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## Preliminary Notes on the Lenopi (Delaware) from New Jersey Who Attended Wheelock's Indian School in Connecticut

By Marshall Joseph Becker

The members of Native American tribes often are treated as if they all confronted the challenge of culture contact in the same way. Focused studies of any single tribe invariably reveal a wide variety of responses to contacts with Europeans as well as with other tribes. An earlier study of the life of John Skickett (1823? – After 1870), a Lenopi descent basket-maker who migrated from southern New Jersey to New York, and later was identified as working in Connecticut, reveals one interesting variation in ways used by Natives to make a living (Becker, *Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Connecticut*. 76 [2014]: 99-118). But Skickett was far from the first Lenopi to relocate to Connecticut. A century before Skickett took his trade to that state, a number of Lenopi children made that difficult journey in the hope of securing a formal education.

Formal education for Native Americans seeking a European style higher education meant that they had to enter a system largely devoted to training future clerics. Efforts to educate "Indians" can be traced back to the early days of Harvard College, which educated future clerics. Founded in 1636, the College struggled financially until The English Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England granted funds specifically for the education of Indians. In 1655 the Indian College building was specifically erected. It also served several other functions during the few decades before it was torn down. By the 1700s sporadic efforts to provide Indians with a formal education were made by several college preparatory schools. One of these, variously identified as "Wheelock's Indian School" or "Moor's Charity School," began in Connecticut in 1754, with mixed success. During its early years, we can identify a total of seven students from the Lenopi tribe of southern New Jersey who enrolled. An examination of their record, using some unpublished letters, is the focus of this note. A more comprehensive summary of what we know about these youngsters, and what happened to them, will be the subject of a longer forthcoming report.

In 1754 Eleazar Wheelock took into his Connecticut home "two Delaware Indian boys," providing them with formal instruction along with the other students at a school he had just founded. These two Lenopi boys were his first Native American pupils and the first of seven "Delawares" sent by the Rev. John Brainerd (1720-1781) to study with Wheelock. John Brainerd had graduated from Yale in 1746, several years after Wheelock had attended, but the clerical community in the American colonies was not large. The individual stories of the seven Lenopi who trained under Wheelock have yet to be told. In 1754, and for long after the term "Delaware" was applied to several tribal groups that had been resident along the Delaware River and Bay. The Lenopi also were known as "Jerseys" (etc.). The specific tribal origin of these two young men was not indicated in these early communications, but my earlier research has identified their families as Lenopi. James Dow McCallum, in a 1932 publication, identifies these two children in 1754 as Jacob Woolley and John Pumshire [Pumpshire]. The latter died in 1757 and presumably is buried in the area of Lebanon, CT. Woolley is believed to have attended the College of New Jersey at some point in his training after leaving Wheelock's tutelage.

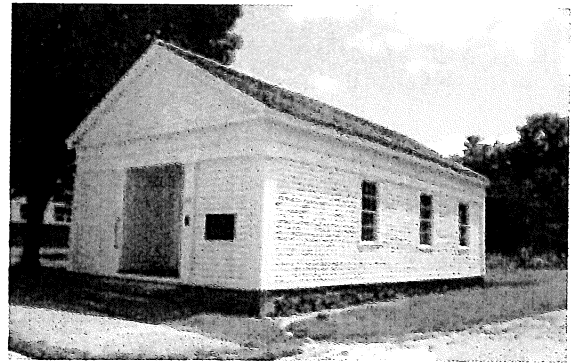
Eleazar Wheelock (1711-1779) graduated from Yale University in 1733 and by 1735 had taken up a post as a Congregationalist minister in Lebanon, Connecticut, about 25 miles to the northeast of New Haven. After some years of struggle, his ultimate material success in that community in the Connecticut interior is narrated by McCallum (1932). In 1743 a Mohegan by the name of Samson Occom arrived from the nearby area of New London, in the Thames River drainage, and studied with Wheelock until 1748. Wheelock's success in educating Occom, and Occom's subsequent success as a missionary to various Indian communities stimulated Wheelock's interest in providing formal training to interested Native Americans to enable them to serve in similar capacities.

The year 1754 witnessed increasing confrontations between Native peoples living in the frontier zones of Pennsylvania and elsewhere, and those colonial populations that were unofficially settling in Indian country. Because New Jersey south of the Raritan River was an area of relative calm, the Governors of Pennsylvania and New Jersey attempted to maintain the peace by taking steps to settle any land claims, and to otherwise cement alliances with resident Indian populations. These arrangements led the colony of New Jersey to purchase some 3,000 acres of land and to transfer ownership to interested Lenopi. During this same period, the government in Pennsylvania took steps to relocate a few Lenape-descendent people then living among the Quaker farmers to New Jersey, a protective measure that lasted during the period of the French and Indian War (ca. 1755-1763).

By the 1750s several Lenopi families had adopted many European behaviors. The numerous Lenopi land sales to the Proprietors of both East and West Jersey, and subsequent documents regarding titles to lands bought by individual colonists, reveal the early use of English writing by many Lenopi, and their acquisition of surnames. Thus the Native named "Nummy" appears as "Tom Nunimi" on a land sale from 30 April 1688. It's not surprising that by 1754 various Lenopi residents in New Jersey might wish to secure a "formal" (English style) education for their children, male and female. The record suggests that several Lenopi may have received formal education at the College of New Jersey (later Princeton) in the heart of former Lenopi territory. Perhaps their lack of a basic grammar school education led Brainerd to direct some of these children to Eleazar Wheelock. Wheelock's efforts to include Native pupils prompted a neighbor, Col. Joshua More of Mansfield, to endow a school with two acres of land and the several buildings on it. The school thus became known as "Moor's [sic] Charity School" or Moor's Indian Charity-School, although white boys also were educated there. Samuel Kirkland of Norwich is perhaps the best known of these young white scholars. A total of seven "Delaware" (Lenopi) children were sent by Rev. John Brainerd from southern New Jersey to Lebanon, Connecticut between the years 1754 and 1762. They traveled a prescribed route, presumably planned by Brainerd, to the school, stopping at specific locations where they would be fed and sheltered. The very mixed success of Wheelock's venture, to which Lenopi and other some other tribes had stopped sending their children, led him to develop a new and much enlarged educational venture that later became known as Dartmouth College, named for its benefactor William, Earl of Dartmouth.

When Wheelock moved to Hanover, NH in 1769-1770 he also brought with him the Charity School for Indians, hoping it would be a feeder institution for the College. The Archives at Dartmouth College include many documents which make specific mention of several Lenopi who were involved in Wheelock's early educational endeavors. These archives have yet to be systematically reviewed for further data on the Lenopi who were involved with these schools. They reveal that in 1757 a Pequot and two more "Delawares" arrived in Lebanon. In 1761 the first Native woman joined the male students; one Mohegan and one a "Delaware." A writing sample of Hezekiah Calvin [1748-?], at age 11 and dated 19 Nov. 1759, suggests that this young member of the well-known Calvin family had joined Wheelock about that time.

A "Delaware" identified as Jacob Woolley, at twenty years of age, appears in several of the Wheelock Papers. Following (continued on 7)



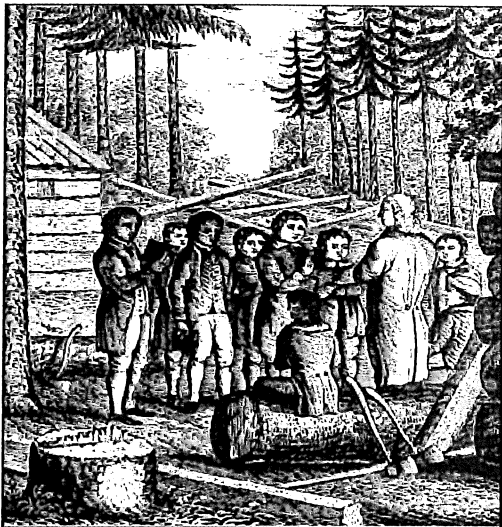
Moor's Charity School, Columbia, CT. Image credited to: <http://ctmonuments.net/2011/09/moor%E2%80%99s-charity-school-columbia/>

**WHEELOCK** (continued from 6) the research lead of James Axtell, I extended a stay at a conference in Hanover in order to transcribe some documents from the Dartmouth College archives. My sincere thanks are due to Phyllis Gilbert (Librarian, Special Collections, Rauner Library, Dartmouth College) for her kindness in locating these several documents. Now, some 15 years later, I'm digitizing my hand-written transcriptions. Two letters in the Dartmouth Archives relate to an episode in 1763 during which Jacob Woolley (also Wooley) was tested in his faith and disrupted the possible calling that Eleazar Wheelock had in mind for him. Woolley had been with Wheelock since 1754 and by 1763 must have been exceptionally well educated in the classical languages and theology. The 1763 event that precipitated the rupture followed the conclusion of the French and Indian War. Wheelock had been instructing Woolley during the period when military actions along and beyond the frontier were most violent. The first letter that I transcribed, written by Joseph Fish from Stonington, CT was in response to a letter from Wheelock that had been dated 7 December 1763.

Fish's letter, that I transcribed, was followed by Wheelock's answer. The carrier of these letters was an individual named "David" but no further information in these two documents provides an identification. Whether he was an enslaved person or employee, or perhaps a local Native, is not evident. However, we do know that Wheelock owned at least one slave and I believe that "David" fell into that category. We also learn from a letter of 8 July 1767 that the Indians in that region were extremely unreliable carriers of the mail, a problem that was noted in that region as early as the previous century.

Joseph Fish's letter to Wheelock, dated at "Stonington Dec. 9, 1763" refers to a visit to "[Secutor] at his Indian Town" where Fish "Sought and found Jacob Wooley." Fish spoke with Wooley for an hour and learned that he was despondent. Wooley made promises to return to Wheelock's tutelage, but did not. Fish then noted that the Indians and Whites in this Native community had only good things to say about Wooley, but that "the house that he kept at was of bad fame." Wheelock's return letter, dated at "Leb.<sup>th</sup> 16.<sup>th</sup> Dec.<sup>r</sup> 1763" indicates that he would not give up on Wooley, whose name he never mentions in this communication. Wooley was one of the 89 Indians who entered Moor's Charity School from 1754 until 1779, when Wheelock died. The seven "Delaware" who attended between 1754 and 1762 had a very mixed record, mostly tragic.

The 7 include: *John Punshire [Pumpshire] (1740-1757)*: Entered in 1754. A 1757 letter from John Brainerd in New Jersey to Wheelock records the death of this young man while he was among his kin. *Jacob Woolley (1743-?)*: Entered in 1754 along with John Punshire. Jacob later went on to attend the College of New Jersey [Princeton], but as most of the Indians he did not graduate. *Joseph Woolley (1737/1739?-1766)*: Joseph, a cousin of Jacob Woolley, entered the school on 9 April 1757. He became one of Wheelock's most learned scholars. By 1761 he was reported to be reading "Tully,"



*Wheelock and His Students, "The Founding of Dartmouth College" Original illustration from The History and Antiquities of New England, New York, and New Jersey (J.W. Barber, 1841)*

Virgil and the Bible in Greek. In 1764 he joined Samuel Kirkland as a missionary to the Six Nations. At Onohoga he had more than 200 students. Of note is that on 6 July 1765 Joseph Woolley was at Johnson Hall, the manor house built by Sir William Johnson in the heart of Mohawk country. Joseph noted that two days earlier he had seen "Captain Killbuck Chief of the Dellawares." Killbuck was a Lenape leader whose group had been allied with the Shawnee since their residence along the Lower Susquehanna River from ca 1700 to after 1730. Joseph Woolley's lack of kinship with Captain Killbuck is another demonstration that the Lenopi were culturally distinct from the Lenape. Joseph ultimately died of tuberculosis in 1766. *Hezekiah Calvin (1748-?)*: Hezekiah also entered Moor's on 9 April 1757, along with Joseph Woolley. His relations with Wheelock were uneven, at best, and alcohol appears to have been a major problem. He did become a schoolmaster among the Iroquois, but seems to have been as poorly provisioned as all the other Natives who passed through Wheelock's school. On 11 August 1765 he wrote to Wheelock asking that some "Stokins" be sent to him, to be carried "by David Fowler." Calvin left his teaching post in 1768 and relocated to Charlestown in the Massachusetts colony. In a letter of March 1769, Wheelock reports hearing that Calvin was in prison. *Miriam Storrs*: Entered in 1761. Miss Storrs was described as a "very likely youth" and entered the school in September of 1761. She remained for three years (to ca. 1764?). After that date she vanished from the record except for a letter that she sent to Wheelock dated "New York Novbr 24 1768." She had arrived in New York on 19 November but offers no biographical information. *Enoch Closs*: Entered in 1762, but ran away from school in 1765. *Samuel Tallman*: Dates of attendance unknown. Tallman may have become a carpenter and lived with New England Indians. He later was at Stockbridge and joined that group in their relocation to Oneida lands.

By 1765 a total of 21 Indian boys, ten Indian girls, and seven white boys had attended Moor's School. The difficulties of training students raised within hunting and gathering and basic horticultural cultures are well described by Wheelock. Their cultural orientations were strongly in contradistinction to the lifeways of the colonists. Whether his Iroquoian students, coming from horticultural cultures, adapted any better than the Lenopi has not been addressed. Problems with student use of alcohol were common, and even the impressive Samson Occom seems to have wrestled with this issue. Later in 1769 the Oneida withdrew their children from the school in Lebanon, and Wheelock turned to various tribes resident in Canada for students. Why the New Hampshire site seemed more attractive to the Huron is not known, but between 1770 and 1820, 33 Native students from the Laurentian region attended Moor's.

Benjamin Franklin pointed out that the education of Indians, with their vastly different cultural backgrounds, posed particularly difficult challenges. The theme of formal "education" as a culturally restricted, if not closed system, is at the core of Thomas Hardy's tragedy, *Jude the Obscure* (1895), in which the stonecutter Jude Fawley yearns for the kind of education available at an English University. His experiences replicate those of most of the Indians who entered Wheelock's world. Wheelock's success with Occom may have inspired him to undertake the training of Natives as missionaries. However, finding many students ill-suited to an academic or missionary career, Wheelock used them as laborers in his agricultural fields. Wheelock's opposition to smallpox vaccination places him amongst the earliest anti-vaxxers. Allegations regarding his mismanagement of funds appear too often to be dismissed.

Whether the "success" of Wheelock's students differed according to their cultural backgrounds has not been explored. Samson Occom's brilliance and achievements appear to have created a false hope in Wheelock's imagination, dashed by the many failures such as that of Samson's son, Aaron Occom who was an extremely poor student. He entered the school three times in seven years, but never lasted. After years of effort, the indifferent success of Wheelock's venture may have led him down a path to Hanover and to the establishment of Dartmouth College. There he maintained his Charity School as an Indian preparatory institution to act as a feeder to the College. The "success" of that facet of Wheelock's educational endeavors remains to be studied.

Several newly transcribed letters provide information about the formal education of the seven Lenopi children who were admitted to Moor's Indian Charity School. Woolley's efforts to secure a formal education from English colonists reveal the difficulties faced by all Native people in a world that was rapidly changing. These Lenopi children ventured from southern New Jersey to central Connecticut in the mid-eighteenth century in search of something new. Exactly what they sought remains unknown. Their individual stories provide a small indication of the challenges faced by members of a highly acculturated faction of the Lenopi tribe during a period of stressful adjustments to colonial society.