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Indians of New England and New Netherlan



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# The Indians of New England and New Netherland

BY

EUGENE L. ARMBRUSTER

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# THE INDIANS OF NEW ENGLAND AND NEW NETHERLAND

## INTRODUCTION

The writer has devoted his leisure hours, during many years, to the study of the history of the Indians of the eastern portion of our country. He soon, however, became aware of the fact that a certain knowledge, regarding the migration of these Indian tribes, was indispensable, to master the subject. Careful research, with this new aim in view, brought out two clues. 1. Samuel G. Drake, *Aboriginal Races*, 15th Edition, 1880, p. 736: "Roger Williams informs us, that the South-West or Sawaniwa was constantly referred to by the Indians of New England. From thence, according to their traditions, they came. There is the court of their great god Cantanowit; there are all their ancestors' souls; there they go also when they die and from thence came their corn and beans out of Cantanowit's field." 2. Letter of Isaack De Rasieres to Samuel Blommaert, 1628, included in *Narratives of New Netherland, 1609-1664*. Edited by Dr. J. F. Jameson. From a description of the Island of the Manhattans we take this from the letter: "Up the river the east side is high, full of trees, and in some places there is a little good land, where formerly many people have dwelt, but who for the most part died or have been driven away by the Wappenos." These two paragraphs had been printed and reprinted, read and read again by many students of history, and by thousands of general readers, but they had been either misinterpreted or passed over as historical statements, which had to be looked upon as such and with which nothing further could be done, as details were wanting.

Roger Williams understood the term South-West to be used in the sense of a general direction, as a bird would fly south-westward. The Indians, however, spoke of a definite locality, the home of their forefathers, known to them by tradition only. The majority of the New England Indians being Southerners, the name Abenaki or Abnaki, which is a variation of Wapanaki, if used to describe them as Easterners, would be a misnomer. However, the name was applied to the territory and denotes the

Eastland. The inhabitants were the Indians of Abnaki. This applies to the time, when the Easterners dwelt here, as well as when the Southerners took their places. In the second case, we hear that the Wappenos depopulated Manhattan Island. This might refer to an hostile attack made by a tribe or band called Wappenos, which perhaps took the inhabitants of the peaceful island by surprise. Details are not available and the statement is duly incorporated in the story of New York without any further comment. But these two paragraphs can be used as a key to the story of the Indians in prehistoric times, in connection with the tradition of the Indians and other facts, which will be found to read different, since the reader has been enabled to read them in a new light. For this reason the writer had decided to publish a brief outline of the story of these Indians, believing that others, who may have access to various other sources of information, may be able to build upon these foundations.

### LENAPE TRADITION

The Lenape came from the North-West. A portion of the nation crossed the Mississippi River and divided then into three parts, one remaining inland, a second invaded Eastland, and the third took possession of Southland. Eastland embraced all of New England, as it is to-day, plus the former Dutch Colony of New Netherland. Southland was the land on the west side of the lower Delaware River and along the Atlantic coast from Delaware Bay southward. That part of the nation which settled inland was called the Turtle tribe; the one invading Eastland, or Wapanaki, the Big Animal tribe, became known as the Easterners, Wapanoos or Wapanaki Indians. The third part, the Big Bird tribe, occupying Southland or Schawanaki, became known as Southerners or Schawanoos.

### EASTLAND

The story of Eastland in prehistoric times consists of four chapters. The first covers the time, when the land was occupied by a nation of which few traces are left. The Matouwac, comprising the four bands of western Suffolk County, on Long Island, *i. e.*, the Nesaquake, Setauket, Secatoag and Unkechaug;

and the Mispat and Chameken bands of Queens County upon Long Island, seem to have been of this nation and there were, no doubt, other small remnants left, which must be looked for among the smaller bands on the headwaters of streams in New England, etc. The second period is marked by the invasion of Eastland by the Big Animal tribe of the Lenape. The third period begins with the invasion of Eastland by the Southerners. The latter had been hard pressed by the Minquaas and were finally driven across the river, which was named for them the River of the Southerners, alias the South River, *i. e.*, the Delaware River of to-day. They, in turn, took possession of the land, occupied by their one-time brethren, from which they had become estranged. The Easterners were gradually forced into various isolated tracts, where they were entirely surrounded by Southerners, and in some cases the ocean formed a secure guard on one or more sides. The fourth and last period shows both the Easterners, as well as the Southerners, conquered by the Maquaas or Mohawk, and made their tributaries.

### THE EASTERNERS

The Southerners called the Easterners "The Bears." There was a Beeren Eylandt in the upper Hudson River, another in the territory of the Canarsee in Kings County. Kanapaukah, on the East River in Queens County, was the planting-land of the bears on the waterside. Pokonoket denotes the place of the bears and the river leading to it, is the Pawcatuck or "River of the Bears." The Maereckkaak in Kings County, a band of Southerners, called their neighbors "the Canarsee," *i. e.*, "big animal" band; the Dutch translated it "the bears."

While the Wapanoos held all the territory of Maine, the name Shepscot was applied to a locality on the Kennebec River, denoting "at the big stone" or rocks. After the Schawanoos had invaded the district, the name Penobscot came into use, applied to a similar locality on the Penobscot River. Penna-psk-ut denotes "at the stone (or rocks) of the Turkey tribe." These were the Penobscot Falls near Bangor. Champlain mentions in 1605 the Norumbega Rapids, and calls the Penobscot River Norumbega.

The leading chief of the Easterners was called the "bashaba,"





which name seems to denote "the buffalo," the largest of the big animals. This ancient title had originated at the time when the forefathers of the Easterners had come into contact with the buffaloes, during their wanderings over the western prairies; the last of the title and his family were killed by the Tarrantines (crane band) about 1614. The Easterners were known under local names, some of which were variations of the tribe-name, as: Wawenoc, Wappinger and Wampanoag. West of the North River were the Tappaen, subdivided into Tappaen, Hackingsackh, etc. Upon Manhattan Island and neighboring places were the Manhattans. On the east side of the North River were the Mahican; on western Long Island the Canarsee; on eastern Long Island the Sinnecox, subdivided into Montauk, Shinnecock, Corchaug and Manhasset bands, their territory being called Wampononck, alias Paumanake. The Wappinger dwelt from the North River, above the junction of the Wappinger Kill (the northern boundary of the Southerners), through upper Connecticut, along the Housatonic, etc., to beyond the Connecticut River. In lower Connecticut were the Mohegan and Pequot. In southern Worcester County, Mass., was the Wunnashowatuckogg band, and in the central part of the same county was the Wushquowhananawkut band. The lower half of the Massachusetts coast and inland to Narragansett Bay, the land was occupied by the Wampanoag; Pokonoket was part of their land. The remnants of the Wawenoc were known as Pequawket on the upper Saco River, and as Norridgewock on the Kennebec River.

## THE SOUTHERNERS

The Easterners called the Southerners the Turkey tribe, the Maquaas applied the name Goose tribe to them. The highest chief of the Southerners in New England was Passaconaway, residing on the Merrimack River. The Southerners or Schawanoos appear as Sauvanoos, in the old abode of their tribe, on the west side of the lower Delaware River; as Sanhikan (from Suanhican (in New Jersey; as Suwenoos on Long Island; as Siwanoy on the main land on Long Island Sound; as Weskqueskeck on the east side of the North River and as Esopus on the west side. The last two bands were known as River Indians (Esopus, the river, *i. e.*, South River). The territory of the

Esopus was known as Schawangunk. In New England they were called the Turkey tribe. Here we find the names Siccanamos and Niantic; the first name denotes turkey tribe, and Sicajok is the land of the turkey tribe, Niantic or Nehantic (nahame-tuk) is the broad river of the Turkey tribe. Early writers say "Nar-ragansett River, commonly called Narragansett Bay." Nahame-hican-es-et, *i. e.*, Narragansett, denotes "at the short (diminutive) river of the Turkey tribe." Nipmuc and Massachusetts were the names applied to the bands south of the Merrimack. Both names seem to refer to the residences of the chiefs. Nipmuc denotes the pond region, and Massachusetts: the great hill. Namepash-emet, who died about 1619, lived at Medford, Middlesex Co., near Mystic Pond. His widow, known as the Squaw-Sachem of the Nipmuc, lived at Wachuset Hill, *i. e.*, Mass-atchu-es-et. The name Penna-ko-ok, *i. e.*, Pennacook was applied by their neighbors on the north, the Indians on the Canadian border, denoting the present place of the Turkey tribe. The Southerners were then pressing eastward. The name Penobscot was used to describe the bands east of the Kennebec River. Naantuket was the name given to part of the island, now known as Nantucket; the name indicates "where the Niantic are." About half of the island had been occupied by members of that band.

The Southerners had been, in their old abode, dwelling along the coast and upon the shores of rivers. They took possession of the lands along the coast and rivers in Eastland. They made villages at outposts; that is, they made them at places, which for some time to come, were to be their most advanced points in invaded territories. Most of their villages bore the names of the bands which dwelt there, these bands bearing names of birds. The South River was called Kitthanne, *i. e.*, the great river. Parts of the lands of the Southerners were known by local names, as Schawangunk; Kaakaki, near the Maquaas boundary, the land around the present Cocksackie, *i. e.*, the place of the Goose tribe. Suanhacky, *i. e.*, the place of the Suwenos or Southerners, was the name applied to the western end of Long Island, embracing Kings, Queens and Nassau Counties. The tribe was divided into bands, known as Goose, Duck, Crane, Swan, Owl, Screech-owl, Gray Goose, etc., bands.

## LANDOWNERSHIP

was a subject for which the aborigines, as individuals, had no understanding. A band would claim a cornfield, while the planting of the land was done by that band. The territory of a tribe was well defined, bands would change from locality to locality, but always within the extensive limits of the tribe's territory. A band might have been living in the westernmost part of the territory for generations. After selling the land, so long occupied, to the white men, that band would remove to an unoccupied part of the tribe's land, perhaps on the extreme southern limit. Thus, when the Easterners invaded Eastland, the tribe took possession of the entire tract, from Delaware Bay to the eastern bounds of Maine. In later times the Southerners encroached upon this land and scattered the Easterners. The latter, however, sold the tracts of land, still occupied by them, without interference on the part of the Southerners. The last move in the invasion of Eastland by the Southerners was the ejection of the Easterners from the land at the mouths of the Piscataqua, Saco and Kennebec Rivers. This took place a few years after Captain Smith had visited that region. When the next white men came there, they found the Southerners located there. The Wawenoc, locally known as Pequawket, *i. e.*, Fox band, had now retired to the upper part of the Saco River, while another part had gone Southward, and had settled with the Mohegan, occupying the land to the very shore of Long Island Sound, thus separating a portion of the Niantic from the main body of that band. Here they became known as Pequattos or Pequot, and were of importance for some years. A small portion located on eastern Long Island with the Sinnecox, at what became known as Peconic. The Southerners, now dwelling at the mouth of Saco River, were known as Socokis.

If a band of Easterners or Southerners removed to a new vicinity, the evacuated land remained the property of the respective tribe and could, at any time, be occupied by another band of the same tribe. The Suwenos on Long Island, *i. e.*, the Maereck, or Maereckkaak, were divided into the Maereckkaak-

wick band, with a village in the town of Brooklyn in Kings County, and the Matinecoc and Marossepinck bands in old Queens County. The Maereckkaakwick Indians sold their land in the town of Brooklyn about 1640 and removed to the town of New Utrecht. After the war of 1643-45 they sold this tract also and removed to the land inhabited by the other two bands in old Queens County, settling on the south shore, where they became known as Merric or Merricoke. Their neighbors, the Canarsee, a band of Easterners, were also forced to remove after the war, and they settled across the North River above the Tappaen. The other division of this band, known as Rockaway, settled in Morris County, N. J., on the Rockaway River. After the departure of the Canarsee the Sinnecox bands were the sole surviving Easterners on Long Island, and the Montauk chief, who had the approval of the governors of the English Colonies, laid claim to the entire island. Manhattan Island, called by the Easterners Manahatouh, *i. e.*, the place where timber is procured for bows and arrows," and by the Maquaas, Kanon newage, *i. e.*, "pipe place," was sold to the Dutch in 1626. The old Manhatesen (Dutch plural form) removed to the land between the North River and Hackensack River, within the limits of the Easterners. On Lucini's map of 1648, this tract, between the two rivers, is called Isola Manhattan, *i. e.*, Island of the Manhattans. Some of the Manhattan Indians removed to Naieck in the town of New Utrecht upon Long Island, some time after the Maereckkaakwick Indians had evacuated the place. The Manhattan Indians looked upon Naieck, or Nayack, as a part of their tribe's (*i. e.*, the Easterners) territory, open for occupancy by any band of Easterners. They removed later to Hespatingh, near Hackingsackh, in N. J., where they were living in 1658. Six years later they, together with some Indians from Staten Island, sold the Elizabethtown tract in N. J. Staten Island was sold in 1657 by chiefs from Tappaen, Hackingsackh, Aquackanonck, Haverstroo, Nayack, etc. The Nayack land, or rather their interest in it, was sold by the Manhattan and Maereckkaakwick Indians in 1652. This purchase was made to secure a clear Indian title to the land, to which both the Easterners and Southerners might lay claims.

## RIVERS

There were four rivers of importance within the limits of Eastland, besides those forming boundaries, *i. e.*, the Delaware and Mohawk Rivers. The Long Island Sound was considered a river; it was the main river of the Wapanoos. The Pawcatuck, *i. e.*, river of the bears, was looked upon as the continuation of the Sound, because it was their way of communication with their northern territory. The Long Island Sound, and the Pawcatuck together were called the river of the Easterners, and the Dutch translated the name as Oost Rivier, and Pawcatuck as Oost Riviertjen. Then there were the North River and the Connecticut River. The bands dwelling upon their shores were called Mohican, alias Mahican, Morhican and Mohegan. These variations denote River Indians, literally "the" river, *i. e.*, Indians of "the" river. The Indians on the North River took their name from the river and later, in turn, the river was named after them Mohicannittuck, to distinguish it from the South River. The Connecticut is called the "long river" (of the Southerners), in opposition to the short river, *i. e.*, Narragansett Bay.

### TREATY OF 1617

In 1617 the Iroquois made a treaty with the Dutch, the Maquaas having arranged the details. Jacob Eelkins, the man who had built the fort on the upper Hudson River, represented the Dutch. By this treaty the Dutch received permission from the Five Nations to trade and to erect trading-posts within the territory of the latter's tributaries, *i. e.*, in Eastland. Upon this treaty the Dutch claim to New England was founded.

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