

Southampton & Native American Heritage

In reflecting on the migration of the Mayflower Pilgrims and as part of Native American Heritage Month we thought it would be fascinating to look at the long links between Southampton and Native American heritage.

1 Early Days

*In fourteen hundred and ninety two,
Columbus sailed the Ocean blue*

Within a very few years of Columbus arriving at a land mass that would be named The Americas small ships were setting sail for the eastern seaboard of the continent from the port of Southampton. Their aim was to reach the fishing grounds off Newfoundland. From the early 1500s Newfoundland fish or stock fish found its way to the local fish market by St Michael's church.

To give an example of the scale of the industry in 1623 the *Fisher* a vessel of 80 tons and 32 crew returned, from the cod banks off Newfoundland with 106,000 dried fish; 5300 tons of wet fish; and 9 tons of fish oil. The return trip had taken 16 days.

The fishing fleets spent months not just at sea but on land where, learning from the Native Americans ways to dry and preserve fish, they would dry out the stock fish prior to bringing it back to England where it was staple part of the country's diet.

2 Beginning of Empire

For nearly a hundred years after Columbus English sailors and privateers did not try to set up settlements and colonies like the

Spanish and Portuguese, but instead, preferred to capture ships and treasure en-route from South America to Iberia. New goods such as deer, beaver, otter and seal skins arrived in Southampton as well as exotic animals like the porcupine displayed in 1585. However in 1583 the town financed Sir Humphrey Gilbert's voyage to Newfoundland, and he is credited with the claiming of North America for Queen Elizabeth I.

Gilbert's ship went down on his return voyage to England but his licence to explore and create colonies passed to his half-brother Sir Walter Raleigh who continued

the drive to found settlements. His enterprise was led by the cartographer and artist John White. When White returned to England from Roanoke in 1587, he travelled via Southampton in the company of a Native American.

The founding of Jamestown in 1608 saw the expansion of trading opportunities and a new popular cargo arriving in Southampton, tobacco.



*Statue of Christopher Columbus,
Civic Centre, Southampton*

3 The Treasure

In 1616 the ship *Treasure* docked in Southampton with a cargo of two hundredweight of tobacco and it is believed that one of the passengers was the woman known as Pocahontas. To her people she was known as Matoaka, the daughter of the chief Powhatan of Attanoughkomouck. To the English she was the Christian woman Rebecca, a princess, daughter of an Emperor from the land they called Virginia, named for Elizabeth I, the Virgin Queen.



*Pocahontas from a
contemporary engraving*

This young woman who, legend says, saved the life of the Englishman John Smith and who married the merchant and tobacco planter John Rolfe, made a great impact on her arrival in England. She was presented at court and became a celebrity. Her real life story was even more dramatic as she had also been captured

and held for ransom by colonists in 1613 when she was persuaded to become a Christian. In 1614 she was married at around the age of 17. Pocahontas died aged barely 20 and was buried at Gravesend leaving behind her baby son, Thomas.

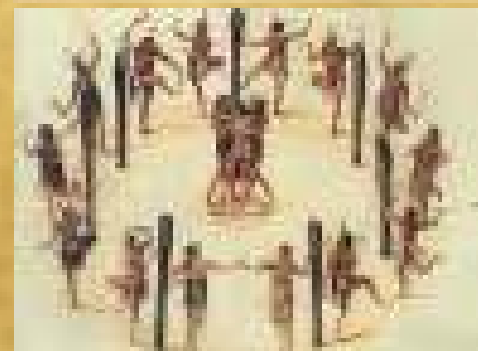
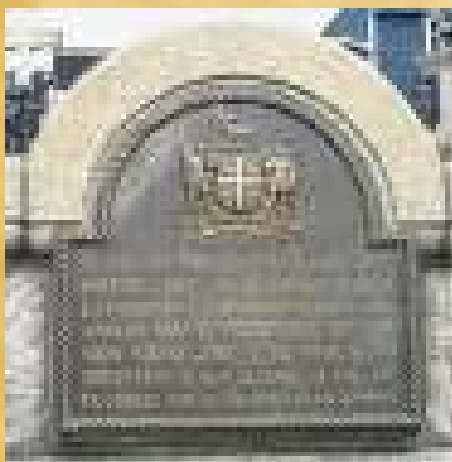


Image by John White

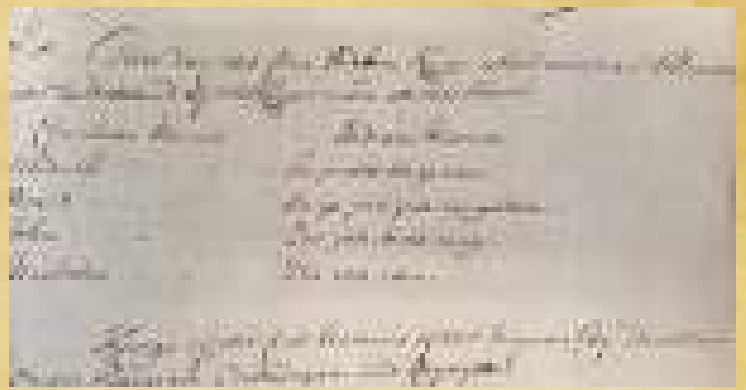
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*Note the supporters of the coat of
arms granted to Newfoundland in
1638 showing two Native Americans.*

4 The Iroquois Delegation

As colonisation progressed across the American continent it brought the colonists into contact with other tribes. In 1710 the Mayor of Southampton hosted a banquet in the Audit House for the 'Kings of the five nations of the Iroquois'. In the town records the names of the delegation are listed both in English and Iroquois. The Iroquois' names were written down phonetically and differ somewhat to how the names are written today.



Southampton City Archives

Although the Southampton records show that there were five kings, one had died on the voyage over to England, the delegation, therefore, is known as the four kings – three Mohawks and one Mohican. The men had travelled to England to seek British military support against the French in what is now North America and Canada. Queen Anne commissioned their portraits from John Verelst and these are the earliest known surviving oil 'portraits from life' of Native Americans. The 'kings' were so popular that printmaker John Simon created mezzotints of the paintings, and poems and ballads were written about them. The paintings hung at court for over a hundred years before being acquired by the Petre family and finally being purchased by the Canadian government in 1977.

The portraits were displayed at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in 2009 with whose kind permission we reproduce their analysis of the imagery portrayed in the paintings.

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**Sa Ga Yeath
Qua Pieth Tow**
King of the Maquas
lifedates unknown

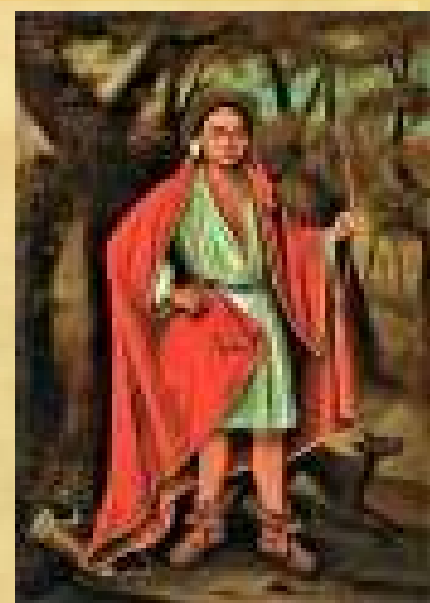
Verelst's depiction of Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) symbolic skin markings, elaborately demonstrated by Mohawk Sa Ga Yeath Qua Pieth Tow (baptized Brant), is one of the best records of eighteenth-century Native tattooing in existence. The tattoos,

visible on all four delegates, were first stencilled on the skin and then pricked into the flesh with trade needles or little bones until the blood flowed. While the precise significance of the markings remains unclear, Haudenosaunee men were tattooed to commemorate their achievements in battle.

The highly individualized depiction of these markings is an important aspect of the representation characteristic of this commemorative portrait. Sa Ga Yeath Qua Pieth Tow was the grandfather of venerated Mohawk leader Thayendanegea (Joseph Brant), a captain in the British military during the American Revolution.

**Ho Nee Yeath
Taw No Row**
King of the
Generethgarich
Nations lifedates
unknown

Born in the area of present-day upstate New York, Ho Nee Yeath Taw No Row (baptized John) was one of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) known as the 'Four Indian Kings.' The



display of symbolic skin markings, distinctive clothing, and beautiful or unique items were all ways that Native diplomats demonstrated their values and status.

There is much discussion among ethnographers regarding the authenticity of the items represented in these paintings. For example, Ho Nee Yeath Taw No Row is depicted holding a bow that would be too small to have been used by an adult. The depiction of a wolf behind him represents his dodem, or clan affiliation. Dodem animals—wolf, bear, and turtle—were included in each of the four portraits, mark the delegates' connections to their community. Verelst, most likely, spoke with each of the men, through their interpreter, to understand the importance of such symbols.



Etow Oh Koam
King of the River Nation
(Mohican)
lifedates unknown

The four representatives of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) alliance are dressed in a style reserved for royalty. They are posed in a stance associated with those wielding power, their gaze directed at the viewer. Mohican Etow Oh Koam (baptized Nicholas) wears or holds items that

refer to his status, such as the carved wooden ball-headed club which identifies him as a warrior.

The beautiful thunderbirds tattooed across the side of his face make reference to an important spiritual support for a warrior. In many Native cultures, thunderbirds are powerful sky spirits that can evoke the terrors and dangers of the natural world. The dramatically draped red cloaks, edged in gold, may have been offered by a London costumer at the Queen's request. In this way, Verelst portrayed the ambassadors in a format familiar to European viewers that indicated their social position both in European and Haudenosaunee terms of reference.

Tee Yee Neen Ho
Ga Row
Emperor of the Six
Nations c. 1680-1755

Presented as 'kings' to the Royal Court in London, the four Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) carried the authority of diplomats. Mohawk leader Theyanoguin (baptized Hendrick) was given the epithet 'Emperor of the Six Nations.' While the

four 'kings' were represented both in European and Haudenosaunee terms, he is the only one almost fully depicted in English dress. He wears black because the Court was in mourning for the recent death of the Queen's consort. His dress consists of a sleeved waistcoat, linen shirt, breeches, stockings, and buckled shoes, helping viewers identify his status as 'Emperor.'

The wampum belt that he holds is a deeply significant item that serves to commemorate the meeting and to represent an alliance that cannot be broken unless the belt is returned. Theyanoguin subsequently became a significant military leader and ambassador after his return to North America.



5 The Cherokee Ambassadors

In 1730 chief Attakullaculla led a group of Cherokee leaders on an embassy to Britain and, in 1762, second delegation came led by chief Ostenaco and Cunnschote Voyl. During this visit the Cherokee delegation visited Southampton to look at a brig which was being used for French prisoners of war and was moored

near the harbour. The next day they were guests at a two hour parade and firing exhibition by the Wiltshire militia designed to impress the men with Britain's military might.

The visit of Ostenaco was organised by the journalist, writer and cartographer Henry Timberlake, who was sympathetic to Ostenaco's wish to meet with the British government to ask them to stand by the agreement to restrict colonists from encroaching on Cherokee lands. Lord Halifax refused to meet with the delegation. Timberlake wrote his memoirs with the map entitled *A Draught of the Cherokee Country*. Henry married a daughter of Ostenaco and had a son Richard. The family remained in England and lived in London. His grandfather, also Henry Timberlake, an associate of the 3rd Earl of Southampton, had travelled to Virginia and he is buried in St Peter's church in Titchfield.



Draught of the Cherokee Country by Henry Timberlake



Painting of Ostenaco by Sir Joshua Reynolds, Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma

6 Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show

By the 19th century America had become independent from Britain, whereas Canada remained part of the Empire. The new country of the United States grew by taking over more land and squeezing the Native Americans onto reservations. By the end of the 19th century the romance of Wild West was born and one of the most charismatic characters Buffalo Bill Cody capitalized on his fame by developing a travelling circus show.

Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show made four extremely popular tours of England in 1887, in 1891-2, which tour departed England from Southampton on the *Berlin* in 1894 with a troupe of 161 people, and finally a farewell tour in 1903. On this last occasion the show was staged over two days in the town on the 7th and 8th of August. They had arrived in Southampton on four special trains with 800 company members and 500 horses. The show was displayed in what is now Watts Park where they re-enacted battles from American history, bucking broncos, Indian war dances and displays of horsemanship. As the publicity announced *'a gathering of extraordinary consequence to fittingly depict all that virile, muscular, heroic manhood has and can endure'*. The party departed England from Southampton. Cody's show was a romanticism of his life and career in the Old West but what he did do was bring those Native Americans, who were also part of that history, with him as part of the company. The most famous of his Native performers was the Hunkpapa Lakota leader Sitting Bull who had fought at the battle of the Little Big Horn. After Sitting Bull's death at the hands of the Indian Agency police in 1895 his son took his father's place in the Wild West Show.



Image of Native American performers at Land's End in 1904



Buffalo Bill parade during the 1904 tour



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