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Indian Place Names: Indian Names of Some of the Streams, Islands, etc., on the Penobscot and St. John Rivers in Maine

Moses Greenleaf

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INDIAN PLACE-NAMES

ON THE

PENOBSCOT AND ST. JOHN RIVERS

Charles Hamlin.

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INDIAN PLACE-NAMES

INDIAN NAMES OF SOME OF
THE STREAMS, ISLANDS, &c.,
ON THE PENOBSCOT AND
ST. JOHN RIVERS IN MAINE

TAKEN FROM

A LETTER FROM MOSES GREENLEAF
ESQ., TO REV. DR. MORSE

REPRINTED FROM THE FIRST REPORT OF THE
AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CIVILI-
ZATION AND GENERAL IMPROVEMENT OF
THE INDIAN TRIBES OF THE UNITED
STATES. NEW HAVEN, 1824

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1903

**AN EDITION OF FIFTY COPIES
PRINTED FOR**

EDGAR CROSBY SMITH

EASTERN INDIANS*

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM MOSES GREENLEAF, ESQ.,
TO REV. J. MORSE, D. D.

WILLIAMSBURG, MAINE, 28th. Nov. 1823.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I noticed in a late paper, some observations of Baron Humboldt, upon your *Report* relating to Indian languages. I have not the paper at hand, and have forgotten what they were, except that they coincided with my own previous opinion, and brought to mind some ideas on which I have often reflected. Investigations of Indian history, customs, languages, &c. are interesting to the learned world, to the antiquarian, the philanthropist and especially to the Americans; but there are some classes of men, to whom the investigation of their *languages* alone, may be more particularly useful, as well as to mankind at large; more especially to the immediate civilized successors of the aborigines. The classes to which I refer, are those of the Geographer and Natural Historian.

The first discoverers, and first inhabitants of a country, *usually* give names to rivers, mountains, lakes, &c. to

* Reprinted from the first report of the American Society for Promoting Civilization and General Improvement of the Indian Tribes of the United States. New Haven 1824.

commemorate some place they have before known, some person, some event, or descriptive of some quality of the place. Civilized discoverers more frequently give commemorative names. Uncivilized, or nearly so, almost universally, *descriptive*. Thus modern names are apt to be arbitrary. Ancient ones very generally have an appropriate meaning. And I believe that, as far as we know, the languages in which the most ancient names of places on the earth, have an appropriate signification, so far we may know, to a moral certainty, the tribe or nation who were or from whom emigrated the first settlers of that region. I recollect, when a boy, to have read in an old English Magazine, an essay under the signature of Merion, founded on these principles, and proving satisfactorily to my mind, that the *Welsh* was the language of the first settlers of the principal part of Europe. He gave a great variety of names of places, still known, with the original signification, which was evidently appropriate, and these names were Welsh words, or sentences, some of them somewhat corrupted, others but little altered, even in the spelling, and some not at all.

It is 30 or 35 years since I read it, and I recollect but few instances, one is *Vesuvius* (Welch *Vus-huv-ys*, a burning mountain,) *Et-na* is analogous.* There were instances all over France, Germany, &c. The Hebrew

* I should like to know, if there are any analogies between the Welsh language, and that of any of the ancient nations of Asia Minor.

scholar finds confirmation of the general proposition, in the proper names recorded in scripture.

A knowledge of the meaning of Aboriginal names of places, will lead to researches for the property or quality indicated, and often with success. It is this which may render investigations of our Indian languages useful to us. It is far from improbable, in my opinion, that a proper attention to this point, in our extensive western regions, may lead to valuable discoveries in soils, products, minerals, &c. at least much sooner than they would otherwise be made.

I have before promised you some names in this region, for other purposes, and now enclose an imperfect list of Indian names of streams, islands and lakes on the Penobscot, and St. Johns, with such explanations as I am able at present to give. I have no knowledge of the language of the Penobscots (or *Penoomskeooks*, as they would more properly be called, or "Numbugs" as I *have heard it said* they call themselves, perhaps *Novumbeguas*.) except occasionally a word or two, and the explanations are chiefly second hand, as are in some cases the names themselves. Perhaps by prosecuting inquiries, which you have the best means of doing, you may, with little trouble, make some valuable additions to our stock of geographical knowledge, in this way.

A few instances, just now occur, which are not on the list, and may serve to confirm some of my remarks.

Olam'mon (*paint*, or place where paint is found.)

The name of a stream and island on the east side of Penobscot. Here is found a good paint, an oxyd of iron. Bog iron ore is found in the vicinity.

Mun'na lam'monun'gun or *Mun'olam'mon-un'gun* (*very fine paint*, or place where it is found, or great quantity of it.) The name of the west branch of Pleasant river, passing through the N. E. quarter of Williamsburgh. No. 6, 9th. range &c. On this is found a large quantity of very fine orange colored ochre, some of a bright yellow, and some red, and a *mountain of excellent iron*. Various oxyds of iron are found all along its banks, and I have seen some sulphate of iron, but not much. Near the head is a mineral stream; qualities not known. The name is a superlative of Olammon. The iron and ochres were found, from inquiry, excited by the name.

Sebec. The town next to this, is from a pond and stream of the same name, but it is properly Sebago (a great water,) and is the same with the Indian name, of Sebago pond, in the county of Cumberland. When I first came to Maine, Sebago pond was called Sebaycook.

They are both the largest in their respective vicinities.

Kennebeek, (Indian *Kahnobahkook*.) Kennebecook and Kahnobahgo. The well known river and two smaller streams in Maine, are all the same name and signification. I once knew it, but have forgotten.

I have exhausted my time and nearly my stock. It is well if the same may not be said of your patience. For

other parts of your letter, which I have not adverted to, accept my thanks, and believe me very respectfully and sincerely,

Your obedient servant,

MOSES GREENLEAF.

REV. DR. MORSE.

**INDIAN NAMES OF SOME OF THE STREAMS, ISLANDS, &c.
ON THE PENOBSCOT AND ST. JOHN RIVERS IN MAINE;
FURNISHED BY MOSES GREENLEAF, ESQ.**

It is rather difficult to spell Indian words, from the want of English letters to convey accurately some of the Indian sounds, and from the differences in pronunciation among the Indians themselves. I have followed such as I think most accurate, and endeavor to use no silent letters, nor any of dubious sound—e—g—for c I write s, except ch as in cheese, for soft g—j &c. a is generally broad, as in father.

Beginning at Bangor, and ascending the Penobscot to Chesunkook Lake, I prefix R, to places on the right, or *eastern* bank, and L, to those on the left. Islands and lakes, in the river, of course, need no such designation. Looking on the map for places there laid down, you will,

from the order of arrangement, ascertain nearly the position of the others.

I give first the Indian names — then the present English names where there are such, and last the signification as far as I know it :

Pem-ta-qua-iuk-took,	Penobscot River,	{ (Old writers have it Pentageovet erroneously I think.)
L. Kenduskeag,	{ (From Ken-kon or Kahn, the calf of the leg, and keag a point of land.	} A pleasant promenade
Sobskook,	Nichols' rock,	{ In the river at the head of the tide.
R. Patagumkis,		Crooked stream.
Aneksassissaik	Ant Island.	
L. *Mskütook,	{ Stillwater west side of Marsh's island.	} Stillwater, (by some rearing water.)
R. Mad-a-mis-comtis,		Young alewife stream
Was soos-sump-sque- hè-mok,	{ Marsh's Island,	{ Slippery rock I. (Was- sous is a bear.)
Ma-chee-wee-sis,	Great works Falls,	Bad Falls,
R. Ta-la-la-go-dis-sik,	Webster's I.	{ Painting place for Squaws.
Wa-be-nung-te-kook,		Crooked Falls.
<i>Pe-noom'-ske-ook,</i>	Old Town Falls,	Rocky Falls.
	(Hence the English word Penobscot. It would have been better <i>Pe-nobs-kook</i> Obskook means a rock in the water.)	
L. Ku-kun-sook,	Pushan stream.	
R. Sunk-haze.		
L. Mas-quas-seè-kook,	Birch stream	
No-lat-hee-hee-mun'- gun, I.		{ Old settlement.

*Schoodic—Schoodiac &c. &c. are all the same word.

Kah-no-nah-jik,		Long Island.
Bos-que-nu-guk-I.	Broken I.	Burying Ground.
L. Kus-sus-kook,	Hemlock stream and I.	
Pem-squam-ku-took,	Birch Island.	
Suga-la-manahn,	Sugar Island.	
L. Beem-squam-kee- took,	}	Quick smooth water.
Sow-on'-gun,		Eagle I.
R. Olamman, str. } and I. }		{ Paint or place where paint is found.
Wom-be-man-do,		White man's I.
Sau-gus,		Bad Island.
(Quere what is the meaning of Saugus.		Lynn?)
Man-da-wesso,		Hedgehog I.
A-was-soos, I.		Bear I.
R. Passadumkeag,		Stream above Falls.
Bos-que-noo-sik, I.		{ Burying ground for Mohawks.
Chee-manahn,		Great Island.
L. Piskataquis,		Rapid River.
<i>Piscataquis</i> —Piscataqua near Portsmouth, another of the same name near Portland and and Piscataquog, in N. H. have all the same meaning, and answer to the description.		
L. Meè-sok-dow-hok,		Burnt land I. and str.
Ba-kun-gun-a-hik I.		Crooked I.
Kas-sa-nun-ga-num-keag,		Elaware rips (or rapids.)
Na-mok-a-nok,		Mohawk Rips.
L. Mad'-a-mis-kon'-tis, str.		Young alewive str.
R. Mad'-a-nau'-kook, str. and I.		
R. Squa-mok-wee-see-boo, str.		Little salmon str.
Ma-num'-kook,		Sandy I's.
Sol-o-gis-moo-dik,		5 Island Falls.
Ma-ja'-obs-koos,		Pomoohah's (Devil's) rock.
R. Mad-a-wam-keag, str.		

At-te-beme-nok,	Cherry I.
Sku-ko-al,	Grass I.
Manas'-koos,	Green I.
Pata-gum-kis,	Half-circle point, str. and falls.
R. Phil-a-moosis,	{ Little Salmon str. (some other explanation.
Nik-è-tou,	The great fork of the river.
Che-too'-kook, or Che-sun-kook,	The great West Branch.
Was-sat-a-quoik,	The great East Branch.

(From this follow up the great West Branch.)

L. Mam-a-sun-gu-obskook,	Rough stone stream.
Ma-dib-par,	Flint stone falls.
Kob-os-see,	Sturgeon I.
Ne-gun-is-sis,	Short falls and portage.
Quas-sa-bam,	Pond I.
Pquakis,	Red Pond.
No-lum-ba-jik,	Pool.
Baam-chè-nun-ga-mis,	Cross Pond.
Bamedumpkok, (Pemedumpkok),	Sandy barred pond.
Manahn-ee-kook,	River full of I's.
Maju-um-quassa-bam,	Bad pond.
Pon-gon-qua-mook,	Same.
Pon-gon-que-mis,	Same.
Bok-a-ja-nes-quis,	Jug I.
R. Aubol-jok-o-ma-gassik streams.	Bald country.
Che-sun-kook Lake,	(Che-great—kook-water.)

ST. JOHN'S RIVER.

(Begin at the head of S. W. branch or great lakes to descend.)

Pon-gon-qua-mook,	Muddy pond.
Baam'-chee-nun'-gamo, or Ahp'moo-jee'-ne-gà-mook,	{ Lake, { Baam' or Ahpm—across. Che or jee—great. Mook-ook, &c. water.

Wal' lan-gas'-que-ga-mor, } or Wallah'-gas-que-ga'mook, }	} Lake,	{ Back wigwam lake. The stream below bears this name, (abridged to (Alligash' to its junction with the Walloostook, or "good river," which heads near the boundary towards Quebec, and these two form the St. Johns.
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(Descending the "Alligash.")

Uem-sas-kikponds,	"Tied together like sausages."
R. Ma-qua-kook,	Birch Stream.

On the Main St. John.

L. Pe-che-ne-ga-mook,	St. Francis' river.
R. Up-que-dopsk,	Fish river.
L. Madāwaskah river.	
L. Walumpkuas river,	(Just below Madawaskah.)
L. Qua dotch quoik river,	" Green River.
L. Si an gas river,	
L. _____	Grand River.
L. Pogop ske kok, str.	(Just above Grand Falls.)
Chè ka chè ne gâ bik,	{ Or Grand Falls, just below the
R. Aroostook river,*	boundary.

The following are among the Radical Words in the foregoing, as I conjecture:—

Gunkis } Gunakik }	Crooked.
Took } Mook } Ook }	Water—I think it indicates a large quantity.
Wassoos } Awassoos }	A Bear.
Moosis	A Moose.

*I suspect this to be radically the same word with Wal loos took, i. e. Good River or Fine River; the description of the stream and surrounding land, agree with this.

Maqua,	Birch.
Bos que,	Burying-ground.
Ma chee,	{ Bad—wicked—(<i>Macheene</i> to
Che } Chee, }	{ kill.)
Manahn,	Great
Baam, } Ahpm, }	Island.
Squam,	Across.
Squamik, } Squamock, }	Quick—Nimble.
Keag,	Salmon.
Obskook, } Obskoos, }	A point of land.
Aubol, } Obol, }	A rock in the water.
	Bald—Barren.

