

STANDING STONE, ANCIENT AND MODERN

As an Indian post of ancient date, none is more universally known than "Standing Stone," where Huntingdon now stands. The very earliest traders could never ascertain by Indian tradition how long it had been a village, but that it dated back to a very remote period may be judged from the fact that the land on the flat between Stony creek and Huntingdon was under cultivation one hundred and thirty years ago. It was used as one extensive cornfield, with the exception of that portion lying near the mouth of the creek, where the Indian town stood, and where also was a public ground, used on great occasions for councils and dances.

The Standing Stone – that is, the *original stone* – was, according to John Harris, fourteen feet high and six inches square. It stood on the right bank of Stone creek, near its mouth, and in such a position as to enable persons to see it at a considerable distance, either from up or down the river.

About this self-same Standing Stone, there still exists contradictory opinions. These we have endeavored to ascertain; and, after weighing them carefully, we have come to the conclusion that no person now living ever saw part or parcel of the original stone, notwithstanding Dr. Henderson delivered what some are disposed to believe a portion of it to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

The original Standing Stone, we are induced to believe, in addition to serving in a similar capacity to that of a guide board at a cross-road, was the official record of the tribe. On it, no doubt, were engraved all the important epochs in its history, its wars, its mighty deeds, its prowess in battle, and its skill in the chase. It might, too, have served as a sacred tablet to the memory of many a noble chief who fell by the arrows of an enemy. These things, were, no doubt, in cabalistic character; and, although each inscription may have been small, its meaning may have taken in almost an unbounded scope, as Indian brevity generally does.

This stone was once the cause of war. The Tuscaroras, residing some thirty or forty miles down the river – probably in Tuscarora valley – wished to declare war against the tribe at Standing Stone, for some real or fancied insult, and for this purpose sent them repeated war-messages, which the tribe at the Stone refused to give ear to, knowing as they did the strength and power of the enemy. Taking advantage of the absence of a large part of the tribe on a hunt, the Tuscaroras, in great force, came upon the village, captured the stone and carried it off. Immediately after the return of the warriors, the entire available war force was dispatched after the depredators, who were soon overtaken. A bloody conflict ensued, and the trophy was recaptured and carried back in triumph.

Dr. Barton, it is said, discovered that the word *Oneida*, meant "Standing Stone," in the language of the Southern Indians.* The *Oneida* tribe of the Iroquois had a tradition that their forefathers came from the south; consequently the tribe at Standing Stone may have been part of the Oneida tribe, instead of Delawares, as was generally supposed. The Tuscaroras, according to history, came from the south, and became one of the Iroquois Confederation, in 1712. The language on the two tribes in question, although not identical, bore a strong affinity to each other. Hence we may surmise that the characters upon the stone were understood by the Tuscaroras, and that it possessed, in their eyes, sufficient value to move it some forty or fifty miles, under what we should call disadvantageous circumstances, especially when it is known that stones of a better finish could have been found anywhere along the Juniata river.

There is no doubt but what the original stone was removed by the Indians, and taken with them in 1754, or 1755, for it is a well ascertained fact, that the Indians in the valley, with some few exceptions, (Aughwick, for instance), joined the French in the above years.

The first survey of the land on which Huntingdon now stands, was made by Mr. Lukens, in behalf of a claimant named Crawford, in 1756. It is therein named as "George Croghan's improvement." It is not improbably that Croghan may have claimed the improved fields and site of the deserted village, but that he ever made any improvement beyond probably erecting a trading post there, is a matter of some doubt. His whole history proves that he was no *improving* man.

On the second stone erected were found the names of John and Chas. Lukens, Thomas Smith, and a number of others, with dates varying from 1768 to 1770, cut or chiseled. This stone was most unquestionably erected by some of the men whose names it bore, on the spot where the original stone stood, but was subsequently removed to or near where the old court house in Huntingdon formerly stood. This position it occupied for many years, and might still stand as a monument of the past, had not some vandal taken it into his head to destroy it. One piece of it still remains in the wall of the foundation of a house in Huntingdon.

* Morgan, in his "League of the Iroquois," gives it a different interpretation.

The old Indian grave yard (and an extensive one it must have been) was on the high ground, near where the present Presbyterian church stands. To the credit of the Huntingdon folks be it said, they have never permitted a general exhumation of the bones of the Indians, to fill scientific cabinets, gratify the morbid appetites of the curious or even to satisfy the less objectionable zeal of the antiquarian.

The few white settlers who lived at the Stone in 1762, partially erected a stockade fort; but before the spring of 1763, they were forced to abandon it, as well as their homes, and fly to Carlisle for protection. When the settlers returned in 1770, the fort still stood, though partially decayed. Immediately on the breaking out of the war of the Revolution, the fort was rebuilt on a more extended scale, by the few inhabitants of the town and surrounding country. It was located near where the court house now stands, immediately on the bluff, and according to the traces of it, discovered by the present generation, must have covered ten acres of ground. It was strongly built; and when the savages were in the midst of their depredations, it was the only reliable refuge – before the erection of the Lead Mine fort, in Sinking Valley – for all the people residing as far west as the base of the Allegheny Mountains.

No actual attempt was ever made against Standing Stone fort; neither were there ever any Indians seen, except on two or three occasions, very close to it. A party of lurking savages was once surprised and shot by a number of scouts on the hill, where the grave yard now stands; but they made good their escape, without any injury being done.

At another time, by a display of cool courage, as well as shrewdness, that would do any general credit, the commander of the fort unquestionably saved the place from total annihilation. One morning, a large body of savages appeared upon the ridge on the opposite side of the river, and by their manoeuvring, it was clearly evident that they meditated an attack, which, under the circumstances, must have proved disastrous to the settlers, for not more than ten men, able to bear arms, were in the fort at the time – the majority having left on a scouting expedition. The commander, with judgment that did him infinite credit, marshaled his men, and paraded them for half an hour, in such manner as to enable the Indians to see a constant moving of the middle column, but neither end of it, while the drums kept up a constant clatter. In addition to this, he ordered all the women out, armed them with frying pans, brooms or whatever he could lay his hands upon, and marched them about the enclosure, after the same manner in which he did the men. The enemy could only make out the dim outlines of the people and hear the noise. The stratagem succeeded, and after a very short council of war, the Indians disappeared.