

The Pentucket & America's Stonehenge

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Introduction

During research on America's Stonehenge the author was often asked what First (Native) American tribe built the site? Knowing the site dated back to circa 3,000 years the question was politely deferred. About a year after the book, *The Architecture of America's Stonehenge* was completed an aha moment occurred. A piece of thick, dark green glass flaked in the First American method of working stone projectile points plus a bone pendent in good condition placed a contact period First American on the site circa 1600 - early 1700 A.D. Was there a way to figure out what tribe lived in the region in which America's Stonehenge was located. James Gage, my son and research partner went into our private library and returned with David Stewart-Smith's 1998 dissertation *The Pennacook Indians and the New England Frontier, circa 1604-1733*. It contained a wealth of information including maps of New England's tribal territories drawn for the project. Smith acknowledged W. Elmer Hinton worked with him to create a series of maps starting with the Proto-Historic period c 1630.¹ His maps showed the site was within the Pentucket territory.

Pentucket Territory

In the book, *History of Haverhill, From its First Settlement, In 1640 to the Year 1860* there is a transcription of the 1642 land deed from the Pentucket to an English company of settlers who purchased their territory or at least part of it.²

“Know all men by these presents, that wee Passaquo and SaggaHew with ye consent of Passaconaway: have sold unto ye inhabitants of Pentuckett all ye lands wee have in Pentuckett; that is eyght myles in length from ye little Rivver in Pentuckett Westward: Six myles in length from ye aforesaid Rivver northward; And six myles in length from ye foresaid Rivver Eastward, with ye Ileand [island] and ye rivver that ye Ileand stand in as far in length as ye land lyes by as formerly expressed: that is, fourteen myles in length : And wee ye said Passaquo and SaggaHew with ye consent of Passaconaway, have sold unto ye said inhabitants all ye right that wee or any of us have in ye said ground and Ileand and Rivver : And wee warrant it against all or any other Indeans [Indians] whatsoever unto ye said inhatitants of Pentuckett, and to their heires and assignes forever Dated ye fifteenth day of november Ann Dom 1642.

¹ Stewart-Smith 1998, 27.

² Chase, 1861, 46-47.

Witness our hands and scales to this bargayne of sale ye day and year above written (in ye presents of us,) wee ye said Passaquo and SaggaHew have received in hand, for & in consideration of ye same three pounds & ten shillings.”

<i>John Ward</i>		ye marke of	
<i>Robert Clements</i>	Passaquo	(<i>A bow and arrow</i>)	[seal]
<i>Tristram Coffin</i>		Passaquo	
<i>Hugh Sherratt</i>			
<i>William White</i>			
ye signe of (1)		ye marke of	
<i>Thomas Davis</i>		(<i>A bow and arrow</i>)	
	Saggaheew	Saggaheew	[seal]”

“The rude *marks* upon this deed, are the only memorial we have left of the aboriginal inhabitants of Pentucket.”³ Unbeknown to the author and historian George W. Chase the “rude marks” were not the only memorial left by the Pentucket.

Hinton’s Proto-Historic map B circa 1630 showed the Pentucket territory being bounded by the town of Merrimac, Massachusetts on the east, Merrimack River on the south, Spicket River (Methuen, MA) on the west and on the north slightly beyond Big Island Pond in Hampstead, NH and out to the Exeter River further east. (Figure 1) The rivers formed the territory’s boundaries.⁴

In the History of Haverhill is an illustration of the English survey of the property/territory in which the survey was overlaid on an 1860 map of the towns.⁵ (Figure 2) It is not known if the English actually understood the full extent of the Pentucket territory. Nor if the two Pentucket men fully understood what the English had purchased. The way the deed was worded it gave the mileage east and west from the Little River along the Merrimack River that came to fourteen miles. The north to south mileage was stated as six miles northward on the Little River. Six miles was a common distance for English townships. When the survey took place they had to interpret the bounds as it did not have the normal east – south – west – north bounds. In a highly unorthodox layout the surveyors came up with a triangular layout of the bounds. The northwest corner of the bounds agrees with Stewart-Smith’s northwest bound slightly beyond Big Island Pond in Hampstead, NH north of North Salem, NH with the America’s Stonehenge site.

³ Chase, 1861, 43.

⁴ Stewart-Smith 1998, 27.

⁵ Chase, 1861, 104 – 105.

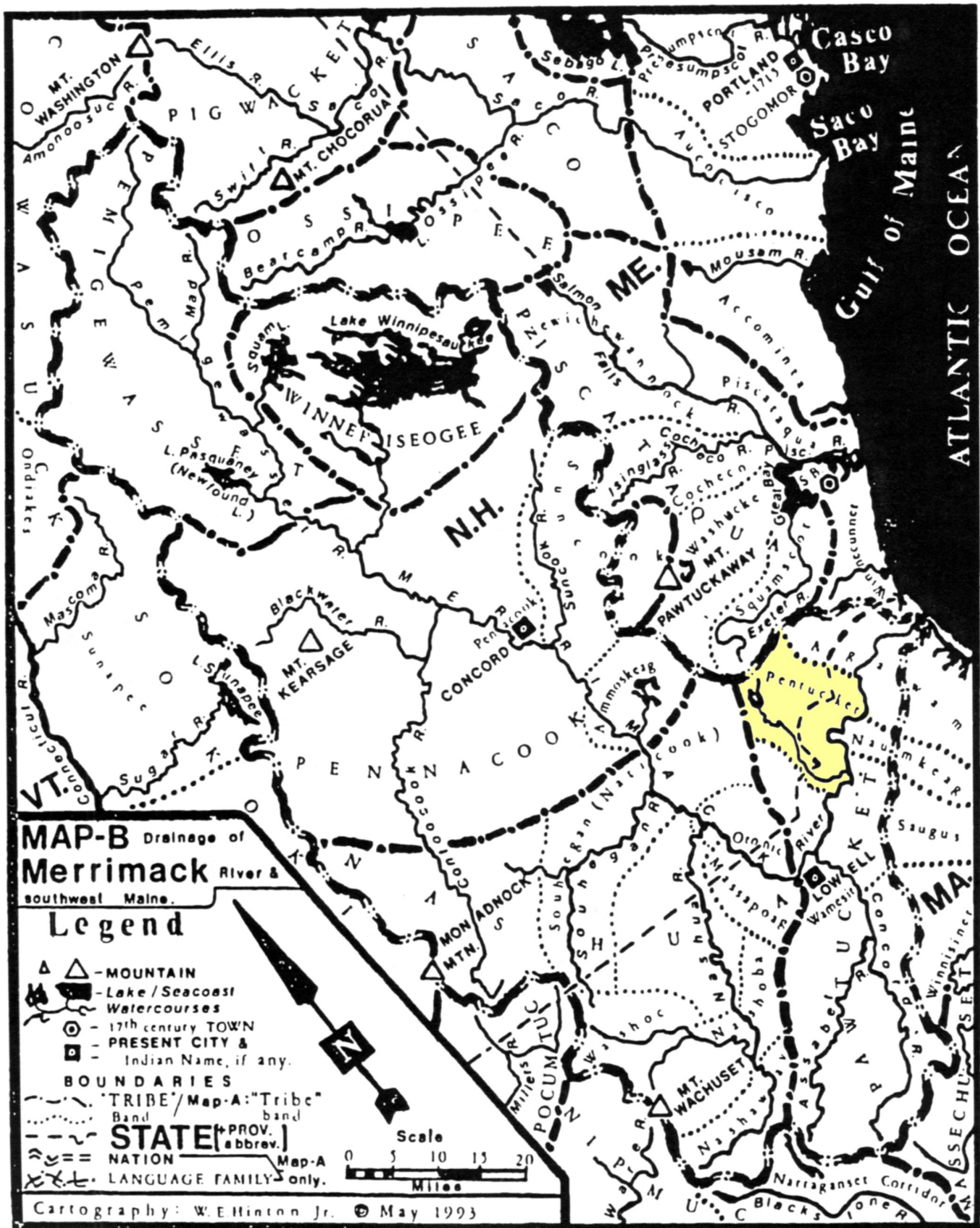


Figure 1 – W. E. Hinton Jr.’s map show tribal and band territories in the early 1600s. Reprinted from David Stewart-Smiths dissertation (1998) Note: Yellow highlight indicates the Pentucket territory.



MAP OF HAVERHILL, AND ADJACENT TOWNS.

Figure 2 – Boundaries of Haverhill in the 1640s. Map from *History of Haverhill, From its First Settlement, In 1640 to the Year 1860*. Note: Gray highlight added.

What did a territory denote?

David Stewart-Smith states “In his correspondence to the governor of New Hampshire, Kancamagus explained that the lands of his people lay along the Merrimack, which was one river, but that each of the places along the river bore names of the family territories. According to Indian deed testimony in Essex county [Massachusetts] we know that family homelands were set up with very specific boundaries under the governance of a family leader or sagamore.”⁶ As of 1623-4 the sagamore of the Pentucket was “Opparunwit (probably Runnawit).”⁷

The Pentucket were one of several families each with its own territory that made up the Pawtucket tribal area. The Pawtucket in turn were part of the Pennacook confederacy.⁸ What took place with the English was the Pentucket as a family were able to sell their territory with the consent of Passaconaway who was the head sagamore of the Pennacook. Consent was needed because by then the Pentucket likely had lost their sagamore as neither men on the deed are listed as such.

⁶ Stewart-Smith 1998, 28 (Citing Perley 1912).

⁷ Stewart-Smith 1998, 92.

⁸ Stewart-Smith 1998, 29.

Historic Confirmation of the Pentucket Village

The following quote comes from Chase's *History of Haverhill*: "The Indian name of the region included within the present bounds of the town, was *Pentuckett*, and it was at one time the home of quite a numerous tribe of that name, who were under the jurisdiction of Passaconaway, chief of the Pennacocks. Their principal village is supposed to have been on the banks of the Little River, not far from its mouth: and the second house on Merrimack street, east from Emerson street, stands upon their ancient burial ground. When the cellar of the above house was excavated, a number of Indian skeletons were dug up in a very good state of preservation. Heads of arrows, stone mortars, and other Indian relics have frequently been found in that vicinity, thus confirming the tradition of settlement thereabouts."⁹ The "good state of preservation" denotes the village and burial site date to the late 1500s or early 1600s.

Showing total disrespect for the First American burials the house was built. Chase notes it was "nearly two years, however, before a house was erected as far from the centre as Little River ..." The center of Haverhill was next to the old burying ground on the corner of Eastern Avenue and Water Street about a half-mile away. That places the house's building date about 1642 the same year the settlers purchased the land from the First Americans indicating a few were still living within the area.

Farmland Readily Available

Chase described the condition of the land in Haverhill on the eve of white settlement: "The Indians so often burned the country, to take deer and other wild game, that in many parts of it there was but little small timber. The meadows had been partially cleared by the Indians long before the arrival of the white settlers, and were covered with a heavy growth of grass which grew remarkably thick and high. The Indians were accustomed to set this grass on fire each autumn, so that they might the more easily kill the deer which came to feed upon the young grass the succeeding spring. On account of the grass, these lands were prized very highly by the first settlers, as from them they procured hay for their flocks and herds."¹⁰

It is not known if this was a general statement or if it specifically referred to the locale where the English made their settlement. What it does is give an idea of the value of the First American's lands. But why was it vacant? According to David Stewart-Smith, "in the winter of 1633, virtually the entire group of Pawtucket families [Lowell – Chelmsford] succumbed to smallpox."¹¹ Pentucket is down river from Pawtucket and may have suffered the same fate. That would account for their village site on the Merrimack River in what is now the downtown area of Haverhill being empty as of 1640 and thus open for settlement by the English without first purchasing the land from the Natives. The English purchased the Pentucket territory two years after they had settled there. This was a common practice among the English.

⁹ Chase 1861, 42.

¹⁰ Chase 1861, 44.

¹¹ Stewart-Smith, 1998, 101 (citing Carlson et al 1992,149)

Names of Pentucket People

The names of three members of the Pentucket live on. Two are Passaquo and SaggaHew whose names are on the deed. The other is a person named Opparunwit or Runnawit.¹² This sagamore's name is known from two different sources.

Levett 1623-4: "Opparunwit"

In 1624 Levett held a meeting at his house in Boothbay, Maine with several sagamores. Christopher Levett wrote, "And a little before my departure there came these sagamores to see me: Sadamoyt, the great sagamore of the east country, Manawormet, Opparunwit, Skedraguscett, Cogawesco, Somerset, Conway and others."¹³ Stewart-Smith felt Opparunwit was likely Runnawitt, Sagamore of Pentucket and Conway was likely Passaconaway, Sagamore of Pennacook. "These sagamores met with Levett to secure a concordant relationship with the English."¹⁴ Allies assisting each other. If Stewart-Smith was correct that would suggest Runnawit was an influential sagamore within his local region.

1629 Wheelwright Forged Deed: "Runnawit Sagamore of Pentucket"

This deed listed the Pennacook territory with Sagamore Passaconaway since it covered most but not all of the confederacy area which was made up of small family territories. In addition it named two specific family territories: Squamscot with its Sagamore Wahangnonawitt and Pentucket with its Sagamore Runnawitt. The Squamscot territory formed the northeastern bound of the land deed but not the northern part of the Pennacook confederacy area that extended northward into Maine. The Pentucket territory that bordered on the north side of the Merrimack River was on the southern bound of the deed. The Pennacook confederacy extended further south into Massachusetts. Therefore it was necessary for the two family territories to be identified as their territories formed part of the forged land deed's bounds.¹⁵

The 1629 Wheelwright deed though proven to be a forgery has been intensely studied. It was forged for a 1707 court base in New Hampshire. What researchers have found is the English names on the deed are correct for this date. They were people associated with Wheelwright and/or of New England such as John Oldham. And two of the First Americans Passaconaway Sagamore of Pennacook and Wahangnonawitt Sagamore of Squamscot who were accurate for 1629. The latter is known from the legitimate 1638 Wheelwright deed.¹⁶ Therefore there is reason to believe Rowls Sagamore of

¹² Stewart-Smith 1998, 92.

¹³ Levett 1628, 92.

¹⁴ Stewart-Smith 1998, 92.

¹⁵ York Deeds 1892, Book VIII, Folio 16.

¹⁶ Bell 1888, 8-9.

Nuchawanack and Runnawitt Sagamore of Pentucket are also real persons living as 1629 and tribal leaders.

Though we can not put a face in the form of a portrait we do have names. These people were known to the English settlers in the 1600s. One of them could have been the person who left the flaked piece of dark green glass at the America's Stonehenge site.

Retained the right to fish, fowl, hunt, etc.

In the 1638 Wheelwright deed the Natives who sold the Squamscot (Exeter) territory which was part of the greater Piscataqua territory reserved the right to return annually to fish at the falls. This shows the First American's sale of a territory did not interfere with their right to use the land which included fishing rights and no doubt the right to hold ceremonies at their sacred sites.

Wheelwright 1638 Deed (legal)

“Know all men by these presents that I Wehanowit Sagamore of piskatoquake [Piscataqua] ...”

“& that it shall be lawfull for the said Sagamore to hunt & fish & fowl in the said limits.”¹⁷

These two excerpts from the 1638 deed show: (1) Wehanowit was a sagamore (his name was also spelled Wahangonawitt) and (2) First Americans retained the right to continue to use the property.

Fishing

During Warren K. Moorehead's archaeological survey of the Merrimack River Valley on “April 29th [1931] the outfit moved by canoe and truck to Groveland where camp was established on the land of Mr. R. Dewhirst. Most of the outfit was transported by water in three large 20-foot canoes known in Maine as ‘guide model’, wide of beam, and the bottoms flat. Such canoes carry a heavy load and are serviceable in six inches of water.” Groveland is on the south side of the Merrimack River across from Haverhill on the north side. After the Haverhill and Groveland area was explored, “The men moved up to Ward Hill neck, where occurs a horseshoe bend in the river, and considerable swift water. The place was known in early times as Salmons Rips and many fish were taken.”¹⁸ The Salmons Rips at Ward Hill is further north along the Haverhill border across from Bradford.

While in Haverhill Moorehead explored a village site called Kenoza. “Kenoza habitations covered some forty acres. Flanking the village is a large brook, famous for trout in early days. In Colonial times great schools of alewives ran up this stream to the lake where they spawned.”¹⁹ “Kenoza” refers to a small lake with the same name about a mile south of the village site. The brook by the village

¹⁷ Bell 1888, 8.

¹⁸ Moorehead 1931, 19.

¹⁹ Moorehead 1931, 21.

site is north of the lake and thus feeds into the lake. On the lake's south side is an outlet to another brook coming in from the Merrimack River. This would appear to be the brook with the alewives Moorehead was referring to and not the one by the village. Either way the alewives (a fish 10" to 12" long) would have been harvested by the Pentucket as a food source.

As noted prior another Pentucket village site was located at the mouth of the Little River, a small river within their territory. The Pentucket were likely heavily dependent on fishing as a means of survival. They may even have had control of the Salmons Rips as an island in the middle of the Merrimack was listed as part of their territory in the 1642 deed. Though the rips would likely have been frequented by other families as well like at the falls at Lowell where numerous tribes gathered to fish for salmon. The falls at Lowell was called Pentucket Falls by some people and Pawtucket Falls by other people at the same time.

Moorehead's crew utilized the Merrimack River for transportation of people and equipment paddling upriver. It gives an idea of the First Americans use of the river as a major thoroughfare.

Archaeological Sites

Moorehead connected with Mr. Fred A. Luce of Haverhill who "permitted us to use two of his archaeological maps and gave us valuable information."²⁰ Luce was a local avid Indian artifact collector. Moorehead's search found "some twelve or thirteen camp sites ..." Of the twelve or thirteen sites he concluded six were village sites. He was not aware of a seventh village site in downtown Haverhill discovered by the town's first English settlers at the confluence of the Little River and Merrimack River.

"Archaeologists have supposed that non-portable mortars indicated a village, the hollow stone serving as a community mill."²¹ Four of Moorehead's six identified village sites had a mortar occurring in "granite boulders". The seventh site downtown Haverhill also had a stone mortar. That shows five out of the seven designated village sites had a stone mortar. Only the two sites at the Salmons Rips did not have a stone mortar suggesting the Pentucket maintained a seasonal fishing site along with a main village site over the years. It also indicates stone mortars were not the only factor used by Moorehead to differentiate a village site from a camp site. The seven show a high ratio of designated village sites in close proximity being within four miles of each other.

²⁰ Moorehead 1931, 19.

²¹ Moorehead 1931, 20.



Figure 3 – Warren Moorehead’s 1931 map showing villages (tipi icon) and mortars (bowl icon) in the greater Haverhill area. Red dot indicates one additional village & burial site not known to Moorehead. Reprinted from *The Merrimack Archaeological Survey*.

Artifacts

Moorehead's description of the artifacts is very limited yet at the same time revealing. He states, "fragments of steatite dishes" and "fragments of pottery" were recovered. Both of these artifacts are dateable. Another dateable artifact is the "woman's knife, of ground and polished slate," early on called a "ulu" a term derived from the Eskimo and later renamed the "semi-lunar knife" by Hoffman in his revision of *A Handbook of Indian Artifacts from Southern New England* (1991). The ground and polished semi-lunar knife has a long date range from the Early Archaic to the Late Archaic. The Late Archaic date range is from 6,000 to 3,700 years ago. The Late Archaic transitions to the Transitional Archaic. The steatite bowl fragments date from the Transitional Archaic period 3700 to 2700 years ago. Pottery begins to show up circa 2700 years ago in the transition to the Ceramic period. The Ceramic period is divided up into three phases: early, middle and late transitioning into the Contact period. Stone mortars found on five of the seven village sites date from the Late Archaic through Late Ceramic into the Contact period.

The steatite fragments in conjunction with the ground semi-lunar "women's knife" place First Americans at the Haverhill village sites during the Late Archaic into Transitional Archaic periods circa 4,000 years ago. The pottery fragments show a presence during the Ceramic period. The stone mortars dating from the Late Archaic through the Late Ceramic period fit the above date range. The Pentucket formerly selling their territory to the English in 1642 provides confirmation of them being in Haverhill at the time of English settlement.

The sites Moorehead and his crew explored and excavated had been heavily picked over by local artifact collectors with only tidbits leftover. The good thing is many of those artifacts collected locally by 1931 had been deposited with the Haverhill Historical Society who had a collection of "7,000 objects."²²

The following is Moorehead's write up on artifacts found at the Haverhill sites.

"As to the artifacts themselves, we obtained a pretty good idea of types, range, form and material from the Haverhill Society's collections which total nearly 7,000 objects. Search of some twelve or thirteen sites produced but one pipe. Two or three fragments of steatite dishes indicate very limited use of that material. There are numerous fragments of pottery, yet none are very large. As to projectile points, it is to be observed that although the Haverhill villages were by trail not more than thirty miles from those at Concord, Mass., there is a striking difference. At the latter sites, along both the Assabet and Concord rivers are apparent many small triangular projectile points of white quartzite, whereas the entire collection at Haverhill, there are not over ninety or one hundred – a very low percentage.

As to projectile points in general, we cannot in this brief paper present details. There are some differences which might be mentioned briefly. The large 'hunting points' which persist farther up river are present on the Haverhill sites, but not in numbers.

²² Moorehead 1931, 21.

Grooved axes are not as numerous as gouges. Celts are found fairly frequently. Ornamental stones, or problematical forms, are not at all common in the valley, or for that matter in entire New England itself.

Some foreign material is present, notably a very large and beautifully made knife, nine inches long, of yellow chert, almost identical with Pennsylvania jasper so common throughout that state, New Jersey and western New York. The woman's knife, of ground and polished slate, is represented by six or seven specimens, and there is also a small copper arrowpoint."²³

On another page he noted, "One of the largest prehistoric villages is located at Kenoza Trotting park, now known as the Aviation Field, Haverhill. From here Luce secured about 700 objects. A large proportion of these are fashioned from poor quartzite, are crudely made ..."²⁴

On the Essex National Heritage Area website there are displayed photographs of a variety of tools from the Haverhill Historical Society: Classic Plummet, Clumsy Plummet, Full Grooved Axe, Plain (on photo it is labeled "Channel" incorrectly) Gouge, and two portable stone mortars: semi-flat and bowl. These artifacts have a date range of Middle Archaic to Transitional Archaic. A Levanna triangular projectile point has a date range of 2000 B.P. to Contact. Moorehead noted, Celts were common. They date from the Late Archaic to Late Ceramic/Woodland. None are shown in the photographs on the website. According to the website's signage, "The artifacts on exhibit range in age from 8,000 years old to present. They provide evidence of continuous human occupation of the Lower Merrimack Valley for nearly 8,000 years."²⁵

Moorehead made an interesting observation he noticed a "striking difference" between the Concord and Assabet River sites within the Pawtucket Territory and those sites within the Pentucket Territory (Haverhill, MA). At "the Assabet and Concord rivers are apparent many small triangular projectile points of white quartzite, whereas the entire collection at Haverhill, there are not over ninety or one hundred – a very low percentage."²⁶ This shows people within each territory from Middle Ceramic through Contact had noticeable differences an important factor.

Village Sites & Associated Water Source

No village site was more than one and half miles distant from another site. The majority were a half mile to one mile apart. This created a cluster of village sites per se in and around three small lakes, a large wetland, two small rivers and the major Merrimack River. The largest lake is Kenoza that is two miles distant from the Merrimack River.

²³ Moorehead 1931, 21-22.

²⁴ Moorehead 1931, 20.

²⁵ Zimmerman n.d.

²⁶ Moorehead 1931, 21.

(1) Kenoza Trotting Park – Aviation Field (abandoned)

This was a large village site on a large level expanse of ground estimated to encompass forty acres. It is represented by a teepee and stone mortar symbol on Moorehead's map. The site was located a ½ mile north of Kenoza Lake and ¾'s mile distant from the village site at the northern end of Pentucket Lake. A "large brook" borders its west side. The brook's headwater is Frye Pond about one mile northwest beyond the village site. The brook borders the village site and runs through a large swampy wetland exiting into Kenoza Lake.

Location: A now forested plateau east of Dutton Road with remnants of an airstrip.

(2) Pentucket Lake

The lake is a small body of water a ¼ mile northwest of Kenoza Lake. A teepee and stone mortar symbol place the village at the northern tip of the small lake. Pentucket Lake is the smallest of the three lakes and is surrounded by dry land fed by a small brook on its northwest side.

Location: In the general vicinity of Pentucket Lake Elementary School. Most of the area has disturbed soils, but, there is a small area between the school's athletic fields and the Lake which appears largely undisturbed. Potential for professional archaeological investigation.

(3) Saltonstall Lake

Saltonstall lake is slightly larger than Pentucket Lake but not by much. It too is surrounded by dry land. The lake is ¼ mile southwest of Kenoza Lake. A teepee and stone mortar symbol place the village in the middle of the three lakes: south of Pentucket Lake, west of Kenoza Lake and north of Saltonstall Lake. In 1931 a brook is shown on the lake's south end, exiting the lake, heading south and connecting with the Merrimack River. The brook is no longer in existence.

Location: Area is a heavily developed residential neighborhood along Eastland Terrace, Woodland Way, Westland Terrace.

(4) Little River at junction with the Merrimack River

This village site was discovered by the early settlers of Haverhill. It is located 1½ miles west of Saltonstall Lake. In 1642 the Little River went out to the Merrimack River. Haverhill's history noted a skeleton, stone mortar, projectile points and other Indian artifacts were found in the area at the junction of the two rivers.²⁷ Moorehead was not aware of this site and therefore it is not located on his map.

Location: Near the junction of Washington Street / Merrimack Street and Emerson Street (commercial downtown area)

(5) Wide Bend in River

One mile west of the junction of the Little River and Merrimack River is a wide bend where this village site was located. It is represented by the teepee and stone mortar symbols. The village is directly on the banks of the Merrimack River. There are no other water bodies associated with it. This village site is 1½ miles east of the Horseshoe Bend / Salmons Rips.

²⁷ Chase 1861, 42.

Location: General area of Margin Street

(6) Salmons Rips – Horseshoe Bend

Two village sites represented by teepee-like shelters are located beside the Merrimack River on opposite sides (east & west) of the Salmons Rips a horseshoe bend in the river with fast water.

Location: One was in general area of Western Avenue & River Street, and the other Fletcher Street and River Street.

Moorehead singled out Kenoza Trotting Park – Aviation Field village site by giving its size (forty acres) suggesting it was the largest site in the cluster? The dilemma is there is no way to determine the size of the village site at the junction of the Little River and Merrimack River and thus make a comparison. It can be surmised the other village sites Moorehead found or were taken to by Luce were smaller. But how small? He mentioned “twelve or thirteen camp sites” of which he designated six as village sites. In doing so, he made a distinction not just based on the presence or lack of a stone mortar as the two Salmons Rips sites show because these two sites did not have a stone mortar. That suggests Moorehead based his “village” site designations on size and where he could on the presence of a stone mortar.

Distances between village sites & water sources

Trotting Park/Aviation Field to Kenoza Lake	½ mile
Trotting Park/Aviation Field to Pentucket Lake	¾ mile
Pentucket Lake to Saltonstall Lake	½ mile
Saltonstall Lake to Little River	1½ miles
Little River to Wide Bend in Merrimack River	1 mile
Wide Bend to Horseshoe Bend at Salmons Rips	1½ miles
West side to East side of Horseshoe Bend	½ mile

Types of Water Bodies

Large brook and swampy wetland

The Kenoza Trotting Park – Aviation Field village site borders a large brook and is adjacent to a large swampy wetland.

Lake

Pentucket Lake and Saltonstall Lake village sites had only an association with a small lake.

River Junction

One village site was located at the junction of the Little River and Merrimack River. Though it is not noted the Little River was a small river and likely a spawning stream for alewives.

Major River

One village site with a stone mortar was located beside the Merrimack River. The topographical map has no other water sources in its vicinity. Therefore this village's water association is with a major river though not a fishing spot.

Horseshoe Bend – Salmons Rips

Two village sites without stone mortars were located respectively on opposite sides of the Salmons Rips (not opposite sides of the river) and may represent seasonal village fishing sites.

The various water body types represent different environments each with its own resource. Swamps and wetlands contain plants such as cattails and animals such as turtles, snakes, muskrats, and provide geese and duck migration feeding areas, occasionally beavers, brooks have alewife spawning runs, and native trout, rivers like the Merrimack River have spawning salmon, shad, bluebacks, alewives, and eel. What needs to be taken into consideration is the close proximity of the Pentucket village sites to each other and the water resources. Every water source could be utilized on an annual basis from every village site.

Semi-Sedentary Life Style

How did a cluster of village sites come to be? The answer is in the life style change of the First Americans. According to New Hampshire Professor Thaddeus Piotrowski, "The localized nomadic existence came to an end sometime before 6,000 B.P., when permanent year-round campsites emerged on the terrace."²⁸ The "terrace" was located on the east side of the Merrimack River in Manchester, NH at Amoskeag Falls is known as the Neville site. New Hampshire archaeologist Victoria Bunker states, "[Archaeologist Dean] Snow ... has described most prehistoric New England community patterns as a continuum between 'central-based wandering' or 'semipermanent sedentary' patterns. Snow also uses the 'restricted wandering' pattern to discuss the earliest New England sites."²⁹ Bunker elaborated that "The restricted wandering community pattern is defined as 'communities that wander about within a territory that they define as theirs and defend against trespass, or on which they have exclusive rights to food resources of certain kinds.'³⁰ "The semipermanent sedentary community pattern is defined as 'a community, which can be identified with a village, that establishes itself in successive locations, occupying each for a period of years. The population is stable and continuously sedentary, but able to be so only by moving the village periodically' (Bearsley et al. 1955: 140) This approach acknowledges that 'economic, sociopolitical, and ceremonial interrelationships' are significant but that improved subsistence is key to evolution (Bearsley et al. 1955: 134)."³¹ The semipermanent sedentary community

²⁸ Piotrowski 2002, 6 (citing Snow 1980, 14-15, 129).

²⁹ Bunker 2002, 27.

³⁰ Bunker 2002, 27 (citing Beardsley et al. 1955, 136).

³¹ Bunker 2002, 28.

though not stated also had reason to claim “a territory that they define as theirs”, “defend against trespass” and assert “exclusive rights”. “Certain places on the landscape must have been so rich, special, or unique as to invite persistent occupation; ...”³²

Stewart-Smith pointed out, “The territories appear to have been permanent areas with established villages, ...”³³ He went on to use the term “semi-sedentary” which was appropriate due to the fact the people utilized seasonal (fishing) sites in addition to their “semi-permanent” village sites. The semi-sedentary / semi-permanent sedentary fits the cluster of village sites in Haverhill, MA situated within the Pentucket territory. Artifacts recovered from the Haverhill, MA sites range from the Middle Archaic 8,000 to 6,000 years ago through Contact in the 1640s. These artifacts exhibit the full scope of activities: woodworking, hunting, animal processing, fishing, and nut and maize processing. They hint at a long established territory.



Figure 4 – America’s Stonehenge Site

America’s Stonehenge C-14 Dates

The America’s Stonehenge site is 8 to 9 miles north of Haverhill, MA depending on which village site the distance is measured from. The site is situated on a hill above the Spicket River in North Salem, NH. Radio carbon 14 dates from the site have a broad range starting with a 6350 +/-40 B.P. uncorrected date. The date was collected from charcoal in association with a stonewall east of the North

³² Bunker 2002, 29.

³³ Stewart-Smith, 1998, 28.

Stone. What is unclear is if the charcoal was from a natural wildfire or from human activity. The next C14 date 3470 +/- 30 BP (uncorrected) (3697 corrected) was from a fire pit in the area of the North Stone confirming human activity. It places people on the hilltop circa 3700 years ago but does not show a correlation with the stone structures. However, the 2995 +/-210 BP date associated with charcoal, fire-burnt stone spalls, hammer stone, broken pick, and scraper shows a direct correlation with the building of the stone structures. The charcoal was recovered from backfill behind the Collapsed Chamber. A series of C14 dates: 2120 BP quarried bedrock, 1910 BP lodge, 1640 BP lodge, 1430 BP Oracle Chamber covered drain, 1250 BP North Stone hearth, and 1195 BP lodge place First Americans on the hilltop continuously from 3,000 years ago to 1200 years ago.³⁴ A shard of thick, dark green glass worked in the First American method of flaking brings their presence on the hilltop into the late 1600s or early 1700s. A trio of three vessels (ceramic jug, galvanized pail and enamel cooking pot) strategically located on the site show a continued presence into the early 20th century. Three purposefully bent young trees documented in 2005 place First Americans on site in the early 21st century.³⁵

The uninterrupted date range of First Americans presence on the America’s Stonehenge site matches the continuous date range of the people who settled on the Merrimack River in what was known as the Pentucket territory as of Contact and later became the town of Haverhill, Massachusetts.

Crystal

America’s Stonehenge is best known for its unique stone chambers and solar alignments (denoted by standing stones). And for its drains (covered, grooved, Grooved Stone set up table-like, earthen ditch) and basins (carved into the bedrock). What goes unnoticed by most visitors is a stone lined shaft with a crystal geode at its bottom, called the Crystal Well. Quartz crystals were found in the shaft’s backfill and in the geode at the bottom. That confirmed crystals were important to the ceremonial complex. Their discovery was likely made by the First Americans between 3700 years ago (from a hearth on the hilltop) and 3,000 years ago (from charcoal mixed in with stone working tools indicating building with stone had begun by then). The date of discovery occurred during the Transitional Archaic period.

An article by William Fowler titled “Magic Stones and Shamans” in the *Bulletin of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society* showed similar period cremation burials imbuing quantities of red ochre that contained “Magic Stones” as he labeled them. He felt the term “Lucky Stone” or “Good-luck stones” which had been attached to them was inappropriate and renamed them “Magic stones with spiritual values,”. Fowler described the stones as “Something of great attraction either in color, odd surface

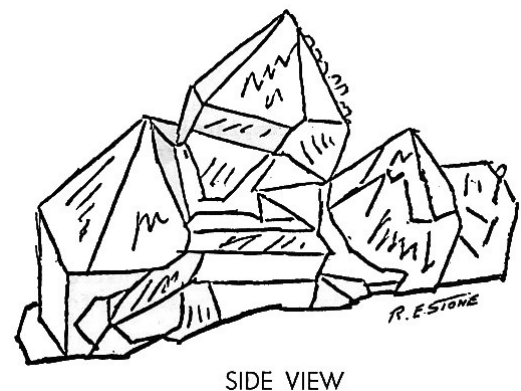


Figure 5 – Robert Stone’s sketch of a crystal cluster recovered from crystal well on site.

³⁴ Gage 2021, XII.

³⁵ Gage 2021, 238-240.

effects, reflective qualities, high finished surface, or on occasion, skillfully incised work denoting human esteem, serve to set these stones apart as perhaps highly valued fetishes ...”³⁶ He listed ten burials containing special stones. All but one was dated to the Late Archaic, Transitional Archaic, and Early Ceramic-Woodland period. The odd one was dated to the Contact Period. The burials primarily were located in a band across southeastern Massachusetts from Attleboro to Cape Cod. Although one burial was found outside the band in the central Massachusetts town of West Brookfield. Of these special stones two were quartz with a single well developed crystal, an iridescent crystalline quartz, amethyst crystal, and ferrous tinted crystal (reddish-orange tint). The Transitional Archaic burials fit in the time period the crystal geode was discovered at the America’s Stonehenge site. The site is approximately fifty miles north in southeastern New Hampshire close enough for the inhabitants of the burial complex to have encountered contact and shared their beliefs about crystals with the inhabitants of their northern neighbors.

The quartz crystal cluster that came out of the geode at America’s Stonehenge was coated in a reddish-orange substance resembling red ochre. The importance is the First Americans likely saw the crystal coated in red ochre as a gift from the spirits. This is judged by the fact the discovery came at the height of their belief and use of red ochre and crystals. But it went far beyond that, the geode contained multiple crystals as discovered by Robert Stone who excavated the well shaft recovering crystals in the backfill as well a crystal cluster in the geode.³⁷ The fact the geode contained multiple crystals which the First American’s mined over a period of time, and viewed as gifts from the spirits, made it the *Home of the Crystal Spirit*. This was no ordinary discovery. These crystals as noted by those interred in the burials were held in “high regard” and contained “supernatural powers”.³⁸

What seems to have occurred was once the crystal geode was discovered the hilltop went from an ordinary hill used for hunting to an extraordinarily sacred place. The conversion warranted an annual ceremony. When two shallow caves were discovered on the hill they were converted to ceremonial usage. That is inferred by a man-made niche in front of one of the caves confirming its use for a ceremonial purpose. This simple set up lead to a slow build-out of stone structures on top of the hill to what is seen today. The build-out started with the original ceremony and over time expanded to include additional ceremonies hence, the numerous stone chambers and drains.³⁹

Conclusion

There is a strong possibility the earliest First Americans who occupied what today is Haverhill, MA back in the Middle to early Late Archaic period were the ancestors of the Pentucket Tribe whose names and marks are on the 1642 deed. Their semi-sedentary life style established a permanent link to a specific area, the family territory. And with that their religious beliefs evolved into the belief their spirits resided at permanent territorial based sites like the people. This concept comes from the importance

³⁶ Fowler 1975, 11.

³⁷ Stone 1963, 7-11.

³⁸ Fowler 1975, 14, 16.

³⁹ For further information see: *The Architecture of America’s Stonehenge*, (Gage, 2021).

placed on the crystal geode. The discovery of the “Home of Crystal Spirit” set in motion a hilltop that has forever remained sacred. Over time the people constructed man-made ceremonial stone structures to accommodate their ceremonies. Simple open topped structures called enclosures at first, reaching a peak circa 1400 years ago with the Oracle Chamber and Grooved Stone Waterfall drain then going into a slow decline. When European settlers reached the North Salem, NH area the Pentucket closed their ceremonial grounds but did not abandon it as seen by the early 20th and early 21st century activity. America’s Stonehenge is New England’s oldest, most elaborate and longest continuously utilized First American ceremonial site.

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