

CONTACT



Historic Preservation

The Stockbridge-Munsee Tribal Historic Preservation Office in Williamstown, Mass. carries out site protection and repatriation interests of the Stockbridge-Munsee Community.

Should you have knowledge of cultural sites or cultural heritage items to make us aware of, we welcome your input.

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Papscanee Island: New Research on a Historic Mohican Site



Stockbridge-Munsee
Community Winter Webinar

Background

This booklet is a supplementary resource to the Stockbridge-Munsee Community 2024 Winter Webinar Series. In this presentation, Dr. Jeffrey Bendremer, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, discussed the research unearthed and the experience involved in the National Historic Register process. Beginning in 2021 as part of the Underrepresented Communities Grant Program funded by the National Park Service, the Tribal Historic Preservation Office worked tirelessly to research and present an application for 22 sites on Papscanee Island to be included.

The webinar can be accessed on the Stockbridge-Munsee Cultural Affairs YouTube page



About this booklet

This details the research and new insights gained in this process of submitting a National Register of Historic Places Nomination for Papscanee Island after years of effort.

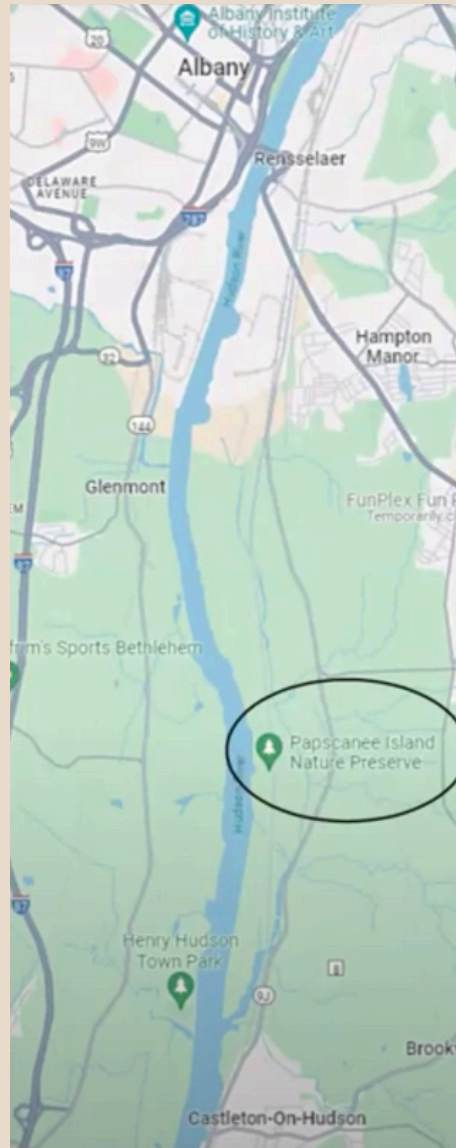
This booklet is meant for public education and as a user-friendly community resource. The Stockbridge-Munsee Tribal Historic Preservation Office is continuously working on preserving ancestral items and protecting cultural sites such as those described.

Booklet created by: Brenda Diego, Repatriation Intern

Papscanee Island

Map

Named after Stockbridge-Munsee ancestor Sachem Papsickene, Papscanee Island is one of the most historically and culturally significant areas in the Mohican homelands. Papscanee Island is located in the Mid Hudson Valley.

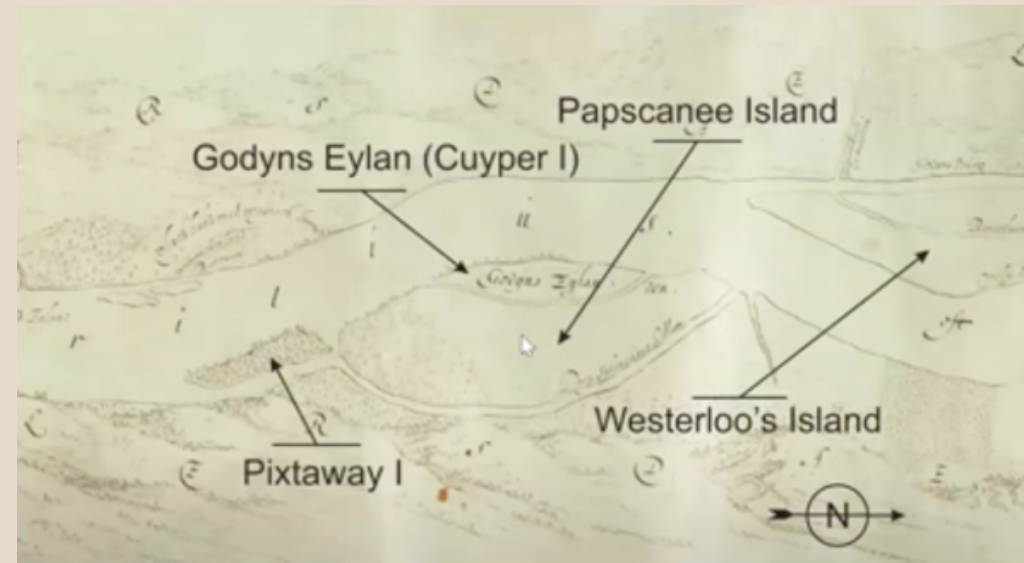


Mohican Territory in the Middle Hudson River Valley Depicting the Location of Fort Orange (later Albany, NY) and the archipelago of Mohican settlement (Vingboons, 1639).



Today, Papscanee Island is attached to the mainland. At one time, Papscanee Island was actually an island and its position made it an important waypoint for trade and diplomatic relations.

It was recently submitted to the National Register of Historic Places by our Tribal Historic Preservation Office.



The earliest map in 1632

Community Importance

While learning about the significance of Papscaanee Island, we felt it was important to center our community in the discussion of this nomination. To gain the perspective of citizens, we had an ethnographic component to our research. In 2022, we asked our community, “Why is this place important to contemporary Tribal citizens?” Here are some of the anonymous responses:

“It’s HOME! The connection with the water, ground and nature around you is inviting like when you walk into your current home and feel that sense of relaxation and comfort.”

“Preserving any of these sites links me to my people who have lived there in the past and continue to live there in my heart.”

“Every time I visit our homelands I feel a sense of belonging and at the same time a sense of grief because the land hasn’t been cared for and we, our history, our presence, are not visible. It is good to know that it is slowly changing.”

Cultural Resource

The whole Island is known to have a lot of historical sites but when looking at the district we worked on for the nomination there are 22 known archaeological sites on the original landform.

“Components” is an archaeological term. They are a part of an archaeological site that relates to a particular time period or particular culture.

There can be multiple components at a single site, like these:

Pre-Contact Native American Sites (Before AD 1600) - 16 components

Post-Contact Native American Sites (After AD 1600)- 5 components

Post-Contact Euro-American Sites (After AD 1600)- 11 components

National Registration

To be successful in the National Registration, the site must fit under one of the four criteria. When we first started to work on this project, our nominating criteria expanded because the full significance of the Island began to appear.

We decided to write a nomination under all four criteria in the nomination. This is very rare to be moved forward through all four.

4 NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

A: EVENTS
That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B: PEOPLE
That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

**C: DESIGN / ARCHITECTURE
WORKMANSHIP / ARTS / DISTRICTS**
That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

D: PREHISTORIC / HISTORIC INFO
That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history.



Criteria A

Property is associated with historic event or activities



Hudson and Native Americans,
Wood Engraving, American, 1876

Henry Hudson arrived in 1609 on the Island. He got as far as Papscanee Island which was the furthest the Half Moon (Hudson's boat) reached because the river widened and became extremely shallow. Papscanee Island serves as an important place for Euro-American and Native-American interaction for trade diplomacy.

Criteria B

Property is associated with important persons

Recognizing the significance of Papscanee Island, the island's name derives from the Sachem Papsickene, a Mohican leader. With our research, we concluded that Sachem Papsickene's signature was a party between some of the earliest land transactions between Native people and the Dutch. The importance of the island remains as a surviving locus of Native American domestic activity in the pre-European Contact period. Henry Hudson and the Dutch were able to establish a very close, workable relation on the Island which established rapport and an economic, and diplomatic relationship enduring for generations.



Indians Trading with the Half Moon by Henry Schnakenberg, 1939-1941

Criteria C

Property has a distinctive design or physical characteristics



Standing early Dutch stone house on the island.



Historic cemetery, with the earliest marked grave at 1707.

Criteria D

Property has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information about prehistory or history



Papscanee Island's position in the river gives it ideal soil for agriculture, resulting in a dozen Late Woodland sites. Roughly 20% of the nominations specifically addressed this criterion. Papscanee Island was a perfect place to look at settlements and then say how this changed with the advent of Europeans. The settlement system was changed because the river became a theater in which trade opportunities became important.

Project Milestones

May 9, 2023

Final version of the Papscanee Island Historic District Nomination submitted for review to the New York State Division of Historic Preservation.

June 8, 2023

The New York State Historic Preservation Review Board discusses the Papscanee Island Nomination, but because of administrative difficulties and landowner objections, tables the vote and schedules it to be reconsidered at the September 7th meeting.

September 7, 2023

The New York State Historic Preservation Review Board meeting is canceled due to a lack of quorum.

December 4, 2023

The New York State Historic Preservation Review Board considers the Papscanee Island Historic District nomination and votes unanimously to approve it.

Project Milestones

December 6, 2023

The Papscaanee Island Historic District is officially added to the New York Register of History Places. The nomination is sent to the National Park Services for review for the National Register of Historic Places.

December 18, 2023

Request sent to publish the Papscaanee Island Historic District nomination in the Federal Register.

January 10, 2024

End of the public Comment Period after the Papscaanee Island Historic District nomination appeared in the Federal Register.

January 26, 2024

Official notification of the finding of eligibility/approval of the Papscaanee Island Historic District nomination after review at the National Park Service.

Remembrance



Painting entitled "Pap-scan-ee" by Len Tantillo.

The Stockbridge-Munsee has achieved a significant milestone by reclaiming ownership of the Nature Preserve portion of the original Island in 2021. This endeavor has been instrumental in defending the Island's natural beauty and ecological integrity from developers. Our Tribe is committed to keeping the Preserve open to the public. By sharing the rich history and cultural significance of Papscaanee Island with visitors, the Tribe ensures that its heritage remains alive and cherished. This commitment to remembrance and preservation underscores Stockbridge-Munsee's dedication to safeguarding its ancestral lands and fostering a deeper appreciation.