

***Lenape Country: Delaware Valley Society before William Penn*****Jean R. Soderlund****University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2015. 249, pp., 22 figures, 2 maps. \$39.95 hardcover. ISBN: 9780812246476.****DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14713/njs.v2i1.35>**

Jean Soderlund, a distinguished early American historian, has made a significant contribution to our understanding of the early Delaware Valley in *Lenape Country: Delaware Valley Society before William Penn*. The book is thorough and well written. Soderlund's focus is on the relationship between the Lenape and the early Swedish and Dutch settlers of the Delaware Valley. Her book is part of a growing body of literature on this period in the Delaware Valley and beyond, including Robert Grumet's *The Munsee Indians, A History* (Oklahoma 2009) and Amy Schutt's *Peoples of the River Valleys: The Odyssey of the Delaware Indians* (Pennsylvania 2007). It also builds on old standards like Clinton Weslager's books on the Swedish and Dutch colonies in the Delaware Valley and Herbert Kraft's classic works on the Lenape. Soderlund emphasizes the resilience and strength of the Lenape in the face of waves of settlement and colonization and the generally peaceful relations between the Lenape and the Swedes and Dutch.

The book is organized into eight chapters. It begins with an overview of the Lenape, titled, "A Free People, Subject to No One." Rather than presenting the Lenape as weak and subservient, she emphasizes their strengths. This is generally a positive view of the Lenape. For Soderlund, the Lenape determined how trade and settlement occurred within their lands. In her view they, not the new colonists, were the power brokers in the Delaware Valley.

The second chapter, "Controlling the Land through Massacre and War, 1626-1638," looks at the period prior to the establishment of the New Sweden colony. This period saw traders visiting the Delaware Valley and early attempts at colonization. The massacre of the Dutch colonists at Swanendael is discussed in some detail as is its aftermath when David

Pieterseon DeVries reopened negotiations with the Lenape. The competition between the Susquehannocks and the Lenape for trade with Europeans is also touched upon. Soderlund does a nice job of relating what was happening in the Chesapeake Bay region during this period to what was happening in the Delaware Valley and again, emphasizes the strength of the Lenape.

Chapter 3, *Managing a Tenuous Peace, 1638-1654*, focused on the relationship of the Lenape to the New Sweden colony. She draws attention to the growing alliances between the Swedes, Finns, and the Lenape. Again, taking a broader perspective, Soderlund compares what was happening in the Delaware Valley with colonial developments in New England, the Hudson Valley, and the Chesapeake.

The fourth chapter, "Allies Against the Dutch" emphasizes how following the Dutch conquest of New Netherland, the Lenape and the Old Settlers, Swedes, Finns, aligned against their new Dutch masters. It appears that even after the fall of New Sweden the Swedes and Lenape maintained a close alignment. Ultimately, Soderlund argues that "The system of alliances by which the Lenape remained at peace during the years from 1654 to 1664 seems unique in North America (p. 111)," and despite the Dutch "pretensions" to rule the "Lenape dominated their own country."

Things changed in 1664 with the English conquest of New Netherland. Sir Robert Carr was dispatched to subjugate the Dutch settlements in the Delaware Valley. The attack was more violent than the bloodless surrender of New Amsterdam. Carr took New Amstel, then the City of Amsterdam's property, and also Alexander d'Hinojossa, the Dutch Governor's, plantation on Burlington Island. While the number of Swedish and Dutch settlers had been very small, with the coming of the English the number of settlers grew and pressure on the Lenape was intense. Under the Duke of York, English colonization began at Salem and Burlington. By 1681 a

massive Quaker migration was transforming the Delaware Valley. Soderlund notes that the center of Lenape power moved north to population and power moved north to southern and central New Jersey (p. 113). The Lenape and Swedes remained close allies during this period. The increased bureaucratic burden of the English government, which required old patents to be renewed and the payment of quitrents, may have led to the unrest known as Long Swede Revolt (c.1668-1672).

Soderlund then moves into a discussion of the competing alliances of the period between 1673 and 1680, which saw the Dutch briefly return, only to be followed by anew English, led by Governor Edmund Andros. Soderlund presents Andros as a capable leader, who “acknowledged the Swedes’ autonomy and adopted Lenape policies in treaty-making and covering deaths with gifts (p.137).”

Even after 1676, the year of the Indian revolts in southern New England and Bacon’s Rebellion in the Chesapeake, Soderlund sees the Lenape as maintaining their sovereignty over much of their land. One year earlier John Fenwick had arrived in southwestern New Jersey with a group of settlers, and soon a second settlement was established at Burlington. The arrival of William Penn in 1681 coincided with a period when Europeans increasingly pushed the Lenape and old settlers from the prime lands along the Delaware. The Lenape refused to transfer the land from central Bucks County north to the Poconos to the English, which would later lead to the infamous Walking Purchase.

Soderlund’s argument is novel and presents the Lenape in a different light than most previous scholars. In her view the Lenape were the power brokers in the Delaware Valley until and even a bit beyond the great Quaker migration of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. This was a watershed period in her view. She also deals briefly with the later history of the Lenape, especially the

execution of the leader Weequehela, the Walking Purchase, the missionary activities of the Brainerd brothers, and the establishment of the Brotherton Reservation in New Jersey. Even here the emphasis is on the resilience of the Lenape. Soderlund concludes that by “embracing principles of peace and freedom for others as well as for themselves, the Lenape diverged significantly from some major Indian groups (p. 202).” Moreover, they retained strength in numbers and were able to influence the development of American society and culture.

Soderlund’s book belongs on the shelves and tablets of all scholars concerned with the early colonial history of the Delaware Valley. It provides a new and positive view of the Lenape during this period, who are presented as resilient and powerful in the face of diverse colonial endeavors. This contradicts earlier examinations of the Lenape which emphasized their small numbers and relative powerlessness politically. From my perspective, the book’s biggest omission is the lack of engagement with the archaeological literature dealing with sites from this time period. A more thorough engagement with the material record could help bolster Soderlund’s arguments. Indeed, many of the sites she discusses, Swanendael, Burlington Island, the Printzhof, have seen archaeological study.

*Lenape Country* presents a new view of the Delaware Valley’s colonization. At the same time, as the best books do, this one raises numerous issues that other scholars may wish to explore.

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