

2020 GRADUATES

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## Cricket Club considers its logo, history has few answers

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The Cricket Club is considering retiring its logo depicting a Native American. A similar logo used for decades by the Washington Redskins of the NFL was retired this week.

**by George McNeely**

A “trending” topic in and around Chestnut Hill these days is the Native American head as the logo for the Philadelphia Cricket Club. This is particularly true in light of the Washington Redskins announcement this week that it would retire its nickname and logo, which resembles the one used by the club.

People have been asking and continue to ask how or why that particular logo was chosen by the club. Recognizing the issues raised by the logo, the club is currently considering whether it is appropriate at this time and discussing its removal.

An exploration of the many books by David Contosta, the Historian Laureate of Chestnut Hill, do not provide the answer. His books include *A Philadelphia Family* (1988) about the Houston and Woodward families; *Suburb in the City: Chestnut Hill Philadelphia* (1992); and *Metropolitan Paradise: The Struggle for Nature in the City: Philadelphia's Wissahickon Valley, 1620-2020* (2010), co-authored with Carol Franklin. Contosta also wrote the history of the Philadelphia Cricket Club that was privately published in 2004 in celebration of the Club's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

This author spoke with David Contosta about this question and consulted with both Alex Bartlett and Liz Jarvis, archivists at the Chestnut Hill Conservancy. A range of other books on the history of our area were also studied. These research efforts have confirmed that we simply do not know how the logo originated. But all seem to agree on a narrative that likely explains the selection.

**Lenni-Lenape in the Wissahickon**

Before the arrival of European settlers to this area, what is now Chestnut Hill was part of a far bigger region occupied by the Lenni-Lenape people, who referred to themselves as the “original people” or “true men.” Their region extended from the lower Hudson River Valley south to the mouth of the Delaware River.

The Lenni-Lenape people did not establish permanent settlements, but rather moved around based on the seasons and access to food. They typically selected village sites that offered easy access to water, flatter land for seasonal planting, and good sunlight for winter warmth. Thus, it is unlikely that they had villages in the Wissahickon Gorge as it would have been too densely forested.

Writings by early Europeans indicate that the temporary villages in this area were likely located on the flat plateaus on either side of the Wissahickon Valley and farther northwest in the low-lying areas along the upper Wissahickon Creek in what is now the Whitemarsh Valley.

William Penn received his land grant for Pennsylvania from Charles II in March 1681. He arrived in late 1682 in what is now Philadelphia and started the first of a series of negotiations with the local people for their land, including what is now Chestnut Hill. Tradition suggests that his first such treaty was negotiated under the famous Treaty Elm in the village of Shackamaxon (now Fishtown) in 1682 or possibly 1683. There is no written record of that treaty, nor was it formally ratified, as Quakers do not swear oaths.

The Native American understanding of land occupancy was significantly different from the European concept of legal ownership, and thus the Lenni-Lenape who agreed to that treaty likely had a very different understanding of the terms.

In that same year, Penn negotiated with the Frankford Land Company, represented by Daniel Pastorius, the sale of 15,000 acres that became the German Township, including what is now Germantown, Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill. Pastorius and a group of early settlers arrived in June 1683.

Those events kicked off centuries of conflict between the Lenni-Lenape people of our area and the European immigrants.

By that time, the number of Native Americans had already been significantly reduced by exposure to illnesses brought by Europeans. Jarod Diamond's groundbreaking *"Guns, Germs and Steel"* (1997) explains that most illnesses have crossed from domestic animals to humans. Europeans had historically lived with a large number of domestic animals and thus had become gradually inoculated against a wide range of diseases. Native Americans had only dogs, so developed no natural immunity to the numerous diseases that were brought by early Europeans traders.

It is believed that such diseases killed up to 95% of Native Americans. There were approximately 20,000 Lenni-Lenape in our area in 1600, but that number had decreased to approximately 4,000 by 1700. So by the time of Pastorius and his fellow settlers, our area had modest Native American presence.

### **Romantic notions of Native Americans**

Fast forward to the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the Romantic Movement, and the broad Anglo-American interest in the revival of native traditions as a reaction to the changes wrought by the first Industrial Revolution. Sir Walter Scott wrote his best-selling novels based in the Scottish Highlands. Washington Irving wrote *Tales of the Alhambra* about Spain before the expulsion of the Moors and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* about the early Dutch settlers in the Hudson River valley. James Fenimore Cooper wrote *The Last of the Mohicans* in 1826 but set it back during the French and Indian Wars.

The Romantic association of Native Americans with the Wissahickon Creek emerged around the same time. In his 1844 poem *Morning in the Wissahickon*, Edgar Allen Poe reminisced about times "... when the red man trod alone, with the elk, upon the ridges that now towered above ..."

In 1854, a carpenter and theater painter named Pat Owens placed a wooden statue of a Native American overlooking the Wisshackon Valley. It was popularly believed to be a portrait of the Delaware chief Tedyuscung. It was sited on a narrow protruding rock that was popularly known as "Council Rock" and incorrectly believed to have been the site of Lenni-Lenape tribal council meetings.

Tedyuscung was born around 1700 and murdered in 1763. As the self-proclaimed "King of the Delawares" (also known as the Lenni-Lenape), he was torn between remaining loyal to his native traditions or assimilating to European ways. He often wore Western clothes, may have converted to Christianity and struggled much of his life with the alcohol brought by traders.

Tangled in the complex politics of the French and Indian Wars, he reluctantly signed onto the Treaty of Easton in 1758 that formally relinquished the tribe's rights to their historic lands in eastern Pennsylvania. The tribe then moved to near Wyoming, Pennsylvania, just north of Wilkes-Barre. Soon after his death, the tribe was pushed further west of the Appalachian Mountains.

That early wooden statue of Tedyuscung gradually deteriorated, was replaced by another in wood, and then the current stone statue was erected around 1902, funded by Mr. & Mrs. Charles Henry, members of the Houston family.

Despite Tedyuscung's preference for Western clothes, the statue is clad in native dress. It also inaccurately sports the Plains Indian feathered ceremonial or war bonnet that was later featured in numerous Western films. Such headdresses were not worn by the Lenni-Lenape.

We know that from various historical sources, including portraits of Lenni-Lenape leaders commissioned by John Penn (son of William) and painted in 1734 by Swedish painter Gustavus Hesselius.

The name Wissahickon was derived from the Lenni-Lenape word "wisamekhan," which meant "catfish creek." Houston adopted that name in the 1880's for both his new upscale residential development, Wissahickon Heights (later renamed Saint Martin's), and his commodious Wissahickon Inn, completed in 1884 to attract potential future residents (now the original building of Springside Chestnut Hill Academy).

His daughter, Gertrude Houston Woodward, was a devout Episcopalian and actively involved with the Women's Auxiliary of the Episcopal Church. The Auxiliary in turn actively supported the recently initiated Episcopal Church missionary efforts to the Native American peoples who were being relentlessly pushed into the arid northern plains, resulting in mass starvation.

The ethical basis of those missionary efforts has been widely questioned more recently. Along with their charity work, the Church's broader goals were the assimilation of Indian peoples and their conversion to Christianity, away from their own religious traditions.

(See this author's article in the Local of 8/1/19 on the complicated history of Bishop John Hobart Hare of Saint Paul's Church, who was profoundly moved by the struggles of the Dakota Sioux and became the bishop of the recently formed Niobara Diocese in 1883.)

In his book about the Houston and Woodward families, David Contosta writes that Gertrude Woodward's "... particular interest was the church's Indian missions, prompting her to give thousands of dollars to Indian causes over the decades. It was also Gertrude who named or renamed many streets in Chestnut Hill after Native American tribes, such as Seminole, Shawnee and Navajo."

### **Considering the Cricket Club logo**

So why did the Philadelphia Cricket Club select a Native American head in a Plains Indian feather headdress as its logo? As noted, scholars of Chestnut Hill history can find no information about that particular decision. Perhaps that information is buried in the files at the Club.

There has been some speculation that the logo may have been used before the building of the Club by the existing cricket team, which had played in various locations before being lured to Chestnut Hill. But it seems more likely that Henry Houston, likely supported by the board of the Club, adopted that head as a nostalgic and Romantic reference to the Native American history of our area, reinforced by the Woodward family's personal interest in the plight of Native Americans.

Those few of the local Lenni-Lenape people who survived the many diseases brought by European immigrants were forced out of Chestnut Hill and the rest of their traditional lands by advancing waves of European settlers and forced treaties. Today, the remaining members of the tribe are mostly based far away in Oklahoma, Wisconsin and Ontario, Canada.

The Club logo features a cartoonish version of the same inaccurate Plains Indian ceremonial feather headdress that appears on the statue of Tedyuscung and thus does not accurately depict a local Lenni-Lenape man. It also incongruously surmounts crossed golf clubs and a cricket bat that represent sports with no traditional association with Native Americans.

Might it be time to reconsider that logo?

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