Spring 2013

Bulletin of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society, Vol. 74, No. 1

Massachusetts Archaeological Society

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Welcome to the Spring 2013 issue of the MAS Bulletin! This issue contains a number of interesting studies of the Native past of our area. The lead article, by Eugene Winter, traces the history of a venerable oak tree in his home neighborhood, through meticulous documentary research, back to its probable Native use. The second article, by Boston City Archaeologist Joseph Bagley, illustrates the importance of returning to old artifact collections, in this case resulting in the find of a Contact period metal cut-out point from the Boston Common. There are also two articles by our most frequent contributor, Bill Taylor, on a new type of scraper and the other on the original Native deeds to the Titicut area.

The last article, by Mary Gage, assisted by her son James Gage, describes a type of stone construction frequently found in southern New England which they contend relates to Native American ceremonialism. Some readers have commented to me, indirectly, that they have some concerns about publishing information of this sort in our Bulletin. There is a perception (particularly among some members of the local professional archaeological community) that the study of such structures amounts to pseudoscience. However, the term “pseudoscience” should only be used to refer to the methodology employed, not to the subject matter explored. Science should be free to explore any subject, so long as it uses a systematic, quantifiable methodology. Those who are familiar with the history of archaeology in this region will be well aware that until fairly recently all archaeology used non-systematic, non-quantifiable methodologies which could be characterized as pseudoscience; indeed, some of our colleagues in the hard sciences still think this of us.

But the nature of science is that it is – or, at least, should be – self-correcting. That is, scientists promote hypotheses which are capable of being discontinued. The statement often voiced in certain quarters that Native Americans never built stone structures should be treated as such a hypothesis, for it is capable of being tested empirically.

At this point in my own research, with over 3,300 such sites recorded throughout the eastern seaboard of the U.S. and Canada, several of which are tied to written historical records by Euro-American eyewitnesses to the Native use of such structures; with archaeological excavation of a limited number of the structures showing them to be of pre-Contact age by radiocarbon dating; and with Native American claims that these are, in fact, their ancestors’ constructions, some of which are still in use as sacred sites today. I believe that we may safely consider the above hypothesis to have been soundly refuted, and move on to a systematic study of these structures and their distribution within the landscape. In my travels to many state historic preservation offices and state archaeologists’ offices in whose jurisdictions these structures are reported, I have found considerable support for the countervailing hypothesis, that at least some of the structures were built by Native Americans. It will always be possible to challenge the cultural affiliation of any one particular structure, and such challenges are welcomed. But we need to move beyond old ideas about them, and if we do, this will have policy implications for preservationists. No matter who built them, the structures are definitely part of the cultural landscape of the region, and should receive the same review and compliance protections as are afforded to standing structures and buried archaeological sites. I am pleased to report that in some states, they do.

During the production process of Edward L. Bell’s article, “Discerning Placemaking: Archaeology and Native Histories of the Den Rock Area,” changes were made to the manuscript submitted that were not approved by the author prior to publication. Typographic and formatting errors to this article and a small number of other errors to other articles were also introduced inadvertently by the editorial production staff. Anyone wishing a replacement .pdf of the Fall 2012 issue of the Bulletin may request one by contacting the Editor.

Ashland, MA
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Curtiss Hoffman
Acorn to Icon
The History of the Pow-Wow Oak in Lowell, Massachusetts
Eugene C. Winter

Introduction

This paper explores the background of the stories about the Pow-Wow Oak tree which grows beside Clark Road in the Belvidere section of Lowell, Massachusetts. This famous oak is graced by a plaque placed by the Molly Varnum Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.).

Their inscription reads:
"Under this oak, the Wamesit Indians met for their Pow-owos, their peace conferences, and their councils of war. At the time of the Revolution of the colonies, the men of this vicinity passed by this tree to Tewksbury Center to join a Company which fought in defense of Concord and Lexington. Tradition claims that this Pow-ow Oak was standing as early as 1700."

Oral Traditions

Why was this story immortalized on the D.A.R. plaque on Clark Road? Is the story of the Pow-Wow Oak a legend and based on fact? Folklorists state that legends usually grow out of facts (Clarke 1963:24). What appears to be legendary should be defined and traced to the earliest time and place of origin. Information is needed from varied contextual resources, including, but not limited to landscape, folklore, the history of land ownership, and of local families who perpetuated the story as a legend. The timeframe includes the Pre-Contact period, including Indian Wamesit, through the modern period when the Pow-Wow Oak Protectors got involved.

Lowell National Park’s Cultural Affairs Director, Martha Norkunas, interpreted Lowell’s past. She looked for the interplay of personal and public memory and how it matches or differs from official city history (Norkunas 2002: back cover). She writes, “Influential French thinker, Maurice Halbwachs described memory as a social, or collective function. The past is recalled by time periods and situating ideas, images, or patterns of thought within the context of a social group. Memory is a dynamic process that orients the individual by linking him or her to family experiences, traditions, class, and place.” (Norkunas 2002: 43)

When Constance Crosby gave her speech at the Dublin Seminar for New England Folk Life concerning native oral traditions which may explain local landscape features and events, she said, “The spiritual landscape formed by . . . traditions means something other than sacred groves, and religious shrines. Spirits and places of spiritual power are often associated with certain topographical features such as islands, boulder formations, earth mounds, springs, hill tops, cliffs, and streams.” (Crosby 1993: 35).

Belvidere District History: Home of Clark Road and the Pow-Wow Oak Tree

Today Clark Road is a major thoroughfare through the Belvidere section of Lowell. What began as an Indian trail before colonization, which was known to exist to the local English farmers whose homes were located miles to the south in ancient Billerica. In 1664 this trail or bridal path was accepted as a country road, “in the way it is now trodden” to Wamesit, passing by the future site of the Hunt garrison. In addition, a trail passing through Margaret Winthrop’s grant became a country road connecting Indian Wamesit with Shawsheen Valley (today known as Andover Street or Route 133). (Hazen 1883: 87-101; Hallett 1956:41; Lowell City Planning Department 1966: 14-18).

In 1906, a fourth section of the Town of Tewksbury was annexed by Lowell. This was the final taking of Tewksbury land, and it included the Clark Road area. Earlier, parts were transferred to Lowell in the years 1834, 1874 and 1888 – as the new city of Lowell expanded. (Secretary of State MA 1920: 46). Originally the Margaret Winthrop (1640) land grant was included into the grant obtained by Billerica (1655). Years later, in 1734, the northern part of Billerica was set off to form the town of Tewksbury, which included Margaret Winthrop’s original grant as well as the eastern part of the Wamesit Indian village.

Soon after the formation of Billerica (1655) the proprietors passed several by-laws (Hazen 1883:67,198) to protect sizeable trees on roadsides as the roads were being developed. The purpose was to protect early foot travel as well as horses and ox teams, especially when travelers required protection from rain and intense sun. The effect of this policy can be seen on Clark Road today. Some trees along the road are huge veteran trees, especially oaks. This informs us that a section of the original forest along Clark Road consisted of oaks as dominant trees, and more importantly they mark the original trail.

Public Naming of the Pow-Wow Tree

It was during the early part of the 20th century that we see for the first time the written or printed acknowledgement of the oak tree with the title Pow-Wow, beginning with Albert O’Heir in 1909 and ending with the D.A.R. public wayside sign in 1931.

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Pow-Wow

When Gookin and Eliot refer to pow-wows they are referring to both the spiritual individual or leader and the ceremonies relating to that individual. (Cooke 1976: 23-24; Cutler 1994: 39; Fiske 1970: 74-75; Karr 1999: 123-124). The D.A.R. sign refers to the gathering place.

The English meaning of Pow-Wow shifted over time. Its early definition, found in the Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles was, "1624 a priest, sorcerer, or medicine man of N. American Indians; a ceremony of N. American Indians, especially where magic was practiced and feasting indulged in; and 1812 political or other meeting, a friendly consultation." (Little et al. 1955:1559). We need to remember that it was the English who passed on the Indian vocabulary, orally and in writing. In later years the word Pow-Wow was used differently and extensively during the modern Pan-Indian times. Today the original Algonquian word is used across the whole country – where it really means a meeting with dancing, feasting, and socializing. (Barnhart and Barnhart 1976: 1634)

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O’Heir owned land on both sides of the road and was notified, as an abutter that the tree was to be removed because of a proposed road expansion and paving due to the increased popularity of automobiles. O’Heir obviously knew and believed the legend of the oak tree. He proposed to the Lowell City Council to take his donation of 5,000 square feet on the western side of the road and to move the proposed roadbed west to his donated land, “in order to save the tree.” (Lowell Citizen:1909) This plan was also backed by his neighbors along the same road. The City accepted his plan. Later in 1909, at O’Heir’s request, the tree was hand labeled and symbolized on a City of Lowell plan that was drawn for the widening and paving of the road. This was the first time that the legend of the Pow-Wow Oak was indicated in print. But it was not written on a public document, recording what had been known by the people who lived on Clark Road. (Griffin 1928:122) This plan was also backed by his neighbors along the same road. The City accepted his plan. Later in 1909, at O’Heir’s request, the tree was hand labeled and symbolized on a City of Lowell plan that was drawn for the widening and paving of the road. This was the first time that the legend of the Pow-Wow Oak was indicated in print. But it was not written on a public document, recording what had been known by the people who lived on Clark Road. (Griffin 1928:122) This plan was also backed by his neighbors along the same road. The City accepted his plan. Later in 1909, at O’Heir’s request, the tree was hand labeled and symbolized on a City of Lowell plan that was drawn for the widening and paving of the road. This was the first time that the legend of the Pow-Wow Oak was indicated in print. But it was not written on a public document, recording what had been known by the people who lived on Clark Road. (Griffin 1928:122) In her book, Little Stories About Lowell (1928), Griffin studied early documents and literature, interviewed elderly persons, compiled historical facts and wrote for a regional audience. In her book, Little Stories About Lowell (1928), Griffin studied early documents and literature, interviewed elderly persons, compiled historical facts and wrote for a regional audience.

The most widespread notice resulted from a book written by Sara Swan Griffin, a member of the Molly Varnum Chapter of the D.A.R. A local historian, she wrote a number of early historical essays collected from the greater Lowell region which included Billerica, Tewksbury, Chelmsford and Dracut. Griffin studied early documents and literature, interviewed elderly persons, compiled historical facts and wrote for a regional audience. In her book, Little Stories About Lowell (1928), Griffin included a statement about a tree on Clark Road called the Pow-Wow Oak among the Anglo folks who lived on that road. (Griffin 1928:122) This was the first time the legend of the Pow-Wow Oak was put into printed and published text. As a result of Griffin’s research, the Molly Varnum Chapter of the D.A.R. erected a wayside sign on Clark Road in 1931 beneath the branches of the tree, providing even greater public awareness.

Birth of the Legend
As we have read up to now, the public was made aware of the legend; Albert O’Heir and his desire to save the tree from road construction; Jennie Clark’s “delightful tale” in the Tewksbury Anniversary booklet; Sara Swan Griffin’s Short Stories of Lowell and finally the Molly Varnum Chapter of the D.A.R. signpost. Now we will look more closely at the area to understand how this legend was developed and why it continued for hundreds of years. We also argue that the legend was indeed based on historical fact. We hope to answer the question raised in the introduction: “What appears to be legendary should be defined and traced to the earliest time and place of origin.”

Chronologically we will look at the Native population of the Wamesit Village and its interaction with the English: Colonial Land Grants, English settlers, and the development of Clark Road. As the Native American and colonial history land use and development is closely examined, it will be become clear how this acorn became an icon. Wamesit Village
Both sides of the Concord River were occupied by the Wamesit village, which spread over twenty-five hundred acres. Daniel Gookin reported in 1674 only on the population living east of the Concord River, stating there were only about fifteen families and about seventy-five souls. (Gookin 1674:74). Weiss writes this population was reported to be about 250 Indians: men, women and children. (Weiss 1959:171). This does include the second segment of the village west of the Concord River. Daniel Gookin (in referring only to the Christianized Indians east of the Concord) reported that Wamesit was the fifth praying Indian town established by missionary John Eliot. (Gookin 1674:74-78) The land had been occupied by Indians for many centuries earlier, so we should recognize that Eliot was putting his own definition on the Indian group which might qualify for acceptance as an Indian town that could meet the requirements of the English town form: permanent settlement, taming of the land, growing corn, etc., as was done in the town of Andover for Indian Roger and his group. (Perley 1912:38-40)
*Winter Pow-Wow Oak*

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**Wamesit Village**

Both sides of the Concord River were occupied by the Wamesit village, which spread over twenty-five hundred acres. Daniel Gookin reported in 1674 only on the population living east of the Concord River, stating there were only about fifteen families and about seventy-five souls. (Gookin 1674:74). Weiss writes this population was reported to be about 250 Indians: men, women and children. (Weiss 1959:171). This does include the second segment of the village west of the Concord River. Daniel Gookin (in referring only to the Christianized Indians east of the Concord) reported that Wamesit was the fifth praying Indian town established by missionary John Eliot. (Gookin 1674:74-78) The land had been occupied by Indians for many centuries earlier, so we should recognize that Eliot was putting his own definition on the Indian group which might qualify for acceptance as an Indian town that could meet the requirements of the English town form: permanent settlement, taming of the land, growing corn, etc., as was done in the town of Andover for Indian Roger and his group. (Perley 1912:38-40)
The grandson and heir of Margaret Winthrop, Waitstill (Wait) Winthrop, became a military leader and was involved in the King William’s Indian wars. The Winthrop grant, east of the Concord and south of the Merrimack, was historically used by the Wamesit. This granted land remained unused by the Winthrops, and the Indians maintained their use of it. As stated earlier, Eliot, desiring to legalize the Indian town as a praying town, was able to get Massachusetts Bay to convert some 500 acres of the Winthrop grant to the ownership of the Indians as part of the legal Indian town of Wamesit. The Winthrop heirs were given an opportunity to acquire replacement land elsewhere. Within 15 years, this land was legally established as Billerica. This land remained unsettled and undeveloped, except by native peoples.

King William’s War

Waitstill (Wait) Winthrop, son of John Winthrop Junior, inherited one thousand acres of land from his grandmother, Margaret, from her original grant. Wait’s inherited property was located in the middle third of Margaret’s original 1640 grant (which included today’s Clark Road area). Prior to 1689, Wait was commissioned a captain in the local militia of Massachusetts; later in 1692 he became a Major General of the Boston Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company. Because of his military position, it is expected that he would receive reports from northern towns that had suffered attacks from the French and Indians coming down from Canada.

In 1689, at the beginning of King William’s War, plans were made to protect the Massachusetts towns, farms and settlers within striking distance of the Merrimack River. By 1690 the English recognized their danger as the messages of attacks poured in from nearby towns. (Drake 1897: 9-10; Hazen 1883:133).

Winthrop served as a member of the Council and as Commander-in-Chief of the Provisional forces. All of these factors coincided with the outbreak of King William’s War in 1689 – 1697. Aside from the many duties he for which he was responsible, lack of money became a problem. In addition his wife, Mary, died of smallpox as well as two of his children. (Dunn 1962: 202, 259) At the very beginning of King William’s War in 1689 Wait Winthrop had sold one-fifth share of his inheritance to a Samuel Hunt of Concord, who moved to Billerica in 1689 as the first and only colonial to reside in what was once the Winthrop land. (N.B.: Winthrop sat on the Court of Oyer and Terminer for the 1692 Salem Witch Trials and then on the Superior Court, where he concluded his public career as Chief Justice until his death in 1717.)

Samuel Hunt and the Garrison House:

Samuel Hunt (1657 – 1742-3), militiaman, was the first and for a time the only colonial to report for duty and later to settle on the Winthrop land. Samuel Hunt is the connection between the Native Americans, the militia and the settlers.

Samuel Hunt (1657-1742-3) was a trained militia man, involved in King Philip’s War, and he later built the garrison house in Billerica at the start of King William’s War, probably in 1689. A son of Samuel Hunt, Senior of Ipswich, and a grandson of William Hunt of Concord, he enrolled from Ipswich and trained as a soldier to serve in the war (1675-76) against the Wampanoag’s leader, King Philip. Proof of his services rendered can be found in Bodge’s book: “Ipswich December 24, 1676, Samuel Hunt received 88.04.00” and states that “Samuel [sic] Hunt, Billerica, Alive.” (Bodge 1896:438-9). Another receipt acknowledges a payment for “June 24, 1735 - List of Proprietors of Narragansett Township No.6 - Those that drewed [sic] their lots in the Narragansett Township No. 6 (later known as Templeton, MA) - Claimant Samuel Hunt, Alive.” (Bodge: 436)

It is probable that the garrison house was constructed by Samuel Hunt in 1689 at the beginning of the King William’s War, even though Hunt had not yet paid for the land he was to purchase from Winthrop. This garrison was the first colonial construction and occupation permitted on the Winthrop grant. According to Hazen, “Ultimately Billerica protected the Winthrop grant by keeping the colonials out of that land ‘in as much as is in them lyeth to make all such marks and stakes to be a nullity.’” This was in effect until 1689 when Samuel Hunt occupied the land. (Hazen 1883:199)
This traditional Indian land, granted to Margaret Winthrop in 1640, remained unused by colonials and remained in use by the Indians. On May 13, 1640, Margaret Winthrop (3rd wife of Governor John Winthrop, first governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony) was granted 3,000 acres "to be at her dispensing for her and her sons [sic], when they shall desire it without [sic] prejudice to any former grant". At a session of the General Court in December 10, 1641 an order was given for this grant to be surveyed by Mr. Flint and Leit. [sic] Willard with [sic] Mr. Oliver or some other skillful in measuring" (Courrier-Citizen 1897:82-84).

This grant included all the land between the Concord River and the Andover grant. Later, all of this land was included within the town of Billerica, and extended northward to the Merrimack River. At the time of Margaret Winthrop's death (1647), the grant was descended to her heirs. The grant was earlier than either the English colonial towns of Billerica or Tewksbury, consisting of 3,000 acres, and included the eastern part of Wamesit Indian village. (Courrier-Citizen 1897:82-84) After Billerica was established it declared a policy (1655-1694) that no person could stake a claim on the Winthrop land, thus enabling continued Indian use (Hazen 1883:199).

The grandson and heir of Margaret Winthrop, Waitstill (Wait) Winthrop, became a military leader and was involved in the King William's Indian wars. The Winthrop grant, east of the Concord and south of the Merrimack, was historically used by the Wamesit. This grant was used by the Winthrops, and the Indians maintained their use of it. As stated earlier, Eliot, desiring to legalize the Indian town as a praying town, was able to get Massachusetts Bay to convert some 500 acres of the Winthrop grant to the ownership of the Indians as part of the legal Indian town of Wamesit. The Winthrop heirs were given an opportunity to acquire replacement land elsewhere. Within 15 years, this land was legally established as Billerica. This land remained unsettled and undeveloped, except by native peoples.

King William's War

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Was Hunt contracted to build this garrison by Billerica or by Wait Winthrop personally as military leader? Beside the land purchase between Winthrop and Hunt, we are uncertain of the relationship between the two. It seems likely that due to Winthrop’s military leadership positions and Hunt’s military service, they were in regular communication during King William’s War. The garrison structure most likely did not include Hunt’s family, only militiamen. (Note: a garrison house in Hunt’s era was used as militia housing rather than the two-story style of domestic housing we know today.) One needs also to remember that the Hunt Garrison had no neighbors, as it was on the as yet unsettled Winthrop grant. Yet this constructed site promoted an alliance with the “friendly” remaining Indians of Wamesit who were in fear of the northern intruders. In a letter dated August 23, 1695, Colonel Lynde writes, “The Hunt Garrison House was built to oversee the bedrock dike which crossed the Merrimack River and which served as an entry point for raiding northern Indians to cross into Billerica. “It is certain that Samuel Hunt’s house at Wamesit was so (in use as a garrison), and from its exposed situation it was probably the most important. It stood near ‘Hunt’s Falls,’ on what is now the farm of John Clark... Here scouting parties must often have made a rendezvous, as they passed and repassed from Chelmsford to Andover, Prospect Hill, and the Great Swamp” (Hazen 1883:132-3).

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The sketched map showing the location of the Samuel Hunt block house, or Garrison House, was provided to the Billerica historian, Henry A. Hazen July 7, 1879. The map was drawn by Oliver Richardson Clark and a letter accompanied it, stating that the Hunt Garrison House was situated on the farm of John Clark, occupant of the site in the 19th century. The way marked “Road to Tewksbury Center” is Clark Road. A copy of the original letter was given to Mr. Harold Patten, a Tewksbury historian, about the middle of last century, by Dr. Stearns of Billerica Historical Society. The map was then prepared for printing by J. Foster Hallett in 1959 for the Tewksbury history written by Mr. Patten. (Patten Scrapbook, private: 1959)

After King William’s War the garrison was torn down and the Hunt family built a new home on what is today Clark Road and the site of the Pow-Wow oak. Samuel Hunt brought his wife, Mary, and raised a family, many of whom remained in the family home for generations. Samuel Hunt raised nine children here, including one daughter who died young. His great grandson, Timothy Hunt (b 1755), built a new house on the site in 1810. Timothy Hunt’s granddaughter, Hannah (Hunt) Candee, lived at the site, and wrote a history of the house in 1885 and left the hand-written manuscript in a bricked up fireplace at what is today 241 Clark Road (Albert O’Heir’s home). This document was discovered when the house was restored in the 20th century. From this document we can confirm the history of the Hunts and Clarks on Clark Road and also the names of their neighbors in the area. They (the Hunts) remained inhabitants of Clark Road until the late 1800’s.

For the security of Billerica there be a garrison of a number competent at Weymessit[sic], who may raise a thousand bushels of corn upon the lands of the Indians in that place; may be improved daily in scouting and ranging the woods between Weymessit and Andover, which will discover the enemy before he comes to the towns and prevent lurking Indians about our towns. Also, that they shall be in a readiness to succor any of the three towns at any time, when in distress; also, shall be ready to join with others to follow the enemy upon a sudden, after their appearing.” (Hazen 1883:132-3).

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“Figure 7: Appendix C (Selected Towns by E. Winter): Incidents between the Eastern Indians and Northeast Settlers (Stewart-Smith 1998: 390)."
The Clark Road Families

In 1734, the town of Tewksbury was set apart from northern Billerica. For about two hundred years only Hunts and Clarks (c.1689-1890) lived on this road. We know that by the mid 19th century there were at most four houses, as indicated on the 1831 and 1856 maps of Tewksbury. Other residents’ names on the road include: Alfred Hunt, uncle of Timothy, the 1810 house builder; William Clark; Deacon Joshua Clark and John Clark.

Captain Jonas Clark, who ran a tavern and a ferry service upstream from Pawtucket Falls, bought 100 acres from the Hunts in 1737 for his son, Thomas. Captain Jonas Clark, having met with his militia at the designated meeting point by the Pow-Wow Oak, led his company in Colonel Greene’s Regiment on April 19th, 1775 to the Battles of Concord and Lexington. An assembly point was litia at the designated meeting point by the Pow-Wow Oak, which was obviously observed by an English Puritan religion and their alliance with English colonists. They would need protection. Were they seeking the support of Samuel Hunt and the garrison militia? All of these reasons to hold a meeting – which the Englishman observed and reported - can be considered but not proven.

Figure 12: Map of Tewksbury, 1831 with Arrow Indicating Clark Road.

Conclusion

What kind of meeting was held at the Pow-Wow Oak which was obviously observed by an English colonist and eventually repeated to others on the Clark Road area? The colonist might have seen a religious meeting with the small Native group which remained after the sale of the Wamesit land west of the Concord River but not east of the river. ... At the time of the Revolution of the colonies, the men of this vicinity passed by this tree to Tewksbury Center to join a Company which fought in defense of Concord and Lexington.”

Figure 13: Part of the 1888 Hannah Hunt Candee Time Capsule

Was it curiosity about the new-comer, the first white man to build a dwelling on Indian land, which up to this time (1689) had been kept vacant by Billerica authorities? It seems most likely that praying Indians would be highly concerned due to the outbreak of King William’s War and the numerous attacks near the Merrimack River. They understood that the northern Indians from Canada would also attack them because of their acceptance of the English Puritan religion and their alliance with English colonists. They would need protection. Were they seeking the support of Samuel Hunt and the garrison militia? All of these reasons to hold a meeting – which the Englishman observed and reported - can be considered but not proven.

If that particular spot on the landscape was the location of the meeting, it might be a place of “pow-er” near the intersection of two trails, a grove of oak trees, and near the water of a tributary stream known as Trull Brook. This spot was also within sight of Samuel Hunt’s garrison house. Samuel Hunt, a militiaman, may have been contracted by either the town of Billerica to establish the garrison house, or maybe by Wait Winthrop serving the Bay Colony as a top military leader. Whoever it was knew the danger of the bedrock dike crossing the Merrimack River as a means of access to the town by northern enemies, and placed Hunt in the role of strategic defense.

As an heir of the Margaret Winthrop land grant, Wait Winthrop inherited the middle third of her 1640 grant, the location where Samuel Hunt established the Garrison House. Eventually Hunt paid for a farm at the same location and lived there for the rest of his life along with his wife, Mary, and nine children.

Did the children ever ask their father to tell them a story? He might tell them the story of the Indian meeting near the oak tree. One child might ask, “Where are you pointing?” Father’s answer might be, “See that young oak tree growing near the slope? That’s the place where I saw them pow-wowing.” Both the oak tree and the adjacent land might have been what he meant, but the listeners would remember the story with special interest in the tree, the motif, now thought of as the Pow-Wow Oak Tree. Thus the legend begins.

The Samuel Hunt Generations are listed below to show the continuous line of their residence on Clark Road: (Wyman 1862:82-84)

Samuel Hunt: 1657 – 1742. (Garrison House, c.1689)
Peter, son of Samuel Hunt: 1692 – 1770
Peter, grandson of Samuel Hunt: 1720 – 1814
Timothy, great-grandson of Samuel Hunt: 1756 – 1838
Thomas, great-great-grandson of Samuel Hunt: 1795 – 1886
Hannah, great-great-great-granddaughter of Samuel Hunt: (1838-?)

By the early 20th century the O’Heir family purchased the Hunt house. Albert O’Heir, the protector of the oak and the first to have the tree indicated on a public document in 1909, lived in the house with his wife and children: Edward, Mimi- am, Kathleen, Albert, Edward, and David. As the Courier-Citizen newspaper article states, “Early in this century, theirs was one of only three houses in that area south of Andover Street.” Geographer-historian Arthur Krim quotes John Kirtland Wright as follows, “The living names in any particular district at any particular time are an accumulation from the past, the quality and density of which depend partly upon the density of population, partly upon the length of time during which the country has been occupied and upon the character of the various waves of settlement” (Krim 1981: 69). As we examine Clark Road we see that the population density was light, the length of occupation was long with few families and their descendants.

The Hunt and Clark families represent a chain of occupants on Clark Road in an unbroken line from

Figure 12: Map of Tewksbury, 1831 with Arrow Indicating Clark Road.
The Clark Road Families

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So, what kind of meeting was held at the Pow-Wow Oak which was obviously observed by an English colonist and eventually repeated to others on the Clark Road area? The colonist might have seen a religious meeting with the small Native group which remained after the sale of the Wamesit land in 1734. The Clark Road area? The colonist might have seen a religious meeting with the small Native group which remained after the sale of the Wamesit land in 1734. Did the children ever ask their father to tell them a story? He might tell them the story of the Indian meeting near the oak tree. One child might ask, “Where are you pointing?” Father’s answer might be, “See that young oak tree growing near the slope? That’s the place where I saw them pow-wowing.” Both the oak tree and the adjacent land might have been what he meant, but the listeners would remember the story with special interest in the tree, the motif, now thought of as the Pow-Wow Oak Tree. Thus the legend begins.

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... At the time of the Revolution of the colonies, the men of this vicinity passed by this tree to Tewksbury Center to join a Company which fought in defense of Concord and Lexington."
the very first Samuel Hunt to the present day. It is suggested that Samuel Hunt, the first English occupant on the Winthrop grant, was the person who told his children the story of an Indian meeting beside the tree. Hunt was the only individual who could have seen Native people at an early date as a remnant population reflecting the old residents of Wamesit Village. It was essentially a closed network through which the legend was repeated until the present day motif, the Pow-Wow Oak Tree, is the single remaining element.

Afterword

One hundred years after Albert O’Heir challenged the City of Lowell to save the Pow-Wow Oak tree, another group gathered to inform the public of the historic importance and cultural significance of a 320+ year old Pow Wow tree on Clark Road. (Koumantzelis 2012).

The Pow-Wow Oak Protectors (P.W.O.P) unofficially started in 2009 and was officially formed in 2011, by George Koumantzelis a Belvidere neighborhood resident. He galvanized interest and raised funds within Lowell, Tewksbury and other areas; he appeared before Lowell City Council to argue various points to save the tree and to declare it public land. In 2012, the Lowell City Council approved a Pow-Wow Oak Tree Preservation Covenant, registered at the Middlesex County of Deeds. Through their advocacy the tree was registered with the American Forests Organization and recognized as a National Historic Tree. Furthermore, through the work of Koumantzelis and P.W.O.P, money was raised: to fund a proper land survey of the area; to fund stone bounds to set off the tree and its land; to fund a certified arborist to date the tree’s age; to fund the creation and installation of a memorial plaque to educate the public about its “legal status as a public tree as well as its very sacred importance to local Native American culture.” (Koumantzelis 2012)

John Coppinger, arborist, attempted to get an approximate date of the Pow-Wow Oak Tree in 2012. He drilled two small diameter borings from the tree, revealing the annual growth rings. The drill used was unable to penetrate to the tree’s center, but the growth rings which were removed provide a date of three hundred and twenty years old. What remains hidden might add another thirty years to the date.

United States Congresswoman Nicki Tsongas sent a declaration from the United States Congress of Special Recognition to the Pow-Wow Oak Preservation Covenant. In November 2012, a community ceremony was held to celebrate the success of the Pow-Wow Oak Protectors and to celebrate the history of this legendary oak tree – truly grown from Acorn to Icon.

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(c) Eugene C. Winter, 2013
An Early Colonial Native American Trade Point on Boston Common

Joseph Bagley

On January 30th, 2013, Justin Thomas, a lab volunteer, found a triangular piece of thin copper while sorting a bag of artifacts from the eastern portion of the Common (figure 2). Because of the sensitive nature of site location data on public land in Boston, the precise provenience of this artifact within the Common will not be included in this report. The author of this publication recognized the shape and material of the artifact and its resemblance to early colonial Native American trade points. Having never personally encountered a copper point outside of museum collections, he had some initial doubt of its identification due to the asymmetrical shape and overall thinness of the point; however, Lindsay Randall of the R. S. Peabody Museum in Andover, MA was able to supply photos and measurements of known New York copper arrowheads and the Museum’s collection that matched the morphology and thinness of this copper arrowhead exactly, confirming the identification (Randall personal communication). The newly-designated site has been named the Massachusetts Site (BOS:132) after the Native American tribe who call Shawmut, now Boston, their home.

Physical Attributes

For comparative purposes, a full set of measurements were taken of the copper point (figure 3). It measures 38.5mm in length and 28.3mm in width, when measured perpendicular to the central axes. One edge measures 36.2mm in length while the other measures 39.3mm, giving the point, overall, an asymmetrical appearance. The angle of the point tip is 27°, the lower of the two “tangs” is 62°, and the upper “tang” is 90°. The point is 0.6mm thick and has a slight curvature. There are no holes through the point, but there is a distinct off-center indentation that may be from an attempt to pierce the point.

The overall form is somewhat atypical. Jeff Boudeau’s typology (2008: 49) depicts triangular points with similar length sides and central piercings, “A”-shaped points, or stemmed points. The form shown here could be the result of damage leading to the loss of some portion of the base, an unfinished form, or more-simply, the point could have been made from a rectangular-shaped piece of copper cut in half (figure 4). Boudeau (2008) notes asymmetry in Levant-like points, possibly indicating use as knives. Because some asymmetry is commonplace in stone points, and a copper trade point in the R. S. Peabody Museum collection used for comparison also possesses the identical form, it is most probable that this point represents a finished copper trade point cut efficiently from a rectangular blank made from a copper kettle. While trade points are, overall, extremely rare, it is possible that this form is under-represented in publications due to its more mundane appearance when more stylized forms are available for illustration and photography.

Provenience

While exact provenience will not be given in this publication, the point was found in the eastern portion of the Common near the site of the Great Elm. The Great Elm was a monumental-type American Elm tree located near the center of Boston Common. It first appears in early 18th century maps in mature form, and was a major feature of the landscape until it fell in 1876. Stratigraphically, the point was found in disturbed earth in the same context as Staffordshire slipware, transfer printed whiteware, and a graphite rod from early electric lighting. This indicates that disturbances have occurred to this area of the site. Elsewhere in the Common concentrations of lithic chipping debris have been identified in disturbed contexts. Concentrations of lithics found in the 2012 Men’s Comfort Station project area contained flakes of the same material and morphology as each other indicating that, while the area has been disturbed, concentrations of artifacts still exist, indicating that at least minimal contextual provenience has been maintained in these areas. In other words, while many areas of the Common are disturbed, it is possible that early artifacts that are not part of 19th century domestic filling episodes are within close proximity to their original context.

The proximity of this point to the Great Elm of Boston Common is significant. The Great Elm was located at the eastern base of Flagstaff Hill, the central and prominent hill within the Common. This elm was large enough to feature prominently on the 1723 Bonner map (Bonner 1723), suggesting its mature age less than 100 years after the founding of Boston. Given this, the Great Elm was a feature of the landscape well before the arrival of Europeans. Also critical to the understanding of both the Common and the early history of Boston is the comment made by the colonist William Wood in the early 1630s that the young city of Boston lacked trees, requiring its first inhabitants to seek wood from nearby towns (Wood 1634). These two facts combined indicate that in the late 16th through early 17th century, Boston Common (and likely the entire Shawmut peninsula, which would later become Boston) was devoid of trees with few exceptions, the largest of which must have been the Great Elm, given its prominence in early Boston history.

Significance

The cultural implications of the proximity of the trade point to the great elm require further exploration. The presence of Massachusetts Native Americans on Boston Common between the Middle Archaic and Late Woodland periods, as well as the presence of English settlers and the removal of Native populations from an area, must have had some impact on this site. Temporally, trade points are limited to the period between the arrival of Europeans with copper kettles, from which the point is most likely made, and the extinction of Native populations from an area. In the case of Boston, the latter can be established between the arrival of William Baxton (Blackstone) in 1625 and the founding of Boston in 1630. The earlier date is a bit more difficult to establish between the arrival of the great elm and the early history of Boston Common.
Introduction

Nearly 30 years after excavation, the Boston Common Lighting assemblage is still revealing new insights into the early history of Boston. Recently, a copper trade point was discovered in an assemblage excavated in 1987. This artifact reveals new information on the early history of Boston, the early colonial history of Native Americans in Boston, and additional information on the production of copper arrowheads. An excavation by City Archaeologist Stephen Pendery and a team of archaeologists between 1985 and 1987, ahead of the installation of a network of light posts throughout the Common, identified four areas of intact archeological deposits including two Native American sites, a Colonial deposit, and a Revolutionary War encampment (Pendery 1988).

In the ensuing years, the collection was cataloged, an archaeological report was completed (Pendery 1988), and a re-examination of the two Native sites, the Frog Pond and Block 79 sites was studied and published (Bagley 2007) (Figure 1). Since excavation, this assemblage has resided in the City of Boston's City Archaeology Lab and has been managed by three consecutive City Archaeologists. The author of this publication, the latest City Archaeologist, recently developed the City Archaeology Program to digitally catalog the entirety of the Lab's collections, which include approximately 1,000,000 artifacts from the 28 archeological collections currently within the Lab's curation facility.

The first large collection included in this plan was the Boston Common Lighting assemblage. Since the Lab's re-opening in April 2012 at its new location in West Roxbury, a dedicated team of volunteers has been sorting, re-bagging, stabilizing, and re-cataloging the entirety of the 92-box Boston Common Lighting assemblage. While it is still very much a work in progress, several new discoveries have been made within the collection, the most significant of which (to date) is summarized here.

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The proximity of this point to the Great Elm of Boston Common is significant. The Great Elm was located at the eastern base of Flagstaff Hill, the central and prominent hill within the Common. This elm was large enough to feature prominently on the 1723 Bonner map (Bonner 1723), suggesting its mature age more than 100 years after the founding of Boston. Given this, the Great Elm was a feature of the landscape well before the arrival of Europeans. Also critical to the understanding of both the Common and the early history of Boston is the comment made by the colonist William Wood in the early 1630’s that the young city of Boston lacked trees, requiring its first inhabitants to seek wood from nearby towns (Wood 1634). These two facts combined indicate that in the late 16th through early 17th century, Boston Common (and likely the entire Shawmut peninsula, which would later become Boston) was devoid of trees with few exceptions, the largest of which must have been the Great Elm, given its prominence in early Boston history.

Significance

The cultural implications of the proximity of the trade point to the Great Elm are great. The preserv- ance of Massachusetts Native Americans on Boston Common between the Middle Archaic and Late Woodland having been established (Bagley 2007), there can be no doubt that the Great Elm played a role in the activities conducted in the area. The Nature Conservancy may still call Boston Common, especially considering its proximity to coastal resources, a fresh water spring, a massive ridge (Trimountain), smaller hill (Flagstaff Hill in Boston Common), natural spring (Frog Pond), mud flat (Back Bay), major river (Charles) and several older Native American sites—all within 1,000 feet of the tree. Therefore, we can likely attribute the presence of this copper trade point with the activities conducted in the vicinity of the Great Elm.

Temporally, trade points are limited to the period between the arrival of Europeans with copper kettles, from which the point is most likely made, and the decline of Native populations from an area. In the case of Boston, the latter can be estabished between the arrival of William Baxton (Blackstone) in 1625 and the founding of Boston in 1630. The earlier date is a bit more difficult to
establish given the variability in the movements of Europeans and Native peoples in the late 16th and early 17th century; however, several European explorers beginning with Bartholomew Gosnold (1602), Champlain (1608), John Smith (1614), and the settlement of Plymouth (1620) may have been the source of the copper used for this trade point. In sum, this copper point likely dates to the period between 1608 and 1625, with the acknowledgement of earlier or later dating depending on trade of goods and the presence of Native people in Boston after Blaxton's arrival. (Shurtleff 1871)

While there are archaeological sites that date to the early Colonial or “contact” period in Boston, these sites are primarily Massachusett grave sites and villages recorded almost exclusively through historic record and recollection during construction. This copper trade point is the first evidence of Massachusett Native American presence in colonial Boston found through professional archaeological investigation.

Conclusions
This discovery has filled a gap in the archaeological record in Boston connecting the Native American can experience prior to the arrival of Europeans with their experience after European arrival. Artifacts such as this help to break down the false divide between prehistoric and historic archaeology in that they prove the continuity of a culture that is adapting to new materials and populations without disappearing or ending at “contact.” Additionally, the uncovering of this artifact in a collection that was excavated in 1986 emphasizes the importance of old collections, the re-examination of these collections, and the information that can still be obtained through this examination. As we continue to process the Boston Common collection, additional artifacts from its deep and important Native American history are continuing to come to light.

Acknowledgements
I would like to thank my dedicated team of volunteers at the City Archaeology Lab who are processing the lab’s collections, specifically Justin Thomas, who found the copper point and brought it to my attention.

References Cited
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Figure 1: Map Showing Location of Site in Massachusetts and Detailed Reconstructed View of Boston Common Topography c. 1630 Showing Location of Nearby Sites and Great Elm. (Map based on Bagley 2007).

Figure 2: Copper Trade Point Found on Boston Common near Great Elm.
A New Type of Scraper
William B. Taylor

Introduction

During 1969-1970 the Seaver Farm Site in Bridgewater, Massachusetts was being developed as a housing project. Seventeen houses were erected along Vernon and Beach Streets. Fill for this project was excavated from three acres along the west side of Seaver Farm, in the field adjacent to the Titicut Site (19-PL-161) on Beach Street. During this project, I continually searched the backfill left by the front end loader. Several graves were exposed along with scattered projectile points (Taylor 1970). A unique quartz tool was discovered in the backfill of this field. It was a chunky piece of white quartz with a 3" (7 cm) sharp edge and a 2" (5 cm) flat base, which was 1" (2.5 cm) thick and tapered at a 45 degree angle. When I brought this implement in to William S. Fowler, he was immediately excited because he saw it could have been hafted exactly like the Triangular Hoe, by using a short handle. Soon he experimented and hafted this scraper with a 10 1/2" (26.7 cm) long handle that he had prepared. This tool was lashed to the handle with a rawhide thong by using the same method used in hafting a Triangular Hoe (Fowler 1985) - the thongs were criss-crossed both front and back to hold it firmly in place (Figure 1).

The sharp edge of this scraper would make it an ideal tool for scraping hides, during the de-sliming process of removing unwanted fat from the skin (Figure 2). Another use could be to thin the walls of a wooden bowl or a dugout canoe. The sharp edges would be ideal to remove unwanted bulges in a wooden product. A further use could be to thin the walls of a soapstone (steatite) bowl, if this style of scraper was developed during the Transitional Archaic Period.

Conclusion

These examples seem to place this new style of scraper in a class by itself. They are different from the Stem, Steepedge, Flake, Shaft and Oval scrapers that appear more commonly on Indian sites. These latter types are shown in the Classification of Stone Implements of the Northeast and illustrated in our Massachusetts Archaeological Society Bulletin v. 25(1) (Fowler 1963, Hoffman 1991). It would be interesting to note any other recoveries by other researchers, to see how widely spread this new style of scraper was used. Figure 1 shows a drawing by William S. Fowler, showing the rawhide lashing used to attach these scrapers to the handle.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Laurie Stundis for her help typing this report. Also David DeMello for taking the photos and Jen Poulsen for enhancing them.

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Figure 3: Measurements of Copper Trade Point from Boston Common

Figure 4: Schematic Showing Four Possible Steps in Making a Copper Trade Point from a Rectangular Piece of Copper Kettle

(c) Joseph Bagley, 2013
Introduction

On June 9, 1664 Josias Wampatuck, the son of Chickataubut, deeded a three mile long parcel of land along the Taunton River called Cotunicut to the Titicut Indians. A copy of this document appears on page 399 of Weston’s (1906) History of Middleboro:

Deed To Indian Reservation – 1664

Prence Govr
A deed appointed to be recorded

THES p’sents witnesses that I Josias allies Chickataubut doe promise by these p’sents to give unto the Indians living upon Catunicut River (viz) Pompanohoo, Waweens and the other Indians living there: that is three miles upon each side of the River excepting the lands that are already sold to the English either Taunton Bridgewater or to the Major and doe promise by these p’sents not to sell or give to any any Pte or Pcell of land: but that the aforesaid Indians shall peaceably enjoy the same without any Interception from mee or by any meanes in any respect: the which I doe engage and promise by these p’sents: witness my hand this 9th of June in the year 1664.

Chickatabutt allies Josias
his marke
Wuttanaumatake
his mark
Witness:
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his marke

A local North Middleboro historian, Albert Smith, spent many hours researching local Indian deeds in Plymouth. He gave me copies of his findings. In

The Deeds for Titicut (Ketiticut) Plantation

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(c) William Taylor, 2013
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covenant and promise to and with the said Peter that it shall be free and lawfull for ever hereafter to and for the said Peter and such Indians that shall hereafter be his heirs or assigns from time to time to have and to hold the said lands with all singular rights, privileges, immunities, and appurtenances within or appertaining without any trouble, molestation, charge suits at law. Or any incumbrances that shall or may arise from, by, or under him the said Josias the son of Josias alias Chickatabut or his heirs, executors, or administrators or any manner of way of their procurement for ever. And whereas it is desired and the design of the said Josias the son of the said Josias alias Chickatabut that the said Peter may be able and capable to accommodate and supply with the land such Indians as shall desire to live in Titicut and want land to plant. Therefore the said Josias the son of ye said Josias alias Chickatabut doth by these presents fully and absolutely forbid and prohibit the said Peter his heirs or assigns or either of any of them from giving, selling, or in any manner of way making over or conveying the said lands or any part or parcel thereof unto the English forever. Therefore if ye said Peter or any heir or assign of his shall at any time hereafter attempt to give, sell or in any manner make over any part or parcel of the lands unto the English he or they that shall so do shall by virtue of this prohibition forfeit and loose all his or their interest in the said lands and by virtue of this deed the said lands lost or forfeited shall fall to and belong to the rest of the then Titicut Indians and their Indian heirs and Assigns for ever. In testimony whereof the said Josias the son of Josias alias Chickatabut have hereunto set his hands and Affixed his seal the eighth day of September in the year of our Lord one thousand six hundred eighty and six (1686).

Signed, sealed, and delivered in ye presence of Benjamin Leonard
The mark of John Cobb Sr. The mark of Josias Thomas Leonard

To all Christian People to whom these presents shall come Josias an Indian Sachem living at a place called Mattakesset in the Colony of New Plymouth and the Son of Josias alias Chickatabut sendeth greeting. Know ye that whereas it doth appear by a writing under the hand of the said Josuah alias Chickatabut dated the eight day of June in the year one thousand six hundred sixty and four that ye said Josias alias Chickatabut deceased doth by these presents and in pursuance of his said father’s promise give, grant, confirm and deliver unto the said Peter an Indian of said Titicut living there between Taunton and Bridgewater in said Colony. All the lands of all sorts that are and lie on the northeasterly side of a direct line from the fort that is now standing on the hill above said Titicut weir and on the southeasterly side of the river unto a place where the line between Middleboro land and Titicut land doth cross the path that leadeth from the said Titicut to Middleboro mill that is to say All the lands called Titicut lands on the southeasterly side of Titicut River and on the northeasterly side of said line that are not disposed of unto the English. Furthermore the said Josias the son of Josias alias Chickatabut deceased doth by these presents
2010 I gave copies of over 60 local Indian deeds to the Robbins Museum, including the one discussed below. These are now stored in the archives of the Robbins Museum.

On May 8, 1694 the son of Josias, also called Chickatabut, reconfirmed his father’s promise of Titi-cut lands with a more extensive version of the original deed, that was signed and witnessed by Benjamin Leonard and John Cobb Sr. and sworn to before Thomas Leonard, Justice. This new deed was entered and recorded on July 9, 1695 by Samuel Sprague, Recorder of the Book of Indian Deeds (Commonwealth Edition of 1857):

To all Christian People to whom these presents shall come Josias an Indian Sachem living at a place called Mattakeesset in the Colony of New Plymouth and the Son of Josias alias Chickatabut sendeth greeting. Know ye that whereas it doth appear by a writing under the hand of the said Josiah alias Chickatabut dated the ninth of June in the year one thousand six hundred sixty and four that ye said Josias alias Chickatabut doth then and thereby promise and engage to give and confirm certain lands at Ticitcut unto two Indians one now called Peter by the English and the other (when living) Thomas Huxter and to the rest of the Indians living on the Titicut River. Therefore the said Josias the son of Josias alias Chickatabut abovesaid (the said Josias sign seal and deliver the above written covenant and promise to and with the said Peter that it shall be free and lawfull for ever hereafter to and for the said Peter and such Indians that shall hereafter be his heirs or assigns from time to time to have and to hold the said lands with all singular rights, privileges, immunities, and appurtenances within or appertaining without any trouble, molestation, charge suits at law. Or any incumbrances that shall or may arise from, by, or under him the said Josias the son of Josias alias Chickatabut or his heirs, executors, or administrators or any manner of way of their procurement for ever. And whereas it is desired and the design of the said Josias the son of the said Josias alias Chickatabut that the said Peter may be able and capable to accommodate and supply with the land such Indians as shall desire to live in Ticitcut and want land to plant. Therefore the said Josias the son of ye said Josias alias Chickatabut doth by these presents fully and absolutely forbid and prohibit the said Peter his heirs or assigns or either of any of them from giving, selling, or in any manner of way making over or conveying the said lands or any part or parcel thereof unto the English forever. Therefore if ye said Peter or any heir or assign of his shall at any time hereafter attempt to give, sell or in any way make over any part or parcel of the lands unto the English he or they that shall so do shall by virtue of this prohibition forfeit and lose all his or their interest in the said lands and by virtue of this deed the said lands lost or forfeited shall fall to and belong to the rest of the then Titicut Indians and their Indian heirs and Assigns for ever. In testimony whereof the said Josias the son of Josias alias Chickatabut have hereunto set his hands and Affixed his seal the eighth day of September in the year of our Lord one thousand six hundred eighty and six (1686).

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The mark of Josias
Thomas Leonard

In Taunton in Bristol County May the 8th 1694 The said Benjamin Leonard and the said John Cobb took oath that they saw above said Josias sign seal and deliver the above written deed as his act and deed unto the said Peter the day or the date thereof. Sworn before
Thomas Leonard, Justice.

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New England Native American Spirit Structures

Mary E. Gage

Introduction

In the Spirit of the New England Tribes [Simmons 1986:254] there is a reference to man-made “Spirit Lodges.” This was a structure built for the purpose of working with a spirit(s). It was confirmed through several different informants in the early 1900’s and again, later in the 1930’s. That raised a question, were the Spirit Lodges an anomaly or part of a widespread practice of building structures associated with spirits?

Spirit Lodges

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Acknowledgements

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New England Native American Spirit Structures

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An interview with Gertrude Aiken circa 1930 gives an idea of what the custom meant: “We were so superstitious about this custom we actually believed evil spirits would follow us if it was not carried out.” (Quoted in Simmons 1986:255)

The lodge was a physical structure specifically built and designed for activities involved with spirits. It was quite different from the cone-shaped wigwams and the dome shaped wigwams used for houses. The houses did not have flat topped roofs like the lodge. The houses were covered with “cedar bark” or “tightly bound grass”. The lodge was covered with loose brush. (Prince, 1907:494)

The Mashpee made distinct differences in their choice of covering material and shape of the roof, showing they distinguished between a dwelling house and a spirit lodge.

In northeastern and western Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York trailside cairns were built by Native Americans. A western Massachusetts example was a large pile of stones built on the ground, known as the Great Barrington/Stockbridge cairn (Figure 1). In southeastern Massachusetts there were stone and brush piles built on top of large boulders. (Butler 1946:173-174)

In these types of piles, stones or stones and brush were the offerings. These objects are different from the personal property, food, and whiskey used as offerings in the Spirit Lodges. Although the types of offerings differed, both the piles and the lodges functioned as places for trailside offerings to the spirits. The Spirit Lodges eventually lost favor with the Mashpee. However, for many, the fear of lingering spirits prompted them to place brush on top of the collapsed lodges (Figure 2).

The concept of trailside offerings to spirits also shows up in the Canadian Shield region of the Great Lakes. In the Great Lakes, travel by water was common. With the Canadian Algonquin Native Americans the offerings were placed along their travel routes, whether it be on land or water.

Tobacco was not the only offering made by the Canadian Algonquins. Like the Mashpee, they too used property as offerings. The property consisted of neatly folded clothing, towels, and tobacco along with prayer sticks (40 sticks of uniform size, linked together with string). The items were placed in a pile on flat ledges where rock art was located. The items were an offering to a spirit asking the spirit for help in healing a sick member of their family. Chinaware and other odds and ends were found inside splits in rock. (Dewdney 1967: 51, 52, 54) These latter items were offerings, but for an unknown purpose.

Tobacco-only offerings were primarily used for a safe journey and were often found at split rocks with an associated spirit. According to numerous stories, spirits reside in splits in rocks in the Canadian Shield region. The splits were portals for the spirits to enter or exit the rock. “Certain dwarfs [spirit people] haunt a crevasse [split] in a rock on French river, where they sometimes make themselves visible; if you throw them some food they disappear.” (Jeness 1935:43) These tales documented this belief throughout the region:

“May-may-goo-shee ‘Rockmedicine Man’ The word is variously translated into English. Among the Cree, where these mysterious creatures are described as little men only two or three feet high living inside the rock, the English is ‘fairies’. Among the Ojibwa various translations run from ‘ghost’, ‘spirit’, and ‘merman’, even to ‘monkey.’ The best rendering in English I could hazard from the scores of descriptions I have listened to would be ‘Rockmedicine Man’.

Authorities disagree on details, but some features of the Maymaygooshee are common over wide areas. They are said to live behind water rock faces, especially those where cracks or shallow caves suggest an entrance. (Dewdney and Kidd 1967:13)

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It should be noted that not every split was considered to have an associated spirit. A split was associated with a spirit when some Native American had an experience or encounter attributed to a spirit at one.

In New England there are numerous split stones, a few of which have stone fill placed inside the split (Figure 3). Are these Native American offering features or farmer field clearing features? The dilemma is that no formal studies have been done on either cultural aspect. At present the author’s son and research partner, James Gage, is doing research on farm-related stone removal through agricultural journals.

His research has revealed that clearing a field of stones was a time-consuming and labor-intensive activity. Prior to the transition to mechanized farming, farmers generally only removed stones from a field if the stone posed a risk for damaging tools. Most field clearing, therefore, took place in plowed fields and to a lesser extent in some hay fields. Pasture and orchards were rarely if ever cleared of stones. The agricultural literature repeatedly recommended that the stones removed from fields be put to practical use building stone walls, repairing roads, for use in underground drainage systems, and for filling in wetlands (Holbrook 1848:105; Holbrook 1851:36; Platt 1873:116-118). However, not all farmers followed this advice. These farmers dumped their stones along the edges of the field or piled them in the center of the field on exposed ledge or around an immovable glacial erratic. There is no evidence for, nor is there any logical reason for, a farmer to fill a split in a rock with stones.

The author is doing research with the assistance of her research partner on groups of stone piles that include split stones with stones inside the splits. These are in New England. I found that these stone cairns are hardly ever found as part of an isolated stone structure; they are almost always found as part of a group of cairns.

Did Native Americans create groups of cairns? An excavation of a cairn in Freetown, Massachusetts confirmed that cairns were built by Native Americans in groups. The Freetown site had one hundred and ten cairns in the group. One cairn that was excavated dated to between 875 and 970 years ago. (Mavor & Dix 1983; 1988:67-75)

In New England split stone cairns are usually not found on travel routes like their counterparts in the Great Lakes. They are almost always found within a group of cairns. The question is, are there other cultural aspects with split stones and other spirits? That is, other than the disruptive spirits found at the Canadian Great Lakes sites?

Splits in boulders on the ground are openings into the earth’s underground. Splits in ledges along the water are openings into the water. Both types of splits lead to a place called the Underworld. References to both were found in a vision received by Oguauns, a Parry Island Native American. Oguauns recounts, “But while my face was thus covered the pathway stood revealed to me, and looking up, I searched for the mouth of the chasm [split] by which I must enter. … At times the invisible Little Wild Indians helped us [Oguauns and his companion, “one of the suns in our sky”] in our descent through the vaults and galleries hollowed out beneath the surface of our earth. At the end of the road lay a pool, which we could only pass by diving into the water and emerging at the farther side.” (Jeness 1935:57) In these statements, Oguauns enters the Underworld through a split. He travels through cave-like rooms and pools of water. It confirms the Native American’s belief in the Underworld being both underground and underwater. Oguauns’ purpose in going into the Underworld was to meet the “Great Manido” which he also called the “blessed Manido” (Jeness 1935:58-59).

There are other references to powerful benevolent spirits in the Underworld. Earth Grandmother is mentioned in gathering roots and herbs for the Mita’ivwin ceremony. (Skinner 1921: 66) During another ceremony, the rice harvest ritual, an offering is made to “Grandfather, the Master of Rice, who caused it to grow for our use. We give this tobacco [with these words he stops and digs a small hole and puts tobacco in it], as an offering to the Underground Powers and ask them to permit us to make the harvest.” (Skinner 1921:144-5) Another reference to an Underworld spirit “…Shingwauk [a shaman] went to Agawa to gather fresh power on a vision quest. He called forth Michipe
An interview with Gertrude Aiken circa 1930 gives an idea of what the custom meant. “We were so superstitious about this custom we actually believed evil spirits would follow us if it was not carried out.” (Quoted in Simmons 1986:255)

The lodge was a physical structure specifically built and designed for activities involved with spirits. It was quite different from the cone-shaped wigwams and the dome shaped wigwams used for houses. The houses did not have flat topped roofs like the lodge. The houses were covered with “cedar bark” or “tightly bound grass”. The lodge was covered with loose brush. (Prince, 1907:494) The Mashpee made distinct differences in their choice of covering material and shape of the roof, showing they distinguished between a dwelling house and a spirit lodge.

In southeastern and western Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York trailside cairns were built by Native Americans. A western Massachusetts example was a large pile of stones built on the ground, known as the Great Barrington/Stockbridge cairn (Figure 1). In southeastern Massachusetts there were stone and brush piles built on top of large boulders. (Butler 1946)

In these types of piles, stones or stones and brush were the offerings. These objects are different from the personal property, food, and whiskey used as offerings in the Spirit Lodges. Although the types of offerings differed, both the piles and the lodges functioned as places for trailside offerings to the spirits. The Spirit Lodges eventually lost favor with the Mashpee. However, for many, the fear of lingering spirits prompted them to place brush on top of the collapsed lodges (Figure 2).

The concept of trailside offerings to spirits also shows up in the Canadian Shield region of the Great Lakes. In the Great Lakes, travel by water was common. With the Canadian Algonquin Native Americans the offerings were placed along their water routes. The most frequent offering was a piece of tobacco to appease disruptive spirits who could cause bad weather, rough water and overturned canoes. “When you want calmer weather give us some tobacco.” (Dewdney 1967: 42) This shows a widespread practice among the Algonquin tribes of encountering disruptive spirits.

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shu, the guardian spirit of the underworld and minerals, especially copper.” (Conway and Conway 1990:24)

Through these excerpts are glimpses of master and guardian Underworld spirits. These spirits were benevolent toward ordinary people like Ogauns who as a youth went into the Underworld seeking a vision and went on to become a warrior. The spirits assist medicine men seeking power. They were called upon in annual rituals for assistance to provide good weather for the rice harvest.

Based upon this anthropological evidence, the purpose of the split stones filled with stones becomes clearer. The Native Americans placed the stones in the split as offerings to an Underworld spirit. These offering stones converted a natural split stone into a spirit portal (i.e. a sacred feature with an associated spirit.) The spirit portal allowed the Native Americans to make contact with a spirit inside the Underworld.

Another type of cairn whose purpose has been lost but is recoverable are cairns directly associated with water. In Canton, Maine (in the central part of the state) there is a small cairn site with a cairn built across a seasonal stream. It is on a steep hillside. The stream is only active during the springtime. The cairn is elongated with its long axis perpendicular to the stream. It does not dam up the water. On the uphill side water was observed flowing under it in an uninterrupted stream that does not pool. On the downhill side the water exits in a steady flow of water. The water comes from snow melt and springtime rains. Therefore it may be associated with the Upperworld Water Spirit (rain) that returns each spring.

This is an excerpt from Indian Rock Paintings of the Great Lakes: “I have yet to learn why Devil’s Bay is so named. Yet in Sabaskong Bay there is a small rock island in the centre of which a huge ‘nest’ of boulders, seemingly an artifact – though a laborious one – and the island is named Devil Birdnest Island. Indians as far east as Lake Nipigon refer to such constructions as ‘Thunderbird’s Nests’. I have heard of others but this is the only one I’ve seen.” (Dewdney and Kidd 1967:53; Carmichael 1981)

The name “Devil Birdnest Island” denotes a Christian influence attached to the structure while retaining the Native American’s underlying association with a bird spirit. The name “Thunderbird Nest” denotes a Native American Upperworld Thunderbird Spirit whose images appear in some of the rock art paintings of that region.

The circular rock structure is an enclosure. Enclosures were used by Native Americans to separate a person from the outer world. (Chartkoff 1983:749) In some cases, the enclosure was used to contain a person and spirit together where the two entities could interact with each other. The “shaking tent” used by medicine men in the Great Lakes region is a good example. The shaking tent was a small cylindrical structure (large enough for one person) creating a small stream. The associated spirit may be an Underworld Water Spirit (spring water).

Cairns sometimes have features which can be interpreted. This past spring we had an opportunity to visit a cairn site in Deerfield, New Hampshire through the New Hampshire Chapter of the New England Antiquities Research Association. Built into the top of one cairn was a Thunderbird Nest. A Thunderbird Nest is a circular feature surrounded by boulders that is several feet in diameter with a rough stone-lined interior (Figure 4). Within the same cairn was a niche that faced the nest (Figure 5). The niche was a long, small, enclosed channel going deep into the cairn. The depth suggests an access feature to the Underworld. As for the Thunderbird Nest designation, the term comes from the Canadian Shield region of the Great Lakes where this type of feature was documented through interviews with Native Americans. (Dewdney and Kidd 1967:53; Carmichael 1981)

Reading the Native American structures is possible to a limited degree, provided we do not project our modern ideas onto the old structures. To recover snippets of the past it is necessary to utilize historical, anthropological and archaeological data on stone structures as a combined set of data. That permits the recovery of small amounts of data currently thought to be lost.

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A private landowner in Sandown, New Hampshire (southeastern part of state) contacted the author this previous spring (2012) when he learned he had partially dismantled a potential cairn attached to a spring. The spring is on the edge of wetlands where several small cairns were identified by the author and her research partner. Approximately half of the stone in the cairn attached to the spring was removed and used for landscaping. The half that remains is attached to the spring. This is an active spring with a steady flow of water creating a small stream. The associated spirit may be an Underworld Water Spirit (spring water).

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Figure 1: Rev. Erza Stiles’ 1762 Sketch of the Barrington/Stockbridge MA (Monument Mountain) Stone Cairn. (reprinted in Butler 1946)

Figure 2: Photograph by Frank Speck of the Remains of a Brush-Covered “Spirit Lodge” in 1922 at the Junction of Mashpee & Waquoit Roads (Speck 1928: fig. 74)

Figure 3: Double Split Stone Cairn Built into an Outcrop. Part of a Stone Cairn Group Site in Newbury, MA.

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Figure 4: A “Thunderbird Nest” Built on Top of a Stone Cairn (Deerfield NH)

Figure 5: Niche Built into the Cairn with the “Thunderbird Nest.”

Contributors

JOSEPH BAGLEY of Boston is the City Archaeologist for the City of Boston and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society. He received a BA in Archaeology from Boston University and is completing a MA in Historical Archaeology from the University of Massachusetts, Boston. He and his wife, Jennifer, are live-in caretakers of the Dorchester Historical Society’s 1806 William Clapp house.

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NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS

The Editor solicits for publication original contributions related to the archaeology of Massachusetts. Authors of articles submitted to the Bulletin of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society are requested to follow the style guide for American Antiquity (48:429-442 [1983]). Manuscripts should be sent to the Editor for evaluation and comment at choffman@bridgew.edu.

For shorter manuscripts (5 pages or less), texts may be submitted as paper copies. Longer manuscripts should be submitted as electronic files (preferably Microsoft Word .doc or .docx files, or .rtf files). All text should have margins of 3 centimeters (1¼ inch) on all edges. For electronic files, do not insert artificial spaces between lines; instead, use MSWord’s Paragraph/Line Spacing function and select “Double”. Proper heading and bibliographic material must be included.

Bibliographic references should be listed alphabetically by author’s last name and presented as follows:

Gookin, Daniel
Towtaid, Worcester MA.

Several references by the same author should be listed chronologically by year. Reference citations in the text should include the author’s name, date of publication, and the page or figure number, all enclosed in parentheses, as follows: (Bowman and Zeoli 1973:27) or (Ritchie 1965: Fig. 12). All information derived from published sources must be cited, whether it is directly quoted or paraphrased. Please check to make sure that citations in the text match bibliographical entries, especially dates of publication.

All illustrations and tables, called figures, should be submitted as electronic originals. Tables should be submitted as separate Excel (.xls or .xlsx) spreadsheets and not incorporated into the text. Figures should be submitted as either .tif or .jpg files, high contrast (minimum 300 dpi), in greyscale. Each figure should fit within the space available on a Bulletin page, which is 17 cm by 23 cm (6½ x 9 inches), allowing for margins. Full, half or quarter page figures should be planned carefully. Space must be allowed for captions. Captions should be in title case and should accompany the text in a separate section, in order and numbered to correspond to the figures.

Figures must be referred to in the text and are to be numbered in their order of reference, with their number indicated in the file name. Every item in each figure and each person should be identified. All lettering must be clear and legible. Scales with dimensions, preferably in metric measurements, should be included with all figures for which they are appropriate.

Dimensions and distances should be given in metric units or in metric units and English units, to the same standard of accuracy (e.g., 10 cm or 2.5 inches, not 2.54 inches).

Authors should include a brief (1 paragraph) biography for the “Contributors” page of the Bulletin issue.