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Local News

Understanding Replaces Controversy Over Tom Quick

By Dawn McElligott

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MILFORD BOROUGH, PA – At the September 8th meeting of the Milford Borough Council, Council Member William Kiger stated, “I’m pleased to say that I think we’re at the end of the Tom Quick Monument controversy.

The plans to resolve the controversy were first drawn up at a forum on June 25th, 2003. It was held at the Tom Quick Inn in Milford. The forum was attended by local historians, Native American leaders and others. The consensus was reached that without evidence of wrongdoing on the part of Tom Quick junior or the Native Americans, the statue should be restored to its pedestal. Additionally, it was decided that the antiquated wording on the monument should be addressed and a series of ceremonies between the Native Americans and other area residents should be performed to seal the peace.

William Kiger, represented the Milford Borough Council at the June 25th meeting at the Tom Quick Inn. Mr. Kiger prepared a report which included a letter from Chief Wounded Bear. In the letter, Chief Wounded Bear states that the elder Tom Quick “was the first pioneer to settle in Milford and live in harmony with the Indians until his death, paving the way for the East Gate of America.” The letter concludes, “Therefore, the memorial should be for the elder Tom Quick, where all the evidence and proof is on his contribution to the area, and not to the young Tom Quick where there are so many confusing stories.”

At the September 8th Milford Borough Council meeting, Mr. Kiger read from a memo regarding the resolution. In it, he noted that Chief Wounded Bear, Tom Quick VII and many noted historians all agreed on the following: (Motion) ... that the Tom Quick Monument be set back in its place on Sarah street with the following message to be cast and affixed to stone at the head of the diamond base:

THIS IS A GRAVESITE AND SHOULD BE RESPECTED AS SUCH.

THIS MONUMENT AND ITS INSCRIPTIONS REFLECT A DIALOG AND MINDSET OF THE ERA IN WHICH IT WAS FIRST ERECTED CIRCA 1889, WHICH WAS 94 YEARS AFTER THE DEATH OF TOM QUICK.

MANY STORIES HAVE BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT TOM QUICK BUT THERE IS NOT ENOUGH DOCUMENTED EVIDENCE TO SEPARATE TRUTH FROM FICTION. HOWEVER, RESEARCH INTO HIS LIFE CONTINUES TO BE ENCOURAGED BY THE PIKE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

THIS GRAVESITE IS UNDER THE CARE OF THE MILFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL WITH THE APPROBATION OF MEMBERS OF THE CREE NATION, LONG REGOGNIZED AS PEACEMAKERS.

(Future) This being done, there will be a series of public ceremonies sealing the agreement.”

After the memo was read, the meeting was opened for a public discussion of the controversy.

Chief Wounded Bear stated “It’s been seventy-five days” since the June 25th forum. “During that seventy-five days we’ve contacted other Indian nations, we don’t send smoke signals anymore”, he joked. His remark brought about laughter, breaking the tension. He said he had spoken to Native American leaders all across the country. “We have a unanimous agreement.” According to Chief Wounded Bear, the feeling among Native Americans was that the

monument was a gravesite and should be honored and the family should be respected.

Seated next to Chief Wounded Bear was Tom Quick VII. "I don't have too much to say, but of Chief Wounded Bear and his son, I've made new friends, that I never thought would happen."

Professor Little Bear said that the legend of Tom Quick has never been honored in a song or a story in Native American culture. To him, its conspicuous absence in Native American art forms is another reason to consider it false. He conjectured that it may have been dreamed up to promote tourism. The professor also said, "None of you should have a heavy heart about it. There is really not enough evidence that he ever killed ninety-nine Indians ... We're all looking for truth... When it comes to historical fact, then we should stick to what we know as fact and keep investigating them until they are finally put to rest and I think because of the lack of evidence that he ever committed half of these atrocities, I feel that the monument, again, should go back and that this should be put to rest ... "

Perry Gower, a visitor, said that the Milford Borough Council should wait until the next meeting before approving the resolution. However, Borough Solicitor, John Klemeyer responded, "We have representative government, not direct government." After further discussion, Council member James Price said that "... this has been open for discussion for four years ... we can keep discussing for six more months, six more years ... but there kind of needs to come to a point where you make the decision, and a lot of people think we may be past that point ..."

Shortly after Mr. Gower spoke, the motion to return the monument to its pedestal was approved by the Milford Borough Council.

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