

Just now I am trying to copy out my notes on the names of beasts, birds, fishes, etc in Algonkin. I have many notes taken in past years from Indians, both Penobscot and Quoddy, and also the meaning and analysis of the words where the Indians themselves had a meaning. To these, in as many different spellings by other workers-- like Montague Chamberlain, Rand, Kellogg, Tenislas, Woklihai, and others-- I am adding notes on the same animal from cognate dialects whenever I can find a form and so hope to collect a lot of material that needs assembling. I think it will be of value; partly because of the new material from Indians, partly because I know the subject so well. My grandfather and father were dealers in raw furs, buying directly of the hunters, so that I actually have handled every fur-bearing animal that ever came into Maine, not by the single skin but often by the thousand every year for all my childhood and youth. (I am speaking literally of "handling". My father shipped his furs directly to London and I used to help him in the work of baling the great bales.) Then my brother and son collected and studied all the small mammals, like weasels, mice, moles and shrews, so that I know them. In birds I began when I was twelve years old to help my father in his great bird-collection and for thirty-five years worked with him as a practical taxidermist and collector of all North American species and sub-species of birds. I knew all the Indian, and fishermen's names for them, and can identify correctly anything which is mentioned by a vernacular name or even half-way described. I was fairly well drilled also in insects, fishes and plants, so that I hope, if I live to finish this list, to make something which will be authentic and not local. It will, however, be quite a job to complete, and I shall probably suspend work after the notes are copied out for security until I do another book on the Neptune Family and Indian magicians, for which much interesting material is garnered. Old Governor John Neptune was a lifelong friend of our family and a great "witch" according to the Indian belief. I have, however, to show how they telescoped history in giving him his reputation. Last summer I took an old Indian with me to the place where he is reputed to have fought the great water-monster, and with topographical map spread out made the Indian show me every detail connected with the story, which they still firmly believe. (You never get quite to the back of an Indian's mind! There is always a wild hinterland in their thinking.)

This is very first-personal-- more so than I intended, but I got to thinking to myself, wondering how much autobiography would have to go with these studies in order to give weight to the dicta of an entirely unknown and unregarded person; for unluckily some who have long been regarded as authorities, knew very little of what they were talking about. But I do know.

Sincerely,

Farrin W. Eckstein