Venoms for Vengeance: The History, Novels, and Movies Surrounding Three Interrelated “Massacres” in the Northeast, 1755–59

DAVID L. GHERE and ALVIN H. MORRISON
University of Minnesota SUNY – Fredonia (Emeritus)

INTRODUCTION

Peacetime violence became a routine occurrence on the mid-18th-century Maine frontier, complicating peaceful diplomacy or triggering renewed hostilities and inevitably fostering cries for vengeance. Our paper “Sanctions for slaughter”, presented at the 27th Algonquian Conference at Chapel Hill in 1995 (Ghere and Morrison 1996) discussed a series of incidents from 1749 to 1772, wherein English colonials deliberately slaughtered non-belligerent Abenaki natives during periods of supposedly suspended hostilities. One major focus of that earlier paper, and by far the worst case that we considered therein, was the Owls Head massacre of July 1755, in the vicinity of modern Rockland, Maine. This little-known incident was the stimulus — the initial venom for vengeance — for the most famous and notorious event of the colonial wars: the massacre at Fort William Henry, at Lake George in eastern New York colony, in August 1757. The lust for retribution for this atrocity in turn prompted another of the best known events of the colonial wars: Rogers’ Rangers’ raid in October 1759 on St. Francis/Odanak Abenaki village in southern Quebec. Venoms for vengeance precipitated each of these events, linking them in a cycle of revenge and retribution for the previous atrocity.

The myths and misunderstandings surrounding the two famous incidents may be stripped away if we examine them in the context of the Owls Head massacre. All three events were termed “massacres” by the receiving sides, and we use the term here only in that relative context. We respectfully dedicate this paper to the memory of Frank Siebert, who was very positive about “Sanctions” in his comments at Chapel Hill. It is our fond hope that Frank would have liked this paper too, if he were still with us here in person. Surely Frank will long be with us in memory — most especially so at the Algonquian conferences, where he regularly made our presentations run the gauntlet of his commentaries. We also wish to thank Bruce Bourque of the Maine State Museum and Bates College for pointing us to several valuable sources used in both papers.
hope to find objective explanations and to expose subjective excuses. In each case there was quite enough blame to share, always starting much earlier. On each “side” were several constituencies, each with the potentiality for several factions, and our earlier paper discussed this issue wherever relevant. Here we need only to review the basics of Abenaki sociopolitical organization that produced volatile relationships with English colonials because the latter often misunderstood its complexities.

ABENAKI SOCIOPOLITICAL ORGANIZATION

Westward from the Penobscot River to Lake Champlain, and northward from south-coastal Maine to the St. Lawrence River, the various bands of the Abenaki people by 1755 all shared an extremely flexible social organization that adaptively allowed rapid change in the shape, size, and location of specific communities. Community membership was open-ended: it was voluntary (except for captives) and ever-changing. Kinship, marriage, adoption and friendship, plus willingness to be led by the local sakamo, were the criteria for living in an Abenaki community. Yet a stay might be only temporary, or spasmodic. As minds and opportunities changed, so did community membership; factions, families, and individuals went away and came in; visitors were welcome. On a larger scale, if desire or necessity warranted the labor cost, entire communities might change locations, or merge with other communities. Whoever was living in one Abenaki community at any given moment had relatives or friends to visit or live with in other Abenaki communities, and while “away” developed yet wider contacts for future networking.

Two papers presented at the 25th Algonquian Conference (at Montreal) clearly demonstrated the benefits of this social system for the leaders as well as the led, among the Pennacook, or Central Abenaki as David Stewart-Smith (1998) justly terms them. Stewart-Smith (1994) delineated the widely-spread political marriages of the offspring of paramount sakamo Passaconaway, which became the basis of his personal confederation in the first half of the 1600s. Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney (1994) described the many temporary stations of a sakamo-on-the-move within a wide personal network—“Wattanummon’s World”, as they called it, of the later 1600s and early 1700s.

Such societal flexibility had been the adaptive key to Abenaki survival throughout at least a century and a half of major challenges to their
existence: Iroquois raids, European diseases, English push, and French pull. The adaptive advantage of settlement dispersal and reorganization extended beyond the Abenaki *per se*, when new village sites were established, or old sites were reoccupied, by newly-constituted mixed communities of surviving refugees, with different preponderancies not only of dialect but of language and ethnicity. Then, intermarriage opportunities widened, and the Abenaki flexible patterns further increased their options for reconfiguration — for individuals, families, and factions alike.

If specific ethnic identities became clouded thereby, the general survival potentiality brightened considerably, bridging the various Abenaki bands with other neighboring peoples, not only of both Algonquian and Iroquoian but also Indo-European language families. Morrison (1998) has described a “Dawnland diaspora” — a spreadout of the Abenaki and their neighbors in all directions — as being both the cause and the effect of their ever-widening social networks. An individual example is worth noting here. During the 1750s (the period discussed in this paper), a principal *sakamo* at St. Francis/Odanak Abenaki village was Joseph-Louis Gill, supposedly the “all-white” son of two English captive parents who had stayed on with their captors. Gill’s Indian name was Magouaoudombaout, meaning “friend of the Iroquois” (Charland 1979:293-294).

Interethnic French-missionary villages also enhanced the potentiality of French military alliances among the northeastern native peoples. English colonials were quick to suspect that some French priests were adept at kindling an anti-English/pro-war faction among their converts, and keeping it hot until ready to send it off to ignite far-away relatives. But although the interrelatedness of Abenaki communities was obvious, many English colonials misunderstood the flexible nature of Abenaki society. Shifts in Abenaki residence and location were wrongly, and far too hopefully, seen by English colonials as evidence of disintegration and permanent migration, rather than dispersion and reorganization. Ghere (1993) has detailed this English misunderstanding of the “disappearance” of the Abenaki in western Maine as being caused by ethnocentric assumptions about native sociopolitical organization. Therefore, unheeding of native realities, New England’s frontier settlement push kept on expanding, inevitably continuing the crunch with the Abenaki.

---

2 The authors are aware of a contrary theory that Joseph-Louis’s mother was not “all-white”, but was descended from southeastern Indians. Even so, our point still counts, that the Abenaki adaptively married out.
THE OWLS HEAD MASSACRE (JULY 1755)

While the specific details of the Owls Head massacre need not be repeated here from our earlier paper (Ghere and Morrison 1996:109–114), it is essential to review the context and basics of that event.

Both unwilling and unable to limit their frontier settlement expansion, the English government in Boston nonetheless tried to keep its wilderness perimeter under control, if only to save expenses, through a combination of diplomacy and military power. A militia expedition up the Kennebec River and the construction of a fort to guard the new settlements prompted a series of Abenaki raids in late 1754 and early 1755. The Penobscot denied involvement in the raids and repeatedly professed their desire for continued peace. By June 1755, the English had declared war and posted scalp-bounties against all Abenaki bands except the Penobscot, who they hoped through diplomacy to recruit as allies. Towards that end, the Boston government demanded that they relocate nearer to the English settlements and join English military activity against the other Abenaki bands, to prove their “loyalty” to peace. While the pro-peace faction of the tribe prevailed at that time, many feared that, despite government promises, proximity to the settlements would expose them to individual retaliations for events in the previous war.

This fragile setting was totally destroyed by the Owls Head massacre of early July 1755. This started out as a duly-authorized campaign of scalp-bounty hunting led by militia leader James Cargill against the officially “hostile” Abenaki bands. However, Cargill, who had extensive knowledge of the area, led his head hunters in the wrong direction to the vicinity of Fort St. George, 40 miles beyond the boundary authorized for scalp-bounty hunting. A conference had just concluded at that fort in which the Penobscot had reiterated their peaceful intentions and the English had demanded their relocation to nearby Owls Head and the protection of the fort. Those Indians who continued to camp at Owls Head had no reason to expect English violence at that time or place but, over a two-day period, Cargill’s band killed and scalped at least 12 if not 14 Penobscot men, women, and children. Cargill clearly knew that he was obtaining non-hostile scalps as counterfeits for bounties in an area that had been promised as safe for these Indians. A second goal, consistent with his reputation as an ardent Indian hater, may have been to provoke the Penobscot into war against the English, thus ending the protection afforded
that tribe by an "unrealistic" truce. The "loyalty" that the English wanted the Penobscot to express would now be strong indeed, but to war, not peace, and to the support of their fellow Abenaki — in vengeance.

THE MASSACRE AT FORT WILLIAM HENRY (AUGUST 1757)

While historians have kept the general public in the dark about the significance and consequences of the Owls Head massacre, popular culture has distorted substance with shadow in its bogus light-show surrounding the massacre at Fort William Henry. James Fenimore Cooper certainly did not let the documented facts interfere with a good story in *The last of the Mohicans*, published in 1826. While some might argue that Cooper did not have access then to the documentary evidence we now have, we suggest that he would not have wanted it anyway. Cooper's novel and the several films "based" upon it from 1920 to 1992 all have been consistent in using a fictional villain in their plot: a Huron chief named Magua, who had a long-standing personal grudge against the English fort commander, Colonel Munro. So, when Munro surrendered the fort to the French besiegers under Général le Marquis de Montcalm, Magua set his multitude of Huron warriors on the defeated English garrison. It makes a great story, indeed, but only in the context of that novel does the Magua scenario make sense; in the context of documented history it is nonsense.

Let us start our more likely account with the basic setting. During the early campaigns of the Seven Years War in North America (alias the French and Indian War), several great blunders were made by inept English commanders, such as the lack of support for important forts in New York colony under siege by General Montcalm. That negligence caused the surrender of both Fort Oswego on Lake Ontario in August 1756 and Fort William Henry on Lake George in August 1757. The surrender terms Montcalm offered to both of these English garrisons promised "the honors of war", which included the paroling of soldiers, a parade-style retreat and safe passage to the nearest friendly fort. Montcalm's self-image of gallantry contrasted sadly with his callous over-reliance on Indian auxiliaries, to whom he had promised "the spoils of war" (meaning scalps, prisoners, and whatever personal loot they could carry away) for their service.

3 Intending this, Cargill would resemble the murdering miller in Robert Frost's poem "The vanishing Red": "I hold with getting a thing done with" (Frost 1979:142) — the thing, in both cases, being genocide.
Montcalm’s promises were totally incompatible and disastrous; in both cases “the honors of war” succumbed to “the spoils of war” inevitably and quickly. Truly accurate enumerations of the casualties are impossible, but “massacres” ensued with scalps and prisoners taken at both surrenders. Civilians at the forts for either business or family reasons were not counted in tallying casualties, yet they were the very easiest of victims. The cause of the massacres was built in: “spoils” were the price of Indian auxiliaries, and were paid to their Indian allies by French and English commanders alike, like it or not. Only the reliance of early historians on English sources and the greater number of Indians as French allies make the French seem bloodier in the spoils business. So, with the cause being a constant, the blame variable must shift to the trigger instead. Official reports, written either by Montcalm or with his aide, the Comte de Bougainville, were carefully crafted to protect Montcalm himself, to make him seem fully blameless. In 1756, Montcalm had blamed the smaller-scale Fort Oswego disaster on unspecified Indians, having had only 260 Indian auxiliaries with him (Steele 1990:79). But in 1757, with many times more Indians present, Montcalm specifically placed blame for the larger-scale Fort William Henry carnage on “the Abenakis of Panaouske [Penobscot] in Acadia, who had supposed that they had reason to complain of some ill treatment” by the English, adding “You know what it is to restrain 3,000 Indians of 33 different Nations” (NYCD 10:616-619).

Those figures are an exaggeration. French documents of Montcalm’s 1757 campaign claim only a total of 1,806 Indians, in 39 bands: 820 “domiciliated” (living at missionary stations) plus 986 from “the Upper Country” (le pays d’en haut). Of the 820 “domiciliated” Indians, 245 (ca. 30%) were Abenaki, in four bands: St. Francis (Odanak), Bécancour (Wolinak), Missiscouï (Lake Champlain), and Panaouameske (Penobscot). (For James Fenimore Cooper fans, only 52 [ca. 6%] Huron were listed, in two bands: Lorette and Detroit.) Montcalm’s total force was over 8,000

4 Montcalm was not the first victorious French commander to have his Abenaki allies break his terms of surrender. René Robinau de Portneuf had granted quarter to Captain Sylvanus Davis’s defeated Fort Loyal garrison at Casco/Falmouth (Portland), Maine in June, 1690, only to have it bloodily undone by his Abenaki force. In fact, during the colonial wars Indian allies frequently showed their autonomy from French control in a variety of ways. These points need to be remembered for proper perspective.
men, of whom ca. 23% were Indians (NYCD 10:606-608).

What else might be exaggerated? Some possible problems are pointed out in two relatively recent books: Francis Jennings’ *Empire of fortune: crowns, colonies, and tribes in the Seven Years War* (1988) and Ian K. Steele’s *Betrayals: Fort William Henry and the “massacre”* (1990). However, these two valuable specialty studies seem somewhat at odds over the relative accuracy of primary-source statements by Montcalm and Bougainville on the one hand and by the Jesuit missionary priest Pierre Roubaud on the other. Jennings is suspicious of both, as are we. Steele seems to mistrust Montcalm and Bougainville more than we do, but places more reliance on some of Roubaud’s details than we are willing to do, or puts a different spin on them than our perspective suggests.

The Father Roubaud in question was 33 years old, and had only recently begun his first Canadian assignment, at the St. Francis/Odanak Abenaki mission village, when he accompanied the warriors of his flock on the French campaign of 1757. He wrote a fascinating, lengthy account of his and their experiences on the march and in battle, sparing no gory details (Roubaud 1757:90-203). Overall, Roubaud’s account seems even more self-serving than Montcalm’s reports; indeed, a modern biographer (Vachon 1979:685-687) portrays Roubaud as an opportunistic chameleon, especially so in later life in a bizarre international, secular career. The details of one particular episode reported by Roubaud must concern us, because we differ with Steele’s apparent interpretation of it.

In the aftermath of the Fort William Henry massacre, Roubaud was trying to rescue an English baby from its Huron captor, who was willing to swap it for an English scalp. Roubaud (1757:187) ran to “the camp of the Abnakis” and “asked the first one” he met for a scalp. That man obliged, even giving Roubaud a *choice* of scalps. Roubaud then ran back to the Huron and swapped the scalp for the baby, and luckily soon found the baby’s English parents. Steele (1990:120) comments, “Despite knowing about the money to be made selling prisoners, this Abenaki had taken scalps instead.” Steele (1990:223, n.46) then follows this up in a note: “Montcalm and Bougainville blamed the Abenaki of Panaouske, but the evidence is thin. Roubaud’s scalp-laden Abenaki was from St. Francis” (emphasis added).

---

5 French Regulars were listed as 3081 total, in seven regiments grouped into three brigades: La Reine, La Sarre, and Royal Rousillon. Canadian militia units totaled 2946 men. Artillery totaled 188 men. In sum, there were over 6200 French supposedly leading over 1800 Indians in the campaign of 1757 (NYCD 10:606-608).
We disagree with both emphasized points. “The evidence is thin” apparently because Steele believes that Roubaud’s statement contradicts both Montcalm and Bougainville and that these two officers had sufficient reason to create a story that would obscure their own guilt and excuse their actions. Actually, no contradiction exists. Roubaud, who we have carefully quoted above in our summary of his baby-rescue, does not state that the Abenaki serial-scalper was from St. Francis. Steele’s assumption that “Abenaki” exclusively meant St. Francis conflicts with the use of the term by French officials to identify a variety of related bands in the Northeast. “The camp of the Abenakis” undoubtedly housed all four Abenaki bands listed as being with Montcalm, and if Roubaud “asked the first one” he met, that warrior may have been from any of the Abenaki bands, including the Penobscot. Furthermore, why would not just being a fellow Abenaki, very possibly a kinsman, be sufficient to share the Penobscot desire for vengeance for the Owls Head massacre?

From our perspective, we simply do not find Montcalm and Bougainville that mendacious, or, at least, mendacious about that. They merely took the facts of an embarrassing situation and construed them in a manner that reflected on them most favorably — hardly a surprise. Another statement by Roubaud provides additional support to the claims of Montcalm and Bougainville. After complaining that the massacre by the French-allied Indians “dishonored the bravery” they had displayed earlier in that 1757 campaign, Roubaud continues:

They pretend to justify their deeds, — the Abenakis, in particular, by the law of retaliation, alleging that more than once in the very midst of peace, or of conferences, such as that of last winter, their warriors had come to death by treacherous blows in the English Forts of Acadia. [Roubaud 1757:195; emphasis added]

Roubaud’s reference to a conference “last winter”, during which Abenaki were killed by English, is an error of detail overlooked by both Jennings (1988:319, n.23) and Steele (1990:153). When Roubaud made this statement, all the Abenaki bands had been at war with the English for two years and there are no records of any conferences or “treacherous” murders of Indians during those two winters. However, the Owls Head massacre, even though it took place in July 1755, fits most of Roubaud’s description since its victims had just attended the peace conference at St. George’s Fort. Six years earlier a similar situation (the Wiscasset Incident of December 1749) did occur in winter, when some Abenaki were attacked
while returning from a peace conference at Falmouth, Maine (see Ghere & Morrison 1996:106–9 for details). The venom for vengeance that Roubaud mentions here so vaguely must be a composite grudge about separate but very similar occurrences in the relatively recent Abenaki past, rolled together — at least in the mind of the newly-arrived St. Francis priest.

We wish to work with the primary sources, not against them. Considering the nature of Abenaki society and the French use of the term “Abenaki”, Roubaud’s statements accord with those of Montcalm and Bougainville, thus thickening the evidence that Steele (1990:223, n.46) called “thin”. The correction of Roubaud’s error of detail and the correlation with known events on the Maine frontier further strengthen this interpretation. From our perspective, now there should be very little doubt (if any) that the Penobscot Abenaki vengefully triggered the massacre at Fort William Henry.

ROGERS’ RANGERS’ RAID ON ST. FRANCIS/ODANAK (OCTOBER 1759)

The military situation eventually turned in the British favor with the appointment of a new, more capable general, Jeffery Amherst, and the transport of additional troops to North America. General Amherst retaliated for the French turning of honors of war into Indian spoils by denying the honors of war to surrendering French garrisons. First at the fall of Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island in July 1758, and again at the fall of Montreal in September 1760, Amherst specifically cited the atrocities committed by French-allied Indians at Fort William Henry. At the Montreal surrender, the French regulars were under the command of Brigadier le Chevalier de Levis, who had been the first senior French officer to try to limit the Indian atrocities at Fort William Henry. Levis’ response to Amherst’s no-honors decree showed both pain and defiance: he burned the French regimental flags and broke his own sword rather than surrender them (Stacey 1979a:24; Steele 1990:148).

Amherst was made English commander-in-chief in America by late 1758 after his victory at Louisbourg, and in 1759 he revisited the Lake George and Lake Champlain region with the forces, the supplies, and the will to win. From this strategic area where other English leaders had fumbled so badly before, the French now retreated northward, after destroying the forts so long contested. Then, in an odd diplomatic move, “Amherst sent two regular officers and a party of five Stockbridge Indians
north, ostensibly to offer peace to the domiciled Indians of New France, but the whole party was taken captive by the Abenaki of St. Francis” (Steele 1990:147). Any new thought of peace with French Indians was replaced by older negativity reinforced anew.

General Amherst developed a strong dislike and contempt for the French-allied Indians, because he was outraged by their depredations against women and children. On 12 September 1759, Amherst sent off from Crown Point his nastiest form of retaliation against the Abenaki. A large force of rangers led by Major Robert Rogers — whom the Abenaki called Wōbi Madaondo (White Devil) — was to go far behind enemy lines and destroy St. Francis/Odanak village, after retrieving any English captives to be found there. Yet Amherst’s orders to Rogers might imply that the general still hoped to teach the Abenaki and the French a moral lesson, also — about making more careful choice of victims than they had done at Fort William Henry:

Remember the barbarities... committed by the enemy’s Indian scoundrels on every occasion, where they had the opportunity... Take your revenge, but don’t forget that tho’ these villains have dastardly and promiscuously murdered the women and children of all ages, it is my orders that no women or children are killed or hurt... [quoted from Steele 1990:147]

Or was Amherst just protecting himself, before the fact of yet another inevitable massacre, as Montcalm had tried to do, after the fact, in 1757? Indeed, ranger attacks differed little from the Indian attacks that were their model: sudden and fierce, with peripheral casualties unavoidable.

Before discussing Rogers’ raid in history, let us consider both its “popular” image and that of the Fort William Henry disaster in literature and film. Maine author Kenneth Roberts earned a high reputation for researching, as well as for telling his stories. In 1936 his Rogers’ Rangers appeared in serial format, and it reappeared in 1937 as book I of his novel Northwest passage. Book I is focused on the St. Francis raid; book II covers Rogers’ later activities. When compared with a modern biography of Major Rogers (Stacey 1979b:679-683), it is clear that the novel benefited from Roberts’ careful research, which only enhanced his excellent story.

6 Amherst’s disdain for Indians was more clearly shown four years later (in 1763) when he ordered that blankets infected with smallpox be distributed to the Indians (Jennings 1988:447).
Unfortunately, the 1940 movie *Northwest passage* (starring Spencer Tracy as Rogers), which is based only on the book about Rogers' raid, distorts some of Roberts' best writing into cornball mush — especially about behavior between genders, using old Hollywood stereotypes of women. Indians inevitably suffer negative stereotyping too (although the novel itself is not much better in this respect). These were the signs of the times circa 1940, and they are equally evident also in the 1936 movie version of *The last of the Mohicans* (starring Randolph Scott as Hawkeye the white-but-Indian-trained guide). But in the 1992 version (starring Daniel Day-Lewis as Hawkeye), while the racial stereotypes are minimized, the romantic mush is replaced by the direct sexuality and total violence that are the hallmarks of the present time — features which Cooper's 1826 novel certainly lacked, radiating extreme sexism and racism instead. Yet even with the flaws, Cooper's novel is still compelling if fictional, and the 1992 movie is powerful, and both end with dignity if tragically. Each form of storytelling, and each example thereof, tells the story of its own time and biases more clearly than the intended subject-story, and is valuable as an artifact of its own context, if for nothing else. Of course these same constraints apply to this paper too: our late-1990s opus displays our values more clearly than it does those of the late-1750s belligerents we are studying.

Both Roberts' novel and the 1940 film *Northwest passage* neglect the origins of Anglo-American ranger companies, making it seem that Rogers himself invented as well as vitalized them. Such was not the case. In both the Seven Years War and King George's War before it, Massachusetts Governor William Shirley can be considered at least the godfather of the rangers as we know them. Yet Shirley only further developed the earlier use of Indian auxiliaries and tactics adopted by field officer Benjamin Church in both King Philip's War and King William's War of the late 17th century. But actually Rogers' specific and comparable predecessor was Captain John Gorham, who started harassing the marauding Micmac in Nova Scotia in September 1744, with his company of 50 "picked Indians and other men fit for ranging the woods" who were "far more terrible than European soldiers" (Krugler 1974:260). John Gorham and his brother Joseph went on to make history with Gorham's Rangers during King George's War, the war prior to Rogers' Rangers' fame. John Gorham mostly used Mohawk Indians; Robert Rogers used Stockbridge Mohican
instead — and thereby hangs the tale that concerns us next.\(^7\)

Using the Abenaki-style of social organization described earlier, some other Northeastern Algonquian peoples, including the Mohican/Mahican, survived by diaspora — making the adaptations of fluidly relocating and intermarrying. Fannie Hardy Eckstorm (1945:80, 1939:218–9) has even posited a Mohican presence in Maine, both collectively and individually, circa 1697–1725. Gordon Day (1962, 1972) has carefully studied Rogers’ raid on St. Francis in the oral traditions of Odanak and concludes that one of Rogers’ own Mohican contingent had kinfolk in this Abenaki village, whom he warned just before the 4 October raid. Rogers reported only one ranger killed in the raid itself — a Mohican. Was he perhaps killed by a fellow ranger, or did he possibly just go missing? Day’s research came too late for Roberts to use to thicken the plot of his novel, but Day (1972) has demonstrated the real importance of using oral tradition to complement the historical records — especially when the records are as self-serving as Rogers’ were.

Rogers’ own report boasted at least 200 Abenaki killed, but French and Indian accounts claim only 30 were killed, of whom 20 were women and children. This low figure would imply that many Abenaki had vacated the village prior to the raid, and also would help to explain the quick reaction of vigorous French and Indian pursuit parties who chased the withdrawing rangers for days. On their return trip (via a very different route than their approach) 47 rangers died and 2 were captured. Therefore, one third of Rogers’ strike force was lost. Even if one were foolish enough to believe Rogers’ own figure of 200 Abenaki killed, Rogers’ raid on St. Francis was clearly only a Pyrrhic victory at best, while the worst case makes it a failure. Roberts’ novel is at its best in describing Rogers’ forced march homeward. Yet the movie breaks away from the book here, defies history, and ends abruptly in romantic mush, as if its budget broke unexpectedly.

As for the surviving Abenaki, the burned village of St. Francis/Odanak was not habitable for the oncoming winter, so the refugees relocated to the Mohawk village of St. Regis/Akwesasne, from which many Abenaki later moved to Oka/Kanesatake. Thus the Abenaki added further interethnic contacts in their continuing diaspora. Yet enough St. Francis Abenaki warriors remained together long enough to make a retaliatory attack — a small raid in June 1760 on an old favorite target, Fort Number 4 at Charleston, New Hampshire. Some English victims died, and several captives

\(^7\) After, of course, pointing out the obvious fact that the title of Cooper’s novel was truly bogus: the Mohican people still exist today.
were taken to Canada — arriving just before the fall of Montreal to Amherst’s campaign, which enabled the captives’ early return. Like Rogers’ raid which precipitated it, this Charlestown raid was no martial triumph.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Obviously, the Abenaki raid on Fort Number 4 in June 1760 was mostly just symbolic. Less obviously, so too were each of the main events discussed in this paper largely just symbolic — with all due respect to the victims. The term massacre is used here only qualitatively, not quantitatively, and especially to imply easy victimization: Owls Head casualties were at least 12, possibly 14; Fort Oswego’s and Fort William Henry’s casualties may never be agreed upon, but Steele (1990) is minimalistic (quantitatively) and wants to see quotation marks around the word “massacre”; Rogers’ raid certainly inconvenienced an entire village but may have cost more Ranger casualties than Abenaki. Yet the symbolic statement made by each of these sad events is far more important than the body count. The victims certainly did not die in vain; remembering them became the venoms for vengeance, festering over time, and passed around and shared like an infectious disease, over hundreds of square miles of contested territory during several years.

This paper has been a study of addiction to vengeance. Lex talionis (the law of reprisal) — as wise persons remember and unwise persons forget — means that “an eye for an eye” will make the whole world go blind. Yet vengeance continues because it is addictive. We suggest that seeing is a better use for eyes than blinding. In this paper we have seen, and tried to get others to see, a causal linkage among some grisly events in a grim war. As we see it, the documentary evidence indicates a direct stimulus-and-response revenge relationship among these events that has been overlooked heretofore, largely because researchers have not looked to Maine colonial frontier encounters when viewing colonial events on the New York and Quebec frontiers.

The common denominator of at least three of these events is the Abenaki, whose adaptively fluid sociopolitical organization defies static placement of Abenaki people — still today, let alone during the traumatic stresses and strains of colonial times. If we have seen connections missed before, between events in different “provinces”, we suggest using a less provincial lens, to view the fluidity in fullest focus. The flexible social structure of the Abenaki may have been a blind-spot to researchers in the past, but it need not continue to be overlooked any longer. When looking
back, we believe that ethnology and history together can give a better, binocular view of these phenomena that are more complex than they look at first glance. “Seeing is believing”, as the old adage reminds us.

REFERENCES


Davis, Sylvanus. 1690. The declaration of Sylvanus Davis... *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 3rd series, v. 1, Hutchinson Papers (Boston, 1825), 101–112.


