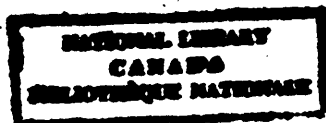


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Abenaki, translate the term by *point du jour*." In Judge Charles Gill's "Notes sur de vieux manuscrits abénakis," occurs a passage which confirms, while adding to, that derivation. The late Father Vetroville, who had been a missionary to the Passamaquoddy and Penobscot Indians, claimed, Mr. Gill says, that the word *Abénaki* signified, in the dialects both of New England and Acadia, "our ancestors of the east," being derived from *wanb* (white, the dawn) and *naghi* (ancestors). In Abbé Cuoq's recently published "Lexique de la langue algonquaine," *Wabanaki* is made to signify "la terre du levant." It seems fairly reasonable to conclude from such a consensus of evidence that *Wabanaki* is the correct form of the name.

As the *Missabos* or Giant Rabbit legends form an important portion of the Wabanaki folklore, it may not be out of place to mention that Dr. Brinton traces that cycle of stories to the resemblance between *wabos* (a rabbit) and *waban* (the dawn). "Here," he writes, "we are to look for the real meaning of the name *Missabos*. It originally meant the Great Light, the Mighty Seer, the Orient, the Dawn—which you please, as all distinctly refer to the one original idea, the Bringer of Light and Sight, of Knowledge and Life. In time, this meaning became obscured, and the rabbit, whose name was drawn probably from the same root, as in the northern winters its fur becomes white, was substituted and so the myth of light degenerated into an animal fable."

The Wabanaki comprise the Micmacs of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, the Abenakis of St. Francis and Becancour, and the Penobscot and Passamaquoddy Indians of Maine. This north-eastern branch of the far-spreading Algonquin family is of great historic interest, not only for the part it has played in the post-Columbian annals of North America, but as having probably preserved in its legends and traditions the traces of intercourse with the Northmen who came to the New World many centuries before the time of Columbus. Attracted thither in 1882, in his search for myths and folklore, Mr. Charles G. Leland did not expect to make any notable discoveries in the Passamaquoddy district. But to his amazement, he found there a far grander mythology than any which had hitherto been recorded among the Indians of the north. He found that the number of their stories was virtually endless, and that most of them were of great antiquity. They had all originally been cast in poetic mould, and the strangest feature in connection with them was the evidence which they furnished of affinity, on the one hand, with the myths of the Eskimo, of the Finns, the Lapps and the Samoyeds, and on the other, with the Eddas and the Sagas of the Northmen.

Mr. Leland has published the result of his researches in a delightful and instructive volume, "The Algonquin Legends of New England; or, Myths and Folklore of the Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot tribes." In his preface, he mentions among those to whom he was largely indebted for assistance, Mrs. W. Wallace Brown, of Calais, Maine, from whom he received a great proportion of the most curious folklore of the Passamaquoddies, especially of such parts as are connected with the Edda. In his list of authorities we find, under the head of "Books, Manuscripts, etc.," "a manuscript collection of Passamaquoddy legends and folklore, by Mrs. W. Wallace Brown, all given with the greatest accuracy as narrated by Indians, some in broken Indian-English." Under the head of "persons" consulted in the preparation of the book we find the name of "Sapiel Selmo, keeper of the Wampum Record, formerly read every four years at the kindling of the great fire at Canawagha.¹"

¹ Caughnawaga, near Montreal.