents now in the Chester County Historical Society: "The Outdoor Allowance Book, 1808-1827," "The Director Book, 1799-," and "The Director of the Poor Day Book." See also Moses Coates and David John [Survey map], Chester County Historical Society *Newsletter* 90, No. 1 (1983) 1.

Hannah Freeman's "race" never was a concern in the discussion of her rights to benefits.

Hannah Freeman documents include two versions (see note 1) of the deposition which appears to have been taken for this purpose.

On February 27, 1798, an act was passed to provide for the construction of workhouses and to support the poor of Chester County, with Moses Marshall among the nine commissioners appointed to serve in an organizational capacity. Nearly three years passed before this facility was ready. During that time Hannah Freeman's infirmities were such that she could no longer earn her keep, and her care became a matter of general concern. Recognizing Hannah's problem, various of her friends and neighbors among whom she had lived and worked for nearly seventy years undertook, on May 1, 1798, to draw up a subscription for her welfare. Some people volunteered to house and care for her for periods of one to two weeks, and others contributed cash to defray the costs of her care. Their care was intended to maintain her until the opening of the Chester County Home.²⁶

The six Commissioners of the Poor elected in October 1798 purchased 325 acres of land in Newlin Township for this facility. Presumably, the future residents were expected to work the land to defray the costs of the workhouse. The delay of nearly three years, until November 12, 1800, when the poor from various townships were taken in, suggests that special buildings were erected on the site rather than using only the structures which had stood on the property.

This may reflect the then current concept that people living a "Christian" life (settled, agrarian) were no longer "Indians" who constantly moved. Frank H. Stewart, *Indians of Southern New Jersey* (Woodbury, 1932), 23, notes that "Indians" sometimes were admitted to poor houses in New Jersey.

The growth of cities, and Philadelphia in particular, inevitably led to reduced dependence on family and other social networks to provide for the poor. Widows, even without children, often had no direct source of aid, and prostitution was a common alternative (Billy G. Smith, "Down These Mean Streets: The Lives of Laboring People in Late Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia," paper presented at the Philadelphia Center for Early American Studies, Dec. 14, 1984, pp. 25-26, 31-33, 47). This process had begun in London more than a century before its first glimmerings in the American colonies and led to the Great Poor Law of Elizabeth (1601), which stipulated that able-bodied vagrants could go to the workhouse rather than be executed, sent to the galleys, or simply banished. Even in England very few workhouses were built during the seventeenth century. The first effective one, in Bristol, dates from 1697. Almshouses in the United States evolved much later as agrarian America began to develop large cities.

²⁶ See Becker, "Legends of Indian Hannah"; and Becker, "Hannah and Her Friends," 12-16.

A graveyard, to serve as the last resting place for the workhouse poor, was laid out in 1800 along the boundary line between the Home and Joel Harlan's adjacent property.²⁷

Hannah Freeman entered the new facility upon its inauguration, the "12th day 11th month 1800."²⁸ Her age at the time of admission was given as sixty-nine years, a figure assumed accurate. She was noted as a resident of Newlin Township. Of interest is the absence of any reference in this document to her ethnic identity, and no other Native Americans have been verified as entering this facility.

Away from the people who had recently cared for her and among whom she had lived her entire life, Hannah Freeman's health continued to decline. Her death date, given as the "20th 3rd month 1802," suggests that she might have been among the first persons housed at the Chester County Home to have died in residence. She was not buried among the graves of the traditionalist Lenape from whom she had come, but, rather, on the western part of the Poor House property, in the cemetery area. A recent bronze marker on a large boulder serves as a monument which purports to indicate her last resting place.

Except for her Lenape origins, Hannah Freeman does not appear to have been an unusual person within southeastern Pennsylvania colonial society. A series of chance events make her life story one of considerable importance in the reconstruction of Native American as well as working women's history. Whereas the Lenape often are portrayed as a single cluster of people who were displaced by an agrarian society, in fact, like so many other aboriginal peoples, they developed a series of strategies which enabled them to adjust to

²⁷ See Futhey and Cope, *History of Chester County*, 404. This facility formed the basis for "Embreeville," the County Home for Chester County located near present-day Route 162. A second building inaugurated in 1855 replaced the first and served until 1955. In 1898 a hospital for mental patients was built on the same property as the County Home. The county operated this facility until 1942, when the Commonwealth assumed this charge. The state purchased all of the property, and with the funds the county bought land in nearby Pocopson Township (June 7, 1942), where later the Pocopson Home was built (opened April 20, 1951). This is the lineal descendant of the original Poor House.

²⁸ "Chester County Poorhouse Admissions" (1800-1826), vol. I, p. 3 (CCHS). See also Wilmer Thompson, *Chester County and Its People* (Chicago, 1898), 129. The ninety-three other Chester County poor people listed as early residents of this home and how they had lived prior to the construction of the Poor House remain unstudied.

changes in their social and technological environment. Hannah Freeman and many of her kin appear to have been co-resident with, but socially marginal to colonial society. What happened to the other members of her family remains unknown, and only the circumstances of her declining years generated documents which enable us to reconstruct her life. But that life offers us a glimpse of a rarely seen course which many aboriginal women chose to pursue: that of becoming an independent wage laborer within the context of the rural colonial population.

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