Maine
Living Lore
Old Town - 32

Maine 1938-9

(The Life of Henry Mitchell, Indian Canoe Maker)

(As usual, Henry was finishing up his work for the day at the island school where he is the janitor when I got over there.)

Mrs. Mitchell: "I think the Indians nowadays eat about the same foods that the whites do, and prepare them in about the same way, but of course in olden times they didn't. There's a process of hulling corn, though, that was used by Indians long ago that we use even now. I prepare some every year and we like it very much here. You put some hardwood ashes in water on the stove to boil, and when the ashes (it may have been the water, but I think she said the ashes) turn yellowish, the water can be drained off into another kettle and the corn is put into that and boiled until the kernels come out of the hulls. Then after the kernels are washed many times they can be heated up for the table. They're especially good cooked with beans that have been soaked and parboiled. I think the hulled corn they sell in the stores is prepared with soda.

"They used to have a way of cooking bread in hot ashes, too. They would mix some flour and water together and let it ferment in the sun, and they'd use some of that mixture with salt, soda, and more flour in making loaves. They used to put these loaves in hot ashes and they'd rise and bake to make a very nice bread. I've eaten bread cooked in that way and it tastes very nice.

"They used to use bone marrow in place of butter, and Ivy leaves to make tea. They would cut moose meat with the grain and hang it up in the hot sun over a fire to dry and smoke. Fish was dried in the same way. Berries were preserved by putting a layer of them on a piece of birch bark, and then making alternate layers of bark and berries."

(While Mrs. Mitchell talked she was working on a small birch bark trinket used to carry a tiny papoose and placed on the back of an Indian woman doll. She afterward gave it to my boy. Henry, who seemed to be in a very happy frame of mind, came in just then and explained to the boy that what his wife was making was used by Indian women in place of baby carriages. He said the Indian women had no trouble getting about the forest with those things on their backs, whereas it might not have been so easy with a baby carriage. "They could hang that right up on a tree," he said, "out of the way of snakes, and the baby would go to sleep standin' up." Mrs. Mitchell was having trouble with the bark which had a tendency to split when she punched holes in it for a lacing. I suggested that perhaps if the bark were wet it wouldn't split so easily, but she said wetting it didn't seem to help any although heating it up did. The trouble, she said was due to the type of bark which was silver birch. The bark from gray birch trees was much easier to work with, she said.

"This bark, sonny," she said to the boy, "has to be gathered at a certain time of the year - when the raspberries are ripe. It peels off then easily, but after that it seems to tighten up on the trees. My brothers were out once gathering some bark, and they took half an hour off for lunch. When they went back to work they found the bark had tightened up just in that short time, and they had to stop work."

Henry: "Well, I see our Redkins (former basketball champions of Maine) got a raw deal in Portland. Some of the boys from here went over to see the game, and they said the referee ought to be the champion instead of Tom's Lunch. Those officials were doin' a good job, too, they said, right up to the time Applebee shot that basket that should have won the game. Probably they saw that the time was runnin' out, and if they didn't do something the home town boys would be on the short end. I'd like to see those teams play on a neutral floor with officials that wouldn't favor either side.

"That trip'll cost the Redskins quite a lot if they go to Atlanta. If ten of them go it's gein' to cost them $1000.00 for the trip. What Sam Gray ought to do is to buy that team and call them the Old Town Canoeists, and give them a check for $1000,00 to go to Atlanta. The only hard part for Sam would be parting with the check." (Gray, who runs the Old Town Canoe Shop, isn't highly regarded by Henry.)

"I can't remember anything unusual that happened when I went to school here, but I remember something about the school. It was only half as large as it is now, and they had red benches four feet long instead of the desks they have now. They had an old fashioned box stove, that took a stick two feet long, instead of the furnace they have now. We used to take turns as janitor: one boy would work for one week, and another boy the next. Some of the bigger boys cut holes in the floor when they had the janitor job, so they could spit tobacco juice through the floor.

"When I was thirteen years old my brother and I drove a pair of horses for my father. We were so small that we had to stand on boxes to harness the horses. My brother was lame so the hardest part of the work fell on me. One of those horses was named Gingerbread, and the other Dandy,and they weighed about 1600 pounds apiece. We hauled wood in the winter time, and sometimes it was hard work for the snow was four feet deep in places. That was government wood that was supplied to members of the tribe. We got it on the upper end of the island and sometimes on Orsan Island.

"We were haulin' some wood once for John Nelson and when we were comin' up the hill here our sled slipped off the road and got bogged down in the snow. Dandy fell over and we couldn't get him up. We saw Peter Susep up at the top of the hill with his team of oxen, and we hollered to him to come and help us out. He unhooked his oxen and drove them down, and he managed to get Dandy up.

He hooked his oxen on in front of our horses and gave them a lick with a long stick he had. They started up that hill at a great rate, but our whiffletrees stuck out at each side beyond our sled, and one of them hooked into a leg of old Susep's overalls and the oxen dragged him to the top of the hill before he could stop them. I never heard such swearin' before or since. Old Susep was swearin' in Indian and English. It was funny, but we didn't dare to laugh or Susep would probably have scalped us he was so mad. We had hollered to him to look out for the whiffletree, but he was so deaf he didn't hear us.

"We used those horse, too, to plow for the Indians. We were always pretty tired at night after that work because we did it after school hours. We snared rabbits when we were kids, with picture wire, but that wouldn't be allowed now on account of the law. What I liked to do most when I was a kid was to play football and baseball. Sometimes I got a lickin' from my mother when I got home late from playin' ball after school if I had my clothes torn.

"Several times during the vacation seasons I worked on the boom raftin' logs for fifty cents a day. We had a chance to save wood there besides. There was always a lot of drift wood, stumps, and short pieces of logs that were no good to the mills that came down with the drives and got mixed up in the jam at the boom. On long drives there were places where the logs got hung up in a jam, and they had to blow them with dynamite. Those blasts always spoiled some waste stuff into rafts, and on Sundays we'd float it down home to the island.

"I was up there once when a circus came to Old Town, and my chum asked me to go with him. He said he intended to take his own girl, and he promised to get one for me. A fellow named Alfred was the paymaster, and we borrowed some of our pay from him, and got permission from Gene Mann to go down to for the day. I'd been wearin' calked shoes all week, of course, at my work, and when I came to look for my regular ones, I found that some one had stolen them. My chum says, 'Never mind, I'll let you take a pair of mine.' He let me take a pair

of his shoes, but they were two sizes too small for me and I could just about get them on. Nobody was goin' down in a boat that morning, and we walked all the way from Nebraska to Old Town. (For some reason one of the booms was named "Nebraska"). That was eleven miles, but it seemed more like 111 to me with those tight shoes. We left at seven in the morning and we got down around noon.

"My chum couldn't find his girl, but after he got settin' down in that circus tent he saw her with some one else. I told him he was a nice one to get a girl for me when he couldn't even keep his own. We had to get along without girls, but we ate a lot of peanuts that day.

"That was an awful walk back. I had to carry my shoes in my hand most of the way, and we didn't get back to Nebraska until four the next morning. While we were waitin' for a boat to take us over (Nebraska boom was on an island) we fell through the rafted logs we were standin' on and got soakin' wet. (Sometimes the "swings" of rafted logs were tied up at the opposite shore to await a time when the mills could handle them.)

"We had just an hour's rest in our bunks before it was time to turn out for breakfast, and we were so sleepy that day that we had to take turns raftin' each others logs while of us laid down back in the bushes to rest. Gene Mann came along once when I was comin' out of the bushes to take my turn and he says, 'The circus don't seem to agree with you, Henry."

"The only bad accident I can remember didn't take place when I was working anywhere, but it happened when I was out for a good time. There were some U.S. war vessels down at Bar Harbor, and a friend of mine, Frank Loren, and I went down on an excursion train to see them. There were a lot of people on that train, and I told Frank that we'd better get up ahead so that we'd be among the first to get on the ferry boat. Frank and I were right in front on the slip when the boat pulled in, and we two and a girl I didn't know jumped for it. Just as we jumped I heard a crash behind me and the end of the slip went

up so that we all slipped and fell on the deck of the boat. That old wooden slip had broken and all of a hundred or more people went down into the water. There was no chance of any of those people swimmin' back under the pier because it was all boarded up where the slip was. There were a hundred people - men, women, and children - down in that hole, fightin' and screamin' and crying. I always thought that Robbins that used to be the publisher of the Enterprise (Old Town Weekly newspaper) was just a big blowhard, but he certainly played the hero that day. He got a rope around his waist and got people to lower him into that hole so he could help people to get out. He saved a lot of them. There were a lot of them down underneath, though, that nobdoy could reach and they were drowned. Some of those people when they got them out were naked - even their shoes were gone. There must have some awful fightin' down there. They have to make those ferry slips of iron now so an accident like that couldn't happen. I saw sixty wooden boxes, with dead people in them, stacked up on the wharf like cordwood. Before that the dead had been laid out in rows, and people went around among them to see if they could indentify any of them. That happend at Bar Harbor about thirty years ago.

"I never cared much about reading when I was a young fellow. My amusements were playin' ball, fishin', swimmin', and skatin'. About all I read now is the Portland Press. That's a better paper than the News. (Bangor) I used to read a few books and magazines like the Saturday Evening Post, about nothing worth mentionin'.

"My mother killed a deer once with an ax. It was about this time of the year (late in February), and she saw a young buck over by a fence, near her home, in some deep crusty snow. She went over with an ax from the shed and killed it. Just us young people were home and we helped her to drag it over to the house and dress it. A little while after we got through three Indian fellows came along, Frank Newell, Charlie Damien, and Charles Toman. They told us that they

had wounded that deer and that they had been chasin' it all day. They asked my mother if she wanted the skin and she said all we wanted was the meat. They told her then if she'd let them take the deer home so they could get the skin to make snowshoes - they used to make a lot of snowshoes around here - they'd bring back the meat. That was quite a while ago, but I haven't seen any of that meat yet."

Mrs. Mitchell: "Henry or I aren't superstitious, but the old Indians were. I remember a story my mother told me about an old woman they saw in the street - wasn't that before the cholera epidemic , ma?" (I forgot to mention that Mrs. Mitchell's mother had dropped in for a visit while we were talking.)

Mother: "Yes, but it was at Eastport they saw the old woman."

Mrs. Mitchell: "Oh yes. That old woman was seen walking up and down the street, they said, crying to herself. She wouldn't let any one come near her, and nobody knew who she was. The next day the cholera struck and a great many of the people died. I remember forewarnings coming as sounds in the sky. I can't give you the Indian word for that, but it means, Something Coming from Nowhere."

(Mrs. Mitchell's brother, Howard, who is something of an authority on local Indian folklore told me a lot of Indian folklore tales last summer when I was getting material for the Maine Guide. Some of those could be used in this study, I suppose. Henry and his wife don't seem to know any of them.) R.G.

Henry had always disclaimed the idea of any personal ambition, but with the idea of discovering one I discussed with him the radio program known as "If I Had The Chance." "Henry," I said, "If you were on that program and the gentleman in charge asked you the question he asks every one, 'What would you do if you had the chance?' What would you say?"

Henry: "Well, 'If I had the chance,' and plenty of money, I'd like to start a basket factory right here on the island and employ only Indians. I'd like to help my people in that way."

R.G.: "What about a furniture factory? Some one that Henry Buxton interviewed told him that a furniture factory would do well in Hancock County because there is plenty of hardwood there. Furniture is sold all over the country."

Henry: "Well, baskets are too. A lot of baskets are sold in this country. They even bring them in here from Canada. I don't think we'd have the experience to make furniture, but we do understand basket making. There are factories run by whites where they make baskets: we could do just as well if we had the money to get goin'. It's hard to get the right kind of wood here, though. We use brown ash in our baskets, and sometimes we have to send seventy miles to get it.

"If my wife had been feelin' well and the walkin' wasn't so bad, we would have gone over to see that picture at the Strand today. What was the name of that picture, Eva?"

Mrs. Mitchell: "It was 'Idiot's Delight,' with Norma Shearer and Clark Gable."

Henry: "Oh yes, Say that must have been an awful walk for you across that ice tonight. (The ice was covered with water and half frozen slush. I told Henry that if I'd known what it was like I would have stayed home.) There was a fine picture there last week - Jesse James. You should have seen it. Some people wanted to run a railroad across James land, and when James wouldn't sell or get out of the way, those people threw a bomb into his home and killed his mother. That's what started him as an outlaw. All the folks around there, though, liked him because he helped them out with the money he stole from people who could afford to lose it.

"We heard Bette Davis sing on the radio the other night. She's a fine actress and she won an award for givin' the best performance in the pictures last year. She and - Who was that?"

R.G.: "Spencer Tracy?"

Henry: "That's the fellow: Spencer Tracy. This Bette Davis was on the Kate Smith hour - we call her Aunt Kate. She wouldn't sing at all, but she told Kate that she always wanted to song on her hour. She sang a few verses and Kate says, "That's fine, Bette.'

"They used to have parties over here, but they don't seem to now. They usually played forfeit games. If you lost you had to kiss some girl, stand on your head, 'measure ten yards of ribbon,' or something like that. 'Spin the Pan' was one of those forfeit games. Some one would spin a dishpan or a big metal cover on the floor, and then they'd call a number. If your number was called you had to jump out of the crowd and grab that pan or cover before it went flat. If you didn't you had to pay a forfeit. If the forfeit was measuring ten yards of ribbon, the boy and the girl had to put their hands together and go through the motions of measuring ribbon. That always caused a lot of fun because every time they measured a yard their heads would be drawn together.

"The old Indians used to have a game something like 'Pick Up Sticks," but they used sticks six inches long make in the shape of paddles, oars, guns, arrows, and so forth. The game was to pick out one at a time without disturbin' the pile. They took turns, and whoever got out the most sticks, won. There was another game I don't kn w the name of, but they played it with a large dish, or bowl. That bowl had a lot of things like buttons in it that were flat on one side. On the other side each of them had a design representin' a bird, animal, a snake, or a fish. There would be crows, chipmunks, beavers, bear, deer, and so on. To play the game they put a pillow on the floor and they all sat around it. Each one of them would take the bowl in turn and lift it up and bring it down hard on the pillow. Those buttons all had different values and only the ones with the design showin' counted. They had no pencil or paper then, but they kept score with peboles of different sizes.

"Games like those wouldn't be fast enough for the young folks nowadays: they want something with more speed to it. Fifteen or twenty years ago they made a lot of canoes in the canoe shop and very few motor boats. Now they make a lot of motor boats, and most of the canoes they sell can be fitted with outboard motors."

Mts. Mitchell: "They're up to date enough over here to play contract bridge, and sometimes the young people play postoffice, but they seem to have forgotten all about the old fashioned party games."

Henry: "Bridge is something I can't talk with you about. I never played it and I don't know the first thing about it. (I told him that I didn't, either)

"Father used to have a camp up above Olamon on Sebois Stream. We used to paddle up there in canoes and it took us all day. It's about thirty miles from here to Sebois. They can go up there now in a car in less than an hour."

Mrs. Mitchell: "On one trip we started from here in the afternoon and slept overnight on a beach near Howland. The next morning we carried the canoe around the dam at Howland and went on to Sebois."

Henry: "I remember once we came back down past Passadumkeag where there's a long stretch of rips. The women got out and walked down along the shore. I was polin' down the rips and when I got down a ways I looked back to see how my chum was makin' it. He was up to his waist in water and walkin' along those slippery rocks with his canoe on his back. He carried his canoe nearly all the length of those rips. When we got by I asked him why he didn't use his pole and he said he broke it when it got caught between two rocks."

Mrs. Mitchell: "We took my grandmother up to Sebois once and she had a codfish that she wanted to keep fresh so she tied it the a thwart of the canoe and let it trail in the water."

Henry: "That was about the worst canoe trip I ever was on. We had a tent near my father's camp, and a day or two after we got there I was standin' near the tent flap and a red fox run out of the woods and came pretty near up to the tent. He just stood there a few minutes lookin' me over, and then he turned and ran back into the woods. I guess he knew I didn't have any gun. They told me a fox comin' around the camp was a sure sign of bad luck. That night the tent blew over and the next day the old lady was taken down with appendicitis and we had to bring her back to Old Town. We made the trip down in the canoe in twelve hours. They say if you hear a fox howl in the woods it's a bad sign.

"We never go berry pickin' here. Some of the Indians do, and they even come over here from the other side to pick berries, but I wouldn't know where to look for them."

Mrs. Mitchell: "I always get mine from the stores or from the children that sell them."

Henry: "You see in the summer and early fall we're pretty busy over here. That's our busiest time. Tourists come over then and we sell a lot of baskets. No time for berry pickin' then.

"I thought of two old Indian traditions the other day. Two Indians were out huntin' and one night when they were asleep in their camp one of them woke up feelin' something wrong. He looked over to where his companion was lyin' and he saw something leanin' over him and suckin' his blood. That figure was transparent and when the Indian woke up it started for the door. The Indian picked up his bow and arrow and shot at the thing when it was goin' out the door, but the arrow passed right through it. They said that was a forewarning of the cholera epidemic that came to this reservation. It was somethin' like the forewarning of the old lady crying in the street up on that reservation near Eastport.

"Another of those old stories was about a well up here in the woods near Lover's Leap that they call the 'Medicine Well.' When they had the cholera here an old man was walkin' up the street with a bucket to get some water from a well. He saw ahead of him another old man who beckoned to him to follow. This old man led the old Indian to the well we're talkin' about and pointed to the well and the bucket. The water was kind of milky lookin' but the old Indian filled his bucket and brought it back to the village. They said that every one who drank that water got over the cholera. Sonny (to the boy), come over here next summer with your brother, and we'll paddle up there and you can see that well and Lover's Leap."

(The Life of Henry Mitchell, Indian Canoe Maker)

(Friday evening when I called at the Mitchell house only their young daughter was at home. Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell had gone over to the Strand Theater to see Gunga Din. They had left early so as to be sure of a seat. Saturday evening when I got over to the island I met Henry coming down the street. He told me, however, that he was merely going to get a bottle of milk and that his wife and daughter were at home. He said to go right over and he would be back in ten minutes.)

Mrs. Mitchell: "I guess you'll have to excuse me. I said I'd have the Indian names of those two games for you the next time you came over, but I didn't get them. _____(I've forgotten the name of her daughter) go over to your grandmothers, will you, and ask her to write on this paper the names of that 'Toss the Ball' game and that one played with a bowl and cushion? (I advised against that, saying it was very icy on the streets, but the girl said she didn't mind that.)

"Did you see in the papers where the Indian representatives to the state legislature were trying to get an increased salary. The other representatives get $600.00, but the Indians get only $200.00. They say it's because they don't serve on committees, and so don't have to do so much work, but they're there all the time and they have to pay their expenses back and forth. Leo Shay says he doesn't have much left when he get through, and that while he's out there he can't do anything else. Leo could do that committee work just as well as any one, but the Indians aren't allowed to have a voice in state affairs because they aren't voters. All they have to do out there is to look out for the interests of the Indians. Just why the Indians shouldn't vote is something I can't understand. One of the Indians went over to Old Town once to see some official in the city Hall about voting. I don't know just what postion that official had over there, but he said to the Indian, 'We don't want you people over here. You have your own elections over on the island, and if you want to vote, go over there.

"The Bangor News had something about the Indian legislators the other day. I don't know whether you saw that or not. (She went into another room to get two clippings from the News. One of these told about the efforts of the Indian representatives to get increased pay. The Indians, the clipping said, were likely to get an increase of $200.00 rather than the $400.00 asked for. The other clipping from the G. and S column, said that the solons at Augusta had said that the Indian legislators didn't do as much work as the others and consequently didn't deserve as much pay. G and S, however, said that considering the sort of work the other lawmakers were doing, the Indians ought to get a salary of $10,000.00 a year, and vacations in Florida thrown in.)

"Leo (Shay) said there were only four people out there that were against that increase. All the others were in favor of it, and rather than vote against him, some of them walked out."

(The girl returned here with the two following Indian names:

Ol-la-day-hum-a-gan, Su-buck-ta-he-gun. The first of these, Mrs. Mitchell said , was the name of the Indian Dish Game, described in a previous interview; and the second, Subucktahegun, was the name of the game in which a ball, attached by a cord to a pointed stick, was tossed in the air. Each player had eight tries, and the winner was the one who could impale the ball on the stick the greatest number of times.)

"I remember an old Canadian folk lore tale my father told us when we were small.

"There was a girl up there who lived in a small village, and she was always dissatisfied with things. One night there was a dance in the village hall and she had no one to take her and no way of getting there. She stamped her foot on the floor and said to her mother, 'Oh I wish there was some one to take me to that dance tonight: I'd be willing to go with the devil himself.'

"Then they heard the sound of sleigh bells outside and a sleigh stopped at the door. There was an awfully handsome man in that sleigh - oh he was a handsome man. He knocked at the door and asked the girl if she would go with him to the dance.

"There was a good crowd there and very good music. That man danced with nobody but the girl, although a lot of the other girls tried to get his attention. By and by she noticed that people were looking down at her feet as she danced. The other couples began to draw away and avied them. They kept on dancing, though, and by and by all the couples except themselves had left the hall. Then the girl looking down discovered that her partner's shoes had changed to cloven hoofs, and when she tried to get away from him she saw that he had changed into a horrible looking person with horns growing from his forehead. Then, according to the old legend, the building sank down through the earth leaving a big hole where it had been."

(Henry returned here with the bottle of milk and told us about three drunken Indians he had seen while he was out. They were the same ones I had seen, earlier in the evening, in Old Town.)

Henry: "I saw three young fellows, pretty well soused down at the landing."

R.G.: "They must have been the three I saw over in front of Lunt's store. They had their arms around each other's shoulders. One of them had curly hair."

Henry: "That curly haired fellow seemed to be more sober than the rest. He was tryin' to get the other two home. If they don't get out of sight pretty soon, that new cop'll get a hold of them. I don't know how they ever got across that ice."

Mrs. Mitchell: "Do you know? I think we'd be better off without that PWA over here. I don't like to speak against my pwn people but I don't think we need that. The ones that ought to have the work aren't getting it, and a lot of young, unmarried fellows are working on there. There are six young fellows over here that are getting that work and two of them are Canadians. When they get they pay they go and spend it all for drink. They aren't supposed to sell that stuff to the Indians, but they get all they want just the same.

"Howard Ranco over here has a job as welfare agent for the island that he get $20.00 a week for. Then he's the superintendent or whatever they call it - on the project, and he gets $25.00 a week for that. They might give one of those jobs to some one else. Jimmie Lewis - he used to be governor here - has a job taking sick people down to the hospital, and he has two other jobs besides."

Henry: "I'd like to have a couple of more jobs to go with this little one of mine. There are three or four people workin' on WPA jobs over here that have cars. They aren't supposed to have cars on that job. My boy, Edwin, tried to get on there but they wouldn't look at him just because I have this little job as janitor. I see Roosevelt is tryin' to get a billion and a half more for WPA and if Congress wont give him that, they may lay off all the white collar workers. That means fellows like you, I suppose. I see Harry King (overseer of the poor, in Old Town) has a new car that he rides arouhd in. (The car is really an old model, second hand car.) I wonder if the taxpayers have to pay for that. I'll bet that fellow has a cellar full of federal food: him and some more people over there. They got rid of him once and put Hurd in there, but when Hurd died they put Harry right back on the job. They tell me he's lookin' ahead to the time when they get a new mayor there and they finally kick him off the job. He's tryin' to get that job of Indian agent. I hope he doesn't: he might be as crooked on that as he is on the one he has now."

Mrs. Mitchell: "Did you see in the paper where they said there was scurvy up in the Saint John Valley? Do you think that really was scurvy?"

R.G.: "The medical examiner seemed to think it was."

Mrs. Mitchell: "Yes, that old doctor that resigned has had a lot of experience, and I think he knew what he was talking about."

Henry: "Barrows didn't like that very well: it gave his administration a black eye. There's a lot of people up there not gettin' enough to eat. Those republicans up there would rather see the people starve than to have it said that federal food was coming in there. That Barrows would like to cover that stuff up if he could. Every time I pick up a paper I see a picture of him somewhere in it. He crowns a new potato queen every day, and when he's not doin' that, he's addressin' some old ladies' club."

Mrs. Mitchell: "Every one hates him out in Augusta."

Henry: "He's always sure of enough votes to elect him, though, from the potato queens he's crowned. The Republicans are knockin' Roosevelt, but I can't see where Barrows is anything to brag about. He's gettin' a good salary, but he'd hate to see the Indian representatives get $600.00 a year.

"There are people right now that aren't gettin' enough to eat over in Old Town. They threw a lot of hams away once over there. I saw those hams myself on the city dump on Main Street. Old Horace Burnham was takin' care of it then. They might have given those hams away to people, but they kept them until they spoiled. They had some sheepskin jackets, about big enough for this little fellow here, a few years ago and they got burned up in that fire that destroyed Keith's shoe store."

(While Henry was talking Mrs. Mitchell had got a strip of wood, such as is used to make baskets, from another room. She cut and bent this wood into a number of trinkets for the boy: horses, figures to ride them, dogs, tables, and chairs. She made them, I think, at the rate of about one a minute.)

R.G.: "I saw some Indian dolls over in a store window in Old Town. Were they made over here?"

Henry: "No, those are machine made. They make them in Japan, I guess, for a lot less than we could afford to make them for. I tell you what, though, fatty, (to the boy): when you come over here next week you can see a doll my wife is making for a lady. That Indian will have a big hat made of feathers; a buckskin coat, with a belt; some chaps, something like you ski pants; and moccasins on his feet. (Henry had a lot of fun explaining to the boy how to use the little figures Mrs. Mitchell had made.)

R.G.: "Do you folks know how Sunkhase Stream got its name?"

Henry: "No, I don't. Oak Hill, on the island here, has been called that a long time. When I was a boy I used to get a lot of acorns up there. They must have named that on account of the oak trees. Right across from here, on the Milford side, there's a big grove they used to call Hawthorn's Grove. I don't know why it was called that. (It was named for the man who owned it.)

R.G.: "What about the 'Cook' up here? Mike Pelletier said that was named for a fellow who used to tote wangan stuff up that way to the drives."

Mrs. Mitchell: "I don't think that is right. I think 'Cook' comes from an Indian word 'Ta Cook,' but I don't know what that means. Then there is the Jo Pease Rips. I used to ask my mother how that happened to be called 'Jo Pease,' but I forgot what she told me. I'll look those names up, and the next time you come over I can tell you."

Henry: "There's a lot of Indian names in Maine. 'Penebscot' means 'Long River.' Up near Passadumkeag there's a gravel bank that runs nearly across the river. That's what Passadumkeag means - 'shallow water, gravel bottom.' This Olamon up here: they call that 'Olemon, but the Indian word is 'Olamon.' That was named for the vein of 'olamon' that the Indians found in the earth there. The olamon was a kind of red ochre that the Indians used for war paint and to make themselves more attractive to the women. The women used it on their foreheads

after a mourning period was over. If a woman's husband died she remained in mourning for nine months. At the end of that time she put a little spot of this clamon on her forehead so people would know the mourning period was over."

Mrs. Mitchell: "How did your name get changed to 'Mitchell,' Henry: your family name used to be 'Swassin.'"

Henry: "It used to be a long time ago, but I don't know how they came to change it. Old grandfather Sockalexis used to go around here doctoring, and he had a boy that worked over in a drug store in Old Town. Right where the bank is now there used to be a drug store run by a fellow named Folsom, and across the street, where the First National store is now, next to Parlin's, there used to be a drug store run by a fellow named Marsh. Old Sockalexis left the recipe for a cold remedy at Marsh's, where his boy worked, so when he gave any one a prescription for it, they could get it filled there. When Marsh died the stock was sold and old Ballard up here got a hold of all the books and papers. That Ballard's Golden Oil that he puts out now is really the old Sockalexis Indian Cold Remedy."

R.G.: "Ballard made some money out of that."

Henry: "Well I guess he did. You remember that fellow they used to call 'Charlie Daylight' that used to run the ferry boat? He was an uncle of mine and his right name was 'Mitchell.' He had a brother named John Mitchell who worked up in the woods some. They called him 'Daylight,' too. The first year he worked up there he said he used to go around to the wangan to see if there was any mail for him, but they always said there were no letters. Just before he came down they found out his name was 'John Mitchell' and they handed him a whole batch of mail. He had been askin' for letters for 'John Daylight.'

"That 'Daylight' wasn't a nickname: it was the English transalation of John's Indian name - 'Chawahdis.' The Indians used to get names like that on account of a custom they had of naming children for the first thing the mother saw when she left the wigwam. It might be a flower, a deer, a bear, a cloud, or almost anything. That is how Indians got such names as 'Red Cloud,' 'Laughing Water,' 'Yellow Flower,' etc. There was a fellow out at Carlisle named 'Jesse Youngdeer.' I used to know a fellow from out west named 'Arthur Cornsilk.' Some of the Indians get some funny names out of that. Take that fellow out in Oklahoma. He's got a lot of money: they found oil on his land. His name is John Cucumber."

R.G.: "Well, I suppose we'll have to be getting home. You people will probably want to listen to the basketball game tonight."

Mrs. Mitchell: "No, we don't care about that: we've grown up."

Henry: "Oh I might listen to it a little while later on: it's Winslow and Cheverus, isn't it?"

Mts. Mitchell: "The next time you come over I'll have those names for you."

R.G.: "I thought last week I was about done coming here, for a while anyway, on account of that ice."

Mrs. Mitchell: "I guess if this weather keeps up you wont have to worry about that ice. When my girl was born - that was seventeen years ago - a lot of anchor ice had backed up above the dam, and they had to cut a channel through it so the doctor could get across. And that was in May!"