

Thomas Dean and the Delaware Towns

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The journey of Thomas Dean (1) from Deansboro, New York, to the Delaware Towns on White river in central Indiana during the summer of 1817 definitely indicates that Chief Anderson was at that time the principal chief of the Delawares in the White river country, and that his seat of residence at Anderson's Town (now Anderson, Indiana) was the seat of government and principal Delaware Indian town. From other sources we had come to the conclusion that the two most eastern towns on White river had been abandoned prior to the year of 1820. Dean's journal strengthens that conclusion.

By letter dated Paris, N. Y., May 12, 1817, Asabel Curtiss Doolittle and Joseph Stebbins, Superintendents of Indian Affairs, wrote to

"The Honourable Governor Of Indiana Territory and to the Agents of the several Tribes of Indians in said Territory,

Gentlemen :

Having been informed that a certain tribe of Indians residing near White River in your Territory have proposed to grant to the New Stockbridge and Brothertown Indians, who now reside in the Counties of Oneida and Madison in New York State, a certain tract of land upon certain conditions,

We therefore, as Superintendents of the said New Stockbridge and Brotherton Indians, beg leave to represent that they are now about to set out on a journey to that country to accomplish that business, and that they have agreed with Mr. Thomas Dean, an inhabitant of the County of Oneida, to accompany them and to be their agent to negotiate with said Indians, or their agents in your Territory, and as we are personally acquainted with Mr. Dean, we do not hesitate in recommending him as a suitable person for that purpose, and as a gentleman in whom you may place the greatest confidence.

Any assistance which you can afford him in transacting his business will be considered a singular favour and gratefully acknowledged by your humble servants."

Thomas Dean was born in Westchester County, near New York City, in 1783, of sturdy Quaker stock. In 1798 the family moved to Oneida County, N. Y., and founded the town of Deansboro. From his father, formerly a part time misisonary to the Indians from the Society of Friends in New York City, Thomas naturally acquired his sense of obligation to the Indians. In addition to his very active life as a farmer, postmaster, owner and operator of the Friends Cotton and Woolen Manufactory, and as a member of numerous boards of trustees, including Hamilton College, he devoted much time and thought to the welfare of his Indian neighbors, the Oneidas, the Stockbridge, and the Brothertowns. For these groups he eventually acted as attorney and agent. The Brothertown group consisted of remnants from several New England and New York Algonquian tribes,—Mohegan, Mahican, Wappinger,

Pequot, Montauk, Narraganset, and others. A tract of land had been purchased for the Brothertowns in 1774 in Oneida and Madison Counties from the resident Iroquoian Oneida tribe, but due to the anti-American attitude of the Iroquoian Mohawks during the Revolutionary War, possession of these lands was not available until 1788. Ten years later when the Deans settled in Oneida County, the Indians were beginning to feel cramped by the white settlers; and in 1809 the Brothertowns sent word to the Delawares and Miamis in Indiana Territory inquiring their attitude concerning the purchase of a new home on White river. The tribes reached a mutually satisfactory agreement, but before the Brothertowns could migrate subsequent treaties with the whites removed the tract from Indian control, and cost the tribe all it had expended on the deal.

The negotiations of 1817 culminated in an all water journey from central New York to the Delaware Towns in central Indiana. The Delawares, around their own council fire in Anderson Town, refused to negotiate; and it was just as well, for at the treaty of St. Mary's the following year they lost all of the White river lands to the sovereign State of Indiana. But Dean was not through. In 1824 he acquired by treaty and purchase from the Winnebago and Menominee a tract of 240 square miles on the Fox river in Wisconsin for his Brothertowns, which land, due to title disputes was exchanged in 1828 for 23,000 acres on the east shore of Lake Winnebago. The Brothertowns established themselves in this new home in 1833, and along with them came their old neighbors the Oneida and Stockbridge. The three tribes shortly thereafter abandoned their Indian tribal life and became citizens of the State of Wisconsin.

Dean's trip to The Delaware Towns was made overland by foot and horseback from Fort Harrison, beginning August 1, 1817. Some days prior thereto, a boat christened the Brothertown Enterprise docked at Vincennes, 50 days out of Deansboro, N. Y. The boat had been made by Dean himself. The latter part of July 1817, there appeared in the Vincennes Sentinel an article written by Dr. Shuler of that city, summarizing the journey of the good boat Brothertown Enterprise. No copy of this paper for that issue is known to be in existence, but fortunately the article was reprinted in the Western Sun, at Vincennes, July 11, 1826. Quoting Dr. Shuler:

"The extensive inland navigation of the western country is strikingly exemplified by the late arrival at this port (Vincennes, Sunday, July 20, 1817) of the elegant schooner built boat, "Brotherton Enterprise", of six tons burthen, from Deansboro, N. Y. in fifty days. This boat left the Mohawk River (Oneida Creek), on the first of June last, under the command of Thomas Dean, and is navigated by four Indian men, accompanied by two Indian women and an Indian boy, all possessing habits, manners and education indicative of the most complete and refined civilization. [The seven Indians were the chiefs and leading men of the Brothertown tribe: Paul Dick, Jacob Dick, Thomas Isaacs, Charles Isaacs, Rudolphus Fowler, and two cooks, wives of two of the chiefs, Sarah Dick and Betsy Isaacs.]

The object of Capt. Dean and company is to obtain from the Wabash Indians the cession of a tract of land for the Brotherton Indians in consequence of an invitation given by the former. They intend to ascend the Wabash to its source, and by a short portage, to pass over into the Miami of the lake, by which

they calculate to return. The whole route will, they calculate, be performed by the first of September, making (in the short space of three months) a journey of between two and three thousand miles. . . .

From Deansboro they passed through Wood Creek into Oneida Lake, from which they descended the Oswego River into Lake Ontario—Coasting the south side of that lake to Niagara Falls, they carried their boat on wheels from Queenston to Chippawa (a portage of eleven or twelve miles), back to Niagara River which they ascended into Lake Erie, along that lake to the mouth of Cataragus Creek, and up it to a portage of eight and a half miles, over which they passed into Chautauque Lake, and down the Conewongo into the Alleghany. The Alleghany, Ohio and Wabash present a smooth and uninterrupted navigation to the head of the Wabash, a portage of nine miles connects the Wabash with the Miami of the lake, over which Capt. Dean intends to transport his boat, and descend the Miami into Lake Erie. He will coast that lake to Buffalo, N. Y."

The Wabash-Miami portage proved to be too much. After an unsuccessful attempt to get it through to Fort Wayne, the boat was brought back to Fort Harrison, and sold September 4. Dean actually pushed the boat up the Wabash to somewhere near the mouth of the Mississinewa. They were never sure whether or not they saw the Mississinewa. After selling the Brothertown Enterprise the party traveled by foot and horseback to Fort Wayne where they arrived September 18. Dean could not buy a boat there, so went out into the forest, cut down a tree and in two days he and the Brothertowns fashioned a pirogue large enough to carry them all, their baggage and two extra passengers. Leaving Fort Wayne September 24 on the Miami river, during the morning of September 28 they reached Fort Meigs where they met Governor Cass and General McArthur holding a treaty with the Delawares, Shawnee, Wyandotts, Pottawottomis and "some other tribes". At the conclusion of the treaty Dean and his party obtained passage to Detroit on the boat Fire Fly; and from Detroit reached Buffalo on the schooner General Wayne.

The journey to the White River country and return was started August 1, 1817, from Fort Harrison. The boat Brothertown Enterprise was left at the fort under care of Major Chunn. Quoting from the Journal:

"August-1. They told us we could go through in three days if we had horses, it being one hundred miles, so we concluded to take three days provisions and get horses if we could, but it happened that there was not more than one pound of meat put up. We took three guns and an ax, started about 10 AM, and our guide went on with us. The weather was very warm, and we had to go through the prairie about seventy-two miles, which was very hot and uncomfortable. We could get no water to drink until we went about thirteen miles, where there was good water and a family lived. Here they gave us some milk to drink. After we had refreshed ourselves we left two guns and proceeded."

On August 4 the last (third) gun and the ax were left at a Wea village. The journal adds: "but we took a hatchet." This Wea village was probably on Sugar Creek, approximately six miles north of the present Thorntown, in Boone County. (2)

August 6, the sixth day out from Fort Harrison, the party crossed White river, and, quoting from the Journal:

". . . went to the house of William Conner, a French trader, whom I found had gone to Philadelphia. His partner, William Marshall had gone to Muncie,

a town 25 miles up the river. The women could not speak English, but we found they had gone down the river. We went down across the prairie about a mile, crossed the river, and went about four miles to a settlement of the Delaware Indians, carried our packs, and then met them at the lower village. (3) They gave us some bread and milk to eat. We invited them to go to Fort Harrison to the council, but they did not agree to go. We returned, crossed the river, and went to Conner's to get a horse to the upper town (4) but got none. Joe, Paul, and Rudolphus started on foot about half past 5 P.M., the rest concluded to stay, and soon after William Marshall came home. He said we could not get any of the Delawares to go to Fort Harrison, they were all going to Fort Meigs to a treaty there the fifteenth of September, so we concluded to go up in the morning. Marshall would furnish me with a horse to ride. It is about forty or forty five miles from the Weas to the White river, making about 140 miles from Fort Harrison."

The Journal for August 7:

"We took breakfast at Conner's, hired a horse, and proceeded on up to the other town. We reached the settlement about 10 o'clock p.m. [a.m.?], obtained some bread and buttermilk, then went on toward the principal Indian village and met Paul Dick with horse going for us. He said the council must be held at the village where Anderson lived. We went up and met several at his house, was appointed a council on the morrow. We were furnished with supper, which consisted of bread and herb tea. . . . We put up at the house of the principal chief. It was as good as any in the village, and he, a plain, majestic looking man, sixty or sixty-five years old. Paul and Fowler were directed to another house to lodge, and the rest of us lodged at the chief's. I had the most comfortable place. It was some boards or staves put on benches, and bullrushes laid on them, and a small pillow, though it was wet in the shower."

The council took place next morning, August 8. The journal for that day is as follows:

"We got together in the morning and were served with some boiled corn and venison for breakfast. After breakfast the people began to come in, and we were soon served with another dish of squashes, made sweet with sugar, and some bread, which we partook of. After the chiefs and councilmen and principal men of the nation came in they informed us that they were ready to hear what we had to say. I spoke to them, . . . and the reply was made by Anderson (Keklawhenund) the principal chief."

The Delawares refused to join the council at Fort Harrison, and the negotiations came to an abrupt end. Continuing the journal for that day:

"There were twenty or thirty Indians who attended the council, which lasted about four hours. We went to look for the horse that I rode, but did not see it. We mentioned that we wanted some provisions to take on our [return] journey, and we were informed that they would be brought in the morning, so we put up for the night, myself, T. Isaac, T. Dick at the chief's, P. Dick and R. Fowler at another house."

Journal for August 9:

"Our provisions soon came in. They were hoecakes and Indian bread. We received two or three pairs of moccasins. Thomas Isaac found the horse and after breakfast we took our leave, went down to the Nanticoke village (Nancytown), obtained some buttermilk, Indian wampum, and butter from a woman by the name of Nancy, and then started for William Conner's. In the afternoon it rained very hard and we were very wet. We came down to Conner's about 5 o'clock and prepared to start in the morning for Fort Harrison."

May, 1801, the Moravian Missionaries came into the Delaware country on White river to set up their mission. Coming in from the southeast, up the White Water river, and across country from where the city of Brookville now stands, they entered first the eastern most of the Delaware towns: Wapicomekoke, or Old Town, residence of the principal chief, Chief Buckongahelas. Here, according to the missionaries, lived about forty Indian families. This town, one of the missionaries, Abraham Luckenbach, said, was also known by the name White Grave. Chief Tetepachsit lived in Monsy Town about four miles down the river. His town consisted of about eight families, and was on the right (north) bank of the river where the city of Muncie now stands. Chief Anderson lived in Anderson's Town, where the city of Anderson now stands. His Town was made up of about 15 or 16 Delaware families. (5)

Buckongahelas died in 1805, and rumor has it that Old Town was abandoned shortly thereafter and its inhabitants moved to Munsey Town or drifted off into new territories. The following year Tetepachsit was murdered by his own people through the influence of the Shawnee Prophet, Tecumseh's brother. From 1810 to 1820, and indeed until the Delawares left the State of Indiana, Chief Anderson was recognized as the principal Delaware chief in the Delaware Towns on White river. (6) The fate of the two easternmost Delaware towns was a reasonable expectancy due to the pressure of the incoming whites east and southeast of them. As a matter of record, when the white settlers began pouring into Delaware County in the early 1820's Old Town was even then only a tradition, and Munsey Town an old cemetery in whose environs lived three Indians—an old man, a woman and a boy. (7)

In the year 1820, John Tipton wrote in respect to the Delaware towns as follows:

"The Delaware Towns are scattered along the west fork of White R from Town 17 N of R 3 E up to Town 20 N of R 9 E a distance of 40 miles, Called Brewits, Conners, Bucks, Straw, Anderson Town and many others of less note." (8)

Tipton was very exact in such matters. Township 17 North, Range 3 East exactly located the lower Delaware Town in northern Marion County. This he called Brewits. (9) Both Munsey Town and Old Town are east of Tipton's eastern limits for the above towns; nor are either of them in his list.

In the year 1818 the United States Government gave the site of Munsey Town to a half blood Miami woman. Quoting from the Miami section of the Treaty of St. Mary's, signed October 6, 1818:

"To Rebecca Hackley, a half-blooded Miami, one section of land, to be located at the Munsey town, on White river, so that it shall extend on both sides to include 320 acres of the prairie, in the bend of White river where the bend assumes the shape of a horseshoe." (10)

The total grant included 672 acres, because the grantee refused to accept river acreage in the total of 640 acres, that is, one square mile. Rebecca Hackley was the wife of Captain William Hackley, U. S. Army, stationed at Fort Wayne, and the daughter of Captain Wells, and the grand daughter of Chief Little Turtle.

Delaware County was surveyed by David Hillis in 1822. The Rebecca Hackley grant is shown on his drawings, and "Munsee T." is marked therein on the right (north) bank of the river where the city of Muncie now stands. (11) The Hackley Grant was purchased in 1825 by Goldsmith C. Gilbert, and two years later on part of this land the white settlers' village Muncietown was organized. (12) Buckongahelas' town, Wapicomekoke, or Old Town is not shown on the Hillis survey. His papers in Indianapolis (13) unfortunately show only the river where it crosses section lines, and not its complete meanders through the County. In the hope that records, in Washington might show these latter, we wrote to the U. S. National Archives Division of the Department of the Interior, August 29, 1946, for copies of the original survey's plats for Delaware County, and copies of the field notes covering them. October 11, 1946, James F. Homer, chief of the Division, wrote to Miss Margaret Pierson, chief of the Archives Division, Indiana State Library, in part as follows: "Our office can furnish you with photostat copies of the plats of T.20 N, Rs 9, 10 and 11 E . . . showing the White River. . . . We have no field notes for the meanders of the river." The question is: Will or will not these photostats show the location of Old Town?*

The fabulous labor of Dean and his Brothertown Indians came to its climax in Chief Anderson's Town. The preparation and toil totaling the sum of their labors, the quality of the expedition's leadership, make self evident there was nothing to command their interest in the Delaware country to the east of Anderson's Town.

Literature Cited

1. The quotations and other material on Thomas Dean and his journey to the Delaware towns, from Dean, John Candee, 1918. *Journal of Thomas Dean, a Voyage to Indiana in 1817*. Ind. Hist. Soc., Publ. 6:271-345.
2. Id., p. 314.
3. This was the lower Delaware town in T17N, R4E, visited by John Tipton in 1820. 1942. *The John Tipton Papers*. Ind. Hist. Bur., 1:197-200.
4. The upper town was north of Conner's. For its probable location, and a discussion of the locations of all the Delaware towns on White river, see Thompson, Charles, N. 1937. *Sons of the Wilderness*, John and William Conner. Ind. Hist. Soc., pp. 41-43, and notes.
5. Stoker, H. E. Translator. 1917. *The Autobiography of Abraham Luckenbach*. Trans. Moravian Hist. Soc., 10. Bethlehem, pp. 375-379.
6. Bur. Amer. Ethnol. Bul., 30:57.
7. Helm, T. B. ed. 1881. *History of Delaware County, Indiana*. Kingman Bros., Chicago., pp. 32, 36, 38, 46.
- Ellis, John S. 1898. *History of Delaware County*. Neely Printing Co., Muncie, p. 118.
- Cecil, Samuel. 1905. Ind. Quar. Mag. Hist., 1:178-179.
8. John Tipton Papers, v. 1, p. 215. This appears in the *Journal of the Board of Commissioners appointed to locate a site for the permanent seat of Government for the State of Indiana*: JOURNAL May 22—June 7, 1820.

* Since the above was written, we have been informed that the field notes for Delaware County in Washington are identical with those in the Indiana State Library.

9. See "Indian Settlement on White River"—Western Censor and Emigrants Guide, a weekly newspaper printed and published by H. Gregg and D. Maguire, on Washington Street, near the centre of town—V. 1, No. 13, for Wednesday, June 11, 1823, Indianapolis.

10. Kappler, Charles J. ed. 1904. Indian Affairs. Laws and Treaties. Washington, 2:173.

11. Records of Surveys (unbound): Brookville and Fort Wayne Districts, in Township Plats, No. 31. Archives Division, Ind. State Libr.

12. Kemper, G. W. H. 1908. History of Delaware County, Indiana. Lewis Publ. Co., Chicago. pp. 103-105.

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13. Archives, Ind. State Libr., Margaret Pierson, chief.