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Business

Opinion

Community

Photo Gallery

Legal Center

Audio

Archives

Shortcuts

Special Features
9/11 & Beyond
Casino Watch
Obituaries
Columnists
Outdoors
Weddings
Engagements
Births
Mortgage Rates
Weather
TV Listings
Movies
Horoscope
Crossword
Discussion Board
Site Map

Classifieds

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Quick! Name Milford's unique claim to fame

By **Greg Cannon**

Times Herald-Record

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Milford, Pa. – This charming little borough on the Delaware does well trading on its history.

There's plenty of it. For some, perhaps too much.

There's a National Historic District downtown that's chock full of fine architecture. Antique shops, quaint inns and fancy restaurants cater to tourists.

But for all the grand architecture on view downtown, it's a 9-foot obelisk tucked away in storage that's gotten the most attention in recent years.

When it comes to the man whom a plaque on the obelisk describes as "Tom Quick the Indian Slayer," history is being debated, not celebrated.

The big stone monument was put up in 1889 to honor local settlers, in particular the Quicks. It came down in 1997 after vandals took hammers to its four plaques, one of which described Indians as "savages."

The plaques were recast by Don Quick, an iron worker and descendant of Tom Quick. Plans to return the monument to its spot on a quiet residential street, below which Quick's bones are thought to be buried, were thwarted by protesters who said a racist killer was being glorified.

Four years later, town officials are reluctant to say just where the monument is being stored for fear it will draw more trouble. But out of sight hardly means out of mind.

Country Road Chronicles, a Native American publication based down the road in Dingmans Ferry, has called the vandalism "heroic" and said the monument belongs in a dump.

In his song "Tom Quick," Noel Paul Stookey of Peter, Paul and Mary fame sings of the monument as "a sorry sign" that "helps passing strangers understand Pike County's frame of mind."

Folks here bristle at the suggestion that they're being defined by a 100-year-old monument. History is messy, they say, and should be understood in context, not judged solely by modern standards.

"I think the past is the past and shouldn't be changed," said one Sarah Street resident who declined to give her name.

For a place that embraces its history, Milford holds Tom Quick at arm's length, unsure about how to balance his place in history with current attitudes.

The popular Tom Quick Inn in the center of town held a forum on the monument, but the inn's Web site describes Quick simply as "one of the original settlers."

Borough Council President Matt Osterberg is eager to see the whole matter resolved.

"This all got twisted in a knot so that we were made out to be a bunch of racists down here," he said. "I want this to be over with."

An end may be in sight. After years of debate, the

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borough council will likely consider a plan next month that would put up the monument along with a new plaque explaining the controversy.

Deciding what to do is made all the more difficult by the fact that no one knows just where history ends and myth begins with Tom Quick.

"We know he saw his father killed, and we know of about five or six vengeful deaths that he was probably a party to," says Lori Strelecki, curator for the Pike County Historical Society, "but after that, it just becomes folklore."

Folklore that has Quick killing 99 Indians in the 18th century.

Frank Little Bear is a professor of Indian studies, a Cree, and a member of the group charged with finding a solution to the monumental dilemma.

He says the monument's troubling words might simply have been a way for town settlers to "cash in" on the Quick story.

A poster in the local history museum advertising the 1889 dedication of the monument, which drew some 10,000 people, lends some support to this theory.

It heralds the "historic occasion" with flags, bands and festivities. Prominent speakers came to hail the Quicks and other settlers. Among them was Gifford Pinchot, a two-time governor and father of the U.S. Forest Service who today is revered in Milford as a local hero.

History can be messy.

Sarah Koenig contributed to this report.

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