



Original bumper sticker

Additional Pending Information

Following the posting of the video of the Tocks Island Dam presentation on YouTube, information was received from Sidney Marshall. Mr. Marshall had been a resident of nearby Walpack, is of Indian descent, and undertook important but largely unrecorded actions in the resistance activity of the local residents. This initial contact resulted in considerable sharing of information and the posing of new questions.

A very preliminary writeup of a few aspects of this material was prepared here, starting on the next page. It is anticipated that the original article may be modified somewhat, not to change the underlying facts or conclusions, but to provide additional illustrations of the people impacted by the proposed dam project, and how they reacted.



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Tocks Island Dam Story – An Indian Perspective

Jim Alexander

*Just saw your YouTube video,
Tocks Island Dam Aftermath.*

*At what cost indeed. I was a neighbor and
friend of Jean Zipser.*

*I lived at Crater Lake in Walpack. With three
different phone companies in the Minisink, it
was definitely cheaper to hop in my Jeep and
drive to Jean's than to call on the phone.*

*Expropriated in 1978. My place and many,
many others demolished before any "just"
compensation. It still rankles.*

*I have photos of Jean on her porch and many
others if you have interest.*

Arriving by email just a few days after the video had been posted, the message from Sidney Marshall struck like a bolt of lightning. I had ended the presentation by discussing the wonderful Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area that now exists, but reflecting the human pain inflicted on the local residents, had asked: "At what cost?"

In researching the story of the unbuilt Tocks Island Dam on the Delaware in northwestern New Jersey and the disastrous forced removal of 15,000 residents, it was helpful to focus on one town, Pahaquarry, and its last residents. The name of the town, which no longer exists as a municipality, came from a Leni Lenape term meaning "the place between the mountains beside the waters." The Indians had been the original settlers, subsequently displaced by the Dutch colonists. The Dutch names still abounded, not so for the Indians.

I was especially fascinated by Jean Zipser, who fell into the role as Pahaquarry's last Mayor, serving with grace and a sense of history. A well-educated and talented person, she resided mostly alone in the oldest home in Warren County, originally built by the first prominent Dutch settler, Abraham Van Campen. She was killed on an icy section of the Old Mine Road in 2006, and the trail of her comments about life in the dying community were intriguing—what was life there really like, and how did she exist with no nearby neighbors? There was an elusive story of a marriage. Where was she buried? More needed to be learned but details were elusive.

There followed a torrent of emails with memories, documents and photos of the time in the sixties and seventies when the area was under siege by the Army Corps of Engineers. The Internet connections in central Maine, where he now lives, are limited, but the message came through strong. Sidney Marshall's Indian name was Nendawen, which means Torchbearer. I sent him a newspaper article with photos of the inside of the Abraham Van Campen house where Jean lived. He replied:



*Jean Zipser (l, before becoming mayor)
and friend Jane Egbert (r), c 1984.
Photo by Sidney Marshall, taken at
Abraham Van Campen home.*

*... and that picture of the door to the stairway
to upper room brings back memories. And
talks around that table; about Tocks and
what bastards the corps and parkies were;
how to cope with them occupying our
Minisink.*

(continued on next page)

Tocks Island (continued from previous page)

12,000 Leni Lenape Minsi banished before us in the Walking Purchase. We called Tocks the Second Walking Purchase.

Natives who had in earlier centuries changed their legal names to Dutch-sounding ones, to avoid being classified with derogatory terms.

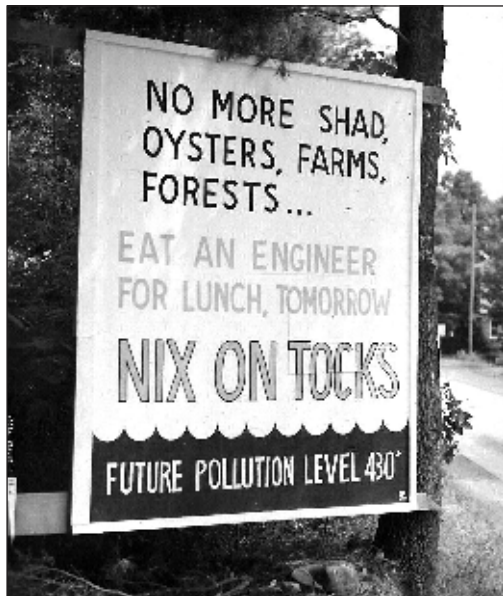
He described Jean's marriage, with reception on the lawn.

Jean was resplendent at the wedding with flowers in her tresses.

Unfortunately, the marriage lasted only several years.

Living through the war zone of a 16-year drawn out land acquisition is what outsiders don't fathom the full horror of. Older couples ... seemed to ride it out marriage-wise. But Tocks broke most of our generation's relationships.

He described how the Corps had selectively condemned properties, leaving some stranded alone.



Original photo by Sidney Marshall

Annie Oftedal died alone up on the ridge, Skyline Drive on Blue Mt. Lakes side. Body stayed there for months. Nobody left to check on her.

Some homes were bulldozed before acquisition, explained by the Corps of Engineers as a "mistake."

And how local people banded together to testify in Trenton and Washington, and to put up local signs and billboards opposing the project. He remembered discussing what the signs should say, who bought the plywood, who did the lettering; he recalled surveying at what altitude to place the signs, to reflect how high the proposed lake's waters would rise. He shared the original photos.

And he wrote about "Pahaquarry Pemmican":

That's what we all called it.

Jean would bake each of us a dense rum Christmas fruitcake that was glorious.

I can say that it got all of us through the hard Minisink Winters.

No, really. You'd wrap pieces to carry for survival.

Always smiling effervescent Jean would cheer you up no matter what outrage Tocks dealt. I do miss her.

That and much more. The now-boarded-up Abraham Van Campen home, last occupied by Jean, needs to be opened up to let the light in; more stories may emerge. Time has moved on, but the truth remains.

Editor's Note: Jim's original video from 2019 was recently modified for use in the current Medford Leas Virtual Pathways program. It, and his article, can be viewed at <https://jimquest.com/writ-history-tocks-island/>. ■

Spirit Guide
Sidney Marshall – “Nendawen” (Torchbearer)



*Nendawen, serving our nation, before return to the
Kittatinny*

My mother never knew her father who was a native American in Buffalo, N.Y.

I’m not mystical or religious.

Nevertheless, when first I set foot on Kittatinny, something travelled up from my feet and welcomed me “home.”

I knew names and places I had never seen before.

What I learned was called a “spirit guide” would show me the way by opening a path through the forest. Really. The boughs and branches would bend out of the way. One day I thought, “This is silly, I’m just following a deer path,” and turned around. Unbroken forest behind. Turned the way I had been going and no path ahead.

So it dawned on me.

Seen at right in this old photo, Nendawen, drinking The Water at the top of Buttermilk Falls, Kittatinny Ridge, 1973.

His home was seized by the Corps of Engineers in 1978, 15 years after his military service, and quickly demolished.

He currently resides, off grid, in central Maine, and, as he puts it, has now seen 75 winters. ■



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