

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

The Mohican of Stockbridge. By Patrick Frazier.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6097z2mf>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 19(1)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Weinstein, Laurie

Publication Date

1995

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Despite the problems highlighted above, *Loud Hawk* is worthwhile reading for those who are interested in American Indian activism, the FBI, and the American Indian Movement, and, specifically, for readers interested in the treatment of Indian people by the court systems in the 1970s.

Troy R. Johnson
California State University, Long Beach

The Mohican of Stockbridge. By Patrick Frazier. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992. 307 pages. \$12.95 paper.

The Mohican of Stockbridge is a meticulously researched and detailed account of the history of the Indians at the Stockbridge mission. The author, Patrick Frazier, attempts to paint a picture of Mohican history from varied perspectives by incorporating views from Indians, colonists, missionaries, militia, and government officials. The picture that emerges is, as Frazier states, "a sometimes tragic but ultimately triumphant story of a people who were nearly last of the Mohicans."

The book covers the Mohican or Mahican Indians, a number of small interconnected groups who lived between the Hudson River in eastern New York and western Connecticut. Frazier clarifies the term *Mohican* in his preface by indicating that it is the traditional English label, while the term *Mahican* is the Dutch label and subsequent ethnological identification for these Indians.

Although Frazier prefaces his Mohican history with a discussion of the contact period and the Indians' encounter with Henry Hudson in 1609, most of the story takes place in the eighteenth century between the years 1734 and 1785. During this time, the Mohican were heavily missionized, and the Christian community of Stockbridge was established in western Massachusetts. Frazier begins the narrative with a 1734 council meeting between several Mohican villages and their leaders, Konkapot and Umpachenee. The meeting was called to consider the new religion and whether the Mohican would adopt Christianity. By this time, the Mohican already had been devastated by intermittent wars with the Mohawk, the French Canadians, and their allied Indians. Land loss and disease had also taken its toll.

The Mohican people turned to Christianity because they felt squeezed by competing European and Indian powers, and Chris-

tianity seemed to protect Europeans from the diseases and other misfortunes that had plagued the Mohican. Their mission was established by John Sergeant, a missionary from the Corporation for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England and Parts Adjacent. Frazier comments that Sergeant was small and frail, with a dead hand, and he contrasted sharply with the tattooed and muscular Mohican men he had been sent to save.

Sergeant labored diligently, along with his assistant, Timothy Woodbridge, to minister to the Mohican. Several English families were sent to Stockbridge to be role models for the Indians. Yet Frazier indicates that, despite the seemingly good intentions of the colonists, the English used the Stockbridgers for acquiring land. Konkapot may have understood these dishonorable English ways. He wanted to make clear that, when he chose Christianity, he was also choosing to be subject to the laws of the Massachusetts Bay colony: He wanted his people to be given the same legal guarantees that other Englishmen had received. Konkapot's dreams were not fulfilled. Frazier exposes the ulterior motives of many of the English people who settled with the Indians. For helping to lay out the township, the Englishmen received huge allotments of land. The timber alone from these tracts was worth a fortune. As Frazier sadly notes, these land allotments were an investment in their own, not the Mohicans', future.

After discussing the establishment of the town, Frazier explains the differences between the Moravian and Presbyterian (Stockbridge) missions and the competition that ensued for Indian souls. The irony of this competition is that it was all in European minds; the Indians themselves often traveled between the interrelated communities, compared notes, and told stories.

The French and Indian War (and the conflicts that led up to it) and the Revolutionary War figure strongly in Frazier's history. He describes how the Mohican were wooed with empty promises to join their English, and then their colonial brethren to fight for others' causes. The Mohican lost many men in these wars, but, despite their bravery, the whites broke their promises to protect Indian lands. In addition, the Indians were used as pawns in a land-greedy chess game between New York and Massachusetts. Both colonies allowed tenants to squat on Mohican lands. When the Stockbridgers complained to Massachusetts, that colony simply settled the matter by proclaiming all Stockbridge claims null and void.

It is difficult to read this book without becoming outraged. Countless times the Mohican people were pressed into service for English causes, only to have their loyalty and friendship toward the English ignored and their lands and lives taken from them. Despite Konkapot and Umpachenee's strongest hopes for their people, the Mohican dreams were shattered at Stockbridge. In the late eighteenth century, the Stockbridgers abandoned their mission and moved further west to Oneida and then on to Wisconsin in the early nineteenth century.

Frazier's story is similar to many recent revisionist histories (e.g., Francis Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 1975; Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 1982; and Karen Kupperman, *Settling with the Indians*, 1980): Europeans venture to North America; Indians help the poor Europeans survive; Europeans promise the Indians land and support in exchange for Indian lands and support; Europeans take Indian lands and lives. Like these and other histories, Frazier's account tries to show that the Indians were not hapless, mute victims. Led by wise men such as Konkapot and Umpachenee, the Indians weighed options and chose strategies, albeit their options eventually resembled "choosing deck chairs on the Titanic."

The Mohican at Stockbridge is a valuable addition to New England studies. Not only does it play a part in revisionist histories, but it also fills a gap in the literature about the Indian communities along the borders of New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. These communities have not been well-described. Further, few recent studies, other than Marion Mochon's *Stockbridge-Munsee Cultural Adaptations: 'Assimilated Indians'* (1968), have examined the Stockbridge community.

My criticisms of Frazier's work are small in comparison to the great work he has done. He tries to pack so much detail into his story that the reading is difficult to follow at times. I found myself flipping pages back and forth in order to follow his complicated, evolving history. Also, I wished he had said a little more about the religious revivalism, the "Awakening," of the early eighteenth century. This movement championed religious conversion throughout New England and provided support for Sergeant's nascent community.

Laurie Weinstein

Western Connecticut State University