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Lenape Indians Sought Magic Cures At Ingham Spring

Along busy Route 202, that carries the hustle-bustle tourist trade to New Hope and interstate trucking to New Jersey, is one of Bucks County's most intriguing and beautiful natural attractions.

It has gone almost unnoticed by the public, perhaps because it is so obvious.

INGHAM SPRING, an unusual cove carved into the side of a hill, gushes 2.75 million gallons of pure, clear water a day.

The water is stored in a 15-acre lake, formed by what is locally called Big Dam. The lake is 2½ miles west of New Hope in Solebury Township, near the historical hamlet of Aquetong, which is named after the picturesque spring.

The tranquility suggested by the lake and the ten surrounding acres of woodland and marsh has been disrupted in recent months, however.

Although the tract has been a passive wildlife refuge, it has been drawn into political debates.

PLANS ARE UNDERWAY for the 25-acre tract to be acquired by Bucks County or, possibly, jointly by the county and the State Fish Commission.

The efforts being made to preserve the spring as a water resource and natural open space area are being matched by equal forces who want the money spent on park projects elsewhere in Bucks County.

But probably none of its previous deed holders has done more to improve the property and to protect it from commercial exploitation than the present owners, Dr. and Mrs. Perry A. Bond.

PRIOR TO WILLIAM PENN's arrival along the Delaware River, the spring had been a focal point in the life of the Lenni Lenape Indians.

For years, the land around the spring was the site of a village for the Indians who ascribed magical and curative powers to the clear, cool water that flowed endlessly from the hillside.

This phenomenon of nature has three names: Ingham Spring, after a family that owned it for 113 years; Great Spring, the name given it by local colonialists and retained by the Bonds; and Aquetong, which, loosely translated, is an Indian expression for "at the spring among the bushes," according to Bucks County historian George MacReynolds.

Besides offering the Indians a water supply and curative powers, the spring provided the natives with legend.

MacReynolds in his reference book, "Place Names in Bucks County," noted that the Indians linked the spring with a natural formation known as Konkey Hole, three miles to the west, near Holicong in Buckingham Township.

THE INDIAN LEGEND said that a pair of young hunters chased a deer into Konkey Hole and it emerged a half hour later at Ingham Spring no worse for the experience.

It is in the limestone formations in the Buckingham Valley, farther west, that the spring has its beginning. The valley, filled with fertile farm lands, forms a natural basin for collecting the water in its (*Continued on Page 4, Col. 2*)

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subterranean fissures.

The Indians' unhindered common use of the spring began to diminish when Penn was granted control of the land.

PENN PRESENTED Ingham Spring to his secretary, James Logan, in 1701 as part of a tract of some 600 acres.

The present name was derived from the Ingham family, which held the spring for three generations.

The first to have it was Jonathan Ingham who had moved to Solebury from New England. He bought it from Logan in 1747. Ingham built a fulling mill on the site. The creek formed by the spring later powered nine separate mills between Aquetong and New Hope, where it empties into the Delaware at the Bucks County Playhouse.

The subsequent owner was Ingham's youngest son, Dr. Jonathan Ingham. During the yellow fever epidemic in 1793, he gained prominence in aiding Philadelphia's diseased victims. He eventually succumbed to the disease while en route to a curative spring in New York.

His son, Samuel D. Ingham, who eventually became secretary of the treasury in the cabinet of Andrew Jackson, inherited the property. He lived in the stone house "Inghamdale," north of the lake. During the 1950s, the house was owned by novelist-playwright Budd Schulberg.

But it is not likely that any other resident of that house will ever match Samuel Ingham's tenure in politics.

Starting in Philadelphia as an apprentice, he returned to Aquetong and built a papermaking mill.

When he was financially able, he entered politics. He served several terms in the Legislature, when he was only 34 years old, he started three successive terms in Congress; he returned home to his business and was then county prothonotary and

secretary of the Commonwealth before being elected to four more terms in the House of Representatives.

Before he died in 1860, Samuel Ingham began to sell some of his holdings, including the tract that is the site of "Deer Park," the summer camp and retreat for the Church of the Latter Day Saints in the Philadelphia area.

INGHAM SPRING itself went through a series of ownerships until the Bonds acquired it in 1936.

The property was run down.

The Bonds tore down all of the buildings that were there. The next year, they built the stone garage that sits next to their house.

Bond, now 91, was affiliated with the University of Iowa for 41 years and was in charge of its Chemistry Department for 31 years.

He designed their attractive stone home. He utilized the constant 50-degree temperature of the spring to provide a form of mechanical air-conditioning in the early 1950s.

The house "floats" on two separate concrete slabs to keep it stable, despite the marshy land around it.

The house is meticulously maintained and landscaped with shrubbery. Bird feeders and wild birds abound.

Mrs. Bond has a doctorate in home economics. She was head of the Home Economics Department at Columbia University, where she was associated for 31 years.

The Bonds were among what could be termed a small colony of Columbia University faculty members who moved to that area of Bucks County during the 1930s. They were active participants in community life.

Shortly after acquiring the property, the Bonds had been given some mated Canadian geese. The lake provided a natural breeding ground and today there are still many dozens

of geese using the spring marshes for their home.

The Bucks County Board of Commissioners in a split 2-1 vote last December announced its intentions to acquire the property for \$280,000.

The board planned to divert one million gallons of water per day, eventually for private users. But the transaction was put aside temporarily when the Bucks County Planning Commission advised against it because there were no definite plans for the spring in the county's regional water plans and because the planning commission said parks in other parts of the county should be acquired or developed first.

The State Fish Commission already has acquired 23 acres downstream from Big Dam for a hatchery. Means are being explored to find a cooperative program between the state and county for the acquisition of the property.

Transcribed by Suzanne Crilley

Photo captions:

BUCKS COUNTIAN Perry A. Bond, 91 cleans snow from outside his home at Ingham Spring in Solebury Township. He and his wife also have provided a lake refuge for Canadian geese.

INGHAM SPRING surges from underground to form a pool (foreground) near the home of Dr. Perry A. Bond and his wife. The site, once owned by a secretary of the treasury, has been proposed as a Bucks County park area, a nature center, and a water source for the Solebury-New Hope area.