

FIRST FAMILIES: WOODLAND PEOPLE  
OF MAINE AND THE CANADIAN MARITIMES

BY

EDITH FAVOUR

with illustrations by Alice Dengler

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FIRST FAMILIES: WOODLAND PEOPLE  
OF MAINE AND THE CANADIAN MARITIMES

I. WHO WERE THE ORIGINAL AMERICANS OF MAINE AND THE  
MARITIMES, AND WHAT WAS THEIR LIFE-STYLE?

It was a life filled with discomfort,  
pageantry, color, emotion, uneasiness anent gods,  
ghosts, and goblins. It was made up of play taken  
seriously and duties stylized into solemnity. But  
above all, it was pervaded with the magical sense  
of rightness that inevitably settles on people who  
have lived a very long time in a very old house, and  
in this respect was underlain by a certain security.

(American Heritage 1961:163)

The Indians of Maine and the Canadian Maritimes who encountered Europeans in the first decade of the 1600's were culturally quite similar tribes of the Northeast Algonquin. They were known to Europeans by varying tribal names, sometimes depending upon their dialects, sometimes upon the geographical landmarks of their hunting territories, and sometimes upon whether their observers were English or French. However, the tribes can be identified today in broad terms as the Abnaki of Maine and New Hampshire, the Malecite of New Brunswick, and the Micmac of Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island, and the Gaspé Peninsula of Quebec.

Seven tribes comprised the Abnaki nation: The Pennacook of New Hampshire; the Sokokis, who lived along Maine's Saco River; the Anasagunticook (which included the Pjepscot), who controlled the whole Androscoggin River valley from the source to the mouth at Merrymeeting Bay; the Indians of Maine's Kennebec River, who were the Norridgewock of the upper Kennebec, the Canibis of its middle stretches, and the Sheepscot at the mouth of that river; the Wawenock of Maine's Knox and Lincoln Counties, who dwelt in the Georges River region; the Penobscot and Pentagoet

of Maine's Penobscot River drainage; and the Passamaquoddy of Maine's Passamaquoddy Bay and Schoodic River (Starbird, 1928; foreword, Staples). One notices immediately the dependence of tribal bands upon the river systems which constituted the range of their hunting activities. The term "my river" occurs frequently in early Indian references to their traditional lands.

Those Abnaki tribes which lived on the upper reaches of the Kennebec, Androscoggin, and Saco Rivers are considered to have been originally more gentle and docile than tribes to the east of them, probably due to the restraining influence upon them of the Jesuit priests who had come from France to Christianize them. Francis Parkman, the great American historian, has constantly stressed the difference between the role and character of the early and of the later Jesuit priests, stating that the early Jesuits were devoted apostles whose aim was to convert the "savage hordes," but that before the end of the 17th century, Jesuit functions had become as much political as religious, and that the Jesuits managed the Indian tribes in such a way as to keep them loyal to the interests of France. Thus, eventually, the Abnaki became fierce defenders of the Jesuits and of France's American continental claims as opposed to England's. The Abnaki's ties with the Indians of Quebec were strong. Thus, when English power in New England finally prevailed over that of France, most of the Maine tribes, with the exception of the Penobscot and the Passamaquoddy, fled their ancient hunting lands, deforested and stained by the blood of white men's wars, and joined the Indians of Becancour and Sillery, finally to meld with those at St. Francis, Quebec (Parkman 1899:212-214). Those families which did not flee to Canada joined the Indians of the Penobscot River drainage, and from them are descended the present-day Penobscot whose dialect is basically Abnaki but whose main reservation is at Indian Island near Oldtown, Maine.



The Malecite Indians lived on the St. John River of New Brunswick, and their name meant "dwellers on the beautiful river" (Hodge 1907:Part I, 793). They practiced a rude but important form of maize and pumpkin agriculture in the fertile river valley as well as devoting themselves to migratory hunting and fishing (Speck and Hadlock 1946:356-358). They and the Passamaquoddy, who occupied the coast east of the Penobscot River and all the region around Passamaquoddy Bay, the St. Croix River, and Schoodic Lake on the boundary between Maine and New Brunswick, shared a common language. Some authorities believe that the Passamaquoddy are an off-shoot from the Malecite--that those Malecite who migrated southward several hundred years ago from their main village at Spring Hill founded the Passamaquoddy tribe (Speck 1940:17). The Malecite were known as the "Etchemin" to early European explorers such as Champlain, "Etchemin" meaning "the men." They were seafaring Indians, hunters of porpoise and seal. Today the Malecite live in settlements on the St. John such as Tobique, Woodstock, St. Mary's, Kingsclear, Oromocto, and Deven (Speck and Hadlock 1946:355,368; Clark 1970:64). The present-day Passamaquoddy live at Pleasant Point and Peter Dana Point in Maine's Washington County near the towns of Perry and Princeton respectively.

The Micmac lived in Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, northern New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and the Gaspé Peninsula in Quebec. Schoolcraft believed that the three Indians whom Sebastian Cabot took back from Newfoundland to England in 1497 were Micmac (Hodge 1907:858). The Micmac were called the "Souriquois" by the French, who considered them fierce and warlike but who formed a lasting friendship with them, a relationship which the English were unable to foster until 1799, when a peace treaty was concluded with them (Hodge 1907:858). Their language differed decidedly from those of the other Maine-Maritime tribes. The Micmac were nicknamed Tarratines ("the traders") because,

being favorites of the French, they could get from them European trade goods to barter with the tribes west of them (Eckstorm 1932:8; Hoffman 1955:V.2, 65-87). Eckstorm has an explanation for the claim by both the Penobscot and the Micmac Indians to the name "Tarratine." She states that just prior to the Plymouth landing, when both Maine and Massachusetts Indians were weakened by pestilence, the Micmac made war upon the Penobscot and sent raiding parties to the Massachusetts Indian villages for corn. Because the Massachusetts Indians later complained to the white colonists of the "Tarratine" attack, and because the English were told the raiders came from the Penobscot area, the English thought all Penobscot Indians were "Tarratines" (Eckstorm 1932:9).

Those Indians at the mouth of the Saco River of Maine whom we have already mentioned resembled closely the Indians of Massachusetts in dialect and life-style and were known to the early French as the "Almouchiquois." Champlain visited them in his voyage of exploration of the New England coast in the summer of 1605 and described them as follows:

These people shave the hair on the top of their heads rather high up and wear the rest very long, combing and twisting it in the back in various ways very neatly with feathers that they fasten to the head. . . They are an active people with well-formed bodies. Their weapons are pikes, clubs, bows and arrows, on the end of which some put the tail of a fish called the signoc (Note: the horseshoe crab). . . They till and cultivate the ground, which we had not seen done before. Instead of ploughs they have an instrument of wood, very strong, made like a spade. . . I went ashore to see their tillage on the bank of the river, and I saw their corn. . . They make gardens of it, planting three or four grains in a place, then heaping up a quantity of earth with the shells of that same fish, the signoc. . . Among the corn in each hill they plant three or four Brazilian beans (Note: the kidney bean, indigenous in America, probably called the Brazilian bean because it was supposed to have been introduced into France from Brazil) of various colors. When they are grown, they intertwine among this corn, which grows five or six feet high, and keep the field very free from weeds. We saw there many squashes and pumpkins and some tobacco, which they also cultivate. . . I saw there a great quantity of nuts, which are small, and have several divisions. . . There are also a great many vines, which bear a very beautiful berry, from which we made a very good verjuice. . . Their settled

habitation, the tillage and the beautiful trees, gave me the impression that the air there is milder and better than that where we passed the winter. . . The forests in the interior are very light. . . consist of oaks, beeches, ashes, and young elms. . . The savages stay in this place all the time, and have a big cabin surrounded by palisades made of rather large trees placed side by side, whither they retire when their enemies come to war against them; and they cover their cabins with oak bark. . . The river is full of fish and is surrounded with meadows."

(Champlain 1606-1616:111-103)

Within the above mentioned tribes there were many sub-tribes and families. The warlike Mohawk of the Iroquois League were their greatest enemies, for the Mohawk continually threatened them. As protection from them, the tribes of Maine and the Maritimes allied themselves, forming the loose Wabanaki Confederacy which was gradually disintegrated by the late 1800's when it had become no more than an "appendage" to the League of the Iroquois (Maine, a Guide 'Downeast' 1970:28).

## II. WHEN AND WHY DID EUROPEANS COME TO THIS SECTION OF AMERICA?

The Indians of the northeastern corner of North America had known white contact, at the very least, for a century before the colonies at Plymouth and Jamestown. In fact, in the early 1500's the Newfoundland cod banks were plied by French, Portuguese, and Spanish fishermen, the Bretons being believed to have frequented them even before the voyage of Cabot in 1497 (Parkman 1897:191). The following samples of European exploration are included here so that the reader may get some idea of the early interest of Europe in "the New World."

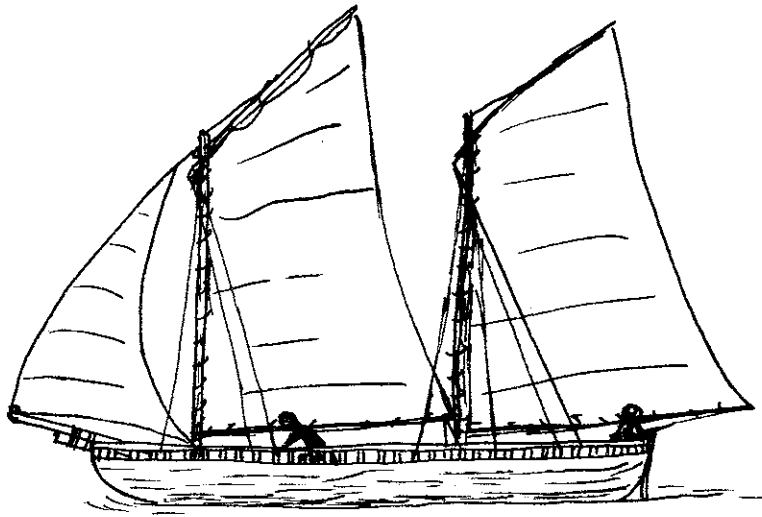
The Italian, Verrazzano, coasted the Maine seaboard in 1524, exploring for France the shores between North Carolina and Newfoundland. The Portuguese, Estévan Gomes, working for Spain, looked for a strait to the Pacific in 1525 and

at that time spotted Mount Desert Island, Maine, and sailed up the Penobscot River to present-day Bangor. Under a patent given to Roberval by Francis I of France, Roberval's captain, Jacques Cartier, planted a cross at the Gaspe Peninsula of southeast Quebec in 1534. In 1604 Samuel de Champlain, navigator and guide for the Sieur de Monts (Pierre de Guast), who had received a patent to all Acadia from Henry IV of France, brought de Monts to the little island of Dochet in the St. Croix River. More than once he sailed down along the coast of New England on voyages of discovery. His pinnace is said to have come to grief on some ledges off Bar Harbor (Morison 1960:9) so that he landed to make repairs on the island which he named and recorded in his ship's log as "L'Isle de Monts Deserts" (Mount Desert Island).

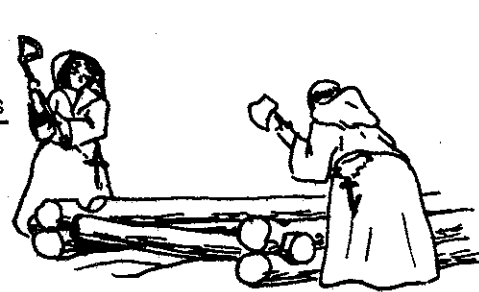
England also possessed early knowledge of the American continent. Venetian John Cabot, sailing for England, had sighted Cape Breton in 1497 (Jesuit Relations 1896:V. I, 1). The British came more definitively into the picture in 1603 when Captain Martin Pring ranged the coast of Maine, to be followed in 1605 by Captain George Waymouth, who landed on Monhegan Island and later entered the Kennebec River. Pring turned up again on the scene in 1606, to be trailed by Captain George Popham for the Plymouth Company. Unsuccessful efforts were made at that time to settle permanently near the mouth of the Kennebec--a plan which did not materialize until 1630, due to Waymouth's serious difficulties with the Indians, several of whom he had kidnapped (Jesuit Relations 1896: V. II, 292). Captain John Smith of Virginia fame mapped the territory between the Penobscot River and Cape Cod in 1614. And so it went, many others following the lure of the New World.

Now for the reasons for exploration. From the very beginning, with the occupation of the Newfoundland cod banks, it became apparent to European

# PLATE A



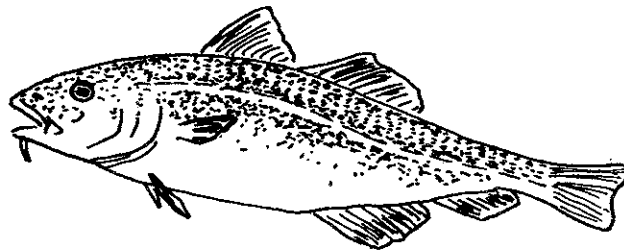
1. Europeans exploring a New World bay



Jesuit priests at  
work in the wilderness



3. Beaver - prime animal  
for the fur-trader



4. Newfoundland Banks cod -  
attraction for Norman, Breton, and Basque  
fishermen



fishermen that a few knives, axes, copper kettles and beads would bring Indians with their furs to the shore to trade. And so, since fur-trading was more lucrative and less rigorous than fishing, a different attraction and purpose emerged for sailing to America.

Added to the lure of fishing, fur trade, and possible colonization, a fourth *raison d'être* appeared--the Christianization of "les Sauvages" by the Jesuit priests of France. Indeed, the *Sieur de Monts* patent expressly stated he was to facilitate "the task of converting and instructing the people that inhabit this country, at present barbarous atheists without faith or religion, to Christianity, and to draw them out of the ignorance and faithless state in which they live." Father Pierre Biard and Father Enemond Massé, under the patronage of that devout Catholic, Madame de Guercheville, attached themselves to an expedition commanded by Vice-Admiral Biencourt, destined for Port Royal in Nova Scotia. Finally, after a two-year period of friction with Biencourt, they set up in 1613 the first French Jesuit mission in all of North America--St. Saveur, at Fernald Point on Mount Desert Island in Maine. Although it was ill-fated, wiped out by the English Captain Argall of Virginia in less than a month after being started, it marked the beginning of a tremendous religious-political influence upon the Indians of New France--

In an obscure stroke of violence began the strife of France and England, Protestantism and Rome, which for a century and a half shook the struggling communities of North America and closed at last in the memorable triumph on the Plains of Abraham

(Parkman 1899:330).

### III. WHAT FIRST-HAND WRITTEN SOURCES SUPPLY INFORMATION ON THE INDIANS OF MAINE AND THE MARITIMES?

The journals and published voyages of explorers and sea-captains form one source. Champlain's Voyages presents an extraordinarily vivid and precise account. Among others are James Rosier's A True Relation of the Voyages of Captain George Waymouth; The General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles by Captain John Smith, who visited Castine, Maine, in 1616 (Jesuit Relations 1897: V. VIII, 287); and the two books of John Josselyn, An Account of Two Voyages to New England, 1638-, 1633 and New England's Rarities. Marc Lescarbot, a Paris Lawyer, historian, and poet, furnished another valuable source in his L'Histoire de la Nouvelle France, derived from his experience of living at Port Royal, Canada in 1606-1607 during which time he explored the coast between St. John, New Brunswick, and the St. Croix River. Nicholas Denys, who came from France in 1632 as Lieutenant-Governor of all coasts and islands of the Gulf of the St. Lawrence and the Gaspé to the Cape of Canso, knew the Indians of that area intimately for thirty-five years and in 1671 wrote an interesting account of his Acadian years entitled Description Geographique et Historique de l'Amerique Septentrionale.

Diaries of white prisoners taken by the Indians are another primary resource. John Gyles of Pemaquid, Maine, who was kidnapped by Indians in 1689 at the age of eleven and who spent nine years in servitude, recounted his experiences in his journal. In it he told of being taken to Canada by the inland route, the Indians' treatment of prisoners, their hunting and fishing practices, canoe-making, root-digging, corn-planting, and many other aspects of their communal life (Gyles 1844:entire).



But among the most detailed of all sources are the reports of the French Jesuit priests--men cultivated and trained in observation--who came to the shores of Nova Scotia a decade before the landing of the Pilgrims and eventually spread their missions throughout all of New France. They wandered with and lived with the Indians they sought to convert, in indescribable confusion and bloodshed, starvation and cold. As Reuben Gold Thwaites, who edited The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, declared,

No coureur de bois was more expert in forest lore than were the Jesuit Fathers; and the records made by these soldiers of the Cross,--explicit and detailed, while familiar in tone,--are of the highest scientific value, often of considerable literary interest

(Jesuit Relations 1896: V. I, viii).

The priests transmitted their written reports annually to their Superior in Quebec or Montreal. Their Superior made up a summarizing narrative or "relations" which he forwarded to the Provincial of the Jesuit order in France. There the "relations" were published in a series of volumes. In an attempt to obtain financial backing for the missions, excerpts from these were read to members of the sophisticated French court, who were thrilled by the primitive tales.

#### IV. WHAT WERE THESE EARLY INDIANS LIKE?

What have all these splendid well-springs told us about the "first families" of the Maine-Maritimes area? Father Biard called them handsome and well-shaped, clever at bargaining, physically dexterous, indomitably prideful, boastful, generous to their friends but treacherous and cruel to their enemies (Jesuit Relations 1896: V. III, 73-99). Jouvency marveled at the Indians' natural oratory (Jesuit Relations 1896: V. I, 277-279). Le Clercq stated that the Micmac "have naturally a sound mind and common sense" (Le Clercq 1910: 241). Father Le Jeune observed,

Those who cross over here from France have a low opinion of our Savages. . . but as soon as they have

associated with them, they confess that only education, not intelligence, is lacking in these peoples

(Jesuit Relations 1898: V. XIX, 39).

There is one thing sure--the Indians themselves had no doubt of their superiority to Europeans. They were amazed at the white man's inability to respond quickly to sensory cues, his awkwardness in constructing objects out of natural materials, his weakness in sustaining vigilance and muscular control, his lack of a sense of direction in the wilderness. Sometimes these opinions were expressed in mockery--sometimes through helpfulness--usually depending upon the relationship existing between themselves and the European in question (Hallowell 1946: 201, 202, 213, 214). Samoset of Pemaquid, Maine, and Massasoit of the Massachusetts Wampanaug were typically friendly and helpful sachems. Champlain, who respected the Northeast Algonquin and kept his word to them, intent on learning from them, had a very favorable relationship with them.

The Indians admired emotional control and strove to attain it. This included not only patience and ability to stand pain stoically but also the repression of anger in their countenances. Schoolcraft pointed out that since the Indian believed in necromancy and witchcraft, he had to suspect all forms of life and matter as being threats to his own existence:

Fear and suspicion put double guards upon him.  
A look or a word might betray him, and he therefore  
often had not a look or a word to bestow

(Schoolcraft 1851-1857: Part III, 58).

Such repression, of course, encouraged deception; and one of the forms of such deception is described by Father Jouveney:

If any person has injured another by means of a  
rude jest, the latter carefully conceals it, or lays  
it up, and in retaliation injures his detractor behind  
his back

(Jesuit Relations 1896: V. 1, 277).

Father Biard's praise of certain Indian characteristics is offset by his vigorous condemnation of these same deceptive qualities mentioned by Jouvençy:

They love justice and hate violence and robbery,  
a thing really remarkable in men who have neither laws  
nor magistrates. . .

(Jesuit Relations 1896: V. II, 73)

. . . they are hypocritical--contradicting,  
flattering and lying to achieve their ends. But when  
once they have gotten their fill, they go off, mocking  
the French and everybody else at a distance and secretly  
laughing at everything. . .

(Jesuit Relations 1896: V. II, 79)

In pre-colonial time the Indians of Maine and the Maritimes had not known intoxicating beverages. Trade-liquor had a disastrous effect upon the Indians. Since they repressed their natural aggressions, the contrast when liquor released their inhibitions was great. Not only did the French and English stand in terror of them when they were drunk, but the Indians, themselves, feared the effects of liquor. In 1651 the Norridgewock Abnaki were so worried about intoxication among their young men that they told their missionary, Father Druillettes,

. . . the Demon of drunkenness. . . must be  
exterminated forever. . . (as) it causes murders  
among us and makes us like madmen;

and they begged him to write to the English deputies at Plymouth and Boston and say,

All the Allied Savages dwelling on the Kenebek  
hate firewater as much as they hate the Hiroquois; and  
if they have any more of it brought hither to sell to  
the Savages, the latter will believe the English wish  
to exterminate them

(Jesuit Relations 1899: V. XXXVIII, 35-36).

Under the influence of rum supplied by unscrupulous traders, Indian sachems deeded away tribal lands and handed over bales of valuable furs for insignificant

compensation. Cotton Mather, in his "Magnalia," commented disapprovingly about such conduct:

Many rude, wild, and ungovernable English did, unto the extreme dissatisfaction of the wiser sort, rashly add unto the occasion which the Indians also took to grow ungovernable

(Wood 1921: V. 10, 17).

Thomas Morton, in his 1637 New England Canaan, provided us with several additional sidelights on the Indians of his area. He noted the respect for age shown by both small children and young people, with no grumbling when commanded to perform tasks. The Reverend Silas Rand, writing and working among the Micmac two centuries later, also stressed this attitude. Morton observed that although young men's opinions were heard in the councils, the old men's decisions were followed. He also noticed that Indians must save face, for it was very important to them that others recognize their worth. Indian eyesight and sense of smell were superior to those of Englishmen, Morton averred. Indians were hospitable and never denied food to a guest, even if he were a stranger:

If anyone comes into their house and falls asleep, when they seem disposed to lie down, they will spread a mat for him and lay a roll of skins for a bolster and let him lie. If he sleep until their meat is dished up, they will fetch a wooden bowl of meat to him where he sleeps and wake him

(Morton 1883: 16).

Although the Indians Morton knew were not apt to quarrel seriously with each other, sometimes tense situations could not be reconciled. When that happened, the two combatants entered a field where, hiding behind trees and aiming their bows and arrows, they would try to wound and finally kill each other. Morton laid great emphasis on the Indians' ingenuity and subtlety.

The generosity referred to by Biard and the food-sharing recounted by Morton actually began as one of the "rights" of kinship, established to ensure survival

of the society. This apparently developed into a habit of almost indiscriminate hospitality (Powell 1891: 34-35; Dowling 1968: 502-507).

The misuse of power, especially the mistreatment of animals, is a taboo in northeastern hunting tradition. According to Penobscot mythology, No-chi-gar-neh, the son of the air, is supposed to have counseled the Indians thus:

You must never allow yourselves to become so small as to use your power upon or against your brother on any contention. . . never abuse the spirit of animals. You may kill the animal or eat his flesh but never abuse the spirit of it, because if you do. . . he will never come to your calling

(Nicolar 1893: 42-43).

This ethic is based on the belief in manito, the Algonkian word for the spirit that rules all things--the mysterious power of life and of the universe--possessed by animals as well as men, which must not be profaned. Father Rasles, priest to the Norridgewock Abnaki, in 1723 explained this concept in a letter to his brother:

As they know hardly anything but the animals with which they live in the forests, they imagine that there is in these animals. . . a sort of spirit who rules all things, and who is the master of life and death. . . there are manitous common to the whole tribe, and there are special ones for each person. Ousakita, they say, is the great Manitou of all the animals that move on the earth or fly in the air. . . when they go to the hunt, they offer to him tobacco, powder, and lead, and also well-prepared skins. . . they say to him: 'Oussakita. . . deign to accept these presents, and do not permit the animals to escape our arrows; grant that we may kill the fattest ones, and in great number, so that our children may not lack clothing or food'

(Jesuit Relations 1900: V. LXVII, 159, 161).

With recognition of this aspect of manito, it is easier to understand a Penobscot hunter's action of not telling his wife how many beaver he had taken in a hunt (for a beaver was especially sensitive to the mention of his own death) but, instead, throwing down before her chips of wood corresponding to the number killed (Speck 1940: 44); or preventing the household dogs from eating the bones of the respected bear (Le Clercq 1910: 226).

Games formed an integral part of Indian lives. Some, like racket (lacrosse), seem to have been invented to strengthen the body for war. Some were devised for gambling, like dice-bowl and straws. Some were outdoor winter pastimes, like snow-snake. Others were indoor amusements, like ring-and-pin, cat's-cradle, or hide-the-button. Exercises to test physical strength, like wrestling, foot-racing, stone-slinging, were popular. Many games were taken so seriously that spirits were invoked and fasting occurred for days before a contest. The propensity to gamble while playing almost any game was deplored by the Jesuit priests since wasted time and poverty resulted (Favour 1974: 1-27).

Many authorities consider that good humor and joking were typical of the Indians of the Maine-Maritimes area. Biard remarked of the Micmac,

For they are droll fellows, and have a word  
and a nickname very readily at command. . .

(Jesuit Relations 1897: V. III, 75).

And apparently humor is a trait that still survives, for in 1940 Dr. Frank Speck declared,

The Wabanaki are indeed a jolly people; with  
most of them any time is play time. . . Indulgence  
in the pastime of humorous narration is incessant

(Speck 1940: 186-187).

Banter, raillery, and often ridicule were the forms of humor most common among the early Indians, a type of communication which the priests, in their earnest endeavors, found hard to bear.

Pre-colonial inter-tribal conflict seems to have been different in motivation and character than later wars which involved both Europeans and Indians. Nicolar, a Penobscot Indian writing in the 19th century, stated that the inter-tribal war objective was only to subdue one another, never to take possession of any part

of the country that they conquered. The glory seems to have consisted in bringing back prisoners (Nicolar 1893: 57). Perhaps we can trace the change in motivation after the advent of Europeans to this country. The coming of the French signalled the beginning of the fur trade. The conflict between the Mohawk and the Wabanaki tribes was exacerbated by this since the Mohawk became determined to dominate that fur trade and divert it from the lower St. Lawrence River to the Hudson River (their territory). The rivalry was then deepened by the commercial interests of the French, Dutch, and English. The land itself became an issue since the English were determined to colonize, which to them meant forcing the Indians off their land. By the middle of the 18th century, Maine's and Canada's eastern tribes became involved in an all-out war between France and England for territory. The tribes were again involved in another white-man's war--this time, the American Revolution in which the Maine Indians sided with the American colonists against the English. Chief Orono of the Penobscot tribe stated to his people at that time:

Our white brothers tell us they came to Indian's country to enjoy liberty and life. Their great Sagamore is coming to bind them in chains, to kill them. We must fight him. . . For should he bind them in bonds, next he will treat us as bears

(History of Penobscot County, Maine 1832: 38-43).

Orono's prestige, which was great, influenced the Passamaquoddy sachems and also the Indians at St. John, the Malecites, so that the Malecites were neutrals in the American Revolution. The changing customs of war, then, were yet another result of an alien cultural impact upon a native way of life.

#### V. WHAT WAS THE FOOD-GATHERING CYCLE?

Reference has been made to the semi-nomadic existence of most of the Maine-Maritimes Indians. This behavior pattern was caused by a cold northern climate and forest density that in most areas made agriculture impractical. Corn requires

more than one hundred frost-free days to mature, so families found it more advantageous to hunt, fish, trap, and gather than to clear land with stone tools and fire and risk starvation. Besides, the tribes which did not grow corn could often trade for corn with Indians to the southwest of them.

The food-gathering cycle was a traditional way of life in which people moved in small family groups to certain areas at certain seasons to carry out specific types of food-getting. In the following discussion details of the gathering cycle were obtained from Damas's Contributions to Anthropology: Band Societies, Speck's Penobscot Man, and Eckstorm's Handicrafts of the Modern Indians of Maine.

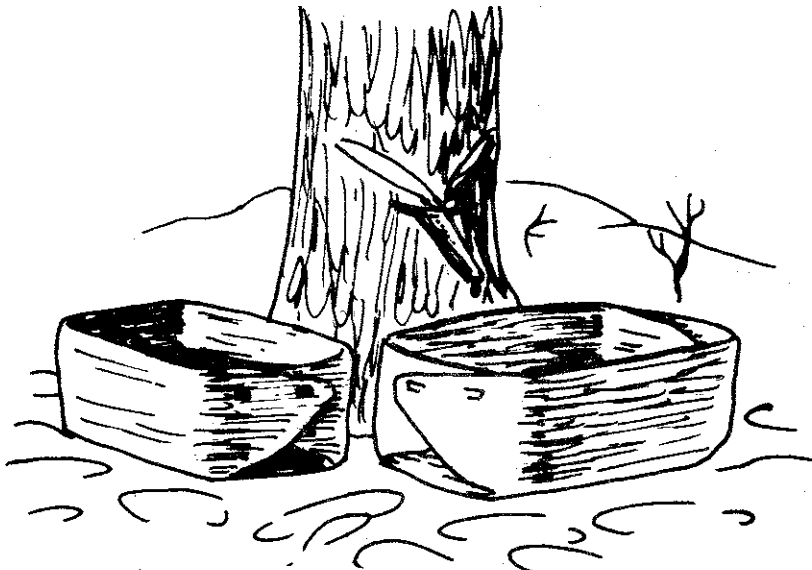
To comprehend this travel pattern, it is necessary to realize that life in the North was based on a yearly cycle of aggregation and dispersal. By this we mean that family hunting groups could and did join other family hunting groups at intervals, forming a named band; but at other times they hunted alone. The following is an attempt to trace the activities of a typical family throughout the year.

In the spring they went to the falls of the rivers or streams in their areas for salmon, shad, and sturgeon; and they caught alewives in the brooks. Spring was also the time for sap-gathering. Just as there were family hunting areas, so also were there family "sugar-bush" properties which were worked by the women and children to obtain maple syrup. Salt was unknown among these Indians, but maple syrup and sometimes maple sugar supplied flavor to their foods. Tapping the maples was followed by corn-planting (where it was possible), and the families usually stayed in that vicinity until the flies drove them out of the woods toward the seashore to clam.

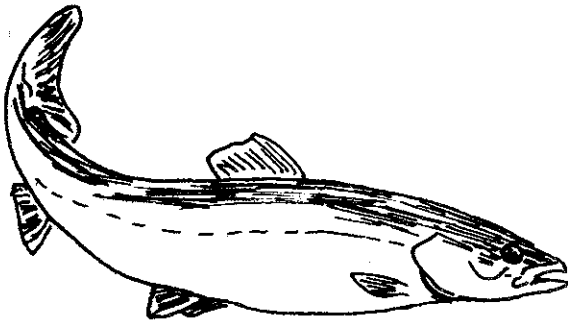
Paddling down the network of brooks, river, and lakes and portaging their birch-bark canoes over land, they sought out traditional family camp sites on the salt-water bays and off-shore islands. The original tourists, they enjoyed the



# PLATE B



5. Sap-gathering for maple syrup



6. Spawning salmon,  
speared at river falls



7. Blueberries, to eat  
on the spot or dehydrate



8. Plant foods - yellow lily, cattails, and acorns



shell-fish and blueberries as vacationers do today. They set up weirs to trap eels and harpooned seal, porpoise, and even small whale known as "blackfish" if they ventured close enough to shore. The women continued the root and bulb gathering which they had started in the spring. As Flannery points out, while fishing was done all year long, it took on added pleasure in the summer when groups of families who had had little contact with each other during the winter met and gossiped and relaxed together (Flannery 1946: 265).

Harpoons for taking of large fish or sea mammals were of sharpened bone, jagged on the sides and fastened to a staff, although detachable from it by means of a double rawhide strip. As soon as the fish was struck, the fisherman pulled away the staff, leaving the bony head in the fish's body. The reason for constructing the harpoon in this manner was to prevent the fish from breaking off the head of the harpoon. Lines and nets were made of twisted, braided basswood bark. For taking of fish which swim in a school, like mackeral or pollock, jigging was done (Speck 1940: 84-86).

Nicholas Denys described in 1672 night fishing for sturgeon with a flare used to attract the fish:

Two Indians place themselves in a canoe: the one in front is upright, with a harpoon in his hand, the other is behind to steer, and he holds a torch of birch-bark, and allows the canoe to float with the current of the tide. When the Sturgeon perceives the fire, he comes and circles all around, turning from one side to the other. So soon as the harpooner sees his belly, he spears it below the scales. The fish, feeling himself struck, swims with great fury. . . but with all its strength it does not go. . . more than a hundred and fifty or two hundred paces. . . That being over, the line is drawn in, . . . they then pass a cord with a slip-knot over the tail and draw it thus to land. . .

(Denys 1908: 353-354).

Many observers, including Champlain, Josselyn, and the Jesuit priests, have testified to the great abundance of fish in the coastal waters in the early 17th century. "You cannot put your hand into the water without encountering them,"

Father Biard declared (Jesuit Relations 1897: V. III, 81). Captain John Smith related that once on the Potomac in Virginia, fish were encountered in such numbers that he had difficulty landing from his boat (Hodge 1907: Part I, 461).

Early Indians dehydrated some of the berries they gathered in the summer to make a winter sweet-sauce. They also smoked or dried eels, clams, and oysters. Biard said that if it were not for their wives, the Indian men would take little thought for the future; but apparently a little wifely tact worked among the Wabanaki just as it does today, at least when it came to getting work done:

Nevertheless if they are by themselves and where they may safely listen to their wives, they will sometimes make some storehouses for the Winter where they will keep smoked meat, roots, shelled acorns. . .

(Jesuit Relations 1897: V. III, 107-108).

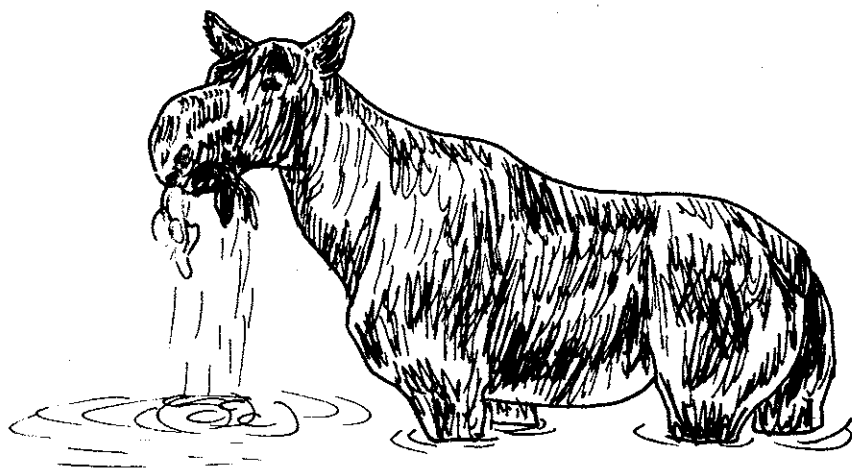
Other sources have recorded the rendering of seal fat into oil, which was then stored in moose bladders (Flannery 1939: 29, 30, 37).

Shucking out the shell-fish and camping as they did on top of the shells, the Indian families over many generations caused great shell mounds to arise. The value of these mounds or "shell-heaps" to anthropologists and ethnographers lies in the tools and weapons of bone, stone, antler, and shell which the Indians lost or left behind.

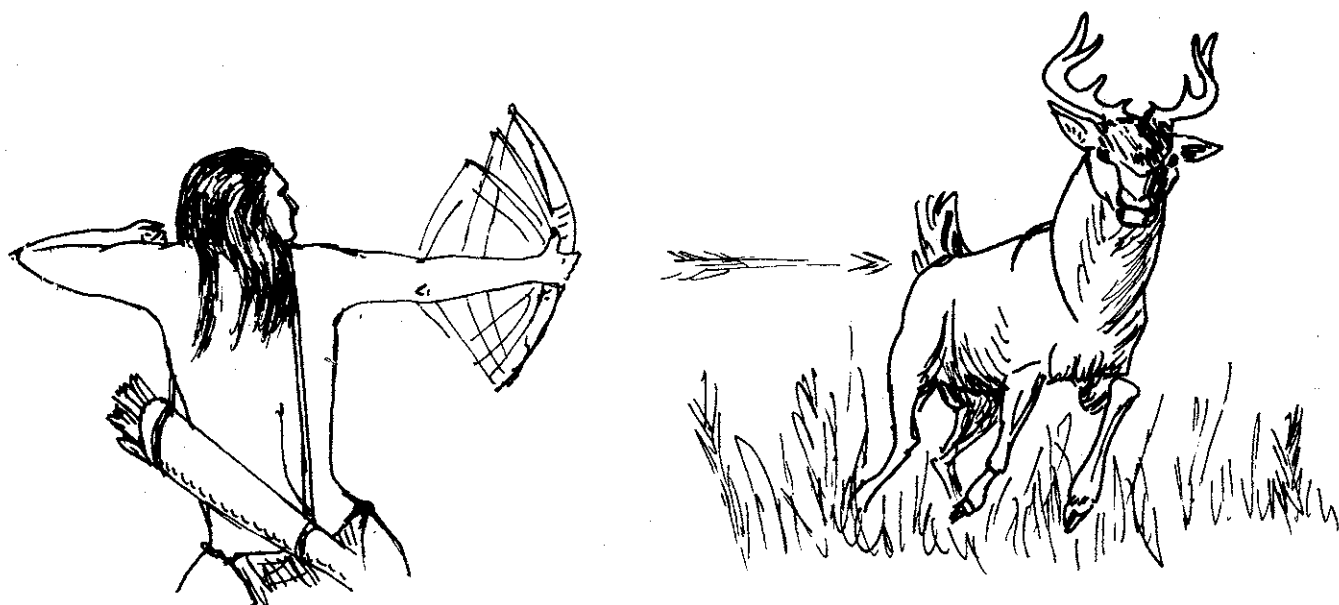
In September the travellers paddled leisurely homeward separately, stopping to fish along the way or to "still-hunt" as the paddlers guided their canoes close to shore to surprise deer, moose, and caribou wading in the stream or lake shallows to seek relief from flies (Speck 1940: 36).

By fall the families had set up camp in their family hunting districts, the trees of which might be marked by blazes or with their own animal totem, that animal with which a particular family had traditionally associated itself. The

# PLATE C



9. "Still-hunting" a moose, feeding on lily pads in stream shallows



10. Hunting a deer with bow and arrow.



family hunting places were in tributary drainage areas of major rivers or on lakes and ponds. So close was the association between rivers and hunting in the minds of the Wabanaki people that they often referred to their hunting-grounds as their "rivers" (Snow 1968: 1146-1147; Speck and Hadlock 1946: 362; Speck 1940: 34).

The most exciting hunt of all was "moose-calling." For this the hunters used rolled birch-bark cones to imitate the quavering call of the cow-moose, thus luring the bull-moose to his downfall. The moose was such an economic necessity that it was hunted all fall and winter long. Its bones and antlers were fashioned into various implements; its hide furnished moccasins; its meat was either cooked or else smoked to make pemmican; and according to Penobscot tradition, its wool was woven into mittens (Speck 1940: 149).

Trapping by the use of snares and deadfalls occupied the winter. The trappers used snowshoes, toboggans, spears, and ball-headed clubs in tending their traplines, which often extended far from the camps where the women and children lived. The Indians also ice-fished in the winter, an activity which was a necessity to them but which has become a modern sport in Canada and Maine. They also speared muskrat and beaver through the ice as well as hunting them after the ice break-up in early spring.

#### VI. WHAT SPECIFIC FOODS DID THE MAINE-MARITIMES INDIANS EAT?

Indian foods consisted of the meat of most mammals, fish, shell-fish, game birds and their eggs, corn, berries, nuts, acorns, and certain parts of plants. The meaning of the word "Algonquin" is "tree-eater," bestowed upon this tribe by other tribes because, when all else failed, the Algonquin chewed the inner bark of certain trees as subsistence food. The Wabanaki Confederacy tribes, being

Algonquin, chewed bark in times of starvation. Indeed, to stay alive, they might even boil and chew on their rawhide thongs, moccasins, and sealskin pouches (Jesuit Relations 1900: V. LXVII, 223; Jesuit Relations 1897: V. VII, 47).

Oysters were obtainable along the coast roughly south of Damariscotta, Maine. North of that the Indians ate clams (both soft-shelled and quahog), mussels, lobsters, scallops, crabs, sea-urchins and periwinkles. We have already mentioned porpoise (eaten especially by the Malecite and Passamaquoddy), seal, whale, eel, and all the fresh and saltwater fish.

Beaver, moose, deer, and caribou (which lived in Maine in earlier days) occupied great importance in the Indian diet, as did raccoon, otter, muskrat, wildcat, hare, turtle--in fact, almost all animals except snakes, which, according to Speck, was never eaten by the Penobscot although there are records of other area tribes eating them (Speck 1940: 96; Flannery 1939: 25).

Wood, in his New England Prospects, mentioned several kinds of goose, turkey, and the snowy owl. Father Biard told of the Micmacs' going to the off-shore islands to hunt bustards, partridges, pigeons, geese, and all kinds of sea ducks. Josselyn's New England Rarities, written in 1672, contains an excellent list of edible birds.

Plants formed a peripheral food source. Champlain saw wild artichokes, indigenous to the area, being cultivated at Gloucester and Cape Cod (Champlain 1904: 107, 117), but in northern New England and eastern Canada the Indians collected them wild. Lescarbot referred to their roots as being "as good as truffles" (Jesuit Relations 1896: V II, 169). The "Micmac potato" was the "hiquebi" root, according to the Relatio Rerum Gestarum, 1613-1614 (Jesuit Relations 1896: V. II, 245). Bulbs of the red and yellow lilies were recorded as being good when boiled. During Thoreau's exploration of the Maine Allagash area, he ate these upon the recommendation of his Indian guide (Thoreau 1950: 191, 206, 306, 331). We could continue listing plant foods--from the roots of



the skunk cabbage to the shoots of the marsh marigold, which the Indians utilized during food scarcity; but it is suggested, instead, that the reader consult one of the many excellent books on wild plant foods such as Indian Harvest (J. M. Lucas), "Uses of Plants by the Chippewa Indians" (Frances Densmore), or A Wild Way to Live (Euell Gibbons). Some government bulletins on this subject are also available. A word of caution must be interpolated here. Certain plants (like pokeberry) are poisonous after their shoots are mature; some (like jack-in-the-pulpit) are full of stinging juice and must be cooked before eating; so one should never eat wild plants indiscriminately in attempts to "live off the land." The tradition of Indian wild plant preparation was arrived at through long experience.

Of the nuts, hickory, hāzel, and beech were utilized. Acorns were cracked and sometimes roasted to take away the bitter tannin.

Of all the berries, the blueberry (called by Josselyn the "sky-colored bilberry") was probably mentioned most frequently by early European observers. Its bushes literally covered the mountains, fields and shorelands. Josselyn told of the Indians' drying the whortleberries and blueberries and selling them "by the bushell" to the English who used them as they would currants, in puddings (Jesuit Relations 1898: V. XVI, 259). But the summer harvest included also strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, huckleberries, some of the heath family (snowberry and wintergreen), the berries of the shadbush, and cranberries, called by the priests "cherries without stones" (Jesuit Relations 1899: V. XLIII, 257).

The Indians drank the broth of cooked meat, swimming in grease, as well as various teas made from the leaves of goldenrod, the fruit of the staghorn sumac, and the leaves and berries of wintergreen. Maple sap and diluted maple syrup also were cooling drinks. Water, of course, was taken directly from its source.

Many "gourmet" specialties prized today originated in the Indian menu--the "New England shore dinner," "beanhole beans," planked steak, fiddlehead greens, to say nothing of corn on the cob, corn bread, and succotash.

#### VII. WHAT WERE THEIR HANDCRAFTS?

An amazing statement concerning Indian government and art was made in the Relatio Rerum Gestarum of 1613 and 1614 (the published annual letters of the Society of Jesus). It referred to the Indians of the New World as "possessing neither laws nor arts" (Jesuit Relations 1896: V. II, 201). Since Indian society did possess powerful mores and a high degree of artisanship, this statement can only be explained by the idea of order which Europeans brought to America and which they used as a measuring stick for everything they encountered--and much of what they encountered they did not at first understand.

The Northeastern Algonquin in historic times were a loose arrangement of kinship bands which were organized into intratribal gentes. The chiefs of the tribes were called sachems. Among small units the sagamore and the council made decisions influenced by the shamans (medicine-men). The council consisted of the old men of the tribe. Important tribal policy as to treaty and war were disposed of by them. In individual conduct the Indian was fairly independent but not completely so, guided as he was by tribal mores. "Established usage took the place of law. . . with no tribunal to expound or enforce it" (Parkman 1899: 39).

Since European arts and crafts were sophisticated, a "double-take" was required for the priests to recognize the intricacy and quality inherent in native products created by tools which were themselves crafted from bone, stone, antler, wood, and shell.

Handiwork which employed birch-bark is especially interesting. Today we can hardly comprehend what birch-bark meant to these Indians. A miracle material, it was waterproof, tasteless, odorless, and resistant to both rot and moths. It gave them their canoes, wigwams, utensils, waterproofing, wrapping, and kindling. It was their stationery, for scraped pictographs on bark served as messages and maps. It was used in making drinking cups, cooking dishes, and food-storage baskets. A stew, strangely enough, could be cooked in a birch-bark kettle directly over the fire if the vessel was filled with liquid. True, it was a "throw-away" vessel, used only once, but it served very well when the Indians were travelling. The birch-bark was often reversed so that the soft, brown, inner bark was on the outside. The surface could then be scraped or etched with a knife, producing cream colored decoration. At least a hundred different products were made of birch-bark (Butler and Hadlock 1957: 4-59).

The following discussion deals with the best-known arts and crafts of the Indians of Maine and the Canadian Maritimes.

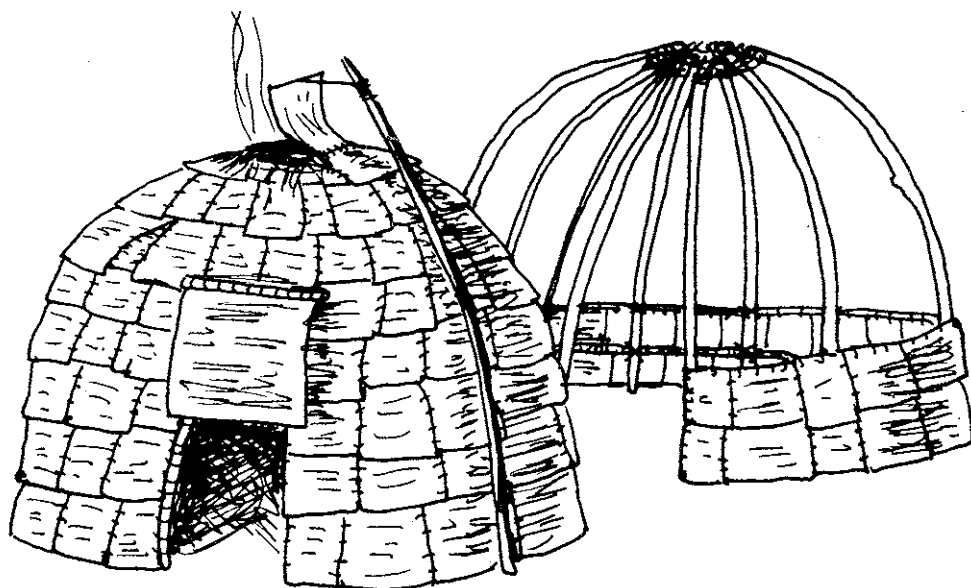
(1) Wigwams

Daniel Gookin probably gave the most detailed description of that type of bark house which was occupied by the people of the Wabanaki tribes, confirming earlier descriptions supplied by Champlain and Father Biard. The framework of their lodges, he said, was built of saplings fixed into the ground, bent inward, and fastened together at the top to form a dome or arbor. The framework was then covered neatly with great sheets of birch-bark which had been "slipped" from trees "when the sap is up," subjected to pressure, dried and hardened into the shape required. The lodges were of several sizes, depending upon their use. Some, the longhouses, might be as large as one hundred feet by fifty feet while the smaller ones might be forty or even twenty feet long, but broad.

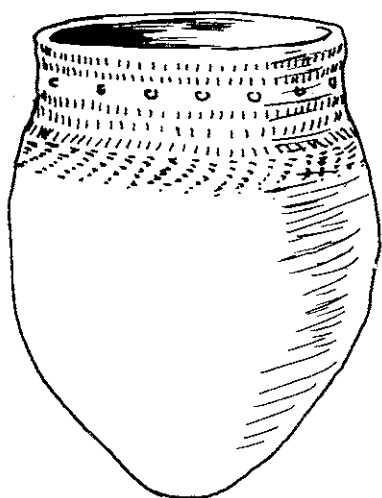
In the smaller sort they make a fire in the center of the house; and have a lower hole on the top of the house, to let out the smoke. They keep the door into



# PLATE D

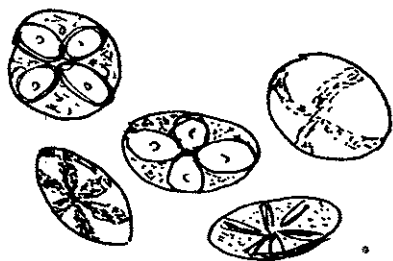
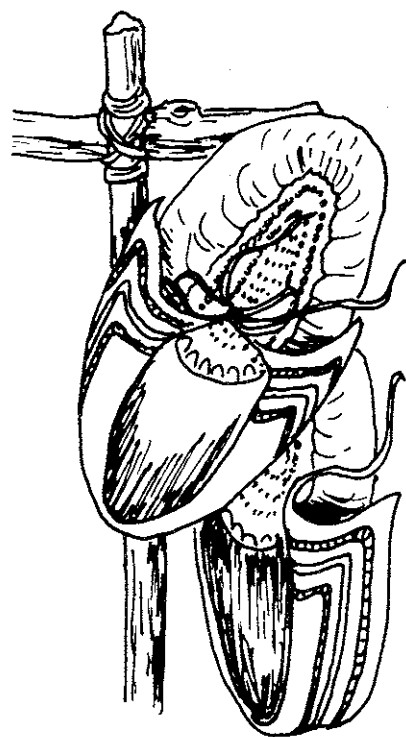


11. "Bee-hive" type of birch-bark wigwam

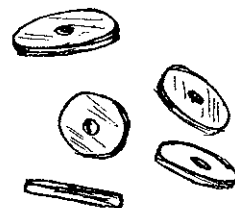


12. Pointed-based clay cooking pot

13. Beaded calf-moose moccasins



14. Dice for dice-bowl game



15. Discoidal shell beads and a bird-bone bead



into the wigwams always shut, by a mat falling thereon, as people go in and out. This they do to prevent air coming in, which will cause much smoke in every windy weather. If the smoke beat down at the lower hole, they hang a little mat in the way of a skreen, on the top of the house, which they can with a cord turn to the windward side, which prevents the smoke. In the greater houses they make two, three, or four fires, at a distance one from another, for the better accomodation of the people belonging to it. I have often lodged in their wigwams; and have found them as warm as the best English houses

(Gookin 1674 (1): 149, 150; Bushnell 1919: 24).

He went on to say that the Indians formed raised couches about six to eight feet broad made of wood, mats, and animal skins.

In 1616 Father Biard described the Micmac and Malecite winter wigwams, emphasizing their speedy construction, and stating that animal skins or woven mats, as well as birch-bark, could be placed over the framework. "The leaves of the fir tree," he related, "were strewn around the fire and were covered with mats or sealskins soft as velvet." Upon these beds the family lay, feet to the flame, with their heads propped on the baggage which they had stowed at the foot of the tent poles. Biard referred here to the conical type of wigwam. Their summer houses, he noted, were "broad and long, that they may have more air" (Jesuit Relations 1896: V. III, 77).

Champlain, describing the Indian homes he had seen in what is now York County, Maine, mentioned seeing a "palisade" and "cabins" covered with oak bark (Champlain 1904: V. I, 102-103).

Father Rasles, writing fifteen years after Gookin about the Abnaki of Norridgewock, Maine, also described a palisaded village of birch-bark covered wigwams, and, like Biard, he emphasized the speed with which a wigwam could be erected (Jesuit Relations 1900: V. LXVII, 135).





Almost universally North American tribes used sweat baths, and the Indians of Maine and eastern Canada were no exceptions. Special houses were usually built for this activity. Le Jeune's Relation of 1633 contains this description:

They make a little low tent of bark and cover it with their fur robes; then they heat five or six stones and put them into this oven, which they enter entirely naked. They sing all the time while in there, gently striking the sides of these stones. . .

(Jesuit Relations 1897: V. V, 103-105).

Biard's account agrees with Le Jeune's but adds,

. . . they will leave this hut, dripping with perspiration, and in the very coldest part of winter cast themselves into a lake or river, careless of pleurisy

(Jesuit Relations 1896: V. I, 261).

Sweating was practiced for any of three different reasons. It might be a religious rite of purification and propitiation of spirits, such as to have a good hunt or fine weather or good luck in battle. It might be to expel the "Noxious humors" (according to Biard) caused by the charms of vengeful sorcerers, for it was thought that such charms could cause both mental and physical disease. Or it might be to relax and clean up in the pleasant society of friends, much as is done in the steam baths of today (Hodge 1910: Part 2, 661).

## (2) Canoes

When European explorers first saw birch-bark canoes, their wonder was understandable. Rosier wrote that Captain George Waymouth and his crew, observing them first along the coast of Maine in 1603, were much impressed by their speed. Champlain also noted their speed, saying that his ship's longboat had been passed by a canoe paddled by two men. But it was not alone their speed, but also the lightness of the craft, its shallow draft, and its great load-carrying capacity that impressed Champlain. He recommended that bark-boats with Indian guides be

used for exploration and fur trade development. The problem in exploring the back country above Montreal was the time involved if French boats were used. It was necessary to penetrate this region during the summer so as to be able to return to France for the winter. With bark canoes the overland carries could be swiftly made (Adney and Chapelle 1964: 7, 13).

The uninitiated could get a wetting, however, in these light boats. Biard complained that if one did not sit up straight in one, it would tip over, and Champlain cautioned that one must learn their management. But Le Jeune commented,

I have found, by experience, that our Ships are  
not as safe nor as swift, if the wind is not fair,  
as the little bark canoes of the Savages. . .

(Jesuit Relations 1897: V. IX, 235).

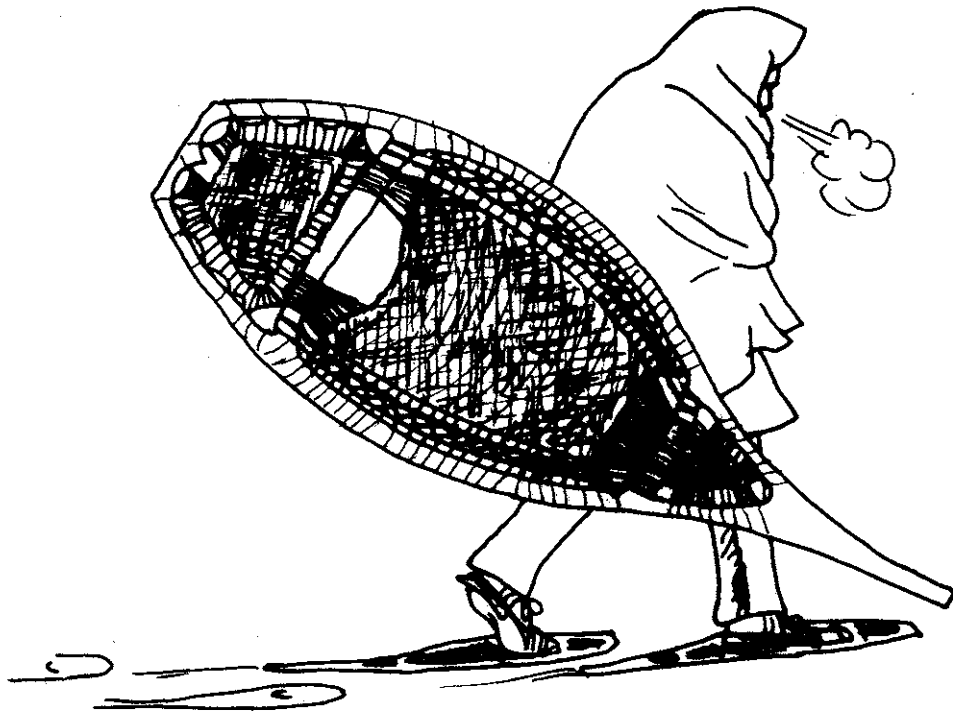
A limitless supply of large paper birch was at the disposal of the native craftsmen. Ash and cedar, black spruce and rock maple--these were the common trees from which they fashioned the woodwork. Although easily torn, the birch-bark was easily mended. Le Jeune related an experience shared with two Indians as they left a village to go down "the great river" to Quebec. Ice which had formed during the night cut the bark of "our gondola." They paddled swiftly to an island--

When we set foot upon shore, the Savages seized the canoe, drew it out of the water, turned it upside down, lighted their tinder, made a fire, sewed up the slit in the bark; applied to it their resin, a kind of gum that runs out of trees; placed the canoe again in the water, and we reembarked. . .

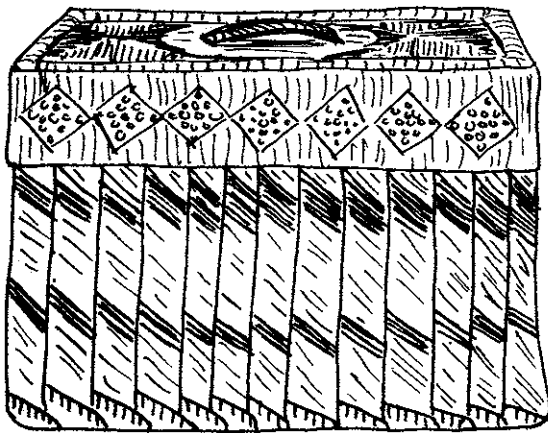
(Jesuit Relations 1897: V. VII, 195).

In truth, the birch-bark canoe was the most complex and intricate product of native ingenuity in the North. Dr. Albert E. Jenks, from his research on the birch-bark industries of the northern people, felt that it was the most effective agency of distribution of tribes and culture during the early times (Powell 1901: xxxl).

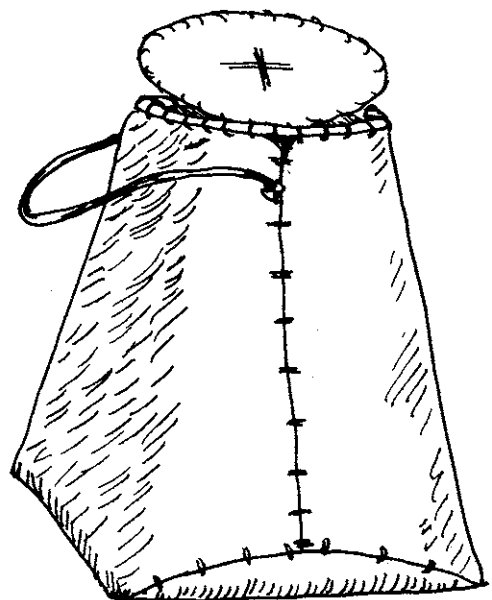
# PLATE E



16. Square-toed Penobscot snowshoe



17. Porcupine quill box



18. Birch-bark water bucket



(3) Baskets

The Indians of Maine and eastern Canada constructed early baskets of birch-bark, sometimes decorated with moose hair and porcupine quills or etched in creamy designs. These were followed later by baskets of sweet-grass and of splints from the brown ash and cedar trees. John Josselyn in 1675 described the birch-bark baskets made by the Almouchiquois of the Saco, Maine, region:

Sweet dishes too they make of Birch-bark sowed with threads drawn from Spruce or white Cedar-roots, and garnished on the outside with flourisht works, and on the brims with glistering quills taken from the Porcupine, and dyed, some black, others red, the white are natural, these they make of all sizes from a dram cup to a dish containing a pottle (half-gallon), likewise Buckets to carry water or the like, large Boxes too of the same materials. . .

(Josselyn 1833: 251).

Embroidery done with porcupine quills upon a birch-bark foundation is a delicate process no longer performed by the Indians of Maine and only rarely to be found today among the Micmac of Canada. Contrasted geometric designs were achieved by thrusting colored quills, closely massed, into the bark. As Eckstorm remarked, "Nowhere did the bright coloring loved so by these natives appear to better advantage" (Eckstorm 1932: 38-43).

The sweet-grass baskets made today are similar to those made long ago. This material is a marsh grass which has a peculiarly sweet odor. The Indians gather and dry the grass, then dampen it again and braid it, weaving the braids around standards of brown ash splints. Such baskets retain the sweet smell for years.

Splints from the brown ash tree (which is really only the young black ash) have been used for many generations by the Indians of the Northeast to make strong, beautiful, woven baskets of all sizes, from tiny watch-charm baskets to large storage chests. In early times vegetable dyes made from boiling berries,

barks, and roots were used. Today commercial dyes make the process somewhat easier. But the manner of preparing basket splints from the brown ash log has not changed. The log is soaked in water and then beaten with the blunt side of an axehead or with a pounding machine for about an hour until the annual rings separate and can be pulled off. The "grains" are then smoothed, split, and divided down their lengths into the desired width. The resulting wooden "ribbons" are arranged in skeins and then dyed (Eckstorm 1932: 19-31).

Making baskets by hand was seeming to become a lost art in Maine with just a few Indians remembering and practicing the skill. There is an increasing interest in preserving such beautiful indigenous work, however, and recently the Passamaquoddy and Penobscot tribes received grants which enabled them to start basket schools among their members.

#### (4) Clothing and its Decorations

Before European encounter, the Northeastern Indians wore winter clothing of animal skins. Eventually, trade supplied the cloth, needles, and silk thread necessary to convert to more easily fashioned garments. Yet even then, the same style persisted as men continued to wear the leggings, breech cloths, kilts, and the characteristic long, square-cut, sleeved coats. The kilt was typical only for the Northeastern Algonquin and Iroquois and was originally a deer-skin wrapped around the hips. Women wore skirts reaching to the calf and a sort of shirt hanging below the waist as well as leggings and moccasins. The men's headdresses were decorated bands into which were sewn bird feathers. The women wore long, peaked hoods, first of buckskin and later of cloth. And let us not overlook the birch-bark rain hats and rain capes (Speck 1940: 145, 147)!

Whereas, originally, the decoration of skin garments had consisted of painted designs, porcupine quillwork, and moosehair ornamentation, the garments

made of trade-cloth were sewn with bright trade-beads and taffeta ribbon. Eckstorm described the typical Penobscot female costume of the 1840's when it was made from "annuity cloth." This was a red or blue broadcloth issued semi-annually to each family of Maine Indians as part of the half-yearly payment of the interest upon the money owed them by the State of Maine for Indian lands.

It took but a small piece of cloth to fashion leggings, a cap, a fancy belt or the cuffs and tongues of a pair of highly ornamental moccasins. The women's skirts also were made from a not very large piece, since they came but little below the knee and were scanty. The parts of the costume did not match in color. The woman who wore a blue skirt wore red leggings and probably a scarlet pointed cap; and, if the suit was intended for gala occasions, all parts of it were adorned with the gayest of ribbon work, in green, red, blue, yellow, or pink, put on in bands or in serpentine stripes, notched and pointed at the edges, or with underset points of a different color. . . the workmanship must have been superior when, as I find in one old Indian pawn paper, a used petticoat, (that is, an outside skirt), could be pawned in the eighteen-forties for six dollars in cash. At our present rates of money-value (Mrs. Eckstorm was writing in 1932) such an article would not have brought less than thirty dollars as a pawn, which would not represent the full value. And this value lay almost entirely in the workmanship

(Eckstorm 1932: 37).

#### (5) Moccasins

The typical outdoor-use moccasin was made of moosehide since deerskin was too soft for woods wear. It had a wide vamp to which the sole was puckered and sewn, it was laced with rawhide, and it had an ankle-flap which could be brought up to cover the ankle.

House moccasins were often of deerskin and were of a similar pattern, sometimes decorated in early years with moose-hair embroidery. Later on they featured beadwork, appliques of wool and velvet cloth, and ribbon ties.

The most appealing use of wampum was as personal decoration. It was strung and sewn into cloaks, caps, moccasins, belts, and scarves. It was worn as a necklace or a bracelet and was twined in the hair. Of course, since it was valuable, its possession was more or less limited to the most important men in the tribes, who adorned themselves, their wives, and their children with it. In 1723 Father Rasles described a well-appointed Abnaki male at the Norridgewock Mission, who was loaded with wampum, and described him with a good deal of empathy and admiration, considering that as a good Jesuit, he had taken the vow of poverty:

Picture to yourself a tall, strong man, agile, of a swarthy complexion, without a beard, with black hair, and with teeth whiter than ivory. If you wish to see him in fine array, you will find his only ornaments to be what are called 'rassades'; these are a sort of shell-work, some white, some black,-- which are strung in such a way that they represent different and very exact figures, which have their own charm. It is with these strings of beads that our Savages tie and braid their hair, above the ears and behind; they make of them earrings, necklaces, garters, and belts, five or six inches broad; and with this sort of finery they value themselves much more than does a European with all his gold and precious stones

(Jesuit Relations 1900: V. LXVII, 137).

#### (8) Snowshoes

To survive the cruelly long, deep-snowed winters, the Indians constructed snowshoes. They were the means of maintaining traplines far from camp. Next to the canoe, the snowshoe provided the most essential way of travel. Rawhide made from deer and caribou was preferred for the webbing. The Indian man cut ash, steamed and curved it for the bow, set in crossbars, and lashed or pegged the framework together at the tail. It was the woman's job to thread the stretched rawhide strips through the center eye of a snowshoe needle and, alternately stretching and weaving the strips, to produce delicate and closely wrought



webbing. A mesh-punch, fashioned from a moose or deer leg-bone or a piece of tapering hardwood, served to even the holes. The ball of the foot was bound to the snowshoe by slipknots in a single, long strip of rawhide. In later years toe-straps were used. To prevent chafing of the rawhide on the bows (and incidentally providing ornamentation), little tufts of moose hair, colored yarn, or leather fringe were inserted under the fastenings in the frame (Eckstorm 1932: 52-55; Speck 1940: 68-72).

#### (9) Pottery

Pre-colonial Northeast Algonquin made pottery of impure clay tempered with fine grit or seashell. The pots were incompletely fired; thus, they tended to crumble when removed from the cooking fire. Wide-mouthed and pointed-based, with a capacity of a half-pint to three gallons, these pots were designed to be thrust down into the heart of the fire, with the fuel drawn up around them. Shards taken from shell-heaps in the Maine area indicate that most pots were made by the coil method although there is evidence that some were made by the use of paddle and anvil. A large portion of the pot's surface was decorated with indentations made by implements such as cord-wrapped or notched sticks (Willoughby 1909: 84; Holmes 1898: 179). Later pottery, as influenced by the Iroquois, had a globular body rather than one with a pointed base and featured a wide, much-decorated rim.

Not all kettles were made of birch-bark or pottery, however. Denys described the making and use of a stationary wooden kettle into which water, heated stones, and meat were placed:

To make it they took the butt of a huge tree which had fallen; they did not cut it down, not having tools fitted for that, nor had they the means to transport it; they had them ready-made in nearly all the places to which they went. . . they employed stone

axes, well-sharpened. . . they cut a little into the top of the wood at the length they wished the kettle. This done, they placed fire on top and made the tree burn. . . at about four inches in length, they removed the fire. . . they removed the burned part. . . then replaced the fire. . .

(Denys 1908: V. II, 401-402).

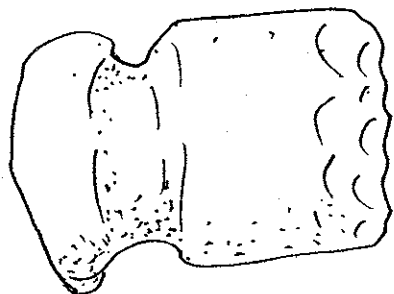
#### (10) Projectile Points

Whenever the average person thinks of Indian artifacts, an image of projectile points usually forms in his mind--arrowpoints, spearpoints, knives. These are chipped stone implements made of such silicious stone as felsite, chert, jasper, chalcedony. The Indians broke such rock into manageable fragments with hammerstones and then flaked them into the desired shape with a tool made of deer antler hafted to wood. They then shafted them to straight sticks (prepared by steaming and rock-rubbing), the tops of which had been split to receive the stone points. The points were then bound to the shafts with animal sinew or rawhide. In some but not all cases, the arrows were feathered. Arrow-makers did not necessarily discard a broken point but often used it as a scraper to flesh hides, to etch birch-bark, or to scrape designs onto bone implements (Abbe Museum Notes 1950: No. 1).

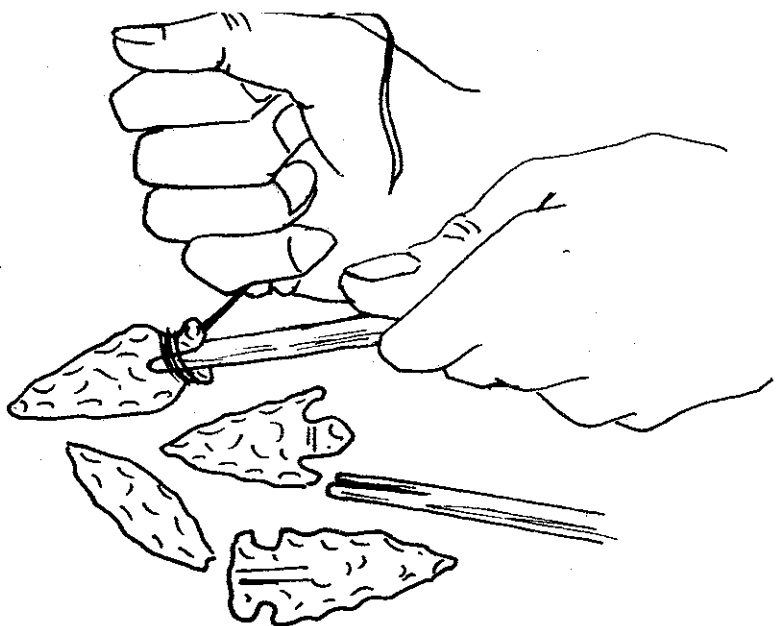
#### (11) Axes

Stone axes were used in conjunction with fire for felling trees. Since their blades were dull by modern standards, the tree was first set on fire, then the fire was quenched, and the charcoal was removed with the axe. This process was repeated until the tree was down. Axes were of two kinds, grooved and ungrooved, and were constructed of very hard, fine-grained rock, entirely different in composition from the stone used for projectile points. The grooved axe was a thick wedge formed with rounded angles and an encircling groove near the top into which was placed a wooden handle. The handle was bound in with

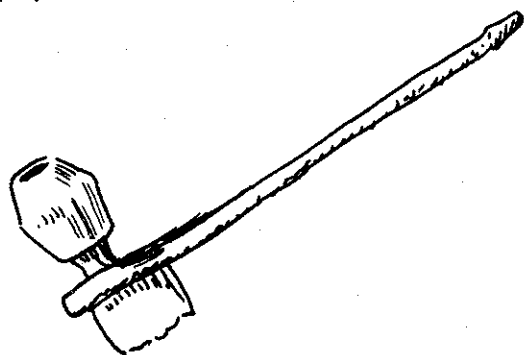
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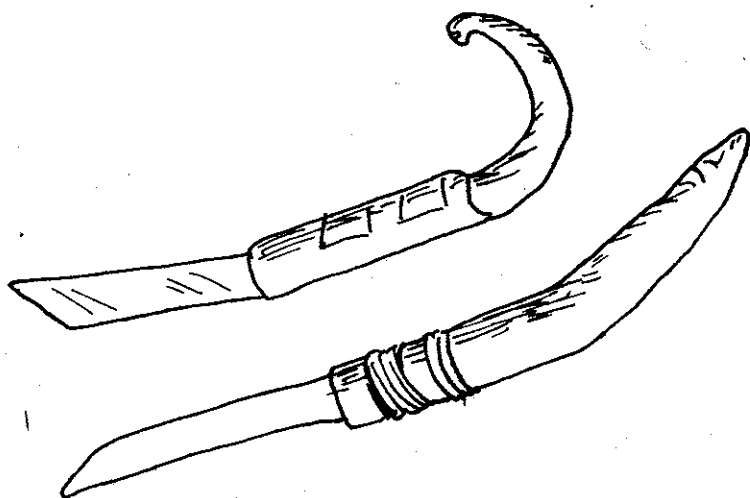
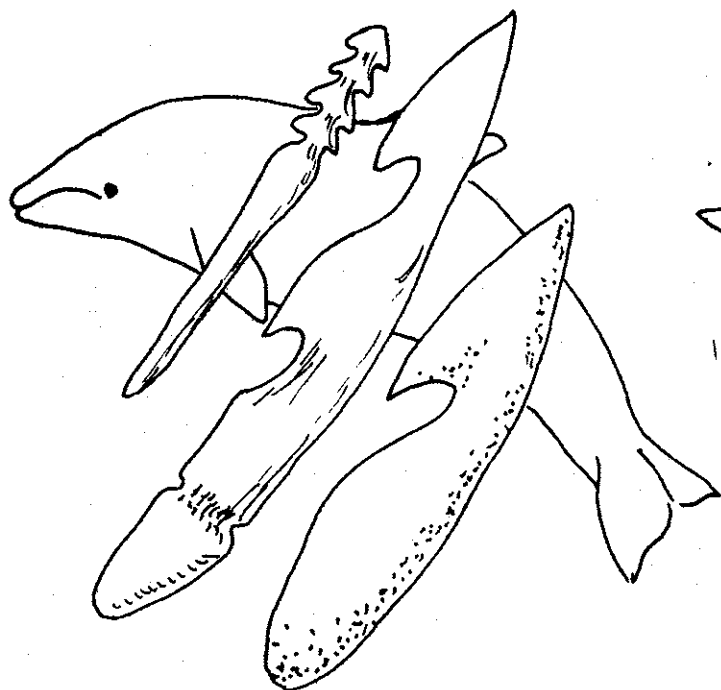
19. Grooved stone axe



20. Hafting the projectile point to the shaft



22. Stone tobacco pipe



21. Steel crooked-knife —  
Note the bent  
thumb-rest

23. Bone harpoons and porpoise



sinew or rawhide. The axe-maker, using another rock, had "pecked" out the groove into a ridge which encircled the axe and then had polished the groove with a polishing-stone of abrasive material. The weight of these axes varied generally from one to six pounds. They were heavy, clumsy implements, so it is understandable that when the early Indians saw iron axes being used by the French, they were among the first items traded (Hodge 1907-1910: 121).

#### (12) Bone Tools

Bone tools included awls, fishhooks and harpoons, fleshers and beamers (for preparation of animal skins), flutes, needles, combs, pendants, and various household articles. Hollow bird bones even provided beads. The discs for the dice-bowl game as well as the gaming sticks were often made of bone. In A Report on the Archeology of Maine, Moorehead made the point that bone not only was more easily worked than stone but was always available:

In the winter, when because of ice or snow it might be difficult or inconvenient to procure stone, there were always in the wigwam the bones of various animals which had been killed for food. It is quite natural that the Indians, having eaten the bird or the animal, would make use of the material thus conveniently at hand. Even the process of splitting the larger bones to extract marrow suggested the making of harpoons, arrow points, fish hooks, awls, ornaments, or knife handles from the fragments

(Moorehead 1922: 191, 192).

#### (13) Carving

Lescarbot referred to the Micmac and the Indians of southwestern Maine when he reported,

Our Souriquois and Armouchiquois have the art of both painting and carving, and make beasts, birds and men in stone, and also in wood, as prettily as good workmen in these parts (France); yet they do not employ them in worship, but only to please the sight and to use as private tools, such as tobacco pipes

(Eckstorm 1932: 44).

(14) Weaving

Today there exist no examples of early native weaving by the Indians of this area, but tradition tells us that cedarbark and rushes were once used for mat-weaving materials. Lescarbot commented favorably on the use of color and symmetry of design in the rush mats made by the Micmac (Lescarbot 1914: V. III, 201). Penobscot Indians questioned by Dr. Frank Speck in the first decade of the twentieth century told him that they could recall blankets and mats made from basswood bark twine by means of a crude loom. They described the warps as hanging from a horizontal bar, and the woof filling being twined in with the fingers. They also remembered articles of clothing being made of woven strips of rabbit skin. Another Penobscot account is of mittens woven from the gray wool which grows close to the hair roots in the mane of a moose. The wool was combed out and rolled on the thigh to make a yarn (Speck 1940: 135, 136). Weaving needles, presumably for basswood twine, have been found in shell-heaps and in village sites. They are flat, slightly curved bone needles about nine inches long, perforated by an eye near one end.

(15) Stone Tobacco Pipes

Smoking was both ceremonial and social among the Indians of the Northeast. Both men and women smoked for pleasure; and the men, when in solemn council, never deliberated upon or made important decisions without smoking. From this custom has devolved the idea of "smoking the peace pipe," although peace was not always the subject under discussion. It was used as a symbol of good will, and Indians propitiated, and gave thanks to, spirits by means of tobacco gifts, sprinkling it into a stream or leaving it upon a rock. Gluskabe, the Wabanaki folk hero, is supposed to have counselled his people,

Burn it and inhale the smoke--it will bring  
freshness to the mind and your heart will be contented  
while the smoke of it be in you

(Nicolar 1893: 64).

"Petun" was the Algonkian word for tobacco. "Kinnikinnick" was the Algonkian word for tobacco mixed with some other plant (Hodge 1907-1910: Part 2, 769). Native tobacco (Nicotiana rustica being the northern species) was a small, hardy type and was usually the only crop cultivated by the Indian man. We know that some of the Wabanaki tribes cultivated it before European contact and that all of them used it, obtaining it by trade, if necessary, from other Indians. Captain Weymouth's crew was given tobacco by Penobscot Indians on the Kennebec River (Rosier 1604: 373). Champlain saw it being raised on Richmond Island in the Saco River in Maine (Champlain 1904: 101, 102). Lescarbot claimed its cultivation by the Micmac on the Gaspé (Lescarbot 1907: V. III, 252). Some of the dried, wild plants which were crumbled and mixed with tobacco were squawbush bark and sweetfern (Speck 1940: 195). Mary Rowlandson, who was captured and held for ransom by Massachusetts Indians when the town of Lancaster, Massachusetts, was attacked in 1675, told of her captors' smoking hemlock and ground ivy when tobacco was unavailable (Rowlandson 1953: 63).

Tobacco pipes were made of stone, frequently of black slate. Highly ornamented at times with curved lines or incised figures, pipes were often constructed in two pieces, the bowl being of stone and the stem of some large-pithed twig from which the pith could be extracted. Eckstorm has pointed out that many Indian pipes which have shown up in a specific area have been of materials and shapes that do not belong there but that two facts make this understandable: pipes "were among the articles most frequently passed from tribe to tribe"; and "our Indians were such wanderers. . . that a Penobscot Indian might be found anywhere from Gaspé to Lake Superior" (Eckstorm 1932: 16). The salamander, which seems to have been a favorite motive in eastern Indian art, was often carved on pipes (Speck 1940: 196).

(16) Bows and Arrows

Indians of the St. Lawrence and the eastern United States used a "self-bow," meaning that it was made in one piece. The material was ash, second-growth hickory, osage orange, oak, or any other hard wood (Hodge 1907: Part 1, 93). The Micmac bows were of maple. Hickory bows were made in western Maine where hickory trees were abundant, but in eastern Maine, where the hickory does not grow, bows were of ash or rock maple (Eckstorm 1932: 12).

The cord of the bow was sometimes made of wild hemp, the swamp milkweed which Champlain saw being gathered and prepared on the New England coast (Jesuit Relations 1898: V. XIII, 272), and sometimes of twisted moose sinew (Speck 1940: 114). Scraping, oiling, rubbing down, and often heating the bow increased its elasticity (Jesuit Relations 1898: V. XV, 245).

A wooden shaft of ash, tipped usually with a head of flint, quartz, or slate, but occasionally bone, formed the arrow. After European contact, the Indians were able to obtain iron arrowpoints. The method of fastening the arrowpoint to the shaft was to bind it with animal sinew, which would shrink and "firm up" the finished product (Jesuit Relations 1898: V. XV, 245). Penobscot Indians told Speck that their tradition included two or three sections of crow or hawk feathers, several inches long, wrapped at their base to the shaft with their upper ends free (Speck 1940: 114). Arrows were kept in skin or bark quivers which were sometimes decorated with paint, beads, or porcupine quills (Jesuit Relations 1898: V. XV, 246).

Apparently, the range of the arrow was not great. Le Jeune commented that when moose (which he called "elk") were being hunted at a time of little or no snow, Indians using bows and arrows found it was "a great stroke of luck" when they could approach them within range of their bows. Consequently, in frozen snow when the moose had poor footing, they would pursue the animals on snowshoes and kill them with "thrusts from javvelins which are fastened to long poles for



this purpose, and which they hurl when they dare not or cannot approach the beast" (Jesuit Relations 1897: V. VI, 295).

(17) Crooked-knife

The crooked-knife is considered to be an indigenous tool adopted by Europeans, who saw the advantage of supplying suitable blades for it for trade purposes. Rasles' Abnaki dictionary called it a "couteau croche" (Eckstorm 1932: 18). Penobscot Indians called it a "biketagenigan." The handle had a bent thumb-rest, and the knife was drawn toward the user who grasped the straight part of the handle with his fingers and laid his thumb against the curve. Originally, the blade was probably of stone, bone, or beaver incisor, but later on metal supplanted these materials. A curved, tapered blade, as in a grapefruit knife, was used, so it is not at all definite whether the term "crooked-knife" refers to the blade or to the handle. John Gyles in the 17th century spoke of the crooked-knife as a necessary part of every Indian man's equipment (Eckstorm 1932: 18, 19). Although rare today, they are still used and treasured by Indians.

(18) Fire-making Equipment and Receptacle for Preserving Fire

Several Indian methods of fire-making were used. One was the strike-a-light method; one was by use of a two-stick, reciprocating motion method; one employed a spindle. Strike-a-light depended upon finding stones such as iron pyrite and flint which would give off sparks when struck together.

Making fire with two sticks is not as easy as it sounds. In commenting upon Lafitau's description of an Indian's twirling one cedar stick within the cavity of another cedar stick, Hough maintained that great knack is essential in the twirling:

It is taken between the palms of the outstretched hands, which are drawn backwards and forwards past each other almost to the finger tips, thus giving the drill a reciprocating motion. At the same time a strong downward pressure is given which may be called a rotating pressure.

The hands move down the drill; when they nearly reach the lower end they are brought back to the top with a quick, deft motion. This is repeated as rapidly as possible. If the lower part of the drill is observed when the motion begins it will be seen that powder is ground off and is collecting in the canal cut into the cavity from the side of the lower piece of wood. Soon, as the motion progresses, the powder begins to increase and to get darker, the odor of burning wood is noticed and the smoke is seen. The pellet of ground-off wood may now be shaken out of the slot or canal. At first it is dark; a thin line of smoke comes from it; gradually the fire spreads through it until it glows. In this semi-charred dust the heat is held until it increases to about  $450^{\circ}$ , or higher. Everything depends on keeping the dust in a heap; it is impossible to make fire without doing this. This is true in all kinds of wooden fire-making tools

(Hough 1890: 531, 532).

Joseph Nicolar, a Penobscot Indian, recalled the typical fire drill formerly used by his people as consisting of a speed wheel of yellow birch-bark through which a small softwood spindle was inserted. Eel skin strips connecting the spindle to a second stick allowed the spindle to wind up and revolve. A blaze resulted at the foot of the spindle to which spunk (a dry, rotted wood from the yellow birch) was applied. The whole apparatus had to be bone dry (Nicolar 1893: 143).

Nicolar also told of the method of preserving and carrying fire when Indians were travelling. Spunk would burn very slowly, a tiny piece lasting half a day when protected from air. Therefore, an Indian would line a quahog clam shell with clay, and after it was dried would place burning spunk within, tying the shell together loosely to leave an aperture for smoke to escape. He would then place the shell in a pouch made from the skin of a small animal, skinned out whole, with a drawstring at its top, and hang it from his belt (Nicolar 1893: 141).

# VIII. HOW DID THE EARLY INDIANS AND EUROPEANS REGARD EACH OTHER?

To answer this question, we must ask other questions. What was the motivation of the particular European who encountered an Indian? Did he come to teach, observe, or exploit? Was he English or French? Had the Indian previously encountered poor treatment from other Europeans?

The English were primarily interested in colonization. Therefore they threatened the stability of the Wabanaki tribes by encroaching upon their hunting lands. They also treated them arrogantly. A traveler in 1759 wrote of the colonial English, "Indians and Negroes. . . they scarcely consider as of the human species" (American Heritage 1961: 168). A century or so earlier, the relationships had begun with friendliness on the part of the English, but after getting Indian help, they became dismissive and hostile, ultimately evicting them from their property. In the joint-stock land companies there was no implemented policy as to the Indians' future or their welfare.

The French got along well with the Indians, both as a matter of policy and of natural rapport. The fur trade, not colonization, interested them. Early on, they recognized the worth of Indian advice as to waterways, woodcraft, and tribal trade routes and so encouraged friendly relationships. Many of the courier de bois intermarried with Indian girls. Yet the French, too, harmed the Wabanaki tribes by encouraging them to forsake their native hunting customs and strip their forests of game animals to supply furs to Europe. Father Rasles, writing in 1723, mourned,

Our Savages have so destroyed the game of their country that for years they have no longer either elks or deer. Bears and beaver have become very scarce

(Jesuit Relations 1900: V. LXVII, 213).

The French Jesuit priests worked heroically and even affectionately at converting the Indians to Christianity, teaching them the white morality,

combatting the spells of the shamans, learning their tongues, compiling Indian dictionaries, urging forethought and responsibility. But in superimposing an alien religion and culture upon people who had already possessed one meaningful to themselves, they served to disorient them and to destroy those mores so important in family and tribal solidarity. In addition, either inadvertently or purposefully, some priests used the Indians' devotion to incite them against the English. Francis Parkman is very precise in pointing this out in his analysis of the situation following the confusing Treaty of Utrecht:

The river Kennebec, which was generally admitted by the French to be the dividing line between their possessions and New England, was regarded by them with the most watchful jealousy. Its headwaters approached those of the Canadian river Chaudiere, the mouth of which is near Quebec; and by ascending the former stream and crossing to the headwaters of the latter, through an intricacy of forests, hills, ponds, and marshes, it was possible for a small band of hardy men, unencumbered by cannon, to reach the Canadian capitol,--as was done long after by the followers of Benedict Arnold. Hence, it was thought a matter of the last importance to close the Kennebec against such an attempt. The Norridgewock band of the Abenaki, who lived on the banks of that river, were used to serve this purpose and to form a sort of advance-guard to the French colony, while other kindred bands on the Penobscot, the St. Croix, and the St. John were expected to aid in opposing a living barrier to English intrusion. Missionaries were stationed among all these Indians to keep them true to Church and King

(Parkman 1899: V. I, 213, 214)

Men like John Josselyn and William Wood, who simply found pleasure in observing native customs and recording New World animals, plants, and birds, offered no threat to Indian security. But Captain George Waymouth and other sea captains and explorers like him, who kidnapped Indians and either took them back to Europe to be trained as interpreters or else sold them into captivity, made contact difficult for Samuel de Champlain, who treated Indians fairly but occasionally was the recipient of their hostility, engendered by bad treatment from other Europeans.

Not only did the Indians' involvement in the war between England and France and the war between the American colonists and England destroy the Indians' own autonomy and security, but the Indians' battles against English encroachment on their lands caused waves of bloodshed. Metacam (known to the English as "King Philip"), son of Massasoet, was so bitter at the injustice to his people that he launched a full-scale war against the English in 1675 in which he managed to involve the Maine tribes. His objective was to drive the English out of New England, an aim which nearly succeeded; but his defeat really signalled the beginning of the deterioration of the Maine tribes since Massachusetts, in determining to protect its settlements in the Province of Maine, felt that the only solution was to wrest all power from the Indians and make them loyal subjects of the King.

Among both white settlements and Indian villages, these confrontations resulted in periods of great terror. Disease, starvation, alcohol, and war destroyed native dignity and self-sufficiency. The clearing of forested hills and valleys was a final death blow, for the Wabanaki were nowhere at home except in hunting in the wild. Treaties made by the English with the Passamaquoddy and the Penobscot caused confusion, since some Indians apparently thought they were selling the occupancy rights to the land rather than the land itself. It is an old, familiar story of colonization, conversion, exploitation; but we should remember that in the enlightened society of today, it is difficult to remember that 17th, 18th, and 19th century "colonization" was an accepted and approved policy among all nations in Europe and Asia, at least.

#### IX. WHAT TRACES OF NATIVE NORTHEASTERN INDIAN CULTURE SURVIVE TODAY?

Certainly not all indigenous Indian culture has been eradicated, even though the "first families" today are largely absorbed in a modern economy. Side by side

with English and French, traces of the native tongues still persist, particularly among the Passamaquoddy, Malecite, and Micmac; and some traditional songs and dances have survived. The hand-crafted baskets and moccasins are still made from natural materials. Some beadwork, but in a diminished amount, is still done, as is carving. Indiancraft has influenced the evolution of the canvas, aluminum, and fiberglass canoes so that they follow closely the lines of the birch-bark prototype. Snowshoes, once meant for work, are now both work and winter-sports items. Lacrosse and ice-hockey are practically national games. Corn, pumpkin, succotash, and squash appear "traditionally" and regularly on the contemporary dining table, and "bean-hole beans" and the "shore dinner" are considered typically New England. The Indian place-names of towns, lakes, streams, and mountains linger on. In Maine alone, six of the sixteen county names are Indian. Maine's mighty Mount Katahdin, containing "the spirit who dwells in its heart beyond the secret stone portal," is the same "Tedden" which John Gyles heard discussed in 1689 by his Indian captors--the same mountain which no Indian, Malecite not Penobscot, would climb beyond "where the green grows," for fear of the vengeful Pamola (Eckstorm 1924: 7,8).

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