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Abenaki Connections to 1704: The Sadoques Family and Deerfield, 2004

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ABENAKI CONNECTIONS
TO 1704: THE SADOQUES FAMILY
AND DEERFIELD, 2004

MARGE BRUCHAC

§

Deerfield, August 15, 1837: A Visit

On August 15, 1837, twenty-five Saint Francis Abenaki Indians,¹ traveling by horse and wagon, arrived in Deerfield and set up camp within the bounds of the

1. The name Abenaki, as a derivation of Wōbanakiak, meaning “people of the dawn,” refers in this instance to the Native American Indian people of Vermont, New Hampshire, and southern Canada, sometimes called “Western Abenaki” or “Saint Francis Abenaki.” This family group came from the village of Saint Francis, also called Odanak, on the Saint Francis River near the

village, where they stayed for several weeks. Some of them were already known to Deerfield residents, but one, an eighty-six-year-old woman named Eunice, had never been to Deerfield before. She called the town "Williamsecook," an Abenaki locative form that indicates "the Williamses' place," and told Deerfield residents that she had undertaken the trip to honor her grandmother and to visit the graves of her great-grandparents. The *Greenfield Gazette and Mercury* reported:

Our people were thrown into a state of considerable emotion last Monday evening and Tuesday, by the encampment of a body of Indians from Canada, about twenty five in number who . . . passed through the village and went to Deerfield where they encamped, and still remain. . . . They are of the Saint Francis tribe, in Canada, and are descendants of Eunice Williams, daughter of the Reverend John Williams, who, it will be recollected, was, with his family, carried captive when Deerfield was destroyed in 1704. One of the party, a woman of 86 years, the mother of the rest, is grand daughter to Eunice.²

The elderly Abenaki woman, who was known to her family as "Eunice of Williamsecook," was warmly greeted by white members of the Williams family who "were not slow to admit their [the Indians'] claim, but uniformly called them 'our cousins.'"³ Only a few of these individuals were mentioned by name in Deerfield's records, but other surviving documents and oral histories reveal the identities of several. Eunice of Williamsecook was accompanied by her granddaughter (who is sometimes identified as her daughter), thirty-nine-year-old Marie Eunice Agent, and Marie Eunice's husband, fifty-nine-year-old Louis Otondosonne Watso.⁴ The Watsos' nineteen-year-old son, Jean Baptiste (John)

Saint Lawrence, north of Montreal. Since the generic term *Indian* was so widely used in early documents and family reminiscences, I use either *Indian* or *Native* in place of the more modern term *Native American*. No insult is implied or intended by the use of *Indian*.

2. *Greenfield Gazette & Mercury*, August 29, 1837.

3. John Fessenden, *A Sermon, Preached to the First Congregational Society in Deerfield, Mass., and in the Hearing of Several Indians of Both Sexes, Supposed to be Descendants of Eunice Williams daughter of Rev. John Williams, First Minister of Deerfield, August 27, 1837* (Greenfield, Mass.: Phelps and Ingersoll, 1837), 4.

4. Louis was apparently the first member of his family to adopt the surname Watso, meaning "mountain." His descendants kept the name in later generations with alternate spellings that include Watzeau, Watsaw, Wadso, Wajoo, and Wajo. See Nancy LeCompte, "Case Study—Chief Louis Watso: Parents, Siblings, Spouses, and Children, Facts, Oral Tradition, and Conclusions," http://www.avcnet.org/ne-do-ba/cs_d08_1.html#6, accessed January 15, 2004. In 1922, Watso's great-granddaughter Elizabeth Sadoques said that Louis Otondosonne Watso (c. 1778–1885) was a son-in-law of Eunice of Williamsecook (c. 1750–c. 1840). The spread in ages and the family tra-

Watso, brought his wife of the same age, Marguerite (Margaret) Obomsawin, who was pregnant. Marie⁵ Saraphine (Sophie) Watso Denis-Paul, Louis Watso's twenty-eight-year-old daughter from his first marriage to the late Marie Marguerite Taxus, came with her six-year-old son, Ambroise Denis-Paul. The fact that Abenaki people routinely traveled in extended family groups from shared places of residence suggests the identity of a few of the other relatives in the party. Louis Watso's next eldest daughter, twenty-seven-year-old Marie Anne, and his unmarried sister, sixty-year-old Marie Helaine Watso, lived with him at Odanak. Marie Eunice and Louis Watso likely also brought their twin sons, fifteen-year-old Simon and Joseph Louis, and their sixteen-year-old daughter, Suzanne.⁶

The records indicate that these Abenaki Indians were treated very hospitably by Deerfield residents, who paid them numerous visits, purchased their baskets, shared food with them, and invited them into their homes. In case the resonances between the 1837 visit and the events of 1704 were not obvious, it should be noted that the same issues of the *Greenfield Gazette and Mercury* that described the Indian encampments included large advertisements for a new biographical memoir of the Reverend John Williams written by Stephen West Williams.⁷ The elderly Eunice was offered indoor lodging, but she preferred to

dition of passing on the name Eunice from grandmother to granddaughter suggest that Marie Eunice Agent (1798–1848) may be a granddaughter of Eunice of Williamsecook. Records at Odanak indicate that Marie Eunice Agent's father was Pierre Michel Agent (?–1822) and her mother was a woman baptized as Marie Angelique, whose parents and dates are unknown.

5. The use of the personal name Marie was common in northeastern Native villages with Catholic missions, where women would be baptized with the name of the holy mother Mary (spelled as Marie in French, Mali in Abenaki), followed by a middle name (e.g., Saraphine, Sophie) that might shift into a phonetic variant for everyday use, and a family surname that might relate to either the mother's or the father's side. These names were also used in combination with Native names, and all could change with over time. For Native families, multiple names reflected the realities of multiple identities and family alliances. See Alice Nash, "The Abiding Frontier: Family, Gender and Religion in Wabanaki History, 1600–1763" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1997).

6. Recorded dates for the other family members mentioned include Marie Saraphine Watso (c.1809–1882), Jean Baptiste Watso (1818–1868), Suzanne Watso (c.1821–1891), Simon Watso (1822–?), and Joseph Louis Watso (1822–1902). It should be noted that Abenaki written records before 1759 are scarce because many were destroyed when the church was burned during a British raid led by Robert Rogers. Statistics after that date come from family papers, oral traditions, and various other sources, including a handwritten document titled "Abenakis Indian Marriages St-Francois-du-Lac" (1796–1805), Abenaki tribal census lists for 1822, 1841, 1844, 1845, 1850, 1851, and records of the Anglican Church and Congregational Church, at Saint Francis Reserve Odanak, Quebec.

7. *Greenfield Gazette & Mercury*, August 29, September 5, 1837. The preface to a volume containing a later edition notes: "A great and growing interest in antiquarian research evinces the eagerness with which the present generation seek after the particular history of their ancestors, and the desire they feel of becoming acquainted with their privations and sufferings, their hardships and dangers, in transmitting to them the beautiful heritage they now enjoy." John Williams, *The*

stay with her kin in the Indian camp. The Abenaki had brought canoes, which they took out on the Connecticut River, and decades later, an elderly Jonas Wilder would recall his childhood memories of this visit: "While I was at Bloody Brook [today, South Deerfield], the Williams Indians came down from Canada, and camped on the river bank. A real pretty young squaw took me out on the river in a birch bark canoe, and we had a good time."⁸

Although Native families such as these were frequently seen traveling through New England towns in the early nineteenth century, they were not, as is so often assumed, gypsies, paupers, or the "last of their kind," eking out a living on the fringes of Yankee society. The 1837 visitors, for example, were described by a Greenfield newspaper reporter as "comfortably well off for Indians, having several horses and wagons, and a goodly supply of blankets and buffalo robes," at a time when few people in Deerfield owned horses, let alone wagons.⁹ The Abenaki would later recall the whole of the nineteenth century as a time when they traveled with complete freedom through familiar territory in New England, New York, and Canada, "camping where they so desired and resting when so inclined."¹⁰

Our Blood Is Mingled

The Reverend John Fessenden,¹¹ the minister of the First Church of Deerfield, prepared a special sermon, preaching from "ACTS, XVII. 26. *And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth.*" In his prefatory remarks, he noted that the Abenaki camp had been crowded by visitors, "almost denying them time to take their ordinary meals." The inconvenience was more than compensated for by the ready trade in Indian baskets.¹²

During a time of racial intolerance and religious diversity, Deerfield's minister chose a universalist theme: "Revelation gathers all the scattered kindreds of

Redeemed Captive, ed. Stephen West Williams (1707; Northampton, Mass.: Hopkins, Bridgman and Co., 1853), iii.

8. Jonas Wilder, "Reflections of a Nonagenarian," *History and Proceedings of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association* 4 (1912-1920): 43.

9. *Greenfield Gazette and Mercury*, August 15, 1837.

10. Elizabeth M. Sadoques, "History and Traditions of Eunice Williams and her Descendants," *History and Proceedings of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association* 7 (1921-1929): 126.

11. John Fessenden (1799-?) was born in Dedham and was graduated from Harvard University in 1818 and Cambridge Theological Seminary in 1821. He was a tutor at Harvard from 1825 to 1827. A Unitarian, he served as minister of Deerfield's First Church from 1830 to 1840. During his ministry a group of parishioners seceded and formed an orthodox Congregational society. His Unitarian faith with its universalist view of salvation and belief in the brotherhood of mankind clearly shaped his sermon on this occasion. —eds.

12. Fessenden, *Sermon Preached*, 4.

the earth, into a common family . . . finds the same life-blood circulating through the veins of every human creature, whether his skin be blanched like the snows . . . or darkened to a sable hue . . . purifies and reconciles all the discordant and conflicting customs and religions . . . as brethren of a single, united, harmonious household."¹³ He declared this Indian visit to be a "remarkable illustration of the truth declared in our text, by which the blood of two races so distinct and unlike, and once so hostile and irreconcilable, has been blended together."¹⁴

The Reverend Fessenden reminded his listeners that the Pocumtuck Indians, whom he likened to the "Canaanites and Amelekites,"¹⁵ had long since been overcome and their land rightly claimed by God's chosen people as in scripture. He hoped that ill feelings about the bloody past could be exchanged for "the hand of friendship" and "the pipe of peace." Referring to the battle-scarred door of the Sheldon House, he noted: "I would say as ye have buried the hatchet whose traces still remain visible on the ancient portal, to remind us of by-gone days of blood and violence, of suffering and captivity, so sleep the sword by which those wrongs,—if wrongs they were,—have been fully avenged."¹⁶ Such gracious words of reconciliation were, in a sense, easy to offer, since so many of the original Native inhabitants of the valley had, by the 1830s, left Deerfield. One can only wonder what the reaction might have been if these Native visitors had intended to take up permanent residence.

These same Indians were not well received in Northampton. In 1838, a reporter for the *Northampton Courier* disparaged them as a "slothful, ragged, dirty, squalid race, appearing to have adopted the vices of the whites without seeming to emulate any of their virtues. The lofty bearing and noble demeanor of the primitive Indians are gone, and nothing is left but the abject and debased exterior of the red man."¹⁷ A reporter from the *Hampshire Gazette* seemed offended at their popularity. Noting, "Visitors have enthronged their encampment from all quarters," he went on to imply that Eunice of Williamsecook was deluded: "We do not think there is any evidence that she is descended from Eunice Williams except her word."¹⁸

Many New England newspaper writers had little tolerance for Indians, during an era when politicians supported the forcible removal of American Indians

13. Fessenden, *Sermon Preached*, 10–11.

14. Fessenden, *Sermon Preached*, 13.

15. According to the Bible, the Canaanites and Amelekites were the original inhabitants of the land God promised to the ancient Israelites.

16. Fessenden, *Sermon Preached*, 14.

17. *Northampton Courier*, June 6 1838.

18. *Hampshire Gazette*, June 6 1838.

to lands west of the Mississippi, when James Fenimore Cooper's 1826 *Last of the Mohicans* was a best-seller, and when audiences could watch a fictional "Last of the Wampanoags" dying on stage nightly in the famous stage play *Metamora*, which ran almost continuously from 1829 to 1872.¹⁹ One can only wonder whether the Northampton writer had history or fiction in mind when he complained that the Abenaki were "a wretched remnant of a race of noble and proud Red men, who once tenanted this fair valley, and whose stealthy tread and uplifted tomahawk, carried death to hearts terrified by their appalling war-cry."²⁰ These stereotypical images, oft-repeated in fiction, drama, and historical writing, obscured more realistic portrayals of Native peoples. In this light, encounters with living Indians could be an unwanted reminder of a people who had refused to vanish under the onslaught of colonization. Throughout the nineteenth century, the lives of many Native peoples in New England were poorly documented, unless they were intriguing, dramatic, or destitute enough to catch the eye of white historians.²¹ While New Englanders were inventing stories about the "last of the Indians," the Indians themselves carried on with their ordinary lives.²² Ironically, theater reviewers noted that Native people sometimes attended dramatic productions on Indian themes, "adding a most picturesque feature by their presence."²³

19. John Augustus Stone wrote "Metamora, Last of the Wampanoags," loosely based on the events of Metacom's Rebellion or King Philip's War (1675–1677), as an American dramatic vehicle for the Shakespearean actor Edwin Forrest. See Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 191–226.

20. *Northampton Courier*, June 6 1838.

21. For a discussions of how Native people were routinely ignored as part of a regional discourse of disappearance, see Donna K. Baron, J. Edward Hood, and Holly V. Izard, "They Were Here All Along: The Native American Presence in Central New England in the 18th and 19th Centuries," research summary for Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, Mass., 1994; and Thomas L. Doughton, "Unseen Neighbors: Native Americans of Central Massachusetts, A People Who Had Vanished," in *After King Philip's War: Presence and Persistence in Indian New England*, ed. Colin G. Calloway (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England 1997), 207–230.

22. Robert F. Berkhofer and Mary Ann Weston both suggest that the misidentification and marginalization of Indians, as the predominant literary style throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, made it nearly impossible to report accurately on Native issues in the news. Generic traits were assigned to all Indians; cultural, linguistic, and other differences were often misreported, and Native peoples were expected to assimilate white cultural norms or disappear. See Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978); and Mary Ann Weston, *Native Americans in the News: Images of Indians in the Twentieth Century Press* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996). These tropes bled into academic historical writing as well. See Donald L. Fixico, "Ethics and Responsibilities in Writing American Indian History," in *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing About American Indians*, ed. Devon A. Mihesuah (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 84–99.

23. "Many a time delegations of Indian tribes who chanced to be visiting the cities where acted this character—Boston, New York, Washington, Baltimore, Cincinnati, New Orleans—at-

The relationship of the Nonotuck, Woronoco, Agawam, Quaboag, and Sokoki Indians to the Deerfield landscape long predated the events of 1837 and 1704. Many members of those groups had folded in among their northern Abenaki neighbors in the aftermath of the French and Indian wars. As just one example, the contemporary Abenaki family name of Sadoques originated with a man named Shattoockquis, who, on November 10, 1665, signed off on a deed for land in Quaboag (now Brookfield) along with the Pocumtuck sachem Mettawampe.²⁴ By 1685, Shattoockquis was the leader of a group of Connecticut River valley Indians who went through a series of relocations, first to Saint Francis, then to the refugee village at Schaghticoke, New York, and then back to Saint Francis.²⁵ This pattern was so typical of valley Indians that it would not be at all outlandish to suggest that Shattoockquis, or his close relatives, participated in the raid on Deerfield. The ethnohistorian Gordon Day surmised that the origin of this family name was either *msátegwés*, meaning “big river person,” or *msádokwés*, meaning “big rump person.” Shattoockquis’s signature on the Brookfield deed may hold the clue—it shows a hump-backed, short-legged animal. Although it most resembles a fox, family traditions suggest that it might also represent a beaver.²⁶

By the early nineteenth century, many Abenaki Indians, and their cousins from the south, regarded the landscape around Deerfield as a homeland they had been forced to leave. For millennia, New England’s Native peoples had preserved memories of ancient and historic events by recounting oral traditions while traveling through the landscape where events took place, thus nar-

tended the performance, adding a most picturesque feature by their presence, and their pleasure and approval were unqualified.” William Alger, *The Life of Edwin Forrest, the American Tragedian* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott 1877), 240.

24. Harry Andrew Wright, *Indian Deeds of Hampden County* (Springfield, Mass., 1905), 57–59.

25. Although there is not yet a comprehensive written history of the movements of the Native peoples of this region during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some aspects of the Connecticut River valley Indian diaspora are discussed in Peter Thomas, “In the Maelstrom of Change: The Indian Trade and Cultural Process in the Middle Connecticut River Valley, 1635–1665” (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1979); Colin G. Calloway, *The Western Abenaki of Vermont, 1600–1800: War, Migration, and the Survival of an Indian People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990); Gordon Day, *The Identity of the Saint Francis Indians, Canadian Ethnology Service, Paper no. 71* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1981); Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, “Revisiting the Redeemed Captive: New Perspectives on the 1704 Attack on Deerfield,” in *After King Philip’s War: Presence and Persistence in Indian New England*, ed. Colin G. Calloway (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England 1997), 29–71; James Spady, “As If In a Great Darkness: Native American Refugees of the Middle Connecticut River Valley in the Aftermath of King Philip’s War,” *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 23, no. 2 (1995): 183–197. Also see the character narratives written by Marge Bruchac, “Atiwans,” “Mashalisk,” “Umpanchela,” “Wattanummon,” and “Weetanusuk,” for *Raid on Deerfield: The Many Stories of 1704*, <http://www.1704.deerfield.history.museum/people/index.jsp>.

26. Day, *Identity of the Saint Francis Indians*, 86–87.

ratively naming, and claiming, familiar space.²⁷ Even after people had moved away from places like Pemawatchuwatunck, the hill in the shape of a beaver now called the Pocumtuck Range, the stories continued to be told, sometimes encoded in names like Amiskwolowoakoik, meaning “people of the beaver-tail hill.”²⁸ Some of the newest stories involved captives, since events of the eighteenth century had forged some lasting relationships between captors, captives, and their descendants. In later generations, when Native and non-Native people met face-to-face in once-contested lands, the social activities that Euro-Americans might well have perceived as simple courtesy—welcoming, visiting, exchanging gifts, sharing food, and publicly acknowledging relationships—likely served to reinforce Native peoples’ sense of emotional attachments to these Indian places that had become Euro-American space.

Connecting Deerfield Objects and Abenaki Family Stories through Time

The Abenaki Indians who circulated throughout New England, upstate New York, and southern Canada in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries kept the memory of their visits to Deerfield alive through family stories. Louis Watso’s great-granddaughter Elizabeth Sadoques explained it like this: “Eunice of Williamsecook tells this story of her grandmother to her son Louis and to her grandson John Wajoo, [meaning] mountain, with whom she lives at St. François the old village of the Abenaki tribe. She remembered her grandmother Eunice perfectly and heard her say many times that she had on several occasions returned to her kinsfolk at Williamsecook.”²⁹

The white-girl captive Eunice Williams started a naming tradition that has persisted to the present among her Abenaki descendants. In 1837, Eunice of Williamsecook told the people of Deerfield that she had been named after her grandmother, Eunice Williams. She passed the name Eunice on to Marie Eunice Agent, who became Louis Watso’s wife. Louis and Marie Eunice Watso’s son, Jean Baptiste Watso, and his wife, Marguerite Obomsawin, who

27. For a discussion of Abenaki and Pocumtuck oral traditions about the local landscape, see Marge Bruchac, “Earthshapers and Placemakers: Algonkian Indian Stories and the Landscape,” in *Indigenous Archaeologies: Decolonizing Theory and Practice*, ed. Claire Smith and H. Martin Wobst (New York: Routledge, 2005), 56–80.

28. For example, in the beaver hill story associated with the Pocumtuck Range, a giant beaver builds a dam that floods the landscape before he is killed and transformed into the mountain in the shape of a beaver. See Phinehas Field, “Stories, Anecdotes, and Legends, Collected and Written Down by Deacon Phinehas Field,” *History and Proceedings of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association* 1 (1870–1879): 63. For the reference to the people called the Amiskwölówōakiak, see Gordon M. Day, *The Mots Loups of Father Mathevet*, Publications in Ethnology no. 8 (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1975), 56.

29. Sadoques, “History and Traditions of Eunice Williams,” 258.

were expecting a child while they were at Deerfield, continued the tradition of naming children for long-past relatives. When a boy was born on the return trip north, he was baptized "William," in memory of that trip to see the Williamses; when a girl was born a few years later, she was named "Eunice." Another one of Louis Watso's grandchildren, Ambrose, who, at six years old, was the youngest visitor to Deerfield in 1837, had been named, according to Sadoques family tradition, after Eunice Williams's husband, Amrusus.³⁰ Those three names, Eunice, Ambrose, and William, have been repeated through the Abenaki generations to the present.

Some skeptics have questioned how an Abenaki family could claim a connection to Eunice Williams, given the understanding that, in 1704, Eunice was adopted and married into the Kanienkehaka Mohawk community at Kahnawake. Eunice could easily have had relatives in other tribes, since social interactions, political alliances, and outmarriages were common among Catholic Indians and the members of the Seven Nations Confederacy.³¹ The Sadoques family story reveals that Eunice's granddaughter established an Abenaki line of descent, and that these Abenaki descendants then reinforced their attachments to Deerfield by regular visiting and repeated use of the name Eunice, a practice that continues even today.

During the late nineteenth century, when C. Alice Baker and Emma Coleman were tracking the captives' stories, they took an interest in Eunice's Mohawk relatives living at Kahnawake but ignored the Abenaki Indians who had visited them, such as Louis Watso and his children.³² In an 1890 letter

30. Eunice Williams's husband has been variously identified in primary sources as Amrusus, De Rogeurs, Tairagie, Toroso, Auresa, and Arosen. Elizabeth Sadoques wrote in 1922: "Nehemiah Howe in the story of his captivity states that he met at Crown Point an Indian called 'Amrusus' who said he was the husband of she who was called Eunice Williams. The name Amrusus is strictly Algonquin in construction and accent and translated in the Abenaki language is the name Ambrose called 'Ambroasis'" (Sadoques, "History and Traditions of Eunice Williams," 260). In 1897, C. Alice Baker wrote: "It is with diffidence that I have declined to accept the name Amrusus, and prefer to await further knowledge. . . . Rev. G. L. Forbes, a scholarly man, an adept in the Iroquois language, curé of Caughnawaga and a diligent student of the records, says that the name Amrusus does not appear there. 'Toroso' and 'Amrusus,' writes Mr. Forbes, 'are certainly corrupt names. They are not Iroquois at all. They remind one of 'Arosen' and 'Tekentárosen,' which are Iroquois, and proper names of men. The records of Caughnawaga have been carefully studied in the hope of finding a name suggestive of Amrusus or Toroso. Arosen and Tekentárosen occur as masculine names, but nowhere in connection with Eunice Williams or her children.'" See Baker, *True Stories of New England Captives* (1897; Bowie, Md.: Heritage Books, 1990), 381.

31. One other consideration that must be taken into account is the fact that not all Native people were Christian, and not all marriages were recorded by the church. Unwed partnerships, illegitimate children, and polygamy were also sometimes found; these practices were known to the Native community but unrecorded in Catholic Church records.

32. In 1897, C. Alice Baker remarked on the 1837 visit: "The possibility that the old squaw was a granddaughter of Eunice is refuted by what we now know of her posterity." Baker, *True*

to C. Alice Baker, the Reverend Edwin Benedict, an Abenaki minister in the Anglican Church at Odanak, recalled that "Eunice Williams M [married] an Abenaki—Her descendants are here now. Their Indian name is Watso as they spell it now—It was Wajo. . . . Old Wajo died in Lake George in 1880 where Bishop John Williams saw him in 1878."³³

When George Sheldon accessioned one of the 1837 baskets into Memorial Hall Museum, he neglected to indicate the name or tribal identity of the maker, labeling it only as a basket "given to 21 year old Catherine Williams, gifted by her daughter, Helen Sheldon Wells."³⁴ Until fairly recently, most of the Native artifacts in New England museums, including thousands of Native-made baskets, were identified only by the names of their white owners, a practice that obscured the artistic and social traditions involved in indigenous basketry.³⁵ In the mid-1990s, when curator Suzanne Flynt turned over this particular ash-splint storage basket, she was still able to read faint writing on the bottom. The basket was made by Marie Saraphine (Sophie) Watso Denis-Paul as a gift for twenty-one-year-old Catherine Williams. So as not to forget the friendship with this Indian woman whom she acknowledged as a distant cousin, Catherine had penciled an inscription that reads: "Basket Given me September 1837 / By Sophie one of the St. Francis Indians / Connected with the Williams family" (figure 24).

Another related object in the collections of Historic Deerfield is an herbar-

Stories, 393–94. What Baker failed to mention is that "what we now know" is based on mission records that were woefully incomplete. Baker and Forbes could find no written records of Eunice's baptism, or marriage or the births of any of her children. Baker, *True Stories*, 380–86. Furthermore, Father J. Guillaume Forbes at Caughnawaga (now Kahnawake) had cautioned Baker about the veracity of some of the Mohawk claims of descent: "The fact that the children of Louis issued from Marie Kahentaieronni and now Marie Kahnetaieronni's great grand children call themselves by the name of Williams is not sufficient proof of their having Williams blood." See Forbes to Baker February 5, 1897 and February 6, 1897, Baker Papers, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, Deerfield, Mass.

33. Even though many Deerfield residents had witnessed the 1837 visit and other interactions with Abenakis in Deerfield in the nineteenth century, none of their recollections made it into the published histories or museum interpretations at the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association until the late 1990s. C. Alice Baker corresponded with the Abenaki schoolteacher and minister Edwin Benedict, but she failed to follow his lead regarding the Watso family's history. See E. Benedict to C.A. Baker, [Pierre]ville [P.] 2 Canada Feb 17, 1890, Baker Papers, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association.

34. Memorial Hall accession catalogue, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association.

35. For a discussion of the symbolism and social beliefs involved in making, decorating, selling, and giving as a gift Northeastern Algonkian Indian basketry during the nineteenth century, see Ann McMullen and Russell Handsman, *A Key into the Language of Woodsplint Baskets* (Washington, Conn.: American Indian Archaeological Institute, 1987).




FIGURE 24. Splint basket, ash, 1837, made by Sophie Watso. This basket was made by twenty-six-year-old Marie Saraphine Watso, nicknamed Sophie, and presented to twenty-one-year-old Catherine Williams at the time of Watso's visit to Deerfield in late August and early September of 1837. To remember this visit and to acknowledge their kinship, Catherine penciled on the bottom of the basket the following inscription: "Basket given me September 1837 / By Sophie one of the St. Francis Indians / Connected with the Williams family." Photograph courtesy of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, Memorial Hall Museum, Deerfield, Massachusetts.

ium of indigenous medicinal plants compiled by Dr. Stephen West Williams. In an 1849 article for the American Medical Association, Williams noted, "When the tribe of Indians from Canada were here in 1837, Louis Watso, their doctor, gave me an account of the principal medical plants they use in their practice."³⁶ "Indian Doctors" like Watso treated both Native and non-Native patients with various herbal medicines.³⁷ The stimulant *Asarum canadense*, commonly called Canadian snakeroot or wild ginger, was known to the Abenaki as *skogabedakwa*, "snake head plant." Although Williams was keen to learn about Native medicine, he was a bit skeptical about taking it.

36. Stephen W. Williams, *Report on the Indigenous Medical Botany of Massachusetts*, American Medical Association Transactions (Philadelphia: American Medical Association 1849), 916.

37. Some of Watso's medicinal knowledge, including the use of wild ginger, spruce gum, and pine fungus, was passed on to his granddaughter Mary Watso; some notes are still in private family collections. Several contemporary over-the-counter herbal remedies sold in Canada, such as "Fortin's Fir Compound" for bronchitis and flu symptoms, are based on Native remedies that

When a company of Indians from Canada were in Deerfield, in the year 1837, I was much affected with palpitation of the heart, and they were much offended with me because I would not take one of their preparations which contained a large proportion of this snakeroot. They use it extensively in many complaints.³⁸

Williams's skepticism may have resulted, in part, from the threat Watso's visits posed to his medical practice. In the 1840s, Williams wrote:

Within a year or two I have seen hundreds of my fellow citizens chasing after a part of a tribe of Indians who came here to make us a visit from Canada, for the cure of their diseases. They pretended to be able to cure all diseases by their simple remedies and the people believe them. The chief of their tribe was called a physician.³⁹

Dr. Louis Watso's remedies were apparently efficacious in preserving his own health, since he was said to have been exceptionally resilient—in his eighties and nineties he was still hunting in the Adirondack Mountains and around Lake Champlain, and “on his hundredth birthday he was skating on the lake.” He lived to the age of 107.⁴⁰ Watso's many relatives made their homes across New England, often settling in Abenaki homelands near tourist resorts in the Adirondacks, the Green Mountains, and the White Mountains. His granddaughter, Mary Watso, eventually moved with her husband, Israel M'Sadoques, to Keene, New Hampshire. Mary Watso M'Sadoques, and her sister Eunice

were originally marketed by Indian doctors and doctresses. Fortin's contains fir-tree gum (koakh8akwpego in Abenaki) mixed with the bark of red spruce (mskask), hemlock (alnizedi), and prickly ash (kagowakw).

38. Williams, *Report on the Indigenous Medical Botany of Massachusetts*, 883.

39. Original letter in Williams Papers, box 15, folder 1, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association.

40. A 1922 article about Louis Watso notes, “The old chief of the Banaca [Abenaki] tribe lived to be 107 Years and five months old. The man possessed the true Indian features and physical development, as shown when on his hundredth birthday he was skating on the lake . . . He was wounded in the leg the bullet being kept there the rest of his life, because of his refusal to have it removed. . . . During the latter part of his life he walked from this village to Saratoga to attend the funeral of his sister who lived to be a hundred and one. . . . Watso is said to have been one of the most famous Indian Chiefs in this part of the state.” *Lake George Mirror*, June 3, 1922. Louis Watso was married at least three times: first, on October 14, 1807, to Marie Marguerite Taksus (c.1792–1814), the daughter of Joseph Taksus (also spelled Taxus or Toxsoose) and Marie Louise Vincent. When his first wife died, Louis Watso married Marie Eunice or Anniese Agent (1798–1848) on November 28, 1814. After she died, he married Marie Louise Wanlinas. Although there are numerous descendants, only the Sadoques family has kept the tradition of their relationship to Eunice Williams alive in the oral tradition.

passed on the family oral histories of the *ngonniak* (“those who came before”) to their daughters, including a girl named Elizabeth.⁴¹

Deerfield, February 28, 1922: A Meeting

By 1922, Mary and Israel’s M’Sadoques’ daughter, Elizabeth Sadoques, was employed as a practical nurse for the aging painter Abbott Handerson Thayer. On March 5, 1921, Thayer’s young assistant, Elizabeth B. Fuller,⁴² wrote to her mother in Deerfield: “The nurse we have is a pure blood indian and has ancestor named Eunice Williams who was taken capture from Dfd. Very interesting I think—she is a charmer from the word go and very refined.”⁴³

Fuller’s mother, Mary Williams Field Fuller,⁴⁴ seized the opportunity to speak to the Abenaki nurse and was excited to realize that they were distant cousins: “By 1921 the tribe had forgotten the name of Williams, although still continuing the name of Eunice, and when in that year my daughter, Elisabeth met in Dublin, New Hampshire an Indian girl by the name of Elisabeth Sadoques, they soon discovered they were both descendants of that far away Robert of Roxbury.”⁴⁵ Fuller insisted that Elizabeth Sadoques come to Deerfield.

On February 28, 1922, when the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association held its annual meeting in Deerfield, the agenda included the usual—elections of officers, financial reports, readings from letters, and committee appointments. A turtle shell and bowl, recently unearthed from a Pocumtuck Indian

41. After the M’Sadoques family moved to Keene, New Hampshire, they were advised to change their name to Sadoques to make it easier for Americans to pronounce. Five of the Sadoques daughters, Ida Ann (1886–1981), Maude (1889–1993), Margaret (1891–1993), Agnes (1894–1979), and Elizabeth (1898–1985), all well-educated women, were collectively known as “the aunts.” Both of Elizabeth’s daughters became historians. Claudia Mason Chicklas has worked with the Ware Historical Society and the New England Native American Institute. The late Mali Mason Keating made a series of recordings for the Vermont Folklife Society in Montpelier. See Mali Keating, “North American Passage: The 19th Century Odyssey of an Abenaki Family,” in *Visit’n: Conversations with Vermonters* (Vermont Folklife Center) 7 (November 2001):24–31.

42. Elizabeth B. Fuller (1896–1979) was an artist who was born and died in Deerfield. She was a direct descendant of Dr. Thomas Williams (1718–1775), a first cousin, once removed, of the Reverend John Williams of Deerfield.

43. Fuller Papers, in collections of Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Memorial Libraries, Deerfield, Mass.

44. Mary Williams Field Fuller (1863–1951) was a direct descendant of Dr. Thomas Williams.

45. Mary Williams Field Fuller, “The Williams Family in Deerfield,” *History and Proceedings of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association* 8–9 (1950):100. Robert of Roxbury was Robert Williams (1607–1693), who emigrated from Norwich, England, to Roxbury, Massachusetts, in 1637. He established the family from whom most of the prominent Williamses in western Massachusetts were descended. He was the Reverend John Williams’s grandfather.

gravesite, were exhibited. The books of Mary P. Wells Smith⁴⁶ were praised for stimulating interest in Deerfield traditions. In the evening, after supper, an Abenaki Indian woman from Keene, New Hampshire, presented a paper on her family history titled, "History and Traditions of Eunice Williams and Her Descendants." It was considered a "rare addition to the early history of Massachusetts."

Miss Elizabeth Mary Sadoques recited excerpts from "a tradition that has existed in my family for two centuries," promising to "tell it exactly as mother tells it and which was told [to] her by her mother." She recalled a white child whose "name was Eunice Williams" and the Abenaki "granddaughter who is my mother's great-great-grandmother." She recounted the family story of a "joyful expedition in 1837" when Eunice of Williamsecook found "her relatives, who received and treated her kindly," and "was shown . . . the house the door of which had resisted the attacking Indians on that memorable night of the sack of Deerfield in 1704."⁴⁷ By 1922, the Sheldon House, also known as the "Indian House," was long gone, but the door had been preserved, and so she made a point of viewing it.

The Sadoques family story, in an edited form, was published in the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association proceedings, the first time it had been put into writing. In later years, Elizabeth would recall with fondness the treatment she received in Deerfield, while puzzling over the fact that, although there would be Mohawk guests in later years, no one at the museums evinced any further interest in Abenaki history. Another seventy-five years would pass before anyone rediscovered the connections between the documents and artifacts in Deerfield's own museums and the family traditions that Elizabeth Sadoques shared.

Part of the problem may be laid at the doorstep of Deerfield's influential historian, George Sheldon, who believed that the Pocumtuck and all of their descendants had vanished and argued that the Abenaki had been merely foreign puppets of the French. As an amateur archaeologist, Sheldon eagerly excavated Native gravesites in Deerfield, including more than twenty on his own home lot, but he staunchly opposed any efforts to work with or provide assis-

46. Mary P. Wells Smith (1840–1930) wrote *The Boy Captive of Old Deerfield* (Boston: Little Brown, 1904) and *The Boy Captive in Canada* (Boston: Little Brown, 1905), fictionalized accounts of Stephen Williams's captivity written for a youthful audience.

47. Sadoques, "History and Traditions of Eunice Williams," 259. The door referred to in the quotation is the front door of the Ensign John Sheldon House that survived the 1704 raid. When the house was torn down in 1848, the door was saved and is on display in the Memorial Hall Museum in Deerfield. It is the best-known relict associated with the February 29, 1704, raid.

tance to living Native peoples. The Abenaki visitors warranted only a single sentence in Sheldon's *History of Deerfield*; they, and Fessenden's sermon, were listed by the wrong date.⁴⁸

Deerfield, 2003–2004: Making Connections

In 2003, when Elizabeth Sadoques's daughter, Claudia Chicklas, and granddaughter, Lynn Murphy, visited Deerfield, and in 2004, when their observations were added to the exhibit "Remembering 1704: Context and Commemoration of the Deerfield Raid," these Abenaki women were seen not as exotic outsiders but as respected informants. The social relations of the 1837 visit, the 1922 talk, and the 2004 commemorative events began to be recognized as important pieces of the local history, fleshed out by Elizabeth Sadoques's oral traditions and the surviving artifacts. By making room for these traditions in the historical narrative, Deerfield's museums were able to expand, and complicate, our view of the past, but this is just one Native family's story—imagine how many others have yet to be explored.

The traditions of Native connections to the valley have been literally hiding in plain sight, obscured for too many years by the assumption that Native oral histories were unreliable. Native stories—whether about a giant beaver in the hills that make up the Pocumtuck Range or about Native families visiting Deerfield in the nineteenth century—were tossed into the category of myth. The written truths embedded in Native stories, even when verifiable, are amplified by the performative experience of sharing them. In much the same way that Europeans have taken literary license to evoke their connections with the past, Native family stories have flexible rules of performance, and they need not be strictly linear accounts. As Lynn Murphy puts it:

We know that antiquity exists, but we prefer to tell the old stories as though they happened yesterday. I've seen this consistently happen in my family. My grandmother told stories that were centuries old with my grandfather in them. The immediacy of having it be your uncle instead

48. George Sheldon's take on the "Indian Question" was that no redress was due Native people for any past injustices. He argued against history by claiming that "In no case, can the origin of Indian hostilities in New England be traced to any claimed infringement by the whites on the territory of the Natives, with the single exception of the Eastern war of 1723." See George Sheldon, *A History of Deerfield, Massachusetts*, 2 vols. (Deerfield, Mass.: privately printed, 1895–1896), 1:670. Fessenden's sermon was listed as being given in 1835 instead of 1837 in *A History of Deerfield*, 2:804.

of long ago and far away made the stories more believable to the kids. Europeans get all tied up in the issue of linear history . . . it's really about place, and time, and family.⁴⁹

In 2004, history circled back on itself when members of the Watso and Sadoques families came back to Deerfield to commemorate the events of 1704 along with other Native peoples, including three music and dance troupes from the communities who had sent raiders to Deerfield three centuries earlier: the Thunderhawk Dancers from Kahnawake, Mikwôbait Dancers from Odanak, and Andicha n'de Wendat from Wendake. Lynn Murphy, Elizabeth Sadoques's granddaughter, commemorated the past, and forged a reconnection, by crafting a reproduction of the basket that her ancestor Sophie Watso made in 1837. The Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association accepted this new/old basket to display not as an artifact of a vanished race but as an artifact that testifies to the persistence, and the connectedness, of Native families, and Native memories, in a very familiar place.

49. Conversation with Lynn Murphy, February 11, 2001.