

THE LEGEND OF THE SPIRIT KEEPERS

AS TOLD BY
SEGACYTEU-SET ABLAZE

*Why We Are
Pennacook Lodge*

THE LEGEND OF THE SPIRIT KEEPERS



In the lands that make our council there lived a group of Abenaki, a people of the dawn, known as the Pennacook. Their range once extended from the sacred top of Agiocochook, now known as Mt. Washington, and all lands southward to the Saughus to the Blue Hills and on to the Ponkapoag. They were a people bound by language and custom. For a thousand generations these children of the forest fished and hunted, defended and protected, explored and discovered, woke and slept, lived and died beneath the shining stars of heaven. In these lands where nature could prove least forgiving, a common spirit of the people bound the Pennacooks together through any challenge.

To give thanks for the bountiful gifts latent in nature's depths, the people prayed and gave thanks to God. They created great stone monuments to connect themselves though the spirit keepers of the land. From these great testaments to the powers of the world the Pennacook's sought the protection from the great spirit and banished the dark that would do the people harm.

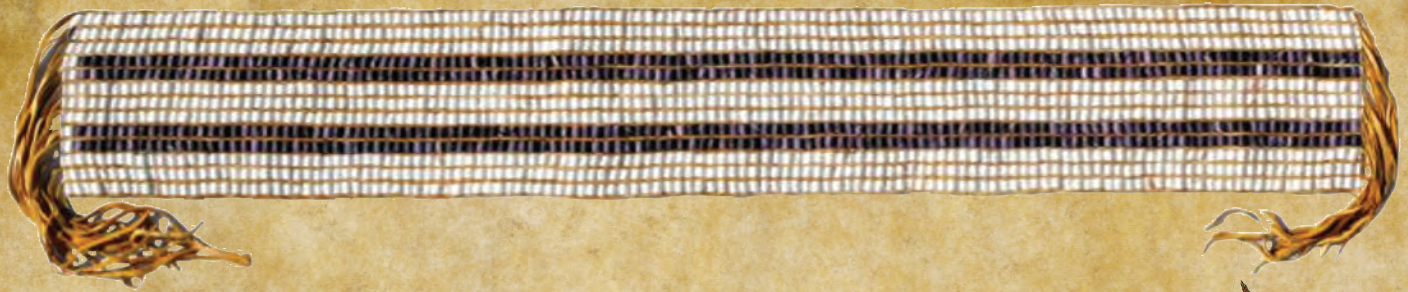
From the water-flushed heights of Pawtucket Falls, the Sachems of the Pennacook's sat to lead in inspired governance from among the people. Upon a throne adorned of beaver skin, turtle shells and pheasant quills, stood protected with the tomahawk, hearing the cry of loon and collecting the sustenance of the cod and lobster sat the powerful Passaconway, the child of the bear. He was a spirit keeper, a powerful Bashaba- a chief of chiefs, born with medicine of the earth in his veins. He could control the very essence of nature, throwing lightning among his enemies and turning dry leaves green again.

Joyously content, the Pennacook's lived for centuries upon the banks of the Merrimack and the Concord and along the New Hampshire and Massachusetts seacoast, undisturbed by foreign neighbor. But upon the waves of the great sea came a shadow that would plunge deep within the heart of the people. The invaders were coming.

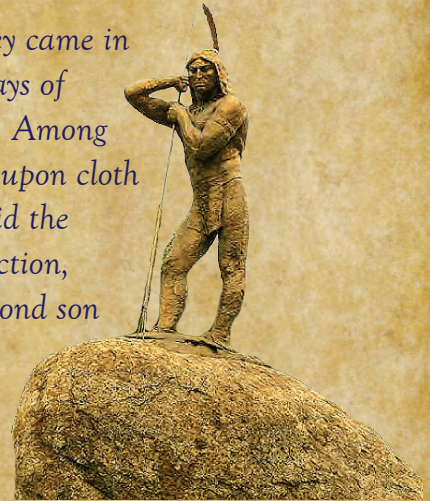
At first they came from the north, Acadia, bearing the gifts of peaceful friends. Trade with them was good but a plague swept unseen and unheard from village to village. Voices, once reaching from each wigwam with abounding laughter fell silent, muted by the eerie cry of silence. Entire villages ceased to exist and the number of the Pennacook that walked the earth slipped eight fold.



Passaconway-Great Bashaba



Then came the Puritans, seeking to end the ways the people. They came in droves, calling to abandon the old and urge conversion to the English ways of life. Passaconaway saw futility in quarrel and sought to coexist in peace. Among his fellow chieftains to the south he promoted peace but his message fell upon cloth ears and hardend hearts. The followers of Metacomet rose and fell, as did the Pequot, Mohegan's, Wampanoag's and Narragansett. Seeing this destruction, death, starvation, Passaconaway abdicated his position declaring his second son Wannalancit to succeed him.



Wannalancit promised to pursuit the peace of his father. However the English compelled no peace and arrested Wannalancit and two hundred Pennacook. They were treacherously imprisoned, left destitute on an island in Boston Harbor. Passaconaway returned to negotiate the release of his son. But, he only found his boy's freedom after the starvation and death of most of the Pennacook prisoners and the sale of many to slavery in Jamacia. Wannalancit returned to the Merrimack but feeling the thrust presented by the English into his native lands the Sachem made a choice. Knowing his father's wish to not engage in conflict with those who opposed him with force, he dismantled his throne at Pawtucket falls and led his people northward to French Acadia.



However, as many as one hundred souls were left behind. At the site most sacred to his people, in the north woods, a land where cove meets cliff and the cry of the loon can be heard abounding from the water was Winnecowet the land of broken rock and place of good pines. It was a mysterious place that the Pennacook's connected to things of the spirit. There Wannalancit gathered those among the Pennacook who best knew the trails and secrets of the land. Beneath a ripe October moon he instructed them to "Keep the Spirit Alive". Upon this group he dubbed the title, Spirit Keepers and placed them under the responsibility of a young but bold warrior known as Swausen.

Known among the Pennacooks for being fair and kind but not alien to mischief, Swausen led the Spirit Keepers in the defense of the Winnecowet, a triangle shaped region from the pond of the wild geese to shores of the Suncook to the lofty heights of Parker Mountain. The last of free living Pennacook's held this land through trial and tribulation. Evil abounds constantly



in the world in which we live in and over time the Spirit Keepers grew silent, until even the mighty Swausen's name was that of mere myth whispered among the trees and branches.

Where they went is source of greater speculation and myth. Some claim that they did not die but still live carried through the standing stones, waiting patiently for those who understand the appraisal and immense powers of the land and the adventures they present to the young and the young at heart. Some affirm they can still hear faintly the old voices and are given aid and comfort by their counsel.

Passaconway himself is said to have lived over 100 years. In his great age he sought to rededicate himself to the spirits guidance. Travelling from village to village, he sought the spirits warmth. Some say he died in Maine and was buried in a sacred cave in Mt. Agamenticus. Others are said to have witnessed the Bashaba's crossing. One moonlit night the spirit found Passaconaway and took him aloft upon a sled pulled by the white wolves to the peak of Agiocochook. There he burst into flame and was carried up to the heavens to live with the Great Spirit where he continued to watch over his people from heaven and protect the spirit of the land.



We who love the woods of the Winnecowet understand the spirit of adventure to be found in these lands. We who eagerly search for its lost trails and secrets, we who promote its interests, name our Lodge Pennacook. We do so in a lasting memory of the great people who first lived and understood the silent beauty of these lands. We humbly regard ourselves as the Spirit Keepers of the Spirit Of Adventure. We to them succeeding pick up the torch to set ablaze within our hearts a great endeavor to keep the spirit alive until the wolf comes to call. It begins again with us.

