

**THE ALGONQUIAN TERMS
PATAWOMEKE
(POTOMAC) AND
MASSAWOMEKE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649328918

The Algonquian Terms Patawomeke (Potomac) and Massawomeke by William Wallace Tooker

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WILLIAM WALLACE TOOKER

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MASSAWOMEKE

With Historical and Ethnological Notes

BY
WILLIAM WALLACE TOOKER



NEW YORK
FRANCIS P. HARPER
1901

N.A. Ling. T 617a
Receipt Dec. 9, 1901

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THE ALGONQUIAN TERMS PAT
AWOMEKE AND MASSAWOM-
EKE.*

THE significations attrib-
uted to many of the early
Algonquian names of
places or peoples which have been
retained in use from the first plant-
ing of the colonies until to-day, are
in most instances totally at variance

*This paper was contributed to *The American Anthropologist*, for April, 1894, vol. vii, pp. 174-185, a quarterly published by the Anthropological Society of Washington, D. C.

with the localities or subjects to which the names were originally applied by those who spoke the language. This anomalous state of affairs is due to the fact that the translator endeavored to find an etymology suitable to the present topographical features without trying to discover whether or not the name rightfully belonged there. Some are random conjectures, without a particle of traditional, historical, or etymological foundation; others are based on hypothetical deductions derived from foreign radicals. These last two are as persistent as any, in defiance of their evidently false analysis, and

will continue to be quoted in historical works and essays until their true etymologies have been given and generally accepted.

Dr. J. Hammond Trumbull* has shown that Indian geographical names (and it will apply to others not geographical), after their adoption by the English, Dutch, and German colonists, became unmeaning sounds or mere vocal designations, their primary significations being entirely obliterated by their transfer to an alien tongue. A mountain, for instance, takes the name of a lake; a tract of land, that of a hill; a swamp, the per-

*Indian Names in Connecticut.

sonal name of an Indian residing there; a spring of water, that of a forest; a river, that of a people, or *vice versa*. The Indian language tolerated no such mere marks; every name was descriptive of the spot or subject to which it was applied, and thus, to an Indian understanding its identity, was beyond question.

Some of these terms in local speech of the whites have for various reasons become abbreviated by the loss of some constituent. These are all problems of the most intricate description, and their interpretation will always remain in doubt in case the original cluster

word has been lost or forgotten. Therefore it is absolutely essential for the proper resolution of synthesis by analysis of Indian nomenclature that the student should have at his disposal, for the purposes of comparison with various cognate dialects, the earliest utterances of the names as recorded by those who heard them spoken, together with the historical facts relating to the same which have been preserved.

The interest in Indian nomenclature increases every year. The true meanings of the terms are desired by the historian and by everyone interested in the various