

Identifying the Native People of the Red Hook, NY, Area in 1609

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The following paper summarizes my research regarding the question of which Indians lived in (or had “tribal jurisdiction”, including the right to hunt, fish, settle, etc.) in what is today Red Hook at the time of Henry Hudson’s arrival (“contact”) in 1609. Red Hook is a town in northwest Dutchess County, New York, and reputable scholars have differed in their opinion of who lived there, with some arguing that it was the Wappingers, and others that it was the Mohicans.

I feel quite confident in concluding the following:

- *That the boundary between the Wappingers and the Mohicans was definitely south of the Roeloff Jansen Kill for most – and likely all – of its entire course (all of which is north of Red Hook).*
- *That none of the evidence presented regarding who lived specifically in the Red Hook area is definitive -- there is little evidence that Wappingers lived in Red Hook, and while there is lots of evidence that some or all of Red Hook falls within the Mohican homeland, none of it is conclusive.*
- *That, for now, Red Hook is itself the most accurate point we can name as the Wappingers-Mohican boundary near the eastern side of the Hudson River*
- *That there is more research that can be done on this matter that may provide a more definitive answer about who lived in Red Hook and where the boundary was.*

I invested hundreds of hours in this research, yet it is still a work in progress. I have tried to be clear where my own investigations came up short and there is definitely room for others to fill some gaps. I thank you in advance for communicating to me any suggestions you may have about anything I present here so that future revisions may be stronger.

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Overview

If one reviews the significant writings on the history of this region and of the native people here, there are contradictory statements made about who lived in what is today Red Hook.¹ Some argue it was the Wappingers, and others the Mohicans.

The Wappinger “homeland” or “aboriginal boundaries” included land as far south as the Bronx and as far east as the Taconic Mountains on the border between New York and Connecticut. The Hudson River marked the boundary on the west.

The Mohican homeland included land on both sides of the Hudson as far west as the Schoharie River, as far east as the Berkshire Mountains from northwest Connecticut to southern Vermont, and went as far north as the southern tip of Lake Champlain. (The Mohican people, also written as Mahican or as variations on the word Mahicondas, were also known as the River Indians, which was how they referred to themselves. They should not be confused with the Mohegans, a distinct tribe that in 1609 lived in southeastern Connecticut.)

Many people have written that the Wappingers lived as far north as the Roeloff Jansen Kill², which then marked the southern boundary of the Mohican territory on the eastern side of the Hudson. The Roeloff Jansen Kill is a stream which in its entirety lies north of Red Hook, meaning Red Hook would fall within the Wappinger homeland.

The first written history of the native people of the Hudson Valley was *Indian Tribes of Hudson's River* by E.M. Rutenber, written in 1872. It's a work rife with significant errors, but he very clearly set the boundary between the Wappingers and the Mohicans at the Roeloff Jansen Kill and that was repeated thereafter in many texts.

Many modern experts continue to affirm the Roeloff Jansen Kill as the boundary between the Wappingers and Mohicans. Perhaps the most prominent among them is Ives Goddard

¹ Even those who live in Red Hook may be uncertain of Red Hook's exact boundaries. It follows the Dutchess and Columbia County line from the Hudson River (just south of the Clermont Historic Site) southeast until just east of where Urubeck Road connects with East Kerley Corners Road. It runs south-southeast between the Spring Lakes, crosses Turkey Hill Road just east of Hapeman Hill Road, then turns south-southwest until it turns west at a point just west of the “fork in the road” where CR308 and CR199 meet. It then runs basically west, excluding Winding Brook Road and Old Rock City Road, crossing CR9 just south of Metzger Road, continuing west-northwest to cross CR9G just north of CR199 (the part heading to the Rhinecliff Bridge), until it hits the Hudson just north of the Bridge and south of Poet's Walk.

² For anyone not familiar with the Roeloff Jansen Kill, it begins out northeast of West Copake in Columbia County. It runs southwest from there, crossing into Dutchess County at Mount Ross, turning northwest to pass just south of the centers of Jackson Corners in Dutchess County and Elizaville in Columbia County. It turns south very briefly and barely crosses back into Dutchess County in the northwest corner of Milan. This is very close to the northeast corner of Red Hook, but it never does cross into Red Hook or into Dutchess County again. From there it runs north-northwest to enter the Hudson north of Germantown, south of the Olana Historic Site (across the Hudson from Catskill).

of the Smithsonian Institute who is the linguistic editor and technical editor of the *Handbook of North American Indians*.

However, one can also find many references to the boundary being farther south. Shirley Dunn, one of the most prominent experts on the Mohicans and the author of *The Mohicans and Their Land, 1609-1730* and *The Mohican World, 1680-1750*, has herself written that the boundary was at Red Hook, with Red Hook falling within the Mohican territory and south of that being the Wappingers.

I have found no arguments that the boundary was any farther north than the Roeloff Jansen Kill, and none that it was farther south than Red Hook. So it seems safe to at a minimum state that north of the Roeloff Jansen Kill lived the Mohicans and south of Red Hook lived the Wappingers.

But who lived in between?

The difference between the Roeloff Jansen Kill and Red Hook is, at the farthest point, about fifteen miles and, at the closest, about six miles (the length of Red Hook north to south). That difference may not be terribly significant to someone who is just trying to get a general sense of these tribes' territories. But as someone who lives in that gray zone in Red Hook, and as someone who believes it's very important for us living here today to have knowledge of and honor the legacy of the native people who lived here, the difference is significant.

For those who may not wish to wade through the detailed explanations and citations of what I discovered, let me summarize my findings.

It seems quite safe to say that the boundary between the Wappingers and the Mohicans was definitely south of the Roeloff Jansen Kill for most – and likely all -- of its course. First of all, it seems clear that Rutenber himself meant that the southernmost bend of the Roeloff Jansen Kill, not the actual course of the Kill, is the general boundary. Ives Goddard agrees on this point and has explained that he, also, in speaking of the Roeloff Jansen Kill as the southern boundary, is referring to its southernmost point, and even then is speaking in general terms. “Certainly the whole loopy course of the RJK cannot have been an ethnic boundary.”

There is a consistent pattern of deeds of sale from Mohicans that indicate that near the Hudson River the boundary was at least as far south as the Dutchess/Columbia County border (which is itself the northern boundary of Red Hook and the boundary of the original Livingston property), and that further east the boundary was pretty clearly as far south as Pine Plains and what is today the hamlet of Bethel, which is south of Red Hook's southern boundary. (Bethel was the site of the Indian village of Shekomeko, not to be confused with today's Shekomeko, which is a little farther south).

As for who lived in what is today Red Hook, there is no definitive proof. As far as making any solid final claims one way or the other, we can't do that, the evidence just doesn't support it. Because the preponderance of evidence does indicate that most or all of Red Hook was within the Mohican territory, I have been found myself at times inclined to lean that way. But that's just lazy scholarship. When looked at case by case, none of the evidence is, in my opinion, solid enough to really support that conclusion.

I should note again that Ives Goddard agrees on this point. He is inclined to believe that Red Hook did indeed fall mostly within the Wappinger territory, but he agreed that the evidence that has been compiled thus far does not allow one to make a solid conclusion.

Shirley Dunn puts more credence in the evidence indicating the Red Hook fell mostly or entirely within the Mohican territory and continues to support what she has written, that most or all of Red Hook itself was within the Mohican territory. In my e-mail correspondence with her she never indicated that she thought the evidence was absolutely conclusive, but that it was stronger than others have given it credit for, and strong enough to support her general conclusion.

I believe there is good reason to refer to Red Hook as itself marking the boundary. The farthest north anyone seems to place the southern boundary of the Mohicans is the northern boundary of Red Hook. And while I didn't actually find evidence of them living there, nobody seems to dispute that the Wappingers lived at least as far north as Red Hook's southern border. So even if one of these two extremes proved true, it's still accurate to say that Red Hook marks the boundary, it's just a question of which territory Red Hook fell into.

While there is nothing definitive, it seems fairly *likely* that the Mohicans lived within at least part of Red Hook. While this cannot be clearly proven, the evidence is strong enough that I believe the burden of proof lies with someone wanting to state otherwise.

And lastly, I would point out that there is clearly more research that can be done on this matter that may provide a more definitive answer.

First, Ives Goddard and Shirley Dunn have both suggested that if someone brought together a collection of most of the original deeds in the area someone could review the many Indian names on them as a way to get a clearer sense of who lived where. Many of the native people are known by name from different sources and could therefore be validated as Mohican or Wappinger (or other), and a clearer pattern might emerge.

Also, Red Hook falls almost entirely within what was originally the Schuyler Patent. While the boundary names of that patent have definitely factored into people's considerations of who lived in this area, I have not been able to find anybody who has seen the original deeds to that land. Edward Smith wrote in his History of Rhinebeck, (1881, p.22), "Having purchased from the Indians the land lying over against Magdalene, now Cruger's Island, Col. Peter Schuyler obtained a patent therefor from Governor Thomas Dongan on the 2nd of June, 1688." So unlike the Beekman lands in

what is today Red Hook, where apparently there is simply no record of Beekman having purchased the lands from the natives (also from Smith, History of Rhinebeck), there is a record of Schuyler having officially purchased the land. If someone could turn up the relevant deed/s, the names of the Indians selling the land could prove very helpful.

Third, while a fairly clear picture emerged of how far south the Mohicans lived, I actually was unable to gain a clear sense of how far north the Wappingers lived. Someone with a little more time could probably gain a clearer sense of that and the consequences for the question of whether they lived in part or all of what is today Red Hook.

Lastly, there have been significant archaeological digs in Red Hook that could possibly shed some light on this question. It seems unlikely because the two tribes were so similar and would have had near constant trading of goods, but I was never able to connect with the key folks who could have told me this definitively.

The Cultural/Historical Context for Identifying Tribal Boundaries

In considering the question of which Indians lived in what is today Red Hook at the time of Hudson's arrival, it's important to first put the question into a broader historical and cultural context. Doug Mackay, of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, does a very good job of this.

“The first problem is one of recognizing that the Wappinger and the Mahican/Mohican are very closely related people. Both spoke dialects of a larger Algonquian language family, both appeared to have lived similar lifestyles, organized their societies in very similar fashions etc. That is not to say that they are the same people, but only very closely related, with closely shared histories. Being in a border area it is also likely that both groups were in contact on a regular basis and may well have traded in material items that were left behind for archaeologists - making it difficult for us to assign a particular site to either nation. Finally, it is important to remember that like all societies, those of Native American groups were dynamic, living societies and not static images as we all too often have in our minds -- a snapshot of how they must have always looked. Therefore these societies were fluid, changing over time, both in how they may look archaeologically, and in exactly where their borders were. The names and boundaries associated with particular tribes/nations in our history books, represent only the boundaries at the moment they were recorded.

“For example (using the Iroquois that I am more familiar with), we know historically that the Mohawk, the Oneida and the Onondaga covered the area between Syracuse and Amsterdam - each with their own particular territory and obvious boundaries (at least in the 1600s). They lived in a limited number of villages of 1-2000 individuals. However, archaeology reveals that only 200 years earlier - the villages were much smaller, more numerous and more scattered and there was less clear boundary between the groups. A few hundred years before that (100-1200 AD), the villages were even smaller, with an almost continuous distribution across that area. While there was certainly some

distinction between the people that made up those groups, archaeology can only estimate what those boundaries were, and how the people thought of themselves in relation to their neighbors. Much the same situation likely applies in your area. While the Mohican and Wappinger both have long histories, it may be difficult to identify, at such a fine scale, just exactly where any boundary may have been at any particular date. The further back in time you examine, the more difficult it becomes to assign a particular site to a particular nation. This is what makes the question you ask a difficult one to answer.”³

It’s important to keep these subtleties in mind and not confuse the question of which tribe lived in Red Hook in 1609 with the question of which tribe lived there definitively forever before Hudson arrived.

The first people to arrive in the Red Hook region arrived approximately 12,000 years ago. 50 miles south of Red Hook is the Dutchess Quarry Cave where points from spears were found near the remains of now extinct caribou and giant beavers. They carbon dated to 10,580 BCE. And about 15 miles south in Hyde Park there is evidence of mastodon hunting from around 9,000 BCE. There is archeological evidence of a human “presence” specifically in Red Hook going back to 5,000 BCE.⁴, and evidence of “seasonal camps” going back at least 4,000 years.⁵

The people who settled in this broad region evolved different cultural characteristics and affiliations that eventually became distinct enough groupings to warrant use of the word tribe as it’s understood today. But those identities continued to shift as did the areas they lived, and other groups continued to migrate into the area.

However, just as we should be careful in trying to use too fine a scale or create too static a picture of who lived where in 1609, Ives Goddard was very eloquent in expressing to me in a conversation that the distinctions we are trying to draw were very real distinctions to those people themselves. For all of their trading and intermarriage and intermingling of language, etc., these people themselves made clear distinctions between themselves and had names for themselves and others. And these people also had a clear sense of boundaries between each others’ land where they each lived, and where they hunted and fished, etc. So the boundaries and identities shifted over time, but at any point in time the differences were real and they held distinct meaning for those people. And quite often we *can* discern those boundaries and identities quite clearly using the range of information at our disposal.

Even though these "borders were not sharply demarcated in the modern geopolitical sense, Native American peoples had clear pictures of the general perimeters of their territories." (Smith, J Michael, “The Highland King Nimhammaw and the Native Indian Proprietors of Land in Dutchess County, NY: 1712-1765”, 2004)

³ From personal correspondence, June, 2009.

⁴ Lindner, Christopher R, “Grouse Bluff: An Archaeological Introduction”, *The Hudson Valley Regional Review: A Journal of Regional Studies*, March 1992 Volume 9, Number 1, <http://www.hrmm.org/hvrr/lindner.htm>

⁵ Carr, Clare O’Neill, *Brief History of Red Hook*, 2001, p.6

Archeology as One Tool for Knowing

When I began my research, I thought the best course of action would be to read what I could about the archaeological digs that have been done in the area and contact people familiar with them. I thought those digs and those people would certainly have something to say about which Indians lived in this area in 1609. However, this turned out to be the least helpful course of my investigation.

There have been significant digs done in the Red Hook area along the river, notably at Cruger and Magdalen Islands and at Grouse Bluff on the Bard campus. Despite conversations with people at the NYS Museum and the NYS Office of Historic Preservation, I was not able to get any information that was helpful in identifying whether those digs revealed anything about whether Mohicans or Wappingers lived there (though it was suggested that some time doing research at the NYS Museum could possibly turn up helpful information). The only small thing that I came up with was that William Ritchie wrote in 1958 in his *Introduction to Hudson Valley Prehistory*, that he believed that Wappingers lived on South Cruger Island. However, I couldn't find any details explaining his conclusion.

Stephen Comer, a PhD candidate in Mohican Studies and one of the founders of the Native American Institute of the Hudson Valley, further reviewed *Introduction to Hudson Valley Prehistory* and concurred that Ritchie gave no evidence for this conclusion. He wrote me that, "Personally, I don't know how he differentiates between the Mohicans and Wappingers culturally, and actually I don't think he can since the lifeways & adaptations of the two groups were so similar."

Shirley Dunn likewise wrote that Ritchie "was operating on far less information about Hudson Valley natives than we have today. His book, the "bible" of archaeologists, is short of historical information, even though it is also still a valuable contribution and guide."

Robert Funk, who worked with William Ritchie and was with the NYS Museum for 33 years, oversaw many field investigations in this area. I have not been able to review any of his writings to see if they might be helpful.

Chris Lindner is a professor at Bard College and is President of the New York Archaeological Council. He worked with Robert Funk for some years and has done reviews of William Ritchie and Robert Funk's work. He has also overseen significant digs in this area himself. I have not been able to connect with Chris by either e-mail or phone. Perhaps there is still something relating to the question of the Mohican-Wappinger border that can be gleaned from these digs.

What Deeds Reveal

When Europeans acquired land from Indians, they generally had to provide a written record of the transaction to their own colonial authorities. Wint Aldrich, the Historian for the Town of Red Hook, explains it as follows:

“Colonial law was particular about this, that there be documentary proof of the purchase, and -- lest there be misunderstanding or a change of mind that could lead to unrest and reprisals -- that three years be allowed to pass before a confirmatory grant be made by the Crown... Of course by the perceptions of our own time any such purchase has to be suspect in terms of mutuality of understanding, fair compensation and absence of duress.”

In my own relatively limited investigations I came across two significant instances that raise questions about just how formally this procedure was followed. E. Smith (History of Rhinebeck, 1881) indicates that there is no record of Beekman having purchased his land in Rhinebeck from the natives. John Michael Smith writes that, “Extant documentation found in company records, though, suggests that title to” at least some of the land involved in the massive Great Nine Partners patent “had not been obtained from the Indians, a violation of New York law requiring that patents only be issued after Native rights had been relinquished.” (Ibid, Smith, J Michael)

That same patent was found to have hugely misrepresented the extent of the land the Indians intended to sell, which was only about 15,000 acres compared to the 145,000 acres reported, for which the Indians demanded and received compensation some 40 years later. (Ibid, Smith, J Michael)

The Limitations and Strengths of Deeds

Ives Goddard pointed out to me that there are numerous issues in trying to use these deeds to determine which tribes lived where. We tend to have the best records of them where the English had disputes among themselves. “So whether the initial sale from Indians was papered legally, the English would go back and find Indians to work with them later on. And the deeds that survived tended to be the ones in English hands.” Another thing is that “Indians would invite Indians from neighboring groups to sign documents with them. So just a name on there doesn’t mean that person is selling their own land.”

It can also sometimes prove challenging to identify what the Indian names of places and geographical features listed on deeds correspond to today, though often those names were noted on maps or in later legal documents clarifying the deeds.

However, these records are still some of the most reliable sources of information we have, and they seem to be relied upon a lot. Ruttenber wrote in 1872 that “Indian treaties and title deeds supply information which, though still imperfect, enables a division of territory and location of subtribes to be made with tolerable accuracy.”

These records definitely ended up being the most helpful and most respected source of information about tribal boundaries that I found.

As I noted in the Overview, I was not able to track down a copy of the Schuyler Patent, which includes all of today's Red Hook and could be very helpful. But I was able to learn about many other deeds that were very informative. They were instrumental in making it clear that the Mohicans lived south of the Roeloff Jansen Kill and into Dutchess County, and gave the first solid hints that the Mohican territory included at least part of Red Hook.

The Livingston Patent

Robert Livingston purchased a large amount of land in 1683 from six Mohicans. The exact southern boundary of that land was under legal dispute for many years. There is reason to believe that it actually ran south of where the legal disputes finally placed it when they were resolved. But today's boundary between Dutchess County and Columbia County to the north is based on that southern boundary as it was settled.⁶

The validity of that deed has never been challenged, and it fairly definitively places the Mohicans south of the Roelof Jansen Kill, about seven miles south of where the Roeloff Jansen Kill enters the Hudson, though not too far south of its southernmost bend.

Mohicans East and South of Red Hook

Deeds have also been instrumental in establishing that the Mohican boundary was south of the Roeloff Jansen Kill in eastern Dutchess County, to the east of Red Hook.

1 - In *The Mohican World, 1680-1750*, Shirley Dunn documents the land problems of Abraham (Mamanitseekun), whose village was Shekomeko, in eastern Dutchess County, south of Red Hook and south of the Roeloff Jansen Kill. Both the Governor and the Moravians agreed that Shekomeko was a Mohican village. In this book, all the

⁶ The original deed can be read online at
<http://books.google.com/books?id=rSoWAAAAYAAJ&lpg=PA191&ots=Vo3J0Wq0jI&dq=sager+tje's%20kill&pg=PA190>

New York State Library, History Bulletin 9, Early Records of the City and County of Albany and Colony of Rensselaerswyck, Volume 2, 1916, p. 190.

The legal disputes relating to the Livingston deed are chronicled in tremendous detail in *Law Practice of Alexander Hamilton, Vol. III* (Julius Goebel, Jr. and Joseph H. Smith, 1980). It also includes detailed quotes from the original 1683 deed, the confirmatory patents of 1684 and 1715, a map of the 1715 survey, the history of the establishment of the county border, and more. Much of the book can be read online at:

<http://books.google.com/books?id=lhByzTg62dEC&lpg=PA53&ots=vIOfc-Jzig&dq=sawkill%20creek%20saugerties&pg=PP1>

The chapter on the "South Bounds of Clermont" begins on page 51,

<http://books.google.com/books?id=lhByzTg62dEC&lpg=PA53&ots=vIOfc-Jzig&dq=sawkill%20creek%20saugerties&pg=PP1>

information about holdings in Connecticut and dealings with Richard Sackett and Martin Hoffman is for land south of the Columbia County line. Also, in the 1750s' the Mohicans presented a list of land for which they had not been paid and one item was a swath of land across the north end of the Little Nine Partners Patent. (pp 231-236)

2 - "One of two documented cases in the region during the eighteenth century where Wappinger and Mohican grantors appear on the same deed, occurs in the area of the Great Nine Partners Patent and provides information defining the general location of where their proprietary interests overlap..." The deed "included provisions "excepting still the Whrits of some North Indians" represented by the Mohican "Elder" Schawash... and other signatories from Shekomeko. These same grantors were also noted seven years later in a deed amendment to the 1730 purchase where they relinquished their remaining "right and title of, in, and to the within Tract of Land"... Unfortunately, neither of these conveyances delineates the limits of Shekomekan claims to the Great Nine Partners tract." But even so it provides further evidence of the Mohican-Wappinger boundary in eastern Dutchess County being located well south of the Roeloff Jansen Kill.

3 - Lion Miles wrote me that he has found five early Indian deeds to the Pine Plains area, and they all show Mohican Indians among the signatories. None of them have been published, to his knowledge. He writes that one of them is dated May 2, 1705. "Its boundaries are vague but it is clear that it covers the land from the Connecticut line to the eastern edge of Schuyler's Patent around Cokertown. Among the Indian signatories were Mohicans from around New Milford, Conn., Wunnupe and Weromaug."

Again, all of these deeds are for land east of Red Hook. But they don't just serve to show Mohicans lived south of the Roeloff Jansen Kill. Cokertown is just east of Red Hook, but well south of Red Hook's northern boundary, in fact it's south of more than 1/3 of Red Hook. While one can by no means deduce from this that the land due west of there (cutting through the middle of Red Hook until it meets the Hudson) was also Mohican land, it also seems unlikely, lacking any obvious geographical boundary to guide it, that the Mohican territory suddenly jogged due north several miles until it hit what is today the county line.

It would seem more plausible – if far from certain – to assume their territory continued to some degree on a western course until it reached the Hudson, which would mean it included at least a portion of Red Hook.

The Wappingers' Uppermost Reaches

Dutchess County was established in 1683 and was subdivided in 1717 into administrative units called the North, Middle and South Wards. "Native land transfers of the 650,000 acres comprising this region, and on which most of the patent grants in Dutchess County were based, began during the last decades of the seventeenth century. Analysis of those deeds made between 1680 and 1691 where Wappinger ethnicity is more clearly defined, shows that the core of their territory lay within areas later encompassed by the Middle and South Wards. Most of the transactions associated with this core zone occurred in a

relatively small area... in the present Town of Poughkeepsie... Less informative data from other Native transfers concerning the Pawling (1686) and Great Nine Partners Patents (1697) may represent evidence defining the uppermost reaches of their homeland along the boundary separating the Middle and North Wards.” (Ibid, Smith, J Michael)

The northern boundary of the Pawling Patent is the southern boundary of the Town of Rhinebeck, which is just south of Red Hook. So what Smith is suggesting is that even south of Rhinebeck one might be reaching the uppermost reaches of the Wappinger homeland. Again, there’s nothing near conclusive here, but it’s another piece to be considered.

Other Legal Documents and Claims Regarding Northern Dutchess County

Besides deeds, there is documentation of other legal claims and actions that can be very helpful.

A Mohican Land Claim Southeast of Red Hook

One was quoted to me by Shirley Dunn. "June 29, 1754. Petition of some Muhheckkaunnuck or river Indians, praying compensation for the following tracts of land, which have been patented without (as they allege) having been purchased from them: A tract lying at Wohnockkanmeekkuk, to the east of Mr. Hoaffman's, and running south some miles (*Indorsed Land Papers* (indexed in a book; the actual papers are at the New York State Library), in Vol. XV, item 110 (pages 283-84))

Hoffman purchased the northernmost section of the Schuyler Patent, meaning what is today the northern part of Red Hook.

There is a lake very near Cokertown that is today called Warackamac. Based on no other information than the similarities in the names and the fact that it would generally fit the location described here, it seems to me that this could be the same lake as Wohnockkanmeekkuk. In that case this petition would be further evidence of Mohicans being in the area of Cokertown and further support the idea that their territory likely did not suddenly jog due north for a couple miles to exclude all of Red Hook.

On the other hand, Carol O’Neill Carr in *A Brief History of Red Hook* indicates that a lake called Waraughkameek is “near the hamlet of Rock City, on the border of Milan” and south of Spring Lake. That places it a few miles south of Cokertown, at the extreme southeast of Red Hook and extreme northeast of Rhinebeck. Again, I have nothing to go on other than the name and the general location described in the petition, but it strikes me that Waraughkameek could also be the same lake as Wohnockkanmeekkuk.

If this is correct, it would corroborate the Mohicans being just east of Red Hook, but it would put them at Red Hook’s southern limit. As with the Cokertown reference, this does not in any way prove that the land west of the area described here was Mohican, but

it would appear even more implausible that their territory suddenly jogged that much farther due north to exclude all of Red Hook.

A Second Mohican Claim for the Same Area

Lion Miles wrote that he has a copy of a 1767 petition from the Mohican tribe claiming legal proprietorship down to "Wau-nau-kom-me-kuk" a little south of Colonel Nicholas Hoffman's house in Tivoli. This is clearly just an alternate spelling of Wohnockkanmeekuk. That leaves me with the same question of just where Wau-nau-kom-me-kuk is, but having a second, consistent petition gives a little more credibility to the first petition.

A Border Dispute Between the Pawling and Rhinebeck Patents

“Other material delineating the westernmost point of this [the Mohican-Wappinger] boundary at its juncture with the Hudson River comes from Native testimony contained in colonial litigation. In a border dispute between the Pawling and Rhinebeck Patents individuals identified as the chief Indians of these respective tracts told county officials in a 1723 deposition” about several geographic features that defined the boundary between their tracts in the area of the southern Rhinebeck border.

“Unfortunately, the Native informants named in this document were not identified ethnically. One of the individuals mentioned, Sekomeck (not to be confused with the place name, Shekomeko), a signatory to the 1730 Nine Partners conveyance and an associate of Nimhamaw in a controversial 1712 transaction in the Long Reach..., might have been a Highland sachem. His appearance here as the "Chief Indian of Pawlings" helps support the earlier assertion that the uppermost reaches of Wappinger territory lay along the border straddling the Middle and North Wards.” (Ibid, Smith, J Michael)

Onomastics – Attempting to Use Historic Place Names to Determine Who Lived Where

Because of the differences in the languages between the Mohicans and Wappingers (who spoke Munsee), sometimes historic place names can yield information about who lived there. Sometimes the word is a known word in one language and not the other. Also Mohican did not have R or L sounds, and Munsee didn't have an N sound, so that can be a clue.

The Schuyler Patent (which again encompasses all of Red Hook) had three place names associated with it: a creek called Metambesem, a meadow called Tanquashqueick, and the lake I wrote of above called Waraughkameek.

What do those place names tell us about who lived here?

Bill Starna, Professor Emeritus of the State University of New York at Oneonta, has written that, “According to Ives Goddard, two are not distinctive. The third,

"Waraughkameek," is clearly Munsee and not Mahican [Ives Goddard, personal communication]."

Lion Miles wrote me that he believes Waraughkameek is probably a bad transcription of the real name. "Remember that the Indians did not have a written language so names depended on the hearing of the scribe." Referring back to the petition mentioned above, he writes that Wau-nau-kom-me-kuk does not have any R's and that is the way the word was pronounced by Mohicans. Warackamac Lake is probably a further corruption of the word..."

He added that John W. Quinney's Mohican name was "Waunaucon," meaning "dish" or "plate," and may well be a derivative of "Wau-nau-kom-me-kuk." "Beauchamp has another variant, as "Wau-nau-kau-ma-kack.""

In a phone conversation with me, Ives Goddard responded:

"It's not an easy thing to work out. It's clear that we're near the boundary. You'd expect to get words and names from both languages due to interactions. Plus you've got the Dutch interpreter. If he spoke Mohican he put the names in Mohican. If he spoke Munsee, he put it in Munsee. Plus there's no obvious interpretation sometimes for words, so it can be tricky guessing which language the word is from."

"During the Mohican diaspora you have people coming from Shekomeko and Stockbridge and they are making land claims along the Hudson. So they come from the Mohican orbit, and they perhaps had a real connection to the Mohicans, it wasn't made up. But it doesn't mean that because they use the Mohican name that it was in their orbit way back when."

"It's hard to find a linguistic argument that would be definitive proof one way or the other. There was tiny variation in language from village to village. This person would marry that person and it mixes. Some guy in Stockbridge might speak Mohican, but at age five on the Hudson he might have spoken Munsee."

"It looks to me like what we have here is a description of the land, and my guess is that it was a Munsee name, and then you had some Mohican speakers writing about it later, but we can't be sure without any more information."

[Note: He also shared the following comment. I do not know what deeds or what woman he is referring to here. I will try to get back to him to clarify, but I am including this here in case it makes sense to someone else reading it. "The deeds in question were deeds within a week of each other, there is a woman mentioned, her name appears 4 times in each, and it's with an R. So the argument that it was a misspelling is weak. And the woman could have been from somewhere else. But the interpreter is giving her name in Munsee."]

The bottom line is that while Lion Miles and Ives Goddard both have a tendency to lean towards either the Mohicans or the Wappingers on the question of the word Waraughkameek, both acknowledged that it's a bit of guesswork, and nothing to really base a solid conclusion on.

Oral History as an Argument for Mohicans in Red Hook

Both Shirley Dunn and John Michael Smith believe that the testimony of David Nimham (also written as Ninham), the last significant Wappinger Chief, is a valuable source of information. He testified in a matter of land claims in 1762 that the Wappingers were the “ancient inhabitants of the Eastern Shore of Hudson’s River from the City of New York to about the Middle of Beekmans [Rhinebeck] Patent.”⁷

Colonel Pieter Schuyler was the first European to own land in Red Hook. His patent was just south of the Livingston Patent and included all of what is today Red Hook. He soon sold those lands in “Great Lots” to a number of other Dutchmen. “Colonel Henry Beekman Jr., the son of the founder of Red Hook, bought 5,500 acres of the southern portion of Schuyler’s Red Hook lands in 1715 from one of the Dutchmen, Peek DeWitt. These he added to his father’s extensive holdings inherited from his father in the present day Town of Rhinebeck. His patent line was extended north to the Saw Kill and included what is now the Village of Red Hook.”⁸

The south boundary of the Beekman Patent coincides with the current south boundary of the Town of Rhinebeck (which runs mainly east-west, crossing CR9G just south of where it meets Mill Road). The middle of the Patent would fall somewhere south of where CR9 and CR9G cross today, which is well below Red Hook. So even allowing for the margin of error in Ninham’s “about” when referring to the middle of the Patent, the boundary would still definitely fall south of Red Hook

Bill Starna basically dismisses Ninham’s testimony. He writes that “Ninham’s claim, made something less than two centuries after contact [153 years], cannot reasonably be used to set aboriginal boundaries. This is even putting aside for the moment the discussion that would be necessary regarding his motives for making the claim in the first place.”

⁷ “Daniel Nimham aged thirty six years, being duly sworn maketh oath [before New York Councilman William Smith], that he is a River Indian of the Tribe of the Wappingoes, which Tribe were the ancient inhabitants of the Eastern Shore of Hudson’s River from the City of New York to about the Middle of Beekman’s [Rhinebeck] Patent, that another Tribe of River Indians called Mayhiccondas, were the ancient inhabitants of the remaining Eastern Shore of the said River, that these two Tribes constituted on[e] Nation, that the Deponent well understands the language of the Mayhiccondas, it is very little differing from the language of the Wappingo Tribe, that the Indian word Pattenack, signified in the language of the Mayhiccondas a fall of water, & has no other signification, and this Deponent further says that he is a Christian and has resided some years with the Mayhiccondas at Stockbridge” (Land Papers, 1728-1868: Misc., Columbia County, New York Historical Society).

⁸ Carr, Clare O’Neill, A Brief History of Rhinebeck, 2001, p. 9.

Shirley Dunn replied that, she does not, “as Starna does, dismiss the information from Ninham. Indian traditions were strong. They prided themselves on memorizing their history, and have given us much of what we accept as true.”

E.M. Ruttenber thought Ninham’s testimony was credible as well. Underscoring how credible he finds it, by comparison, he indicates that “The testimony in regard to the Montauks (another tribe further south) is not so clear and positive,” and yet he believes that even that testimony “is sufficiently so to indicate their status at the time.”

In the end, I believe Ninham’s testimony is worthy of consideration, but cannot be considered completely dependable or in any way decisive.

And What Do These Indians Themselves Believe Today? – Red Hook as a Boundaryland

Contrary to what James Fennimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* implies, neither the Wappingers nor the Mohicans were killed off or died off. And it seems worthwhile to see what they currently claim as their ancestral homeland. Again, I quote Doug Mackay.

“Currently, we [the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation] have worked with the nations to develop a map that depicts which ones are interested in Tribal Consultation (in accordance with a number of federal regulations) for certain areas. The Mohican area of concern includes all of the Hudson River Valley, including both counties. Part of the reasoning behind this is that the current Mohican Nation includes descendants of many of the Hudson River groups that came together as European settlement pressure, disease and warfare affected the original populations. As I mentioned earlier, many of these groups were closely related and the Mohican may well have offered refuge to other groups as they lost their ability to maintain their independent nation status.”

The Wappingers were one of the groups that had many people fall in with the Mohicans, many of them joining the Mohicans where they themselves initially retreated to in Stockbridge, MA. This evolution is evident in the name of the recognized Mohican tribe today, the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians (Munsee being the language spoken by the Wappingers).

Doug continues: “The Delaware Nation (currently residing in Oklahoma) is another group closely related to both the Wappinger and the Mohican.” (The Wappingers are generally held to be a “Delaware-speaking group”. Specifically, they spoke Munsee, a subgroup of Delaware (the other subgroup being Unami). Mohican is also an Eastern Algonquian language and in some classifications Mohican is grouped with the Delaware languages of Munsee and Unami as "Delarawan", reflecting their similarities. But most classifications do not group them this way.)

The Delaware Nation's "original territories appear to have been the southern portions of the Hudson Valley into New Jersey..." Red Hook "lies right along the boundary of the northernmost line of what the Delaware Nation continues to hold an interest in for Tribal Consultation. This line touches the western edge of Dutchess County at the river, but then quickly runs southeast, cutting through the town, leaving the northeast section of Red Hook to only Mohican interest."

I believe that this piece of information is again not conclusive, but I think it is meaningful that the Delaware Nation claims a Tribal Consultation interest through the Wappingers that only includes part of Red Hook.

E.M. Rutenber and the Mohican-Wappinger Boundary

EM Rutenber was very wrong about many things in his classic book, *Indian Tribes of Hudson's River*, written in 1872. But he states unequivocally that the Roeloff Jansen Kill was the Wappinger-Mohican boundary.⁹ And the fact that he made this claim carries some weight with some people and it has been repeated in many places, including the *Handbook of North American Indians*. So it seems worthwhile to take a moment to explore his claim, despite everything I've already documented to the contrary.

Notably, Ives Goddard pointed out to me that "Rutenber doesn't get it all right," but he had access to extensive documents that have since been lost... including in the Albany fire of 1912." (And Ives Goddard is himself held in incredibly high esteem by many people – including myself. One scholar wrote me that, "He is a careful, diligent, brilliant scholar, and his work is beyond question." So the fact that he sides with Rutenber on this question is significant.)

However, the good news for us today is that Rutenber does generally cite the evidence on which he bases his claim regarding the Roeloff Jansen Kill, and most or all of it is still available to us today. So we are able to, in Rutenber's words, "judge of the correctness of the conclusions drawn therefrom."¹⁰

Rutenber provides two arguments for his claim regarding the Roeloff Jansen. First, he cites "totemic authority." "Each Indian nation was not only divided into tribes and chieftancies, but had peculiar totemic classifications. Totems were rude but distinct devices or family symbols, denoting original cosanguinity, and were universally respected. They were painted upon the person of the Indian, and again on the gable end of his cabin..."¹¹

⁹ Page 51

¹⁰ Page 4

¹¹ Page 49

He writes that the Mohican totem on the west side of the Hudson was the wolf, but that on the eastern side it was the bear. “Below the Mahicans from the Roeloff Jansen’s kill to the sea, the wolf again appeared as the totem of the Wappingers.”¹²

Ruttenber is generally quite thorough in citing sources for the statements he makes in his text, but in this case he neither provides documentation for his claim about the totems of the Mohicans and Wappingers, nor for the implied presence of bear images on people and homes north of the Roeloff Jansen and of wolf images south of the Roeloff Jansen.

Ives Goddard himself debunked this claim. He wrote me that “The Wappinger as Wolf clan is an echo of Heckewelder’s erroneous equation of the Munsee and the Wolf Clan, a claim denied by a whole string of his successors, beginning with Trowbridge in the 1820’s (see Hbk. No. Am. Inds. 15:225).”¹³

The other evidence Ruttenber provides is, amazingly, the very same testimony I wrote about earlier in this document provided by David Ninham, the Wappinger Chief. He writes, “For dividing the territory of the Mahicans at Roeloff Jansen's Kill... there is other than totemic authority... The affidavit of King David Ninham is on record, under date of October 13, 1730, in which it is stated that the deponent was a "River Indian of the tribe of the Wappinoes, which tribe was the ancient inhabitants of the eastern shore of Hudson's river, from the City of New York to about the middle of Beekman's patent...”¹⁴

So, first, we must still weigh the concerns that Bill Starna raised about the credibility of Ninham’s testimony in the first place. But beyond that, as I noted earlier Ninham’s testimony clearly places the Wappinger-Mohican boundary *south* of Red Hook, not to mention *far* south of the Roeloff Jansen Kill. So to the degree it is credible it contradicts exactly what Ruttenber claims it supports.

Ives Goddard wrote me that “I think when Ruttenber gives the boundary as Roeloff Jansen Kill he is being no more precise than saying: at about the county line between Dutchess and Columbia Counties, where the line and the stream roughly coincide. Certainly the whole loopy course of the RJK cannot have been an ethnic boundary.”

This makes complete sense, but the way both Ruttenber and Goddard’s statements have been quoted to me by some people makes it clear that they think what is meant is that the loopy course of the river really is the southern boundary. So it’s important to note clearly

¹² Page 50

¹³ Shirley Dunn’s research also contradicts Ruttenber. She notes that, “In the 1790s, Hendrick Aupaumut reported that the Mohicans had three clans, represented by the Bear, the Wolf, and the Turtle.” But she notes that he was more familiar with the Mohawk, and that these were indeed the three animals that represented their clans. “The Wolf, Turtle and Turkey, rather than the Wolf, Turtle and Bear have been reported elsewhere as the three main clans of the Mohicans. This clan division is probably correct for the seventeenth century. The Bear Clan seems to have been absent on Mohican deeds. No recognizable bear was drawn by any Mohican as a signature pictograph, while wolves, turtles, and turkeys or turkey tracks were common.”

Ruttenber himself wrote that “totemic emblems” should not be confused with “tribal jurisdiction.”

¹⁴ Page 51

that the only way their statements would make sense is to acknowledge that they are referring to the southernmost bend of the Roeloff Jansen Kill, and that even then they are speaking in a broad generality.

That this is true is underscored by Ruttenger's own testimony to Mohicans living south of the actual course of the Roeloff Jansen Kill.

Most prominent among this is when he refers to the very Livingston purchase discussed earlier in this document. "Two immense tracts were sold to Robert Livingston, July 12th, 1683 and August 10th, 1685..." He goes on to list a number of the "Mahican Indian owners" involved in the sale.¹⁵

Esopus Indians in Rhinebeck and Red Hook

John Michael Smith provided me with transcripts of a number of deeds for parcels in Rhinebeck along the Hudson, just west of Beekman's patent. (In his book *History of Rhinebeck*, 1881, Smith indicates that there is no record of lands purchased from Indians by William Beekman, who was the first European landowner in much of today's Rhinebeck.)

They were all signed by Esopus Indians. Shirley Dunn writes of Esopus Indians being allowed to live on Mohican land further north following the Esopus Wars, and John Michael Smith believes the Esopus Indians in Rhinebeck were similarly recent transplants.¹⁶

"Native land sales occurring in the North Ward before the Pawling purchase, associated with the Schuyler [Red Hook] and Kipsbergen [waterfront Rhinebeck/Rhinecliff] Patents in 1683 and 1686 were made by Esopus Indians independent of Wappinger participation. These areas, however, were not traditionally Esopus lands, and their appearance in deeds east of the Hudson River was part of a wider dispersal of Indian people from the Ulster County region, an aftereffect of the last Dutch-Munsee Wars fought some twenty years earlier and the first decades of English settlement there. Many of these dispossessed individuals, leaders of extended family kin-groups, also appear with increasing frequency as participants to clearly defined Mohican land sales along the Roeliff Jansen Kill and Catskill Creek in neighboring colonial Albany County... Esopus expatriates remained in these areas well into the eighteenth century, where their descendents were eventually noted as small but viable components of the Moravian mission stations established at Shekomeko and Wechquadnach in the 1740s..." (Ibid, Smith, J Michael)

¹⁵ Page 88

¹⁶ Three of the deeds are fairly well clustered in the same area along the Hudson, all falling within the Town of Rhinebeck. But there was one that was confusing to me. From January 3, 1683, it regarded land "near Magdalen Island," which is squarely in Red Hook, and also squarely within the Schuyler Patent. It conveyed that land to "Capt. Jan Bachter". I understood Schuyler to be the first European to own the land in that area, so I don't know what to make of this information. Perhaps others who have more knowledge of these matters can make sense of it. John also indicated that he is currently "working on a book with a Dutch Historian that will document this material in much more detail".

The Indians who lived in the Town of Rhinebeck are commonly referred to as the Sepascots. I found very little information about them and which tribe they belonged to. The only thing I came across that was specific on this point was written by Steve Hopkins in his article Indian Winters in the Hudson Valley Chronic. “The Sepascots, actually a clan of Munsee Delaware from the west side of the river, settled at Rhinebeck, and would follow a three-mile-long trail along the Landsman’s Kill to their principal seat at Sepasco Lake.” He indicates that it is unclear whether the Sepascots were related to the Esopus Indians involved in the land sales in Rhinebeck along the Hudson, just west of Beekman’s patent. He also doesn’t indicate whether they were relative newcomers, having migrated after the Dutch arrived, which would be consistent with what Jon Michael Smith and Shirley Dunn have written, or if they lived there prior to that.¹⁷

Sadly, Steve has lost his notes since he wrote the article and does not remember where he got this information. He spent a good deal of time exploring “a rich trove of information from a number of ancient, crumbling texts, the names and authors of which escape me, that I was allowed to reference during a spate of research at the FDR library.” So I have not been able to verify what he writes and there is likely far more to be learned by someone who investigates the question further.

Jeff Golden is the Founder and President of the Common Fire Foundation (www.commonfire.org). He did the work behind this paper as an independent researcher. He can be reached at jgolden@commonfire.org.

¹⁷ Hopkins, Steve, “Indian winter - The story of Native Americans in Dutchess County”, Hudson Valley Chronic, Volume 1 No. 2, 2006, http://www.hvchronic.com/volume_1/no_2/006_Indians_page_1.html