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Correspondence to Dr. Charles E. Banks 1930

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November 10, 1930

Dear Doctor Banks:

In re Saco, your only error of importance seems to be in getting the root separated out. I think we can make it.

Tooker was leaning upon Trumbull, I should say, when he spoke of "Saco in Maine [as] another form of the word." I happen to have Trumbull's paper on geographical names (in Conn. Hist. Colls., vol. II) open upon my table so it will be no trouble to quote the passage for you. Tooker and Trumbull both were at a great disadvantage in not knowing our Maine dialects, or languages. We had at least three in Maine, and the Micmacs ~~are~~ another, and they all vary decidedly. It is indeed true that Vineyard Indian would have great difficulty in communicating with some of our eastern tribes. A Penobscot has to learn Quoddy (Maliseet), and can't talk with Micmac. According to Champlain and LeCarbot, their Micmacs could not talk with the Saco Indians.

But, the Saco Indians were Souriquois Alouchequois, and much resembled the Massachusetts Indians. They were sedentary, agricultural, lived in stockaded villages and in general resembled the Bay Indians. Therefore I think it permissible to try to explain some of their place-names by the Mattick language or Roger Williams' Narragansett. (I mean now, the Indians of the coast; the upper Saco Indians seem to me to be Abnaki)

Now taking your long list of occurrences dated from 1614 to 1629, the forms are all very much alike. To me, accustomed to hearing the language spoken, the words are all good forms and very similar. There must have been a strong nasal at the beginning so that Swackadock and Swanckadocke and Sawacotock are near alike as they would be spoken.

The interchange of N and U is very common indeed and may account for some of the spellings, but I think that some one speaking with a stronger nasal than usual would also produce the form. We do not need to pick and choose among the forms you give. Saco is nothing more than one of them with the tail cut off. Lengthen the a to a diphthong and you have the word, less the -tegu, k.

(And, by the way, I had forgotten Wassle's definition of Teg8 as flot, but it is precisely what I gave you, wave. I think Trumbull too precise in his insistence upon "tidal river"; that does not lie in the root; I don't know the application of it in his regions; but he must not force it upon us up here, because up here it has no such meaning.)

Now, granting that we may go to the watick in this case, I find we are fairly overcome with the duplications of this words; I can't begin to give a list of them.

Sackatucket, Harwich, Mass.
 Sanguis, Lynn
 Sahnchecontuckout, Edgarton (1698)
 Sanchecantacket " "
 Sakesset, near Nehoboth (1675)
 Sankotuck Sanktucket (1691)
 Sankrohomen, Nonotuck (St. Tom) Mass. 1691
 Satucket
 Saqustucket
 Saughtucket, Duxbury
 Sankroek Sawcatucket R. South Kingston
 Saugatucket
 Saugatuck R., Westport, Conn
 Soakatuck R " "
 Saukrohonk, Indian died, 1653,
 Saukronk " "
 Sankrohoncum " " 1674, same as above, plus word for ladd
 And so on. The meaning almost invariably "at the outlet"
 The best examples are the following:
 Sawahquatock, mouth oferring River, Harwich, Mass
 Sawkatucket, same
 Sawkatockkett, Brewster, Mass.

The third above is identical with your 1622 form!

We have here many names meaning "at the outlet" or something very similar. I took them from Douglas-Lithgow's Dictionary in a few minutes. The only one I noticed with a prefix was MASSAUGATUCKET, in Marshfield, meaning "great outlet tidal river".

There is nothing against your supposition that a prefix like Massa- or Missi-, perhaps shortened to M' did not originally belong to our Sawacotuck, for repeatedly in taking down a Indian from an intelligent man of clear enunciation, I have sometimes caught and sometimes missed an initial M', sometimes important to the sense, because I am sure he by no means invariably uttered the full word. The strongest argument against it is that in the southern New England forms it seems to have been so rare.

On the other hand, there is this to be said of our Maine forms, which uphold the idea that perhaps it had no prefix (unless the M') that they had a way of speaking of whatever was most important of its kind as the mountain (Katahdin), the island (Mt. Desert, Grand Menan), the lake (Woosehead, Sebago). Saco R. being the largest outlet along that shore until you get to Piscataqua it is not impossible that they called it simply The Outlet, meaning the Grand Decharge, as the French put it.

Champlain's Chouacit is a good form. It also shows no sign of a prefix. probably he pronounced the word Show-a-co-it, which is nearer to your forms than the French usually came, good enough to be accepted without challenge.

I do not find the southern form of outlet-names common in Maine. Douglas-Lithgow gives Sawacook as on "north side of Pejepscot, Toropam", but no date or authority. Sagadahock is Abnaki, and forms east of there, like unkheath, sawkhead, Sunkhaze, Sahkkehagan are distinctly eastern and northern.

This summer I got from an old Quoddy Indian a story singularly mixed up regarding the great battle between the Micmacs and the Saco Indians in 1607. There was no doubt at all of the location of the place, for we know it from both Champlain and Lescarbot. This Indian called the place both Sakdiamkiak and Sakatiamkiak. It seems to analyze

SAKAT(Sakd) -- I-- AMK-- IAK
 Outlet his sand-bar place
 AMP(F), or UMP(K) are among our assist roots to pick out. The root means gravel, sand, and often a sand-bar or gravel-bar.

There is no question about this meaning of the "gravel-bar outlet". But I find no trace of gravel in the old word, which is distinctly southern.

Again in Beland's Algonkin legends of New England, a Penobscot woman, whom we know very well, speaks of the Saco (p. 123) as Sangadihawk. She is speaking Penobscot, and as Beland was not very dependable in his Indian forms, I presume she said Saⁿghediauk, or just "The Outlet", perhaps our ordinary name for the Saco, certainly not referring to the Intervales where her legend was located.

The trouble with your analysis lies in your mistaking the length of the first element. It is not Sa-wahqua-tuck, but Sawak-i-tuck. The Watick Dictionary gives no word for outlet and I can get at it only indirectly, but in that book Trumbull gives

saget, saket. saketog, suppositive from
 sohken, s^hhken, or suhken, he pours out.

This clearly is our SAUK, SAWAK- element. If we did not have here a form-ittuck for "river", like the Delawares, I should make the word

SAWAK--- I--- TUC---K
 Outlet- his- river-place

equivalent to "At the outlet of the river". Still this does not completely satisfy. Every river has an outlet; why this is special?

If I could only find a form with a m in it, I should know I had it right. Sawa(m)catuck, Sawama(m)tock, Swacka(m)dock would be perfect forms for "Outlet-gravel-river-place", "At the river with a gravel bar at the outlet". What I have found in renobspot and malis-et almost justifies the supposition that there was once a nasal here which the early travellers and settlers discarded as unimportant. I could so easily pronounce the word to give it just that necessary missing root! And a nasal is so hard for our English ears to hear and throats to utter!

I am not sure just now about the difference between "sand" and "gravel" in our northern speech. With our swift rivers, given to freshets, of course we get more gravels than sands in the shall places. I believe the root UMP,OMB,OMK, whatever it may be (for I am not stopping to work out such details, since I write at letter speed and not as a real "utterance") seems not with us. The wtick form, as given Eliot is very different for sand, and has a question mark after gravel, which I judge was his own invention to fill a need in his translation; it looks like a manufactured word.

I am not satisfied with my report on Agamenticus. It was a guess only, perhaps a bad one, for I can't find that wenahan, island, was used in composition. But I throw out the "over across" idea though I would like the adn root, if applicable; but I know it is not to York River. I suspect the Agamenticus island which bothered me on Jenness's map was Cape "eddick". The Huble is not big enough. What I said to you I have no copy of and can't remember; but it was not a weighty utterance. Better try again. And there are Cabot and Ganong, both much better men than I am, who can not pretend to any great Indian acquirements; so follow my spiels with some caution! Just now I have taken up Symmes and Pigwacket again. I think I have made out Pigwacket hard and fast.

Sincerely,

Brewer, Maine, November 18, 1930

Dear Doctor Banks:

Replying to yours of the 15th regarding Saco, you are correct in supposing that the Indian would not make as much of the article The as I did in trying to bring out a usage. We had no definite, (or indefinite) articles and when he was emphatic he had to use Missi, Massa, Kight, K't and the like prefixes. Usually also a personal pronoun was prefixed to his nouns, -- my, thy, his, etc-- where the sense permitted. The emphasis which I indicated by underscoring The even we English usually get by making the noun emphatic. Here on the Penobscot, we do not often use the river's name, but we say "I am going across the River", "I am going out to the River", with just enough stress on the noun (which I have indicated by a capital) to make the hearer certain what river is meant. So of Moosehead, "I am going to the Lake tomorrow" always used to mean here, going to Moosehead Lake although it was sixty miles away and innumerable other lakes, many of them large, lay much nearer.

Does this not perhaps answer your difficulty about Saco meaning, the Outlet? A little vocal stress upon a word sometimes makes it enough more important to remove it from the class of common nouns to that of proper nouns. Where the Indians lacked a definite article, I think they could "take up the slack" in this way, and that Saco, the Outlet, would be understood anywhere west of Agadahock, which is substantially the same, and of Sunkheath (at George's River) which I assume to be the same. (The Penobscot had no "outlet" below Bucksport and I know no use of the word on this river)

If you wished I could state the case and send duplicates to Ganong and Cabot, asking them whether they assented. That would be safe, for if they agreed, we have all in New England whom I know, who would be interested. On the other hand, it would mean more delay and perhaps they would not agree. But I am willing to do it, if you wish. I don't like to leave a thing half-way.

About -ittuck I can't say. probably it might be hidden under -atuck, but I can't recall a parallel, and I dislike to pronounce upon a single case when no vocabulary exists of the language of southwestern Maine. It is quite probable, but not provable. S

Somewhere I have marked on my late topographical chart the points Champlain gave in his map, as printed in the definitive edition of Champlain, which Ganong edited for the northeast. From that chart I could tell just what he meant, but not just now.

Thank you for the post-mortem on Symmes. I see that like most people he died for lack of breath. With your other decision I am not quite agreeable, because I can prove that it means the other thing. "The day after the fight, being the Sabbath and the 9th", means that the Fight was on the Sabbath, not that Jones was lost that day. I have two other cross-references which prove my opinion that "being" means "which was" and refers to the Fight. However, with nothing to stay my position, I should probably accept your decision.

Lady Vane's picture I should be most pleased to own. Probably it would tell me nothing, but I'd like to see her. There are a few points yet to be unearthed about the Vanes, after I am through with Thomas Symmes.

Mail about to leave. Thanks for your enclosure. I remember Dr. True coming to see my father many years ago. He possessed zeal without knowledge. Sincerely,

Brewer, Maine, December 2, 1930

Dear Doctor Banks:

Your word Wannametonna is most interesting but, although I have put in quite a bit of time on it, I have not found anything contributory to your own bit of surgery.

It does not look nor seem like our northern Abnaki. I should call it the southern language and one more evidence that the Indians of York were like those of Massachusetts.

I have gone through the Watick Dictionary and Lithgow's lists for the various states, and see several words which are a little like it. Wullamanick, Brookfield, Mass., deed of 1673, said to mean "vermilion, red paint", and applied to a hill there.

Woolumnonuppoque, Dedham, Mass., no meaning assigned. Also R. Williams whom you quote, Wunnam, red-painting, but perhaps only equivalent to "handsome".

The change from "l" to "n" does not trouble me at all: it was common among some of the tribes. Like yourself, I should say that wannam would stand for wunnam and that would shift into wullum, or oole, without change of gear.

Our Penobscot word for "good, pleasant, handsome" is oule, oole, probably also wulle, though I can't cite an instance. (Yes, Woolasticook, St. John River, a good river, that is, one without bad falls or rapids, good for the canoeeman.)

The second syllable makes the adn, or etn root for "hill". But I am puzzled by the ending. I should suppose it stood for one syllable, am; but I can't see what I am to do with the am (Hif Hi 'ad some heggs, I could tell!) There is nothing about the word to denote a pond that I can see; apparently a hill-word.

Turning to our northern dialect and pasle, I do not find in any of my names listed anything like it. We have words for "red paint" Olamon, the town, means just that; we pronounce it O-lah-mon, when we do not say Old Lemon. We get it again at Katahdin Iron Works in Oolammonongamook, also called Munolammonungun and Mummyrugin. This comes from Rasle's *wonéma*. Changing the r to l, as we usually have to do with his words, we get oolamon, back where we started. The whole word Munolammonungun seems to mean "red-paint works", where they dig it out by instruments.

I have looked through the three volumes of the State Scientific Survey of 1861, 2, 5 and through Dr. Jackson's Survey of 1836, 7, 8 and find nothing relating to red haematite (iron ore) being found in York. That is the Red Paint of the Katahdin Iron Works. I have just tried to get Walter B. Smith, an archaeologist and "Red Paint Indian" man, a good geologist, to tell me if he knew of any red ore near York; but have failed to get his house. However, it would not take much of it to give the hill its name, and if you know of any bog iron ore near the ponds you speak of, then that is your word. The red paint idea seems to me the most likely one of all. They valued the stuff so highly that even a small spring exuding iron deposits might be sufficient.

As to the scarcity of Indians, you see the big war with the Micmacs in 1607 took off some and then the pestilence in 1618 circa probably swept away most of them. Quite likely the Micmacs (the Tarrateens) of the early writers) came up again and finished the job and the people were exterminated by 1624. As for burials, I could cite some instances about Saco if I wished to take the time. But probably those who did not die and lie above ground went south to escape the Micmacs when they swept the country.

I want very much to know about the moon on May 9, 1735. Could you find it in an old almanac? new, full or old, time of setting, or rising. Scant room for a name even. F.H.E.