

WYALUSING HISTORY TRAIL: Old Wyalusing Historical Sites

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(1) GOHONTOTO

In 1616, Frenchman Stephen Brule made note of the Andaste/Susquehannock village of Gohontoto, located near the site of Park Place in Wyalusing Borough. It would have been a palisaded village with corn fields along the creek flats below. The Indians at Gohontoto were known as Susquehannocks or Andaste. In the 1650s, Iroquois defeated the Susquehannocks and destroyed Gohontoto. Thereafter, the Wyalusing Valley was considered Iroquois territory (Cayuga), despite the absence of Iroquois villages there.

(2) THE WYALUSING ROCKS OVERLOOK, INDIAN TRAILS

At Wyalusing, two major Indian trails intersected. The Great Warrior Path ran from Shamokin along the Susquehanna to Tioga. The Wyalusing Path connected the West Branch to Binghamton. Wyalusing was also between Iroquois lands in New York State and white settlements in the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania. Wyalusing Rocks was an Indian lookout for traffic using the river. The Great Warrior Path probably forded the Wyalusing Creek at the Taylorville bridge and crossed Lime Hill, using Old Stage Coach Road. Sullivan's Army followed the Great Warrior Path as well. One can see this old path/roadway on Vaughn Hill/Lime Hill with a beautiful mountain view (near Don Abrey's farm).



Wyalusing Rocks Overlook

(3) THE BATTLE OF LIME HILL

On April 7, 1782, a war party of 13 Indians captured and carried off the family of Roswell Franklin. Their house in flames behind them, Mrs. Franklin and her four children, Olive, Susanna, Stephen, and baby Ichabod, were led back up the Great Warrior Trail by their captors. A rescue party of 8 settlers headed by Thomas Baldwin and Joseph Elliot pursued the Indians, overtaking them near Wyalusing. North of town they set an ambush for the natives on a ridge overlooking the trail. In the ensuing battle, five of the Indians were killed and two of the rescuers wounded. The 3 older children escaped by running toward the settlers whose voices they recognized. Mrs. Franklin was shot and killed by an Indian who was slain in turn. Baby Ichabod was never seen again. The battle occurred on Lime Hill several hundred yards off of Route 6, northeast of the present-day marker.



Lime Hill Marker

(4) FRENCH ASYLUM (Overlook)

In 1793, refugees of the French Revolution settled several miles up the river from Wyalusing at a place called French Asylum or Frenchtown. They came seeking safety from the guillotine in France, yellow fever in Philadelphia, and slave revolts in the Caribbean. Imagine as you view the valley from the Marie Antoinette overlook: streets laid out in a grid pattern, a marketplace, several shops, numerous two-story houses, several taverns, a theater, distillery, school, chapel, and a very large log structure known as the Great House. To the locals, it was amazing, but to the French, it was an unsophisticated backwoods settlement. When Napoleon came to power, he declared an amnesty ending the French Revolution. By 1804, most of the Frenchmen had returned to France. Those who stayed, however, left their names and their descendants to this valley. Two of them were the Charles Homet and Bartholeme Laporte families. The Laportes occupied the land where the Great House or Queen's House stood. It passed into the Hagerman family and ultimately became the French Asylum State Historic site.



Marie Antoinette Overlook

(5) HOMET'S MILL AND FERRY

Charles S. and Francis Homet, sons of French émigré, Charles, were prosperous farmers. Another son, Joseph, built a mill and operated a ferry. Although the house and mill are now gone, the mill site can best be seen from the other side of the river, at the end of the road at the south end of French Asylum. Francis' home can still be observed in French Asylum next to the Methodist Church. Charles' home, later occupied by Seth Homet, is still standing in Homet's Ferry with its nearby cemetery.

(6) INDIAN MEADOWS or MISISCUM (Mississcome)

Along the river in Homet's Ferry, near the Wildrick farm, were natural grasslands, used by the Indians and earlier settlers to get hay for livestock. This site, called Misiscum by the Indians and Indian Meadows by whites, had a natural blue grass meadow with large walnut trees. The first European families in Wyalusing, the Stropes and VanValkenburgs, settled here in 1773. Ambrose and Justus Gaylord Jr. also lived here before the Revolutionary War.

(7) STANDING STONE

"The Standing Stone", 25 feet high, 13.5 feet wide, and 4 feet across, is a gray sandstone monolith that stands erect on the Southeast bank of the Susquehanna. It was first described by an officer of Sullivan's Expedition and also marks the Northwest boundary of French Asylum.

(8) CAMPTOWN RACES

Stephen Foster's well-known song, "The Camptown Races," was probably inspired by the horse races run between this village and Wyalusing. Foster resided in nearby Towanda and Athens in 1840-1841. The line,



Camptown, PA

"Camptown racetrack five miles long," seems proof enough of this activity as the distance between Camptown and Wyalusing is exactly five miles. Also, the line, "The blind horse stick in a big mud hole.... Can't touch bottom wid a ten-foot hole," could only apply to a stretch of country road such as that between the two towns in the 1840s.

(9) THREE CAMP HOMES in Camptown

In 1793, Job Camp, a Revolutionary War captain, settled with his wife Anna Oviatt and 8 children in the village that bears his name. The homes of three of his sons still stand in the village today. At the corner of Water Street and Route 706 is found the house of William Camp, built in 1821 from bricks made on the property where the ball park is located today. The house is owned by James and Mary Lou Chadwick. Another son, Elijah, built the structure at the foot of Crow Hill Road, across from the Elementary School. Israel Camp lived in the building now owned by Rich and Wendy Gaustad on Route 409. It was moved from the site where the Brick house was constructed.

(10) CIVIL WAR HERO -- Stephen Rought's grave in the Spring Hill Cemetery

Rought, a sergeant in the 141st PA Regiment, was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for capturing the flag of the 13th North Carolina at Brock Road during the battle of the Wilderness in May 1864. Stephen suffered a war ending wound only 6 days later at the Mule Shoe at Spottsylvania. The 141st was known as the Bradford Regiment, much of it recruited in Bradford County in the summer of 1862; Company A came from Wyalusing. The 141st had one of the most distinguished combat records in the Army of the Potomac, serving from the battle of Fredericksburg to the surrender at Appomattox. In just two battles alone, from May 3 to July 2 at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, the regiment shrank due to combat casualties from 419 men and officers to 58 (56% casualties at Chancellorsville, and 73% at the Peach Orchard at Gettysburg). Stephen was wounded and captured at Chancellorsville, so he missed Gettysburg. Stephen's three brothers also served the Union: Hiram was killed at Petersburg, age 17; Jacob was wounded; and Ephram became a deserter. Stephen died March 16, 1919, age 79.

(11) THE BATTLE OF INDIAN HILL

On September 29, 1778, Colonel Thomas Hartley battled a large force of Indians, who were pursuing him after a punitive raid he had launched against native and Tory villages near Tioga in retaliation for the Battle of Wyoming. Hartley and his men made a difficult march up the Sheshequin trail along the Lycoming, Towanda, and Sugar Creeks. After burning several native towns near Athens and Ulster, including Queen Esther's Town, they were returning down the Susquehanna River toward Wyoming. Hartley's force of 217 men stopped to rest at Friedenshutzen, allowing the Indian force to catch up to them at the top of Indian Hill, near Mark's Valley View Restaurant. Indian probes developed into a full-scale attack near present-day Deremer's farm. Hartley's men counterattacked from high ground and repulsed the Indians, who left 10 dead and carried off an unknown number of wounded. Hartley's men suffered 4 dead and 10 wounded. A stone marks the site of the battle.