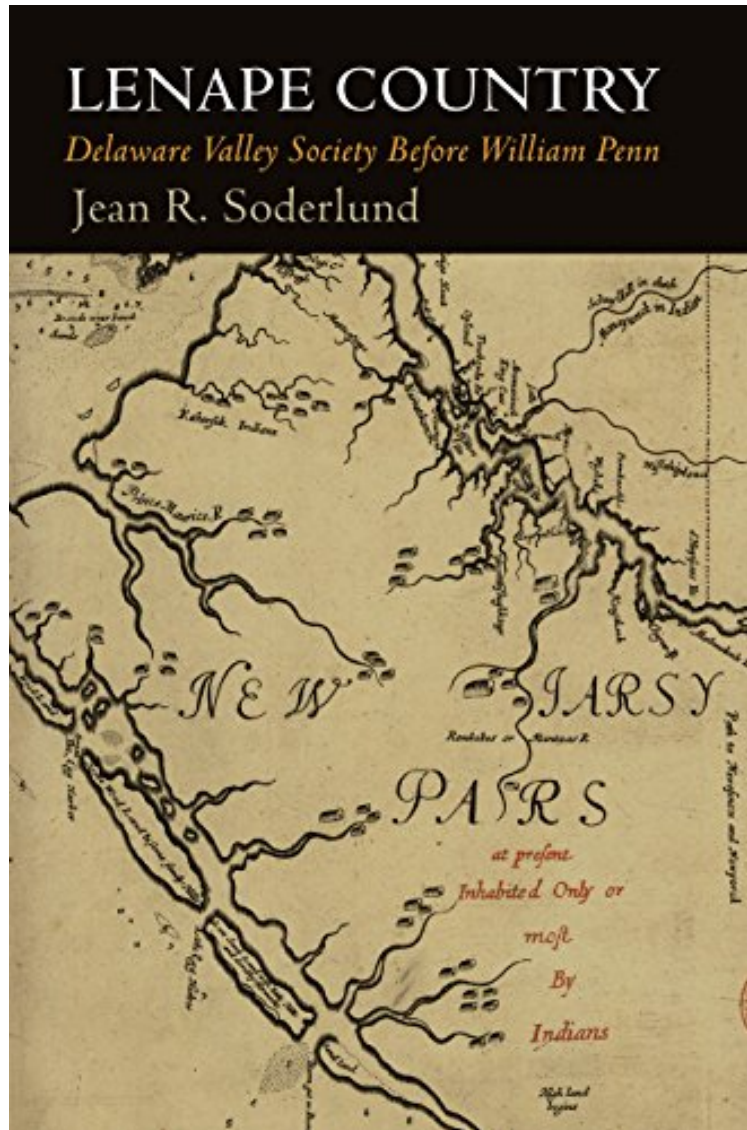


# Lenape Country: Delaware Valley Society Before William Penn (Early American Studies)

Jean R. Soderlund

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**Jean R. Soderlund : Lenape Country: Delaware Valley Society Before William Penn (Early American Studies)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Lenape Country: Delaware Valley Society Before William Penn (Early American Studies):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Lenape History By S. Geary Wonderful book, and not just because

my ancestors are in it. I learned a lot about the Lenape and the tri-state area (New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware). This book is very well written and readable-not your usual dry history. I enjoyed it very much, and recommend it to history buffs and researchers/ancestors of our Native American tribes.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. During my first read I could not put the book ...By SaraDuring my first read I could not put the book down. A page turner. Now reading a second time - more slowly to flesh out the details. Had no idea the Native and European interaction was so intricate.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. great book!By CustomerVery informative! More history then I expected on my home area.

In 1631, when the Dutch tried to develop plantation agriculture in the Delaware Valley, the Lenape Indians destroyed the colony of Swanendael and killed its residents. The Natives and Dutch quickly negotiated peace, avoiding an extended war through diplomacy and trade. The Lenapes preserved their political sovereignty for the next fifty years as Dutch, Swedish, Finnish, and English colonists settled the Delaware Valley. The European outposts did not approach the size and strength of those in Virginia, New England, and New Netherland. Even after thousands of Quakers arrived in West New Jersey and Pennsylvania in the late 1670s and '80s, the region successfully avoided war for another seventy-five years.Lenape Country is a sweeping narrative history of the multiethnic society of the Delaware Valley in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. After Swanendael, the Natives, Swedes, and Finns avoided war by focusing on trade and forging strategic alliances in such events as the Dutch conquest, the Mercurius affair, the Long Swede conspiracy, and English attempts to seize land. Drawing on a wide range of sources, author Jean R. Soderlund demonstrates that the hallmarks of Delaware Valley societycommitment to personal freedom, religious liberty, peaceful resolution of conflict, and opposition to hierarchical governmentbegan in the Delaware Valley not with Quaker ideals or the leadership of William Penn but with the Lenape Indians, whose culture played a key role in shaping Delaware Valley society. The first comprehensive account of the Lenape Indians and their encounters with European settlers before Pennsylvania's founding, Lenape Country places Native culture at the center of this part of North America.

"A commonly held idea is that Quaker settlers led by William Penn established Delaware Valley society's emphases on freedom, tolerance, and peaceful conflict. In Lenape Country, however, Jean R. Soderlund demonstrates that these Delaware Valley hallmarks originated with the Lenape Indians and were the bases of Lenape economic and political dominance through successive waves of European colonization in the region. . . . Lenape Country is meticulously researched and cautiously analyzed, qualities that strengthen Soderlund's assertions for the primacy of Lenape influence in the formation of Delaware Valley identity. It is a much needed study of this pivotal time in American history and a valuable contribution to Native American and colonial-era scholarship."American Studies"Succinct and imaginatively conceived, Lenape Country is one of the best narrative histories I have read to date on the European-Indian interaction along the Delaware River."Gunlg Fur, author of A Nation of Women: Gender and Colonial Encounters Among the Delaware IndiansAbout the AuthorJean R. Soderlund is Professor of History at Lehigh University and editor of William Penn and the Founding of Pennsylvania: A Documentary History, also available from the University of Pennsylvania Press.Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.IntroductionIn May 1672, while traveling north through the English colonies in eastern North America, the founder of Quakerism George Fox and fellow missionaries arrived in New Castle, the small capital of the Delaware colony inhabited mostly by Dutch and English colonists. The town stood on the west bank of the river that the Lenapes, the Native Americans who dominated the region, called the Lenapewihittuck (now Delaware River). Fox and his companions quickly crossed the river, hiring Lenape guides who led them through the fertile lands of what is now southwestern New Jersey and the Pine Barrens farther east. Fox wrote to Friends in England that as they "passed through the woods, sometimes we lay in the woods by a fire and sometimes in the Indian cabins, through the bogs, rivers, and creeks and wild woods we passed. . . . I came at last and lay at one Indian king's house and he and his queen received me lovingly and his attendants also and laid me a mat to lie upon, a very pretty man and then we came to another Indian town where the king came to me and he could speak some English and he received me very lovingly and I spake to him much and his people and they were loving."Fox and his associates called the Lenapes' territory the "Indian Country," recognizing the Natives' sovereignty over the land. They described to colleagues in England a land still dominated by Lenapes despite the settlements of Swedes and Finns along the river, the Dutch/English town of New Castle, and Quaker villages of Middletown and Shrewsbury near the Atlantic shore. The hospitality of Lenapes saved Fox and his companions from sleeping under the open sky in terrain they considered a "wilderness." The Quaker leader distinguished between the settlements of Lenapes who treated him "lovingly" and the "wild woods" full of bogs and rivers to cross, recognizing the Lenapes' authority while appreciating their kindness. He spoke several times to the Natives about religion but reported no success in convincing them to Quakerism. They rejected his spiritual authority as he depended on them for food, direction, and shelter.The Quaker missionaries proceeded to visit Friends in New England, returning to Lenape country in September 1672, when they again traveled safely through the region by respecting the Lenapes' power and following their rules. This time, with Lenape guides, they took the more usual route across New Jersey from

Manhattan to Matinicum (now Burlington) Island, moving steadily from point to point "through many Indian towns, and rivers, and bogs." They traveled through territory the Lenapes protected carefully against European settlement or passage without guides. Indeed, one night the party "found an old house, which the Indians had forced the people to desert." The Quakers learned later of several Lenape murders of Europeans in the area the previous year. The travelers safely crossed the Lenapewihittuck once again with the help of hired Lenapes and their canoes, then rode thirty miles south "and came at night to a Swede's house, and got a little straw and lay there all night." With another guide they proceeded to New Castle, where government officials offered lodging and space so that the missionaries could hold a Quaker meeting before departing for Maryland. The Lenapes' firm grip on south and central New Jersey is clear in a map from 1673 created by a merchant named Augustine Herrman, who had settled in New Amsterdam in 1644 and then established his plantation, Bohemia Manor, on the Maryland eastern shore in 1661. Herrman labeled the country from the Lenapewihittuck to the Atlantic Ocean as "at present inhabited only or most by Indians," and he drew Lenape towns adjacent to many rivers and streams emptying into the Lenapewihittuck and the sea. Various Lenape people populated the territory as illustrated in the map (see Figure 1), including the Cohanseys, Mantes, and Armewamese, who had sold some of their lands to Europeans but retained much of New Jersey as their own. It was through this territory that, with the Natives' guidance and permission, Fox's party had crossed. Notwithstanding its acknowledgment of the Natives' continued presence and power in the region, Fox's report to English Friends about his journey through Lenape country helped to establish the mythology that the early Delaware Valley was a wilderness inhabited by generally friendly Indians and some scattered colonists. From his few weeks in the region, Fox described a segmented society, with Lenape towns entirely separate from Swedish, Dutch, and English villages. In this short time he learned little about the society the Lenapes, Swedes, Finns, and other Europeans had built together since European arrival, and he thus gave the impression to William Penn and other Friends in England that the Lenapes' domain was ripe for Quaker colonization. Fox's narrative has given impetus to the legend that the Delaware Valley was a blank slate on which Penn and the Quakers first brought peace and justice to the Lenapes. For the Quaker founders of Pennsylvania, their descendants of the mid-eighteenth century, and historians in subsequent centuries, Delaware Valley history began in 1681 when Penn received his charter from Charles II. In creating and perpetuating this founding myth, colonists and scholars have credited Penn with efforts to form an open, tolerant society that dealt honestly and amicably with the Lenapes and other Natives. He pledged to pay a fair price for their land and to avoid the bloodshed that destroyed Native and European settlements elsewhere in eastern North America. Like other founding myths that ignored the history of Native Americans prior to European colonization, the Pennsylvania legend wiped away the Lenapes' own history prior to contact with Europeans as well as the sixty-five years of exchange, conflict, accommodation, and alliance between the Natives and the Dutch, Swedes, Finns, and English. Native Americans kept alive evidence of past events through spoken narratives rather than written documents, and most European settlers had little interest in recording the oral history of the original inhabitants. The colonists who described the Lenapes and their culture were more interested in their current practices and condition than the ways in which their society had evolved over the past fifty to one hundred years. Similarly, the Quakers consulted Swedish and Dutch records primarily to demonstrate early European settlement in what is now Delaware to combat Lord Baltimore's claim to the region based on his 1632 charter. The Swanendael (Valley of the Swans) whaling station and plantation, founded by the Dutch in 1631 but quickly destroyed by the Lenapes, provided key evidence to support Penn's case for ownership of the Lower Counties. Beyond the needs of the boundary dispute, however, Penn's colonists had little curiosity about the society the Natives and earlier European settlers had built. Like English colonists in Jamestown, Plymouth, and Massachusetts Bay, the Friends wove a creation myth of exceptionalism, claiming for themselves a special relationship with the Lenapes based on Quaker principles of justice, peace, religious freedom, and respect for people of different backgrounds. Because of this mythology, the Lenapes are often portrayed as a weak people lacking the numbers and fortitude to defend their homeland. The prevailing narrative ignores the period from 1615 to 1681 when the Lenapes dominated trade and determined if, when, and where Europeans could travel and take up land. Besides the Swanendael incident, no major conflict between Natives and Europeans occurred in Lenape country to rival those in other regions, such as the Anglo-Powhatan wars and Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia, the Pequot and King Philip's wars in New England, and the Kieft's and Esopus wars in New Netherland. With the massacre at Swanendael, the Lenapes established their primacy and never lost it until after Penn received his colony in 1681. This portrayal of the Lenapes as a powerless nation gained momentum soon after the fraudulent Walking Purchase of 1737, when William Penn's sons Thomas and John Penn, with James Logan, convinced the Iroquois to undercut the Lenapes' protests of land theft by asserting they were under Iroquois control. In 1742, building on earlier similar allegations that the Lenapes denied, the Onondaga sachem Canasatego called the Lenapes "women" who refused to fight but rather depended on the Iroquois for protection. Mythology created in the mid-eighteenth century to subjugate the Lenapes and divest them of their remaining territory in eastern Pennsylvania reinforced the earlier legend of the benevolent William Penn to suggest that Lenapes had never controlled their country economically or politically or had any substantial impact on the evolution of Delaware Valley society. Most recently, the historian Bernard Bailyn has suggested that, before 1681, Lenapes lived in "bands of less than 50 related individuals, little more than extended families," much smaller than

adjacent Native communities that ranged from as high as 2,000 among some Iroquois to two or three hundred among other Algonquians. Bailyn's use of the word "bands" rather than "towns" or "nations" underscores his claim that the Lenapes lacked any coherent government. In fact, the sizes of Lenape towns and their political organizations were consistent with those of many other Native societies of eastern North America. Bailyn further argues that the Lenapes were "hunters and gatherers," despite ample evidence that they grew corn and other crops. Painting with a broad brush, Bailyn characterizes the Finns, who formed a large percentage of the region's European population, as "barbarous, uncivilized frontier peoples" who participated in Sweden's expansion "overseas, to the land of equally barbarous peoples, the Lenapes, on the shores of the Delaware River." Sampling anecdotes about the early settlers and Lenapes, Bailyn misses entirely how the Native and European inhabitants collaborated politically, socially, and economically to create Delaware Valley society. Bailyn's presentation of the seventeenth-century mid-Atlantic offers a step backward as scholars, excavating evidence from seventeenth-century records of the pre-1681 Delaware Valley, have begun to uncover aspects of this past. In recent decades, historians have used the journals, reports, and correspondence of Dutch and New Sweden officials to provide European perspectives on Lenape culture and intercultural exchanges between the Lenapes and colonists. Others have examined New Sweden within the larger framework of mid-seventeenth-century eastern North American trade and diplomacy, and they have carefully delineated relations among the Lenapes, Susquehannocks, Swedes, English, and Dutch. Still, no sustained historical study exists for both sides of the river from Dutch arrival in the Lenapewihittuck region to the eighteenth century. Most scholars of the early Delaware Valley begin the history of relations between the Lenapes and European colonists only in 1681 with William Penn's commitment to a "holy experiment" in which the Quakers practiced their principles of nonviolence and established a society quite different from other American colonies. While some versions of this narrative acknowledge that even William Penn strayed a bit from his ideal of harmonious and just dealings with the Lenapes, all emphasize his role in setting a benchmark of amicable coexistence that subsequent provincial leaders, including Logan and Penn's sons Thomas and John, chose to disregard. The history of the Delaware Valley has also suffered from scholars' tendency to focus their work by colonial boundary rather than provide a more integrated study of the region that became New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. A number of scholars have illuminated the Lenapes' society, culture, politics, and postcontact relations with Europeans in these provinces as part of projects focusing on a state's ancient and more recent pasts. These studies are rich and insightful yet miss the ways in which Lenapes managed land and resources throughout Lenape country and responded across colonial boundaries to European settlement. \* \* \*The Lenapes are an Algonquian people who at first contact with Europeans and through most of the seventeenth century controlled the country stretching from what is now central and southern New Jersey through eastern Pennsylvania to Cape Henlopen in Delaware. They spoke the Unami (or Lenape) language, which was closely related to but distinct from other Algonquian dialects. Lenape in Unami means an "ordinary, real, original" person, and it was the word by which Lenapes referred to themselves. They affiliated closely with the Munsees, whose homeland extended from current central and northern New Jersey through southern New York. The names "Unami" and "Munsee" were the words each group used to designate the other; the word "Unami," for example, means in Munsee "person from down river." By the mid-eighteenth century, European colonists referred to both the Lenapes and Munsees as Delawares, a name many of the Natives adopted as well. Most Lenapes lived along tributaries of the Lenapewihittuck, which the Dutch and Swedes called South River, and the English named the Delaware (see Map 1). The Lenapes built unpalisaded towns that reflected their good relations with one another and propensity to avoid war with other nations. The Lenapes held land cooperatively, by the community as a whole, not by individual members or families claiming ownership rights. Their sociopolitical structure was egalitarian and democratic: sachems, operating with the guidance of a council of elders and other leaders, held considerable authority as long as they followed the collective will of their people. For about fifteen years after the first Dutch ships entered the Lenapewihittuck, Dutch-Lenape relations focused on trade. Then in 1631, Dutch investors sent men to Cape Henlopen in Delaware to build a plantation colony they called Swanendael on land purchased from the Sickoneysincks, the southernmost community of Lenapes. Believing that they had sold a site that was to be a trading fort rather than an agricultural plantation, the Sickoneysincks killed all the residents and destroyed the settlement. Thus they prevented the Dutch from establishing an agricultural economy on Lenapewihittuck, demanding instead that the Dutch obtain goods only through trade. After 1631, under Lenape supervision, the Dutch reverted to their practice of conducting the fur trade from a small fort and ships. The Lenapes imposed strict limits on European settlement even as leaders of New Sweden (1638-55), the Dutch South River colonies (1655-64, 1673-74), and the Duke of York's Delaware colony (1664-73, 1674-81) claimed they had established primacy on the river. Unlike Native Americans in southern New England and the tidewater Chesapeake area, the Lenapes retained control of their country until the 1680s. During the seventeenth century, prior to William Penn's arrival, the Lenapes and early European colonists created a society in Lenape country that preferred peaceful resolution of conflict, religious freedom, collaborative use of the land and other natural resources, respect for people of diverse backgrounds, and local governmental authority, all facilitating the business relationship the residents sought for profitable trade. Though theirs was a polyglot, negotiated society, it was one in which the Lenapes held the upper hand and remained flexible to win allies and accommodate trade. The process by which the Lenapes and their

European counterparts created this society was difficult, uneven, and tenuous. Though David de Vries, a Dutch adventurer, had found the destroyed Swanendael in 1632 and claimed he made "a firm peace, which they call rancontyn marenit," with the Sickoneysincks, the Natives and Dutch had in fact negotiated a tentative pact that would be renegotiated throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by different groups of Europeans and Lenapes. After the massacre at Swanendael, the Dutch dropped their plans to establish plantation colonies in the region they called South River, limiting their footprint to forts protecting their commerce with the Lenapes and Susquehannocks. When Peter Minuit sought permission to establish New Sweden in 1638, Lenapes granted a small parcel of land for a trading post and enough acreage to sustain the colony. As conflict arose between the colonists and Natives in the spring of 1644, Lenapes murdered five Europeans, the Lenape equivalent of limited war. Despite Kieft's War in New Netherland and the Anglo-Powhatan War in Virginia during the 1640s, however, the Lenapes refrained from destroying the Dutch and Swedish outposts along the Lenapewihittuck primarily because they wanted the trade but also because they were developing personal relationships with colonists. With the change of leadership in New Sweden and among the Lenapes by 1654 and the Dutch conquest of New Sweden in 1655, the Natives, Swedes, and Finns formed a more stable alliance against both the Dutch and, after 1664, the English Duke of York's governments. Through their partnership the Lenapes, Swedes, and Finns avoided involvement in Peter Stuyvesant's war against the Esopus Indians; while the Lenapes sheltered Esopus refugees, the Swedes and Finns refused to serve with New Netherland troops to expropriate Esopus land. In the late 1660s and early 1670s, when the Lenapes resisted English encroachment on unsold lands by killing more than ten English colonists and their allies, the Swedes and Finns would not participate in Governor Francis Lovelace's intended military offensive against the Lenapes, thus quashing Lovelace's plans. After Edmund Andros became governor in 1674, Lenape country once again stayed out of war despite the danger of wholesale destruction of English colonies along the Atlantic coast from the spread of King Philip's War in New England and Bacon's Rebellion in the Chesapeake. Though Lenapes threatened to attack their English neighbors, the mutual accord of the Natives with the Swedes and Finns prevented a racial conflict such as in New England and Virginia. Thus, even before William Penn landed in 1682, Lenapes and their European neighbors had established a relatively fair and equitable relationship. The Lenapes had welcomed trade with the Dutch, who sailed into the Lenapewihittuck by about 1615. When the Dutch started to build the plantation colony at Swanendael, however, the Lenapes moved quickly to snuff it out. They quickly made peace on the condition that European activity in the region should focus on trade, not large-scale agriculture. The sachems enforced these ground rules with the Swedes, Finns, Dutch, and English who vied for but failed to dominate the region through most of the seventeenth century. The Lenapes controlled where the Europeans could settle; required actual occupation to confirm rights to land; demanded periodic gifts; and kept all dealings on a pragmatic, nonideological basis. Despite diminishing populations from epidemic disease and war, before 1681 the Lenapes continued to outnumber Europeans in the region. The Natives monitored the movement of colonists, preventing them from venturing north of the Falls (the site of present-day Trenton, New Jersey) and providing Native guides to accompany messengers to Maryland and New York. The memory of Swanendael remained alive in Lenape country for decades. The society that the Lenapes and Europeans created on Lenapewihittuck was different from those described by historians for other regions, though certainly more similar to the middle ground of cross-cultural accommodation in the Great Lakes region than to contemporaneous conflicts in the colonial Chesapeake, New Netherland, and southern New England. The Lenapes traded and negotiated with Europeans, but they also retained their sovereignty through much of the seventeenth century, despite their declining numbers, by using both diplomacy and strategic small-scale violence and by forging alliances with the Susquehannocks as well as the Swedes and Finns. In negotiations for land, the Natives and Europeans quickly learned each other's goals and the Swedes, Dutch, and English learned the Lenapes' expectations so they had clear knowledge of each other's perspectives. While identifying as separate communities, the Lenapes and Swedes associated in ways that changed each group, as they assimilated technology, language, and respect for the other's religion and culture. They understood the differing preferences for politics and diplomacy, with the Europeans adapting to the Natives' norms. Some intermarried, integrating familial customs into both groups. As decades passed, the Natives and Europeans established a framework for interaction based on mutual values of self-determination, shared use of the land, and an inclusive definition of freedom, all facilitated by mutual commitment to economic gain. \* \* \* The Quakers are credited with creating a peaceful, tolerant, multiethnic polity in West New Jersey and Pennsylvania, of governing with a light hand. The historian David Hackett Fischer, in his influential *Albion's Seed*, distinguished Delaware Valley "freedom ways" from those of the Puritans and Virginia cavaliers. The Friends, he argued, created a culture of "reciprocal liberty" in the region, a culture based on the belief that "God had given [liberty] not merely to a chosen few, but to all his children, so that they might be safe in the sanctity of their families and secure in the possession of their property." In fact the Friends who settled in West Jersey and Pennsylvania perpetuated the model of decentralized authority, preference for peace, and openness toward other cultures and religions that the Lenapes, Swedes, and Finns had already established. The Lenapes and colonists remained separate, with different legal frameworks and governance, yet interaction was a normal part of their daily lives. To the Lenapes, the Swedes and Finns became another community in their country, people with whom they intermarried, exchanged

goods, and defended against common enemies. The English Quakers offered a greater challenge to the Natives because of their substantial numbers, but they were also peaceful, refrained from any significant effort to convert Natives to Christianity, and initially accepted joint use of unimproved territory. The Lenapes, Swedes, and Finns had worked out a policy that allowed travel across lands whether or not they had been sold. The New Jersey Friends and William Penn's colonists accepted this policy when they arrived. Mid-Atlantic society changed after 1700 with more general shifts in the Atlantic world. Demand for grain and meat products in the West Indies and Europe bolstered the economy and offered opportunity to new immigrants from England, Ireland, and Germany, putting increasing pressure on Lenape lands. The colonies became enmeshed in imperial conflict between Great Britain and France. While some Lenapes migrated west to the Susquehanna and Ohio valleys, others stayed in small New Jersey towns, pursuing their traditional agricultural economy and reaping the resources of the Pine Barrens and Atlantic shore. They remained a localized, egalitarian people through the eighteenth century, and today they still identify with numerous groups rather than as one unified organization representing the Lenapes of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Most Jersey Lenapes rejected an invitation from western Delawares in 1771 to join them in the Ohio Valley, and in fact most stayed in New Jersey when the Brotherton Indians moved to New York in 1802. They had assimilated European ways to some extent, but mid-Atlantic society had assimilated Native ways as well. Delaware Valley society began with the Lenapes and they were part of it. Despite increasing regulation, racism, war, and loss of land, the Delaware Valley offered resources and family ties that made it home.