



NEGOTIATING AT THE ONEIDA CARRY

WILLIAM J. CAMPBELL

ARTICLES of a TREATY,

Concluded at FORT STANWIX, on the twenty-second day of October, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four, between Oliver Wolcott, Richard Butler and Arthur Lee, COMMISSIONERS PLENIPOTENTIARY from the United States in Congress assembled, on the one Part, and the SACHEMS and WARRIORS of the SIX NATIONS on the other.

THE United States of America give peace to the Senecas, Mohawks, Onondagas and Cayugas, and receive them into their protection upon the following conditions.

Article 1. Six hostages shall be immediately delivered to the commissioners by the said nations, to remain in possession of the United States, till all the prisoners white and black, which were taken by the said Senecas, Mohawks, Onondagas and Cayugas, or by any of them in the late war, from among the people of the United States, shall be delivered up.

Art. 2. The Oneida and Tuscarora nations shall be secured in the possession of the lands on which they are settled.

HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY

PRESENTED TO FORT STANWIX NATIONAL MONUMENT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN HISTORIANS/NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Cover Image: The 1784 Treaty of Fort Stanwix. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Continental Congress & Constitutional Convention Broadside Collection.

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PREPARED UNDER COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT WITH
THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN HISTORIANS
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

MAY 2017

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Fort Stanwix National Monument

William J. Campbell, Ph.D.

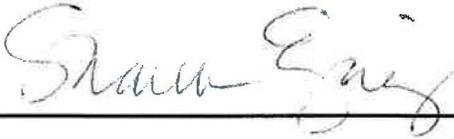
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A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The spelling and reference to indigenous terms, places, and people often provided as much of a challenge to the colonizers of North America as for present-day commentators. During the colonial and revolutionary periods, and in much of the nineteenth century, no standardization of transliterating indigenous words existed. Those people that left written records were always subject to varying degrees of influences based on their own language and culture, not to mention the linguistic differences among indigenous communities, tribes, and nations. With regard to capturing proper indigenous pronunciation, there were also inherent problems transliterating Indian language using the Roman alphabet. These factors contributed to a slew of linguistic complications and misnomers, both then and now. In the North American context, today the commonly used indigenous expressions and references are largely the product of a hodgepodge of interrelated French, Dutch, German, Spanish, and English renditions of peoples, names, and places that would otherwise have linguistic variations from nation to nation, tribe to tribe, or even between villages. The Algonkians, for instance, called the Ganiengehaga, “Mohawks,” (man-eaters); the English term “Iroquois” was a variation of the name the French initially gave the Haudenosaunee; and the Lenapés residing on the Delaware River at the time of contact were deemed, perhaps not surprisingly, “Delawares.” This list goes on with varying degrees of complexity.

For clarity and consistency, I have made the choice to maintain the most commonly used and recognized names for most of the indigenous tribes and nations mentioned in this study. For instance, “Iroquois” will be used instead of “Haudenosaunee” (People of the Longhouse), as well the “Five Nations” and later “Six Nations” when referring to the Iroquois tribes of the metaphorical longhouse. “Mohawks” will be used instead of “Ganiengehaga” (People of the Flint). The same can be said for Oneidas (Onyota’a:ka, or People of the Standing Stone), Onondagas (Onönda’gega or People of the Hills), Cayugas (Guyohkohnyo, or People of the Great Swamp); Senecas (Onöndowága, or People of the Great Hill), and finally, Tucaroras (Karū’ren, or Hemp Gatherers). While I am aware of the inherent problems of referring to first peoples by their Europeanized tribal names, I do not want to contribute to reader confusion nor muddle the arguments outlined in this study by opting to alter some names and not others.

Furthermore, because the actions and motivations of indigenous communities varied not only between nations, but also villages, when possible, distinctions between communities will be made based on geographical- or village- specific actions. The Chenussios faction of Seneca Nation, for instance, will be referred to by tribal name or geographical location, “western Senecas.” The same can be said for the “Ohio Iroquois,” “Shamokin Delawares,” and so on.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- APS:** American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, PA, USA.
- BFP:** Leonard Labaree et al., eds. *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*. 18 vols (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968).
- DHSNY:** E.B. O’Callaghan, E. B., ed. *The Documentary History of the State of New York*. 4 vols (Albany, N.Y.: Weed and Parsons, 1849–51).
- DRCHSNY:** E.B. O’Callaghan, and B. Fernow, eds. *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*. 10 vols (Albany, N.Y.: Weed, Parsons, and Co., 1853–87).
- GW:** Worthington Chauncey Ford ed., *The Writings of George Washington*. 14 vols (New York, 1889).
- HSP:** Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, USA.
- JC:** Richard Day, ed., *Calendar of the Sir William Johnson Manuscript* (Albany: University of the State of New York, 1909).
- JSK:** Walter Pilkington, ed., *The Journals of Samuel Kirkland: 18th Century Missionary to the Iroquois, Government Agent, Father of Hamilton College* (Clinton, NY, Hamilton College, 1980).
- LOC:** Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., USA.
- NAC:** Library and Archives, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.
- NYPL:** New York Public Library, New York, NY, USA.
- ORF:** Eugene Parker Chase, ed., *Our Revolutionary Forefathers: The Letters of Francois, Marquis de Barbe-Marbois* (New York: Duffield and Co., 1929).
- OT:** Neville B. Craig, ed., *The Olden Time: A Monthly Publication Devoted to the Preservation of Documents and Other authentic information in relation to the early explorations, and the settlement and improvement of the country around the head of the Ohio*. 2 vols. (R. Clarke and Co., 1876).
- PA:** William Henry Egle et al. eds. *Pennsylvania Archives, 3rd series*. 16 vols. (Harrisburg: State Printer, 1894).
- PCR:** Samuel Hazard, ed. *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania: Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, from the Organization to the Termination of the Proprietary Government*, 16 vols (Harrisburg, Pa.: Theodore Finn and Co., 1851).
- PHMC:** Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, PA.
- PRO:** Public Records Office, London, England, U.K.
- SWJP:** Sullivan, James et al., eds. *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*. 14 vols. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1921–1963).

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The opportunity to reengage the history of treaty making in Iroquoia at such an important place, and during such a transitional time, was overwhelmingly thanks to the initiatives of the employees of the National Parks Service (NPS). While tirelessly struggling to secure funding in order to disseminate the histories of this country and protect its natural resources, NPS employees bring history and education to life across the United States. Without NPS funding, this project would not exist, and without NPS employees, this history would not have been seen or heard. To the employees of the National Parks Service: Thank you.

Not often do scholars get a chance, or have the motivation, to revisit, revise, and expand on what was their doctoral dissertation, and then their first book. In 2013, the late Mr. Aidan Smith at the Organization of American Historians contacted me to do just that. After speaking at length on the telephone, and then discussing the parameters of the project in person while Aidan visited San Francisco, I agreed. But by early 2014 I soon realized why scholars might actively try to avoid returning to the scene of the original crime, so to speak. Combing through my book on the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix two years after it was published, and over a decade since I began writing it, I soon encountered a treasure-trove of problems (thanks in part to scholarly reviews) and organizational obstacles that would not have been present had I started this project anew. The cringing dissipated, though, as this new project began to take form with the help of additional research, institutional support, and the invaluable feedback and support offered by friends and colleagues.

Building from grants and scholarships from the Library Company of Philadelphia, the American Philosophical Society, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Newberry Library, the David Library for the American Revolution, and McMaster University that provided the foundation to for my dissertation, funding from the NPS, the Huntington Library, California State University at Chico, and the University of Memphis furthered this project. Trips to the Library of Congress, Robarts Library at the University of Toronto, the Ontario Archives at York University, and the National Archives in Ottawa, also proved helpful. But most appreciated and helpful were the comments from peer reviews of the first draft. To Dr. Karim Tiro at Xavier University, and the multiple readers at NPS, my many thanks. Particular praise must be given to Museum Specialist at Fort Stanwix, Dr. Amy Roache-Fedchenko. And many thanks to Chuck Smythe, as well, who in late 2013 welcomed me to Fort Stanwix, introduced me to the staff, and offered all the research notes on the Stanwix treaties that he had collected over the years. Chuck, thank you kindly for your help and kindness.

Because a significant portion of this history has already been published in various forms, I must also thank Oklahoma University Press, Pennsylvania History, and New York History for allowing me to revise, repackage, and reprint the content found in my first book, *Speculators in Empire: Iroquoia and the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix*, and related articles.

Lastly, I thank those that afforded me the time to complete this task. This report was supposed to be finished almost three years ago. In my limited experience as an academic, the profession leaves little room for unexpected changes in one's personal life and even less for geographical maneuverability. With that in mind, I thank Dr. Aram Goudsouzian

at the University of Memphis, the late Aidan Smith at the Organization of American Historians, and the staff at National Parks Service, Fort Stanwix, for their patience and understanding. Finally, to my family, Breda and Marion, I could never have completed this project without you both.

PREFACE

The primary purpose of this narrative is to revisit, recount, and historically frame the treaty negotiations that occurred at Fort Stanwix (present-day Rome, New York) between Iroquois and Euroamerican negotiators in 1768, 1784, 1788, and 1790. That being said, this history is about a location as much as it is about the people who gathered at the palisade during the course of the last four turbulent decades of the eighteenth century. As we will see, what surfaces in the process of this investigation are the interwoven struggles for land and sovereignty that underpinned many of the major conflicts in North America during the revolutionary era (ca. 1763–1815). In other words, the history of Fort Stanwix and the portage it secured acts as a remarkable but underappreciated instrument to which we can better understand the changes that occurred during this time, especially as they relate to indigenous-colonizer motivations and interactions. As such, imperial and capitalistic aspirations—British and American, federal and state, local and personal—are emphasized and explored throughout this narrative. Further, by exploring the many layers of colonization and viewing change through the lens of these treaties, this story identifies, among other things, the pinnacle of Iroquois influence on the geopolitical development of early North America, as well as the events that led to the swift decline of such power and the eventual physical colonization of Iroquoia, and beyond.

This history is largely limited by the records left behind by Europeans. Uncovering the perspective of the colonized is a difficult task, especially when Europeans have left us most of the written sources. That being said, indigenous voices are not void from this study. When I am able to speculate about indigenous agency and motivations based on a significant amount of circumstantial evidence, I do; though, admittedly, I choose never to stray too far from the records.

Conceptually, what historian Eliga Gould terms “treaty-worthiness” influences this history as well. “Far more than liberalism or republicanism,” Gould contends, “revolutionaries’ emphasis on peace through treaty-worthiness explains why Americans ultimately opted for a national union.”¹ As past subjects of an empire, colonial rebels may have orchestrated a successful revolution and declared themselves heads of a new nation, but the validity, longevity, and strength of that nation depended upon being recognized by others. Without international diplomatic relations there would be no viable economic and military security. In other words, for “the former colonies to take their place among the powers of the earth, they needed European treaties that would turn the rights that Congress had unilaterally proclaimed into rights that other nations would respect.”² For budding American imperialists that meant a concerted effort to emulate the “new hierarchies of value, new forms of dependency, and, often, new languages of exclusion” that were extensions of European ideas of peace and treaty-worthiness. In the 1780s that meant defining and securing the boundaries of a new nation and identifying those people considered to be citizens. To do so, many leaders

1 Eliga H. Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth: The American Revolution and the Making of New World Empire*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 11.

2 *Ibid.*, 2.

of the early republic sought to bolster federal authority by creating a constitution and raising an army. At the same time, white Americans also sought to diminish the voice and legitimacy of power possessed by non-citizens—namely, Native Americans, and specifically, the Iroquois. In the end, we should not forget, “the American Revolution was never just a struggle for the right of Americans to govern themselves. From the beginning it was also a struggle for dominion over others.”³

How this struggle for recognition translated into laws, policies, and collective attitudes following the rebellion remains critical to our understanding of the formation of a nation, the development of Indian affairs, and of course, the Fort Stanwix treaties. As white male revolutionaries defined themselves by way of the language and laws of exclusion, political and cultural autonomy faded for North Americans of color. The revolution entrenched slavery into the fabric of the new republic and transformed Native Americans from sovereign nations into “new categories of dependent nationhood.”⁴ This process began in the 1780s with the Iroquois.

The proprietors of bountiful and strategically located lands, the Iroquois represented the legacies of a colonial past that many Americans believed unnecessarily bolstered and strengthened the power of Indians. Instead of negotiating under the appearance of equality (as best illustrated at Fort Stanwix in 1768), when Iroquois and American representatives met at the Oneida Carry immediately following the revolution they did so as recent enemies. Considered by American revolutionaries as defeated and abandoned by the Crown, the Iroquois were stripped of their status and power. The target of private, state, and federal land speculation and politicking, Iroquoia became a formative legal battleground during the 1780s, and Fort Stanwix the diplomatic epicenter.⁵

In reaction, indigenous peoples located on the edges and within the territory claimed by both the British and American empires sought to preserve their sovereignty by maintaining treaty protocols cultivated since Europeans began invading the continent. In Chapter 1, *Introductions*, treaty protocol in early North America, and the agreement, or “Covenant Chain” that metaphorically bound the Iroquois in a peaceful alliance with Euroamericans, had long been understood and recognized as the principle mechanisms of cross-cultural exchange between independent nations. But following the revolution, land-grab diplomacy reigned supreme. Despite Iroquois efforts, as historian Lawrence Hauptman summarizes, between 1768 and 1790, their status “changed from independent or collective sovereignties on a large, viable agricultural land base tied to the religious ritual cycle to being dependent peoples boxed in on island reservations.”⁶

Returning to pre-revolutionary North America, Chapter 2, *Empires*, serves to familiarize us with the fortification and strategic development of the Oneida Carry during the eighteenth-century wars between Britain and France. By revisiting the evolution of Iroquois-Crown relations circa the Seven Years’ War (French and Indian War), *Empires* also provides a backdrop for the thorough exploration of events directly preceding the 1768 treaty—as reviewed in Chapter 3, *Collaborators*. Chapter 4, *Accomplices*, details the daily interactions and terms of the 1768 negotiations. From

3 Ibid., 4.

4 Ibid., 11.

5 Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), xvii.

6 Laurence M. Hauptman, *Conspiracy of Interests: Iroquois Dispossession and the Rise of New York State*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 64.

there, Chapter 5, *Revolutions*, recounts colonial rebellion in Iroquoia, the siege of Fort Stanwix, and the Battle of Oriskany. Emerging from the military battles of the revolution, Chapter 6, *Adversaries*, turns our attention to the tribal, federal, state, and private political battles that dominated the historical landscape of the early republic and underpinned the 1784 treaty negotiations and beyond. Rounding-out this study, Chapter 7, *Mistreated Allies*, and Chapter 8, *Very Unwise*, are dedicated to the 1788 and 1790 negotiations that took place at, or near, Fort Stanwix. Spearheaded by New York governor George Clinton, the treaty negotiations of the late 1780s represent the final steps in how most of Iroquoia was illegally obtained, the ways many Iroquois were divided and confined onto reservations, and the land greed that provided the foundation for a burgeoning American empire.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTIONS

In 1743 the Pennsylvania-born North American botanist and horticulturalist John Bartram departed Pennsylvania for Canada. Bartram journeyed into Iroquoia by pushing up the Susquehanna River towards the Finger Lakes. Collecting and cataloguing along the way, he also documented the changing landscape and his encounters with the Iroquois. The deciduous varietals, loosened and rich soil, and indigenous cultural and agricultural practices captivated the scientist. By early July, Bartram’s diary read as if he was a world away from the cleared and flattened streets of colonial Philadelphia.

After arriving at Oswego, a fortified British trading post on the southern shores of Lake Ontario, Bartram took a brief break from commenting on the flora and fauna of the region. On a beautiful summer morning in July he sat and took his tea while being entertained by local traders. There, at Oswego, three hundred miles from Philadelphia, the early morning meal and other available European goods pleasantly surprised him. Naturally inquisitive, Bartram asked the traders how they managed to transport materials so quickly from New York to frontiers like Oswego. The key to making the quick voyage, the botanist recorded, was a three-mile “carriage” that bridged the Mohawk River and Wood Creek; the latter emptied into Lake Ontario at Oswego (Figure 1).

The “carriage” Bartram learned about in the summer of 1743 had, since the turn of the century, been known to European traders traveling west from Albany along the most efficient route between the Catskill and Adirondack Mountains towards the coveted Great Lakes. Better known as the Oneida Carry or Carrying Place, the portage provided the shortest distance between trickling headwaters of Wood Creek and the Mohawk River. Because the two swampy flatlands in between these headwaters connected the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean, the location had, for centuries, remained invaluable to the exchange of goods and information. In fact, before Europeans named the portage after the regional inhabitants, the locals may have called the location *Deowainsta* (Figure 2).¹

Traversed by indigenous traders, marauding war parties, and migratory communities for centuries, *Deowainsta* rested in the heart of Iroquois territory. By the time John Bartram learned about the location, the Carry had long provided an important resource for its indigenous overseers—the Oneidas. For a negotiated price, seasoned Indian navigators and pack carriers could be seen shuttling merchandise for European traders and travelers across what the Dutch called the *Trow Plat*. And, as trade increased along with the reach of European goods and people, so too did the traffic at the Oneida Carry.²

1 Reference to “Deo-Wain-Sta” as the indigenous term for the Oneida Carrying Place is found in scores of published materials that discuss the history of the area. It appears, though, that the indigenous roots of the term are questionable. No record of the term’s use can be found in documents earlier than 1845 (Proceedings of the New York Historical Society, New York: Press of the Historical Society, 1845, Vol. 3, p. 136). I have opted to use the term for stylistic reasons, as well to underscore an indigenous connection to the area prior to European colonization of the area.

2 Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 262.

In the winter months of 1634–1635, perhaps the first Europeans to unknowingly traverse the portage made their way northwest from the Dutch trading hub, Fort Orange. Guided by five Mohawks, Dutch West India Company agent Harmen Meyndertsz van den Bogaert, along with Willem Tomassen and Jeronimus de Lecroix, ventured in deep snow as far as the Oneida village of “Onneyuttehage” on the shores of the Oneida Creek. Tasked with rekindling Indian trading alliances and finding out why the flow of furs to Fort Orange had diminished, van den Bogaert’s journal of the forty-day voyage marks the earliest known account of Iroquois communities west of present-day Albany, New York. A brief stay at the village helped counter the recent overtures of French traders and emissaries, but it did not help clarify the topographical inquires of the visitors. Van den Bogaert, and subsequent expeditions by Dutch investigators and renegade traders over the course of the next three decades, did not make specific mention of the portage. In fact, according to scholar Gilbert Hagerty, “until the English took over from the Dutch there are no records to show that Oneida Carry was known to the whites.”³

Sometime during the last three decades of the seventeenth century the region became of interest to European colonizers. With peace in 1674 (following the Treaty of Westminster that ended the Third Anglo-Dutch War) came the expansion of Indian trade throughout the North America’s borderlands. Interestingly, as early as 1688, a French mapmaker, Jean-Baptiste Louis Franquelin, made specific reference to the portage that bridged Lake Oneida and the Mohawk River.⁴ By the end of the following year, the French had built a small post to protect the location, and it did not take long before the English Crown took note.⁵ Aware that the extension of trade was crucial to securing indigenous allies, who were in turn critical to imperial strategizing, a number of expeditions into the heart of Iroquoia were authorized. One of the first English voyages was undertaken by the Crown’s top military engineer, the Dutch-born Col. Wolfgang William Römer.

After spending a decade in Europe as a military engineer in the army of William III, in 1698 Römer found himself on his way to North America with the newly appointed governor of New York, Lord Bellomont. Two years later, after surveying the coastal region and the Hudson River, Römer led a three-man expedition into western New York. They followed trading routes from Albany that now snaked beyond van den Bogaert’s earlier expedition to the shores of Lake Oneida. In September 1700, while on their way to the Onondaga Castle to search for a site on which to erect a British fort, Römer’s expedition made their way west along the Mohawk River. Before arriving at “Oneyda” the men had visited Mohawk strongholds at Schenectady and Canajoharie. On September 20, 1700, after meeting with the Mohawk sachem Onoronorum just west of Canajoharie, Römer’s expedition arrived at Wood Creek. Tasked with recording “the country as you go and come” to assess the accessibility of the region, Römer recorded the following: “We came by a most miserable path to the Carry Place.” He made no mention of a French trading post. Nevertheless, Römer

3 Dean R. Snow, Charles T. Gehring, and William A. Starna, eds., *In Mohawk Country: Early Narratives About a Native People* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 1-13; Gilbert Hagerty, *Massacre at Fort Bull: The De Lery Expedition against Oneida Carry, 1756* (Woonsocket, R.I.: Mowbray, 1971), 13.

4 Franquelin, Jean-Baptiste Louis, *Carte de l’Amerique Septentrionale*, 1688. Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C. Accessed May 3, 2014, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3300.ct000668>

5 Robert B. Roberts, *New York’s Forts in the Revolution* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1980), 414.

could not deny the strategic importance of the Oneida Carry and noted such after making his way back to Albany.⁶

Less than two years later, in July 1702, Ohio Iroquois and Seneca representatives from the western reaches of Iroquoia petitioned Edward Hyde, the third Earl of Clarendon and appointed governor of New York. The Indians, concerned with establishing an easily accessible trade route to Albany, requested that the province blaze a permanent path over the portage by widening the passage and removing the fallen trees and brush from Wood Creek. The governor agreed and promised to cover the cost of guides that would bring the western traders to Albany. It appears that the governor kept his word. Four years later, Iroquois representatives wrote him, thanking the province for clearing and maintaining the portage. Such action, the indigenous authors suggested, “will induce and encourage the far Indians to come to trade here which will engage them to be firmly united to us.” The enlargement and clearing of the Carry paralleled similar trends occurring along the fertile flats beyond Schenectady and throughout the upper Mohawk River valley. When traders began to cross the Oneida Carry much more frequently, the Oneidas did not let the opportunity to benefit from the increased traffic pass them by.⁷

As early as 1727 the province of New York endorsed the construction of a small, fortified trading post at the mouth of the Oswego River on Lake Ontario. English engineers reinforced the post at Oswego and oversaw the building of stockades at the falls of Oswego and at both ends of Lake Oneida. To undercut French designs in the region, the English realized the need to maintain a strong foothold on the southern shores of Lake Ontario. To do so, however, communication lines between Schenectady and Oswego needed to be secured. Consequently, the use of the Oneida Carry quickly became central to the transportation of goods. The portage soon became a topic of interest at Albany again. According to John F. Luzader, the Commissioners for Indian Affairs started paying particular attention to the area after forty-seven traders petitioned colonial authorities to intervene because the “Indians were making too much of a good thing of their situation at the Carrying Place.” The Oneidas (along with local Onondaga and Seneca cargo carriers) recognized the value of their services and would not transport, or allow the transportation of goods over the Carry without receiving proper compensation.⁸

As the traffic at *Deowainsta* increased, so too did competing claims to the continent. During the first three decades of the eighteenth century, in a bid to curb European power and direct colonization, Iroquois brokers did their best to project an image of themselves as overlords of the northeast. At both Montréal and Albany, Indian negotiators persistently protected their communities, homelands, and sovereignty by strategically situating the Iroquois at the center of both British and French enterprising. And for colonial administrators seeking to establish boundaries and order in their respective empires, seeing the Iroquois as both conduits and buffers to other Indian nations served their interests as well.

6 Daniel Sherman, “The Six Nations” (An Address Delivered Before the Chautaugua Society of History and Natural Sciences at its Semi-annual Meeting Held in Jamestown, January 29, 1885) W.W. Williams, 1885.

7 John F. Luzader, et al. *Fort Stanwix* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Park Preservation, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1976), 4.

8 Luzader et al., *Fort Stanwix*, 4; Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 262.

The Great Laws of Peace

When European and Iroquois brokers met to discuss trade, land transactions, war, and peace, both sides angled with a firm understanding of the other's cultural characteristics, procedures, and intentions.⁹ Most Europeans may not have understood the structure of the Iroquois League (the alliance between Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas), but they learned and conformed to the protocols that guided formal interactions. The Iroquois' Great Laws of Peace, or He Gayanashagowa, provided the foundation for that protocol. The Great Laws provided guidelines for conflict resolution and exchange as well as a spiritual cornerstone preserving the histories of a people (Figure 3).¹⁰

According to nineteenth-century linguist Horatio Hale, the story of the Great Laws (and thus the Iroquois League) begins sometime during the middle of the fifteenth century.¹¹ In his account of the legend, Hale records that for centuries prior to the Great Laws the Five Nations fought with one another and the surrounding tribes. At the height of conflict, the eastern tribes (Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas) were suffering from an extended war with one another and the neighboring nations to the east, while the Senecas and Cayugas had similar problems with enemies to the west. According to Iroquois oral history, an Indian peacemaker, Dekanawidah, rose above tribal conflict. Dekanawidah traveled throughout the region and urged resolution. He gained a key disciple among the Iroquois, Hiawatha. Hiawatha aided Dekanawidah in the spreading of his message of peace among the five Iroquois tribes. After the Mohawks and Oneidas accepted the message, the men traveled to the Onondagas. When he reached the Onondagas, Atotarho, a ruthless headman who ruled the nation with an iron fist, refused to relinquish his power. Compromising, Dekanawidah promised Atotarho that the Onondagas would forever maintain the control over the Council Fire, keeping the oral record of the Five Nations. After Atotarho agreed, Dekanawidah called the five warring nations together, buried their weapons under the Tree of Peace, and set the guidelines for peaceful resolution—thereafter known as the Great Laws of Peace.¹²

While the direct relationship between the Dekanawidah epic and the founding date of the league still remains questionable, the participants and the alliance mechanisms appear to be less contentious.¹³ The call to assemble to resolve a dispute was initiated by a message carried on a string or belt of wampum which cleared the road to allow a peaceful passage to the designated council fire at Onondaga, or *katsihstakéhō?*¹⁴ Often times the chanting of the

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- 9 Michael K. Foster, Jack Campisi, and Marianne Mithun, eds., *Extending the Rafters: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Iroquoian Studies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 14
- 10 William J. Campbell, "Seth Newhouse, the Grand River Six Nations and the Writing of the Great Laws," *Ontario History* 96:2 (2004): 183-202.; William Fenton, "Structure, Continuity, and Change in the Process of Iroquois Treaty Making," in *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy*, eds. Jennings et al (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985): 26-31.
- 11 Horatio Hale, *Hiawatha and the Iroquois Confederation: A Study in Anthropology* (Salem, Massachusetts: Private Printers, 1881); Horatio Hale, *Iroquois Book of Rites* (Philadelphia: Brinton, 1883).
- 12 For further details, Fenton, *Great Law and the Longhouse*.
- 13 William A. Starna, "Retrospecting the Origins of the League of the Iroquois," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 152 (September 3, 2008): 279-322.
- 14 Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 135. Furthermore, negotiations were to always be conducted in ritual 'Indian speech.' See William C. Sturtevant, "A Structural Sketch of Iroquois Ritual," in *Extending the Rafters: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Iroquoian Studies*, ed. Michael K. Foster, Jack Campisi, and Marianne Mithun (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), Screen reader support enabled.

names of the League's founding chiefs would be heard as the respected sachems arrived at the council fire. According to most scholars, the traditional council consisted of fifty chiefs, each representing a matrilineage within one of the founding nations of the Iroquois League. The Senecas had eight representatives, the Mohawks and Oneidas, nine, the Cayugas, ten, and the Onondagas, fourteen.¹⁵ These civil chiefs, or sachems, were often distinct from their war chief counterparts, and "were to be confirmed in their offices by the General Council of the League," later known as the Grand Council.¹⁶ To be sure, the number of tribal appointments varied between nations from time to time, but the principle of cooperation and reconfirmation of unity via structured resolution patterns underscored the purpose and functionality of the Great Laws.¹⁷ When the participants arrived, each tribe would be greeted by the "At the Wood's Edge" ceremony to offer condolences for the losses suffered by the respective tribe since the last time the Indians gathered. The ritualistic "covering of the dead" played an important role in Iroquois culture and negotiation protocol. The "Three Bare Words" were spoken, metaphorically clearing their eyes, ears and throats to allow for unhampered deliberations. This constituted the first part of the "Requickening Address." A Roll Call (verbal listing) of Chiefs soon followed, as did The Six Songs, and a call upon the strength and wisdom of the League's founders as the chiefs prepared for deliberations. The replies of mourners and the return of condolences and wampum strings then followed, all prior to the installation of any new chiefs. A wampum record of the events would then be prominently displayed, and songs of peace and restoration sung. The process took those involved through a metaphorical transformation. Evil thoughts were purged and any obstructions cleared from the body. The participants recalled past friendships, figuratively covered the dead, renewed camaraderie by shining the friendship chain, dispelled the clouds in the sky to restore the sun, and rekindled the council fire. This practice reinforced the idea that the Iroquois, and their League, would continue for time immemorial.¹⁸

After at least one night of rest and informal greetings, divided by intertribal association, the appointed councilors sat on two opposing sides of the fire. The first moiety (one or more clans acting together) included the Mohawks and Senecas, the gatekeepers of the metaphorical longhouse, and the Onondagas, the "firekeepers." They addressed the congregated Oneidas and Cayuga on the other side of the fire as "you, our children," who in turn addressed the Mohawk, Seneca, and Onondaga representatives as "our fathers' kinsmen."¹⁹ The Tuscaroras, the sixth nation to enter into the Iroquois union in the early

15 Charles M. Johnston, "To the Mohawk Station: The Making of a New England Company Missionary—the Rev. Robert Luggier" in *Extending the Rafters: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Iroquoian Studies*, eds. Michael K. Foster, Jack Campisi, and Marianne Mithun, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984) 82. See also William Fenton, *American Indian and White Relations to 1830: Needs and Opportunities for Study*. Chapel Hill (N.C.: UNC Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1957) 21-22.

16 Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1972) 14.

17 Fenton, "Structure, Continuity, and Change in the Process of Iroquois Treaty Making," 21-27.

18 William Fenton, "Indian Treaty Protocol: The Crucible of Indian-White Relations," in *William Fenton Papers*, (Ms Coll. 20, Series 3, February 24, 1979, APS); William Fenton, "Structure, Continuity, and Change in the Process of Iroquois Treaty Making," in *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy*, eds. Jennings et al (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985): 18-19; Michael K. Foster, "Who Spoke First at Iroquois-White Councils," in *Extending the Rafters: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Iroquoian Studies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984): 183-85; Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 134-35; Graymont, *The Iroquois and the American Revolution*, 13-15.

19 William Engelbrecht, *Iroquoia: The Development of a Native World* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 129

1720s, had limited and indirect input into the decision-making process. Next, ancestral laws and customs were recited, and forgiveness for past injustices requested. Negotiations then began with the Mohawk chiefs, the first nation to embrace the message of Peacemaker. After agreeing on a statement, a Mohawk speaker conveyed their decision to the Senecas, the last nation to bury the war hatchet and join the Iroquois League. Once the Senecas agreed, or a compromise reached, the speaker of the first moiety, usually a Mohawk, announced their decision to the chiefs of the opposite side of the council fire. Wampum belts and strings, that provided each side a mnemonic record of the proceedings, were held by the speaker and passed over the fire. The Oneidas and Cayugas listened, supposedly without interruption, and acknowledged the message by touching and returning the wampum to the speaker. In a similar fashion of deliberation, and often a day later, the Oneidas and Cayugas conversed, and when they reached an agreement they announced their sentiment to the Onondagas—the designated mediators of the deliberations. Officially, the Onondaga decision stood as the final verdict unless they decided to resubmit the matter to the chiefs for another round of deliberation.²⁰ Theoretically, the council deliberations remained open-ended until the issue at hand was resolved, or an agreement of deferment reached. Finally, following formal condolences and treaty negotiations, a public feast and presentation gifts were arranged to conclude the negotiations.²¹

The process of negotiation and deliberation no doubt varied to a degree depending on the immediate circumstances. Like the Iroquois union itself, protocol altered over time. Both were processes, rather than organizations and procedure set in stone. This was especially the case following contact. Mohawk influence among the Iroquois, for instance, grew considerably during the seventeenth century after contact with Dutch (and later English) traders. By the middle of eighteenth century, however, the western nations, the Senecas in particular, began to exercise more authority among their brethren as a result of numerical superiority, land possession, and trade options, among other issues. Thus, depending on the issue at hand, regional interests among the Iroquois impacted negotiations, established protocol, and the decisions of each Indian spokesperson. That being said, the negotiation protocol, even if loosely observed and always evolving, increasingly provided the foundation for the protocols and blueprints of cross-cultural exchange. And as this method of resolution and exchange increased, so, too, did the claims of their indigenous creators. Peace had brought power and security to five once-warring tribes. A century later, many of those same nations sought to secure a future by making the most of their place at the council fires as they greeted Europeans.

“Forest Diplomacy”

Following sustained contact with Europeans, the roots of what William Fenton called “forest diplomacy” can be traced to the Condolence Ceremony, the political ritual in the Great Laws used to mourn and install chiefs. While traditional greetings and expressions

20 Johnston, “To the Mohawk Station.” “Indian Treaty Protocol: The Crucible of Indian-White Relations,” p. 82, Feb. 24, 1979, Fenton Papers.

21 Wilbur Jacobs, *Dispossessing the American Indian: Indians and Whites on the Colonial Frontier* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1972), 12-26. For a revised account of the tools involved in Indian- European relations, see Christopher L. Miller and George R. Hamell, “A New Perspective on Indian-White Contact,” *Journal of American History* 73:3 (1986): 311-28; Fenton, “Structure, Continuity, and Change in the Process of Iroquois Treaty Making,” 27-30.

remained intact, instead of dividing by intertribal association, participants would often separate into two lines, as dictated by Indian-European affiliation, on each side of the council fire. Similar to traditional verbatim recall, each point made was repeated and summarized while the speaker confirmed the message on wampum held in his hand. By the mid-seventeenth century, documented ceremonial and treaty practices throughout eastern regions of North America reveal the dissemination and use of Iroquois protocol, and the multi-meanings of “treaty” itself. Essentially, four basic rules initiated Indian-European council procedures. First, the hosts delivered a ceremonial welcome. Next, the visiting participants answered the ceremonial welcome and expected hospitality. Then, the fire was kindled as the petitioners set the agenda of the council and proposed the first point of negotiation. Finally, the respondents answered all proposals made by the petitioners before introducing their own business.²²

Relatedly, the term “treaty” in early North America did not always or exclusively denote the confirmation of a signed contract between the appointed representatives of two or more nations. A treaty, Francis Prucha remarks, also included the “‘act of negotiating,’ the discussion aimed at adjustment of difference or the reaching of an agreement, and by extension the meeting itself at which such negotiations took place.” Consequently, the term itself also meant the process of “‘holding a treaty,’ ‘inviting the Indians to a treaty,’ providing provisions ‘for a treaty’ or greeting Indians as they arrived ‘at a treaty.’”²³ And not every European or Indian was considered worthy of this process. As Gould reminds us, treaty worthiness, or the perception thereof, became a tool in power brokerage. Treating with one another, and bestowing the acts of the process, empowered.

For two and a half centuries, the relationship between Europeans and the indigenous inhabitants of North America shifted due to four primary factors: restoration, trade, military allegiance, and land. During this time the major functions of Iroquois war parties included the maintenance of “emotional equilibrium” for warriors seeking to avenge or replace murdered family; political influence over other tribal groups; and perpetuation of “a political situation in which the threat of retaliation against either party could be used to play off the British and the French against one another.”²⁴ Realizing that neither the French nor English had the ability to attain definitive control over the other, the Iroquois knew that “acknowledging any governor exclusively as greatest lord was suicidal—particularly if that meant getting involved in imperial warfare.”²⁵ Pragmatic and adaptable, Iroquois negotiators constantly reevaluated their tactics as North America became a battleground of empires.

By the latter part of the seventeenth century two dominant and opposing alliance systems solidified on the continent: the English and the French. For the Iroquois,

22 Fenton quoted in Michael K. Foster, “Who Spoke First at Iroquois-White Councils: An Exercise in the Method of Upstreaming,” in *Extending the Rafters: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Iroquoian Studies*, eds. Michael K. Foster, Jack Campisi, and Marianne Mithun (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984): 183–85; Mary A. Druke, “Iroquois Treaties: Common Forms, Varying Interpretations” in *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League*, eds. Jennings et al. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 88-90, 92-96.

23 Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Treaties: The History of a Political Anomaly* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 24-25. For Prucha’s summary of treaty protocol, see pp. 25-26.

24 Anthony Wallace, *Death and Rebirth of the Senecas* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 44-48.

25 Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 158.

geographically wedged between these imperial enemies, treaty making became as much a tool steeped in indigenous traditions for the purpose of maintaining peace as it had been a ritual used selectively to pit the French, English, and other first peoples against one another. The Covenant Chain, an alliance forged in sixteenth century between the Iroquois and colonial New Yorkers, is one of the most obvious examples of this power brokering. Originally, the functionality of the Covenant Chain was to maintain both peace and trade between the two members and their extended networks. In an attempt to erode the power of New France and those tribes operating within the French imperial orbit, however, the Covenant Chain soon evolved into an “aggressive partnership” based on military objectives. Unfortunately for both New York and the Iroquois, they garnered little support from their respective networks as they sought to usurp French power. The result crippled the Iroquois, and so the dynamics of the Covenant Chain evolved.²⁶

After decades of heightened conflict (the Beaver Wars, 1640s–1690s), French, Huron, and multiple Algonquian nations humbled the Iroquois. In response, and in defiance of New York demands, Iroquois negotiators met Louis-Hector de Callière in Montréal in August of 1701. The Indians assured the governor of New France that their respective warriors would remain east of Detroit and maintain a policy of non-intervention in any future conflict between European powers in North America. In return, the French recognized Iroquois sovereignty. Following a few more days of private deliberations, the gathered participants agreed to terms of a *Grande Paix*.²⁷

Seeking to protect their imperial interests by keeping the deflated Iroquois neutralized, the French opted to negotiate with the Five Nations rather than invade Iroquoia. For the time being, French imperial planners reasoned, a neutralized indigenous threat south of the Great Lakes would create a safeguard against English invasion while catering to the expansion of French influence and trade in North America. In other words, if the 1701 treaty stipulated that the Iroquois were now subject to French authority, first peoples allied with the French would have unrestricted access to Albany, via Iroquoia. This would undermine Montréal’s trading network and expose more potential Indian allies to their English competitors. That being said, French colonial authorities realized the need to tread carefully while negotiating with the Iroquois; a wrong move could potentially alienate their long-time Algonquian and Huron allies. Meanwhile, the English too sought to strengthen their ties with the Five Nations. Claiming land, waging war, and capturing lucrative trade could be done so much easier with indigenous allies, and in the northeast, the Iroquois had long been a natural component of Dutch, and then English, imperial designs. This dynamic created opportunities for Indian brokers seeking to redefine their own strategies as their communities shrunk and became increasingly dependent on European goods. For the Iroquois, neutrality “did not mean passivity.”²⁸

At the same time Iroquois negotiators were meeting the governor of New France in Montréal, two other delegations negotiated claim and trading rights over the lands south of the Great Lakes with the English at Albany and Philadelphia. The move was strategic,

26 Jennings, “Iroquois Alliances,” in Jennings et al., eds., *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy*, (Syracuse University Press, 1995), 38.

27 For a detailed account of the treaty, see Gilles Havard, *The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001).

28 Jennings, “Iroquois Alliances,” 39.

not coincidental. “In giving each imperial power an equivalent paper claim to the same territory (territory that the Iroquois themselves did not control),” Daniel Richter summarizes, the treaties “promised to counter power with power and to preserve Iroquois independence through a new, far more subtle form of accommodation.”²⁹ Theoretically, by claiming control over contested regions, the Iroquois made themselves integral components of the imperial enterprising of two competing empires. It was a balancing act carefully calculated by the Indians, especially those brokers representing communities living close to, or among, Europeans.

Nine years later in 1710, four Indians arrived in London with former Albany mayor, Pieter Schuyler (1657–1723/4). Schuyler was concerned with Albany’s geographic vulnerability and sought to use the publicity surrounding the visit to press the Crown for aid. The “Iroquois Kings,” or “Four Indian Kings” (only three of the four were actually from the Five Nations) made the most of their audience with Queen Anne and other colonial administrators by taking every opportunity to present themselves as royal heads of state. While being transported around London in royal carriages, the Indians did not shy away from presenting the Iroquois as proprietors of the land and resources of much of the northeast, and arguably, the entire North American continent. They were embellished claims that found receptive ears in London. Increasingly brokers on both sides of the Atlantic talked of an “Iroquois Confederacy.”³⁰

Different from “the fountain of ‘Iroquois culture and spiritual unity’ that the League was,” historian James Merrell states, “the Confederacy was a political and diplomatic forum.”³¹ The rise of the Confederacy paralleled the ebbing of sachems’ diplomatic powers, as notable warriors, orators, and middlemen increasingly emerged as the dominant voices of the Iroquois when they negotiated with Europeans. No doubt the product of Iroquois strategizing, the Confederacy (and its indigenous leaders) also quickly grew in both power and importance thanks to the English. The Confederacy provided an alliance mechanism in which Iroquois leaders could use the threat of an English ally to help legitimize their authority and secure their homelands, while the Crown sought to use the Confederacy to curb French expansion, “legally” acquire lands, and pacify hostile first nations.³²

The Iroquois Kings’ visit to London appears to have fueled rumors circulating among French authorities. At the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, which officially ended the War of the Spanish Succession (Queen Anne’s War), French negotiators acknowledged the Iroquois to be within England’s imperial orbit³³ This formal recognition is curious given intertribal realities and autonomy, not to mention the existence of Mohawk settlements at Kahnawake, St Regis, and Oka along the St. Lawrence River. But for imperial planners, ‘Iroquois’ usually

29 Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 157; Daniel K. Richter and James Merrell, eds., *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600–1800* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 6-7.

30 John G. Garratt and Bruce Robertson, *The Four Indian Kings* (Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1985); Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 165; Wallace, *Death and Rebirth of the Senecas*, chap. 1

31 James Merrell, *The Lancaster Treaty of 1744* (New York: Bedford / St. Martin’s, 2008), 13.

32 Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1984), 12-15; Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*.

33 Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 10-24; Dorothy V. Jones, *License for Empire: Colonialism by Treaty in Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 21-35; Timothy Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire: The Albany Congress of 1754* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 20.

referred to the English-friendly factions, and Mohawk River Valley tribes in particular. Furthermore, by identifying the Iroquois by name in a formal treaty, the French placed the responsibility of future Iroquois actions firmly with the English Crown as much as they were acknowledging an increased British imperial authority in North America.

Europeans were not the only ones attempting to define both limits and boundaries of power. From the 1720s onwards, the Iroquois did their best to capitalize on their recent positioning. In 1722 at Albany, at the request of the governors of Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York, the Five Nations assumed responsibility for the actions of the Indians largely residing in the Blue Ridge Mountains region to the south, including the Tuscaroras, Conestogas, and Shawnees, and other smaller bands. Astutely, they did so with the language of the colonizers. The Iroquois claimed to have previously conquered the tribes in Maryland and Virginia, and thus, by “right of conquest,” could dispose of the lands as they saw fit. Meanwhile, Iroquois negotiators carefully suggested to the Shawnees, and other nations being overrun by European colonizers, that they relocate to the Ohio Country to both strengthen and be protected by the Confederacy. For the Tuscaroras, the Iroquois offered a place in the metaphorical longhouse, and the Five Nations became six. The Confederacy grew, and so too did the importance of the Covenant Chain. Iroquois diplomats soon cleared paths to Boston and Philadelphia. By treaty with colonials the Iroquois were gaining power, even if the other Indians had numerical superiority and did not always conform to the demands coming from Onondaga.³⁴

The Ohio Country

During the early decades of the eighteenth century, the Ohio Country provided geographic and cultural security for a number of indigenous peoples. Although claimed by the Iroquois, the region “was less an Iroquois empire than a refuge” for those nations dislodged and exploited by agreements reached between British and Iroquois negotiators. Resentment toward their exploiters, as a result, flourished throughout the Ohio and southern Great Lakes region. Most Hurons, for instance, who had been forced to retreat from southern Ontario during the Beaver Wars, maintained strong ties with French traders and missionaries throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. Actually, in 1701, the Hurons pledged alliance to the French after Antoine Laumet de la Mothe Cadillac built Fort Pontchartrain and opened an outpost at Detroit to trade. In 1738 under the direction of Nicholas Orontony, a contingent of Hurons migrated to the Ohio Country and settled only a couple miles south of present-day Sandusky. They joined other displaced Petuns (becoming the Huron-Petun Nation, or Wyandot). Furthermore, the Shawnees who, despite also being ordered by the Iroquois, left for the region in the mid-1730s due to pressure from increased colonization in Virginia and Pennsylvania. Strong relationships were soon forged between these Indians and the local *coureurs de bois* (French fur traders). But, the relationship made English authorities wary.³⁵

In 1732 while holding council with the Shawnees, New York governor Clinton informed the Indians that he had heard of their recent visit to Montréal. When asked to move their wives and children from the Ohio Country back to Pennsylvania under the

34 Jennings, “Iroquois Alliances” 41-42; Merrell, *The Lancaster Treaty of 1744*, 11-13.

35 R. Douglas Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720-1830* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 12-20

protection of Thomas Penn and the Confederacy, the Shawnees declined. The Indians cited anxiety over the explosion of colonizer settlements, but assured the governor that their nation would not be swayed by French overtures. But, for the Shawnees, trade with the French had its benefits. The recently founded town at the mouth of the Scioto River flourished by the 1730s. In addition, the Shawnees organized into a quasi-republic, kindled a council fire, and cast off all claims of the Iroquois to administrate their own affairs. The Shawnees were not the only nation willing to subvert the authoritative claims of the Iroquois and their European allies.³⁶

In April 1728, Delaware anger over trader abuses and European encroachments filtered back to governor George Clinton. Instead of appealing to the Iroquois for their brokerage, as was expected, the Indians took matters into their own hands. News that the Delaware Chief Manawkyhiekon sought Miami-Illinois (Twightwee) support to avenge the death of his relative, Wequeabay, worried colonial authorities about a possible rupture with the local Indians. Moreover, Sassoonan, “King of the Delawares,” visited Philadelphia and complained about white encroachments. Sassoonan lamented that he had grown old and was troubled by the lack of compensation that the Delawares had received for the increasing Christian incursions. The chief called into question the sale of lands between the Susquehanna and Delaware rivers, sparking the examination of previous treaties.³⁷ Delaware efforts to secure their homelands were dealt a fatal blow in 1737 when Pennsylvania authorities established claim over hundreds of thousands of acres during the infamous Walking Purchase.³⁸ In the end it appeared that Manawkyhiekon had reason to question the quality of the Iroquois brokerage. In 1742 at a treaty in Philadelphia, the Onondaga chief and orator, Canasatego, publically supported Pennsylvania’s blatant play for Delaware lands.³⁹ Ordered by Iroquois and provincial proprietors from their ancient lands, many Delawares sought refuge among likeminded communities in the Ohio Country by the end the decade. Another faction headed northeast to Shamokin on the Susquehanna, later to be widely recognized as the followers of the controversial Indian leader, Teedyuscung.⁴⁰

Distanced from the policies of Onondaga, Albany, and Philadelphia, by the mid-1740s the Ohio Iroquois, Hurons, Delawares, and Shawnees thrived under increasing

36 Thompson and Yeates, “Causes of the Alienation of the Delaware and Shawanese Indians,” MG193 Box 1, Fort Pitt Museum Collection, 1759 (Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission); For Indian migration to the Ohio Country and increased independence, see Michael McConnell, *A Country Between: The Upper Ohio Valley and Its Peoples, 1724–1774* (Lincoln:University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 5-20, 69-72; Francis Jennings, *Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies, and Tribes in the Seven Years’ War in America* (New York, W. W. Norton, 1988), 28-30.

37 Thompson and Yeates, “Causes of the Alienation of the Delaware and Shawanese Indians.”

38 For Walking Purchase details, see Francis Jennings, “The Scandalous Indian Policy of William Penn’s Sons: Deeds and Documents of the Walking Purchase,” *Pennsylvania History* 37:1 (1970): 19-39; Jennings, *Empire of Fortune*, 25-28.

39 Merrell, *The Lancaster Treaty of 1744*, 22.

40 Thompson and Yeates, “Causes of the Alienation of the Delaware and Shawanese Indians.”

levels of socio-economic sovereignty.⁴¹ As the region increasingly played host to a number of English and French designs, many of the loosely tied Ohio nations benefited from their newfound positions of strategic imperial and economic importance (Figure 4).⁴²

By the mid-1740s, the French had established a loose network of trading posts that maintained vital lines of communication and trade that stretched from New France to the mouth of the Mississippi River. Supported by a majority of the local indigenous inhabitants, a French presence in the Ohio River valley threatened to hem in the English colonies by blocking droves of traders and colonizers from moving west beyond the Appalachians. The dynamics of the Ohio Country began to significantly change, however, after King George's War and the fall of Louisbourg in June 1745. French supplies began to dry up which created a lucrative opportunity for English traders and the Crown. Many Ohio nations began to assume a fluid allegiance to gain the most from a courtship by the two competing suitors. The availability and price of goods went a long way to secure indigenous favor, and thus imperial ambitions.⁴³

Firming Alliances

Meanwhile, so long as the Confederacy made itself useful to the competing colonizers, the Iroquois remained formidable and invaluable conduits for many other Indians. But, for the power of the Confederacy to be real, the Iroquois required Europeans to recognize and confirm their claims by treaty and gifts. It was something colonials willing did when the Iroquois sanctioned the sale of land.

During the 1730s, in a play to strengthen their ties with Pennsylvania, the Iroquois not only 'validated' the Walking Purchase by publicly supporting the transaction during treaty exchanges, but also sold to the province thousands of acres of land on the lower Susquehanna River. In return, Pennsylvania bolstered the prestige of the Iroquois brokers with gifts and formal recognition of the Confederacy. In 1744, the Iroquois sought to capitalize on their strengthening relationship with Pennsylvania. That summer, Iroquois brokers led by Canasatego traveled to Lancaster to seek redress for lands they claimed by right of conquest in Virginia and Maryland. As squatters squatted, speculators speculated, and traders peddled liquor in Iroquoia, tensions between the colonies and the Iroquois had increased almost to the point of war. But as England and France tumbled towards war, the Iroquois realized their Confederacy again stood poised to benefit. Thinking they had the support of Pennsylvania, and provincial interpreter Conrad Weiser in particular, the Iroquois met colonial representatives. At Lancaster, despite the "wrongheadedness," "confusion," "brawlings [and] wranglings," that did not make it into the published treaty record, the negotiations concluded peacefully and with festivities.⁴⁴ After the Iroquois

41 The Ohio Iroquois, or "Mingos" were Iroquoian-speaking first peoples who had migrated to the Ohio region circa the 1740s along with displaced Delawares. The cultural and political bond that existed between these populations and the eastern Six Nations gradually became transplanted with the ties between the other Ohio nations—Shawnees and Hurons included. The 'Chenusio' were the most westerly body of Senecas who also had, as a result of geography, more connections with the western and Ohio nations than the eastern tribes of the Longhouse. Furthermore, French influence on these Indians was much greater than British during the time of the French colonial network that spanned throughout the *pays d'en haut*, and the Mississippi and Ohio River valleys.

42 Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 184.

43 Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier*, 35.

44 Merrell, *Lancaster Treaty of 1744*, 27.

secured a substantial payment for lands they claimed in the Shenandoah Valley, they departed north “laden with fine presents and fine words.” Fine words, indeed. Colonial Virginians (and later Americans) soon asserted that because the Iroquois acknowledged the Crown’s right to all lands within the bounds of Virginia (“sea to sea, west and north-west”) the Indians relinquished much of the continent—and the Ohio Country in particular. It was a “sinister consequence” of a treaty that helped accelerate the armed struggle for North America.⁴⁵



Just a year before the Lancaster treaty concluded, John Bartram took his breakfast at a fortified trading post; a frontier of empire. Bartram, perhaps unknowingly, dined in the heart of a contested region and the along the shores of a lake that would soon witness key events in an imperial struggle that spanned the globe. The route Bartram’s biscuits and tea travelled that so intrigued the botanist would soon guide warriors, soldiers, and refugees of a war that would soon alter a continent and its peoples. In fact, within twenty years of that warm June morning in 1743, the British Crown’s possessions in North America stretched from the frigid waters of Hudson’s Bay to white sands of the Caribbean, bounded only to the west by the swift currents of the Mississippi River. As Bartram packed for his second expedition to East Florida in 1765, Iroquois brokers, no longer wedged between competing imperial interests, made their way to Johnson Hall to protect their future in what was imagined to be a new British empire in North America.

45 Ibid., 30. For the treaty proceedings see 41-88.

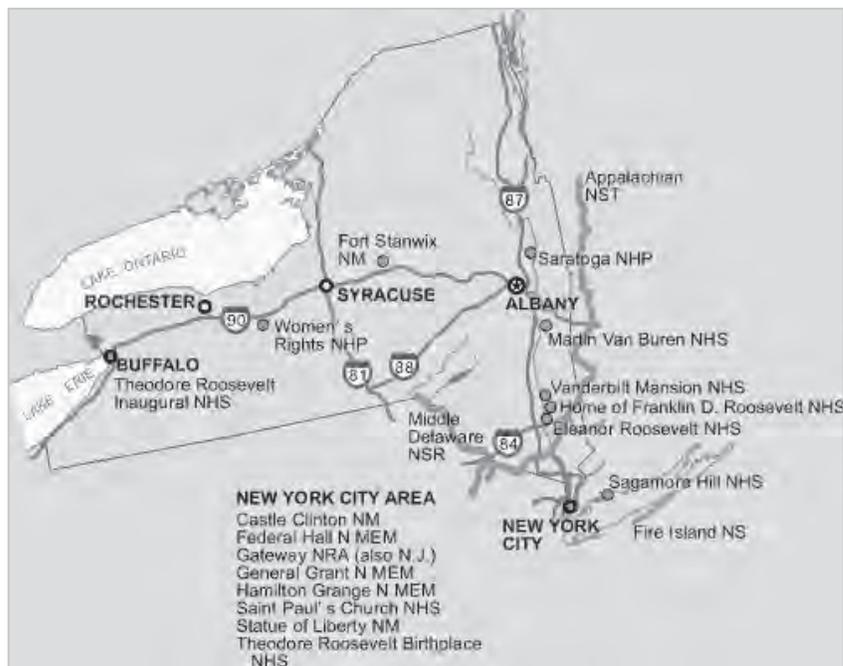


Figure 2. The Oneida Carrying Place

(top) "Oneida Carry" Accessed April 18, 2013,
<https://www.nps.gov/fost/learn/historyculture/the-oneida-carry-and-its-early-fortifications.htm>;
(Bottom) "Regional Map" Accessed November 15, 2017,
<https://www.nps.gov/fost/planyourvisit/upload/fortrgionalmap.gif>

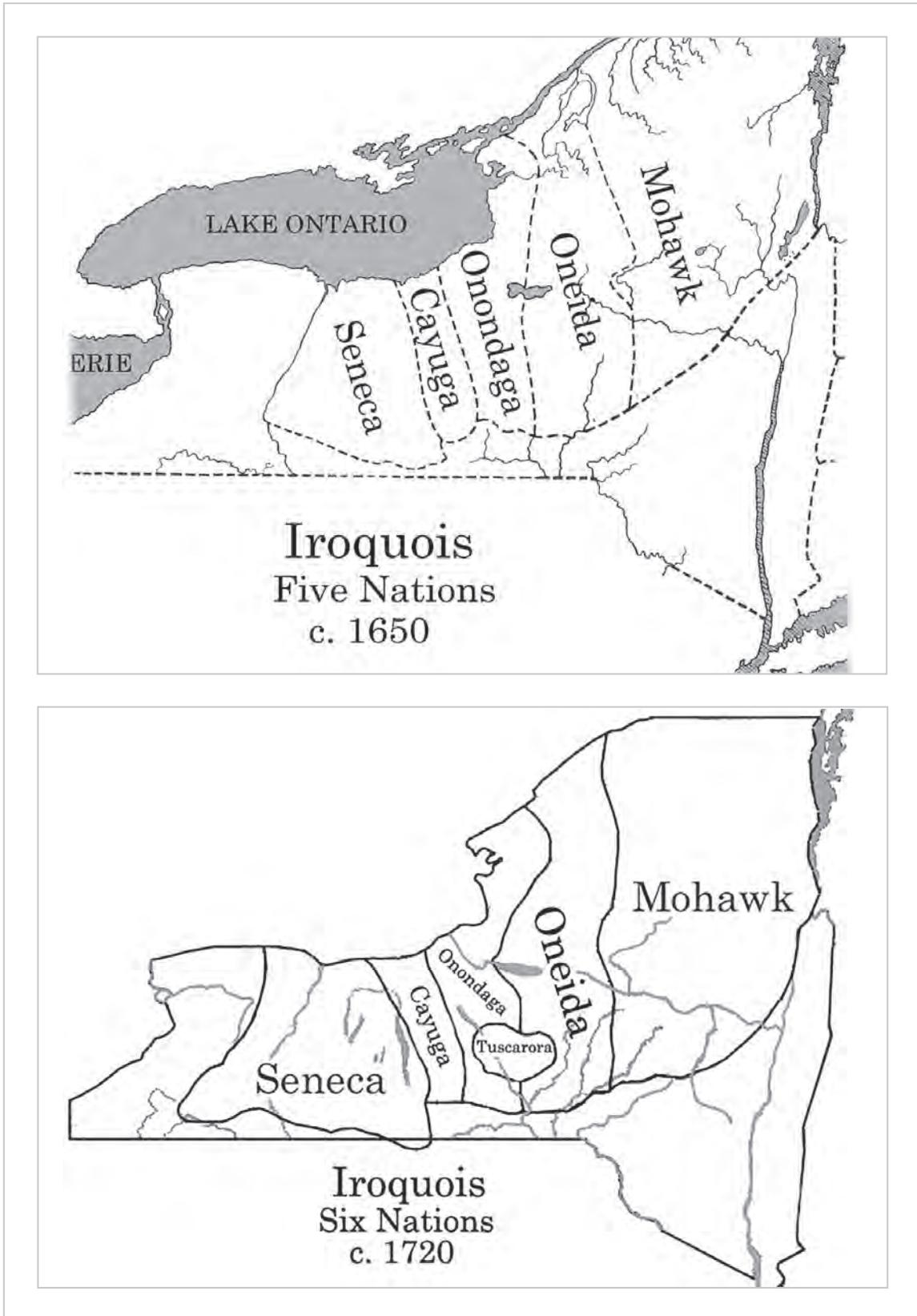


Figure 3. Location of Iroquois Nations, 1650–1720

(Both Images) "Nations" Accessed July 10, 2017, <https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iroquois>



Figure 4. European claims in North America, ca. 1730

Courtesy of edmaps.com. Accessed October 21, 2015, http://www.edmaps.com/html/historical_maps_of_canada.html

CHAPTER TWO

EMPIRES: WAR AND FORT STANWIX

At the onset of War of the Austrian Succession (King George's War, 1744-1748), parameters of the Iroquois Confederacy had expanded to include a distinctive British element. Two fires officially burned; one at Onondaga, the ancient heart of the metaphorical longhouse, and the other at Johnson Hall, the impressive Mohawk River valley manor of Sir William Johnson, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the northern colonies.¹ (Figure 6) Perhaps more than any other contemporary, Johnson recognized the importance of mastering the customs and language of Native Americans while transacting business in Iroquoia. In fact, by building negotiations on a foundation of Iroquois language and rituals, Johnson and his Indian associates created an acceptable "protocol of intercultural diplomacy" that British colonial rulers warmly welcomed.² The system was welcomed not only because it served Iroquois claims to vast territories and provided them with European gifts and special status but also because the British Crown sought Indian alliances to advance its own imperial goals.³

Ironically, while the Iroquois brokers at Lancaster in 1744 did not cede the Ohio Country (or much of the continent), subsequent attempts by Virginia to lay claim to the region bolstered Six Nations' authority over the same coveted lands. Helping promote the notion of Iroquois dominion was the 1747 publication *The History of the Five Nations*.⁴ Written over two decades before by the politician and scholar Cadwallader Colden of New York, the brief history of the Iroquois became a staple reference for colonial administrators on both sides of the Atlantic. In short, the work helped solidify the idea of a powerful Confederacy. Colden, who wrote the first section of the two-part history in 1727, concluded the work during King George's War. He presented the Iroquois as exemplars of Indian military and diplomatic ability. By referring to the Indian wars of the seventeenth century and the "Great Laws of the Iroquois," Colden's rendition of events accented Iroquois

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- 1 The literature on the life of Sir William Johnson is vast. For notable published references see, William Elliot Griffis, *Sir William Johnson and the Six Nations* (New York: Dudd, Meadows and Co., 1891); Flexner, *Mohawk Baronet*; James T. Flexner, *Lord of the Mohawks: A Biography of William Johnson* (Boston: Little and Brown, 1979); Julian Gwyn, "Sir William Johnson," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), <http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?BioId=36096> accessed Nov. 6, 2006.; and Milton W. Hamilton, *Sir William Johnson, Colonial American, 1715-1774* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1976). For an excellent summary of Johnson, see Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 3-15; and Michael J. Mullin, "Personal Politics: William Johnson and the Mohawks," *American Indian Quarterly* 17:3 (1993).
 - 2 Timothy Shannon, "Dressing for Success on the Mohawk Frontier," in *American Encounters: Natives and Newcomers from European Contact to Indian Removal, 1500-1850* eds. Peter C. Mancall and James H. Merrell (New York: Routledge, 2000). For the "protocol" quotation, see Richter and Merrell, eds., *Beyond the Covenant Chain*, 22.
 - 3 Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 134-37. For the importance of gift giving, see Jacobs, *Dispossessing the American Indian*, 12-17; Colin Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 67-69; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 112-19.
 - 4 Colden Cadwallader, *The History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada, Which Are Dependent on the Province of New-York in America* (London: Published for T. Osbourne, 1747).

dominance over their indigenous neighbors. Moreover, the work employed an eighteenth-century European social model to describe incorrectly a people, society, and continent. He referred to Indian “Castles” and “Kings” and “Conquest.” In short, *History of the Five Nations* expressed the willingness of the colonial administration to accept and perpetuate an inflated idea of Iroquois power, especially via treaty. Each side viewed the other as an instrument for securing their interests on the continent.⁵ The need appeared mutual, but maintaining the Covenant Chain that bound Indian and white interests was often a delicate task. Often brokering agreements were men and women well versed in negotiation and human exchange.⁶

While the authority of the Confederacy was being touted in London and at Johnson Hall, the actual Covenant Chain was under stress. Things had changed during King George’s War. Increasingly, the numerous and formidable Ohio River valley nations proclaimed and exercised greater independence from the Iroquois, thus disrupting the diplomatic status quo. Furthermore, because William Johnson was decommissioned as New York’s Indian agent while serving as an officer during the war, the flow of gifts into Iroquoia had all but dried up. No Johnson “meant no clothing, provisions, or arms with which to support themselves.”⁷

It also meant that individual Iroquois brokers no longer received the same preferential treatment from colonial authorities. The inconsistency increasingly led to doubt and social deterioration among the indigenous inhabitants of the Mohawk River valley. In fact, from 1748 to 1752 only one major council convened at Albany between the Iroquois and the governor of New York. Adding insult, in late 1752 Governor George Clinton reinstated Indian commissioners to handle Indian grievances instead of reappointing William Johnson. The pressure of increased European squatting throughout the Mohawk River valley compounded an already-strained situation. Due to a series of unfavorable judgments in land disputes, the Iroquois despised the fact that Governor Clinton expected them to negotiate with the Indian commissioners instead of Johnson.

Returning to Albany

As soon as the ink was dry on the treaty of *Aix La Chapelle*, ending the War of the Austrian Succession in Europe, the French and English retrenched once again into a state of cold war in North America. To curb French influence, colonizers from Virginia and Pennsylvania began to break with diplomatic protocol and began treating with the Ohio nations directly. The Crown needed to act fast to retain their Iroquois allies and to reign in freewheeling colonial expansion. Eight months after the Lords of Trade ordered New York Governor James DeLancey to convene a large council with the Six Nations, colonial and

5 Ibid.; Fenton, “Structure, Continuity, and Change in the Process of Iroquois Treaty Making,” 3-5.

6 Fenton, “Structure, Continuity, and Change in the Process of Iroquois Treaty Making,” 3-5. For further discussion of “middlemen” and “cultural mediators” see Margaret Connell Szasz, ed., *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker* (University of Oklahoma Press: Oklahoma, 1994); and James Merrell, *Into the American Woods* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999).

7 Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire*, 46-48.

Indian delegations met at Albany, New York, in an attempt to restore goodwill.⁸

The beginning of the negotiations did not go so well. Mohawk negotiators expressed, in particular, dissatisfaction with French, Virginian, and Pennsylvanian intentions throughout the Ohio River valley. They are all vying for lands, Chief Hendrick (Theyanoguin, b. 1691 – d. 1755) blasted, “which belong to us.” No doubt mindful of the fallout from Canastego’s negotiations at Lancaster in 1744 (the Mohawks were not in attendance), Hendrick intended to reassert Iroquois authority. If the Pennsylvanians or the Long Knives (Virginians) intend to build forts in the region, the Mohawk chief demanded that the Iroquois be properly consulted, *and* compensated.⁹ After a few days of unsuccessful negotiations regarding the proposed Plan of Union, on July 3, 1754, Conrad Weiser responded to Hendrick. He reminded the Indians that for the past thirty years the road of trade had been well traveled between the Ohio Country and the English colonies. In fact, Weiser insisted that in 1751 the Ohio Indians called upon Virginia to construct a fort in the region to protect the Indians from French aggression and trader abuses. Soon after the Virginians arrived to construct the fort, however, the French with a force of “a Thousand and 18 cannon” took possession of the palisade. Thus, the English were not to be blamed for the deteriorating state of affairs at the fork of the Monongahela River. Weiser did not challenge Iroquois *ownership* of the region but made a firm stand regarding the intentions of the English colonies. Weiser’s move did not go without reward.¹⁰

Two days passed before the Indians responded. When they did, a compromise had been reached. Hendrick brightened the Covenant Chain and vowed to resist French overtures. As would become evident during the forthcoming outbreak of hostilities, Hendrick’s pledge included few other Indians besides the Mohawks. For the time being, though, the Mohawk chief avoided further debate regarding Ohio Country lands by ceding thousands of acres lying between the Susquehanna and Ohio Rivers to Pennsylvania. Hendrick’s bold move infuriated the Ohio nations and threatened to undermine Virginian claims to the lands south of the Ohio, and west of the Monongahela Rivers. Complicating the situation, the Iroquois also negotiated a private transaction. In return for £2000 the Indians agreed to cede lands on the north branch of the Susquehanna River in the Wyoming Valley to representatives of the Susquehanna Company of Connecticut. The deal later acted as a primary instigator to the Pennamite Wars, because the cession overlapped with Pennsylvanian land grants and caused further friction among the colonists and Indians.¹¹

In return and undoubtedly aided by the many private conversations that took place unofficially, Hendrick secured Crown support for matters closer to home. The Crown pledged to address contested land claims, along with problems associated with inadequate trade regulations such as excessive liquor trafficking among the Indians. Furthermore,

8 Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan and B. Fernow, eds., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* Vol. 6 (Albany, N.Y.: Weed, Parsons, and Co., 1853–87), 800-1. For the Croghan quote, see Croghan to Governor Penn, May 14, 1754, in William Henry Egle, et al., eds., *Pennsylvania Archives, 3rd series* (Harrisburg, PA: State Printer, 1894), II:144-45.

9 O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VI: 870.

10 *Ibid.*, 872

11 *Ibid.*, 888; David Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again: Pontiac’s Uprising and the Fate of the British Empire in North America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 29; For a detailed account of contested provincial boundaries, see “Virginia Claims to Land in Pennsylvania” in Egle et al., eds., *Pennsylvania Archives, 3rd Series*, III: 483–574.

Hendrick emphasized that they would remain discontented with Iroquois-Crown relations until the reinstatement of William Johnson as their primary Indian agent.¹² The Albany compromise may have cost the Iroquois “the ability to play several diplomatic hands at once,” but it did lead to the replacement of the Indian Commissioners with a Royal Superintendent of Indian Affairs and guaranteed Confederacy brokerage in future continental affair.¹³ Hendrick maneuvered with great diplomatic skill and secured what he could for those of the Six Nations willing to work with him, and the British. William Johnson later conceded to the Lords of Trade that the “eyes of all the Western Tribes of Indians are upon the behaviour of the Six nations, whose fame of power, may in some measure exceed the reality, while they only act a timid and neutral part.” Johnson further confessed, “this I apprehend to be the modern State.”¹⁴

Plans to unify the colonies may have failed miserably, but colonial representatives managed to brighten the Covenant Chain before the Albany congress concluded; and the shining of the Chain gave the Crown a dim light of hope as their position in the trans-Appalachian region continued to deteriorate. By the spring of 1754, however, the Ohio Company of Virginia shareholder George Washington failed in his attempt to construct a fort at the forks of the Monongahela and Ohio rivers. When Washington returned with a Virginia militia later in July, his force proved no match for the French and Indians defending the newly completed and renamed Fort Duquesne. British regulars fared no better. In the spring of 1755 General Braddock was out maneuvered by a tactically superior French and indigenous forces during the campaign at the forks of the Ohio.¹⁵

Soon after Johnson received his appointment as Superintendent of Indian Affairs in 1755 he requested council with a large assembly of the Iroquois. Wary of the Virginian interests in the trans-Appalachian region, many Indians west of the Oneida Carry viewed “Braddock as the Governor of Virginia and his armies as the people of that Province . . . They looked therefore upon Mr. Braddock’s Enterprise as one Encroachment making war upon another.”¹⁶ The spoils of victory, many Indians judged, would be the Ohio Country lands. After all, as Chief Hendrick boasted the same year, “we are the six confederate Indian nations, the Heads and Superiors of all Indian nations of the Continent of America.” The Ohio nations must have wondered what lengths the Iroquois negotiators would go to in order to protect their own homelands and interests.¹⁷

12 O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VI: 875-92; Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire*, 221.

13 Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire*, 223.

14 “Colonel Johnson’s Suggestions for defeating the designs of the French” July 1754, in O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VI: 897.

15 *Ibid.*, 7: 270; Alfred Cave, “George Croghan and the Emergence of British Influence on the Ohio Frontier,” in *Builders of Ohio*, eds. Warren Van Tine and Michael Pierce (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2003), 4

16 Peter Wraxall, “Some Thoughts upon the British Indian Interest in North America more particularly as it relates to the Northern Confederacy commonly called the Six Nations,” *Memoir on North American Indians c. 1755-1760: Secretary of State Miscellaneous* (Microfilm: B-618, 1Ref: MG11-C05), NAC. William Johnson earlier confirmed the same sentiment in a letter to the Lords of Trade, July 1754, in O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VI: 897.

17 For Hendrick’s quote, see Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 14. In 1755, cartographer Lewis Evans’ “General Map of the Middle British Colonies in America” furthered the myth of an Iroquois empire. Evans depicted the boundaries of the Six Nations extending to the Mississippi River.

Fort Bull

As Braddock toiled towards the forks of the Ohio River, General William Shirley had been ordered to secure the Crown's position along the southern shores of Lake Ontario. To do so, Shirley turned his attention to Oswego, situated between two French lifelines: forts Frontenac and Niagara. In the late spring of 1755, Shirley marched over 1700 men of the 50th and 51st Regiments, along with Colonel Peter Schuyler's "Jersey Blues," towards Oswego. Shirley recognized the importance of the Oneida Carry. William Johnson agreed. In order to keep communication and supplies open between Albany and Oswego, fortifications at the Carry required strengthening, and Wood Creek cleared of all obstructions. As a result, by late May a contingent of soldiers and laborers from Shirley's force busied themselves with the first task. Directed by Marcus Petri from the German Flatts, the workers began construction of two 35' x 20' fortified log storehouses, one on each end of the Carrying Place. Construction began, however, without the consent of the Oneidas.¹⁸

By the time Shirley's men broke ground at the Carry the relationship between the Oneidas and the English colonies had been deteriorating for months. A year before Shirley's men arrived at the Carry, reports of abuse at the portage filtered back to New York. In one instance, English traders complained to Governor James DeLancy that when attempting to cross the Carry armed resident Indians "forced them" to pay dearly to have their goods transported and "boldly robbed them of their rum and stores with surly looks and storms of threatening language." Fearing for their lives, the traders reported, they consented to the terms but made sure to seek an alternative route on their return to Albany. Correspondence from Johnson Hall confirms an increase of abuses at the Carry, and rumors that the Oneidas were strengthening their ties with Ohio nations. Thus, when Oneida complaints filtered back to William Johnson shortly after the arrival of Shirley's men, the soon-to-be Superintendent of Indian Affairs did not take them lightly. Johnson urged a halt to construction until the consent of the Indians could be secured. Shirley agreed.¹⁹

The construction of fortified storehouses may have been temporarily interrupted, but that did not stop Shirley from ordering the clearing of obstructions from Wood Creek and the graveling of the Carry's main road. Shirley feared the French and their indigenous allies "intended to obstruct the passage . . . by falling great trees across it." But on June 28, 1755, when Captain William Williams arrived to oversee the clearing and roadwork, he found the Oneidas openly hostile to the idea of any construction. As scholar Gilbert Hagerty points out, relations "with the Oneidas had now been strained to the where [Williams] not dare dig a trench or cut a picket." Making matters more tense, without any form of protection, those under Williams' command were at the mercy of the local Indians. But within a week of Williams' report Johnson managed to strike a deal with the Oneidas. With the help of his Mohawk allies, Johnson negotiated for not only the erection of two storehouses but also a fort. In return, the Oneidas that were promised a fort at Kanonwalohale (Oneida Castle) continued control of trade over the Carry once the war ended, and that no rum would be sold to their villages. Shirley also pledged "some pieces of Artillery" to the Oneidas while negotiating at Oswego. Thus, on July 4, 1755, five days before Braddock met his end at the

18 Charles H. Lincoln, ed., *Correspondence of William Shirley* (New York: MacMillan, 1912); "William Alexander to William Shirley, May 27, 1755," in *Correspondence of William Shirley* (New York: MacMillan, 1912), II, 453-55; Luzader et al., *Fort Stanwix*, 5; Hagerty, *Massacre at Fort Bull*, 21-22.

19 Hagerty, *Massacre at Fort Bull*, 22.

Battle of the Monongahela, Petri recommenced construction of the storehouses. By mid-August the project was completed, and Petri, now a Captain, was on his way to relieve the company at the western post on Wood Creek. Meanwhile, Captain Williams was to remain at the eastern storehouse on the Mohawk River until Petri returned.²⁰

Like Oswego, the British position at the Oneida Carry undercut French supplies lines and imperial designs in the *pays d'en haut* ("Upper Country" or Great Lakes region/watersheds). If left unchecked, French authorities reasoned, the British would be capable of pushing deep into the Great Lakes and up the St. Lawrence with the help of an increasing number of indigenous allies. French fears were not unfounded. In fact, when Oneida warriors helped Johnson during the Lake George campaign that September the French threatened retaliatory measures that would take the French and their indigenous allies deep into Oneida territory. Catching wind of the intelligence, and fearful that the Oneidas would retract from their earlier agreement with the upcoming scheduled arrival of more soldiers at the Carry, in October the now 61-year-old Shirley ordered the construction of two forts, one at each end, to safeguard the portage. How could Oswego be supported, Shirley lamented to William Johnson, "if the French should take . . . the Carrying Place." Five weeks later, Fort Williams, the largest and most fortified of the two, guarded the Mohawk River. Meanwhile, Captain Petri was at the trickling and marshy headwaters of Wood Creek overseeing the construction of a smaller palisade. Not a trained military engineer, Petri's final product did not follow Shirley's plans, and no doubt fell considerably short in reassuring the resident Oneidas that it would provide a strong deterrence for the French and their Indian allies. In fact, when completed, the fort at Wood Creek (or "Fort Bull" as it became known) included "no loopholes, flankers, nor bastions of any kind." Also absent were mounted cannons.²¹

The apparent shortfalls at the Oneida Carry did not stop General Shirley from looking west from his post at Oswego with aspirations of marching on Niagara. Oswego, Shirley lamented, "is as much the key of these lakes and the . . . country lying around them, to the English, as Nova Scotia is of the sea coast and eastern parts of North America." If the French succeeded in taking Oswego, it will "not only make them absolute masters of the navigation of all these lakes" and "let them into the heart of the country inhabited by the Six Nations." Not content with leaving the post without completing the needed repairs, together with bad weather and a dwindling number of committed Indian allies, Shirley was forced to delay his expedition against Niagara. Meanwhile, fifty miles north at Fort Frontenac, a force of 1,400 Canadians and Indians waited anxiously for Shirley to make his move. If the British general intended to attack Niagara, French forces would move on Oswego. By the end of October, however, it became clear that an attack on Niagara would have to wait until the spring. As a result, Shirley traveled towards Albany, leaving Colonel Mercer in command of 700 men at Oswego and just a few dozen to guard the Carry; soon, the waterways froze and winter set into the southern Great Lakes. Poorly equipped, short on supplies, and suffering from starvation and scurvy, the men under Mercer and Williams

20 Shirley to Sir Thomas Robinson, June 20, Dec. 20, 1775, in Lincoln, *Correspondence of William Shirley*, II, 200, 355; For instructions to Williams, see Shirley to William Williams, Aug. 12, 1755, *ibid.*, II, 235; Hagerty, *Massacre at Fort Bull*, 23.

21 Shirley to Sir Thomas Robinson, June 20, Dec. 20, 1775, in Lincoln, *Correspondence of William Shirley*, II, 200, 355; For instructions to Williams, see Shirley to William Williams, Aug. 12, 1755, *ibid.*, II, 235; Hagerty, *Massacre at Fort Bull*, 23.

were nearly forced into a headlong retreat before the winter's end. By the end of February 1756, morale at Oswego and the Oneida Carry hit an all-time low.²²

The situation appeared to turn around on March 12 when a dozen batteaux loaded with supplies and food reached the Carry from the German Flatts. Despite reports that the ice on Wood Creek had yet fully broken and enemy war parties were camped along the supply line, Williams quickly ordered a relief column to take supplies to Oswego. Eleven icy days later, the relief party under the command of James Reade, the Assistant Commissary at Fort Williams, arrived at Oswego.²³

As February gave way to March, the ice on the waterways between Albany and Oswego broke away. In anticipation of renewed conflict, Colonel John Bradstreet was tasked with recruiting and organizing two thousand laborers to trek thousands of pounds worth of ammunitions and supplies over the Oneida Carry. By mid-March, arterial supplies critical to the British position in North America flowed over the Carry.²⁴

Recognizing the importance of a supply line, French military leaders and allied Indians decided to make good on their earlier threats concerning the portage. On March 12, 1756, a company of soldiers and French-allied Iroquois (largely from Akwesasne, Kanasetake, Kahnawake, and Oswegatchie) and Huron warriors departed Fort de La Présentation. Opting to take the Carry by surprise, Lieutenant Gaspard-Joseph Chaussegros de Léry, a Canadian-born seigneur and commander of the two hundred strong French force, followed the one hundred-plus French-allied Iroquois and Huron warriors. Twelve days later, they arrived and positioned themselves on the doorstep of the Carry. Early the next morning, after capturing a number of prisoners, de Léry chose to attack the poorly fortified palisade on Wood Creek. Soon thereafter, French and Indian forces stormed Fort Bull, killing the handful of soldiers that garrisoned the post. Not long after de Léry ordered the fort to be set ablaze, the thousands of pounds of gunpowder ignited, blowing the fort to bits. With William Johnson's force within striking distance and Fort Williams well equipped, and his Indian allies having fulfilled their own independent objectives, de Léry opted to pull back. But the damage had been done. The conflict that had been raging in North America since the sacking of Pickawillany in 1752 finally became official. On May 17, 1756, King George II declared war against his 'beloved' French rival, King Louis XV.²⁵

The Seven Years' War

As the administrative departments for the kingdom of Great Britain (or Whitehall) prepared for a global war, Shirley kept his sights on refortifying the Oneida Carry. Writing to James Abercrombie in June 1756, Shirley noted that "since early this Spring" a detachment of eighty workers under the direction of James Fairservice had been busy "Clearing the Wood Creek" to shorten the distance of the Carry. British engineers also

22 Luzader et al., *Fort Stanwix*, 4.

23 Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 94-201; Hagerty, *Massacre at Fort Bull*, 26-29.

24 Shirley to John Bradstreet, March 17, 1756, in Lincoln, *Correspondence of William Shirley*, II, 419-22.

25 Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 94-201; Francis Parkman, *Wolfe and Montcalm* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 374-76; D. Peter MacCloud, "The Franco-Amerindian Expedition to the Great Carrying Place in 1756," (Paper read at the 18th annual meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society, McGill University, Montreal, May 23, 1992).

built a new storehouse at Wood Creek on the site of the destroyed bastion, and Fort Newport at the creek's upper landing. At the other end, on the Mohawk River, under the direction of Major Charles Craven, British workers started work on "The Pentagon," or "Fort New," and later designated "Fort Craven," with the hope of replacing Fort Williams by the end of the summer.²⁶

Military operations along one of the Crown's most important supply routes in North America were not Shirley's only problem. By the spring of 1756, his command of the Crown's forces in America came under scrutiny. Shirley, not long after losing the patronage of the Duke of Newcastle, found out that Daniel Webb and James Abercrombie would act as interim successors until John Campbell (the 4th Earl of Loudoun) was ready to take command. By July, Loudoun, Webb and Abercrombie sat around a table in Albany debating an appropriate course of action. In the end, Loudoun opted to concentrate on the British position at Ticonderoga instead of a preparing for a major Lake Ontario offensive. But, like Shirley before him, Loudoun recognized the importance of protecting Oswego and the supply line over the Oneida Carry. As a result, he ordered Webb, and the 24th Regiment of Foot, to Oswego. His orders, however, came too late. On August 15, 1756, after Montcalm's canon bombardment killed Mercer, Oswego fell to the French. News of the catastrophe reached Webb at the Oneida Carry five days later. Undermanned to defend the Carry from the rumored six thousand Frenchmen marching towards Albany, Webb faced a tough decision. Fresh off the boat, so to speak, the British general's unfortunate beginning in North America began as the earthworks at the Oneida Carry burnt to the ground behind him while leading a general retreat to the German Flatts.²⁷

Braddock's defeat in the Ohio Country, the sacking of Oswego, and the abandonment of the Oneida Carry did little to help British imperial endeavors and prestige in North America. Coupled with military defeats, it appeared that more and more Indian allies were holding fast to claims of neutrality, or worse, taking up positions beside the French. In fact, Montcalm's victory on the shores of Lake Ontario induced many wavering Senecas and Oneidas to hedge their bets with the French. The English Crown needed to act quickly if it intended to turn the tide throughout the northeastern borderlands.

Johnson began earlier that spring when in April 1756 he ordered Captain Petri and thirty workers to Kanonwalohale to commence construction of a fort the British had promised the Indians. Johnson also tried to mend fences during councils with Iroquois and Delaware leaders after Pennsylvania Governor Morris placed a scalp bounty on all Delawares. A few months later, Johnson dispatched George Croghan, the newly appointed Deputy Indian agent, to conduct peace talks between Pennsylvania and the Delawares.²⁸

Animosity had been increasing between Pennsylvania proprietors due to the scalp bounty declaration and a number of Indian nations as a result of contentious land claims, most of which had stemmed from the infamous Walking Purchase scandal of 1737 and the land the Mohawks promised Pennsylvania at Albany in 1754. In fact, news that many Delawares had agreed to take up the hatchet against the English filtered back to

26 Shirley to James Abercrombie, June 27, 1756, in Lincoln, *Correspondence of William Shirley*, II, 470-71.

27 Luzader et al., *Fort Stanwix*, 6.

28 Richard Peters to Shirley, May 6, 1756, in Lincoln, *Correspondence of William Shirley*, II, 438-42.

Philadelphia.²⁹ Writing to Johnson in March 1757, Croghan remarked on the state of affairs. “There is good understanding between the Governor and me, as well as most of the gentlemen of the place, and every one seems fond of an inquiry being made into the Complaints of the Indians; except some of the Proprietary Agents.”³⁰ Croghan’s relationship with the Pennsylvania proprietors had deteriorated since the 1744 treaty at Lancaster. Thomas Penn, in particular, loathed Croghan’s betrayal of protocol when he personally treated with select Indians in a bid for land.³¹ But Croghan’s tune changed after 1757, as he too began to tout the authority of the Iroquois Confederacy.³²

Meanwhile, by the end of 1757, things looked rather bleak for the English. The French controlled the Ohio Country, had sacked forts Oswego and William Henry, and, with the help of a number of Iroquois warriors, raided colonizer settlements (largely consisting of German colonizers) along the critical Albany-Oswego supply line. Commenting on the state of affairs late in the year, Marquis Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil, commander at Niagara, stated: “I have ruined the plans of the English; I have disposed the Five Nations to attack them; I have carried consternation and terror into all those parts.”³³ But, within months of the commander’s remarks, the mutually beneficial partnership between many Indian nations and the French Crown that was critical to French success in North America began to erode.

The British may have lost a number of posts to French and Indian forces, but English naval blockades halted the critical Indian trade and goods required to outfit allies and fuel imperial ambitions in North America. The fall of Louisbourg in May 1758 made things worse for the French. Throughout the Great Lakes and Ohio Country, many disgruntled Indians distanced themselves, or struck out against the French garrisons incapable of providing “goods and services necessary to sustain the reciprocal relationship native alliances were built upon.”³⁴ By July, not long after a delegation of Ohio Indians visited Philadelphia to assess in person the validity of colonial peace overtures, General John Forbes prepared to move against Fort Duquesne. A month later, Fort Frontenac on Lake Ontario fell to Colonel John Bradstreet. By the end of the summer, English forces controlled the St. Lawrence River, the southeastern Great Lakes, and considerable ground west of the Alleghenies. Reports that even the Shawnees had relocated from Logg’s Town up the Allegheny River to be closer to the Senecas came as welcome news to British authorities.³⁵

Fort Stanwix

Eager to strengthen their position on the continent, imperial strategists again turned their attention to the Oneida Carry. In the early summer months of 1758, as British forces geared up for what would be a series of successful offenses, James Abercrombie ordered

29 “Council held in Philadelphia,” *Penn Family Papers - Indian Affairs 1687-1801*, vol. 3 (Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia), p.39.

30 Croghan to Johnson, Philadelphia, March 14, 1757, in O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VII: 266.

31 Cave, “George Croghan and the Emergence of British Influence on the Ohio Frontier,” in Van Tine and Pierce, eds., *Builders of Ohio*, 6.

32 “At a Council held in Philadelphia,” Aug. 30, 1757, vol. 3, Penn Family Papers.

33 Luzader et al., *Fort Stanwix*, 7.

34 McConnell, *A Country Between*, 128.

35 Ibid.

Brigadier General John Stanwix to regain control over the Oneida Carry. At the same time, William Johnson struck another deal with the Oneidas to build a new palisade at the Carry. This time, however, their approval did not come without a promise from Johnson that in addition to “plentiful and cheap trade,” the fort would be knocked down as soon as hostilities ceased between the French and English. Johnson agreed. After engineers reviewed site plans and gathered the needed supplies, construction of the unnamed fort began on August 23, 1758, one quarter mile upstream from the ashes of Fort Williams.³⁶ (Figure 7)

From the beginning, a series of obstacles plagued the timely construction of the new fort at the Oneida Carry. Despite promises to build a modest and temporary fortification, the initial plan agreed upon by the lead engineers and favored by Stanwix called for a massive square fort, with a 1420-foot exterior circuit capable of “Lodging 200 Men, in the Winter, and for 3 to 400 Men in the Summer.” The ambitious plan also called for “curtains, bastions, ramparts, barracks, magazine, and storehouses.” To complete the task, substantial manpower would be needed. Of the two thousand men assigned to construct the fort and defend the Carry, however, less than eleven hundred ever congregated at one time at the portage, with no more than four hundred working on the fort. Desertion, sick lists, reconnaissance, a lack of ready supplies from Schenectady, and Bradstreet’s renewed campaign against Fort Frontenac dwindled numbers further. Not helping matters, health problems plagued Captain Green, one of two lead military engineers overseeing the construction of the fort, eventually forcing Abercrombie to relieve him of duty before workers laid the first log.³⁷

Despite early setbacks, Lieutenant John Williams, Green’s replacement, made considerable headway in the first few weeks. But, when a revised plan calling for a substantial decreasing of the fortifications in light of Bradstreet’s recent victory at Fort Frontenac made its way to the Carry, another problem faced Stanwix and Williams. Determined to press ahead as planned, Williams convinced Stanwix to holdfast. Writing to Abercrombie in September 1758, Stanwix remarked: “[If we continued as planned] the Advantage of the Situation and *guns* sufficient for the post will make pretty Strong I am told every way preferable to Fort Edward.” In response, Abercrombie consented, but added that he expected a fort capable of lodging four hundred men completed by the end of winter. Failure to do so, Abercrombie added, “must be answerable for the Consequences.” But, it would be almost three months before General Stanwix could christen his frontier masterpiece as his namesake. Lucky for him, and Williams, “Mrs. Nanny Crombie,” as his troops called him, had been replaced by Jeffery Amherst due to, among other things, the failed assault on Fort Carillon (later Fort Ticonderoga).³⁸

The Treaty of Easton, 1758

As laborers slogged away at the Oneida Carry, in October 1758 English authorities met with hundreds of potential indigenous allies for the third time in two years at Easton, Pennsylvania. Bringing together representatives from New York, Pennsylvania, New

36 Luzader et al., *Fort Stanwix*, 8-10, 14; John Albert Scott, “Joseph Brant at Fort Stanwix and Oriskany” *New York History*, 19:4 (1938): 16-17; For a firsthand account during the fort’s construction, see “Documents: Fort Frontenac and Fort Stanwix.”

37 Luzader et al., *Fort Stanwix*, 10.

38 Stanwix to Abercrombie, Sept. 7, 1758, *James Abercrombie Papers* (Huntington Library, San Marino, CA); Abercrombie to Stanwix, Sept. 12, 1758, *ibid.* Luzader et al., *Fort Stanwix*, 11.

Jersey, the Iroquois, Chief Teedyuscung's followers from the Susquehanna (Shamokin Delawares), some Ohio nations representatives, and scores of smaller nations largely residing east of the Allegheny Mountains, the treaty helped turn the tide for the British. As Richard White notes, "direct peace negotiations between the British and the Ohio Indians proceeded rapidly after the appearance of [Delaware Chief] Pisquetomen and Keeyuscung (or Delaware George)." Intent on finding terms of peace not only with the British, but also among the Delawares, the men pressed for terms that would secure Indian lands and open up trade. Interestingly, however, imperial endeavors at the forks, were not of primary concern when the Delawares arrived at Easton. Far more concerned with patching differences between the Iroquois and colonial authorities, the participants even brushed aside Teedyuscung.³⁹

Intent on securing his people's possession of the upper Susquehanna Valley independent of both Pennsylvanian and Iroquois interference, Teedyuscung's arrival at Easton caused a stir. Perhaps not surprisingly, the Iroquois and agents representing the Penn family and British Crown joined forces against the "King of the Delawares" and his Quaker allies, marginalizing his influence over the proceedings. In fact, when Croghan arrived at Easton to oversee the treaty, Teedyuscung and two hundred Delaware Indians waited for him. Before negotiations began, Teedyuscung demanded a personal clerk. Historian Nicolas Wainwright suggests that the Quakers did not trust Croghan's minutes and persuaded the "Delaware King" to obtain an assistant. Teedyuscung also distrusted Croghan.⁴⁰ The suspicion and innuendo of his untrustworthiness as an interpreter angered Croghan and marked a rift between the two old acquaintances. But there was real reason to be concerned. With his own interests in mind, and as acting Deputy of Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Croghan began to tout the authority of the Iroquois when it came to Delaware demands. In fact, when the Easton meeting concluded, Teedyuscung's land grievances remained largely unaddressed. The Quakers blamed Croghan for this situation alleging that he kept Teedyuscung too drunk to negotiate. Other evidence documents that the "Delaware King" did not need much help. Whether or not it was Croghan's strategy, Teedyuscung remained isolated during the negotiations. Croghan held thousands of acres in Indian deeds and he needed to play a careful hand given the Crown's promise not to settle west of the mountains in return for Indian support. Like his patron, Sir William Johnson, Croghan began to bolster Iroquois authority over the Ohio region. The constructed image of the Confederacy brokers as overlords continued to gain ground as the Crown and its representatives negotiated for indigenous allies. As for the assembled Ohio Indians, they acknowledged "a token of Iroquois hegemony" and agreed to terms of peace only after the British promised to treat them as allies, and Pennsylvania agreed to relinquish claims to lands west of the Appalachians. For a fleeting moment the European negotiators agreed. When colonial agent Christian Frederick Post and Chief Pisquetomen relayed the news west, the French did not waste time before razing Fort Duquesne and retreating back up the Ohio. By summer's end,

39 White, *The Middle Ground*, 249-51.

40 Nicholas B. Wainwright, *George Croghan, Wilderness Diplomat* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 129-30.

Niagara too had fallen.⁴¹ Shortly thereafter, General Forbes succeeded where Washington and Braddock previously failed. By November's end, Forbes controlled the forks of the Ohio River. By winter's end, the newly named Fort Pitt was the Crown's most westerly frontier in North America.⁴²



A month before Forbes took the forks, British victories in Africa, the Caribbean, and Europe were punctuated by General Wolfe's dramatic victory on the Plains of Abraham outside the walls of Quebec City. Less than a year later, on September 8, 1760, Montréal surrendered. Six months later, with the French in North America defeated, the Indian department cut frontier costs. General Jeffrey Amherst now felt no obligation to maintain cordial relations with the Indians; a people he confessed he wished "to extirpate . . . root and branch."⁴³

Meanwhile, as the continent emerged from the Seven Years' War, control over Oneida Carry once again promised to provide a measure of stability for the Oneidas. But, because logistical and military setbacks delayed the completion of Fort Stanwix until 1762, the British did not intend to simply pack-up and leave. Therefore, by the time terms at Paris officially ended the war, instead of being used as a defensive post against French aggression, Fort Stanwix became a point of contention among the Iroquois. The fort, after all, had been built on the condition that it would be demolished after the war. Not long after the cannons had ceased firing, William Johnson began fielding complaints originating from the Oneidas. As the Mohawks mediated, the abandonment of the recently completed palisade appeared even less likely by the spring of 1763. By then, as Pontiac's War raged, the "primary function" of the fort "was to provide for an imperial presence in the Iroquois country, particularly among the Oneidas."⁴⁴ But, the end of Pontiac's War brought new problems to the footsteps of the Carry. Despite the terms of the 1763 Proclamation (that forbid physical colonization west of the Appalachian Mountains), the relentless incursion of European squatters into the borderlands threatened to rip apart the Confederacy and ignite another Indian war. It soon became clear to Iroquois negotiators and colonial administrators that the opening of a new frontier in the Ohio Country would serve to benefit a variety of converging interests; and what better place to convene to finalize an agreement than the Oneida Carry. (Figure 6)

41 Anthony Wallace, *King of the Delawares: Teedyuscung, 1700-1763* (Salem, N.H.: Ayer, 1970); C.A. Weslager, *The Delaware Indians* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1972), 235-47; White, *The Middle Ground*, 251.

42 Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 186.

43 J.C. Long, *Lord Jeffrey Amherst: A Soldier of the King* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), 187.

44 Jones, *License for Empire*, 74.

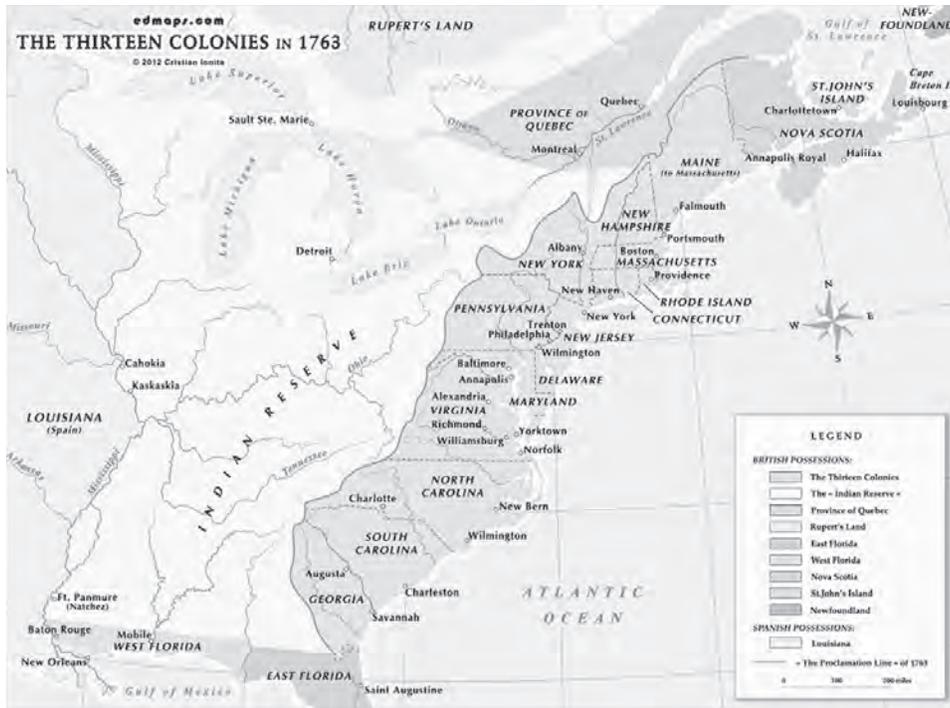


Figure 5 North American Colonies and Proclamation Line, 1763.

Courtesy of edmaps.com. Accessed online July 10, 2017 at: https://www.edmaps.com/html/thirteen_colonies_1763.html

CHAPTER THREE

COLLABORATORS: THE ROAD TO DEOWAINSTA

As the winter months of 1762 set in, North America reeled from the destruction caused by the Seven Years' War. Commonly referred to by colonists as the French and Indian War, the conflict that raged between imperial forces for almost a decade on the continent displaced and destroyed thousands of lives and all but bankrupted two competing European empires. When the war ended, the English Crown acquired a North American empire as well as the hefty cost of its administration. In fact, Britain's national debt had increased almost fifty million pounds Sterling as a result of the global conflict.¹ Governing an empire with an administration plagued by financial and political instability bordered on futility. In an attempt to ebb the bleeding, the Crown first sought to avoid past mistakes. That meant formally integrating the American colonies into the mechanisms that guided diplomacy and trade in Europe. The Crown could no longer afford costly cold war maneuvering in North America that often occurred out of imperial reach. Trade and expansion overseas required regulation to generate money and to avoid further conflict. It also meant controlling colonial interactions with the continent's first peoples. By the spring of 1763, as Pontiac's War underscored, new boundaries needed to be quickly established and an Indian management plan put into place. To keep things orderly, the colonial administrators reasoned, what better allies to turn to than the Iroquois? Despite intentions, or perhaps delusions, the new empire envisioned never came to be.

A War for Independence

The Seven Years' War "did more than shift cartographic boundaries; it set people and events in motion." For many colonists, the Peace of Paris signed on February 10, 1763, "brought hopes for a change of fortune."² Peace between European nations represented an opportunity for colonials to return to speculating in lands in trans-Appalachia. With the French gone, enterprising speculators from Connecticut to Virginia looked towards the Mohawk River valley and beyond the mountains to the fertile Ohio Country. Hardened by previous displacement and war, however, the indigenous residents living on the coveted lands did not passively relinquish the territory. In fact, by 1762 Indian concerns that the war had been mainly between rivals for their lands were substantiated as settlers lured by the Connecticut-based Susquehanna Company pushed deep into the Susquehanna Valley. The joint-stock land company, formed in 1753, maintained that the province's colonial charter granted them sea-to-sea land rights. When Iroquois leaders met Johnson that April they warned the superintendent that if incursions continued, major problems would follow.³

The Indian policies of General Jeffrey Amherst also fueled tensions. "Arrogant

¹ Jones, *License for Empire*, 74-75.

² Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen*, 15.

³ In 1763 British-allied Six Nations had been reduced to a population of approximately 160 fighting men and a total population between perhaps 600 and 800 Indians. The western Senecas, however, had a population of about four thousand Indians in twenty villages that largely remained anti-British. *Ibid.*, 35-44; 48-63.

and ignorant of Indian ways, the British commander-in-chief . . . viewed an empire as something to be governed, not negotiated and cultivated by giving gifts to Indians.” On the heels of war, Amherst rolled back expenditures when most needed, and demanded that Crown agents cease distributing gifts among the Indians. The gifts showed respect for Indian traditions. Physically, gifts also represented the Crown’s goodwill, and were essential resources for their indigenous recipients—whether they were redistributed, displayed, or used in everyday life. Moreover, by withholding gifts and retaining a British presence west of the Appalachians, albeit scant, Amherst threatened Indian autonomy throughout the Ohio Country.⁴

In February 1762, English trader Alexander McKee informed the Shawnees that the French had given up all claim to the continent to the English. Angered at the notion their previous “father” had relinquished claim to something he did not own, in April a delegation of Shawnees arrived at Fort Pitt to express their frustration. That winter, messages sent to Amherst and William Johnson from Ohio-based traders warned of the increased dissatisfaction of western nations towards the English.⁵ The Iroquois, too, complained about squatters in the Mohawk River valley and as far west as Oswego. Reports also trickled back to the colonial capitals that factions of Seneca and Cayuga warriors were conspiring against the English. These Indians, along with most Ohio and Great Lakes nations, loathed the English as much as Amherst reviled complications with Indian affairs. In fact, by the spring of 1763 the message long preached from a Delaware prophet named Neolin had gained a wide audience of believers throughout the Great Lakes region. Neolin insisted that during a dream-induced journey the Master of Life had charged him with the task of ridding the Indians of the pestilence caused by the colonizers. The prophet advocated the rejection of European drink and trading goods, and urged Indians to cease fighting among themselves and to take only one wife. With racially charged terminology, Neolin promised a heaven without the ills of the European for those Indians willing to cleanse their country of the white man and his abuses. Soon, the “voices of militant warriors drowned out sachems’ words of caution.”⁶

On May 7, 1763, hundreds of Indians led by Ottawa Chief Pontiac encircled and attacked British forces at Fort Detroit. A month earlier Pontiac spread Neolin’s message during a council with Ottawa, Huron, Potawatomi, Ojibwa delegates at Detroit. The charismatic leader urged the Indians to take the hatchet to the English. Within weeks of the attack on Detroit the infectious fervor of the Indian attacks spread to the Ohio Country and seeped well into Iroquoia. By mid-June, British palisades at Venango, LeBoeuf, and Presque Isle, as well as the substantial Fort Michilimackinac had fallen to determined Indian war parties struggling to assert their independence. At Venango, before the attacking Indians murdered over a dozen British soldiers they forced the garrison commander,

4 Ibid., 67-69.

5 For report of Shawnees at Pitt, see Sewell Slick, *William Trent and the West* (Harrisburg: Archives Publication Company of Pennsylvania, 1947), 109-25. For Croghan reports on Indian Affairs, see James Sullivan, et al., eds., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, Vol. 3 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1921-1963), 964-65 (1762); *ibid.*, IV: 62, 97, 98 (1763); and *ibid.*, X: 534-35 (1763). For Johnson to Amherst, see *ibid.*, III: 185-86, 530-31.

6 Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen*, 66-71. For a detailed discussion concerning Neolin and other Native prophets, see Gregory Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 33-35.

Lieutenant Francis Gordon, to record their grievances. Inept imperial trading policies and high prices were cited, but the fear that the English planned to take possession of their lands topped the list. At Fort Pitt, Delaware Chief Turtle Heart passed on the same sentiment while laying siege to the post. In response to the swelling violence, British military leaders in North America corresponded, seeking a speedy resolution to the conflict. As an acceptable means to aid in the reduction of indigenous resistance to British occupation of the *pays d'en haut* and Ohio River valley, Crown representatives conspired to “inoculate the Indians by means of blankets.”⁷ Before recorded in correspondence, however, the contagious idea had been played out at Fort Pitt. On June 24, Delaware negotiators were given two blankets and a handkerchief by the leading commander at Fort Pitt, Captain Simeon Ecuyer. “I hope it will have the desired effect” Indian agent William Trent noted in his journal later that day.⁸ Despite being crippled by smallpox, Indian warriors fought well into the summer. In September, a Seneca war party annihilated two British infantry companies and a supply train near Niagara Falls, killing five officers and seventy-six men. But, by the end of October it was clear the English would not be easily routed from Indian Country. Along with Colonel Henry Bouquet’s forces and a small pox epidemic, supply shortages handcuffed Indian militants and reduced many villages to beggary. Even Pontiac agreed to terms and withdrew to the south. Nevertheless, many Indians in the Ohio Country continued to resist British influences—and fierce factions between colonizers and Indians festered.⁹ (Figure 8)

What historians have termed Pontiac’s Rebellion has received significant attention and need not be detailed here. The struggle could be considered the continent’s first major war of independence following colonization.¹⁰ The Indians may not have cleansed their lands of the English, but the hostilities did force the Crown to consider a new imperial strategy. The Crown realized that if unsanctioned trespasses on indigenous lands continued, peace would remain well outside imperial reach. In the end, the rebellion called Pontiac’s did not rid the continent of the English, but it did stir the colonial administration to action. As winter snows brought respite from the conflict, messengers carried word west that the English king had created a new boundary line between Indians and Europeans in North America.

The Royal Proclamation

On October 7, 1763, King George III signed a royal proclamation that set in motion a series of events that not only affected the lands and peoples throughout North America’s colonial borderlands but also laid the foundation for rupture between Britain’s colonies

7 “Inoculate . . .” quoted from Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 809n. See also White, *Middle Ground*, 288; Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again*, 152-53.

8 For details on the progression of events related to the infectious material, see Albert T. Volwiler, ed., “William Trent’s Journal, June 24, 1763,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 11 (1924): 390-413. For further commentary on the Indian uprising with reference to the siege of Fort Pitt, see Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 541-42; Gregory Dowd, *War under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations, and the British Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 190; McConnell, *A Country Between*, 195; Howard H. Peckham, *Pontiac and the Indian Uprising* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), 226.

9 Calloway, *Scratch of a Pen*, 72-76.

10 For Pontiac’s War, see Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again*; Dowd, *War under Heaven*; William Nester, “Haughty Conquerors”: *Amherst and the Great Indian Uprising of 1763* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2000); and White, *Middle Ground*, chap. 7.

and the Crown. The Royal Proclamation sought to better organize and integrate colonial possessions in America into the empire. To do so, the proclamation also aimed to neutralize borderland violence. This was to be done with the force of quill and ink; by drawing a temporary boundary line between European and Indian populations that stretched along the western edges of the colonies from the newly acquired Canadian territories to the Florida peninsula.¹¹

The proclamation established a boundary that reflected an imperial policy of controlled expansion by forbidding speculation and colonization west of the Appalachians on lands reserved explicitly for Indian use. The terminology could not have been clearer: Indian lands “should not be molested or disturbed in the Possession of such Parts of Our Dominions and Territories as, not having been ceded to, or Purchased by Us, are reserved to them or any of them as their Hunting Grounds.” As for continued colonial growth, Crown regulations would guide all further land sales. “[N]o Governor or Commander in Chief in any of Our Colonies . . . do presume, on any Pretence whatever, to grant Warrants or Survey, of pass Patents for any lands beyond the Heads or Sources of any of the Rivers which fall into the Atlantik Ocean from the West and North-West, or upon any Lands whatever, which not having been ceded to or purchased by Us as foresaid, are reserved to the said Indians, or any of them.” Moreover, for those Indians intending to dispose of their lands east of the boundary on lands not yet purchased by Europeans, the proclamation insisted that the initial sale must be to the Crown “at some Public Meeting or Assembly” to avoid fraudulent practices and future disagreements.¹² Implementing and enforcing Crown policy in colonial North America, however, proved to be a messy business.

The 1763 Royal Proclamation restricted speculators from capitalizing on large colonization schemes but failed to curb unregulated trade or the irritating stream of squatters undaunted by Crown declarations. Encroachments on Indian lands continued. In fact, they increased. Scores of renegade colonizers pushed the edges of empire farther west by seeking a livelihood in Indian Country. But, because the Proclamation restricted large-scale migration it hindered European, and indigenous, enterprises. Land speculators could not eject squatters from land without securing clear title. Meanwhile, as squatters planted crops and built homesteads on the same Indian lands, they established land rights based on ‘improvements.’ Simply put, squatters squatted, but speculators could not capitalize on the sale of land. And for those first peoples residing west of the boundary line, incursion onto their lands after 1763 represented a direct assault on their Crown-recognized sovereignty. As soon as news of the 1763 boundary line arrived in the colonies, scores of well-connected colonists and indigenous power brokers sought to alter the map of British North America. (Figure 7)

Perhaps most importantly, because the proclamation acted as a legal roadblock to the sale and partitioning of tracts beyond the Appalachians, it also stunted the resources and diplomatic mobility of the Iroquois. For the Indian backers of the Confederacy, the redrawing of the 1763 boundary line promised to open up the Ohio Country to colonization, thus deflecting European interest in land away from the Mohawk River Valley. Consequently, by as early 1764 the interests of the Mohawk River valley Iroquois, a slew of colonial

11 Proclamation and Peace Treaty, 1763, Johnson Family Papers (MG19-F2) NAC.

12 Ibid.; Peter Wraxall, “Some Thoughts upon the British Indian Interest in North America more particularly as it relates to the Northern Confederacy commonly called the Six Nations.” *Memoir on North American Indians: Secretary of State Miscellaneous* (Microfilm: B-6181, MG11-C05), NAC.

speculators, and select Crown agents began to converge. A new Indian boundary meant the extension of imperial authority, and therefore the continued prominence of the Indian Department and the Iroquois Confederacy in their mutually reinforcing place in an expanding British empire in North America.

Meanwhile, although New France had been surrendered by the early 1760s, French-allied Indian nations had not been conquered. Resentment throughout the Ohio Country towards the presence of Redcoats, colonists, and unregulated trade continued.¹³ In response, William Johnson urged colonial administrators and provincial authorities to attend to a growing number of “reasonable & well founded” Indian complaints of “enormous & unrighteously obtained Patents for their Lands” as well as the limitations of the provinces.¹⁴ While a system of Indian-colonial relations had been theoretically exercised since the Albany Congress of 1754, it remained “strictly ad hoc.”¹⁵ Nevertheless, Johnson viewed the centralization of administrative power as the key ingredient to an enduring peace. Pontiac’s War revealed a number of dangerous discrepancies in the British imperial system that exposed the shortcomings of Amherst’s policies and the cost of British diplomatic neglect throughout the *pay d’en haut*.¹⁶ Amherst’s career collapsed and many officials envisioned a new policy that would sustain a peaceful coexistence between Indians and Europeans. Their ideas “spawned an ill-starred document known as the ‘Plan for the future Management of Indian Affairs.’”¹⁷

The plan of 1764 sought to regulate official interactions between Indians and Europeans.¹⁸ That authorization did not include the colonial Commander-in-Chief, governors, or any senior military figures but was to rest solely with the power of the superintendents of Indian Affairs.¹⁹ For the Iroquois, that meant power sharing, as they had already re-appointed Johnson as the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the northern colonies. If adopted, the proposed plan would have dramatically reduced the powers of the political and military officials in colonial America, and in turn greatly increased the influence of the superintendents and their deputies.²⁰ Put plainly, Johnson (and by extension his kin and professional networks) stood poised to inherit the key to frontier kingdoms. As for the Iroquois, that meant selectively guiding aspects of the British empire in North America.²¹ Both groups envisioned a series of interdependent confederacies with the Ohio River valley a mere extension of Iroquoia.²² Concurrent with Johnson’s plotting, his subordinates envisioned the material benefits of their patron’s management of Indian affairs. With the French

13 McConnell, *A Country Between*, 233-34; White, *The Middle Ground*, 289.

14 O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, II: 45455

15 McConnell, *A Country Between*, 234. Timothy Shannon suggests that the Albany agreement was largely ignored. See Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire*, 208-12.

16 White, *Middle Ground*, 289; Croghan to Johnson, Feb. 24, 1763, Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, IV:339.

17 Egle et al., eds., *Pennsylvania Archives*: IV: 182-89; See also McConnell, *A Country Between*, 234-35.

18 McConnell, *A Country Between*, 234; Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire*, 13-15, 33-35.

19 Egle et al., eds., *Pennsylvania Archives*, IV: 183. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 209.

20 The only clause that was to restrict the power of the superintendents included “in Cases of great Exigency, or when . . . the Superintendent may be in some remote part of his District.” Egle et al., eds., *Pennsylvania Archives*, IV: 183.

21 Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft*, 56.

22 McConnell, *A Country Between*, 235-36.

defeated many old and new claimants did not want to miss their chance at western lands. Johnson's Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, George Croghan, pursued such ends.

George Croghan

Born in Ireland during the early 1720s, George Croghan emigrated to British North America in 1742.²³ Within a few years he had acquired almost 1,200 acres of land in the Condigwinet valley with Indian trader William Trent, and organized Pennsborough Township in Lancaster County.²⁴ Not content with the prospect of a storekeeper's life and small land holdings, Croghan soon ventured west with aspirations of gaining a fortune in the Indian trade. By the fall of 1744 he had established a trading house at the Seneca village at the mouth of the Cuyahoga River.²⁵ For the next decade Croghan traded goods with the Ohio Indians and acted as an unofficial agent for the province of Pennsylvania. During this time he forged a trading relationship with the Indian populations in the region and established trading hubs deep into the Ohio Country.²⁶ By the 1750s, Pennsylvania traders, led by Croghan, established a trading network that extended farther west than meaningful colonial authority. His trading posts and Indian allies challenged French authority and undercut their alliances with the region's first peoples. In other words, Croghan's presence and networks disrupted the status quo.

By the end of the Seven Years' War, with the French Crown no longer a threat, Croghan looked to cash-in on years of networking and land speculation.²⁷ On May 2, 1763, Croghan departed Fort Pitt and began a lengthy journey for London. Croghan sought, among other things, to clear title to thousands of acres of land he held in Indian deeds and gain compensation for trading losses incurred during the onset of the Seven Years' War.²⁸ On December 7, 1763, Croghan met with eleven men at the Indian Queen Tavern in Philadelphia to discuss the reparation strategy of those who lost heavily in trade during the onset of the previous conflict. Among the concerned were a few of his oldest creditors and friends.²⁹ Making Croghan their agent, they decided to lobby the Board of Trade for 200,000 acres of land in lieu of their combined losses in 1754-1755.³⁰ They gave Croghan and David Franks

23 In 1742 Croghan's name first appeared in the records. He was listed as a transporter of goods from Edward Shippen to Peter Tostee. See R.G. Crist, "George Croghan of Pennsboro," (Paper presented before the Cumberland County Historical Society and Hamilton Library Association, May 7, 1964; Harrisburg, Pa.: Dauphin Deposit Trust Company, 1965), 9

24 Albert T. Volwiler, *George Croghan and the Westward Movement, 1741-1782* (New York: AMS Press, 1926, 1971), 32; Wainwright, *George Croghan, Wilderness Diplomat*, 9; Crist, "George Croghan of Pennsboro," 9.

25 Cave, "George Croghan and the Emergence of British Influence on the Ohio Frontier," 2; Crist, "George Croghan of Pennsboro," 9-10.

26 Richard Hockley to Thomas Penn, Feb. 15, 1749/50(?), Official Correspondence, Penn Family Papers, vol 4, p.?

27 Cave, "George Croghan and the Emergence of British Influence on the Ohio Frontier," 3. The same line of argumentation is noted in Volwiler, *George Croghan and the Westward Movement*, 21; and Crist, "George Croghan of Pennsboro," 10-12.

28 Wainwright, *George Croghan, Wilderness Diplomat*, 199-200.

29 Present at the tavern meetings were David Franks, Jeremiah Warder, Samuel Burge, George Croghan, John Coxe, Abraham Mitchell, William Trent, Robert Callender, Joseph Spear, Thomas McGee, Philip Boyle, and Samuel Wharton. See "Proceedings of a Meeting of Traders," in Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, IV: 264. See also, see Slick, *William Trent and the West*, 128.

30 It is important to note that the focus of the 'Suffering Traders' was shortly thereafter centered on the losses incurred from the events of 1763. This decision was made by the primary investors (Baynton, Wharton, Croghan and Trent) who had more to gain seeking restitution for losses in 1763 rather than 1754.

£210 and a memorial on behalf of the “Suffering Traders” which William Trent and Samuel Wharton drew up.³¹ Unofficially, Croghan secured the trust of John Baynton, Samuel Wharton, and George Morgan by offering them a monopoly on trade. Decades later, an embittered Morgan recalled the appeal of Croghan’s scheme:

By and through him we were to have an exclusive contract to supply with Goods not only all the Natives within the District, to our immense Profit on the Skins and Furs we should receive in Payment, but also to furnish the prodigious Quantities of Merchandise which would be wanting by Sir William Johnson and Col. Croghan to conciliate the Affections of the Savages to the English and also supply all the back Posts with provisions . . . I frequently lamented to him the unhappiness of Mr. Whartons disposition in regard to airy schemes, and his affectation of aiming at the great merchants, without attending to his real business; I pointed out to him the shameful situation of their books and many needless expenses.³²

The sufferers were not the only collection of speculators represented in London seeking to cash in on the fact that French claims had been removed and Crown reaction to the rebellion promised to solidify British control in the region. They were, however, the only ones with the ears of Johnson and the Iroquois.

While in London, Croghan courted the interests of the President of the Board of Trade, Lord Hillsborough. When his initial overtures appeared unsuccessful, Croghan addressed the Board of Trade and submitted “The Memorial of the Merchants and Traders relative to the Losses in the late and former Indian Trade.”³³ In addition to pleading his own case at the Board of Trade, he did his best to encourage the board to reconsider the structure of the Indian Department and ultimately the boundary established by the proclamation of 1763.³⁴ Croghan knew that the establishment of a new boundary “would be the

31 Thomas P. Abernethy contends that Croghan’s trip to London was financed by New Jersey governor William Franklin. See Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *Western Lands and the American Revolution* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1937, 1959), 54. This connection is challenged by William Herbert Mariboe. See Herbert Mariboe, “The Life of William Franklin, 1730(1)–1813, Pro Rege et Patria” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1962). Both authors fail to provide evidence to support their claims. What is known is that some money—the exact amount was never disclosed—was secured by Croghan from the Burlington Co. of New Jersey, which Franklin held interest. See William Byars, ed., *B and M Gratz, Merchants in Philadelphia, 1754–1798* (Jefferson City, Mo.: Lewis, 1916), 762.

32 Baynton, Wharton and Morgan: 1763–1768, “George Croghan Papers”, d. 1782 1754–1808 Croghan Papers, Section 10, Regarding BWM relationship with Croghan.—Written by Morgan [n.d.] 2, HSP.

33 Merchants to Moses Franks and George Croghan, and to the right Honorable The Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, Philadelphia, December, 12, 1763: “A Traffick with the Savages, being entirely in the way of Barter without the Use of Books, renders it very difficult, To furnish Accounts with that regularity, which may be expected by the Lords of Trade, We would therefore recommend to you, To prevail [upon] their Lordships, if they should induce his Majesty to grant us Redress, To appoint Commissioners in this Government, To exam[ine] and liquidate the respective Traders Accounts. — perhaps, They may be influenced, to name Gentlemen in this City; If they can, Mr Croghan will recollect such, As will be proper. . . We beg leave to request, That you will will all Dispatch After Mr. Croghans arrival, converse with as great Number of Merchants, trading to this city & New York, As possible, and explain to Them How essentially their Trade is interested, in supporting Our Memorial to the Lords of Trade & what Advantages will result to Them, By having it favourably received. . . The natives have most barbarously murdered many of the said Traders and seized and robbed Them of their Effects and expelled The Remainder from their Country.” Signed, Baynton and Wharton, Franks Simons Trent & Co., Abr. Mitchell, Philip Boyle, Robert Callender, Joseph Spear, John Ormsby, Dennis Crohorn. Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, IV: 267–271.

34 Yoko Shirai, “The Indian Trade in Colonial Pennsylvania, 1730–1768: Traders and Land Speculation” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania 1985), 157–58.

first and indispensable step for land speculation on the Ohio and Mississippi.”³⁵ The Crown would block conformation of private sales on Indian land until then, but once the land was Crown land, the governors could confirm title. Croghan hoped to capitalize. On February 24, 1764 Croghan wrote Johnson, keeping his patron apprised of the board’s deliberations concerning Johnson’s restructuring proposals.³⁶ Meanwhile, Croghan waited anxiously to hear back any news regarding his land petitions.³⁷ Restless and frustrated, Croghan arranged to deliver a message to the Board of Trade in late March 1764 outlining reasons for reconsidering the Indian policy.³⁸ Before the complete disaffection of the Indians, Croghan cautioned, the Crown must take the appropriate measures to restore peace before the Indians “cut off our frontier settlements, and thereby lay waste a large Tract of Country.” He continued: “[W]hat must His Majesty’s subjects dread from a general defection of the Indians?”³⁹ Johnson’s underling quickly offered suggestions.

“First” Croghan argued, “a natural boundary should be made between them and us across the frontiers of the British middle Colonies from the heads of the River Delaware to the mouth of the Ohio where it empties into Mississippi.” The “lands west of such a line should be reserved for the Hunting grounds of the Six Nations . . . as they are the original Proprietors of that Tract of Country for all the lands East of such boundary.”⁴⁰ Conveniently, most of his 200,000 acres in Indian deed would fall within the new purchase—a fact that Croghan undoubtedly knew well. He also held much larger aspirations. To get the board to reconsider a new boundary marked only his first step. As Johnson’s right-hand man, Croghan also pressed the members to liberate the Indian Department from military control, which would provide him with a future of opportunities.⁴¹ The Crown’s provision of money and gifts to buy Indian interests remained central to Croghan’s message.⁴² In a letter to Johnson, Croghan emphasized his position. He explained to his superior that neither his land claims, nor Johnson’s recent 20,000 acre Indian deed from the Mohawk would be granted until a new Indian boundary could be established. Croghan further added that that he had done everything in his power with respect to Iroquois complaints about contentious European holdings in the Mohawk River valley.⁴³ To be sure, Johnson knew that Croghan would do everything in his power to extend the

35 Ibid., 158.

36 Croghan to Johnson, Feb. 24, 1764, in Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, IV: 339-41.

37 Croghan to Johnson, March 10, 1764, *ibid.*, 362.

38 Croghan lobbied Mr. Rice, a member of the Lords of Trade. On April 14, he sent word to Johnson updating his superior on the state of affairs. He indicated to Johnson that his recent efforts had not been in vain and that the Lords of Trade appeared happy with the news of Johnson’s efforts against the Shawnees and Delawares. In addition, Croghan misleadingly assured Johnson that he was working tirelessly for his benefit, stating he had “Don Nothing in My own affairs as yet Nor Do I See any Greatt probability of getting any thing in Restitucion for ye. Greatt Loss My Self & others Sustained. ye. Beginning of ye. Late War.” Croghan to Johnson, April 14, 1764, *ibid.*, 396-98.

39 Croghan to the Lords of Trade, July 12, 1764, in O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VII: 602-05.

40 Ibid., 602-5.

41 Shirai, “The Indian Trade in Colonial Pennsylvania,” 158.

42 Croghan to Johnson, April 14, 1764, in Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, IV: 399. See also Croghan to Johnson, May 11, 1764, “P S: yr. Honour was plesd. To Write Me that if you Could you wold Take part of ye. Goods from Baynton & Wharton wh. I Menshond. To you in My Leter by Mr. MaKee wh. If you Can will greatly oblige Me,” *ibid.*, 422.

43 Croghan to Johnson, July 12, 1764, *ibid.*, 462-66.

boundary, centralize Indian affairs, and tout the authority of the Iroquois Confederacy, as it was the only tangible means Croghan had to cash in on his Indian deeds. That being said, when it became clear that Croghan would not be granted a special act of parliament to address his grievances, “the boundary negotiations became the vehicle through which a reparations grant was sought from the Indians.”⁴⁴

In anticipation of a forthcoming boundary readjustment, when Croghan returned to America one of his first orders of business was to expand the claims of the Suffering Traders.⁴⁵ Croghan also used his imperial assignments as a vehicle for speculation. From 1764 through 1768, while holding councils with Ohio and Illinois nations, Croghan ceaselessly communicated with Johnson, his creditors, and colonial officials about his visions of the west. He enthused about the lush terrain.⁴⁶ By the end of 1765, he had convinced Johnson to send a message to the Board of Trade recommending the establishment of an inland colony. In fact, by early 1766, Croghan and eight of his creditors had drawn up the “Articles of Agreement” for the first Illinois Company.⁴⁷ By early spring Croghan had also orchestrated a clandestine land agreement between prominent colonial figures, forming the yet-to-be-named Ohio Company. For his support, Governor William Franklin of New Jersey, Benjamin Franklin’s son, was promised a significant share of any future land deeded to Croghan. Franklin Sr., as a result, supported the plan to compensate the Suffering Traders with land from a cession.⁴⁸ Well aware of the advantages of Benjamin Franklin’s support, Croghan nevertheless believed it wise to deceive the Board of Trade about Franklin’s complicity.⁴⁹ On April 19, 1766, Croghan and his conspirators gathered in Philadelphia and prepared for what appeared to be the inevitable establishment of an inland colony. Fourteen conspirators entered an agreement. They included New Jersey governor William Franklin, Philadelphian merchants John Baynton, Samuel Wharton, and George Morgan and select conspirators—speculator and Indian agent John Hughes, Pennsylvania Assembly house speaker and lawyer Joseph Galloway, Sir William Johnson, and, of course, Croghan.⁵⁰ By year’s end those involved in the venture had devised a strategy to obtain an unidentifiable amount of land in a colony not yet in existence. The risks were high, but in the 1760s speculating in land and trade was just that: speculation. With visions and plans for new lands, the only obstacle remaining was the 1763 boundary.

The renegotiation of an Indian boundary had been a topic of discussion since word of the 1763 proclamation reached the British colonies in America. The 1763 boundary did not reflect the realities of the North American terrain and neither had the proposed plan of 1764. While contested land claims continued to undermine the authority of the Iroquois

44 Jones, *License for Empire*, 78. See also, McConnell, *A Country Between*, 237.

45 Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, XI: 566.

46 Croghan to Johnson, December 27, 1765, *ibid.*, IV: 888.

47 For Johnson’s message to the Board of Trade see *ibid.*, V: 37-38, 196-97. For Illinois Co. details see “Articles of Agreement for the first Illinois Co.” March 29, 1766. Cadwalder Collection, George Croghan Papers (HSP). See also Samuel Wharton to Thomas Wharton, Aug. 11, 1766, box 1: 1669-1766, Wharton-Willing Papers (HSP).

48 Croghan to Johnson, March 30, 1766, in Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, V: 128-29. See also “Articles of Agreement,” April 29, 1766, box 1: 1669-1766, Wharton-Willing Papers.

49 “George Croghan to Benjamin Franklin, Feb. 25, 1766,” in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, Vol. 13, eds. Leonard Labaree et al. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968), 171-73.

50 “Articles of Agreement,” April 29, 1766, box 1: 1669-1766, Wharton-Willing Papers..

Confederacy and Crown authority, so did the independent actions of the Ohio nations. When newly knighted Sir William Johnson held council and treaty with Iroquois sachems and warriors in the spring of 1765, he entered the deliberations armed with the promises of a reorganized and centralized administration. The treaties provided Johnson with the first opportunity to affirm Crown initiative by negotiating a new boundary, and the council gave the Iroquois a forum to reestablish their control of the Ohio Valley lands and its inhabitants.⁵¹

The Politics of Boundaries

The Kayaderosseras patent had been a thorn in the side of the eastern Iroquois (the Mohawks, in particular) since the first decade of the eighteenth century. The land was originally patented in 1703 and 1708 by thirteen original petitioners and included over 250,000 acres north of the Mohawk and west of the Hudson Rivers; land that encompassed the heart of Mohawk homelands. Like most other contested land claims, the Indian lands had been patented under questionable circumstances. The patent received special attention at the Albany Congress in 1754 when Chief Hendrick (Theyanoguin) voiced Mohawk contempt for the claim and demanded its nullification. Set aside for almost a decade as a result of war and borderland turmoil, the issue resurfaced with a vengeance in the fall of 1764.⁵² (Figure 9)

When Johnson sent the Lords of Trade an update on Indian affairs in November 1764 he knew well the diminished capacity of the Iroquois to enforce their will on the Ohio nations. Nonetheless, he stressed the Crown's support of the authority of the Iroquois, and their Confederacy, as they were considered vital to the systematic overhaul of Indian affairs. To do so, Johnson suggested, illegal colonization in the Mohawk River valley must be addressed, and the contentious Kayaderosseras patent must be resolved.⁵³ Mohawk frustration with the patent had long been kept at the forefront of discussion at Johnson Hall. In February Johnson wrote Colden, indicating that the Iroquois delegates gathered at his home were outraged by the injustice they had experienced. Johnson urged those who would listen that if those experiences were remedied, the Mohawk River valley Iroquois would give up claim to thousands of acres of other westerly lands on their own terms.⁵⁴

Convinced, the Crown sanctioned Johnson to hold council with the Iroquois to discuss the prospect, and parameters, of a new boundary. Wasting little time, on

51 Johnson informs Leake of the capture of Captain Bull of the Delawares, adding "The people in N York no doubt are too selfish to admit persons readily into their Land schemes Except where it may be of little value. There is a good deal of Land about the Western parts of this province unlocated, but at the same time such as the Lands. would not readily dispose of." Regarding the Kayaderosseras Patent, Johnson also notes that it was "fraudulently obtained in Q Annes time. . .had given great disgust to the Mohawks & been the occasion of their present dislike to selling Lands." Finally, Johnson offered to purchase land on behalf of Leake. Johnson to Robert Leake, March 9, 1764, in Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, IV: 359-60. For Mohawk protests, see Johnson to Colden, September 21, 1764, in Richard Day, ed., *Calendar of the Sir William Johnson Manuscripts* (Albany: University of the State of New York, 1909), 237.

52 O'Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, IV: 853-92.

53 See Johnson to the Lords of Trade, *ibid.*, VII:670-75 and Johnson to Gage, in Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, IV: 624. For resistance to renegotiating the patent as noted in the New York Assembly see November 3, 1764, Johnson to Colden. Nov. 3, 1764, in Day, *Calendar of the Sir William Johnson Manuscript*, 243.

54 On December 17, 1764 it is recorded that Johnson wrote Lt. Col. Charles Lee in London, indicating that he believed that if the Kayaderosars region was vacated, it would result in the sale of almost 200,000 acres of land. See Dec. 17, 1764, *ibid.*

April 29, 1765, Johnson began official negotiations.⁵⁵ The Shawnees were not present, but the gathered Iroquois and Delawares happily spoke on their behalf. After a few days of deliberations, Seneca Chief Gaustarax (Kayendarūnghqua) and Delaware Chiefs Long Coat (Anindamoaken al) and Squash Cutter (Yaghkapoose) agreed to remain hostages until the terms of peace as described by Colonel Henry Bouquet eight months prior were met and peace restored. Then, only days after discussions had commenced, matters turned to land. On May 2, Johnson asked the Indians to consider the grievances of the traders who lost so much as a result of treacherous conduct of some of the “ye Indians” and then conveniently noted “Brethren, The last but the most important Affair . . . is with regard to settling a boundary.” It would be a boundary “which no White Man shall dare to invade.” In his closing remarks, Johnson called on the Indians to inform him of the intended nature and path of the boundary.⁵⁶ For the next four days the Indians and Johnson deliberated over the geographical limits of the new boundary. Then, on May 6, the Onondaga speaker proposed that the line begin at Owego on the east branch of the Susquehanna River. Thence, “down the East side of the River Shamoken (or Fort Augusta) and running up the West Branch of Susquehanna on the South side thereof.” From there, “to Kittaning (Armstrong, Pennsylvania) or Adigo on the Ohio, thence along down the Ohio to the Cherokee River (Tennessee River), and up the same to its head.”⁵⁷ As for the request of the traders, the Onondaga speaker declared that they would be given “some lands near Fort Pitt” as restitution. How much land was left unclear. Later that night, after a few hours of private deliberations, Johnson assembled the chiefs. He asked the Indians for further clarification with reference to the lands “to the Eastward,” that is, north of Owego. The Iroquois took the opportunity to address matters closer to home.

We think to continue the line up [the Susquehanna] River to Cherry Valley Lake, and from thence to the German Flatts . . . [as] you have no right or title on the South side [of] the Mohawk River above that place, however for the present we shall not extend the Boundary Line higher than Owego, but when the affair comes to be finally determined we shall think farther about it . . . You know that We are Owners of the Land Westward of the German Flatts, we hope we are not to be cheated out of it . . . Brother, since that is the case let us know what the White People claim, and we’ll tell honestly what we sold.⁵⁸

The lands in question lay at the heart of Mohawk homelands and were well known to Johnson. The 1763 proclamation had done little to halt colonization west of the line. But the situation of the Mohawks was even more vulnerable because the line did little to protect their homelands. By 1765 the Mohawk River valley was dotted with European enclaves. Sensing the weight they carried as brokers, the Mohawks left the matter of the boundary readjustment north of Owego to future negotiations. They had as much to gain as they did to lose if the matter was not handled delicately. On one hand, the Indians knew the Crown wanted to extend the line as far northwest as possible to avoid colonization and land claim complications. On the other hand, many Iroquois inhabiting the eastern reaches of the

55 O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VII: 718 ff “there were many conferences previous to [the opening] day.”

56 Ibid., 724-25. See also William Trent Journal, 1759-1763 (Historical Society of Pennsylvania), 2-4.

57 O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VII: 728.

58 Ibid., VII: 729-730.

Mohawk River valley realized an extension of the line would place their homes east of the new boundary. They wanted time to ensure they could negotiate the best deal with the Crown. To do so, they turned to the Ohio River valley to alleviate the increasing pressures of European colonization to the northeast.

Before the council with Johnson ended in 1765, the Iroquois negotiators detailed the extent of their claims by carefully outlining a new boundary west of the Appalachians. In fact, in the summer of 1767, a year before the boundary was formalized at Fort Stanwix, fourteen Mohawks and Onondagas accompanied the surveyors Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon as they ran their line between Pennsylvania and Maryland. Very aware of the details of the pending land cession, the fourteen Iroquois (later joined by eight Senecas) convoyed the famous surveyors' team west of the Monongahela River. They did this to ensure the safety of the Crown surveyors in the Ohio Country, and thus the authority of Iroquois Confederacy. When the group encountered a group of potentially hostile Delawares not long after crossing the Monongahela, a principal Mohawk chief provided invaluable assistance. On two occasions the Iroquois delegates averted hostilities by treating with local Indians. One of those times they did so with a group led by Chief Pisquetomen, brother of Tamaqua "King Beaver" of the Western Delawares.⁵⁹ The Iroquois convoy also made sure Mason and Dixon stayed in line with their pending boundary plans. When the surveyors reached Dunkark Creek (near Mount Morris, Pennsylvania) the Iroquois insisted the group proceed no farther west. Not wanting to sanction the surveying of a line that stretch west beyond the forthcoming land cession, and perhaps mindful of potential aggression from the Ohio nations, the Indians played it safe. On October 9, the Iroquois and surveyors departed ways. Without Iroquois support, the Mason-Dixon survey drew to an abrupt end. "Iroquois refusal to continue," writes Cameron Strang, "effectively marked the western extent of the survey."⁶⁰ Given the boundary negotiations in 1765, it illustrates just how aware of colonial land and legal practices the Iroquois negotiators of the impending boundary had become.

Ultimately, even though the Iroquois remained ambiguous regarding the northern extension of the forthcoming boundary, William Johnson expressed satisfaction with the proposal. After all, the Iroquois negotiators agreed to cede millions of acres of land—especially the southern Ohio Country. It was no coincidence that the most land ceded in 1768 west of Appalachian range was located in the southern reaches of the Ohio Country; areas that overlapped with Cherokee claims. Nevertheless, by May 9, 1765, Johnson had concluded official negotiations with the Iroquois. The Delawares present had agreed to the terms laid before them, including the boundary. Again, the Shawnees, who occupied and depended on the Ohio River Valley lands that had been carved away, were not present. Not surprisingly, when news of the preliminary agreement filtered west tensions increased.⁶¹

Projecting authority via treaty did not always translate into reality. The situation worsened before the year's end when Johnson and his Iroquois allies learned that Whitehall was "tired of the Expense of Supporting Forts" and planned to shrink the borderlands (on paper).⁶² Because Whitehall could not foot the colonial bill alone, a gradual withdrawal of

59 Cameron Strang, "The Mason-Dixon and Proclamation Lines: Land Surveying and Native Americans in Pennsylvania's Borderlands," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 136, 1 (2012): 13-15.

60 Strang, "Mason-Dixon," 21.

61 O'Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VII: 730.

62 Gage to Johnson, in Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, XI: 987.

troops occurred, leaving trade regulation and the responsibility for borderland order in the hands of the colonial governments.⁶³ Violence increased. Time became of essence.

Brewing Discontent

Back in the Illinois Country as an official ambassador in January 1767, Croghan keenly tied his own interests to the Crown's—and Johnson was happy to let him. On January 24 he opened council with Indians of the Western Confederacy at Fort Charters. The Indians agreed to peace terms, acknowledging the King of Great Britain as their “sovereign father.” The Indians agreed to let British troops occupy French forts to maintain trade, but adamantly objected to the right of the Crown to cede or occupy any other part of their country without proper consideration. Our forefathers, the Indians proclaimed, had occupied this land “many hundred years before any white man had crossed the great waters, wherefore they looked upon themselves as the sole owners of it and expected that no part of it should be taken from them before they were paid for it.” The regional inhabitants also made it clear that they resented Iroquois claims to their lands and were determined to resist European colonization. They “spare no pains to inflame their minds with the strongest prejudice against us,” Croghan reported. But, not surprisingly, Croghan also had a remedy. “From the best intelligence I could obtain . . . I am thoroughly convinced that the skins and Furs received there and shipped to France, are not worth less than eighty thousand pounds sterling one year with another.” Croghan promised that the money from trade would defray the future cost of keeping the Indians tied to the Crown's interests. He urged that a fort be erected immediately at the mouth of the Illinois River and close to Indian settlements on the Wabash. He concluded his report by emphasizing the “calamities of repeated Indian wars” would follow if the Crown did not quickly establish a strong trading network up and down the “Frontiers of all our Canadian conquests.” Johnson, like Croghan, was not easily hoodwinked and understood borderland politicking. But, considering their involvement in the recent secretive speculation scheme Croghan felt it necessary to reassure Johnson and outline the steps necessary to win Crown support while keeping the interests of the company in mind. Croghan knew his superior well.⁶⁴

Meanwhile, as the summer of 1767 drew to a close, there were many indications that all was not well with Indian affairs. “Our forefathers held these lands as long as Death would let them live” Captain Amos complained to Johnson on behalf of the Nanticokes on August 12. “[W]hen Death took our forefathers away, they left these same Lands to their Children as long as you and any of your Children is alive. We have followed their advice which we find has been good and therefore until our Brothers of the Six Nations can *show us* that it will be *our* Benefit to remove, we cannot think of destroying our town.” Captain Amos was responding to the increased attempts of Crown deputies to buy the lands of the Nanticoke nation to avoid further colonist confrontations. But the Nanticokes like other nations close to European settlements, often chose to lease their lands instead of selling. Although lip service

63 McConnell, *A Country Between*, 237; Peter Marshall, “Colonial Protest and Imperial Retrenchment,” *Journal of American Studies* 5 (1971): 1-17; Jack Sosin, *Whitehall and the Wilderness: The Middle West in British Colonial Policy, 1760-1775* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 196), 110-117.

64 Record of Journey later Submitted to Johnson, Jan. 15, 1767, File 5: 1766-1768, Croghan Papers. The following nations signed the Fort Charters treaty: “Pecrins, Kaskaskeys, Mitchigamis, Cahokias, Pyankichaas, Wawiatanons, Kikapoos, Masgrtamis, Poutewatemis, Sackees, Outagamis, _____ wees?”

was paid to the authority of the Iroquois, the Nanticokes also distrusted their Indian neighbors.⁶⁵ They were not alone.

On October 28, while conversing with a Delaware confidant at Fort Pitt, Croghan was informed that a party of disgruntled Senecas “from the Six Nations Country” had traveled to the region and summoned the Shawnees, Delawares, and the Senecas “of the two Creeks” to a council to discuss recent Iroquois transactions with the British in the east. Referring to the 1765 meeting with Johnson, the Seneca leaders told them that the British intended to rob them of their land “lying between the Ohio river and the settlements of Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania.” The nations were told that the English and Iroquois negotiators “had agreed with Sir William Johnson to give up a Tract of country” and as a result, intended to unjustly take possession of their Ohio lands. The Senecas declared that because the English had cheated them of their lands so often, they “were now determined to have justice therein, or bury every warrior of their Nation.” They requested the aid of the Shawnees and Delawares in their endeavor to bring the English to a sense of the injustice. The message delivered by the Senecas was also sent on a wampum belt to the Ojibwas and Ottawas. Sometime thereafter, a party of Ojibwas returned to the lower Shawnee town, informing the residents “the chiefs and principal warriors of twelve different nations would collect themselves to a council in the Shawnee country.” Two weeks later, a group of Mohicans and Hurons confirmed the western nations had held council at the request of the Senecas.⁶⁶ The frontiers stirred in anticipation of a new Indian boundary.⁶⁷

On December 7, 1767, New York governor Henry Moore wrote Lord Shelburne in London. “Most of the letters which I have received from Sir William Johnson of the late have been fill’d with accounts of Uneasiness which now prevails among the Indian Nations.” According to Johnson, Moore stated, “we are upon the eve of another Indian War.”⁶⁸ General Thomas Gage wrote a similar warning to the Pennsylvania governor the same day.⁶⁹ On December 23, Lord Shelburne received an even stronger statement from the Lords of Trade. They had received a report that the western Indians had held secret councils, and goods had been plundered throughout the Ohio Country. Their intelligence indicated “a design of a hostile and dangerous tendency.” Seeking to avoid committing more resources to the American colonies, the Lords proposed enlisting the “Lord” of the frontiers, Sir William Johnson. Johnson urged the government that the “complaints of the Indians on account of encroachments upon their lands” could be resolved by “the expediency of the establishing a boundary line between their Country and the settlements of his Majesty’s subjects.” The line, the Lords argued, had already been negotiated by Johnson and had been “received by the Indians with marks of the greatest satisfaction and

65 Amos to Johnson, Aug. 12, 1767, Lots 657-8, Superintendent of Indian Affairs Collection, Series I (NAC). Emphasis added.

66 Croghan Private Journal, no. 8, Oct. 28, Nov. 6, 1767, box 8, ser. 4, Cadwalader Collection, Croghan Papers.

67 For further reference to heightened Ohio Country affairs, also see Samuel Wharton to Franklin, Sept. 20, 1767, in Labaree et al. eds., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, XIV: 257-60.

68 Moore to Shelburne, Dec. 7, 1767, in O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VII: 1003.

69 Gage to Governor Moore, Dec. 7, 1767, in *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania: Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, from the Organization to the Termination of the Proprietary Government*, Vol. 9, ed. Samuel Hazard (Harrisburg, PA.: Theodore Finn and Co., 1851), 403

approbation.” Whitehall attached importance to the decisions of the Iroquois.⁷⁰

A new cabinet-level office was also created in January to help matters. The new Secretary of State for the colonies, Lord Hillsborough, avidly supported the idea of a prompt boundary settlement.⁷¹ While London urged a boundary to be speedily sorted to avoid an Indian war, those Indians actually affected by the proposal threatened to rebel if a line was confirmed. Many throughout the Ohio and Illinois Countries, including Croghan, knew this well. Croghan, Johnson and the Mohawk River Valley Iroquois promoted a solution to a problem that would help them, but outraged some of the very people they claimed would be pacified by an end to uncertainty. They were perpetuating a grand deception, and willing to risk the fallout if it meant protecting their interests—interests that guided Crown policy. The empire would expand, orderly, and those peoples unwilling to heed to Crown-Confederacy authority would be left in the cold. By the end of December the Board recommended to the King’s ministers that no time should be lost in sending word to readjust the present Indian boundary in order “to prevent the fatal consequences of an Indian war.”⁷²

Crown Approval

“This Packet carries you his Majesty’s Orders to settle the boundary with the Indians” Thomas Penn wrote Johnson on January 7, 1768. Penn urged Johnson to make the boundary as beneficial to the province as possible. “I hope you will get soon [some] of the Land in the Fork of the Susquehannah” Penn added, and noted the orders to run the line would arrive shortly. The following week the Pennsylvania Assembly and Governor Penn agreed to send a force once the snow cleared to remove squatters near Red Stone Creek and Cheat River.⁷³

By February, all roads to a peaceful resolution of borderland troubles converged at future boundary negotiations. William Johnson’s “Vigilance & Attention to His Duty,” Lord Hillsborough wrote Governor Moore of New York, “cannot be too much commended . . . [he] has not failed to communicate in the fullest manner the Apprehension.” According to Johnson, Hillsborough continued, the Indians have repeatedly expressed that their greatest reason for discontent stems “from their not having received His Mâty’s Determination upon the Proposition of a Boundary Line on the Plan suggested by them in 1765.” Hillsborough remarked that indigenous complaints should be “examined with the greatest impartiality . . . as may restore mutual confidence.”⁷⁴ Hillsborough agreed with the assessment. Nevertheless, those Indian grievances emanating from the Ohio Country fell

70 Ibid., 403-04.

71 Jones, *License for Empire*, 88.

72 According to the Lords, the boundary had been agreed to run from “Owegy, upon the Eastern branch of the Susquehannah, from whence, pursuing the coarse of that branch to Shamokin, it runs up the Western branch to the head thereof, and from thence to Kittaning on the Ohio, and so down that river to its influence with the Cherokee River. . . as the line settled with the Cherokees falls in with a part of the Conohway River, communicating with the Ohio, it does seem to us that it would be *unadvisable*, that the line now proposed to be settled with the Six Nations and their allies, should be extended lower down the Ohio, than the mouth of the said Conohway River, as the carrying further might afford a pretence for settlements in a Country, which, however claimed by the Six Nations as part of their ancient dominion, is in fact actually occupied by the Cherokees as their hunting ground, and who would consequently consider such settlements as a direct violation of what has been agreed upon by them.” Moore to Shelburne, Dec. 7, 1767, in O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VII: 1004-5. Emphasis added.

73 Thomas Penn to Johnson, Jan. 1, 1768, in Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, XII: 405-6.

74 Earl of Hillsborough to Governor Moore, Feb. 25, 1768, in O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VII:11.

on deaf ears. Crown attention remained focused on the complaints of the Mohawk River valley Indians, and Johnson made sure it did not stray.

Meanwhile, Johnson prepared for a congress with the Iroquois and Cherokees at Johnson Hall. Johnson wrote the Pennsylvania Assembly and John Penn to inform them about his intention to speak highly of the province.⁷⁵ Prior to opening the council, Johnson spent the first day of March consulting his Mohawk allies on how to address the upcoming discussions in the “properest manner” possible. Meanwhile, the Cherokees were on peaceful terms with the Shawnees and working towards a resolution with the Delawares. That meant potential trouble for the Iroquois and the functional authority of the Iroquois Confederacy. Depleted numbers, an insecure future, and rebellious Ohio Valley nations meant those Iroquois delegates present at Johnson Hall in early March 1768 keenly sought to solidify peace with their traditional southern enemies in order to prepare for an Ohio Valley backlash.⁷⁶ On March 2, shortly after Chief Tiadaroo spoke on behalf of the Seven Nations of Canada, the great Chief Little Carpenter (Attakullakulla) along with the Cherokee delegation entered Johnson Hall.⁷⁷ On March 5, Johnson reported to Gage that upwards of seven hundred Indians had arrived. He believed peace would be concluded between the Cherokees and the Iroquois.⁷⁸ Johnson would not be disappointed. Before the treaty concluded, holding and mnemonically recording his message on a wampum belt, an Iroquois speaker pulled up a pine tree and buried the axe of war. Ousonastota, a Cherokee Chief who had visited England during the reign of George II, responded in similar fashion. In addition, Ousonastota urged that the Mohawks be placed in charge of subduing those who would seek to destroy the new alliance. The assembled Iroquois responded by thanking the “Great King for his intensions and for what he is going to do about the Boundary Line.” They added, “but Brother we hear bad News the Cherokees have told us that the line was run in their Country last year, and that it has surrounded them so that they cannot Stir; We beg that you will think of this for our heads will be Quite turned if that is to be our Case, We therefore think that the line we talked of last should not go beyond Fort Augusta.”⁷⁹ Within ten days Johnson concluded the negotiations and a peace was solidified. He wrote John Penn to inform him of the pains he took to quash Indian hostilities towards Pennsylvanians. All went well, Johnson noted, and pledged his “readiness always to serve [John Penn] and [his] Family.”⁸⁰ Johnson waited on word from London.

When William Johnson received news that the Crown had approved the plan to confirm a new Indian boundary, he wasted little time and ordered Croghan to convene a

75 Johnson to Penn, Feb. 29, 1768, in Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, XII: 453-54; Johnson to Joseph Galloway, March 1, 1768, *ibid.*, 544-56.

76 Writing to Croghan on March 16, 1768, Johnson prepared his deputy for the arrival of the out-going Cherokee delegation at Fort Pitt, Little Carpenter included, and noted “I must say, I never See the Six Nations so hearty in any thing, as in this Peace.” *Ibid.*, 472.

77 Journal of Indian Affairs, Johnson Hall, March 1-3, 1768, *ibid.*, 456-58.

78 Johnson to Gage, March 5, 1768, *ibid.*, 459-60.

79 Treaty with the Six Nations and the Seven Confederate Nations of Canada and the Deputies of the Cherokee Nation, in O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VIII: 38-53.

80 Johnson to John Penn, March 15, 1768, in Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, XII: 467-69.

council with the Ohio nations at Fort Pitt.⁸¹ When Croghan received Johnson's instructions, he responded to Johnson and arranged a meeting with the superintendent at a tavern at New London Harbor. Croghan brought Samuel Wharton and William Trent. Johnson reassured the schemers that reparations for the 1763 traders' losses would be addressed at a planned council to be held at Fort Stanwix.⁸²

On Tuesday April 25, Croghan opened negotiations with over one thousand Indians at Fort Pitt. Those congregated included prominent Ohio Valley nation chiefs and warriors, and Iroquois Confederacy representatives.⁸³ Following the formalities of opening the council, negotiations were delayed three days while prominent Crown and Indian representatives deliberated in private. Private, off-the-record negotiations were nothing new. Treaties were an art, and were planned, recorded and remembered with meticulous detail.⁸⁴ The negotiations at Fort Pitt were no different. Not long after the council reconvened, Tohonissahgarawa addressed the Ohio nations. Speaking on behalf of the Iroquois Confederacy, Tohonissahgarawa demanded "the *Shawnese, Delawares, and Wyandotts* . . . throw all evil Thoughts out of your Minds and Hearts; and to think of nothing but promoting a lasting Friendship with your Brethren the *English*, as we your elder Brothers, the *Six Nations*, have determined to do." He continued by claiming Iroquois authority over the people and lands of the Ohio County by right of conquest. The move was bold.⁸⁵ On May 3, in a speech worth quoting at length, Nymwha, a respect-

81 "That no time be lost at this critical Juncture, I would have you dispatch a Message immediately to the Six Nations living along the Ohio, the Shawanese, Delawares, and such other tribes in that part of the Country as have had any of their People killed by ours since the Peace, to meet you at Fort Pitt, as soon as possible." Johnson to Croghan, February 29, 1768. 'Transcript of Correspondence' (March 12, 1763 – June 12, 1808). Croghan Papers, HSP.

82 For Croghan's business transactions both before and after Stanwix, see Deed of Croghan to William Trent, March 10, 1768; 'Bond' Croghan to Joseph Galloway and Thomas Wharton, Dec. 10, 1768; 'Indenture' and 'Deeds', Croghan to William Trent and Galloway and Thomas Wharton, Jan. 31, 1769; Deeds, Samuel Wharton to Thomas Wharton, Jan. 31, 1769, box 2: 1767-1771, Wharton-Willings Papers; and Croghan to Franklin, Feb. 12, 1768, in Labaree et al. eds., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, XV: 42-44.

83 Six Nations (Chiefs): Keyashuta, White Mingo, Soneno, Allyyondongo, Onaughkong, Gettyqueaye, Onondagago, Cadedonago, Soggoyadentha, Thonissagarawa, Oyanay, Toeaghquottet, (Chief Warriors): Toeageda, Toedassaho, kennissoen, Thagonneyesus, Dawatdehough, Awanneynatha; Delawares (Chiefs): Custetoga, Beaver, Latourt, Spawagassa, Nesticuthethem, Cascatehon, Kekiwenum, Washawanon, Mahetoaughkong, Loyalaughaland, Tugasso, (Chief Warriors): Cpt. Jacobs, Winganum, Cpt. Pipe, Cpt. Johnny, Grey Eyes, White Wolf, Theckhoton, Opemalughim, Killaykhehon, Wiesahoxon. Shawnees (Chiefs): Kaysinnaughtha (Hard Man), Etawakissaho, Maughkatethwa, Maykypuckathey, Maughkatemawaywa, Nymwha, Bennoxcumma, Naynichtha, Wassaynametha, Wethawathocks (Chief Warriors): Thethawgay, Waughcomme, Othawaydia, Mawaydia, Munnena, Kawcomme, Shilleywathetha, Quighbya. Munsies (Chiefs): Auttemaway, Kendasseong, Wassawayhim, Quekquahim, Waughellapo. Mohickons (Chiefs): Wennighjalis, Kelleigheon, and seven Wyandots. See *Minutes of Conferences Held at Fort-Pitt, In April and May 1768, under the direction of George Croghan, Esquire, Deputy Agent for INDIAN Affairs, with the Chiefs and Warriors of the Ohio and other Western Indians* (Philadelphia: William Goddard, 1869); and Hazard, Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, IX: 515-44.

84 As James Merrell has noted, although significant differences can be noted in treaty records depending on who was speaking, translating and recording, historians have been left with a rich source detailing deliberations. Both Europeans and Indians were aware that the record of events could and most likely would be used in the future as reference. As a result, days would often pass as the prime movers of negotiations would hammer out the details of the subsequent deliberations prior to having it 'officially' recorded. James Merrell, informal conversation, McNeil Center for Early American Studies, Philadelphia, March 2006. Also see Merrell, "I desire all that I have said . . . may be taken down aright."

85 *Minutes of Conferences Held at Fort-Pitt, In April and May 1768, under the direction of George Croghan, Esquire, Deputy Agent for INDIAN Affairs, with the Chiefs and Warriors of the Ohio and other Western Indians*, 9. Emphasis added.

ed Shawnee speaker, rose and blasted the Iroquois claimants and the English.

Brethren, When you talked of Peace to us, at the Time we were struggling in War, we did not hearken to you at first. You mentioned it a second Time to us, we still refused to attend to you; but after repeating it to us several Times, we consented to hear you. We then looked at you, and saw you holding Instruments of War in your Hands, which we took from you, and cast them into the Air out of Sight. We afterwards desired you to destroy your Forts, as that would be the Way to make all Nations of *Indians* believe you were sincere in your Friendship; and we now repeat the Same request to you again.- We also desire you not to go down this River, in the Way of the Warriors, belonging to the foolish Nations to the Westward; and told you that the Waters of this River, a great Way below this Place, were coloured with Blood; you did not Pay any regard to this, but asked us to accompany you in going down, which we did, and we felt the Smart of our Rashness, and with Difficulty returned to our Friends. We see you now making Batteaus, and we make no Doubt you intend going down the River again, which we now tell you is disagreeable to all Nations of *Indians*, and now again desire you to sit still at this Place . . . They are also uneasy to see that you think yourselves Masters of this Country, because you have taken it from the *French*, who you know had no Right to it, as it is the Property of us *Indians*. We often hear that you intend to fight with the *French* again, if you do, we desire you will remove your Quarrel out of this Country, and carry it over the great Waters, where you used to fight, and where we shall neither see or know any Thing of it. All we desire is to enjoy a quiet Peace with you both, and that we should be strong in talking of Peace . . . All we have to say to you now is to be strong, and let us agree to what we desire of each other. When you first talked of Peace to us, you desired us to sit over the River quietly at our Fires; but our Women and Children were frightened away by the Noise you made in repairing your Fort; but, if you do as we desired you, they will return without Fear . . . We therefore desire you will put a Stop to your People going down this River, till we have spoken to the Nations living in that Country; which we intend to do with the Assistance of our Brothers the *Six Nations*, and our Grandfathers the *Delawares*.⁸⁶

Not only had Nymwha recounted Shawnees resistance to both English and Iroquois claim to the land and trade, but demonstrated a stronger commitment to the advice of the Ohio Delawares over that of their Iroquois “Brothers.” Commotion over the address carried well into the next morning. All the cards were on the table.

The next afternoon Thonissahgarawa apologized for the words spoken by Nymwha and the “Difference which happened this Morning among themselves, as it was the Means of preventing our meeting them in the Forenoon, and desired that their Brethren, the *English*, and the Tribes of *Indians* present, would take no Notice of it.” Tensions were high and the Iroquois needed to act fast. In response to the claims of the Shawnees, Kayashuta (Seneca) laid down a copy of the 1764 treaty negotiated with Colonel Bradstreet that claimed the Shawnees had given up their right to Ohio and Illinois lands. The Pennsylvania commissioners then addressed the gathered Iroquois. By addressing Indian concern about European settlements via the Iroquois, the commissioners were not only acknowledging the authority of the Iroquois Confederacy, but also emphasizing the subservient position of the Shawnees. It must be remembered that those speaking on behalf of the Iroquois

86 Ibid., 12.

Confederacy, the Crown, and the Province of Pennsylvania, all knew about the 1765 boundary negotiations between Johnson and the Iroquois.⁸⁷

Meanwhile, as of late April, Guy Johnson had taken over the majority of his uncles' duties as Sir William rested and recuperated on the east coast. Failing health had forced Johnson to make frequent and inconvenient trips to the seaside to be attended to by physicians at hot springs that seemed to alleviate his pain. His presence at Johnson Hall was missed. While traveling through the Mohawk River valley, Governor Moore wrote to Hillsborough, indicating among other things, his inability to settle boundary disputes that concerned his province because Johnson was away in Connecticut attending to his health.⁸⁸ The timing of Johnson's departure is important to note, given that Guy Johnson was largely responsible for addressing significant issues that related to the boundary negotiations in the early summer of 1768. Of particular concern was the path the boundary line might take through Mohawk territory. Hillsborough had recently rejected a line north through Mohawk and Oneida territory that would disrupt Indian settlements and ran contrary to what was agreed upon in 1765. However, the Iroquois had been pressing Johnson on the matter. In fact, in a series of letters to Hillsborough and Gage, Guy Johnson repeated Sir William's intention to extend the boundary north from Owego at the upcoming negotiations. On behalf of his father-in-law, Guy reasoned that the extension of the boundary would "give more permanency to the Transaction" because it is a natural boundary. He informed Gage that he would explain the reasons in further detail to Governor Moore, as Moore was scheduled to arrive in a few days. Gage was assured that "the contested grants from NY extending down the Susquehanna to Tionondadon [a branch of the Susquehanna near Otsego Lake] . . . need not . . . prevent the Continuation of the boundary Line this Way, for the satisfaction of the Six Nations and the obtaining a Cession of Territory to the Crown." Furthermore, Gage was told that Johnson intended to place great priority on establishing New York's provincial limitations, and on "persuing the Transactions of 1765."⁸⁹

Johnson expressed his ideas on July 20 in a letter to Gage. He observed a "Mistake has been made by which the Line is not proposed by the Board of Trade to the Northward of Owego." Johnson reasoned that when the Indians met in 1765, the details of the northern extension of the boundary were not addressed at length. The Indians needed to convene and discuss the issue in greater detail before committing to a lasting agreement. They had done so, Johnson argued, and now if the "Boundary Between the Six Nations & New York . . . will not be secure[d] . . . the affair of the Boundary will be defeated in its principal Object." The boundary was a notable concern, but Johnson was even more concerned with the future course of Indian affairs. The topic dominated his letter to Gage.⁹⁰ Johnson was not attempting to pull the wool over the eyes of his superiors in Whitehall. When his opinion conflicted

87 Ibid., 14. The terms of Bradstreet's treaty negotiations are explored in the previous chapter. For an expanded summary of the events, see Chapter 2; Jones, *License for Empire*, 90-91. The subservience of the Ohio valley nations to the Six Nation was also being underscored in other venues. See An Indian Conference at Guy Park, May 16, 1768, in Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, XII: 507.

88 Moore to Hillsborough, July 4, 1768, in O'Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VIII: 78.

89 Guy Johnson to General Gage, May 30, 1768, in Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, XII: 519-21; Guy Johnson to General Gage, June, 16, *ibid.*, 525-27; Guy Johnson to Hillsborough, June 20, 1768, in O'Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VIII: 76.

90 Johnson to Gage, July 20, 1768. in Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, XII: 552-56.

with both Gage and Hillsborough, Johnson made it clear what he planned to do towards establishing a boundary. The question is, why?

A series of conferences were held at Johnson Hall throughout the summer of 1768. Growing tensions in the west and persistent Mohawk concern with the claims of the Kayaderosseras patentees took center stage. From June 8 to 28, a heated discussion occurred at Johnson Hall over the issue of Mohawk lands. When Mohawk speaker Abraham pressed Peter Remsen and John McCrea, the Kayaderosseras patent claimants, to produce a copy of the contested patent, they “said that [they] had not brought it with [them].” Minutes later, the claimants produced a copy of the patent, dated August 26, 1702 and signed by Chiefs Joseph and Hendrick (Tejonihokarawa). Abraham scoffed at the authenticity of the document, repeated the relevant oral history of his nation, and rejected once again the argument that his forefathers had ceded lands west of the Mohawk River. Disagreement ensued. “We now desire, that all Proceedings in this affair, and all surveys and pretensions may be stopped” Abraham concluded, “untill we hear further about it.” The Mohawks also took the opportunity to emphasize that since the reduction of the French, the English had been surveying and colonizing lands that had “never been conquered”—a practice that also infuriated the Iroquois.⁹¹

One month later, Johnson met in secret with Abraham to let him know that he had recently been informed by New York Governor Moore that two new applicants had applied for land within the contested Kayaderosseras patent. Unlike the other claimants, Johnson disclosed that the men had a convincing original proof of sale. When the claimants’ representative arrived the following day and laid down the patent, “which had not been produced before,” both Johnson and the Mohawks were likely surprised when the deed “appeared less favorable [for] the Patentees.”⁹² Johnson and the Mohawks were quick to act.

Increasing reports of Indian unrest to the west and internal conflict among the Six Nations weighed heavily on English-Indian relations by the summer of 1768.⁹³ It is not too speculative to assume that when signs of changing winds appeared on the horizon, the Mohawks agreed to make concessions with regard to the loathed patent. Moreover, the most recent claim maintained European ownership over the least amount of land of any of the several rival claims and Johnson’s own claims in the region were not affected. After a few days of private deliberation with Johnson, Abraham addressed the council on August 2:

We hope that the Gentlemen here present believe that we, though a Small Nation, have been, and are Still head of a powerfull Confederacy . . . As we have now, with a view to peace, settled this matter and given up all pretensions to this Tract, and are at Present reduced to a very small scanty portion for our Subsistence, we now address you, Brother. —recommending it to you, to take this matter into consideration, & requesting you to procure some good Strong writing, as a Security for the Land we live upon, that we may no more be disturbed, or alarmed with apprehensions, and Storys, that this Land will be taken away from us.⁹⁴

91 An Indian Congress at Johnson Hall, June 8 to 28, 1768, *ibid.*, XII: 529-43.

92 An Indian Conference with the Mohawks at Johnson Hall, July 28, 1768, *ibid.*, XII: 555-56.

93 On Indian unrest, see ‘An Indian Congress’ with Chippewas at Guy Park, July 10 to 16, 1768, and Johnson Hall, July 22 to 27, 1768, *ibid.*, 548-50 and 558-63.

94 An Indian Conference with the Mohawks at Johnson Hall, August 2 to 4, 1768, *ibid.*, 578

Before the conference concluded, Johnson assured the Mohawks that he would consider at length their recent concessions “and endeavour to the utmost of his power to have their Lands secured to them . . . in the most effectual manner.”⁹⁵ It is difficult to imagine that Johnson was referring to anything other than the upcoming council at Fort Stanwix.



By the time the summer of 1768 drew to a close in colonial North America, the government in London had for the previous five years felt the pinch of limited resources while attempting to integrate the affairs of the colonies more formally into the mechanisms of empire. This proved to be a difficult task, as the Chatham and Grafton ministries “were hard put to finance the everyday operations of government.” While historians have concentrated on the Townsend Acts of the summer of 1767 as a great provocation to widespread colonial protest, a spirit of rebellion had grown throughout the Ohio River valley for entirely different reasons.⁹⁶ Dissatisfaction became prevalent throughout the borderlands. As Europeans pushed north and west and displaced the indigenous inhabitants, tensions increased. All indicators pointed to growing Indian discontent west of the Susquehanna, but the convergence of interests of the English-allied Iroquois, land hungry merchants, and colonial elites had created an atmosphere ripe for exploitation. It would not be long before the participants met at the Oneida Carry to participate in one of the most spectacular councils in early North America.

95 An Indian Conference with the Mohawks at Johnson Hall, August 2 to 4, 1768, *ibid.*, 579.

96 Jones, *License for Empire*, 87-88. Sosin, *Whitehall and the Wilderness*, 128-64

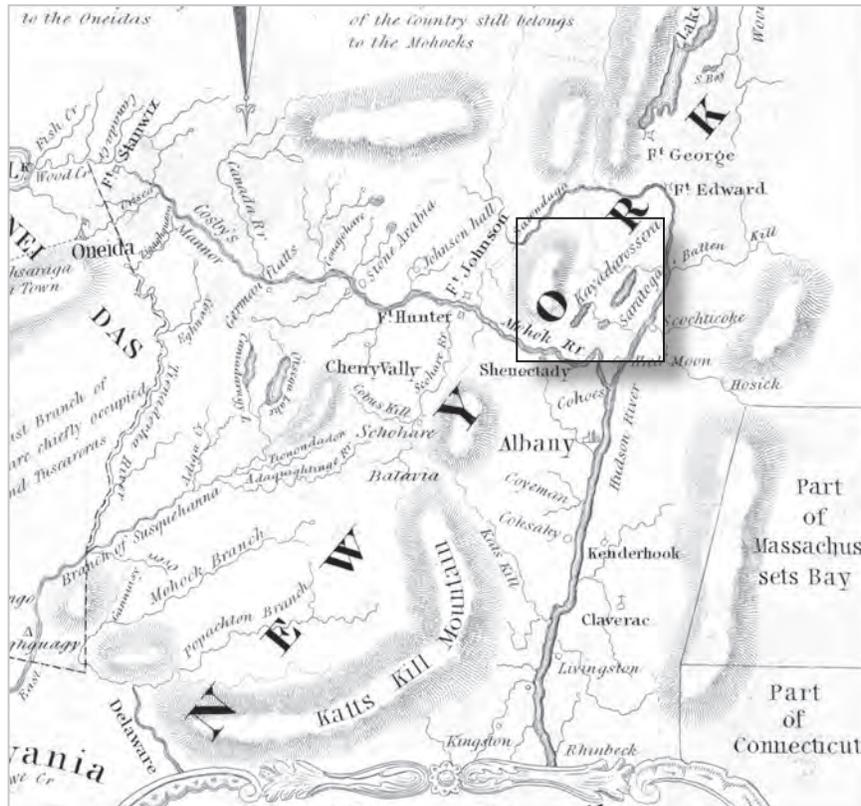


Figure 7. Kayaderososa Region

Courtesy of the New York Public Library. Accessed Sept. 12, 2015, <http://exhibitions.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/map/johnsonmap.html#map>

CHAPTER FOUR

ACCOMPLICES: THE 1768 TREATY OF FORT STANWIX

In late September 1768, as summer in Iroquoia gave way to the chill of autumn, thousands of Indians traversed the lake-dotted landscape of New York on their way to the Carry. Those congregating did not arrive in columns bearing arms in anticipation of battle, rather assembled amicably to participate in negotiations that promised to redefine the boundaries of empire. They did so, officially, to readjust the contentious Indian boundary set by the 1763 Royal Proclamation. For the Iroquois negotiators there was much to gain by rekindling the fire with the Crown. In fact, in exchange for their blessings, it was believed a measure of security could be gained by maintaining a partnership with the managers of empire. If strategically positioned, time had taught the Iroquois that the Crown paid handsomely to obtain the legalities of exploitation. Given the unparalleled scope of the 1768 negotiations, they were not disappointed. On November 5, within view of £10,000 in hard currency and thousands of pounds worth of Indian goods protected by armed guards and the formidable walls of Fort Stanwix, in the largest assembled council in early North America, Indian representatives extended the 1763 Indian boundary by ceding millions of acres of land to the King of England. And for a king's ransom the Crown gained possession of what is today parts of western New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky and West Virginia; lands claimed, but not occupied, by the Iroquois negotiators. In the end, those that gathered at the Oneida Carry in the fall of 1768 agreed that the price of maintaining the authority of Crown and Iroquois Confederacy would be the security of the Ohio Country and its indigenous inhabitants.

Gathering

Along with the smells and sights that accompanied thousands of people that speckled the Oneida Carry, the unkempt log and earthen walls of Fort Stanwix greeted those that arrived at the portage. Despite logistical setbacks and arguments over designs that plagued a timely completion of the new British palisade, by 1768 Fort Stanwix had been operational for about a decade. In fact, even before its completion, the emerging fort provided a safe haven for over four hundred soldiers during the winter of 1758–1759. But within only a couple years, as Fort Stanwix neared completion, the fort's usefulness had already faded. By the end of the Seven Years' War, with the French defeated, the formidable fort had been relegated to providing an "imperial presence" in Iroquoia, "particularly among the Oneidas." By 1761 only fifty men garrisoned a complex that could house hundreds. By the summer of 1764 the local environment had taken its toll on the undermanned and underfunded post. By the end of 1767, while having evaded General Gage's recommendation that the fort be abandoned to cut costs, only "a half pay Officer, a Corporal & his men" stood guard at Fort Stanwix. Despite still demanding admiration in 1768, like the Crown's position in the American colonies, the great fort at the Oneida Carry had been deteriorating rapidly since the end of the war.¹ Nonetheless, for a brief moment in time the Oneida Carry stood at the center of British

1 Luzader, et al., "Fort Stanwix," 8-17.

imperial endeavors in North America. As for Fort Stanwix, its walls provided shelter to the chief negotiators of empire.

Before William Johnson formally opened the negotiations, a number of obstacles needed to be addressed. The material and logistical requirements for the council were immense. By late October over three thousand Indians had gathered at Fort Stanwix to witness the land cession and enjoy the largesse of Crown-sponsored diplomacy. Those in attendance at Fort Stanwix largely consisted of sachems, warriors, and their close associates—male advocates of the Iroquois Confederacy. “[O]ccasioned by their staying at their Villages, to secure their Corn,” Samuel Wharton later recorded, women and children did not accompany the men. Those first peoples in attendance still needed to be gathered, housed and fed—feats that required significant planning and a touch of luck. While the exact quantity of supplies consumed is difficult to determine, the number of occasions when Johnson stressed the need for ample provisions testifies to the importance the he placed on the availability of supplies.²

Half a year before the congress concluded, Johnson’s nephew and future Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Guy Johnson, wrote General Gage. While Johnson tended to his health, Guy Johnson informed Gage that the Crown must be prepared to cover the cost of fifty barrels of pork and “a proportion of Flour” per week, so long as the number of Indians did not exceed one thousand.³ In mid-July Johnson submitted for approval a list of goods to Robert Adams, “a verry good Judge of such Articles,” and Mr. Mortier, the deputy paymaster general. In addition to the supplies, at least £10,000 would be needed to secure the cession, Johnson told Gage, £2,000 of which he figured might be used in private negotiations.⁴

William Johnson arrived at Fort Stanwix on September 19. In addition to “presents for the Indians consisting of divers Goods—ammunition Cash &ca. being prepared, and sent forward in 20 Boats,” five boats packed with food stores arrived with Johnson. By early October Johnson sought more supplies. On October 2 he wrote a supplier in Schenectady, asking for “Sixty pounds Ster[ling] in Goods.” Six days later Johnson dispatched two Mohawks with a letter and a wampum belt to hurry the tardy Ohio nations. As Johnson waited to formally open the negotiations, Indian trader William Trent and Philadelphia merchant Samuel Wharton, used the interlude to advance the interests of the ‘Suffering Traders.’⁵

According to the treaty records, on September 19, Governor of New Jersey, William Franklin, William Trent, and Samuel Wharton accompanied Johnson as he arrived at Stanwix.⁶ The record suggests that the men arrived at Fort Stanwix two days after the superintendent, but it appears more likely they informally presented their account of the trader’s losses to Johnson and selected Iroquois allies on September 21.⁷ Writing to Benjamin Franklin two months after the fact, Wharton recounted the events

2 Wharton (Thomas? Samuel?) to Ben Franklin, Dec. 2, 1768, Benjamin Franklin Papers, FG1109 (APS).

3 Guy Johnson to General Gage, May 4, 1768, in Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, XII: 489.

4 Johnson to Gage, July 20, 1768, *ibid.*, 555.

5 Congress at Fort Stanwix, *ibid.*, 617-19.

6 *Ibid.*, VIII: 111.

7 The treaty as recorded in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of Pennsylvania* indicates that Wharton and Trent arrived at Fort Stanwix on the September 21 with Governor Penn. Evidence suggests, however, that the 21st marked only the first day they spoke on record. They had arrived with Johnson two days earlier. See *ibid.*, XII: 618.

that preceded the negotiations. In July, after receiving news of the imminent council, Wharton, William Franklin, and Trent journeyed to Johnson Hall. The guests stayed for over a month before departing for the Oneida Carry. Wharton writes, “we were engaged, in using our best Interest with the Indians, to obtain a Reimbursement for the Losses, which we & others had sustained, by the Depredation of the Shawnanese and Delawares in the year 1763.” On September 15, following these preparations, it is likely they all set off together for Fort Stanwix.⁸

During the three months prior to the treaty, George Croghan, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Johnson’s right-hand man, and leading protagonist of the Suffering Traders, worked behind the scenes at Johnson Hall and remained active when he arrived at the fort.⁹ Few records shed light on the clandestine dialogues that no doubt occurred late into many nights. We can assume Croghan was aware of the meeting between Johnson, Trent, and Wharton in September when they formally delivered their “accounts of Traders Losses [and] their powers of Obtaining a retribution in Lands from the Indians.” When news that a fellow disgruntled trader named Daniel Coxe prepared to challenge the claims and tactics of the Suffering Traders bid, the men sought a meeting with Johnson. On October 5, Wharton and Trent “delivered in a long State of their case” a rebuttal to Coxe’s claims.¹⁰ Trent requested that the Iroquois “make a compensation for the losses [the traders] incurred” in 1763, and Johnson thereafter “reminded the Six Nations of their Promise and agreement as aforesaid in 1765, To give the Traders some land Near Fort Pitt.”¹¹ The content of Coxe’s request and the rebuttal have not survived; however, a series of related events are noteworthy.

Ten days after Wharton and Trent countered Coxe, Governor Penn, Attorney General Benjamin Chew, and Chief Justice of Pennsylvania William Allen, departed Fort Stanwix leaving behind Richard Peters and James Tilghman as acting commissioners. Peters, an ordained clergyman from England who had run away from two marriages and a child, had an uncanny appetite for Indian lands and aptitude for dishonesty. A day before, on October 14, Penn and his entourage had delivered a set of papers to Johnson. They had to adjudicate a number of claims for merchant losses, including those of the Wharton group and Coxe. After “persu[ing] the whole of the Papers,” the committee ruled in favor of Wharton and Trent, stating that they had been the ones to apply for losses in 1763 and the Indians had agreed to make future reparations to them during the council in 1765. No losses had been applied for before that time, and thus Coxe’s claim could not be allowed now. The Pennsylvania delegation also dismissed earlier trader claims. These affairs, including Croghan’s losses from 1754, “had been set aside in England.” In other words, some claims for old losses were made void because no one had filed for restitution at the time and other claims had been heard in London and rejected there. Penn’s support for the Suffering Traders of 1763 and Croghan’s willingness to set aside his earlier claims were both rooted in the prospect of a major land cession. Wharton, Trent and Croghan had already bought

8 Wharton (Thomas? Samuel?) to Benjamin Franklin, Dec. 2, 1768, Franklin Papers; For Johnson quote see, Johnson to Gage, Sept. 12, 1768, in Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, VI: 363.

9 Croghan is identified as present at an Indian council at Johnson Hall as early as June 22, 1768. See *An Indian Congress*, *ibid.*, XII: 558.

10 *Ibid.*, 618-619.

11 William Trent Journal, 1759-1763 AM 170 (HSP).

out the right of claim of the other traders who lost goods in 1763 in anticipation of a private settlement. Penn was a shareholder in that venture. Wharton, Trent and Croghan needed to negate other traders' claims if they were to corner the land cession opportunities at Fort Stanwix. Knowing that the Suffering Traders cession would not interfere with his provincial claims over the region, Governor Penn could depart. Thus, when the matter was settled with Coxe, and "Sir William assured them that he should have no [further] Objection," the governor and his closest advisors returned to Philadelphia.¹²

Meanwhile, it was not until August 18 that Virginia Indian commissioners Dr. Thomas Walker and Colonel Andrew Lewis received word about the impending conference at the Oneida Carry. With little time to prepare, both men made their way to Johnson Hall by the end of the month only to be told the council would be delayed. With the interests of Virginia-based Loyal Land Company in mind, but without the backing of the Iroquois or Johnson, it did not take long before the two men opted to change their plans. After spending a couple of weeks in an uncomfortable Tavern near the Oneida Carry, and an additional two more weeks at Fort Stanwix waiting for the council to begin, Lewis departed on October 12th. Fearing Virginian interests would not be represented at the planned council with the Cherokees nine-hundred miles away at the Treaty of Hard Labor, Lewis packed his belongings and headed south. "Walker later claimed," according to Colin Calloway, "that he merely witnessed the treaty at Fort Stanwix but, representing the interests of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and other Virginians speculating in lands beyond the Blue Ridge Mountains, he doubtless arrived early to speak with Johnson in private and advance those interests without making a public record of it."¹³ Johnson and the Iroquois, however, had already arranged agreements with Pennsylvania, and Pennsylvania-based speculators. It would be an aspect of the Fort Stanwix agreement that Virginian speculators and authorities would not forget.

By mid-October over nine hundred Indians, largely those of the Six Nations, arrived at encampments around the fort. The death of a Seneca chief held up Ohio Indians at a Seneca village near Cayuga Lake.¹⁴ Once the proper condolences concluded at Cayuga, Johnson informed Gage that he expected their imminent arrival. While waiting, those Indians already in attendance ate and drank heartily. An Indian, Johnson wrote Hillsborough in London, "consumes daily more than two ordinary Men amongst Us."¹⁵ Worried about the dwindling supplies, Johnson noted that the last four weeks "occasion[ed] such a Consumption of Provisions that had I not brought up sev[eral] head of cattle & a Quantity of Corn &c timelier we sho[uld] have been distressed on that account, before the Whole could arrive which . . . I hear will be near 3000."¹⁶ Two days later Johnson's fears were confirmed when Lieutenant Achilles Preston arrived at Fort Stanwix from Cayuga. Preston alerted Johnson about a large delegation set to arrive from the Ohio. The next day when another account arrived, a panicked Johnson wrote a goods supplier in Schenectady. With

12 'Congress at Fort Stanwix,' in Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, XII: 619-20; Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft*, 27

13 Colin Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012), 66-67.

14 The chief in question was later identified as Onoghkaridawey. See Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, XII: 621.

15 Johnson to Hillsborough, Fort Stanwix, October 23, 1768, in O'Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VIII: 104.

16 Johnson to Gage, October 13, 1768, in Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, VI: 436.

the provisions near an end, Johnson requested enough pork and flour to feed three thousand Indians for approximately three weeks. If the goods could not be procured, Johnson worried, it will negate the “design of this Congress, as it cannot be Supposed that Hungry Indians can be kept here, or in any temper without a Bellyfull.” Johnson urged to leave nothing “undone to procure provisions.” This was unbridled diplomacy at its finest.¹⁷

When required, supplies could be mustered quickly. On October 20, four days after Johnson appealed for additional goods from Schenectady, John Bradstreet informed the superintendent that forty-eight of the requested sixty barrels of provisions had been sent. The other dozen barrels would follow as soon as he could locate additional supplies.¹⁸ A day later, Johnson found out that a quantity of blankets were on their way, but additional time would be needed to secure “two pair of Christian Blankets,” four pairs of red strouds, and 1,000 Dollars.¹⁹ As for edible necessities, Johnson must have breathed a sigh of relief when he received word from Colonel Bradstreet sometime shortly after October 25 that “about Seventy Barrells of Provisions arriv’d from New York which will be forwarded to you as soon as possible.”²⁰ The timing could not have been better. By October 22 more than 2,200 Indians had gathered at the fort. Well stocked, Johnson awaited any stragglers.²¹

Meanwhile, as Croghan and Hugh Crawford traveled to Canajoharie to round up the remaining Indians needed to open the negotiations, Johnson did his best to smooth over resentments that might hinder the proceedings. On October 18 he met with Tiagawehe, a Tuscarora chief. Two years earlier Tiagawehe visited Johnson Hall and lodged a seemingly trivial complaint. According to the chief, in 1766 while leading over one hundred and forty Tuscaroras from North Carolina to the headwaters of the Susquehanna, Pennsylvania colonizers stole six of their horses. He requested that Johnson write the Pennsylvanian governor to secure compensation. Apparently, nothing came of the matter – that is until 1768. At Fort Stanwix Tiagawehe approached Johnson. This time, however, the chief warned that “if any Sum [would] be allowed the Sufferers” he too “would be empowered” to receive something. Johnson responded by consulting the Pennsylvania commissioners. Soon thereafter, the superintendent informed the chief, “the Governor had Consented to make . . . Satisfaction” and the value of the horses was settled at “Sixteen half Johanne’s” or approximately nine dollars.²² Satisfied, Tiagawehe withdrew his complaint.²³

Midday on October 21, Croghan returned from Canajoharie. He informed his superior of the imminent arrival of a large group of Indians. Johnson prepared by arranging an appropriate area for a large encampment. By early evening the Indians had arrived. Johnson welcomed Indian representatives in his private quarters and “gave them a strict Charge to keep their Young men sober & in Proper order.” He then “drank Their healths & Ordered them Rum, Tobacco & 12 lb. of Paint for their young Warriors to dress with,” and made sure a bullock was sent to feed the new arrivals until the next day when regular provisions

17 Johnson to John Glen, October 16, 1768, *ibid.*, XII: 607-8.

18 John Bradstreet to Johnson, October 20, 1768, *ibid.*, VI: 445.

19 Daniel Campbell to Johnson, October 21, 1768, *ibid.*, 446.

20 John Bradstreet to Johnson, October 25, 1768, *ibid.*, 449.

21 Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft*, 68.

22 Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, XII: 623-24.

23 *Ibid.*, 624-25.

would be available.²⁴ Two days later the treaty roster was completed when Gaustrax, the great Seneca chief, finally arrived along with a small contingent of Indians. Apologizing to Johnson for his lateness, the Seneca headman cited his old age, unexpected condolences, and “high-water.” After the customary exchange of welcome, Johnson and the Indians retired to their respective quarters and prepared for formal negotiations.

In private, Johnson worried. Writing to Hillsborough the night before negotiations officially commenced, he brooded about the effects of a dwindling British presence in the region which, according to Johnson’s Indian informant, illustrated English parsimonious neglect of the Iroquois Confederacy, and were marks of Crown “injustice & disregard.” Furthermore, if left unabated, the traders’ unregulated cheating practices signal “characteristic proofs of [British] dishonesty & want of authority.” Without a redress of grievances and the speedy conclusion of a boundary, the Indians would remain “intoxicated with the Storys and promises of designing men.” Johnson’s paternalism is evident, but his lingering worries rested with the needs of the Mohawks. Johnson conceded that the advantages of the boundary would not be felt by “any of the Indian Nations for some time, and are at best local, & confined to one Confederacy.”²⁵ Evidently with the Iroquois Confederacy’s interests and his own in mind, Johnson retired for the evening.

The sights must have been astonishing. Surrounded by makeshift lodging for over three thousand Indians, at that moment Fort Stanwix took the leading role on the British imperial stage. Collected were a who’s who of colonial North America, both European and Indian. The fires that surrounded the English palisade no doubt crackled well into the night as those gathered engaged in customary dance and song. Guards kept a keen watch on the livestock, presents, and the food stores inside and outside the fort. Indian chiefs, as well as Crown and provincial representatives, anticipated the completion of unparalleled land cession. As dawn broke on Monday, October 24, 1768, the wait for those players who had long jockeyed for position came to an end.

Formalities

The following morning, after the commissioners representing Pennsylvania and Virginia announced their credentials to those assembled, Johnson addressed the gathering.²⁶ “Brethren, I take you by the hand and heartily bid you welcome to this place where I have kindled a Council Fire for affairs of importance. . . I do now, agreeable to the ancient custom established by our Forefathers, proceed to the ceremony of Condolence.” After allegorically rekindling the council fire and wiping away obstructions to their eyes, ears and throats,

24 Ibid., 625-26.

25 Johnson to Hillsborough, October 23, 1768, in O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VIII: 104-6.

26 Those chief negotiators assembled at Fort Stanwix on Monday October 24 included Sir William Johnson; New Jersey governor William Franklin; Chief Justice of New Jersey Fred Smith; Virginian commissioner Thomas Walker; Pennsylvanian commissioners Peters and Tilgham; Indian agents George Croghan, Daniel Claus and Guy Johnson; Interpreters John Butler, Andrew Montour and Philip Philips; Mohawk Chiefs Abraham, Aroghiadecka, Onahario, Kanadagaya, Kayenqueregoa, Kendrick and Tobarihoga; Onondaga Chiefs The Bunt, Diaquanda, Tawawshughti and Tewawmit; Seneca Chiefs Gaustrax and Odongot; Oneida Chiefs Ganaghquieson, Senughsis, Tagawaron, Nicholaser and Cajuheta; Cayuga Chiefs Tagaia, Arawawna and Skanarady; Tuscarora Chiefs Saquarcesera, Kanigot and Tyagawehe; and select “Mingoes of Ohio”. Benevissica stood for the Shawnees, while Killbuck, and Turtleheart spoke on behalf of the Delawares. Ibid., 111-12.

Johnson addressed the assembled Indians. Recording his speech mnemonically on a wampum belt, he urged the Indian sachem and councilors to “consult with the Cheiftains of your young men [and the] chieftains and Warriors to pay a due regard to your Sachems and Councillors whose sage advise will seldom or never be amiss.”²⁷ Johnson continued,

Brethren, As I would deal with all people in their own way, and that your Ancestors have from the earliest time directed and recommended the observation of a Sett of Rules which they laid down for you to follow, I do now, agreeable to that custom, take of the clearest water and therewith cleanse your inside from all Filth and every thing which has given you concern . . . In performing these ceremonies I can not omit this necessary part, which is, that as there are but two Council Fires for your confederacy, the one at my house and the other at Onondaga, I must desire that you will always be ready to attend either of them, when called upon, by which means business will I hope, always be attended & properly carried out for our mutual Interest, and this I earnestly recommend to you all . . . I must also advise you to be unanimous amongst yourselves & reside in your respective Countries, and not to think of scattering or settling amongst other Nations, as has been too much the Practice for some years past, to the great weakening of your confederacy.²⁸

Johnson’s comments reveal a subtle acknowledgement of borderland realities. By 1768 the independence exercised by the Ohio nations had opened a rift not easily ignored and potentially ruinous. It conflicted with long standing protocols and the imagined authority of the Crown and the Iroquois Confederacy in North America. Johnson knew that well and sought to maintain order and control by reminding the potentially disgruntled Indians of acceptable behavior as outlined by years of tradition. After the Indians “gave a Yo-hah at the proper places,” Johnson’s condolences ended. Those assembled dispersed until the next day.²⁹

The following afternoon Oneida Chief Conoghquieson (Kanaghwaes, Kanaghqweasea, and Kanongweniyah) addressed the assembly. After repeating Johnson’s message from the previous day, he thanked the superintendent for the close attention he had paid to the ancient customs of the Iroquois; customs Conoghquieson considered to be “the cement of our union.” At length, he promised Johnson that the chiefs would consult their young warriors as occasion may require. In addition, the Oneida speaker assured Johnson that all “the six nations, with the Shawanese, Delaware & all their dependents as far as great Plains of the Sioto” would observe whatever the superintendent decided to recommend to them. What Conoghquieson did not divulge, however, is the fact that the recommendations he spoke of had been carefully negotiated over the past three years. Johnson’s “decisions,” as it would seem, would come as no surprise to those Indians gathered at the Oneida Carry. The benefits to be had from such a personal relationship with the Crown representative did not escape the Mohawk River Valley Iroquois. With the “clearest running stream” the chief then cleansed Johnson of his impurities and concluded his condolences ending formal negotiations for the day.³⁰

27 Ibid., 114.

28 ‘Proceedings of Sir William Johnson with the Indians at Fort Stanwix to settle a Boundary Line,’ Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid., 116-17.

With the condolence ceremonies concluded, on Wednesday October 26, 1768 the council turned their attention to boundary details. Speaking on the fifteen-row Covenant Chain wampum belt that had been used since the time of William Penn, Johnson first strengthened the peaceful union between the English and the Iroquois. He then reviewed the economic rewards that had benefited the Indians since time of contact, and urged the Indians not to molest future traders while they traveled through Indian territory. “This will protect you from all dangers” Johnson maintained, “& secure to you the blessings of Peace, and the advantages of Commerce with a people able to supply all your wants.”³¹ Soon thereafter Johnson departed from the “Usual Method of treating with [the Indians]” and had Chief Abraham, “who spoke & wrote both English & Mohock excellently well,” translate his words into Mohawk in order to avoid any possible misunderstandings.³² Johnson, a seasoned orator and multi-linguist, knew the stakes were high. He recalled at great length and “[i]n a verry full Council” the agreement reached in 1765 at Johnson Hall with regard to the readjustment of the Indian boundary.³³ Recalling their previous discussions, Johnson noted that colonist encroachments on Indian lands would continue unless “some Bounds are agreed to, fixed upon and made public between us.” Quick to assert Crown respect, Johnson added, “[as you can see] His Majesty has directed me to give you a handsome proof of his Generosity proportion[e]d to the nature and extent of what Lands shall fall to him.” After finishing, he suggested the Indians retire to consider the subject before returning “fully prepared to give an agreeable answer.” Chief Abraham informed Johnson that the Indians would give him notice when they chose to reassemble, and thanked the superintendent for giving them ample time “that our minds might not be burdened or diverted from it by attending to anything else.” Before the Indians retreated to their private camps, the Oneida Chief, Conoghquieson, addressed the assembly in a bid to be granted a prominent role in the final consideration of the matter.³⁴ That evening Johnson met with a delegation of Nanticoke Indians to resolve a longstanding land issue with the province of Maryland. By 1768 only a few hundred Nanticokes remained, mostly scattered along the Susquehanna having been adopted and allowed to jointly occupy Iroquois territory. A century of conflict with Maryland had left the Algonquian speakers few other choices. In 1768, however, the opportunity for redress was not lost. Utilizing a middleman, the Nanticokes obtained £166.2.3 for the “remainder of their land in Maryland.”³⁵ With the Nanticoke affair settled, the Crown waited while the Indians deliberated.

The Northern Extension

On Thursday night, October 27, Teyohaqueande, a respected Onondaga sachem and warrior arrived at Fort Stanwix along with eighty-six other Indians. An old acquaintance of Johnson, Teyohaqueande had been a prominent figure in Iroquois affairs since the mid-1750s. Johnson provided the new arrivals with “paint, Pipes, Tobacco & a dram” and turned

31 Ibid., 118.

32 Wharton (Thomas? Samuel?) to Benjamin Franklin, Dec. 2, 1768, Franklin Papers, APS.

33 Ibid.

34 O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VIII: 118-19.

35 Ibid., 119.

his attention to the deliberating Indians.³⁶ For several days and nights, Samuel Wharton recorded, the Six Nations' chiefs "were constantly sending for Sir William & Mr. Croghan to explain matters to them & remove their Doubts."³⁷ At approximately 4:00 in the afternoon on Friday October 28, after being clothed by the Crown as a result of a cold snap, key Iroquois negotiators emerged from their private quarters and addressed the superintendent. With reference to the boundary, the Indians noted that "it would be for our mutual advantage if it were not transgressed" but added that "dayly experience teaches us that we cannot have any great dependence on the white People" and feared "that they will forget their agreement for the sake of our Lands." To appropriately address their concerns, the speaker suggested that the boundary line detailed by Johnson in 1765 did not take into consideration their particular settlements. The settlements in question were deep in the Ohio Country, but rather those increasingly hemmed in by European homesteads and fences near the Finger Lakes. If the line were to stop at Owego, "for to what purpose could it be to draw a Line between us & the country of Virginia & Pennsylvania whilst the way to our Towns lay open." As a result, the Iroquois asked Johnson for his help in the resolution of the issue. With a prearranged answer at hand, Johnson replied. "I have attended to what you say and do admit that it is reasonable the Line should be closed . . . & I have prepared a Map on which the Country is drawn large & plain which will enable us both to judge better of these matters." After a brief exchange of words, the primary negotiators decided to retire to Johnson's private quarters for further deliberation.³⁸

In a rare instance of note taking, a scribe recorded the content of the private deliberations. While pointing to the boundary map, Johnson noted that the Crown had yet to "fix upon any particular place" to continue the line northward from Owego. "It therefore remains for me to obtain a continuation of that Line which will be secure to you and advantageous to us on which subject we now meet."³⁹ In the months preceding the treaty Thomas Gage had warned Johnson against any deviations from the 1765 agreement. The "matter [was] not to be done by any Persons on this Side of the Atlantick," Gage remarked in July, "and must be referred home for further Orders."⁴⁰ Johnson, however, did not hide the fact that he intended to make an appropriate concession to the Iroquois if it completed the boundary. "A Mistake has been made by which the Line is not proposed by the Board of Trade to the Northward of Owegy," Johnson replied to Gage on July 20, 1768, and unless solved "the affair of the Boundary will be defeated in its principal Object."⁴¹ Johnson sought to establish security for the Mohawk River valley Iroquois whose terms would be formalized before the conclusion of the treaty. Gage could do little more than caution Johnson against what he perceived to be the "needles Trouble" of attempting to resolve more than the boundary between the provinces and the Indians. But the Iroquois had much more sway over Johnson than did Gage.⁴²

36 Ibid., 119; On Teyohaqueande history see "Deiaquande," accessed Nov. 22, 2006, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, <http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?BioId=36309&query=Deiaquande>

37 Wharton (Thomas? Samuel?) to Benjamin Franklin, Dec. 2, 1768, Franklin Papers, APS.

38 O'Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VIII: 120.

39 Ibid., 120-21.

40 Gage to Guy Johnson, July 11, 1768, Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, XII: 546.

41 Johnson to Gage, July 20, 1768, *ibid.*, 552-57.

42 Gage to Johnson, Aug. 14, 1768, *ibid.*, VI: 394.

Located on the Susquehanna River approximately thirty miles due south of the southern banks of Cayuga Lake, Owego marked the northern point of the boundary negotiated in 1765. But, the termination of the line at Owego was not a settled matter. The Iroquois had many good reasons for wanting an extension of the line northward. Without a north-easterly extension of the boundary from Owego, the Finger Lakes remained exposed to swelling numbers of European land jobbers and squatters. In an attempt to protect the little land that remained, Iroquois pushed for a revision of the 1765 agreement and the establishment of an identifiable border between the province of New York and their homelands.

⁴³ In return, the Indians arranged for an appropriate concession. Referring to a past agreement, Johnson mentioned “the piece of Land in the Forks of the Susquehanna is very much desired by the Commissioners from Pennsylvania and would be more advantageous to them than to you.” Besides, the land would likely be soon surrounded by Europeans making it difficult for any northward mobility and the Pennsylvania governor had prepared “a large & handsome consideration” to compensate the Iroquois for ceding their interests in this tract. Johnson ended by suggesting the Indians retire for the night and consider the offer.⁴⁴

The Iroquois gathered in 1768 sought security; however, that did not mean they were ignorant of, or about to be duped by, the pre-treaty finagling that occurred between European land jobbers. Before anyone could capitalize on the establishment of a new boundary, a cession had to occur. In fact, those indigenous negotiators at Fort Stanwix wielded the power to finalize the agreement. Thus, after Johnson concluded his speech to the assembled Indians, Abraham responded that a reply would come from the Iroquois as soon as the Crown recognized the range of their land claim that extended well beyond the Kanawha River to the south, and actually included a “very good & clear Title to the Lands as far as the Cherokee River.” Based on the right of conquest, the Iroquois representatives demanded Crown acknowledgment of the claim. The Mohawk River valley Iroquois had learned a difficult lesson over the preceding century of contact with land hungry Europeans. It is evident that the Indians made a bid for as much as the Crown would recognize. “We were formerly generous & gave the white people in many places Lands when they were too poor to buy them, We have often had bad Returns. Nevertheless we would still act generously and mean to do as much as we can without ruining our Children.” With Johnson’s support behind them, the Iroquois vied for an extensive territorial claim. That night Johnson again hosted an Indian council in his private quarters.⁴⁵

Aware that an acknowledgement of Iroquois claims as far south as the Cherokee River meant deviating from Crown directions, Johnson backed the request. In fact, ten days prior to Iroquois assertion of rights to the lands south of the Kanawha River, John Stuart, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the southern colonies, concluded the Treaty of Hard Labor with the Cherokee Indians in South Carolina. On October 14, 1768, as Johnson engaged in pre-treaty discussions at Fort Stanwix, the Cherokee nation agreed to cede their lands west of the Appalachian Mountains to the Ohio River running north to the Kanawha River. Half a decade of resistance to European expansion provided the Cherokee with a firm

43 As to avoid their settlements between Owego and Oswegy, the Indians demanded that the “Line should run up the Delaware to the Swamp & from that run across to the Governors (Cosbys Land) and then go away to lake George which we can not but think a fair offer.” DRCHSNY 8: 122

44 O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VIII: 121.

45 *Ibid.*, 121-22.

sense of territorial rights. It also provided aggressive Europeans with a glimpse of the prime lands that would later include most the states of Kentucky and Tennessee. Iroquois claims to the lands south of the Kanawha River later provided a serious point of contention in London and Charleston. The area in question also promised to redirect speculation well away from Iroquoia. In October 1768 the lands were a part of a comprehensive assertion made by chiefs who knew Johnson was eager for a major diplomatic agreement and realized that because of this they could push him closer to their goals.⁴⁶

Interest in the northern extension was not limited to the Iroquois. A significant amount of the land promised to Croghan fell on the eastern side of the would-be boundary. In fact, by 1768 Croghan had acquired over 127,000 acres in Indian deeds from Iroquois chiefs on Otsego Lake.⁴⁷ Like all such direct land sales by Indians, the buyer had not gained a defensible title unless the Crown confirmed the deeds. Croghan, of course, knew that a cession covering these lands would bring a confirmation of title closer to realization and thus increase the market value of the Indian deeds. Without a confirmation of the boundary, the title rights to the Indian deeds and all other prearranged grants to Croghan would remain imperfect. By erecting a legal boundary of settlement in New York, Croghan's Indian deeds and grants would likely have been recognized by the Crown. It is difficult to believe that this fact did not register with Croghan as he tended to "Crown" business each night of the deliberations. The Iroquois negotiators, too, realized weight of the confirmation.

On Saturday, October 29, the Crown waited. The Indians remained in private council well into the afternoon as the chiefs and warriors consulted over the proposed boundary. The Oneidas, in particular, obstructed the proceedings. Johnson had allowed Presbyterian ministers Samuel Kirkland and Eleazar Wheelock into the Oneida territory in the 1750s in order to combat the influence of the French Jesuits. While Johnson and Wheelock held significantly different views about the local indigenous inhabitants, the men nevertheless maintained a cordial relationship until the mid-1760s. In 1766 Kirkland established a mission at Canajoharie. By 1768 his ministry had divided the Oneidas. Johnson was very displeased and had been increasingly wary of Kirkland's intentions. Making matters worse, in an attempt to secure land for further religious use, the Presbyterian ministers decided to send a representative to Fort Stanwix.⁴⁸

When Johnson found out that the "clergyman sent by Mr. Wheelock from New England . . . was very busy amongst the Indians," he sent for the Mohawk and Onondaga chiefs. After clothing a number of them "with whom he had several conferences," Johnson anxiously waited. Later that afternoon the Onondaga and Mohawk informants returned to the superintendent's quarters with a "Message from the whole" requesting additional time to deliberate. Johnson was impatient. He reasoned "that the security of their Lands depended upon their dispatch and the freedom of the Cession." Nevertheless, he had little choice but to wait until the next morning.⁴⁹

That night a belt arrived from the Ohio Country carrying news that French and Spanish agents were stirring up Indians by spreading tales that warned the English intended

46 For a record of the Treaty of Hard Labor, see Treaty of Hard Labor, accessed Nov. 3, 2006, *University of Nebraska Lincoln*, <http://libr.unl.edu:2000/jefferson/content/documents.php?id=jef.00089>.

47 Wainwright, *George Croghan, Wilderness Diplomat*, 256-7.

48 O'Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, IV: 395.

49 *Ibid.*, VIII: 122-23.

to halt trade and remove them from their homelands. Believing these allegations, several nations planned to revive an old pact to “unite and attack the English” but agreed not to engage in a general insurrection until the Stanwix negotiations concluded. With every indication that the Ohio nations stood poised to revolt if the outcome of the deliberations threatened their territorial claims and livelihood, cession arrangements continued but with a hint of last-minute hesitation. On Sunday morning, after the warriors had been consulted regarding the proposed extension, four unnamed sachems voiced concern over ceding Ohio lands towards “Wioming or the Great Island, as they reserved that part of the Country for their Dependants.” Johnson responded that much time had previously been spent negotiating the boundary. Then he warned that if the current opportunity was rejected and the Indians insisted on drawing a new line that interfered with “Grants, or approach almost to our settlements,” he could do little to initiate a more effectual method of preventing further encroachments. Thereafter, a series of arguments erupted. After the tension quelled, a number of alterations to the map were made and the Indians retired once again to their “Council Hutt for further consideration.”⁵⁰

Over the course of the next day, Johnson, Croghan and Trent engaged in private negotiations with a number of Indians. The Indians held firm on their suggestions related to the northern extension of the boundary. Although an Oneida chief informed Johnson that the Indians continued to argue over the time that had been spent on the northern extension, the matter nonetheless was not hurried. In fact, at 9:00 pm, six Oneida chiefs met Johnson in private and in a bid to “shew their good intension,” the Indians suggested that the boat launch near Fort Stanwix would be an acceptable point of origin for the commencement of the line. While thanking the Indians for the concession, Johnson nevertheless asked that the line be extended much farther westward. He offered five hundred dollars and a “handsome present for each chief” if the Oneida nation could convince the others to do so. The chiefs promised to do their best.⁵¹

On Monday morning the Oneida chiefs returned to Johnson’s quarters. Because game had grown scarce in their country, the Indians stated that their nation would likely have to depend on the revenue generated from the Oneida Carry for survival in the future. As a result, “their people positively refused” to push the line any farther westward. Surprised at the obdurate refusal, Johnson encouraged reconsideration. Shortly thereafter the delegation returned. For the sum of six hundred dollars, “over and besides the several Fees which were given in private,” they agreed to extend the line slightly west to Canada Creek, reiterating that the new line would be forever binding. Johnson had no other choice but to accept the final offer.⁵² After a day of acquainting themselves with boundary details, the Iroquois brokers met Johnson on Wednesday and confirmed the line. The chiefs also insisted “on having 10,000 Dollars” for the lands relinquished to “Mr. Penns Gov’t.” After conferring with the Pennsylvanian commissioners, Johnson informed the Indians that the provincial representatives would agree to the terms.⁵³

50 Ibid., 123-4. The four sachems included Tyaruruante, Ganaquieson, Tyeransera and Tagawaron.

51 Ibid., 124.

52 Ibid., 124-25.

53 Ibid., 126.

The New Purchase

The Pennsylvania cession was immense. Bounded by the 1737, 1749, and 1754 land cessions to the east, the western edge of the tract stretched diagonally across the length of the province (northeast to southwest) from Owego to south of the Ohio forks.⁵⁴ The western limits of the tract followed the same line as detailed in the 1768 Stanwix agreement. Pennsylvania paid the Six Nations 10,000 Spanish dollars for the cession, and more importantly, legal claim to the lands. As reviewed earlier, when Europeans did not have clear title to the land there was a firm policy of recognizing the common law legal interests of people who *used* land but did not themselves have a Crown patent. These interests had to be cleared before patents could be issued from the Crown, or in the case of the colonies like Pennsylvania, the proprietors.

A complication arose with the purchase that pertained to the boundary of Pennsylvania. How far west and south could the Penn family claim to act with the powers of the Crown? The boundaries set by the treaty meant that Iroquois had backed the Penns' claims to a jurisdiction over territory claimed by Virginia, among others. In a struggle between two powerful colonies, the Iroquois supported Pennsylvania. According to the Board of Trade, the Ohio River southlands belonged to Virginia and that province had previously allocated the lands to soldiers for services rendered in the Seven Years' War.⁵⁵ Johnson knew he was contributing to a clash of territory between Pennsylvania and Virginia, but like his Iroquois counterparts, his backing of Pennsylvania's bid for land was strategic.⁵⁶ Thrilled by the news that a deal had been struck, Thomas Penn wrote Johnson thanking him for "doing everything in [his] power for the service of my family."⁵⁷ By assigning the lands to Pennsylvania, the Iroquois formally recognized Pennsylvania's provincial boundaries.

54 "on the east side of the east branch of the River Susquehannah, at a place called Owego, and running with the said boundary line, down the said branch on the east side thereof till it comes opposite the mouth of a creek called by the Indians Awandac (Tawandee) and across the river and up the said creek on the south side thereof, along the range of hills called Brunette Hills by the English, and by the Indians, on the northside of therein, to the heads of a creek which runs into the west branch of the Susquehannah, which creek is by the Indians called Tiadughton (Pine Creek – as noted in 1784), and down the said creek on the south side thereof, to the said west branch of Susquehanna, then crossing the said river, and running up the same on the south side thereof, the several courses thereof to the fork of the same river which lies nearest to place on the River Ohio called the Kittanning, and from the said fork by a straight line to Kittanning aforesaid, and then down the said river Ohio by the several courses thereof to where the western bounds of the said Province of Pennsylvania crosses the same river, and then with the said western bounds to the south boundary aforesaid to the east side of the Allegheny hills, and with the said hills on the east side of them to the west line of a tract of land purchased by the said proprietors from the Six Nation Indians, and confirmed October 23d, 1758, and then with the northern bounds of that tract of land purchased of the Indians by deed (August 22d, 1749) and then with that northern boundary line to the river Delaware at the north side of the mouth of a creek called Lechawaachasein, then up the said river Delaware on the west side thereof to the intersection of it, by an east line to be drawn from Owego aforesaid to the said river Delaware, and then with that east line to the beginning at Owego aforesaid." The Place spoken in the deed as the forks nearest to the Kittanning, is the Northwest corner of present day Cambria county. Wallace "Iroquois Indians: Treaties and Treaty Journals, 1701-1857," A. F. Wallace Papers, misc. coll. 64, ser. 9 (APS).

55 The Report of the Board of Trade of March 7, 1767, states "Your Majesty will be pleased to observe that altho on the one hand the Settlements in the new established Colonies to the South are confined to very narrow limits; yet on the other hand the middle Colonies (whose state of population requires a greater extent) have room to spread much beyond what they have hitherto been allowed and that upon the whole one uniform and complete line will be formed between the Indians and those antient Colonies, whose limits not being confined to the Westward has occasioned that extensive settlement." Alvord, "The British Ministry and the Treaty of Fort Stanwix."

56 See Johnson's letter June 26, 1769, quoted in Jones, *License for Empire*, 89.

57 Thomas Penn to William Johnson, Nov. 2, 1768, David Library of the American Revolution Collection APS.

Addressing the assembly on Tuesday, November 2, the Iroquois affirmed that all other claims to the land ceded to Pennsylvania are null and void. “[W]e expect that no regard will be paid to them or any such claims now hereafter, as we have fairly sold them to the proprietors of Pennsylvania.”⁵⁸ The proprietors were not the only beneficiaries of the cession. Johnson, Croghan, and the Suffering Traders received particular distinction.

Personal Politics

Having contemplated the current state of Indian affairs, the Iroquois firmly endorsed Johnson’s bid to maintain centralized authority. Rather than shedding the responsibilities of the superintendency by selling out his long time Indian allies, Johnson preserved the support of the Mohawk River Valley Iroquois and their Confederacy. For the Indians it was business as usual. Drawing attention to indigenous contempt for the recent department changes, the Iroquois speaker announced that without the King’s support the office of the Superintendent of Indian Affairs would be ill-equipped to address Indian grievances properly. “We all know the want of this, and we make it a point of great consequence on which this our present Agreement is to depend.” In a statement likely directed to Whitehall, the speaker concluded by cautioning the administration that as injustices increased, so too would tensions between colonists and Indians. Without a capable Indian department “our Affairs will go wrong and our heads may be turned.” The message could not have been more obvious.⁵⁹

The Iroquois orator then turned to Croghan and the Suffering Traders. In “order to shew that we love justice, we expect the Traders who suffered by some of our dependants in the wars five years ago, may have a grant for the Lands we now give them down Ohio, as a satisfaction for their losses.”⁶⁰ During the 1765 negotiations at Johnson Hall the traders gained indemnity from the Iroquois for goods destroyed in Pontiac’s War. The preferred method of compensation included a much-anticipated land grant. While a system of reimbursement based on individual losses existed on paper, by 1768 the reality was that shares in the venture had been bought up and were held by a few scheming individuals. As noted earlier, to consolidate their claims, Croghan, Trent, William Franklin, and Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan, organized the Indiana Company prior to the congress at Fort Stanwix. By November 3, 1768, the Suffering Traders had been granted all the lands on the “southerly side of the mouth of Little Kanawha Creek, where it empties into the river Ohio, and running from thence south east to the Laurel Hill, thence . . . until it strikes the river Monongahela [sic] . . . to the Southern boundary line of . . . Pennsylvania, thence westerly . . . to the river Ohio, thence down the said river. . . to the place of beginning.”⁶¹ Elated, Trent later remarked on his complete satisfaction with the cession.⁶²

In addition to his interest in the Suffering Traders’ grant, Croghan received further consideration. Busy since 1764 circumventing 1763 Royal Proclamation restrictions, he intended to make the most of the Stanwix negotiations. On June 27, 1767 Croghan and

58 O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VIII: 127-28.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61 Wharton, *Facts and Observations Respecting the Country Granted to His Majesty by the South-East Side of the River Ohio in North America; The Establishment of a New Colony There; and the Causes of the Indian War, Which, last Year, desolated the Frontier Settlements of the Provinces of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia*, 71-72, 77-78, 84-87. Italics removed.

62 William Trent Journal, 4-5.

thirty-nine partners had petitioned Whitehall for 40,000 acres west of Lake Otsego. The Otsego patent actually contained more than 100,000 acres. In order to skirt limits imposed by the proclamation, Croghan worded the petition cleverly. Writing to the Board of Trade in 1767, the petitioners “humbly conceive that the Royal intention in said Proclamation was solely to prevent the defrauding the Indians in purchases made by Private Persons.” Since the Indians were determined to give the claimants the land, Croghan reasoned, he would voluntarily cover the costs of the cession to avoid complications. Furthermore, because land transactions between Indians and Europeans had to be sanctioned by a Crown agent, Croghan arranged for Governor Henry Moore to purchase the land on behalf of the Crown on June 10, 1768, at Johnson Hall. The financial benefits of speculation, however, would not occur until the owner could divide and sell the lands. As a result, it was imperative that the boundary line be established west of the tracts. Thus, when the Iroquois speaker addressed the issue of Croghan’s land on November 3, it represented a culmination of almost five years of jockeying by Croghan. And in a moment his prospects were brightened. “Our friend Mr. Croghan” the speaker remarked, “long ago got a Deed for Lands from us, which may be considered and get as much from the King somewhere else, as he fairly bought it. – And as we have given enough to shew our Love for the King and make his People easy, in the next place we expect that no old claims which we disavow or new encroachments may be allowed of.”⁶³

The special considerations made by the Iroquois at Fort Stanwix served a number of purposes. The cession of legal interests in land to the Penns undercut the claims by Connecticut and Virginia to “Pennsylvanian” land by providing Iroquois support for provincial expansion west to the Ohio River. The Suffering Traders’ Indiana grant along the Ohio, just south of Pennsylvania’s southern border, satisfied a few well-connected speculators with a keen interest in expanding empire. Not only did Croghan manage to involve himself in the Suffering Traders cession but he was deeded over 200,000 acres which were split between the Lake Otsego region in New York and Fort Pitt in the newly assigned lands of Pennsylvania. In the end, however, the Iroquois also used the cessions as a tool for securing their own future. The northern extension of the boundary to the Oneida Carry guaranteed, at least on paper, legal protection to most of the eastern Iroquois homelands in the Finger Lakes region. Regarding the Ohio Country, the Iroquois washed their hands of the complications associated with controlling their increasingly hostile Ohio nations. Only a few issues remained. Prior to dealing with them, the Iroquois speakers emphasized the significance of the Covenant Chain.

On Tuesday, November 1, 1768, with “Sentiments of Independancy, Justice & Finness, That would do honor to any Civilized Chieftans,” the Indian speaker held the Covenant Chain wampum belt in his hand recalling the ancient agreement.⁶⁴ When the English first reached the shores of North America the Indians did their best to accommodate and care for the beleaguered new arrivals. A peaceful agreement was made, binding the English and the Iroquois in chain of friendship. Apprehensive that the bark that bound the agreement would break, the Indians decided to make one of iron. “But perceiving the former chain was liable to rust,” the Iroquois opted to replace it with a chain of silver. But silver tends to dull; and as noted by the Iroquois speaker, it took both the energy of the Indians and the “King’s people” to polish and maintain the chain. In other words, the Iroquois had done their part

63 O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VIII: 127-28.

64 Wharton (Thomas? Samuel?) to Benjamin Franklin, Dec. 2, 1768, Franklin Papers, APS.

and it was now time for the Crown to pay due regard to their needs. After the boundary details had been recited, so as to help commit them to the oral knowledge of the Iroquois, the Indians insisted that “no further attempts shall be made on our Lands . . . [and desired] that one Article of this agreement be, that none of the Provinces or their People shall attempt to invade it under color of any old Deeds, or other pretences what soever.” Furthermore, the warriors of every nation must be granted the liberty of hunting throughout the area, without the interference of Europeans west of the line, as it was the only means of continued subsistence for many of their people. Finally, the Iroquois negotiators turned to the particular security of the Mohawk nation.⁶⁵

A Nation within An Empire

While the northern extension of the boundary demarcated a clear line between European colonizers and the Iroquois, the traditional lands of the eastern gatekeepers of the longhouse, the Mohawks, fell well within the region now formally on the European side. (Figure 10) Divided and scattered among European communities, the primary Mohawk villages stretched along the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers felt encroachments. While the friendship forged between British agents and Mohawk chiefs, sachems, and warriors had provided a cordial and strategic alliance over the last century, by 1768 there was no escaping the fact that most of the Mohawks ancestral lands had been invaded by squatters and speculators, and the fences and animals of empire. The Mohawk nation, integral to the façade of Crown and Iroquois Confederacy authority, demanded a resolution to its plight. After outlining the course of the boundary, the Iroquois speaker mentioned the precarious situation of the Mohawks. Because their homes are “now within the Line which we give to the King . . . [and] they are the true old Heads of the whole confederacy” the speaker proclaimed that they must be given special consideration. The confirmed remedy was as interesting as it was telling. The speaker noted that the several villages and unpatented lands still in their possession, along with “the Residences of any others in our confederacy affected by this Cession shall be considered as their sole property and at their disposal both now, and so long as the sun shines, and that all grants or engagements they have now or lately entered into, shall be considered as independent of this Boundary so that they . . . may not lose the benefit of the sale of it . . . with whom they have agreed, may have the Land.”⁶⁶ The clause underscored Mohawk control over all the remaining lands *east* of the boundary yet unpatented, and the unique authority to sell and transfer the lands to whomever they deemed fit. They negotiated the legal right to act as a nation within an empire. This addition to the agreement is nothing short of remarkable, as it illustrates not only the clout of the Mohawks, but also their firm grasp of British law, land practices, and related legal processes.

The Cession

With final concerns settled, the largest land cession in colonial North America concluded. The congress that prepared the transaction had provided the Mohawk River Valley Iroquois with an opportunity to put forward their grievances and anxieties; it gave them an occasion to bargain, and negotiate long-overdue boundaries and guarantees. They

65 O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VIII: 127.

66 Ibid., 127-28.

negotiated skillfully. They had been adept at identifying their interests, at devising remedies, at putting pressure on other parties, and at stating matters eloquently. In diplomatic arts, they equaled the colonizers.

The next day, Wednesday November 2, it poured rain. Selected Indians were again provided with blankets and additional clothing. During the day the assembled participants remained indoors. That evening Johnson again met with “the Mohocks and other Chiefs.” After making few inroads in another attempt to persuade them to extend the line farther west in New York, Johnson informed the chiefs that the commander-in-chief, Thomas Gage, planned to reduce the number of occupants at Fort Ontario. The Iroquois did not take issue and retired until the next day.⁶⁷

On Friday, November 4, 1768, after taking a day to prepare deeds and speeches, the Indians and Europeans reconvened to conclude the treaty. Following a condolence ceremony for the recent loss of the Oneida chief, Johnson rose and addressed the gathered participants. He requested them to protect the traders who were essential to continued trade and communication. After explaining the King had done all in his power to address frontier abuses and compensate the Indians, Johnson assured them that the line would be “duly observed by the English” and forever binding until a time the Indians felt it necessary to make “any future additions or alterations.”⁶⁸ Had his promise been kept, the Treaty of Fort Stanwix would have been a fine pragmatic achievement of Iroquois diplomacy.

The superintendent then turned his attention to the Ohio nations. “Brothers the Shawanese & Delawares,” Johnson began, “I now particularly address you.” According to Johnson, because they resided so far southward and away from the heads of the Iroquois Confederacy they had been susceptible to a variety of bad influences and poor intelligence which resulted in mischief and poor judgment. Urging the Ohio nations to dismiss the rumors of a general revolution in America and the return of French fleets and armies, Johnson assured the Indians “that those who were able to conquer Canada, & drive their enemies out of their country, will always have it in their power to defeat their future projects should they be weak enough to make any future attempts to regain what they lost.” He further reminded the Indians of their previous agreements with the English, the treaty of peace between the Iroquois and the Cherokees, and also their place in the Iroquois Confederacy. Johnson advised the Ohio nations to “pay due regard to the Boundary Line now made, & to make all your people acquainted with it.”⁶⁹

Johnson next recited the parting requests of Governor William Franklin. Franklin, who had recently been honored with the name Sagorrihwhioughstha, or ‘Doer of Justice’ by the Iroquois, had little bother with treaty affairs now that his interests were secured. Before leaving, however, he made sure that Johnson reminded the Delawares of the agreement made at Easton in 1755, by which they had officially relinquished land in New Jersey and the “Province [was now] entirely free from all Indian Claims.”⁷⁰

Concluding his address, Johnson urged the Ohio nations to avoid wandering and to return to their villages in the east, “after the manner of your ancestors.” Instead of remaining disunited and confused by the ramblings of bad men, Johnson continued, “bind you

67 Ibid., 129.

68 Ibid., 129-30.

69 Ibid., 131-32.

70 Ibid., 131-33.

all together” under the protection of the Iroquois Confederacy. By projecting an image of unification among the Iroquois, both Johnson and the Iroquois sought an order that gave legitimacy to their positions and strengthened their partnership in the extension of empire. Before executing the deed of cession, 500 Spanish dollars were paid to the Conestoga Indians to give “full satisfaction of [their] Lands, which by the death of that People” became the property of Pennsylvania’s proprietors. Johnson then called an end to the daily negotiations. Those assembled retired and awaited the formal reading of the cession.⁷¹

As the Indians entered the fort on the morning of November 5, 1768, they did so past the largest amount of currency and goods collected to date for an exchange between North American first peoples and the British empire. In the early morning hours workers carted and arranged over twenty boatloads of gifts so the “whole assembled in the Area [would] subscribe to the Deed & receive the consideration.”⁷² The Crown had spent an unprecedented amount of money to conclude the negotiations. In fact, Samuel Wharton later recorded that he had never before seen such an enormous amount of money, added that the gifts were of the finest quality and placed on display. In the middle and “circumvented by the Goods & Dollars on three Sides” sat Sir William Johnson. The chiefs, warriors and “all other Indians standing on the __Ramparts & ca pleasurably view[ed] the Goods.”⁷³ After reaffirming the treaty, a Iroquois speaker rose and addressed the Crown representatives.

We the Sachems & Chiefs of the Six confederate Nations, and of the Shawanese, Delawares, Mingoes of Ohio and other Dependent Tribes on behalf of our selves and of the rest of our Several Nations the Chiefs & Warriors of whom are now here convened by Sir William Johnson Baronet His Majestys Superintendent of our affairs send GREETING. WHEREAS . . . the Lands occupied by the Mohocks around their villages as well as by any other Nation affected by this our Cession may effectually remain to them and to their Prosperity and that any engagements regarding Property which they may now be under may be prosecuted and our present Grants deemed valid on our parts with the several other humble requests contained in our said Speech. AND WHEREAS at the settling of the said Line it appeared that the Line described by His Majestys order was not extended to the Northward of Osweg[o] or to the Southward of Great Kanhawa river We have agreed to and continued the Line to the Northward on a supposition that it was omitted by reason of our not having come to any determinations concerning its course at the Congress held in one thousand seven hundred and sixty five and in as much as the Line to the Northward became the most necessary of any for preventing encroachments at our very Towns & Residences.”⁷⁴

Next, the Iroquois declared that the boundary was rightfully extended to the southward to the Cherokee River, for the sum of the “Ten thousand four Hundred and Sixty pounds seven shillings and three pence sterling.” The exact boundary line was recorded as follows:

Beginning the Mouth of Cherokee or Hogohege River where it emptys into the River Ohio and running from thence by a direct Line to the South side of said River to Kittaning which is above Fort Pitt from thence by a direct Line to the nearest Fork of the west branch of Susquehanna thence through the Allegany Mountains along the South side

71 Ibid.,

72 Ibid., 134.

73 Wharton (Thomas? Samuel?) to Benjamin Franklin, Dec. 2, 1768, Franklin Papers, APS.

74 O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VIII: 135-36.

of the said West Branch until it comes opposite to the mouth of a Creek callek [sic] Tiadaghton [Pine Creek] thence across the West Branch and along the South side of that Creek and along the North side of Burnetts Hills to a Creek called Awandae thence down the same to the East Branch of Susquehanna and across the same and up the East side of that River to Oswegy fro thence East to Delawar River and up that River to opposite where Tianaderha falls into Susquehanna thence to Tianaderha and up the West side of its West Branch to the head thereof and thence by a direct Line to Canada Creek where it emptys into the wood Creek at the West of the Carrying Place beyond Fort Stanwix . . .⁷⁵

The list of signatures confirming the treaty included six chiefs, one from each of the Six Nations of Iroquois (Abraham for the Mohawks, Conoghquieson for the Oneidas, Sequarusera for the Tuscaroras, Bunt for the Onondagas, Tegaia for the Cayugas, and Gaustrax for the Senecas). The final treaty did not mention the approval of any Ohio nation representatives, nor a single sachem or chief of the western Senecas. While scholar George Knepper claimed that “the Ohio Indians . . . were prominently represented at councils leading to the Treaty of Fort Stanwix,” the western nations had little representation or say in the final agreement.⁷⁶ Their presence and objections would have complicated a tidy land cession. Adding insult to injury, the Ohio Indians would be sent a mere twenty-seven pounds worth of goods.⁷⁷ Sealed and delivered in the presence of New Jersey Chief Justice Frederick Smyth, Virginian and Pennsylvanian commissioners, and Sir William Johnson, the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix was concluded on November 5, 1768.⁷⁸ The final cost: “13,156, 14 shillings, and one penny: 10,460 7s. 3d in cash; 2328. 5s 0d. in gifts, and 758. 4s. 5d. in provisions, with additional expenses for travel, messengers, making wampum belts at the treaty, and so on.”⁷⁹

In finalizing this treaty, those that signed the agreement deviated from royal instructions in three significant instances.⁸⁰ First, the boundary agreed upon extended south past the Kanawha to the Cherokee River. The additional area, “1107 $\frac{3}{4}$ miles in length, and about 100 miles in breadth,” not only accounted for a significant portion of land, but contained land already ceded by the Cherokees to the Crown at the Treaty of Hard Labor.⁸¹ Second, the boundary also extended north past Owego to the Oneida Carry near Fort Stanwix. Third, Johnson and the Iroquois allowed a number of personal transactions to simultaneously occur which ran contrary to Crown instructions. (Figure 12) By taking the liberty to adjust the royal instructions, the negotiators undoubtedly acted on their appraisal of the situation.

75 Ibid., 136.

76 George W. Knepper, *Ohio and Its People*, (Kent, Kent State University Press, 1989), 33. For a detailed account of the events, see also Samuel Wharton to Benjamin Franklin, Dec. 2, 1768, in Labaree, ed., *Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 15: 275-79.

77 Jon Parmenter, “The Iroquois and the Native American Struggle for the Ohio Valley, 1754-1794” in Skaggs, ed., *The Sixty Years’ War*. For an account of goods sent to the Ohio, see O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VIII: 132-34.

78 The Six Nations chiefs to sign the treaty and deed included Abraham (Mohawk), Canaghquieson (Oneida) Sequarusera (Tuscarora), Bunt or Otsinoghiyata (Onondaga), Tegaia (Cayuga) and Guastrax (Seneca). The Virginian commissioners were Thomas Walker and Richard Peters, while James Tilghman represented Pennsylvania. For A. F. Wallace’s brief reference to the event, see Wallace, “Iroquois Indians: Treaties and Treaty Journals, 1701-1857.”

79 Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft*, 79.

80 Marshall, “Sir William Johnson and the Treaty of Fort Stanwix,” 149; Jones, *License For Empire*, 89.

81 Wharton, *Facts and Observations Respecting the Country Granted to His Majesty by the South-East Side of the River Ohio in North America; The Establishment of a New Colony There; and the Causes of the Indian War, Which, last Year, desolated the Frontier Settlements of the Provinces of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia*, 12.

That does not mean, however, that Johnson, for instance, deviated from his responsibility as a loyal British subject and diligent Crown representative. In fact, Hillsborough was well aware of Johnson's intentions to adjust the boundary, and on at least one occasion gave his approval.⁸² Johnson weighed his options as a Crown representative and accepted that certain realities had to be accepted to achieve a diplomatic settlement. The northern extension had to be clarified to establish a new one in the south, and there were private interests that, unless settled, could impede harmony. Moreover, the Iroquois negotiators no doubt reasoned that it made more sense to guide, and thus benefit from, who would receive lands, and where. Consequently, the Suffering Traders and proprietors of Pennsylvania warmly greeted news of the treaty's terms, whereas Virginian and Connecticut speculators did not.⁸³ Nor did the Ohio nations whose lands had been sold from under their feet. Thus, when Philadelphia merchant and Suffering Trader powerhouse Samuel Wharton later recalled that no other treaty had ever concluded with better judgment and Indian satisfaction than at Stanwix, his prejudice is easily identified.⁸⁴

82 Hillsborough to Johnson, Oct. 12, 1768. O'Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VIII: 101.

83 The deed to the Suffering Traders was issued to William Trent (the assigned power of attorney) on January 7 to 12, 1769. Present was the Mayor of Philadelphia Isaac Jones and Richard Peters. The deed read as follows: "Whereas: Robert Callender, David Franks, Joseph Simon Levy, Andrew Levy, Phillip Boyle, John Baynton, Samuel Wharton, George Morgan, Joseph Spear, Thomas Smallman, Samuel Wharton, Administrator of John Welch, deceased. Edward Moran, Evan Shelby, Samuel Postlethwait, John Gibson, Richard Whiston, Dennis Cronon, William Thompson, Abraham Mitchell, James Dundas, Thomas Dundas and John Ormsby. . . [they have appointed] William Trent of the County of Cumberland and Province of Pennsylvania, . . . their lawful attorney and agent. . . to receive from the Sachems, Councillors and Warriors of the said united nation[s], a grant of a tract of land, as a compensation. satisfaction or retribution for the Goods, Merchandise and Effects of the said William Trent and the Traders aforesaid which the Shawese, Delaware and Huron tribes, tributaries of the said six nations (contrary to all good faith and in violation of their repeated promises of safety and protection to their persons, servants and effects (whilst trading in their country), did in the spring of the year One Thousand, Seven Hundred and sixty-three, violently seize upon and unjustly appropriate to their own use, and Whereas are now convened in full Council by order of our Father the King of Great Britain and France and Ireland, defender of the faith, etc., at Fort Stanwix, in the province of New York in order to agree for ascertain and finally fix and settle a permanent and lasting boundary line . . . and whereas the said Sir William Johnson, Baronet has now at this present Congress reminded the said Six United Nations of their said promise, and at the earnest desire of the aforesaid Traders by their said attorney strongly recommended to the Six United Nations to make them a restitution by a Grant of a Tract of Land to his said Majesty . . . to and for the only Use, Benefit and Behalf of the said William Trent in his own right and as Attorney as aforesaid. . . [the Six Nations] therefore by these presents signify, publish and declare that notwithstanding the grant and gift hereby made and given by them unto his said Majesty. . . and Behalf of the said William Trent in his Own Right and as Attorney . . . will be included within the Cession Sale and Boundary Line which the said United Six Nations shall and will make, sell and grant . . . yet, nevertheless the said Six United Nations have neither asked, demanded, nor received . . . consideration for the hereby given and granted premises . . . And for and in consideration of the sum of Five Shillings . . . all the Tract or Parcel of Land beginning at the Southerly side of the Mouth of Little Kanahawa Creek, where it empties itself into the river Monongahela, then down the stream of the said River Monongahela, according to the several courses thereof to the southerly boundary line of the Province of Pennsylvania, thence westerly along the course of the said Province Boundary Line as far as the same shall extend and from thence by the said course to the River Ohio, thence down the said River Ohio according to the several courses thereof to the Place of beginning, together with and all singular, the Trees, Weeds, and Under-Woods, Mines, Minerals, Oares, Waters, Water Courses, Fishings, Liberties, Privileges, Herditaments and Appurtenances, whatsoever, to the said Tract or Parcel of Land. . . And also all the estate, right, title Interest, Property claims and demands whatsoever, whether native, legal or equitable, of us, the said Indians." The deed was signed and validated on January 12, 1769, in Philadelphia by Abraham 'The Steel'; Sennghois 'The Stone'; Sagaurisera 'The Cross'; Choaugheata 'The Mountain'; Tagaaia 'The Pipe'; and Gaustarux 'The High Hill.' See Deed at Fort Stanwix for Traders Losses—Iroquois Indians to William Trent and Others, Nov. 3, 1768, American Indian Manuscripts, Misc. Mss. FG 1718, APS.

84 Wharton (Thomas? Samuel?) to Benjamin Franklin, Dec. 2, 1768. Franklin Papers, APS.

In the end, all signatories of the treaty were willing to sacrifice the fate of the independently-minded Ohio nations in pursuit of self-interests that both guided and massaged imperial designs. They were speculators in empire. Now that a new boundary was delineated, those speculators, Indian and European, urged the King to act swiftly to put colonists on the ceded lands. If “delayed or disputed,” Samuel Wharton warned, “The most unhappy Consequences will instantly result.”⁸⁵ Unbeknownst to Wharton and his likeminded accomplices that stood to gain both security and fortunes from the 1768 cession, it was not unrest in the Ohio Country that would cause delay. Another revolution was brewing that would lay waste to the plans of those speculators in empire that convened at Fort Stanwix in 1768.

85 Wharton, *Facts and Observations Respecting the Country Granted to His Majesty by the South-East Side of the River Ohio in North America; The Establishment of a New Colony There; and the Causes of the Indian War, Which, last Year, desolated the Frontier Settlements of the Provinces of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia*, 12.

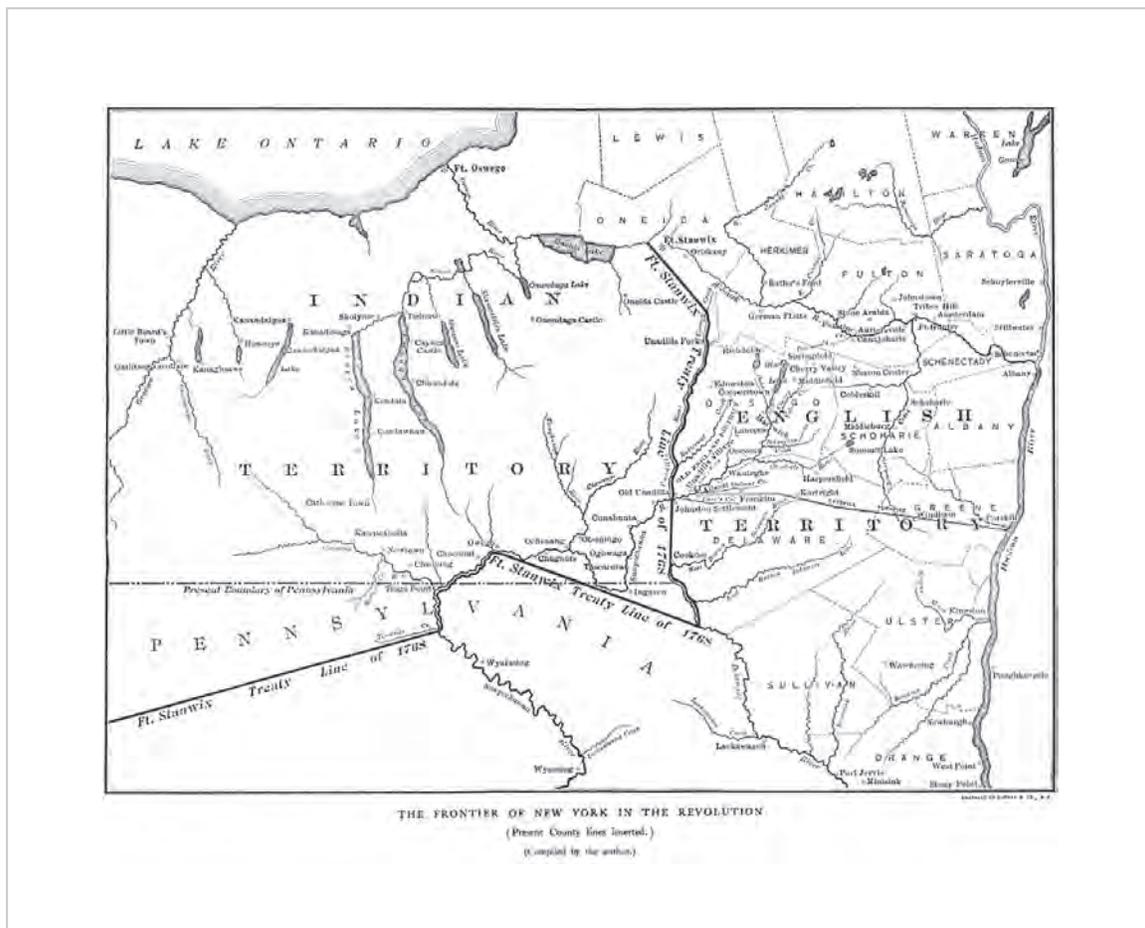


Figure 8. The Northern Extension

Accessed Oct. 3, 2011,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Fort_Stanwix#/media/File:Frontier_of_NY_in_Revolution2.png

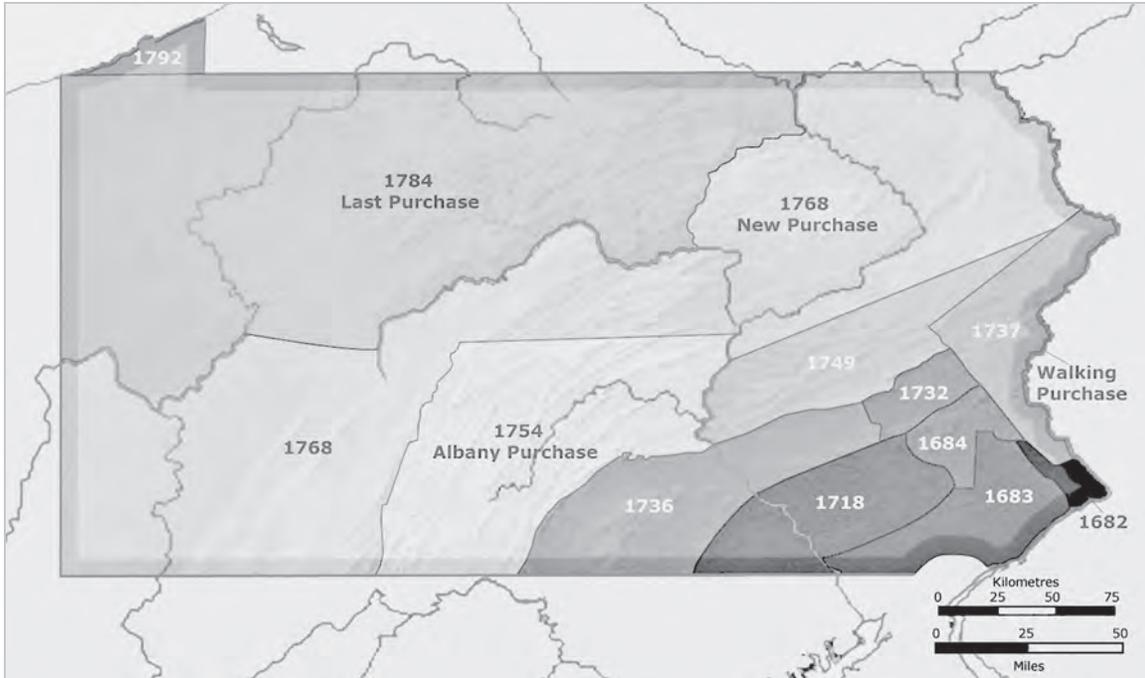


Figure 9. Pennsylvania Land Purchases, 1682–1792

Accessed Dec. 12, 2013, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Fort_Stanwix#/media/File:Pennsylvania_land_purchases.png

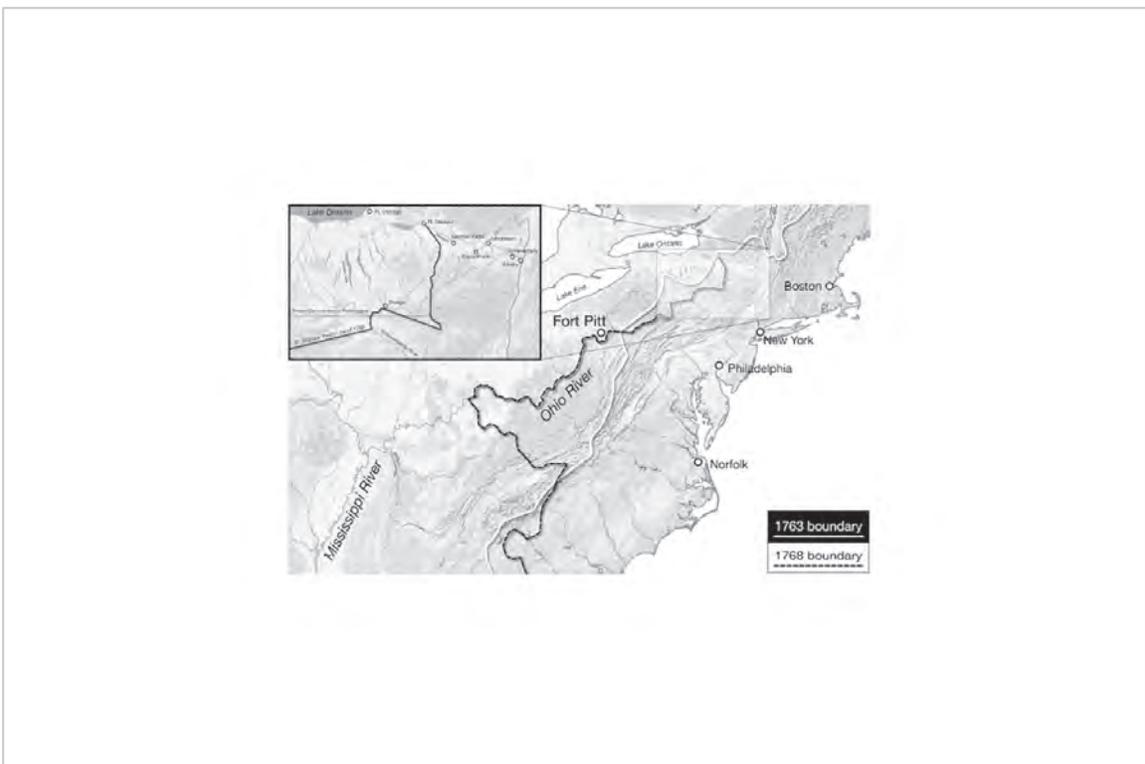


Figure 10. The 1768 Fort Stanwix Boundary Line Courtesy of William J. Campbell, *Speculators in Empire*

CHAPTER FIVE

REVOLUTIONS: WARS FOR INDEPENDENCE, 1769–1783

During the bitter winter month of February 1778, almost a decade after the Treaty of Fort Stanwix concluded, the commander of the palisade that controlled the snow-swept portage signed an order that set prices for “cider, turnips, potatoes, cabbage, apples, sugar, fowels, turkies, butter, cheese, onions, and tobacco.”¹ He did so to avoid internal disputes among soldiers over the increased scarcity of goods. Supplies—fresh food in particular—had grown sparse during the previous year. The communication lines and transportation routes that had impressed John Bartram thirty years prior were now primarily being used to conduct, or flee from, war. Soldiers and war materials had all but replaced trade goods making their way from the headwaters of the Hudson River to the southern shores of Lake Ontario. By 1778 the colonial rebellion consumed the region and its inhabitants, disrupting and destroying much of Iroquoia—especially those communities stretched along the Mohawk River. Divided and displaced, the Six Nations struggled to defend their lands and sovereignty as the colonizers locked horns in a civil war. But choosing the best path to defense created rifts between tribes and within communities. Not long after independence was declared, the revolution factionalized the Iroquois and undermined the Great Laws. In August of 1777, just six miles from Fort Stanwix, Iroquois warriors clashed at the battle of Oriskany. As the winter snows covered the decaying bodies at Oriskany, *Deowainsta* had been transformed from a place of diplomacy and peaceful cross-cultural exchange, to a pivotal battleground of carnage and sorrow. Veritably, the next time Indians and colonizers gathered to negotiate inside the walls of the fort that guarded the portage, a continent would be transformed and the place of the Iroquois in a new American empire redefined.

The First War of The Stanwix Cession

Much had changed over the course of a year that culminated in the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix. Beginning with the cold-blooded murder of Conestoga Indians on the banks of the Susquehanna, 1768 hinted at the impotency of British law on the margins of empire. News that the Crown sought to reduce dramatically colonial expenditures by scuttling the plan of 1764 and stripping the Department of Indian Affairs to a bare-bones operation further contributed to deteriorating relations in North America. By spring 1768, however, a number of parties with converging interests agreed on the need for a grand diplomatic initiative. In early November 1768, the previous efforts of the Iroquois appeared to have paid off. That being said, it would not take long before the beneficiaries of the 1768 treaty at Fort Stanwix ran into trouble. For those attempting to project authority and capitalize on speculation, the 1768 treaty of Fort Stanwix set the geo-political parameters for conflict west of the Appalachian Mountains for the three decades that followed.

By the early 1770s it was clear that the home government took a dim view of William Johnson’s willingness to overlook private interests for what he determined an important

1 Phyllis Smith, ed., *From the Hearths at Fort Stanwix*, (Rome, n.p., 1977), 6.

step in maintaining Crown control throughout the borderlands. By the middle of the decade the future of the Department of Indian Affairs, and the Iroquois as a crucial component of the British imperial design, waned. In fact, from 1768 to 1776 Whitehall initiated a series of measures that significantly altered Indian-European relations, and thus the security of many indigenous communities. One of the first orders of imperial business for the new Pitt ministry concerning North America was the drawing of the new boundary. The ministry guaranteed the permanency of the Indian Department, but the abandonment of most western forts, the relocation of British regulars to the east coast, and the abandonment of the supervision of the Indian trade restricted the powers of the department and threatened to reduce the superintendency to little more than a symbolic position.² The unwillingness of the Crown to uphold the many private clauses of the 1768 Fort Stanwix agreement created further tension. Crown discretion caused delay; the postponement of development eroded fortunes, jeopardized grand designs for an inland colony, and undermined Iroquois security. Finally, the 1768 Fort Stanwix treaty did not resolve inter-colonial boundary disputes, and the subsequent angst set those colonials jostling for control of the Ohio River Valley on a collision course. Leading the way were Virginian speculators, whose opportunities for fortune in Ohio Country lands were dealt a significant blow in 1768.³ In fact, the “Treaty at Fort Stanwix marked an end of an era in Virginian-Iroquois relations . . . [it] was the last time colonial Virginians and Six Nations chiefs met in council.”⁴

The interest of ambitious Virginians in the land around the forks of the Ohio River was nothing new by the American Revolution. When Governor Dinwiddie promised George Washington and his soldiers land in the region in 1754 for services rendered defending the Ohio River Valley during the Great Meadows campaign, the colony’s claims to vast tracts of land west of Appalachians intensified. Not until the treaty of Fort Stanwix readjusted the 1763 Indian boundary line did Virginia claimants have a live prospect of applying their grants to a tract of land cleared of indigenous interests. But the terms of the 1768 treaty left their visions for the Ohio Country unfulfilled, rendering many Virginian speculators quite cantankerous.

By 1772, reports that colonists from Virginia had pressed deep into the Ohio River valley had made their way east to the colonial capitals. Like many eighteenth century frontier colonists, the Long Knives pushed west in search of land paying little regard to ideas of Crown-sanctioned boundaries or the Indian occupants of the region. In fact, in 1772 Virginia speculator John Donelson brazenly ignored the 1768 treaty line parameters when he surveyed a route from the Holston through the Cumberlands to the Kentucky River and up the Ohio River. The adjustment promoted Virginian colonization of the Ohio via the Watauga Valley.⁵ Interestingly, both Iroquois and Cherokee indifference towards the lands Donelson traversed made the Virginian speculator’s move possible. As noted earlier, the 1768 Fort Stanwix and Hard Labor land cessions overlapped. (Figure 12) Both the Cherokees and Iroquois claimed the land between the Kanawha and Holston Rivers.

2 Volwiler, *George Croghan and the Westward Movement*, 224.

3 David W. Maxey, “The Honorable Proprieties v. Samuel Wallis: ‘A Matter of Consequence’ in the Provice of Pennsylvania, *Pennsylvania History*, 70, no. 4 (2003), 367.

4 Elizabeth Meek Fels, “The Battle of Point Pleasant: Its Relation to the American Revolution and to Tennessee”, *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, 33, no. 4 (1974), 369.

5 Fels, “The Battle of Point Pleasant,” 369.

Paying little regard to the Shawnee inhabitants of the area, in 1770 the Cherokees and Iroquois resolved the dispute at council with William Johnson. The tidy adjustment to the 1768 boundary line provided for a natural gateway from Virginia to the Ohio Country and away from both Iroquois and Cherokee homelands.⁶ Virginia colonizers, angered by the favoritism of the 1768 cession, did not let the opportunity pass them by. By the end October 1773, stories of conflict and murder on the Kentucky frontier sparked the first tales about Daniel Boone.⁷ As Colin Calloway summarizes,

became a battleground where two worlds and worldviews collided. Backcountry settlers hunted, supplementing their crops and livestock, and they adopted Indian hunting techniques, but they did not behave like Indian hunters or adopt the morality of Indian hunting values. They felt no kinship with animals; they ignored rituals that Indians believed were necessary to harvest plant and animal life and keep the world in balance, and they slaughtered game wastefully. The Indians fought to preserve their hunting territories; invading settlers fought to transform them into fields and pastures. They felled trees with fire and axes, fenced and plowed fields, brought in pigs and cattle, and tried to hold the land they seized as private property. They changed the landscape and many of its meanings. Colonists called the Indians savages; Shawnees called the invaders who disrupted the balance of their world ‘crazy people [who] want to shove us off our land entirely’ . . . And the crazy people kept coming.⁸

One of the first large scale conflicts such as these materialized in what historians call Lord Dunmore’s War.⁹

Meanwhile, along the Mohawk River, an ailing Johnson wrestled to bring order to a deteriorating situation. While holding council at Johnson Hall with some Iroquois in April, Seneca Chief Sayenquaraghta agreed to “deviate from [their] ancient customs” and hand over those Indians accused of murdering a French trader. Moreover, Sayenquaraghta placed blame for his nation’s recent misgivings with the Iroquois Confederacy to messages circulated by the Shawnees. Only days after the council concluded Johnson informed Dartmouth of the Seneca’s compliance towards English law, but admitted that he held very little hope that “that settlements can be restrained by any ordinary measures, where the multitude have for so many years discovered such an ungovernable passion for these lands, and pay so little regard to a fair title, or the Authority of the American Governments.” By June, Johnson did not shy from including Virginians in his criticisms.¹⁰

On July 6, 1774, Dartmouth confirmed to Johnson that the Virginians had marched on the Ohio and planned to settle “on a tract of land 30 leagues up the river.” The Secretary of State of the Colonies confessed that he was privy to the plan because Governor Dunmore himself had written him on that matter. In fact, Dunmore encouraged Michael Cresap to murder Indians to provoke a war so Virginia could bolster their claim to much

6 Theda Purdue, “Cherokee Relations with the Iroquois,” in Richter and Merrell, *Beyond the Covenant Chain*, 146.

7 For further reference to Daniel Boone, see Lofaro, *Daniel Boone*, 2003.

8 Calloway, *Scratch of a Pen*, 56.

9 Abernethy, *Western Lands and the American Revolution*, 78-90; Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 40-46.

10 Johnson with Indians at Johnson Hall, April 18, 1774, in O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VIII: 424-29. Johnson to Dartmouth, May 2, 1774, *ibid.*, 421-24; Johnson to Earl of Dartmouth, June 20, 1774, *ibid.*, 459-60.

of the contested land. Cresap, who had recently made an enemy of George Washington for squatting on land the future president claimed, did not need much encouragement to attack Indians.¹¹

While news of the building tensions traveled from London, Guy Johnson sat in his father-in-law's house and wrote Dartmouth. On July 11, 1774, after persuading the assembled Iroquois to show patience towards the Crown and colonies with regard to regulating trade and speculation throughout the borderlands, Sir William Johnson outfitted his indigenous allies with smoking pipes, plenty of tobacco, and enough liquor to properly consider "the principal object of Congress." They were Johnson's last recorded words and acts as Superintendent of Indian Affairs. That night, after retiring to his quarters due to exhaustion and pain, Johnson "was seized with a suffocation of which he expired in less than two hours." Johnson was dead.¹² Two days later, both Indians and Europeans carried the body from Johnson Hall to Johnstown, New York. Before a crowd of over two thousand bereaved witnesses, Johnson's remains were put to rest in a family vault at the church he erected. The following day, Oneida Chief Cononghquieson initiated the ceremony of condolence by uttering the three bare words, metaphorically covering the grave and body of the deceased with wampum.¹³ News of the immense loss spread quickly.

Despite subsequent attempts to calm tension in the Ohio Country throughout August and September, unchecked expansion by Virginians and the death of Johnson undermined Indian confidence and all but shattered any prospect of a peaceful resolution. On September 15, 1774, an Onondaga speaker relayed the following message from the Shawnees to Guy Johnson and the Iroquois. "Brothers, You are very much for making peace, and have sent your Messengers thro' all the nations for that purpose, and you have also taken the Ax from us, and buried it. - When you took this Ax, you desired us to promote peace with all about us; but whilst we are doing this, an Ax was struck into your Heads, and ours by the Virginians." The Onondaga speaker concluded by stating that the Shawnees now wished the Crown would place the axe back in their hands so they could properly defend themselves. By October 1774 few doubted the imminence of another war.¹⁴

Tensions between the Ohio Indians and the Virginians erupted into war on October 10, 1774 when Shawnee and Ohio Iroquois forces led by Chief Cornstalk intercepted and attacked the militia of Colonel Andrew Lewis at the confluence of the Kanawha and Ohio Rivers. The ensuing battle of Point Pleasant marked the only major conflict of Lord Dunmore's War. When night fell after hours of fighting, Cornstalk's force retreated over the river. Seeking to obtain the best terms while his force was still strong, Cornstalk made peace overtures towards Dunmore. Dunmore welcomed the news of Indian capitulation and immediately demanded hostages. The Virginians declared victory. By the end of October of 1774, following the Treaty of Camp Charlotte

11 For Washington's frustration over Cresap's squatting, see Washington to Cresap, Sept. 26, 1773, GW, 2:392-93. For Dunmore's encouraging of Cresap to murder Indians, see Dunmore to Dartmouth, Official Report, Dec. 24, 1774, in Thwaites and Kellogg, eds., *Documentary History of Dunmore's War*, 390.

12 Dartmouth to Johnson, July 6, 1774, in O'Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, VIII: 471; Guy Johnson to Dartmouth, July 12, 1774, *ibid.*, 486.

13 Johnson's last council with Indians, June and July 1774, *ibid.*, 474-80.

14 Guy Johnson to Earl of Dartmouth, Oct. 6, 1774, *ibid.*; 'Proceedings of Col. Guy Johnson with the Six Nations' Johnstown, Sept. 1774, *ibid.*, 495, 496-506. Quote on 499.

in which the Shawnees acknowledged the 1768 land cession, Dunmore claimed the Ohio for Virginia.¹⁵

The immediate impact from Dunmore's invasion of the Ohio was significant. For the Shawnees, who would continue well into the nineteenth century defending their lands, the terms of the Camp Charlotte Treaty incited movement. Refugee Shawnees abandoned the Muskingham Valley and fled to the Scioto River region to join the communities willing to stay in the region. Others fled farther west. The town of Chillicothe in the Scioto Valley, for instance, was packed-up and relocated near present-day Xenia, Ohio. Within just a couple of years of the Battle of Point Pleasant, only Delaware and Moravians occupied the eastern Ohio River valley.¹⁶

Notwithstanding the fact that historians have termed the 1774 conflict Lord Dunmore's War, Dorothy Jones is correct in her declaration that "it might better be called the War of the Stanwix Cession."¹⁷ It would be the first major war following the treaty; others would follow. The 1768 agreement between the Iroquois negotiators and the Crown represented an essential step in the vision towards maintaining an orderly empire, greater protection for Iroquois homelands in New York, and a key element in the plan for William Johnson, George Croghan, and their associates to cash-out after years of land speculation. But, in the end, the cession did little other than lay the seeds of future conflict by opening a vast territory to colonization during an era of unprecedented Crown cutbacks. Not unlike previous negotiations between Johnson and the Iroquois, the success of cross-cultural agreements depended less on the reality of borderland affairs and more on the ability of the Crown and the Iroquois to work in accord and project an image of hegemonic alliance. But, without the weight of Crown resources after 1768, the office of the superintendent and the Iroquois Confederacy simply could not function as primary agents in Ohio Country affairs. As a result, both colonizers and Indians struggled to exert control and what they each considered their rightful claims over the region. When the Shawnees temporarily bowed to Virginian aggression in 1774 and signed the Camp Charlotte treaty, the occasion marked the end to the Crown's ability to control colonial expansion. Moreover, by treating with the Shawnees directly, Virginia rejected protocol by dismissing the authority of the Iroquois Confederacy. It was a sign of unfortunate events that lay ahead for the Iroquois.

When the terms of the 1768 land cession filtered east, colonizers began to infest the Mohawk River Valley like an incurable disease. Unlike the troublesome Ohio Country, which stood at the center of the grand aspirations of budding land companies, the Mohawk River valley seemed relatively safe and within reach for many land hungry families. By the end of 1772, the newly established Tyron (Montgomery) County that encompassed most Mohawk territory was helping funnel newly arriving Europeans into the heart of Iroquoia. One of the locations affected was the Oneida Carry.¹⁸

Only years before, while gathered at Fort Stanwix, a number of Oneida chiefs had consented to the extension of the northern boundary line up the Unadilla River to the juncture of Wood and Canada creeks—a location at the center of the Oneida nation and less than

15 Hurt, *Ohio Frontier*, 15, 57-58; Helen Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press), 79-81.

16 Tanner, ed., *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 81.

17 Jones, *License for Empire*, 107.

18 Graymont, *Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 3.

ten miles from Fort Stanwix. This meant that Oneida territory directly butted-up against the 1768 line of purchase. Not surprisingly, despite promises from Johnson, colonizer pressure on Iroquois lands did not relent. For many Oneidas, in particular, the most quarrelsome were the Palatine German colonizers located at Burnetsfield (Herkimer, New York), a mere forty miles from the largest of Oneida settlements, Kanonwalohale (Oneida Castle). The Germans had colonized the area as early as 1723 after purchasing lands from the Mohawks. Despite cordial relations with their Oneida neighbors for over four decades, by the end of the Seven Years' War a number of German families had further squatted on lands surrounding Fort Stanwix. By the 1760s, new waves of European squatters joined the pesky Germans. The colonizers not only funneled liquor into the region but also competed directly with Oneida laborers whom were paid to shuttle goods over the portage. Exacerbating the situation, Oneida complaints seemed to fall on deaf ears at Johnson Hall. Preoccupied with maintaining the loyalty of the Mohawks and the integrity of the Iroquois Confederacy, William Johnson made note of the mounting tensions near the Carry but did little to thoroughly address localized frustrations in Oneida country. Then in 1766, the grisly and racially charged murder of an Oneida man from Oquaga by a deranged Jerseyan named Robert Seymour further compounded tensions.¹⁹ That same year, Rev. Samuel Kirkland, the protégé of Eleazar Wheelock, founder of Moor's Charity School, arrived at Kanonwalohale. (Figure 13)

Samuel Kirkland

In 1765 Kirkland had been sent to proselytize to the Iroquois by Wheelock in order to fulfill his degree at the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University). His experiences among the western gatekeepers, the Senecas, humbled the young man. The Senecas had little patience for, or motivation to adhere to, the self-righteous messages of the inexperienced evangelical missionary. In the end, “[p]rolonged hunger, attempted assassination, and Indian resistance” forced Kirkland to abandon his post in the spring of 1766. But Kirkland returned to Iroquoia less than a year later. Hoping to jumpstart a funding campaign in Europe for his missionary program in America (later Dartmouth College), Wheelock needed a success story. Despite Kirkland's failure among the Senecas, Wheelock angled and weaved stories of grandeur about one of his prized pupil's successes among the Indians. In reality, Kirkland was forced to start over in late 1766. This time, however, it would be with the Oneidas who were much closer and more susceptible to English influences and hampered by internal divisions. Luckily for Kirkland, the Oneidas at Kanonwalohale (unlike the Senecas) welcomed the newcomer. Embroiled in a long-standing rivalry with the other main settlement (Old Oneida), Kanonwalohale residents embraced Kirkland as “their own equivalent to Sir William Johnson.” Kirkland's eventual influence in Iroquoia rested with the fact that Kanonwalohale leaders sought in Kirkland “a colonial patron with external clout.” Fortunately for Kirkland he could fulfill that role.²⁰

By 1768 Kirkland had made significant inroads at Kanonwalohale. He had all but mastered the language and became known as a generous provider. For the Oneidas, the missionary was a resource to tap in times of need. Kirkland fed and clothed many Oneidas

19 John Campbell to William Johnson, July 6, 1763, in Sullivan, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson* Xiii: 287; William Johnson to Thomas Gage, Dec. 18, 1764, *ibid.*, XI: 468. Karim Tiro, *People of the Standing Stone*, (Boston, University of Amherst Press, 2011), 24-25.

20 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 54.

during periods of prolonged hunger, and in doing so, went into personal debt. Like George Croghan, Kirkland recognized the importance of patronage and adopting indigenous customs in order to promote his own agenda; and promote he did. The Calvinist missionary soon organized a formal church at Kanonwalohale, and relentlessly sought to turn the locals into god-fearing Christians. Soon as many as four hundred Oneidas, Tuscarouras, and Onondagas were reported attending Kirkland's weekly fiery sermons. Kirkland's influence grew, as did the Oneida utilization of the opportunities and services he offered. Kirkland's presence increasingly divided and solidified the Oneidas into two competing camps: christian and traditional. Reacting to the increased influence of Kanonwalohale leaders, Old Oneida sachems blasted their rival village and its occupants for forgetting the ways and beliefs of their ancestors. In short, Kirkland's missionary activities "amplified factionalism." Compounding the tension and adding to the division was the seemingly ceaseless stream of liquor flowing into Iroquoia.²¹

Meanwhile, Wheelock relied on Kirkland's growing popularity and the letters the missionary wrote about his successes at Kanonwalohale as a principle means to attract donations for the construction of his new school, Dartmouth College. Unfortunately for Wheelock, Kirkland did not share his mentor's shift from using most of the money raised in Europe to build a college in New Hampshire for predominately white privileged young men—instead of educating Indians. Further deteriorating their relationship, Kirkland publically criticized Wheelock for his attempts to secure large swaths of Iroquois lands as a necessary element in his plan to christianize the Indians. Retrospectively, it was a moment of great irony given how the young missionary would eventually pillage his many of his followers of their lands and futures. Instead, in the late 1760s, though, Kirkland strengthened his ties with Oneida leaders by defending their homelands. In 1768, the missionary urged the Kanonwalohale Oneidas to reject the sale of their land to Wheelock's agent at Fort Stanwix, as well as to the Crown. The move widened the rift between Kirkland, his past mentor, as well as Sir William Johnson. In that venture Johnson triumphed with the help of the Mohawks and Oneida leaders like Conoghquieson from Old Oneida. But the demands of the Oneidas, particularly the warriors from Kanonwalohale, were not completely dismissed. As we have already seen, the northern extension of the 1768 did not run north of Fort Stanwix, preserving the warrior's hunting territory. As for control of the Oneida Carry, the Oneidas secured a pledge by the Crown to jointly control and operate the important portage. Further, fearing, for good reason, the colonizers would not be deterred by the new boundary running through their country, Oneida strategists responded by encouraging Christianized Algonquian tribes to relocate to the eastern edges of their lands. For the Oneidas, these refugee communities, Brothertown perhaps being the most notable, would serve as a buttress to illegal European expansion.²²

Meanwhile, the relationship between Johnson and Kirkland deteriorated steadily following the Treaty of Fort Stanwix. By 1770, Kirkland directly undermined the established protocol associated with Johnson's position as Royal Superintendent of Indian Affairs. Seeking to sidestep Johnson's authority in his quest to gain Oneida allies, Kirkland not only convinced the Boston Board to cover the cost of a new meetinghouse at Kanonwalohale, but

21 Ibid., 54-55; Tiro, *The People of the Standing Stone*, 13-16; For "amplified factionalism" see *ibid.*, 12.

22 Tiro, *People of the Standing Stone*, 31-35; Valone, "Samuel Kirkland," 191-92.

also complained to the governor of New York about Johnson and his general neglect of the Oneidas. In a world where patronage and protocols were carefully crafted and sustained, Kirkland's bold moves infuriated Johnson. The superintendent openly sought to undermine Kirkland's growing authority, or replace him outright. Tensions ensued. But, unfortunately for Johnson, the Crown had little interest in footing the bill for Church of England missionaries in Iroquoia. By 1774, as Johnson took his last breaths, the brand-new glass-windowed, two-story, 36-foot-long meeting house with a towering steeple garnered Kirkland even more Oneida at Kanonwalohale. For the Oneidas, determined to elevate their status to that of the envied Mohawks, their choice to use Kirkland as a patron appeared to be paying off. By the year's end, more colonial style houses had been built, and scores of Oneidas and Tuscaroras filled the pews at Kirkland's weekly indoctrinations.²³

Even at the time of William Johnson's death, Kirkland encouraged the Oneidas to "reflect on the emptiness of all mortal accomplishments" instead of mourning the death of the superintendent. As rebellion gripped the colonies, the New England born Kirkland identified with the Patriot cause. This created divisions between old friends, like Joseph Brant, and other Iroquois that sought to uphold their relationship with the English Crown. At Old Oneida, chief Conoghquieson especially took offense to Kirkland's overt politicking at Kanonwalohale. But, it did not stop Kirkland from making gains with the Oneidas and Tuscaroras. In fact, by the time Patriot militia controlled Tyron Country, Kirkland acted openly as a conduit of Congress at the Oneida Carry. And, when General John Sullivan laid waste to Iroquoia in 1779 during the American Revolution, Kirkland provided support, as both a brigade Chaplain and interpreter. Put simply, the path of empire in North America did not unfold as envisioned by those negotiators who gathered at Fort Stanwix in 1768. As a result, by the time Dunmore's Long Knives took the forks at the Ohio in a Virginian bid for the region, the Iroquois Confederacy had far more pressing concerns to attend to closer to home. Rifts between Iroquois communities increased as land speculation in New York and talk of colonial rebellion gained ground.²⁴

Rebellion

As insults turned to widespread revolution, most Iroquois sought to distance themselves from the turmoil. From the eastern to the western doors of the longhouse, Iroquois chiefs and sachems approached the rumblings of rebellion with caution. Since the end of the Seven Years' War the Iroquois had struggled with borderland realities. Even with the aid of William Johnson, the negotiating power of the Iroquois Confederacy's advocates steadily slipped. The pressure of colonization along the Mohawk River, Crown cutbacks, competing colonial interests among Six Nations communities, and the void left by Johnson's death, all contributed to the destabilization of Iroquoia.

Guy Johnson's appointment to the position of Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the northern colonies further added to the uncertainties. Most likely William Johnson's cousin, Guy was immediately out of his league. While few could match William Johnson's cleverness and fluidity among Indians during council, Guy also had limited experience and struggled with oration. But, the pending imperial crisis, along with the support of

23 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 65-68. Tiro, *People of the Standing Stone*, 18.

24 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 72-82.

most of the Iroquois Confederacy chiefs, assured Guy Johnson's speedy appointment as acting Superintendent of Indian Affairs. The reasons were simple for the Iroquois. Guy Johnson may have lacked his predecessor's charm, charisma, and uncanny ability to bridge white and Indian worlds, but he promised to "perpetuate the patronage and methods of Sir William."²⁵ In other words, given the unsettling pattern of events taking place in Indian Country, many Iroquois felt Johnson's kin and protégé was the best available option as they sought to protect their communities. (Figure 15)

But within months of Johnson's death Guy struggled with stresses of his new position as tensions increased throughout Iroquoia over colonization and rumors of widespread rebellion. In response, Guy Johnson targeted Patriot agitators like Kirkland, who sought to further undermine his authority as the Crown's Superintendent for Indian affairs in the northern colonies. In May 1775, after a series of disputes over Kirkland's overt attempts to spread evangelical Calvinism and Patriot political messages in the Ohio Country, Guy Johnson temporarily detained the missionary at Johnson Hall. But Kirkland was not alone in his religious and political challenges. Despite retreating to Cherry Valley following his detainment, Kirkland soon returned to Iroquoia. This time, however, he came armed with catch phrases of liberty as the American Revolution swept through the colonies. For people like Guy Johnson, seeking to maintain the imperial status quo, the colonial rebellion soon undermined the plans (and fortunes) of many speculators in the British empire in North America.²⁶ One of those people was George Croghan.

With a history of shifting allegiances, close friends among the enemy, and lands coveted by all, George Croghan was left little room to maneuver during the revolutionary era. With the room he was given, the aged and indebted veteran of Indian affairs traversed both Loyalist and Patriot camps in a last-ditch effort to capitalize on a lifetime of speculation. But, as the war of independence laid ruin to Iroquois claims of vast continental territories, so too did the conflict extinguish Croghan's dreams of an inland colony organized on the lands ceded in 1768. And as one person's fortune slipped away due to rebellion, many others quickly capitalized on the unfolding chaos. On June 7, 1774, George Washington was informed that the "great Government Scheme is blown over; which like the Mountain in labor has bro't forth a Mouse." And Washington would gain. For those interested in the success of the Ohio Company, news of the failed inland colony (Vandalia) brought an end to almost six years of political and economic jockeying. To many Virginians determined to colonize the Ohio River valley, it meant fortunes won, but for the primary shareholders in George Croghan's vision of the west, it marked disaster and continuation of financial woes. After having spent almost seven years in receivership, and without the projected presence of a centralized Crown authority, Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan, too, could do little other than withdraw their trade from the Illinois and Ohio regions. Notwithstanding George Morgan's frequent laments about the "unhappiness of Mr. Whartons disposition" and "the shameful situation of their books," by 1775 the firm started to liquidate its assets to cover debts. For the Philadelphia merchants, that meant joining the ranks of those grasping at the few remaining holdings of George Croghan.²⁷

25 Ibid., 72.

26 Ibid., 72-76.

27 Volwiler, "George Croghan and the Development of Central New York, 32-35; Regarding Baynton's, Wharton's, and Morgan's relationship with Croghan, see Written by George Morgan [n.d.], p. 2, sec. 10, Croghan Papers.

Like his superior, his creditors, and the power of Iroquois Confederacy, Croghan's fortunes depended on an active and flexible administration across the Atlantic. When the Crown failed to recognize the private transactions of the Treaty of Fort Stanwix and withdrew its support for the inland colony of Vandalia, Croghan was ruined. As talk of revolution swept through the colonies, Croghan could not protect against the foreclosure of his coveted New York lands. "I main to Sell the ottsego Tract" a depressed Croghan wrote Gratz on September 24, 1774, "and gett Don with that part of the Country." He entered into agreements with William Franklin and Thomas Wharton, among other creditors, in order to meet outstanding judgments amounting to over £10,000. While Bernard Gratz managed to save almost 29,000 acres of Croghan's Otsego tract, claims continued against Croghan and by April the following year it was likely he would never again set foot in New York.²⁸

In the spring of 1775, battles at Lexington and Concord marked the beginning of the colonial rebellion on a military scale. Croghan had long worked for the Crown, but always a pragmatist, joined a pro-Patriot committee in Pittsburgh in May 1775. The move was fueled by personal ambition and survival, not ideological convictions. Despite the overture, his recent alliance with Lord Dunmore (and probably what was known of his entire career) put his trustworthiness in doubt. As a result, it did not take long before Patriot agitators strongly encouraged Croghan to pack and depart for Philadelphia. He spent the next four years in Philadelphia, dodging imprisonment and charges of treason. Following the British evacuation of the city in June 1778, he fled to Lancaster. Ironically, Croghan was a man now rejected from two worlds. He died four years later, bed-ridden with gout and all but penniless, outside of Philadelphia.²⁹

Similar to speculators in empire like Croghan, for the continent's first peoples the colonial struggle for independence had as much or more to do with Indian lands as it did with competing notions of liberty. Indian communities, stretching from the Great Lakes to the southern reaches of Appalachia, too, found themselves meandering between worlds. As the contest widened, the war soon consumed Iroquoia. Regional leaders labored to balance the demands of their communities and those of their European neighbors. For the Iroquois, the war heightened regional divisions to the point of internal rupture. By 1777, many Iroquois warriors found themselves courted by opposing sides of the colonial conflict. In their own bid for independence, many Mohawks, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas eventually fought alongside those Europeans who defended the British Crown. Most Oneidas and Tuscaroras, however, hedged their bets with the colonial rebels. Thus, not long after Oneida and Seneca warriors clashed at Oriskany in August of 1777, the Great Peace that bound the Iroquois, historian Barbara Graymont maintains, "shattered."³⁰

The Siege of Fort Stanwix and Battle of Oriskany

In the hot summer months of 1777, the corridor that bridged Oswego and Albany hosted some of the most significant engagements during the American Revolution. Not only

28 Volwiler, "George Croghan and the Development of Central New York," 43.

29 Croghan's bills were covered by Barnard Gratz, an old merchant friend and creditor of the agent. Gratz, in return for his services, was awarded over 100,000 acres of Croghan's Indian deeds. See "George Croghan Estate, 1747-1816," vol. 43, Croghan-Gratz Deeds, Frank M. Etting Collection, 1558-1917 (Historical Society of Pennsylvania).

30 Graymont, *Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 143; Bilharz, *Oriskany*.

engagements of cannon, musket, and sword, but also those encounters that took place over crackling fires, behind doors, and between friends. That summer, Iroquoia stood center stage once again as colonizers and colonized struggled to gain, or maintain, their independence. Bridging these competing visions of the future was the fort that guarded, and those lands surrounding, the Oneida Carry.

A year before the soldiers under the command of British Colonel Barry St. Leger invaded rebel positions in the Mohawk River valley by way of Oswego, General Philip Schuyler ordered the occupation and reinforcement of the dilapidated Fort Stanwix because of its strategic significance. As more and more Loyalists fled north to British controlled Canada during 1776, the Mohawk River valley became a borderland between rival factions struggling to claim a continental empire. Recognizing the opportunity to establish a Patriot control of the vital portage, Schuyler's orders to seize control of *Deowainsta* not only strengthened the rebel hold over the Mohawk River valley, but also reassured the Oneidas that their new allies would protect their homelands in the case of a Loyalist invasion.³¹

When rebellion engulfed New England in 1775, the Oneidas, like the Iroquois Confederacy, declared neutrality. Much like those imperial conflicts that preceded the revolutionary era in North America, Iroquois diplomats and negotiators navigated the archipelago of European interests in pursuit of maintaining their own independence. As far west as Fort Pitt, most Iroquois leaders recognized the gamble of jumping into the war. Neutrality dominated discussions, while watchful eyes and sharp ears assessed the unfolding conflict.³²

When war broke out in 1775, however, there were some notable differences that limited the Confederacy's ability to sustain neutrality on a local level. Following 1763, Crown cutbacks and the ravaging effects of colonization throughout the Mohawk River valley only accentuated the void left by Sir William Johnson. As Samuel Kirkland worked diligently to usurp diplomatic protocol in Iroquoia, many Oneidas and Tuscaroras weighed their options. As the war soon extinguished the possibility of maintaining neutrality for those Iroquois forced to defend their lives, families, and homes, the Oneidas and Tuscaroras under the leadership of the chiefs and warriors at Kanonwalohale, opted to ally themselves with Kirkland's Patriots. Given the failure of the 1768 boundary and their limited clout at the house Sir William Johnson built, for many Oneidas Samuel Kirkland represented a useful weapon in the defense of what would inevitably be the continued contamination of their soil by New York colonizers. As Oneida leaders negotiated a future with Kirkland and the Congress he represented, other Iroquois leaders looked to polish the ancient chain that stretched across the Atlantic; Joseph Brant was one of them.³³

Brant, who in 1775 organized and led most of the able-bodied warriors from Canajoharie to British Canada, plotted his return to the Mohawk River valley. But the apprehensive Sir Guy Carleton, commander-in-chief of all British forces in North America, sidelined Brant's plan to quickly turnaround and reoccupy Iroquois homelands. In response, Brant, along with Guy Johnson, Daniel Claus, and John Hill (Oteronyente) sailed from

31 Colin Calloway, *American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), 29-30. Joseph T. Glatthaar and James Kirby Martin, *Forgotten Allies: The Oneida Indians and the American Revolution*, (New York, Hill and Wang, 2006), chapter 5.

32 Calloway, *American Revolution in Indian Country*, 29-30; Glatthaar and Martin, *Forgotten Allies*, chap. 5.

33 Watson, eds. *Annals and Occurrences*, 36. Tiro, *People of the Standing Stone*, 40-41; Glatthaar and Martin, *Forgotten Allies*, 121-22.

Quebec to London to gain support of a more aggressive bid to invade the valley, along with their futures within the empire. There they found a receptive ear with Lord George Germain, the new imperial secretary of state. Along with being amused and comforted by the luxuries of high-society London, Brant cleverly aligned Iroquois independence with that of the grand British imperial endeavor with those that would listen; and many listened. While adorned by both traditional Iroquoian dress and other regalia used to play on the imagination of his patrons, Brant wooed and dazzled.³⁴ Interestingly, in the centuries that have passed since Brant was whisked through London, it can still be argued that similar rouses and dress-ups remain effective tools of diplomacy when dealing with those with overinflated senses of superiority.

Four months after independence was declared, Brant, Claus, Johnson, and Hill disembarked in New York with a renewed hope to recapture the Mohawk River Valley along with their futures in a continental British empire. “No mere pawn of the British,” Alan Taylor succinctly observes, “Brant embraced Loyalism to serve Mohawk interests.”³⁵ By the spring of 1777, Brant led as many as one hundred volunteers deep into Patriot held territory. Dressed and painted as Indians, as many as eighty percent of Brant’s volunteers were poor white males from the valley. Bullied and emasculated by aggressive Patriot recruiters, many sought to enact revenge. Along with Mohawk warriors, Brant’s corps attacked Patriot enclaves, plundered, and generally undermined the rebel cause in the heart of Iroquoia. Perhaps more importantly, the fear of Brant’s volunteers seeped in the mindset of the enemy.³⁶ They burned, pillaged, and disrupted. Their determination to resist colonial rebellion soon led to rumor, and then to lore. Among enemies and allies, it was often whispered that Brant’s “savage murderers” were bent on total destruction, from “Georgia to Maine.”³⁷ And so, for each death they delivered, Brant’s volunteers involuntarily assumed responsibility for scores more. In the end, the Brant’s volunteers, despite being comprised of mostly whites, helped fuse the Patriot war of independence with a race war against Native Americans. To establish a new order of the emerging America empire, those aligned with the Patriot cause longed to shed the shackles of patronage and protocol that stretched across the Atlantic to the English Crown. To do so, the prestige of the Iroquois Confederacy, the Crown’s most effective indigenous alliance, had to be undermined.

Meanwhile, during the long summer days of July 1777, Patriots positioned in the Mohawk River Valley worried about an attack. Rumors abounded, as Oneida spies at Niagara and Oswego provided the rebelling colonists invaluable intelligence about impending Loyalist advances. Despite Patriot overtures to a collection of Six Nations’ chiefs at German Flatts in August 1776, in which American representatives promised to uphold the 1768 boundary so long as the Iroquois Confederacy remained neutral, before the year’s end most Iroquois sought to weaken the rebel cause. It made sense given the rebels were more untrustworthy than the dishonest supporters of the Crown. In fact, in July 1777 armed with the blessing of Lord Germain, Brant and his volunteers arrived at Oswego. Their mission: rendezvous with the army of Colonel Barry St. Leger and Sir John

34 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 84-89.

35 Ibid., 89.

36 Ibid., 90-91.

37 Schoolcraft, “Historical considerations on the siege and defence of Fort Stanwix, in 1777,” 4.

Johnson and re-take the Mohawk River valley. Their primary obstacle: the fort that guarded the Oneida Carry.³⁸

As St. Leger, Johnson, and Brant advanced with their troops from Oswego towards the Oneida Carry, General John Burgoyne slowly prepared to lead an army south from Montreal towards the headwaters of the Hudson River, while General Howe aimed to press north from New York. If successful, strategists reasoned, the three-pronged offensive would converge to take Albany and Saratoga, thus severing the troublesome New England colonists from the rest of the British colonies in North America.³⁹ Unfortunately for the Crown, things did not unfold as envisioned.

Earlier that spring, the commander of the Patriot forces along New York's borderlands, General Philip Schuyler, worried about an impending Loyalist attack. Schuyler ordered the 3rd New York Regiment, under the command of Colonel Peter Gansevoort, to the Oneida Carry. Tasked with securing and defending the portage, in April Gansevoort's corps began rebuilding the dilapidated walls of Fort Stanwix (re-named Fort Schulyer on August 5, 1776). The strategic importance of the portage did not escape even the soldiers tasked with the fort's rehabilitation, and according to historians Glatthaar and Martin, the "Oneidas lauded these initiatives."⁴⁰ Positive relationships increased between Oneidas and Patriots as the soldier-laborers worked to strengthen the rebel position by re-fortifying Fort Stanwix. Oneidas, led by Good Peter, White Skin, Grasshopper, and Skenandoah, impressed their guests with their hospitality and respect. In return, it did not take long before Continental officers spoke highly of Oneida leaders while many of their soldiers engaged in friendly interactions with the Indians. But old tensions paralleled new friendships. That same spring, as soldiers bet on (and likely played) lacrosse while officers exchanged gifts with Indian leaders, Loyalist forces pressed south from Quebec City driving the Patriots from the vital waterways of the St. Lawrence River.⁴¹

Months earlier, a Mohawk and two Seneca spies had entered Fort Stanwix on a reconnaissance mission. The spies relayed messages from Brant that strongly alluded to an impending Loyalist attack. When the Oneidas learned of the spies and their intentions, they relayed the information to the fort's commander. Seeking to protect themselves from an attack, Oneida scouts, led by Thomas Sinavis, kept a "watchful Eye" on British movements through the winter and spring of 1777.⁴² In May, the returning Oneida scouts cautioned of an impending attack. A month later, at the command of Schuyler, the Indians were again sent out to track enemy movements. In a scene befit for a Hollywood script, when Sinavis and four other Oneida scouts entered Saint Regis in late June, they were informed that Sir John Johnson and Daniel Claus were also present in the village. From their concealed position on the second floor of the village's main council house the Oneida spies overheard the Loyalists encouraging the Indians to join St. Leger's

38 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 91; Graymont, *Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 115-16.

39 Paul A. Boehlert, *The Battle of Oriskany and General Nicholas Herkimer*, (Charleston, The History Press, 2013), 57; Scott, "Joseph Brant at Fort Stanwix and Oriskany," 399-400.

40 For soldier comments on strategic importance of Fort Stanwix, see Joseph Bloomfield, "Friday, June 28, 1776" in Mark E. Lender and James Kirby Martin, eds., *Citizen Soldier: The Revolutionary Journal of Joseph Bloomfield*, (Newark, New Jersey Historical Society, 1982), 65. On Oneida support of rebuilding, see Glatthaar and Martin, *Forgotten Allies*, 119.

41 Glatthaar and Martin, *Forgotten Allies*, 125-28

42 For the "watchful eye" quotation, see *ibid.*, 143.

campaign against Fort Stanwix. Armed with invaluable intelligence that would help change the course of the American Revolution, the Oneidas left Saint Regis undetected, arriving back to Kanonwalohale in mid-July.⁴³

It is probable Fort Stanwix would have fallen to the advancing British army had Oneida spies not tipped off the Patriots about the impending attack. Instead, the rebels had time to prepare. Guarding the portage under the command of Gansevoort were approximately 400 men of his own 3rd New York regiment, and another 250-300 more taken from Col. James Wesson's Massachusetts Continentals. Together with a detachment of artillery, as day broke on the morning of August 2, 1777, a few more than 750 Patriots stood watch over the Oneida Carry.⁴⁴ As the sun rose towards midday, Patriot defenders laid their sights on a gathering Loyalist force outside the fort's walls. Outnumbering the rebels by perhaps more than two to one, the army consisted of British regulars, colonials, French Canadians, Hessians, and over 600 Native Americans, including Brant and scores of his Volunteers.⁴⁵ Before the day's end, St. Leger offered Colonel Gansevoort and the defenders of Fort Stanwix safe passage in exchange for an unconditional surrender. Gansevoort responded: "It is my determined resolution . . . to defend this fort and garrison to the last extremity, in behalf of the United American States, who have placed me here to defend it against all their enemies."⁴⁶ On the morning of August 3rd a flag was hoisted above the walls of Fort Stanwix in a symbolic gesture of defiance.⁴⁷

St. Leger wasted little time ordering the siege of the fort to commence. News of the attack quickly spread throughout the Mohawk River valley. Seeking to maintain their tribal sovereignty and to best position themselves towards an uncertain future, many Oneidas flocked to defend the Carry. Without additional relief, though, many believed Fort Stanwix would fall. The attackers did too. And so, on August 5, 1777, when the besiegers learned that General Nicholas Herkimer and 800 Tyron County militia augmented by as many as 100 Oneida warriors were marching towards the Oneida Carry to relieve the Patriots, a force was sent to intercept the rebels.⁴⁸ The intercepting force, as many as 500-strong, consisted mostly of Indians, but also included in its ranks Hessians and Sir John Johnson's King's Royal Regiment from New York. Joseph Brant, Cornplanter, and Sayenqueraghta, among others, led the hundreds of indigenous warriors. When they reached a steep ravine six miles east of the fort (near present-day Oriskany, New York) the men stationed themselves on each side of the gorge and waited for Herkimer.⁴⁹

Mid-morning on August 6, 1777, Herkimer and the Tyron County militia descended into the boggy ravine. But before the entire column entered the gorge the Indians

43 *ibid.*, 145-47.

44 Scott, "Joseph Brant at Fort Stanwix and Oriskany," 400-1; Glatthaar and Martin, *Forgotten Allies*, 154-55.

45 Johnson, "Orderly Book during his campaign against Fort Stanwix,"; Scott, "Joseph Brant at Fort Stanwix and Oriskany," 400.

46 For Gansevoort's response to St. Leger, see Peter Gansevoort to St. Leger, Aug. 9, 1777, vol. 2, Military Papers of Gen. Peter Gansevoort Jr. (1749-1812), 224. NYPL.

47 The flag Gansevoort had raised above the walls of Fort Stanwix in symbolic defiance of St. Leger's demands has garnered considerable attention. Cardwell, "Red, White, Blue—and Gold."

48 Glatthaar and Martin, *Forgotten Allies*, 160.

49 Bilharz, *Oriskany*, 51. Gavin K. Watt, *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley: The St. Leger Expedition of 1777*, (Toronto, Dundurn Press, 2002). Watt identifies Sayenqueraghta and Cornplanter as the Senecas responsible for choosing the location of the ambush. See *ibid.*, 135.

opened fired. Within minutes Herkimer had been shot off his horse. Panicked ensued. Unable to stand due to his wounds, the general was dragged to safety where he continued to try and conduct the defense effort while slumped and smoking a pipe under a beech tree. (Figure 18) Divided and confused many militiamen retreated east. Others fled into the surrounding thickets. The attackers pursued with lethal consequence.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, those caught in the ravine struggled-on, eventually forging forward to higher ground. Fearing being completely routed by the attacking Crown forces and allied Indians, it is probable that Herkimer dispatched a message to Gansevoort calling for support. Regardless, whether seeking to distract the besiegers or relieve Herkimer, not long after the battle at Oriskany commenced Gansevoort ordered 250 soldiers from the fort. The Patriots plundered two Indian camps, took four prisoners, and scalped Indian children collecting berries. They destroyed food stores and carted away “wagonloads of blankets, spears, tomahawks, and clothing.”⁵¹ The impact of this sortie on the siege, whether or not fully understood at the time, proved critical. (Figure 14)

Meanwhile, following a brief respite from the carnage as rain pelted the battlefield, more and more Patriots fell dead to the ground at Oriskany. Hundreds died. The hand-to-hand combat that characterized the six hours of conflict left scores of bodies scattered for miles. Neighbors and relatives glared into one another’s eyes as they met with weapons wielded. Governor Blacksnake, a Seneca war chief, later recounted how the Indians, armed mostly with tomahawks and knives, killed the Americans no different than they slaughtered animals. With no mercy given, Blacksnake remembered, death blanketed the ground: “there I have Seen the most Dead Bodies all it over that I never Did see, and never will again I thought at that time the Blood Shed a Stream Running Down on the Decending ground.”⁵² Transfixed by the carnage unfolding before him, a member of Herkimer’s force remembered the “bitter groan[s],” “sudden scream[s],” and “loud resound [of] the tortur’d pris’ners’ cries.”⁵³

But the outcome of the battle at Oriskany was hardly a clear-cut victory for the Crown. From a military perspective, while the Indians routed Herkimer’s relief column, when news of the Patriot raid on the Indian camps at Fort Stanwix reached the battlefield the attacking Indians quickly withdrew. Fearing the rebels would target their supplies and unguarded families, the Indians (mostly Mohawks and Senecas) quickly made their way back to the fort. It did not take long before their fears were confirmed. Coupled with the loss of Indian lives on the battlefield, many Crown-allied Senecas and Mohawks threatened to abscond from the fight. The siege, after all, appeared to cost their Loyalist allies minimally in terms of human risk. Sensing an imminent Indian defection, St. Leger quickly tried to use the military victory at Oriskany to his advantage. He offered Gansevoort two more chances to surrender. Both times St. Leger’s terms were rejected. The Patriot defenders would have to be pried out from behind the walls of Fort Stawnix, something St. Leger no doubt knew would be impossible without indigenous support. This, together with rumors that another Patriot relief column marched towards the Oneida Carry under the command of Major Benedict Arnold, left St. Leger in an awkward position. On August 22, 1777, after learning that a couple of

50 Glatthaar and Martin, *Forgotten Allies*, 163-66.

51 Bilharz, *Oriskany*, 53-57, esp. 53.

52 Quoted from Bilharz, *Oriskany*, 58

53 Craig, *The Olden Time*, 300.

hundred Indians had already left their camps and believing Arnold's army was only miles away, St. Leger lifted the siege of Fort Stanwix.

Crown soldiers hastily retreated to Lake Ontario, leaving behind stragglers and equipment. The failure of St. Leger to capture Fort Stanwix and secure the Mohawk River Valley had almost immediate consequence for the Crown's military efforts in North America. According to British General John Burgoyne, his defeat at Saratoga in October 1777 could be directly linked to St. Leger's failure weeks before. Had St. Leger succeeded, Burgoyne reasoned, his army would not have faced the full power of the rebel force under the command of Major General Horatio Gates. Instead, and without relief from New York, Burgoyne surrendered. In the end, the successful defense of Fort Stanwix and the Patriot victory at Saratoga proved a turning point in the war. Shortly thereafter, France joined the conflict, providing money, supplies, and soldiers that would later prove instrumental in securing American independence.⁵⁴

A Place of Great Sadness

The Siege of Fort Stanwix and the Battle at Oriskany had other lasting consequences. Beyond the immediate and long-term military implications associated with St. Leger's failed invasion of the Mohawk River valley, the events of August 1777 accentuated a much more intimately distressing aspect of the revolution. For those warriors and soldiers that clashed during the Battle of Oriskany, the grounds that bled red underscored the beginning of brutal civil conflicts that would ravage the valley for the next five years, and beyond.

Disagreements and conflicts between the Six Nations were nothing new. Since the middle of the eighteenth century alone, reports of clashing Iroquois factions accompanied news of the sacking of Fort Bull in 1756 when Akwesasne, Kanasetake, Kahnawake, and Oswegatchie Iroquois led French forces to the Oneida Carry; or after 1758 when rumors of widespread Oneida dismissal of the Onondaga Council's calls to arms filtered back to Johnson Hall; and again during the Pontiac's Rebellion of 1763, when Seneca warriors raised the hatchet against British garrisons and squatters. Just how often, or how many, Iroquois lost their lives due to regional interests and disagreements is next to impossible to establish with any degree of certainty. That being said, when Iroquois warriors found themselves on opposing sides of imperial struggles they made it a point to avoid one another.

The Battle of Oriskany was different. When the mostly Indian force attacked Herkimer's relief column on August 6, 1777, many of the warriors and war chiefs were Mohawks and Senecas. Their enemy that day included not only colonial rebels, but also as many as one hundred Oneida warriors. And when the warriors and chiefs met on the boggy grounds that day, they did not avoid lethal confrontation. Arguably, the bloody exchange signified a culmination of intra- and intertribal disputes that had characterized the indigenous communities of the Mohawk River valley during the preceding decade. The battle unleashed a wave of violence and sorrow that has impacted both the region, and its inhabitants, ever since; so much so, as Joy Bilharz documented, for many

⁵⁴ Graymont, *Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 133–46. Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 92; Scott, "Joseph Brant at Fort Stanwix and Oriskany," 300; Nester, *The Frontier*, 2. For the terms and events of Burgoyne's surrender, see O'Callaghan, ed., *Orderly book of Lieut. Gen. John Burgoyne*.

Iroquois the corpse-strewn landscape of Oriskany henceforth became known as “a place of great sadness.”⁵⁵

The union that held together the Six Nations faltered as a result of Iroquois actions at Oriskany. The Great Laws were temporarily shelved as the leadership of warriors replaced that of the sachems. On the battlefield, Iroquois murdered Iroquois. At Oriskany, five Seneca war chiefs and numerous Oneida warriors were counted among the slain. Soon thereafter death and sadness gripped Indian and colonizer villages throughout the Mohawk River valley. Vengeance and retribution followed. Patriots looted and burned Loyalist enclaves and villages, and horsewhipped those that protested.⁵⁶ Others were not so fortunate. During the same period of time, intertribal disputes violently spilled over into prominent Indian villages. Mohawk warriors razed the Oneida village of Oriska. In response, Oneida warriors, accompanied by Patriot soldiers, sacked and pillaged the Mohawk villages of Tiononderoga and Canajoharie. The belongings and estate of Molly Brant, Joseph’s sister and widow of Sir William Johnson, were targeted specifically. Few, if any, Indian deaths occurred, but the significance and impact of the violent exchanges between the opposing Iroquois factions should not be underestimated. Scores of refugees fled north to British Canada, while the destruction Canajoharie fueled Brant’s anger. Seeking revenge, Brant’s Volunteers and other Crown-allied Indians targeted Patriot positions throughout the valley and into Pennsylvania.⁵⁷

War in Iroquoia

In January 1777, eight months before the battle at Oriskany, the chiefs of the Iroquois Confederacy convened and covered the council fire at Onondaga. The extinguishment of the council fire at Onondaga was as strategic as it was symbolic. From 1763 onwards, the unfolding rebellion created wedges between Iroquois leaders and communities. Once Americans declared their independence in 1776, many Indians faced difficult decisions. While neutrality remained the best option for many, more and more chiefs and warriors began to choose their allies so as to best serve their own local needs. In response, Iroquois Confederacy chiefs opted to cover the council fire. While this action underscores how rebellion-related tensions pulled apart Iroquois communities throughout the Mohawk River Valley, it should not be seen as only a response. By extinguishing the fire at Onondaga, Iroquois headmen maintained the political neutrality of their Confederacy, both “legally and literally,” while simultaneously allowing for “increasing numbers of warriors and women [to] chose a particular side.”⁵⁸ In fact, there is also ample evidence that underscores that most Iroquois warriors on opposing sides of the imperial conflict actively sought to avoid confrontations with one another. That being said, for many Iroquois leaders the battle of Oriskany had illustrated just how susceptible their Confederacy was to the pressures of the conflict unfolding around them. As a result,

55 Bilharz, *Oriskany*, 90, 93.

56 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 93.

57 Matthew Dennis, *Senecas Possessed: Indians, Witchcraft, and Power in the Early American Republic*, (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 93; Tiro, *People of the Standing Stone*, 49; Glatthaar and Martin, *Forgotten Allies*, 176-77.

58 Robert W. Venables, “Faithful Allies of the King: The Crown’s Haudenosaunee Allies in the Revolutionary Struggle for New York,” in Joseph Tiedemann et al, eds.; *The Other Loyalists: Ordinary People, Royalism, and teh Revolution in the Middle Colonies, 1763-1787*, (Buffalo, SUNY Press, 2009), 139.

dialogue between the Patriot-allied Oneidas and Tuscaroras and the other Six Nations continued throughout the remainder of the war.⁵⁹

By dissolving the Iroquois Confederacy, both contemporaries of the time and historians since have viewed the action and the subsequent battle of Oriskany as clear indictors of a civil war that erupted between opposing factions of Iroquois.⁶⁰ There is merit in this claim, too. In the end, the impact of, and Iroquois responses to, widespread colonial rebellion temporarily undercut the Great Laws, suspended the functionality of the Confederacy, divided the Six Nations, and displaced hundreds of Iroquois from their homelands. Following 1777, Iroquoia was irrevocably changed.

Fearing further retribution and continued violent upheavals, as many as three hundred Iroquois (mostly Oneidas and Tuscaroras) traveled to Albany in September 1777 to hold council with Philip Schuyler. Schuyler welcomed the Indian contingent, and following customary exchanges, he wasted little time before delivering a message to the Indian written by the recently appointed Commander of the Northern Department, Major General Horatio Gates. Gates appealed to the Indians by drawing parallels between the Patriot cause and that of the gathered Iroquois. His message resonated with the Oneidas and Tuscaroras, who pledged to take up arms against the Crown's soldiers. Before the month's end, over one hundred Indians travelled north to join the Patriot campaign against Burgoyne's advancing army.⁶¹

After the failed siege of Fort Stanwix and Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga, Crown military strategists fortified their positions in Canada. Left without Crown support, displaced warriors and Loyalist soldiers of the Mohawk River Valley sought to remind the Patriots they did not intend to passively relinquish their homes and their presence in the region. Using Niagara and western Iroquois villages as their bases of operations, in 1778 Loyalists and Crown-allied Iroquois continued to launch guerilla raids throughout the northern borderlands of the American Revolution. But without the support of a Crown army, there was little chance of Loyalists regaining control of the region. The raids did, however, render rebel strongholds, like Fort Stanwix, both ineffective and logistically difficult to maintain. In response to the raids, Continental soldiers and rebel militiamen sacked numerous Indian towns. For many of the invaders it was their first time in Indian Country. When Onoquaga was destroyed in October 1778, the attackers made specific mention of the fertile Indian lands throughout the Mohawk River valley.⁶²

After months of disruption and insecurity throughout the northern borderlands, in 1779 George Washington ordered part of his Continental Army to strike into the heart of Iroquoia. Washington hoped to reduce the raiding ability of their indigenous enemies by destroying Indian villages and supplies. Tasked with commanding the four brigades of almost five thousand Continental soldiers was General John Sullivan. "The Expedition you are appointed to command is to be directed against the hostile tribes of the Six Nations of Indians..." Washington ordered Sullivan. "The immediate objects are the total destruction and devastation of their settlements, and the capture of as many prisoners of every age

59 Tiro, *People of the Standing Stone*, 49-52.

60 Calloway *American Revolution in Indian Country*, 123; Graymont, *Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 142; Venables, "Faithful Allies of the King," 141.

61 Glatthaar and Martin, *Forgotten Allies*, 180-81.

62 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 93-94.

and sex as possible. It will be essential to ruin their crops now in the ground and prevent their planting more.”⁶³

Sullivan, born in New Hampshire and the third son of Irish Catholic immigrants, rose to prominence during the first few years of colonial rebellion. A friend of Washington, Sullivan, in late summer 1779, led his army up the Susquehanna River in late summer of 1779. By August, Sullivan had arrived at Tioga. Soon thereafter, he ordered the complete destruction of Chemung. When news of the rebel army filtered throughout the region, Indian communities braced for impact while a much smaller Loyalist force organized under the leadership of Colonel John Butler. Instead of harassing the much larger Patriot army with guerilla tactics, Butler, following the decisions of his Indian brethren, prepared to meet Sullivan in open engagement. The result was devastating for the defenders. Their subsequent defeat at the battle of Newtown along the Chemung River undercut Indian morale. For the remainder of the invasion, Sullivan’s army went virtually unchallenged as they carried out a scorched earth campaign throughout Iroquoia. Following Washington’s orders, the rebels invaded and destroyed at least forty Indian settlements, burning crops and slaughtering livestock along the way. That winter, hundreds of Iroquois, mostly the elderly, women, and children, died due to starvation or the elements.⁶⁴ (Figure 19)

Sullivan’s brutal campaign reduced the Iroquois to complete dependence on either the British Crown or the newly emerging American empire for the basic necessities of life for the remainder of the war. Few Indians looked towards the immediate orchestrators of the violence for their survival. The affected Iroquois, many of who had maintained neutrality to that point, turned to the Crown for support. Thousands fled to Niagara. Hundreds regrouped to join the ranks of Brant’s Volunteers or Butler’s Rangers who launched more raids into the Mohawk River Valley and Pennsylvania in the 1780. But the damage had been done. Following Yorktown and the end of hostilities between the independent states of America and the British Crown, attention turned to the fertile lands of the Iroquois. “Almost immediately,” historian Matthew Dennis remarks, “the Empire State began to earn its name . . . The dispossessed Iroquois domain made life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness possible in New York.”⁶⁵ But before Indian removal could occur, the terms needed to be established; and what better place to chastise the chiefs of the Iroquois Confederacy than at the Oneida Carry and in the same fort the Iroquois had so recently demonstrated the height and extent of their powers.

63 “From George Washington to Major General John Sullivan, 31 May, 1779,” accessed Dec. 4, 2015, Founders Online, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-20-02-0661>

64 Glatthaar and Martin, *Forgotten Allies*, 248-62; Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 97-100; Dennis, *Senecas Possessed*, 34.

65 Dennis, *Senecas Possessed*, 34-35.

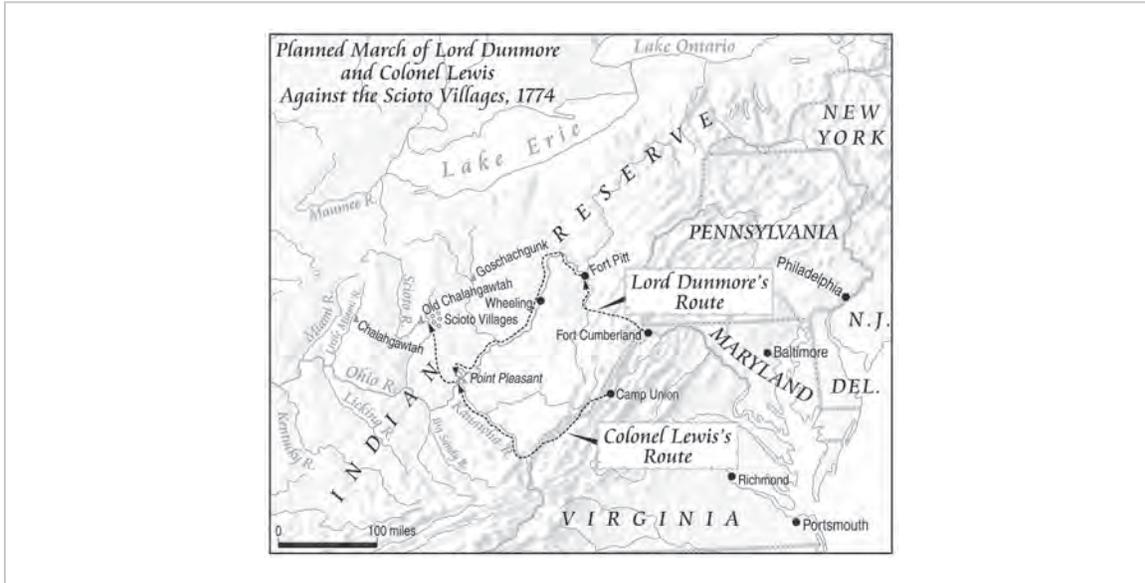


Figure 11. Lord Dunmore's March

Philip Schwartzberg—Used with permission from Meridian Mapping: Cartographic and Graphic Design. Accessed July 1, 2017, <http://warfarehistorynetwork.com/daily/military-history/lord-dunmores-war-the-battle-of-point-pleasant/>



Figure 12. Western boundary of New York, Tyron County, ca. 1777.

From topographical observations by Claude Joseph Sauthier Engraved, 1777. Accessed July 12, 2017, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyron_County,_New_York



Figure 13. Samuel Kirkland

Portrait of Samuel Kirkland by Augustus Rockwell, ca. 1870s. Accessed Jan.7, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Samuel_Kirkland_by_Augustus_Rockwell_detail.jpg



Figure 14. Battle of Oriskany.

“Herkimer at the Battle of Oriskany” by Frederick Coffay Yohn, 1901. Courtesy of the Public Library in Utica, New York. Accessed July 10, 2017, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Oriskany



Figure 15. Guy Johnson

"Guy Johnson and Karonghyontye (Captain David Hill)," by Benjamin West, 1776. Courtesy of the National Art Gallery, Washington., D.C. Accessed March 3, 2017, <https://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.569.html>

CHAPTER SIX

ADVESARIES: 1784 TREATY OF FORT STANWIX

Colonizer interest in lands inhabited, controlled, and claimed by the Iroquois stretches back to at least the founding of Fort Orange (later Albany, New York). As already noted by Harmen Meyndertsz van den Bogaert's trek into Iroquoia during the winter of 1643, that interest was defined by competing European attempts to secure control over extractable resources. For those Europeans eyeing the bounty of Iroquoia, such resources were viewed as the principal way to accumulate personal wealth while extending imperial reach. Put another way, until the early eighteenth century most European operations in Iroquoia focused on understanding and defending important transportation and trade routes. As we have seen, that began to change as the number of colonizers in North America rapidly increased. A century later, as botanist John Bartram made his way through the same territory, colonization of the eastern reaches of Iroquoia had embroiled the Iroquois Confederacy in ceaseless entanglements over the ownership of land. Meanwhile, France, and England spiraled towards another imperial war for control over resources. Weakened by over a century of European diseases and the overhunting of lands to satisfy colonizer market demands and greed, the Iroquois repositioned themselves to defend against the pestilence of speculators, squatters, murderers, and thieves bent on obtaining their land. Aware of the dynamics of Anglo-colonization patterns and the legalities governing land acquisition, leaders of the Iroquois Confederacy cultivated an important ally in the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Sir William Johnson. By the end of the Seven Years' War, as punctuated by the terms of the 1768 treaty at Fort Stanwix, that alliance stood poised to reap the benefits of collusion. Colonial rebellion and the subsequent independence of thirteen American colonies changed that design. Where once colonial and Crown protocol created opportunities for the personal networks of many Iroquois chiefs and leaders, as well as their European counterparts, the removal of that authority now led to a power vacuum. Positioning to fill that void and capitalize on the exposed and war-torn Iroquois were scores of colonizers emboldened by colonial independence and keen to carve out their own fortune at the expense of the Iroquois and other Native Americans.

This was the atmosphere in 1784 on the edges of the newly emerged, but still undefined, American empire. That fall, at the Oneida Carry, the soil of Iroquoia still remained the primary objective for most colonizers, but those seeking to direct and control transportation and trade routes, as well as solidify congressional authority to secure the new Republic, amplified pressures. As Laurence Hauptman succinctly concludes, between the end of the American Revolution and the Civil War, “[t]hree interlocking forces—transportation, land, and national defense—helped create an urban industrial corridor in the heart of Iroquoia.”¹ Related, most commentators have situated the 1784 treaty in a post-war narrative of nation building. In fact, in 1932 historian Henry S. Manley suggested that the treaty “marked consequences” for indigenous relations in the United States for the decade that followed.

1 Laurence M. Hauptman, *Conspiracy of Interests: Iroquois Dispossession and the Rise of New York State* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1999), xv.

When new states emerged from the revolutionary war not only did old provincial boundary disputes resurface, so did questions concerning state and federal jurisdictions over Indian lands, trade, and treaty rights.² Unpacking the 1784 treaty of Fort Stanwix provides us a moment in history to identify the seeds of those interests; interests that wreaked havoc on Iroquoia and its indigenous inhabitants before the century's end; and interests that would come to define core elements of the American empire's treatment of indigenous populations (on the continent and abroad) for the century that followed.

In this light, the 1784 treaty was not “an auspicious beginning of treaty making by the independent United States,” as historian Francis Prucha remarks, but not just because it “forced unilaterally upon the Indians the demands of the United States—in this case return of prisoners and, most important, land cessions.”³ As we will see, by publicly demonstrating unwillingness to maintain the authority of the Iroquois Confederacy, federal officials did much more than demand land and prisoners. By treating the Iroquois as conquered peoples, American representatives emphasized the end of colonial traditions and the privileged place of the Iroquois Confederacy in a new imperial order. By doing so on the very same grounds the same Indians had achieved one of their greatest diplomatic feats, U.S. officials slashed the power of the Iroquois Confederacy and announced congressional authority over the contested region ceded in 1768, while a new order of special interests positioned to capitalize on the lucrative and brutal business of Indian dispossession.

George Washington and Virginia

To bolster the ranks of George Washington's depleted Virginia Regiment following the outbreak of the Seven Years' War, in 1754 Governor Dinwiddie issued a proclamation that promised those men that enlisted shares in a land speculation venture totaling approximately two hundred thousand acres in the Ohio River valley.⁴ The young Washington was personally granted a lion's share of the bounty lands, a large segment of which would later become known as his Kanawha tracts (eventually totally approximately twenty thousand acres). But, as we have reviewed, Pontiac's Rebellion and the subsequent Royal Proclamation of 1763 temporarily halted colonizer consumption of Indian lands west of the Appalachians. Not long after, the pressures of land acquisition soon led to the careful and planned readjustment of the 1763 Indian-colonizer boundary line during negotiations at the Oneida Carry in 1768. Stunted and left in the cold by the terms of the 1768 treaty, Virginian speculators regrouped and strategized with the hope of capitalizing on the lack of Crown authority in the regions opened to settler-colonization.⁵ To contest the Ohio Country land redistribution scheme initially spearheaded by Croghan and his associates (that favored Pennsylvania) that emerged following the 1768 treaty at Fort Stanwix (later

2 Henry S. Manley, *The Treaty of Fort Stanwix, 1784* (Rome, N.Y.: Rome Sentinel, 1932), 10, 113.

3 Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 42-46.

4 Robert Dinwiddie, “A proclamation, for encouraging men to enlist in His Majesty's service for the defence and security of this colony: Whereas it is determined that a fort be immediately built on the River Ohio. Given at the Council-chamber in Williamsburg, on the 19th day of February, in the 27th year of His Majesty's reign, annoque Domini 1754” *Early American Imprints*, Series 1, 1639-1800. No. 40722. Microfilms Section, NYPL; Also see *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, V: 440 (London Public Records Office); Egle, *Pennsylvania Archives*, III: 486.

5 Egle, *Pennsylvania Archives*, III: 487.

to become known as the Walpole Land Company), Washington created the Mississippi Land Company. When Washington's land company's petitions fell on deaf ears in London, many members sought alternative methods to secure clear title to their western claims. One opportunity came in 1774 when Lord Dunmore led Virginian forces to Fort Pitt, brutally routed the Shawnees (who maintained the Iroquois had no right to cede their land), and claimed the region for Virginia. But Washington's hopes to increase his land holdings in the Ohio River valley were again dashed when Parliament issued the Québec Act later the same year, placing most of the valley under the jurisdiction of the Province of Québec. Angered and frustrated, as colonial rebellion gained steam, many Virginians, including Washington, had just as many monetary as ideological reasons to join the revolution. Almost immediately following the signing of the Declaration of Independence, rebel forces led by Virginia invaded and laid claim to the lands in southern Ohio River valley. With the land office in Pennsylvania closed, Virginian-Patriots made further bids for the contested region. In 1778, Virginia funded a supposedly secret expedition into Illinois Country for the purpose of claiming the lands in the north. As historians Ada Hope Hixon and William Reid Cubban noted in 1919, as the American Revolution drew to a close, George Washington maintained claims to thousands of acres of contested Indian lands "in what is now New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia, Ohio, and Kentucky." Prior to rebellion, Washington's (and Virginian) claims to most of those lands were contested, at best.⁶

Even before the ashes of war settled, the colonizers again turned west. Washington was one of them. Another land rush began. But by 1784 the Crown no longer needed to clear title, so the game changed. State and regional interests clashed over jurisdiction and competing claims as federal interests struggled to institute order under the Articles of Confederation. "If there was one single issue in the period from the formation of the Second Continental Congress to the termination of war with England likely to inflame oratory [and] divide the states into bickering adversaries," Jack Campisi observes, "it was the issue of who owned the western land—more particularly, the land in the Ohio Valley."⁷ Washington, like other aspiring leaders of the new Republic, oscillated between his loyalties to the American people, fellow Virginians, and his own pocketbook. "In the first six months after his return to Mount Vernon," W. W. Abbot writes, Washington "took steps to have legal title to the various parcels of his western lands confirmed by the state of Virginia, and he began to search for ways to make his holdings productive and profitable." Abbot continues,

[Washington] wrote and talked to people about what could be done with these lands; he ran notices in newspapers and distributed handbills, in Maryland in Pennsylvania as well as Virginia, inviting settlers to take up and improve small parcels under long-term leases; and he tried to identify and make contact with people abroad who might be induced to come to America and become his tenants.⁸

6 Ada Hope Hixon and William Reid Cubban, "George Washington Land Speculator," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 11:4 (January, 1919), 570.

7 Campisi, "Fort Stanwix to Canandigua," 49.

8 John E. Ferling, *The First of Men: A Life of George Washington* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 402

In 1784 Washington traveled almost seven hundred miles on horseback to survey his western land claims. Like those players in empire before him, Washington sought to merge national interests with his personal aspirations.⁹ One way to do so was to rapidly develop communication and transportation lines between Virginia's Atlantic ports and the waterways west of the Appalachian range. To this end, Washington made a point of visiting the Oneida Carry to survey the land, assess the locations topography, and to unofficially meet with the Iroquois. After doing so, the future president advised Congress:

I am clear in my opinion, that policy and economy point very strongly to the expediency of being upon good terms with the Indians, and the propriety of purchasing their lands in preference to attempting to drive them by force of arms out of their country which, as we have already experienced, is like driving the wild beasts of the forest, which will return as soon as the pursuit is at an end, and fall perhaps upon those that are left there; when the gradual extension of our settlements will as certainly cause the savage, as the wolf, to retire; both being animals of prey, though they differ in shape. In a word, there is nothing to be obtained by an Indian war, but the soil they live on, and this can be done by purchase at less expense.¹⁰

Months later, as the three Indian commissioners sent by Congress traveled north in the fall of 1784 to treat with the Iroquois, Washington wrote the Virginia governor Benjamin Harrison. The president proposed a water route be carved through the mountains that linked the James and Potomac Rivers to the Ohio River (and thus Virginian claims to the southern Ohio River valley). If such a route could be established, resources, trade goods, and people would flow from Virginian ports, through the Appalachians (and the heart of Washington's land holdings) into the belly of Ohio River valley up to the mighty Great Lakes, and beyond. Perhaps not surprisingly, Harrison supported the plan and wasted little time before creating the Potomac Company to lure investors. Washington personally received fifty shares in the venture via a decree by the Virginia legislature. Once Congress confirmed the *western* boundary of Iroquoia and claimed the region under the jurisdiction of the United States, Washington, and Virginians stood poised to reap the benefits.¹¹

The Empire State

Virginians were not alone in their quest to benefit from the expansion of a newly emerging American empire. When armed conflict with Loyalist forces drew to a close, the metaphorical longhouse of the Iroquois and the lands that connected its eastern and western doors not only became the borderlands between two competing continental empires but also the target of New York special interests. In fact, if any state exemplifies the aggression that defined land speculation during the first two decades following the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783, it was New York. As historians have convincingly detailed, Iroquois dispossession and the collapse of the "Iroquois mystique" paralleled the rise of the aptly

9 Edmund S. Morgan, *The Meaning of Independence: John Adams, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson* (Charlottesville, V.A.: University of Virginia Press, 1976), 41.

10 Quoted from Manley, *The Treaty of Fort Stanwix*, 46-47.

11 Jared Sparks, ed., *The Writings of George Washington, being his correspondence, addresses, messages, and other papers, official and private selected and published from the original manuscripts; with a life of the author, notes and illustrations*, Vol. 4 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1847), 58-68.

named Empire State.¹² Barbara Graymont concurs, stating that the extinguishment of congressional authority over Iroquois lands rested at the heart of New York's Indian policy following the American Revolution.¹³ And long before the cannons quieted, New York eyed Iroquoia.

Not long after General Sullivan laid waste to much of Iroquoia, soldier stories about the lush and rich terrain of the Mohawk River valley fueled the urgency of many land speculators. Worried about competing claims, in 1780 the New York legislature proposed to relinquish all state claims to the Ohio River valley in return for congressionally approved control over what is present-day Vermont and upstate New York. Pragmatically, Congress rejected the overture. By the early 1780s it was clear that the emerging and cash-strapped United States would soon be at loggerheads over land and boundaries, and Congress worried that New York's dismissal of federal authority would establish a hazardous precedent. As per the terms of 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix, the signatories considered the Indian lands in Iroquoia west of the boundary line to be reserved for the exclusive use of the Six Nations. Inconveniently, this fact interfered with New York's land acquisition aspirations. So, while Virginia anxiously awaited Congress to secure another land cession and confirm the *western* limits of Iroquoia, New York schemed to undermine the 1768 treaty line. Even by late 1782, when New York's cession of claims to the Ohio Country was finally approved, it was evident that Congress did not intend to uphold New York's "suzerainty" title claims to Iroquoia. Making matters worse for New York speculators, Massachusetts resurrected its charter-based claim to the same territory. Despite having over one century pass since Massachusetts raised the issue of western land claims, New York worried about whether Congress would approve. When Congress agreed "to convene a special court to adjudicate the claims as provided under Article IX of the Articles of Confederation, New Yorkers' fears seemed justified."¹⁴ Compounding the situation, rumors spread that Massachusetts might send militia forces into Iroquoia to garrison the forts left abandoned by the Crown. Panicked, New York special interests strategized. The clever and astute Governor Clinton led the way. (Figure 20) Until, and if, Congress officially recognized the 1768 boundary line, many New Yorkers hoped to capitalize on existing legal ambiguities as the American Revolution drew to a close. Plainly speaking, the prospect of personal fortunes at the expense of Iroquois dispossession united otherwise political enemies.¹⁵

Before hostilities with Loyalist forces concluded, the New York State legislature "instructed the governor [Clinton] and four commissioners to be mindful of New York's interests at the future peace negotiations with the Indians."¹⁶ Three principle issues caused the greatest concern. First were Virginia's blatant plays for the lands in the Ohio River valley and Great Lakes regions. If successful, Virginian land speculators threatened to literally reroute the flow of trade that long benefited trading hubs like Albany and ports like New York City. Second was Massachusetts' lingering claims to Iroquoia based on the colony's original charter. Finally, the fear Congress would claim authority over Iroquoia by right of

12 Hauptman, *Conspiracy of Interests*; Lehamn, "End of the Iroquois Mystique."

13 Barbara Graymont, "New York State Indian Policy After the Revolution," *New York History* Vol. 57, No. 4 (October, 1976): 440.

14 Lehamn, "End of the Iroquois Mystique," 532.

15 Hauptman, *Conspiracy of Interests*, 61.

16 *Ibid.*, 62.

conquest stemming back to Sullivan's scorched-earth campaign in 1779 rounded out the list of major concerns. John Jay, president of the Continental Congress at this time, consulted Clinton to "establish Posts in that Country, and in every respect treat it as their own."¹⁷ In order to act quickly, though, Jay continued, the Iroquois must be humbled and absorbed into New York's polity. Congress-appointed commissioner and New Yorker James Duane agreed. The "disgraceful System of flattering the [the Iroquois] as great and mighty Nations," Duane secretly confided to George Clinton, must be abandoned. If the Iroquois were recognized as independent nations and "detached from the State," Congressional claims to Iroquoia would be "incontrovertible."¹⁸ Thus, even before the Treaty of Paris was signed, New York policy makers plotted with Iroquois lands in their sights. In July 1782, the legislature ruled that a large segment of said land be claimed as bounty payment for the State's militia. Then, in March 1783, using military bounty as their legal justification to claim Iroquois lands, New York policy makers appointed Indian commissioners to oversee the acquisition of Indian lands. Much like their Virginian counterparts, New York policy makers reasoned that together with the sale of land, control over trade and transportation routes would strengthen the State while lining the pocket books of those New Yorkers speculating in Indian dispossession. The instructions to the commissioners reveal New York's initial ploy:

The principal object of your commission is to endeavor to accomplish an exchange of the district claimed the Oneidas and Tuscaroras for a district of vacant and unappropriated lands within this State . . . If such exchange cannot be obtained you will inquire whether it is the intention of those tribes to sell any part of the district belonging to them and if so what quantity thereof and where situated and what are the terms and considerations which they may expect for the same . . . [if willing, the Indians are to be relocated . . . North of the north boundary line between this State and the State of Pennsylvania, south of Lake Ontario, west of a south line drawn from the east side of the mouth of the Little Seneca or Chenisse River where it empties into Lake Ontario extended to the boundary line of Pennsylvania, east of the following line and bounds, to wit, a north and south line drawn through a point twenty miles east of the most easterly inclination of the strait of Niagara and extended north to the said Lake, and south until it intersects a east and west line drawn through a point twenty miles south of the Great Falls of the Niagara, thence from the said intersection west to Lake Erie, thence along the east bank of the Lake Erie to the boundary line of Pennsylvania aforesaid.¹⁹

Congress objected to the plan, citing that New York sought to undermine congressional Indian policy and urged New York to reconsider its approach; Governor Clinton refused to cooperate with federal authorities and conspired further.²⁰ In fact, Clinton went as far as sending British General Frederick Haldimand an offer to replace New York troops with Crown forces at Oswego and Niagara as a means to lay claim over Iroquoia. Haldimand refused, but the overture underscores Clinton's cleverness.²¹ Furthermore, the

17 John Jay to George Clinton, Oct. 25, 1779, in Richard B. Morris, ed., *John Jay: The Making of a Revolutionary*, Vol. 1, Unpublished Papers, 1745–1780 (New York, 1975), 660.

18 James Duane to George Clinton, Aug. 1784, in Hough, ed., *Proceedings of the Commissioners*, 1:21-24. See also Manley, *Treaty of Fort Stanwix*, 57-58.

19 *Ibid.*, 28-29.

20 Hauptman, *Conspiracy of Interests*, 62-63

21 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 154. For an excellent reading of Clinton, see *ibid.*, 151-56.

governor cited the Articles of Confederation as the basis of New York's authority to treat with the Iroquois directly. Under the Articles, Congressional jurisdiction in Indian country was limited to those first peoples "not members of any of the states."²² According to Clinton, the Iroquois had been considered subjects under New York since 1701, and thus the jurisdictional responsibility of the State. "I would never suffer the word 'Nation' or 'Six Nations' or 'Confederates' or 'Council Fire at Onondaga,' Duane confidentially consulted Clinton, "or any other form which would revive or seem to confirm their former ideas of Independence."²³ Congress did not agree, and in August wrote Clinton on that matter. Adopting Duane's advice, Clinton firmly responded to Arthur Lee and Richard Butler:

The Indians of the Six Nations, whom I have requested to convene at Fort Schuyler, have advised me that they will be accompanied by Deputies from other Nations possessing the Territory within the Jurisdiction of the United States; I shall have no Objection to your improving this Incident to the advantage of the United States, excepting however and positively stipulating that no Agreement be entered into with the Indians, residing in the jurisdiction of this State (and with whom only I mean to treat) prejudicial to its Rights. Those Engagements being made on your Part, You may rely on every Exertion in my Power and that of my Colleagues to promote the Interest of the United States; which I flatter myself no State in the federal Union has at any time more cheerfully and efficiently supported than this.²⁴

As we will see, it was bold argument manufactured for the purpose of acquiring legal jurisdiction over Iroquois lands. The play was even more pronounced when Clinton attempted to treat with Iroquois diplomats prior to the arrival of federal commissioners at Fort Stanwix in 1784 in a bid to secure a direct land cession. Ironically, for the claim to hold, Clinton required the Iroquois to admit they were dependents of New York. But the Iroquois negotiators that met Governor Clinton and his associates recognized the limits of direct negotiation with the New Yorkers. They knew too well the toxic potential that would result from unregulated colonization and State greed. Congress did too.

Congress

To combat the "great inconveniences" associated with state attempts to increasingly treat with the Iroquois independently, Congress turned to Article 9, Clause 2, of the Articles of Confederation. Drafted in 1777, the Articles outlined a formal procedure in which boundary disputes would be resolved by appointed commissioners or judges. In September 1783, Congress strongly reminded state governments of this clause. Until federal agents treated with first peoples, Congress expressly "forbade settlement on lands inhabited or claimed by the Indians outside of state jurisdiction and purchase or other receipt of such lands without [our] express authority and direction." Any action taken otherwise would be null and void.²⁵

22 Articles of Confederation, March 1, 1781, accessed Nov. 8, 2014, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/artconf.asp

23 James Duane to George Clinton, Aug. 1784, in Hough, ed., *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs*, 1: 21-24.

24 Quoted from Manley, *Treaty of Fort Stanwix*, 54-55.

25 Day, *Calendar of the Sir William Johnson Manuscript*, XXIV: 264, 319-20; *ibid.*, XXV: 602. Also see Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years*, 41-43.

On October 15, 1783, a committee appointed by Congress to consult on Indian affairs submitted their suggestions. Led by New Yorker James Duane (the same Duane secretly writing to Governor Clinton), the committee proposed that an official Indian policy should be adopted, and a general council should be held with the Indians of the northern and middle states to “receive them back into the favor and friendship of the United States.” That being said, while the committee urged Congress to avoid taking any action that would incite war, it explicitly stated that first peoples should be treated as defeated enemies “whose lands could be taken by right of conquest.” The committee further frowned upon dealing with the tribes separately; suggesting that course of action was to be followed only “in case of inevitable necessity.”²⁶ In return for their friendship, the Indians would have to agree to new trade regulations, return all captives, and consent to a new boundary line. Congress agreed.

Yet, within a year and despite passing the 1783 resolution that called for one large general assembly of the Indian confederacies, Congress had a change of heart. They decided to “treat with the several nations at different times and places.”²⁷ Furthermore, if the argument for right of conquest would not hold weight among the Indians, Congress reasoned, “the destruction wrought by Indians and the outrages and atrocities they had committed required atonement and a reasonable compensation for the expenses incurred by the United States.”²⁸ The reasons for revising their strategy are clear. Time was of the essence, and, with New York’s dismissiveness of congressional authority and British presence in Iroquoia, something needed to be done, and quickly. Given the past prestige held by the Iroquois Confederacy in continental affairs, federal strategists sought to reinforce postwar divisions among first peoples and exploit indigenous vulnerabilities. Moreover, echoing Washington, congressional records suggest concern about maintaining important trade and transportation ties between eastern and western zones of colonization as a way to maintain control over a growing and potentially unruly American population. Related, Congress worried about the lingering British control of trade throughout the Great Lakes and the loyalty it garnered, with both first peoples and colonizers, not to mention potential Spanish (and French) designs for the interior of the continent. But, unlike New York, which sought to immediately purge Iroquoia of Iroquois, Congress recognized the continental importance of Indians residing in the northern borderlands. As historian Alan Taylor demonstrates, contrary to the “assumption that Americans always tried to drive the Indians from their lands,” federal officials still had much to gain by having the Iroquois return to New York following the American Revolution. The Indians would act as a buffer to British Canada and curtail uncontrolled unsanctioned speculation. In short, Congress hoped to avoid an all-out mass migration of Indians to British Canada as means to protect their federal interests.²⁹

As we will see, this says much about Iroquois willingness in the fall of 1784 to hold out for terms for what Taylor suggests was the surprising ambivalence of Crown officials to provide a place for the Indians within the bounds of British Canada.³⁰ Control over land

26 Day, *Calendar of the Sir William Johnson Manuscript*, XXV: 680-94.

27 Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years*, 42-46.

28 Day, *Calendar of the Sir William Johnson Manuscript*, XXV: 680-94.

29 Alan Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 118.

30 Ibid.

still remained of principle concern. By offering protection to the divided Iroquois in return for their admission of defeat, Congress could capitalize on the sale of land when it saw fit. The Indians would still be driven out, but for the meantime, their presence in New York furthered Congress's agenda. To this end, Congress recognized the importance of Indian relations in the early 1780s, and the need to establish claim to a contested region without provoking the first peoples to arms, and without causing an immediate rupture between the freshly christened United States of America. They acted accordingly.³¹

In March 1784, Congress elected five commissioners (George Rogers Clark, Oliver Wolcott, Nathaniel Greene, Richard Butler, and Stephen Higginson) to negotiate with the western nations as far south as the Cherokees, and authorized three of the commissioners to act as the official mouthpiece of the United States of America (much like the role Johnson assumed as the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the British Crown). But questionable loyalties to a federalist agenda forced Congress to reconsider their original appointees. In late April, Benjamin Lincoln and Arthur Lee replaced Green and Higginson. Duane continued to maneuver between his federal appointment and New York allegiances. This is perhaps of little surprise that he was not present to represent Congress at Fort Stanwix in 1784. Increasingly worried about state scheming and needing to set a clear message to all member polities, Congress pressed the commissioners to hold council with the Iroquois based on the following principles: the Indians had to be punished, captives returned, and reparations given. If successful, Congress reasoned, State attempts to treat with Indians directly and on a regional basis would be thwarted, and unregulated settlement curbed. Consequently, increasingly problematic border and trade disputes could be resolved, and more importantly, the federal government could generate thousands of dollars by clearing Indian title and selling western lands. It was a lofty plan.³²

Meanwhile, rumors abounded in Indian Country about what to come. In January 1784, General Schuyler met Iroquois leaders in Schenectady and chastised them for not keeping the promises they made in 1776. The General did his best to entrench the feeling of vulnerability among the gathered Indians by producing a copy of the Treaty of Paris. Schuyler accused the Crown of betraying the Indians, as there was no mention of, nor provisions made for first peoples in the peace agreement. He was right. A cunning negotiator, Schuyler continued: "And yet Congress with a magnanimity and a generosity peculiar to a free people, are willing to forget the injuries and give peace with the Indians." Schuyler added that the 'conditions will be doubtless such as Congress have a right to insist upon and as the Indians out of regard to their future welfare ought to accept.'³³ But in the fall of 1784, not all Iroquois worried about treating with their American foes. After all, some Iroquois were instrumental in helping the colonists secure their independence. Surely the Oneidas stood poised to reap the benefits of an alliance with the Patriots? They had, after all, chosen the winning side.

A Fragmented Longhouse

When it became clear that the rebelling colonists were months away from claiming victory over the formidable English Crown, a number of Oneidas felt emboldened enough to ridicule their Iroquois brethren with who they had exchanged blows. In July 1783 during

31 Day, *Calendar of the Sir William Johnson Manuscript*, XXVI:73-74, 123-24, 135-36, 273-74, 282.

32 Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years*, 42-46.

33 Manley, *Treaty of Fort Stanwix 1784*, 30-31, 34-35.

a council, one Oneida speaker bitingly remarked that those Indians that had aligned with Loyalists should consider moving to the British Isles, as the King could no longer provide protection and land in America.³⁴ But by early September 1783, complaints from Oneida leaders suggest their festering insecurities with the intentions of their colonial counterparts. American colonizers, without respect to legal agreements or Oneida sovereignty, were pouring over the existing 1768 boundary line and trying to rob Oneidas of their lands. In response, the Indians took measures. Speculators from New York, in particular, sought to “take away our Lands by Piece Meal,” Oneidas complained to federal authorities.³⁵ Making matters worse, those Christian Oneidas that “viewed their faith not as subordination to colonial authority but as means to strengthen the solidarity and autonomy of their communities,” faced continued persecution and abandonment by their so-called religious equals and their new god.³⁶ The acquisition of Indian land and colonist quest for personal wealth appeared to triumph over whatever messages Samuel Kirkland spewed from his pulpit every Sunday. In response, the Oneidas took direct action. In an attempt to create a buffer between their settlements and the pesky colonizers, the Oneidas invited scores of Mohicans and other landless and Christianized Algonquian tribes to live on tracts on their territory’s eastern edges. Like stacking sandbags to stem off the flood of colonization, most Oneidas entrenched and hoped their religious conversion, connections to brokers like Kirkland, and proven commitment to the Patriot cause would prevail³⁷ But they still remained cautious. In the spring of 1784, after receiving news that New York sought to hold council with the Iroquois, the Oneidas openly expressed worry, and for good reason. Clinton sought to hold council with the Iroquois for the primary purpose of making the Indians “Members of the State” (at least on paper). In April the Governor sent personalized messages to all Six Nations. Recognizing Clinton’s intentions, the Oneidas agreed to meet at Fort Stanwix that fall, but on the condition that their lands were not negotiable. “General Washington,” they reminded Clinton, “assured them . . . that they should possess and keep their lands.”³⁸ The Oneidas proceeded cautiously.

As for those Iroquois that had sided with the Crown, by the summer of 1783 there were few reasons to be optimistic. Like the Oneidas, many of their families, homes, and communities were shattered. Susceptibility and anger compounded the cynicism that draped much of Iroquoia. Crown agents, once close allies and full of promises, now kept their heads low and waited for news. During this time General Frederick Haldimand, Governor of Quebec and military commander in British North America, struggled to keep the preliminary terms of peace a secret until the final treaty was signed. Unfortunately for Haldimand, news of the Crown’s defeat and the embarrassing terms of the surrender were impossible to spin. Once Crown-allied Iroquois learned about the terms of surrender and the territory relinquished by the Crown, they were flummoxed. Others teetered on rage. The King could not “pretend to cede to America what was not his own to give,”

34 “Conference with the Indians of the Six Nations, July 1783” in Jennings, et. al., *Iroquois Indians* [microfilm] (David Library of the American Revolution, Washington’s Crossing, PA).

35 Tiro, *People of the Standing Stone*, 61.

36 David Silverman, “The Curse of God: An Idea and Its Origins among the Indians of New York’s Revolutionary Frontier,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser, Vol. LXVI, No. 3 (July 2009): 498

37 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 145-47; Silverman, “The Curse of God,” 496.

38 Quoted from Tiro, *People of the Standing Stone*, 62.

Iroquois warriors pondered at Fort Niagara. Fearful that the Iroquois might rise up against the British soldiers still garrisoning forts throughout the region, Haldimand and other commanders sanctioned the plying of rum and presents to the situation. If kept drunk, General McLean at Fort Niagara reasoned, they are less likely to retaliate³⁹ Fear was not the only reason that the Crown needed to appease the Indians, whether through drink, presents, or hollow reassurances of Iroquois independence; the King needed Indian allies. By 1783, if the Indians abandoned, or even rose up against the British, the Crown had no way of maintaining their thinly manned posts, and thus the empire of trade it still clung to north of the newly independent colonies. As a result, Crown agents did their best to placate the Iroquois. For many disgruntled Indian warriors this meant Crown post-war diplomacy materialized in the form of a bottomless supply of liquor. But, for others, it created opportunities. Ceaselessly strategizing, many Iroquois realized that they could use the King's army throughout the Great Lakes and western reaches of Iroquoia as a means to deter American expansion. At the least, a British presence in Indian Country would buy the Iroquois time. Because of this dynamic of mutual need the Iroquois gained important concessions from the Crown prior to meeting with American negotiators in the fall of 1784: the British continued to maintain a military presence and direct trade throughout the Great Lakes region, the Crown backed the legal integrity of the 1768 land cession, and "endors[ed] a new pan-Indian confederacy." "Those concessions," Taylor writes, "exposed the fallacy in the peace treaty: the insistence that a new and artificial boundary could suddenly separate native people from their British allies. Interpenetrated and interdependent with the Six Nations, the British could not afford a rupture with their native allies."⁴⁰ Enforcing and underscoring indigenous sovereignty by resurrecting the east-west 1768 boundary line (in direct opposition to the north-south treaty line that now separated colonizers) reveals a key strategy of many first peoples on the eve of the 1784 treaty held at Fort Stanwix. For many Iroquois, carving out territory free from the clutches of the American land jobbers was of utmost importance.

Given the Iroquois needed the threat of the British to help defend their land and sovereignty claims, the Crown required the Iroquois to protect its economic interests in North America following defeat at the hands of the Patriots, and the bickering factions of the new Republic did not have the resources or foot soldiers to enforce the terms of the Treaty of Paris, the importance of the 1784 treaty held at Fort Stanwix should not be understated. In many respects, that fall almost every facet of empire in North America stood poised to be redefined. Once again, Iroquoia and the Ohio River valley emerged as the focal points of empire building. "Echoes of the oratory at Fort Stanwix were destined to be heard with little delay," Richard Manley writes, "in Quebec and London, in Richmond and Paris."⁴¹ The weight of undefined boundaries, land cessions, international and domestic power dynamics, and of course indigenous relations, all hung heavy in the air as indigenous and colonizer representatives made their way once again towards the Oneida Carry.

39 Quoted from Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 113-14.

40 Ibid., 113-15.

41 Manley, *Treaty of Fort Stanwix*, 62.

Gathering Again

In the fall of 1784, the Marquis François de Barbé-Marbois, Secretary of the French Legation to the United States and highest-ranking French official in North America, traveled north from Philadelphia into the heart of Iroquoia. “We are on our way to go to the settlements of the savage Oneidas,” Marbois wrote, as he meandered up the Hudson River. Documenting his journey along the way, Marbois intended to witness the first postwar treaty Congress arranged with the Iroquois.⁴² By meeting with the Iroquois at Fort Stanwix once independence was secured from the Crown, Congress sought to curb borderland hostilities, publicly define national and state boundaries, and establish the Indian protocol for a new continental order. As Marbois continued north, he noted that only five years prior soldiers and tents lined the river. Now flocks of sheep peacefully roamed the “slopes of the walls . . . [and] scaled the ramparts” of forts the “enemy erected at so much expense and with so little result.” Now “everything breathes liberty,” he delighted, “everything enjoys abundance, and peace attracts . . . a prodigious number of immigrants from Europe.”⁴³ Not long after disembarking his sloop at Albany, Marbois joined a young James Madison, the Chevalier de Caraman, and the widely admired General Lafayette. Together they soon began trekking westward towards the Oneida Carry. Along the way, Marbois cooked, Madison guided, Lafayette cared for the horses, and Caraman scouted for lodging. As the group traveled up the Mohawk River, the Marquis’s remarks began to change; “everything recalled the war to us.”⁴⁴ The devastation wrought by the American Revolution had crippled many Iroquois communities. Hunger gripped the region. Families of ten or more shared a single bed. For the smallest of payments, Marbois mused, Indian children clamored to help their group with any chore or task. As for the local colonizers, their numbers lessened, and blockades still surrounded their homes, as the men ventured farther west. Forced to leave behind their carriage at Germans Flatts due to deteriorating road conditions the group completed their journey on horseback. Uncertainty lingered in the air as François de Barbé-Marbois predicted the Iroquois would be little more than a memory “once civilization . . . extended its effects over all the world.”⁴⁵

On September 29, 1784, the group traversed the flats of the Oneida Carry to the main gates of a dilapidated Fort Stanwix. No longer a formidable statement of strength in Iroquoia, the fort had slipped into disrepair following the American Revolution. Surveying the grounds, Marbois noted that the cabins built to accommodate the arriving Indians were little more than “shelters of branches of trees whose dried leaves protected them against neither wind nor rain.” Marbois did not know that weeks earlier many Iroquois had already been present at the location negotiating with Governor Clinton. Nevertheless, unlike the lavishness of unbridled Crown diplomacy that filled bellies and housed thousands of Iroquois participants sixteen years before, the atmosphere in the fall of 1784 at Fort Stanwix was somber. An early frost and a cold drizzle aggravated the situation.⁴⁶

42 Eugene Parker Chase, ed., *Our Revolutionary Forefathers: The Letters of Francois, Marquis de Barbe-Marbois* (New York: Duffield and Co., 1929), 178. Also see David Andrew Nichols, “A Rejoinder to ‘Jefferson’s Notes on Virginia: Francois, Barbe-Marbois in Iroquoia, 1784,’” *New York History*, 84:4 (Fall 2003): 389-408.

43 Chase, *Our Revolutionary Forefathers*, 178-79.

44 *Ibid.*, 184-85.

45 *Ibid.*, 185-87.

46 *Ibid.*, 187.

Three weeks earlier, Clinton and his close associates (Peter Schuyler and interpreter Peter Ryckman) met with a disappointing number of Iroquois at the Oneida Carry. Paying little regard for federal authority, Clinton hoped to out strategize his colonizing competitors. By treating with the Indians directly, the governor aimed to obtain a land cession that encompassed much of the western reaches of Iroquoia, inclusive of the Niagara and Oswego frontiers. If successful, New York could capitalize on the sale of land and formalize their claim to the contested territory, much to the potential chagrin of Massachusetts and Congress. In order to make that happen, however, Clinton needed the support of the Iroquois; and that, he quickly realized in September 1784, was unlikely.

When Clinton requested the Iroquois to treat with him in 1784, both Patriot- and Loyalist-allied Iroquois proceeded carefully. Unlike Clinton's rivals who routinely underestimated his political savvy, the Iroquois were keenly aware of the governor's slippery magnetism. From Fort Niagara, the location of one the two largest refugee Iroquois populations, Confederacy chiefs and sachems made a conscience decision to only send "deputies" to meet with New York representatives. The warriors could make peace with Clinton, but had no authority to cede land, as they were not chiefs. Leading the Iroquois into diplomatic battle was Joseph Brant, and the Mohawk chief did not hesitate to speak his mind.⁴⁷ Following Clinton's welcome and address, Brant deliberated for a day as it poured rain. On September 7, 1784, Brant addressed the New Yorkers. Commenting on the Governor's attempt to negotiate with the Iroquois, Brant politely, but firmly, noted:

Brothers! You again spoke and made Us acquainted that the powers of managing Indian Affairs at large belonged to Congress, and that they had appointed Commissioners for this Purpose, and that You were appointed by this particular State, to manage Indians Affairs with Indians residing within the Bounds thereof, in Consequence of which You appear here at this Place. Here lies some Difficulty in our Minds, that there should be two separate Bodies to manage these Affairs, for this does not agree with our ancient Customs. This was the Reason why We made such a reply when your Messenger Mr. Ryckman came to our Country: it was the Voice of our Chiefs and their Confederates that We should first meet Commissioners of the whole thirteen States and after that if any Matters should remain between US and any particular State, that we should then attend to them: At the same Time We are fully determined notwithstanding all this to make a final Settlement with You & do all We can for that Purpose⁴⁸

And while the Iroquois had, in the past, juggled two or three colonizer polities to secure their interests, the situation in 1784 was much different and grave. Brant, and his associates knew this well and relinquished nothing to New York.

When Brant left Fort Stanwix 1784, he did so in haste, and before the negotiations at Fort Stanwix officially began. His intention to travel east towards London to seek confirmation of a tract of land in British Canada had been stalled by news of death and disease at Niagara. Doubling back to the Great Falls, Brant left Seneca Chief Cornplanter and Mohawk Captain Aaron Hill with the arduous tasks of reconfirming Indian territory as outlined in 1768, and opposing any further land cessions to the federal Indian agents. Unlike the negotiations of 1768, however, the new American government had little use

47 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 157.

48 Quoted from Manley, *Treaty of Fort Stanwix*, 70-71.

for the exaggerated prestige and authority long attributed to the Onondaga Council. As for Clinton, he left on September 11, frustrated and irritated. Unaccustomed to being outmaneuvered, Clinton kept scheming. He instructed Peter Schuyler and Peter Ryckman to stay behind to undermine federal intentions (arming the men with gallons upon gallons of rum), and assured the Oneidas gathered that he had no designs on their lands. He was lying through his teeth. But for the moment, Clinton was stymied.⁴⁹

Two weeks later, when Lafayette, Madison, Marbois, and Caraman realized the three Commissioners Plenipotentiary of the United States, Arthur Lee, Oliver Wolcott, and Richard Butler, had not yet arrived, they opted to push-on to Kanonwalohale the following morning. On September 30, after traversing what Marbois imagined to be a “barbarous and wild” road to the Indians, Samuel Kirkland and Oneida leaders welcomed the eighteenth-century celebrities.⁵⁰ For those Oneidas that pushed to support the rebelling colonials during the revolutionary war, the esteemed French and American guests represented heads of the new dominant polities that were now close allies. As a result, despite having little more to give, the Oneidas generously accommodated Marbois, Caraman, Lafayette, and Madison. Community leaders, warriors, and chiefs greeted the men in the central town hall under a white flag. After introductory formalities, the men dined on heaps of salmon, fresh milk, butter, fruit, and honey. They drank from wooden goblets (Lafayette being honored with the only glass goblet—albeit held together with gum), and were entertained by customary dance and speeches well into the early morning⁵¹ Many Oneida leaders must have reasoned their new “fathers” would reciprocate their overtures given the sacrifices their tribe had made that proved critical to securing American victory against the English Crown? Surely, the Oneidas would now have the ear of Congress much like the Mohawks had the ear of the English Crown? No doubt many Oneidas must have thought that it would only be a matter of time before Congress bestowed upon their Indian allies the gifts and assurances that had typified European-Iroquois relations for the two preceding centuries? Unfortunately, much like Marbois’ predication of the eventual vanishing of Indians in North America, many Oneidas, too, misjudged the situation.

On October 1, with sore heads and little sleep, Marbois, Caraman, Lafayette and Madison packed up, and returned to Fort Stanwix. Interestingly, Marbois made note of a fight that erupted before the group departed. Two Oneida brothers, one twenty-five years of age, the other twenty-eight, slugged it out with war clubs in front of the guests. They had fought on opposing sides during the rebellion, and the presence of the guests no doubt sparked debate. Luckily, the brothers reconciled after smoking a pipe together with their parents.⁵² Marbois’s recording of the event is important as it highlights the localized tensions that lingered in the homes and communities throughout Iroquoia. When the group returned to the Oneida Carry, the scene had changed. The Virginian congressman, French general and diplomats now brushed shoulders with warriors and chiefs from the Mohawk, Onondaga, Cayuga, Oneida,

49 Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years*, 45

50 Chase, *Our Revolutionary Forefathers*, 189.

51 Nichols, “A Rejoinder to ‘Jefferson’s Notes on Virginia,’” 398.

52 Chase, *Our Revolutionary Forefathers*, 201-2.

Seneca nations, as well as scores of other Native Americans from Canada. They all drank, ate, and speculated as they awaited the representatives from Congress.⁵³

The following day the three Indian agents arrived at the Oneida Carry. At three degrees below zero (Celsius) and drizzling for early October, it must have been a miserable day. Charged with solidifying federal power throughout northeast and Great Lakes region, Wolcott, Butler, and Lee faced formidable obstacles as they prepared to treat with the Iroquois gathered at Fort Stanwix. They had a complicated web of interests to unravel, identify, and address. So, too, did the representatives positioning themselves on behalf of New York, the French Crown, and the fractionalized tribes and communities of Iroquois. Once again, there was much up for grabs. This time, however, the Iroquois Confederacy would not be beneficiaries or speculators in empire. In this moment of undefined treaty protocol and the malleable legalities governing an emerging American empire, the 1784 treaty of Fort Stanwix became a crucial stage of interaction and a projection of what was to come.

Of utmost importance, Congress instructed the Indian commissioners, the terms of the treaty must be *dictated, not negotiated*. The representatives of the Iroquois Confederacy were to be viewed as defeated enemies, and subject to punishment under congressional terms. On October 3, the commissioners opened the “negotiations” with assembled Iroquois. Whether to impress or threaten, or a combination of both, Congress opted to send approximately one hundred and fifty Continental soldiers along with the three commissioners. At that time, those soldiers constituted one-third of the United States’ standing army. Given Clinton’s blatant refusal to heed to federal authority, it seems probable that the Indians were not the only people Congress sought to impress. Where sixteen years prior the Crown’s primary negotiator, William Johnson, sat surrounded by heaps of hard currency and literally boatloads of goods, Wolcott, Butler, and Lee commenced the formalities of treating with first peoples surrounded by soldiers. It was an ominous sign.

Gathered to witness what became the first treaty ratified by Congress were just over six hundred Indians. More than half of those in attendance were Oneidas. Oneida allies (Akwesasne and Kahnawake Iroquois, Mohicans, Tuscarora and Brothertown first peoples) constituted another one hundred and thirty plus participants. Less than thirty “deputies” of the British-allied Iroquois remained present after Brant departed.⁵⁴ And while the opening remarks of the first Indians speakers were enough to impress onlookers like Griffith Evans, an agent from Pennsylvania unfamiliar with treaty protocol, the welcomes and pageantry of the greetings were a skeletal version of what had come before. To be sure, the commissioners wasted little time with formalities and customary pleasantries. In their opening address, Oliver Wolcott got straight to the point. Any business made between individuals or States would not be recognized without the direct approval of Congress. Furthermore, peace would be granted to the Iroquois only if the Indians publicly acknowledge congressional “supremacy in Indian diplomacy,” returned all American captives, and made a gracious land cession to help ease the suffering of Americans that had been targeted by the Iroquois during the recent rebellion. Wolcott

53 Chase, *Our Revolutionary Forefathers*, 203.

54 American-allied: Oneidas (317, inclusive of “Col. Louis’ Family”), Akwesasne (21), Kahnawake (20), Mohican (65), Tuscarora (33), Brothertown (4). Crown-allied: Cayugas (7), Mohawks (2), Onondagas (5), Senecas (13). See Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 157-58.

specifically mentioned the frontiers of Niagara, Oswego, and lands west of Buffalo Creek. As we will see, the land cession demands were well calculated.⁵⁵

More than a week passed before the “defeated” Iroquois delivered a response. Conveniently plied with rum by New York’s agents, many Indians found brief respite from their dire situation in the bowels of a barrel. Angered by bold New Yorker attempts to undermine the proceedings, the Indian commissioners ordered the federal soldiers to seize and impound all the liquor being peddled by independent traders and State officials. The scene deteriorated further. In response, New York agents ordered the county sheriff to arrest the federal officers for theft. With the situation spiraling out of control, Wolcott, Butler, and Lee ordered the assembled soldiers to use the threat of force as a means to rid the council grounds of the pesky intruders.⁵⁶

No doubt empowered by the brief collapse of federal authority, on October 17 Mohawk chief Aaron Hill delivered a forceful reply. Speaking on behalf of the Iroquois *and* the western nations, Hill declared that “[w]e are free, and independent, and at present under no influence. We have hitherto been bound by the Great King, but he having broke the chain, and left us to ourselves, we are again free, and independent.” Going further, Hill added: “We are the only person to treat of, and conclude a peace, not only on the part of the Six Nations, but also on that of the Ottawas, Chippewas, Hurons, Potowatamas, Messasagas, Miamis, Delawares, Shawnees, Cherokees, Chicasas, Choctas, and Creeks, and establish peace in the name of them all.” It was a bold statement, harkening to a past that Hill and his like-minded Iroquois struggled to let go. As for the captives Congress demanded to be returned, Hill suggested that the commissioners themselves send a delegation back to the tribes to pick them up. The next day, Cornplanter followed Hill’s lead. The Seneca chief excused the actions of the Indians in the war and then, with some hesitation, set forth a proposed boundary line that mirrored that set in 1768.⁵⁷

Shocked by the defiance of the Iroquois, the commissioners spent a day commiserating before responding. Setting aside caution, on October 20 Butler addressed the Indians. Speaking on behalf of Congress, Butler found it “extraordinary” that the Iroquois should speak for the western Indians, because only the Six Nations had been summoned to treat, and he asked for some authority, either in writing or in wampum belts, without which “your words will pass away like the winds of yesterday that are heard no more.” The commissioners further dismissed Covenant Chain justifications for having entered the war. “Where was your sense of covenants . . . when after solemnly covenanting with us in 1775, and again as solemnly in 1776, receiving our presents to cover you, to comfort you, and to strengthen you—immediately you took up the hatchet against us, and struck was will all your might?” Butler then turned to Hill, in particular, and added: “It is not so. You are a subdued people; you have been overcome in a war which you entered into with us, not without provocation, but in violation of your most sacred obligations.” As for the prisoners, Butler blasted, the Iroquois are a defeated and abandoned people. Given that the Indians have not provided the Americans the “smallest satisfaction,” the commissioners demanded the Iroquois

55 Ibid., 158.

56 Neville, B. Craig, ed., *The Olden Time: A Monthly Publication Devoted to the Preservation of Documents and Other authentic information in relation to the early explorations, and the settlement and improvement of the country around the head of the Ohio*, 2 vols. (R. Clarke and Co., 1876), 406-7, 411.

57 Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years*, 46.

locate, collect, and deliver the said captives as per the terms of Congress. Butler then turned to the boundary line.⁵⁸ Butler dismissed the idea that the 1768 boundary would remain unaltered, and reminded the Iroquois that Congress demanded a land cession that encompassed the frontiers of Oswego and Niagara and lands west of Buffalo Creek. “We shall now therefore . . . declare to you the condition,” Butler continued, “on which alone you can be received into the peace and protection of the United States.” He then read the previously prepared terms of the imposed treaty:

Article I.

Six hostages shall be immediately delivered to the commissioners by the said nations, to remain in possession of the United States, till all the prisoners, white and black, which were taken by the said Senecas, Mohawks, Onondagas and Cayugas, or by any of them, in the late war, from among the people of the United States, shall be delivered up.

Article II.

The Oneida and Tuscarora nations shall be secured in the possession of the lands on which they are settled.

Article III.

A line shall be drawn, beginning at the mouth of a creek about four miles east of Niagara, called Oyonwavea, or Johnston’s Landing-Place, upon the lake named by the Indians Oswego, and by us Ontario; from thence southerly in a direction always four miles east of the carrying-path, between Lake Erie and Ontario, to the mouth of Tehoseroron or Buffaloe Creek on Lake Erie; thence south to the north boundary of the state of Pennsylvania; thence west to the end of the said north boundary; thence south along the west boundary of the said state, to the river Ohio; the said line from the mouth of the Oyonwayea to the Ohio, shall be the western boundary of the lands of the Six Nations, so that the Six Nations shall and do yield to the United States, all claims to the country west of the said boundary, and then they shall be secured in the peaceful possession of the lands they inhabit east and north of the same, reserving only six miles square round the fort of Oswego, to the United States, for the support of the same.

Article IV.

The Commissioners of the United States, in consideration of the present circumstances of the Six Nations, and in execution of the humane and liberal views of the United States upon the signing of the above articles, will order goods to be delivered to the said Six Nations for their use and comfort.

“They are the terms on which you may obtain perpetual peace with the United States, and enjoy their protection,” Butler abruptly concluded. “You must be sensible that these are the blessings, which can not be purchased at too high a price. Be wise, and answer us accordingly.” Overcome, outnumbered, and no doubt humbled, the Iroquois deputies signed the treaty on October 22, 1784 (Figure). Shortly thereafter, the commissioners sanctioned the distribution of a smattering of presents the Indians desperately required. The federal soldiers, along with six Iroquois hostages, were ordered to remain at the Oneida Carry

58 Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years*, 46-47.

until the Iroquois returned all war captives to Fort Stanwix. Then, a day later on October 23, 1784, with the blessing of Wolcott, Butler, and Lee, Pennsylvania agents “negotiated” another land cession with the Iroquois deputies. For a meager \$5000 in Indian goods, Pennsylvania gained a huge swath of land and thus abolished all remaining Iroquois claims to their state “except for eight hundred acres on the Allegheny River reserved for Cornplanter and his heirs.” The treaty terms and subsequent land cession to Pennsylvania marked a colossal diplomatic defeat for the assembled Iroquois.⁵⁹

As Alan Taylor notes, the new boundary line is striking because the commissioners sought to “define the *western* margin of Iroquoia, rather than the eastern, where settlers were encroaching. From a federal perspective, the critical matter was to affirm that the peace treaty with the British established a firm international boundary . . . [and a] strip of federal territory along the Niagara River prevented the Six Nations from interposing between British Canada and American New York.”⁶⁰ (Figure 21) Furthermore, by defining the western limits of Iroquoia, federal control over these areas would undermine New York’s recent bid to claim and empower Congress to control the route and trade goods flowing into, and out of, the region.

While the Iroquois deputies prepared to depart Fort Stanwix, worried about the news they had to carry westward, the gathered Oneidas and their allies expressed great satisfaction with the 1784 treaty terms. After all, the Indian commissioners and Lafayette had honored them as allies of both Congress and the French King, they had their homelands mentioned specifically in the terms of the treaty and a commitment by Congress to protect their boundaries, and they secured a guarantee from the commissioners that federal funds would be used to rebuild key Oneida settlements. Samson Occom, a Mohegan Presbyterian cleric, who along with Kirkland joined the Oneidas at Fort Stanwix, optimistically remarked that the “old Cruel Hatchet” and American “Bloody Sword” had been deeply buried in the ground. After smoking the ‘Long Pipe of Peace,’ the Oneidas and their indigenous allies formed a circle with their American brethren. The Indians sang “the Song of Peace and Love,” while scores of Indians danced with great celebration. “Now I think that this Land,” Occom wrote, “may truly be call’d the Land of Peace, Unity, Freedom, Liberty, and Independence.”⁶¹ Occom could not have been more wrong.



59 1784 Treaty of Fort Stanwix, accessed March 10 2013, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/six1784.asp. For Butler quotes, see Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years*, 46-48. The treaty was signed by the following people:

Indian Commissioners: Oliver Wolcott; Richard Butler; Arthur Lee

Mohawks: Onogwendahonji, his x mark; Touighnatogon, his x mark

Onondagas: Oheadarighton, his x mark; Kendarindgon, his x mark

Senekas: Tayagonendagighti, his x mark; Tehonwaeaghrigagij his x mark

Oneidas: Otyadonenghti, his x mark; Dagaheari, his x mark

Cayuga: Oraghoanendagen, his x mark

Tuscaroras: Ononghsawenghti, his x mark; Tharondawagon, his x mark

Seneka Abeal: Kayenthoghke, his x mark

Witnesses: Sam. Jo. Atlee; Wm. Maclay; Fras. Johnston; James Dean; Saml. Montgomery; Derick Lane, captain

Pennsylvania Commissioners: John Mercer, lieutenant Aaron Hill; Alexander Campbell; Saml. Kirkland, missionary; William Pennington, lieutenant; Mahlon Elord, ensign; Hugh Peebles.

60 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 159-60.

61 *Ibid.*, 160-61.

The start of colonial rebellion marked the beginning of the end for those Indians and Europeans who attempted to maintain or guide imperial designs in the early America. The 1784 treaty officially removed the Iroquois as primary players in, and benefactor of, empire. No longer considered treaty-worthy by American imperialists, the Iroquois Confederacy could no longer orchestrate treaties with consequences of continental proportion. The second treaty held at Fort Stanwix underscored the new, restricted, negotiating parameters for the Iroquois. By publicly demonstrating an unwillingness to treat with the Iroquois (or any other Indian nation as allies and equals), Wolcott, Butler, and Lee did much more than demand land and prisoners. The Revolution may have caused serious civil conflict, but it was the American marginalization of the Iroquois (through treaty and protocol dismissal) that snuffed out the authority of first peoples in continental affairs — or rather, in the legal requirements of colonization. To realize their own North American aspirations, federal officials longed to bury the pesky legacies of the past, and gathering of the Iroquois at the Oneida Carry in 1784 signaled the first step towards extending the boundaries of their new nation.

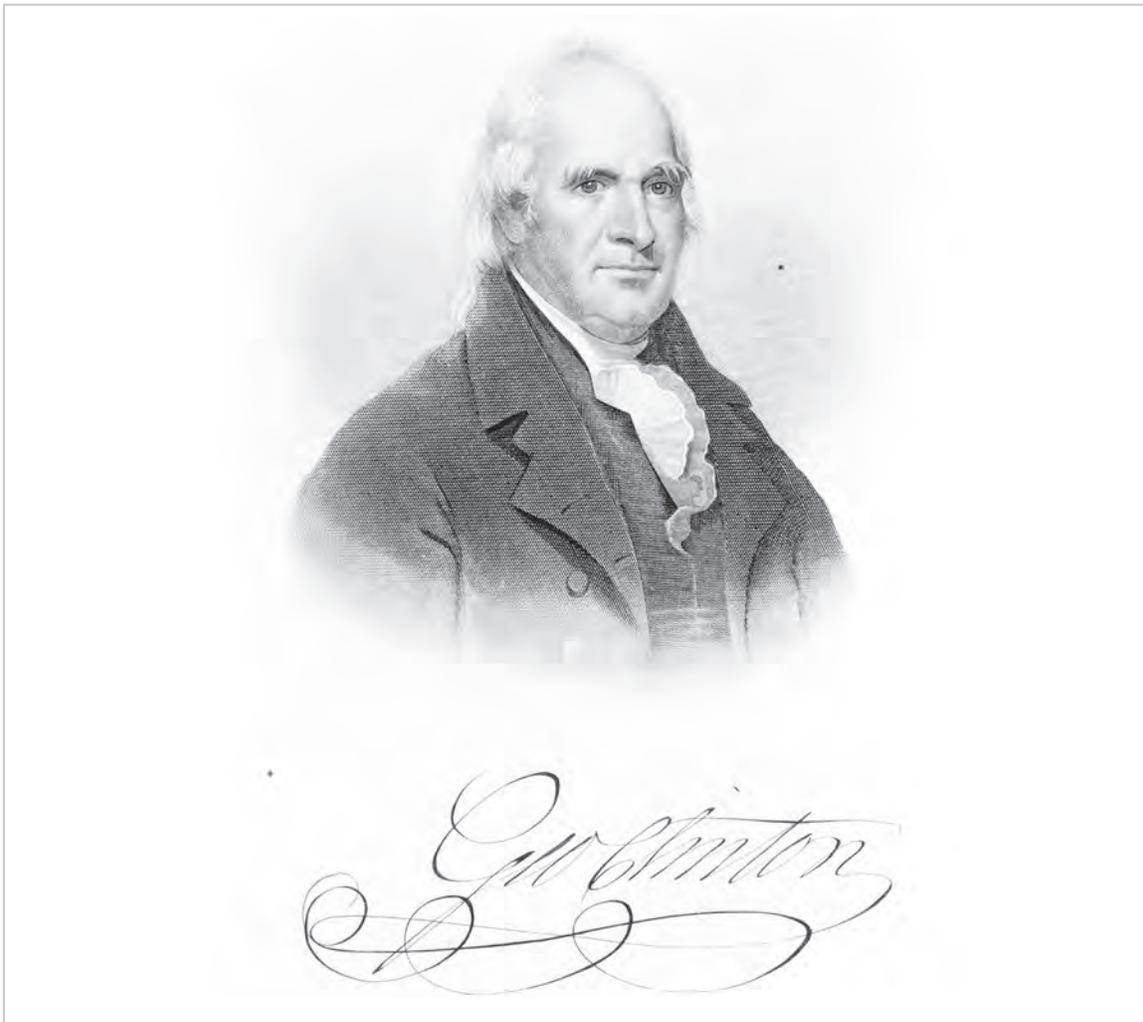


Figure 16. George Clinton

Engraving of George Clinton, 1739–1812, painted by Ezra Ames; engraved by John Chester Buttre.
Courtesy of the Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/94505261/>

ARTICLES of a TREATY,

Concluded at FORT STANWIX, on the twenty-second day of October, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four, between Oliver Wolcott, Richard Butler and Arthur Lee, COMMISSIONERS PLENIPOTENTIARY from the United States in Congress assembled, on the one Part, and the SACHEMS and WARRIORS of the SIX NATIONS on the other.

THE United States of America give peace to the Senecas, Mohawks, Onondagas and Cayugas, and receive them into their protection upon the following conditions.

Article 1. Six hostages shall be immediately delivered to the commissioners by the said nations, to remain in possession of the United States, till all the prisoners white and black, which were taken by the said Senecas, Mohawks, Onondagas and Cayugas, or by any of them in the late war, from among the people of the United States, shall be delivered up.

Art. 2. The Oneida and Tuscarora nations shall be secured in the possession of the lands on which they are settled.

Art. 3. A line shall be drawn, beginning at the mouth of a creek about four miles east of Niagara, called Oyonwayea or Johnson's Landing Place, upon the lake named by the Indians Oswego, and by us Ontario, from thence southerly in a direction always four miles east of the carrying path, between lake Erie and Ontario, to the mouth of Tehoferoron or Buffalo creek on lake Erie, thence south to the north boundary of the state of Pennsylvania, thence west to the end of the said north boundary, thence south along the west boundary of the said state, to the river Ohio, the said line from the mouth of the Oyonwayea to the Ohio, shall be the western boundary of the lands of the Six Nations, so that the Six Nations shall and do yield to the United States, all claims to the country west of the said boundary, and then they shall be secured in the peaceful possession of the lands they inhabit east and north of the same, reserving only six miles square round the fort of Oswego, to the United States, for the support of the same.

Art. 4. The Commissioners of the United States in consideration of the present circumstances of the Six Nations, and in execution of the humane and liberal views of the United States upon the signing of the above articles, will order goods to be delivered to the said Six Nations for their use and comfort.

Mohawks,	his	ONOGWENDAHONJI, ✕ ()	
	mark.		
Onondagas,	his	TORWIGHNATOGON, ✕ ()	OLIVER WOLCOTT, (L.S.)
	mark.		RICHARD BUTLER, (L.S.)
Senecas,	his	OHEADARIGHTON, ✕ ()	ARTHUR LEE, (L.S.)
	mark.		
Senecas,	his	KENDARINDGON, ✕ ()	
	mark.		
Senecas,	his	TAYAGONENDAGIGHTI, ✕ ()	
	mark.		
Senecas,	his	TEHONWAEAGHRIYAGI, ✕ ()	
	mark.		
[Signers carried forward.]			OTYADONENGHTI,

Figure 17. The 1784 Treaty of Fort Stanwix.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MISTREATED ALLIES: 1788 TREATY OF FORT STANWIX

The geopolitical uncertainty of the late eighteenth century in North America made it increasingly difficult for the Iroquois to negotiate from a position of power. Unlike the past when competing imperial interests courted the Iroquois (and in turn indigenous negotiators leveraged the weight of their Confederacy to maintain sovereignty), the mid-1780s marked a transitional moment whereby a shifting continental dynamic eclipsed the protocols of exchange and recognition. Immediately following colonial independence, the Iroquois faced an aloof British Crown on one hand, and the many heads of a land-hungry American hydra on the other hand. As the Crown half-heartedly tried to lure the Iroquois north while Congress sought to bait them back south, Iroquoia quickly emerged as a zone of legal and political uncertainty. Left to face the relentless attacks of speculators, con-artists, and thieves bent on dispossession, Iroquois communities began to buckle under postwar disunity, tribal fragmentation, and alcohol abuse. For most Indians, simply trying to identify a path to survival seemed impossible. As it became increasingly clear that their lands were being targeted many Iroquois placed their faith in local leadership, both indigenous and white, to guide them through the aftermath of war. But ravenous speculators capitalized on Iroquois divisiveness, an inept Crown, and a distracted Congress. Making matters worse, with funding plummeting for Indian affairs, many trusted protectors of the Iroquois soon became advocates of, and wealthy from, dispossession. In short, whether by conspiracy or complacency, the dispossession of the Iroquois occurred at a staggering pace immediately following the 1784 Treaty of Fort Stanwix. As we will see, the 1780s marked an unparalleled time of egregious betrayals and broken covenant chains. Mistreated by the Crown, Congress, and their colonizing neighbors, many first peoples throughout Iroquoia fell victim to the vultures of imperialism.

The political uncertainties and legal ambiguities that blanketed the region during the late eighteenth century typified the atmosphere and terms of both the 1788 and 1790 treaties held at Fort Stanwix. The British Crown may have agreed to the terms of the Paris Treaty of 1783, but Redcoats still controlled the forts and trade routes throughout much of the Great Lakes. Congress may have proclaimed authority over the buying and selling of Indian lands, but states, land companies, and individuals continued to purchase and scheme. Iroquois Confederacy chiefs may have met, offered condolences, and proclaimed to stand as one against aggressive colonization, but tribes and communities remained bruised and divided. In the late 1780s, speculation reigned about the stability of the American republic, the strength of the British Crown, and most importantly, the future of Iroquois lands.

Reactions

The terms of the 1784 treaty at Fort Stanwix demonstrated to State and land-company lobbyists that Congress had no intention to relinquish federal claim to Iroquoia. In fact, the Indian commissioners that concluded the 1784 terms explicitly made a point of defining the western boundaries of the lands occupied, and claimed, by the Iroquois. The Niagara frontier, still the bulwark of Loyalist-allied indigenous occupation in territory ceded following

the American Revolution, was carefully considered. Congress reasoned that the farther west they could establish the boundary of Iroquoia the stronger their claim would be to the region. This move reinforced the terms of the Treaty of Paris, undercut New York and Massachusetts bids to the region, and hoped to squash unsanctioned land speculation. In theory, the treaty of 1784 underscored federal authority over the sale of as much land as possible occupied (and previously claimed) by the Iroquois.

For the Iroquois, when news of the new boundary line filtered back to Confederacy Chiefs at Buffalo Creek it was met with anger. Not only had more land been forcefully taken in 1784, the proposed new boundary promised to sever Iroquois communities along the southern Great Lakes. Dismissed as an act of “force on their captive delegates,” the 1784 terms were roundly repudiated by not only the Iroquois but also by scores of other tribes worried about the precedent the treaty threatened to set. Nevertheless, Loyalist Iroquois pondered the perils of dispossession when Congress paid no heed to their remonstrations.¹

Having forecasted American aggression towards the Iroquois, Joseph Brant pressed the Crown to produce an alternative for those Indians that fought against the rebels. On October 25, 1784, only three days following the signing of the second Fort Stanwix treaty, Sir Fredrick Haldimand, the Governor of the Province of Québec, issued a proclamation on behalf of the English Crown. “Whereas His Majesty having been pleased to direct that in consideration of the early attachment to his cause manifested by the Mohawk Indians and of the loss of their settlement which they thereby sustained,” Haldimand proclaimed, “that a convenient tract of land under his protection should be chosen as a safe and comfortable retreat for them and others of the Six Nations, who have either lost their settlements within the Territory of the American States.” More specifically, Haldimand guaranteed the first peoples that resettled in British Canada a tract “situated between the Lakes Ontario, Erie and Huron . . . upon the Banks of the River commonly called Ours [Ouse] or Grand River, running into Lake Erie, allotting to them for that purpose six miles deep from each side of the river beginning at Lake Erie and extending in that proportion to the head of the said river, which them and their posterity are to enjoy for ever.”² (Figure 18)

Earlier that year, in May 1784, Haldimand secured a land cession from a group of Mississaugas. For £1,180, the Governor of the Province of Québec obtained what would become a contentious claim to over 385,000 hectares of land; the same land he entrusted to Brant five months later. From the beginning, contention plagued the nature of land cession. Surprising, the immediate disputes had less to do with the questionable purchase of the territory from only a portion of the Mississaugas and more to do with issues of Iroquois sovereignty. For colonial administrators operating in the wake of American independence, Haldimand’s proclamation was conveniently viewed as an agreement similar to an Indian reservation held in Crown trust. As such, the Crown maintained, the Iroquois were welcome to settle in British Canada but were prohibited from selling or leasing the land they settled upon. The Crown wanted the refugee Indians to remain along the Grand River (as well as the Bay of Quinte) to act as a buffer to the independent American colonizers to the south. For Brant and other Indians seeking to migrate north,

1 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 160.

2 Indian Records, R.G. 10, Ser. 2, XV, 132-33; B222, 106. NAC.

Haldimand's proclamation was no differently than those that had come before: another iteration of the many agreements between nations that defined boundaries, and more importantly, upheld Iroquois sovereignty. Accordingly, Brant had assumed he could, and did, sell and lease portions of the tract.³ Given the terms of the 1768 treaty that accentuated this notion of Iroquois sovereignty, in 1784 it is not surprisingly why Brant or anyone else assumed different. That being said, it would take less than a decade before the British Crown felt confident enough on the continent to try and legally redefine Haldimand's proclamation with the contentious 1793 Simcoe Patent (and the muddled legal legacies are still with us today).⁴

Almost a decade preceding Haldimand's proclamation, as recalled earlier, Joseph Brant traveled to London to negotiate the price of an Iroquois alliance with the Crown. Guy Johnson, the successor of Sir William and recently deposed Superintendent of Indian Affairs, accompanied Brant. Like other speculators in the British empire, Brant knew well that advancing his position and livelihood required the shining of the chain that had long connected the Iroquois with the Crown. While in London, Brant assumed the role of the loyal and noble savage. He adorned traditional Indian dress and spoke of North America's wild Indian country. The Mohawk chief capitalized on his celebrity by playing into how the English sought to see him. In other words, Brant manipulated his hosts like a master diplomat. When he departed for New York in the summer of 1776, Brant carried with him promises of allegiance and protection should the Iroquois join the Crown and suppress the colonial rebellion.

In the fall of 1784, after traveling among the western nations to help organize a confederacy to defend the 1768 boundary, Brant arrived at the Oneida Carry. Once he stymied Governor Clinton's efforts to pillage the Iroquois of their lands, Brant pressed on. While the Butler, Lee, and Wolcott engaged words with the remaining Iroquois at the second treaty of Fort Stanwix, Brant hurried to Niagara to tend to family, and then planned for another journey to London. Arriving in England in December 1785, Brant "renewed his standing as a celebrity entertained by the aristocracy and the urban literati."⁵ And while Brant again enjoyed hobnobbing among the social elite, his second visit to London exposed a harsh reality. Whitehall was unwilling to commit anything tangible in terms of an official policy to the white Loyalists in the American colonies, and even less to those first peoples and Africans that had fought the rebels. Undeterred, Brant carefully petitioned those that would listen. He departed London in the spring of 1786 with a hefty pension for life (5 shillings per day), a shaky promise from Lord Sydney to compensate the Mohawks to the tune of £15,000 (over £2,300 of which was designated for Joseph and Molly Brant), but no firm commitment in support of a new sweeping Indian policy.⁶ Upon his return to North America, Brant complained at length about the ineptitude of Parliament to his indigenous compatriots. He had good reason to do so. At the same time, though, Brant kept accepting what he could from those hands that fed his interests.

3 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 119-21.

4 "Copy of the Simcoe Deed also known as Treaty No. 3½." April 1, 1793, Indian Affairs, RG10 Volume 1850 IT 006, NAC.

5 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 254.

6 *Ibid.*, 255; Colin Calloway, *Crown and Calumet: British-Indian Relations, 1783-1815*, (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 101.

Meanwhile, the Oneidas and other Patriot-allied Iroquois warmly championed the 1784 Fort Stanwix treaty. During the council the federal Indian commissioners praised the Oneidas as esteemed guests. The commissioners publically vowed to protect Oneida lands, support Kirkland's mission, and funnel federal funds to Kanonwalohale to rebuild the church and community. "As the Oneidas saw it," Alan Taylor writes, "the [1784] Fort Stanwix treaty operated as an ideal treaty council should: reaffirming an alliance and providing presents without compelling any land cessions from them."⁷ In fact, the Oneida's quick elevation of status compelled many Onondagas to recognize the tribe as the "head of the Six late confederated Nations."⁸ But celebrations were short lived. In early 1785 Congress had no interest in treating the Oneidas as the new heads of the Six Nations, never mind nurturing an alliance with them. Essentially bankrupt and politically outmaneuvered by New York in their attempt to amend the Articles of Confederation to raise federal taxes, Congress limped and wheezed into the last half of the 1780s. Accurately diagnosing the political landscape, New Yorkers began testing the strength of federal authority. New York surveyors trickled into Iroquoia, first eyeing the lands around Fort Stanwix. Angered, the Oneidas sent a delegation to Congress to protest the blatant infraction of treaty terms and petitioned to have Philip Schuyler appointed as their Superintendent. But Schuyler and Congress both rebuffed the overtures. Because capital was needed as confederation waned in postwar America, promises made to the Oneidas soon turned to lies. Mistreated allies, scores of Indians scrambled to survive.

Oneida Land

Stretching south from the banks of the St. Lawrence River through the heart of Iroquoia, Oneida lands stood at the precipice of American imperialism in the 1780s. When the dust of war settled scores of speculators turned their attention to Oneida country. One of the first intrusions occurred only weeks after the 1784 treaty concluded. That November, Colonel John Harper nefariously obtained a land cession. Harper, a Patriot war hero that led a number of Iroquois into battle, was fluent in Oneida and close with a number of prominent Kanonwalohale warriors. Seeking to cash in on his ties with the Indians, Harper visited Kanonwalohale bent on obtaining clear title to a tract of land on the upper Susquehanna River. He intended to secure his future by opening the region to colonization. The Colonel soaked his Indian hosts in liquor. Afterwards, he departed Kanonwalohale with a signed deed to over 100,000 acres of land leaving a dead Oneida in his wake. Within weeks, Harper was peddling the lands to potential colonizers.⁹

Immediately, Oneida leadership at both Kanonwalohale and Oriske rejected the land cession. Not only had the deed been signed by only a fraction of Oneida leadership empowered to conclude such an agreement, but the means by which Harper obtained the signatories was also noted. Seeking justice, in January 1785 the Oneidas took their anger directly to New York. Weeks passed as the matter was debated between the state Senate and the Assembly. Frustrated, the Oneida delegation returned to Iroquoia. Then, after months of consideration, in early April the Houses reached a compromise. While New York politicians were keen to

⁷ Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 160. For council proceedings, see "Fort Stanwix Council Proceedings, Oct 20, 1784," in Craig, *Olden Time*, 425-26.

⁸ Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 161.

⁹ Tiro, *People of the Standing Stone*, 67; Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 162.

support efforts that would place New Yorkers along the banks Susquehanna, thus undermining Massachusetts bids at the region, both Houses wanted to avoid setting a bad precedent. As historian Kiram Tiro concisely observes, in the end New York did not object to so much to *how* Harper obtained the deed, but rather because the sale had been “executed by private interests.” In other words, New York politicians worried that if they approved Harper’s deed the action would ultimately undermine the state’s constitution, and thus the state’s self-proclaimed “‘pre-emption right’ on the future purchase of Indian land.”¹⁰

Meanwhile, Governor Clinton schemed. Once the legislature reached a decision, Clinton acted fast. In early May he approved of a plan to send Peter Ryckman to Kanonwalohale to meet with the Oneidas. Wasting no time, that spring Ryckman traveled west from Albany with clear objectives. As Clinton’s mouthpiece Ryckman publically disapproved of the Harper deed but did not go as far as telling the Oneidas of the legislature’s recent ruling. Instead, Ryckman construed the situation to facilitate Clinton’s plan. To avoid problems like the Harper deed in the future, Ryckman announced, it would be wise for Oneida leadership to convene with Governor Clinton as soon as possible. Ryckman thenceforth extended an invitation to the primary chiefs and sachems of the Oneida to treat with Clinton the following June at Fort Herkimer.¹¹ Wary of Ryckman’s intentions and still clinging to the hope that Congress would financially support his mission, Samuel Kirkland lamented about the invitation to meet with Clinton especially while many Oneidas struggled to survive.¹² Kirkland’s apprehensions were well founded.

During his stay with the Oneidas Ryckman also made note of the state of his surroundings. While being debriefed upon his return to New York, Ryckman made particular mention of the deplorable living conditions at Kanonwalohale. The Indians were starving. Alcohol abuse was extensive and increasingly corrosive. Poverty gripped the community. For New York’s agenda, the Indian commissioners informed Clinton, the atmosphere was *ideal*. For mere pennies of sundry goods, the commissioners predicted, New York could ruthlessly squeeze thousands of acres of land from the beleaguered Oneidas at the upcoming council.¹³

In anticipation of the council at Fort Herkimer, Clinton organized. He courted Oneida-fluent James Dean to serve as the State’s interpreter and studied maps of the southwestern borderlands between New York and Pennsylvania. Having been foiled at Fort Stanwix the year before, Clinton prepared for payback. On June 23, 1785, council proceedings formally opened at Fort Herkimer. The fort, originally built in 1740 to protect the homestead of the Herscheimer (Herkimer) family and previously known as Fort *Kaouri* (Bear), was located opposite of Canada Creek on the south side of the Mohawk River near German Flats. Rebuilt during the revolution the palisade now played host to scores of Oneida and Tuscarora Indians that had come to hold council at Clinton’s request. Dismissing Iroquois treaty protocol, Clinton went straight for the jugular. In order to

10 Tiro, *People of the Standing Stone*, 67.

11 “Governor Clinton to the New York Delegates in Congress Appraising Them of the Approaching Adjournment of the Legislature. April 11, 1785,” in Hastings, ed., *Public Papers of George Clinton*, VIII: 381-83; Tiro, *People of the Standing Stone*, 67; Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 162-63.

12 Glatthaar and Martin, *Forgotten Allies*, 305.

13 Franklin B. Hough, ed., *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs*, 2 vols, (Albany, Joel Munsell, 1861), 77-78.

“protect” the Oneidas and Tuscaroras from unwanted advances on their lands Clinton offered a compromise to what he touted as the lingering problems associated with the Harper deed. Consciously hiding the fact that New York’s legislature had already ruled against Harper (a tactic he would repeat four years later), Clinton suggested the Oneidas cede even more land along the Pennsylvania-New York boundary. In total, the governor sought a land cession almost five times the area of Harper’s fraudulent deed. Shocked to hear that Clinton sought land, let alone an area of such grand magnitude, the assembled Indians convened and deliberated before responding. Clinton rejected the return offer of a much smaller and mountainous region of land. The governor then produced “a heap of money & told some of our nation to take up a handful,” Oneida Chief Good Peter recalled, and encouraged the Indians to reconsider. But Good Peter, the main speaker for the warriors, stood firm. “Since last Winter, We had determined not to sell any of our Lands,” Good Peter insisted, “and that the Boundaries fixed should remain.” Instead of purchasing the land, the Oneida chief proposed, New York could *lease* the land “in the Manner they are done by the White People, along the Boundary Line throughout the Extent of our Country.” To be clear, Good Peter concluded, “We cannot sell any more of our Lands and this Leasing may be an Income to our Children.”¹⁴ (Figure 19)

Not long after Good Peter explained that the Oneidas required knowledgeable people to help administer the lease proposal, Clinton rose and addressed the Indians. Seething, the governor communicated to the Indians his disdain for the leasing proposal. Unwilling to make room for indigenous landlords in his worldview, Clinton adopted a much more threatening tone. If the Oneidas did not sell land to New York the State could not protect the Indians from the hordes of colonizers poised and salivating along the existing boundary line. If a land cession does not happen now, Clinton puffed, the devastation that will soon follow will be “your Fault and not ours.” Bullying the Oneidas to the point of reconsideration, Clinton also attacked the character of Good Peter whom he suggested was at the very least a Crown sympathizer.¹⁵

That night fear and disagreement divided the Oneidas as they deliberated. The next morning Peter the Quarter Master (Beech Tree) replaced Good Peter as the principle speaker for the assembled Indians. Beech Tree (who was a signatory on the Harper deed) addressed Clinton with much more agreeable terms. In an about-face, the Oneidas offered to cede to New York a whopping 460,000 acres of land. For less than four cents per acre the assembled Indians agreed to part with prime hunting grounds in return for a mere \$11,500 (payable half in provisions and half in cash).¹⁶ The principle reasoning of those Indians that supported the sale hinged upon immediate need. First, for a society facing starvation and widespread social collapse, the speedy relief provided by goods and provisions should not be underestimated. Further, fearing their lands would be overrun and no compensation would be obtained if left to deal with private land companies and speculators many Oneidas concluded that making a deal with Clinton had limited, but tangible, benefits. One of those benefits, in addition to securing goods and provisions was the ability to ebb the relentless waves of colonization. To this end, the terms of the 1785 council reveal another interesting aspect. At the most eastern

14 Ibid., 92-93.

15 Ibid., 97, 102-5; Tiro, *People of the Standing Stone*, 69-70.

16 “Treaty Between the Oneida and Tuscarora and New York” June 28, 1785, in Hazard, ed., *Pennsylvania Archives*, Third Series, XI: 508-9; Glatthaar and Martin, *Forgotten Allies*, 306.

edges of the land cession the Oneidas “granted land to a cadre of cultural mediators whom they hoped would prove trustworthy and useful.”¹⁷ These designees for special consideration include Samuel Kirkland, James Dean, and a blacksmith named Abraham Wemple. The New York legislature, pleased with their haul of Indian land, tentatively approved the cession of land to the three men. The politicians knew well that the men would need a State patent to secure clear title and bet that Kirkland, Dean, and Wemple favored their pocket-books more than their friendships with the Oneidas.¹⁸

“And so the pattern went,” historians Joseph Glatthaar and James Kirby Martin conclude. New York representatives “employed all means honest and dishonest to gain more and more Oneida territory” in the years that followed. Land hungry speculators began to aggressively exploit and pillage the Oneidas that were buckling under internal divisions. Samuel Kirkland, too, succumbed to the temptations of personal security and fortune. At the expense of those Indians remaining in Iroquoia, Kirkland began to tout assimilation as the only option for Oneida survival. Having had a taste of the material benefits reaped from his Indian connections, Kirkland slowly began to encourage his devout flock to “breakup their holding into private and individual family farms like the Americans.” Put plainly, instead of providing protection against dispossession Kirkland became a principle conduit to Oneida removal.¹⁹

Meanwhile, a 1785 census noted that just fewer than two thousand first peoples had already relocated to what would become the Grand River Six Nations reserve in Upper Canada. Almost 500 Mohawks led this refugee migration, followed by scores of other Iroquois and 400 Indians from other tribes including Delawares, Nanticokes, Tutelos, and even some Creeks and Cherokees. Like their brothers who opted to remain in Iroquoia, they too “felt the searing pain of forsaking the spirits of their ancestors and leaving their beloved homeland totally unprotected.” Seeking balance and security, the refugees soon rekindled the council fire of the Six Nations along the Grand River and started to rebuild. The Oneidas south of the Great Lakes were less fortunate. Mistreated by their Patriot allies, “widespread despondency” gripped the region, and made it more likely for those Indians remaining “to sell off huge parcels of once-sacred territory to speculators and land agents of various kinds.” Just a couple of years after the Fort Herkimer cession, the shadow of New York once again darkened Iroquoia.²⁰

Greedy New Yorkers

Within two years of the Fort Herkimer cession, New York pocketed more than \$125,000 with the sale of 343,594 acres of Oneida lands to hungry colonizers. At more than a one thousand percent profit on the initial purchase, Clinton looked for an opportunity to repeat. But lingering Massachusetts’ claims to Iroquoia risked complicating New York designs for the region. New York’s recent windfall, though, exacerbated Massachusetts hopes to lay claim to Indian lands to the West, and forced Governor James Bowdoin to compromise. In December 1786, at a meeting in Hartford, Connecticut, New

17 Tiro, *People of the Standing Stone*, 71.

18 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 165.

19 Glatthaar and Martin, *Forgotten Allies*, 306-7; J. David Lehman, “The End of the Iroquois Mystique: The Oneida Land Cession Treaties of the 1780s,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 47, no.4 (Oct. 1990), 540-41.

20 Lehman, “End of the Iroquois Mystique,” 541.

York and Massachusetts delegates reached terms. State representatives agreed to divide their so-called preemption rights, leaving Massachusetts with a tentative right to six million acres of Indian lands. But like most newly formed States, Massachusetts was cash-strapped following colonial independence and quickly unloaded their “rights” to speculators. Taking the lion’s share at three cents per acre were speculators Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham.²¹

As Clinton and his associates in New York prepared to strike again, other New Yorkers also worked to capitalize on recently exposed Iroquois lands. In the autumn of 1787, knowing well the framers of the U.S. Constitution were in Philadelphia busily working on creating a new governing document for the emerging American empire, a speculation syndicate focused on obtaining a huge swath of Iroquoia went to work. That November, Colonel John Livingston, backed by personal wealth and a slew of influential members of New York’s legislature, along with Philip Schuyler, negotiated a lease with Senecas, Cayugas, and Onondagas chiefs at Kanadasega on behalf of the Genesee Company of Adventurers. For a single payment of \$20,000 and “the yearly Rent or Sum of Two Thousand Spanish Milled Dollars,” Livingston obtained a staggering 13 million acres under a 999-year *lease* term. By leasing the land, Livingston and his investors had seemingly skirted the State prohibition on the sale of Indian lands to individuals. Following the Kanadasega lease, with most of western Iroquoia in his pocket, Livingston turned East towards Kanonwalohale.²²

Prior to the council at Kanonwalohale Livingston courted those cultural brokers close to the Oneidas, like Kirkland and Dean, as well as key Oneida war chiefs, like Captain Jacob Reed and Colonel Louis. Offering cash payments and grand promises to all those that supported his plan, Livingston soon garnered the support he required. In early January 1788, the Oneida chiefs at Kanonwalohale leased approximately five million acres of their homeland to Livingston. Small parcels of land were reserved for Brothertown and Stockbridge Indians, as well as the usual suspects: James Dean, Samuel Kirkland, Kirkland’s sons, Jedediah Phelps, and Abraham Wemple, among others. As for the Oneidas, they agreed to remain within a 250,000-acre reservation. They also secured primary fishing rights along the southern banks of Lake Oneida, as well as on Wood and Fish Creeks.²³ The terms of the agreements quickly reverberated throughout New York, and the nation, sparking the odium of Governor Clinton.

The Livingston lease boldly challenged the authority of New York’s constitutional claims, undermined federal precedent established in 1784, and obfuscated New York and Pennsylvania jurisdictions (because some of the leased land to Livingston overlapped with the land claimed by the Susquehanna Company). It was a bold move even during the unruly land rush in postwar North America. But unlike the other contenders for Iroquois lands, Livingston was confident because he had the support of Oneida chiefs at Kanonwalohale, Kirkland, Schuyler, and other key figures. Clinton, however, was not so easily hoodwinked. The governor and the state legislature swiftly responded to news of the Livingston leases. New York legislators aligned with Clinton declared both lease agreements null and void

21 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 166.

22 *Journal of the Assembly of the State of New York*, 56; Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 170-71

23 Hough, ed., *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs*, I: 120-24, 132-33. For details on land reserved for individuals and other first peoples, see Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 173, 447(ff10).

just weeks after the lease terms concluded at Kanonwalohale. The legislature argued that the leases violated the state constitution and further empowered the governor to unleash the militia on any lessees that attempted to colonize land claimed by New York. To ensure legal prowess moving forward, in early 1788 New York passed a law that required a state representative be present to witness and record all land transactions with first peoples. Another law prohibited any Indian land purchases without the consent of state legislature. Transgressors would face a hefty fine and imprisonment at “the discretion of the court.”²⁴ Then, employing the same tactic used at Fort Herkimer, New York turned its attention back to the Iroquois.²⁵

New York representatives relayed to the chiefs that the state would not protect them, or their lands, if the lessees did not live up to the terms of the agreements. Once again placing blame on the Iroquois as a means to stir up fear and confusion, New York further threatened to cut off any form of assistance in the matter if colonizers cheated or violently targeted the Indians. The governor promised state protection for the Iroquois so long as they turned over Iroquoia to New York. To this end, employing language he thought would appeal to customary traditions of cross-cultural exchange, Clinton extended another invitation to the Iroquois to treat with him that June at Fort Stanwix. Meanwhile, the legislature promised Livingston “reimbursement of his expenses” and “reasonable compensations” from the state so long as his network of speculators offered their support to New York and assisted Clinton at the upcoming negotiations. But Livingston balked at the offer. Instead the Genesee Company of Adventurers offered Phelps and Gorham one-sixth partnership in order tidy-up any conflicting claims to Iroquoia and dangled more acreage in front of brokers like Kirkland for their continued loyalty. In May, with the help of Loyalists Colonel John Butler and Joseph Brant, a deal was struck at Buffalo Creek and the Niagara frontier that furthered the agendas of Livingston and his associates.²⁶ The cooperation of Crown representatives, Loyalist-allied Iroquois, and private New York speculating syndicates underscored the supremacy of individual opportunism in a region plagued by political and legal uncertainty. Time was ticking for both state and federal bids to capitalize on the sale of Iroquois lands. If Clinton did not act fast, private transactions and the impending U.S. Constitution promised to undermine New York’s claim to the region. When New York ratified the new constitution in July 1787, Clinton no doubt realized his time was short before federal legislation went into effect and the lingering ambiguities over Indian lands disappeared.

The 1788 Treaty at Fort Stanwix

Well-fed and floating in liquor on the western edge of Iroquoia, thanks to Livingston and his associates, the Senecas, Onondagas, and Cayugas remaining in the United States had few reasons to trek to the Oneida Carry in early summer 1788. Emboldened by his widespread support network, Livingston encouraged all Iroquois that would listen to pay no regard to Clinton’s pleas. The governor “means to . . . drive you off [your lands] and tell you that you have no Property here.”²⁷ But with so much on the line Clinton was determined to

24 Michael Leroy Oberg, “Good Neighbors: The Onondagas and the Fort Schuyler Treaty, September 1788,” *New York History* 88, No.4 (Fall 2007), 396-97.

25 *Ibid.*, 396.

26 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 176-78. Also see McKelvey, “Historical Aspects of the Phelps & Gorham Treaty of July 4-8, 1788,” 1-24.

27 Quoted from Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 180.

press on with his treaty plans. In private, however, he worried about a poor Indian showing. Without the appearance of an Iroquois consensus any treaty agreements would be open to criticism. Livingston knew this, too. He stationed Genesee Company agents in the field to disrupt the planned council and kept those at Kanadasega drenched in gallons of rum and plenty of supplies. By doing so Livingston ensured those Indians that traveled towards the Oneida Carry in the fall of 1788 did not include most of the Six Nations that remained in the United States.²⁸

Outraged, but undeterred, Governor Clinton commenced the proceedings at Fort Stanwix in early September. Besides the Oneidas, only a few Onondaga chiefs (whom carried no significant authority at the Confederacy-level) showed up. Led by a sachem named Black Cap (Tehonwaghsloweaghte), an “upstart” leader of a “small community at Onondaga Lake” that did not participate in the Livingston lease negotiations, the Onondagas that traveled to Fort Stanwix did not represent a majority of their nation, nor was Black Cap an official mouthpiece of the rekindled Confederacy at Buffalo Creek.²⁹ Nevertheless, as a sign of respect, on August 28 Black Cap welcomed the arriving New Yorkers with traditional treaty protocol. After metaphorically clearing his eyes and throat, and offering condolences to ease the hearts of those gathered, the Onondaga chief presented Clinton with “a string of White Wampum.”³⁰

Six days passed before Clinton formally addressed the gathered Indians. Historian Michael Leroy Oberg suggests the Onondagas intentionally delayed the beginning of the negotiations in order to gather intelligence and diplomatically align his followers with other Iroquois at Niagara and Kanadasega. While this is plausible, given the available records and treaty outcome, it is more likely that the undocumented parlays that occurred over the six-day interval had more to do with New York plying, pressing, and making empty promises to the gathered Onondaga leaders in order to secure a land cession. This does not detract from Black Cap’s curious positioning during the negotiations, but it does offer a less complicated explanation for the six-day hiatus that is line with scores of other treaty records. Simply put, when *he* was ready, Clinton responded to Black Cap’s ancient welcome. Ironically, for a governor that sought to present New York as an ancient protector of the Iroquois, Clinton spent no time with reciprocal ceremonial formalities, underscoring his contempt for diplomatic protocol. He began the proceedings by barring John Livingston from the treaty grounds (who had accompanied a number of Indians to the fort), and threatened violence if the speculator came with forty miles of the negotiations. Then, in characteristic fashion, the governor cut to the chase. Apparently, “public business” back East demanded that he could not long stay at Fort Stanwix to treat with the assembled Iroquois. Conjuring old tactics and reiterating trite lies, Clinton shamelessly continued. New York “has never wished to take your lands,” the governor proclaimed, and now *he* felt betrayed by the Iroquois because they had broken the Covenant Chain by entering into leagues with Livingston and other private groups. It did not matter to Clinton that most of the gathered Indians were not involved in the Genesee Company negotiations. He wanted to frighten and browbeat those Onondagas in attendance into submission. Consciously withholding that New York’s legislature had already voided the Livingston leases, Clinton erupted; “It was wrong of you

28 Hough, ed., *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs*, II: 258-59.

29 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 181.

30 Hough, ed., *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs*, I: 177.

to receive those men among you & to make bargains with them . . . [and now] it is essentially necessary that we should consult together and determine what is best to be done to correct the Evils which have taken Place among you.” Once again, Clinton conveniently had a plan. Because “Scalps will neither cloath nor feed you” if payment is not received from Livingston, only the protection of New York could offer the Indians security. The cost for the mighty shield of New York, though, was, of course, more Iroquois land.³¹

Black Cap’s response to Clinton’s message is curious. First, he denied that the Onondagas had engaged in negotiations with Livingston. By doing so he subverted the validity of Livingston’s lease agreements that had already been negotiated by his superiors at Buffalo Creek and the Niagara frontier. This approach conveniently provided Clinton with an opportunity to seize land so long as Black Cap sanctioned a sale. And Black Cap did, but not before he made a last-ditch attempt to “lease” Onondaga lands to New York. Michael Oberg is correct, Black Cap was no stooge, but it seems unlikely that he thought Clinton hoped to lease Onondaga lands. Given the harsh blowback from Buffalo Creek and death threats directed at Black Cap following the negotiations it is more probable that the young Onondaga leader was attempting to save his honor. This line of thinking is extended, given that in the same breath Black Cap assured Clinton that if New York was not willing to lease the lands “we are ready to enter into such other agreements you shall propose.”³²

On the heels of Black Cap’s reply to Clinton another void in the available records looms as the negotiators spent the following five days in private discussions. When Black Cap emerged, his revised message pleased the dogged governor. “[W]e have determined . . . to settle the business of this Treaty agreeable to your Wishes,” the Onondaga chief announced. Two more days then passed before the exact terms of the treaty were announced. News of an impending agreement no doubt lured more Indians to Fort Stanwix in anticipation of reaping immediate benefits (and thus much needed relief) of treaty goods. Furthermore, Clinton had yet to treat with his principle targets, the much more numerous Oneidas. Already assured of the outcome with the Onondagas, Clinton patiently waited. At this point, the increased Iroquois attendance now promised to help validate both Black Cap’s authority and the terms of the impending land cession.³³

Oberg suggests Black Cap “made it clear that he was not going to sell the Onondagas’ lands,” but rather viewed the 1788 agreement between New York and his followers as a means to “continuing Good to us, and our Children after us.”³⁴ There is merit to this claim especially when we consider indigenous access to, and use of, the ceded territory. The final terms of the 1788 treaty with the Onondagas present at Fort Stanwix clearly guaranteed the Indians the legal “Right of Hunting in every Part of the said ceded Lands, and of fishing in all the Waters within the same.” As for the question of ownership, however, that was different. Black Cap may have thought of the final document as a “shared-use agreement between the Onondagas and New Yorks,” but Clinton did not.³⁵ Whether or not Clinton ignored the nuances of Black Cap’s shared-use proposal, or the inexperienced upstart simply hoped such was the collective understanding, in the late 1780s it mattered little. For the governor,

31 Ibid., 177-78.

32 Ibid., 185.

33 Ibid., 195.

34 Oberg, “Good Neighbors,” 403; Hough, ed., *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs*, I: 195-96.

35 Oberg, “Good Neighbors,” 408.

the questionability of Black Cap's authority paled in comparison to the chief's mark on a document that stated the Onondaga agreed to "cede and grant all their Lands to the People of the State of New York *forever*."³⁶ Not surprisingly, where the final document is staggeringly void of any specific geographical definition of what "all their Lands" included, Clinton was sure the Onondaga reservation he vowed to protect was clearly defined:

All that Tract of Land beginning at the southerly end of the Salt [Onondaga] Lake at the Place where the River or Stream on which the Onondagoes now have their Village empties into the said Lake, and ruins from the said Place of beginning East three miles, thence Southerly according to the general Course of the said River until it shall intersect a Line running East & West At the Distance of three miles South from the said Village, thence from the Said Point of Intersections West nine miles, thence Northerly parallel to the second Course above mentioned until an East Line will strike the Place of Beginning, and thence East to the said place of Beginning.³⁷

In the end, for paltry 1,000 French crowns, £200 in basic necessities including clothing, and a hollow promise of \$500 payment in annual perpetuity, Clinton obtained an almost priceless land cession, both politically and financially, from Black Cap.³⁸ After amusing the young upstart enough to secure a land cession, Clinton turned his attention towards the Oneidas.

Early that year the Genesee Company of Adventurers made inroads with the Oneidas. As noted earlier, in January 1788 Livingston obtained key supporters at Kanonwalohale including Captain Jacob Reed and Colonel Louis, not to mention a five-million acre long-lease agreement. But uncertainty and rumor throughout most of 1788 took a toll on Livingston's grand deigns. Coupled with the efforts of an influential French trader and sensationalist named Peter Penet who touted the Clinton-option, support for Livingston faltered among the Oneida holdouts. In an effort to combat his waning support among the Oneidas, Livingston returned to Kanonwalohale in June 1788 to make a personal plea. Using James Dean as his interpreter, Livingston looked to at least regroup his wayward supporters. But even with gifts, promises, and liquor, the fractured community remained disinterested in Livingston's proposal. No doubt holding onto the belief that American politicians at both the state and federal levels would protect their indigenous allies, most Oneidas rebuffed the speculator. Only Captain Reed and a small group of Oneidas accepted Livingston's gifts, offering few guarantees in return. Nevertheless, to ensure the death of the lease agreement, Clinton aimed to establish consensus among the Oneidas.³⁹

On September 16, 1788, in predicable style, Governor Clinton quickly got to his point. Addressing the Oneidas, Clinton warned that only New York could protect their communities against the wickedness of Livingston and other unregulated private scheming. Blaming the Oneidas for allowing private speculators into their homes, Clinton opted to withhold that New York's legislature had already ravaged Livingston's lease

36 Ibid., 401. Emphasis added.

37 Hough, ed., *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs*, I: 198-99. Also quoted in Oberg, "Good Neighbors," 404.

38 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 181. Also see Venables "Governor George Clinton's Promises."

39 Tiro, *People of the Standing Stone*, 79-84; Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 181-82.

agreement. Preemptively addressing any lingering divisions among the Oneidas over any legal ramifications for renouncing the lease, Clinton vowed to shield the Indians from any grievances brought to New York's court by the Genesee Company. But like most of Clinton's promises, the pledge was only good if he got what he came for—land.

Always masquerading his intention to obtain clear title, the governor encouraged the Indians to entrust to New York's protection the six million acres that they promised Livingston. Clinton also pressed the Indians to agree to an even smaller reservation than previously negotiated. A smaller reservation, Clinton brazenly asserted, would ensure "that is our People should come there it would be immediately discovered." "Our People will know," the governor continued hollow promises, "that they cannot get any Part of this Tract and therefore will not attempt it." Again, Clinton lied through his teeth.⁴⁰

It had been four years of upheaval and starvation since Clinton, on the very same ground, pledged to "have no claim on your land" provided the Oneidas many reasons to pause. Colonel Louis (Akiatonharónkwén), assigned to negotiate with Clinton (along with Otsequette, the eighteen-year-old, French-educated, inexperienced adopted son of General LaFayette) asked the governor why New York wanted to clear title to all of their lands? Surely if New York intended to protect the Oneidas, Clinton would ensure that the Indians obtained a state patent to their own lands so they could benefit from an annual income? Louis's reasoning was sound, but Clinton knew the Oneidas required "state indemnity against the vindictive Lessess," or at least needed to believe they did.⁴¹

Having already swayed the young and suggestible Otsequette on their way to Fort Stanwix, Clinton changed tactics.⁴² Hoping to outfox Louis and other skeptical Oneidas, the governor softened and personalized his approach. Evoking centuries-old intimacies of cross-cultural exchange, Clinton asked Colonel Louis as a personal favor to grant him access to the streams that fed into the Oneida Lake that the Indians currently held in exclusive right. (and within a decade New Yorkers bled the rivers dry) likely because he sought a loftier guarantee from Clinton. In return for clear title to the five million acres of land that the Oneidas had previously leased to private speculators, the cantankerous governor recognized Oneida rights to lease their *remaining* lands and to choose the occupiers of the land ceded along their eastern boundaries: "The Oneidas may, from time to time, *forever*, make leases of the lands between the said parallel lines . . . to such persons, and on such rents reserved, as they shall deem proper, but no lease shall be for a longer term than twenty-one years from the making thereof." Many Oneidas had good reason to think the lease term applied to all ceded lands. Nevertheless, the clause gave the Oneidas the power to administer and lease their remaining lands, including those they had previously offered to other first peoples. Subsequently, the terms of the 1788 treaty shrank the Brothertown reservation to six square miles, and reconfirmed the thirty-six-square-mile reservation of the Stockbridge Mohicans. Meanwhile, Samuel Kirkland's two sons, John and George, along with Jean Francois Perache, all received land grants along the eastern boundary of Oneida territory. At the insistence of the Indian commissioners, Kirkland, for this noteworthy service to New York, received 1,280 acres. John Bleecker, the other

40 Hough, ed., *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs*, I: 223-25.

41 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 183.

42 For an excellent summary of Otsequette's personality and trip to Fort Stanwix with Clinton, see *ibid.*, 183; and Pilkington, ed., *Journals of Samuel Kirkland*, 219.

interpreter for New York, received 640 acres. Jedediah Phelps, despite being favored over Kirkland and Bleeker by the Oneidas, had the misfortune of being too closely associated with the Livingston scheme and so received nothing. Turning back to the lease terms, the 1788 treaty terms also promised to enact laws that would “compel the Lessees to pay Rents” to their Oneida landlords. The agreement theoretically provided a degree of legal, economic, and social stability for the remaining Oneidas in New York who still had so-called friends stationed along their eastern boundary and were still in control of approximately 250,000 acres. State legislature later dramatically reduced the lease right to a fraction of their remaining lands, but for the moment the Oneidas gained an important concession from Clinton.⁴³

Only six days after Clinton first addressed the Oneidas gathered at Fort Stanwix, on September 22, 1788 the treaty concluded. In addition to lease right, in exchange for the clear title to a whopping 5 million acres of land the Oneidas received \$2,000 in hard currency, \$2,000 in non-edible goods, \$1,000 in immediate provisions, and a \$500 pledge from the state for the construction of new grist- and sawmills. Finally, Clinton contractually obligated New York to forever make an annual \$600 payment to the Oneida every June 1 at Fort Stanwix. Starving and fractious, the Oneidas may not have secured long-lease terms according what the governor’s minions transcribed on the document, but the money, goods, and Clinton’s promise to pay the Indians an annual set “annuity” relieved short-term worries.⁴⁴



Immediately following the 1788 treaty held at Fort Stanwix state planners began preparing for the invasion of Oneida territory. Having scored a devastating blow on Livingston and his long-lease plans, by early 1789 a quarter of the Oneida cession was prepped for survey and colonization. That land, as Alan Taylor succinctly contextualizes, provided New York a profit of over ten times what the state paid to the Oneidas during the same time period for the entire cession.⁴⁵ By the summer of 1789, as state surveyors began to run lines throughout the ceded territory, many Oneidas including Good Peter, expressed shock and disbelief by the news that they signed an agreement that relinquished clear title. Rumors of bribery and deceit fueled tensions among the Oneidas. As news of the Oneida land cession thundered west, indigenous lessees marooned around the Niagara frontier began to splinter. Like an insatiable vulture, Clinton watched and waited from Albany as now the Cayugas and remaining Onondagas sought resolution and relief. As rifts widened, some Iroquois petitioned New York. Others Congress. Some even called upon the French for aid. Scores more turned inward seeking salvation from a spiritual revival that washed over Indian Country. Meanwhile, with the ratification of the U.S. Constitution, Federalist lawmakers in the capitol again turned their attention north to Iroquoia.

43 Hough, ed., *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs*, I: 142-43. A more accessible copy of the treaty can be found at: <https://courses.cit.cornell.edu/govt313/lc/texts/1788treaty.html>

44 Ibid., 142-43, 233-34.

45 Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 185.

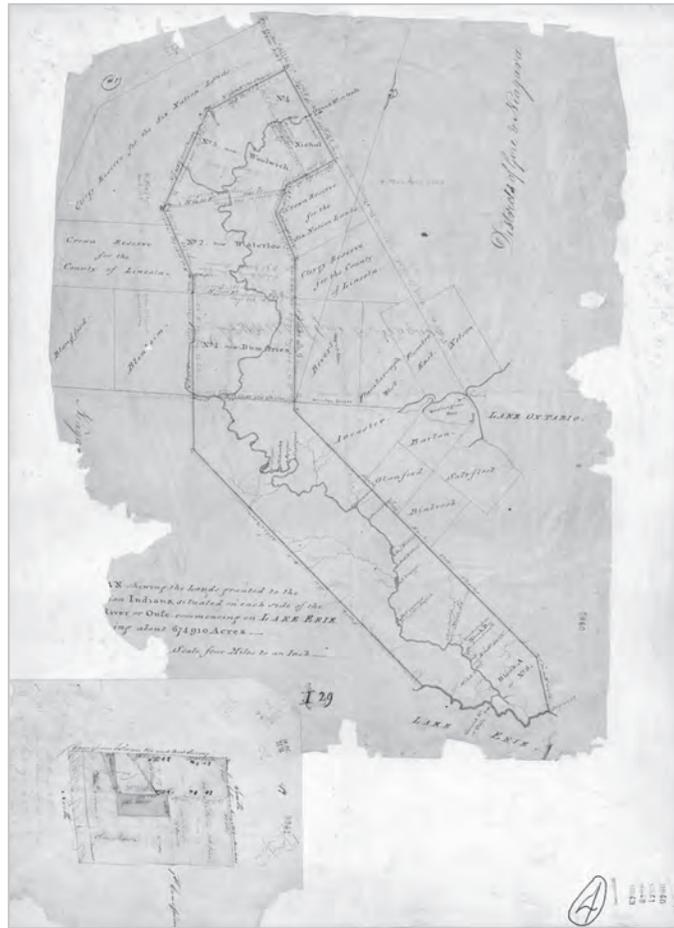


Figure 18. The Haldimand Tract
Thomas Ridout Survey, 1821. Courtesy of the National Archives Canada.



Figure 19. Good Peter

"Good Peter, Chief of the Oneidas" by John Trumbull, 1792. Courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery. Accessed Sept. 12, 2015, <http://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/110>

CHAPTER EIGHT

“VERY UNWISE”: THE 1790 TREATY OF FORT STANWIX

By the end of the 1780s New Yorker fingerprints could be found all over the goods, liquor, and treaty documents that had been used to wheedle and defraud many of the Iroquois tribes remaining in the United States. So great the deception, after concluding the 1788 treaty Good Peter actually thanked Governor Clinton for protecting his people from ruin: “[W]e do heartily congratulate you this Day upon having accomplished the Treaty and thereby secured to us so much of our Property which would have otherwise been lost.”¹ Years passed before a federal official recorded Good Peter’s challenges to the terms of the 1788 treaty as recorded by Clinton and his minions. By then New Yorkers had flooded onto Oneida, Onondaga, and Cayuga lands. The Empire State may have “lost title to the Senecas land, but [it] had secured the rest by a policy that involved the calculated defrauding of the tribes.”² With relentless persistence American colonizers kept on colonizing.

Meanwhile, the newly reorganized United States government scurried to gain favor among its unruly States to unite the country under the U.S. Constitution. New York posed a considerable threat to unification if it did not ratify the document. As we have seen, Clinton, a staunch anti-Federalist, loathed Congressional interference especially in matters related to western lands. New York actions at the treaties of Fort Herkimer (1785) and Fort Stanwix (1784 and 1788) illustrated the extent to which Clinton balked at the idea of federal authority throughout Iroquoia, and beyond. Congressional inaction and internal bickering following the 1784 treaty seemed to confirm federal disinterest. But the New York governor also suspected that the period of uncertainty that allowed for land grabs in Indian country would not last. By the late 1780s, rumors that New York legislators had organized a seditious party compounded fears about the rise of a massive western confederacy of first peoples. Together with Shays’ Rebellion, borderland ambiguities and hostilities fueled action.

As the newly minted President George Washington and his support staff struggled to keep the new American empire from collapsing, New York continued to scheme. In late 1788, Samuel Kirkland informed Governor Clinton of the widening divisions among the Iroquois at Buffalo Creek. Kirkland, deflated by the current state of his own flock and his future prospects of successfully missionizing, also commented on other vulnerable Iroquois factions that might be susceptible to New York’s overtures. Among those first peoples considering other options were a number of Cayuga sachems. Clinton acted fast on this news and together with New York’s Indian commissioners decided to send the Cayugas an official invitation to meet in Albany. As for Kirkland, Clinton rewarded the missionary’s priceless intelligence with even more promises of Iroquois lands.³

1 Jack Campisi, “From Fort Stanwix to Canandaigua: National Policy, States Rights, and Indian Land,” in Christopher Vescey and William A. Starna, eds., *Iroquois Land Claims*, (Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1988), 60.

2 Ibid. See also Samuel Kirkland, “Memoir of negotiations relative to Indian lands within the state of New York.” HM 2140. The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

3 William A. Starna, “‘The United States will protect you’: The Iroquois, New York, and the 1790 Nonintercourse Act,” *New York History* (Winter 2002), 5.

The 1789 “Treaty” of Albany

In February 1789 Clinton welcomed a faction of Cayugas in Albany that had temporarily split from Buffalo Creek leadership. Void of any pomp and ceremonial displays of grandeur, Clinton opted to host his Indian guests in Isaac Denniston’s tavern, known then as the King’s Arms. Led by *Hawistawg*, or Steel Trap, the dozen or so Cayugas that filed into the pub during the bitter cold of winter represented only a portion of their nation and most definitely not the Confederacy Chiefs at Buffalo Creek or Grand River. Together with only one Seneca Chief (*Toneaghas*) and one Onondaga Chief (*Kaightotten*) and the indigenous women that accompanied them, the dozen or so Cayugas were operating independently from Confederacy leadership; but that did not bother Clinton.

After brief formalities, the governor again got straight to his point. Clinton praised the Onondagas and Oneidas that had recently treated with him at Fort Stanwix in 1788, and reiterated his disdain for “the white People” to which Iroquois leaders at Buffalo Creek had agreed to lease land. He continued by commending the sensibilities of the Indians gathered at Denniston’s tavern to meet with him to discuss the best way to protect their mutual interests and Iroquois lands. Of course Clinton had a plan already lying in wait. In exchange for hunting and fishing rights and an annual payment, the crafty governor offered to protect the Cayugas if they agreed to also relinquish most of their lands to New York with the exception of a designated reservation. In only a matter of days the assembled Indians, now including Colonel Louis (a previous supporter of the long-leases) and Good Peter, consented to Clinton’s terms. “We believe all that you have said,” Good Peter speaking on behalf of the Cayugas remarked, “and do not think there is any Deception in you.”⁴ Good Peter was wrong. Eager to quell any second thoughts before the treaty was signed, Governor Clinton assured the Cayugas that New York was offering them “a sufficient Reservation of Land, a Sum of Money down, and an annual Sum forever.” “[Y]our Nation,” Clinton brazenly added, “ought to rejoice in such a Treaty.”⁵ After some finagling over the extent and boundaries of the Cayuga’s land claims, on February 24, 1789, for the sum of “five hundred Dollars . . . one thousand six hundred and twenty-five Dollars on the first Day of June next, and five hundred Dollars on the first Day of June forever thereafter” Clinton struck again, pillaging the Cayugas of their lands with the help of his loyal interpreter, Samuel Kirkland. The following day the nefarious deed was executed in the bowels of Denniston’s tavern.⁶

News of the Cayuga land cession at Albany spread quickly. Iroquois leaders at Buffalo Creek and on the banks of the Grand River, shocked and angered, began to communicate more frequently. In late May Iroquois leaders at Buffalo Creek signed and dispatched a letter to Clinton that questioned the validity of the Albany agreement struck with Steel Trap. By July, no doubt feeling the bite of criticism, Steel Trap and other Iroquois chiefs questioned the right of New York surveyors poking about Cayuga Lake. Panic caused concern that quickly began binding the lingering wounds of war. Before the close of summer Joseph Brant, too, objected to the terms of the Cayuga land cession. Brant, together with leaders at both Grand River and Buffalo Creek, did not mince words: “We endeavored to explain to you that you had not treated with the Chiefs . . . but we are

4 Ibid., 282-92, esp. 286.

5 Ibid., 297.

6 Ibid., 305.

now sorry to find you do not wish to be convinced of an Error, which you took no previous steps to avoid.”¹

A Vulnerable Republic

Clinton’s bulldozing in Iroquoia caused alarm not only for the Six Nations but also those first peoples residing on the periphery and within contested territory of the once mighty Iroquois empire. Calls for war against the Americans circulated among the indigenous residents throughout the Great Lakes and Ohio Country. Anxieties heightened over the possibility of another war.

Thus, as the 1780s drew to a close the newly confirmed President of the United States, George Washington, faced a number of combustible situations. Scores of frontiers from the Great Lakes to the Gulf shores undermined the territorial claims of the American empire. Rumors of strengthening Indian confederacies supplied by British and Spanish traders swirled east while internal divisions crippled Congress. On the one hand Washington needed to appease anti-Federalists. On the other hand, the President needed to do more than bare teeth if Congress threatened to bite. Together with petitions from the Iroquois and other States left in the cold by Clinton’s bold land grabs, Washington knew he needed to act.

On July 22, 1790, Congress, seeking to secure the western edges of the United States and reap the benefits of Indian land sales, passed the first Indian Trade and Intercourse Act. The Non-Intercourse Act of 1790, as it became widely known, entrenched the Confederation Proclamation of 1783 in the legal foundation of the new republic by strictly forbidding the sale and purchase of all Indian lands without the congressional stamp of approval. The Act took direct aim at anti-Federalist land speculating taking place in New York. Ultimately borrowing from the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the 1790 Act stated that “no sale of lands made by any Indians, or any nation or tribe of Indians within the United States, shall be valid to any person or persons, or to any state, whether having the right of pre-emption to such lands or not, unless the same shall be made and duly executed at some public treaty, held under the authority of the United States.”² The 1790 Act, and the five more that followed (1793, 1796, 1799, 1802, and 1834), would eventually resurface as the foundation to contemporary land claims in New York. “Even so,” as historian William Starna aptly notes, “few are aware of the history of its passage and the entanglement of the federalist government, New York State, and the six Iroquois Nations in its implementation.”³

The legal importance of the Non-Intercourse Act may have escaped consideration in the halls of state and federal courts from almost the next two centuries, but it did not go without notice by contemporaries, especially Governor Clinton. In fact, just months before Congress prepared to pass the act Clinton scrambled to gather as many Iroquois as possible, once again at Fort Stanwix. For good reason Clinton worried that the pending legislation would undermine his ability to continue to expand the territorial reach of New York. In early April 1790, following a meeting with the Indian Commissioners, Clinton sent an open letter to the Onondagas and Cayugas, as well as one to Brant at Grand River. The governor

1 *Arbitration of outstanding pecuniary claims between Great Britain and the United States of America: the Cayuga Indians.*

2 Act of July 22, 1790, in Prucha, ed., *Documents of the United States Indian Policy*, 13-14.

3 Starna, “The United States will protect you,” 5.

invited those Indians that were not present at the 1789 Albany treaty to attend a brief week-long meeting in early June at Fort Stanwix.⁴ Hoping to bolster the validity of New York’s recent land purchases by assembling as many Iroquois as possible, Clinton was well aware of the pending legislation soon to pass in Congress. But almost as soon as Clinton’s letters were dispatched for the west, reports of American colonizers trespassing on, and deforesting protected Iroquois lands filtered east. Uneasiness and distrust lingered throughout Iroquoia, and New Yorkers were the principle cause.⁵

The 1790 Treaty of Fort Stanwix

In late May 1790, Clinton, New York politicians, Indian Commissioners and speculators departed New York City destined for the Oneida Carrying place. On the morning of Thursday May 27, three days after leaving New York, the group arrived in Albany. After being joined by Peter Gansevoort and Abraham Ten Broeck, the group prepared for their last push towards Fort Stanwix. Rumors circulated that no Indians had yet arrived at the fort. It did not take long before rumor turned to reality.⁶

“No Indians appeared on the Ground” on June 1, 1790, the day the treaty was supposed to be start. Instead, Samuel Street of Niagara, met the contingent of New Yorkers on behalf of nine Iroquois Chiefs from Buffalo Creek. There, in the house of Seth Ranney located outside the walls of the fort, Street informed the New Yorkers that he had the authority to discuss a variety of issues related to land use and sales, but could not execute any deeds or deals on behalf of the Iroquois. Clinton’s entourage convened and resolved that they would not negotiate with Street until their messenger, Peter Osiquette, returned from Buffalo Creek.⁷

The following day Samuel Kirkland arrived at Fort Stanwix. Kirkland, now closely aligned with New York’s busiest and most active land speculating syndicate, had a vested interest in Clinton’s finagling. The aging missionary’s thinning flock paralleled his enlarged appetite for Indian land and wealth. Together with a resurgence of indigenous religious traditionalism among the Oneidas, Kirkland was becoming increasingly disillusioned. Arguably, by the 1790 Treaty at Fort Stanwix, Kirkland, long considered a power broker and peacekeeper between the Iroquois and the Yankees, was firmly entrenched on the side of New York.

After settling in at Ranney’s house, Kirkland provided his patrons with a detailed report of Indian affairs. The missionary turned land speculator confirmed that Clinton’s message to the Iroquois was dispatched in early May via Peter Otsiquette, and that shortly after his arrival at Buffalo Creek, Otsiquette reported the following back to Kirkland: “The old Cayuga Chief called the *Fish Carrier*, and the Onondaga Chief called *Clear Sky*, rejected the Governor’s Message inviting them to a treaty at Fort Stanwix. They moved in public Council to invite the Governor and Commissioners from New York to Buffaloe Creek for the Business of the proposed Treaty.” Their answer triggered commotion, Otsiquette relayed to Kirkland, as “many of their Warriors” consider the response “ungenerous and

4 Hough, ed., *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs*, II: 368-72.

5 Ibid., 373-76.

6 Ibid., 376. The group consisted of Clinton, 1st Lieutenant Governor of New York Pierre Van Courtlandt, Ezra L’Hommedieu, Abraham Ten Broeck, Peter Gansevoort, and Richard Varick.

7 Ibid., 376.

impracticable.” The influence of Loyalists at Buffalo Creek, and Colonel John Butler in particular, caused Yankee lobbyists considerable concern. “After counselling for several Days among themselves,” the Onondagas informed Otsequette that they intended to treat with Clinton at Fort Stanwix. As for the Cayugas, they would proceed as they pleased. The public declaration caused notable divisions among the Onondagas. Fish Carrier reminded his kin what their nations had already suffered greatly from “a People who [already had taken] every Advantage of them,” and called the decision to treat with Clinton “very unwise.” In response, and with hollow words, Otsequette staked his life on the good intentions of New York, then he departed for Fort Stanwix.⁸

As contingents of Onondagas and Cayugas from Buffalo Creek traveled towards Fort Stanwix, divisions widened among the Oneidas. Already struggling to maintain tribal unity, news of the gathering at Fort Stanwix caused even further disagreements both among and between the Christian and Traditionalist Oneida camps. Deemed “unseasonable to the Commissioners, and expensive to the State” to invite the Oneidas to Fort Stanwix, Clinton opted to travel to Kanonwalohale on June 5 with a small group of men including Gansevoort and Kirkland. Later that day the governor assured the Oneidas that the main reason for rekindling a council fire at the fort was to illustrate that the “friendly Disposition of the State towards all their Indian Brethren.” Clinton, with Kirkland as his mouthpiece, continued to misrepresent his primary intention to dispossess the Iroquois of as much land as possible. New York sought to “adopt every reasonable and just Measure to heal the Animosities which subsisted between [the Iroquois],” the governor charged. Utilizing the language of indigenous diplomatic protocol, Clinton again presented himself as a protector of the Iroquois and New York as a beacon of peace of friendship. In reality the governor and his supporters sought to bolster State land claims by gathering as many indigenous signatories as possible, confining and rendering the tribes dependent on a reservation system, and unleashing waves of colonizers into Iroquoia. The next morning, content with their brief visit to Kanonwalohale, the New Yorkers packed up and returned to the fort.⁹

Another day passed before Clinton received word from messengers. During the evening of Monday June 7, 1790, messengers from the Onondagas and Cayugas at Buffalo Creek, and from Brant along the Grand River, arrived at Fort Stanwix. The Onondaga messengers confirmed that their Chiefs would attend council at Fort Stanwix, mentioning further that they suspected the Cayugas and Mohawks would as well. Clearly communication was taking place between the Six Nations and their satellite communities. The Cayuga messenger confirmed this point by also informing Clinton that a total of ten Chiefs were making their way to the Oneida Carry. They asked Clinton to be patient as they waited for their old Chiefs to make the journey east. Clinton, not known for his patience, sent runners for supplies and sat tight.¹⁰

Over the next few days, news of multiple Indian contingents journeying towards Fort Stanwix arrived at the Oneida Carry. The perceived tardiness of the Iroquois representatives tested Clinton’s patience. On June 10, when Beech Tree requested supplies to fill the bellies of a group of Onondagas that had arrived at Kanonwalohale, Clinton responded by sending the Oneida Chiefs a personal supply of alcohol along with a forceful request to tell

8 Ibid., 379.

9 Ibid., 381-82.

10 Ibid., 382-86.

his visitors to hurry-up and get to the fort. Additional Indian requests for ceremonial paint also appear to have gone unanswered.¹¹

On Sunday June 13 approximately one hundred Onondagas arrived at Fort Stanwix by way of Kanonwalohale. After encamping on the grounds outside the fort, the Indians and the New York delegation exchanged welcomes. The Onondagas specifically requested that the “ancient Custom might be revived of the little Refreshment in the evening to make them sleep well, and the Morning to Wash their eyes.” Clinton, with much to gain, agreed. Once supplied with food and drink, the parties retired until the following morning.¹²

Holding a string of four rows of white wampum, Clinton opened the formal proceedings on Monday June 14, 1790 at Fort Stanwix. With an unusual degree of sensitivity to indigenous diplomatic protocol, Clinton carefully crafted his metaphors to appeal to the gathered Indians. He presented himself as concerned with healing the divisions among the Iroquois, and thus, “had taken the earliest opportunity of kindling a Council Fire, at this same place, to establish Peace, revive our ancient Friendship, and Rub of the Rust which the Covenant Chain had contracted during the Course of the War.”¹³ They were lofty and self-aggrandizing words from a slippery politician and land speculator that had capitalized on both a weak federal government and a divided Iroquois Confederacy. Nevertheless, Clinton forged ahead with his selected account of the preceding six years.

More than three years past, Clinton continued, before “disobedient Children of the State” undermined the “mutual Friendship and Tranquility” established at the 1784 Treaty of Fort Stanwix. Forgetting to mention widespread Iroquois backlash to the 1784 land cession, the governor went even further. Clinton declared that he had resisted the urge to reach out and punish those that had entered into the long-lease agreements for fear that it would have undermined the ancient “friendship” between the State and the Iroquois. Instead, Clinton announced, in 1788 he sought to strengthen the bond between the Iroquois and New York by kindling another council fire at Fort Stanwix. And, despite exercising great patience by waiting at the fort for weeks that year, he continued, only a handful of Iroquois arrived to shine the Covenant Chain. Not once in the recorded notes is the word “land” mentioned in Clinton’s opening remarks. Rather, Clinton summed up his address by reminding those Indians gathered that New York had complied with the terms of the 1788 agreement, having made two annual payments to the Iroquois. Moreover, what he sought was not an alteration to the existing agreements, but rather affirmation of the 1788 treaty terms. In response, Clear Sky rose, and on a string of white wampum, evoked the three bare words, covered the dead, and cleared the obstructions from the ears, eyes, and hearts of those gathered at Fort Stanwix. After which, citing Clinton’s suggestion to think and deliberate among themselves carefully, the Onondaga Chief called an end to the daily proceedings.¹⁴

That evening Clinton dispatched Ephraim Webster to locate and deliver a message to the Cayugas still en route to Fort Stanwix. He urged the Indians to quicken their pace to the Oneida Carry as treaty formalities had already commenced between New York and

11 Ibid., 387.

12 Ibid., 388.

13 Ibid., 389.

14 Ibid., 389-92.

the Onondagas. His patience was “almost exhausted.” The following day Clinton was again forced to wait when the gathered warriors opted to prepare for a ceremonial dance causing a delay in the proceedings.¹⁵

The next morning, Wednesday June 16, Webster returned to the fort with news that Fish Carrier and accompanying Cayugas were less than a day’s travel away. Later that afternoon, Beech Tree reopened the negotiations. After informing Clinton it was not their custom not to treat with *just* principal chiefs, but rather lesser chiefs and warriors so that they too might learn the protocols of diplomacy, the Oneida Chief sat down and turned the forum over to Clear Sky. “My [w]ords are few but they are strong,” Clear Sky pronounced, after recounting the sales of land to New York while standing before Clinton holding a belt consisting of eleven rows of white wampum with four slanted rows of black wampum across it. Then, on a long eighteen-row wampum belt, the Onondaga chief then metaphorically buried the war hatchet deep beneath the roots of a great tree so that the “voices of the Birds and All Discords and Jealousies” may sink to the bottom of the hole and be thenceforth be washed away forever by floods. Clear Sky continued, raising a five-rowed checkered wampum belt, representing “Female Governesses,” and “one String of four Rows of white Wampum, representing the Children.” He explained to those assembled that the Onondaga clan matrons, too, sought terms of peace with Clinton and the State and trusted their men would negotiate accordingly. *Kahiktote*, another principal Onondaga chief, then addressed the assembled participants. He claimed to speak on behalf of the chiefs at Buffalo Creek, and urged those gathered to remember his words. Clinton, no doubt smitten with the tone and messages of Onondaga orators, responded favorably to the Indians, and urged the participants to assemble a committee of principal chiefs and warriors to expedite the proceedings. The Indians agreed. Within hours an agreement had been reached. By that time Fish Carrier and Joseph Brant had arrived on the grounds to bear witness to the affirmation.¹⁶

In the end, the Onondagas present at Fort Stanwix on June 16, 1790, agreed to endorse the terms and land cession as detailed two years before on the very same ground. Signed by twenty-eight Onondaga warriors and chiefs, witnessed by three Oneida and two Seneca chiefs, as well as Joseph Brant, Clinton and New York appeared to emerge as victors. Elated, Clinton outfitted the Onondaga with goods and supplies for another night, additional money for their expenses, and said his farewell in language cloaked in expressions of perpetual harmony.¹⁷

The next day Clinton turned his attention to Fish Carrier and the assembled Cayugas. Utilizing Joseph Brant as his translator instead of Kirkland, Clinton welcomed the Indians with customary language and protocol and repeated, verbatim, the peaceful intentions of New York towards the Iroquois since the end of the war. But now

15 Ibid.,393.

16 Ibid., 395-98.

17 The Onondagas signatories included Tehonwaghskwenton, Rononghsionni, Tekanaghkwaghshen, Aonghwenjaeghte, Skanawadigh, Attageranen, Skayaness, Ayanoo, Oyadageghte, Aanheinte, Othwentageghte, Aronghyowanench, Kaghictoton, Onaghsadegeah (Flaming Arrow), Skayendakhon, Rassegtoghare, Tekaneghsate, Arronghyeaghtha, Joghahison, Sagoyenaghs, Karongyatsigowa, Onoonakaronton, Tehoghweaharonti, Kagnenrayen, Agwirongtongwaghs, Anongsighracgtha, Oniantaryro, Kanetaygh. The three Oneida chiefs witnessing included Aghwistonisk, Oneyanha, and Colonel Honyery. And the two Seneca chiefs witnessing included Onongaickhon and Thoghawayin. See *ibid.*, 401-2.

having dealt with the Onondagas and Oneidas, Clinton’s tone was less conciliatory. The governor declared that New York acknowledged Cayuga ownership of their lands after hostilities ceased, and despite its authority to do so, the State did not demand a cession from the Indians as a way to reward Patriots that suffered at the hands of the Iroquois. Not until the long-lease agreements happened, the governor droned on, did the chain of friendship once again begin to rust. As recorded verbatim from his speech to the Onondagas, Clinton once again orally recast recent history in Iroquoia as best to serve his own ends. In the end, Clinton presented himself as the self-sacrificing protector of the Cayugas and the ancient customs of the Covenant Chain, and the terms of the 1789 treaty at Albany as the natural byproduct of New York’s stalwart commitment to the Iroquois. After reiterating that he had already negotiated agreeable terms with the Oneidas and Onondagas, Clinton underscored how New York had abided by customs of their “ancient forefathers” and the payment terms of the agreement signed one year earlier in the depths of Denniston’s tavern.¹⁸ “It is unnecessary to repeat the Particulars of this Covenant to you,” Clinton boldly charged, “as we are sensible you are fully informed of it. It is sufficient to say that the Terms of it were equally advantageous to your Nation, if not more so, than those which we had concluded with . . . the Onondagas and Oneidas.”¹⁹ If key Cayuga chiefs and warriors did not receive payment, Clinton continued, he was not to blame. The governor ended his speech by asking the Cayugas to deliberate and review their records of the transactions in order to “form a proper Judgment on the Subject” before responding so the “Spirit of Peace and Friendship” may prevail and “Harmony and Reconciliation” restored²⁰.

Not waiting to deliberate before answering in part, Fish Carrier immediately addressed Clinton. The Cayuga chief assured Clinton that his nation believed New York and the governor had conducted themselves in accordance with the customs of the forefathers. That being said, Fish Carrier and the Cayugas at Buffalo Creek were not alone to blame for the confusion that defined post-war Iroquoia. Representatives from Massachusetts, men of status from New York claiming to be State authorities, and Loyalists from Niagara all converged at one time or another on Buffalo Creek hoping to secure land cessions from the Cayugas. Confused and fearful of colonizers already on Cayuga lands at Tioga Point, the Cayugas did their best to find the right path. Opting to avoid conflict, Fish Carrier pointed out, “[we] were reduced to the Necessity of promising to those People Grants for their Lands when the same should be legally purchased from the Indians who were the Proprietors.” After adding a Cayuga voice to Clinton’s narrative and pledging his nation’s intention to secure peace with New York, Fish Carrier sat down. Soon thereafter the Cayugas retired to their quarters for further deliberations.²¹

On Saturday June 19, 1790, Fish Carrier reopened the proceedings by asking Clinton to reconsider the many Cayugas that had not received compensation for the lands ceded to New York. In addition to the existing terms as already negotiated a year earlier, \$4,000, the Cayuga chief reasoned, would fill their bellies and bury the uneasiness that persists among many Iroquois at Buffalo Creek. The Cayuga chief then reminded Clinton part of

18 Ibid., 404-10.

19 Ibid., 410-11.

20 Ibid., 411-14, esp. 414.

21 Ibid., 414-18, esp. 418.

the Cayuga reserve would be given to Peter Schuyler. As for “our Cousin the Steel Trap, [he] shall remain where is at what was formerly called the Lower Village.” On a wampum belt with rows and three crosses of white wampum, Fish Carrier ended his proposition and address.²²

“Brothers!,” Clinton replied, “the [1789] Covenant must remain firm and unalterable forever.” Sensing Cayuga weakness, Clinton pressed the Indians further. Peter Schuyler had conspired to seize “the Places of your Nativity,” and had it not been for Clinton’s own diligence, their nation would have relinquished “the Bones of your Ancestors.” Speaking further about Schuyler, his federalist nemesis, Clinton chastised the Cayugas: “[y]ou might as well ask us to reward a Child for lifting up his Hand against his Father, as to reward a public Officer for betraying the Trust reposed in him by the People.” Clinton’s patience was running thin. Embroiled in a lengthy political war with New York federalists, Cayuga praise and acceptance of Schuyler (despite his own unforgiving plundering of the Iroquois) must have roused the bullheaded governor. Reeling in his anger, Clinton appealed again to the principles of peace: “[w]e came not here to violate Agreements but to confirm them.” If more money was sought, Clinton reasoned, it seemed only fair to pay the Cayugas what Schuyler, John Livingston, Dr. Caleb Benton, and the New York Genesee Land Company offered to give.²³

The following morning, June 20, 1790, an appointed committee of Cayugas “consisting of two Sachems from Buffaloe Creek,” along with Joseph Brant, and Governor Clinton, entered the quarters of New York’s Indian commissioners. Clinton produced the terms of the so-called 1789 treaty of Albany, and reiterated the sum already paid to the Cayugas. Of further note, “exclusive of this Advantage a very extensive Tract of Country was reserved to them, and the Privileges of Fishing and Hunting as usual.” Clinton then took advantage of Cayuga insecurities by reminding the gathered indigenous negotiators that what was being offered equaled that given to the Onondagas. Samuel Street questioned the final terms only to be browbeaten by Clinton, the commissioners, and Brant. Nevertheless, Street’s persistence hinted at enough dissatisfaction among the Cayugas that Clinton revised his offer. A day later the governor pledged more clothing and sundry goods to the Cayugas given that their nation numbered more than the Onondagas.²⁴ The overture appears to have silenced any further dissent. The treaty was executed on the morning of June 22, 1790, and read as follows:

We the said Cayugas do hereby acknowledge to have received from the People of the State of New York the Sum of five hundred Dollars in Silver, being annual Payment stipulated to be made to us the said Cayugas on the first Day of June, Instant, in and by certain Articles of Agreement or Deeds of Cession hereunto annexed & executed at the City of Albany, by and between the People of the said State, by their Commissioners, authorized for that Purpose, and several of the said Cayugas for and in behalf of the said Tribe or Nation, and bearing Date the twenty-fifth Day of February, in the Year one thousand seven hundred and eighty-nine; And also the further Sum of one thousand Dollars as a Benevolence. And we the said Cayugas in Consideration thereof do by these Presents fully, freely and absolutely ratify & confirm the said Agreement

22 Ibid., 419-21, esp. 421.

23 Ibid., 422-23. See also Sakolski, *The Great American Land Bubble*, 56.

24 Hough, ed., *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs*, II: 426-28.

and Cession, and all and singular the Articles, Covenants, Matters and Things therein expressed and contained, on the part of us the said Cayugas, done or to be done, executed and preformed; And we the said Cayugas do further hereby grant and release to the People of the State of New York, all our Right, Interest and Claim in and to all Lands lying East of the Line of Cession by the State of New York to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, except the Lands mentioned in the said Deed of Cession hereunto annexed to be reserved to us in the Cayugas and our Posterity.¹

Like the agreement signed by the Onondagas just days earlier, Clinton, emboldened by number of Cayuga signatories, departed the grounds of Fort Stanwix confident that his ploy had worked.²



While Clinton gathered his papers and scurried back to New York, President Washington strategized to better gauge borderland tensions and address continued State interference in Indian affairs. Washington had already appointed Timothy Pickering as a special Indian commissioner and made sure Congress passed more assertive laws, like the NonIntercourse Act, as to bolster federal authority. Urged by the Secretary of War, Henry Knox, to extinguish Indian title by way of treaty, Washington also adjusted Congress’s approach to Indian affairs. The “Indians are especially tenacious of their lands,” Knox wrote to Washington, and recent treaties (including the 1784 and 1788 Fort Stanwix treaties) especially caused concern because they were widely viewed as private and unsanctioned land cessions. Knox urged Washington to survey, and if need be, placate the Indians via treaty as the best means to avoid frontier wars and extinguish Native title. At the same time, he pressed Washington to raise an army. In other words, Knox sought to define and map the limits of indigenous (and State) land rights, and to create a standing army to enforce and project federal authority. Washington agreed.³ To this end, in December 1788 as New Yorkers schemed in Iroquoia, Arthur St. Clair, the Governor of the Northwest Territory, convened a treaty with Ohio tribes at Fort Harmar (present-day Marietta, Ohio). St. Clair soon realized the region’s indigenous inhabitants opposed the 1784 and 1788 Fort Stanwix land cessions and the 1785 Fort McIntosh agreement. Threatened with force if they did not agree to relocate west and into a reservation system, numerous Huron, Delaware, Ottawa, Chippewa, Potawatomi, and Sauk representatives signed the Fort Harmar treaty on January 9, 1789. But most of the signatories had no intention of vacating their homelands without a fight. And fight

- 1 Jack Campisi, “From Fort Stanwix to Canandaigua: National Policy, States Rights, and Indian Land,” in Christopher Vescey and William A. Starna, eds., *Iroquois Land Claims*, (Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1988), 60.
- 2 The Cayuga signatories included Shogedas, Tehageasereghtha, Tehaghyoghsayen, Thodeaghares (his mark included), Atsiaaktatye, Ongweghconagh, Oghskadaongh, Tekaraghko, Tewaghtaghgote, Skononghsowane, Kanonghsayonton, Kaghowiyoo, Ojageghte (Fish Carrier), Shagoyeghwatha, Ogonghsaniyonte, Karonghyageten, Tetonthoreghgongh, Karenhodon, Oghniohwenton (signed by Fish Carrier in his absence), Teyoronghyongoah, Teyorenhagwente, Tehaghsharanegeah, Teyoyaghyagongh, Kanentagonra, Brant (Mohawk), Aghwistonis (Oneida), Oneyanha (Oneida), and Gaghsaweta (Oneida) bore witness with the usual suspects from New York. *Ibid.*, 429-30.
- 3 Knox to Washington, “Report Relative to the Northwestern Indians,” June 15, 1789, in Lowrie and St. Clair Clarke, eds. *American State Papers*, I: 8. See also Campisi and Starna, “On the Road to Canandaigua,” 469-71.

they did. Responding in part to New York’s flagrant dismissal of federal authority and reports of growing Indian discontent, Washington ordered St. Clair back to the Ohio Country in 1791. The President hoped to illustrate the federalist agenda would prevail, and sent 1,400 soldiers into northwestern Ohio with the purpose of killing those first peoples along the Maumee River that resisted. Instead, a united front of Indian warriors laid waste to the American force at the battle of Wabash, or what Colin Calloway has aptly termed, “The Victory with No Name.” Indian triumph on the Wabash River has historically been long overshadowed by the story of the battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 whereby the U.S. Army defeated the western confederacy of nations. But, American defeat along the banks of the Wabash River shook the fragile republic to its core.⁴ By 1792 Washington and many federalist advocates in Philadelphia realized they needed to act fast to counter the power of the rising Empire State, and the anti-federalist dissent spreading throughout the republic. Seeking allies, both domestic and foreign, Congress again turned to the Iroquois.

4 For full treatment of 1791 battle, see Calloway, *The Victory with No Name*, 2014.

EPILOGUE

By the early 1790s the floods of colonization relentlessly washed over Iroquoia in waves like an aggravating virus. Slowly, but surely, even Iroquois leaders like Good Peter that held on to the thin promises made by New York, began to speak out against the corruption and deception that underpinned many treaty negotiations of the 1780s. But, with Brant and a large contingent of Iroquois at Grand River, and most other nations temporarily ruined by the Fort Stanwix treaties of 1784, 1788, and 1790, any threat from the once-mighty Iroquois Confederacy appeared to wane. One of the last strongholds of Iroquois resistance to American imperial endeavors was led by the Seneca nation at Buffalo Creek.

At this time, the western gatekeepers of the factionalized metaphorical longhouse were led by Cornplanter and Red Jacket, and were increasingly galvanized by the religious teachings of Cornplanter's half-brother, Handsome Lake. Located along the eastern shores of the mouth of the Niagara River at Lake Eire, Buffalo Creek remained the western refuge for scores of Iroquois following the American Revolution. With close ties to the western nations of the Ohio and Great Lakes regions, Buffalo Creek Senecas still posed a considerable threat to the stability of the new republic. During the 1780s and early 1790s, as New York devoured Iroquoia, Seneca leaders like Cornplanter positioned to direct the flow of American expansion.

In November 1790, Cornplanter led a delegation of Senecas to Philadelphia to address President George Washington. Washington, looking for a way to reign in the unruly behavior of anti-federalists like Clinton and extend federal control, warmly welcomed the disgruntled Seneca chiefs. In a well-documented speech, on December 1, 1790, Cornplanter recounted his nation's history with the colonizers of North America, as well as Euroamerican double standards, land greed, and deception. Recounting the terms of the 1784 treaty of Fort Stanwix and subsequent land grabs thereafter, Cornplanter rhetorically asked Washington "where is the Land which our children and their children after them are to lie down on?" In his response to the Senecas, Washington sought to neutralize the threat of the Senecas joining the western confederacy of Indians bent on resisting American expansion. He also pushed to assert federal authority. Recognizing that the Senecas sought to address the long-lease agreements that loomed over their lands, Washington underscored federal commitment to the terms of the 1784 treaty. "Hear well, and let it be heard by every person in your nation," Washington wrote, "that the President of the United States declares, that the general government considers itself bound to protect you in all the lands secured to you by the treaty of Fort Stanwix, the 22d of October 1784." The president further pledged to protect the Seneca nation from "bad white men" so long as Seneca warriors did not join the "bad Indians . . . [that] have long continued their murders and depredations upon the frontiers laying along the Ohio. Washington had much to gain from adopting this approach. Cornplanter, too, realized the potential material and security benefits of maintaining diplomatic neutrality.

Meanwhile, as Washington "conceded that the Indian tribes, including the Six Nations, held the underlying right to the soil," he prepared to march an army into the Ohio Country. If favorable treaty terms could not be gained by overtures of peace, treaty terms would be gained at the end of a sword. Washington sought to make an example of the Ohio nations.

But when news of Arthur St. Clair's defeat along the Maumee River filtered back to Buffalo Creek, the U.S. government was quickly humbled and the policy of neutrality among the Iroquois faltered. As Campisi and Starna note, young Iroquois warriors "urged [their people] to join what appeared to be an easily won war against the Americans." Cautiously, indigent leaders sought to use the threat of the rising united confederacy of western tribes as a means to reassert Iroquois authority and maintain sovereignty.

Throughout the first half of 1792, as war hung over the frontiers of the American empire, the U.S. government made efforts to keep the Iroquois neutral. When it became clear in late summer 1792 that the Ohio nations were determined to fight and die for their lands, Washington ordered General Anthony Wayne to prepare for war. Meanwhile, when rumors circulated that the western tribes, the Iroquois, and British representatives held a council at Buffalo Creek in October 1792 to debate whether to militarily resist American expansion, the situation came to a head. Fearing ending up on the wrong side of an imminent war for the Ohio Country, both the Iroquois (at Buffalo Creek and Grand River) and the U.S. government sought terms. Agreeing on a location, out of reach of private and Crown interests, however, proved difficult. Squatters, surveyors, and competing state claims to Iroquoia also caused delays. With tensions high and General Wayne's army marching west, Washington ordered Timothy Pickering to hold a grand council with the Iroquois, and the Senecas, in particular. In late summer 1794, Pickering made his way from Philadelphia to the Seneca village of Canandaigua, following a path similar to the one botanist John Bartram traversed fifty years earlier.

Over 1,500 Iroquois journeyed to Canandaigua in 1794 to witness what Jack Campisi suggests was intended to be a "Seneca show to which others were invited." When formal proceedings commenced on October 18, 1794, Pickering made sure lobbyists from Pennsylvania and New York were nowhere to be found. Within days, Crown agents, too, had been identified and barred from the proceedings. Not long thereafter, news of General Wayne's victory at the Battle of Fallen Timbers circulated among the participants gathered at Canandaigua. Pickering, despite realizing that the threat of the western nations on the United States had been neutralized and the Iroquois were now virtually defenseless, stayed on task. For ten years the United States had tried, and failed, to secure an Iroquois cession of the Ohio River Valley (Fort Stanwix in 1784 and Fort Harmar in 1789). With renewed confidence and federal objectives in mind, Pickering pressed forward with the intention of settling Iroquois land disputes and securing the Ohio Country for colonization.

On November 11, 1794, the treaty concluded. In exchange for peace and friendship with the Iroquois, \$10,000 in goods, and an annual payment of \$4,500 "which shall be expended yearly, forever," American citizens were granted "free passage through [Iroquoia], and the free use of the harbors and rivers . . . for the passing and securing of vessels and boats, and the liberty to land their cargoes where necessary for their safety." For the Senecas, the land cessions of the 1784 treaty of Fort Stanwix were restored and the bounds of their nation's land rights defined; with this any future Iroquois claims to the Ohio Country were negated.

In the end, much more became of the treaty intended to quell tension and remove the threat of the Senecas joining the western tribes. Determined to secure terms that included all key signatories, Pickering made numerous concessions to the Iroquois that today form the basis of land, resource, and cultural rights of the Iroquois remaining in the United

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States. In fact, in many ways the Treaty of Canandaigua reiterated and legally retrenched the same principles of indigenous land rights as expressed thirty years before by the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which today still remains the bedrock of First Nations land rights in Canada. Somewhat ironically, in an attempt to curtail aggressive state actions and extend federal authority to reap the benefits of future exploitation of Native Americans, Pickering, and Congress, by way of ratifying the treaty of Canandaigua, legally reaffirmed Iroquois sovereignty and provided the mechanism to undermine the validity of the 1788 and 1790 treaties held at Fort Stanwix. It would take almost two centuries of cultural persecution and further dispossession before the Iroquois could begin enacting a degree of justice. Iroquois struggles to assert and exercise their rights continue to this day.

SUMMARY AND RESEARCH RECOMENDATIONS

This study documented, described, and historically contextualized the treaties negotiated at, or near, Fort Stanwix, New York, during the late eighteenth century. The study has framed the treaties within the context of European and American imperial efforts to control and colonize the frontiers and borderlands of their empires in Iroquoia and beyond. By doing so, this study has also underscored Iroquois (Haudenosauanee) efforts to preserve their political autonomy and territories in the region. In the end, the historical narrative has provided the following five areas:

1. The importance of the Oneida Carry and its relationship to Fort Stanwix in the eighteenth century. The Oneida Carry was a crucial transportation corridor for first peoples and later European and American colonizers because it linked the Mohawk River to Wood Creek, which connected the lower Hudson River to Lake Ontario and the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence River regions;
2. A description of the physical place and space of the treaty negotiation;
3. A comprehensive account of the treaties and negotiations that took place at, or near, Fort Stanwix in the late eighteenth century that includes reference to the major players representing the various interested parties at each of the treaty negotiations, their role in the events leading up to the negotiations, during the negotiations, and after the treaties were signed (especially as it related to colonization, land speculation, and indigenous dispossession);
4. A thorough documentation and analysis of the indigenous tribes and individual represented at the various treaty negotiations that took place at Fort Stanwix. This account has also noted those tribes and nations that did not participate (or refused or were not invited to participate) but who were directly affected by the negotiations agreed to at Fort Stanwix;
5. Finally, the legal and political legacies of the treaties negotiated at Fort Stanwix on subsequent relations among tribes, the State of New York, the United States, and Canada. In other words, the report has described to what extent the treaties negotiated at Fort Stanwix set precedents and provided a foundation that formed the basis of American policy and law regarding Indian tribes and nations as it related to political recognition, reservations, and the supremacy of federal powers over state powers regarding Indian affairs.

Because the final narrative presented here has relied almost exclusively on written materials for guidance (primarily secondary-source literature generated in the past 25 years, as well as primary source materials documented at length in the bibliography) it has notable limitations. A thorough ethnographic study of the same topic and treaties would provide not only a clearer indigenous voice but also the historical legacies and memories of the treaties among first peoples today. To do so, Iroquois communities both in Canada and the United States should be consulted. Also, an effort should be made to uncover the legacy of the first Fort Stanwix treaty among those first peoples and nations throughout the Ohio River valley given that their communities felt the brunt of the 1768 land cession.

Given both time, financial, and length restraints, this report was limited by the sources it utilized. That being said, further archival endeavors could help provide even more historical context and insight into these treaties. The list is long, but identifying a few notable resource repositories that went untapped seems appropriate. They include the Connecticut Historical Society (especially the Oliver Wolcott Papers); the Massachusetts Historical Society (especially the Timothy Pickering Papers); the New York State Archives and Library in Albany; and the Wisconsin Historical Society (especially the Draper Manuscript Collection). Further inquiry into the treaties would also benefit from a review of newspapers and popular print related to the treaties, and of course, another trip back to Francis Jennings, et. al., eds., *Iroquois Indians: A Documentary History of the Diplomacy of the Six Nations and Their League*.

Finally, during the past decade significant advances have been made with digital mapping and spatial history. If funding were ever available, I would strongly encourage the National Park Service to contract a historian capable of not only rethinking, but also (re-)visualizing and displaying the histories of the treaties negotiated at the Oneida Carry.

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