Last winter I had the opportunity to evaluate a folder of Passamaquoddy documents in the archives of the Heye Foundation of the Huntington Free Library. I found that the contents of the folder that in 1926 Speck had labeled "Passamaquoddy Documents" fills a gap in our knowledge of Passamaquoddy history. Most of the items dealt with Gov. John Francis, son of Gov. Francis Joseph Neptune, a rather shadowy figure who seemed to hide in a downeast fog. Erickson says, "To my knowledge the name John Francis does not appear in the Records of the Executive Council as the Governor of the Passamaquoddy" (Erickson 1988: note 66). Williamson's account of John Francis comes in the middle of his explanation of the Penobscot split without even a date given to help separate Francis events from Attean events (Williamson 1846b:95-96). Even Eckstorm is extremely sketchy about him, although her father knew him (Eckstorm 1945:59). Vetromile, who served the Passamaquoddy mission from 1854 to 1858 (Lapomarda 1977:21) and wrote their history, often did more to confuse issues than to clarify them (Vetromile 1866). Rich resources of documents which include the Huntington Free Library's collection of Passamaquoddy Documents, Georgetown University's John Bapst Letters, Congregazione dei Ss. Cuori, Casa Generaliza in Rome, and Archdiocese of Boston Demillier Letters and Fenwick Papers shed much light on Gov. John Francis from 1835 to 1860. They show that instead of resorting to shamanism, John fought his adversaries by letters requesting support from the Bishop, neighboring Wa­banaki tribes, the Caughnawaga Grand Council and others. Repercussions from the struggle to retain his governorship attributed to the Caughnawaga Grand Council's decision to substitute documents on paper rather than the traditional wampum for the Grand Council Fires of the Seven Nations.
As a young man, Francis Joseph Neptune, John Francis's father and Chief from 1778 to 1833, became involved in American politics, made several trips to Boston to make treaties with Massachusetts, became a Whig, and looked after the interests of his tribe in the conflict of the world around him. After negotiating the Treaty of 1795 with Massachusetts, which retained the Indian hunting territories and provided land to establish an Indian village at Pleasant Point, he returned to his ancestral hunting territory to continue the hunting life style that he had known prior to the Revolution (Owen 1848).

A Passamaquoddy village grew up on the newly acquired reservation land at Pleasant Point, composed of conservative Malecite whose hunting territories were on the St. Croix watershed and a lesser number of more village-oriented Penobscot. Components from two different bands added problems to the melding process of the new life style. Other factors compounded the transition process for those trying to adapt to community living from the hunting life style. The early 1800s were probably the hardest period that the Wabanaki had ever experienced. Indians had little money. The end of the Revolution brought to a close a 200-year span of government bonuses or subsidies for joining forces with an army and a market for scalps. There was a shortage of able young men. For several years nearly 500 Malecite had occupied Passamaquoddy hunting territories seriously depleting the game there. Traditionally they were hunters; they resisted attempts to be transformed into farmers. The War of 1812 embargo policies ended the lucrative European fur market. Interaction from the white community greatly increased with the development of the village, often creating situations new to the Indians. It was easy to blame the problems arising from the sedentary lifestyle on neighbors with whom they had not been accustomed to living or hunting in close association, people who may have had different religious or political beliefs.

In 1833 Francis Joseph Neptune died. Usually after the death of a chief, his oldest son was next in line. However, it was not considered hereditary in the full sense because the tribe together with delegates from neighboring Wabanaki bands agreed to the selection. There seldom was a problem and I have found no evidence of or a need for a Passamaquoddy tribal party system prior to 1833. A chief was instituted for life at his chief-making ceremony. Sometimes a relative of the dead chief was selected, the blood line being retained in the family.

The traditional hunters agreed that John Francis, whose family had been Passamaquoddy or Malecite chiefs for over 200 years (Eckstorm 1945:70–71) would follow his father. Qualities the hunters looked for in a sachem, or "strong man" (Speck 1940:239) were those of a hunter or provider (Smith 1977:213). John had gained a marvelous reputation as a hunter (Sabine
1852:114), but never learned to write English. It may have been a surprise to find that the villagers, feeling that communal living required a different criteria of leadership qualities to cope with situations not relevant to the hunting life style, formed the New Party. Sabattis Neptune, a Passamaquoddy with Penobscot roots (Sabine 1852:104), and well known to non-Indians as an orator, was their candidate and expected to win (Vetromile 1866:118). The major factors concerning the Old Party were that the chieftainship be retained following hereditary lines and that the office be for life. John won, the hunters outnumbering those who were trying to imitate the European communal lifestyle. For the next 28 years John’s leadership was to be constantly challenged by the New Party.

John Francis had been very much aware of the development of the New Party among the Penobscot. In the role of a Passamaquoddy delegate to mediate the Old Town dispute he backed the Old Party traditionalists (Williamson 1846a:96). At that time the principle backer of the Penobscot New Party was a Passamaquoddy, Sabattis Neptune, who was now the Passamaquoddy New Party’s candidate for governor.

The New Party villagers were better known to the non-Indian community than were the bush people. The New Party attended church regularly and were active in other community affairs. Earlier missionaries, aware that Indian hunters were not village oriented, provided religious almanacs with the Christian festivals marked so that the Indians could keep them while in the bush. Vetromile reintroduced this practice in 1859. It had been the ancestors of the bush families who had been chiefs guiding their people through the Colonial Wars and Revolution and who had kept up their persistent requests for a Catholic priest, not accepting Protestants as substitutes. They were now labeled anti-church by community oriented-missionaries who backed the villagers familiar to them.

Demillier, Bapst, and Vetromile were European gentry trained from early youth for the clergy. A sudden decision sent them from a European classroom to the American frontier, where Catholics were an unpopular minority, without adequate orientation or preparation for the native culture and not even able to speak English. Their letters are testaments of their inability to acculturate well to the Indian villages (Bapst 1850). Their own adjustment problems were so great that they could do little to help the Indian adapt to community living. They lived an isolated life not really understanding what was going on around them. There was no one to whom they could go to discuss problems. In the modern vernacular, they burned out quickly. Demillier and Bapst associated themselves with the New Party; Vetromile, who at first supported the New Party, learned that Sabattis was the villain and transferred his support to John Francis (Vetromile 1866:119).
Liberty poles were popular in every Yankee community during the Revolution. They were adopted by the Maine Indian's political parties as symbols of party power and may have had a traditional basis in the form of a tall straight tree skinned of all its branches except a tuft at the top erected at a bush camp which could be seen for some distance by any travellers who might come by, a custom still maintained by traditional Mistassini hunters. The liberty poles became the rallying points for party rivalry. When Old Party hunters visited the village, battles ensued to tear down the liberty poles at Old Town (Bapst 1850) and Pleasant Point (Belmore 1945:48).

By 1840 animosity between Governor John and Sabattis was apparent. The Governor wrote that Sabattis Neptune was “doing all he can and have me removed from being Governor”, that Sabattis wanted to be Governor, that Sabattis influenced “a large nambe of the tribe to sign against me...”, and requested Bishop Benedict to “write the priest [Demillier] & prevent his influencing Sapatis going any further the same difficulty will be here that there is at Penobscot...therefore hope and trust you will order the priest away & send a good one in his room that will be my friend and see that justice is done me...”. He accused the Penobscot tribe of “Setting Sabatis out he has been there twice since February and it is all their doing the priest has turned me ut of the Church twelve week ago to please Sabatis.” He finally requested, “trust you will see that I am restored when a new priest come,” and then emphasized the need for a new priest “the priest abused my squaw by knoqking her down because she was unwilling to have the flag taken Down when it was up when som our people was having the Queens wedding over again.” Capt. Joseph Stoneslos added the following note to the Governor’s letter, “if the Priest Stays here two weeks longer we shall have fighting among ourselves she must be taken ride away” (Francis 1840).

In a fit of temper Gov. John threw down his wampum belt, and other tokens of his office (Williamson 1846b:96). His action was blamed on his wife, but the specifics are omitted. If it was the result of Demillier’s incident with his wife, the Williamson’s date of 1838 is two years too early. Although the Malecite enjoyed celebrating the Queen’s birthday, the French priest at Pleasant Point would hardly find it an occasion for celebration. On Sept. 9, 1841, Noel Neptune, Lt. Governor, took the next step by sending a petition to the Maine Legislative Council signing it, “Lt. Governor and Acting Governor” (Neptune 1841) Williamson gives the year of John’s temper tantrum as 1838, (Williamson 1846a:96). It does not seem that Noel would wait 3 years to send his petition which again would make Williamson’s date too early. John believed that he had been elected for life and was to fight for his life term of office. James Farnsworth, Indian Agent for seven years, wrote to the Bishop stating that Indian problems were now the worst he
had known due to the “bad management of the Priest” (Farnsworth 1834).

In July 1842 Gov. John and Sabattis tried to settle their dispute. A liberty pole was cut down (Walker et al 1980:71); Sabattis was accused of owing allegiance to Queen Victoria! (Vetromile 1866:118). The Old Party boycotted the election of 1844 (Walker et al 1980:71). A notice dated Eastport, July 23, 1844 and preserved in the Passamaquoddy Documents warned that “Liberty Pole now in the old Meeting House at Pleasant Point belong to Governor Francis and his party, not American.” Anything that could be interpreted as pro-Canadian sympathy could make one vulnerable in this border community at this time.

In July 1848 Penobscot and Malecite representatives met with Agent Leland and “agreed not to choose a new Governor for one year or until they could hear from the King of the Indians in Canada” (Leland 1848). The following month Leland summoned the chiefs to Pleasant Point to work out a treaty recognizing John Francis as the legitimate chief for life and to abolish the New Party. The treaty signing was followed by a feast. Gov. John Francis, Lt. Gov. Newell Neptune, and Capt. Peal Nicolar who signed the treaty representing the Passamaquoddy tribe were all of the Old Party. The Penobscot representatives, Gov. John Athian, Lt. Gov. John Neptune, Capt. Jo Mohawk, and Peal Tomer also represented the Penobscot Old Party. Party splits did not develop among the Malecite. Their delegates, Gov. Francis Tomer, Lt. Gov. Joseph Francis, Capt. Jo Preston, Capt. Tomer Polis, and Capt. Lewis Tomer were all in favour of the Old Party. No one representing the New Party signed the agreement. Sabine’s account adds that the settlement was reached only after five men were selected from each Party to fight. John’s group won enabling him to retain his office for life (Sabine 1852:104.) Was this a ploy using hunter’s criteria against those of the New Party? The “Leland Treaty” is as follows:

Pleasant Point
Headquarters, Perry Sept. 4, 1848

The dispute which has heretofore existed between the three nations in regard to choosing a Governor of the Passamaquoddy Tribe of Indians, has been not to silence by mutual consent of these three tribes, known by names of Passamaquoddy, Penobscot and St. John Indians. This been done by the governor and the Chiefs of the Passamaquoddy Tribe; the “bad bird” has been killed, and we have decided the case which has troubled us for ten years past. The “bad bird” is a New Party name; but it is to be regarded no more. This question was settled with Eastern part of Maine, Sept 2, 1848, by those who respect the old Indian Laws.

The real trouble is now settled upon our oath, calling upon our Saviour to witness it.
Penobscot                  Passamaquoddy                  St. John's
Gov. John Athian          Gov. John Francis            Gov. Francis Tomer
Capt. Jo Mohawk          Capt. Paul Nicola              Capt. Jo Preston
Peal Tomer               Capt. Tomer Poh's               Capt. Lewis Tomer

Sylvanus Leland, Agent for the Passamaquoddy Indians

To whom it may concern:

I hereby certify that the Governor of the St. John's Tribe of Indians and two of the Chiefs of the Penobscot tribe of Indians met the Passamaquoddy tribe of Indians at Pleasant Point in Perry to see about the difficulty with regard to Governor John Francis of the Passamaquoddy Indians, having met on Monday, 21st August, 1848, and after hearing all parties, all the parties agreed not to choose a new Governor for one year or until they could hear from the King of the Indians in Canada.

Some thought that "the Penobscot and St. John Indians settled the question by allowing two parties and two Governors. . ." (Vetromile 1866: 119). However, that was not Leland's interpretation for soon he joined J. O'Donnell, and Peter Gill writing, "Heard Bishop of Boston last summer 1848 say all Indians unite under John Francis as Governor. . .paper to Caughnawaga" (Leland et al 1848).

Sabine refers to the signing of a "formal treaty" in August of 1848 (Sabine 1852:104), which coincides with this document. I have found no documentation that shows that the State of Maine recognized the Leland Treaty. It would appear that Agent Leland was extremely lucky to pull off his treaty, a brilliant move. The only copy of the treaty which I have found is that at the Huntington Free Library. However, the Maine Legislature approved a Treaty of Peace among the Passamaquoddy Feb. 28, 1852 that permitted John Francis to remain Governor for life, that he have a Lt. Governor, and that another Governor and Lt. Governor be elected to reside at Peter Dana's Point. (Acts and Resolves of Maine State Legislature, Treaty of Peace Among Passamaquoddy 1852.)

Father John Bapst who had recommended that the Penobscot New Party move to Caughnawaga or St. Francis now recommended that the Passamaquoddy New Party move to Peter Dana's Point with their chief (Vetromile 1866:108, 119).

Leland must have realized that he was on thin ice. In a brilliant move giving the traditionalists further backing he received former Agent Kimball's cooperation writing a joint letter addressed "To the King of the Seven Tribes at Caughnawaga, and to the Grand Council and Representatives about to be assembled at the Grand Fire at Caughnawaga" asking that
"the Chiefs in Grand Council would at once put an end to the Mischievous machinations of Said Sabattis and forbid his stirring up strife any more" (Leland and Kimball 1848). This would provide official backing which they lacked from the State of Maine.

In July, 1850, a notice appeared asserting John's absolute authority over the Passamaquoddy by referring to him as Governor John Francis, the commander in chief of the Passamaquoddy tribe of Indians..." (Leland 1850) showing that John still was in need of support for his office.

The bitter 19-year dispute was a period of adaptation from a hunting life to a communal life style. Repercussions were far reaching. The Caughnawaga Grand Council soon announced their decision to abolish the tradition of wampum in the following document:

19 Aug 1859

From Caughnawaga.
Dear Brethren:

People have related to you quite contrary what was told them. We are therefore absolutely obliged to abandon our ancient custom of sending our words to our brethren by Wampum belts. We now send you words in writing. . . . several of you. . . altering our Laws that were handed down to us by our forefathers which we observe and respect as these Laws came from the Great Master of Life.

Advise all your men, Women, and children to follow your same unaltered mode of living as heretofore — to strictly follow the Roman Catholic Religion which is the Best and preferable to follow in and to adhere to the same government, listen to and obey your Chiefs, listen attentively to the good advice of your missionaries. Be very careful of your lands, do not sell or dispose of them but keep them for the use of your children . . .

Grand Chiefs
Marten x Ramasouten Charles x
Thomas x Tulonoltin Thomas x Sook
Michael x Larmhin

War Chiefs
Michael x Takahuncka
J. Bapt x Thoratre

(Caughnawaga Grand Council, Pass, Docs.: Huntington Free Library.)

The Passamaquoddy dissenters defied ancient tribal law and traditions in efforts to adapt to communal living. Neither the Maine Legislature, the Catholic missionaries, or the Caughnawaga Grand Council understood the core of the problem. The Old Party, most of the New Party, and the Caughnawaga Grand Council were Catholic. The new missionaries were unaware of the distinctive needs of the two communities and limited
their work to the villages. It was no longer realistic for the Grand Council to issue edicts and assume that they would be obeyed. Essentially the problem was that the qualities for a hunting society chief were entirely different from those required of communal living. Many of the ancient tribal customs and laws lost their meaning in a community society where respect for the hunter declined. The breakdown in the ancient manner of selecting a chief led to the breakdown of other traditions. One of the aims of the Caughnawaga Grand Council was to preserve and honor Indian traditions, traditions that were often meaningless to villages. Wampum edicts issued by The Caughnawaga Grand Council were no longer obeyed because few people knew how to interpret them (Walker 1984:49–50) forcing them to abolish their ancient and honorable method of preserving law, records, and badge of authority by the mnemonic method of wampum belts. Perhaps from the Kimball-Leland letter the Caughnawaga Grand Council recognized that the power of the written word should take precedence over the “talking beads”. These beads were meaningless in the new communities where the number of important communications in writing was increasing rapidly. The establishment of organized villages brought new problems requiring solutions not within the experience of the traditionalists. Tribal dissention and splits resulted.

REFERENCES

Bapst, John
1850a Letter to Fr. Joseph Duverney. Georgetown University Archives.
1850b Letter to Bishop Fenwick. Fitzpatrick Papers, Archdiocese of Boston.

Belmore, Bruce W.

Eckstorm, Fannie Hardy

Erickson, Vincent O.

Farnsworth, James
1834 Letter to Bishop Fenwick. Passamaquoddy Documents, Huntington Free Library.

Francis, John
1840 Letter to Bishop Benedict. Fenwick Papers, Archdiocese of Boston.
Lapomarda, Vincent A.  

Leland, J. Sylvanus  

Leland, J. Sylvanus, and Jacob Kimball  

Leland, J. Sylvanus, J. O'Donnell, and Peter Gilligan  

Maine State Legislature  

Neptune, Noel  

Owen, W.D.W.  

Sabine, Lorenzo  

Smith, Nicholas N.  

Speck, Frank G.  

Vetromile, Eugene  
1866 *The Abnakis and Their History, or Historical Notices on the Aborigines of Acadia*. New York: James B. Kirker.

Walker, Willard  

Walker, Willard, Greg Buesing, and Robert Conkling  

Williamson, William D.  
