

THE MONTAUK NATIVE AMERICANS of EASTERN LONG ISLAND



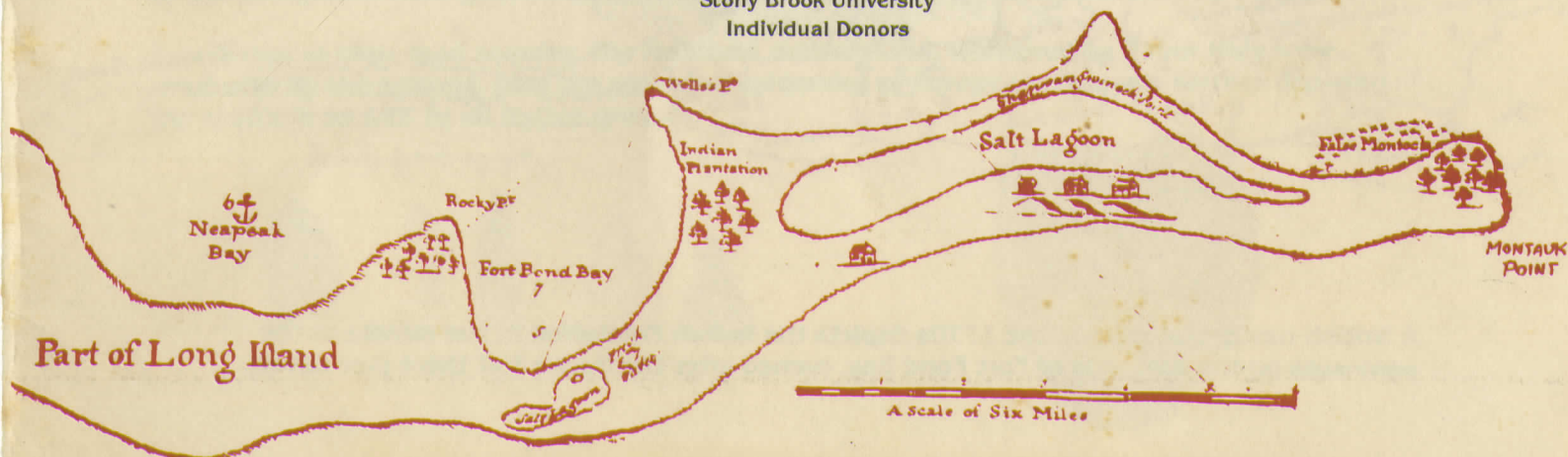
The Montauk Fowler and Pharaoh Families, 1924

Guild Hall
East Hampton, New York

February 2 - March 10, 1991

Dr. Gaynell Stone
Guest Curator

Funded by
New York Council for the Humanities
Guild Hall
Suffolk County Office of Cultural Affairs
Suffolk County Archaeological Association
Center for Excellence & Innovation in Education,
Stony Brook University
Individual Donors



THE NATIVE PRESENCE: CONTACT PERIOD, 1524-1640

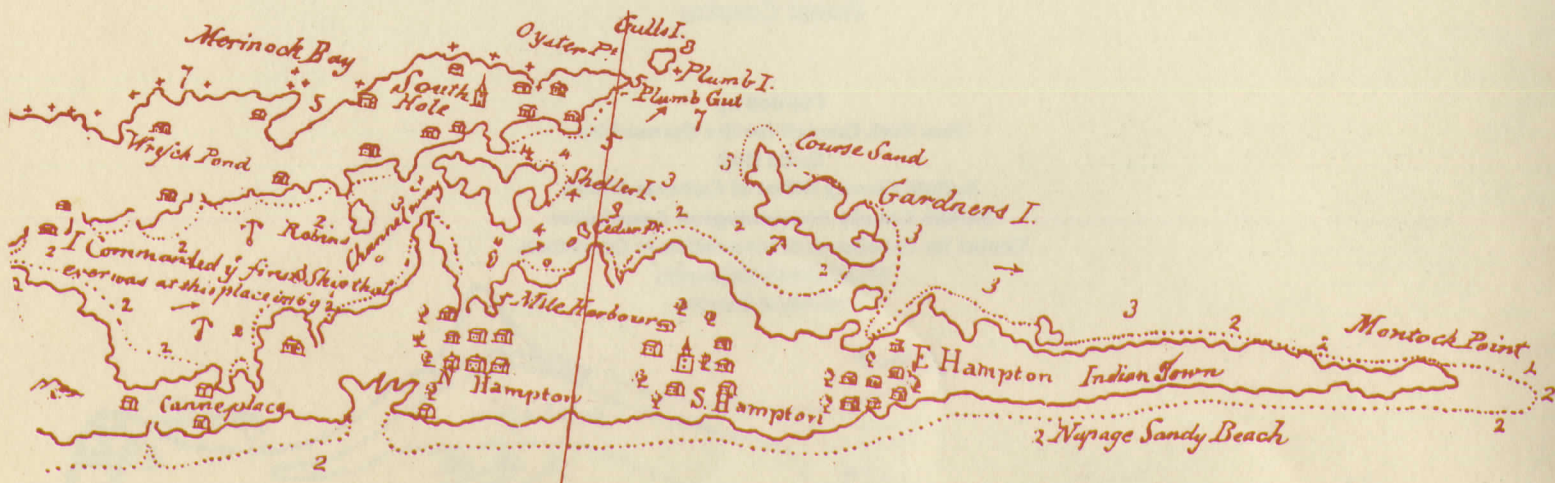
The Montauk most likely fit that description. Their first known European visitor was probably Adrian Block, who coasted around the point in 1619, naming it Visscher's Hoek (for the extensive fishing going on) and mapping Block Island.

"The people excel us in size; they are of bronze color, some inclining more to whiteness, others to tawny color; the face sharply cut, the hair long and black, upon which they bestow the greatest study in adorning it; the eyes black and alert, the bearing kind and gentle." Thus Giovanni Verrazano described the Native people he discovered in New York and Newport harbors in 1524.



John Scott's map of the Island drawn in 1655 and published in 1680 showed the village of Easthampton, the point as Wampanog, and Myantoket as the peninsula, as well as the new Native fort - the only map to do so.

By the beginning of the 1700s Southack's map of Long Island lists E. Hampton, Montock Point, Napage Sandy Beach, and **Indian Town** on the Napeage part of the peninsula.



A British navigation map of the 1770s depicts the **Indian Plantation** in the middle of the peninsula on the east side of Fort Pond Bay, named after the Native fort there (see cover).

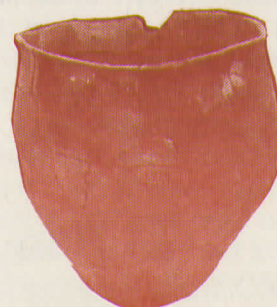
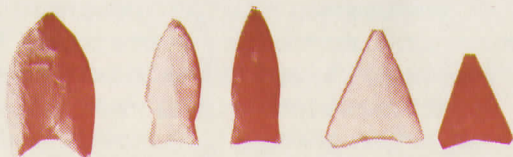
land purchase (usually referred to as a "reservation" at the tip of the point. Maps after 1880 list only the Montauk Development Company on the former Native land, reflecting the final dispersal of the Montauk off their ancestral land to enclaves in Freetown (north of East Hampton), Eastville (eastern Sag Harbor), the Shinnecock Reservation, and other areas of Long Island and the nation.

From both the documentary and map record, it is clear the first European explorers entered an inhabited area and that the subsequent colonists invaded another people's land. This was accomplished peacefully because epidemics of European diseases brought by earlier fishermen and explorers like Verrazano had decimated the Native population to about 1/10th its former size before colonization. The English justified their settlement through

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The Natives did not understand that they were 'selling' the land forever, as they had no concept of individual ownership - the bounties of Nature were for all to share. They retained the right to fish, hunt, fowl, and gather basket and wigwam materials in many deeds, which soon was taken from them as the colonists fenced the land. They thought the goods given to them by the Europeans were gifts for the use of the resources, a custom of their society.

Restriction of their food sources, the resultant malnutrition, worsened by liquor they were piled with by the settlers, plus the recurring epidemics of European diseases, further depleted the Montauk as well as all Native groups.

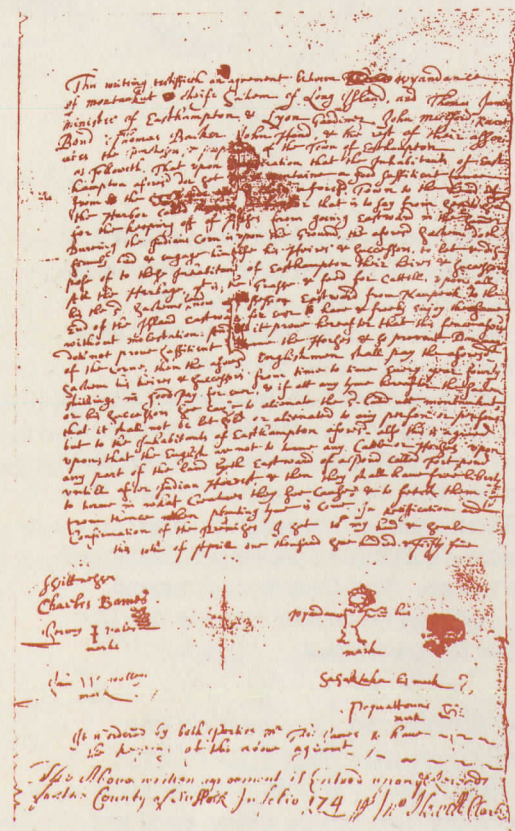


COLONIAL PERIOD, 1640-1800

Loss of the Land

A series of 16 documents were signed between the East Hampton settlers and the Montauk, each taking away more of the Natives' land, beginning in 1648 when they were paid in trade goods - coats, hoes, hatchets, knives, drills, looking glasses - for all of the land from the Southampton border to Napeague.

The treaty of 1655, prohibiting the Montauk from selling their remaining lands to anyone but East Hampton, first established Wyandance as the "chief sachem of Long Island" to facilitate land transfers as far west as Huntington. Complaints from sachems and settlers there led Governor Nicolls to declare the title void in 1665.



The 1660 deed, negotiated when the Montauk were weakened by disease, raids from the Naraganset, and the loss of Wyandance, sold the Montauk peninsula from Napeague to the point for 100 pounds sterling (or equivalent in wampum or corn) to be paid 10 pounds a year for 10 years. Residence rights on the peninsula were returned to the Montauk in the deed of 1687 with the newly-formed Trustees of the Freeholders and Commonality of Easthampton. As late as 1702 the Montauk were still complaining they had not been paid this fee.

The Montauk then began to sell land to Rip Van Dam, a wealthy merchant of New York; the alarmed Trustees quickly negotiated four separate documents in 1702 which set a "reservation" boundary; regulated grazing rights; allowed the Montauk to move back and forth between the eastern and western sides of Great Pond (Lake Montauk), but not both sides simultaneously; and banned sale of hay by the Montauk and limited the amount of livestock they could raise. These limitations effectively prevented the growth of the Montauk population.

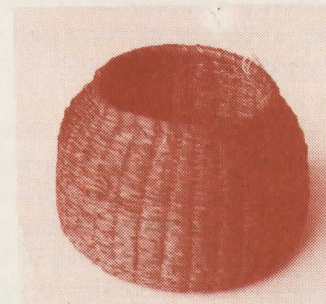
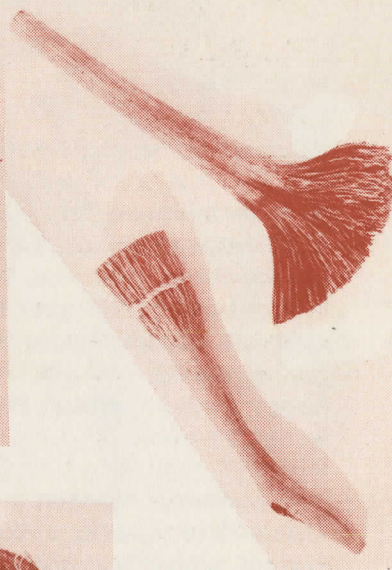
In 1719 the Trustees required a 100 pound bond of the Montauk to prohibit any Native Americans other than Montauk to live there. The population dropped to about 160 people by the 1740s. In 1754 the Montauk agreed to a further proviso that no "mustees or mulattos" would be allowed to live at Montauk, further limiting the group's size, to hasten their demise.

By 1794 the Montauk were prohibited by the Trustees to graze horses which were not their own - another sanction to reduce economic viability. A census of the Montauk was sent to the Long Island Assemblymen in Albany to prove they were "true blooded natives" in 1806 - to forestall eviction?

A Petition to the New York Assembly in 1800 by Benjamin and Stephen Pharaoh explains why the Montauk appeared to accept these repressive measures: "...the war being ended between us and the Narowganset tribe, we demanded the deeds; but they would not give them up, but said they would let us improve at Certain Seasons of the year A certain part of the land as by A lease - which we being the weaker party was obliged to consent..."



How quickly the Montauk became attached to European trade goods is revealed by objects found at the turn of the century in a 17th and early 18th century burial ground at Pantigo. Among the wide range of export wares was a late 17th century glass bottle with the name 'Wobetom' carved on it - a material link with this period, as Wobetom put his symbol on several of the deeds alienating the Montauk land. Eighty percent of the Natives signing the deeds used their personal symbol, the remainder signed an 'X'.



New Lifeways Economic

The Montauk participated in the new European economic system by using their traditional skills: hunting to provide game and fowl for colonists' tables; woodworking to make bowls, scrubs, tools, toys, and later, houses and mills; craft work to make baskets, eelpots, and rush and cane bottoms for chairs. They also participated in the economy by purchasing their guns and sometimes furniture from the local Dominyn family of craftsmen.

But the most lucrative - and dangerous - occupation for Montauk men was shore whaling. The settlers located East Hampton where it is in order to participate in the Whaling Designe; besides piracy, this was a get-rich-quick enterprise - one year's profit on the oil could purchase a farm.

17/Sceelener and Shotnose
(1675)

EASTHAMPTON July ye 4 anno 1675.
Book O, page 46.—Know all men by these presents yt wee ye vnder written have & by these presents Doe engag our selves in our owne persons to goe to Sea for James Sceelener & James Loper both of Easthampton uppon the Designe of Whaling to ye utmost of our abyliens to kill Cui & save ye same for the above named & to Continue in ye Designe During ye Whole season next ensuing ye Date hereof & to attend all opportunities for ye advantageing of ye said Designe in such boates and places as ye afore named shall place or appoint us to go in uppon ye south side of Long Island & to ye true & faithful performance hereof wee Each of us byrde ourselves in the sum of ten pound Sterlinge for him yt Shall fayle in not performinge according to this Engagemēt unto ye afore named James; and James & soe to Continue in ye afore named their service and Designe vntill the Expiration of ye said season: For & In Consideration whereof the aforesaid James & James by these presents Doe byrde & engage themselves in ye aforesaid sum to provide all necessarie Craf for the vefulnes of ye said Designe & to allow unto us & to bee by vs gontes or obtained During ye said terme of time afore named & to Car ye same: yt is to say to cart it 12 miles from East to West to some Convenient place where it may bee tryed or boyled out into Oyle soe farr as is needfull to the truth hereof wee all set to our hands this Day aforesaid.

Shotnose E his mark
Jeuirewell S his marke
Addams his H mark
mech graes W his mark
Sungachose Jt his mark
wewest sowet W mark
Pereuse 200y his mark
Wecomp R his Ma
Hoboneck C15 his
umhous y his mark
Jambouack R Quail mark
Checa A no his mark
hames N his mark.

Signed and sealed
and delivered in
presence of
Samuell Terrell
Reinock Garrison.

Source: H. Hodge, ed., *Records of the Town of Easthampton*, Vol. I, Sag Harbor: Mont. 1877, pp. 278-279.



The Montauk skilled at whaling were eagerly sought after by those engaged in the trade. Their pay at first was low (a coat and gunpowder for the season), but with competition for the best by the whaleboat owners, the amount of goods increased and bribes of liquor were offered. The Town government passed laws prohibiting traders from stealing each other's men, creating monopolies to stifle competition, and punishing Montauk who did not fulfill a season's contract.



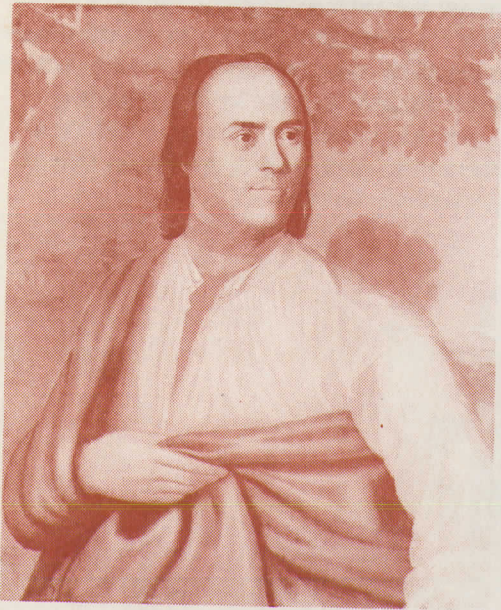
New Lifeways

Missionization and Education

In order to make the Natives a tractable part of the European order, it was essential to Christianize them. The Rev. Thomas James preached to them, gave the Montauk shelter near the village during their problems with the Narragansett, and got them to sell from Napeague to Montauk Point to himself and a few other men.

Rev. James composed a Catechism in the Montauk language, a variant of Mohegan-Pequot, which has not been found.

More attention to the Natives of Long Island was needed, so the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel sent the Rev. Azariah Horton, originally of Southold, to minister to them from 1740 to 1750. Staying and preaching in their wigwams, he traveled a circuit from Jamaica to Montauk, but spending more time at Montauk.



After Horton left for New Jersey, Samson Occom, a Mohegan of Connecticut, came to Montauk to minister and to educate them. Occom was an exceptionally talented man, not formally educated until 16, but mastering English, Greek, and Latin, as well as theology beginning in 1743. By 1750 he was teaching at Montauk and married a Montauk, Mary Fowler; later he was ordained a Presbyterian minister by East Hampton's Rev. Samuel Buell. Because of his presence, the Montauk were probably the best educated Native group on Long Island.



He and his brother-in-law, David Fowler, also educated by Wheelock, traveled to Oneida from 1761 on to preach to and educate the Iroquois. His Christian Cards and wood alphabet blocks, developed while teaching at Montauk, indicate his unique teaching ability. His extraordinary skill at preaching led his teacher, the Rev. Eleazar Wheelock, to send him to England to raise funds for a school for Indians.

This performance led the Earl of Dartmouth to provide funds for what became Dartmouth College - no longer a school for Native Americans. He also composed hymns to Native melodies, some of which are still sung in Presbyterian churches today. Throughout his pastoral career, his salary was about half that of his white colleagues; besides teaching, he was forced to garden, bind books, and perform other chores in order to support his family.



Political Relations

The Montauk participated in many campaigns of the French and Indian War (1754-63): Capt. John Budd's company of Southold, Campaign of 1758, included John Peter, Silvester, Jacob Weagut, Josiah Gonnick, James Warbaton, and Joseph Jeffery. Capt. Stephen Sayre's company of Suffolk, Campaign of 1759, included Anthony Fowler, Adam Pharow, Joseph Jeffery, Ned Gardner, Henry Indian, Joash Indian, Hannibal Gonnick, John Charles, Samson, etc. The Campaigns of 1760 and 1761 included ten other Montauk; Connecticut militia companies enlisted Samuel and George Pharow. Their service did nothing to secure the Montauk better treatment at home.

The Montauk and the Province of New York

A Huron beaded sash was presented to Rev. Buell by Sir William Johnson, Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Province of New York, while visiting Samson Occom at his Montauk home in 1773; the reason for this visit is believed to be Johnson's attempt to keep the Montauk loyal to the British in the looming conflict. Occom and his Native colleagues tried to remain neutral in the Revolutionary War, but among the 'reservation' Montauk there was a split; the Pharaohs, Fowlers, Hanibals, and Gonnicks had men serving the rebels. Abraham Quaw was the only Montauk to sign East Hampton's "Articles of Association" before the Revolutionary War; a Quaw has fought in every major conflict of the United States government.



Migration to Brothertown, New York

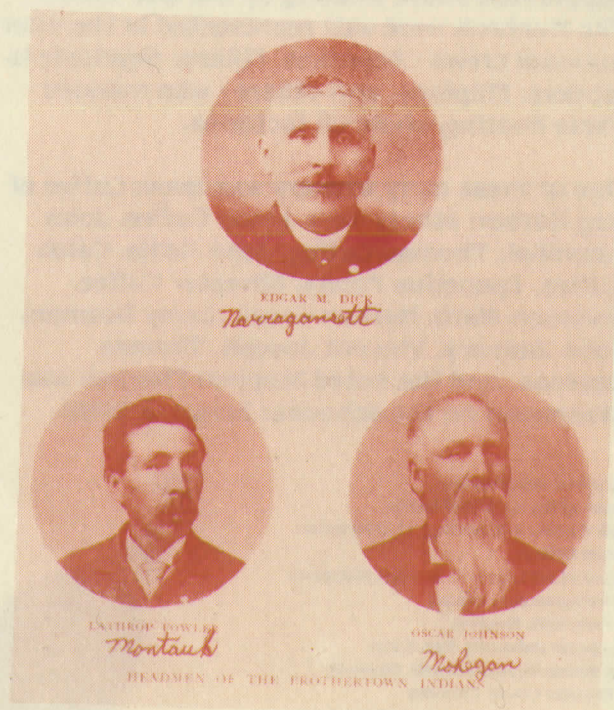
"...we have moved in the bush for winter quarters. And have as often had our wigwams torn down and what is still more (serious)... they (Town Trustees) have sometimes burnt them, scarcely giving us time to get out doors..." Montauk Petition to the New York State Assembly, 1800

Knowing that the Montauk could not survive in the oppressive situation created by the Town Trustees, Occom led the movement to create a town for the remnant Native groups of New England in the Oneida Territory, away from the negative influences of the whites. A first migration occurred in 1775, with 13 Montauk going.



The movement was stopped by the Revolutionary War, but by 1784 the second migration was underway, and included the David and Jacob Fowler families, the Samuel and Obadiah Scipio families, the Peter(s) family, the Benjamin and Ephraim Pharaoh families, the Joseph Johnson family, and Samson Occom's family.

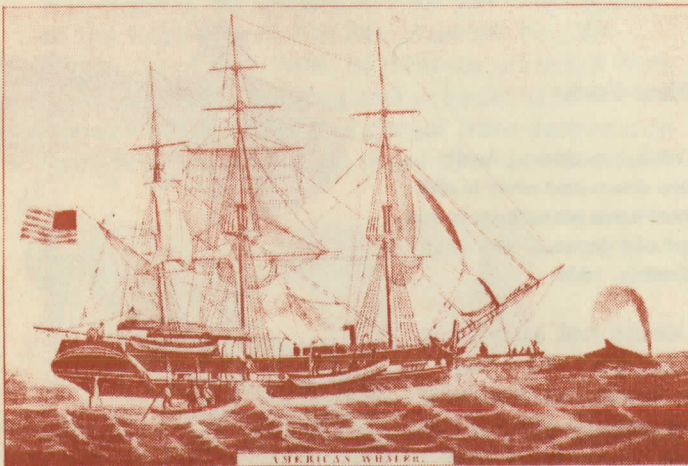
Occom died there in 1792; by the early 1800s the Brothertons were being pushed off their land by trespassing settlers. They finally located in Brothertown, Wisconsin on the shores of Lake Winnebago. They were the first Native tribe in the U.S. to become American citizens in the 1820s, but after they were urged by the government to divide their land, their reservation was lost.



THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The Montauk were increasingly dispersing from the 'reservation' at the tip of Montauk peninsula, and were appearing (through the Federal censuses) in Southampton, East Hampton, Sag Harbor, Southold, Greenport, Brookhaven Town, Smithtown, Oyster Bay, and New York City - usually as laborers, farm hands, domestic servants, seamstresses, etc.

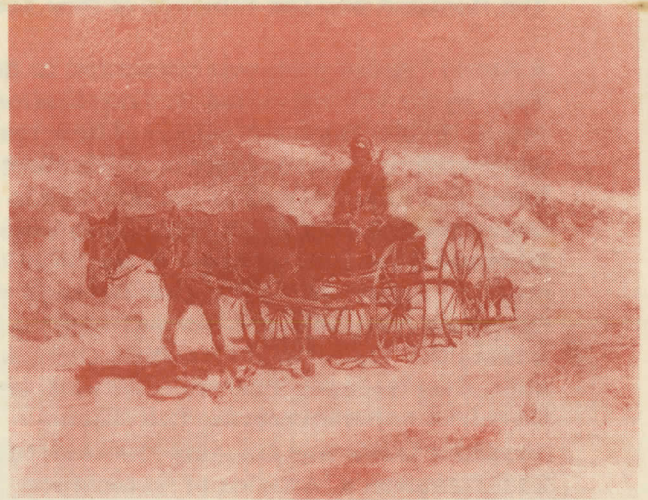
On the 'reservation' the Montauk continued trapping fur animals for the pelts, shooting fowl, harvesting oysters, raising their stock and gardens. Ice and perch were harvested at the ponds in winter; berries were picked and sold for money for shoes. They continued their craft work, making bowls, squaw brooms, scrubs, and baskets.



Still the most lucrative (and dangerous) occupation was the ocean whaling which had supplanted shore whaling by the late 1700s. The Montauk were well represented in the international crews - Azoreans, Fijians, Seychelle Islanders, Filipinos, and others - who manned these floating whale oil factories.

One of these early whalers was Isaac Cuffee of Sag Harbor; others were Jason Cuffee, John Hannibal, Thomas Cuffee, John Kells, Caleb Cuffee, Epenetius Peters, Silvester Cuffee, Solomon Ward, Nathan Green, Leroy Beaman, John January, Vincent Joseph, Thomas Beaman, and the noted Stephen Pharaoh was steersman on the schooner Susan in 1860.

Illustrations courtesy of --
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Red Thunder Cloud, Catawba



Other occupations were related to the increasing tourism on the East End: driving bathers to the beach in a buggy, delivering ice, working in the hotel. Another source of income was exhibiting themselves as Indian Royalty at county fairs, or excelling in sports, such as the noted pedestrian racer, Stephen Talkhouse Pharaoh, who was signed by P.T. Barnum.

This increasing tourism sparked the sale of Montauk peninsula by the Town Trustees to Arthur Benson in 1879 for development as a resort. The remaining Montauk families were 'bought out; they say lied to. Two houses were moved off Montauk to Freetown, the others were burned and all their possessions stolen, according to Maria Pharaoh's **Autobiography**. A court case was begun by the Montauk in 1896 to regain their land; it continued until 1917 and bankrupted them. Judge Abel Blackmar declared to more than 20 Montauk in the courtroom and scores waiting outside that the tribe had ceased to exist and that they had therefore lost their claim to the reservation.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Descendants of the original Montauk Natives still live in East Hampton and Sag Harbor, as well as Amityville and Huntington, Nassau County and points in between. They are nurses, factory workers, policemen, shop owners, mechanics, computer analysts, and many other occupations. They may be your neighbors. Since they do not live on a reservation, they are not as visible as the Shinnecock and Poospatuck who do.

Those who migrated to Brothertown, New York now live in Brothertown, Wisconsin and throughout the United States. They have married into many of the Northeastern Native tribes and live on many reservations throughout the country.

4/20/1994