

# Two Delaware Valley Indian Place Names

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**B**ECAUSE DATA essential for the analysis of *Queonemysing* and *Mageckqueshou* have recently come to the attention of the present writers, these names are treated here together in spite of the fact that they designated places in widely separate parts of the Delaware Valley.

## I. Queonemysing

Seventeen years ago, while preparing a volume on the Indians of the Brandywine River area,<sup>1</sup> one of the writers [CAW] began a search into the source of the name *Queonemysing*,<sup>2</sup> a search which has only recently come to a successful conclusion. The name appears on a historical marker erected in 1924 by joint action of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission and the Delaware County (Pennsylvania) Historical Society, but when inquiries were directed to these institutions both referred to Albert Cook Myers as their authority.

That there was a historic Leni Lenape village in the big bend of the Brandywine is fully established in a number of contemporary sources; for example, it is clearly marked — although unnamed — on the well-known Taylor-Pierson map of 1701. Myers apparently supplied the name and composed the rest of the inscription on the marker, which reads in part as follows: QUEONEMYSING INDIAN TOWN WAS LOCATED ON THE OTHER SIDE OF BRANDYWINE CREEK FROM HERE IN THE GREAT BEND[.] RAT-TLESNAKE TRAIL LED THENCE OVER POINT LOOKOUT TO THE ROCKS ON CHRISTINA CREEK IN PRESENT

<sup>1</sup> C. A. Weslager, *Red Men on the Brandywine* (Wilmington, Delaware, 1953).

<sup>2</sup> G. P. Donehoo enters the name in his *History of the Indian Villages and Place Names in Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, 1928) as designating "a former village of the Unami Clan of the Delaware, situated in the big bend of Brandywine Creek," but he gives no primary source for the name, nor does he attempt an interpretation. The land within the great bend of the Brandywine is in Birmingham Township, Delaware County, Pennsylvania, just north of the Delaware-Pennsylvania border; cf. the West Chester Quadrangle (1904) of the United States Geological Survey.

WILMINGTON[.]<sup>3</sup> Since Myers' reputation as a reliable historian was well established, it seemed certain that he was working from an unrevealed source, but a letter to him about *Queonemysing* brought forth a reply, dated January 12, 1949, to the effect that at his advanced years he could not keep up with such requests, and he referred the questioner to the institutions previously consulted. His poor health, and subsequent death, closed this second avenue of inquiry.

In 1966, the mystery was solved when one of the writers [again CAW], with the assistance of Dr. Albright Zimmerman, began a search of the several hundred boxes of the as-yet uncataloged Albert Cook Myers papers, now in the possession of the Chester County Historical Society in West Chester, Pennsylvania. In a box numbered 84, stored in the attic, they found not one, but two clues, to the early occurrence of the name *Queonemysing*. The first, chronologically speaking, is in a document dated August 16, 1709, now found among the Chew papers in the manuscript room of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania,<sup>4</sup> but formerly, when noted by Myers on October 1, 1924, in the hands of Mrs. Samuel Chew at "Cliveden," Germantown. A transcription of this document follows.

The 16th day of the 6 month called August 1709.

Then Received of George Harlan of Brandy Wine Creeck in the County of Chester Husbandman on the account of Governour Penn & by order of the Comm[issio]n[er]s of Property the Sum of Twenty five pounds of currant money of Pensilvani[a] being in part of the Purchase of the land at Brandy Wine Creeck made & concluded by agreement Between the s[ai]d Comm[issio]n[er]s & us whose names are hereunto Subscribed. Survivors — Being the Natives of the Soil & Especially for the Tract of Land whereon the Indian Town was Scituate called Quineomessinque. Witness our hands the day & Year first above written.

Testis

Samuel Hollingsworth

John Heald


Ezekiel Harlan

his

Shekcok  knacan<sup>5</sup>

mark

his

Cheh  hakaktue

mark

<sup>3</sup> A photographic reproduction of the marker appears opposite p. 94 in *William Penn, His Own Account of the Leni Lenape or Delaware Indians, 1683* (ed. Albert Cook Myers, Moylan, Pennsylvania, 1937). <sup>4</sup> Item 15 of package 3.

<sup>5</sup> The name is variously spelled (the endorsement of this document, for example, giving it as "Sheeckonickan"), but Checochinican is the form preferred by CAW and used in *Red Men on the Brandywine*.

The second document, which gives the name in a somewhat different form (the one Myers adopted), was recorded in a New Castle County (Delaware) deed book 18 years later, as follows:

The depositions of Alphonses Kirk aged about sixty six years of age John Gregg aged about fifty nine years of age and Ezekiel Harlane aged about forty six years of age they being Solemn [1] y attested Deposeth as followeth that they near or about forty years ago or thereabouts they the said Deponents being very well acquainted with a certain Road a small foot path leading up from the Rocks of Christiana leading up the Woods to an Indian Town called Queonemysing which said Road Leading Cross a Runn named rattle snake Runn and the said Road by some was called Rattle snake Road which said place wee have Hewed and Blazed a Spanish Oak with four Blazes above some Old Marks and further sayeth not. Alphonsus Kirk John Gregg Ezekiel Harlan Christiana hundred the 25th of February 1725/6 — Taken before us Charles Springer John Richardson Recorded the 28th of March 1727 Jos Fox D Rr<sup>6</sup>

Unearthing two forms of an Indian geographical name is one thing, but giving an acceptable interpretation of the name on the strength of such a meager record (scribal inaccuracy being what it was) is something else again. If the earlier form is a better representation of the name proper than the later one (the usual assumption), it is possible that *Quineomessingue* reflects the following elements: *quin-*, “long”<sup>7</sup> and perhaps, by extension, “much,” “many”; *names-*, “fish” — presumably of a small variety<sup>8</sup>; and the familiar locative suffix, *-ingue* (i.e., *-ink*). As the sum of the elements we suggest — not without some hesitation — the following: “at the place (i.e., river) of many fish,” a sense which is paralleled in part by the Swedish name for the Brandywine, *Fiskiekijlen*, “the fish kill (i.e., stream).”<sup>9</sup>

## II. Mageckqueshou

Of the numerous Lenape names recorded in colonial days for features in and around Trenton, three are perhaps better known than any of the others: *Asinpinck* “at the stony water,” *Atsayonck*

<sup>6</sup> Deed Book *H* of volume I, p. 91.

<sup>7</sup> D. G. Brinton, *A Lenape-English Dictionary* (Philadelphia, 1888), p. 122.

<sup>8</sup> Brinton, *Legends*, p. 243; cf. Brinton, *Dictionary*, p. 90, and J. H. Trumbull, “On the Composition of Indian Geographical names,” *Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society*, II (1870), 42.

<sup>9</sup> A. R. Dunlap, *Dutch and Swedish Place-Names in Delaware* (Newark, Delaware, 1956), p. 27.

“at the place of stones,” and *Sankhickan* “flint at the end of the flow”<sup>10</sup>; but a fourth name, *Mageckqueshou*, to employ the form appearing on the Jansson-Vischer series of maps (ca. 1650 and later), also appears frequently in the records, as the following list of examples, all showing scribal variation, makes sufficiently clear: 1651 *Mechechasou*, 1659 *Meggeckessou*, 1659 *Mekkeksjouuw*, 1659 *Meggeckosjou*, 1660 *Meggeckessouuw*, 1661 *Meggeckosjouuw*, 1662 *Mecheckesjouuw*, 1662 *Meggeckesjouuw*, 1663 *Meggeckesjouuw*.<sup>11</sup> The first element here is probably *macheu* “great,”<sup>12</sup> but the meaning of the rest of the name remained unclear, at least to the present writers, until they discovered, in a deposition dated 1684, a statement about a Swedish land purchase “from an Indian king Named Kekesik-kun,” the upper limit of which was “as far as over against [i.e., across from] Mekaquatshoe eight miles above Burlington.”<sup>13</sup> The form recorded in this document suggests that the second element of the name bears a relationship to *Atsayonck* (otherwise *Atsayonok*, i.e., *atsayon* plus a locative ending; *Axion*; etc.<sup>14</sup>) and reflects *achsin*, “stone.”<sup>15</sup> Thus the full name seems to mean “at the great stone,” if one assumes that the name ended with the customary locative.

It still remains to determine, if possible, to what feature the name *Mageckqueshou* was applied. Fernow, who edited volume XII of *New York Colonial Documents*, said that it referred to Trenton Falls,<sup>16</sup> but the term “falls” must be used here with caution. In the journal of the Dutch traveler Jasper Danckaerts, under date of

<sup>10</sup> For the first name see Peter Lindström, *Geographia Americæ* (ed. Amandus Johnson, Philadelphia, 1925), p. 310; for the second and third names see A. R. Dunlap and C. A. Weslager, “Toponymy of the Delaware Valley as Revealed by an Early Seventeenth-Century Dutch Map,” *Bulletin of the Archeological Society of New Jersey*, XV–XVI (1958), 7.

<sup>11</sup> These are all from *New York Colonial Documents*, as follows: I, 598; XII, 255, 273, 286, 315, 355, 370, 384, 446.

<sup>12</sup> D. G. Brinton, *A Lenape-English Dictionary*, p. 68.

<sup>13</sup> A. R. Dunlap and C. A. Weslager, “More Missing Evidence: Two Depositions by Early Swedish Settlers,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XCI (1967), 38.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. C. A. Weslager, “Robert Evelyn’s Indian Tribes and Place-Names of New Albion,” *Bulletin of the Archeological Society of New Jersey*, IX (1954), 9–10; Dunlap and Weslager, “Toponymy . . .,” *ibid.*, XV–XVI, 7.

<sup>15</sup> Brinton, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> *New York Colonial Documents*, XII, 255.

November 17, 1679, one finds the following description of the falls (so-called):

As . . . we had heard so much of the falls of the South River . . . we went . . . to look at them. . . We had supposed it was a place, where the water came tumbling down in great quantity and force from a great height above, over a rock into an abyss, as the word *falls* would seem to imply, and as we had heard and read of the falls of the North River, and other rivers. But these falls of the South River are nothing more than a place of about two English miles in length, or not so much, where the river is full of stones, almost across it, which are not very large, but in consequence of the shallowness, the water runs rapidly and breaks against them, causing some noise, but not very much, which place, if it were necessary, could be made navigable on one side. As no Europeans live above the falls, they may so remain.<sup>17</sup>

But this is by no means the sum of our information about rocky shallows in the Trenton sector of the Delaware River. An earlier Dutch writer, Andries Hudde, spoke of "the first fall" and, above that, "the Great Falls,"<sup>18</sup> and the Swedish engineer and geographer, Peter Lindeström, left us a map which shows not only one, but two, stretches of rocky shallows, both about two English miles in length, the upper part of the first (or lower) one being at *Packquimensi Sippus* (which Amandus Johnson, Lindeström's editor, somewhat hesitatingly, but with probable correctness, identifies as Crosswicks Creek), and the lower part of the second one being close to what Lindeström called "the shore of sanckikan." This second shallows is designated, on the Lindeström map, *Asinpinck Affallet* (i.e., *avfallet*, "the race"). But farther up the river is what Lindeström called *Fallet Asinpinck*, i.e., "the Asinpinck falls," by which he undoubtedly meant the main falls, or the place where the declivity began.<sup>19</sup>

It is unfortunate that nothing these writers say tends to confirm Fernow's association of *Mageckqueshou* with the falls of the Delaware in any of its sectors. There are two pieces of evidence, however, which help to answer the question of location. For one thing, the 1684 deposition cited above places *Mageckqueshou* (or *Mekaquatshoe*) on the river eight miles above Burlington, which would put it in the

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<sup>17</sup> *Journal of Jasper Danckaerts* (ed. B. B. James and J. F. Jameson, New York, 1913), p. 96.

<sup>18</sup> *New York Colonial Documents*, XII, 32.

<sup>19</sup> Lindeström, *op. cit.*, facing p. 156; also *ibid.*, pp. 165, 309–10 (but note that our interpretation of "Affallet" differs from the one given on p. 309).

vicinity of the first shallows; and for another, *Mageckqueshou* was an important point on the trail which linked Manhattan to the South River settlements,<sup>20</sup> and the Lindeström map just mentioned shows this trail running through the New Jersey land adjoining the first shallows. In sum, then, *Mageckqueshou* probably designated a large stone, or perhaps a stony area, either on the eastern bank of the river or in the river itself near the eastern bank, at or near the place where the route from Manhattan came to the Delaware.

Finally a word about the Lenape name *Machihachansio* (as recorded in a Dutch document<sup>21</sup>) or *Mechakanzjiää*, otherwise *Maghchachansie* (as recorded by the Swedish writer Israel Acrelius<sup>22</sup>). The final element, *-sio*, is apparently, like *-shoe* or *-xio(n)*, a remnant of *achsin*; the first element seems to be a form of *macheu*; and the middle element is probably a shortened form of *hakihakan*, "field," "plantation."<sup>23</sup> Thus the full meaning might be (if one assumes a locative ending) "at the great stone field." That the name was used, like *Mageckqueshou*, in the neighborhood of the first shallows of the Delaware is to be inferred not only from the source documents cited, but also from Lindeström's *Geographia Americae*, where the abbreviated form *Mechansio* designates a hill (with Swedish *berg*), an island (with Dutch *eiland*), and a stream (with Lenape *sippus*), as follows: *Mechansio Bergh*, *Mechansio Eijlandh*, *Mechansio Sippus*.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps *Machihachansio* represents a fuller form of *Mageckqueshou*, one in which the concept of small land area, guessed at in our interpretation of *Mageckqueshou* above, is given actual expression.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, *New York Colonial Documents*, XII, 286, 315, 413, 414.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 292. Cf. *Narratives of Early Pennsylvania, West New Jersey, and Delaware* (ed. Albert Cook Myers, New York, 1912), p. 75, and *Narratives of New Netherland* (ed. J. F. Jameson, New York, 1909), p. 315 (but note that Jameson's location of the feature is erroneous).

<sup>22</sup> *A History of New Sweden* (Philadelphia, 1874), p. 57.

<sup>23</sup> Brinton, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>24</sup> Lindeström, *op. cit.*, map facing p. 156; also *ibid.*, p. 161.