

## NATIVE AMERICANS OF THE FARMINGTON VALLEY ---Cynthia E. Griggs

Thousands of years ago ancient hunters and gatherers followed herds of animals along the fast flowing and winding little river that we call the Farmington. These ancient people were led by the rhythms of nature, and were spiritually connected to earth, sky, and water. Information about their lives is based on archaeological evidence and oral histories carried from generation to generation.

Many artifacts have been found along the Farmington River and its tributaries. Campsites and rock shelters have been located on glacial terraces above the river, in upland areas, and near soapstone quarries. By the junction of the Pequabuck River and the Farmington River in Farmington was a major camping and trading center. Archaeological digs there have yielded over 100 fire hearths and piles of stone materials. The site was visited again and again by ancient people over thousands of years. It was most frequented in the Middle Archaic Period (@ 6000 TO 4000 B.C.). Three major Indian trails met here. Native People traveled long distances on trails which usually followed rivers and streams. The North West Path, which approximately follows Route 44, was a north / south trading route, connecting with trails which went up into New York State.

During the Woodland Period (1000 B.C. to Contact with Europeans) agriculture was introduced, and people planted gardens of corn, squash and beans (called "the three sisters), and other crops. Corn replaced acorns and hickory nuts as diet staples. Bows and arrows replaced spears for hunting. Wigwams were constructed in a village setting. English Colonists encountered large villages in Windsor, Farmington, and Simsbury.

The Pequot War (1636-1638) not only ended the power and culture of the Pequots, but also affected Indians throughout Connecticut including the Farmington Valley, bringing increasing Colonial control. King Philip's War (1675-1676) became the final attempt of the Indians to fight for the land and identity lost to Colonial advancement. During this war the English Massacoe Plantation by the Farmington River in Simsbury was burned and destroyed by King Philip and his warriors. At this time most of the Massacoe Indians, who were friendly to the Colonists, moved to the Housatonic River area and later many moved to the Indian town in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

As Indian life changed irreversibly, Indians from many tribes, removed from their original land, moved into the Farmington Valley. The local Tunxis Tribe became part of a larger group called "Farmington Indians". Many educated Farmington Indians were involved in planning an Indian emigration movement to New York under the leadership of the Mohegan Indian Minister, Samson Occom, and Joseph Johnson, Mohegan teacher at the Farmington Indian School. The Farmington River Valley had a very important role in the emigration of New England Indians to land given by the Oneidas of New York. In 1773 Farmington Indians signed letters urging other tribes to join the move. Four of them petitioned

the House of Representatives, asking for a Colony Law Book to use as a guide in the new land.

In 1785 the new tribe, "Brothertown" was formed in New York, uniting educated, Christianized Indians from 7 tribes, Farmington Indians, Mohegans, Narragansetts, Niantics, Groton Pequots, Stonington Pequots, and Montauks. Soon after Stockbridge Mohicans (which also included Indians from the Farmington River Valley) settled on land adjacent to the Brothertown.

Both the Brothertown and Stockbridge people were forced off their New York lands, and after long journeys and many hardships found land in Wisconsin. The Stockbridge Munsee Band of Mohicans was federally recognized many years ago and have a large reservation in Wisconsin. The Brothertown Indian Nation which was the first Indian tribe in the country to receive U.S. citizenship is, at last, on the Active List for Federal Acknowledgement. They know of their Farmington Valley heritage. It is also our cultural heritage.

*I relate to the Stockbridge Munsee Band of Mohicans and the Brothertown Indian Nation as their Eastern Historian. I have a close connection with the Brothertown and have recently been honored with a gift of the "Circle of Life" blanket, and a special award as a "Friend of the Brothertown" for help I have given to them over many years. Best Regards, Cynthia*