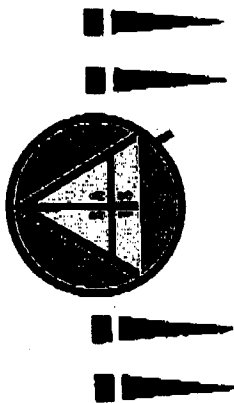


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*Anthropologists At Work:
A Case Study of the Nanticoke Indian Community*

FRANK W. PORTER III
University of Maryland Baltimore County

Beginning in the late nineteenth century and continuing intermittently to the present, various scholars as well as laymen have visited, studied and recorded their observations and findings of the Nanticoke Indian community at Indian River in Sussex County, Delaware. These reports range in quality from fleeting impressions to detailed studies. Attention has been directed to the history of the Nanticoke tribe in a search either for its origin or the current activity and status of the community. In all, we have a rather broad understanding of the process of acculturation of the Nanticoke Indians. One particular aspect which most investigators have failed to explore has been the impact of these studies on the social organization of the Nanticoke community. Have individual lives been influenced by the publications of these investigators? Has the community responded in specific ways because of the presence of these investigators? This paper focuses on those individuals who have contributed to the recent historiography of the Nanticoke Indians and explores the extent to which their research has been internalized within the community.

One of the first episodes to draw attention to the status and identity of the Nanticoke community of Indian River materialized in 1855 when Levin Sockum, a highly successful landholder who owned and operated a general store in Indian River Hundred, was accused of violating a Delaware law which prohibited the sale or loan of firearms to a Negro or mulatto when he sold a quarterpound of powder and shot to Isaiah Harmon. George P. Fisher, the prosecuting attorney, later wrote a newspaper article which detailed the events of the trial and popularized the traditions surrounding the origin of the Nanticoke.¹

Because Sockum had admitted to selling the powder and shot to Harmon, Fisher had to demonstrate that Harmon was indeed a mulatto. It is significant to note that none of the court's witnesses were able to establish the ancestry of Harmon. Fisher finally placed Lydia Clark, a blood relative of Harmon, on the witness stand. Clark testified that before the American Revolution an Irish lady named Regua (a corruption of the name Ridgeway) purchased and later married a "very tall, shapely and muscular young fellow of dark ginger-bread

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

FRANK W. PORTER III is a lecturer in geography at the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

RICHARD W. FLECK is associate professor of English at the University of Wyoming.

JAMES H. HOWARD is professor of anthropology at Oklahoma State University.

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color." The offspring of this union intermarried with the remnant of the Nanticoke tribe. This testimony established to the satisfaction of the court that Harmon was a mulatto. Not only was Sockum found guilty and fined twenty dollars, he was brought into court on a second charge—possession of a gun. The court accepted testimony that Sockum was also a mulatto and fined him an additional twenty dollars.²

What seems incredible is that Fisher described Harmon as "a young man, apparently about five and twenty years of age, of perfect Caucasian features, dark chestnut brown hair, rosy cheeks and hazel eyes." Furthermore, Fisher observed that "of all the men concerned in the trial he was the most perfect type of the pure Caucasian, and by odds the handsomest man in the court room, and yet he was alleged to be a mulatto." It would appear, as Fisher himself admitted, that "Sockum's case originated in the private spite of envious Caucasian neighbors."³

Initial interest among professional anthropologists in the possibility of surviving Indian groups in the eastern United States began in 1889 when James Mooney, then employed by the Smithsonian Institution, distributed a questionnaire about Indian survivals to one thousand local physicians in certain counties of Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, and North Carolina. Mooney requested information about Indian local names, ancient remains, and survivors of pure or mixed Indian origin. The replies to this circular letter indicate that a substantial number of local groups of Indian origin were present at that time in the above-mentioned states.⁴

Mooney based his inquiry on the theory that a substantial population of Indian admixture would be located where the most populous tribes had originally resided. On the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia the replies to his letter suggest "that the few who remained at the beginning of the last century had become so mixed with negro blood that in the general alarm occasioned by the Nat Turner slave rising in 1831 they had been classed as full negroes and driven from their homes, so that their identity was lost." Mooney noted, however, that several groups still claimed descent from the Nanticoke, Piscataway, and Wicocomoco, and attributed this strong sense of being Indian, despite their small number, to their stated fear of losing their "identity by absorption in the black race, and against this they have struggled for a full century."⁵

Resistance to amalgamation with Negroes, Mark Nagler has pointed out in his article, "North American Indians and Intermarriage," reflects both internal and external controls.⁶ A case in point were the Pamunkey Indians of Virginia. While Pamunkey law forbade intermarriage with a Negro, Virginia law pro-

hibited the legal union of Negroes, Indians, and mulattoes with Caucasians. The resulting pronounced tendency towards endogamous marriages in these Indian communities, coupled with the fact that the Virginia legislature ordered the Pamunkey to carry official certificates of tribal memberships, served to strengthen the social cohesion of these groups and maintain their social separation and spatial isolation from white society. For similar reasons the Chickahominy and Nansemond of Virginia and the Nanticoke of Delaware would later seek state recognition as Indian tribes.⁷ Although Mooney continued to correspond with local residents, performed library research, and made a trip to southern Maryland to investigate the Wesorts, unfortunately no publications resulted from his survey.

In 1898 William H. Babcock with an unidentified companion became the first professional anthropologist to visit the Nanticoke Indian community. After a brief stay Babcock was willing to identify these people as Indians, but added that "they have nearly as many white attributes of mind and body, habit, and temperament." Babcock's published report clearly indicates that he was preoccupied in describing the physical appearance of the people. More pertinent information about the community is interspersed among his details about physiognomy. Babcock briefly discusses instances of out-migration, the strong tendency towards endogamous marriages, and the racial hostility which resulted in the development of separate churches and schools. He also cites the thrift and success of land-holding farmers and mentions the existence of an aboriginal burial mound.

As a result of his short sojourn in the community, Babcock concluded that the people should not be neglected any longer. "They ask no help, being very well able to take care of themselves," he observed, "But the anthropologic world may brighten matters a little for them by showing that in their long struggle for individual existence they have at last become visible to the scientific eye."⁸ And so they had; however, a decade passed before Frank G. Speck began his ethnologic fieldwork among the Nanticoke under the sponsorship of the Heye Foundation, The Museum of the American Indian.

In the interim period M.R. Harrington visited in May of 1908, Indian River and Cheswold, an off-shoot of the Indian River group, and obtained several ethnological specimens for George G. Heye, the founder of the Museum of the American Indian in New York City. Describing this trip three decades later, Harrington recollected that he had remained in the community for only two or three days during which time he purchased a few items, one of them an interesting and primitive corn-sheller. Other objects included mortars, pestles, baskets and an eel trap. No study was made, and no report was published.⁹

Summarizing these early years of exposure to the outside world, we can safely state that very little effort had been made to study intensively the Nanticoke community. Clearly, one of the most controversial issues within the community, and one which attracted some interest from outside, involved the social status of the people. The trials of Levin Sockum and Isaiah Harmon were purely local affairs and consequently did not receive widespread attention. And one must remember that the argument concerned whether the defendants were Negroes or mulattoes, not if they were in fact descended from the Nanticoke Indians. Aside from Babcock's brief report and Harrington's collection of ethnological specimens, both of which were directed to a professional audience, most information merely echoed local traditions and repeated details emanating from the Harmon and Sockum trials.

One of the most influential scholars to address the question of Indian survivals in the eastern United States was Frank G. Speck, an anthropologist at the University of Pennsylvania. While most ethnographers at that time preferred to visit Indian tribes west of the Mississippi River, Speck exerted in the attempt to recapture the ethnography of the Eastern Woodland tribes by searching for data from remnant communities and forgotten eastern reservations. When Speck initiated his investigations at Indian River in 1911 attitudes towards these Indian communities had crystallized in the minds of professional scholars and the general public. Most people were quite certain that the last full-blooded Indians in the East had long since died and that they were dealing with a tri-racial isolate, an undetermined admixture of Negro, Caucasian, and Indian blood. Most research proceeded from this assumption and perspective.

Speck took exception to the "ethnological barn storming" of untrained, popular writers who had dismissed the possibility of Indian communities still surviving in the eastern United States.¹⁰ Fieldwork conducted in both the eastern and southern states had assured Speck not only of the presence of Indian descendants, but that the rapid change in social conditions influencing these ethnic islands called for prompt action on the part "of field-working ethnologists who know the living groups better than those who wrote their pre-mortem obituaries!"¹¹

It is well worth the time to examine some of the insights and guidelines formulated by Speck in his work with Indian descendants in the East. Foremost, residence among the people was essential, "For without the experience of having lived with a native group a writer's estimate of native cultural values must be as worthless as Anatole France's ornithology of the penguins." Furthermore, one should not expect these people, who had resided on the borders of a large European population for over three centuries, to exhibit culture traits of the

aboriginal way of life. The Indian descendants still possessed a culture, but one which had undergone significant change because of alterations in the plant and animal resources of their habitat wrought by intruding cultures that cleared the forests to cultivate fields. Consequently "native architecture, clothing, utensils, furnishings, weapons, vehicles, amusements, ornaments, fishing, hunting and trapping methods did not die out. They changed." Only personal contact and first-hand observation could ferret out those aboriginal traits which had persisted and determine those aspects of culture which had been adopted or changed through time.¹²

Frank G. Speck, who had studied under Franz Boas, subscribed to the method of research of his mentor: patient, detailed description of a primitive culture, based on long and intimate residence with the community. Boas' method of ethnology was based on a study of the dynamic changes in society which could be observed at the present time. Until the anthropologist could discern the cultural processes before him, he should refrain from the attempt to solve the fundamental problem of the general development of the community.¹³ One can readily perceive the influence of Boas on Speck in his early work at Indian River.

The initial observations of Speck at Indian River included, like those before him, data capable of being developed into "an instructive record of a community, made up of the amalgamation of three distinct races." Such a community, stated an early report, offered material for the study of one of the "far-reaching aspects of modern anthropological research, namely the effects produced by race amalgamation." Of direct interest to professional anthropologists, the report continued, were physical variation, tribal prerogative, clan consciousness, race sensibility, and the sociological significance of exclusive property in folklore and belief.¹⁴ Wilson D. Wallis, later to become Chairman of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Minnesota, accompanied Speck on these first visits. When queried as to whether he had performed head measurements, Wallis gave the following reply.

I am sure that I did not take any measurements. I should think measurements would be important if one could ascertain the exact amounts of White, Negro, and Indian blood in the subjects; but I assume that this information would be difficult, perhaps, impossible, to obtain; and the reliability of the information would be open to question. The result would be, if this is the case, that one would not know what one had measured.¹⁵

Speck paid little attention to the question of race admixture in his actual fieldwork. This is not surprising in view of the fact that he was interested

primarily in soliciting information about Indian survivals, especially as it pertained to material culture. Speck's most significant contribution rests in his gathering of ethnological specimens and the recording of folklore, superstitions and medicinal cures. His visit to the Nanticoke community was none too soon for the art of basketry had just become obsolete.¹⁶

In particular Speck placed considerable emphasis on the activities and industries associated with the production of corn. The cultivation of corn included the use of suckering canes, corn-husking pegs, corn shellers, and large, log corn-cribs which many local farmers attributed to the Indians. Nearly every Nanticoke family possessed a corn mortar and pestle, used to pound the corn into grits or flour. Certain foods derived from corn were also of Indian origin; among these were the ash cake johnny-cake, and pone.¹⁷ Of equal importance were the activities which the Nanticoke devoted to marine life because much of their subsistence and livelihood were derived from the Indian River. The devices and methods for catching fish combined aboriginal techniques and those which had been modified by modern usage. The eel pot, fish-nets, netting needles, mesh sticks, and fykes were in widespread use in the community.¹⁸

Speck excelled as a participant observer in his fieldwork, but he also was one of the first anthropologists studying Indians east of the Mississippi to become directly involved in the process of change of his study group. Traditionally anthropologists promoted a strong value notion that one should not intentionally induce change in the culture being investigated. More recently, participant intervention in the field has become a departure from traditional methods. Allan R. Holmberg states that with the method of participant intervention the investigator becomes a vital part of the process he is studying by strategically and economically influencing the situation. Specifically, he assists the community in developing itself and studies the process while it is taking place.¹⁹

The close rapport which Speck had with the Nanticoke community greatly facilitated his work, and it resulted in a deep and personal involvement in the lives of the people. For many years the Nanticoke community had labored at the local and state level for recognition of being Indian. The Nanticoke, however, had been assigned the social and legal status of "colored" or Negro. In order to maintain their distinctiveness and separation from the Negro population the Nanticoke had established their own schools and churches in the late nineteenth century. Although the Nanticoke previously had legally incorporated in 1881 when they formed their own school, by 1920 no one in the community remembered the importance of the original corporation. In 1971 Russel Clark, the elected chief and close friend of Speck, discussed with

the anthropologist the need to preserve the racial integrity of the community. Clearly this was a delicate situation. Possibly influenced by the earlier example of James Mooney who had helped to organize the Chickahominy of Virginia, Speck, after considerable deliberation, consulted an attorney who suggested that the Nanticoke form a corporation and obtain a charter from the State of Delaware. On February 24, 1922 the Nanticoke Indian Association received a corporation charter from Delaware.²⁰ It is significant to note that Speck acted only in the capacity of spokesman and counselor; after representatives from the community agreed to the formation of an independent organization Speck turned the matter over to the newly elected officers.

One of the underlying objectives of the Nanticoke Indian Association was to heighten interest in the old Indian traditions. An annual festival, commemorative of native campfire powwows, was to be held each Thanksgiving. Although the Nanticoke no longer retained their native language and practiced little of their traditional way of life, Speck, greatly impressed with the intense interest which the Nanticoke exhibited towards their Indian heritage, taught his friends a number of Indian dances and songs, and assisted them in acquiring or making ceremonial costumes of a regionally correct style. "There was no intent to hold up these things as direct survivals of their Nanticoke Indian forebears," cautions C.A. Weslager, but simply "to revive the Indian individuality by attaching some aboriginal practices to their own denuded cultural framework."²¹ An unfortunate by-product of this nascent Indian revivalism was the ridicule the Nanticoke were subjected to by the white community.²²

After the death of Chief Russel Clark, Speck confided that "the lure of Indian River passed away with him."²³ Speck's first period of study among the Nanticoke had been extremely successful. The many ethnological specimens he had collected were now housed in the Museum of the American Indian, and the folklore, superstitions, and medicinal cures gathered from the community had been published in two monographs and numerous articles. Speck's interests became centered upon the ethnography of other Algonkians of the Eastern Woodlands, his travels taking him among the Canadian and Labrador Indians, the Delaware in Oklahoma, and remnant groups in Virginia and the Carolinas.

Speck did not return to Indian River until 1942. During the interim years considerable change had taken place in the community. Brewton Berry, one of the few sociologists who has studied many of these remnant Native American communities in the East, considers this period as detrimental to the isolation which had protected the Indians from contact with the outside world. Paved roads, compulsory school attendance, induction into the armed forces had swept many of these groups into the mainstream of white society.²⁴ It was

hard to believe at first," Speck remarked after driving through the community, "It seemed that only imagination could forge the links with the past." This was only a fleeting impression, for although outward appearances indicated significant changes, Speck quickly perceived that "Folk customs persist here even against the inroads of modern influence streaming through the back roads from the highways connecting the Hundred with the 'city' now but three hours distant in a car." Speck attributed much of the growth and development within the community to economic change and a social turnover in the local status of "colored" people in educational opportunity. Yet tangible links still existed with the past. Several of the men were observed trapping animals to supplement their food requirements; folk customs still dictated a good deal of the social behavior; and traditional domestic utensils and recipes were being used in many of the households.²⁵

During this second period of study Speck once again devoted considerable time to seeking out Indian survivals. Speck's interviews unearthed new information about folk-remedies, especially burns, warts, measles, and whooping cough. Speck also made inquiries about children's games, a long neglected theme among ethnologists. The crossbow, popgun, arrow sling, stone sling, buzzer and bull roarer all received attention. A review of Speck's publications during this period reveals how extensively he was able to fill the gaps in these subject areas.²⁶

An interesting sidelight to Speck's investigations at that time qualifies one facet of an earlier Nanticoke hunting technique. While interviewing Elwood Wright, a rather gifted craftsman, the conversation shifted to the method of cudgelling rabbits. Elwood recalled that about forty years earlier Bill Coursey had visited his home enroute to cudgel rabbits on the north shore of Indian River. Wright went on to describe the actual throwing stick, how it was thrown, and that it was an individual, not communal, hunt. In response to a written inquiry from Speck about rabbit cudgelling, Winona Wright, a teacher at the Indian Mission School, informed the anthropologist that no one in the community recollected such a method of killing rabbits. Warren Wright, the brother of Elwood, said that he never heard of nor saw any method other than snare or trap. "Evidently the Courseys read of the Indian method," Speck admitted afterwards, but "This note does not alter the MS material."²⁷ Speck had already published his findings, but he fully recognized the significance of Winona Wright's reply.

Frank Speck combined his expertise in the field with a strong dedication to his students. Anthony F.C. Wallace has alluded to the efforts of Speck to teach others how to obtain precise and reliable information about individual primi-

tive cultures.²⁸ "His contact with graduate students was always informal and personal and he even liked to have students around his office when he was working," recalls A. Irving Hallowell, and "When he was ready for lunch, or a cup of coffee in the afternoon, there was always good anthropological talk and a chance for drawing upon his vast knowledge in a more intimate way than was possible in class."²⁹ He was also accustomed to taking his students with him into the field for first-hand experience. One of the first to join Speck in his work at Indian River was Gladys Tantaquidgeon, of Mohegan descent, who collected data about medical practices. Tantaquidgeon's material on the Nanticoke was published in her *A Study of Delaware Indian Medicine Practices and Folk Beliefs*.³⁰ At a later date Anthony F.C. Wallace and Theodore Stern also visited the community. Wallace, in particular, had an excellent opportunity to analyze a significant aspect of the economic base of the Nanticoke community. In two brief reports, based on several trips to Indian River, Wallace discussed and outlined the possible investigation of the historical and contemporary exploitation by the Nanticoke of the biota of Indian River and its banks.³¹ In a personal communication, Wallace regrettably remarked: "I'm sorry to say that I have never done more on the Nanticokes than the two pieces which you list, and by now that is so long ago that I don't think I can say anything useful by way of summary."³² Theodore Stern directed his research interests to the descendants of the Chickahominy Indians of Virginia, which culminated in a detailed ethnohistory of the tribe.³³

The loss of ethnographic data has been an unfortunate circumstance associated with the study of the Indian River community. Wilson D. Wallis recollected the destruction of information from an early visit with the Nanticoke.

I am afraid you are going to draw a large blank from me relative to the Indian River people whom I visited some twenty years ago with Dr. Frank Speck. As I remember it, Dr. Speck had previously been there, and took me with him on his second trip. After my return I recorded some notes regarding beliefs which we had heard. Subsequently Dr. Speck told me [he] had published accounts of these beliefs, in a Museum of the American Indian series, and I destroyed all my notes; so that I now have no record whatever.³⁴

George G. Heye described the fate of many of Speck's photographs of the Nanticoke.

Between 1911 and 1914 we received 96 negatives from Dr. Speck, and in 1922 we received 33 more. Between 1924 and 1926 we received 41 negatives from this locality taken by Frederic Johnson. Unfortunately many of these negatives are not good, being faulty in focusing and also stained in inadequate washing. I should say, roughly speaking, there might be a couple of dozen that would make good prints.³⁵

One final note involves Eulalie Loatman, a resident of New Jersey and of Nanticoke descent, who wrote a novel about the Nanticoke, but apparently it was never published.³⁶

As illustrated thus far very few of the individuals involved in the study of the Nanticoke community had made extensive use either of primary historical data or had attempted to view the Nanticoke, who had successfully integrated many new agricultural practices and other related material culture into their way of life, as a functional part of a rural community with slowly emerging economic ties with large urban centers. Most of the professional anthropologists who had endeavored to study the Nanticoke community had done so with the expressed purpose of discovering surviving aboriginal culture traits. Undoubtedly these efforts were successful in preserving some folklore, folk-remedies, and ethnological specimens, but we were provided with only a superficial description of the social and economic activities which had resulted from the acculturation of the Nanticoke during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The need for historical investigation was more than evident, but the problems manifest in such an undertaking were monumental. Local traditions, so strongly entrenched, had flavored virtually every aspect of the origin of the Nanticoke, and a cursory review of the published nineteenth century primary historical sources in Delaware appeared to be devoid of information specifically related to the Indians. Clinton A. Weslager, a businessman from Wilmington, Delaware, exhibited an avid interest in the Moors of Cheswold and the Nanticoke of Indian River and has pursued this line of research since the 1930s. By his own admission, Weslager proceeded with his investigations "Purely for personal satisfaction and as a hobby to occupy leisure hours. . . ."³⁷ This interest gave rise to a close friendship between Weslager and Frank Speck, and with the latter's advice and criticism Weslager began fieldwork among the Moors and Nanticoke. Surprisingly Speck had never visited Cheswold, although "he used to look out of the train as he passed on his way home from Indian River but did not stop."³⁸ Together, Speck and Weslager discovered a strong tradition of herb cures, folklore, and material culture which indicated direct links with an aboriginal heritage among several families in Cheswold.

The fruition of Weslager's work resulted in the publication of *Delaware's Forgotten Folk: the Story of the Moors & Nanticoke* which was presented to the public "not as a textbook nor as a scientific discussion, but merely as reading entertainment founded on the life history, social struggle, and customs of a little-known people."³⁹ Dealing with the extremely sensitive issue of race mixture, Weslager's book was read by both a professional and non-professional

audience. The dilemma of the Nanticoke being considered a tri-racial isolate received widespread attention. In many instances the content of *Delaware's Forgotten Folk* was either misconstrued or intentionally used to demean members of the community.

During the late 1930s and continuing to the present several individuals became very interested in the study of "mestizo," "mulatto," "outcasted," groups in the eastern United States. William H. Gilbert, who published a "Memorandum Concerning the Characteristics of the Larger Mixed-Blood Racial Islands of the Eastern United States," attempted to enlist the interest and support of scientists and research foundations to investigate these tri-racial groups.⁴⁰ It is absolutely critical to bear in mind that the interest of these researchers focused overwhelmingly on the social qualities and ramifications associated with these groups as *tri-racial isolates*, not necessarily as descendants of Indians. Considerable attention was directed to trends in the naming of mixed-blood populations; analysis of the physical environment of their habitat; social origins of the people; estimation of admixture in racial hybrids; patterns of mate selection; and dental and medical findings of the people.⁴¹ With little forethought these authors aggregated all of the known surviving Indian groups of the eastern United States as mixed-blood racial islands; and virtually all research proceeded with a view toward formulating an intelligent understanding of each specific group and generating a governmental policy towards them.⁴² Few of these men envisioned the possible ramifications their work could have on these groups.

Delaware's Forgotten Folk appeared at a time when many young men from the Indian River community had entered into the armed forces. In Delaware, as elsewhere, draft boards and military administrative personnel found it difficult to classify young men claiming Indian rights, provided by Delaware law and who had been inducted had their Indian rights, disregarded when they were recognized by the Georgetown Draft Board, identified when they were identified as Negroes by military authorities. Two young men who had requested classification as Indians were stationed with colored troops in the South. Weslager, who had become friends with several of the Nanticoke families, was called upon for assistance with this rather sensitive problem. Although officials in Delaware could classify the Moors and Nanticoke as Indian, there was no authority for such action on the part of the United States Army. W. Berl, State Director of the Delaware Selective Service, informed Weslager that it would be "definitely up to the Army to determine the classification of these registrants."⁴³ On June 20, 1942, Weslager wrote to the Adjutant General of the United States Army about the status of the two young men from Indian

River. Pursuing the matter, Weslager requested information from the National Headquarters of the Selective Service System as to the necessary procedures to transfer the two conscripts either to white or Indian units and what steps could be taken to insure that future conscripts from Moor and Nanticoke families would have their Indian status preserved.⁴⁴ Two months later, on July 31, 1942, Weslager received an answer to his inquiries from Brigadier General H.B. Lewis, Acting General of the War Department.

With regard to race, there are two categories within the Army, white and colored. Members of the Negro race are assigned to colored units. All other distinct races are assigned to white units. Individuals of races with distinguishable Negro characteristics acquired through intermixture with that race are assigned to colored units. Under this policy, an Indian may be assigned as an individual to a white unit or he may be assigned to a company or regiment made up entirely of Indians, that company or regiment being a component part of a white regiment or division.⁴⁵

As to the two men from Indian River, information obtained from the War Department revealed that the local draft board at Georgetown had classified them as colored. To allay any future mishaps with the local board, Weslager was informed by Major Morris S. Schwartz from the National Headquarters of the Selective Service System that "the registrar will list the registrant as being the color which the registrant claims. In case the registrant is listed as being another color than that which he claims to be, the registrant may protest his listing and the matter should be referred to the State Director for determination of race."⁴⁶ When a similar misunderstanding occurred the following year, the individual involved was immediately transferred out of the colored detachment and into a white organization.⁴⁷

The above incidents reflect the confusion and lack of precedent in the Selective Service System's administrative procedures with regard to the classification of Nanticoke men. In 1944 the ancestral background of the Moors and Nanticoke, as presented in *Delaware's Forgotten Folk*, invoked the racial prejudice and hostility of one Nanticoke's Commanding Officer, which resulted in his being reassigned to a colored unit. In a letter to Frank Speck this individual described the circumstances surrounding this classification.

The Book I got from you some time ago, of Delaware Forgotten Folks of Nanticoke and Moor it really has given me trouble now, I can not change my Commanding Officer's mind about the book, he believe every word of it, of which not every word not truly, of which you state... after they read the Book, they then wanted to courtmarshal me for this and then he or they, my (sqdn) went around telling every body about this the Nanticoke Indian is half blood negger, that what the book said, so every body know about it all over Columbus, Ohio.⁴⁸

Dismayed by this turn of events he placed total blame on the book and the burden of responsibility on its author. One can surely understand his hostility for he had just been transferred from a colored unit after nine months assignment.

Speck gave the letter to Weslager, who corresponded promptly with the Nanticoke in question, and initiated efforts to rectify the situation. "I can not understand how this book can do you any possible harm," Weslager remarked, "It presents a case very favorable to the Nanticoke Indian Tribe, and was not written in a way to bring disfavor to any members of the tribe." "My book," he continued, "points out strongly that Nanticoke are *not* Negroes, and if offered in evidence should be in your favor instead of against you."⁴⁹ The issue at stake, however, while prompted by racial prejudice, could be supported by General Lewis' earlier communique in which he noted that "Individuals of races with distinguishable Negro characteristics acquired through intermixture with that race are assigned to colored units." One need only to read the first chapter of *Delaware's Forgotten Folk* to find supportive evidence of the accusations made against this individual. Much to the credit of Weslager's personal involvement, this particular case, like those before it, ended with the return of the Nanticoke soldier to a white unit.

Delaware history is replete with episodes which illuminate the controversy over the social status of those individuals claiming Indian ancestry. Significantly many of these controversial issues were resolved by residents of the Nanticoke community; in some cases, as demonstrated by the question of Selective Service classification, effective solutions transcended local control and aid was sought from individuals outside of the community. At the state level the presence of the Nanticoke has been reflected in the arguments over educational facilities for "colored" people (which as late as 1965 included Negroes, mulattoes, Moors, and Indians) and whites. Within the Nanticoke community this resulted in the construction of separate school facilities for Negroes, Indians, and Caucasians. In 1875 the Legislature of Delaware enacted a law entitled "An Act to Tax Colored Persons for the Support of Their Schools." This legislation stipulated that an assessment of thirty cents on every one hundred dollars of property be levied on all Negroes for the erection and maintenance of separate schools for Negroes. Unwittingly the legislators classified the Nanticoke as Negroes, thus legally requiring their children to attend school with Negroes. The Nanticoke resisted, organized, and hired a lawyer to exert pressure on local politicians to exempt them from this tax with the condition that they erect and maintain their own school. In 1881 the State legislature acquiesced and authorized them to construct and support two schools of their own.⁵⁰

In Delaware no high schools existed for Moors or Nanticokes. Paradoxically, the Nanticokes refused to send their children to high schools for Negroes, and the high schools for whites denied admission to Indians. It is not surprising, therefore, that the number of high school graduates among the Nanticokes was relatively small prior to 1965. One way to circumvent this predicament was to send the Nanticoke students to Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas. Admission of a student to Haskell required the signature of the Agency Superintendent, Field Agent, and Social Worker. At the request of several Nanticoke parents, Weslager's services were called upon once again. Several letters of inquiry were written by Weslager to Haskell Institute and the United States Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs. A precedent had already been established for admitting the Nanticoke to Haskell Institute. Willard W. Beatty, Director of Education, Department of the Interior, had visited Indian River at an earlier date at the request of Frank Speck, and had personally "approved the enrollment of several of these students whom I met at Haskell Institute. I realize that they are not an organized tribe in our sense of the word and therefore do not have a Reservation Principal, Field Agent or Social Worker," Beatty acknowledged to Weslager, "In this particular instance, an application signed by the school teacher and, I would hope, countersigned by yourself would be considered adequate." Finally, Beatty wanted assurance that the student "is basically an Indian and second, that he or she will profit from enrollment in a Federal Indian vocational school and that the type of education which he needs or desires cannot be obtained locally in the public school."⁵¹ This educational system continued to function legally until the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), but persisted in Indian River until 1965 after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Individual outsiders have played an instrumental role in providing solutions, as well as creating problems, in the Nanticokes' quest for identity. Although Frank G. Speck and Clinton A. Weslager framed their investigations of the Nanticokes within the narrow contexts respectively of Indian survivals and race mixture, they have been singularly responsible for our limited knowledge of the Nanticoke during the twentieth century. Both of these men found themselves inextricably involved in the personal lives of these people. Previous to Speck's introduction of various Indian customs, the Nanticoke had exhibited no outward desire to revive the material aspects of their Indian heritage. Throughout their history discrimination and denigration has plagued the Nanticoke for claiming Indian ancestry. Preservation of their Indian identity served to maintain their separation from Negroes and Caucasians. This identity maintenance performed the critical function of welding the Nanticoke into a

strong, viable, and cohesive community.

The Nanticoke Indians of today participate in a lifestyle which resembles that of their white neighbors. While the Nanticoke Indians have undergone considerable culture change since their first encounter with Europeans, the Nanticoke community at Indian River aptly demonstrates that some of the Indian tribes of the eastern United States, although losing virtually all of their traditional way of life, survived and have persisted to the present. It would be difficult to overestimate the efforts of the Nanticoke in maintaining their sense of identity and social solidarity in the face of continual inroads threatening their community. Significantly most of these problems were resolved through the initiative and self-determination of the Nanticoke. Yet we have also seen that certain crises could not be solved locally and aid came from individuals outside of the community.

NOTES

1. George F. Fisher, *The So-Called Moors of Delaware* (Dover, 1929). This sketch originally appeared in the *Milford Delaware Herald*, 15 June 1895.
2. Ibid. C.A. Weslager, *Delaware's Forgotten Folk: the Story of the Moors & Nanticokes* (Philadelphia, 1943), pp. 31-37.
3. George F. Fisher, *The So-Called Moors of Delaware* (Dover, 1929). While performing fieldwork in the Nanticoke community, I discovered a photograph of Levin Sockum and his wife Eunice Ridgeway. This is the only known photograph of Sockum and can be viewed on page two of Frank W. Porter II, *A Photographic Survey of Indian River Community* (Millsboro, 1977).
4. James Mooney, "The Powhatan Confederacy, Past and Present," *American Anthropologist* new series 9 (1907): 144.
5. Ibid., p. 145.
6. Mark Nagler, "North American Indians and Intermarriage," in *Interacial Marriage: Expectations and Realities*, ed. Irving R. Stuart and Lawrence Edwin (New York, 1973), p. 286.
7. Theodore Stern, "Chickahominy: The Changing Culture of a Virginia Indian Community," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 96 (April 1952): 200; Frank G. Speck, "Chapters on the Ethnology of the Powhatan Tribes of Virginia," *Indian Notes and Monographs*, Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, Vol. 1, No. 5 (1928); and Helen C. Rountree, "Powhatan's Descendants in the Modern World: Community Studies of the Two Virginia Indian Reservations, with Notes on Five Non-Reservation Enclaves," *The Cherokeem* 10 (June 1972): 61-97.
8. William H. Babcock, "The Nanticoke Indians of Indian River, Delaware," *American Anthropologist* new series 1 (1899): 277-282.
9. M.R. Harrington to C.A. Weslager, January 31, 1942, C.A. Weslager Manuscripts, Hockessin, Delaware. The personal letters and other documents in the possession of Mr. Weslager will hereafter be referred to as the Weslager MSS. A verbal description of a corn sheller was obtained during an interview with Robert Davis, a Nanticoke residing at Indian River. In addition, the following information was found in the diary of a Sussex County

farmer. "Then came the shelling, although shelling in those days was not as we know it [refers to the period 1822 to 1855]. It was beating it off with pesis in a corn cradle which required a good deal of muscular strength. This cradle was made something like or shape of a small bedstead of heavy timber with permanent and strong slats in the bottom and curved downwards with the side boards run up two feet with none at the ends. These slats were placed about 3/8 of an inch apart so that the corn as beat off would run through and leave the cob in the cradle to be taken out by hand. The beating was done by heavy sticks of hickory or other hard and heavy wood 4 1/2 feet long. 3 inches diameter at the big end with 2 1/2 feet of the small end shaved down to the hand. These pessels are a little crooked or curved so as to fit the shape of the bottom of the cradle." "Portions of the Diary of John Burton Wingate," Sussex County, Delaware. Dated February, 1884. Manuscript located in the Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.

10. Frank G. Speck, "Reflections Upon the Past and Present of the Massachusetts Indians," *Bulletin of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society* 4 (April 1943): 35. On one occasion Speck graphically responded to such an unsubstantiated declaration. "I must say I have lost all patience with the old-fashioned habit of pronouncing a people extinct, lost or barren, when someone has noted 'death of the last full-blood.'" Speck replied caustically, because "Tribes are listed and treated as living social and biological entities as long as a drop of blood" is known to flow in veins of descendants and the consciousness of name is kept alive. "Concerning 'An Ethnological Introduction to the Long Island Indians' A Letter by John H. Morice and a reply by Frank G. Speck," *Bulletin of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society* 7 (April 1946): 59-62.

11. Frank G. Speck, "Reflections Upon the Past and Present of the Massachusetts Indians," *Bulletin of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society* 4 (April 1943): 33. For a similar argument see Frank G. Speck, "A Note on the Housatonic Band of Nipmuc," *Bulletin of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society* 4 (July 1943): 49-56.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36. For a critical appraisal of Speck's salvage ethnography see George L. Hicks, "Cultural Persistence Versus Local Adaptations: Frank G. Speck's Catawba Indians," *Ethnohistory* 12 (1965): 343-354.

13. Franz Boas, "The Method of Ethnology," *American Anthropologist* 22 (1922): 311-322. For a valuable, though brief, account of Speck's professional life, see A. Irving Halliwell, "Frank Gouldsmith Speck, 1881-1950," *American Anthropologist* 53 (1951): 67-75.

14. Anonymous, "The So-Called Moors of Delaware," *American Anthropologist* 14 (1912): 199-200.

15. Wilson D. Wallis to C.A. Weslager, January 29, 1942, Weslager MSS.

16. Frank G. Speck, "The Nanticoke of Delaware," *The Southern Workman* 44 (1913): 391-397.

17. Frank G. Speck, "The Nanticoke Community of Delaware," *Contributions from the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation* 2 (1915).

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-21.

19. Allan R. Holmberg, "Participant Intervention in the Field," *Human Organization* 14 (1955): 23-26.

20. C.A. Weslager, *Delaware's Forgotten Folk: the Story of the Moors & Nanticokes* (Philadelphia, 1943), pp. 82-92.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

22. The following captions illustrate the lack of understanding of those who witnessed the Nanticoke powwows in Indian River: "Delaware Redskins Revive Old Tribal Custom

for Thanksgiving Celebration," and "Nanticokes following Custom of Tribal Ancestors Give Thanks with Weird Dances," *Salisbury Times*, 30 November 1928.

23. Frank G. Speck, "Back Again to Indian River, Its People and Their Games," *Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Delaware* 3 (1942): 17.

24. Brewton Berry, *Almost White: A Study of Certain Racial Hybrids in the Eastern United States* (New York, 1963), p. 172.

25. Frank G. Speck, "Back Again to Indian River, Its People and Their Games," *Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Delaware* 3 (1942): 17-24.

26. Frank G. Speck, "Outgelling Rabbits," an Old Nanticoke Hunting Tradition and Its Significance," *Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Delaware* 4 (February 1946): 9-12; *Idem*, "The Prolific Among the Nanticoke of Indian River Hundred, Delaware," *Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Delaware* 4 (May 1943): 2-4; *Idem*, "A Maker of Rel-pots among the Nanticokes of Delaware," *Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Delaware* 4 (January 1949): 25-27; and *Idem*, "The Memorial Brush Heap in Delaware and Elsewhere," *Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Delaware* 4 (May 1945): 17-23.

27. Frank G. Speck, "Outgelling Rabbits," an old Nanticoke Hunting Tradition and Its Significance," *Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Delaware* 4 (February 1946): 2-4; Winona Wright to Frank G. Speck, June 2, 1945 and Frank G. Speck to C.A. Weslager, no date, Weslager MSS.

28. Anthony F.C. Wallace, "The Frank G. Speck Collection," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 95 (1951): 286.

29. A. Irving Halliwell, "Frank Gouldsmith Speck, 1881-1950," *American Anthropologist* 53 (1951): 75.

30. Gladys Tantaquidgeon, *A Study of Delaware Indian Medicine Practices and Folk Beliefs* (Harrisburg, 1942).

31. Anthony F.C. Wallace, "Recent Fieldwork Among the Nanticoke Indians of Delaware," *Bulletin of the Philadelphia Anthropological Society* 1 (March 1948): 2-3; and *Idem*, "Recent Field Studies of the River Culture of the Nanticoke Indians," *Bulletin of the Philadelphia Anthropological Society* 1 (May 1948): 3.

32. Personal Communication, Anthony F.C. Wallace to Frank W. Porter III, July 19, 1977.

33. Theodore Stern, "Chickahominy: The Changing Culture of a Virginia Indian Community," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 96 (1952): 157-225.

34. Wilson D. Wallis to C.A. Weslager, January 29, 1942, Weslager MSS.

35. George G. Heye to C.A. Weslager, April 29, 1942, Weslager MSS.

36. Rutile Loatman to C.A. Weslager, February 29, 1944, Weslager MSS.

37. C.A. Weslager, *Delaware's Forgotten Folk: the Story of the Moors & Nanticokes* (Philadelphia, 1943), p. viii.

38. Miscellaneous Field Notes, October 24, 1941, Weslager MSS.

39. C.A. Weslager, *Delaware's Forgotten Folk: the Story of the Moors & Nanticokes* (Philadelphia, 1943), p. ix.

40. William H. Gilbert, "Memorandum Concerning the Characteristics of the Larger Mixed-Blood Racial Islands of the Eastern United States," *Social Forces* 24 (May 1946): 438-447.

41. For example: Edward T. Price, "A Geographic Analysis of White-Negro-Indian Racial Mixtures in Eastern United States," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 43 (June 1953): 138-155; William S. Politzer, "The Physical Anthropology and

Genetics of Marginal People of the Southeastern United States," *American Anthropologist* 74 (June 1972): 719-739; Vernon J. Farenton and Roland J. Pellegrin, "The Sabines: A Study of Racial Hybrids in a Louisiana Parish," *Social Forces* 29 (December 1950): 148-154; Thomas J. Harte, "Trends in Mate Selection in a Tri-Racial Isolate," *Social Forces* 37 (March 1959): 215-221; Idem, "Social Origins of the Brandywine Population," *Phylon* 24 (1963): 369-378; A.R. Durlap and C.A. Weslager, "Trends in the Naming of Tri-Racial Mixed-Blood Groups in the Eastern United States," *American Speech* 22 (April 1947): 81-87; R.C. Elston, "The Estimation of Admixture in Racial Hybrids," *Annals of Human Genetics* 35 (1971): 9-17; and Carl J. Wittkop, et al, "Medical and Dental Findings in the Brandywine Isolate," *Alabama Journal of Medical Sciences* 3 (1966): 382-403.

42. William H. Gilbert to C.A. Weslager, July 20, 1945, Weslager MSS. At that time both Weslager and Gilbert attempted to organize a symposium which would bring together those scholars that had been conducting research on mixed-blood communities. Unfortunately they did not achieve their goal. C.A. Weslager to William H. Gilbert, July 21, 1945, Weslager MSS. However, in 1972 under the direction of B. Eugene Griessman, the *American Anthropologist* devoted part of the June and October issues to the analysis of "the American Isolates."

43. W. Bel, Jr. to C.A. Weslager, May 22, 1942, Weslager MSS. Weslager briefly discusses the problems involved with classification and its impact on the organization and activity of the Nanticoke Indian Association in *Delaware's Forgotten Folk: the Story of the Moors & Nanticokes* (Philadelphia, 1943), pp. 103-107.

44. C.A. Weslager to Adjutant General, U.S. Army, War Department, June 20, 1942, Weslager MSS.

45. Brigadier General H.B. Lewis to C.A. Weslager, July 31, 1942, Weslager MSS.

46. Morris S. Schwartz to C.A. Weslager, July 2, 1942, Weslager MSS.

47. Brigadier General P.S. Gage to C.A. Weslager, September 4, 1943, Weslager MSS.

48. Ernest R. Harmon to Frank G. Speck, November 27, 1944, Weslager MSS.

49. C.A. Weslager to Ernest R. Harmon, November 29, 1944, Weslager MSS.

50. C.A. Weslager, *Delaware's Forgotten Folk: the Story of the Moors & Nanticokes* (Philadelphia, 1943), pp. 112-127; and Frank W. Porter III, *A Photographic Survey of Indian River Community* (Millboro: Indian Mission Church, 1977), pp. 2-3.

51. Willard W. Beatty to C.A. Weslager, July 15, 1949 and C.A. Weslager to Solon G. Ayers, June 25, 1949, Weslager MSS. One argument which Weslager employed in buttressing his request for the admission of Nanticoke students to Haskell was that the small number of children who graduated from Indian Mission School would never present a serious problem for Haskell Institute. C.A. Weslager to W. Keith Kelly, Principal Haskell Institute, August 6, 1954, Weslager MSS. During an oral history survey on education in Sussex County, one Nanticoke informant recalled her experience at Haskell. "I would say that there have been about 16 that graduated from Haskell. I think the first year they went was in 1948 and the last graduates were in 1960. There may have been more. . . like when I graduated from 8th grade there were four of us and all four went to Haskell and graduated. But usually it would be only one or maybe two out of a class. And one year we only had one graduate," William H. Williams, Project Director, *Oral History Project: Education in Sussex County*, no pagination, no date.

John Muir's Evolving Attitudes Toward Native American Cultures

RICHARD F. FLECK
University of Wyoming

Both Herbert F. Smith and Thomas J. Lyon have already pointed out that very little criticism exists on the writings of John Muir perhaps because we are not yet ready for his advanced environmental thinking. Thus, there is no criticism on Muir's attitudes toward North American Indian cultures except brief commentary in Herbert F. Smith's *John Muir* (New York, 1965).

John Muir's impressions of North American Indian cultures, like those of Henry David Thoreau, changed markedly after he had actually lived with natives in the wilderness. While Muir strongly sympathized with the down-trodden Indian and seriously questioned harsh attitudes toward native Americans, he first had to overcome some fearful experiences which inevitably influenced his thinking. Muir's attitudes toward the Digger Indians of California were quite prejudiced, for instance. However, after several excursions to the Alaskan glaciers where Muir lived among the various Thinkit tribes including the Chilkats, Hoonas, and Takus, he grew to respect and honor their beliefs, actions, and life styles. Their essential joy despite harsh surroundings gave Muir his first clue that native Americans were capable of a sound and harmonious pattern of living.

When the Muir family moved from Scotland to Wisconsin in 1849, they soon became aware of weary and forlorn bands of Winnebago Indians who begged for food. After a short while, young Muir's favorite horse was stolen by one of these Indians who treated the animal quite cruelly, as the Muirs later learned. They heard of valuable things being stolen from their neighbors' farms as well. At times the Winnebagoes took it upon themselves to slaughter farmers' livestock for food. All of this naturally frightened the young lad from Scotland. However, Muir listened with eager intentness to an argument between his stern father and a neighbor over Indian land rights which he later recalled in *Boyhood and Youth*. This passage warrants complete citing:

I well remember my father's discussing with a Scotch neighbor, a Mr. George Mair, the Indian question as to the rightful ownership of the soil. Mr. Mair remarked one day that it was pitiful to see how the unfortunate Indians, children of Nature living on the natural products of