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## Introduction

In this way our settlements will gradually circumscribe and approach the Indians, and they will in time either incorporate with us as citizens of the United States, or remove beyond the Mississippi. *The former is certainly the termination of their history most happy for themselves.*

These words, excerpted from a longer but equally candid description of federal Indian policy, were from the pen of a man widely viewed as a humanitarian. In this context, then, they might seem revelatory, although in fact, they are not. President Thomas Jefferson was simply stating what, if it had not been official policy, seemed assuredly to be design, ever since the *Mayflower* bumped its prow against that now-famous rock. According to Jefferson, extending settlements into Indian homelands would cause “the decrease of game rendering their subsistence of hunting insufficient,” which in turn would “draw them to agriculture,” and then spinning and weaving, tasks better pursued indoors. “When they withdraw themselves to the culture of a small piece of land,” the president continued, “they will perceive how useless to them are their extensive forests, and will be willing to pare them off from time to time in exchange for necessaries for their farms and families.”<sup>1</sup>

Aided by warfare, disease, famine, and racism, the strategy that Jefferson so well articulated, one that had been tested and refined in southern New England decades earlier, was in most ways realized. By the mid-eighteenth century, Indian communities throughout much of that region were in sharp decline, having retreated into praying towns or other enclaves separated from, but economically and sometimes socially intertwined with, surrounding colonists. Most found themselves engaged in a holding action, determined to secure their identities, a way of life, and what little remained of their lands.

The mission to the American Indians initiated by Old World Moravians, who

were rebounding from their own experiences with adversity, was following a more favorable trajectory, having just taken its very first steps. The Thirty Years' War had forced members of the fifteenth-century *Unitas Fratrum*, or Church of the Brethren, whose Protestant members mostly lived in Moravia and Bohemia, underground or into exile. Many fled to Poland, while others sought refuge in Saxony on the lands of Nicolaus Ludwig, Graf von Zinzendorf. It was from there that he would found the *Herrnhuter Brudergemeinde* (Community of Brethren at Herrnhut) and, in 1727, lead the spiritual renewal of the Moravian Church, and it was from Herrnhut that the ecumenical missionary movement in Europe and into the Americas was launched. Thus begins our story.

The Indians living near New Milford, Connecticut, early in the eighteenth century had probably anticipated a move farther up the Housatonic River. Over the previous several decades, their landholdings had been sold or otherwise lost to encroaching and ever more numerous colonists.<sup>2</sup> Wood to warm their homes, fields in which to plant their corn, and game to cook in their kettles had become increasingly scarce, and there was no reason to believe that things would get better. Taking themselves and their belongings somewhere else made perfect sense. So it was that in 1736, the Connecticut General Assembly reported that the Indians had left what they called Weantinock in favor of “a bow on the west side” of the river, “upon a piece of plain land there, and [they] have a desire to continue at said place.”<sup>3</sup> This place, which sat in the valley between where the modern Macedonia Brook and Tenmile River flow into the Housatonic, was Pachgatgoch, also known as Schaghticoke, signifying “the confluence of two streams” in two of the local native languages.<sup>4</sup>

Indians in southern New England had been on the move for some time, most noticeably since the fury and brutality of King Philip's War (1675–76) and the deep and widespread devastation to people and towns it had wrought.<sup>5</sup> Yet scholars have produced conflicting assessments of the war's impact on native people. Some maintain that the Indians, reduced to “demoralized and dispirited remnants,” “sank deeper into subjection and debauchery” or simply fled the scene, while others cite their “adaptability and persistence,” their ability to redefine their communities, and their forging of “regional ethnic networks.”<sup>6</sup> Missing from this picture, with just a handful of exceptions, are thorough and

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thoughtful studies of the war's survivors that would allow such assessments to be better examined.<sup>7</sup>

Also on the move were Protestant missionaries, who, beginning early in the seventeenth century, had come to New England with the inalterable goal of “reduc[ing]” the Indians from savagery to “civility.”<sup>8</sup> A century later, they were preaching from Indian churches and in dozens of praying towns and reservations throughout the region, sometimes side by side with native clerics they had cultivated. In the remoteness of western Connecticut, however, there were no missions. Indian people were ministered to, if at all, on the run, mostly by ecclesiastically hard-nosed Presbyterians planted in towns and farming villages in the more populated southern reaches of the Housatonic Valley. Holding firm to their faith and flocks, it is doubtful that these groups envisioned the arrival of pious interlopers of a different stripe. But they did come, from another place in the Old World, and with their own way of doing things.

**The Setting**

The Housatonic River flows 150 miles from its multiple sources in southwestern Massachusetts, first south and then southeast, to Long Island Sound. In northwestern Connecticut, the gradient increases and the river gathers steam, rushing through narrow limestone and granite-lined gorges, through rapids and over cascades, broken by long, broad, slower-moving stretches. Of great importance to the lives of the Indian people of Pachgatgoch were the falls at Bulls Bridge, which they called Sasaksuk; the “Great Falls” below New Milford; and the rich floodplains bordering the river from Kent south to Bulls Bridge.<sup>9</sup> Today, as in the past, the Housatonic watershed is marked by a great diversity of plants and animals, a factor that was of no little importance to its native inhabitants.

Scattered up and down this river valley were the homes and farmsteads of Indian people, about whom, until the end of the seventeenth century, little is known, with existing information sketchy and often unreliable.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, it is safe to assume that the way of life there had been similar to that of natives elsewhere in southern New England and in southeastern New York.<sup>11</sup> The picture that emerges after 1700, however, is framed by the familiar triad of warfare, nearly a century's worth in coastal and eastern New England; the

calamitous effects of epidemic disease; and the colonial juggernaut, colored by the cold language found in the documentation of land loss.

Attempts to locate and identify the Indian people of western Connecticut, along with those adjacent in New York, in conformance with presumptive rules of social theory and political organization have been met with only limited success. Much the same can be said about efforts to generate a regional archaeological framework, one buttressed by high-resolution data and against which systems of adaptation and change could be discerned and models tested. In each case, a large part of the problem is the general lack of evidence. The primary sources on the region's history are scattered and spotty, and the secondary literature is weak and of questionable worth. Archaeological data are incomplete, tentative, or unreported. And there remains the tyranny of the ethnographic record, in which Indians have been shoehorned into ill-fitting and unrealistic sociopolitical units such as "bands," "tribes," and "confederacies."<sup>12</sup> Most discouraging is the near absence of a renewed, if not refocused, scholarly interest in the region and its native people.

Although King Philip's War forever altered the face of much of native New England, leaving those who escaped its ruin to grapple with an unpromising future, it was not the root cause of the shift in ground in the Housatonic Valley; indeed, there is little to connect Indian people there to the conflict. The clashes that did occur were over lands claimed by Connecticut and coveted by New York, whose governors saw the war first in terms of opportunity; other conflicts were largely local squabbles, frequently manufactured, about what Indians might do.<sup>13</sup> Certainly the Indians at Weantinock wanted no part of it, taking the noteworthy step in September 1675 of offering the colony assurances of their friendship.<sup>14</sup> Thus, change that is evident in the form and function of native societies at the turn of the century is more readily explained by the early and unremitting loss of population to the ravages of European-introduced disease and the rapid and aggressive pace of settlement, which exerted pressure on Indians to adapt to a radically different environment—for them, the very transformation of self.

With the move of the Weantinock Indians to Pachgatgoch in 1736, only a handful of what could be described as consolidated Indian communities were to be found in the Housatonic Valley. There was Wechquadrach in the town of

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Sharon, close-by Indian Pond on the New York–Connecticut border, and several hamlets in the vicinity of Milford and Long Island Sound, one of which was called Turkey Hill.<sup>15</sup> Potatuck, which rivaled Pachgatgoch in population, was adjacent to the river in the town of Southbury. Otherwise, individual native families erected their dwellings in the valley wherever they could. Over the hill in New York Colony, just south of Pine Plains, was Shekomeko, and north across the border in Massachusetts, the praying town of Stockbridge, which was established at the same time as Pachgatgoch. To the west of Stockbridge was the enigmatic Westenhook. To this mix can be added references to Indians in the Salisbury, Connecticut, area; in the Hudson Highlands; and to a couple of poorly known settlements in Dutchess County, closer to the Hudson River.

Other, more distant native communities with which Pachgatgoch had some degree of interaction included Kaunaumek, southeast of Albany, and another at Farmington, Connecticut. Finally, across the Hudson, a short distance up the Catskill Creek, was a hamlet of Indians at Freehold. This is the way it was when, in August 1740, Christian Heinrich Rauch made his way up the height of land separating the Hudson and Housatonic Valleys and to the Indians at Shekomeko.

**Moravians, Indians, and the Colonies**

Rauch, a twenty-two-year-old laborer in the Moravian Church, had landed in New York City from London via Heerendyk, Holland, in mid-July 1740. Five years earlier, a small contingent of his brethren had undertaken the church's first mission effort in the colonies on the Ogeechee River of coastal Georgia.<sup>16</sup> Scarcely off the ground, it fell victim to the ravages of dysentery and other maladies, internal disputes, and also to the Moravians' pacifistic inclinations, which rendered them a liability to a colony under threat of invasion by the Spanish in adjacent Florida. Their plans to teach and preach to the local Creek Indians went nowhere, and talk of going to the Cherokees farther inland remained just that. There would be no mission to the Indians here, at least for the moment.<sup>17</sup>

Rauch had been sent by the bishops at Marienborn, Hessen, perhaps at the urging of David Nitschmann, and also Augustus Spangenberg, who later would head the North American church, to minister to the Indians in New York Colony, about whom Rauch seemed entirely uninformed.<sup>18</sup> He had no idea which Indians he was to contact or where they might be living, or even whether there

would be interest in hearing a missionary's message if he managed to find any. In his wanderings around New York City, Rauch encountered two Mahicans, Shabash and Tschoop.<sup>19</sup> Somehow he persuaded these natives, who described themselves, it was said, as being from a very wicked people, to invite him to their village in the Hudson Valley. They assured him that he would be met at Martinus Hoffman's place near Red Hook.<sup>20</sup> But when Rauch knocked at his door, Hoffman told him the Indians had left word that they had gone hunting, and he pointed the way to Stissing Mountain and the home of Johannes Rau, on the eastern edge of Dutchess County.<sup>21</sup> Rauch set out alone toward the highlands.

Johannes Rau was one of the hundreds of Palatine Germans who had flooded into the region thirty years earlier.<sup>22</sup> As Rauch laid out his plans to him, Rau offered up his own sentiments, suggesting that conditions among the natives were such that they were quite beyond salvation. But Rauch was not to be deterred. His initial contacts with the Indians, with whom he lived, as well as with a few of their German and also Dutch neighbors, who reportedly were anxious to hear the word of God, were mostly positive. However, meddling by other colonists, who threatened Rauch with all sorts of harm, including lynching, and whose interests did not lie with seeing the Indians become Christians, much less receive wise counsel from someone who was, helped foster from within Shekomeko a belligerent opposition to his presence.<sup>23</sup> Withdrawing to the relative security of Rau's home, which for nearly two years he would use as a base, Rauch spent his days with the Indians, just a short walk away, and his evenings tutoring his host's children in exchange for room and board.<sup>24</sup>

Nothing is known about Shekomeko in the time before Rauch's arrival. Although the bulk of its inhabitants were identified as Mahicans, this was a mixed Indian community formed also of Esopus (Sopus) and Highland Indians, Wompanoos, Minisinks, and possibly others.<sup>25</sup> A prized, detailed sketch of the place, drawn by the Moravian John Hagen in 1745, survives (fig. 1).<sup>26</sup> The only other information we possess about the community concerns a suggestion of Shekomeko's political relationship to other Mahican or Housatonic communities, and the existence of a few kinship ties, mostly to Indians at Stockbridge and to several native families living in the vicinity of or closer to the Hudson River.

In the meantime, its attempt to establish an Indian mission in Georgia abandoned, the church turned its attention to the north and Pennsylvania. A number of the displaced Moravians found temporary employment erecting a building at Nazareth, a tract that had been purchased by the evangelist George Whitefield for a "Negro school." Shortly thereafter, Bishop David Nitschmann arrived from Europe with orders to establish a Moravian community in the area.<sup>27</sup> In spring 1741 a log house was raised on land where the Monocacy Creek flows into the Lehigh, and with a founding population of seventeen brethren, Bethlehem was born. These numbers grew when a party of Moravians from Herrnhut, Saxony, the home of the mother church, landed the following October. Among them was Nicolaus Ludwig, Graf von Zinzendorf, a bishop of the *Unitas Fratrum* and the head of the renewed church. He would not only inaugurate the community but bestow its name. Also in this company was a lesser soul, one Gottlob Büttner, an unmarried brother from Silesia.

Back in Shekomeko, Rauch's persistence and fervor had yielded results. Two Wompanoos and a Mahican in Shekomeko had responded to his teachings and expressed a desire to be baptized.<sup>28</sup> But Rauch was not ordained, which made it impossible for him to administer the sacrament. As chance would have it, however, Zinzendorf had just then ordered Büttner to travel to Shekomeko, where he arrived on New Year's Day 1742. Wanting in part to know more about this distant mission, and perhaps hoping to use the opportunity to demonstrate his church's vitality, Zinzendorf instructed Büttner to have Rauch travel to Oley, Pennsylvania, where an all-Protestant synod had been scheduled. He was to make sure that Rauch brought an Indian with him, and to remain at Shekomeko if he was unable to find someone trustworthy to keep an eye on things. Büttner sought out Jacob Maul, a freeholder living near Rhinebeck and a member of Rauch's fledgling colonist flock, to take his place. The pair made their way to the Hudson River and south. Instead of one Indian, they brought along the three candidates for baptism.<sup>29</sup>

The arrival of the party of Moravians and Indians in Oley may have generated some apprehension among the congregation and its supporters there. Rauch and Büttner reported that their trip had been difficult. They had been refused lodging, overcharged for purchases, and ridiculed by locals and passersby for being in the company of Indians. Zinzendorf was unhappy that neither of his

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charges could tell him whether the minister at nearby Westenhook (here a reference to Stockbridge), a potential obtruder and canonical competitor, was affiliated with the “high church.”<sup>30</sup> He proposed to make a trip to Shekomeko that summer to take stock of the mission himself.<sup>31</sup>

Rauch was ordained a minister of the Moravian Church by Bishop David Nitschmann in Oley on 11 February, and on the same day, he baptized his Indian companions, the first native baptisms in the North American church.<sup>32</sup> Shabash, Seim, and Kiob became Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.<sup>33</sup> The most noteworthy of the three was Abraham, who asserted a claim, around which swirled considerable controversy, to the land on which Shekomeko stood, and from all indications was a man of influence. A few years later, as one of Shekomeko’s many emigrants, he would assume headman status among the refugee Indians in Pennsylvania and in New York’s Susquehanna Valley, and play a role in colonial-Indian politics.<sup>34</sup>

In September 1742 Gottlob Büttner and his wife of just a few days, Margarethe Bechtel, were sent to head the mission at Shekomeko. There they joined Rauch and his assistant, Martin Mack, who had been a member of the second contingent sent to Georgia and was himself newly married to Jeannette/Johannetta Rau, Johannes’s daughter. Before long came several other Moravians who would spend time in the community, which was destined to become a missionary training ground.<sup>35</sup>

Life at Shekomeko was hard. The brethren were often shorthanded, the supply of food was more scarce than not, and there were debts to pay and little ready money with which to do so. Nonetheless, the mission thrived, at least in the eyes of the brethren, and there were additional baptisms.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the activity there increasingly drew the attention of Indians from the surrounding area, including the headman and a number of the people from Pachgatgoch, a several hours’ walk to the southeast. There would be some thirty years to come of social and spiritual interaction between Indians and Moravians in this part of colonial America, all marked by life’s peaceful moments and well attended by its vicissitudes.

Visits by Indians in the neighborhood had undoubtedly been part of an ongoing pattern for as long as Shekomeko had existed.<sup>37</sup> But there is no doubt that they took on an added significance with the arrival of the Brethren. Soon, the

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Moravians began taking note of the numbers of Indians who stopped by and where they had come from, which suggests something other than mere curiosity. As promised, Zinzendorf arrived at Shekomeko in mid-August 1742. After deliberating with his followers, he presented his plans, most of which had to do with the task at hand—converting natives. Zinzendorf's primary goal was to see a congregation organized at Shekomeko that would be strengthened not only by the appointment of Indian assistants but also by seeking counsel from his native acolytes, Isaac, Abraham, and Jacob, to whom of late had been added Johannes.<sup>38</sup> Büttner was even more expansive, declaring that Shekomeko should be the “Rendivouz” for the “heathen messengers of these eastern parts.”<sup>39</sup> Also on Zinzendorf's list was the need “to explore Albany and New England.” This meant looking into the disposition of the Mohawks, west of Albany, one of the six Iroquois nations that he had made arrangements to visit after a chance meeting with a number of their headmen in Tulpehocken, Pennsylvania, two weeks earlier.<sup>40</sup>

*Viele Fremde*, many Indian strangers, from Wechquadnach, Pachgatgoch, Potatuck, and elsewhere in the region made their appearance in Shekomeko, and in turn played host to the Moravians intent on widening their search for souls. The initial contacts were made with the residents of Wechquadnach, about ten miles distant; in October 1742 they went to Rauch with the news that, after conferring among themselves, they had agreed to ask the Moravians to come and assist them as well. To smooth this new relationship, they intended to move their houses to the west side of Indian Pond, closer to the mission.<sup>41</sup> The following January, Rauch traveled to the Mohawks' country, not to preach, but to explore, find a place to live, and then learn the language. He stopped first at Fort Hunter, the Mohawks' easternmost location at the mouth of Schoharie Creek. This was no easy trip for the Moravian, and certainly unsettling. The daily exercise of the Indians at the fort, he reported, was to paint their cheeks red and their eyes and noses black, making themselves look quite frightful. They laughed at him whenever he spoke. Still, his meeting with Henry Barclay, the minister in charge, was businesslike, and shortly thereafter, Rauch headed west toward the Mohawk town of Canajoharie. On the way, he ran into a thoroughly disagreeable and churlish minister who hounded him at every step. He also met with the hostility of farmers fearful of losing their lands as the threat

of war loomed. The only Indians he managed to see were shy, apprehensive, and unapproachable. Rauch cut short his trip, deciding to return via Albany. But once there, he learned that there were constables on his trail bent on arresting him because he did not have a pass to travel in the area. Upon his return, Shekomeko must have been a very welcome sight to him.<sup>42</sup>

Rauch's journey to the Mohawks was one of several undertaken by Moravian brethren as part of the reconnoitering effort that Zinzendorf had ordered the previous summer. Two weeks after his return to Shekomeko, Rauch left for Kaunaumek, an Indian community southeast of Albany, stopping off at Stockbridge on the way. Brother Shaw traveled to the Highlands on the east side of the Hudson in August 1743; a month later, he and Brother Sensemann set out for Schaghticoke, the refugee Indian settlement above Albany. Also in August, Sensemann went into New England in search of Indians with Brother Mack.<sup>43</sup>

In January 1743, Indians from Potatuck and Pachgatgoch arrived at Shekomeko requesting a Moravian of their own.<sup>44</sup> Within the week, the Macks were dispatched to explore these two places, both of which were located south along the Housatonic.<sup>45</sup> After losing their way in the deep snows and spending the night in a barn along the trail, they reached Pachgatgoch and were welcomed by the headman Maweseman (var.), with whom they lodged. The next day an English "New Light" preacher appeared and harangued the Indians for some two hours about how angry God was with them and told them that He would cast them all into hell. The Indians were left uneasy, telling Mack how different this message was from what they had heard at Shekomeko. In fact, when Mack spoke to these Indians about his God, they responded, "*Gahene, Gehene*" (That is true, that is true).

Just then at Pachgatgoch was the unnamed headman from Potatuck, considered to be a particularly bad person who, Mack was told, "shot or beat dead every one who spoke of the Savior." This play at menacing could only have been for effect. Considering the circumstances of Indians in southern New England at this time, and even in the previous two decades or more, it is doubtful that any such acts would have been carried out, not without reprisals.<sup>46</sup> Mack was undaunted by the threat and went ahead and asked the headman whether he could pay his people a visit. The discussion that followed was mostly one-sided, with the headman first wavering about whether there would be any Indians at Po-

tatuck who would care to listen to him and then making doubly sure that Mack understood that white people had on other occasions tried to deceive him. Finally, he did consent, and he and Mack shook hands on their agreement, much to the surprise of Maweseman, who allowed that no such thing had ever happened before. Before leaving for Potatuck, Maweseman, along with his wife and two children, who Mack declared were no longer considered to be “dead people” or unawakened, approached him, asking to be baptized. Mack relayed this news by messenger to his brethren at Shekomeko.

From Pachgatgoch the Macks made their way to the vicinity of Potatuck, some twenty-five miles down the valley. Although Potatuck was by itself a village, a collection of Indian houses, the Macks also happened upon a number of nearby dwellings in which lived Indians who were part of the larger community. As she had done on occasion at Pachgatgoch, Jeannette Mack translated. When asked, the Indians said they understood her quite well.<sup>47</sup> Mack discovered that the Indians at Potatuck had had dealings with surrounding “New Light” preachers long before they had ever seen a Moravian. And as they had at Pachgatgoch, the Indians expressed some doubt about the Moravians’ message. The “New Lights” instructed them not to sin or work on Sundays if they expected God to take them in. For their part, the Moravians welcomed the Indians as sinners, saying that for as long as they believed in God and had Jesus in their hearts, they would experience happiness. The headman of Potatuck became especially sour when several Englishmen, evidently also preachers, appeared; he reproached them for the years when they had come to the Indians only to babble, pray, and read books, while Brother Mack spoke to them about what he experienced in his heart. He invited Mack to live in Potatuck. For Indian people, at least for the moment, the differences in religious perspectives among the missionaries could not have been more stark.

Returning to Pachgatgoch, the Macks found a very ill brother Büttner, who had struggled through deep snow and intense cold from Shekomeko to reach them. On 13 February he baptized six Indians, including Maweseman, to whom he gave the name Gideon. Gideon’s son became Joshua.<sup>48</sup> Gideon soon repaid the visit, accompanied by nearly thirty Indians from Pachgatgoch and Potatuck, and requested that a brother be sent to live in his community.

A few days later, without Jeannette, Mack left for Pachgatgoch with a party of