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Compiled and Narrated
by
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for
The Two Hundredth Anniversary
of the
Town of Merrimack NH

EPISODE 3 - Presented by Souhegan Lodge #98 I.O.O.F., Reeds Ferry NH

Passaconaway's last speech

March 8, 1662 The first mention of this territory among written records was the "Petition of Passaconaway" to the Gen. Court of Mass. for a grant of land, April 9, 1662.

Laid out

April 3, 1662 Picture if you can this aged Chief reduced to such extreme poverty, that he had to ask Eng. thru (sic) Gov. John Endicott and the Eng. Court, for a place to pitch his wig-wam.

The Court granted his request and Passaconaway and his followers were given a piece of land north of the Souhegan, 1-1/2 miles wide and 3 miles long on both sides of the Merrimack River. This was surveyed by three men sent by Mass. Gen. Ct -- the Indians paying the cost of surveying. The grant also included two islands (Nunnehaha and Minnewawa) in the Merrimack River nearly opposite Reeds Ferry.

Here he and his descendants lived until the White man swept him from the land. Here in this locality, he no doubt held his War Councils and wielded his mighty power. Many an arrow-head or Indian relic has been dug up in this Town and no doubt they belonged to the Souhegans; a branch of the Penacooks tribe; of the Algonquin Nation.

All the Indians between Lowell and Concord belong to the Penacooks, and were ruled by Passaconaway. These Indians regarded him with awe, as his reputation for wisdom and cunning was well known among all the Tribes of the East.

He was ever for peace with "The Whites," and he held almost unbounded influence over his followers. They believed he had a secret alliance with Nature; and that it was in his power to make water burn, and trees dance. They supposed he could change himself into flame and that he could darken the Sun and the Moon, and in consequence of these attributes the Indians regarding him with veneration.

Unlike Philip, Passaconaway was friendly to the "Whites," or English. This may have been policy as he saw the Eng. were gradually crowding the Indians.

1685 In the end, he deeded or submitted to the English, all his lands, people and possessions as the records show. This peace was kept, and he commanded his son Wonnolancet that he should always keep it.

1662 About 20 years before his death, when he had just passed the

century mark, he called his chiefs together for his last speech to them; and as he stood there before them on that fair spring morning, he without doubt presented the most picturesque figure that ever addresses a New Eng Audience. He is reputed to have uttered these words.

Speech

"Hearken to the words of your Father, I am an old 'Oak' that has withstood the storms of more than a hundred winters. Leaves and branches have been stripped from me by the winds and ghosts; my eyes are dim; my limbs totter. I must soon die, and I must go the way of all flesh. I am not likely to see you to meet together any more. When young and sturdy I delighted in War. The whoop of the "Penacooks" was heard upon the Mohawk and none louder than "Passaconaways." The scalps upon the pole of my wigwam told the story of the Mohawk's suffering. I will now have this word of council with you, that you may take heed how you quarrel with the English. Hearken! The Eng. came, They found us few and weak. In vain did I try my arm against them; in vain my sorcery. I who can make the dry leaf live again; who dares the rattlesnake; and defies the thunder; who had communed with the "Great Spirit," can read the sign in the "falling leaf." Tho' you may do them much mischief, yet you will all be destroyed and rooted off the Earth if you do, for I was as much an enemy of the Eng as their first coming into these parts as any one what-so-ever; and did try in all ways and means possible to have them destroyed, at least to have prevented them from settling down here, but I could in no way effect it. Therefore I advise you never to contend with the English nor make war with them.

The "Great Spirit" says these words; and they must be true. We are few and helpless before them, We must bend before the storm! The winds blow hard! The 'Old Oak' tumbles! It's branches are gone! It's sap is frozen! It bends! It falls! The White Men are the Sons of the morning. The "Great Spirit" is their Father. His sun shines bright upon them. Peace! Peace with the white man is the command of the "Great Spirit" and the wish the last wish of Passaconaway. Never make war with them, As surely as you light the fires; the breath of Heaven will turn the flames upon you and destroy you. Listen to advice, It is the last I shall be allowed to give you, Remember it and live."