

Notes on Indians From "Connecticut Historical Collections"

This volume, published in 1836 by John Warner Barber, contains several footnotes concerning Native Americans who lived in, or had once lived in Litchfield County. They have current interest because of the recent clash in the courts between the surviving remnants of the Indian Tribes and the State of Connecticut over the definition of what constitutes a Native Tribe.

From the town of Kent: "There is in this town, (says Dr. Trumbull,) convincing evidence that it was a grand seat of the native inhabitants of this country, before Indians, who more lately inhabited it, had any residence in it. There are arrow heads, stone pots and a sort of knives and various kinds of utensils, frequently found by the English, of such curious workmanship as exceeds all the skill of any Indians since the English came into this country, and became acquainted with them. These were not only found when the town was first settled, but they are still found on the sides of the Housatonic River. The history of the Indians in the town when the settlement of it commenced is well known."

"Mowehue, a sachem, who a few years before had removed with his Indians from New-town to New Milford, about the year 1728, built him a hunting house at Scatacook, in the northwest part of Kent, on the west bank of the Housatonic River. He invited the Indians at New Milford, from Oblong, in the province of New York and from various other places to settle with him at Scatacook; and it appears that he was a man of so much art and popularity among the Indians that in about ten or eleven years, about the time when the town was settled, he could muster one hundred warriors. The whole number, probably, was about five or six hundred. These, like the other Indians in this state, and in most other states, have been greatly diminished. Their whole number, at this time, is not more than forty. The Moravian missionaries visited these Indians about the time of the great religious concern [revival] in this country. They came first in the year 1740 and visited the Indian village called Chekameka, in the Oblong, in the province of New York. They, about the same time, came and preached to the Scatacook Indians, and in 1743, according to their account, the Scatacook sachem was baptized by them. In this place they formed a church, and had a flourishing congregation. They baptized 150 of the Kent Indians. It is universally testified, that these missionaries were very inoffensive people; that they were well esteemed and kindly treated by the people of the town while they tarried. They, however, complained of themselves as ill treated, persecuted and imprisoned; but it could not be by the people of Connecticut. What became of the Indians who were first on the ground, before the English had any settlements there is not known. When they moved away, or to what place, cannot be ascertained. The probability however is, that they were connected with Philip's Indians in the war against New England; and that in the slaughter which the Connecticut troops made of the Indians on the Housatonic, at the close of the war, numbers of them were slain, and that the rest were so alarmed, that they removed into Canada, as many other Indians did about the same time."

Under the town of New Milford appears the following: "It has been said that all the tribes along by this river [the Housatonic], from its source to the sea, were in strict alliance and friendship; and that by means of certain sounds made on their guarding heights, an alarm might be spread in the space of three hours, through the whole line of

tribes, a distance of near 200 miles. The natives were generally very friendly, and serviceable to the first settlers of this town, by defending them from hostile attacks and by supplying them with such provisions as they could furnish.”

“They had several reserves of land made for their accommodation in and about the town, as for a considerable time the ‘Indian Field’, so called, the place once called ‘Raumaug’, (from the name of the sachem before mentioned,) now in the parish of New Preston; the ‘Great Falls’, which they reserved for the fishing of lampreys; and lastly, the place where they now reside, called Scatacook. The two former they sold many years since. The two latter they still own. But their number has ever been diminishing since the neighborhood of the white people, and at this time they are reduced to a mere handful. So much for the natives.”

A footnote for the town of Salisbury reads: “At the time of the first settlement in the town, there was then an Indian settlement at Weatog, consisting of seventy wigwams, all in a cluster. They were friendly and hospitable, especially to the whites, and encouraged their settlement. It is unknown how long they had made a stand at that place. Doubtless, in their most savage state, they had encamped in different places on the river, where they could hunt and fish. Long before there was any settlement of white people in the town, a Col. Whiting, with his regiment, pursued a band of Indians as far as the northeast part of the town, and there, on the banks of the Housatonic, defeated them with a dreadful slaughter. They lay at their ease, sporting and fishing, on both sides of the river. He, becoming acquainted with their situation, came upon them unawares, killed some and put the rest to flight. About seventy Indian graves are visible there to this day.”

Sharon contains the following: “Considerable numbers of the Indians resided in the western and northwestern parts of the town, which are watered by two large ponds, and by the Ten Mile River, which touches the western borders of the town. Their principal village was on the east side of the Indian Pond, so called, which is a body of water lying partly in the state of New York and partly in Connecticut. On a romantic and beautiful plain, lying between this pond on the west and the Indian Mountain, a spur of the Taghannuck [Taconic] range on the east, was a numerous village, where the natives continued to reside for many years after the whites came into the town.

The deed from the Indians, by which they sold their lands to Thomas Barnes, was signed by Nequitimaug and Bartholomew, two of the principal men of the tribe.”

Historic Bytes

Bob Grigg