

**REPORT OF THE ABORIGINAL
NAMES AND GEOGRAPHICAL
TERMINOLOGY OF THE STATE OF
NEW YORK. PART I. - VALLEY OF
THE HUDSON**

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Report of the aboriginal names and geographical terminology of the state of New York. Part I. -
Valley of the Hudson by Henry R. Schoolcraft

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HENRY R. SCHOOLCRAFT

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MR. SCHOOLCRAFT'S REPORT

ON

THE ABORIGINAL NAMES

AND

GEOGRAPHICAL TERMINOLOGY

OF THE

STATE OF NEW YORK.

PART I.—VALLEY OF THE HUDSON.

CIRCULAR OF THE COMMITTEE.

ROOMS OF THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, }
University of New York. }

Sir:

The undersigned, having been appointed a committee, to prepare a Map of the State, with all the original Indian names, solicit information on this head. It is believed that sectional maps, made by the early surveyors, exist among family papers, and would be commented, as well as, in some instances, manuscript journals and letters. Another source of information, is to be found in the names of creeks, rivers, and other boundary marks, in early deeds. Tradition, in townships and neighborhoods, is a third, and still fruitful source of preserving these names, the meaning of which, may sometimes be yet obtained, from the natives, or from interpreters.

Every year carries to the grave, some of those pioneers and early settlers, who are the best qualified to give the desired information, and thus narrows the circle of tradition, at its highest source. This Society furnishes a safe and eligible repository for all such documents, whether presented, or deposited. It is an object of deep interest, with its members, to collect and preserve, the sonorous and appropriate Indian terminology of the State. The committee will make due acknowledgments, in their final report, for all aid in this species of research.

Communications may be made to either of the undersigned, or under cover, to GEORGE FOLSON, Esq., the Domestic Corresponding Secretary.

HENRY R. SCHOOLCRAFT, }
C. FENNO HOFFMAN, }
S. VERPLANCK, }
WILLIAM L. STONE, }
B. F. BUTLER, }
EDWARD ROBINSON, }
WM. W. CAMPBELL, }
Committee.

ABORIGINAL NAMES, &c.

§ ANCIENT INDIAN STOCKS OF NORTH AMERICA, EAST OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER.—FROM TRADITION.

IN speaking of the Ancient Tribes, who inhabited the borders of the Atlantic, Philologists have found a manifest want of terms of an appropriate-generic character, and yet sufficiently distinctive, to denote the original races, or mother-stocks, who have peopled the country. Tradition has preserved but a few names, of this character, relative to the great unknown period of their early chronology. Our absolute knowledge of the entire race, does not penetrate farther back than 1492; and it was a century later, before the Atlantic coasts of North America began to be settled. At this era, the native population was divided into an almost infinite number of tribes, each of whom claimed some of the characteristics of nationality, but none of whom had preserved any exact and clear traditions of their origin, history or affiliation.

The course of the migration of barbaric tribes, on this continent, appears to have resembled that, which history denotes to have prevailed on the Asiatic continent, and

during the early epochs of Europe. One type or race of adventurous or predatory tribes, succeeded another, and held possession for a time, till it was pushed away, or overthrown by a stronger or fiercer tribe. Of these successive developments of a wandering people, in North America, theory and conjecture, have left us an ample field for their exercise, but nearly all that we can say, with historic truth, of the early state of our aborigines, is, that the last bands, in point of time, were numerically greater or stronger, than their predecessors in the forest, since they conquered them, and kept possession of the country. When the continent itself was first occupied, where the impulse of population began its movement, and how it proceeded, in the career of conquest and the division of nations and languages, we cannot pretend, with any certainty, to say. The first voyagers and discoverers, found all the coast inhabited, but not densely occupied. The people, seen at various places, resembled each other very much, in looks, color, habits and manners. They were nomades and hunters, roved vast tracts, with bow and arrow, claimed to be independent of each other, and spoke diverse languages. The number of the tribes and nations, appeared to be very great.

It was evident, however, as soon as enquiry began to be properly directed to the subject, that, while the territory of North America was overspread with a multiplicity of tribes and bands, each bearing a separate name, and claiming separate sovereignty, there were but a few generic stocks. And that the diversity noticed by Europeans, and insisted on by the aborigines themselves, had arisen, chiefly, from the progress and development of languages, among rude and unlettered tribes. Distinct from this diversity of language, they might have all been called ONE PEOPLE.

When we dismiss this era of the colonization of our coast, and push back the inquiry on the simple strength of aboriginal tradition, concerning the generic stocks, and the ancient state of things among them, it is remarkable how little we have, which is at all entitled to attention. Even the Aztecs, who had attained a state of semi-civilization,

in the valley of Mexico, and had a system of pictorial inscription superior to the northern tribes, are not able to trace their history beyond the year of our Lord, 1000. And much of the certainty of this computation arises from the observation of an eclipse during the reign of one of their emperors, which has enabled astronomers, to verify the period.

But the tribes situated *north* of the Gulf of Mexico, as a general limit, and *east* of the Mississippi, while they also used, to some extent, a pictorial and symbolic method of expressing ideas on strips of bark and other substances, had, actually, no signs whatever to mark their chronology, and hardly a trace of astronomical knowledge, beyond the counting of the phases of the moon, and the noting of the summer and winter solstices. The latter constituted the completion of their year, and was the term found to be in universal use, for computing age. They had no history, no chronology, no astronomy, no arts, no letters—nothing, in fine, by which they could connect themselves with the other races of the human family in Europe, Asia, or Africa. With the exception of the Aztec picture writings, there was not even a tradition of such connexion. Most of the tribes north of the latitude of the Gulf of Mexico, believed themselves to have come out of the ground, by an almighty fiat, which they concealed under various allegories; and to have no foreign, or derivative origin.

Where there is so much thick darkness, it is gratifying to find even a little light breaking it. In contemplating their traditions, we find two or three names of races, which we may regard as occupying the foreground of our Indian history. Tradition asserts, that at an ancient period, there was a powerful nation living in the southern spurs of the great mountain range, which still bears their name, who were called, by early writers, APPALACHITES. They spread over the vallies and rivers having their issue in the Mexican Gulf, where some of their descendants have remained, under various names, constituting the Indians of the Floridian type, and others migrated south into the circle of the