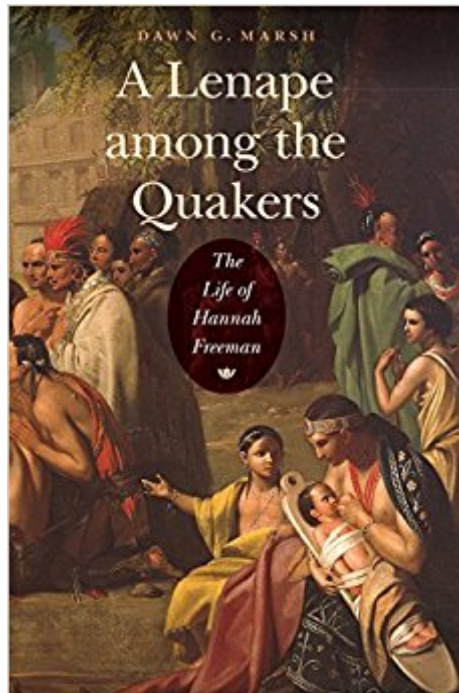




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# A Lenape Among The Quakers: The Life Of Hannah Freeman



## Synopsis

On July 28, 1797, an elderly Lenape woman stood before the newly appointed almsman of Pennsylvania's Chester County and delivered a brief account of her life. In a sad irony, Hannah Freeman was establishing her residency—a claim that paved the way for her removal to the poorhouse. Ultimately, however, it meant final removal from the ancestral land she had so tenaciously maintained. Thus was William Penn's "peaceable kingdom" preserved. A Lenape among the Quakers reconstructs Freeman's history, from the days of her grandmothers before European settlement to the beginning of the nineteenth century. The story that emerges is one of persistence and resilience, as an "Indian Hannah" negotiates life with the Quaker neighbors who employ her, entrust their children to her, seek out her healing skills, and, when she is weakened by sickness and age, care for her. Yet these are the same neighbors whose families then dispossess her own. Fascinating in its own right, Freeman's life is also remarkable as a unique account of a Native American woman in a colonial community during a time of dramatic transformation and upheaval. In particular, it expands our understanding of colonial history and the Native experience that history often renders silent.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Marsh's elucidating account of the "less than peaceful indigenous-white experience in colonial Pennsylvania" focuses on one Lenape woman, Hannah Freeman, the

last of her tribe to maintain residence in its Brandywine River Valley homeland. By means of extensive use of original documents—including the writings of William Penn, who arrived in southeastern Pennsylvania in 1682 espousing his doctrine of “benevolent colonialism”—Marsh demonstrates how the Lenape lost their land piece by piece. By the time of Hannah’s birth early in the eighteenth century, much of the Lenape land was already taken, but she steadfastly stayed on her family’s land even as many of her people left for the western part of the state. She worked for, and was well treated by, her Quaker neighbors until she was placed in the almshouse, where she died five years later. Marsh’s account of events that are also poignantly encapsulated in the iconic Benjamin West painting *Penn’s Treaty with the Indians*, a bucolic scene masking the Indians’ imminent removal to what was essentially a reservation, is a thoughtful documentation of one woman’s struggle to maintain her ancestral homeland. --Deborah Donovan --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

“Clear and compelling. . . . Through the life of Hannah Freeman, Marsh places the mythology of Penn’s peaceable kingdom in stark relief.” —Jean R. Soderlund, *Western Historical Quarterly* (Jean R. Soderlund *Western Historical Quarterly* 2016-09-13) “A thoughtful documentation of one woman’s struggle to maintain her ancestral homeland.” —Booklist (Booklist 2014-04-15) “In a genre that so often focuses on the lives of politically significant —œgreat men— (and occasionally women), we rarely learn of the lives of the marginalized, but this is exactly what historian Dawn G. Marsh has attempted. *A Lenape among the Quakers* is a scathing indictment of the hypocrisy of Quakers’ professions of peace while engaged in a land grab.” —Michelle LeMaster, *Ethnohistory* (Michelle LeMaster *Ethnohistory*) “Engagingly written—and impassioned as Marsh clearly chastises Hannah Freeman’s Quaker neighbors for their hypocrisy in promoting friendly relations with indigenous neighbors and landowners, while facilitating their dispossession.” —Gunlog Fur, *Journal of the Early Republic* (Gunlog Fur *Journal of the Early Republic* 2016-09-13) “With great insight and sensitivity, Dawn Marsh has pieced together Hannah Freeman’s story. All who have ever wondered what happened to Pennsylvania’s Native people should read this book.” —Nancy Shoemaker, author of *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (Nancy Shoemaker 2013-09-20) “Using the closely examined life of a single eighteenth-century Native American woman, Dawn Marsh convincingly challenges Pennsylvania’s claim to a more just and humane treatment of its indigenous

peoples, persuasively contending that Native Americans adopted complex strategies to preserve their cultural heritage, and explores the significance of the continuing mythology of "Indian Hannah Freeman" all in a good read. Melton McLaurin, author of *Celia, A Slave* (Melton McLaurin 2013-10-03) "Marsh makes commendable use of the scant documentary evidence to piece together Hannah Freeman's life. Her painstaking efforts to give Hannah a voice are impressive." Thomas Britten, *The Historian* (Thomas Britten *The Historian*)

This book reads the way a TV documentary sounds. Chapter 3 has valuable insights and I wish more people knew these details. I'd definitely recommend this book to anyone interested in history, especially early American history. A fascinating factoid from the book: Pennsylvania's homicide rate in the 1720's alone exceeded London's rate for all of the 18th century. (Every time a politician talks about violence like it's a new problem, think about that fact.) There is excellent insight to how the European settlers created poverty in a land that once had none. Then sections that show how they complained that people they made poor were now in poverty and, as such, a burden. There's even an excellent description of what a poorhouse was and how it came to exist. The book reveals Pennsylvania's false history, the settlers lie that there was an absolute extinction of all Indians in Pennsylvania. Hannah's death was part of their evidence. But the book also mentions that the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission reports 50,000 PA residents with Native American lineage, some of who are Lenni-Lenape like myself. The reasons I'm giving this 4 stars instead of 5 are as follows: I'm not sure that the Shackamaxon meeting under the Elm tree is actually well known by all Pennsylvanian children, though it should be. How the actual "naming" process works isn't revealed until page 78, so it might be confusing as to how the Lenapes names are assigned or assumed by the colonists before that section. The difference between Minsi and Munsee should have been touched upon, especially given how often people mistakenly use them interchangeably. Page 115 starts using the term "The Delawares" without mentioning how that name came into use, or who Thomas West, 3rd Baron De La Warr is. The Walking Purchase mentions the runners, but doesn't note the wildly boasted "fact" that they were identical siblings. (This cheating strategy is well known enough to be parodied in modern comedies.)

As I read this somewhat interesting account of the early American treatment of Delaware Indians I couldn't get one thing out of my mind. I suspect when the native Americans saw hordes of Europeans taking over their land and driving them westward they felt much the same as I do today.

As our country is being taken over by people we never invited or wanted we are losing our way of life just as the natives did. But just as many Americans today have no concern about the influx of uninvited illegals, the natives initially weren't too upset over the increasing populations of Europeans. Once immigration reached a crucial threshold it was too late. The home team had lost and the situation could not be reversed. I do find what happened to American natives to be saddening. However, this is an example of the history of human expansion. We should not allow ourselves to label 18th century Americans as evil because they believed the natives to be less than civilized. They were not civilized by the standards of today or of 300 years ago. 18th century Americans had to struggle for subsistence and we hadn't gotten comfortable enough to get into the "give me your tired, your poor..." Routine. Getting off my soap box I do enjoy reading about the native history even though the author admits much of it is embellished. It is also eye awakening for me to read that we weren't too mean to the aging native Hannah to give her welfare and a place to live in a poor house. I wasn't aware such places existed in those days. I did appreciate the efforts made by Wm Penn and the Quakers to live in harmony with the natives. I liked the author's attempt to put the plight of the Delaware into the larger history of the natives but she could have included so much more. I was slightly perturbed that the author frequently repeated herself.

Book could use more history and less criticism of Chester County residents, past and present. Was an interesting read of Hannah's life.

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