

Carroll Yesteryears
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A Pledge to Honor and Support Native Americans
By David Buie

The holiday season is in full swing, and there is much to celebrate. The two holidays that immediately come to mind are Thanksgiving and Christmas, but the entire month of November was designated Native American Heritage Month in 1990 by President George W. Bush.

From November 1 to November 30, Native American Heritage Month honors the remarkable group of people who have contributed so much to the story of our nation. This month is also known as American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month. Regardless of the name, acknowledgement raises awareness and educates all people about the challenges Native Americans have faced and continue to face. Let's pledge to recognizing and supporting the remaining Native Americans not just during November but throughout the year.

Native Americans inhabited or passed through Carroll County for thousands of years before Europeans settled there. As a result, Native American archaeological sites and artifacts have been found in many parts of the county.

At the time of the European colonization of North America, the Susquehannock and Lenape were the dominant indigenous nations. Manchester, situated at the intersection of two important Native American trails, was a camping site used until the arrival of European colonists who were aware of their existence.

Because of the widespread presence of Native Americans, many artifacts have been unearthed since the early 1900s. In 1926, a Westminster paper reported, "John H. Martin, this city, while helping to shock wheat on the Irvin L. Hunter farm, Sullivan road, Monday afternoon, saw a peculiar stone and was attracted by the groove in the rock. On picking it up, he at once recognized it as an Indian tomahawk and in a remarkable state of preservation. Only two have been found near here in recent years." Technically speaking, this should have been called a "stone axe." The likelihood that it was ever used in warfare is small, but the fact it was found on a cultivated field in the twentieth century is remarkable.

In 1941, a Union Bridge paper featured a picture of a large grinding stone on someone's lawn. The stone would have been used for pulverizing corn, nuts, and beans. Perhaps the Native Americans who originally owned it also had a cooking pot made of soapstone. Near Marriottsville, at the eastern edge of Carroll County, there was plenty of the soft rock called soapstone which could easily be shaped into water-holding vessels with a few stone or antler tools.

Metarhyolite, a very fine-grained volcanic rock found in Frederick County and Adams County, Pennsylvania, was preferred for fashioning projectile points and scraping and cutting tools. It's a pretty shade of lavender-gray. Native Americans living in the mid-Atlantic region traded this rock widely because it made such superior tools and they traveled great distances to gather it.

Amateur and professional archaeologists have excavated the Pine Valley Park site in Manchester where groups of hunters and gatherers may have started camping 5,000 to 3,000 years before the present. Archaeologist Stephen Israel noted that their findings include “stone spear points, knives, scrapers, shaft strengtheners, drills, and other stone tools from the Hunters and Gatherers Prehistoric Period.”

Teachers, Scout leaders, and others can borrow an educational trunk containing objects of local Native American life and lesson ideas from the Historical Society of Carroll County for a small fee. Contact the Office Manager at 410-848-6494, ext. 200.

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Photo caption: Sample of stone tools found in northeastern Carroll County at a Native American site dating from 5,000 to 3,000 years before the present. The tools are made of metarhyolite and include small projectile points, larger points or knives, an “engraver” with a pointed tip, and a scraping tool.