A Capital For New Hampshire.

I.

The Land of the Pennycooks.

Long before any settlers arrived on our New England shores, the fishing grounds from Cape Cod north to Labrador, were famous among European fishermen who made annual trips hither with rich returns. Adventurous sailors followed them and explored the bays and inlets along this coast and in 1622 a settlement was made by Englishmen at Odiorne's Phint-the first in present New Hampshire. These settlers purposed to develop the fishing industry and hoped for trade in furs with the Indians. This venture survived only a few years but neighboring ones at Dover Point and Strawberry Bank (Portsmouth) developed into the towns of today. These early settlements were financed by groups of Englishmen organized for the purpose, many of whom were Royalists and Church of England folk seeking wealts and fame.

Fess than two years after the settlement at Odiorne's Point, a group of Englishmen organized for settlement in New England but with very different purpose. They secured a grant of land extending from three miles south of the Charles river to three miles north of the Merrimack and west to the "South Sea" (Pacific Ocean). Only the coast of New England had been mapped by explorers and it was assumed that the Merrimack river followed a course consistently from west to east. When this error became known confusion resulted for the Massachusetts Bay grant was found to overlap grants made earlier in New Hampshire. The boundary was in dispute for more than a century-a dilemma aggravated by the fact that the settlers in the two areas had little in common except their English origin.

The pioneers in Massachusetts Bay arrived in I630 under leadership of John Winthrop and they were a part of the Puritan movement then sweeping England toward civil war and the execution of King Charles I. The spirit of these 300 pioneers was hatred of the immoral governmental

tyranny in England and the part played in that tyranny by certain dignitaries of the Church of England. Whole-hearted reformers, these pioneers "turned to the New World to redress the balance of the Old." No adventurers, they were substantial men of landed estates, the professional and middle classes—who had left much that they held dear for the sake of an ideal; hence a ruthlessness of spirit toward those who dissented from them. Compromise would be fatal to their spiritual concept.

Pioneer life in New England depended in no small degree, upon knowledge of and adjustment to the native Indians. The early settlers found themselves heighbors to the Pawtuckets who roamed northern and eastern New England. A component tribe was that of the Pennycooks who, with a man-power of four to five hundred warriors, controlled the Merrimack valley from Winnipesaukee to Pawtucket falls near present Dracut, Mass., with hunting grounds which stretched easterly to the Piscataqua river. Passaconaway, chief of the Pennycooks, was a leader both wise and able and he seems to have lost no time in approaching the white men who settled near his southern boundary. Among all the Indians of New England he was known as a great sagamore and with such a reputation he could not retire before the white invader.

Passaconaway was believed to have a power of sorcery granted to a chosen few by the Great Spirit and there is evidence that even the white men recognized a mysterious gift for they left a record that he was devil-possessed. In spite of such reputation as a "Powah" (Powow), the chief was consistently a good friend to the pioneers even though from fear, at times, they treated him and his with indignity. With his two sons he came under the influence of John Elliott who visited Pawtucket falls on a missionary trip and they became converts to the Christian faith.

Friendliness with the Indians opened up their trails in the Merrimack valley to the white men who began at once to trade with the natives.
One of the traders named Jenkins, must have given some provocation to
the savages for, during a trip in I632, he was killed by one of the Indians,

Passaconaway, honor as ever, delivered up the treacherous red man to the white authorities. John Elliott bore witness to the chief's excellent qualities and wrote that, although he hath been a great witche in all men's esteem, he himself had found Passaconaway a very wise and politic man.

During early trips up our valley, traders heard tales of a fortified place on a bluff overlooking a wide and fertile plain, through which the Merrimack followed so twisted a course that the Indians had called it Pennycook, or Crooked Place. This intervale was said to be a favorite planting ground for the tribe, and there they made their headquarters during the summer season until their crops of corn, beans, pumpkins and melons were harvested. As traders viewed Pennycook they carried back enticing reports of the place.

In 1638 Massachusetts men made a first official visit to Pennycook on a trip in quest of the source of the Merrimack. Passing Sugar
Ball bluff "in a Bote" their Indian guides rehearsed the legend of a
battle when, during one of the periodical raids by Indians from the
north, the Pennycooks had come near extermination. Unsuccessful in early
attacks, the enemy came down at harvest time in strong force and camped
on the site of Fort Eddy directly across the river from the Penbycook
fort at Sugar Ball. The local tribe had gathered its harvest and stored
it in plaited baskets against the walls of their fort and, with their
women and children safe inside, they accepted a state of siege with little misgiving. Sometimes the warriors sallied forth for a skirmish, without advantage, until the enemy devised a stratagem.

Crossing the river secretly, the Mohawks from the north surrounded the Pennycook fort in ambush while a single warrior acted as decoy and strolled across the plain below. The Pennycooks rushed out to capture him, leaving the fort at the mercy of the ambushed foe. No one, even among the local savages, knew who won the victory but evidence of the

the slaughter appeared for generations to come. Whenever floods ros or heavy rain washed down the sandy bluff, the white men who farmed the intervale found bones and skulls uncovered, grim proof of that pre-historic battle.

Such was the tale heard by the men who travelled up our river:

1638 as a surveying party. They went as far north as Weirs, long time fishing grounds for the Indians, and there they left a record cut in a granite rock. Favorable reports of the lovely fertile plains in out valley, multiplied through the years and in 1659, in recognition that "Pennicooke is An Apt place for a Township", the General Court of Ma achusetts considered a petition for a grant of land to people from Newbury and Dover. Other petitions followed till, in 1663, the General Court granted a plantation six miles square at Pennycook, to a group of Salem men. They built a trading house on the grant, but Indian war prevented settlement.

Troubled years of intermittent warfare brought a temporary composite between New Hampshire and Massachusetts and our province was content to combine its government with the latter for better protection against the savages. So feeble was the government of New Hampshire doing most of the 17th century that the only enterprise in Pennycook under its protection seems to have been a trading post maintained by Capt. Richard Waldron and Peter Coffin on the east side of the river and near the old Indian fort at Sugar Ball.

In I668 two Englishmen stationed at this trading post, sent two Indian servants to Waldron and Coffin at Piscataqua, to bring back guns, powder, shot and cloth to trade for furs. The Indians returned with a load of cloth and rum. The Englishmen, desirous only of trade dispensed the rum freely and it is said that a hundred Indians drank steadily for a day and a night. The marvel is that all save one left the trading post peaceably after the orgy, but that one savage lurked about until one of the white men left the post on an errand to the

nearby fort, whereupon he attacked and killed the lone man at the trading post. To the great credit of the Indians, they themselves condemned the guilty man and he was shot the following day. Tahanto, one of the Penny-cook cniefs, used his influence nobly and sought to persuade the traders to bring no more rum to Pennyscook since, as he said, "It would make the Indians all one Devill."

In those days, Passaconaway, exceedingly old, had given the leadership of the tribe to his son, Wonolancet, who continued the honorable
tradition of his father in dealing with the white men: this despite frequent suspicion and injustice directed against the Indians. Greatly reduced
in numbers through war and pestilence, the Pennycooks moved their headquarters away from this valley and became a wandering and unorganized
people. Only a few remained in Pennycook to see the white settlers claim
the old-time dominion of their tribe. Kancamagus, last chieftain of the
Pennycooks, was a grandson of Passaconaway but he proved unworthy of his
heritage. On pretence of fear of a Mehawk attack, he led his warriors eastward in 1685 and entered into a peace agreement with the white men. Then
he joined in a treacherous Indian conspiracy and the attack upon Dover
with the massacre of a number of white men, followed. One of the victims
was Maj. Waldron, the Pennycook trader.

The year I697 records the first white women known to have lodged in Pennycook, and that under duress. In bleak March of that year, northern Indians came down through our valley and raided Haverhill, Mass. and carried Hannah Dustin and the nurse who had been tending her and her new born babe, into captivity. On the return trip, the savages made camp on the little island at the mouth of the Contoocook river and there Mrs. Dustin carried through her bold plan for escape. Down the Merrimack on their flight, the two women and a captive white boy paddled their canoe under the very walls of the deserted fort at Sugar Ball and, in due time, reached Haverhill in safety.

After an interval of nearly thirty years, the first white settlers

came to Pennycook and their record mentions only two Pennycook warriors left in the neighborhood-Pehaungun on the east side of the river and wattanummon on the west side. Wattanummon's land lay along the brook still called by his name and the white men found him setting his eel pots in the brook while his squaws cultivated the crops of corn and beans and cut his scanty hay. His wigwam stood on a little knoll south of the brook and closely east of the highway bridge which now crosses the brook. This kholl has been leveled off for the railroad track, but in the old days it was reputed to be the one spot in the vicinity never submerged by flood.

Now and then traces of the Indian life of ancient times have been found in our townaship. As late as the year 1855, when the cellar was dug for the house at 36 Penacook St., an Indian grave was uncovered about ten by fifteen feet in size. Within lay the skeletons of nine bodies and the local authority of the day.Dr.William Prescott, identified them as a male of great stature, two females and sixyouths or children. Each skele = tion was enclosed in a case composed of several thicknesses of pitch pine bark except that one of the females was wrapped with a babe on either side. These skeletons lay. each upon its right side with head toward the south and with face toward the east and rested upon the right hand.Perhaps this was the grave of a mighty warrior chief who with his entire family was wiped out in the plague of I6I2 which is known to have ravaged New England before the white man ever settled along our coast. This grave was a tangible link between the Concord of 1855 and the days when the proud Pennycooks lived, loved, hunted and battled in this fair valley of the Merrimack.

A much more detailed account of the local Indians may be found in the Lyford History of Concord, in the chapter entitled "Aboriginal Occupation" by Amos Hadley.