

THE SHENK FERRY INDIANS

Good day everyone...it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

Last summer in Lancaster County, geologists and students made a most significant discovery--one which forced scientists to change their ideas about a mysterious Indian tribe which lived in that area, when (and before) Columbus ever landed in the Western World. No one knows exactly where those Indians came from or why they disappeared. There is no written record of them. Early colonists in America and Pennsylvania never referred to them, probably because they had vanished before this Pennsylvania of ours was ever settled. We don't even know what name they gave themselves, but discovering archeologists from Franklin and Marshall College have called them the Shenks Ferry Indians. F and M students, working under the direction of the college uncovered evidence of an entire Shenks Ferry community of 500 to 1000 persons, whose habitat was surrounded by a double stockade--not just a small community but a fairly large village of habitants. The original boundaries and the buildings that it enclosed have been staked out by the students. And they found remains of human skeletons, tools and earthware that dated from about 1450 AD. There were mass graves where bodies had been piled like cordwood, many of them with spears and arrowheads protruding from the bones, suggesting an ancient massacre, so swift and brutal that the Shenk Ferry Indians didn't even have time to bury their dead properly. How much history we learn from the work of these F & M archeologists! Pre-Pennsylvania history! And it is as

exciting as a mystery novel, because no sooner do they find a pattern to village plans, than they come up with something unexpected. For example, excavators discovered a sort of inside plumbing--with the Susquehannock Indians digging garbage pits directly under their dwellings. This section of Lancaster County has always been a rich source of Indian relics, some, would you believe it, going back to 10,000 BC. Farmers plowing their fields have been turning up Indian Arrowheads ever since Lancaster's rich loam was first tilled. The test hole they dug at Shenks Ferry site last summer, immediately held out so much promise, that F & M recruited top students to begin the diggings and turned them loose. About a foot of top soil was uncovered and whenever they found a dark stain of bones or pre-Pennsylvania life in the ground, they went to work. They were thus able to plot out the location of that stockade and poles which had supported houses. The buildings were 30 by 15 feet with rounded ends. A whole village discovered in Pennsylvania--one which existed long before the Christian era--or for that matter, the Babylonian era as we know it. Dr. Kinsey at F & M claims it is the most orderly and easiest archeological discovery to interpret since he's been digging. Literally last summer in Lancaster County the ancients were brought up to date. Someday, 4500 years from now, someone might be digging up your house. Keep it in good order, will you? We'll want them to be as proud of today's Pennsylvanian as you are.

This is Pete Wambach. It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.