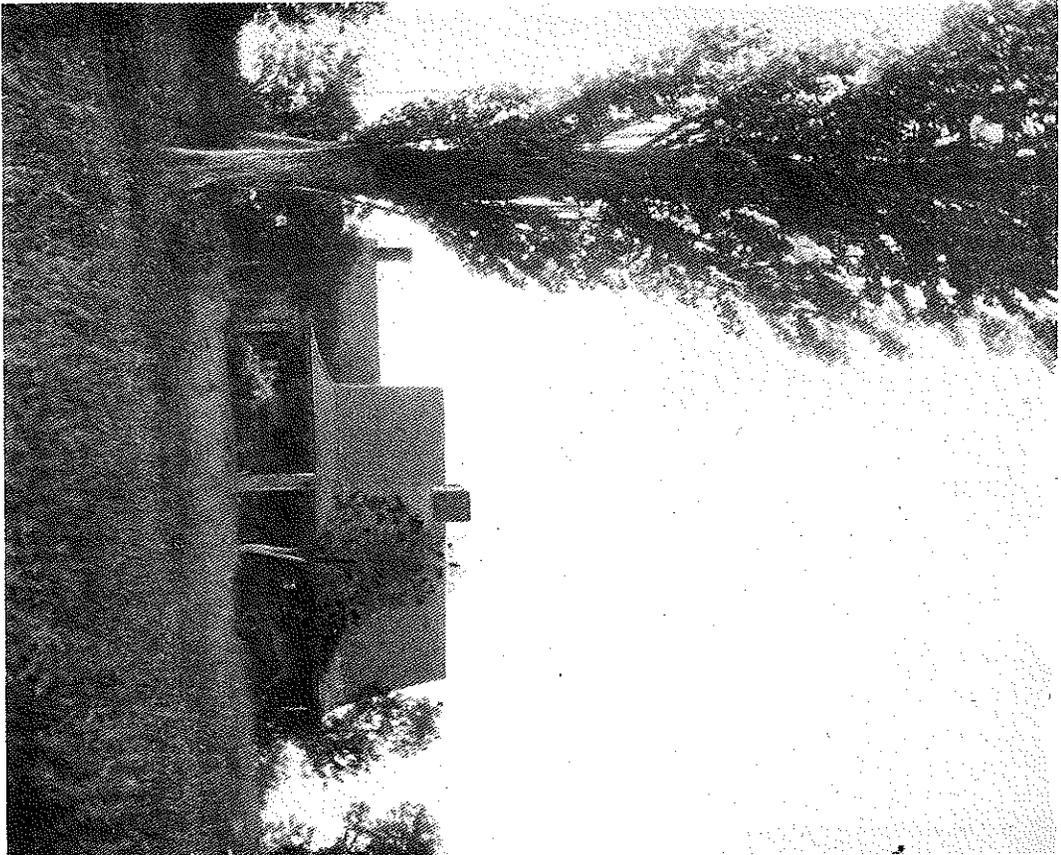


# YANKEE TOWNSHIP

CARL F. PRICE



CITIZENS' WELFARE CLUB  
EAST HAMPTON, CONNECTICUT



*Photograph by Geo. E. Tingler*

THE OLD MANSE  
Home of the Rev. Joel West, 1792

*Lake with clear and sparkling water,  
Welling from the springs of crystal,  
Hidden 'neath the hills around it.*

—From *Lake Pocotopaug* by O. Adelia Clark

LAKE POCOTOPAUG lies within the chalice of the Connecticut hills. Nature has gently tipped her goblet toward the south, pouring forth from its lip a grateful libation of clear, spring-fed lake waters. From the Pocotopaug outlet they flow with limpid grace through streams and ponds and rivers toward the sea.

North of the lake rises Meshomestic Mountain, but so gradually that its summit cannot be seen from the surface of the lake. Its name derives from the Indian phrase for "great rattle-snake"—originally "Me-shom-as-sek." Other spellings are current—Mesomussuck, Mesomesick, Mesawmesick, and, colloquially, this is shortened to Somersic. J. Hammond Trumbull even gives another meaning to the word—"a great going-down," but the rattle-snake interpretation is the translation most widely accepted. Once rattle-snakes were very plentiful on this hill. One day in September, 1881, on Meshomestic, Deacon Pelton of Portland killed fifteen, and the next day killed four and captured six. Even to this day there are enough rattlers on these slopes to tempt the exterminating instincts of a twentieth century Saint Patrick.

Mott Hill, the modern title of that part of Meshomestic which lies just north of the lake, though less musical, less aboriginal in quality, is a more logical name; for only by a stretch of the imagination can Meshomestic be regarded as a mountain. Its highest elevation falls short of a thousand feet. Only at the top of the fire tower, erected by the State on Bald Hill, to the west of Mott Hill, can the wayfarer rise above the thousand-foot line and above the tops of the trees that otherwise obstruct the view. Not until the climber reaches the highest step of this tower, can he behold the thrilling panorama of New England which suddenly bursts on his sight. On a very clear day his binoculars may distinguish the Catskill Mountains, a hundred miles to the west, the steamboats and sails on Long Island Sound to the

south, and the lower hills of Vermont and New Hampshire to the north.

On the east side of the lake, like a sentinel, stands Baker Hill, steeper in slope, but less in altitude than Meshomestic. Its eastern scarp plunges sharply down to Bear Swamp, the reputed resort in olden days of ursine prowlers that worried the colonial fathers of this region. But Baker's summit commands what Meshomestic lacks, save from its fire tower—a wide-spreading panorama embracing vistas in four Connecticut counties; and when the barometer is high, you may enjoy a view of Long Island Sound. This *buena vista* once persuaded an inn-keeper to build a summer hotel on the hill, but it was burned down before it was completed and only an abandoned well now marks the site.

From Baker Hill there now flashes nightly a beacon for the wayfarers of the sky, and as the Boston-New York airplane flies above its summit, the aviator knows that his sky journey between those two cities is just half accomplished. *Oliveer Wiswell*, the popular novel by Kenneth Roberts, informs us that the town of "Ninety-six" was so named because it was just ninety-six miles from New Keowhee, then the Boston of that region in the South. By the same token, East Hampton might well have been named, "Hundred and Seven," as it is exactly that number of miles from both Boston and New York. It is a curious coincidence that the highest point on the Air Line railroad (N. Y., N. H. & H.), less than a mile south of Baker Hill, is exactly equidistant from those two cities.

Between Baker Hill and Meshomestic, Nature's goblet has a nick in it, where the sky reaches down toward the waters of Markham's Bay, the northeast branch of the lake. West of the lake, however, the rim of the goblet, though higher, is more level along the summit of Clark's Hill, which is only an extension of Meshomestic. In fact, both of these hills are parts of the Bolton Range which crosses Central Connecticut from northeast to southwest and ends abruptly in

Cobalt Mountain, or Great Hill, on the eastern shore of the Connecticut River, whence the land gradually falls away in the general seaward slope of lower New England.

The brim of the tilted cup is lowest at the south. Here the lake finds outlet into a musical stream, Pocotopang Creek, which sings its way through a series of ponds in the center of the village of East Hampton, transmitting its song into the tinkle of bells made in the bell-shops along the way, or into the laughter of children for the Christmas toys here manufactured. Hurrying on by devious ways through meadows and valleys, the waters from the lake flow south of Hop Swamp into Pine Brook,<sup>1</sup> at Leesville into the Salmon River and at East Haddam into the Connecticut River, which finally bears them to Long Island Sound and the sea.

Poets have sung of the companionship of the stars and of the camaraderie of the sea. But the stars are far away, and the illimitable sea is too vast to seize in one's heart and, betimes, too boisterous a play-fellow. As for me, give me the companionship of a small lake with sweet crystal water, with wooded shores and hills to be mirrored upon its surface, with verdant islands to enhance its beauty. Here one may cultivate an intimacy which the wide-spreading sea forbids. A boundless ocean expanse can scarcely be compassed by man's comprehension. One admires, and is awed by, the vast sea: one loves a lake.

The lake of a thousand moods resembles a temperamental personality, and the human heart eagerly responds to the whimsical emotions that play upon the face of the waters. The very hills of the intimate horizon conspire with the winds of heaven to make the waves to laugh or wrinkle with frowns. The boisterous madness of a morning's gale awakens the abandon of a wild glee. The calm surface of the lake at sunset soothes the heart and woos the spirit of meditation. The raging fury of the little waters in a sum-

<sup>1</sup> The Indian name for Pine Brook was Nippaquashneeg. Trumbull, in his work on Indian names, says that this is a corruption of Wunn-appaquashne-antka, meaning "a good place to get fags for making mats."

mer's thunder-gust reveals a passion of temper. The ice-bound, rigid expanse in winter displays a mood of dignity and reserve.

Such a lake, begirt with low-lying hills and jeweled with wooded islands, is Pocotopaug.<sup>2</sup> Little wonder that the Indians, living on its shores, believed the lake to be moved by the intelligence of some unseen personality. Their primitive instincts led them, like the early Greeks, to perceive a god dwelling in everything in nature that stirred their emotions. To us moderns, Pocotopaug possesses much of the charm of companionship that endeared Walden to Thoreau. It is, indeed, far superior in natural beauty to the famous Massachusetts pond. Had the "Concord Par" been born in East Hampton, instead of Concord town, and lived on the shores of Pocotopaug, he would have complained of no railroad bank to mar the seclusion of its pristine beauty, no locomotive's screech to rival the laughing of the loons. Before the charms of Pocotopaug had been discovered by a horde of summer colonists, its quietude made its shores a sanctuary for the wild birds, and the deer confidently slaked their thirst in its waters.

In the days before the palefaces invaded the Indians' domains, before Thomas Hooker, with his family, his cattle and his *penates* had plunged through the forests from Newtown to found a colony at Hartford, or even Adrien Block, the Dutch explorer, had guided the first European prow up the Quinnehuckgut River in 1614, the region around Middletown and East Hampton was inhabited by a tribe of Indians called Wangunks or Wangurns. The name Wangunk means "the Bend," or, in this instance, the place where the Connecticut River makes a great bend from Middletown through the Narrows to Middle Haddam. It is sometimes

spelled Wangunk, Wangonke, Wongum or Womgog. These Indians, belonging to the Algonquin Race, were doubtless related by marriages to other tribes in Connecticut along the river, and especially to the tribes on the north as far as Windsor. The chieftain of the Wangunks, at the time when the white men first visited Connecticut, was Sowheag. He lived first in We(a)thersfield and later in Middletown, and his lands included the hills of Chatham with its pellucid Lake Pocotopaug, where hunting and fishing were especially rewarding.

Many of the Wangunks pitched their wigwams on the shores of Lake Pocotopaug and on the Twin Islands that rise from almost the center of the lake. Of these two, the eastern island bears the name of the local chieftain, Terramangs, from whom David Buell is said to have acquired title, purchasing it for a peck of beans. The island is still in possession of the family.

On the west side of the western island, when the water is not high, a wharf of heavy rocks may be seen, which tradition tells us was built by the Indians. In 1911, when the lake reached its lowest ebb of recent years, this dock stood well out of the water. It was visible also in 1901 and 1905.

In the days of the Wangunks, fishing and hunting here yielded a plentiful store of provisions: for the waters of Pocotopaug swarmed with bass and pickerel, and through the forests roamed the bear, the fox, the deer and lesser game in great numbers.

Indian arrowheads and spear-points have been found not infrequently all through the town of East Hampton, and even on Twin Islands and on little Scraggy Island that graces the northern waters of the lake, like a brigantine, caparisoned in green. By the observant eye, practiced in the characteristic angles of arrowheads and other aboriginal implements, they are still to be discovered, now and then, especially along the brooks and in ploughed fields after a

<sup>2</sup> Various spellings have been used for the name of the lake: Pocotopaug (History of Middlesex County), Pochutapaug (J. H. Trumbull's Indian Names), Pokatapaug and Pomtopog (David D. Field), Pocotopaug (Mrs. O. Adella Clark), Pocotopug (Barber's Historical Collections), Pocotopaug (Historic Towns of the Connecticut Valley), Pocotopog (Journals), Pochetapauge (Town Record, 1722). Locally, the lake used to be called, "The Pond."

heavy rain. The most complete collection of local Indian relics ever made in the town was gathered by Herman Rich (1843-1933). It is to be regretted by expert collectors that Mr. Rich, with all his fine zeal as an amateur archaeologist, failed to label his Indian relics with a description of the place where each item was found. Billings Neff of Portland was another that made many Indian "finds" within this township. His collection is now in Judd Hall of Wesleyan University.

Indian skeletons have been exhumed from time to time in various parts of Chatham; so little respect has the white man's curiosity for the rights of the dead. In 1808 three Indian mounds were opened. In one was found the skeleton of a man in sitting posture and wrapped in blankets—all of which crumbled on exposure to the air. In the man's lap there were two small brass kettles, containing a spoon, two knives, a vial and a pipe—evidently his treasured possessions in life. On one arm of the skeleton, where it passed around the kettles, the flesh had been preserved by contact with the metal. In the two other mounds were found the skeletons of children. One of them held a small brass cup which had preserved the flesh at the point of contact. The other side of the cup had decayed, indicating that where they had actually touched, the flesh and brass had preserved each other. About the child's wrist was wrapped wampum, strung on deerskin, and about its neck beads of hearts of oyster shells. The other child held a copper box, containing wampum, strung on deer leather.<sup>3</sup>

On the U. S. Government geodetic survey map of 1893, Lake Pocotopang resembles the two lobes of the human brain, the right hemisphere being considerably atrophied. One cannot draw a straight line two miles long on the surface of the lake; but following the shore line with all its sinuous curves involves a journey of nine miles. The road around the lake, however, clocks four and four-fifths miles. Ety-

<sup>3</sup> *Statistical Account of Middlesex County*, by David Dudley Field, page 9.

ologists tell us that the Indian name, Pocotopang, meant "Divided Pond," and not "Clear Water," as is popularly supposed. The northeast portion of the lake is known as Markham's Bay and is divided from the rest of Pocotopang by Markham's Point on the southeast and Arrow Point on the northwest (formerly known at different periods as Hinckley's Point, Swedes' Point or Spellman's Point). In colonial days the main road from east to west compelled travelers to ford the lake between these two promontories—an impossible feat today since the dam at the Drain has raised the surface of the lake much higher than it was in ancient times. Before this artificial raising of the lake, its high-water mark was achieved in the Flood of 1869.

An old map of Pocotopang, evidently made when the lake was lower than it has been within the memory of the living, locates Stony Island in the middle of Markham's Bay, shows the Twin Islands as one, and assigns a considerable area to the now submerged Conklin's Island. Even in the drouths of 1905 and 1911, some bathers walked on the bottom of the lake from the Lake View House on the west shore, and from Markham's Point on the east shore, to Twin Islands, the while keeping their chins in air. In 1865 Renben Smith and the Ingrahams, William and Euphrastes, performed the same feat. But this was never possible off Derby Point. On February 17, 1901, when the water was twelve inches below the pipe at the Drain, the lake was still thirty feet deep between the old pine tree at Derby Point and Scraggy Island.

The mounted traveler, headed for Clark's Hill and the west, would often pause for refreshment at the old inn near Markham's Point before crossing the ford in the lake. This tavern stood on the Marborough Road until 1938. When it was being dismantled by Howard C. Rich, some wondered if any hidden treasure would be found in the corner of the huge chimney. There some Easthamptonians had hidden their silverware during the War of 1812 when the

British bombarded Stonington, raided along the river, burned Lord's factory at East Haddam, and, as they feared, menaced East Hampton with invasion. But the old house yielded only literary treasures, a few old books and papers, and even these were more interesting than valuable. The secrets of the long-closed underground passage, running eastward from the house, have never been revealed.

At the northeast corner of Arrow Point, where the shore of the lake bends to the contour of Markham's Bay, there once stood a large, flat rock. Beside this the Indian squaws used to fashion arrowheads for the hunting and warfare of their braves. In evidence of this, a few perfect arrowheads and a large quantity of chips and broken or incomplete arrowheads have been found near this rock, probably spoiled in the making and then cast aside, there to be buried in the light soil through the centuries until the red men had passed away and another race had claimed and treasured the little stones as precious relics of an earlier day. Even the huge stone, beside which they were laboriously chiseled, has been removed by the white men; for when the New Haven Railroad rebuilt its viaduct through the center of the town, this monolith and its granite neighbors were taken to strengthen the structure. Thus thousands of travelers have passed, to and fro, over the rock around which the Wangunk squaws once sang their weird songs while they fashioned deadly arrowheads for their braves.

The south end of Arrow Point has been found through the years to be prolific in arrowheads; and the current explanation for this is that once it was a popular Indian hunting-ground. The Indians' "Long House," three miles north of Pocotopaug, was their hunting lodge. Tradition has it that the aboriginal hunters were in the habit of beating the Meshomestic forests to the north of the lake for game. They would form a far-flung semicircle which was gradually contracted as they advanced in the direction of the lake. Thus they drove the game before them and finally corralled

them on Arrow Point, hemmed in on three sides by the water and in the rear by the hunters. Then the slaughter would be renewed and the flying arrows would lay low a fine mess of game. Probably for the same reason, Markham's Point has yielded a rich harvest of arrowheads, though much less than Arrow Point.

Besides hunting and fishing, the Wangunks relied also on their crops of corn, beans and tobacco for their subsistence. Succotash was their favorite dish. On the cross road, running south from Cranberry Meadow, near the corner of the old road that extended from Grover Lane to Colchester, stands Indian Rock, on which the Indians used to grind their corn. Here they would first grind the corn in the hollow of the rock by means of a stone bar or pestle; then spread it out on a flat space on the rock and reduce it to meal by a rolling process, the roller being a large, round boulder. One of these corn-grinding boulders, found in Middlefield, is on exhibition at Judd Hall, Wesleyan University.

There now exists neither record nor memory of warfare among the Indians within the present confines of East Hampton, although just north of the town's boundary, and also in Haddam Neck to the south, there were Indian battles which proved altogether decisive, at least locally. Not long before white men settled in the Connecticut Valley, a large force of the terrorizing Mohawks swept down from Onondaga in the North and devastated the river tribes, forcing them to pay tribute to their conquerors as the price of peace. Sawash, sachem of the tribe living near what is now Hartford, averted this onslaught from his own tribe by "appeasement": he loaded the Mohawks with wampum and promised annual tribute, which kept the peace during his lifetime. On his death, his twin sons, Saweg and Nowashe, quarreled because the former succeeded his father as sachem. Nowashe insulted the Mohawk messengers when next they came to collect the tribute, and led out part of his tribe in secession to build a village and a strong fort on the banks of Roaring Brook in what is now Glastonbury.

For two years the Mohawks left him untaxed and unmolested, but finally they marched against Nowashe in large numbers. In their first attack against Nowashe's fort they were roundly defeated. Burning the village, the Mohawks retreated northward, halting for over a week at the river ford (Warehouse Point). Then suddenly they swept in a huge southward circle to Minnchaug Mountain (visible from Baker Hill) and, to elude Nowashe's scouts, waded from there in the waters of Roaring Brook down to the fort, which they captured by surprise. Soon Nowashe and his tribe were at the mercy of the Mohawks' torches and tomahawks. The few survivors, saved by the intervention of Saweg, were banished to a place between the Podunk and Scantic rivers, two miles north of Hartford.<sup>4</sup>

The Battle of Haddam Neck is recalled with much less circumstantial detail than the Battle of Glastonbury, though there are many who can point out the battlefield where the Wangunks fought and defeated an invading tribe of Indians from Long Island. The field is at the end of the Neck, not far from the bluff that overlooks the meadows, and just east of the famous Indian cave, once explored by an anthropological expedition from Wesleyan University. I have visited the spot many times. The field has been very prolific of arrowheads and tomahawks to searchers for Indian relics. In modern parlance, it might be said that the Indians of East Hampton, Long Island, had unsuccessfully attacked the Indians of East Hampton, Connecticut; though the cause for war then could scarcely have been more justifiable than our modern postal dispute as to where East Hampton letters ought to be delivered by the U. S. Post Office.

<sup>4</sup> For a complete account of the Mohawk campaign see *Wadsworth or The Charter Oak* by W. H. Gocher (Hartford: Gocher, 1904) and Barber's *Connecticut Historical Collections*.

*When comes the dreamy gloamingtide,  
And eves with fairy wings bedight  
Are chasing swift the rays of light  
That linger at the waterside,  
I love to tarry by the lake  
Within the chalice of the hills,  
Where in the depths and in the rills  
A spirit seems its home to make.*

—From *Washington Verse*

THE legend of Lake Pocotopang is a tragedy involving the primitive theology of the Indians, for it is deep-rooted in their overmastering fear of displeasing the god Hobomoko and their dread of bringing his frightful vengeance upon them, whenever his wrath was aroused. What evil these poor Wangunks had committed to enrage the Great Spirit is no part of the legend that has been handed down through the years to the palefaces. But the tribe must have reached some definite conclusions as to their own wrong-doing, and the conscience of Chief Terranaugus must have ached sorely before he could ever have given his consent to such a tragic expiation as was forced upon him.

The first intimation the Indians had of the god's displeasure was the drowning of one of their braves in the clear waters of Pocotopang. Some might have regarded this as a mere accident. By us it may be deemed foolhardy for a modern camper on these shores to venture across to the islands in a canoe during a summer thunderstorm. But to the Indians it was almost inconceivable that any of their braves, so skilled with paddle and canoe, so strong in propelling a boat or in swimming through the waves, would ever be unable to master any conditions that might arise on the little lake.

These doubts were all resolved when soon afterward others of the tribe were drowned in the same waters. There could no longer be any question that a Great Hand above had overturned the canoes and dragged the swimmers to their death. Vengeance was pursuing the tribe. Grief blended with fear, as they turned their faces to the sky and called for mercy.

These losses were but a prelude to the greater calamity that followed. A devastating plague broke out in the settlement and soon the wigwams were filled with the sick. Death stalked out of the forest and into their midst, all too often to claim the strong as well as the weak, the young as well as the

old. Terror gripped the whole tribe. No one knew when he himself might be seized with the dread disease. Perhaps the god would destroy them all, unless—ah! desperation was speaking now—unless something could be devised to appease his anger.

At length they pled with their chieftain to summon a council of the tribe; and in response to his call there assembled at the twilight hour all of the men who had not been prostrated by illness to confer with Terramaugus.

The dignified Indian chief and his braves were all seated on the ground, when the Medicine Man in feathered array made a dramatic entrance into the rough circle and sat directly opposite the chief. Then solemnly arose Terramaugus, the tallest of his tribe, noble in features and stern in expression. Sadly, but eloquently, in the flowery terms of Indian oratory, he recounted the woes and sufferings they had endured and the fears that now haunted them. Had they angered the god Hobomoko? Was it his vengeance that was hurling death at them? Then let the Medicine Man at once explore the mind of Hobomoko, and perhaps he could discover whatever they must do to appease the wrath of the Great Spirit and find favor in his eyes once more. It might be that Hobomoko would ask of them some terrible sacrifice. Would they all be willing to yield to his anger whatever he might demand? With this question the chief sat once more upon the ground.

Then one after another of the braves arose, each in his turn assenting to the counsel of the chief and declaring that, if indeed the god were angry and demanded satisfaction, nothing could be too great for them to offer. When all had spoken, Terramaugus again arose and faced the Medicine Man, who leaped to his feet to receive his chieftain's decision.

"Gitchetan, the words have been spoken. You have heard the voice of your tribe. Go, and with drum and incantation call the Spirit of Hobomoko and see if this misery of death that has come upon us be the mark of his anger.

And should his answer confirm our fears, then beg him, implore him, flatter him with our promises, that in some way he may be cajoled into revealing to us what sacrifice we must offer to remove the curse of his displeasure; for whatever he asks, your chief and all of the braves vow that it shall be done."

Slowly the Medicine Man turned and walked with solemnity from out the circle of red men and disappeared in the forest. The twilight by this time had given way to the darkness of night. The council remained seated in oppressive silence. The dancing flames of the fire lighted a ring of copper faces whose features stolidly betrayed nothing of the burning excitement and anxiety within their hearts. The silence was broken only by the laughing of a loon on the waters near by or the hooting of an owl, as the moon sprang out from behind a passing cloud. After a long vigil, the beat of a drum in the distance made the heart of each brave throb faster and the weird chanting of the Medicine Man warned them that in a little while they would learn from him whatever fate Hobomoko had prepared for them.

They had not long to wait; for soon Gitchetan emerged from the shadows and as he re-entered the circle, they all arose to their feet to receive the fateful word of the god. Hailing Terramaugus with a mystic sign, the Medicine Man in the forensic idioms of the red man began a long description of his approach to the god by the ancient Indian ritual, culminating in his summons by drum and incantation. He rehearsed the woes and fears and repentance of the tribe, as he had repeated them to Hobomoko. Then, trembling and in a lower voice, he described the wrath of a god and the fury with which the sentence of doom had been uttered by Hobomoko as the only sacrifice he would accept to appease his anger. Gitchewan paused and seemed unable to speak further. Whereupon Terramaugus, like the rest impatient but still dreading to hear the words of doom, challenged him:

"Speak on, O Gitcheetan, we stand ready to hear and obey."

"The great god Hobomoko," replied Gitcheetan, "demands the sacrifice of the fairest daughter of the tribe in the waters of Pocotopaug—thy daughter, Na-moe-nee, O Terramangus."

The chieftain stepped back, as though to avert a blow. Trained to conceal his emotions, he still betrayed for a moment the agony, the stab of those words through his heart. The company stood in awed silence, watching the terrific struggle that was raging within the soul of Terramangus; a battle between affection and duty; the grim alternative between evading a personal sorrow or liberating his people from the curse of the god. The struggle was not for long. The nobility of his nature and his sense of duty prevailed. Lifting his hand, he said in a low voice:

"The will of Hobomoko shall be obeyed."

Slowly the council dissolved, as heavy-hearted they talked in small groups of the awesome events of the night. Terramangus, however, said not another word to any of them, but alone departed at once for his wigwam. There arousing Na-moe-nee who was lying asleep, he took her tenderly by the hand and led her through the trees on the path that ran along the north shore of the lake and to the hill overlooking the northeast bay.

Far from the sound of other voices walked the chieftain and his daughter, as he sorrowfully explained to her the significance of the council, the Medicine Man's approach to the angry god, the awful words of Hobomoko, demanding her sacrifice in the waters of the lake. A father's agony of grief was in his voice and in his heart, and only by his stern sense of duty and his fear of the terrorizing god was he goaded on until he had told the whole story to his daughter.

Trained in the primitive beliefs and fears and sacred customs of the Indians, she accepted the crisis as the natural outcome of the tribe's unfaithfulness; the sacrifice as inevitable. Without a spark of self-pity, she felt exalted in

being the one chosen for sacrifice, if only her people might be freed from the sorrows they were suffering, if only the scourge of death might be stayed. The nobility of chieftains was in her veins, and with that nobility she replied:

"Father, I am willing to go at once, if only that will move Hobomoko to hasten relief to our people and bring them peace."

Together they walked forward in the waning moonlight, eager daughter and sorrowing father, until they had rounded the head of the lake and had come to the summit of the ledges on the east shore of the bay. At her behest her father bound her wrists and her ankles, lest in the last struggles of consciousness the instinct to live might thwart her purpose. Then, stepping to the edge of the cliff, she plunged far below into the waters of Pocotopaug which, parting to receive the maiden, quickly curtained her dying struggles until peace had come.

Hobomoko was appeased. Immediately he relented from torturing the Wangunks. From that time forward the tribe ever revered the name and memory of Na-moe-nee as of the one who had saved their lives. There is no suggestion in the legend that the Indians ascribed any *maleficium* to the chieftain's daughter, such as the early colonists imputed to the witches whom they put to death. Na-moe-nee was innocent of all wrong herself; but for the misdeeds of others she had made the supreme sacrifice that ended their punishment. Faithful was Hobomoko in keeping his promise that the plague would subside and that none of the Wangunks would ever from that day perish in the waters of Pocotopaug. Not within the memory of man nor in the records of the town, after the white men had replaced the Indians, was anyone ever drowned in Lake Pocotopaug after the death of Na-moe-nee; until December 8, 1885. On that day the long spell of Hobomoko was broken and a lad by the name of Jeremiah D. Wall, while skating on the lake, fell through the ice and was drowned. But this was not until many

decades after the last of the Wangunks had disappeared from the land.

Two other versions of Pocotopang legends have been published in recent years: "The Legends of Lake Pocotopang" by Eleanor Morris Buell (Mrs. Arnold A. Purple), a prose story first publicly read by the author on June 15, 1910, and printed the next day in *The Penny Press, Middle-town*; and "Lake Pocotopang and Its Moods and Legends" by Mrs. O. Adella Clark, a poem in fourteen pages, printed in pamphlet form by the author in 1925. The latter is cast in the flowing trochaic tetrameters, unrhymed, such as Long-fellow employed in his "Hiawatha"; but the content of the poem is original with Mrs. Clark, and the historical footnotes on the Indians of this region and the early settlers were culled by her from extensive research among the ancient archives of Middlesex County and various historical works.

Oswenee, the beautiful daughter of old Oslo, Mrs. Purple makes the tragic heroine of her story; and Cochicha, the daughter of Chief Terramagus, is the jealous and designing villain. Cochicha so bitterly envies Oswenee for being loved by Amawan, the young warrior, that she places a curse on Oslo's daughter: all whom Oswenee loved must be sacrificed to the evil spirits of the lake. When the braves had departed for their autumn hunt, the curse began its devastation. Oslo's canoe, twenty yards from shore, "commences a series of most astonishing turnings and twistings." The Indians near by, thinking the canoe possessed of a demon, rushed to the shore, only to see the boat swallowed by a whirlpool and the helpless old brave drowned before their eyes. Soon afterward Oswenee's mother died—the last of her kin. The young man, Amawan, whom she loved, still lived; but the sinister Cochicha warned her that he, too, must soon die, unless Oswenee would drown herself as a human sacrifice, to free her lover and future generations of the tribe from death in the waters

of the lake. Oswenee, reconciled to her fate, and eager to save her beloved Amawan, made her way to the cliffs overlooking the Bay. "Standing there on a projecting rock, her eyes raised to heaven, she murmured a last prayer for the lover she had left behind and then, without faltering, she cast herself down into the clear waters of Lake Pocotopang."

In Mrs. Clark's version, however, Na-moe-nee was the sacrificing Indian maiden, daughter of the chief, Taxawana. She was jealously envied "by the base and false Re-chau-na," the great enchantress, because "one there was of noble bearing" who gave to her his love. When Re-chau-na doomed him to be drowned "by the Spirit of the Waters," Na-moe-nee begged that he be spared. But the enchantress replied that Na-moe-nee must drown herself in deepest water, if ever her lover were to be saved and the curse of drowning be forever taken away from all the rest of the tribe. Re-chau-na then lured "the stalwart warrior," Na-moe-nee's lover, to cross the lake with her in a birch canoe. A violent storm suddenly arose and Na-moe-nee, standing on the ledges and believing that otherwise her lover would be lost, cast herself into the lake, but not until she had sung her death-song (which in a note Mrs. Clark states was adapted from an authentic Indian maiden's death-song):

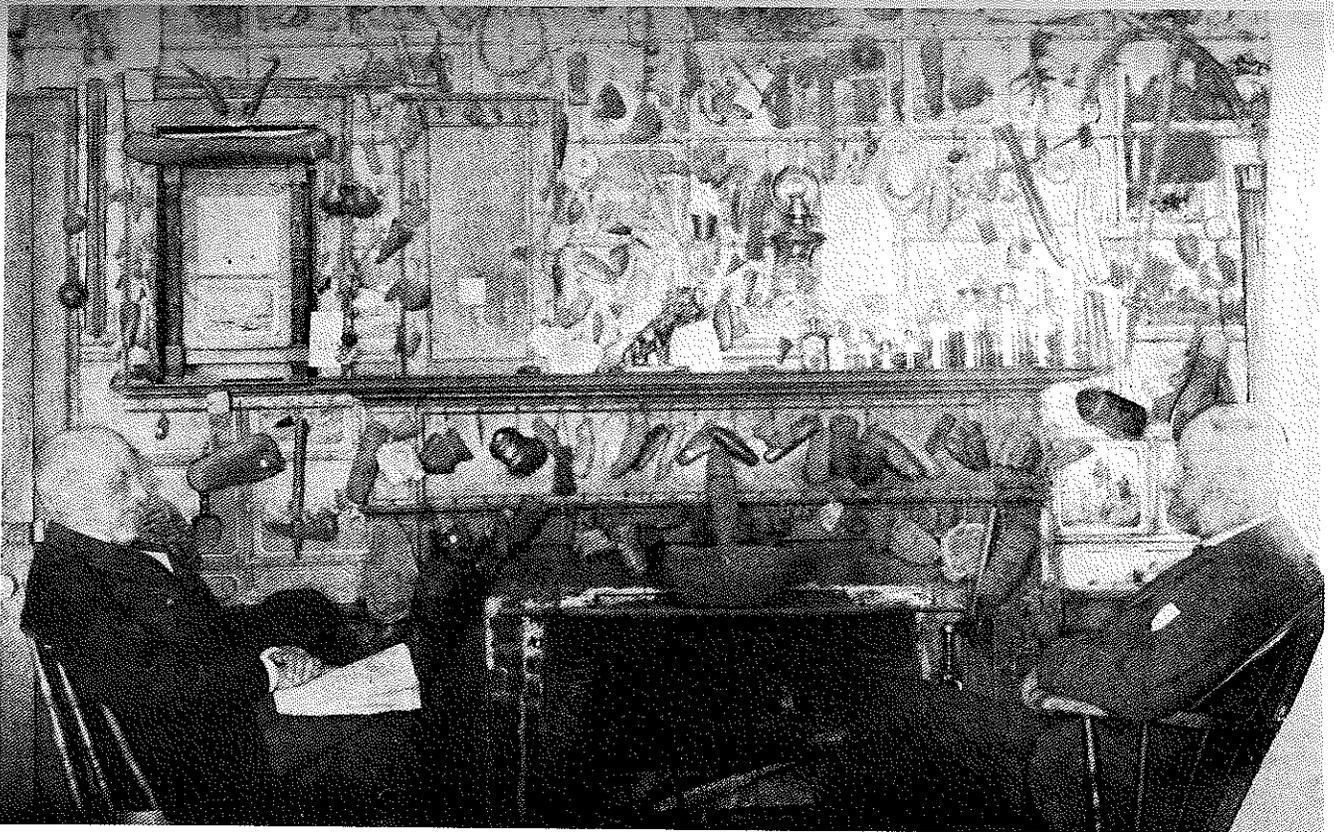
When he is gone, why should I stay?  
Light of my eyes, joy of my soul!  
Why should I stay? Spirit of Death,  
Oh, set me free. Farewell, O Sun!  
Farewell, O Earth! Farewell forever!

When the Indian maiden's life had departed, the storm subsided, the Spirit of the Water was appeased, a spell of safety from drowning was cast upon the lake, and

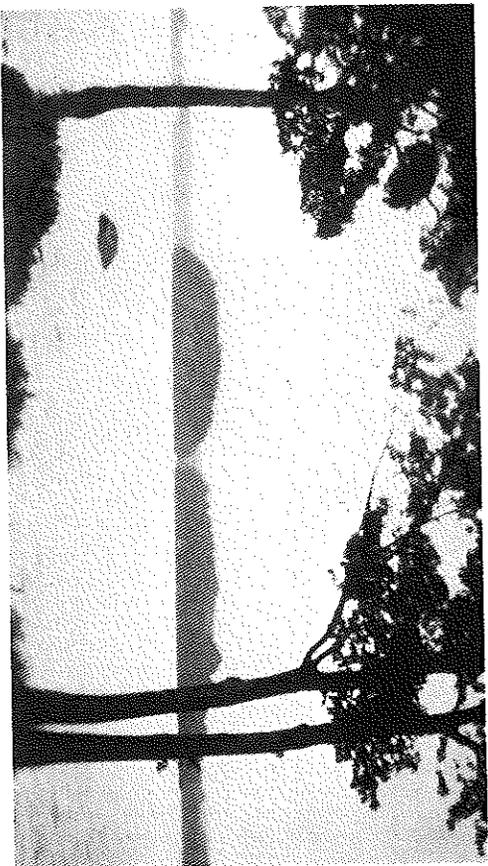
Not one instance of a drowning  
Ever occurred to falsify the story,  
Till one day the spell was broken,  
A young lad was taken from us.

Both of these recent versions of the legend are evidently related to each other. They both ascribe the motive of the Indian maiden's sacrifice to her fear that her lover would die, as was threatened by a jealous rival who boasted supernatural powers. Herein, too, the resulting freedom of the whole tribe from the curse of drowning plays little, if any, part in the real, impelling reason for her sacrifice: it is merely an incidental result, rather than the immediate purpose of the maiden's death. In this mutual similarity the modern versions differ widely from the original legend, long repeated at Chatham firesides, which ascribed supernatural powers solely to the Indians' god. His word alone was authority for the guilt of the whole tribe, the expression of his anger, and the command that the maiden be sacrificed as an atonement. The only point at which these two recent versions coincide with the original legend is in the simple act of the Indian maiden's sacrificing herself by leaping into the lake; and that much of the tale can be duplicated in other Indian myths throughout New England.

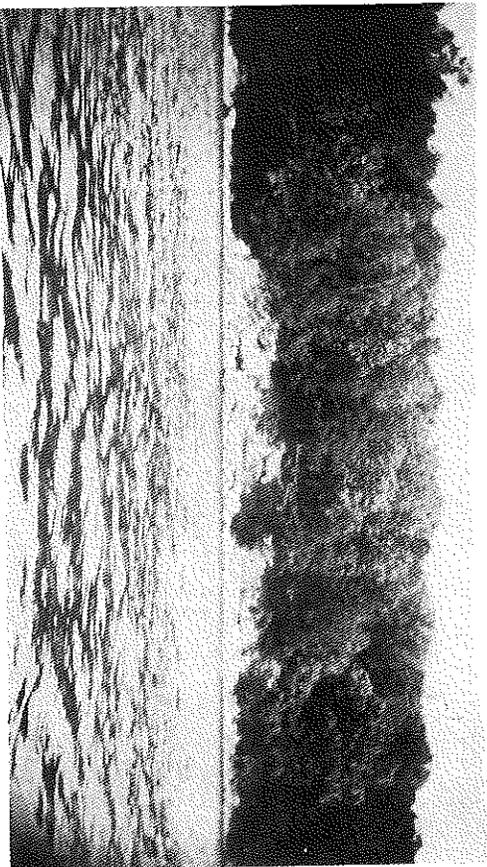
The two modernized forms of the legend, therefore, beautifully as they have been written, may be regarded as pure modern fancy, rather than genuine Indian lore. The original legend, as we have given it, preserves the logic of events and the nobility of the sacrifice; and, in outline at least, is probably not far from what the Indians themselves believed. Washington Irving once said, "I thank no man for enlightening my credulity on points of poetic belief. It is like robbing the statue of Memnon of its music." And all the evidence that we can ask—or, indeed, find—that this was once a cherished and popular tradition among the red men who dwelt on the shores of Pocotopaug, is the repetition of the legend, often made in East Hampton homes by those who still remembered the last of the Wangunks.



POCOTPAUG HOUSE MURAL MUSEUM  
Charles (on right) and Glover Buell at the Fireside



LAKE POCOTOPAUG AND THE TWIN ISLANDS



THE INDIAN MAIDEN'S LEAP  
Markham's Bay, Lake Pocotopaug

*Ye say, they all have passed away,  
That noble race and brave;  
That their light canoes have vanished  
From off the crested waves;  
That, 'mid the forests where they roamed,  
There rings no hunter's shout;  
But their name is on your waters,—  
Ye may not wash it out.*

—From "Indian Names" by Lydia Huntly Sigourney

**T**HE last of the Wangunks? There must have been one last surviving full-blooded Indian of all the tribe that once inhabited what is now the Township of East Hampton. Who was the last of the Wangunks?

The story of the Indian massacre at the place we now call Skinnerville (less than a half mile from the Center) seems to indicate that the white men, once they were firmly settled in this region, were only too anxious to reduce the troublesome Wangunks to one last lone survivor. Instead of a massacre by the Indians, as I have heard some of the older residents call it, this was really a massacre of the Indians. It is true, there was great provocation to the colonists, but their vengeance was appalling. The Wangunks, like most red men, cherished a peculiar weakness—a predilection for such pretty little souvenirs as a human scalp, especially if it be the scalp of a white man. Mrs. Curtis, the daughter of Patrick Derby, one of the first settlers in East Hampton, was authority for the story that her great-aunt was one day strolling down the road, past what was later the site of the Dick Flood Place, as we used to call it. A party of Indians seized her and deftly cut off her scalp, though they did not kill her. She made such a horrible and gory appearance when she at last reached the Center, that a company of her neighbors, on hearing her story, hurried to the spot, where they came upon a circle of frenzied Indians whirling in a wild dance about the scene of the scalping, as though in celebration of the event. The white men, all being armed with guns, attacked them at once and killed nine of the Indians. The scalped lady was taken to Middletown where, with careful nursing, she eventually recovered from the wound. But the Indians, for that little ecstatic indiscretion, had advanced nine points nearer to the last of the Wangunks.

In 1764 there were only thirty or forty Wangunks left. There is a record that one Mary Cuschoy, a full-blooded Wangunk, lived in Chatham as late as 1771. Three years

later, the enumeration of the township showed only two of the tribe living here.<sup>1</sup> The order of a Commission of the Connecticut Legislature in 1785 that the Wangunks be paid in full for all their lands, not yet paid for, ended the national existence of the Wangunk Tribe. But there still remained in town one brave of pure Indian blood. Who was this last of the Wangunks?

With that question on my mind, one clear fall day, I started on a morning's walk in quest of a gigantic balanced rock which, by common report, was standing in a small valley by the side of a stream, deep in the woods on the southern slope of Miller Hill. As I was then ignorant of its exact location, I took a blind man along with me to show the way—Joel W. Smith, whose home, "The Lone Spruce Tree," stood near the foot of Miller Hill on the north.

Joel Smith, in his early twenties, lost his sight, and almost his life, by the discharge of a cannon near the Center during the celebration of a Civil War victory of the Union Army. Now (and this was in 1902) in his late sixties, he could see more than most of the rest of us. He had transmuted his calamity into a blessing to his fellow Bartimei throughout the world. After graduation at the Perkins Institution for the Blind (Boston, Mass.), he served for years on its faculty; founded *The Mentor*, the first magazine for the blind; toured Europe, studying the current methods of education for the blind; helped Sir Francis Campbell to found the Royal Institution for the Blind in London; devised the American Braille type which for some time was taught in more institutions for the blind than any other system; sent Braille printing presses to China to help educate blind orientals in a phonetic Chinese, so easily learned that a host of blind beggars quickly became skilled public readers on the street corners to crowds of passersby. He was the only man in town whose achievements were ever celebrated in *Who's Who in America*.

<sup>1</sup> *Massachusetts Historical Collections*, Vol. X, page 118.

This man Smith could uncannily see in the dark—with his mind's eye. To watch him run for a train, or browse around Boston or New York, all alone, was to convince any sceptic of this. He could see to write: he composed voluminously on his typewriter and made important mechanical improvements which were embodied in a well-known make of typewriter. By using his Braille typewriter he carried on a strictly confidential correspondence with his blind friends—without the help or inspection of any sighted intermediary. He could see well enough to climb almost to the summit of Mont Blanc in Switzerland, farther up than any other blind man had ever reached until later, when the blind Sir Francis Campbell climbed to the summit.

So on the morning of our journey to the balanced rock, I was the blind, he the sighted; and it was not an instance of the blind leading the blind. He could see; and confidently piloted me over the hill, down its farther side, through the rail fence, across an open field and then on a long scramble through the thick trees and heavy underbrush to the exact spot where, in the glacial age, the slowly moving ice had borne a huge monolith from the north and had deposited it in the ravine. We explored its dimensions, its little pedestal and the remnants of an ancient water-power dam near by. We photographed it with Mr. Smith's camera; and meeting a friend in the woods, persuaded him to snap-shot the two of us standing in front of the rock. In the developed print we look like pigmies beside the immensity of the huge boulder.

On our way home the question recurred to me, Who was the last of the Wangunks? When I propounded it, Joel Smith knew the answer:

"It was Jonathan Indian. Like most of his race, he was proud-spirited, but he often fell before his fondness for drink. He used to work intermittently for my Grandfather Smith; would spend a week or two gardening in the field back of our home until he had acquired enough money to go on a few days' drinking debauch. When his money and his run

were all gone, he would return and start work again. He was the last full-blooded Indian in town. His wife was a 'white squaw', and their son Bill Indian married a colored woman. Their descendants, a blend of the three races, are living in town today."

Years later Joe Barton told me this story about Jonathan. One day with his squaw he visited the home of Giles C. Hall on the bend of the road that is now Summit Street. When he asked for some cider, Hall brought up from his cool cellar two cups full, and they looked so delicious to the old redskin that he said: "Me an' m'squaw are one. Me drink both cups. All the same." But the poor squaw looked so disconsolate that Hall descended again to the cider barrel and brought up a third cup for her. All of which confirmed Joel Smith's account of Jonathan's bibulosity.

On our arrival at "The Lone Spruce Tree," Mr. Smith's venerable father, John W. B. Smith, was awaiting us—a wonderful man, then about ninety-five years old (he was born in 1806). Though approaching the century mark, he still tended furnace in winter and his garden in summer, the most flourishing vegetable patch in town; read (without glasses) his Bible and *The Outlook* magazine; remembered clearly the day when the soldier boys left East Hampton for the War of 1812 and recalled old Jonathan Indian's working in the Smith garden or staggering along the road. Once after a night's frost, Jonathan was sent down into a low lot to see if some potatoes had been frozen. When he returned, he reported: "Some of them potatoes frozen hard, and some frozen soft."

Neither the blind man nor his ancient father told me that day the dramatic story of Jonathan's end; but Dr. William Browning and others have since recounted the tale.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. John Richmond served East Hampton and the whole region hereabouts as its one "beloved physician" for nearly

<sup>2</sup> Dr. John Richmond of East Hampton Parish: an Episode of an Old-time Practitioner.

thirty years. Born in Brookfield, Massachusetts, he was introduced to East Hampton in 1792 by Doctor Coleman of Glastonbury. Medical schools were rare in that day, and it was the custom for aspiring young medics to serve a sort of apprenticeship with some practicing physician, studying under him anatomy and therapeutics and the pharmacopia; at the same time visiting his patients along with the doctor to gain a practical clinical experience in the field. Many young men thus gained their medical skill in East Hampton under the guidance of Doctor Richmond, and nearly always he had two or three such students in his home and under his tutelage. The *History of Middlesex County* (Beers) lists the names of twelve of Richmond's medical students on pages 211-212.

What the old doctor lacked and particularly desired was a complete human skeleton with which to demonstrate to his students the fine points of anatomy. One day in the year 1818, the thought flashed upon him, "What a fine skeleton Jonathan Indian would make!" Not long afterward he decided to explore the possibilities of that brilliant idea. Knowing Jonathan's inordinate fondness for rum, the doctor approached him on his weak side and made him an alluring business proposition. Doctor Richmond agreed to furnish Jonathan a pint of rum every month, so long as he lived, providing Jonathan would bequeath to the doctor the possession of his body after death for medical purposes.

Jonathan jumped at the bargain. A pint of rum every month! What cared he for his carcass after death? That final event might be decades away from now. The deal was made at once and ratified by a contract, signed by both parties and duly witnessed. To the periodic delight of Jonathan, the doctor was faithful in keeping his part of the agreement. He was meticulous, too, in having Jonathan sign a receipt for every pint of rum delivered to him. The grim race between rum and death for the last of the Wangunks continued for over a year. At last, in 1819, Jonathan went the way of all flesh and was gathered to his aboriginal forefathers.

There has never been the slightest suggestion that his death was in any way accelerated by the honorable practitioner, though at the hands of a less scrupulous medico it might have been possible. Probably King Alcohol took his usual toll from so devoted a subject. But undoubtedly the doctor was as jubilant as an insurance treasurer when his alcoholic annuities, on the monthly instalment plan, finally ceased and determined. The corporeal principal sum was about to become his own. At once he presented his claim to the family for Jonathan's body. They were unutterably shocked to learn that the doctor proposed to carve up their late lamented grandfather. But when the contract was produced, duly signed and witnessed, together with Jonathan's receipts, and when further he threatened to "have the law on them," they sadly relented and Doctor Richmond bore the cadaver at once to Terranangus Island in the center of the lake.

There for three days he fondly dissected the Indian before his students, the while lecturing to them on the finer points of anatomy, as each organ or muscle or bone came to light under his skillful knife. The bones of the frame which remained they boiled down in kettles, macerated and then wired them together into a complete skeleton. To weather the bones, the doctor placed it in his front yard on what is now known as Lake View Street. There all passersby could view the osseous remains of their late fellow-townsmen and reflect on the moral lessons of the scene. Children in that region were so horrified by the spectacle that, rather than pass by the doctor's yard, they would take the long way around in going to and from school by way of Main Street. In due time, to the relief of his neighbors, the doctor brought poor Jonathan indoors—to be the skeleton in his closet and the model for his little class in anatomy.

But this is not all of the story. Within two years of Jonathan's death, his dissector, Doctor Richmond, died; not from alcoholic intemperance, but from high blood pressure, plus an afternoon of undue excitement, plus a horse-

back ride through a midnight blizzard. On that last wintry afternoon of his life, a town meeting was held, during which he indulged in an exciting debate that taxed his powers to the limit. And this was the bone of contention:

In 1817 Joel W. McKee, one of Bishop Francis Asbury's Methodist itinerants, brought the then unpopular Methodist doctrine into East Hampton. From Eastbury (now East Glastonbury) he travelled southward to East Hampton over Mott Hill, holding a prayer-meeting in every house that he passed.<sup>3</sup> Out of the resulting Methodist class-meeting there developed a body of regular worshippers to whom McKee was assigned by the Methodist Conference to minister. Seeking a place for worship, they petitioned the Town Meeting to grant them the use of the schoolhouse for Sunday services. Doctor Richmond bitterly opposed this in the meeting, and was so vehement that the motion to grant the petition was defeated and the Methodists were forced to find some other place for their devotions.

That night, in answer to a summons to the birth of a baby, the doctor rode horseback, facing a furious December blizzard and plunging through the deep snow up Miller Hill and then eastward beyond the old covered Cornstock Bridge to the home of the expectant mother. When the sun rose on the snow-bound hills the next morning (December 16, 1821), mother and babe and the doctor lay dead in that house. The thwarted Methodists, of course, were quick to point out the moral of divine retribution; and Jonathan Indian's family were at once eased of their burden of vengeance for their ancestor's lack of a decent burial. But most of the townspeople mourned the loss of their beloved, albeit eccentric, physician.

Dr. Richard Mayo Smith succeeded Richmond as the town physician, the next spring, but he died just before Christmas

<sup>3</sup> In those days there were many inhabited houses on Mott Hill, in testimony of which there are still to be traced many empty cellars in the fields and woods of that region. It is said that at one time a post office stood at the four corners on the summit of the hill. The foundations of the old schoolhouse are still to be seen.

of that year; and Dr. Charles Smith of North Stonington took his place in the spring of 1823. Three years later, Dr. Francis G. Edgerton settled as a regular practitioner in East Hampton and took over the instruments and other professional effects of Doctor Richmond, including the skeleton of Jonathan Indian. For forty-three years he practiced faithfully in the town and died in 1870

When Dr. Albert Field, his successor, came to East Hampton with his young bride, they lived for a while with Doctor Edgerton's widow. One rainy day, Mrs. Edgerton said to Mrs. Field:

"It must be very stupid for you here this dismal day. Why don't you go up to the attic and rummage around among the old trunks there? You'll find some dresses of nearly a hundred years ago and many other antiques that will amuse you."

After Mrs. Field had gone through two trunks, she opened a third; and on seeing its gruesome contents, she gave a scream of horror. Old Lady Edgerton lumbered up the stairs, shouting: "Whatever is the matter, my dear?" "Oh, there has been a murder!" was the reply; "I've found some human bones in one of the trunks." Mrs. Edgerton gave a laugh and comforted her at once: "O fiddlesticks! that's only the skeleton of old Jonathan Indian, which Doctor Edgerton inherited from Doctor Richmond. He wasn't murdered, and he's quite harmless!"

The last I ever heard of that last Easthamptonian Wanguk was the report that his skeleton had been sold to, and displayed by, a museum on Fourteenth Street in New York City. Could it have been Huber's, that notorious dime museum which flourished in the nineteenth century and, in its chamber of physiological horrors, pandered to the morbid and the curious? Years after our first walk to Balanced Rock, I made assiduous efforts to trace the present habitat of Jonathan's skeleton; but I could find neither hide nor hair—nor tibia nor femur—of the Last of the Wanguks. *Sic transit gloria Wangukorum!*

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