

Indigenous, European, and American Place Names of Streams and Waterways in Delaware

Draft Dec 7, 2021
University of Delaware
Water Resources Center
Newark, Del 19711

Introduction

Recognizing the rich Indigenous history and lasting presence of the Native people, the University of Delaware Water Resources Center has dedicated a project aimed at highlighting original place names and their meanings. Indigenous names have always existed for many water-relevant locations, far outdating their anglicized replacements common today. In many places, Swedish and Dutch names established by some of the earliest settlers in Delaware are also relevant to the state's history, and have been lost in similar fashion. Utilizing 1966 U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1245, the UDWRC mapped original place names of streams and waterways in Delaware (Lenepheoking). Many of the original place names are derived from Lenape, Nanticoke, and Algonkian origin reflecting the indigenous people who lived here for millennia. When the Swedes and Dutch sailed here in the early 17th Century, these western Europeans left multiple variants due to differences in spelling and translation among all the influential languages in the area. When King Charles II regained the monarchy after the interregnum of Oliver Cromwell in 1660, the Duke of York granted land charters to William Penn after 1682 and many place names were anglicized and Swapecksiska and Hvitlers Creek became White Clay Creek and the Swedish potato and barley mill snaps Brannvin became the Brandywine River.

The evolution of place names in Delaware mirrors history from the Lenape to the Swedes and Dutch to the English then the Americans. The Lenape lived here for millennia since the melting of the glaciers and the rising of the seas at least 12,000 years ago and met the Europeans in Lenapewihittuck (Reed and Wallace 2019). The Europeans arrived at the turn of the 17th Century and met the indigenous people in the tribal homeland of the Lenni-Lenape in Lenape Haki-nk to the north and along the bay, the Nanticoke in Nentego to the south, and the Susquehannock to the west (Figure 1).

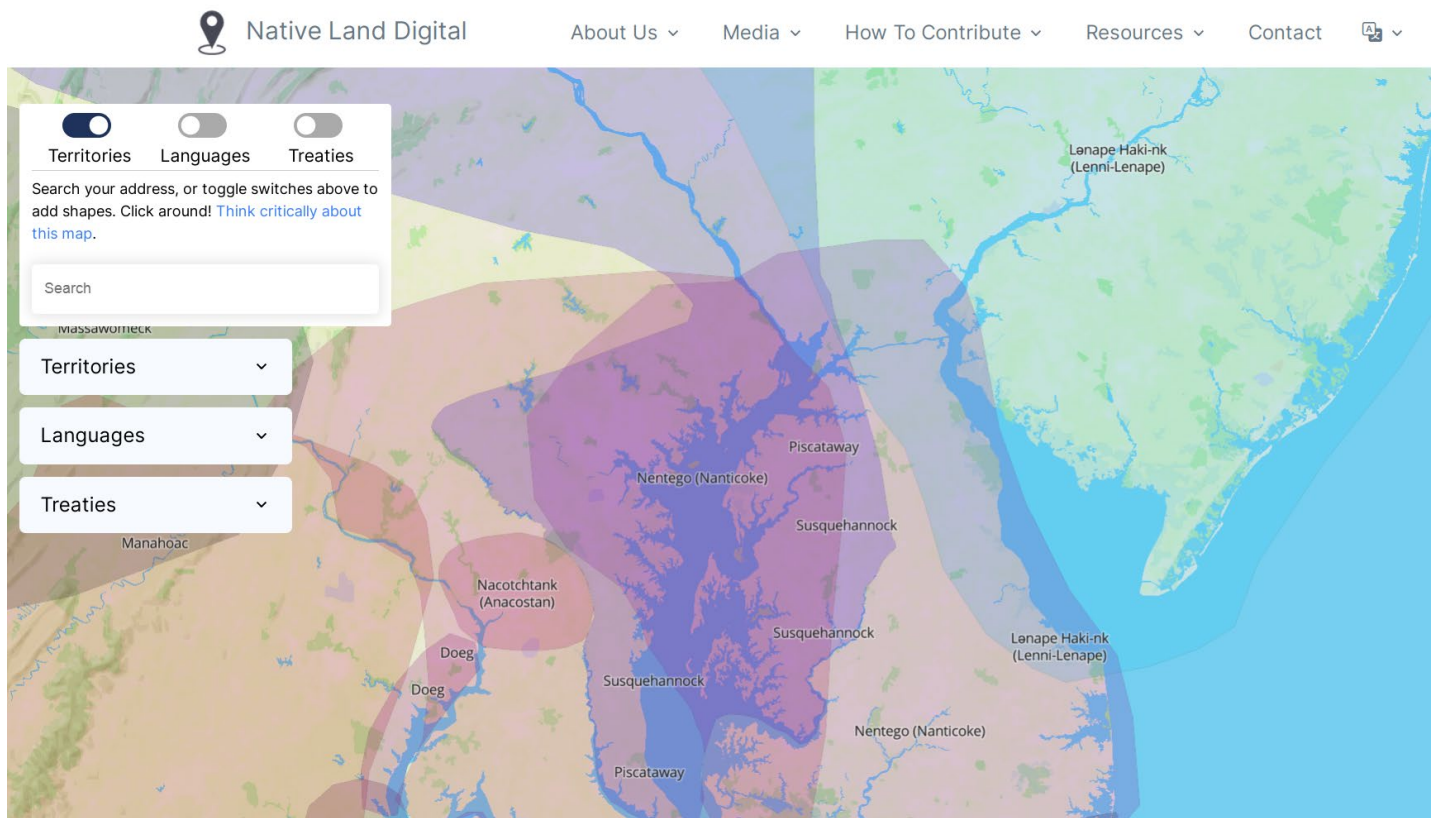


Figure 1. Native lands in Delaware (Native Land Digital 2021)

In 1608, Captain John Smith explored the Chesapeake Bay, interacted with the Nanticoke, and sailed up the rivers of the Eastern Shore into Delaware. The Minqua (Susquehannocks) occupied the west and warred with the Lenape and the Dutch. Peter Lindstrom's 1654 map of New Sweden identified creeks or kyls along the bay and the Sickoneysincks at Cape Henlopen. Naaman was a Lenape sachem who sought peace with the Swede Governor Printz at a 1644 conference. The Lenape and

Minqua fought a trade war from 1626 to 1636. Lenape leadership was through matrilineage where a female matron passed down authority to her heirs and the male sachem was merely a spokesman.

In northern Delaware, indigenous villages are found at the Clyde Farm at Churchman's Marsh, Crane Hook on Delaware River (Hakenena Sipu) in Wilmington, Naaman's Creek, and Brandywine River at DuPont Eleutherian Mills at Hagley (Reed and Wallace 2019). The indigenous people named Iron Hill near Newark Marettico, meaning "hill of hard stone" or Aquasehum, meaning "a place where there is iron." and the Minqua indigenous people had a fort on the hill which was attacked by the Seneca in 1663. Significant to the history of the Brandywine Valley and the Lenape village of Queonemysing is the 1683 agreement between Seketarius and other Lenape sachems and William Penn for the land between the Upland (Chester) and Christina creeks. Queonemysing on the river of the long fish is situated at the bend of the Brandywine just north of the 1682 Penn's arc of Delaware. Trading stations are found at Frederica on the Murderkill River, Killens Pond, and Saint Jones River near Dover. In 1683 Penn's William Markham entered into agreement with Sachem Seketarius of Queonemysing and Minguanan (Machaloha) on White Clay Creek. In 1684, Penn identified one mile on either side of Brandywine for Lenape continued seasonal occupation of Queonemysing from mouth to west branch. In 1725, Alphonsus Kirk and Samuel Hollingsworth remembered that land was reserved for Brandywine Indians and the Indians were to retain their "Town on Brandywine." Kirk remembered: "above thirty years Since he saw two Papers which Saccatarius or some other of the Chiefs of the Indians on Brandywine had in their possession. In 1778, the Lenape (the Delaware) was the first nation (domestic or otherwise) to sign a treaty with the new U.S. government and the Continental Congress.

The Lenape held an annual fish festival on Vandever land on ground now known as Brandywine Village in the spring (Dunlap and Weslager 1960). "Their encampment may be said to have had a general course or range of north west and south east from nearly opposite the present lower dam down to the shipyard and within an average distance of one hundred yards of the creek." The Indian therefore never failed to indulge his habit in coming down to "fish and turtle" after planting his corn, beans, and other vegetables. "In the afternoon they would be seen usually returning to their encampment laden down with fish and loggerheads, and upon their arrival would always find a large blazing fire prepared for cooking their fish, the squaws and children having made it up in their absence round a rock or fallen tree. The several groups of returned fishermen would go to their respective campfires, throwing in their fish and placing the great loggerhead in the midst of the coals on his back, keeping him down with stones and watching him preserving the lower shell for a bowl. These festivals generally terminated in five or six weeks, or until they thought their truck should be attended to, when they broke up their camp and returned home."

The Dutch sailed here in 1616 in search of beaver pelts for the fashionable continental hats of the day and in 1630 founded the colony of Zwaanendael at Hoeren Kill (Whorekill) or Lewes Creek. In 1638, the Swedes founded New Sweden and built Fort Christina (after the teenage queen at the Rocks on the Christinakill) and in 1654 erected Fort Casimir and New Amstel at present-day New Castle. In 1664 King Charles II regained the monarchy after the interregnum of Oliver Cromwell and defeated the Swedes and Dutch here and later the Duke of York granted land charters to William Penn after 1682. By 1700, Penn sold over 800,000 acres of Lenape land in Pennsylvania with more than 9,000 colonists in place. William Penn's three lower counties of Pennsylvania (New Castle, Kent, and Sussex) were declared under Quaker influence in 1704. In 1767, Mason and Dixon completed the survey of their line that separated the land of the Catholic Calverts in Maryland from the Quaker Penns in Pennsylvania and the land in between was Delaware. In 1776 the Delaware Assembly formed the state of Delaware and separated from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In 1787, at the Golden Fleece Tavern in Dover, Delaware was the first state to ratify the U.S. constitution.

Place names of Delaware waterways have fascinating stories. Flowing from Pennsylvania to the Christina River, the Brandywine was called Suspecough the indigenous name meaning, "at the muddy pond" and comes from the Swedish snaps Brannvin a potato liquor after the Old Barley Mill built by a 17th century Swedish surgeon near present day Market Street in Wilmington. The Christina River was the Lenape Sickpeckons Sippunk meaning, "at the river at the muddy pond." Was named after the teenage Swedish queen. Naamans Creek was named after an indigenous chief around 1655 and may refer to an Algonkian word for fish. Nanticoke comes from the indigenous tribe the tidewater people. Hwiskakimensi Sippus is the Lenape name for Red Clay Creek meaning young tree stream." Shellpot Creek is the Kitthantemessink from the "large stream at the scattered stones." Is also from the Swedish Skoldpaddekill or Skillpaddekylen meaning "mud turtle creek." Sockarockets Ditch flows to the Deep Branch in Sussex County and is thought to have been named for an indigenous Chief Socorocet who took part in the making of treaties delegating the land in the eastern part of Delaware in the 1680s. The White Clay Creek is anglicized from the indigenous Lenape Swapecksiska which the Dutch adapted to Hwitlerskil.

Ackan Managaha: Commonly known today as Port Penn, this area was originally called Ackan Managaha by the Lenape meaning "the land of the large owl."

Akorebakissing: Adjacent to Naamans Creek is an area in the native language meaning "at the stony place on the side." It is alternatively called Pocathunsing meaning "near the open/treeless hill."

Alapocas Run: This stream flows southwest to Brandywine Creek, just north of Wilmington. The name, most likely of indigenous derivation, first appeared in New Castle Court Records in 1680.

Appoquinimink River: The common and indigenous name likely meaning, “wounded duck” or “view of settlement. There are many alternative spellings of the name. Variants: Minques Kil, Apoquemene Creek, Appoquenimi Creek, Apoquenama Kill, Apequinemy River, Oppequimina Creek, Appquenemink Creek, Apoquinimy Creek.

Arrowhead Point – Appoqueneme: The marsh area along the Delaware River, called Appoqueneme meaning “view of settlement” was later used as a cut through saving vessels the trip around Bombay Hook Island.

Assawoman Bay/Senepuxent: Originally called Assateague, an Algonkian word meaning “stream or inlet in the middle” or “across,” it later became known as Assawoman, another Algonkian name meaning “midway fishing stream.” Variants: Senepuxent.

Asketum Branch: Three-mile creek which flows northwest to join Stoney Branch and Tyndall Branch in Sussex county. There is no known indigenous name.

Augustine Beach: A beach located along the Delaware River. Named for Augustine Herman, a surveyor credited with mapping the Delaware-Chesapeake Region for Lord Baltimore, There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Delaware Beach, Saint Augustine Beach, The Piers.

Augustine Creek: A creek named for Augustine Herman, a surveyor credited with mapping the Delaware-Chesapeake Region. There are no known indigenous alternatives, however, there are several variations of English and Dutch origins. Variants: Augustin Creek, Saint Augustine Creek, Canoe Branch, Ariens Kill.

Bombay Hook Point – Mettocksinowousingh: Thought to be translated from the Lenape name Mettocksinowousingh meaning, “little tree point,” the point was also called by the Dutch name Ruyge-Bosje meaning, “shaggy bushes.” Variants: Bomtiens Udd, Bompties Hook, Boomtien Hoeck, Canarosse, False Liston’s Point, Mettocksinowousingh, Neuwisings, Ruyge-Bosje, Neusink.

Brandywine Creek – Suspecough or Wawaset: Flowing from Pennsylvania to the Christina River, the Brandywine was called Suspecough the indigenous name meaning, “at the muddy pond”, Wawaset meaning "near the winding bend", and Tancopanican for "stream of the little tubers," referring to the ground nut or Indian potato found on the banks of the river. The Swedes named it Fiskiekjilenin meaning, “fishkill.” Many believe the Brandywine comes after the Swedish liquor Brannvin a potato liquor after the Old Barley Mill built by a Swedish surgeon near present day Market Street in Wilmington. Variants: Brandewyn Kill, Brandywine Kill, Brandewyne Creek, Brande Wine Creek, Brandywine Creeck, Brandywine River, Brainwend Kill, Fiske Creek, Fiskiekjilen, Visscherskil, Suspecough, Tancopanian, Wawaset, Wawassan, Wawasiungh.

Bread and Cheese Island: An island located at the confluence of Red and White Clay Creeks, the name is a translation of the Dutch Kees Und Brodts. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Kees Und Brodts, Knesudbradozen, Rodhlers Onu.

Broadkill Hundred: A political subdivision included in the historic “Old Sussex” which included Lewes and Rehoboth Hundreds at the time. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Broadkiln Hundred.

Broadkill River: Ending at the Roosevelt Inlet, the river has several spelling variations, however, there is no known indigenous name. Variants: Broad Kill, Broad Kill Creek, Broadkill Creek, Broadkiln Creek.

Chesapeake & Delaware Canal: Constructed in 1829 to link the Delaware and Chesapeake Bays, the canal cuts 25 miles through the state of Delaware. There is no indigenous name.

Choptank River – Rapahanock: The river was given the indigenous name Rapahanock meaning “a stream that ebbs and flows,” by Captain John Smith. It is also known by the Nanticoke name Tshapetank meaning “stream that divides” or “stream that flows back strongly.” Variants: Rapahanock, Tshapetank.

Christiana: The village was named for the Christina River, but the spelling was corrupted to “Christiana” in the colonial era. There is no known indigenous name.

Christina River - Sickpeckons Sippunk: Flowing for 15 miles to the Delaware River, called the Lenape name Sickpeckons Sippunk meaning, “at the river at the muddy pond.” The stream was named Christina River on Lindstrom's maps of 1654-55, in honor of Queen Christina of Sweden. The Indian variant, Minquas Kill, which was applied prior to 1660, is derived from the Lenape name for a neighboring tribe, and was taken from the Iroquoian word menque, meaning "males" or "men." Another Lenape name, Sickpeckons Sippunk, means "at the river at the muddy pond." (Dunlap and Weslager, 1950; Dunlap,

1956). There are several variants of the name with indigenous and Swedish origins. Variants: Christina River, Christien River, Christine River, Christeen River, Christiany River, Christen River, Christiana Creek, Elbe-Revir, Minquas Kill, Minques Kill, Minquaas Kill, Minquess Kill, Sickpeckons Sippunk, Supekongh, Tasswaijres.

Clark Point: A point located on the Delaware thought to be originally called Paradijs Udden meaning “Paradise Point” by Swedish, Finnish, and Livonian sailors who stopped at the point on their way to present-day Wilmington in 1683. There is no known indigenous name.

Cooch’s Bridge: A bridge on the Christina River named for Thomas Cooch and site of the only Revolutionary War battle in Delaware. There is no indigenous name.

Claymont: A suburban development originally named Naamans Creek for local Indigenous Chief believed to be a friend of Swedes in the area at the time.

Cool Spring: A railroad settlement and church named for a nearby cool water spring. There is no known indigenous name.

Corner Ketch: Settlement said to be named for a popular tavern which attracted a tough crowd. There was an associated warning that became “they’ll ketch ya at the corner.” There is no known indigenous name.

Crane Hook: A point of land on the Delaware Bay. Crane Hook is the translation of the original Swedish name Trane Udden and the later Dutch name Kraenhoek. There are several Swedish and Dutch variants, however there is no known indigenous name. Variants: Kraenhoek, Trane Udden.

Crooked Gut: A stream running to the Mispillion River named Strunkiln in Dutch meaning, “dung river.” There are several other Dutch variants, however, there is no known indigenous name. Variants: Strunkiln, Strunt Kill, Dreck Creek, Durk Creek.

Delaware Bay – Poutaxat: Located between Delaware and New Jersey, the Delaware Bay is 25 miles across at its widest point. The bay was given the Lenape name Poutaxat which means, “near the falls.” The common name was given to the Bay for Lord de la Warr, for whom the state and Delaware river were also named. Variants: Baeijuande Zuyt River, Godyns Bay, Godins Bay, Niew Port May, Poutaxat, South Bay, Zuyt Baye.

Delaware River - Lenape Wihittuck or Hakenena Sipu: Running 270 miles from New York to the Delaware Bay, the Delaware River was called Lenape Wihittuck meaning “river of the Lenape,” or Mackerick Kitton, another Lenape name meaning “great river.” Variants: South River, Zuydt Revier, Chihohocki, Chickhohocki, Lenape Wihittuck, Mackerick Kitton, Kit-hanne, Swensa River, Nya Sweirges Elf, Charles River, Prince Hendricks River, Willems Rivier, Swenskas Revier, Sodre Reviret, Store Revir, Nassau River.

Drawer Creek: Flowing 7.5 miles to the Appoquinimink River, the creek has several variants, however, there are no known indigenous names. Variants: Drayers Creek, Drayer Creek, Drawer Creek, Drawers Creek, Drawjers Creek, Drawyers Creek.

Duck Creek - Quinquingo Cipus: Joining Mill Creek to form the Smyrna River, the creek is named Quinquingo Cipus from the Lenape word quinquingus meaning “large, wild duck.” Swedish variant Ancke Kijhlen and Dutch variant Ende Kil are both derived from the Lenape name. Variants: Quinquingo Cipus, Ancke Kijhlen, Ende Kil, Green Branch.

Dutch Neck: Neck of land between the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal and the Delaware River. There are no known indigenous names.

Fennimore Landing: Located on the Appoquinimink River. There is no known indigenous name.

Fenwick Island: Formerly an island, the peninsula is part of the barrier beach of Maryland and Delaware. It is currently also a resort community which attracts a significant summer population. Although there are several known variants, there is no known indigenous name. Variants: Fenwicks Island, False Cape, Assawoman Beach, Phenix Island, Hinlopen, Cape Hinlopen.

Fern Hook – Kojjaka: A marsh on the right bank of the Christina River in Wilmington. Fern Hook is an attempt to translate the original indigenous name Kojjaka meaning “pine tree place.” Variants: Kojjaka, Furu Udden, Vurenhoek, Fire Hook.

Hen and Chickens Shoal: A shoal that extends 4 miles between Cape Henlopen and Rehoboth Beach in the Delaware Bay. There is no known indigenous name.

Cape Henlopen: The point of land at the south end of the Delaware Bay which is now part of Cape Henlopen State Park. There are several variants from various groups that arrived on its shores, however, there is no known indigenous name. Variants: Cape Hinloopen, Cape James, Cape Cornelius, Cape Hinlopen, Zuijt Hoek, Cape la Warre.

Hockessin – Hockessin: Village near the Pennsylvania/Delaware border. The name is potentially indigenous in origin and meaning “bark of tree” or “place of many foxes.” Variants: Occasion, Okesian, Occasion, Hocesion, Ockession, Okession, Okesan, Okeshion, Hockessing.

Hoopes Reservoir: Reservoir named for former chief engineer of the Wilmington Board of Water Commissioners Col. Edgar M. Hoopes, Jr. There is no known indigenous name.

Hurricane Run: One-mile long stream running to Rocky Run north of Wilmington. There is no known indigenous name.

Husbands Run: A 1.7 mile long creek running to the Brandywine. The creek was most likely named for the Husbands, a family who settled in the area during the 19th century. There is no known indigenous name.

Indian Beach: Located on the Atlantic coast near Rehoboth Beach. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Rehoboth Indian Beach.

Indian Gut: A ditch which stretches towards Kellys Ditch. There is no known indigenous name.

Indian River: A nine-mile long stream heading in Millsboro Pond and running into the Indian River Bay. There is no known indigenous name.

Indian River Bay: The Indian River Bay extends from the mouth of the Indian River to the Indian River Inlet. There is no known indigenous name.

Indian River Hundred: A political subdivision that was part of the original “Old Sussex” along with the Lewes and Rehoboth Hundreds. There is no known indigenous name.

Iron Bridge: A bridge across Brandywine Creek northwest of Wilmington. There is no known indigenous name.

Iron Hill – Marettico: A hill named for the iron ore that was mined from the location prior to 1661. The indigenous people named the hill Marettico, meaning “hill of hard stone” or Aquasehum, meaning “a place where there is iron.” The Minqua indigenous people had a fort on the hill which was attacked by the Senacas in 1663. Variants: Marettico, Sasquasehum.

Kiamensi – Kwiskakimensi: A railroad station whose name is derived from the Lenape word Hwiskakimensi meaning “young tree.” Variants: Kwiskakimensi.

Killcohook National Wildlife Refuge: A refuge extending into the Delaware River. There is no known indigenous name.

Kitts Hammock: A hill located on the shore of the Delaware Bay. It is reported to have been initially named “Kidd’s Hammock,” for the 17th century pirate, Captain William Kidd. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Kitts Hammock, Kittshammock.

Leipsic: A village located on the Leipsic River northeast of Dover. It was first known as Fast Landing until 1814 when it was named for the German city. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Fast Landing.

Leipsic River: A 14 mile-long stream flowing toward the Delaware Bay in Kent County with variant names Little Duck Creek and Leipsic Creek. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Little Duck Creek, Leipsic Creek.

Lewes: The site of the first Dutch settlement in Delaware, known as Zwaanendael, founded in 1631 and subsequently destroyed by the indigenous people the same year. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Lewis, Lewistown, Lewes Creek, Hoornkill, Zwaanendael.

Lewes and Rehoboth Canal: A canal running 9 miles long connecting Roosevelt Inlet to Rehoboth Bay. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Lewes Creek, Lewis Creek, Blommers Creek, Bloemaerts Creek, Hoeren-Kil, Hoere-Kil, Horn Kill.

Liston Point: Point of land that forms the western point of arbitrary division between the Delaware River and Delaware Bay. There are several variants such as the Swedish name Hager Udden, meaning “heron point.” The current name refers to Morris Liston, who acquired land in Blackbird Hundred before 1680. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Liston’s Point, Hager Udden.

Little Assawoman Bay: just north of Assawoman Bay. Assawoman is an Algonkian name meaning “midway fishing stream.” Variants: Assawoman Bay, Assawoman Sound.

Little Mill Creek : A stream running for 6 miles flowing to the Christina River from Hoopes Reservoir, with Dutch variant name Taswaijeeskil meaning "creek of the meadow in which there are tufts." There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Mill Creek, Taswaijeeksil, Tesswijreskijl.

Marcus Hook – Miminheckhacking: A tract of land near Naaman Creek. The name Marcus Hook is only used in Pennsylvania and is reportedly of indigenous origin. The indigenous name for the land is Miminheckhacking which means “at the corn land.” Variants: Miminheckhacking.

Mattapany – Mattapany: A tract of land on the north side of Roy Creek southwest of Bethany beach. Mattapany is an indigenous name which means “landing place.”

Mermaid: A locality northeast of Newark. It was named after the Mermaid Tavern which was constructed in 1740. There is no known indigenous name.

Mill Creek: A stream flowing for 7 miles to White Clay Creek whose Swedish variant Lillefalskijlen means "Little Falls Creek." There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Lillefalskijlen.

Mispillion River: A river that flows from Silver Lake in Milford to the Delaware Bay. The first occurrence of the name appears as Mispensing on a map of 1664. Although it is tentatively analyzed as meaning “at the great tuber (stream)”, there is no known origin of the name Mispillion or the other variants. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Mispensing, Misspann Creeke, Mispelion, Mispalling Creeke, Masphilion Creek, Muskmellon.

Montchanin: A village on the Reading Railroad west of Brandywine Creek. It was named by Colonel Henry A. duPont before 1890 for Anne Alexandrine de Montchanin. There is no known indigenous name.

Mount Cuba: Located northwest of Hoopes Reservoir, the name is derived from the estate of Cornelius Hollehan called “Cuba Rock” which was built in 1730 in the Mill Creek Hundred. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Cuba Rock.

Murderkill River: A stream flowing southeast and northeast to the Delaware Bay. Although there are several known variants and the earliest form of the name appeared on Lindestrom’s maps as Mordare Kijhlen which means “the Murderer Creek” in Swedish, there is no known reason for the name. Additionally, there is no known indigenous name. Variants: Mordare Kijhlen, Murtherkill, Mother Kill, Mothers Creek, Motherkiln Creek.

Naamans Creek: A stream that begins in Pennsylvania and flows southeast to the Delaware River. The stream is thought to have been named for an indigenous Chief around 1655. The name may also refer to an Algonkian word for fish, as the stream is known to have been a Lenape fishing ground. Variants: Naamans Creek, Naamans Hock(Dunlap and Weslager, 1950)..

Naamans Bridge: The bridge is constructed over Naaman Creek just south of the Pennsylvania boundary. Initially built in 1682, the bridge was used by early Swedish, Dutch, and English settlers of the area.

Nanticoke River: A stream that flows from just southeast of Harrington. The name Nanticoke comes from the indigenous group of the same name who lived along the river. Another variant of the stream is Kuskarawaok an indigenous name reported by Captain John Smith in the early 17th century which means “place of making white beads.” Variants: Gravelly Fork, Gravelly Branch, Northwest Fork Nanticoke River, Kuskarawaok, Kuskarawaock.

New Castle – Tamakonck: Settled as an indigenous village and given the name Tamakonck which is thought to mean “place of the beaver.” In 1651, the Dutch established a fort and the first town in Delaware in the area which they called Santhoeck. The town was captured by the English in 1664 and was given the current name. Variants: Fort Casimir, Fort Trefalldigheet, Newcastle, New Castle, Fort Trinity, Niew Amstel, Quinamkot, Aresapa, Santhoeck, Tamakonck, Macherish Kitton, Cannkonkan.

New Castle County: A political subdivision named for the early settlement of the same name. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Newcastle County.

Newport: A town located on the Christina River southwest of Wilmington. The town was named Newport Ayre in 1735, however, there is no known indigenous name. Variants: Newport Ayre, New Port.

Nonatum Mills: A locality on the left bank of the White Clay Creek. Nonatum was a paper mill community shown on maps until the 19th century. Nonatum is an indigenous name meaning “I rejoice” or “I am well-minded.”

Odessa – Appoquinimi: A village located on the Appoquinimink River northeast of Middletown. The area was originally an indigenous village known as Appoquinimi. The area was renamed Odessa for the Russian city in 1855. Variants: Appquinimi, Cantwell’s Bridge.

Persimmon Run: A river that begins in Maryland and flows northeast to the West Branch Christina River. There is no known indigenous name.

Pocomoke River - Pocomoke/Wighcocomoco: A river flowing to Pocomoke Sound in the Chesapeake Bay. The river and an indigenous village were referenced as Wighcocomoco by Captain John Smith in 1606. Wighcocomoco is thought to mean “a fortified area containing houses.” Pocomoke is also an indigenous name thought to mean “pierced or broken ground.” Variants: Wighcocomoco, Newfound Branch.

Port Mahon: A settlement at the mouth of the Mahon River given its current name in the early 19th century for Port Mahon the capital of the Spanish Island of Minorca in the Mediterranean. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Port Mahon’s, Mahon’s Ditch, Mahon’s.

Port Penn: A village located on the Delaware River south of Delaware City. The village was most likely given its common name in 1774 for William Penn who is said to have stopped at the location to replenish his water supply before continuing to New Castle and Philadelphia. There is no known indigenous name.

Primehook Neck: An area of land between Slaughter Creek and Primehook Creek. The current name was taken from the Dutch name Priume hoek which means “Plum Point.” There is no known indigenous name.

Queonemysing: Lenape village (pace of the long fish) along the Brandywine where Pennsylvania and Delaware join together.

Raiders Pond: A pond in the barrier bar marsh connected to the Indian River Inlet by a channel. There is no known indigenous name.

Rattlesnake Hill: A wooded elevation on the left bank of the Broadkill River. There is no known indigenous name.

Red Clay Creek - Hwiskakimensi Sippus: A creek headed in Pennsylvania which flows southeast to White Clay Creek. Referenced on Lidestrom’s Map (1654-1655) as Hwiskakimensi Sippus, a Lenape name meaning “young tree stream.” Variants: Hwiskakimensi Sippus, Rodlers Creek.

Reedy Island: An island located in the Delaware River. There are Dutch and Swedish variants of the name which led to the English translation, Reedy Island. There is no known indigenous name.

Rehoboth Flats: A marsh located between the shore dunes along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean and the Lewes and Rehoboth Canal. There is no known indigenous name.

The Rocks – Hoppokahacking: Locality that exists in Wilmington on the left bank of the Christina River. The site of the first landing point of the Swedes in 1638 and For Christina. The Lenape name for the area is Hoppokahacking potentially meaning “at the land or place of the tobacco pipe” or “at the rocks place.”

Rossakatum Branch: A stream flowing northwest to Records Pond. The name Rossakatum is thought to be of indigenous origins. Variants: Little Mill Branch.

Saint Georges: A village located on the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Quinquernium, Quinquinium.

Saint Georges Creek: A stream originally headed at St. Georges, but was incorporated in part into the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. There is no known indigenous name.

Saint Jones River: A stream headed in Silver lake and flowing southeast to the Delaware Bay. Named for Robert Jones who was granted the land bordering the river. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Jones Creek, Saint Jones Creek, Warge Kijhlen, Wulfs Creek.

Sheep Pen Ditch: A stream flowing east to Millsboro Pond. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Sheepen Ditch, Sheepen Creek, Fameys Branch, Pole Bridge Branch, Pole Dam Branch.

Sheep Pen Landing: A locality on the right bank of Guinea Creek at its junction with Herring Creek. There is no known indigenous name.

Shellpot Creek – Kitthantemessink: A stream flowing to the Brandywine Creek at Wilmington. Shellpot is from the old Swedish name Skoldpaddekill or Skillpaddekylen meaning “mud turtle creek.” The indigenous Lenape people called the stream Kitthantemessink meaning “large stream at the scattered stones.” Variants: Schillpades, Schilpatts, Shilpats, Shell Creek, Skilpot, Shilpots, Kitthantemessink (Dunlap and Weslager, 1961 and Dunlap, 1956)..

Shoals Branch - Askakeson Branch: A stream flowing east to Long Drain Ditch. Called Askakeson Branch by the indigenous Lenape people, meaning “at the small swamp.” Variants: Askakeson Branch, Shealds Branch.

Smyrna: A town southwest of Woodland Beach. Formerly known as Duck Creek, the town was renamed in 1806 for the seaport in Turkey. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Duck Creek, Duck Creek Cross Roads.

Smyrna River: A stream headed northeast of the town of Smyrna. Formerly considered to head at Smyrna Landing, the head of the then navigable waters. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Duck Creek.

Sockarockets Ditch: A stream that flows southeast to join with Welsh Branch to form Deep Branch. Thought to have been named for an indigenous Chief Socorocet who took part in the making of treaties delegating the land in the eastern part of Delaware in the 1680s. Variants: Green Branch, Sockorockits Ditch.

Spinnel Udden: A point of land on Delaware Bay between Woodland Beach and Bombay Hook Point. The name is Swedish for “the spider point.” There is no known indigenous name.

Stockley Branch: A stream headed at the junction of Alms House Ditch and Sabrey Branch. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Tussocky Branch, Tusky Branch, Tussicky Branch.

Stoney Creek: A creek flowing southeast to the Delaware River. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Stenkil, Quarry Creek, Quarryville Creek, Fransens Creek, Oele Fransens Creek.

Sussex County: A political subdivision originally part of the Hoorncill district court set up by the dutch Governor Calve in 1673. The county was divided into Saint Jones and Deal Counties in 1680 and in 1682 Deal County was changed to Sussex County for William Penn’s own county in England. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Hoorncill County, Hoerenkill County, Whorekill County, Deal County, Deale County, Essex County.

Swan Gut: A stream and estuary flowing into Maryland to the north shore of Assawoman Bay. There is no known indigenous name.

Swanwyck: A village north of New Castle. The name is Dutch for “swan district,” first applied to a dutch community in the 17th century that was located southeast of the final settlement. The name Strandwijk was also shown in Lindestrom’s maps which means “strand district” or “area along the shore.” There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Swanewick, Swanwike, Swanwick, Swan Hook, Swaenewyck, Strandwijk.

Tadpole Neck: A neck of land between Taylors Gut and the Smyrna River. There is no known indigenous name.

Talleys Corner: A settlement northeast of Wilmington. There is no known indigenous name.

Talleyville: A town south of Brandywine Creek. Named for the descendents of William Talley who purchased land in the Brandywine Hundred in 1795. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Graceville, Tallyville.

Tantrough Branch: A stream flowing northeast toward Haven Lake. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Tantrough Ditch, Goldsmith Run.

Tanyard Branch: A stream flowing west into Maryland to Marshyhope Creek. There is no known indigenous name.

Tappahanna Ditch - Tappahanna Ditch: A stream flowing southwest to the junction of Harrington Beaverdam Ditch and Tidy Island Creek. Tappahanna is a form of an indigenous name thought to mean “the stream that ebbs and flows.” Variants: Tappahannak Creek.

Terrapin Pond - Terrapin Pond: A swamp located on Saunders Beach. Terrapin is of Algonkian origin. There is no known indigenous name.

Thorndyk Branch: A stream flowing southeast to Double Run. There is no known indigenous name.

Thorofare: A water passage at the mouth of the Smyrna River in Delaware Bay. There is no known indigenous name.

Thorofare Neck: A neck of land on the Delaware Bay between Ceder Swamp and the Smyrna River. There is no indigenous name.

Thowrntown: A community located west of the Delaware River. There is no known indigenous name.

Thrumcap: A locality on the shore of the Delaware Bay. The name Thrumcap is most likely a mariners term from Maine which refers to a clump of trees that serves as a landmark. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: The Thrumcap, Thrum Cap.

Tomahawk Branch: A stream flowing northwest to Marshyhope Creek. There is no known indigenous name.

Townsend: A village southeast of Middletown. Named in 1855 for Samuel Townsend, a local landowner. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Charleytown, Charley Town, Charleston.

Trussum Pond: A reservoir located on James Branch. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Trussem Pond.

Turkey Run: A stream flowing southeast to Shellpot Creek. There is no known indigenous name.

Turnip Patch Point: A point of land on the left bank of Pepper Creek. There is no known indigenous name.

Tyndall Branch: A stream heading at the junction of Asketum Branch and Stoney Branch and flowing northwest to Deep Creek. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Stony Branch.

Vance Neck: A neck of land between Silver Run and the Appoquinimink River. There is no known indigenous name.

Vandyke: A locality on the Pennsylvania Railroad. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Van Dyke.

Vernon: A settlement southwest of Harrington. During the 19th century the settlement was a busy trading center but it began to decline with the introduction of the railroad and growth of Harrington. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Vincent's Causeway.

Viola: A village built on a tract of land known earlier as "Golden Thicket." There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Canterbury Station.

Voshell Mill: A settlement southeast of Star Hill. There is no known indigenous name.

The Wedge: A region of approximately 800 acres bounded on the west by the Maryland state border and on the north by the Pennsylvania state border. Ownership of the land was disputed between Pennsylvania and Delaware as Mason-Dixon's Surveys of 1765 designated the land as part of Pennsylvania while Delaware did not accept Mason-Dixon's conclusions. In 1893 a joint commission awarded the land to Delaware. There is no known indigenous name.

Welsh Branch: A stream flowing south to join Sockorockets Ditch and form Deep Branch. There is no known indigenous name.

West Branch: A stream heading in Maryland and flowing south and east to the Christina River. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: West Branch Ditch.

White Clay Creek – Swapecksiska: A stream heading in Pennsylvania and flowing southeast to the Christina River. The name comes from the indigenous Lenape name Swapecksiska which the Dutch later adapted to Hwitlerskil. Variants: Whitley Creek, Swapecksiska, Hvitlers Creek, Red Clay Creek (in part). Variants: Whitley Creek; Swapecksiska; Hvitlers Creek. It is a translation of the Swedish name Hwitlerskil, which in turn is a translation of the Lenape name "Swapecksiska." (Dunlap, 1956).

Whitney Swamp: A swamp located south of Dublin Hill. There is no known indigenous name.

Wilmington: A city located on the Delaware River that is the site of the first Swedish Settlement at Fort Christina in 1638. In 1739 the city was named Wilmington for Spenser Compton, Earl of Wilmington and a friend of William Penn. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Fort Christina, Christinahamn, Fort Altena, Willingtown.

Winterthur: A village which is the site of an estate and gardens that now make up the Winterthur museum. Built in 1839 for James A. Binderman and his wife Evelina Gabrielle du Pont and named by Binderman for the city of Winterthur, Switzerland where his family had lived. The museum was built in 1927 by Henry F. du Pont. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Winterthrup.

Woodenhawk: A settlement southeast of Hickman and potentially named for an indigenous Chief Woodenhoocke.

Woodenhawk Bridge: A bridge over Marshybope Creek. It is also potentially named for an indigenous Chief Woodenhoocke.

Wyoming – Wyoming: A town known successively as West Camden and Camden Station. Wyoming is an indigenous Lenape name meaning “at the great flats.” Variants: West Camden, Camden Station.

Yellowbank Point: A point of land on the left bank of the Indian River at Oak Orchard. Named for the yellowish color of the river bank. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Willowbank Point.

York Beach: A beach between the Atlantic Ocean and the town of York beach. There is no known indigenous name.

Yorklyn: A village located on the Red Clay Creek just south of the Pennsylvania state border. There is no known indigenous name. Variants: Auburn Mills.

References

Dunlap, R. and C. A. Weslager, 1960. Contributions to the Ethno-History of the Delaware Indians on the Brandywine. Pennsylvania Archaeologist. 30(1).

Heck, L. W., Wraight, A. J., Orth, D. J., Carter, J. R., Van Winkle, L. G., and Hazen, J., 1966. Delaware Place Names. U.S. Department of Interior, Geological Survey, Geological Survey Bulletin 1245. Washington, D. C. 124 pp.

Native Land Digital, 2021. Native Lands.

Reed, P. S., and Wallace, E. B., 2019. A Historic Saga of Settlement and Nation Building. First State National Historical Park. Historic Resource Study. Prepared for Organization of American Historians/National Park Service. U.S. Department of the Interior. 291 pp.