



## Story of Queen Allaquippa



*Penn's Treaty with the Indians* by Benjamin West, 1771  
Art print courtesy of the PA Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia.  
Gift of Mrs. Sarah Harrison (The Joseph Harrison Jr. Collection)

"...the most esteemed of their women do sometimes speak in council...He told me she was an empress; and they gave much heed to what she said among them..." T. Chalkley, 1706, Conestoga, Pennsylvania.

Few know the story of this Iroquois matriarch and staunch English ally named Queen Allaquippa. Yet, the town of Aliquippa, Pennsylvania is still named for her. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, other area sites were also named after her including: Allaquippa Town, Allaquippa Creek, Allaquippa Island, and Allaquippa Cornfield.

The name Allaquippa is actually a Delaware (Lenape) word that means Hat or Cap. Even though her name was in the Delaware language, she was usually referred to as being Iroquois. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was not unusual for an American Indian to be from one nation yet have a name given to them from another nation.

Queen Allaquippa was an Iroquois matriarch probably from the Seneca Nation. The Seneca are part of the Iroquois Confederacy, a powerful government eventually encompassing six nations: the Seneca, Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga, and Tuscarora. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Iroquois government believed they had dominance over other Indian nations in the Ohio River Valley.

### Early Life

There is little documentation about Queen Allaquippa's early life. She was born sometime around 1680. Her father was probably from the ancient Susquehannock Nation, now Iroquoian, who signed a treaty with William Penn. The West picture above is the artist's rendition of the treaty. Allaquippa attended the treaty and oral history implies that she is in the painting

Allaquippa lived at Conestoga, Pennsylvania and had at least one son, named Canachquasy. In 1701, they traveled to New Castle, Delaware to say farewell to William Penn who was returning to England. By 1731, the family began to move westward and eventually settled near the Forks of the Ohio, adjacent to where McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania is today.



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## Influence

Women in the Iroquois play an influential role in Indian politics. The women place representatives into council and they can advise what topics are to be discussed in council meetings. At times, they will speak at the meetings. With Allaquippa Town built along the river, Queen Allaquippa was in a perfect area to conduct and control business. The rivers permitted transportation for fur traders and diplomats to stop and speak with Queen Allaquippa before and after traveling to nearby Logstown (Ambridge, PA) where the Indians conducted council meetings. Extracts from three journals help to describe her influence in the area. Conrad Weiser, the Pennsylvania diplomat, visited with her on his way to Logstown in 1748. Pennsylvania hoped the Indians would sign a treaty to ally with the English and let fur traders come to the area. He wrote, *"We dined in a Seneca town where an old Seneca woman reigns with great authority. We dined at her house and they all used us very well."* Pennsylvania was successful in forming a treaty with the Indians.

In 1749 the French captain, Celeron de Blainville led an expedition with approximately 245 men to claim the Ohio River Valley for the French. Celeron tried to meet with Queen Allaquippa but she and most of her people had left town before they came. It was well known she was an ally to the English. She may have left because she was unsure what Celeron's

intentions were with such a large contingent. Celeron wrote, *"The Iroquois inhabit this place, and it is an old woman of this nation who governs it. She regards herself as sovereign; she is entirely devoted to the English. ...This place is one of the most beautiful that until the present I have seen on La Belle Riviere."*

In 1752, Virginia diplomats stopped at Allaquippa Town on the way to Logstown in the hopes of forming a treaty with the Indians to allow Virginia fur traders to trade here and to live here. Before the council meeting she presented a string of wampum to the Virginian diplomats to *"clear their way to Loggs Town."* The Virginian government was successful in forming a treaty with the Indians.



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## Allaquippa and Washington

Due to the 1752 treaty between the Indians and Virginia, George Washington was ordered by the Virginian Governor to deliver a message to the French to leave the Ohio River Valley. The French were polite to Washington but they refused to leave. Washington and his guide, Christopheher Gist, did not originally stop at Allaquippa Town on the way to the French fort. However, they did stop on their return. Queen Allaquippa rebuked Washington for not stopping on the way to the French at Ft. Le Boeuf. Washington wrote, *"...she expressed great concern that we passed her in going to the fort."* (Le Boeuf). She told Gist, *"...she would never go down the river Alleghany to live, except if the English build a fort, and then she would go and live there."* For years the Indians had unsuccessfully encouraged the Pennsylvania government to build a fort in this area. Now that the Indians had signed a treaty with the Virginians, it was obvious that Allaquippa would continue to encourage Virginia to build a fort. As Washington returned home, he passed Virginian soldiers planning to build a fort at the Forks of the Ohio (Pittsburgh, PA). In 1754, Washington was sent to re-enforce these Virginian soldiers. Washington and his troops were at the Great Meadows when an Iroquois emissary named The Half King sent a message that the French were nearby. On May 28<sup>th</sup>, Washington, The Half King, and their men surrounded the French at an outcropping of rocks about 6 miles from the Great Meadows. A skirmish ensued and the French lost 13 people, including

Ensign Jumonville. Worried about French retaliation, Washington returned to the Great Meadows and built a Fort of Necessity. The Half King went back to Queen Allaquippa. By June 1st, The Half King and Queen Allaquippa, who was about 74 years old at this time, brought 30 families to the Great Meadows. This numbered almost 100 people, mostly women and children. Washington had few food supplies so he requested the women and children be taken to Aughwick (Shirleysburg, PA) to be placed under English protection. He also asked the Indian warriors to stay and fight the French. In mid-June, representatives from 10 different Indian nations came for a council meeting to discuss Washington's request. Before the council began, Washington wrote, *"Queen Alliquippa desir'd her Son (who is really a great Warrior) might be taken into Council, as She was declining and unfit for Business and that he should have an English Name given him."* Washington gave Canachquasy the name of Col. Fairfax and told him it meant "first in council." The council did not go well for Washington. The Indians had seen that the French outnumbered the British. They knew Washington had little military experience. The Iroquois council had previously ordered the Indians to stay neutral. The Indians' first priority was the safety of their women and children. The Indian warriors decided to take their families to Aughwick and left Washington and his men to fight the French.

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## Death of a Queen

After Washington surrendered Fort Necessity to the French, life did not go well for the Indians at Aughwick. By October of 1754, The Half King was dead. In December of 1754, George Croghan, the Indian agent wrote, *"Hear is the Half King's famely in pour condition and Alequeapy ye old Quine is dead and left several children..."*

Today, few people know about Queen Allaquippa. Yet, it was her loyalty to the English which helped to set into motion a series of events that facilitated the start of the French and Indian War. This world war eventually led to English control of most of North America and set the stage for the American Revolution.