
A
PLACE CALLED
PARADISE

Culture and Community in
Northampton, Massachusetts,
1654-2004



EDITED BY
KERRY W. BUCKLEY

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STEADY pressure from English settlements reduced the traditional homelands of Native Americans and destroyed the populations of game and fur-bearing animals. The defeat of Metacom in King Philip's War of 1675–1676 put an end to large-scale armed resistance to English settlement in Northampton, but not to Indian habitation. Though many Native peoples sought refuge elsewhere, some never left their homelands, choosing to make themselves less visible by moving beyond the fringes of colonial settlements. This strategy of avoidance helped ensure a continued Indian presence in the valley up until the present day, but that presence often went unrecorded and unnoticed by whites. Margaret Bruchac chronicles the struggles of Nonotuck peoples as they coped with social upheaval and environmental change while sustaining cultural identity and kinship ties.

Native Presence in Nonotuck and Northampton

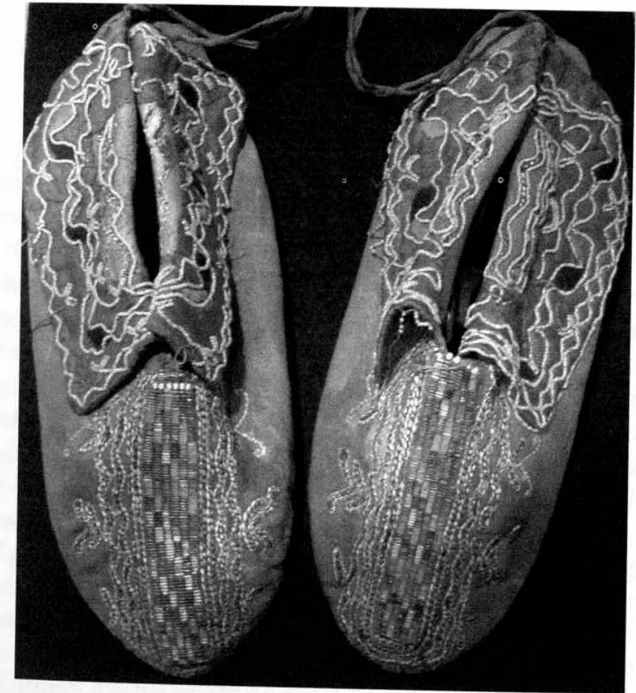
MARGARET BRUCHAC

THE first English colonists to arrive in the middle Connecticut River Valley identified the indigenous inhabitants by the Algonkian Indian¹ terms for the places where they lived: *Agawam*, the “landing place” that is now Springfield, *Woronoco*, the “winding land” at Westfield, and *Pocumtuck*, the “shallow, sandy river” at Deerfield. The region around the oxbow, at the geographical midpoint of the river, was called *Nonotuck*, a term which has been roughly translated to mean either “the middle of the river” (Noah-tuk), or the “far away land” (Nauwut-ucke) in the Massachusetts dialect.²

Three hundred and fifty years after the Euro-American settlement of Nonotuck (now called Northampton), the Native American³ history of this place may seem elusive. Much of the early archaeological record has been destroyed, if not by colonial settlement, then by the search for the relics and remains of the earliest Indian inhabitants. Lithics, pottery shards, beads, and bones from the distant past have surfaced in the plow zone and emerged in washouts, to land in both public and private collections of Indian relics.⁴ Woodlands era (c. 4000 B.C. to the present) site features, like storage pits, post holes, and corn planting mounds, that remained visible well into the twentieth century, have now been supplanted by housing developments and industrial parks.⁵ The locations of Native gravesites, like those of the Mam-inash family on Hospital Hill, or the unidentified burials salvaged from the meadows beside the river, have long since been forgotten by all but a few

anthropologists and Native historians.⁶ Even the landscape itself has been reshaped, particularly rivers, like the Cappawonganick (Mill River), which once wove its way alongside wigwam villages set on terraces, and now slips over the falls below Paradise Pond to hide in culverts beneath the main streets of town.

Northampton once had an Indian fort, but it never had an Indian reservation, and it does not have a resident tribal community today. Smith College once had a museum devoted to Indian history, but those antiquated displays of plaster-covered skulls and mute lithics have been dismantled and are patiently awaiting repatriation.⁷ A handful of exquisite artifacts on display at Historic Northampton, including quilled moccasins trimmed with silk ribbon, woven ash splint baskets stamped with floral designs, and a single strand of disk-shaped shell wampum beads, testify to the complex intercultural relations between Nonotuck's Indians and Northampton's English inhabitants.



Moccasins, c. 1682. Gift of Martha Woodruff. *Historic Northampton*.

This pair of moccasins represents a fusion of native technology and European style. The lining is cotton tape and the ties are silk, both trade goods. The porcupine quill embroidery is executed with traditional techniques, but the design of a meandering vine and flowers probably derives from European embroidery patterns.

On the streets of the town today, Native history can be viewed as a series of locative snapshots, from the farm fields called "Bark Wigwams," to a street named "Fort Hill," to a fading downtown sign for "Nonotuck Savings and Loan." But these snapshots do not tell the whole story. In the following pages, I offer a few glimpses into Northampton's Native past, by commenting on some of the sources that reference local Native history and reflecting on the lives of some of the Native peoples who continued to inhabit Nonotuck long after it became known as Northampton.

Remnants of Once Powerful Tribes

During the early nineteenth century, a series of historical myths were created and embellished by American historians in order to disconnect contemporary Native communities from their history and landscape. In western Massachusetts, those myths took four basic forms, which reflected popular interpretations of pre-contact Native history: 1) Before colonial settlement, this area was a wilderness; 2) All nonfarming Native sites were temporary, nomadic camps; 3) Algonkian peoples were developmentally inferior to, and less industrious than, their Iroquoian neighbors; and 4) Local Indians had abandoned these lands and moved on, thereby justifying permanent resettlement by non-native colonists.⁸

Local archaeologists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as Edward Hitchcock, Harry A. Wright, Harris Hawthorne Wilder, William J. Howes, William S. Fowler, and Walter S. Rodiman, incorporated these myths into their interpretations of the Native sites they found. Amateur and professional archaeologists in the region contributed to the disconnection of local Native history as they systematically disinterred graves, disarticulated bodies, separated grave goods from gravesites, and traded desirable collections around the region. Many worked in the footsteps of earlier collectors, tapping into the same local sites repeatedly in their search for particular kinds of artifacts.⁹ As just one example of the bias prevalent in the minds of collectors, Harry A. Wright suggested, in 1940, that stylistic similarities between Nonotuck and Mohawk pots implied that the local Native woman "must have recognized the inferiority of the pottery she was producing" and thus imitated the Mohawks. Recent tests show that some of the most ornate local pottery actually predates similar designs in New York, so the styles may well have originated here.¹⁰

Throughout the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries, Native gravesites were widely regarded as archaeological sites rather than sacred or private property. Deerfield's Memorial Hall, established in 1870, was dedicated to housing "such memorials, books, papers and relics as would illustrate and perpetuate the history of the early settlers, and of the race which

vanished before them," including exhibit cases of Indian graves.¹¹ Similar exhibits were set up at local colleges for regular viewing by students.¹² In an 1820 address to the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester historian Isaac Goodwin articulated the sense of entitlement to Indian lands and Indian remains that was common among American intellectuals: "We tread upon their graves without emotion. With unconcern we build our streets and erect our edifices upon their sacred enclosures. . . . with sacrilegious hands we scatter to the winds alike the bones. . . . the land they once defended is ours. . . . these hills, are all our own."¹³

Local historians like Sylvester Judd, James Russell Trumbull, and George Sheldon built on these ideas as they fashioned town histories that recounted the details of Indian warfare and raids, with the prevailing assumption that the Indian was doomed to disappear in the face of expanding civilization. Historians in the Connecticut River Valley gave little attention to the oral traditions attached to local sacred sites, the domestic pursuits evidenced in the landscape, or the intricate networks of intertribal relationships across New England, unless those details could be seen as contributory factors to warfare. The focus on warfare carried with it a corresponding focus on male leaders and Euro-American gender stereotypes, without sufficient consideration of the complexities of Native family and kinship relationships and roles.

These practices and beliefs were supported by the prevailing sense that colonial victory in Indian warfare had justifiably dispossessed Native peoples of any claims to the past. In 1873, local historian William S. Tyler wrote: "There is scarcely a town in the valley whose soil was not sprinkled with blood in the early wars with the Indians." In 1837, when the town of Deerfield had erected a monument to a 1676 event known as the "Bloody Brook Massacre," Massachusetts Governor Edward Everett had stepped in to deliver the oration, since "the commemoration of an Indian catastrophe was thought of as an occasion capable of being turned to good electioneering purposes."¹⁴

Although there was not a large Native community in Northampton, a number of local Native families and individuals continued to circulate within their traditional homelands, marketing baskets and brooms, hiring out as day labor, and dispensing traditional Native medicines to their white neighbors. Many were frequent travelers, tracing intertribal connections and kinship networks within a broad homeland.¹⁵ Certain kinds of work—particularly basket-making, chair seat-weaving, administering Native medicines, and crafting splint brooms—were regular occupations of Native itinerants. Sylvester Judd personally knew the Sampson family, local Indians living in Amherst and Hadley, who made baskets and brooms and hunted: "Joseph Sampson had a hut near Smiths mill. . . . He was an excellent marksman, and could shoot a swallow flying."¹⁶ Mrs. Newton of Hadley told Judd in 1859 that

only "Indians and squaws peddled brooms and baskets in Hadley when she was young and after. She does not recollect that white people made or peddled brooms."¹⁷

In 1861, Massachusetts Commissioner John Milton Earle summarized the general public's view of Native peoples when he wrote:

Much ignorance and misapprehension prevail in the community at large, among those who have not had the opportunity of personal observation relative to these remnants of their race. They seem to suppose that they have hardly emerged from their aboriginal state, although the painted face may not now be seen, nor the war whoop, the tomahawk, or the scalping knife . . . and the questions: "What sort of people are they?" "Do they dress like white folks?" "Can they speak the English language?" "Do they live in wigwams?" or other of like nature are often asked.¹⁸

The popular media often depicted Indians as exotic outsiders, dubbing those who still lingered around the outskirts of Yankee villages as "the last of their kind." In 1838, one such group was depicted in disparaging terms by the local newspaper:

The Miserable Remnants of a tribe of Indians from Canada, squatting in the woods a mile or two from town have been, and continue to be, the lions in this vicinity. Strange how demoralizing the contact of civilization with that of savage life, where it is but partial and of a loose and anti-Christian character. . . . They are 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. . . . Altogether considered, they are merely 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.¹⁹

Later historians perpetuated these biased representations of local Native peoples in historical texts, children's stories, speeches, and pageantry.²⁰ During Northampton's Quarter Millennium Commemoration, in 1904, Smith College President L. Clarke Seelye intoned:

How different the scenes which greet us from those which greeted her [Northampton's] infancy. Above are the same heavens; the same majestic river flows through the meadows; our horizon is bounded by the same picturesque mountain ranges; but how changed the inhabitants and their environment! No longer unbroken forests stretch as far as the eye can reach, concealing in their unexplored recesses wild beasts and savages; no longer men fear lest a sudden Indian raid may massacre the few inhabitants. . . . In place of a rude and contracted society, we behold a prosperous and highly civilized community.²¹

By 1916, a Rhode Island newspaper wrongly declared that the Nonotucks had utterly vanished: "In regard to the Nonotucks . . . there is almost

no historical account except the mark of a few of them upon local deeds." This report praised the exhibits created by Smith College Professor Harris Hawthorne Wilder, noting that this "restoration has thus a special interest, as it supplies data that were supposedly lost forever."²² Wilder's craniometric studies and his collections promoted scientifically flawed and prejudicial beliefs about race and intelligence. Natural differences in cranial measurements were used to "prove" that the "real" Indians were all dead, and that their living descendants were inferior specimens. In the 1950s, a *Daily Hampshire Gazette* reporter wrote about Indian remains that were still on display: "What stands behind this case . . . and perhaps what lies unknown beneath the local soil is all that remains of the peaceful, agriculturally inclined Nonotuck Indians who have long since been replaced by the citizens of Hampshire County."²³

Museums across America had evolved from curiosity cabinets into historical exhibits that aimed to display narratives of colonial progress vis-à-vis the Indians, while generally ignoring or misrepresenting the stories of Native communities.²⁴ Local museums and colleges often took their lead from prominent historical organizations like the American Antiquarian Society, which depicted the surviving New England tribes as degraded, racially mixed remnants, compared to their noble, but now extinct, progenitors.²⁵ The disconnection that was implied between living populations of northeastern Indian peoples and legitimate versions of northeastern Indian history became part of what contemporary historians have termed the "discourse of disappearance." That discourse directly affected the ways in which Northampton's early Native history was recorded and interpreted. By way of demonstration, let's take a step back in time to the founding era of Northampton.

Planting at Cappawonke and Weekwassuck

The documentary records of correspondence among the English leaders of the United Colonies indicate that the Nonotuck and Pocumtuck peoples were initially regarded as sovereign nations, savvy trading partners, and formidable enemies. For example, in a 1648 letter to Massachusetts Governor John Winthrop, William Pynchon wrote:

I grant they are all wthin ye line of yr pattent, but you cannot say that therefore they are yr subjects nor yet within yr jurisdiction untill they have fully subjected themselves to yr government (wch I know they have not) & untill you have bought their land: untill this be done they must be esteemed as an Independant free people, & so they of Naunotak do all account themselves, & doubtless wch ever goes with strength of men to disturb their peace at Naunotuk they will take it for no other than a hostile action.²⁶

William Pynchon began trading with the Nonotuck Indians in the 1640s. By May 1653, twenty-four petitioners from the Connecticut colony and three settlers from Springfield had requested permission from the General Court of Massachusetts to "plant, possess and inhabit Nonotuck."²⁷ They intended to measure out plantations at Cappawonke, the meadows beside the river. Since trade relations were good, the Nonotuck were initially willing to allow the English to settle a small town, on the condition that: "Pynchon shall plow up or cause to be plowed up for the Indians sixteene acres of land on ye east side of Quinnoticott River . . . the Indians have liberty to plant their present corn fields. . . ."²⁸

It must be noted that the earliest English settlers moved into a long-inhabited, carefully managed landscape. Early town records note that the forests and fields had been so efficiently cleared by Indian burning "that many large tracts were almost destitute of timber, and in some place covered with high coarse grass. This grass and other wild herbage furnished pasture for the cattle of the inhabitants of Northampton, Hadley, Hatfield, etc. for many years."²⁹

Indian deeds are often cited as evidence of the sale of land, but it's doubtful that these documents were ever viewed by Native signers as quit-claims. In practice, they were negotiated like treaties and temporary joint use agreements, confirmed by the exchange of gifts, and reserved Native rights to hunt, plant, set up wigwams, etc. on land that was supposedly "sold."³⁰ Although they were clearly misled, Native participants intended to reserve their traditional rights. A 1666 deed for parts of Deerfield noted that the sachem Chauk "doth reserve Liberty of fishing for ye Indians in ye Rivers or waters & free Liberty to hunt deere or other wild creatures, & to gather walnuts . . . on ye Commons."³¹ The Nonotuck Indians had planted corn on both sides of the river for generations, and their actions suggest that they never intended to vacate the premises.

Maize, which had been imported from the southwest during the first millennium A.D., had become an important component of Native life in the valley, but it was not the primary food source. Just as they had done for countless generations, Algonkian peoples continued to seasonally gather resources from hunting territories in the hills, fishing places at the falls, and other gathering habitats.³² In the homelands model, corn cultivation is just one of many food procurement strategies that does not require permanent residence near the planting fields.³³

Corn served a dual purpose as a valuable trading commodity, since the early colonists were, at first, dependent upon Native foods for their survival. In one dramatic instance, in 1638, the Indians at Pocumtuck accepted payment of 300 fathoms (six-foot lengths) of wampum for 500 bushels of corn, and delivered it by canoe to supply the starving English settlements below Hartford.³⁴

Wampum, from the Narragansett word *wauompeg*, "white shell," indicating tubular or disk beads strung on hemp or leather,³⁵ had long been used by Native peoples for ceremonial purposes, to carry messages and condolences, as tribute, and as decoration. Awonusk, one of the female signatories of deeds for land around Fort River, signed her mark with a symbol that seems to represent a woven strip of wampum.³⁶ The production and distribution of shell beads increased dramatically after the importation of metal drills and the mass production required for the Indian trade. Between 1645 and 1668, John Pynchon employed a number of Northampton men in stringing fathoms of wampum for the Indian trade.³⁷

Indigenous foods and substances quickly became staples of Euro-American economies and foodways. The one surviving fragment of Connecticut River Valley language collected by fur trader John Pynchon, a list of names of the moons of the year and a few words for fur-bearing animals, may, for example, reveal his need to schedule a ready supply of food and furs. His compilation of terms referencing the names for the full moons of the year begins with the following information:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. <i>Squannikesos</i> | When they set Indian corne (pt of Aprill & pt of May) |
| 2. <i>moonesquan nimockkesos</i> | when women weed their corn (pt of May & pt of June) |
| 3. <i>Towwakesos</i> | when they hill Ind corne (pt of June & pt of July) |
| 4. <i>matterl lawawkesos</i> | when squashes are ripe & Ind beans begin to be eatable |
| 5. <i>micheeneekesos</i> | when Ind corne is eatable |
| 6. <i>pah quitaqunkkesos</i> | ye middle between harvest & eating Ind corne ³⁸ |

The main resource that fed the fur trade was not corn, but beaver, and when the beaver population started to plummet from over-hunting, Nonotuck and other valley peoples found themselves unable to pay their trading debts.³⁹ John Pynchon and his agents had become thoroughly enmeshed in political relationships with the valley tribes, and Native leaders, in their turn, had become indebted to these savvy English traders for trading cloth, coats, and a whole host of trade goods that were now feeding intertribal gifting networks.

In 1660, the Nonotuck sachem Umpanchela was forced to part with two tracts of river land at Nattacous and Wequittayyag in order to pay off his debt to John Pynchon, a debt that included a fine of two fathoms of wampum for being drunk. Pynchon was well aware of the fact that the beaver had been depleted, and had noted in his account book just before Umpanchela left on a hunting trip, after three months of purchasing coats, cloth, knives,

wampum, and a gun on credit: "Decembr 25 60 Trusted him [Umpanchela] on the same acot one red cote 2 knives. . . . If I am not pd in Bever when he comes from Heakeg [Squakheag, Sokoki hunting territory] all his land is to be mine."⁴⁰

Shifting Homelands

The first English efforts at trade and settlement with the Indians of Northampton seem to have started off peacefully, but over time, ancient intertribal relationships and land tenure systems were dramatically altered by European disease, warfare, and politics. In 1664, a group of Nonotuck built a fortified enclosure named Fort Hill, close by the town of Northampton, across the Mill River. Natives at Fort Hill were compelled to comply with a list of conditions imposed by the town that forbade, among other things, working on the Sabbath, drinking, hosting visitors, and holding the religious observances known as *pow-wows*.⁴¹

In times of stress, Native communities shifted residence, moving away and returning when situations calmed.⁴² For much of the first two centuries of contact, the fluidity of social boundaries created a great deal of confusion among Euro-American observers, particularly whenever Native peoples traveled to the north. It now appears, from the documentary records and oral traditions of Native families who have been poorly understood by historians, that tribal identities persisted, even after families relocated outside the valley.⁴³

Several events contributed to the large-scale diaspora of Indians from the Connecticut River Valley. One potential cause resulted from an event in 1667, when three Northampton youths—Godfrey Nimms, James Bennet, and Benoni Stebbins—broke into several homes on the Sabbath day to secure the money to pay a Nonotuck man named Quequelatt to escort them to Canada. The boys, and eventually Quequelatt as well, were all apprehended and whipped.⁴⁴ Pynchon used this incident as justification for appointing a Nonotuck leader who would ensure obedience to English law. Chickwalloppe's trust in the English was seriously damaged a few years later, when his (Chickwalloppe's) son was arrested for a murder in Albany, and hanged, despite Pynchon's assurances that diplomacy would prevail.

Relations had become increasingly strained in the region by 1675, when a Wampanoag leader named Metacom, baptized Philip, and popularly called "King Philip," started a rebellion against English settlement that quickly spread across southern New England. John Pynchon endeavored to secure neutrality from local Indians, but many of them joined Metacom in attacking Northfield, Deerfield, Hatfield, Hadley, Northampton, and Brookfield. In May 1676, the English retaliated with the massacre of nearly 400 Native

refugees, including elderly men, women, and children who had gathered at Peskeompskut, now Turner's Falls. King Philip's War eventually became, in the shaping of American historical memory, a marker for the supposed end of Native occupation of New England, and a justification for later Indian removals.

In 1676 Governor Andros of New York invited Connecticut River Indians to settle in the village of Schaghticoke, near the Hoosic and Hudson Rivers. In the succeeding decades, Pocumtuck, Nonotuck, Woronoco, Sokoki, and a few Mahican peoples moved back and forth between the Connecticut River, Schaghticoke, and Canada. A few families joined the Catholic Mohawk mission at Caughnawauga, now Kahnawake, south of Montreal.⁴⁵ Native peoples nonetheless maintained ties to the valley in a variety of ways. In 1693, during a rout of "Canada" (former Connecticut River Valley) Indians at Quabaug, Major John Pynchon wrote, in his account to Governor Phipps, "What I much wonder at, one of the soldiers a Smith [blacksmith] of Northampton, says that one of their hatchets he knows well that he made it about a year ago."⁴⁶

Schaghticoke, New York, became an active trading post, a stopping point on the way to French missions in the north, and a rallying place for former Connecticut River Valley Indians who traveled back and forth between their original homelands, the Hudson River Valley, upstate New York, Canada, and Vermont.⁴⁷ In the spring of 1674, "most of the Indians on the Westfield River at Woronoco and Pojassick had moved to Albany for reasons unknown to the English at Springfield."⁴⁸ The move to Schaghticoke was rarely a one-way passage. For example, in 1691, John Pynchon received a letter from Captain Partridge, who wrote: "the Indians that are come down are about 150 of them, men, women, and children, and are settled at Deerfield under the side of the mountain southerly from the town, living in the woods about a mile out of the town, the men plying hunting and leaving their women and children at home."⁴⁹ Connecticut River Valley Indians allied with their northern neighbors in the subsequent imperial conflicts between England and France for control of the American colonies. These wars were dubbed King William's War (1689–1697), Queen Anne's War (1702–1713), King George's War (1744–1748), and the French and Indian War (1754–1763). During these wars, hundreds of captives were taken from valley towns, and many of these were incorporated, even if temporarily, into Native kin networks.⁵⁰ Titus King from Northampton, who was held prisoner between 1755 and 1758 by former Connecticut River Valley Indians now living among the Abenaki in Canada, recalled his adoption ceremony, when:

The Family that I was adopted into gave my Indian master that took me a Sute of Cloths came & took me by the hand lead me away to his house now I was in New Family & in a nere Relation: to them: became brother to the old Indian &

Squaw being in the place of an indian that was Killd the Last War I being in the Same Relation as he was to them I became a Grandfather they Said there Grandfather was come to life again.⁵¹

Titus King eventually escaped and made his way back to Northampton, where he became a popular schoolteacher. Mary Sheldon of Deerfield formed more lastig attachments with her former captors. She had been taken captive from Deerfield during the 1704 raid on that town, and adopted by the Canadian Indians, who “became very much attached to her.” On her release, she remarried and moved to Northampton, where history records:

In after years these Indians came to visit her at Northampton. They always came when Clapp’s corn was green, and would devour it in large quantities, roasting the ears at a fire under an apple tree. On one occasion she received a visit from two squaws. Leaving their papooses in the bushes on Pancake plain, they came into the street, and found the house where Mrs. Clapp lived, by means of the step stones which had been described to them. They asked permission to bring their children, which was readily given.⁵²

Over time, despite the raids, white communities tightened their hold on the valley, supplanting Native homelands with large towns situated at the most desirable locations alongside the river.⁵³ Although the vast majority of Native peoples from the valley relocated to live with their Native neighbors in surrounding communities or northern mission villages, a few Native families remained in valley towns.

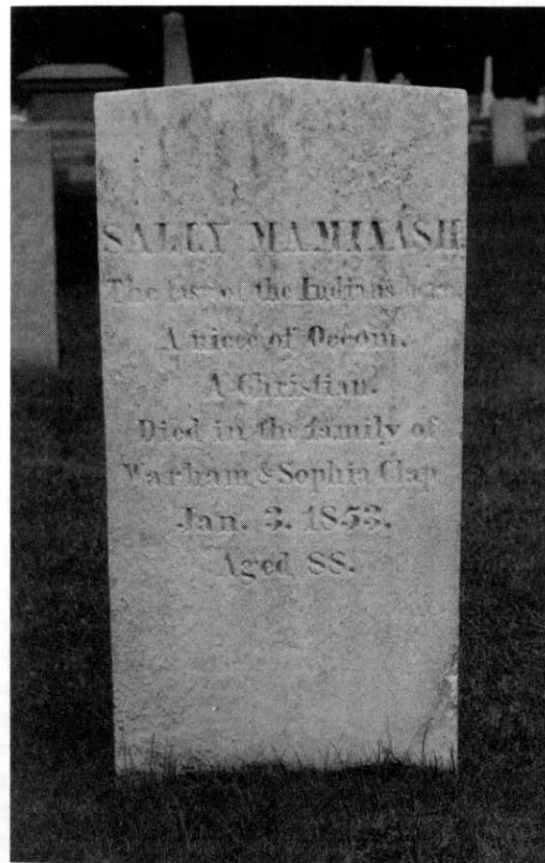
Sally Maminash—Last of the Indians Here

Sally Maminash (alternately spelled Mammanash, Mammanache, etc.) is buried in Northampton’s Bridge Street Cemetery, where her gravestone, situated in the family plot of Warham and Sophia Clapp, reads: “Sally Maminash. The last of the Indians here. A niece of Occum. A Christian. Died in the family of Warham & Sophia Clap. Jan. 3, 1853. Aged 88.”

A collection of fading newspaper clippings from the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* adds a few more tragically cryptic details to Sally’s story—her father Joseph’s gravestone stolen from a “lonely grave on Pancake Plain,” her mother Elizabeth “stoned to death by local boys,” her dying brother “neglected and alone,” her grandmother “old, lousy and lame,” and Sally herself, a “wild, passionate, wilful” girl who worked as an itinerant spinner and weaver, transformed into a “sweet, saintly Christian,” sitting peacefully in her chair reading her Bible.⁵⁴

Almost every town in New England had an individual who was described as “the last of the Indians,” a popular, if somewhat misleading sobriquet. Molly Ockett, an Indian Doctress who was survived by several daughters

and an ex-husband, was called “the last of the Pequawkets” when she died in 1816. In 1859, Eunice Mauwee, a Schaghticoke elder who is the direct ancestor of many members of the Schaghticoke tribe today, was erroneously called “the last of the Pequots.”⁵⁵ Paine Henries, the so-called last of the Nipmucks, who died in 1936, was survived by two brothers, a sister, and several nieces and nephews.⁵⁶



Sally Maminash’s gravestone. Bridge Street Cemetery, Northampton.

The inscription on Sally Maminash’s gravestone reads “last of the Indians here.” This epitaph tells much more about nineteenth-century New England than about Sally because she was not the only Indian in Northampton and was certainly not the last. She was an accepted and skilled member of the local community, working as an itinerant spinner and weaver. Sally’s mother, Elizabeth, came from the community of Mohegan in southeastern Connecticut. Her brother, Joseph Maminash, was a Revolutionary War veteran. Her uncle was Samson Occum, Mohegan preacher, fundraiser for Moor’s Charity School (later Dartmouth College), and founder of the Brotherton Community of Christian Indians in New York.

In Northampton, the largest concentration of Native peoples seems to have centered around Pancake Plain and Hospital Hill, where the Maminash gravesites were located. Through much of the twentieth century, the site was home to a mental hospital, rural fields grown up to brush, and homeless shelters. Charles Dean wrote, in a 1958 article for the *Daily Hampshire Gazette*:

Hospital Hill, the beginnings of which are either distorted or utterly lost in the mists of legendary lore . . . became the end of the trail for the last Native Americans, whose ancestors roamed the forests and fished the streams hereabouts before the coming of the white man. . . . perhaps the most reasonable explanation for the retarded development of this part of Northampton was its remoteness . . . a narrow flat strip of land lying between the foot of the hill itself and the southern bank of Mill River . . . but even as late as the 1830s only seven or eight houses were located there, devoid of elegance or comfort, and occupied by person noticeable for the peculiarities, habits, and dress which makes them known as characters. . . . "Ratty Clark" and family . . . made a somewhat precarious living as potters. . . . But the most colorful inhabitant of the plain perhaps, was "Aunt Nab" whom a contemporary once described as a "maker and vendor of cornhusk mats" and as having a "cracked voice and garrulous manner."⁵⁷

Sally Maminash lived in the center of town, where she was well known to many Northampton residents as an itinerant weaver. In 1816, she joined First Church along with seventy-six other people, including several other Indians and African Americans and a Nipmuc family named Bakeman. By 1819 large numbers of people had left First Church to join new congregations—Edwards Church, the Unitarian Society, Methodists, Baptists, and others. Reverend Solomon Williams recorded Sally Maminash's name on a "List of Church Members 1819 who were living or have not taken a dismissal" after religious controversy split the congregation.⁵⁸ Decades after her death, when Solomon Clark compiled his Historical Catalogue, Sally Maminash was described as follows: "Sally Maminash. The last of the Indian race in Northampton; long and tenderly cared for, under the infirmities of age, by Mrs. Warham Clapp, and her son Edward and his wife."⁵⁹

Sophia Clapp, who sponsored Sally's membership in the church, had offered Sally a home in her old age. Although the Clapps treated, and buried her, as a family friend, later writers seem to have embellished the earlier accounts to make Sally appear more simple, more destitute, and more alone than she was in real life. In the Northampton of the late nineteenth century, Sally seems to have been cast as a token civilized Indian, an icon of what was romantically believed to be a vanishing race. The Maminash family were not uncivilized remnants of vanishing tribes—they served as soldiers, weaved in local homes, attended local churches, and participated in the social milieu of Northampton much like their white neighbors. They were, however, vulnerable to racial prejudice and danger from their less tolerant neighbors.

Sally's father, Joseph Maminash, was identified in colonial records as Podunk, Nonotuck, and/or Pocumtuck Indian, listing places of residence in Norwich and East Windsor, Connecticut, and Southampton and Northampton, Massachusetts.⁶⁰ The Maminash men, like many Native men in New England, mustered in alongside their white neighbors in local regiments for military service. When Mohegan men from Connecticut were recruited for the English campaign against Louisbourg in 1745, Joseph Mammanash[sic], Sally's father, joined Nathan Whiting's 11th company, along with a number of Indian men in this and related companies, including members of the Uncas, Dick, Nanapau, Quaquequid and Wetowomp families.⁶¹ When he died in 1767, Joseph was buried on Hospital Hill, in a grave marked with a brown stone bearing the mark of the turtle, the clan totem of the family. During the 1860s, the stone was stolen, and has never been found.⁶²

Sally's mother, Elizabeth, who was identified as the sister of the Mohegan minister Samson Occum, apparently came from the community of Mohegan Indians in southeastern Connecticut. In 1779, then sixty-year-old Elizabeth met an untimely, as-yet-unexplained death. Some traditions say she was stoned to death by a gang of Northampton boys; others that she died in liquor.⁶³ She was buried beside her husband, and her children took up residence among their Native neighbors.

Sally's brother, Joseph, served in the military during the American Revolution, and is listed in Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors as follows:

Maminash, Joseph, Hadley. List of men raised to serve in the Continental Army from the 4th Hampshire regiment as returned by Capt. Samuel Cook; residence, Hadley; engaged for town of Hadley; joined Capt. Shay's co., Col. Putnam's regt.; term 3 years; also, Private, Capt. Daniel Shays co., Col. Rufus Putnam's (5th) regt.; Continental Pay accounts for service from Jan. 15, 1777 to Aug. 31, 1778; reported died Aug. 31, 1778; also, same co. and regt.; return dated Albany, Feb. 9, 1778; mustered by Col. Woodbridge.

He, too, is buried in an unmarked grave on Hospital Hill. Among the few artifacts remaining from the Maminash family are Sally's Bible, stored at Forbes Library, and her favorite chair, a low ladder back with its original ash-splint seat, still in the hands of a Clapp descendant.⁶⁴

The Maminash family, although a Native family with deep roots in New England, had "arrived" in the records of Northampton toward the end of the French and Indian wars and the beginning of the American Revolution, the very era when American history was being re-scripted to write Indians out of the picture. Indian deeds had long since been signed, and Northampton's settlers refused to see the cornfields in the meadows, the graves on Pancake Plain, the basket-makers on the streets, or the houses on the edge of the river as evidence of Native persistence. The neighbors of the Indian graves on

Hospital Hill today include homeless shelters, empty homes, a crumbling mental hospital, and the Smith playing fields, on the backside of town. Mary Brewster foreshadowed their present obscurity:

The field where the Indians were buried, now owned by the state hospital, was owned by W. F. Arnold who left standing the group of gaunt pines that long guarded the "Indian Grave" in picturesque and poignant contrast to the spot today where, in sunny bleakness below a stone-covered ridge, gone is the last trace of a historic burial place, unmarked and generally unremembered.⁶⁵

In 1920, Harris Hawthorne Wilder wrote of his delight at discovering the survival of Indian corn-mounds, near the oxbow of the Connecticut River, close to traditional Native village sites, on, apparently, the very same grounds that Pynchon agreed to plow for the Nonotucks in 1654. Wilder plotted out the locations of at least three associated sites: for village locations, on bluffs



Plaited baskets, pre-1830. Gift of Amelia Clark. *Historic Northampton*.

Native Americans continued to live throughout the region, keeping alive their traditions while sometimes having to submerge their identities. Evidence reveals that Indian peoples continued to make a life for themselves. Plaited baskets, woven by native Americans from carefully prepared and painted wood splints, were prized items of exchange throughout the nineteenth century. Made for kitchen use, home storage, or farm work, splint baskets represent some of the ways in which native and non-native peoples interacted from the seventeenth century onward. As such, this basketry was part of a world in which native peoples continued their artistic traditions while also living as farmers, hired laborers, and artisans in nontraditional communities.

overlooking the Mill River along present-day South Street; for burials, in the fields beside the river; and for planting fields, in a sunken meadow shut off by a railroad embankment.⁶⁶

Recovering Northampton's Native Past

By the 1970s and 1980s, as both a corrective to the prevailing sense of erasure, and a deeper investigation into the social dynamics of Native communities, a new generation of scholarship emerged that continues to inform our understanding of Northampton's Native past.⁶⁷ Between 1956 and 1983, ethno-historian Gordon Day patiently worked on Abenaki research with tribal informants and archivists across New England, publishing writings that directly addressed Connecticut River Valley Indian history, such as "English-Indian Contacts in New England" (1962), "The Identity of the Sokokis" (1965), "An Agawam Fragment" (1967), and "The Identity of the St. Francis Indians" (1981), a text that reveals the names of many former Pocumtuck, Nonotuck, and Woronoco peoples who had relocated to northern Abenaki villages. A selection of Day's essays, now compiled as a volume titled *In Search of New England's Native Past*,⁶⁸ serves as an excellent introduction to the complex political and social relations of central and northern New England.

The following texts represent just a few of the recent writings on Northampton's Native history that have broken new ground. William R. Young's 1969 volume for the Springfield Science Museum, *The Connecticut Valley Indian: An Introduction to Their Archaeology and History*, stands as a good introduction to the state of research in archaeological sites by that date, and also introduces some of the questions that later works have tried to answer. Peter Thomas's 1979 dissertation on Pynchon's trading arrangements with local Indians, "In the Maelstrom of Change," revealed details about the individual transactions, economic debts, ecological changes, and political shifts that unbalanced Native communities. Following in that trend, James Spady, in his 1994 senior thesis, "In the Midst of the River: Leadership, Trade and Politics among the Native Peoples of the Connecticut River Valley: 1635-1700," and in the article "As if in a Great Darkness: Native American Refugees of the Middle Connecticut River Valley in the Aftermath of King Philip's War" brought out the character of individual Native peoples caught up in the machinations of Euro-American conflicts played out on the American stage. Evan Hafeli and Kevin Sweeney's 1997 work "Revisiting the Redeemed Captive: New Perspectives on the 1704 Attack on Deerfield" helps to both clarify and complicate the identities of Native peoples involved in eighteenth-century raids on Connecticut River Valley towns. In 1992, Historic Northampton made a significant contribution to inspiring the development

of new local curriculum with *Native Peoples and Museums in the Connecticut River Valley—A Guide for Learning*, edited by Dorothy Krass and Barry O'Connell.

Lest one think that New England's historical scholarship resides exclusively in the hands of Euro-Americans, it should be noted that many Algonkian Indian elders and scholars have made dramatic contributions to regional history, by sharing Native perspectives and traditions that improve our understandings of Native peoples, past and present. Local museums, like the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association and Historic Northampton, have created new exhibits, Web sites, and guidebooks. The Five College Native American Indian Studies Curriculum Committee also encourages Native elders, students, and faculty to develop new methods for teaching Native history. The college exhibits that once displayed Indian bodies have been dismantled, and the colleges themselves are coming to terms with their own legacy vis-à-vis Native peoples by founding new intertribal and interinstitutional partnerships. In sum, the year 2004 may represent three hundred and fifty years in which Euro-American settlement and history overwhelmed Native presence in Northampton . . . but it also marks an opportunity to do justice to all of our interwoven histories, by finding ways to work with Native peoples, respectfully recovering Native histories that have not vanished, that are still so close at hand.

NOTES

1. The term "Algonkian," alternatively spelled "Algonquin" or, by linguists, "Algonquian," describes a broad cultural and linguistic grouping that includes all the non-Iroquoian Native peoples of New England (i.e., Abenaki, Mohegan, Narragansett, Nipmuc, Nonotuck, Pequot, Pocumtuck, Schaghticoke, and Wabanaki, Wampanoag, and others). It seems to have originally derived from a French adaptation of a Malecite word. For further explanation, see Gordon Day, "The Name Algonquin," in Michael K. Foster and William Cowan, eds., *In Search of New England's Native Past: Selected Essays by Gordon M. Day* (Amherst, 1998), 123.
2. Letter from Reverend Edwin Benedict from Odanak, Canada, to C. Alice Baker of Deerfield, MA, February 17, 1890, Collections of Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, Memorial Libraries, Deerfield, 1; Harry Andrew Wright, *Indian Deeds of Hampden County*, (Springfield, 1905), 28–29; James Hammond Trumbull, *Natick Dictionary*, Bulletin 25, Smithsonian Bureau of Ethnology (Washington, DC, 1903), 87.
3. Since this discussion relies on so many early documents, I will use the generic terms "Indian," "American Indian," and "Native" (with a capital "N") to refer to the indigenous peoples of the North American continent, rather than rely exclusively on the relatively modern term "Native American." Even though the term "Indian" is technically a misnomer, no insult is implied or intended by its usage here.
4. Elizabeth S. Chilton, "In Search of Bark Wigwams: Archaeological Investigation of an Early Contact Period Site in the Connecticut Valley" (paper presented at the

Northeastern Anthropological Association Meeting, South Burlington, VT, March 1990). Eric S. Johnson and James W. Bradley, "The Bark Wigwams Site: An Early Seventeenth-Century Component in Central Massachusetts," *Man in the Northeast* 33 (spring 1987): 1–26; Harris Hawthorne Wilder and Ralph Wheaton Whipple, "The Position of the Body in Aboriginal Interments in Western Massachusetts," *American Anthropologist* new series, 19 (1917): 372–287; William R. Young, "A Survey of the Available Knowledge on the Middle Connecticut Valley Indians—Prehistoric and Historic," in *The Connecticut Valley Indian: An Introduction to Their Archaeology and History* new series, 1, no. 1, Springfield: Museum of Science (1969): 33–61.

5. E. B. Delabarre and Harris H. Wilder, "Indian Corn Hills in Massachusetts," *American Anthropologist* 22 (1920): 203–255.
6. Margaret Bruchac, "The True History of Sally Maminash," *Weathervane*, Historic Northampton (December 1997); Chilton, "In Search of Bark Wigwams."
7. Margaret Bruchac, "Collecting Indians for the Colleges: Constructing Native Invisibility in the Connecticut River Valley," Research report for Five College Reparation Committee, work in progress 2003b.
8. Russell Handsman and Trudie Lamb Richmond, "Confronting Colonialism: The Mahican and Schaghticoke Peoples and Us," in Peter R. Schmidt and Thomas C. Patterson, eds., *Making Alternative Histories: The Practice of Archaeology and History in Non-Western Settings* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1996), 87–117; Neal Salisbury, "The Memorial and Indian Rooms, Memorial Hall, Deerfield," in Dorothy Krass and Barry O'Connell, eds., *Native Peoples and Museums in the Connecticut River Valley—A Guide for Learning* (Historic Northampton, Five College Public School Partnership Program, 1992).
9. Young, *Survey of the Available Knowledge*, 33–61; Bruchac, "Collecting Indians for the Colleges"; Margaret Bruchac and Elizabeth S. Chilton, "Where Have All the Indians Gone: Reconsidering Historical Memory in the Connecticut River Valley" (paper presented at the Northeastern Anthropological Association Meeting, University of Vermont, Burlington, March 2002).
10. Wright, *Indian Deeds of Hampden County*, 8–9. Elizabeth S. Chilton, "One Size Fits All: Typology and Alternatives for Ceramic Research," in *Material Meaning: Critical Approaches to the Interpretation of Material Culture* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999).
11. George Sheldon, *A Guide to the Museum of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association* (Deerfield: Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, 1908).
12. Bruchac, "Collecting Indians for the Colleges."
13. Isaac Goodwin, "Address to the American Antiquarian Society," 1820, in *American Antiquarian Society Proceedings*, Worcester, MA (1812–1849): 161A.
14. Harriet Martineau, *Society in America* (London, 1837), 126–127.
15. 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, MA, 1994); Margaret Bruchac, "In Search of the Indian Doctress," in *Old Sturbridge Village Visitor* (Old Sturbridge Village, September 1999); Thomas L. Doughton, "Unseen Neighbors: Native Americans of Central Massachusetts, a People Who Had Vanished," in Colin G. Calloway, ed., *After King Philip's War: Presence and Persistence in Indian New*

- England (Hanover, NH, 1997); Handsman and Richmond, "Confronting Colonialism," 87-117.
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