

TAX Just  
ON Wanna  
Native American  
O Have  
Mists Fun!  
Namebearers (Part 2)

by Harry Zirlin

More than ten years ago, my fourth article in this series was entitled “Native American Namebearers” (*American Butterflies* Vol. 3, No. 1 Spring 1995). In that column, I noted that in the mid-nineteenth century, the pioneering New England entomologist Moses Harris (for whom Harris’ Checkerspot is named) set upon the idea of naming skippers in honor of well-known Native Americans rather than the mythological or historical personages of Europe. This notion was embraced by other taxonomists such as S.H. Scudder and W.H. Edwards and soon there were many skippers named for the people that were here before the Europeans arrived. Among those discussed in my 1995 essay were Hobomok Skipper, *Poanes hobomok* (Harris 1862); Mulberry Wing, *Poanes massasoit* (Harris 1864); Indian Skipper, *Hesperia sassacus* (Harris 1862); Uncas Skipper, *Hesperia uncas* (Edwards 1863) Cobweb Skipper, *Hesperia metea* (Scudder 1864) and several others.

In that article I also noted that so many skippers were named for Native Americans that I would only treat some of them there and leave others for a future article. Well, the future is now. But in going through the scientific names of skippers, I

realize now how many skippers were named for Native Americans that I did not know about before. In this connection, it is notable that many everyday words we use have their origin in the languages spoken on the North American landmass before it was inhabited by the people who arrived after 1492. And remember, there is not, to my knowledge, any such thing as an “Indian word.” Rather, there are words in the Cree language, and words in the Choctaw language, etc. Some of these languages are related to each other the way French and Italian are related, and others are not. For example, the English word woodchuck has nothing to do with how much wood a woodchuck can chuck. The name is actually a corruption of the Cree word “wuchaka” which was that tribe’s name for the little varmints.

So, to pick up where I left off ten years ago, I discussed in Part I that the Wampanoag chief or sachem Massasoit of Mulberry Wing fame died in 1661 and that his son Metacom became sachem thereafter. What I did not tell you is that Metacom was also known as Metacomet and that the eastern subspecies of Dun Skipper *Euphyes vestris metacomet* (Harris 1862) was named for him. Actually Harris described *Euphyes metacomet* as a full



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Left: A female Dun Skipper (*Euphyes vestris metacomet*). July 10, 2005. Westchester Co., NY.  
Right: An illustration of a male Metacom.



species, unaware that *Euphyes ruricola* (now *Euphyes vestris ruricola*) from California had already been described ten years earlier.

Unlike his father Massasoit, who was a great friend of the white settlers (and indeed, without whom, it is doubtful that the settlers could have survived) Metacom (1640-76) who took the name “King Philip” upon his father’s death, led a futile resistance against the early settlers. He inspired a series of deadly attacks against the English settlements, though he never seems to have taken part in these attacks himself. The unrest and violence became known as “King Philip’s War.” Metacom sought alliances with other tribes to push back the English colonists but by 1676 these alliances had fallen apart. Eventually, a group of Mohawks allied themselves with the English in New York and attacked Metacom’s band of warriors. Metacom was shot to death on August 12, 1676 by a Mohawk serving with the colonial forces. He was decapitated and pieces of his head were sent to the various colonial capitals. There exists, however, a legend among descendants of the Wampanoag that his head was stolen back by his warriors and that it was buried in secret near Mount Hope, Rhode Island, the place where Metacom planned his

campaigns against the colonists. Indeed, Metacom’s spirit is said to still speak to those who can hear it. In any event, the death of Metacom ended all Native American resistance in southern New England.

Another chief who participated in King Philip’s War against the English was Quanopin also known as “Panoquin.” Scudder used this name for Salt Marsh Skipper, *Panoquina panoquin* (Scudder 1864) although the genus name was not created until 1934. Scudder actually named Salt Marsh Skipper *Hesperia panoquin*. Scudder, who seems to have had an affinity for Native American chiefs of a hostile bent (hostile to the English, in any event), named Northern Broken-Dash *Wallengrenia egeremet* in 1864 for Chief Egeremet who participated in the war that the tribes of Maine waged against the English between 1688 and 1697. Egeremet and other chiefs, assisted by French soldiers, attacked Storer’s garrison in Wells, Maine in 1692.

Another small dark skipper named after a Native American is Dusted Skipper *Atrytonopsis hianna*, (Scudder 1868). Hianna was also known to the early settlers as the sachem Yanno and he sold the town of Hyannis (also named for him) to the settlers in 1644. Indeed, the area may have once