

Who lived here before we did?

NATIVE AMERICANS: Pre-1600

READ: Think about the meanings of these words as you read.

inhabit wilderness game

WRITE: Write the answers to the following questions after you read the information

1. What Native Americans lived in this area?

2. How were Native Americans different from the Europeans?

3. What did the Native Americans do well?

Just like people, villages grow and develop. When we record this experience, we call it history. Let's travel back in history to discover what our village, Port Chester, was like before the Europeans arrived and settled here.

When the first Europeans came to North America they found native people in many parts of the country. The Native Americans had developed a way of life which helped them to survive in the **wilderness**. They were different from the Europeans because they did not believe anyone could own the land, that it belonged to everyone.

The first Native Americans to **inhabit** this area were the Siwanoy, member of the Mohegan tribe who settles on Manursing Island in Rye. The land that is now Port Chester was part of the Mohegan settlement and Shanrockwell was the chief of the tribe.

Shanarockwell and his people had many talents. As farmers, they grew corn, squash, pumpkin and tobacco. As hunters, they searched the forest for **game**, which they used for food, clothing and shelter. As fishermen, they caught many different kinds of fish in what is now called Long Island Sound and the Byram River.



NATIVE AMERICANS: Pre-1600

THE ARTS MAKE HISTORY COME ALIVE :

MURALS: Port Chester is proud of its murals. A mural is a large painting that shows a scene from history or the life of the people painted or hung on a wall. Port Chester's most famous murals are found in the U.S. Post Office on Westchester Avenue, but this one is in an historic building, now a restaurant, on the corner of North Main Street.

SPEAK, LISTEN: Talk about the mural and how it relates to what you just read. What do you think is happening in the mural?



MUSICAL THEATER: Two Port Chester residents, Camille Linen and Donna Cribari, wrote Flashbacks, a musical theater history of Port Chester for the Westchester County Historical Society. There are three scenes from Flashbacks in this book: The first one takes Port Chester students into the past to meet Chief Shanarockwell and his wife Poninga. Nobody really knew her name.

READ, SPEAK, LISTEN: Take turns reading the scene that follows out loud and act out the different characters.

...FLASHBACKS, an original musical history of Port Chester

Book & lyrics: Camille Linen; Music & Lyrics: Donna Cribari

Ensemble: (*sings*) The river calls, ancient and clean **Scene One: The River**
The river sings of the things its seen.

Youth One: (*book in hand, sings to Ensemble*) Speak to me, O river, for you know
How our past can help us live and grow.
From your asphalt banks, I seek in vain,
For what was here when life was true and plain.

Shanarockwell: Where am I? What is this place?

Youth One: (*aside to audience*) I can't believe it worked. (*To Shanarockwell*)
Greetings, friend. (*Tries sign language*) This is quite a change for you.

Shanarockwell: I understand your words, friend. (*signs "friend"*)

Youth One: You do? Hey guys, wake up. Look who showed up.

Youth Two: Cool!

Shanarockwell: Yes, it is. (*Makes gesture that it's cold out*) But where am I?
What is this place?

Youth One: You're at the marina.

Shanarockwell: Marina?

Youth Three: You're on the banks of the beautiful Byram River in the Village of
Port Chester, in the county of Westchester in the year....

Shanarockwell: The river? Buy rum? (*laughs*) Does the river flow to the Great
Water?

Youth Four: The Great Water? Flow? Yeah, I suppose it does flow. To Long Island
Sound, you mean.

Shanarockwell: That name is not known to me. But the river, it is my home.
(*Looks around sadly*) Where are the others? My people?
My tribe? My castle?

Youth Two: Castle? You mean your teepee?

Shanarockwell: Teepee? That name is not known to me.

Youth Three: They didn't have teepees in the northeast, they're called wigwams.

Youth Two: He said castle.

Shanarockwell: (*stone-faced*) I said castle. I am Chief Shanarockwell and this river
is, was, my home. What has happened? Why are you here?

Youth One: Look, chief, I don't want to upset you, but I'm afraid your teepee
(*Chief gives him look*) I mean, castle, is gone. This marina. Well, it's progress. I guess.

Shanarockwell: Speak sense.

Youth One: None of this makes sense. But I think I've awakened you from a long sleep, a very long sleep.

Youth Four: Yeah, about 300 years, give or take a few moons.

Shanarockwell: Awakened me? But how? Why?

Youth Two: How? (*does mock Indian gesture, chief doesn't react*) Sorry, I couldn't help myself.

Shanarockwell: (*Becoming aggressive*) What am I doing in this place? Speak, What do you want of me??

Youth One: (*aside*) He'll never get it. Oh well. (*To chief, rapid fire*) You see, we were assigned a multi-media project about the history of Port Chester for our social studies class, so we decided to come down here...

Youth Three: (*interrupts*) Let **me** try. We came down here, to the river, for inspiration. It's ancient, you know. Anyway, the sound of the water was so comforting, so peaceful. Maybe we all fell asleep for a while. I don't know. It's hard to explain, isn't it?

Youth Two: (*interrupts*) What she means is...we were trying to get some ideas, then there were those voices, singing.

Youth Four: Then whoosh, you appeared and...I'm scared.

Shanarockwell: You speak words I understand, but I don't know what you say.

Youth One: Forget it! Welcome to the 21st century, Chief.

Youth Three: Chief Shanarockwell, your tribe was here first. You're a primary source, just what we need for our research project. Will you answer a few questions for us?

Youth Four: Let me ask him. What was it like in this neck of the woods 300 years ago, Chief?

Shanarockwell: Woods? Where are they? They have disappeared.

Youth Two: Right, but does anything around here stir your memory? Anything?

Shanarockwell: (*after a long pause*) ...It is not what I know!

Youth Four: That's it? After 300 years, you come back to tell us: It is not what I know!?

Poniga: (*enters*) Chief Shanarockwell was never a talkative man. Why don't you ask me?

Shanarockwell: Poniga, my wife. How did you find us?

Poninga: I heard voices, singing. Why are we in this strange place, husband?

Shanarockwell: We have been called from the other side.

Poninga: Really? *(To youth)* How did you do it? I was there one moment and here the next. Do you have powers? *(a little frightened)*

Youth One: It must have been the river.

Shanarockwell: This is our river, Poninga, our **beautiful** river.

Poninga: *(looks at the river, is disgusted by the sight)* That's enough. What do we have to do to return to the other side?

Youth One: We were hoping you could tell us what it was like around here 300 years ago.

Youth Two: All we know is what the settlers, the white men, the Dutch and the English, wrote in their journals. *(indicates book)*

Poninga: Let me see. What did the white man say about us. Did they mention my name? They should have. I am the wife of Chief Shanarockwell, Poninga...P-O-N-I-N-G-A.

Youth Four: Hey, we've got Poningo Street in Port Chester.

Poninga: Poninga Street? How nice. What's a street? Did they tell about my wampum? I made the most beautiful wampum, blue and white, from the finest, selected shells.

Shanarockwell: PEACE!

Youth Two: There are a few names here...Weckquaesgeck, Sintsinck, Kitchwank, Tankiteke

Youth One: No, no those were tribes. I'm afraid the white men weren't too good with Indian names.

Youth Three: I have an idea. We'll tell you what was written. You see if you agree.

Shanarockwell: Then can we return to the other side?

Poninga: Don't be so impatient. This sounds interesting.

(Youths, Shanarockwell and Poninga sing "Until the White Man Came")

Youth One: Your language was used to "say what you think"

Youth Three: You were never excessive with food or with drink

Youth Two: You all "partook" of tribal justice.

Youth Four: Your code of honor, simply “Trust us”.

Youths: Was that true?

Shanarockwell: Yes, that was true.

Poninga: That is, until the white man came.

Shanarockwell & Poninga: Then he brought in fur traders and seekers of gold
Who “bought” up all the land we hadn’t even sold.
He set up target practice and sold us some guns
And told us reservation life was good for everyone.

Youth Four: You had strong white teeth, sparkling eyes so tame.

Youth Three: Straight backs, none were crippled, limp or lame.

Youth Two: You never cared for fighting or hurting each other.

Youth One: You offered pipes of peace to your white brother.

Youths: Was that true?

Shanarockwell: Yes, that was true.

Poninga: That is, until the white man came.

Youth Three: History says you sold the same piece of land
To an old Dutch weaver and an English deckhand.

Youth Four: Chief Shanarockwell, was that true? (Chief hesitates)
Chief, my man, I’m talking to you.

Shanarockwell: Yes, that was true. (*with Poninga*) True, until the white man came.

Youth One: This book says that Native Americans were monogamous, is that true?

Poninga: (*says the word as if it were a disease*) Mon-ah-gim-us? That sounds terrible.

Youth One: It means that Native American men had only one wife.

Shanarockwell: One wife like Poninga is all I needed. (*Poninga nudges him*) But a chief has the right to have many wives. Poninga never gave me cause to want others!

Poninga: True, except for that day you returned from trading with the white
Man down the river. Remember.
(*They take places for re-enactment of scene, Youths become their audience*)

Shanarockwell: (*enters with jug and sack*) I am home!

Poninga: Shanarockwell, I welcome you. You have been gone for three moons.
We have feared for your safety.

Shanarockwell: You may feel pride for your husband and chief, Poninga. I have made a most important trade for our people.

Poninga: I hope it is better than the last one: eight coats, seven shirts and wampum in exchange for the land of our fathers!! Really!!!

Shanarockwell: Peace! You speak with the tongue of a brave. You still live on the land traded to the white man, don't you?

Poninga: Yes, but...

Shanarockwell: I have been with many chiefs on the ship of the god Manitou. He comes from across the great water. He brings us sacred liquid. Your husband was the first to taste this liquid. *(No reaction)* I said the **first** to taste the sacred liquid.

Poninga: I heard you. Go on, what did you get for my wampum?

Shanarockwell: I have tasted of divinity. Now I bring this to our people. Kneel, wife, Manitou has accepted your fine blue wampum so you shall be the first of our Tribe to become divine.

Poninga: Kneel?

Shanarockwell: Kneel. *(He offers her the jug)*

Poninga: *(kneels reluctantly and takes a sip)* Pfew! *(spits it out)* Yuck!
This is what you traded my beautiful wampum for. I spent days on that wampum.

Shanarockwell: Peace, wife. This is not a proper attitude for one who has tasted divinity.

Poninga: Divinity? You took a three moon trip in our only canoe and traded my magnificent wampum to the white man to **buy rum???**

(The scene freezes as each one of the Youths "gets it"!))

Youth Three: Buy rum...

Youth One: That's how...

Youth Two: the river...

Youth Three: got its name!

Youth Four: Cool!!! Buy rum – Byram River!

Ensemble: Ho!

Who lived here before we did?

EARLY SETTLERS: 1600- 1660

READ: Think about the meanings of these words as you read.

wampum surrender rivalry

WRITE: Write the answers to the following questions after you read the information.

1. Why do we speak English and not Dutch?

2. How much did it cost to buy the land that is now Port Chester?

3. How did the area of Port Chester/Rye become part of the English Empire?_____

By the early 1600's, Europeans had explored much of North and South America. Henry Hudson, a Dutch sea captain and adventurer, claimed the land along the Hudson River for the Netherlands in 1609. At that time, the Dutch and the English were competing for wealth and power in the New World. This **rivalry** eventually led to war, which was fought in both America and Europe. The English were victorious and the Dutch had to **surrender** the settlement of New Netherlands, which then became the English colony of New York.

The first settlers to arrive in our area came from Greenwich, (Greenwich) Connecticut in June 1660. Among them were Thomas Studwell, Peter Disbrow, and John Coe. These pioneers led the early development of Port Chester and Rye. They "purchased" the land that makes up Rye and Port Chester from Chief Shanarockwell for eight coats, seven shirts and fifteen fathom (90 feet) of **wampum**.

The area became part of the English Empire and its people were considered subjects of the King of England. The date of the agreement between Shanarockwell and Studwell, Disbrow and Coe was June 29, 1660. Three versions of the agreement appear on the following page.

June the 29 - 1660

Boit Knosson into an more comit may concern to the Indians and
 English that wa shanawock word pugganowa maonohoba and Cokenpoko
 have sold into potow disbuo John Coo Thomas the dwell all living at this
 present at Granwige to say a certain parcell of Land the parcell of
 Land which these Indians a bove mentioned have sold is called in the
 Indian name manshing fland and is now in to the main Land which is
 called in the Indian name poningo this said fland was a bove mentioned
 Coo have by warrant of this bill doe sell all our Right and title into John
 Coo potow disbuo Thomas the dwell generally to enjoy from any molestation
 of us or any other Indians to them and to their heirs assigns and
 exccutors for ever and forther we have given into potow disbuo
 John Coo and Thomas the dwell for their cattell by on the main
 called by the Indians poningo and what timber or trees that is forthan
 disse and not to be molested by us or other Indians: and we doe here
 be acknowledging to have received full satisfaction for this parcell of
 Land a bove mentioned to say we have received eight cotas and seven
 shutes tiffene fadom of roomy on which is the full satisfaction for the parcell
 of Land a bove mentioned and for the witness we have here to set our hands
 witness to this Kneg

Henry disbuo
 23 - 1672

the mark of shanawock
 the mark of shanawock
 the mark of Coken
 the mark of waowanman

Cokin / this mark
 maonobob / his mark
 qvabacko / his mark
 ppaish / his mark
 wamagoo / his mark
 wonanao / his mark
 topogond / his mark
 matishoy / his mark
 richard O / his mark

Jvne the 29 - 1660

Be it knowen vnto all men hom it may Concern both endens and Inglifh that we fhanorockwell fagamore maowhove and cokenfekoe have fovlld vnto peter difbro John Coe thomas ftydwell all Living in this prefent at grenwige to fay a fartain parcell of Land the parcall of Land which thefe Indians above mentioned have fovlld is called in the Indian name manvfing Iland and is nere vnto the main Land which is called the endian name peningo this faid Iland wee above mentioned doe here by vartve of this bill doe fell all ovr Right and titell vnto John Coe peter difbro thomas ftydwell qviatealy to inioy from any moleftation of vs or any other Indians to them and to thare haires afignes and executors for ever and fvrthar we have given vnto feter difbro John Coe and thomas ftydwell food for thaire cattell vpon the main called by the endians peningo and what timber or trees that is for thair evffe and not to be mollested by vs or othar Indians and wee doe hereby acknowLidge to have receifed fvll fattiffaction for this pyrchis of Land above mentioned to fay we have receifed eight cotes and feven fhvrts fiftene tadvm of wompone which if the fvll fattiffaction for the parcall of Land above mentioned and for the witnes we have hereto fet ovr hands

witnes Joshva knap

Henry difbrow

febrow

23 1678

the mark of U fhanarockwell

the mark of N Aronaqve

the mark of P ookow

the mark of V wawatanman

Cokinfecho H his mark

maowbort J his mark

qvabaiko Z his mark

Ipawakum q) his mark

aramapon C his mark

wonanao P his mark

topoqone P his mark

matifhes JJ his mark

richard O his mark

Be it knowen unto all men whom it may concern both Indians and English that we Shanarockwell sagamore, Maowhobo and Cokensekoo have sold unto Peter Disbro, John Coe, Thomas Studwell, all living at this present at Grenwige, to say a parcel of land which these above mentioned Indians have sold is called in the Indian name Manusing Island, and near unto the main land which is in the Indian name Peningo. This said island we doe sell all our right and title . . . and farther we have given feed for their cattle . . . and what timbers or trees that is for their use and not to be molested by us or any other Indians. And we do acknowledge to have received full satisfaction for this purchase to say we have received eight cotes and seven shirts, fiftene fathom of wompone....and for the witness we have hereto set our hands.

Ipawahun

Aramapoe

Wonanao

Topogone

Matishes

Richard

Shanarockwell

Aranaque

Cokow

Wawatanman

Cokinseco

Maowbert

Quaraiko

The treaty was kept in the Disbrow trunk with the family treasure:

Constructed Response Questions

Base your answers on the documents.

1. When was the land that is now Port Chester purchased from the Siwanoy?

2. What did the Indians receive in exchange for the land?

3. Do you think that this was a good deal for the Siwanoy Indians at the time?

4. Was the deal between the Siwanoy Indians and the settlers fair?

SAWPIT as a BORDER AREA

READ: Think about the meanings of these words as you read.

**self-reliant deeded adapt disputed border pits
settlers hostile**

WRITE: Write the answers to the following questions after you read the information.

1. Why was our area called Sawpit?

2. Why were some Native Americans hostile while others were friendly?

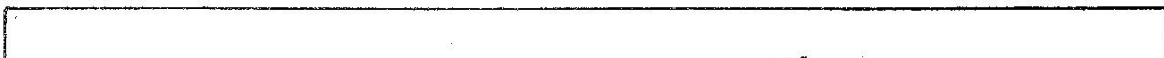
3. Would you rather that Sawpit was still part of Connecticut or deeded to New York?

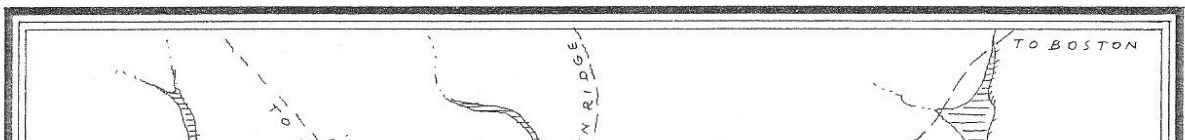
The early inhabitants of Port Chester were courageous and **self-reliant**. They quickly learned to survive the hardships of pioneer life. The struggle to **adapt** to the wilderness and **hostile** Native Americans brought them together into one community. The people helped each other and learned much from the friendly Native Americans who had lived on the land for hundreds of years. As time went on, more land was explored and settled. Some **settlers** traveled inland toward Poningo Neck, now the site of the City of Rye. Other settlers moved to an area along the Byram River. This area became known as Sawpit Landing or Sawpit. Today, this area is the Village of Port Chester.

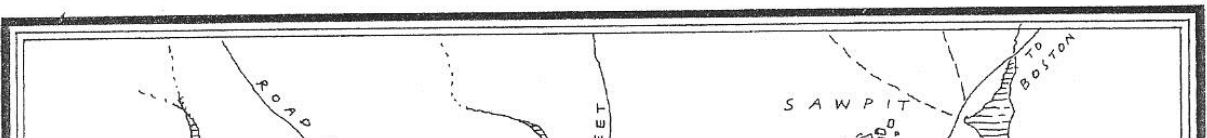
The early name of our village was Sawpit. It was named for the saw **pits** then in use. Logs were placed in **pits** in the ground to be cut and sawed for shipbuilding. This took place on Merritt's Pond which was later known as Lyon's Point. Soon everyone began to refer to our area as Sawpit. The name Sawpit was used for the first time in 1732.

Sawpit was a **border** area which was claimed by both Connecticut and New York. In 1665, the court of Connecticut called all settlements by one name, Rye, and said they were part of Connecticut. However, in 1683 the land was **deeded** back to the New York Colony. The ownership of the Sawpit was **disputed** for almost 105 years. The issue was finally settled in 1788 when the legislature of New York State ruled that Sawpit was the Town of Rye, which was located in New York.

MAP SHOWING LAND ON WHICH PORT CHESTER IS NOW LOCATED







Who lived here before we did?

THE BYRAM RIVER INFLUENCED THE TOWN'S GROWTH

"The River calls ancient and clean, the River sings of the things it's seen. " Flashbacks.

READ: Think about the meanings of these words as you read.

influenced proximity occupations carriage

Byram River

READ: Think about the meanings of these words as you read.

carriage proximity influenced occupations

WRITE: Write the answers to the following questions after you read the information.

1. How did the Early Settlers use the Byram River and the Long Island Sound?

2. How did the Byram River get its name?

3. Describe how the Byram River has changed. How has it stayed the same?

Travel was difficult and sometimes dangerous in Sawpit. Paths connected various parts of the town. The Post Road, King Street, and Grace Church Streets were among the earliest **carriage** paths. Roads outside the settlements were often just rough paths. For these reasons, people often traveled by boat rather than by **carriage** or stagecoach.

Our village had its early beginnings on a waterway. Its **proximity** to Long Island Sound and the Byram River **influenced** the lives of the early settlers in many ways. Building, farming, trading, and shell fishing were important **occupations** of the early settlers. An early family by the name of Lyon recognized the potential of the harbor area and built a huge oyster and clam business in Sawpit. Their seafood products were shipped to areas as far away as New York City. The same family also started boat lines to carry produce and passengers to the Port of New York. Three ships were anchored in Sawpit for this purpose: The Caroline, The Jackson, and The New York.



NOW



The Byram River played a major role in the development of our village. The river helped to make the village an important port, which influenced the growth of the community. The Byram River was originally called the Armonck River because it began in Armonk. According to local legend, Indians from the back woods came to the river to buy “White Man’s Rum.” Soon the river came to be known as the “Buy Rum” or Byrum River. Years later the spelling was changed and “Byrum” became Byram.