

Hoops

by **G. Murphy Donovan** (June 2014)



“We learn from history that we never learn anything from history.” – Hegel

One afternoon a couple of neighborhood kids came by to see if they could install a basketball hoop on our corner. I thanked them for asking; at the same time saying that my permission for civic improvements wasn't necessary. No matter, the boys were more concerned about disturbing us than getting municipal approval. The corner was a hangout for whiffle ball anyway. So I allowed as how basketball might just diversify the amusements. The intersection on our corner is one few level spots in the heights above the Potomac River. A month or so later, on a bitter cold windblown night, the basketball brothers installed their hoop under the streetlamp.

This high ground above Chain Bridge has a history as a gathering spot. Our neighborhood sits atop an ancient Algonquian settlement. Hoops were a part of Native American games for millennia. Lacrosse is a direct descendant of one of those games. Basketball is one of those ironies of American history too. The most popular sport today on Native American reservations countrywide is “[rez ball](#)”