Appendix G

Dean Snow's Eastern Abenaki Tribal Names

The following excerpt about Eastern Abenaki tribal names is from
A chapter by Dean R. Snow, *Eastern Abenaki*, pg. 146.
In: *Volume 15, Northeast*. Bruce G. Trigger, Volume Editor
In the series: *Handbook of North American Indians*. William C. Sturtevant, Series Editor
1978, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

Snow’s comments on Eastern Abenaki tribal names is reprinted as an appendix for the information he provides about the ethnicity of the indigenous communities of the Maritime Peninsula at the time of European contact, and especially because of his comments in paragraph five on the Wawenoc community at Bécancour. After having one or more personal communications with Frank Siebert, Dean Snow came to the opinion that Wawenoc, as noted, was a village name, not a tribal or dialectical division. Frank Siebert was a collector and an expert on Abenaki material culture, but never published any widely distributed texts or essays on the Native Americans in Maine with whom he had such close contact during his professional career. Prior to Snow’s comments on Siebert’s opinion that no community of Wawenocs existed occupying the central Maine coast in pre or protohistory, this editor is not aware of any other writer or commentator who shared Siebert’s view. Snow’s opinion on the insignificance of the Wawenocs, whom he “lumps” with the Canibas in the *Archaeology of New England* may now be considered the dominant view among Maine archaeologists and ethnohistorians. Snow suggests that the Penobscot word wáwinak (Wawenoc) refers to a nearby island in the St. Lawrence River, and not to any community along the central Maine coast. According to Carol Smith Fisher (personal communication, 2005) Siebert was skeptical not only of the long standing assertion that the Wawenocs were one of the four important Abenaki communities in Maine (Williamson, 1832), but also often expressed the opinion that the confederacy of Mawooshen was romantic bunk invented by early English narrators and writers who mistook a village site on the Mousam River (just west of Kennebunk Beach) for the confederacy of Native American communities described to Ferdinando Gorges and printed by Purchas in 1625. In this context, and considering the whole spectrum of often contentious opinion about the ethnicity of the indigenous communities of coastal Maine in protohistory, Siebert represents one extreme of this spectrum. His skepticism lends itself to a reductionism that minimizes the historical significance, size, social organization and complex trading networks of the indigenous communities of central Maine. Future ethnohistorians may prove Siebert correct: there was no Wawenoc community living on the central Maine coast in pre and protohistory. The name instead derives from a community of refugees who settled at Bécancour during and after the French and Indian wars. Siebert, though virtually unpublished, by virtue of his influence on the much more well known Dean Snow, has had a vast impact upon how we now view the ethnicity of the central Maine coast at the time of European contact. Though Bruce Bourque strongly disagrees with Dean Snow's riverine theory of the lifestyles and locations of Maine's indigenous communities, he clearly agrees with Snow's assertion of the unimportance and the lack of separate cultural identity of Native Americans living between the Penobscot and Kennebec rivers at the time George Waymouth encountered 286 warriors (from which indigenous community?) near Cushing and then kidnapped 5 Native Americans who were brought to England and recounted the narration of Mawooshen. This reductionist view of Maine's ethnohistory now predominates in classrooms, museum displays and textbooks. It also raises more questions than it answers, not only about the Native Americans encountered and kidnapped by the Waymouth expedition, but about the large indigenous population that lived between the Penobscot and Kennebec rivers and now has no name and no cultural identity. If the Wawenoc nation never existed, who was it that George Waymouth, John Smith and others encountered in such great numbers? And even more puzzling, what indigenous community was responsible for creating the huge archaeological site at the loop in the St. Georges River in Warren, Maine, in the heart of Mawooshen?

The following text reprints Snow's comments on tribal names in the *Eastern Abenaki* chapter in Bruce Trigger's *Northeast.*

Table 2 lists the major synonyms for the Eastern Abenaki and their four major divisions. The table is necessarily simplified. There are many more spelling variants; it is not unusual for an early document to contain four or five spellings of the same term. In addition, many more meanings have been attached to the synonyms than the five clear-cut definitions used here. Researchers are cautioned to proceed carefully through primary sources and to distrust all secondary sources.

The earliest use of the term Abenaki in its various spellings appears to be French. Champlain, the *Jesuit Relations*, and other sources use the term after about 1630, abandoning the earlier extension of Etchemin (Maliseet-Passamaquoddy) to include them. Many later writers lumped them with the Western Abenaki under the heading Openango (spelled variously). English writers of the seventeenth century usually called the Eastern Abenaki simply Eastern Indians. In the nineteenth century the term Tarrantine, a seventeenth-century English name for the Micmac, was revived (as Tarratine) and erroneously applied to the Penobscot (Siebert 1973). Various other obscure and confusing identifications also exist, usually as single instances.

Pigwacket is preferred to Pequawket, the other major form, because it more closely approximates the original pronunciation. As used here, the term includes the Ossipee and the Presumpscot River Indians, but probably excludes the people of the lower Saco River and the Sokoki. The Pigwacket may be the inhabitants of the "Shawakotoc" on the list published by Purchas. The Pigwacket are not clearly isolated in English documents until the treaty of 1690. French sources make specific references to them shortly thereafter (JR 67:31). Pigwacket derives from the Eastern Abenaki word *apík*^{w}*ahki* 'land of hollows' (F. T. Siebert, personal communication 1974), not from a term meaning 'punched-up-through hill' (Eckstorm 1936:378-379).

Arosaguntacook and Arossagunticook represent Eastern Abenaki *alessíkantek*^{w} 'river of the cliff dwellings or rock shelters'; the form Androscoggin (River) probably is a corruption or analogical contamination with the name of Massachusetts governor Edmund Andros. The modern Penobscot name for the Saint Francis Abenaki is *alessikántek*^{w}*eyak*, the Arossaguntacook being one ancestral element in the Saint Francis population. The meanings 'river abounding in shellfish' (Speck 1940:18) and 'fish-curing place' (Eckstorm 1941:147) are erroneous (F. T. Siebert, personal communication 1974).

Kennebec appears in the Purchas publication as Kenebeke, a village name, as well as in the earliest French sources (Champlain 1907; Lescarbot 1928). It represents Eastern Abenaki *kínipek*^{w} 'large body of still water, large bay', probably primarily referring to Merrymeeting Bay (F. T. Siebert, personal communication 1974). It has since been broadened as a name for the entire river and its inhabitants. The Kennebec of the eighteenth century were usually called Noridgewock after their last surviving village. The Amaseconti were a subdivision from the Sandy River, most of whom migrated to Becancour, Quebec, in 1704. The Wawenock were the people of Bécancour, called *wáwinak* in Penobscot, evidently meaning 'round or oval island' (perhaps from a nearby island in the Saint Lawrence River); it is a village name, not a tribal or dialectal division (F. T. Siebert, personal communication 1974).

Penobscot appears first to identify, apparently correctly, a village near modern Orland (Purchas 1625, 4:1873-1875). The French form Pentagoet (Champlain 1907:46) was applied to the river generally and to the site of modern Castine specifically, beginning in 1604. Later usage by both the French and English applied the term to the river and virtually any location on it. Many contemporary students believe (incorrectly) that Penobscot has always identified the village at Old Town. The Penobscot River was called Pemaquid by some early English explorers. That term was soon shifted to Pemaquid Point, to the confusion of later historians. Penobscot derives from *panáwahpskek* 'where the rocks widen, open out, spread apart' (F. T. Siebert, personal communication 1974).

Most of the forms discussed above appear frequently as plurals. The number of published variants of these, their subdivisions, and village names runs to at least 1,000.