

OLD INDIAN TOWN OF FRANKSTOWN

Frankstown is probably the oldest place on the Juniata river, Conrad Weiser having mentioned it as early as 1748; and in 1749 and 1750 it is spoken of by traders. The Indian town was located at the mouth of a small run, near where McCune's mill now stands, and at one time contained a considerable number of inhabitants. The Indian name of the place was *Assunepachla*, which signifies a meeting of many waters, or the place where the waters join. This would seem an appropriate name, since within a short distance of the place the river is formed by what was then known as the Frankstown Branch, the Beaver Dam Branch, Brush Run, and the small run near McCune's mill.

The name of Frankstown was given to it by the traders. Harris, in his report of the distances between the Susquehanna and the Allegheny, called it "Frank (Stephen's) Town." The general impression is that the town was named by the traders, in honor of an old chief named Frank. This, however, is an error. It was named after an old German Indian trader named Stephen Franks, who lived contemporaneously with old Hart, and whose post was at this old Indian town. The truth of this becomes apparent, when we remember that the Indians could not pronounce the *r* in their language; hence no chief was likely to bear the name of Frank at that early day. Old Franks, being a great friend of the Indians, lived and died among them, and it was after his death that one of the chiefs took his name; hence arose the erroneous impression that the name was given to the town in honor of the chief.

How long *Assunepachla* was an Indian settlement cannot be conjectured, but, unquestionably, long before the Indians of the valley had any intercourse with the whites.† This is evidenced by the fact that where the town stood, as well as on the flat west of the town, relics of rudely-constructed pottery, stone arrow-heads, stone hatchets, &c., have repeatedly been found until within the last few years.

The use of stone edge-tools was abandoned as soon as the savages obtained a sight of a superior article – probably as early as 1730. The first were brought to the valley by Indians who had received them as presents from the proprietary family.

It is stated that the first brought to *Assunepachla* cost a special trip to Philadelphia. Three chiefs having seen hatchets and knives at Standing Stone, were so fascinated with their utility that they resolved to have some. Accordingly they went to work at trapping, and in the fall, each with an immense load of skins, started on foot for Philadelphia, where they arrived after a long and fatiguing march. They soon found what they wanted at the shop of an Englishman, but, being unable to talk English, they merely deposited their furs upon the counter, and pointed to the tomahawks and knives. This indicated trade, and the Englishman, after a critical examination of their skins, which he found would yield him not less than £100, threw them carelessly under the counter, and gave them a hatchet and a knife each. With these the savages were about to depart well satisfied, but the trader suddenly bethinking himself to the possibility of their falling in with the interpreters, and their ascertaining the manner in which they had been swindled, called them back, and very generously added three clasp knives and a quantity of brass jewelry.

With these they wended their way back, proud as emperors of their newly acquired weapons. Never did the chiefs enter a place with more pomp and importance than their warriors. The very dogs barked a welcome, and the Indians came forth from their wigwams to greet the great eastern travelers. Their hatchets, knives and trinkets passed from hand to hand, and savage encomiums were lavished unsparingly upon them; but when their practicability was tested the climax of savage enthusiasm was reached. The envied possessors were lions; they cut, hued, and scored, just because they could.

But, alas for all things mutable! their glory was not destined to last long. The traders soon appeared with the same kind of articles and readily exchanged for half a dozen skins what the warriors had spent a season in trapping and a long journey to procure.

† Some antiquarians ascribe its origin to the Mound Builders.