

The Accohannock Indians

A BRIEF HISTORY



courtesy of the Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art

The indigenous Accohannock Indian people are classified as a Woodland Algonquian sub-tribe of the Powhatan Empire from the Atlantic Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake Bay. Their home was the Kingdom of Accomac, as it was known to the Indians in pre-colonial times. This was before there was a Virginia or Maryland. It included what is presently Somerset County and extending south to Kiptopeke, Virginia. The Accohannock Indians made up the northern portion, and the Accomac made up the southern portion.

An estimated 2,000 Indians lived in this area, which included Crisfield and Marion. These Indians were a canoeing society, and most of their movements and trade routes were done by water. The Accohannock name means "people of the bending waters".

The Accohannock people inhabited the same territory for at least 8,000 years, making the Accohannock Indians the oldest historical tribe in Maryland. The written history begins in 1524 when Captain Giovanni Verrazano landed at the 38th parallel of the Eastern Shore on the Chesapeake Bay, which is now in Maryland, but previously considered Virginia. This is where he met the first tall, light skinned Indians of the Southern Eastern Shore Tribes of the Chesapeake Bay. These Indians were known as the Accomac Confederation.

In 1995 the Accohannock Indian Tribe became a corporation and received their 501(c)(3) status. They have worked diligently as the Accohannock Indian Tribe, Inc. to preserve their heritage and to present educational opportunities to their community. In 2017 the Accohannock Indian Tribe Inc., officially became recognized by the State of Maryland and is now striving for federal recognition.

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