

1888

# Report of the Agents of the Penobscot Tribe of Indians

John H. Stowe

*Indian Agent, State of Maine*

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REPORT OF THE AGENT

OF THE

PENOBSCOT TRIBE OF INDIANS,

FOR THE YEAR

1888

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AUGUSTA:

BURLEIGH & FLYNT, PRINTERS TO THE STATE.

1889.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN COUNCIL, December 29, 1888.

Read, accepted, and five hundred copies ordered printed.

ORAMANDAL SMITH,

*Secretary of State.*

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# REPORT

*To His Excellency the Governor and the Honorable Council of Maine:*

I herewith respectfully submit, as agent of the Penobscot Tribe of Indians, the following report of the condition of the Tribe with an account of the receipts and expenditures in their behalf, and proper vouchers therefor, for the year ending November 30, 1888.

## APPROPRIATIONS.

See chapter 67, page 36, Resolves of 1887.

Annual interest of Indian Trust Fund.....	\$4,429 70
For farming .....	700 00
Superintendent of farming .....	150 00
Schools.....	600 00
Salary of Governor of Tribe.....	50 00
" Lieut. Governor of Tribe.....	40 00
" Priest .....	100 00
" Indian Agent .....	200 00
Fall Dividends (annuity) .....	1,700 00
Bounty on crops .....	350 00
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	\$8,319 70

The foregoing appropriations were made for the fiscal year which began December 1, 1887, and ended November 30, 1888; but as the duties of the agency were administered by my predecessor in office during the first four months of the year which, by the way, are months which always make heavy drains upon the poor fund, there remained of the appropriation of Indian Trust Fund interest to be accounted for by me,

\$1,698.24. The distribution of the shore-rent fund was also made sometime before I entered office, as the law requires its payment in February of each year.

*Receipts.*

May 4,	Of C. A. Bailey, unexpended balance of Island Cemetary Fence Apprt'n,	\$ 69 73
June,	Warrant.....	2,150 00
September,	" .....	2,890 00
December,	" .....	481 57
		<hr/>
		\$5,591 30

*Expenditures.*

For supplies for poor, sick and infirm.....	\$1,042 24
Spring dividends.....	481 29
Medicine and medical attendance.....	204 30
Burial expenses .....	65 26
Contingent .....	44 24
Farming .....	728 00
Superintendent of farming .....	150 00
Schools.....	597 77
Fall dividends.....	1,478 75
Bounty on crops.....	350 00
Salary of Governor of Tribe .....	50 00
"    Lient. Governor of Tribe .....	40 00
"    Priest .....	100 00
"    Indian Agent.....	133 33
Cemetery fence.....	57 45
	<hr/>
	\$5,522 63
Cash balance on hand.....	68 67
	<hr/>
	\$5,591 30

CENSUS.

The annual census of tribe taken as usual early in January by the Superintending School Committee of Old Town places the number of members at 385.

## ELECTION.

The biennial election of officers of the tribe took place on the first Tuesday in October, the day fixed by law for that purpose. The duty of exercising the suffrage fell, by natural rotation, to the Old Party; and the following choice of officers was made: Governor, Saul Neptune; Lieut. Governor, Sebattis Dana; Representative to the Legislature, Joseph Nicholar.

## SCHOOLS.

The school on Old Town Indian Island has been this year, as last, under the able instruction of Sister Christina, one of the three Sisters of Mercy who have a permanent home on the island. I have visited the school on several occasions, and bear willing testimony to the good discipline maintained; to the interest shown by the pupils in their work; to their quickened intelligence as evinced in ready and accurate answers, and to the evident pleasure of both teacher and scholars in seeing that others were mindful of their efforts.

It is doubtless true that the Indians do not take to school work as readily as their more favored white brothers and sisters. The claims of heredity are strong. But experience amply proves that their inaptitude for study falls far short of incapacity; while the persistent and well directed efforts of teacher and the wise monitions of the older members of the tribe—whose intercourse with the whites teaches them that it is ignorance, and not “a little learning” which “is a dangerous thing”—furnish the necessary stimulus which enable them to overcome the irksome work of the school room, and to make a most creditable record there.

Indeed, so well are they succeeding in their school work here that, as I learn, every year some of the older and brighter scholars outstrip the limited course of study and leave the school, for the sole reason that the teacher's time does not suffice to take up new and higher branches. And the need of an assistant teacher is already quite strongly felt.

To supply this want, a larger appropriation of money than the present would, of course, be required. The time may not be fully ripe for such a move; but when it is, I am confident the State will exercise its accustomed liberality and make provision for two teachers instead of one. The schools on Olamon and Mattanawcook Islands have been carried on under the direction of the Supervisor of schools of Olamon and the Superintending School Committee of Lincoln respectively, and have in both cases, I believe, given good satisfaction.

#### AGRICULTURE.

The farming operations of the year have been fairly successful. More than the usual number of members of the tribe, I think, applied for seed in the spring; and while the long-continued wet weather retarded ploughing and planting, summer found the crops looking bright and promising. The one thing, perhaps, which militates most against the highest success in farming is the yearly departure from home in the month of July of nearly if not quite three-fourths of the entire tribe, who go to the seaside and other summer resorts, for the purpose of selling their baskets and various other articles of manufacture. Many of those who leave growing crops behind engage some one to look after them; and while this is done in a more or less satisfactory manner, some, I am sorry to say, quit their fields having an evident understanding with the bugs that after the latter have taken what they want, the original owners will gratefully accept what remains. It will be my endeavor to apply such correction as best I can. The early and severe frost this year proved disastrous to the crop of beans growing on the Island, as it did to like crops in other sections of our State; though something was saved from the wreck. Potatoes and other root crops did exceedingly well; and winter will have spent his force without exhausting the supply which many of the

Indian farmers have laid up for ready use. The long, cold season of winter will often convince the most skeptical that careful farming pays.

#### IN GENERAL.

The deaths among the members of the tribe during the past eight months have numbered six adults and six children. Among the most notable was that of Mrs. Mary Swasson, widow of the late Governor Sockbesin Swasson. She had been an invalid for years, and at the time of her death was at Narragansett, Pier, R. I., her usual summer rendezvous for basket trade. Her body was brought home for burial.

The large number of cases of minor ailments reported to me indicate the Indian's disregard for the laws of health, and that like many of their white brethren they apparently hope to defy nature by making friends with the doctor. It is doubtless unwise to defy either. From a business point of view, the past year has been checkered with success and failure. The young men of the tribe who are among the best river-drivers of the State, especially efficient in swift waters, made for the most part, long and profitable drives. On the other hand, the annual visit to the Seashore and other pleasure resorts, which every Indian plans to make was, with but few exceptions, long continued and poorly remunerative. Owing to the backwardness of the season, the Indians found themselves on the ground long before many of the visitors arrived; and the numberless rainy days that followed proved, in many ways, a severe set back to their business. The fact that it was also a Presidential year, is assigned by some as one of the causes of the dullness of trade. Be that as it may, but few came back "confronted by a large surplus" and querying "what to do with it." Such surplus as they had was easily and generally wisely expended. A few could fortify their homes with repairs against the rigors of a coming winter; more considered themselves fortunate in securing a fair supply of the staple articles of food and clothing, while a select few indulge in comforts which are sometimes termed

luxuries. The preparations for these yearly trips oftentimes involve the labor of months and no little self-denial. They prove that the Indians possess industry, skill, prudence and economy and that they have it in their reach to become provident and prosperous.

Even in a small community like this of the Penobscot Indians, there are numerous calls for subscriptions for public purposes. As an illustration of this I would state that the members of the tribe have contributed, during the past year, several hundred dollars worth of baskets, most of which have been sold through the agency of the Sisters of Mercy and the proceeds converted into a fund to be used in adding a chancel to the Island church. It is estimated that they will need for this purpose about five hundred dollars, and they expect to secure the entire amount by next fall. They have also contributed much for other purposes. Their purses, however, are not equal to all the demands made upon them and I would recommend that the following special appropriations be made in their behalf by the next legislature. One hundred dollars for re-silling their church and furnishing new floor timbers for same. One hundred and fifty dollars for municipal purposes, such as turnpiking and draining roads, surveying lots, repairing the Oak-hill bridge, &c. And one hundred dollars for the purchase of hose for their fire engine, as their present supply is inadequate. The above appropriations are, in my judgment urgently needed and I trust they will be freely granted.

Respectfully submitted.

JOHN H. STOWE,

*Agent of Penobscot Indians.*

OLD TOWN, Me., December 17, 1888.