

The Montauks' Long March

Newsday Jan 14-1979

—Continued from Page 5

ketts, Narragansetts (now no longer foes), Mohegans, Pequots, Tunxis, Nehantics and Wampanoags.

But the amity of Brothertown was not to last. The Oneidas came to fear the cultural innovations of the people they had welcomed with open arms. The Indians who had fled to resist change were now seen as bringers of change to the Oneida country. The Brothertown Indians, after all, cleared their land and planted crops, like the whites. They spoke English and wore American clothes. By 1831 even German immigrants apparently were considered less a threat to the Oneida ways. In that year many of the Brothertown Indians, including the



Then: William Walter Fowler,
in World War I uniform

Montauketts, sold their land to the Germans and set out west for another home.

They settled on 28,000 acres near Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, purchased from the Winnebago and Menominee tribes. This intertribal settlement thrived, and the Montauketts assumed roles of leadership and honor. The biggest shipbuilder on Lake Michigan in 1890 was Lathrop Fowler, a Montaukett, and the present county attorney of Calumet County, Wisconsin, is C. Robert Fowler, a Montaukett. Members of this community, still known as the Brothertown Indians, have also served with distinction in the Wisconsin legislature.

Today only about 50 Montauketts remain on Long Island. They keep an extremely low profile in the villages of East Hampton, Sag Harbor and Hicksville. They are unorganized and have not held a formal tribal meeting in years. Meanwhile, other well-organized tribes are taking to the lawpath to retain ancient tribal lands.

The Montauketts' onetime enemies, the proud Narragansetts, are the first East Coast tribe to win a lawsuit; they now live on 1,900 acres of their former 3,000-acre reservation in Charlestown, Rhode Island. They have been shut out of that land since 1881. In an out-of-court settlement, the Wampanoags of Gay Head, Martha's Vineyard, have won back 225 acres of the land they lost in 1870. The Penobscot and Passamaquoddy of Maine look like they may be winning their suit for \$300 million and 350,000 acres, and the Schaghticoke and Pequots of Connecticut feel certain of victory also.

On Long Island, the Shinnecocks, who live on a state-recognized reservation in Southampton, are seeking tribal recognition from the federal government and compensation for 3,200 acres of land they believe was illegally taken from them more than a century ago. My own tribe, the Catawba of South Carolina, has

*1st part missing, but has info
on Brothertown*

filed suit for 144,000 acres of land that takes in the entire city of Rock Hill and part of an amusement park. We have asked for a settlement of 32,000 acres of undeveloped land and a \$30 million economic development fund.

Attorneys for the Native American Rights Fund believe that the Montauketts have one of the best cases to make for regaining tribal land. To say that the tribe does not exist is to ignore the fact that more than 250 Montauketts are living today in Wisconsin. They have intermarried with other tribes, but still maintain an Indian culture. Their rights to Montauk land are not dependent on residence there. They are valid because of the Non-Intercourse Act of 1790, still legitimate today, which declared that no Indian land could be sold without the consent of Congress. That certainly was not the case in 1879 when Benson misled some unsuspecting Montauketts into leaving their ancestral land.

The Wisconsin branch of the tribe has kept abreast of the happenings on the East Coast. One of the Brothertown Indians drove to Rhode Island last summer to talk with the Narragansetts about their lawsuit. Then he visited what used to be Montaukett land at East Lake Drive and the Point. When he asked at the Montauk Chamber of Commerce where he could find the Montauketts, he was told, much to his amusement, that they all lived in Wisconsin.

ketts is planning to come back "home," as the "moccasin telegraph" seems to imply, there is no need for anyone to panic. Much of the land that was the reservation is



Now: Novella Pharoah
of Sag Harbor,
contemporary descendant of
Wyandanch, Montaukett chief

still in uninhabited and picturesque country.

As Joe Fowler of Wisconsin said recently, "What's wrong with making a good living in Wisconsin and enjoying a summer home by the ocean in Montauk? Everyone else enjoys it out there. Why not the Indians?"

When those Montauketts from the west come east to investigate the land claim and a suit is filed, as observers expect, we shall have ample opportunity to see if President Carter's high-sounding phrase of "human rights" applies only in other countries. Or will it also include a Long Island Indian tribe that was dispossessed 100 years ago? □

1979.65 (2)