

Over 12,000 Years of History

For over 12,000 years, native people have lived on the North American continent. The land where the city of Lowell is located was populated by various groups of native people. The most well-known of these is the Pennacook, a group of Algonquian-speaking people who lived in the Merrimack Valley and thrived in New England for hundreds of years, building a rich and thriving society with its own traditions, lifeways, and culture.



Native people of the Northeast, including the Pennacook, built wigwams (also called a weetu) for shelter. The Pennacook did not settle in one place. They traveled to different spots in the Merrimack Valley throughout the year. In the winter, families constructed wigwams like this, which kept the warmth of a fire in and brutal cold and storms out. The door faced to the east to catch the rising sun and provide light for the inhabitants.

This pot, made around 1000 years ago, is similar to what the Pennacook would have crafted for carrying water and storing food. The pot is inlaid with intricate designs.

A Note on Language: We have chosen to use the term “native people” to collectively refer to the people indigenous to the land that is now the United States. Where appropriate, we have used people’s tribal affiliation. The words “Indian” and “Native American” are also used throughout this collection, particularly in historic documents, and are alternate terms for people indigenous this land.

Image Top: Paul Hudon, Lower Merrimack: The Valley and its Peoples, (American Historical Press, 2004).

Image Bottom: Courtesy of the Massachusetts Archeological Society. Massarchaeology.org.

Over 12,000 Years of History

Over the course of thousands of years, native people in the Northeast continued to develop and refine tools to make their lives easier and more comfortable. Using the natural resources from the land, they crafted tools for woodworking, farming, and hunting. The archaeological evidence they left behind gives us clues as to what they ate and how they lived.



Normanskill chert is a compact, quartz-based sedimentary rock that comes in a variety of colors, including red, black, and green. Many native people of the Northeast, including the Pennacook, made tools from this material.



This gouge tool, from the Middle or Late Archaic Period (6000 – 3000 years ago), was found in Lowell. A gouge was used primarily for woodworking.



These tools, from left to right, represent weapons used by native people from 6000 – 500 years ago. The earliest native people relied primarily on spears. About 500 years ago, native people developed the technology to make the smaller and more precise arrow designs on the right. This allowed them to hunt smaller, faster animals more efficiently while still relying on spears for larger prey.

Image Top: Harrisena Artifact Images. Dean Snow. 1976 (iDAR id: 374213) doi:10.6067/XCV8TD9VFR. Image Middle and Bottom: Courtesy of Trevor Lamb. Collection of the Lowell Historical Society.

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To the Pennacook and other tribes living in the Merrimack Valley, fish was an incredibly important food source. At the head of what is now Pawtucket Falls, native people from across the region would gather during salmon runs in the spring to catch fish, which they would preserve in salt and store for winter. These gatherings also served as a time for diplomacy when leaders would gather and hold counsel.

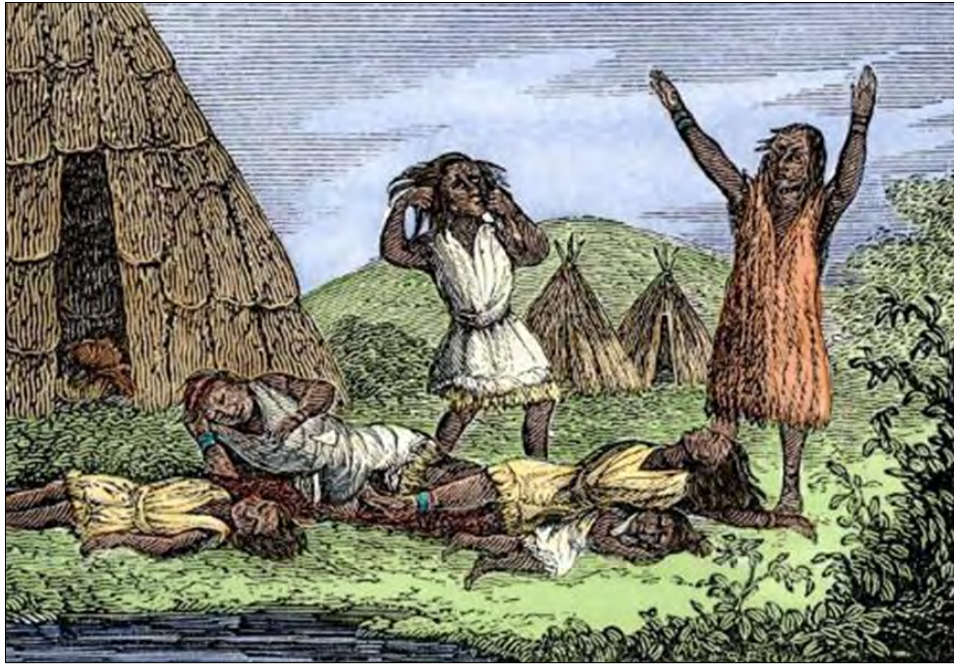


This 1585 drawing shows a group of Algonquian people fishing. The Pennacook would have used the same tools and techniques. From their dugout canoes, they would use spears to catch fish. In the background of the picture, men are checking their weirs, the large wooden traps used to catch fish as they move upstream.

*Image: 1585 carving by Theodore de Bry and John White.
Made in the vicinity of the Virginia Colony.*

Adapt and Survive – The Arrival of Europeans

Even before mass European settlement of modern-day New England, native people in the Northeast began contracting and dying from new diseases in astounding numbers. Spread via trade routes from Europeans in New Brunswick, Canada, native people across the Northeast were exposed to germs to which their bodies had no immunity. Their numbers began to dwindle, which weakened their military capabilities before and after the arrival of English settlers.



“European colonization had a significant impact on the Native peoples of New England. Foremost, it led to the spread of disease, which led to a demographic catastrophe among Native American communities like Pawtucket [what is now Lowell]. Native towns and villages experienced a severe decline in their population.... Disease led to a population decline among Native Americans, as most experts estimate today, of about 90 percent. The 1616-18 and 1633-34 small pox epidemics had particularly devastating impacts on the Pennacook Indians living in the lower Merrimack River Valley. Smallpox returned again in 1639. In 1647, it was followed by influenza. In 1649-50, another smallpox epidemic broke out in New England, trailed by diphtheria in 1659. In the long run, disease rendered the Penacook Indian lands vulnerable to English colonization.”

Image: Woodcutting titled “Great mortality among the Wampanoags due to smallpox, colonial Massachusetts, 1600s.”
Text: Christoph Strobel and Robert Farrant, “Chapter 2: Pawtucket and Wamesit: The Challenges of [Reconstructing the History of] Two New England Native Communities,” Lowell National Historical Park Ethnographic Report, March 2011, pg. 14.

Adapt and Survive – The Arrival of Europeans

As more Christian Europeans arrived in North America, some, like the missionary John Eliot (1604-1690), sought to convert native people, including the Pennacook. Working with native allies, Eliot published Bibles and teaching materials in the Massachuset language by creating a written language out of their previously only spoken language. Once the Pennacook learned to read, religious texts became accessible in their own language. Many native people converted to Christianity based on faith, but for many others it was a way to better their relationships with Europeans in hopes of preserving their land and lives.

The Lords Prayer.

O*Vr Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy Name : Thy Kingdome come : Thy will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdome, the Power, and the Glory, for ever. Amen.*

The Lords Prayer

N*OOshun kefukqut, wunneetupantamunach koowefuonk. Peyaumootch kukkeitaffootamoonk. Toh anantaman ne n-naj okheit, neane kefukqut. Afekefukokish petukqunnegash afaminnean yeu kefukok. Ahquontamaiinnean nummatchefseongash, neane matchenehikqueagig nut-ahquontamanounonog. Ahque fagkompaguninnean en qutchhu-aonganit, webe pohquohwuffinnan wutch matchitut; newutche keitaffootamoonk, kutahtauun, menuhkefuonk, sohfumoonk micheme kah micheme. Amen.*

Nat.



Text: The Lord's Prayer in English and Massachuset. John Eliot, "The Indian primer; or, The way of training up of our Indian youth," 1669. Smithsonian Institution. Image: Portrait of John Eliot, 17th century. Collection of Roxbury Latin School (public domain).

Adapt and Survive – The Arrival of Europeans

John Eliot established several settlements in Massachusetts called “Indian Praying Towns.” These small communities brought Christian Indians together in one place, further separating them from non-Christian native people, what Eliot and others called their “pagan” brethren. One such community was established among the Pennacook, in what is now Lowell, at a place called Wamesit. Far from Eliot’s home in Boston, Wamesit was not as closely monitored nor as devout as some other praying towns. The Christian Indians in Wamesit maintained good relations with the non-Christian Pennacook at Pawtucket Falls.

“*Wame[s]ut* [Wamesit] is our next Praying-Town; it lyeth at the bottom of the great Falls, on the great River *Merymak* [Merrimack] and at the falling-in of *Concord* River; the Sachem of this place is called *Nomphon*, [s]aid to be a prince of the Bloud [Blood], a Man of a real Noble Spirit: A Brother of his was [s]lain by the *Mauquaogs* [Mohawks] as he was upon a Rock fi[s]hing in the great River. In revenge whereof he went in the aforementioned ra[s]h Expedition, but had [s]uch about him, and was [s]o circum[s]pect, that he came well off, though he lo[s]t one principal Man. This place is very much annoyed by the *Mauquaogs*, and have much ado to [s]tand their ground.

In this Place Captain *Gookins* ordered a Garri[s]on to be kept the la[s]t year, which Order while they attended they were [s]afe; but when the Northern Sachems and Souldiers came, who [s]tirred up ours to go with them on their un[s]ucce[s]sful Expedition, the Town was for the mo[s]t part [s]catter’d, and their corn [s]poyled [spoiled].

The Teacher of this Place is named *George*; they have not much e[s]teem for religion, but I am hopefully per[s]waded of [s]undry of them; I can go to them but once in a year.”



On this 1675 map of Massachusetts, “Pawtucket” and “Wamesit” are located at the top and bottom of the circle. The praying town of Wamesit was located near where downtown Lowell is today. The non-Christian Pennacook lived in Pawtucket on the far side of the river.

*Text: John Eliot, A Brief Narrative of the Progre[s]s of the Go[s]pel Among the Indians of New England, (1670, republished by WTR Marvin, 1868), pg. 29-30.
Image: Seller, John, fl. 1658-1698, and Hill, Joshua, "A map of New England," map, 1675. Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center, Boston Public Library.*

Adapt and Survive – The Arrival of Europeans

The depiction of native people varies wildly from artist to artist and is often informed by the time in which the artist lives, their personal experiences, and their perceptions of Indians. The two images below depict native leaders from the 17th century – Passaconway of the Pennacook people (left) and Ninigret of Rhode Island's Niantic people (right). Compare how the artists chose to portray each of these men. Keep in mind that while Ninigret's portrait was painted in the 17th century (during Ninigret's lifetime), the drawing of Passaconway was not made until 1856, nearly two hundred years after his death.



Image Left: Charles Edward Beals, Passaconway in the White Mountains, (Boston: R. G. Badger, 1916), pg. 22.

Image Right: "Native American Sachem," Anonymous, 17th century. Rhode Island School of Design Museum. This painting probably depicts more accurately what Passaconway would have looked and dressed like.

Adapt and Survive – The Arrival of Europeans

In 1675, Metacom's War (also called King Philip's War) raged across the region igniting tensions between native people and European settlers throughout the Massachusetts Bay Colony. As a result, even praying towns like Wamesit were not immune to violence and maltreatment. The colonial government forcefully removed the residents of Wamesit to Deer Island, located in Boston Harbor, where some Pennacook were sold into slavery in the West Indies. When released from captivity after the war in 1676, many of the remaining Pennacook fled north to avoid persecution.

“Petition of John Eliot Against the Sale of Indians.

To the Hon. Gov. and Council, sitting at Boston, this 13th of the 6th, 1675.

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF JOHN ELIOT

SHEWETH:

That the terror of selling away such Indians unto the Islands [West Indies] for perpetual slaves, who shall yield themselves to your mercy, is like to be an effectual prolongation of the war [Metacom's War], and such an exasperation of them, as may produce we know not what evil consequence upon all the land.

... When we came we declared to the world (and it is recorded) yea, we are engaged by our Letters Patent from the King's Majesty, - that the endeavor of the Indians' conversion, *not their extirpation*, was one great end of our enterprise in coming to these ends of the earth. The Lord hath so succeeded that work as that, by his grace, they have the Holy Scriptures, and sundry of themselves able to teach their countrymen the good knowledge of God. And however some of them have refuse to receive the gospel, and now are incensed in their spirits unto *a war against the English*, yet I doubt not that the meaning of Christ is to open a door for the free passage of the gospel among them.

My humble request is, that *you would* follow Christ's design in this matter, to promote the free passage of religion among them, and *not destroy them*....

“In 1675, the Indians (Oct. 27 and Nov. 4) had been provoked by English desperadoes who had repeatedly fired upon them, at Chelmsford and elsewhere, upon suspicion that the Wamesits had been guilty of burning a barn, by and for which some of the natives had been killed... As Philip's war progressed, the Wamesits at one time went away, deserting the station, leaving only some few old men and women here, too old to get away. Sad to relate, soon after the young Indians left, their wigwams at night were set fire to, and all those that remained perished. Their ashes, no doubt, are somewhere in this ground on which we tread.”

*Text Top: John Eliot, "Petition Against the Sale of the Indians," 1675, found in History of the Indian wars of New England by Robert Boodey Caverly, 1882.
Text Bottom: History of the Indian Wars of New England by Robert Boody Caverly, 1882. pgs. 74-76.*

Displaced but Not Destroyed – Native Perpetuity in the Northeast

Though the majority of the Pennacook people were pushed off the land that would become Lowell to make way for European settlers, native people continued to live in the Merrimack Valley throughout the 19th century. Even during the Industrial Revolution, as Lowell's factories began to generate enormous amounts of cloth and cash, native people returned to Pawtucket Falls to fish and trade. As visible reminders of the Pennacook disappeared and more native people integrated into new cultural lifestyles, many Americans falsely assumed that native people were a relic of the past and described them more like fossils or fairy tales than human beings.

“Some time every summer a fleet of canoes would glide noiselessly up the [Merrimack] river, and a company of Penobscot Indians would land at a green point almost in sight from our windows. Pawtucket Falls had always been one of their favorite camping-places. Their strange endeavors to combine civilization with savagery were a great source of amusement to us; men and women clad alike in loose gowns, stove-pipe hats, and moccasins; grotesque relics of aboriginal forest-life. The sight of these uncouth-looking red men made the romance fade entirely out of the Indian stories we had heard. Still their wigwam camp was a show we would not willingly have missed.”

“But at length the fishermen, for this was a fishing place, pulled up the bushes on the shore, for greater convenience in hauling in their seines, and when the bank was thus broken, the wind began to blow up the sand from the shore, until at length it had covered about fifteen acres several feet deep. We saw near the river, where the sand was blown off down to some ancient surface, the foundation of an Indian wigwam exposed, a perfect circle of burnt stones, four or five feet in diameter, mingled with fine charcoal, and the bones of small animals which had been preserved in the sand. The surrounding sand was sprinkled with other burnt stones on which their fires had been built, as well as with flakes of arrow-head stone, and we found one perfect arrow-head. In one place we noticed where an Indian had sat to manufacture arrow-heads out of quartz, and the sand was sprinkled with a quart of small glass-like chips about as big as a fourpence, which he had broken off in his work. Here, then, the Indians must have fished before the whites arrived. There was another similar sandy tract about half a mile above this.”

Text Top: Lucy Larcom, A New England Girlhood, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986) pg. 165.

Text Bottom: Thoreau, Henry David, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell company, 1911) pg. 156.

Displaced but Not Destroyed – Native Perpetuity in the Northeast

As the United States entered the 20th century, native people continued to live in and travel to Lowell. Many of people from a variety of tribal groups, including Penobscot and Micmac, set up temporary shops in Lowell to sell baskets made of natural materials and using traditional methods. Native people continued to encounter hardships, including discrimination and poverty, in cities across the Northeast.



This basket, made for sale in the 1960s by Penobscot artists in Maine, is similar to baskets that Penobscot, Micmac, and other native people travelled to Lowell to sell. Records exist of native basket makers selling wares in the city well into the 20th century.

FIGHTING SQUAW
—
Arrested in Merrimack Square

He is not just sure what his mother's original name was. He has always known her by the name of Brown. She sells baskets and so does he and in the summer they take in the beaches. He says that the woman is a full-fledged Micmac. She came to this city from Bathurst, N. B., and her father was at one time chief of the Micmac reservation at Burnt church, a reservation situated a few miles from the Miramichi bay in New Brunswick.

Marlow says that his mother-in-law is not in the habit of getting drunk. She left home, 32 Bridge street, this morning with an armful of baskets and it was evident that she exchanged them for firewater. He does not know anything about the white man going away with her daughter and he believes she used that as a subterfuge to talk with the officers.

TRANSCRIPT

“He is not just sure what his mother’s original name was, He has always known her by the name of [Mary] Brown. She sells baskets and so does he and in the summer they take in the beaches. He says that the woman is a full-fledged Micmac. She came to this city [Lowell] from Barthurst, N. B. [New Brunswick, Canada], and her father was at one time chief of the Micmac reservation at Burnt church, a reservation situated a few miles from the Miramichi bay in New Brunswick.

Marlow says that his mother-in-law is not in the habit of getting drunk. She left home, 32 Bridge street, this morning with an armful of baskets and it was evident that she exchanged them for firewater [alcohol]. He does not know anything about the white man going away with her daughter and he believes she used that as a subterfuge to talk with the officers.”

*Image Top: National Museum of the American Indian.
Text Bottom: “Fighting Squaw Arrested in Merrimack Square,” The Lowell Sun, (Lowell, MA). Jan. 26, 1903. The author uses the terms “squaw” and “firewater” to make fun of Mary Brown. Neither words are acceptable for use today.*

Displaced but Not Destroyed – Native Perpetuity in the Northeast

Today, the Greater Lowell Indian Cultural Association (GLICA) seeks to preserve and celebrate native heritage by hosting events that bring people of native descent together to practice song, dance, and trade. They also work with other local organizations to educate and provide services for the community.



27th ANNUAL MID-WINTER POWWOW

Held in the Gymnasium in Bldg. 4
200 Springs Rd.
Bedford, Massachusetts

*** January 20th, 2018 ***

Co-Hosted by the Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital and
The Greater Lowell Indian Cultural Association.

Public Invited:	ADMISSION IS FREE!!
Gymnasium opens:	10:00 am
Grand Entry:	12:00 noon
Closing Ceremonies:	5:00 pm

NO DRUGS, WEAPONS, OR ALCOHOL ALLOWED

This is a family orientated gathering of Native People who come together for Drumming, Dancing, Singing, and Trading. We invite you to come and share our culture and heritage with us. Please come and join us in our celebration.

Handicapped Accessible

For further information please contact the following:

Chief Tom "Eagle Rising" Libby	(978) 551-2203
Kodah Ashe	(978) 908-7574
Dawn "Quiet Rabbit Seeking" Libby	(978) 270-0879



VA HEALTH CARE
Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital
BEDFORD VA
200 Springs Road, Bedford, MA 01730



*Image Left: Courtesy of GLICA Facebook page.
Image Right: Courtesy of GLICA Facebook page.*