

Appendix: Moodna Cultural Connections -- Maringamus' Wigwam

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Murderers' Creek

At the time of European contact, the Moodna Creek was called the Waoraneck. Since at least the Orange County Charter of 1683, the lower part of the Moodna Creek towards the Hudson River was known as "Murderers' Creek." The upper part of the creek is known as the Otterkill, reflecting the abundance of river otters during early settlement. River ships sailed up the Moodna then.

The origin of this name, "Murderers' Creek," is unknown. The crime is unknown. The identities of the "murderers" are unknown. In an 1875 atlas, "Murdners" is written close to "Muringuius Wigwam," but there is no evidence that Maringamus was a murderer. Rather, at least in his middle and later years he was known as friendly to settlers; he visited their homes and churches, and may have been a friend of Vincent Matthews, known as the first settler in the Washingtonville area.

A legend, "Naoman," may be relevant. It tells of the murder by a local tribe angry at the incursions of settlers: murder of a settler family who lived at the mouth of the Moodna, and murder of the elderly Native friend who came to warn them. During the nineteenth century, this popular tale was printed in the National Reader.

Maringamus' "Wigwam" and "Castle"

Maringamus and Awessewe were principal chiefs of the Waoraneck Indians in the Highlands. Between 1685 and 1704, Maringamus was a signer of at least four (Dongan, Kakiat, and first and second Cheescocks) Indian Deeds. Popularly known as the "last Indian Chief" in the Washingtonville area, he was alive in 1756 --- reputedly about a hundred years old.

His "wigwam" was along the Moodna Creek. However, it seems that that the very word "wigwam" is questionable. "Wigwam" may have indicated a village.

In time, there was more than one "wigwam," at least several --- if not many ---strung along the Moodna. One home may have been a longhouse near the Village of Washingtonville, where a "colored" man named Henry Page lived, another may have been in Hamptonburgh, another in Salisbury Mills, and later a small stone home in the settlers' style in Mountainville. Some of his "wigwams" were at the same sites as the homes of Vincent Matthews.

There was also a "castle" or village, perhaps used for defensive purposes, on the nearby Schunnemunk Mountain.

MacGregories

In 1685, the first settlers in the present Orange County were Scotch Presbyterians at Plum Point. They had traveled from Maryland to settle in New Jersey, but were invited to New York by Governor Dongan. The group included: Colonel/Captain Patrick McGregorie, his wife Margaret, his brother-in-law David Toshuck (who called himself the "Laird of Minivard"), Toshuck's servant Daniel Maskrig, McCollom/Collum, about 25 others, and their families and servants. Toshuck, who established a trading-post on the south side of the Moodna at Sloop Hill, died in 1689. Captain/Colonel MacGregorie, who was appointed Muster-General of the provincial militia, and took part in a mission to French

Indians, was killed during the Leisler revolution in 1691. However, he had not completed the process of patenting his 4,000 acres at the mouth of the Moodna. Governor Dongan re-purchased it in 1684. MacGregorie's son-in-law, Captain John Evans, patented the land (as the Manor of Fletcherdon) in 1694, forcing Margaret to sell her house to him and then to lease it. She petitioned, and in 1710, 1720, and 1721 Patrick MacGregorie, Jr., was granted 660, 500, and 160 acres in compensation. The Evans Patent was annulled in 1699.

Should one wonder whether the MacGregories were the family of the Naoman legend, as Ruttenber and Clark told it in 1881 they ““were not only the first Christians that settled and improved thereon, but also peaceably and quietly possessed and enjoyed themselves during the term of their natural lives.””

Young Turkey

In 1947 a local lay historian, Dwight Akers, told a fine tale for the young about a Native youth. Long ago, Young Turkey lived in “Up-to-the Sky Village” under Skoonenoghy, “Grandfather of Mountains,” along the “lazy” small River Waranek, “mother and protector of the finny tribes”. By mistake, he killed a rattlesnake, Achkook. Because of breaking this taboo, he underwent many adventures. When he became a man, he was called Broken Arrow. [INCLUDE inside cover art].

Nathaniel Parker Willis

Nathaniel Parker Willis, poet and writer, claimed the mysterious name “Moodna,” supposedly a local community name. He wrote that it referred to a late Indian chief, probably Maringamus --- but this makes no sense. Peripatetic, when he became invalided he settled at Idlewild in Cornwall. There, in 1855, he wrote:

“The Brook of Idlewild, like myself, is beginning to lessen its individualism, at the approach of summer visitors. With the preparation for coming back of the leaves, the torrent, so lonely and loud in winter, begins to hush to a brook little heard; and its foam-clad cascades and rapids show but for common rocks, blest only in the pleasant shade that comes with their renewed insignificance. So it is! Take summer from us --- stream or man --- and, ‘with the winter of our discontent,’ comes a strengthening of the floods within us, these again stilling and lessening with the return of more genial surroundings. Come, brother brook! let us murmur contented along! What we lose in one season we gain in another --- the lonelier and colder around, the louder and prouder in ourselves --- the bleaker, the stronger --- the drearier, the more clothed with music and majesty of our own.”

Prosaically, he wrote of the 1853 flood, which the local newspaper compared to an earthquake in its destruction.