

Nanepashemet and his Descendants Society Paper by Geo. Wellington – Narrative 12.86

Daniel Gookin in his Historical Collection of the Indians of New England says that the Pawtuchats constituted the last great Sachemship of the New England tribes. Gookin in the same volume estimates there were at one time 18000 warriors in eastern Massachusetts and southern New England divided as follows: 4000 Pequots, 5000 Narragansetts, and 3000 each of Wampanoags, Massachusetts and Pawtuckets.

The Pawtucket domain extended from the Charles River in a northerly direction as far as Pennacook (now Concord N.H.) on the Merimack, and covered part of the territory between the Charles River and the Pescatagua River.

Gookin also said that Nanepashemet the ruler of the Pawtuckets was recognized by the Nipmucks as far west as Pocumtuck now Deerfield. Early in the 17th century Nanepashemet had established his principle dwelling at High Rock, Saugus, now Lynn. Another favorite dwelling was in the vicinity of Mystic Ponds then included in Mishawam (Charlestown).

In 1615 the Tarratines had become unfriendly to the Pawtuckets and commenced then depredations into the domain of their southern neighbors. Sir Ferdinando Gorges an explorer of that period had said of the Tarratines that thousands including men and children had be slain by them in the course of their expeditions. Gorges also wrote of a severe plague which had greatly afflicted the local Indians destroying great numbers of them.

Nanepashemet by reason of the afflictions already enumerated felt that his decimated people had but little power to resist the further attacks of the powerful Tarratines, and with his immediate family and a few followers migrated to the vicinity of Mystic Ponds, erecting there a stronghold and dwelling.

In 1619 the Tarratines in their canoes ascended the Mystic River and succeeded in ambushing and killing Nanepashemet. His squaw and children however escaped the enemy. The remaining Pawtuckets came under the control of the Squaw Sachem, her children four in number, Montowampate (James), Wonohaguaham (John), Wenepoykin (George) and a daughter Yawata (Abigail) were too young to assume Sachemships.

In September 1621 a Plymouth company of thirteen led by Captain Miles Standish and accompanied by three Indian guides explored the vicinity of the Mystic River. They had crossed the Bay in a shallop. The party landed on the peninsula of Mishawum (Charlestown) but were unable to find the Squaw Sachem of whom they had been informed by a certain Massachusetts Sachem, Obbatinewat by name.

After spending the night in the shallop, the explorers proceeded to advance further into the country. Leaving their boat under the guard of two of their number they marched overland for a distance of three miles. Here they came into a place where in a letter to the Countess of Lincoln, England as recorded in the Charlestown Town Records wrote as follows: About the

months of April and May in the year of our Lord 1629 there was a great design of the Indians from all around as to the eastward in all parts to cut off the English which John Sagamore who always loved the English revealed to the inhabitants of the town."

It was said that the Sagamore John "was more courteous, ingenious and loving to the English than any other Sachems." He became well acquainted with the settlers manner of living, their religion and language and at one time expressed a wish that he might abandon the Indian ways of life. This was subsequent to a sickness he had experienced when the incantations of a powwow failed to give him relief and the administrations of Pastor Wilson – including prayer and medicine, was followed by recovery, enrolling him to go on a hunting trip. However the protests of his tribesmen and powwows at his expressed desire to enter upon the white man's ways of life were such that he continued to follow the Indian way of life.

In August 1631 while on a visit to his kinsmen, Sagamore Masconom at Agawam (Ipswich) he was wounded by the Tarratines who had attacked the Indian settlement there. His brother Sagamore James was also wounded and the Catter's wife carried away captive to Pemaquid Maine where she was subsequently ransomed by Abraham Shurte the chief magistrate of the Colony here and returned to her husband at Swampscott.

Sagamore John usually accompanied delegations of Indians from other tribes when they had occasion to visit Governor Winthrop for entering upon negotiations with the colonists at Boston and acted as interpreter. On one occasion Sagamore John was accompanied by Sagamore James on a visit to Governor Winthrop, requesting aid in collecting the value of 20 beaver skins from a certain Mr. Watts, who had defrauded them. The Governor gave Sagamore James a letter of introduction to Emanuel Dowling, Esq, a lawyer in London England. It is recorded that Sagamore James presented his claim in person and was accorded much honor as an Indian chief.

Sagamore James wooed and won for his bride Wenncanus the daughter of Passaconoway, the Sachem of the Pennacooks. The courtship and marriage as described by Thomas Morton in "The New England Canaan" a book published in London. John Greenleaf Whittier made use of this anecdote in his poem "The Bride of Pennacook."

Governor Winthrop in his journal on Dec 5, 1683 wrote, "John Sagamore died of small pox and almost all his people; above 30 buried by Mr. Maverick of Wernsanet in one day – James Sagamore of Sagas died and most of his folks." Sagamore John died in the belief that he would go to the Englishman's God.

Sagamore George upon the death of his two brothers became the ruler of the remaining Pawtuckets inhabiting the vicinity about Massachusetts Bay. It did not appear that the Squaw Sachem had relinquished her complete jurisdiction over all of the Pawtuckets as she with other Sachems came to the General Court in Boston in 1643 and agreed to become loyal subjects to the English government. They covenanted not only to obey all just laws by to inform the authorities of any conspiracy to attack the English. The Court presented each

Sachem with two yards of cloth for coats, gave each a good dinner and refreshed them with cups of sackh (?). Governor Winthrop recorded that they “departed very joyful.”

Upon the breaking out of King Philip’s War, Sagamore George allied himself with King Philio against the English, but was captured by the latter and sold into slavery in Barbados. In 1684 he had returned to Massachusetts and died in the Natick Wigwam of Yawata, his sister.

Two of the Lealters (?) sons, James Rummy Marsh and Thomas Davenpowit (?) distinguished themselves as loyal to the English throughout King Philips War, performing scout duties in running down the enemy in their forest habitats.

Sagsamotr George children were as follows: Wattaquattinusk (Sarah), Petagoonaqua (Susanna) and Manoitahqua a son. They were all nataives of Nahant. The 3 daughters were said to have decorated themselves with more beautiful feathers or plumes than others of their tribe for which they were accorded collectively the appellations of Wanapanaquin having significance to the fact that they were these plumes.

Manatahqua, Sagamore George’s son, had two sons Nonumparree (David) and Wattanoh (Samuel). The names of these descendants and some others appear on various old deeds given the early settlers in Winnisimet and vicinity.

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Note: transcribed by Oakes Plimpton 1/18/17. Indian names may be misspelled. . . .