

## RESEARCH OF

*Donald R. Repsher, of Bath, Pennsylvania  
Friend and Brother to the Lenape*



*[Consists of two articles by the same writer, Charles Laubach, of Durham, Pennsylvania. The second will immediately follow the first.]*

## PREHISTORIC MAN IN BUCKS COUNTY

Charles Laubach, Durham, Pennsylvania; read at the Pipersville Meeting, July 19, 1892.  
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Public Library, Easton, Pa., H 974.821 B 926-c.)*

*[Personal note: This paper represents the state of archaeological knowledge in 1892, and in my  
opinion some of its conclusions cannot be construed as the final word on the subject. - Donald R.  
Repsher]*

Man in the Delaware Valley must be studied from a geological standpoint. Not only is this true of our section of the country, but of the Pacific coast and intervening country as well. To determine at what precise point in geological time man appeared upon the earth, is obviously impractical with our present knowledge. We can, however trace prehistoric man as far back as the Glacial epoch and possible in the Pliocene. Man in the Tertiaries from being hypothetical has at length become a tangible creature.

That there was a prehistoric age of man is easily recognizable by every sense which makes us intelligent human beings. If this principle of knowledge were insufficient to convince, we need but to refer to the Hebraic accounts for conclusive arguments in favor of this our most reasonable doctrine. Their record refers to cities and countries which were populous and possessed by appliances and arts and sciences that were old when the Hebrew nation comprised only a few families.

Northern Africa was at that time the seat of a civilization which the Jews never equalled. Ethiopia, already overpopulated, swept thence a tide of civilization towards the ever-receding western world. Even before the oldest Hebrew records, Ethiopia had its vast pyramids, colossal monuments and grand moral memorials which are not but *debris* of an ancient civilization.

It seems, too, in that period, which is so far away from us that their incidents are almost imperceptible in the dimness of their own antiquity, that the populous hordes of Africa, as well as the people of Asia, were impelled by the same mysterious principle of impulse and unrest to move ever onward toward the setting sun. Hence we find that the tendency has forever been "Westward."

This singular record of the weird past has its prototypes even now in this materialistic age of strange surprises and wonderful discoveries. There is the same restlessness of races, and the spirit of unrest agitating us now that actuated the Phoenicians to discovery and conquest in the

unrecorded history of those past ages.

This same mobility is the peculiarity of the present-day pioneers, whose few wants, hermit habits, and primitive disposition tend to carry them to the borders of unexplored countries, towards which the ax and plow and printing-press are impelling hordes of the hungry, eager and adventurous spirits of the age. There they indulge in the rude and semi-barbarous pleasures incident to nomadic life.

There will probably always be overcautious folk, who will accept no other testimony than his or her own eyes - often the most treacherous of guides - who turn their backs when we speak of prehistoric man, chipper of jasper, argillite and flinty rock, and who with no other weapon than bow and arrow held at bay the savage and ferocious beasts of primeval time. Such a man stands out in the geological history of the Delaware Valley, not as a dim shadow, but as a substantial fact.

In the valley of the Delaware river paleolithic man has left abundant traces of his former presence. Dr. C. C. Abbott, of Trenton, New Jersey, one of the most competent archaeologists of this country, says while speaking about prehistoric implements:

*“As the first to point out what is now maintained by competent archaeologists to their real significance, I may be pardoned for devoting the conclusion of my address to a consideration of the Delaware Valley. So far as its physical character and the traces of prehistoric man found there, have a bearing on the question of the antiquity of man in America. But do not suppose that others have not gone over the same ground. Shaler, Belt, Whitney, Wright, Pumpelly, McGee, Lewis, as well as our State geologists, are practically one in their view that the gravel deposits along this river are so far ancient as to be very significant as to whatever traces of man or other mammals they may contain; while Dawkins, Tylor, Putnam, Morse, Hynes, Wilson, DeCosta, and others have all been more or less successful in finding traces of paleolithic man in this river valley, and admit without qualification his former presence.”*

I would prefer to give the opinions of others, rather than my own, but as prehistoric man and his implements have claimed my attention for many years, I may be pardoned for bringing before this society some facts in the distribution of prehistoric implements and their importance in the study of the question now before us. The conditions under which prehistoric implements occur in the valley of the Delaware are characteristic, and are associated with a deposit, which, although geologically recent, is of great antiquity.

A wide gap, that the most earnest opponent of prehistoric man cannot close, exists between these and the Indian relics proper. The confusion concerning the evidences of man's antiquity in the valley of the Delaware is due to the fact that the average collector has laid too much stress upon the character of the implements found, and too little upon the circumstances under which they were found. The evidence of man's antiquity is the same the world over, and only when we find the geological and archaeological condition in accord, i.e., prehistoric implements in undisturbed deposits of great age, can we assert that such evidence has been found.

The discoveries in this region give tangible results of man's great antiquity in the valley of the Delaware. Several sites, circles of stones, hearths, small boulders burnt and cracked by fire, fire-discolored earth, etc., have been found in this vicinity, deep under gravel-deposits of post-glacial times. These deposits, lying immediately south of the terminal moraine, give us approximately their own age and connection with the last Glacial epoch. To say that man was here before the close of the last Glacial epoch fixes a minimum point only, as to his antiquity. How long he was here previous to that time must be determined by other considerations.

The Glacial period was a long time in closing. The deposits at Trenton and along the Delaware northward took place while the ice sheet still lingered in the upper water shed of the Delaware. The Glacial period followed the Tertiary period, especially towards the advent of the Glacial epoch. Both geological and astronomical causes may have been at work in producing this singular period in the earth's history.

The best established view seems to be that Glacial periods are periodical phenomena, depending upon the eccentricity of the earth's orbit. By this we can approximately fix the time of the age or period. It may have ended about 60,000 years ago. In about 150,000 years to come the orbit of the earth will again be so eccentric that a glacial period may supervene. The time estimate become of great importance in elucidating the question, how long ago did man first make his appearance on the earth?

Assuming then that geologists are correct in their data, we have from thirty to sixty thousand years of time for these deposits to be made, and at no time was the continent uninhabitable, however deeply submerged the lower lying areas. There was land enough for mammalian life, and it flourished at the very foot of the advancing or receding ice sheet. It should be noted that all of the remains of prehistoric man thus far reported from these deposits in this region have come from or immediately beneath the later ice action. It is significant that nearly all the paleolithic implements found by Dr. Abbot in the Trenton gravels are of similar age and condition.

In my frequent excursions throughout the valley of the Delaware I have found many promising fields, and obtained many valuable specimens of the handiwork of the later Indians.. Among these polished and finished specimens were occasionally noticed some of rude shape, showing a wide gap in the methods of manufacture, and from their respective positions it became conclusive that they belonged to two different races of men occupying the country at different times.

In the fall of 1886 while overseeing a large excavation being made in opening a limestone quarry north of Durham creek, (*Personal note: this probably refers to Durham Cave*) and at a depth of about twenty feet from the surface (the surface soil being glacial drift) against a limestone ledge, the workmen came upon an undoubted ancient hearth or cooking place. Numerous fire-burnt and broken stones were found, with several rude but rather dubious looking implements of stone. The hearth or fireplace and burnt stones were undoubtedly placed in the circular position by ancient man before this deposition of over twenty feet of glacial gravel.

Several years ago while a gang of men were making excavations on the New Jersey side

of the Delaware, they exhumed from the glacial gravels quite a number of artificial objects manufactured by ancient man. These implements were exhumed at a depth of at least forty feet from the surface, and in a geographic position denoting great age.

Along Fry's run, in Williams Township, Northampton county, Pennsylvania, Theophilus Steckel, while quarrying sand in a deposit of the same age, exhumed at a depth of twelve feet several hearths or fireplaces of circular shape, besides a large number of stone implements of undoubted artificial manufacture.

In 1862 after a heavy freshet whereby about twenty acres of river drift were washed away along the Delaware river at Riegelsville, Bucks county, we picked out of the embankment remaining, at a depth of forty feet from the surface, some sixty arrow heads manufactured of argillite. It may be claimed that this river drift deposit is comparatively recent, yet viewing it from an archaeological standpoint, it is extremely old, dating back at least to the thawing of the great ice sheet.

About four hundred yards north of where a little creek sometimes called the "Brandywine" empties into Durham creek, under an overhanging limestone ledge, were found about thirty or more implements of rude manufacture resembling the net sinkers of the late Indians. These implements of stone must have been placed there before the extensive flood created by the melting of the great ice sheet, as the limestone in the vicinity is covered by an alluvial deposit of drift and soil averaging from seven to fifteen feet in depth.

After the 1862 freshet in the Delaware, Lewis Bloom, on the New Jersey side of the Delaware, opposite Durham, discovered in a washout at a depth of fifteen feet from the surface in the underlying clay a *cache* of agrillite and quartz arrow-points containing as least half a bushel. These primitive implements were probably deposited or buried in the clay or soil by ancient man.

Having endeavored to make clear what I mean by prehistoric man, and shown also that he was a fact and not a myth, the question arises, what was his fate? Did he, like the mammoth and the mastodon, become extinct?

Whatever conclusions may ultimately be arrived at in regard to the relationship between the Red Man found in this section at the time of its discovery by the Europeans and prehistoric man, it is quite apparent that a long lapse of time occurred between their respective occupation.

No line of connection between Glacial man and the modern Red Man has yet been determined, and in all probability never will be. It is doubtful whether sufficient positive evidence to satisfy the minds of mankind at large, of the presence of an earlier people than the Indian along the valley of the Delaware, will ever be forthcoming; yet, to the minds of candid observers, there is such a degree of positive evidence in the interpretation of known facts that brings it within the bounds of certainty.

That prehistoric man attained to an advanced degree of culture in the land is almost certain, as may be demonstrated by visiting the museum of American Archaeology and

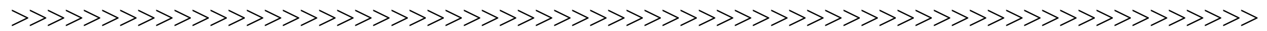
Paleontology of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

However others may be impressed by what I have now imperfectly presented, for myself I see while strolling along the pleasant shore of the beautiful Delaware river the remnants (implements) of a once grand and noble race, who, while living, inscribed their history, meager though it might be, upon enduring tablets of stone. These ancients, having fulfilled their mission, pass.

The Indian with his polished stone looms up and, like his predecessor, fades away. Soon, the present race having attained its zenith, will, like its predecessors, follow, and another grander, nobler, brainier civilization will step upon the platform and gaze with wonder and admiration upon the relics of the past.

In recapitulating the various geological formations occurring where these prehistoric implements were found, we have recent alluvium, river-drift, brick-clay and post-glacial deposits. This, in brief, is the tale told by our clay and gravel deposits in northern Bucks and adjacent parts of New Jersey. How interesting do they become where they aid us in deciphering the early history of man.

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**PREHISTORIC BUCKS COUNTY**

Charles Laubach, Durham, Pennsylvania; read at the meeting in the Friends' Meeting-House, Quakertown, May 28, 1901. (*Published in "A Collection of Papers Read Before the Bucks County Historical Society," Volume 3, pages 61-68; printed for the Society by B. F. Fackenthal, Jr., Riegelsville, Pa. Marx Room, Easton Public Library, Easton, Pa., H 974.821 B 926-c.*)

*[Personal note: My personal opinion is that Mr. Laubach's hypothesis of discontinuity between the Lenni Lenape and earlier inhabitants needs a word of caution. It's not inconceivable that the Lena'pe people mentioned in the first paragraph would have answered the unwelcome, inquisitive questions of the "explorers" with "I don't know" as a polite way of getting rid of them, thus forestalling an endless series of further questions. - Donald R. Repsher.]*

The discovery and settlement of the valley of the Delaware was prehistoric; the works and deeds of ancient man, his unrecorded monuments, ruins and sculptured rocks were, already antiquated when the "Restless," a ship built in 1614, commanded by Cornelius Hendrickson, coasted along the western bank of the Delaware River. Along the shore and some distance inland he found numerous savages who called themselves "Lenni Lenape" (The Original People). This appellation, however, was a misnomer, for as set forth by other explorers, we find that when they asked these self-styled original people in regard to the use of some of their rude or primitive stone implements, they replied, "That they had used them but did not make them, and they were here when they came into the locality;" in fact they possessed no positive knowledge of the more primitive stone implements, nor of their owners.

The locality to which I desire especially to call your attention was occupied as late as

1728-1730 by a brave and turbulent tribe of savages called the Shawnees. I have spent forty or more years in the realm of natural science, assisted by Dr. Swift, of Easton, in 1855-1856, then personally looking up the Indian village-sites, mounds, quarries, implement-manufactories, mortuary-customs, etc., in eastern Pennsylvania, until 1877, when I was assisted by Prof. R. F. Berlin, a noted archaeologist of Allentown. In 1888 to 1893 I had the pleasure of accompanying Dr. C. C. Abbott, of Trenton, and Prof. H. C. Mercer, of Doylestown, in their expeditions throughout northern Bucks and New Jersey.

Later through Prof. Holmes, of Washington, D.C.; Col. H. D. Paxson, of Philadelphia, and various other experts in anthropological lines, I came into possession of nearly every variety of pre-historic art; some of which may be roughly classed as kitchen or tableware; but by far the larger portion consists of implements of war and agriculture.

The pots used by the Indian to stew their meat were manufactured of clay, mixed with crushed shells and other substances, and so carefully baked that they could withstand the action of frost or fire; they ranged from one to ten gallons in capacity. At times instead of building a fire under the pot, they heated stones and threw them into the pot, boiling the meat in that manner.

To fit their corn for cooking they pounded it in a mortar of stone or wood; some of which were portable and others stationary. When hunting or traveling the Indians simply picked up two flat stones with which they crushed the corn or other food material to suit their purpose. Their dishes were either flat stones or bowls made of birch-bark. The spoons were generally of shells or gourds, shaped for the purpose. To describe even a small part of their wares and implements of war or of the chase would lead us far beyond our prescribed limits; therefore we must content ourselves with a brief outline of a portion of the Shawnee camp-site, and a few of the implements found during our investigations.

In the advent of the white man, the locality along the west bank of the Delaware river, extending from the foot of the second spur of the South mountains to the palisades of Nockamixon township in Bucks county, was occupied, as above noted, by a large body of war-like savages, under the protection of the Delawares, who resided on the eastern bank of the river, and closely watched their vicious proteges in their various dubious manouvres, as is indicated by the numerous picket-camps abounding in the vicinity. The aboriginal inhabitants being savages and pagans, the early Colonists who came in contact with them doubtless considered themselves saints, and the red men devils (*referring to the Shawnees whose village was on the west side of the river*).

The Indians had two kinds of money - "sewan," made from the black portion of the clam shell and called "suck ahack," which was double the value of the white variety, "wampum," which was made from the stem of the periwinkle or ear shell, the black beads (sewan) as currency and for jewelry.

One hundred and seventy years have come and gone since those who inhabited the large and beautifully located town of Pechequelin have passed away. The only traces left of the presence of those dusky people are a few local names, and the numerous stone implements

strewn about, accompanied by jasper and argillite chips on the work sites. By proper investigation of these implements of stone we learn how primitive man through countless ages slowly but surely developed in his arts, habits and customs, and we also learn to know the Indian as he was before coming in contact with his conquerors, the white man. *[Aaah the mind of the early white writers of the last century, and they have not improved much on to the present - WT]*

Laying aside, for the present, the inquiry into the manner of man's first appearance in America, let us look for a moment at the geological changes occurring as the world forged along during the successive ages. In delving down into the earth's strata, we turn over the massive stone leaves of geological record and read therein, in legible characters, the story of the evolution and progress of terrestrial life. We find that some of the simplest primordial organisms, such as the pentacrini and other radiata, have survived with but little modification from the dawn of the Paleozoic era to the present; but as its ocean currents and atmospheric temperatures changed, the law of development produced successive races of animals tending to the possession of higher and more complex structures.

Some exceptions might be noted, where through some occult limitations of capacity for further progression, types matured, then declined gradually, yielding their existence to more advanced species and finally became extinct. At the close of the Tertiary period, this portion of the United States was the home of the Mastodon and allied monsters of the forests. The gradual change of climate and the slowly advancing ice sheets caused the total extinction of these formidable monsters. They fulfilled their allotted part, passed away and in time were succeeded by a superior animal, savage man, who closely followed them in leading an arboreal life and slowly evolved to a cave and tent dweller.

In the fullness of time civilized man appeared, the highest animal yet known, who now controls the earth. Will he, too, act out his allotted part, become extinct and be succeeded by a still higher and far superior being, who in the distant future may pry into the quaternary formation, and, finding fossil man of the quaternary period, marvel as to the manner of creature he was, how he lived, where he came from, and what sort of cataclysm caused his extinction?

Anthropology in its latest researches claims that the budding instinct of some of the higher animals is nearly equal to the thinking of the lowest man, and far less than that separating the savage from the scientist or politician. Knowing then, that the history of the earth for thousands of years is indelibly written on tablets of stone, it must ever remain a gratification and inspiration to the scientist as well as to the historian to read not only in the record of the rocks the history and progressive development of our home on earth; but that we can trace the process by that which brought it about. It is not, however, necessary that we become process mad, unable to see in and behind the unfolding, the power that moves the wheels, for who among us can rest content to know no more scientifically of the wondrous world we mysteriously inhabit than did savage man of the past?

Geologically, that portion of the Delaware valley under consideration belongs to the Post-tertiary, or recent formation, and is characterized by deposits of glacial, post-glacial drift, and alluvium to a depth of from ten to sixty feet.

A large portion of the river bank, north of Durham cave, where primitive man had his dug-outs, fire-sites, pottery and implement manufactory, has been destroyed by floods, the construction of the canal, and other improvements in the vicinity of the ancient village site.

The locality was, and is now an ideal one, the towering South mountains to the north and east, the Pennsylvania palisades and bend in the river to the southeast and the lofty Rattlesnake hill to the south and west formed a fitting and grand panorama, and a picturesque abode for primitive man, as it does for the modern inhabitants of the present village. Besides, the historic Durham cave, located almost in the centre of the ancient village, afforded a convenient shelter during periods of intense cold or protracted bad weather.. Prominent in geographical position, remarkable in its natural features and mineral wealth, the locality early attracted the attention of savage man, and later that of the European, the naturalist and the explorer.

The settling of a tract consisting of over 5,000 acres of land as early as 1682, 50 miles from Philadelphia, proves that the mineral resources of the region were known to adventurers, while yet the country was to a great extent occupied by the descendants of the aborigines. Hence these dusky children of nature had but a limited time given them to remove their effects to more congenial parts of the country, while their cleared fields and virgin forests were appropriated by the white man, the Indians receiving payment in clothing, guns, ammunition, iron-pots, whiskey, hatchets, etc. Yet they still were dissatisfied, as the following extracts dated May 21, 1728, will show.

*Instructions by Governor Gordon, of Pennsylvania, to John Smith and Nicholas Skolehoven, messengers from Kakowwatchy, chief of the Shawnees at Pechoquevalin:*

*“You are to tell my friend Kakowwatchy that I am glad to hear from him. We have always understood him to be a wise good man, inclined toward peace and a lover of Christians. That is, if these eleven men were sent out to assist our Indians against the Flatheads, it was kindly done of him. But these people behaved politely. It was not becoming of our friends to come into Christian’s houses with guns and pistols, and swords painted for war, and take away the poor people’s provision by force with great threatenings to those who opposed them. This was not a behavior becoming friends, nor what we expected from the Shawnees, etc.” \* \* \**

*“The Governor will be glad to see Kakowwatchy at Durham some time this fall when treaties are over and when the weather grows cooler. He will then treat him as a friend and brother”*

September 28, 1728, the Governor said (the larger portion of the Shawnees having left),“Inquire also after the Indians, and if you can, see Kakowwatchy, know of him why his friends left Pechoquevalin, after they had promised to meet him at Durham iron works.”

December, 1731, the Governor addressed the Shawnees at or near Alleghening, and reminded them of the old league and covenant made 34 years previous between the Conestoga Indians, William Penn, and the Shawnees, giving them the privilege of dwelling at Durham, and telling them in a friendly spirit that the English had supplied them with all they wanted and there

were a large number of Delawares, Shawnees, Mongoes and Asseckales settled at Alleghening from Durham and vicinity, a large number of more civilized ones remained in huts along the streams eeking out a precarious living, until old age called them to the "happy hunting-ground."

On November 25, 1678, a day of thanksgiving was set apart by the General Assembly for the great deliverance of the Colonies from a plot to murder the King and destroy the Protestants; for delivering the people from the smallpox and other prevalent diseases, and from the Indians. Some evilly disposed persons told the Indians that the smallpox was brought to them by the Colonists trading match-coats, etc., on the lands belonging to the Indians. The Indians forthwith held a consultation; one of their chiefs told them, while stretching his hands towards the skies, "It came from thence." To this his hearers asserted with a grunt.

In our early days it was told us that on the annual approach of Indian-summer the Indians in this locality held a grand jubilee on the southern slope of Rattlesnake hill. It was the belief of the Indians "that the departed ones returned from the spirit-land to their old council-houses and hunting-grounds, and found everything as they had left it, perhaps thousands of years previous. The spirits came trooping over the hill and vale in battalions of thousands. They passed and re-passed on the trails, smoothed by the feet of countless generations that had lived and trodden the path during the eons of the past. They again saw the grand old forest in its transcendent autumnal glory, the native hills and valleys were once they roamed and basked in the bright and glirious sunlight. Rejuvenated, they departed again into the misty great unknown."

There is a great deal to be learned in this line that ought to have a place in history, and year by year the records of these dusky tribes are gradually fading and will continue to fade unless presented by the great educator, the press of our nation.

Should these questions be asked in our schools: What is the archaeology of your district? Give a synopsis of the topography and geology of the district. Also outlines of the local history of your locality. If so, the answer would probably be: "Nothing worth consideration." So drift we on, and history and science oft-times slumber.

In conclusion I will call your attention to the Indian mode of fishing in the Delaware river in the locality under consideration.

The Shawnee Indians, evidently driven by necessity to invent an apparatus to supply their larder with fish, invented a device which was constructed in the following manner: in the river nearly midway between the Durham cave and the northern ward of the village, was and is yet a ripple and strong current, which in the latter part of summer, and at low water, has a depth of from one to three feet. About seventy yards from the west shore of the river the Indians had erected a braided incline, or fish-basket. This was composed of a series of slender saplings about fifteen feet in length, woven together with basket-willow to a width of six feet, with sides a foot high. From this fish net or weir an oblique line of stones was piled, extending a considerable distance toward the east or New Jersey side of the river; on the west of Pennsylvania side the stones were piled in a similar manner extending to the bank of the river.

Close to the weir a short semi-circular wall was erected to form an eddy. Here they

anchored a canoe as a receptacle for the fish caught in the weir. In the spring of the year, the fish generally came up the river in shoals; tumbling over the walls they became bewildered and were then driven by Indians into the narrow space at the weir, captured and thrown into the canoe.

In the fall of the year immense quantities of eels and other migrating fish coming down the river were stranded in the weir and easily captured.

After the Shawnee Indians had been driven to the Ohio country by orders of the Six Nations, the pioneer whites captured immense quantities of fish in the same manner. Later in 1804, the weir was remodeled by the pioneer residents in the vicinity. They split the saplings and nailed them on a rude oak frame which had been pinned together with wooden pins. In this manner some of my own ancestors, assisted by the Stems, Schanks, Tinsmans and others, caught large quantities of fish.

Along the steep river banks the Indians had cut dug-outs which were all located on the west bank of the river, and were about eight feet in width by twelve feet in depth, opening towards the river, and elevated sufficiently so that ordinary freshets seldom reached them. Several of these dug-outs were cleaned out and utilized by our pioneer ancestors when fishing, until the great freshet of January 3, 1841, when a large portion of the river bank was washed away, along with many towering sycamore trees which were, according to trustworthy evidence, fully four feet in diameter, six feet above the ground.

When the flood waters subsided the fish weir and most of the wing-walls were gone, and as a new generation had arisen which cared more for ease and less for the hardships to be endured while fishing, it was decided to no longer continue the old method.

Among the curiosities in early times were the Indian cornfields, trails crematories, burial-grounds, and the large quantities of primitive art scattered about. The Durham cave might have been classed among the seven wonders of the world. Tourists from all sections had carved their initials on the flat entrance stone and also in the interior of the cave. Queen Esther's rooms, a portion of the subterranean chamber, were also to some extent disfigured by carvings.

On the sloping banks, at the confluence of Durham creek with the Delaware River, was built the first canoe-shaped Durham boat, so named after its artificer, Robert Durham, who was connected with the early iron industry at Durham. The sloping beach was described by our ancestors covered fully two acres of ground, the sand was of almost pure silica. It was shaded by a number of huge sycamores and must have been a grand working-place for our pioneer boat-architect and builder.

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