



**Brothertown Trip-June 11-20, 1999**  
By Deborah Pickering

On June 11, forty-nine travelers, most of whom are Brothertowners, left Wisconsin for historic sites in New York and Connecticut. We ranged in age from the teens to eighty-something, but most of us were middle-aged. Thirteen of us were men. Several family groups made the trip, but some people came along. The journey was enlightening and emotional for all. In both states we were welcomed by representatives of the government, the tribes, and occasionally the press. Our leaders, who spent more than a year planning the trip, were Dennis Gramentz, Alicia Johnson, and Jessica Kramer.

After two long days of driving, sometimes through heavy rain, we arrived at Hamilton College in Clinton, located in central New York (also known as Leatherstocking Country after the series by James Fenimore Cooper). After breakfast at the college, we attended services at the Congregational United Church of Christ in Deansboro. The church members had prepared a special service for us, including songs by Samson Occum and shaped-note or Sacred Harp music, a choral folk tradition that originated in Colonial and English singing schools in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

After the service we visited historic sites in the area. Our ancestors left New York for Wisconsin early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; what remains in central New York are a few grave sites and homes as well as the original land-granting documents at Hamilton College. The original Brothertown lands are in a beautiful valley surrounded by hills, a two mile wide rectangle of farm land between Clinton and Oriskany Falls. We visited the farm house where David and Hannah Garret Fowler lived - Lawrence Ames lives there now. The Fowler graves, along with those of Samson Occum and others, are in a wooded lot on that same farm. We also visited the Dick Family burying ground, the school/meeting house built in 1810 (now a private residence), and a third cemetery with 22 marked, but unidentified, graves. Only the Dice graveyard has been maintained. The other two are located in wooded areas on farms. Before our arrival, the local townspeople cut away underbrush and, in the case of the Fowler/Occum gravesite, they also tied orange flags near the graves so we could find them. These visits were emotional for many of us; some took rocks and dirt and left flowers or tobacco.

Dinner was equally overwhelming. We were welcomed by the entire community at a buffet at Joan's Old Museum in Deansboro, where we ate and conversed with townspeople, listened to speeches, and presented gifts. Attending were local residents who planned for our arrival: Russell Blackwood, a retired Hamilton College philosophy professor, Phillipa Brown, and Dorothy McConnell, historian for the town of Marshall. All have studied and/or written about the Brothertown history in New York. The next day, June 14, we had the opportunity for several hours to see the original documents at the Hamilton College library.

At noon, we left for Stockbridge, Massachusetts, driving through the Hudson River Valley to see Berkshires. Although we were only in Stockbridge for a few hours, we visited the library and two other sites. By this time, Cynthia Griggs of Collinsville, Connecticut, a Brothertown historian, had joined the group. She stayed with us until we left for home, providing information about families and locations. On June 15, after spending the night in Hartford, Connecticut, we went to Farmington, where we visited the Day-Lewis Museum, a repository of local Indian history, located near the site of travel routes and meeting places thousands of years old. Peg Yung, a Farmington resident and local historian, was our guide through the sites. We also saw Farmington Meadows, where Tunxis Indians once farmed, and burial grounds, including Riverside Cemetery, which features a marker erected in 1840 for an Indian burial ground. In Farmington, as elsewhere, we were welcomed and met by representatives of state and local governments as well as Native Americans.

We had lunch at the First Church of Christ (Congregational), built in 1652. In the church hall, members of the congregation served us a meal of Indian food - succotash, cornbread, and a casserole of turkey, wild rice, and cranberries. After lunch, the mayor as well as others spoke, and we presented gifts.

That afternoon, most people visited rock shelters and a soapstone quarry in Canton; others went to the People's Woods on the Farmington River. Later, we left for Mystic, Connecticut on Long Island Sound.

We spent most of June 16 at the Pequot Museum, located on the reservation near Mystic. This passage from the brochure does justice to the museum, which opened as recently as August, 1998. "This dazzling 308,000-square-foot facility traces the rich cultural heritage and tumultuous history of the Pequot Tribe from prehistoric times to the present through a fascinating blend of life-like displays and state-of-the-art computer and multimedia technology." It would take several days to see everything, but most of us were impressed with the 22,000 foot square village and moved by one of the 13 original films, "The Witness."

The entire day was very emotional. When we first arrived and assembled in The Gathering Place, a dome-shaped glass enclosed area, we were met by some members of the Pequot Tribe. One woman, after greeting those whose faces and names were familiar to her, said "We've been waiting for you to come home. Needless to say, it was a tearful reunion. We also had lunch that day with the elders of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe where we were welcomed and each given a small gift.

After dinner at Abbott's Lobster in the Rough, a rustic seafood restaurant on the shore, many of us visited the Foxwoods Resort Casino, the source of the Mashantucket Tribe's prosperity. The huge complex employs 11,000; visitors per day average 40,000. The most dramatic tribal touch is the Rainmaker statue at the center of the complex of buildings. The 12 foot plastic statue of an Indian hunter shoots a laser-beam arrow into the air once an hour to invoke the Great Spirit. The response is the sound of thunder, and then artificial showers rain into the base of a fountain.

The next day, June 12 we went to Uncasville and Montville on the Mohegan reservation. We visited the Mohegan church, which is being restored, the Tantaquidgeon Indian Museum, Fort Shantok State Park, the Mohegans 17<sup>th</sup> century settling place and burial grounds, and the Mohegan Sun, a casino. The later was built to resemble a Native American long house. The interior design, as well as the architecture, reflects and embodies the Mohegan culture. We were each given a booklet, Mohegan Sun: The Secret Guide, which explains the symbols, logos, and names throughout the casino. The four entrances represent the four directions, each correlating with a season. Each entrance is decorated to honor and symbolize a season. The casino is, in effect, a museum rich with symbols.

That evening, June 17, we began the trip home. After spending the night at Casantota, New York, we drove to Niagara Falls where we spent three hours on our own sight-seeing. The evening of June 18 we drove to London, Ontario to spend the night. Then, after a long drive, we were back in Wisconsin on June 19. Some of us left the group in Milwaukee, but most went to Fond du Lac on June 20 to visit more familiar with Brothertown graveyards and to share one last meal together.

Each of us had a different experience on this trip, but all would probably agree that discovering distant relatives and walking the land our ancestors walked gave us a profound sense of connection to other members of the tribe and to our roots. We learned so much and deepened our understanding of who we are and what our ancestors survived.

