ABSTRACT

GREENE, TAYLOR. “‘No man can interfere with you’: Sir William Johnson and British North American Networks of Power, 1738-1774.” (Under the direction of Dr. Megan Cherry).

Historians conducted ample research on British imperial patronage in the eighteenth-century; however, relatively little has been explored on the particularities of exchange and reciprocity in the context of cultural differences in North America. Britain’s Superintendent of Indian affairs for the northern colonies, Sir William Johnson, advanced from his uncle’s American agent to one of British North America’s most influential men. During his life, Johnson performed numerous roles: he was a fur trader, developer, land broker, gardener, proprietor, entrepreneur, merchant, diplomat, soldier, colonial official, Mohawk sachem, English baron, rival, lover, husband, and father. In each function, Johnson created and maintained relationships that helped him socially advance. While he initially struggled to navigate New York’s factional politics, Johnson became a seasoned tradesman and an unparalleled cultural broker. Through partnerships with locals and his fortune from shrewd investments, Johnson practiced Iroquois gift-giving diplomacy that set him apart from his contemporaries. Furthermore, Johnson coupled his personal and business connections to his Iroquois networks in the exchange of exotic items that bound the provincial elite in America to his ambitions. By the mid-eighteenth century, Johnson ascended British politics and became irreplaceable. Sir William Johnson overcame social hurdles, outmaneuvered political rivals, and ultimately helped sustain the Covenant Chain between the British Empire and the Iroquois Confederacy.
“No man can interfere with you”: Sir William Johnson and British North American Networks of Power, 1738-1774

by

Taylor Greene

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of North Carolina State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

History

Raleigh, North Carolina

2018

APPROVED BY:

_______________________________
Megan L. Cherry
Committee Chair

_______________________________
Brent S. Sirota

_______________________________
David P. Gilmartin
DEDICATION

For my wife and children. Your happiness is my life’s greatest ambition.
BIOGRAPHY

A Raleigh native, Taylor Randel Greene traveled west in 2005 to attend Utah Valley State College for a year before he served a religious mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Phoenix, Arizona. In 2010, he graduated from Brigham Young University with a Bachelor of Arts in History. He subsequently studied abroad in France before moving to Las Vegas and attended graduate school at the University of Nevada – Las Vegas. He returned to Raleigh in 2013 to focus on work and his family. In 2015, he decided to finish his graduate degree in history at North Carolina State University.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I lamented my alma matter’s decision to end their history graduate program, Akram Khater kindly suggested that I apply to NCSU. Even before my admission, his door has always been open, and his humble brilliance has inspired me. Dean Bruno judiciously guided my research many years ago and has been nothing but helpful ever since. Also, I am thankful to Judy Kertesz for her counsel and advice.

My committee members deserve high praise for their assistance. David Gilmartin stands unparalleled in his wisdom and ability to offer good-natured humor. I found nothing but high-level enthusiasm and inspiration as I worked with the talented Brent Sirota. I continually cherish the lively class discussions with each of you.

What can I say about the person who served as a long-suffering editor, insightful mentor, and pro bono psychologist? Megan Cherry exemplifies what it means to be an outstanding scholar and a compassionate teacher. Her detailed knowledge of colonial New York on-the-spot recommendations incalculably aided my research. Thank you for everything.

I am also obliged to my family. My mother has been unwavering in her support for my higher education, and my father instilled in me a great passion for history at a young age. They have generously supported my decision to pursue a teaching career. Lastly, long hours at work and school have deprived my wife and children of a husband and father for too long. They are my greatest joy, and I cannot wait to spend more time with them.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: The “Reality of his Friends”</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Methods of Reciprocity</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: A “Sensibility of Favors”</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

In the early modern era, European empires imagined themselves as part of broader populations defined against ‘unordered’ peoples and spaces.\(^1\) Imperial subjects celebrated their ordered, hierarchal system where all aspects of life connected and interconnected at various vertical layers.\(^2\) In this monarchical system, power originated at the head of government—the king—and flowed downwards. Scottish philosopher David Hume elaborated “there is a long train of dependence from the prince to the peasant…[it] beget[s] in every one an inclination to please his superiors.”\(^3\) But not all orders came from above. Vast stretches of land and sea created logistical nightmares for crown agents in London. In response, the English farmed out power to various political and sub-political actors including governors, assemblies, proprietors, and missionary organizations.\(^4\) Historian Gail MacLeitch remarked that empire became “a series of processes and negotiations shaped by various interest groups.”\(^5\) These groups varied in their approach to empire and often struggled against one another. In their contests, each connected themselves to the various networks of influential people in a system known as patronage, which both sustained and complicated European imperialism in North America.

Patronage was a type of paternal, reciprocal linkage that that bound people, communities, and organizations together.\(^6\) Those who successfully mastered lessons of networking achieved

---


advancement as they formulated, maintained, and enriched associations.\(^7\) Like a father to a child, the patron dictated the flow of favor and obligation. If a patron agreed to a relationship with a client, the two entered a mutual relationship of obligation. The patron granted the client access to resources, privileges, and connections. Patrons expected clients to advance and form profitable networks of their own. Most American colonists accepted this non-equal relationship because it sustained their mode of governance. Furthermore, patronage required careful consideration of the amount of favor patrons extended. If patrons gave all, they nullified their very reason for being in the hierarchy.\(^8\) Lastly, patrons risked all if their ambitions stalled or met political disgrace. If a patron’s political favors or wealth stalled, clients, no matter how loyal, connected with other patrons that shared similar ideological views.\(^9\)

Like Anglo-Americans, native peoples also recognized a form of patronage. While Europeans practiced a vertical system of governance ultimately backed by coercion, various native peoples exercised a looser method based on persuasion.\(^10\) The Iroquois, also known as the Haudenosaunee, obliged others and created personal loyalty through conceptions of reciprocity, gift-giving, and renewing bonds in the Great Lakes area. Ceremonial gift exchange accompanied commercial interactions because ritual presents indicated an overarching agreement between peoples that represented goodwill, safe passage, and reciprocity.

In Anglo-Iroquois commerce, a “mutuality of dependence” emerged.\(^11\) Iroquois received European manufactured goods and military alliances in exchange for furs and land. European-


\(^8\) Anastasia Piliavsky, ed., *Patronage as Politics in South Asia* (Delhi, India: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 125.


introduced diseases devastated Iroquois numbers; however, guns enabled Iroquois warriors to recuperate their losses through captive-taking raids. As time progressed, the Haudenosaunee consistently declared their sovereignty and creatively adapted in response to British and French infringements. Imperial officeholders, however, lacked the means to subjugate the Iroquois, and thus begrudgingly adapted to native modes of diplomacy.

One crown agent, New York Governor Edmund Andros, supported James II’s desire to create alliances with powerful Native American peoples to help secure colonial borderlands—especially during Metacom’s War (1675-1676). Metacom, also known as King Philip, expressed grievances committed by the English against Indian goods, land, and authority. Massachusetts officials ignored the complaints, and Metacom and his allies responded with war. New England pooled militias together and formed the New England Confederation and clashed with Metacom’s forces. Thousands died. Hoping to centralize Indian diplomacy under his royally-sponsored colony, Governor Andros distributed weapons and ammunition to a Mohawk force. The Mohawk army raided Metacom’s winter camp and helped New Englanders claim victory. With New York’s support, the Iroquois Confederacy, made up of the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca, formed a type of protectorate over native refugees from the war. Additionally, the Five Nations also claimed the remnant New England Indians as

---

12 Brandão, Your Fyre Shall Burn No More, 131.
13 MacLeitch, Imperial Entanglements, 3-6.
14 Ned C. Landsman, Crossroads of Empire: The Middle Colonies in British North America (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 39-41
16 Landsman, Crossroads of Empire, 41.
dependents and relocated them closer to the Iroquois territory.\textsuperscript{19} This mutually beneficial agreement of Anglo-Indian relations between Andros and the Iroquois became known as the Covenant Chain.\textsuperscript{20}

The Covenant Chain directly sustained—and largely comprised—the security of England’s middle colonies in North America. Despite its importance, the Covenant Chain acted more like a relationship than a formal alliance since each side interpreted it differently.\textsuperscript{21} This agreement required consistent gift-giving rituals between British and Iroquois officials that maintained open trade, discourse, and military coordination.\textsuperscript{22} Many British officeholders viewed the Covenant Chain as a system of Iroquois dependence that sanctioned British territorial claims in the Ohio Valley and the Great Lakes region.\textsuperscript{23} This observation acknowledged Iroquois sovereignty in diplomatic dealings but maintained that Britain essentially purchased their allegiance through costly gift-giving diplomacy.\textsuperscript{24} For Stuart supporters like Governor Andros who desired greater crown control and influence through New York, the agreement formalized Anglo-Indian treaties in other colonies since they “participated in treaty negotiations as subordinate partners to New York.”\textsuperscript{25}

The Covenant Chain increased in importance after the Glorious Revolution in 1688 because King William III focused the empire’s resources and attention on the defense Anglo-

\textsuperscript{19} Pulsipher, \textit{Subjects unto the Same King}, 269.
\textsuperscript{21} Landsman, \textit{Crossroads of Empire}, 42-43.
\textsuperscript{22} Cadwallader D. Colden, \textit{The History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada Which Are Dependent on the Province of New York in America: And Are the Barrier between the English and French in That Part of the World...} (London: T. Osborne, 1747), Part II Chapter 1.
\textsuperscript{24} Beaumont, \textit{Colonial America}, 122.
Dutch interests in continental Europe. This kept in line with Britain’s hands-off approach to the colonies known as salutary neglect. Left without any coherent imperial policy or funds, British colonies in North America desperately relied on their militias and alliances with Native Americans during subsequent conflicts such as the War of the League of Augsburg (King William’s War) and the War of Spanish Succession (Queen Anne’s War). This worked to the advantage of British-allied natives because the competition for trade and friendship gave them the power to demand recognition and good treatment. For the British, the Covenant Chain extended their interests to the Iroquois’ purported hegemony over other Native American peoples. After 1710 when prominent New York colonists sponsored the trip of four “Indian Kings” to meet Queen Anne in England, the name ‘Iroquois’ became familiar to Britons in London who usually cared more for European or Mediterranean news. Furthermore, Indian Commissioners and colonial governors purported the myth that the Iroquois possessed a type of empire to the Board of Trade. This erroneous classification of Iroquois governance served the Board and colonial officials. Historian Andrew Beaumont explained “The chain came as close as was possible to an affirmation by the Iroquois of British Dominium over them.” That claim justified additional British imperial expenses and territorial expansion—especially when placed in context French claims made around New France.

For the Iroquois, the Covenant Chain served as a non-exclusionary bond of friendship that likewise promoted economic and militaristic expansion. Secretary for Indian Affairs, Peter

28 Pulsipher, Subjects unto the Same King, 4.
32 Beaumont, Colonial America, 120-121.
Wraxall remarked that the Iroquois maintained a balance between French and English known as “great ruling Principle of the Modern Indian Politics.” Indeed, Haudenosaunee headmen and women played both French and English diplomats off each other to maximize their intake of treaty and trade goods. Moreover, the Covenant Chain secured the southern and eastern borderlands of Iroquois territory, which allowed Haudenosaunee warriors to resume raids for captives and furs against western Indians in Illinois country. Lastly, the agreement promoted greater commerce between Anglo-Iroquois factions because it allowed more legal protections that, in theory, protected against fraud and guaranteed safe commercial passage. After enduring numerous demographic and cultural ordeals in the seventeenth century, the Covenant Chain presented the Iroquois anglophiles a means to resist European intrusion and preserve Iroquois sovereignty and religion.

In the early eighteenth-century, the Covenant Chain endured substantial complications. According to the Covenant Chain, the Iroquois claimed Shawnees, Delawares, and Mingoes as dependents in the Ohio Country. While these groups sometimes followed the Iroquois’ lead, they considered themselves free peoples and traded with both French and British merchants. Additionally, Iroquoian representatives deeded land that didn’t technically belong to them while they expected their ‘dependents’ like the Shawnee to honor such deals. Further stressing Anglo-Indian diplomacy, some New York settlers flooded Iroquoia with rum and engaged in fraudulent land deals with unauthorized and often inebriated individuals—the same reasons that justified Metacom to take the warpath. However, the Iroquois were not blameless either. In 1701, the Five

---

36 Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 136-137.
Nations began raiding the British-allied Catawba in the Carolinas. In response, French diplomats gave more presents to encourage divisive raids that undermined the Covenant Chain while English Governors allocated greater expenses to their Commissioners of Indian Affairs to help regulate Anglo-Indian affairs. In 1722, colonial governors met with Iroquois headmen and renewed the Covenant Chain that secured an agreement that the Iroquois would cease their southern raids against British-allied natives. Furthermore, some colonial officials envisioned a more simplified Anglo-Indian system where one people managed many. However, the Iroquois were more than just a military force; they were peace-makers. Mediating between native peoples and balancing European rivalries, the Haudenosaunee exercised considerable power during the eighteenth century.

Historians have proposed many reasons for why the Covenant Chain held throughout the tumultuous eighteenth century. English historians viewed the Covenant Chain as a method where policymakers practiced their imperial ideologies in treating the Iroquois like an empire and using it to justify territorial expansion. Native American historians focus on how the Covenant Chain relied on the political geography of North America and how the balance of power operated between Europeans and native peoples. Daniel Richter, for example, draws attention to the Covenant Chain’s native framework and adaptability. Others, like Ned Landsman, highlight how each side profited from the ambiguous nature of the Covenant Chain relationship. Because each side saw value in the agreement, they made it work despite challenges. This thesis acknowledges the centrality of native peoples in promoting the Covenant Chain; however, it

---

40 Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 243-244.
42 Landsman, *Crossroads of Empire*, 42.
varies by focusing attention on a cultural mediator claimed by both the Iroquois and English. Each side acknowledged his aptitude in Anglo-Indian diplomacy because he navigated between both worlds with ease thanks to the help of his Iroquois and English allies. While many reasons contributed to the maintenance of the Covenant Chain, Sir William Johnson stands among the leading factors.

Sir William Johnson became England’s most celebrated cultural broker in North America through his cultural mediations and ability to create networks. He arrived in Boston’s harbor as an émigré in 1738, developed an extensive estate upon the Mohawk River, and became one of New York’s leading gentlemen. Unlike some fur traders who sacrificed lasting relationships for short-term profit schemes, Johnson recognized the strategic importance of the Iroquois Confederacy. He practiced and mastered Iroquois politics and played up the Anglo-Iroquois alliance to enrich himself and his allies with the help of Hendrick Theygonguian and Molly Brant. By this method, Johnson outperformed contemporaries and outmaneuvered rivals. At the height of his power, Johnson served as Britain’s superintendent of Indian affairs for the northern colonies and exercised an unprecedented power that one of Johnson’s clients typified by declaring: “No man can interfere with you.”

Contemporary cultural brokers paled in comparison with the Superintendent for Indian Affairs. Conrad Weiser arrived in New York during the great Palatine migration of 1710. Living along the Schoharie Creek near Mohawk villages, Weiser learned the Mohawk language and Iroquois gift-giving practices long before William Johnson. In 1729, Weiser moved to Pennsylvania and became an interpreter and Indian Commissioner. Despite his longstanding experience with Iroquoian peoples, Weiser never achieved Johnson’s elite status principally.

because Weiser lacked an initial powerful patron and couldn’t navigate British politics quite as well as the superintendent. Weiser maintained alliances between Pennsylvania and nearby Native Americans until his death in 1760. Weiser’s client and close friend, Daniel Claus, went on to serve under William Johnson. Another Pennsylvania trader, George Croghan, also became one of Johnson’s deputies. All the aforementioned men found great wealth and advanced within their spheres of influence; however, none commanded the amount of influence and respect as Sir William did. William Johnson stood unique because he acknowledged gift-giving and Anglo-Indian trade as forms of cultural art. Furthermore, Johnson’s entrance to North America in 1738 also worked to his advantage as it allowed him a time of peace to learn and practice forms of patronage before war broke out between Britain and France from 1740 and onwards. Combined with his ability to form and maintain powerful networks, Johnson effectively upheld the Covenant Chain.

Sir William Johnson’s life and career inspired admirers over the years. In 1801, an anonymous donor contributed seven parcels of letters and reports involving William Johnson and his associates. Diligent scholars organized and published volumes of the letters starting in the mid-nineteenth century. Regrettably, a fire broke out in 1911 and damaged many of the papers setting research back. Finally, in 1965, scholars organized and released the Sir William Johnson Papers to the public. Many of Johnson’s initial biographers worked on these papers including William Leete Stone Jr.

47 William Leete Stone, Jr., The Life and Times of Sir William Johnson (Albany: Munsell, 1865), vi. Stone claims the papers came from General John Tayler Cooper and others from his father after acquiring them from the Johnson family in England.
William Leete Stone Jr. formed the first generation of William Johnson enthusiasts. Like his father before him, William Leete Stone Jr. took an interest in the early history of colonial New York and William Johnson.\textsuperscript{49} In 1865, Stone Jr. wrote Johnson’s first biography \textit{The Life and Times of Sir William Johnson, Bart.}\textsuperscript{50} Stone Jr. claimed his work served to “introduce the principal personage… upon the stage of action… interblended” with the diplomatic history between New York and the Iroquois Confederation. Although Stone Jr. worked closely with the \textit{Johnson Papers}, he also relied heavily on myth and oral accounts.

Subsequent research by Arthur Pound, Milton Hamilton, and James Flexner expanded on Stone’s biography. Unfortunately, Arthur Pound paid scant attention to Johnson’s concentrated focus on forming profitable networks and, instead, focuses on popular legends and rumors surrounding Johnson’s life. New York state historian, Milton Hamilton carefully reconstructed Johnson’s life in \textit{Sir William Johnson: Colonial American, 1715-1763}. Despite his attention to detail, Hamilton missed the mark in explaining how Johnson found success compared to contemporaries and often mischaracterized the nature of Johnson’s role as an intercultural diplomat.\textsuperscript{51} James Thomas Flexner 1959 biography emphasized an entertaining, and often inaccurate, narrative of Johnson’s life as a type of feudal lord on the frontier.\textsuperscript{52} While well-intentioned, these antiquarians narrated a helpful chronological of Sir William Johnson’s life but focused more on lively narratives than historical analysis.

Partly in response to Patricia Bonomi’s discussion on New York’s factional society and politics, John Guzzardo’s dissertation centered Johnson in patronage politics. Guzzardo

\textsuperscript{49} Stone, \textit{The Life and Times of Sir William Johnson}, v.
\textsuperscript{50} Stone, \textit{The Life and Times of Sir William Johnson}, v. After his death in 1774, William Johnson’s son John Johnson and his son-in-law Daniel Claus removed his private papers to Canada.
explained that provincial politics and the “vigorous Mohawk Valley subculture that constituted Johnson’s base of operation” was unacknowledged by historians like Bonomi.\footnote{John Christopher Guzzardo, “Sir William Johnson’s Official Family: Patron and Clients in an Anglo-American Empire,” PhD dissertation (Syracuse: Syracuse University, 1975), 1.} Guzzardo argued that Johnson learned and replicated plantation imperialism—England’s favored form of colonization—on New York’s frontier.\footnote{Guzzardo, “Sir William Johnson’s Official Family,” 34.} In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, England ‘planted’ Catholic Ireland with Protestant, quasi-military settlers. Also known as planters, these Protestant colonists created plantation communities set on replicating English social, religious, and political life in Ireland. Imperial officials hoped by sponsoring the creation of compelling, Protestant networks that they could gradually convert the populace into loyal subjects that accepted British sovereignty.

More recently, Fintan O’Toole investigates Johnson’s networks in Ireland and creatively finds similarities in clan cultures between the Irish and Iroquois; however, he relies mostly on speculation rather than historical evidence.\footnote{Fintan O’Toole, White Savage: William Johnson and the Invention of America (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 304. O’Toole relies on speculation stating that Johnson viewed himself as a Gaelic lord with scant evidence.} While Johnson brought Irish cultural mentalities with him and formed fast friendships with other Anglo-Irish immigrants, he understood his advancement relied on how well he accommodated and promoted English culture without losing influence within the Iroquois Confederacy. Convincing others of the necessity for himself and the Covenant Chain justified Johnson’s advancement in both Iroquois and English societies.

Timothy Shannon adds to the conversation as he stresses Johnson’s ability to embrace “Indian fashion” where Native American aesthetics and European attire undertook new cultural forms. By employing fashion appropriately, Johnson exercised an enormous influence on his constituents.\footnote{Timothy J. Shannon, “Dressing for Success on the Mohawk Frontier,” 14-18.} While illuminating, Shannon seems to only gesture at the hierarchal nature of
patronage for Johnson—focusing on his patrons while not paying enough attention to his Anglo-American clients. Johnson spent an enormous amount of time and effort in adequately grooming his clients and helping them succeed. Johnson’s work helped uphold the Covenant Chain, but he also couldn’t do it alone. He required networks of powerful friends.

Historian Colin Calloway focuses on Johnson, Highland Scots, and native peoples. An interesting comparison, Calloway corrects O’Toole’s mistakes because Calloway details the similarities and dissimilarities of the three. Furthermore, Calloway also builds upon Wanda Burch’s excellent “Sir William Johnson’s Cabinet of Curiosities,” noting how Johnson established a residence that served as a symbolic middle ground that helped maintain the Covenant Chain. Burch powerfully argues Johnson’s vast collection evidenced two cultures that “blended into the power of one man in a way that never equaled again by a white man in America.” At his home, Johnson facilitated cultural exchanges which transformed his residence into a significant space of power. Gail MacLeitch, however, insists that Johnson never intended to incorporate Iroquois interests on equal terms. Instead, MacLeitch argues that he mixed intercultural “forms in ways that were ultimately detrimental to the Iroquois.”

Gail Danvers complicates works by New Indian Historians like Daniel Richter and Richard White. Richter and White advocate the phenomenon of cultural synthesis during exchange periods between Anglo-Indians. However, Danvers differs in that she reminds scholars that the British Empire did not want to create a bi-racial culture from Anglo-Indian relations. Instead, imperial officials ultimately desired to impose sovereignty on native peoples and

---

61 MacLeitch, Imperial Entanglements, 11.
manipulated gender to serve that goal. Danvers, like MacLeitch, proficiently stresses the importance of women in Iroquois society. Unfortunately, Danvers’ article grants little agency to women—or native peoples as a whole—who creatively adapted to crisis after crisis in the eighteenth-century. Although Danvers correctly identifies Johnson as a British imperial advocate, she misses Johnson’s ambitions. While a loyal servant of his patrons, Johnson tied his fate with that of the Iroquois through financial, political, social, and familial networks. If Britain abandoned the Covenant Chain, Johnson’s carefully built networks of power would crumble. In the later eighteenth-century, Jeffrey Amherst represented many in the British Empire that only saw Indian importance as it related to France’s imperial ambitions. Once removed, these imperial officeholders saw no reason to continue the Covenant Chain or support expensive gift-giving ceremonies—especially to former enemies. Johnson stood against those like Amherst and advocated the necessity of Anglo-Indian alliances—especially the Covenant Chain even in times of peace. To Johnson, the Covenant Chain served as a means to achieve lasting peace.

Sir William Johnson alone could do relatively nothing; he required connections, friends, and allies. Richard Grassby and Lindsay O’Neill highlight the role family networks played in the eighteenth century. In Kinship and Capitalism, Richard Grassby stresses the importance of family capitalism over individualism in promoting economic growth in the British Empire until 1740. Grassby also highlights that family partnerships composed most of the early modern businesses where kinship and capitalism reinforced each other. With equal intensity, Lindsay O’Neill focuses on the power letters, favors, and gifts possessed in creating and maintaining

63 Danvers, 202. Only in the last paragraph does Danvers provide a token nod towards the Iroquois creative adaptability.
relationships across the Atlantic. She examines how social and economic connections operated among Britain’s elite. Unfortunately, both refuse to use William Johnson as an example.

This thesis emphasizes the role networks played but also centers around William Johnson’s life and how he serves as a prime candidate for how networks operated in the eighteenth century. Combining Grassby and O’Neill’s research, this thesis adds to the analysis of patronage by focusing on the particularities of exchange and reciprocity in the context of cultural differences and, most particularly, through the operation of gift-giving as a form of reciprocity with multiple meanings. As the governing policy in Anglo-Iroquois relations, Johnson appreciated the power the Covenant Chain possessed and learned to negotiate with the help of influential friends, clients, patrons, and allies. Ultimately, Sir William Johnson and his networks of power served as a significant factor that upheld the Covenant Chain in the eighteenth-century.

The first chapter details how Johnson learned how to create and maintain wealth through networking and enterprises initially from his uncle, Sir Peter Warren. Combined with face-to-face interactions with native peoples like Hendrick, Johnson secured political patronage from colonial and London officials, amassed wealth, and accumulated favors. Ultimately, Johnson outmaneuvered his opponents through his expansion of networks and did so through his insistence on preserving the Anglo-Iroquois alliance.

The second chapter focuses on how Johnson’s practice in Iroquois gift-giving diplomacy made him indispensable. Through partnerships with Walter Butler, Hendrick Theygonguian, and Molly Brant, Johnson learned and eventually mastered the Iroquois gift-giving diplomacy and sustained the Covenant Chain during times of widespread conflict. Johnson tapped into native systems of patronage with gift-giving and subtly altered the system to suit the needs of his

\[\text{\footnotesize\cite{O'Neill, 115-117.}}\]
British patrons. His grasp of native conceptions of reciprocity and obligation made him essential as an Anglo-Iroquois diplomat for both peoples.

The third chapter shifts to focus on Johnson’s gift-giving and favor exchange with Anglo-American elites. Specifically, it details how colonial Americans reimagined themselves—and hoped to move up the social ladder—through the accruement, distribution, and display of luxury goods and exotic wares. Initially, with the backing of his uncle, Johnson became a supplier of these material goods but eventually commanded the entirety of Anglo-Indian exchanges. Johnson distributed gifts and earned the goodwill from colonial notables. That goodwill translated into financial, social, and political favors for Sir William and his family. Besides giving gifts, Johnson showcased his residence and collection to those he wished to impress and incorporate within his networks of influence.

In eighteenth-century North America, Sir William Johnson exemplified how empire functioned in the colonies. He outperformed contemporaries through cultivating powerful personal and business connections, making himself indispensable through gift-giving diplomacy, and skillfully performing methods of exchange and reciprocity. Despite ongoing hostilities and challenges, Sir William Johnson exerted considerable influence as Britain’s leading Anglo-Iroquois diplomat and helped sustain the Covenant Chain.
Chapter 1: The “Reality of his Friends”

Navigating British North American politics proved complicated during the eighteenth-century due to factious groups of elite families. These powerful kinship networks dominated courts, filled county offices, and presided over councils. Colonial Americans who desired to socially advance required the backing of a patron that provided connections. Those connections translated into financial and political favors. In return, powerful patrons expected their clients to generate their own connections for the patron’s benefit through efficacious service, obliging epistolary correspondence, and cordial personal interactions. Additionally, patrons sought clients who indicated proper shared tastes and manners that justified their inclusion into the colonial genteel.66 Gentility separated the unimaginative commoners from the “great minded souls.”67 Ultimately, the journey from client to patron highlighted how networks of power operated in the British Empire.

William Johnson proceeded through phases in his life that explain his rise in wealth, reputation, and power. Wealthy family connections, well-connected merchant contacts, and various Mohawk Valley locals furnished Johnson with an advantageous beginning and contributed to Johnson’s accomplishments. Unlike contemporaries, Johnson’s connections enabled him to bypass Albany middlemen and secure an independent source of revenue. With Johnson’s wealth and relations, he created expanded political opportunities and exposed himself to risks. Indeed, William Johnson encountered obstacles and made mistakes as he developed his wealth, reinvented himself as a British gentleman, strengthened ties with native peoples, and climbed the patronage ladder. Despite diverse challenges, Sir William Johnson exemplified how networks of power operated in the eighteenth-century British world. He outperformed

---

contemporaries and political rivals because he carefully cultivated powerful personal and business connections through honest trade practices, epistolary correspondence, fulfilling his imperial duties, and extending patronage. Throughout a lifetime of network-building exercises, Johnson achieved an unprecedented position in British North America and enjoyed a far-reaching reputation that extended from the backwoods of Ohio to the courts of Europe.

Colonists like William Johnson reinvented themselves through the written and spoken word. The written word possessed the power to generate respectability and shaped one’s imagined presence in the eighteenth-century, class-conscious society. Penmanship, vocabulary, text structure all informed one’s written word and directly reflected the author’s character. Authors justified their genteel belonging through the use of Latin, poetry, Shakespearean quotes, biblical tropes, or Greco-Roman metaphors. But language involved more than just words in the eighteenth-century—it required presentation. Cultural mannerisms, tone inflections, commonalities, and delivery each influenced the efficacy of a presenter. These written and spoken etiquettes came through diligent learning, immersion, and unending practice. Over time, William Johnson mastered and deployed these techniques which enabled his inclusion into genteel society and enhanced his economic and political opportunities. Initially, however, Johnson only knew little of British North America or a ‘life of leisure’ as he came from a declining, middling Irish family. His uncle, Sir Peter Warren, served as Johnson’s primary patron and tutor on patronage politics.

Through familial networking and his aptitude for naval warfare, Peter Warren led a successful career in the British Royal Navy. At twelve, Warren’s Catholic father died, which

---

motivated Warren to leave Ireland and enlist in the British Royal Navy in 1716.\textsuperscript{70} Although Peter worked with his elder brother Oliver, it was his Protestant Uncle Lord Admiral Matthew Aylmer who served as Peter’s initial patron. Per Aylmer’s advice, Warren converted to Protestantism to qualify for a naval career, and he advanced through the ranks.\textsuperscript{71} In 1727, he became the captain of the *Grafton* and enjoyed a successful career as a British officer working with privateers preying on Spanish and French ships in the West Indies.

While Peter Warren flourished under his patron, he established his own means of wealth generation during high seas conflict. Warren amassed riches through the amended British prize law of 1708.\textsuperscript{72} Captured ships and cargo were considered ‘prizes’ to be sold at friendly harbors. When other naval captains or privateers were involved in a capture, the captains split the three-eighths of the prize equally. Additionally, any commanding admiral or commodore involved in a capture took a cut of about one-eighth of the total prize.\textsuperscript{73} Warren steadily built a fortune from his naval exploits, became a commodore in 1744, and earned a Vice-Admiralty after the Battle of Cape Finisterre in 1747. Consistent eighteenth-century wars between rival European nations competing over Atlantic waterways provided Warren a healthy flow of income and prestige that he ambitiously employed to climb social ladders.

Military contacts had their limits, and so Peter Warren created landed connections in Ireland and New York as he enhanced both his wealth and reputation. Warren used proceeds from Spanish and French prizes to purchase his father’s farm in Ireland which granted Peter a


\textsuperscript{72} Lenman, *Britain’s Colonial Wars, 1688-1783*, 66.

reliable, landed income. Selling ships and their cargo brought Warren into contact with New York merchants including the wealthy Delancey family. In 1731, he married Susan Delancey which secured Warren a kinship link to the influential merchants. Her dowry provided him a “tolerable fortune” of £3,000. In five years into their marriage, Warren purchased a fourteen-thousand-acre estate from New York Governor Cosby’s widow for a minuscule sum of £110. Warren’s duties as a naval officer, however, prevented him from personally managing the new holding which Warren christened Warrensburg. In his stead, Peter Warren called upon his nephews, William Johnson and Michael Tyrrell, to manage the property as his factors.75

William Johnson’s New York entry and initial thrust towards power came because of his kinship connection to Peter Warren. Family networks spanned across the Atlantic and helped create and maintain strong business and social connections. Family members often employed one another due to familiarity and trust.76 Affluent members of the British Empire allowed younger family members to serve as factors or persons who made business transactions on behalf of another.77 Historian Richard Grassby details that “Services of kinsmen were indispensable. In long, risky overseas trades, merchants needed correspondents and agents who would honor their obligations.”78 Oftentimes fathers employed their sons to serve as overseas factors; however, Captain Warren had three daughters.79 Due to Britain’s patriarchal, gender-rigid hierarchy, Warren relied on male relations. Previously in 1734, William Johnson already proved his ability to manage an estate as he collected rents for Warren’s Irish lands.80 In 1738, Warren sponsored the expensive trans-Atlantic voyage for his two nephews so that they could manage Warrensburg

74 Peter Warren to George Anson, April 2, 1745, Anson Papers, 152. in Julian Gwyn, The Enterprising Admiral, 11.
75 William Johnson to Oliver Delancey, March 20, 1769, Documentary History of the State of New York 2:936
77 Grassby, Kinship and Capitalism, 293-295.
78 Grassby, Kinship and Capitalism, 299.
79 Gwyn, The Enterprising Admiral, 114. Warren later had a son that died in a New York epidemic in 1744.
80 O’Toole, White Savage, 37.
in Warren’s stead.\textsuperscript{81} Upon learning of his new duties in North America, Johnson wisely abandoned Catholicism like his uncle and converted to Anglicanism to enhance his American prospects.\textsuperscript{82} Tyrrell helped Johnson for a few years in New York but eventually decided to join his uncle in a more exciting naval career. As Warren’s sole remaining factor, Johnson understood his responsibility to settle the land, create a consistent client base, gauge local and Atlantic markets, and explore the Anglo-Indian fur trade.

Since William Johnson worked as his uncle’s personal representative, when Peter Warren ascended in the British hierarchy, William Johnson became a person of note. He spoke and transacted business in the name of his commanding uncle. Furthermore, as Warren continued spinning his enterprising threads across the Atlantic, he also indirectly fostered his nephew’s representative power. In 1742, William Corry from Schenectady borrowed money from Johnson while the latter acted in his uncle’s name. When Corry refused to pay back his debts, Johnson gestured towards involving legal authorities and informing his uncle. Horrified, Corry swiftly reached out to Johnson and proposed the two to meet, over dinner, to amicably resolve the debt, and not involve Warren nor colonial authorities.\textsuperscript{83} Whether or not the dinner took place, Corry later became one of Johnson’s most active supporters in Schenectady.\textsuperscript{84}

Johnson utilized Peter Warren’s economic connections and made Warrensburg a profitable development.\textsuperscript{85} Initially, Captain Warren sponsored the 1738 emigration of twelve County Meath families that provided the labor for the new settlement along the Mohawk River. Despite that Johnson was “an entire Stranger to both Whites and Indians,” he “spared no pains of

\textsuperscript{81} Michael Tyrrell to William Johnson, May 28, 1741, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:10-14
\textsuperscript{82} O’Toole, \textit{White Savage}, 38.
\textsuperscript{83} William Corry to William Johnson, June 4, 1742, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:17
\textsuperscript{84} Mr. William Corry to Sir William Johnson, August, 25, 1757, \textit{Documentary History of New York} 2:763.
\textsuperscript{85} Peter Warren to William Johnson, November 20, 1738, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 13:2
procuring Tenants.”

Captain Warren instructed Johnson: “by all means incourage setlers…Especially those Germans…” to settle in Warrensburg. The nearby Germans were Palatines that previously settled in the Hudson and Mohawk valleys in 1709. Utilizing his uncle’s credit and promising steady employment, Johnson recruited nearby Germans and other groups to settle Warrensburg. Johnson, tenants, and a few black slaves painstakingly cleared the heavily forested land and planted seeds within the first few years. Johnson hoped that as he followed his uncle’s instructions and worked the estate that he would one day inherit Warrensburg.

Johnson recalled: “[I] labored sorely the best of my Days, not doubting in the least it was for myself.” By 1742, Johnson recruited other tenants and encouraged another fourteen Irish families to move to Warrensburg. The tenants leased the land, worked it, and paid rents to their landlord every year which created a relationship of dependency between them and Sir Peter and his factor.

Even with his uncle’s patronage, William Johnson still struggled to engage with New York’s marketplaces. Captain Warren used his earnings from captured prizes in the West Indies to import various goods including linens, ribbons, rum, molasses, cod, axes, iron tools, clothes, and leather caps. Tenants, settlers, and native peoples near Warrensburgh desired these items. Johnson facilitated Warren’s trade by proxy. To ensure Johnson’s success, Warren wrote to

88 A Bill of Sale, March 8, 1745, Sir William Johnson Papers, 9:3.
89 William Johnson to Oliver Delancey, March 20, 1769, Sir William Johnson Papers, 2:935.
90 William Johnson to Oliver Delancey, November 3, 1753, Sir William Johnson Papers, 5:907
91 O’Toole, White Savage, 42.
92 James Axtell, Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial North America (New York: Oxford University, 1992), 125-150.
several New York notables to help his nephew. In 1738, Warren thanked Major Jacob Glen for his “great civility” towards William.⁹⁴ Sir Peter then requested that Glen continue to look after his nephew.⁹⁵ Johnson enjoyed his uncle’s connections but also began to resent his uncle’s constant micro-management. Even though Warren traveled the Atlantic and visited various markets, he lacked firsthand experience with New York’s frontier marketplace. As such, Warren sometimes sent Johnson unsellable goods.⁹⁶ Regardless, Warren stubbornly demanded detailed notes: “How can I Judge what is best for you when you don’t, particularly tell me the prices only say at large this and yt. Sels well you ought to be more Circumspect and particular.”⁹⁷ Although they disagreed from time to time, the two ran a profitable enterprise. Warren’s trade contacts and business advice helped Johnson develop mercantile skills of his own.⁹⁸

As Warren’s factor, Johnson learned how to enlarge his networks to influence local markets through letters and personal interactions. Trade in colonies occurred in seaports, urban marketplaces, native villages, and colonial forts. Forts, for example, served several purposes, including enforcing British territorial claims and providing secure sites for trade. As Warren’s factor, Johnson familiarized himself with each of these marketplaces through corresponding in face-to-face interactions or through letters. Mobilizing those lessons, Johnson created his own marketplace by establishing a general store in 1739. Johnson initially ran Warrensburg’s general store to facilitate the active settlements and foot traffic in the Mohawk Valley. Johnson also equipped local native peoples in what “necessarrys they wanted…”⁹⁹ Johnson used his newfound customer base, profits, and his uncle’s fortune to extend lines of credit. Those who desired credit

⁹⁴ Peter Warren to Jacob Glen, September 3, 1738, Sir William Johnson Papers, 9:1.
⁹⁵ Peter Warren to Jacob Glen, September 3, 1738, Sir William Johnson Papers, 9:1.
⁹⁹ William Johnson to Peter Warren, May 10, 1739, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:5.
publicly signed bonds with Johnson and promised to pay the principal back with added interest.\textsuperscript{100} Through these measures, Johnson made Warrensburg a profitable estate and created a dependent community.\textsuperscript{101} In Captain Warren’s fiscally-secure employment, Johnson made missteps but learned the intricacies of trading in Atlantic marketplaces. In 1745, he shipped peltry to the wealthy New York City merchant Edward Holland.\textsuperscript{102} The merchant corrected the young factor on how to ship his goods properly. He advised Johnson to diversify his produce and limit how much he should send to market. A year later, Johnson erred again in shipping flour where Holland remarked: “Your method of drawing your Weigh note is wrong, flower is always sold by the gross hundred so that the next you weign must be according to ye. Inclosed Sketch.”\textsuperscript{103} Johnson adhered to Holland’s instructions and adapted accordingly.

Despite Johnson’s adjustments, he still lacked a solid reputation in the mercantile world. Reputation worked practically and psychologically. British officials capped flour prices if the seller had “not got an Establish’d reputation.”\textsuperscript{104} Johnson’s reputation as a merchant grew as he consistently sold quality produce and honored his terms. An enhanced reputation enabled traders like Johnson to sell his flour at higher rates and enter into greater business arrangements.\textsuperscript{105} On the psychological aspect, reputation possessed remarkable importance in British society. Joseph Ward later declared: “Scarcely anything is so important to an individual as a good Name, and it

\textsuperscript{100} Bond with Judgment from George Swan, August 1, 1743, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:20.
\textsuperscript{102} Holland previously served as a Commissioner of Indian Affairs and Mayor of Albany. The Six Nations and Johnson, July 2, 1751, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:339.
\textsuperscript{103} Edward Holland to William Johnson, June, 1745, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:38.
is vastly more interesting to a Community.” A strong reputation permitted Johnson to secure other lines of credit outside of his uncle’s network. While Holland initially served Warren, Johnson secured Holland’s friendship and forged a business relationship based on mutual respect. Holland served Johnson well because the former possessed a formidable mercantile network and enabled Johnson to sell in the best markets. Warren and Johnson rewarded Holland by backing his ambition to become mayor of New York City for almost a decade. By the mid-century, Holland advanced to occupy a seat on the Governor’s Council.

As William Johnson profitably assisted his uncle, he also developed his own connections in the fur trade through utilizing knowledge from local sources and establishing a relationship of trust with the Mohawk. Warren instructed Johnson to dabble in the fur trade: “…as for what Skins you Can procure I will send them to London, and ye. Produce of them Shall be sent you in proper goods.” Johnson met with Mohawk headmen to inquiring about buying land and acquiring fur. Johnson later reported that rum, linen, and iron tools were continually in great demand, but heavy competition oversaturated Fort Oswego markets. Instead of competing with well-established traders, Johnson targeted a lesser known Oneida village on the Susquehanna River named Onaquaga or Oquaqo. Petty traders frequented Warrensburg on their return to Albany to inform Johnson of their success at the Oneida village. Johnson believed he could replicate that success by personally selling his uncle’s vast array of wares in exchange for

107 Holland had previously served as an Albany alderman and achieved wealth through his Albany trade. His father, Henry Holland, left a sizeable inheritance for Edward and Edward decided to move to New York City.
110 John Catherwood to William Johnson, April 2, 1750, *Sir William Johnson Papers*, 1:269. While Johnson aligned with Governor Clinton’s faction, Warren seemed willing to please the Opposition by ousting Holland from his council seat secretly. Johnson, however, wished to continue working with Holland. Holland continued to serve as mayor of New York City until his death in 1756.
quality furs. Johnson hired an interpreter and declared he “could Make a good hand there.”

And he did. Johnson traded directly with the Oneida village, bypassed Albany entirely, and sold his wares to New York merchants. Furthermore, Johnson’s fur trading site became a more appealing alternative than Albany simply because of its proximity to the frontier. Johnson later indicated his exchanges were “very brisk & lucrative.” Part of what helped Johnson achieve that success was his willingness to learn native languages in order to directly deal with headmen and women of each village. Like English diplomacy, nothing could replace the value of face-to-face interactions in Native American diplomacy and business. Johnson became fluent in the Mohawk language and culture by the early 1740s and expanded his network among the Mohawk.

Johnson served as his uncle’s factor because he believed he would inherit Warrensburg and expand his socio-economic contacts from that locality. Daniel Claus, future son-in-law, detailed that Johnson “spared no pains of procuring Tenants, no fatigue of clearing a Domain, and encountered many Risques & Dangers…continued slaving himself…with great Labour, Trouble & many Disappointments. No Undertaking being so difficult & discouraging as the making an Opening & Settlement into so very thick a Forrest or Wood…” Johnson, the tenants, and a few African slaves toiled at expanding Warrensburg; however, Johnson gradually realized his uncle did not plan on leaving the estate to him. Utilizing his local knowledge and his

---

115 Reverend Henry Barclay proselytized among the Mohawk near Fort Hunter in 1739 and supported a law against the trade of rum which ultimately failed. For William’s early Indian trade success. See Memorandum of Col. Daniel Claus, n.d. (Dec 10, 1780?) Sir William Johnson Papers, 13:723 (Original in Canadian Archives, Claus Papers, Vol. 14)
117 Memorandum of Col. Daniel Claus, n.d. (Dec 10, 1780?) Sir William Johnson Papers, 13:723
uncle’s credit, Johnson purchased a plot of land on the north side of the Mohawk River—
opposite from Warrensburg and began his enterprises in earnest.119

In 1739, Johnson made his first move towards financial independence from his uncle
through land speculation. Johnson recognized a crucial business opportunity as settlers streamed
into the Mohawk River Valley and drove up the demand for land. According to census records,
Albany County’s population was 2,273 in 1703.120 In 1746, Albany County’s population reached
10,634.121 Bread, peas, and flour were in continual demand in other colonies and Europe. New
York land proved fertile ground to produce wheat and peas which explained the flood of
settlers.122 In sum, New York land became extremely precious because of its agricultural profit-
potential. Johnson declared that “People here are mad Every day purchaseing land, &
Surveying, so that land must be very dear in a Short time.”123 Seizing the opportunity, Johnson
used his earnings and purchased a large lot in 1739. Johnson utilized that land to produce those
items in high demand and focused on expanding his fur trading operation.

While still managing his uncle’s estate, Johnson secured a piece of property for future
development and opened a fur trading store with his uncle’s credit. Johnson claimed a portion of
land that was “the properest place on the Whole [Mohawk] River for a Store house and Shop in
the Winter…”124 Johnson shrewdly recognized the opportunity to make profits by providing
processing, storage, and shipping services to tenants, neighbors, and newly settled residents.

119 Johnson also made token payments and provided some gifts to his uncle, but not as much as Warren would have
liked. This, and Johnson’s resistance to Warren’s ‘orders’ strained their relationship.
120 Comparative Table of Population in the Province of New York. 1703-1712. Documentary History of the State of
New York, 1:691. Census of the City of New York (About the Year 1703), Documentary History of the State of New
York, 1:611-624;
121 An Account of the Number of Inhabitants of the Province of New York taken 4 June 1746, Documentary History
of the State of New York, 1:695.
122 Answer of the Collector of New-York to the Queries of the Board of Trade-1747, Documentary History of New
York 1:725-726.
124 William Johnson to Peter Warren, May 10, 1739, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:5
Additionally, Johnson wished to intercept fur traders because: “the Ind[ians] frequente[ed] mostly the North side [of the Mohawk River] in their way to Albany.”\textsuperscript{125} By acting as a middleman between native sellers, petty fur traders, and buyers in New York, Johnson secured an independent revenue source and generated a positive reputation as he honestly transacted business with clients. Johnson’s ability to broker land deals between Mohawk friends and Anglo-Americans only enhanced his influence among both.

By 1740, William Johnson moved out of the shadow of his wealthy uncle and expanded his influence throughout New York marketplaces. In serving as a factor, Johnson received tutelage and correction from his uncle and his uncle’s merchants. Johnson’s continuing management of Warrensburg granted him a seat of operational capital that funded his own development on the north bank of the Mohawk River. Lastly, his service as a factor enabled Johnson to reach out beyond his uncle’s contacts and make some of his own.

After 1740, William Johnson extended his personal network through cultivating a reputable business reputation with nearby localities of settlers and native peoples in the Mohawk River valley. Johnson included nearby soldiers, the Dutch at Fort Hunter, Palatine Germans, and the Mohawk people within his networks. Johnson fostered relations through extending lines of credit, dealing fairly, and behaving like a gentleman. In return, Johnson expected loyalty and reciprocation. In essence, Johnson mobilized his newfound wealth and industry to set up networks of clients.

William Johnson cultivated friendly ties through trade correspondence with nearby garrisoned officers and soldiers. For instance, he worked with Fort Hunter’s commander, Lt. Walter Butler and his sons Thomas and John. In response to Johnson’s earlier complaint about

\textsuperscript{125} Memorandum of Col. Daniel Claus, n.d. (Dec 10, 1780?) \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 13:724. Tense change and elaboration are mine.
Warren’s unsellable goods, Butler stepped in and helped Johnson outfit his fur trading store.\textsuperscript{126} In 1744, Johnson and the Butlers consistently transacted business with one another where Thomas indicated his father desired to become Johnson’s client and offered “His Humble Servis to You…”\textsuperscript{127} Thomas saturated his writing with mentions of obligations and service because Johnson’s fur trading business supplied the Butlers with a healthy line of credit. The Butlers returned the favor by referring Fort Hunter soldiers to Johnson’s store. The Butlers also gathered and disseminated military intelligence and local news to Johnson. In 1745, Johnson became a Justice of the Peace, and Walter Butler—then a Captain—received a Commissary’s commission.\textsuperscript{128} Johnson employed Walter’s sons in his fur trading store. With the Butlers and their marital relations added to his network, Johnson enjoyed greater support from the population at Fort Hunter.\textsuperscript{129}

Johnson included nearby German settlers into his network through tenancy, trade, and marriage. German exiles previously settled in Stone Arabia and Burnetsfield which surrounded Johnson’s estate. In 1740, Johnson took in a young, German runaway indentured servant girl named Catherine Weisenberg and employed her as his housekeeper.\textsuperscript{130} The two promptly became intimate and had three children: Ann (1740), John (1742), and Mary (1744). Although no official marriage documentation exists, Johnson referred to Weisenberg in his will as “my beloved wife Catharine Johnson…”\textsuperscript{131} Through marriage, Johnson secured a familial tie to the

\textsuperscript{126} Guzzardo, 21.
\textsuperscript{128} Edward Holland to William Johnson, April 6, 1745, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:27.
\textsuperscript{129} The Fort Hunter Dutch had a longstanding anti-Albany feud since the founding of Schenectady and Leisler’s Rebellion. Schenectady Dutch opposed Albany’s monopolistic fur trading families that oftentimes illegally traded with Montreal. In 1690, French and native forces decimated Schenectady. The British constructed Fort Hunter for Mohawk protection in 1712 in return for land for German Palatines to settle. Many Dutch exiles settled at Fort Hunter and readily assimilated with English culture unlike the Albany Dutch.
\textsuperscript{131} Will of Sir William Johnson, January 27, 1774, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 12:1063
German community. That closeness is proven by the Fort Hunter Anglican baptismal records which show Johnson’s children had at least one German or Dutch godparent each.\textsuperscript{132} While Germans in the Mohawk Valley had a problematic history with British authorities, they remained dependent on the security and trade that the British colony offered.\textsuperscript{133} Johnson’s frontier enterprises provided Germans access to British consumer goods and credit lines while keeping their distance from major urban centers.

With Warren’s credit, Johnson established enterprises that helped him create a community based on obligation and dependence. In the 1740s, William Johnson developed his farmlands, built a mill on Kayaderosseros Creek, constructed storehouses, and promoted his general store. Nearby settlers and neighbors paid Johnson to use his bolting mill and storage facilities. Bolting mills acted as a type of social hub for the community where people met, congregated, transacted business, and exchanged ideas. Additionally, Johnson established his own general store for tenants, Mohawk neighbors, visiting soldiers, and petty fur traders. But the general store served functions beyond buying and selling goods outside of urban marketplaces. Similar to mills, general stores served as community social centers where people met, acquired news, exchanged ideas and opinions, and formed relationships. Johnson stocked his store with goods brought up the Mohawk River from Manhattan. Those who transported those goods also acted as couriers that connected the general store and mills to larger urban centers and ultimately the Atlantic network. Johnson heavily employed those couriers with letters that plugged him into that Atlantic system. Lastly, Johnson’s store granted lines of credit, farmers, traders, Mohawk

\textsuperscript{133} Otterness, \textit{Becoming German}, 1-8. These Palatine Germans emigrated from several German principalities in the Holy Roman Empire. The British passed a Naturalization Act that brought many immigrants from war-torn Europe; however, erroneous rumors circulated that England would pay passage to the Americas. England sponsored 3,000 which frightened NYC with a population of 6,000. Otterness argues Germans were in a state of dependency and perception paranoia to navigate British politics; however, others moved to the frontier (Mohawk Valley) to escape more rigid British authorities. Regardless, they actively engaged in the Anglo-Indian trade to ensure their community physically and financially survived.
neighbors, and soldiers from the nearby Fort Hunter. As Johnson developed his lands, it became a major economic hub for the Mohawk Valley. Additionally, Johnson extended credit lines of his own that created relationships of obligation between the borrower and creditor.

In 1743, Johnson moved his family across the Mohawk River to a newly built, stone home known as Mount Johnson. Having secured a seat of power, Johnson enjoyed various locals that sought his recommendation and counsel. Because of Johnson’s handling of Warrensburg and his various enterprises, he became a person of great significance. To maintain his reputation in Albany, Johnson purchased a two-story, brick house in Albany worth £1500 in 1748. As a reputable merchant and land broker, New York’s aspiring citizens sought after Johnson’s recommendations. For example, John Catherwood solicited William Johnson on behalf of a County Meath girl who desired employment with the Governor’s wife. Catherwood remarked “As she is a stranger she refers herself to you for a Character…I beg You’ll send me an Answer as soon as possible.” Johnson’s words carried an air of authority as he labored as a reputable tradesman. While Johnson solidified his holdings on the Mohawk and Albany localities, he sought stronger mercantile relationships in the Atlantic trade.

Johnson exercised his influence with New York merchants in hopes of acquiring London commercial contacts. Johnson continued his relationship with Edward Holland into the 1740s. Holland ferried goods and news from London to New York but was based in of New York. Johnson desired a London-based merchant. London merchants provided the latest, quality goods and specialized items that enabled Johnson to generate greater profits. Additionally, direct trade

---

134 Bond with Judgment from George Swan to William Johnson, August 1 1743, 1:20.
136 Purchase of a House, Undated, Sir William Johnson Papers, 9:36
137 John Catherwood to William Johnson, September 5, 1745, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:39. Catherwood also informed Johnson of his uncle’s exploits in the capture of Louisburg and estimates his uncle earned £20,000.
with London merchants eliminated middlemen and enabled Johnson to tap previously inaccessible markets. Johnson explained that his entire wealth depended on “My haveing good goods & well bouht.” London contacts also could apprise Johnson on the latest European political news that deeply affected how the Atlantic market operated. Lastly, trusted agents executed legal documents and acted as personal representatives for London-based affairs. Simply put, Johnson expanded financial opportunities and employed his New York merchants to establish a correspondence with London merchants.

Johnson retained London-based merchant contacts through gentlemanly communication and mutually-beneficial transactions. Initially, however, epistolary correspondence proved difficult for Johnson. Through Holland, Johnson established contact with London merchants Samuel and William Baker Johnson who impersonally communicated with Johnson. Despite their distant prose, Johnson consistently deployed politeness and signed off communications with: “Your Most Obedt. Humble Servt.” In April of 1749, the Bakers sent a simple invoice that ended coldly with “Errors Excepted, Saml & WM Baker.” Regardless, the two parties continued their business. In October, the relationship changed. The Bakers added “We are,” next to their name. The signature, still relatively lifeless and sterile, relented after a year of successful business dealings. In January of 1750, the Bakers warmly signed off a letter to Johnson: “We are Sr, Your most humble Servt.” Although initially wary of the unknown Johnson, the Bakers and Johnson established a mutual relationship built on successful

140 Samuel Baker to William Johnson, August 5, 1772, Sir William Johnson Papers, 8:559. Samuel possessed Johnson’s power of attorney to make investments on behalf of Johnson’s considerable accounts.
144 Samuel and William Baker to William Johnson, October 12, 1749, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:251
commercial ventures. The two maintained their relationships for the remainder of Johnson’s life. Johnson’s successful marketplace transactions and consistent epistolary prose helped him integrate the Bakers within his patronal network.

In exchange for his patronage, Johnson received political news, timely market updates, competitive prices, and superior goods from the Bakers. The Bakers advised Johnson the condition of the fur market in London stating that “some particular sorts rise & others fall, according as the Quantity of each sorts happens to be more or less on the Importation, sometimes also fashion alters, but in general Furs find a pretty good Demand.”146 Johnson began directly exporting his furs from the Mohawk Valley and having the Bakers find the best deals through their connections throughout the empire.147 Additionally, the London merchants provided Johnson with quality luxury goods and literature that enabled Johnson to reinvent himself as a gentleman. In 1750, Johnson received several academic books, two dictionaries, a two-year subscription of Gentleman’s Magazine, a French horn, a trumpet, and hunting horn, pencils, sealing wax, writing paper, white and red lead, pictures of the best running horses, and several prints from the Bakers.148 Besides his daily observations, magazines like Gentleman’s Magazine informed Johnson’s fashion. Academic books and dictionaries polished Johnson’s writing, grammar, and vocabulary. The possession of music instruments, writing equipment, and décor afforded Johnson the tools of the elite. Equipped with superior London goods and language, Johnson clothed himself in gentlemanly glory for all to witness. These material goods evidenced Johnson’s character and enabled him to enter into a culture based on shared tastes and high standards.

While Johnson carefully groomed his gentlemanly image, he also sought out greater

---

connections among the Iroquois. He did so through face-to-face interactions. Johnson proclaimed himself “an Adventurer in the Indian Trade.”  

Johnson encountered Canajoharie Mohawk Chief Hendrick Peters Theyanoguin and formed a long-lasting friendship. Hendrick taught Johnson the Iroquois politics through word and example. Unlike Euro-Americans, the Haudenosaunee relied on consent and persuasion instead of coercive authority in their socio-political dealings. New York Lt. Governor Cadwallader Colden later explained that those who wished to exercise power in Iroquoia had to secure the people’s esteem. One earned Iroquoian respect through distributing acceptable gifts, honestly transacting trade, and performing eloquent speeches. While many petty fur traders scoffed at the elaborate and time-consuming methods employed by the Iroquois, Johnson savored it.

By 1740, William Johnson won the favor of Mohawk neighbors through fashion, gift-giving, and his skill in speeches. Unlike many English contemporaries, Johnson wore Indian dress and paint during Mohawk ceremonies and trade deals, spoke fluent Mohawk, and how to present himself in both speeches and mannerisms. These lessons allowed Johnson to enter into horizontal relationships with other headmen and women outside of Canajoharie. Additionally, Johnson’s adherence to Mohawk diplomatic and cultural etiquette earned him an honorary sachemship and new name: Warraghiyagey or “man who undertakes great things.” While Johnson gained the Mohawk’s trust—and the trade and land that accompanied it—Hendrick

---

150 The fur trade bypassed Canajoharie after the construction of Fort Oswego. Shannon argues that Hendrick sustained Canajoharie through shuttle diplomacy. Hendrick attended conferences from Canada to Philadelphia even if his people were not involved. Those meetings equipped him with presents which he redistributed to his Canajoharie networks and sustained the village. Shannon, “Dressing for Success on the Mohawk Frontier,” 30-31.
152 Cultural brokers among the French were known to engage in some of these activities. See George W. Schuyler, Colonial New York: Philip Schuyler and His Family (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1885) 1:122.
153 Translation can also mean “much business” or “many things.” William Johnson to Peter Warren, May 10 1739, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:7.
utilized Johnson’s networks, acquired and redistributed European goods, and increased his standing and that of the Mohawk people in the Iroquois Confederacy.\textsuperscript{154} The pair enjoyed a mutually beneficial friendship as they profitably fit each other into their own cultural frameworks. However, not all celebrated Johnson’s financial ascendancy. Johnson’s succeeded in creating constant customers with local tenants, attracted petty fur traders, and earned the goodwill from his Mohawk neighbors. These actions took away from competitors who possessed powerful connections of their own.

Johnson’s success in cultivating power networks on the frontier brought him into conflict with Albany’s Indian commissioners in the 1740s.\textsuperscript{155} New York’s governor required commissioners to regulate the fur trade and prevent frontier hostilities or fraudulent deals which would jeopardize the alliance with the Iroquois Confederacy known as the ‘Covenant Chain.’\textsuperscript{156} Dutch descendants in Albany possessed commissions for Anglo-Indian diplomacy and also many occupied seats in New York’s Assembly.\textsuperscript{157} Unfortunately for the governor, most of the Albany commissioners belonged to a faction that opposed the governor and his policies. Members of the Albany commissioners and the opposition, John De Peyster and Philip Livingston allegedly

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item In the early seventeenth century, the Dutch originally established Albany—then known as Fort Orange and Beverwijck. The Dutch and nearby Iroquois peoples created a diplomatic and trade alliance known as the “Covenant Chain.” The Covenant Chain required constant gift-giving diplomacy to maintain goodwill between the two peoples. Cadwallader D. Colden, \textit{The History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada Which Are Dependent on the Province of New York in America: And Are the Barrier between the English and French in That Part of the World...} (London: T. Osborne, 1747), Part II Chapter 1.
\item The Iroquois inhabited a region known to historians as Iroquoia. It encompassed lands the Iroquois inhabited (south of modern-day Lake Ontario) and territory the Confederacy claimed by right of conquest (Ohio County and areas around Lake Erie). Outside of Iroquoia laid the French and their allies. The English renewed this agreement after they conquered New Netherland in 1665 by utilizing the previous Dutch negotiator Arent van Curler. Ned C. Landsman, \textit{Crossroads of Empire}, 25.
\item For example, Pieter Schuyler served as a Commissioner for Indian Affairs. George W. Schuyler, \textit{Colonial New York}, 1:3, 42.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
supported continental neutrality. Neutral neutrality enabled Albany traders to conduct business with England’s sworn enemy, France, and their allied native peoples. Some New York citizens speculated that Albany commissioners illegally acquired cheap trading goods from Montreal and sold them to the Iroquois to fatten their profit margins. Mohawk headmen likewise complained about the illegal trade but focused more on how the Albany commissioners allegedly endorsed fraudulent land deals. Despite vehement opposition to their alleged practices, the commissioners were too well-connected for the governor to replace. Furthermore, newly settled fur traders had few alternatives than to do business with Albany middlemen due to their formidable trading and political networks. Albany merchants supplied petty fur traders with credit, outfitted them with trade goods and traveling gear, collected the fur upon their return, and then shipped the fur to their New York contacts for a lucrative profit. Johnson disrupted this scheme because he required neither Albany middlemen credit nor their contacts. Furthermore, Johnson supplied credit, provisions, and merchant contacts to petty fur traders—essentially taking the place of Albany’s middlemen.

Albany’s Indian commissioners and fur traders planned their first attack on William Johnson’s growing reputation. In 1743, the Commissioners of Indian Affairs politely notified Johnson that “Information Hath been made to us” that Johnson sold “Rum and Strowds…to the french or Indians contrary to the Tenor Intent and meaning of an Act of Generall Assembly…” Essentially, the commissioners trumped up charges on Johnson. Ironically, those charges were the very thing others suspected them of committing. Nothing came of the summons, and

158 George Clinton to William Johnson, April 25, 1747, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:87.
160 Conference between Governor Clinton and the Indians, June 12, 1753, Documentary History of the State of New York 6:788.
161 Summons from Commissioners of Indian Affairs, July 22, 1743, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:19.
Johnson’s reputation emerged unscathed. However, Johnson also endured physical threats from his opponents. In speaking about Albany’s Dutch-descended population, William’s brother Warren recalled “Willm. has had many Escapes from them, being often waylaid by No. of them…”¹⁶² Regardless of the adversity, Johnson relied upon his networks including his uncle and clients but also sought out other patrons.

In retaliation to intermediaries in Albany, Johnson explored a possible alliance with New York’s colonial governor, George Clinton. At the onset of King George’s War in 1744, British colonies entered open hostilities against the French in North America. The Board of Trade—a crown-appointed committee assigned to manage foreign and domestic commerce—tasked Governor Clinton with the security of New York. Fort Oswego rested upon the banks of modern-day Lake Ontario and served as New York’s westernmost trading hub. Its position made it a primary war target for France. According to Clinton and his supporters, New York’s Assembly stood responsible for the fort’s deplorable condition. Regardless of who was at fault, the garrison was under-stocked and neglected. Desperate for help, Governor Clinton looked for allies to aid him against his foreign and domestic enemies. By the spring of 1746, Johnson’s merchant reputation reached the ears of Clinton, and so the Governor offered Johnson the supply contract to provision and outfit Fort Oswego to William Johnson.¹⁶³ Johnson appreciated the fort’s significance since it protected the Mohawk Valley. Additionally, Johnson also understood that the contract opened possibilities for Johnson to show how he utilized his private affairs for public purposes. This act helped Johnson stand apart from other merchants and contemporary fur traders. Johnson demonstrated his enthusiasm by sending Thomas Butler to New York City and

¹⁶³ William Johnson to John Catherwood, April 14, 1746, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:49
the German Flatts to acquire enough cattle to ship to Oswego within a few days. While Johnson enjoyed the contract and added notability, he required a more exceptional show of talent to secure Clinton’s patronage.

William Johnson ultimately earned Governor Clinton’s patronage through his superior reputation with the Mohawk. While New York’s Assembly and Indian commissioners dragged their feet at the beginning of King George’s War, Clinton desired to act. Wars created political risks and opportunities that made or unmade men. Governor Clinton desired London’s recognition and greater influence with New York’s populace. Thus, Governor Clinton proposed an offensive expedition against Crown Point in 1746 but required Iroquois support. Clinton turned to the Albany commissioners who resisted his request as war threatened their illicit trade. Most of the assembly refused to attend the council and sent only Cadwallader Colden and Philip Livingston. In April, Governor Clinton arrived at the Albany conference with notables from neighboring colonies; however, no Indians attended. Clinton’s political opposition undoubtedly celebrated the embarrassment until William Johnson arrived. Cadwallader Colden reported “Mr. Johnson put himself at the Head of the Mohawks, dressed and painted after the Manner of an Indian War-Captain; and the Indians who followed him were likewise dressed and painted, as is usual with them when they set out in War. The Indians saluted the Governor as they passed [by]…” Johnson’s procurement of a Mohawk army horrified Clinton’s enemies. The Governor, however, gratefully extended his full political patronage to Johnson. Governor Clinton appointed Johnson Colonel of the Six Nations, presented him with a separate militia commission,

164 William Johnson to Thomas Butler, December 22, 1746, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:70-71.
165 Flexner, Lord of the Mohawks, 57-61.
gave him the whole Indian commissioner department, and granted him a seat on the Governor’s council. In essence, Johnson ascended British politics through the careful cultivation of his reputation and deployment of his Mohawk networks.

Around 1745, the French moved to eliminate Johnson due to his ability to shape powerful Anglo-Iroquois connections; however, Johnson’s allies defended him. During King George’s War, the French sent ambassadors laden with gifts to convince the Iroquois to defect or remain neutral. If their plans worked, then New York stood vulnerable to French invasions. And if New York fell, then France effectively cut the British colonies in two. Johnson, however, previously established and maintained firm friendships with the Iroquois through gift-giving. In response, the French targeted him for assassination. Albany resident James Willson initially warned William Johnson that “the french have told our Indi[ans] that they will have you Dead or alive…” Willson implored Johnson to flee Mount Johnson and sojourn the winter in the safety of Willson’s Albany home. But Johnson understood that if he accepted, the Mohawk may interpret that move as a show of cowardice and then not honor war commitments. Unwilling risk his reputation with the Mohawk, Johnson politely declined Willson’s offer. Instead, he stood his ground and re-engineered his residence to become a military outpost. Indeed, the name of his home changed from Mount Johnson to Fort Johnson. In this endeavor, Johnson tapped his network for aid. Friends, family, clients, and patrons responded to the call. William’s brother, Warren, wrote and informed Johnson that Admiral Warren offered four four-pounder cannons from Warrensburg. Additionally, Governor Clinton approved Johnson’s request for “a Party of

---


Men” to defend Johnson’s property and neighbors. Due to Johnson’s generous credit terms, his tenants responded more enthusiastically when he needed to raise a militia. Johnson organized and outfitted Mohawk raiding parties and colonial ranger units from Fort Johnson to protect his future and that of the valley. Johnson actions deterred any assassination attempt, and his networks’ swift response revealed Johnson’s influence at work.

Johnson’s position as Indian commissioner enabled him to reach for higher political contacts and move towards becoming indispensable in Anglo-Indian relations. Johnson effectively served as an Indian commissioner in Clinton’s interests to the point Clinton declared in 1747: “I cannot depend on none but [William Johnson] to preserve [the Iroquois] in the British Interest…” A year later, Governor Clinton assigned Johnson to secure Iroquois loyalty at a conference in Onondaga. This diplomatic mission served as the perfect opportunity for Johnson to enhance his standing among the Iroquois and New York’s notables. Johnson prepared distributable goods, studied past diplomatic documents, and journeyed to Onondaga where he made his formal introduction to the Iroquois Confederacy. At the conference, Johnson met with Iroquois headmen from each of the Six Nations and methodically delivered his speech. He presented gifts of wampum at key moments of his counsel to emphasize his words. Johnson relayed Clinton’s request that the Iroquois honor the costly and timely method of European prisoner-exchanges in order for British to secure Iroquois captives from Canada. Although Iroquois warriors desired to continue their raids, a spokesman assured Johnson that they would wait a bit longer. They expressed their “firm Resolution...to stand by [the British] as Brothers

---

170 George Clinton to William Johnson, July 25, 1746, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:55.
171 O’Toole, White Savage, 79.
173 A Conference at Onondaga, April 24, 1748, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:155
174 A Conference at Onondaga, April 24, 1748, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:157-158
175 A Conference at Onondaga, April 24, 1748, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:161-163.
for ever…”\textsuperscript{176} The 1748 Onondaga conference was a resounding success. Johnson renewed the Covenant Chain alliance and, with his achievement, fully entered British political life as a leading Anglo-Indian diplomat. Unfortunately, Johnson’s success motivated his political enemies to shut him out of power.\textsuperscript{177}

King George’s War ended with the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, and New York’s Assembly deployed their networks against Governor Clinton and William Johnson. For Johnson’s actions during the war, he was awarded £2,836 for “His Majesty’s Service for Keeping the Six Nations of Indians and their Allies Strictly Attached to the King’s Interest…”\textsuperscript{178} However, Johnson spent £7,177 at Oswego alone.\textsuperscript{179} Johnson supplied the fort from his own stores and relied on Clinton’s assurances that the Assembly would compensate his expenses on behalf of the public. Furthermore, Johnson also incurred other debts as he outfitted raiding parties from Fort Johnson to combat French forces. Governor Clinton only motivated the Assembly to pay £5,801.\textsuperscript{180} Johnson was outraged. Despite furious communications, he could not get the Assembly to reimburse his war-time expenses.

In a forlorn letter to his uncle, William Johnson indicated his personal attempts to mediate his affair with the assembly and requested Warren’s aid. Johnson identified Chief Justice Delancey as one of the opposition’s leaders and attempted to open a dialogue with him. Johnson shrewdly discovered Delancey’s preferred coffee house and frequented it often to run into Delancey. However, Johnson found “him Inclined to do me [no] Service, or even take much notice of me.”\textsuperscript{181} Johnson worked any angle he could to advance his interests. Regrettably in this

\textsuperscript{176} A Conference at Onondaga, April 24, 1748, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:164.
\textsuperscript{177} A Conference at Onondaga, April 24, 1748, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:159.
\textsuperscript{179} Albany Council, July 5, 1751, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:342
\textsuperscript{180} Albany Council, July 5, 1751, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:343
instance, he failed. Not only did the failure sting, but it also felt as if Johnson’s gentlemanly aspirations were shut down. He declared that he “never disobliged [Delancey], or any of the family” and couldn’t understand their enmity towards him.\footnote{William Johnson to Peter Warren, July 24, 1749, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:238. Clarification added.} Unfortunately, Johnson did not accurately gauge the extent of Clinton’s influence compared to his opponent Delancey. As Clinton’s client, Johnson naturally fell into Delancey’s crosshairs. Noting his uncle’s relation to the Delancey’s by marriage, Johnson asked for his help; however, Peter Warren had ambitions of his own. In 1747, Warren was “one of the Richest men in England…a Vice Adm. of the White & a Member of Parliament…”\footnote{Warren Johnson to William Johnson, September 13, 1747, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:116.} Furthermore, Admiral Warren wished to maintain amicable relations with the powerful Delancey faction, so he advised William Johnson to give up his position and tend to his private affairs.\footnote{William Johnson to Peter Warren, July 24, 1749, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:238. Warren became a member of Parliament at this point and allied with Delancey. That political alliance pitted Warren and Clinton, Johnson’s two patrons, against each other.}

William Johnson’s temporary withdrawal from colonial politics shows the limits of the British imperial system that he attempted to climb. Johnson mournfully reported that he “flattered my Self that my hearty endeavours for his Majesties Service when represented by my freinds, would have been taken Some Notice of, but as there is no further Expectation of it I shall…[attend] my own business.”\footnote{William Johnson to Peter Warren, July 24, 1749, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:240. Abbreviations added for ease of reading.} Exasperated, Johnson ended his Oswego contract in 1749 and resigned all offices related to Indian affairs in 1750.\footnote{William Johnson to Goldsbrow Banyar, July 29, 1754, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:410-411; William Johnson to Governor George Clinton, May 4, 1750, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:278-278} His patron, Governor Clinton, lamented Johnson’s absence due to his “ill Treatment offered…by the Assembly, not withstanding so many repeated Sollicitations…”\footnote{George Clinton to William Johnson, March 20, 1751, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:322} Even Hendrick informed New York officials “We were very much shocked…and it was the more Terrible, because he was well acquainted
with our publick Affairs…his knowledge of our affairs made us think him one of us…”\textsuperscript{188} Hendrick attempted to leverage his own Iroquois networks so “that Coll. Johnson may be reinstated.”\textsuperscript{189} However, the former Albany commissioners achieved their goal as Johnson resigned, and Governor Clinton reluctantly gave the commissioners their former positions back. Instead of futilely over-tapping his contacts, Johnson gambled that his withdrawal from Indian affairs in the mid-eighteenth century may have a detrimental effect down the road that required his intervention. Before Johnson moved to the political background, he made sure to draw attention to the shortcomings of New York’s factional assembly. He furiously wrote letters to all within his network about the affair.\textsuperscript{190} In these ongoing letters, Johnson consistently emphasized his role in defending the public good and lambasted New York’s factional politics.\textsuperscript{191} Additionally, he cast doubt on the proper goals and loyalty of New York’s Assembly. The Dutch descendants in Albany provided Johnson a perfect disparaging target that British and London authorities could easily comprehend. In his letters, Johnson portrayed himself as the loyal Englishman betrayed by malcontents.\textsuperscript{192} While Johnson slandered the opposition, he also managed his estate, brokered land transactions, traded furs, and built up his private fortune. Though Johnson left Indian affairs to others, he remained subtly involved in promoting his constituents within New York’s Assembly. Johnson learned that even his agents required constant vigilance against the influence of factional politics that opposed his interests in the Mohawk Valley. Like Johnson, Dutch parochial officials lent money out and called in those bonds when advantageous. In this manner, both Johnson and wealthy Albany citizens attempted to manipulate local politics through money-lending. In one instance, Johnson called his New

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{188} Albany Council, July 2, 1751, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:339-340
\item \textsuperscript{189} Albany Council, July 2, 1751, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1: 340
\item \textsuperscript{190} William Johnson to Peter Warren, July 24, 1749, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:239.
\item \textsuperscript{191} William Johnson to George Clinton, January 22, 1749, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 9:38.
\item \textsuperscript{192} William Johnson to Robert Orme, May 19, 1755, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:522.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
York allies to support a policy in the Assembly. One contact, William Corry—the same man that personally settled his debts with Johnson in 1742—brought his Schenectady contacts to support Johnson’s hopeful appointments in the Assembly.\(^{193}\) However, Corry shied away from publicly pronouncing his alignment with Johnson because he owed a large sum of money to the Dutch in Albany. Corry rightly feared his Albany lenders would call in his debts if Corry outwardly supported Johnson. Hesitant, Corry informed Johnson that he would openly support Johnson’s interests only as a last resort but would then require Johnson’s financial support: “I must also depend upon you if they [the Albany Assemblymen] give me trouble, [to sustain me with] a hundred pounds for a few months…”\(^{194}\) New York colonists found their interests aligned with members of factions geared towards supporting the governor or opposing him—or both in Corry’s case. In this manner, wealth, credit, and debt directly influenced official colonial politics. Corry’s overt declaration for Johnson was not needed, and Corry continued supplying Johnson with political intelligence and support for years to come.\(^{195}\) While Johnson slowly built his political base from the shadows, Indian affairs deteriorated quite publicly.

William Johnson’s absence in Indian affairs became significant a point of contention in the mid-eighteenth century between the English and Mohawk. Indeed, Johnson had so efficiently projected his reputation with both Governor and Mohawk headmen that both continually desired Johnson’s return, but Johnson refused. Colonists continued pumping the backwoods of Iroquoia full of rum, racked up debt and collected binding signatures to pay off the debts—often from unauthorized or unrelated parties. Land encroachment was a continuous theme for the entire


eighteenth-century, and the Albany Indian Commissioners appeared complicit in the activity. Alarmed at the heightening tensions, Governor Clinton convened a 1751 Albany council. Clinton hoped to ease anxiety with the Iroquois and discuss. Clinton presented presents to alleviate Mohawk concerns about Johnson’s absence and the faltering diplomatic situation. But the gifts weren’t enough. The Six Nations declared: “one half of [Colonel] Johnson belonged to his Excellency, and the other to them…” and demanded Johnson’s presence. The Governor sent a runner to summon Johnson, and only after he arrived did negotiations resume. None in attendance doubted Johnson’s influence with the Mohawk; however, Johnson kept his distance from official Indian affairs as best he could.

Johnson gambled that Anglo-Indian Affairs would ultimately deteriorate without his intervention. Two years after Clinton’s 1751 conference, the Governor and several Mohawk sachems met again since Mohawk issues remained unresolved. Hendrick detailed the increasing, fraudulent land claims: “We have sold several small Parcels of Land to our Brethren [the English] and they have taken up a much greater quantity…it has been done by stealth and Deceit, and we desire our Brother [Governor Clinton to correct it]. But Governor Clinton was powerless against the opposition and their allies. Clinton regretfully informed Hendrick that he would delegate the matter to the Albany commissioners. Enraged, Hendrick remarked “we know them so well, we will not trust to them, for they are no people but Devils, so we rather desire that you’ll say, Nothing shall be done for us…[we will tell the 5 Nations that] the Covenant Chain is broken between you and us. So brother you are not to expect to hear of me any more, and

---

Brother we desire to hear no more of you.” While Hendrick most likely exaggerated his ability to speak for the other Iroquois nations, the Governor and Board of Trade took the threat seriously. Indeed, if the Covenant Chain broke then the British had lost not only valuable trade but also their entire border security from New York to Pennsylvania.

While British officials scrambled to salvage their alliance with the Iroquois, the Assembly opposition finished off Governor Clinton’s political career in North America. The opposition in the assembly, led by James Delancey, refused to pay Governor Clinton’s salary. In 1753 facing gridlock with the assembly and feverish tensions with the Iroquois, Clinton resigned. Unlike Johnson, however, Clinton had no desire to wait out his options nor deal with New York factions again. In the end, Clinton’s health faded, and he “requested His Majesty’s Permission” to return to England. Johnson required a new patron.

Seeing an opportunity, Johnson successfully conveyed the urgency of the potentially explosive Anglo-Indian situation to Lt. Governor Delancey. Lt. Governor Delancey handled affairs after Governor Clinton’s departure until his replacement—Sir Danvers Osborne—arrived in 1753. However, within two days of his arrival, Governor Osborne was found dead under mysterious circumstances. Lt. Governor James Delancey took over the governor’s duties again. As evidenced by his sparse letters, Johnson hesitantly worked with Delancey due to the latter’s previously fierce opposition of Clinton and his allies. However, Delancey’s new position as acting governor required him to support imperial policies—some of which he formerly opposed. Johnson gauged Delancey’s dedication to his new position by petitioning the governor

---

200 Conference between Governor Clinton and the Indians, June 12, 1753, Documentary History of the State of New York 6:788.
202 Edward F. Delancey, Memoir of the Honourable James Delancey in Documentary History of the State of New York, 4:1057-1058. Although some speculated Delancey had something to do with Osborne’s death, the investigation concluded it was suicide.
on his outstanding debts and financial neglect from the assembly, and Delancey appeared sympathetic. Johnson also highlighted the effects of Franco-Iroquois diplomacy that threatened border security. The Seneca ceased reporting on the movements of French troops and French-allied natives. Moreover, despite a 1721 peace agreement between Anglo-Indian allies, the Seneca sent war parties against the Iswä or British-allied Catawba to the south. Johnson explained to Lt. Governor Delancey the severe threat posed by French diplomats in luring the Iroquois Confederacy to support French interests which opposed both Delancey’s governorship and Johnson’s enterprises. The two reconciled and littered their correspondence to the Board of Trade with alarmist letters indicating Anglo-Indian affairs were in a critical condition.

Johnson’s gamble paid off. With Delancey backing him, Johnson’s plea reached the Board of Trade who used the crown’s prerogative power to intervene. The King recognized Johnson’s “great Influence and personal Interest among the [Six] Nations.” On July 5, 1753, King George II commissioned William Johnson to act in the Governor’s stead in treating with the Iroquois at Onondaga. Johnson and his allies highlighted the mutuality of dependence between the Iroquois and British and convinced others of his necessity. In this manner, Johnson bound others in Britain’s hierarchal system to his causes. Johnson promptly assembled his Mohawk allies at his Mount Johnson home where Hendrick declared: “we were highly rejoiced, to think that [William Johnson was] again raised up, and impowered…”

---

203 See William Johnson to James Delancey, October 12, 1754, Sir William Johnson Papers, 9:139. Their relationship warmed significantly in 1755 as they coordinated in the war against France.
204 The Iroquois claimed the region west to the Blue Ridge mountains and utilized the Great Warriors’ Path (Shenandoah Valley) to raid Southern Indians. Onondaga Convention, September 8, 1753, Documentary History of New York 2:636. A new peace was established at Albany in 1759.
205 Commission from George II to William Johnson, July 5, 1753, 13:26
206 Letter from Col Johnson with his proceedings at a conference with the Mohawks. Documentary History of New York, July 26, 1753 [Generally write the date written. If unknown write received but mark. Add citation clarification if needed], 2:630 Clarification added
brother Abraham spent several days preparing Johnson for the Onondaga Convention.\footnote{Letter from Col Johnson with his proceedings at a conference with the Mohawks. \textit{Documentary History of New York}, July 26, 1753, 2:631} Johnson’s absence from Indian Affairs weakened his influence, and the conference effectively served as a means to announce Johnson’s return which came none-too-soon as Johnson learned “a great Number [of Iroquois]…[had] already gone to the French.”\footnote{Sir William Johnson to William Shirley, December 17, 1754, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:431} Because Johnson’s commission originated from the crown and he retained Delancey’s backing, the dispossessed Albany commissioners could make no move against him. Johnson now answered directly to the governor and the Board of Trade.

Johnson immediately consolidated his position and expanded his influence to London through the use of trusted, personal representatives. Always looking for ways to advance, Johnson set his agents about to clarify the scope and power of his new commission from the Board of Trade. Johnson’s representative extended Johnson’s reach through connecting with men in authority. For example, Johnson commissioned Dr. Richard Shuckburgh as the Surgeon for Johnson’s Indian unit during King George’s War. After the war, Dr. Shuckburgh visited George Mantagu Dunk, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Earl of Halifax in London on Johnson’s request.\footnote{Lord Halifax became President of the Board of Trade in 1748. The Board of Trade had a long history in futile attempts to reform colonial administration under royal authority. Timothy Shannon details that under Lord Halifax’s direction, the Board of Trade attempted to wrestle back executive power from the Southern department. Johnson also wished greater crown control and oversight in colonial affairs which made Lord Halifax a potentially powerful ally. See Shannon, \textit{Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire}, 77-78. Also Jack P. Greene, “An Uneasy Connection: An Analysis of the Preconditions of the American Revolution,” in Steven G. Kurtz, ed., \textit{Essays on the American Revolution} (Chapel Hill, 1973), 65-80.} During the visit Dr. Shuckburgh casually remarked upon Johnson’s plan to settle the Kingsborough area; however, legal complexities mired the process.\footnote{William Johnson to Goldsbrow Banyar, July 29, 1754, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:411} Lord Halifax responded that that business should be taken directly to the Ministers of Revenue. Upon closer inspection, the encounter served as Johnson’s attempt to side-step standard procedure. Johnson already attempted going through
proper channels to no avail and wanted Lord Halifax’s support to expedite the issue. As President of the Board of Trade, Halifax exercised considerable power and influence. While Halifax did not immediately grant Johnson’s request, he remembered it.

Johnson excelled in updating Halifax on Anglo-Indian Affairs and loyally followed instructions. As Johnson’s patron, Halifax recognized Johnson’s centrality to maintaining Anglo-Iroquois affairs and, by extension, the Covenant Chain. Disliking the decentralized nature of the colonies, Halifax planned how he could make use of the Covenant Chain to centralize all Indian affairs. Halifax realized his plans through granting favors to William Johnson such as supporting Johnson’s aim to acquire the coveted Kingsborough area during the Seven Years War. Upon receipt, Johnson distributed parcels to his clients and political allies.

While William Johnson utilized epistolary correspondence to secure Halifax’s disposition and favor, he concurrently secured the support and friendship from colonial governors in British North America. In the face of the Seven Years’ War with France around 1753, Johnson corresponded with other royal officials including Governor Shirley of Massachusetts, Governor Morris of Pennsylvania, and Lt. Governor Banyar of New Jersey to shore up British frontier security and reassert his importance in Anglo-Indian affairs. Governor Shirley proved a valuable ally after his re-establishment in 1754. The two initially corroborated on proper policies that secured the goodwill of native peoples with letters and face-to-face meetings. Johnson found common ground with colonial governors as he brought up his past debacles with factions opposed to their royal governors. Again, Johnson impressed his necessity in maintaining the fragile Covenant Chain with the Iroquois:

It gives me no small pleasure to find…that there is a probability of his

---

212 William Johnson to William Shirley, December 17, 1754, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:429-430
Majestys Ministers takeing into their consideration the present Shattered State of ye Six Nations, & their Allies. As a further neglect of them, I am Sensible would be attended with verry bad consequences, If not with the entire loss of them, and with them every other Indian in the Country. I will not take uppon me to say what may be the Consequences of such an Évent, the Effects however I doubt, might be fatall to the British Interest upon this Continent. 214

Johnson continually evidenced the importance of his work for the security of the colonies—a primary duty for colonial governors—and earned their initial favor.

Johnson’s influence and Halifax’s backing helped motivate the Albany Congress of 1754, and his Mohawk connections allowed him to impress those who attended. After Colonel George Washington’s engagements at the Battle of Jumonville Glen and the onset of the Seven Years’ War with France, the Board of Trade ordered an assembly to gather at Albany to address the fractured nature of the colonies. Johnson and his allies’ consistent reports on the sad state of Indian affairs affected the Board’s decision. 215 Many notables attended including native headmen, royal governors, and prominent colonial officials. 216 The conference began by renewing treaties with British-allied natives such as the Iroquois. Johnson wished the entire gathering to witness his influence in a memorable fashion. Most likely done in collaboration, the Mohawks initially refused to attend the well-populated Albany Congress. Traditionally, hosts provide presents, shelter, food, and drink for the attendees. The prolonged commencement financially stressed the Albany Congress. Albany’s council finally sent for William Johnson, and only with Johnson did the Mohawk attend, and the conference began. 217 The exercise forced all to recognize the importance of Johnson and the Mohawk in Anglo-Indian affairs.

---

217 William Smith ed., *Review of the Military Operations in North America*, 19. “Not a few thought it an artifice of Mr. Johnson’s, who expecting to rise into importance, from the reputation of a mighty influence over the Indians, kept them from a punctual attendance…”
Using public meetings, Johnson attempted to present his new vision of his Anglo-Indian position to all of Britain’s North American colonies. The French employed one superintendent commissioned by the French crown that treated with all native peoples. The British, however, possessed a de-centralized system where each colonial governor either directly dealt with their own Indian affairs or delegated it to their commissioners. This became extremely problematic because sometimes Governors and their commissioners did not share the same goals. Furthermore, colonies figuratively trampled upon one another’s feet in their dealings with semi-nomadic native peoples. The proceedings at the Albany Congress echoed Johnson’s sentiment: “all the Provinces be (if practicable) comprized in one General Treaty to be made in his Majesties name, it appearing to us that the Practice of each Province making a Separate Treaty for itseff in its own Name is very improper…” However, the Albany Congress failed to generate the position both Johnson and his patron Halifax desired—President-General. The office would have coordinated military affairs and, in peace, preserved Anglo-Indian relations. Regardless, Johnson continually supported a centralizing crown for himself. While Johnson worked with American networks, he continually craved Whitehall’s approval.

Besides treating with colonial authorities, Johnson repeatedly sought the crown’s advice and authorization by appealing to his London contacts. Again, Johnson relied on his informative network and agents to inquire from London authorities on the matter of Johnson’s authority as an Indian Affairs Commissioner. Johnson utilized his London contact, Dr. Shuckburgh, to understand his role from the President of the Board of Trade, Lord Halifax, and to gauge Johnson’s status at court. Shuckburgh reported to Johnson that: “[Your] Reputation with Ld.

Hallifax & that board is very good & I believe that whatever you draw for or think necessary for the [Indian] Service will be comply’d wth.”

Halifax revealed that Johnson possessed the authority to re-enlist those who previously served under him. Additionally, Shuckburgh informed Johnson that Parliament desired a renewed war with the French, allotted a million pounds to augment his Majesty’s forces, and placed General Braddock in command. During the war, all colonial governors answered to the Commander-in-Chief. Shuckburgh’s information enabled Johnson to identify the new commander-in-chief and secure his favor by following orders.

Through Johnson’s successful management, correspondence, and connections—and his insistent critiques of colonial Anglo-Indian policies on the outset of the Seven Years’ War—the Board of Trade supported a new office: superintendency of Indian Affairs. General Braddock commissioned the rank upon Johnson in April 1755, and Johnson earned military positions from his other political alliances. For example, Governor Shirley successfully nominated Johnson as commander of the Crown Point expedition. Additionally, Braddock approved of Governor’s Delancey and Shirley’s commission for Johnson to serve as a Major General. As a Superintendent and Major General, Johnson immediately promoted his loyal supporters and clients. These men included George Croghan, Peter Wraxall, Daniel Claus, Thomas Butler, John Butler, Jonathan Stevens, and Benjamin Stoddert. Johnson detailed their duties in sustaining the Covenant Chain, leading Indian forces, and securing the goodwill of prominent headmen and

222 Richard Shuckburgh to William Johnson, March 13, 1755, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:455
223 Richard Shuckburgh to William Johnson, March 28, 1755, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:465
224 Commission from Edward Braddock, April 15, 1755, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:465-466
225 William Shirley to James Delancey, Feb 24, 1755, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:448-449
227 George Croghan was a previous fur trader that Johnson recruited for his talent in Indian diplomacy. Wraxall served as Johnson’s secretary and aide de camp, Claus was a “German Gentleman” who lived with the Canajoharie for a time, Thomas and John Butler were the sons of Johnson’s friend Walter Butler, and Benjamin Stoddert.
women. Additionally, his agents kept Johnson apprised of market and wartime conditions. But risks accompanied Johnson’s new position. If Johnson’s forces suffered a military defeat, it reflected poorly on the leader. Likewise, if Johnson failed in his duties as superintendent, his reputation would be ruined, and Halifax may grant the position to someone more capable. Johnson feverishly fought against fraudulent land claims, settler encroachment, and the rum trade during the French and Indian War which risked turning allies into enemies. As evidenced by copious letters, Johnson corresponded with governors, officers, agents, and native headmen in efforts to maintain favorable Anglo-Iroquois relations. At the onset of war, fear politics and potential glories of war created spaces for advancement. Moreover, when prominent men like Governor William Shirley believed their world contained a limited supply of positions and favors, they believed advancement meant the demise of someone else.

Previously a political ally, Governor Shirley subverted Anglo-Indian affairs for personal gain which earned William Johnson’s enmity in the summer of 1755. In a letter to Lt. Governor Delancey, Johnson explained that he went to great lengths to persuade the French-allied Caughnawaga Mohawks to defect, but Governor Shirley frustrated Johnson’s negotiations. The Caughnawaga previously lived with the other Mohawk along the Mohawk River in the mid-seventeenth century. After the French destroyed Mohawk villages in 1666, French diplomats convinced the Caughnawaga to convert to Catholicism, move to Canada, and become French allies. However, during the Seven Years’ War, Governor Shirley declared the Caughnawaga were unredeemable traitors. This attitude created a massive strain on Anglo-Iroquois relations.

---

228 William Johnson to Benjamin Stoddert, May 23, 1755, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:535
229 William Johnson to James Delancey, June 15, 1755, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:595-596.
because the British-allied Mohawk still considered the Caughnawaga part of their people.\textsuperscript{231} During the conflict, both frequently resisted conflicts with the other. Johnson comprehended the nature of kinship relations in Iroquois society and repurposed his Indian conferences to attempt to recover the Caughnawaga.\textsuperscript{232} However, Shirley’s abrasive attitude and actions shattered hope of reconciliation.

Epistolary correspondence and networks had the potential to both make and unmake people. Just as Peter Warren’s connections initially helped Johnson get a start, so too did Johnson’s connections short-circuit William Shirley’s political career in the British Empire. In their ensuing feud, Johnson tapped his networks to go over Shirley’s head. The feud escalated when Shirley refused to provide Johnson funds for his native diplomacy. Johnson wrote to General Bradstreet who swiftly reprimanded Shirley: “You must remember, Sir, at our Conference at Alexandria a particular Sum was appropriated for Presents to be made at Oswego & Col. Johnson [has] unlimited Credit for that Purpose…”\textsuperscript{233} Outmaneuvered on the financial front, Shirley changed tactics. Shirley sent his Anglo-Indian representative, Colonial Lydius, to treat with the Iroquois and convince them to join Shirley’s expedition against Fort Niagara without Johnson’s knowledge or permission.\textsuperscript{234} Informed of this underhanded move, Johnson drafted a grievance letter to the Board of Trade. Before he sent it, however, Johnson and Shirley met in person over the matter. Shirley claimed plausible deniability and wished Johnson’s letter to the Board of Trade to reflect the same. In good faith, Johnson removed Shirley’s name from

\textsuperscript{231} O’Toole, \textit{White Savage}, 64-65.
\textsuperscript{234} Indian Conference at Mount Shirley, July 4, 1755, \textit{Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York}, 6:987. “Lyddius had been privately perswading them to go to Niagara with him…Coll: Johnson spoke to Mr. Lyddius and forbid him and the Interpreter to interfere any further…” John Lydius possessed a considerable influence with New York Indians.
his complaint against Colonel Lydias. However, Shirley felt Johnson should have expunged more from the report since it still showed Shirley in a negative light. Shirley politely demanded Johnson’s submission by ordering Johnson “not to forget to engage some good Indians” to serve as Shirley’s escort through the allied territory. Johnson refused. Hendrick reported to Johnson on Shirley’s reaction to Iroquois warriors when he reached Oswego: “[Shirley] told us [Iroquois warriors]—that though we thought, you our brother Warahejage had the sole management of Indian affairs, yet that he was over all; that he could pull down, and set up…[Johnson] was but an upstart of yesterday.” Upon receipt of Hendrick’s report, Johnson overtly moved to discredit Shirley.

Johnson vented his frustration with Shirley to his network in hopes they would echo his sentiments to the Board of Trade and build support. The feud soon centered on Johnson’s position. Governor Shirley believed Johnson’s position was subordinate to colonial governors. Shirley argued: “I dont understand your Commission in the same manner, you seem to do; I cant think General Braddock intended to forbid me by it to take any Steps for procuring Indians to go with me…or that you should assume to yourself a Power to engage all the Indians to go with yourself.” Shirley believed Johnson greedily engaged all native auxiliaries while Shirley’s campaign stood without. Both men recognized military victories brought advancement and losses brought dishonor in British society. Johnson, not willing to risk his expedition nor indulge in

---

236 The report was written that basically it was Shirley’s fault that his unsupervised subordinate was causing trouble in Anglo-Indian affairs.
239 Shirley saw Johnson wielding all his contacts to support Johnson’s Crown Point Expedition leaving little for other expeditions. Johnson had no obligation to Shirley to provide additional native troops to Shirley’s forces. Both men recognized that victories or losses in battle could make or break you in British politics. Every edge was required, and Shirley wished to supplant Johnson’s Indian network.
240 William Shirley to Johnson, July 17, 1755, *Sir William Johnson Papers*, 1:734-736. Shirley did attempt to offer some measure of peace by accepting all of Johnson’s recommendations for commissions. Regardless, Johnson believed he didn’t need the escort and reported such to the Lords of Trade.
Shirley’s trenchant Anglo-Indian attitudes, gave Shirley nothing. Contrary to the Board’s instructions, Shirley commissioned his own Indian commissioners and justified his actions because of Johnson’s alleged stubborn incompetence. Overwhelmed by his duties and the feud, Johnson denounced Governor Shirley’s diplomatic interference to Lt. Governor Delancey.241 Johnson hoped between Delancey, Braddock, Pownall that he could generate greater political support against Shirley. Unfortunately, General Braddock led an ill-advised expedition against the seasoned French forces that killed Braddock and routed his forces in 1755. Governor Shirley of Massachusetts became the acting commander-in-chief of British North America—Johnson’s unquestionable superior.

After Braddock’s loss and Shirley’s ascension, Johnson restlessly worked and deployed his contacts and friends to maintain positive Anglo-Indian relations. Braddock’s defeat in the Ohio Valley obstructed Indian diplomacy. Many native allies saw the balance of power shift towards the French, who were more than willing to continue favorable trade and encourage British allies to become neutral or defect. Additionally, dependents claimed under the Covenant Chain threw off the rhetorical yoke and waged war against the British. One escapee from the Delaware nation reported their war goal to “Subdue the English first [then] we may do afterwards what we please with the French…”242 Likewise, the Shawnees turned and terrorized Pennsylvania’s borderlands to Johnson’s horror. While the Mohawk and Oneida outwardly supported the British, other Iroquois nations moved towards a position of neutrality that played the British and French for gifts. Johnson and Hendrick urgently attended many Indian conferences to maintain Anglophile factions and pro-British sentiments. However, Governor Shirley subverted Johnson’s diplomatic efforts as the former only desired to destroy Johnson’s

Infuriated, Johnson described the governor of Massachusetts as “a Man drunk with power, envenomed by Malice & burning with Revenge…abandoned to passion & enslaved by resentment.” Johnson passed along Hendrick’s report to the Lord’s of Trade which essentially stated that Johnson “was an Upstart of [Shirley’s] creating, that it was he, [who] supplied [Johnson] with money and that [Shirley] could pull [Johnson] down.” While Shirley and Johnson continued their power struggle, the British western frontier virtually collapsed under French assault. Realizing the desperate state of affairs following Braddock’s defeat, Johnson mobilized his entire network of North American contacts and solicited their support in removing Shirley.

For nearly two decades, Johnson had built up his network and leveraged the accumulated power to maintain his position against Shirley’s interference and solicit the aid of others. Johnson’s letters rapidly intensified to his agents and political allies. Johnson also plainly related his entire feud with that “Inveterate Enemy” to his supporters which included Goldsboro Banyar, John Watts, Lt. Governor Delancey, and Thomas Pownall. As Johnson hoped, each of his friends corroborated Johnson’s accounting to the Board of Trade and mobilized their own networks to support Johnson. For example, Johnson previously secured the friendship of Thomas Pownall, Lt. Governor of New Jersey, secretary to the Earl of Loudoun, and direct agent for the Board of Trade. When Johnson reported on Shirley’s interference and threatened to resign unless the Board stood for Johnson, Pownall synchronously tapped his London contacts—including his

243 Day Calendar of Sir William Johnson Manuscripts, September 3, 1755, Sir William Johnson Papers, 47.
244 William Johnson to Thomas Pownall, September 4 1755, Sir William Johnson Papers, 2:9-10.
245 William Johnson to Lords of Trade, September 3 1775, Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York, 6:994. Clarification added.
246 Thomas Pownall originally served as Sir Danvers Osborn’s secretary and accompanied the latter to New York. William Smith described Pownall as “He is something of a scholar, but a confused reasoner; and in his stile perplexed; and in that usefullst of all sciences…he is a mere novitiate…[but] galloping into preferment.” Livingston also reported Delancey felt threatened by Shirley’s “rising reputation” and so joined in Johnson’s faction against the former. William Smith ed., Review of the Military Operations in North America, 39-40, 43.
brother John who served on the Board of Trade—to corroborate Johnson’s claims. But even well-placed words took time as the Earl of Halifax weighed his options between his two feuding clients. Additionally, Halifax initially found Shirley capable, and he appreciated Shirley’s vision for using negotiation and patronage in the colonies.

During the rivalry, William Johnson achieved a military victory largely because of his carefully crafted native networks. Johnson’s orders were to take Fort Saint-Frédéric or Crown Point. Johnson used all of his influence to bolster his ranks with Iroquois warriors for the expedition. Johnson’s most important ally, Hendrick, joined him as the two methodically moved up the Hudson from Albany and began construction of Fort Edward to secure the region. Johnson then advanced with his main camp to the shores of Lake Saint Sacrament in order to scout for the enemy. Upon the lake’s shores, Johnson attempted to curry royal favor by renaming Lake Saint Sacrament to Lake George. While searching for the enemy, Johnson consolidated his supplies and lamented the large amounts of deserters. Nevertheless, Johnson felt secure: “if my Orders [to the Iroquois scouts] are observed, I do not dread a surprise.” Hendrick’s Mohawk warriors served as scouts, messengers, and soldiers. These warriors reported that French forces moved south of camp towards the unfinished Fort Edward. Thinking the unfinished fort was under siege, Johnson dispatched a force to help. Unbeknownst to Johnson, French-allied native warriors refused to attack Fort Edward because it appeared fortified and equipped with cannons. In response, Baron Dieskau had no choice but to move north and target Johnson’s base camp. Dieskau’s army captured a deserter who informed the French that Johnson sent a

---

detachment to aid Fort Edward. The French utilized that information and laid an ambush against Hendrick’s men which began the Battle of Lake George.\(^{252}\)

The Battle of Lake George provided Johnson the opportunity to advance further in British politics, receive royal recognition, and expedite his request to displace Shirley. Dieskau ambushed the Anglo-Indian relief unit and killed Johnson’s closest Mohawk ally, Hendrick. The British fought a fighting retreat as they fell back to Johnson’s camp.\(^{253}\) Although Johnson took a wound in his upper-thigh which plagued him the rest of his life, his forces broke the French assault and won the day. Furthermore, Johnson’s forces captured French commander Baron Dieskau. Such a prize bolstered the army’s morale and enhanced Johnson’s reputation. In recognition of Johnson’s victory, and to raise public’s morale, King George II rewarded William Johnson a baronetcy and £5,000.\(^{254}\) Johnson’s political allies such as Thomas Pownall, James Delancey, and John Watts offered their congratulations.\(^{255}\) Shirley reprimanded Johnson for not pursuing the routed French forces to Fort Saint Frédéric.\(^{256}\) Johnson ignored Shirley’s reproach as the latter’s demands were impractical with Johnson’s injury, Hendrick’s death, and winter fast approaching.

After his victory at Lake George, Sir William Johnson put everything on the line to remove Shirley from his North America powerbase. If the Board of Trade took Shirley’s account of an incapable Johnson seriously, then Johnson likely faced political disgrace—the death knell to his political aspirations. Johnson had several options. He could either resign his position as Indian commissioner or surrender his military rank to bring attention to his ordeals. Johnson

\(^{252}\) Johnson previously complained about deserters, and the French captured such a deserter that informed them of the British force to help Fort Edward. Anderson, *The Crucible of War*, 118.

\(^{253}\) Anderson, *The Crucible of War*, 119


gambled again and, in an extremely public letter addressed to all the colonial governors, William Johnson resigned his military command on December 2, 1755.\(^{257}\) Shirley immediately moved to subordinate Johnson by offering him a commission for the Indian Affairs. Johnson rejected the degrading offer and reaffirmed that “I do not conceive the necessity of your issuing another Commission to me or that I can consistently accept it. I am willing to continue acting under Mr. Braddocks Commission...”\(^{258}\) Johnson ignored Shirley, publically disavowed Shirley’s ongoing interferences, and petitioned for Shirley’s removal.\(^{259}\) With Johnson’s military victory, the capture of Baron Dieskau, consistent reports, and corroborated evidence, the President of the Board, Earl Halifax—whom Johnson favored any chance he could—recommended Shirley’s removal to the privy council. Besides Johnson’s influence, Halifax discovered Shirley’s ambitions reached beyond Halifax, and so Halifax withdrew his patronage from Shirley and trusted Johnson and Pownall’s reports.\(^{260}\) Investing in Johnson, Halifax supported Johnson’s motion for a crown commission independent of colonial governors. The council consented to both accounts. Johnson’s ability to align interests with his patron and the risk he took paid off.

Sir William Johnson achieved his highest imperial position after he won the political quarrel with Governor Shirley of Massachusetts. Johnson’s actions ensured that he ascended and Governor Shirley met disgrace. The King appointed William Johnson as the Sole Agent and Superintendent of Indians and their Affairs in February 1756 and provided colonial authorities clear instructions that dispelled any doubts about Johnson’s role.\(^{261}\) In his new role, Johnson received compensation for his duties directly from the military department and answered to the


\(^{258}\) William Johnson to William Shirley, January 3, 1756, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York State*, 7:11.

\(^{259}\) Colonel Johnson to the Board of Trade, January 17 1756, *Documentary History of New York* 2:645.


Lords of Trade and received pay from North America’s commander-in-chief. Imperial policy dictated that colonial governors and commanders-in-chief must defer to Johnson’s decisions on all Anglo-Indian affairs. This also included frontier land deals which gave Johnson considerable influence and power in the colonies. The Board of Trade recalled Governor Shirley and, in October 1756, he sailed for England. The feud ended in Johnson’s favor as he advanced, and Shirley lost his governorship and military commissions.262

Peter Warren’s earlier networking and enterprising lessons served Johnson well. Johnson filled new positions with loyal supporters, rewarded his political patrons and clients with land and curiosities obtained from his position, and skillfully executed his new duties. Johnson supported his friends like Thomas Pownall who enthusiastically supplanted Shirley’s networks. Pownall eventually acquired Massachusetts governorship, systematically alienated Shirley’s colonial allies, and repurposed previous supply contracts to favor Pownall’s allies. Although Johnson achieved a unique position in British North America, he remained vulnerable to court intrigue and military uncertainties. Indeed, poor military leadership threatened Johnson’s ability to successfully maintain the Covenant Chain during and after the Seven Years’ War.

Through Johnson’s ever-expanding network of dependents, friends, and political allies, Sir William Johnson attained an unprecedented status in eighteenth-century British North America. Johnson came from a declining middling family and, with the help of his wealthy uncle, established himself in North America. Under the tutelage of Sir Peter Warren, Johnson learned how to create and maintain wealth. Hendrick and other native headmen and women taught Johnson how to navigate native politics and society effectively. Equipped with such lessons, Johnson shrewdly handled Anglo-Indian affairs and secured political patronage from colonial and London authorities. As challenged occurred, Johnson relied on earlier lessons, his

262 O’Toole, White Savage, 154. Governor Morris of Pennsylvania, an ally of Shirley, also lost his governorship.
amassed wealth, and accumulated favors and powerful networks to overcome difficulties.

Although Johnson maintained the Covenant Chain during wars, factional politics and ambitious men threatened it all.
Chapter 2: Methods of Reciprocity

American frontiers signified the edge of European settlements and the beginning of ‘untamed’ territories and peoples. Though Europeans considered Native Americans uncivilized, they often entered into horizontal relationships with them for security and economic advantages. Likewise, native peoples formed friendships with European nations because natives regularly benefitted from trade deals and military alliances. Despite the drastic political difference between native polities and European empires, each adapted to the other and entered into frontier negotiations.263 Furthermore, native peoples practiced their own form of patronage and any who mastered those forms rose to prominence. Despite his aptitude for creating Anglo-American networks through personal and business relations, Sir William Johnson’s ability to uphold the Covenant Chain chiefly relied upon his mastery of Iroquois forms of patronage. Through partnerships with Walter Butler, Hendrick Theygonguian, and Molly Brant, Johnson learned the complex nature of gift-giving politics among the Haudenosaunee and ceremonially redistributed goods on behalf of the British Empire which preserved Anglo-Iroquois friendship. In promoting his Iroquois networks, Johnson made himself indispensable to the Lords of Trade and allowed him to effectively maintain the Covenant Chain.

When William Johnson became an Indian Commissioner in 1746, he fortified his understanding of Iroquois gift-giving from his personal experiences with Mohawk Valley locals and prior Indian conferences notes.264 Cultural brokers, such as William Johnson, enhanced their ability to treat with local native peoples as they grasped the significance of Iroquoian conceptions of power as understood through oral tradition. Through the actual gift-giving rituals, Johnson learned that the Iroquois represented five autonomous nations bound together through

264 A Conference at Onondaga, April 24, 1748, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:157-158; O’Toole, White Savage, 72.
ritual gift-giving ceremonies. The Iroquois referred to themselves as the Haudenosaunee or “People of the Longhouse.” As Johnson was aware, Haudenosaunee oral history explained that the Five Nations were not always unified. The Hiawatha legend, for example, reveals gift-giving helped unify the Five Nations.  

Haudenosaunee tradition states that during the fifteenth century, various Iroquois groups warred with one another in the Great Lakes region but resolved their differences through gift-giving ceremonies. Initially, Huron prophet Degawida feared a perpetual cycle of violence and devised a stratagem to end the conflict. He met a grief-stricken headman named Hiawatha and consoled him with soothing words and gift-giving ceremonies. These rituals included the transference of meaningful words and materials that imbued the very essence of honesty and true intent. Choice presents possessed an inherent spiritual essence that appeased aggression, sorrow, and revenge. A French Jesuit priest recorded the words from the same ceremony centuries later: “By this [the giving of a condolence gift] we wash out the blood of the slain: By this we cleanse his wound: By this we clothe his corpse with a new shirt: By this we place food on his grave.” Reformed, Hiawatha determined to make peace with the fierce Onondaga leader, Tadodaho. Tradition states that Tadodaho previously injured Hiawatha and ruled other with fear. However, Hiawatha overcame his fear, presented the Great Peacemaker’s teachings, and offered Tadodaho gifts which repaired their relationship. The two developed an amiable friendship and spread Degawida’s teachings to the other five nations. Headmen and women

---

265 Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 38.
266 Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 31. Richter highlights archeological evidence that proves economic exchanges within Iroquoia rapidly increased in the late fifteenth-century indicating an unprecedented period of peace which correlates with Haudenosaunee oral tradition.
from the other nations accepted Deganawida’s teachings and bound themselves together in a new polity known as the Great League of Peace and Power.271

The Great League of Peace and Power provided the vehicle for peace, commerce, unity, and dialogue within and without the Five Nations.272 Originally, the Haudenosaunee did not intend the League to exercise any significant political control among the nations such as uniform military action or invariable foreign policies. Rather, the League served as a means to provide spiritual unity which, in turn, strengthened social networks, stabilized Iroquois society, and allowed easier assimilation of non-Iroquois.273 Part of Hiawatha’s legend includes the story of how he planted the Great Tree of Peace in Onondaga. The implied naturalistic imagery suggested that the league was an oral constitution that created a space under the shade and protection of the tree. The roots extended outwards to include and invite other peoples.274 Balance, respect, and material reciprocity formulated the basis for mutual cooperation between peoples and inclusion among the Iroquois. A lack of reciprocity suggested a rejection of a relationship or—simply put—war.275

The People of the Longhouse exercised this same gift-giving diplomacy when they first made contact with Europeans.276 This proved important because the Iroquois suffered large population losses due to wars with Algonquins and other traditional enemies. Additionally, diseases ravaged entire communities.277 The Iroquois attempted to alleviate their ordeals through

271 This is traditionally why Onondaga serve as the hosts for peace gatherings. See Richter, Ordeal of the Longhouse, 39.
272 Alan Taylor, American Colonies, 102. Emphasis is mine.
275 Richter, The Ordeal of the Longhouse, 49; Anderson, Crucible of War, 13.
276 Richter, The Ordeal of the Longhouse, 41.
277 Richter, The Ordeal of the Longhouse, 58-61.
captive-taking to repopulate depleting populations.\textsuperscript{278} Through contact with Europeans, the Iroquois acquired trade items that gave them an edge over their enemies such as iron tools, weapons, and firearms.\textsuperscript{279} In the mid-seventeenth century, the Iroquois expanded westwards and assimilated many native peoples to acquire captives and maintain their material exchange with Europeans.\textsuperscript{280} Beyond weaponry, the Haudenosaunee creatively incorporated manufactured European goods to fit within Iroquois customs and culture. For example, European objects such as glass beads, medals, button, and lace served as material for natives to fashion new jewelry.\textsuperscript{281} Despite the changes and ordeals, Haudenosaunee gift exchange sustained Iroquois relations with other peoples including Europeans.

European empires desired friendship with the Iroquois because the Iroquois possessed vast native-trade networks, claimed large swaths of territory through conquest, and retained a formidable reputation as warriors.\textsuperscript{282} For these reasons, Europeans attempted to adapt to gift-giving diplomacy. As French, English, and Dutch forces competed for North American territory and waterways, each recruited native peoples through various means. Many European empires struggled against one another in a seemingly never-ended series of conflict. Each required native warriors and scouts that essentially formed borderland security and auxiliary units. For example, the French settled the St. Lawrence River valley in 1608 and established friendly relationships

\textsuperscript{278} William Engelbrecht, \textit{Iroquoia: The Development of a Native World}. (Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 2003), 43; Brandão, \textit{Your Fyre Shall Burn No More}, 6; Taylor, \textit{American Colonies}, 104-112.
with Northern Algonquians. The Dutch settled the Hudson River valley near modern-day Albany and formed a friendship with the Five Nations of the Iroquois and their ‘dependents.’ Europeans supplied their allies with weapons that enabled a series of Mourning Wars among the Algonquians and Iroquois while the Netherlands and France gained useful allies that augmented their colonial security. But European empire-states also desired wealth. North American native peoples supplied that demand through the fur trade. The French deployed their Jesuits to embed themselves within Algonquin culture and encourage economic and religious alterations. In *Nieuw Nederlant*, the Dutch formed an “iron chain” trading agreement with the Haudenosaunee. Fumbling through their first years of contact in the seventeenth-century, European powers quickly learned that gift-giving diplomacy was the only political exchange both the Iroquois and Algonquin people accepted.

Many Europeans diplomats struggled to engage in gift-giving within the complex Iroquoian political system effectively. For example, the French grappled with the Haudenosaunee’s political makeup which included not only five peoples but also clan sub-groupings. In one instance, a French diplomat presented the Mohawk with a singular gift. Upon

---


receipt, a Mohawk representative scoffed that: “the French were stupid enough to give them things which could not be divided…”  

The French emissary failed to recognize the three clans of the Mohawk—the bear, turtle, and wolf—and gave an indivisible gift. Furthermore, he also failed to recognize the individuality and localism inherent in Five Nations villages. This complicated yet flexible system of consensus facilitated cooperative action at the village, tribe, or intertribal level. The decentralized Iroquois political system frustrated Europeans who were more familiar in dealing with centralized political authorities.

The Haudenosaunee refused any notion of coercive politics and further complicated the mission of Euro-Indian diplomats. No individual held an exclusive right to violence or coercion in Iroquois villages thus the Iroquois form of government defied European statehood. Unlike European models, the Iroquois embraced politics based upon the concept of consensus.

Lt. Governor of New York Cadwallader Colden believed each nation acted as “an absolute Republic by itself.” Speaking on Iroquois politics, one exasperated British official declared that the Five Nations were a people “with whom no treaty can be depended on.” Iroquois villagers retained personal autonomy, and representative leaders were selected from consensus. An entire village rarely completely agreed with each other and so multiple, skilled orators arose that voiced a mixture of popular views. Historians have categorized those who supported trade

---


295 Anonymous to Thomas, Lord Culpeper, 26 July 1681, quoted in Richter & Merrell’s *Beyond the Covenant Chain* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 15.

with the English as Anglophiles and those who favored the French as Francophiles. Neutralists played European rivalries off of each other and preferred a non-commitment stratagem. Each faction’s influence depended on the ability of their headmen and women to distribute gifts and present compelling speeches. Successful Euro-Indian diplomats, like Johnson, learned to work within the factional system of Iroquois politics. One method they learned was that diplomats could selectively target key persons for their gifts and could enhance that person’s proclaimed views. By giving gifts to leaders of all the factions, European envoys established a method to deal with Iroquois factionalism.

Successful Euro-Indian diplomats also required an understanding of native leadership, families, and gift-giving politics. An Iroquois leader only made requests of villagers which indicated that he respected individual rights. War-making, for example, remained outside a headman’s ‘coercive’ control. The war party adhered to Iroquois rituals and was wholly voluntary. Thus, the greatest Iroquois leaders were articulate, considerate, and incredibly generous; and they bound followers through rites of reciprocity. Dutch navigator David Pietersz de Vries added that leaders were generally “the poorest among them.” In this manner, European notables significantly differed from Iroquois leaders in that Europeans strove to accumulate wealth to project their importance. On the other hand, Iroquois communities identified their greatest leaders by those who gave the most away.

297 Anderson, Crucible of War, 14.
298 Richter, The Ordeal of the Longhouse, 7, 271.
299 Goldsbrow Banyar to William Johnson, September 23, 1755, Sir William Johnson Papers, 2:80. Banyar reported “it is a Custom for the old Women even to preside” over Iroquois war councils.
300 Richter, The Ordeal of the Longhouse, 6.
302 José Brandão, Your Fyre Shall Burn No More: Iroquois Policy toward New France and Its Native Allies to 1701. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 21. Brandão explains that oftentimes chiefs would use an intermediary to make requests. If his requests were refused, then he didn’t risk direct public shame.
In 1664, England conquered Nieuw Nederland—renamed New York, incorporated Dutch settlers, and established an alliance with the Haudenosaunee through gift-giving ceremonies. Eager to tap into fur trading profits and secure borderland security, English authorities encouraged the establishment of a “silver chain” agreement or—more commonly known—the Covenant Chain with the Iroquois. They did this by using the previous chief Dutch negotiator, Arent van Curler, who met with the Five Nations on behalf of the British crown until his death in 1667. The Covenant Chain served as a military and trading alliance which required constant renewing or gift-giving ceremonies as patterned after the Hiawatha legend. Colonial governors and authorized representatives regulated trade and kept the peace between the two peoples. Since Curler, the New York delegated those activities to Dutch-descended Indian commissioners who also controlled most of New York’s fur trade.

When William Johnson arrived in 1738, he opted to utilize his uncle’s wealth and create local contacts of his own to sidestep Albany’s fur traders entirely. In 1739, William Johnson connected with Lt. Walter Butler. Lt. Walter Butler established himself as an Anglo-Irish frontiersman, a soldier, and a thriving merchant since 1711. Initially, the British military deployed Butler to drill colonists for combat, serve as a paymaster, and recruiter. Walter enhanced his skills as a backwoods soldier during Dummer’s War (1722-1725), which pitted New England colonies against the French-allied Wabanaki Confederacy. But Butler’s pay was

---

305 Landsman, *Crossroads of Empire*, 25.
poor, and so he made connections of his own. Butler married the wealthy Mary Dennison who inherited a sizeable estate from her father, Thomas Harris. In 1728, Walter received command of Fort Hunter, and his sons married into prominent Dutch families. Butler learned Iroquois gift-giving diplomacy and executed land deals with Mohawk headmen like Hendrick Thayenoguin. Additionally, Butler served as New York Governor William Cosby’s client and acquired vast swathes of land for him. Cosby died in 1736 and left his estate to his widow who sold a significant portion to Peter Warren which eventually became Warrensburgh. Instead of seeking out experience from Albany’s commissioners, Johnson formed a fast friendship with his fellow Irishman and well-seasoned frontiersman, Walter Butler.

Walter Butler acquainted William Johnson with frontier living and the fur trade. Although Johnson eventually served as Butler’s patron, initially Butler shared his experience with Johnson. In 1739, Johnson complained that Warren sent him impracticable items to sell such as moth-eaten stockings and other garments. From his store near Fort Hunter, Butler sold Johnson items more appropriate for a fur trading store on the frontier. With Warren’s financial backing and Walter Butler’s expertise, Johnson quickly transformed his residence into a major economic hub in the Mohawk Valley. Johnson rewarded his friend a by employing Walter’s sons in his store, militia unit, and eventual Indian Department. In return for their service, Johnson ensured the Butler boys were well-compensated and had access to a significant line of credit.


312 William Johnson to Peter Warren, May 10, 1739, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:5.
While Johnson appreciated his connection to Walter Butler, he still required the firsthand experience in Iroquois gift-giving diplomacy.

Through his connection to Butler, William Johnson established himself as a profitable fur trader and learned more about gift-giving diplomacy from Hendrick Theyanoguin. Originally from Tionondoroge, Hendrick served as Johnson’s perfect counterpart. Hendrick dressed in European clothing, engaged in letter-writing, and initialed documents rather than draw his clan symbol. Hendrick also engaged in various land schemes with William Johnson. Hendrick enlarged and energized his own networks through the gifts he acquired from Johnson’s connections. The partnership between Hendrick and Johnson formulated the basis of Johnson’s Anglo-Indian power networks based on reciprocity and obligation. Butler and Hendrick helped Johnson understand the basics of Iroquois gift-giving diplomacy which enriched Johnson’s entrepreneurial activities in the Mohawk Valley.

Meanwhile, Albany’s Dutch-descended commissioners resisted British imperial procedures and Iroquois customs, which led to a deterioration of Anglo-Iroquois relations. In New York, the Albany trade commissioners like Arent van Curler, Cornelius Cuyler Cuyler, and Johannes De Peyster retained their positions from the days of Dutch rule. These Albany commissioners relied on powerful connections in New York’s Assembly and their wealth through the fur trade. Those networks of wealth proved crucial for times where colonial

---

320 Summons from Commissioners of Indian Affairs, July 22, 1743, *Sir William Johnson Papers*, 1:19.
governments could not—or simply refused—compensate Anglo-Indian expenses.\footnote{William Johnson to Peter Warren, July 24, 1749, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:238-239.} Unfortunately, these commissioners often ignored Iroquois gift-giving diplomatic protocols which led to poor Anglo-Iroquois relations. For example, Hendrick Theyanoguin Peters complained in 1745 that Albany commissioners required sachems to travel to Albany for Indian conferences or to report grievances. This flew in the face of Iroquois diplomatic protocol which specified the village as the center for diplomatic affairs. Even the French recognized that practice. However, like the Dutch before them, Albany commissioners rarely ventured to Iroquoia.\footnote{Harmen Meyndertsz Van Den Bogaert, \textit{A Journey into Mohawk and Oneida Country, 1634-1635: The Journal of Harmen Meyndertsz Van Den Bogaert}, trans. Charles T. Gehring and William A. Starna (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007). Bogaert specified that Dutch traders and regulators rarely ventured to Iroquoia and only did so when French counter-diplomacy threatened profits.} Furthermore, Hendrick complained that the commissioners fraudulently dealt with them and even sent surveyors to measure out ‘purchases’ in the dark. Hendrick quipped that the British must believe the Mohawk “were become the property of Albany people, [that] they were their dogs…perhaps our Brother the Governour imagined we were thoughtless.”\footnote{At His Excellency’s residence in Albany, October 9, 1745, \textit{Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York}, 6:295. Brett Rushforth states dogs were nearly synonymous with slaves. Brett Rushforth, \textit{Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slaveries in New France} (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2012), 36.} Hendrick assured the Governor and the commissioners that the Mohawk were neither thoughtless nor slaves and helped maneuver the Iroquois into a position of neutrality as tensions flared between the French and English.

Besides the Mohawk, the Albany commissioners also earned the indignation of English settlers in New York. In 1747, assemblymen claimed the Albany commissioners emboldened fraudulent land deals and secretly traded with Montreal in their pursuit of profit over professed loyalty to England.\footnote{Remarks on the Representation of the Assembly of New York, May 26, 1747. \textit{Documents Relating to the Colonial History of New York}, 367-368. The Dutch descendants purportedly sought free trade over British imperial procedures.} Furthermore, French diplomats—previous enemies of the
Haudenosaunee—eagerly repaired relationships through their envoys like the Jesuits who mastered gift-giving diplomacy.\textsuperscript{325} Through gift-giving, the French gained incredible influence with the Six Nations and Albany’s commissioners ‘lost all influence among the Indians.’\textsuperscript{326}

Without intermediary help from Hendrick, the English risked relations moving from one of neutrality to that of hostility. This proved especially alarming during King George’s War when French and Indian forces decimated the town of Saratoga, forcing the British to abandon settlements directly north of Albany. The loss of Saratoga emboldened Franco-Indian forces and further weakened Anglophile supporters among the Iroquois. But the loss of Saratoga was laid at the feet of the Indian commissioners. Captain John Rutherford testified in Albany’s court that he frequently complained to the commissioners about the sad state of Saratoga’s fort previous to the raid “again and again, and nothing [was] done.”\textsuperscript{327} Captain Rutherford accused New York’s assembly and the Albany Indian commissioners of protecting profits over the public’s defense. Exasperated, New York Governor George Clinton sought for an alternative to the Albany Indian commissioners—preferably one with more significant experience in gift-giving diplomacy paired with crown loyalty.

Johnson earned Clinton’s attention through his practice of gift-giving diplomacy to defend New York’s public good—and Johnson’s own enterprises. Johnson recalled in 1746 that leading Iroquois sachems “were chiefly in the French Interest, and had actually received Belts of Wampum from the French….if some proper Measures be not taken to Secure and preserve them

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{325} The Examination of Coll. William Johnson, October 3, 1747, \textit{Documentary History of New York} 2:618
\textsuperscript{326} Cadwallader Colden to Governor Clinton, August 8, 1751, \textit{Documents Relative to the History of the State of New York}, 6:739.
\textsuperscript{327} Examinations at a Court of Inquiry at Albany, Dec. 11, 1745. \textit{Documents Relating to the Colonial History of New York}, 6: 374-375. Rutherford explicitly named Colonel Pieter Schuyler as one of the commissioners. Other soldiers, Sergeant Convers, David Mahany, William Schaw, and Benjamin Schaw, confirmed Rutherford’s account and explained due to the poor conditions that the fort had been relegated to a state of degradation. The Assembly answered the charge with a defense of technicality that the maintaining of forts “was never proposed” and further called them “Fortified Camp[s].” Remarks on the Representation of the Assembly of New York, May 26, 1747. \textit{Documents Relating to the Colonial History of New York}, 6:367-368.
\end{flushright}
in their present good disposition…it may greatly discourage them.”

Johnson acknowledged his French counterparts efficiently and consistently treated with the Iroquois through gift-giving during King George’s War. Johnson required the goodwill of various headmen and women from various Haudenosaunee clans and villages in order to secure protection along New York’s frontier and prevent future catastrophes. Because Johnson achieved that goodwill, Clinton dismissed the Albany’s commissioners and had “the whole conduct of Indian affairs [given] to Mr. Johnson with a Commission of Collonel to command them.”

Ultimately, Johnson motivated the Six Nations to fight for England because of his distribution of wampum and material goods.

William Johnson practiced the basics of wampum’s role in Haudenosaunee society that enabled him to communicate with Iroquois leaders efficiently. Native peoples initially fashioned wampum belts out of quahog clam shells and white whelks found along New England’s coastline. The beads were polished, hollowed, and connected to strings. Depending on the ordering and deployment of strings, wampum belts called councils, ordered seating, elected new chiefs, signified offices, adopted new family members, or recorded significant events. Wampum served as a mnemonic device that allowed a speech-maker to recall specific points of a speech. Wampum also served to validate the communication of the presenter.

---

328 The Examination of Coll. William Johnson, October 3, 1747, Documentary History of New York 2:618
329 Cadwallader Colden to Governor Clinton, August 8, 1751, Documents Relative to the History of the State of New York, 6:739.
330 Paul Otto discusses the various linguistic variations of ‘shell beads’ utilized by English French, and Dutch. Otto writes “Porcelaine, sewant, and wampum became intercultural words—terms needed to function in social, economic, and political contexts that were shaped by intercultural realities.” This thesis acknowledges the various terms but utilizes the English wampumpeag or the truncated wampum for reading ease. Paul Otto “‘This is that which…they call Wampum’ Europeans Coming to Terms with native Shell Beads,” Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal vol 15 Issue 1 Winter 2017. 1.
331 Paul Otto “‘This is that which…they call Wampum,’” 1.
Wampum initially served as a colonial currency but changed after the seventeenth century. European rivals recognized the intercultural value of wampum and competed with each other through the acquisition and distribution of wampum. Indeed, after a steady trade with Europeans, the very nature of wampum changed. Diplomats like Johnson learned to bestow and receive wampum belts for mourning rituals and engage in the Wood’s Edge Ceremony. Those ceremonies included lengthy harangues, feasts, recollection of past friendships, and affirmation of new alliances. Europeans crafted treaties that required signatures while native peoples regarded wampum belts as their records of alliances and war. While Johnson relied extensively on wampum, he also mobilized his broad access to European goods as trade items and diplomatic goods for his Iroquois contacts.

During King George’s War, William Johnson subtly altered exchange customs as he attempted to strengthen the Covenant Chain through fashion, gifts, and titles. Johnson enhanced Anglo-Indian face-to-face correspondence with rum, silver medals, fine shirts, coats, boots, and hats. In one instance, Johnson focused on Tayengarghquere—an influential Anglophile Iroquois headman known as “the King of the 5 Nations”—and gave him “A fine Ruffled Shirt…a Blue lac’d Coat…a fine pr Stockgs: wth: a Silver Ribbon to.” The ruffled shirt, coat, stockings, and silver ribbon enabled Tayengarghquere to stand apart from other factions.

333 Brandão, Your Fire Shall Burn No More, 24. Note that European powers engage in wampum-diplomacy and even tailor their native-approaches to extract wampum as tribute. Eventually, the British began to apply capitalistic principles to this native-system and produce wampum in factories.
335 Shannon, Iroquois Diplomacy on the Early American Frontier, 147.
336 Shannon, Iroquois Diplomacy on the Early American Frontier, 85-86.
339 An Account of Expenses with Receipt…for Sundry Disbursements made to the Six Nations of Indians, Received July 28, 1748, Sir William Johnson Papers, 9:21. Note that the title of king did not exist in Iroquois politics and was most likely a self-proclaimed title or just one Johnson careless attributed to a noteworthy representative of the Iroquois Confederacy.
Additionally, fashion informed English colonists, settlers, and traders that Tayengarghquere was an English-friendly Iroquois leader. Tayengarghquere’s title “King of the Five Nations” was most likely crafted by himself—a clear indication of localism.\(^{340}\) Regardless, the British gladly embraced Tayengarghquere’s self-appointed title because he favored the English. Johnson reinforced that favor with gifts which honor-bound Tayengarghquere to reciprocate. In this manner of gift-giving, Johnson earned the approval of diverse Iroquois headmen and generated pro-British factions among the Haudenosaunee.

Even during times where British war policy failed, Johnson doubled-down on Iroquois gift-giving to preserve the Covenant Chain. In war, Johnson outfitted raiding parties with weapons and supplies. In one instance, a scouting party led by the Mohawk nation’s most celebrated warrior, Gingego, was ambiguously and massacred. A survivor reported the enemy “cut their heads off, [flayed] them instantly, cut of their noses, ears and lips, stuck their heads on a stake’ to the fire, so that when found they were half roasted…”\(^{341}\) Johnson warned the governor that the Six Nations blamed their loss on New York’s inability to provide Johnson greater funds to outfit and field more Iroquois warriors. They claimed the French “never go so weak.”\(^{342}\) The survivor also indicated after the slaughter, a French Jesuit sent several Belts of Wampum to the Iroquois “desiring them to go to Canada” and join the French. Rushed, Johnson quickly ended his letter to Clinton informing the latter that the “Barbarous Murder” required Johnson’s personal intervention laden with gifts. Despite French threats on his life, Johnson collected provisions and departed on a diplomatic sortie into the heart of Iroquoia to repair Britain’s damaged

\(^{340}\) Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 276.
Furthermore, Johnson instructed Governor Clinton to send Arent Stephens to Oswego laden with “pork, biscake, powder, lead, shot, flints, pipes and tobacco, which could not cost very much, and would be very acceptable to them, and the means of drawing great numbers to our interest.” With his patron’s support, Johnson continued his efforts to maintain the Covenant Chain and justify his position in the imperial hierarchy.

Johnson enhanced his patronal relations as he engaged with gift-giving directly with to augment Britain’s military manpower during King George’s War. Previous Indian agents gave one present for all clans, but Johnson supplanted the roles of headmen by giving individuals gifts. Johnson accomplished this by presenting gifts directly to Iroquois warrior-recruits. Common gifts included paint, razors, combs, looking glasses, and ribbons. Iroquois combatants utilized most of these items for bodily decoration ceremonially required for conflict. Additionally, Johnson either personally or representatively furnished Iroquois warriors with practical war items such as guns, rum, pistols, powder and shot, red flags, knives, snowshoes, tobacco, spears, traveling rations, needles, and cash subsistence for their families. In one example, Johnson presented a Oneida party with ammunition and clothing. In return, the Oneida offered their thanks and “promised they would be ready at any time when Sir William called upon them to join His Majestys Arms.” Iroquois culture supported notions of reciprocity and exchange. Johnson fulfilled various needs through material gifts that supplied

---

343 William Johnson to George Clinton, March 16, 1747, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York* 6:423
Iroquois with proper materials to thrive in colder seasons. Like the Oneida party, Johnson expected military service in return for his gifts. Iroquois military participation helped Johnson fulfill his duties as Secretary of Indian Affairs and earned the favor of Johnson’s New York patrons.

Close relationships with sachems like Hendrick helped William Johnson maintain peace after King George’s War. In the eighteenth century, an extended peace with France was unrealistic, so both European powers maneuvered in preparation for the next conflict. In 1748, Hendrick reported on meetings with various native peoples and other British colonies. In one such report, Hendrick informed Johnson that French commander Monsieur Celleron entreated British-allied Indians at Cuyahoga to move to New France and strengthen their border. The French commander offered gifts through an intermediary headman that obligated him to convince others to move through word and gift. However, Johnson’s generous distribution of British gifts earned the goodwill of Anglophile agents like Hendrick who intervened and ‘unsealed’ the Cayohoga headman’s lips. Hendrick did so by redistributing greater gifts than those given by France that encouraged the headman to betray the French plot. Hendrick concluded his report with a belt of wampum that served both to verify his account and also oblige Johnson with his own large belt.

Following King George’s War, Johnson masterfully practiced gift-giving and the Wood’s Edge Ceremony which enabled him to prevent renewed hostilities with France. While British and the French signed the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle that ended the war between their nations,

---

349 European-made clothing, guns, and ammunition enabled men to hunt during winter times. See Journal of Indian Affairs, December 9-12, 1758, Sir William Johnson Papers, 10:49
350 Meeting of the two Castle of the Mohawks, February 2, 1750, Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York State 6:548.
351 Meeting of the two Castle of the Mohawks, February 2 1750, Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York State 6:549.
352 Richter, The Ordeal of the Longhouse, 47.
the Iroquois had no such peace agreement in place with the French. Aggravated that captured kinsmen and women had not been returned, diverse Iroquois warriors carried out raids into Canada. Governor Clinton wished to assuage Iroquois worries and—most importantly—end Iroquoian raids in Canada. Governor Clinton hoped to secure British and native prisoners of war through the traditional—and time-consuming—European model of ransom and prisoner exchange. Additionally, ongoing Iroquois raids indicated that Britain did not control their Iroquois allies—or “Iroquois subjects” as the British often claimed. If the raids continued, Clinton’s superiors, Lord Halifax and the Board of Trade, would reprimand and probably replace him. To avoid that fate, Clinton entrusted the diplomatic venture to William Johnson.  

Johnson exhibited a keen understanding of gift-giving and the Wood’s Edge Ceremony that enhanced his reputation within Iroquoia. Johnson sent a runner with a wampum belt who expressed Johnson’s request that the Iroquois should cease their Canadian raids. Additionally, William Johnson also personally engaged in the Iroquois Wood’s Edge Ceremony. Upon Johnson’s arrival in Onondaga, Onondaga Sachem Ganughsadeagah greeted Johnson, expressed that the Five Nations wished to continue their raids into Canada, expand their hunting territory, and presented Johnson with wampum. On his turn, Johnson replied with a gift of wampum and desired to contemplate Ganughsadeagah’s words and respond the following day. That evening, however, Johnson provided “a Feast for [the] Sachems and another for the Warriours & dancers who I hope will be merry.” Through these introductory rituals, Johnson adeptly handled the delicate situation. For instance, Johnson remarked he desired to think about Ganughsadeagah’s

---

353 A Conference at Onondaga, April 24, 1748, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:157; George Clinton to the Lords of Trade, April 22 1748, Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York 6:419-420.
354 A Conference at Onondaga, April 24, 1748, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:155.
words which indicated he was neither rushed nor disingenuous. Additionally, Johnson presented wampum with a *request* for those in Onondaga to *consider* his words. In this instance, wampum served as a material manifestation that Johnson both heard and accepted Ganughasteagah’s words and promised a sincere response. Lastly, Johnson immediately alleviated Ganughasteagah’s concern about hunger and gained the favor of the village through providing food. Through the gift of food, Johnson engaged in commensality which strengthened relationships between feast participants.

On April 25, 1748, Johnson skillfully presented his response and secured an agreement through gift-giving. Johnson explained his delayed arrival, offered an apology, and reminded the Iroquois of their Covenant Chain agreement. Johnson recounted the beginnings of Anglo-Iroquois friendship: “I found out some of the old Writings of our Forefathers which was thought to have been lost…I find, that our first Friendship Commenced…at Albany.” Johnson expertly employed imagery in his explanation of British prisoner exchange, made naturalistic analogies, and sealed his requests with gifts of wampum. Finally, Johnson ended his speech with a promise that “the King your Father has sent you a parcel of Goods for use of your Families as a Token of his Love to all those who are Hearty in his Cause and mind this News…” Pleased at Johnson’s observance of Iroquois protocol and offered presents, the Five Nations answered the following day and agreed to Johnson’s terms and ceased their Canadian raids.

This instance represents Johnson’s ability to stand apart from contemporaries. Unlike his predecessors, Johnson was interested in working with New York’s Governor and cultivated

---

356 See Thomas Widlok’s *Anthropology and the Economy of Sharing* (New York: Routledge, 2016) for an excellent discussion on the distinction of sharing over gift-giving exchanges.
357 A Conference at Onondaga, April 25, 1748, *Sir William Johnson Papers*, 1:158-159
wealth through exhibiting loyalty to the British Empire. Clinton’s patronage enabled Johnson to change how New York’s Indian affairs operated. Previously, Albany’s commissioners managed relations between the colony and the Iroquois rather poorly. After Clinton appointed Johnson as the sole commissioner, Johnson worked under his patron without interference from other parties. Furthermore, unlike Albany’s previous commissioners, Johnson expressed a willingness to travel to Iroquois upon Anglo-Indian business. He equipped himself with the necessary material connections so he could make good on promises, and learned cultural intricacies from Butler and Hendrick. He skillfully relayed Governor Clinton’s goals for the Iroquois in the form of a request, properly distributed wampum, gained the favor of Onondaga’s public through food, recounted the history of Anglo-Iroquois friendship, expertly presented his case, and promised a future through gifts. Johnson often greeted each participant by name and strengthened his friendships with influential headmen and women through gift-giving while elevating Anglophile influence in Iroquois communities.359

Due to competing interests and negotiations, the Seven Years’ War pushed Johnson’s gift-giving diplomacy to the limit. The Iroquois claimed domination over the Delaware, Shawnee, Miami, and Mingo since the sixteenth-century Beaver Wars.360 These peoples inhabited the Ohio River valley which possessed both fertile land and rich wildlife to fuel the fur trade. Both Britain and France courted the Iroquois for Ohio land. Unfortunately for the two European powers, the Iroquois did not exercise sovereignty over the territory but eagerly accepted European presents and sold lands as if they did.361 France built a string of forts and hoped to prevent English westward settler expansion. If under French control, the valley also territorially connected French Canada to La Louisiane district. Meanwhile, Pennsylvania

359 Journal of Indian Affairs, December 9-12, 1759, Sir William Johnson Papers, 10:65.
360 Richter, Ordeal of the Longhouse, 11-15.
361 Francis Jennings, “The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire” 3-24; O’Toole, White Savage, 158-160.
commissioners treated with Iroquois representatives for the Ohio Indians and purchased land. As English colonists settled the Ohio Valley, a conflict between France and England became inevitable.

Despite Johnson’s familiarity and influence among the Iroquois, he often struggled to counteract French diplomats and military successes. Johnson’s background consisted of a patriarchal world where men existed within a rigid, gendered, hierarchy. British men exhibited their manliness through their obedience to their superiors. The Iroquois, however, existed in a flexible and reciprocal system where masculinity was exemplified through principles of independence, self-reliance, and self-determination. Johnson had to carefully navigate between his background and the reality of his situation. Johnson altered gift-giving, so he could demand a specific reciprocal action in line with Johnson’s orders to recruit and field warriors against the French. During the Seven Years’ War, Johnson informed the Five Nations that he refused to provide gifts to warriors who were not willing to fight. A Cayuga headman indicated that he and many feared that Johnson’s announcement was a threat. Johnson hurriedly explained that his proclamation was not a threat but an invitation: “When they come down I shall force no Man to go with me, those who are inclined to do it, shall be welcome & be provided for according to the Directions I have received from the King my Master.” Johnson presented the Cayuga headman with wampum that indicated his sincerity—and likely earned the headman’s favor. In this instance, Johnson changed his provisioning procedures to materially reward those who publicly and physically evidenced their friendship to the British.

---

Consequently, William Johnson varied in his expectations for his gift-giving during the Seven Years’ War. In a campaign against Canada, Major General Abercromby grew increasingly impatient as Johnson hurried throughout the Five Nations to recruit more warriors. On June 27, 1758, Johnson sent his agent Captain John Butler—Walter Butler’s son—to inform Canajoharie Mohawks that Johnson intended on deploying to Lake George within a few days. Canajoharie Mohawks, some of Johnson’s greatest supporters, objected to Johnson’s rapid call for deployment. Their representative, Chief Sachem Hans the Wildt complained that “So hurrying & peremptory a Message as we received from you Yesterday, gave our Whole Castle great Suprize & Concern, as it was very contrary to our established Custom & manners to be as it were thus drove out to War.” Indeed, Mohawk tradition required a series of rituals, feasts, dances, songs and sacrifices. Hans the Wildt implored that the Indian Commissioner would alter his plan. Johnson revealed the hierarchal structure of the British and that his orders came from above stating he “must Obey.” Confused, other Iroquois representatives arrived in the following days and expressed similar concerns. In response, William Johnson deployed his accrued knowledge of Iroquois speech-making customs but broke with their gift tradition. Instead of giving gifts to all, Johnson declared only those who joined him on the warpath would prove themselves his real friends and promised he would present them with weapons, clothing, food, and other necessities of war. In an ultimate act Johnson “threw down the War Belt & danced the War Dance, after which a principle Man of each nation present also Danced.” Johnson departed with his retinue and made similar speeches on his way to Lake George to other Iroquois peoples to convince

367 Indian Proceedings, June 27 1758, Sir William Johnson Papers, 9:936-937. Note that the Mohawk met with Johnson before representatives from the Onondagas, Oneidas, and Tusacaroras arrived. It was likely that the Mohawk both wished to come to terms with Johnson beforehand but failed.
369 Indian Proceedings, June 27 1758, Sir William Johnson Papers, 9:939.
them to join Abercromby’s force.\footnote{Indian Proceedings, June 28 1758, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 9:939} Despite the complaints by many Iroquois leaders, Johnson recruited an impressively large Haudenosaunee force through his deployment of wampum paired with eloquent speeches.\footnote{A List of Indians, July 16 1758, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 9:944-945. Johnson recruited approximately 450 warriors.} Part of what made Johnson stand apart from his contemporaries was his ability to negotiate settlements between Iroquois custom and British war objectives through his distribution of gifts. While Johnson appealed directly to warriors for immediate aid, he also liberally gave gifts to Iroquois women.

Johnson strengthened his relationship with the Haudenosaunee by recognizing the power and influence Iroquois women possessed. The Iroquois organized themselves in matrilineal clans that formed the basic framework for cooperative relationships from the village to the confederate level.\footnote{Brandão, \textit{Your Fire Shall Burn No More}, 2. Francis Jennings, \textit{The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League} (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 7.} Iroquois women were the central component of the clan system because women controlled major foodways, collected food, produced clothing, appointed or deposed village headmen, and worked the land.\footnote{José Antônio Brandão, trans., \textit{Nation Iroquoise a Seventeenth-Century Ethnography of the Iroquois} (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2003), 5-6. Iroquois men supplemented Haudenosaunee diet with meat, but women produced the main staples of maize, squash, and beans otherwise known as Three Sisters.} Clan matrons (the gantowisas) selected headmen according to how well he provided for his family and honored his village through courageous and selfless acts.\footnote{Joseph-François Lafitau, \textit{Moeurs des Sauvages Amériquains, Comparées aux Moeurs des Premiers Temps}, (Paris, 1724) 1:483, 2. Accessed March 3, 2018. \url{http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b86029431}; Nation Iroquois, 63. The unknown author of \textit{Nation Iroquois} stated “Each one there [village councils] gives his opinion in a very serious manner, after which they agree upon the procedure.” Emphasis is mine.} The longhouse—the residence of the Haudenosaunee—provided the physical manifestation of power in Iroquoian society. In the longhouse, women occupied the essential space in their duties. In the mid-eighteenth century, many Mohawk, like those in Tiononderoge,
resided in framed houses, cleared and fenced their fields, and possessed livestock.\textsuperscript{375} Although the longhouse fell more into a ceremonial role during the eighteenth-century, Iroquois women maintained their significance in Haudenosaunee society.\textsuperscript{376} Iroquois families continually traced descent through their mother’s lineage, and any children in a marriage belonged to the mother—even after cases of separation.\textsuperscript{377} Furthermore, Iroquois women possessed not only households but also the land they worked.\textsuperscript{378} Laywomen attended governing councils where matron-elected chiefs met and discussed foreign and domestic affairs.\textsuperscript{379} Women assembled their own councils, advised village headmen and sent representatives to advocate the gantowisas’ positions on matters of civil and martial importance.\textsuperscript{380} A Jesuit priest named Joseph-François Lafitau remarked that Iroquois women were masters of their husbands and likened the Haudenosaunee to an “empire of women.”\textsuperscript{381} Despite Johnson’s patriarchal background, he worked with Iroquoian stateswomen in the struggle against France.

Through providing various gifts to matrons, Johnson secured a more profound Iroquois commitment to the Covenant Chain than previously attained.\textsuperscript{382} On May 10, 1756, many

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\textsuperscript{375} Dean R. Snow, “Mohawk Valley Archaeology: The Sites”, \textit{Occasional Papers in Anthropology}, Number 23 (Pennsylvania State University, 1995) 485; Timothy Shannon, “The World that Made William Johnson” \textit{New York History} 89 2 2008 114. The Mohawk seemed to have benefited the most from their kinship ties to William Johnson and Molly Brant. Patriot Tench Tilghman reported in 1775 that the “Mohawks are become a civilized People, they live in good Houses and work their lands to the same advantage that the Whites do.” Tench Tilghman, Memoir of Lieut. Col. Tench Tilghman, \textit{Tench Tilghman Papers} 1775-1786, Library of Congress. 82.
\textsuperscript{377} Colden, \textit{The History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada}, 13. In cases of divorce, the woman simply put the man’s belongings outside of the longhouse indicating that he was no longer welcome.
\textsuperscript{379} William Guy Spittal, \textit{Iroquois Women: An Anthology} (Ohsweken, Ont.: Iroqrafts Ltd, 1990), 10-21
\textsuperscript{380} Lafitau, \textit{Moeurs des Sauvages Amériquains}, 1:483.
\textsuperscript{381} Lafitau, \textit{Moeurs des Sauvages Amériquains}, 1:71-72. Translation is mine.
\textsuperscript{382} Tilghman, \textit{Memoir of Lieut. Col. Tench Tilghman}, 83. Tense agreement and clarification added.
\end{thebibliography}
headmen and women answered Sir William’s summons to his residence at Fort Johnson. Johnson desired the continued loyalty of the Iroquois and their warriors for the war and treated with the envoys. One headman recalled Johnson’s previous request for the sachem to relocate closer to the English, which he did. However, this sachem gestured to the accompanying women and remarked that “women have a great influence on our young Warriors, I must desire that the women now present in particular may be acquainted with what news you may have and with all public affairs relating to the five Nations, for their Influence is a matter of no small consequence with our Fighters.”

Johnson responded that he understood that “Women are of no small consequence in relation to public affairs” and promised that he would continually consult and inform them of diplomatic business. Although Johnson came from a patriarchal world, he understood the necessity of acquiring the goodwill of Iroquois matriarchs to strengthen Anglophile factions. Johnson did so by distributing gifts directly to the gantowisas.

Gifts served as a communicative medium that enhanced Johnson’s reputation with Iroquois families and promoted the Covenant Chain. Sir William Johnson gave gifts to children and families to earn the respect of clan matrons. The Haudenosaunee valued kinship networks and family above all else. For instance, an Iroquois warrior usually refused the warpath if he knew his absence endangered his family to counter-raids, exposure, or starvation. When the previously mentioned Oneida party accepted Johnson’s gifts and pledged military support for the

---

383 At a Metting of four Cheifs of the Oneida & Seneca Nations to wit Schoroyady or the half King, an Oneida, Tahwaghsaniunt alias Belt of Wampum & two other Sachems of the Seneca Nation also two Seneca Women, May 10, 1756, Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York, 7:103.
384 At a Metting of four Cheifs of the Oneida & Seneca Nations to wit Schoroyady or the half King, an Oneida, Tahwaghsaniunt alias Belt of Wampum & two other Sachems of the Seneca Nation also two Seneca Women, May 10, 1756, Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York, 7:103. After the Seven Years’ War, Johnson returned to his previous strategy in encouraging patriarchal authority among the Haudenosaunee.
English in 1758, women and children comprised the majority of the group.\footnote{Journal of Indian Affairs, November 30, 1758, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 10:61.} Johnson distributed trinkets and presents to children which earned the mother’s approval.\footnote{Conference Between Esopus Indians and Justices of the Peace, September 7, 1741, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:14-15.}

William Johnson also gained matron-approval though producing and distributing foodstuffs.\footnote{An Account Against the Crown, November 14, 1768, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 12:644-648.} In this manner, Johnson and his agents did not supplant the woman’s role. Instead, they integrated themselves within the longhouse family. This integration proved vital for the British Indian Department for two reasons. First, it offset French counter-diplomacy that strove to empower Francophile factions among the Iroquois. Johnson required trustworthy Iroquois agents throughout Iroquoia so he could stay abreast of Franco-Indian diplomacy without overspending due to rumors. For instance, British command held Johnson responsible for distributing presents to Iroquois warriors and matrons if an attack seemed likely. If that information turned out to be a false rumor, then Johnson wasted precious time and money. Secondly, Johnson integrated his Indian Department directly among the families which enabled Johnson and his agents to oppose colonial representatives who hoped to sidestep Johnson’s department.\footnote{Proceedings of Indian Affairs, July 15, 1755, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:644-645; Matthew Ferrel to Colonel William Johnson, July 28 1755, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:785-786.} Johnson existed within a fiercely competitive imperial hierarchy in which political peers sought to outperform each other to garnish favor with their superiors. For example, some like Massachusetts Governor William Shirley led a military force during the Seven Years’ War and attempted to sidestep Johnson’s Indian Department by treating directly with sachems and warriors.\footnote{Anderson, \textit{Crucible of War}, 205.} Former allies, Shirley and Johnson sought to outperform the other on the battlefield, and Iroquois auxiliary support could make the difference.\footnote{Anderson, \textit{Crucible of War}, 112-113.} However, Johnson successfully integrated himself and his agents in Haudenosaunee villages, whereas Shirley’s representatives
held little esteem. Johnson’s Indian Department enhanced the Iroquois Anglophile faction through distributing gifts through matriarchal power networks.

William Johnson earned Iroquois matrons’ reciprocity through carefully constructed words and generous dispersals of clothing. English wool blankets allowed women and children to survive the bitter, northern winters. During the winter of 1759, a Mohawk Sachem named Seth remarked that “their Women & Children were in Expectation of being Cloathed by Sir William as the two Mohock Castle had been last Month & their Men were firmly attached to His Majestys [the King of England] Interest…” Within three days, Johnson sent his agents Captain John Butler and Jelles Fonda with “two Horse Loads of Goods to cloath the Women & Children.” Johnson’s thriving enterprises—his farm, mill, fur trade, and general store—enabled him to quickly respond to Iroquois material demand which translated into a reciprocal obligation. Additionally, Johnson assuaged Iroquois home-front concerns like counter-raids through his dispersal of gifts, speeches, resettlement advice, and offer of British forts to help provide for Iroquois women and their families.

William Johnson also generated goodwill from Iroquois women through his distribution of specialized items. Johnson carefully selected and distributed European-made items which Iroquois then incorporated within their own culture. For instance, in 1770 Onaquaga’s sachem Peter Ogwitontongwas, also known as Little Peter, asked the well-established Johnson for a black shroud because his wife’s nephew died. Iroquois women attributed ceremonial value

---

394 Journal of Indian Affairs, November 19 1758, Sir William Johnson Papers, 10:59.
395 Journal of Indian Affairs, November 19, 1758, Sir William Johnson Papers, 10:60.
397 Timothy Shannon, “Dressing for Success,” 32.
towards black, woolen shrouds which enabled mourners to honor fallen kin.\textsuperscript{398} Little Peter admitted: “I Would take it As a Great favour as it is not in My power at present to Procure Neither Did I Ever intend to trouble You…but…this Ocation calls for what is not in my power & the Women Are Exceeding Desirous I should beg [your] favour…”\textsuperscript{399} Johnson possessed a longstanding reputation as an influential leader because of his generosity since 1739. Little Peter lacked the means to produce such a specialized item as the shroud for the matrons, so the matrons sent him to Johnson. In return, Little Peter offered his friendship and favor in exchange for Johnson’s gifts. Little Peter’s case highlights the mutuality of dependence that matrons, headmen, and Johnson had upon each other. Without matron-approval, Johnson’s Indian Department would fail in its mission to establish profitable trade and a secure border. Without British trade goods, prominent Iroquois sachems lost influence and prestige.

As William Johnson gained the approval of village matrons through gift-giving, he received the Iroquois military support that he and the British government desperately needed during the Seven Years’ War. Johnson provided provisions that earned matrons’ respect and allowed Iroquois men to leave their families behind and follow Johnson on the warpath. For example, on November 23, 1758, Johnson clothed fifty Onondaga women. Appreciative, the Onondaga war leader promised that “he would use all his Influence this Winter amongst the young Men of his Nation so as to have a number of them ready to join the Army next Spring.”\textsuperscript{400} As British forces made critical advances against the French in Canada including the capture of Louisburg and Forts Duquesne and Frontenac, the Onondaga leader fulfilled that promise as

\textsuperscript{398} Letter from Colonel Johnson with his Proceedings at a Conference with the Mohawks, September 24, 1753, \textit{Documentary History of New York}, 2: 633.
\textsuperscript{399} Peter Ogwitontongwas to William Johnson, Feb 9, 1770, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 7:379.
\textsuperscript{400} Journal of Indian Affairs, November 19, 1758, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 10:60.
hundreds of Haudenosaunee warriors flocked to Johnson call. As Johnson reinforced his relationship with Iroquois matrons, he also found success and helped augment British forces in the war.

While William Johnson and his allies found moderate success in their gift-giving diplomacy among the central and eastern nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, they also alienated the western nations—namely the Seneca. Before the Seven Years’ War, the Seneca grew envious as Johnson gifted provisions, clothing, weapons, and ammunition to the Mohawk. By 1754, the Mohawk claimed to speak on behalf of the Iroquois Confederacy stating they acted as “the head of all the other Nations.” The French countered Johnson and the Mohawk’s influence by deploying their own envoys laden with gifts that strengthened the Francophone faction among the Seneca leading some to subtly aid the French in raids. Further complicating Johnson’s situation, the French famously defeated General Braddock’s force in 1755 and, a year later, seized Fort Oswego. With each victory, French forces distributed the spoils of war generously among individual native warriors—including the Seneca—which boosted support for Iroquoian Francophiles. The French’s gift-distribution kept allies loyal, encouraged neutralists to become Francophiles, and pressured Anglophiles to become neutralists. The British Indian Department frantically tried to dispel Anglophile anxiety, but Johnson seemed helpless as British officers like General Braddock and Ambercromby distrusted American, politics, people, and backwoods fighting advice. And so they met with consistent defeats when faced against France who took

---

401 O’Toole, White Savage, 203.
402 At a Council Held in the City of Albany, June 28, 1754, Documentary History of New York 2:577. This claim was repeated in 1756, 1757
403 Anderson, Crucible of War, 331.
405 Anderson, Crucible of War, 164, 187.
their Franco-Indian relationships seriously.\footnote{Fred Anderson, \textit{The War that Made America: A Short History of the French and Indian War} (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 61-62.} Desperate to delay the inevitable loss of the western nations, Johnson sent a few gifts to the Seneca and Cayuga in 1756.\footnote{William Johnson’s Journal of Indian Proceedings, February 23, 1757, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 9:618.} In 1757, Johnson ordered Thomas Butler to establish an embassy among the Cayuga, Onondaga, and Oneida. The superintendent gave the impossible task to Butler and Jelles Fonda to secure Seneca allegiance and expunge French envoys from Seneca territory.\footnote{William Johnson to Thomas Butler and Jelles Fonda, December 20, 1756, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 9:582-583.} Iroquoian Anglophiles dissuaded Butler and Fonda from completing their mission—most likely saving their lives—as they informed the pair that the Cayuga and Seneca planned to murder Johnson’s agents and betray the British.\footnote{Thomas Butler to William Johnson, January 9, 1757, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 2:656-666.} When loyal, the Seneca helped Johnson track Franco-Indian movements. Without the Seneca, Johnson and his agents were blind to anything west of Iroquoia. With each military defeat, both Johnson’s position and the Covenant Chain diminished.

Elements of the Covenant Chain began to unravel as the Pennsylvania frontier erupted in war. The Delaware and Shawnee—previously British allies who defected to the French due to British military failures—raided Pennsylvania settlements along the frontier. Alarmed, Johnson immediately responded with dialogues with the Iroquois to curtail those whom the Iroquois claimed as dependent peoples. This took time and an abundance of gifts which meant more expenses. But Pennsylvania Governor Morris caved to pressure from his constituents. The Delaware and Shawnee launched devastating raids along the frontier that Pennsylvania widely publicized.\footnote{Mary Jemison in James E. Seaver’s \textit{A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison} (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015).} In 1756, Pennsylvania declared war on the Delaware and Shawnee.\footnote{William Johnson to William Shirley, April 24, 1756, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 2:447.} This action put Johnson in an awkward spot as it jeopardized his standing with the Iroquois Confederacy and
the Covenant Chain.\textsuperscript{412} French diplomats saturated Delaware, Shawnee, and Seneca villages with gifts that Johnson just couldn’t replicate. If the backwoods fell into chaos, then Britain’s American frontier stood on the cusp of disaster. Moreover, if the Covenant Chain broke, then Halifax and Johnson’s dream of a more unified system of governance among the colonies shattered with it.

As Franco-Indian forces consistently beat the British back, Johnson scrambled to maintain pro-British sentiment among the Haudenosaunee. Those who remained loyal to Johnson provided him with military intelligence—often rumors—concerning the French and their native allies. Part of Johnson’s job required him to gauge reliable military intelligence which became a costly ordeal. For example, Thomas Butler informed Johnson in April of 1757 that “the enemy have some grand desine upon the Engilish very shortly.”\textsuperscript{413} However, Johnson could not confirm rumors about the location of the attack: the Mohawk Valley, Iroquoia, or Lake George. Unable to confirm the intelligence, British forces tried preparing for all three: New York raised its militias, Iroquois warriors returned home to protect their families, and British forces assembled at Fort Edward and Henry William. Two months after Johnson’s intelligence, French General Louis-Joseph de Montcalm led a massive force to Lake George and overwhelmed Fort William Henry.\textsuperscript{414} Only Fort Edward stood in the way of a French advance to Albany. Luckily for the British, General Montcalm refused customary presents and spoils of war to his native allies at Fort William Henry. In retaliation, the warriors took what they wanted in property and blood.

\textsuperscript{412} William Johnson to William Shirley, April 24, 1756, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 2:447. In this instance, it appeared the Iroquois outmaneuvered Johnson. The French directly dealt with the Shawnee and Delaware. The Iroquois claimed a sense of paternity over the two native peoples that Johnson had to honor if he were to keep Anglo-Iroquois relations amiable. Thus, while the French paid gifts directly to the Shawnee and Delaware, Johnson had to pay enough gifts to the Iroquois to take their portion and then have enough left to compete with French gifts. This also explained why Johnson wasn’t making much progress in stopping the raids. When Governor Morris declared war, the Iroquois used it as an excuse to demand even more gifts to smooth it all over.


from the fort’s camp following and injured.\footnote{Ian K Steele, 
*Betrayals: Fort William Henry & the ‘Massacre’* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1990), 144.} After the massacre, those native warriors returned home.\footnote{Anderson, 
*Cradle of War*, 197-200.} Combined with a shortage of supplies and left without Indian auxiliaries, Montcalm withdrew.\footnote{Anderson, 
*Cradle of War*, 199-200.} The fortuitous pause allowed Johnson time to distribute more presents. However, without a British victory, all seemed lost.\footnote{Anderson, 
*Cradle of War*, 212; Beaumont, 
*Colonial America*, 214.}

In 1758, British Prime Minister William Pitt shuffled up North American military leadership and enabled Johnson to engage with his Indian Affairs more proactively. A staunch Whig, Pitt envisioned empire as something to be acquired by any means necessary with little thought to long-term consequences. To defeat France, he devoted vast sums of money from the Treasury to focus on the fighting in North America.\footnote{Anderson, 
*Cradle of War*, 215-216.} Pitt’s strategy was to energize North American British patriotism and incentivize the large population masses for their own defense.\footnote{Memorandum of Indian Presents, March 29, 1759, Sir William Johnson Papers, 3:23.} With promised wages, militia ranks swelled, and British forces began winning battles under the leadership of General Jeffrey Amherst. In 1759, Johnson distributed various provisions to the Six Nations from his own stores which included items appropriate for both men and women.\footnote{William Johnson to Jeffrey Amherst, February 16, 1759, Sir William Johnson Papers, 3:19.} Earning the allegiance of a large number of Iroquois warriors, Johnson met General Prideaux’s troops at the recently recovered Oswego and marched against Fort Niagara.\footnote{Anderson, 
*Cradle of War*, 330-338.} In July, the Fort Niagara’s commander surrendered to Johnson.\footnote{Thomas Butler to William Johnson, April 3, 1757, Sir William Johnson Papers, 9:661-663.} Niagara’s fall essentially cut the French off from their string of forts leading to Ohio country and the Mississippi. With military successes under his belt and gifts to distribute, Johnson performed the ultimate act that tied his fate to the Iroquois. He married.
During the height of the Seven Years’ War, William Johnson forged his strongest Iroquois link through marriage. *Degonwadonti*—more commonly known to English speakers as Molly Brant—lived in nearby Canajoharie when she became intimately involved with Johnson in the mid-eighteenth century. Brant seemed a logical choice for Johnson because she was “descended from and communicate[d] with the most noble families of the Indians.” Shortly after Johnson’s common-law wife Catherine Weisenberg died in 1759, Molly Brant moved to Mount Johnson as William’s ‘housekeeper.’ That same year Brant gave birth to their son Peter Warren Johnson—named after William’s uncle and primary patron. William and Molly had eight children together that survived into adulthood.

Molly Brant acted every part of Johnson’s equal in Anglo-Indian affairs and enhanced her husband’s reputation among the Haudenosaunee. For instance, Brant dispensed blankets, clothing, gifts, and meals to Iroquois peoples on Johnson’s behalf. Because of her ability to procure and distribute goods through her pairing with Johnson, Author Isabel Kelsay claimed Molly Brant “made herself the most powerful woman among the Mohawks.” Brant enhanced Johnson’s ability to acquire lands and broker Anglo-Indian treaties. Patriot Tench Tilghman later explained that “she was of great use to Sr William in his Treaties with [the Haudenosaunee]. He knew that Women govern[ed] [Iroquois] Politics.” Brant often purchased items from general

---

stores for herself or distributed them to Iroquois friends.\footnote{William Fox’s Account, August 25, 1770, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 7:865.} Through Johnson, Brant reimaged herself as a powerful clan matron through the movement of goods.

Johnson favored Molly Brant with gifts and her own line of credit in exchange for her help in promoting Anglophile factions among the Iroquois. Iroquois women held immense influence over warriors.\footnote{John Henry Lydius to William Shirley, July 17, 1755, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:738.} Like other matrons, Molly Brant also helped Johnson in that regard.

In 1759, Brant desired to join her husband while he campaigned against the French at Oswego, but Johnson dissuaded her. Johnson most likely worried the travel would be too much for his extremely pregnant wife, and also previously expressed concerns about the lack of supplies at his camp.\footnote{Journal of Niagara Campaign, July 26-Oct 14, 1759, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 13:122-125.} Brant’s willingness to join her husband on the campaign suggests that she kept warriors loyal to her husband and reminded them of their obligations. Shortly after the exchange, Anglo-American forces defeated the French at the Battle of Quebec, and the French in North America surrendered in 1760.\footnote{Anderson, \textit{Crucible of War}, 369-370.} With British victory and Johnson’s gifts, the Covenant Chain grew stronger.

One week after New France surrendered, William Johnson presented his command over the Covenant Chain as he negotiated peace with France’s former native allies with gift-giving ceremonies. At a Montreal conference, Johnson instructed the Six Nations of the Iroquois to mediate peace with France’s former Native allies and bring them under the Covenant Chain agreement. Headmen listed fifteen requests that including that the British honor agreements with them as the French did.\footnote{Indian Conference, September 16, 1760, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 13:163-166.} Headmen accompanied each request with wampum. Johnson and his Iroquois allies agreed and secured the Treaty of Kahnawake through gift-giving and persuasion. Unfortunately, Johnson over-spoke his ability to enforce the agreement or control the impending
flood of liquor and fraudulent deals that plagued the backwoods of North America. Additionally, Pitt the Elder steadily eroded Halifax’s influence and, in 1761, Halifax resigned his position on the Board of Trade.  

General Jeffrey Amherst undercut both Johnson and the Covenant Chain which sparked the flames of Pontiac’s War. Eager to recoup losses from Pitt’s expenditures during the Seven Years War, British policymakers swept aside Halifax’s efforts to reform governance in America. Instead of focusing on territorial claims, issues with the imperial constitution, or Indian relations, London concentrated on taxation and expense control. This enabled Jeffrey Amherst to shatter Johnson’s promises of reciprocal relations. Without imperial backing, Johnson stood helplessly by as the Covenant Chain failed to prevent the ensuing violence. Amherst typified his London superiors as he expressed his displeasure beforehand at paying expenses for presents. In 1761, he told Johnson “You are sensible how averse I am, to purchasing the good behavior of Indians, by presents, the more they get the more they ask, and yet are never satisfied…” In another letter, Amherst agreed that trade must go on but wished to divorce it from gift-giving as he saw it as mere bribery. Despite Johnson’s dire warnings, Amherst treated France’s former allies as conquered enemies, so Amherst prohibited the sale or transference of guns and ammunition. These Northern Indians were heavily dependent on European manufactured goods for their daily wants. Additionally, native peoples lost knowledge of traditional hunting techniques as they became reliant upon European guns. Without either, the Shawnee, Delaware, Mingo, Wyandot, Ottawa, and Miami faced severe hardships. Tensions mounted and an Ottawa sachem Pontiac seized the initiative, utilized pan-Indian religious movements, and took up arms against the

---

British in 1763. The ensuing conflict, Pontiac’s War, raged across North America from the shores of Lake Superior to Mississippi.

Without imperial backing, even Johnson could not motivate the Iroquois to mediate an end to Pontiac’s War. Amherst continually resisted Johnson’s pleas declaring, “it would be madness, to the highest degree, ever to bestow favors on a race who have so treacherously, and without any provocation on our side, attacked our Posts, and butchered our Garrisons. Presents should be given only to those who remain our firm friends.” Pontiac’s forces laid siege to Fort Detroit, ambushed British troops, and seized small forts around Lake Erie. Amherst simply used his office to throw more military resources at the problem. In July, Johnson desperately wrote to the Board of Trade and sent his agent George Croghan to London to explain Amherst’s blundering Anglo-Indian leadership to the Lords of Trade.

Johnson’s formidable networks allowed him to resolve Pontiac’s War through gift-giving and diplomacy. In September of 1763, The Lords of Trade (Wills Hill, Earl of Hillsborough, Edward Bacon, George Rice, and Francis, Lord Orwell) informed Johnson that “We do entirely agree with you in opinion as to the causes of this unhappy defection of the Indians…” They recalled Amherst in November and replaced him with Johnson’s friend, General Thomas Gage. With Gage’s support, Sir William Johnson immediately resumed gift-giving negotiations and enlisted native allies to augment Britain’s military forces to end Pontiac’s War. Eventually, the Ottawa, Pottawattamie, Huron, and Chippewa headmen came to Johnson’s peace talks. In the

---

443 Jeffrey Amherst to William Johnson, September 30, 1763, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York State*, 7:568-569.
444 Jeffrey Amherst to William Johnson, September 30, 1763, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York State*, 7:568-569.
dialogue, Johnson mediated peace by exchanging wampum and resuming the movement of trade goods between peoples. While the Board supported Johnson, other policymakers sought out alternative ways to recuperate the vast sums of wealth expended during the Seven Years War.

Johnson remained unchallenged by political rivals for the remainder of his life; however, he continually struggled to maintain peace between Anglo-Indian factions due to ongoing settler encroachment. After Pontiac’s War, settlers continually ignored imperial prerogative and encroached on Iroquois land. Despite difficulties, Johnson spent the remainder of his life exerting his networks of influence to uphold the Covenant Chain as he believed it was necessary to achieve British imperial objectives.

During his life, Sir William Johnson carefully navigated Iroquois politics and the changing dynamics of frontier diplomacy by utilizing gift-giving. Iroquoian networks enabled Johnson not only to secure Britain’s frontier security but also influence other native peoples on Britain’s behalf. Johnson’s expertise of native gift-giving diplomacy elevated his position among the Iroquois and enhanced his standing as an effectual Indian Commissioner. As Johnson gained prestige among native peoples, he gained greater access to trade goods, military intelligence, and economic opportunities. Through his use of gift-giving, Johnson subtly manipulated Iroquois custom to fit Britain’s imperial objectives. Although the Superintendent of Indian Affairs faced opposition from Francophile, Nativist, and internal rivals, he overcame most through the careful mediation of his power network and reinforcement of his ties with the Haudenosaunee through gift-giving.

---

446 Proceedings of Sir William Johnson with Pondiac and other Indians, July 23, 1766, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York State* 7:854-867
Chapter 3: A “Sensibility of Favors”

During the Consumer Revolution in the eighteenth century, the extremely class-conscious British society redefined itself through material goods.\textsuperscript{448} The expansion of markets and credit enabled ordinary people to acquire luxury goods that previously indicated one’s membership to the upper echelons of society. Historian Alan Taylor expounded that “common people strove, as consumers, to efface the insulting line between gentility and commonality.”\textsuperscript{449} Commoners did so through acquiring, wearing, or exhibiting luxury goods—typically British imports.\textsuperscript{450} In doing so, they engaged with material exchanges and a ‘language of goods’ that conveyed experiences “across social and geographic boundaries.”\textsuperscript{451} In response, the British elite adopted new fashions, mannerisms, and furnishings. The possession and display of luxury goods became a mark of social elegance.\textsuperscript{452} As Anglo-Americans collected and displayed items to reimage themselves as the provincial gentry, they also sought after goods from the greater imperial marketplace.

As trans-Atlantic travel and business became more commonplace, non-British artifacts rose in popularity among the British elite. Many British citizens wrote travel narratives of their time among the fringes of empire. These travel narratives—usually filled with exaggerations sprinkled with fiction—sold exceptionally well throughout the empire because they helped define the readers against a non-Christian, ‘otherness’ and also connected readers to the exotic.\textsuperscript{453} British military campaigns also popularized non-British peoples and goods. British

\textsuperscript{449} Alan Taylor, \textit{American Colonies}, 312.
\textsuperscript{451} Breen, “‘Baubles of Britain,’” 80.
Authors often employed a common trope that highlighted the prominence of the empire compared to ‘uncivilized’ cultures. Memorialized items and trophies from non-European peoples came to symbolize Britain’s imperial ego. But rarity and craftsmanship also played a role in the desirability of exotic goods. Historian Maya Jasanoff revealed that native crafts “…were beautiful, these things, elegantly and richly decorated. They were also often technically sophisticated, and appealing because of fascinating workmanship and unusual design.” Like luxury items, British consumers preferred exotic items because they evidenced the owner’s extensive reach across the empire and often awed genteel guests. In a world permeated by networks, impressing the right acquaintance earned favors and the attention of patrons.

The possession and display of exotic goods gave rise to spaces of entertainment in England, but for those who wished to recreate English life in the colonies, it presented an opportunity. Reverend William Hanna aptly reported, “Many are the Places of Intertainment & Curiosities in London which Delight & amuse the mind.” Those who satisfied the elite’s curiosities gained favor which translated into reciprocal relations. Colonial Americans wished to recreate English life and prove their ‘Britishness.’ Like luxury items, the possession of ‘exotic’ goods became a unique symbol of social superiority.

The elite housed curiosities and displayed them to friends with shared taste as a pastime. However, unlike luxury items in the mid-eighteenth century, exotic goods could only be procured by those familiar with indigenous

---

454 Kathleen Wilson, ‘Empire of Virtue: The Imperial Project and Hanoverian Culture c.1720-1785,’ in Lawrence Stone, ed., An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815 (London: Routledge, 2011), 128.
455 Catherine Cangany, “Fashioning Moccasins: Detroit, the Manufacturing Frontier, and the Empire of Consumption, 1701-1835,” The William and Mary Quarterly Vol 69, no. 2 (April 2012), 271.
458 “Interest in colonial rarities was high and provided colonists with a special place in the world of gift exchange.” O’Neill, The Opened Letter, 124.
459 Patrick Griffin, Experiencing Empire Power, People, and Revolution in Early America (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017), 9.
peoples on the fringes of the British Empire. Cultural brokers eagerly engaged in this cultural ‘self-fashioning’ and presentation that also served as an element of patronage.

William Johnson’s carefully crafted networks across the Atlantic and among the Haudenosaunee enabled him to become one of North America’s greatest cultural brokers. However, Johnson also engaged in the Consumer Revolution where he acquired and facilitated the movement of luxury and exotic goods. As a broker of goods, Johnson mobilized his influence in upholding the Covenant Chain to procure indigenous-made items for friends, family members, military officers, merchants, clergy, and members of the colonial elite. Furthermore, Johnson’s life reveals the interconnection between material and power. Along with his exchange of favors, Johnson’s distribution and display of exotic items helped expand his patronage networks and earned a seat among America’s provincial elite.

Diverse gifts augmented commitment and reciprocal relations between the sender and the recipient. Receivers maintained the option of refusal which indicated a relationship-rejection. Conversely, those who accepted gifts entered into a social bond with the receiver. Accompanying letters enhanced the perceived value of gifts especially if the letter detailed the gift’s origins or cultural uses. Building on relationships of trust and mutual respect, America’s elite requested presents on behalf of themselves or others in their own networks. In this manner, British gift-giving mapped out the dependencies and interdependencies among Anglo-Americans.

In the British colonies, exotic gifts served various, networking functions depending on their type. Clothing, for instance, indicated one’s gender, class, age, and status. Clothing also possessed the ability to distort or modify identities. Members of the British elite often sought

---

after Native American clothing for various reasons. Britons reimagined themselves by culturally cross-dressing and appropriating from indigenous peoples. Some even memorialized their cultural cross dress through commissioning costly paintings.462 Others utilized Native American clothing in London’s famous masquerades in which “Londoners deliberately inverted ideals of civility, assuming the bodies [and wear] of exotic Indians…”463 At the end of the masquerade, all reverted to their ‘civil’ and polite behaviors. While some believed the dressing served to symbolically portray British dominance over other cultures, others utilized clothing to negotiate with other cultures.464 Beyond clothing, other favorite gifts included weapons, animal trophies, small craft, food, and drink. Each possessed the ability to be shared with others that created a shared experience and helped forge common identities that spanned great distances.

Despite the type of gift, each possessed a practical and symbolic value for Anglo-Americans. For example, moccasins served practical and social purposes in the eighteenth century. Made from deer or elk skins by Native American women, moccasins “afforded the wearer quieter footfalls, surer feet, and a more comfortable journey than other types of footwear.”465 Thus soldiers and clergymen wore them for practical purposes.466 However, the mere possession of moccasins indicated the wearer possessed a reliable connection to Indian trade networks either directly or indirectly.

In patronage networks, gifts helped facilitate goodwill but also revealed the unequal relationship between patron and client. In exchange for patronage, patrons often demanded clients to procure specific gifts. Clients tapped or enlarged their networks to accommodate their

---

463 Horn, *The Power of Objects in Eighteenth-Century British America*, 256-257. While Americans attempted to replicate English life in the colonies, colonial masquerades proved complicated because of the social and racial confusion that followed.
466 Cangany, “Fashioning Moccasins,” 271.
patron’s desires. If clients failed, they risked souring their relationship with patrons. If clients succeeded, they received higher trust and responsibilities on behalf of their patrons. After receipt of presents, patrons consumed, displayed, or redistributed them. Thus, the movement of material helped outline the flow of power. Most seeking patronage reimaged themselves through material goods and sought for guidance from familial relations.

William Johnson’s uncle, Peter Warren, served as Johnson’s first patron and initially taught him the virtues of acquiring and distributing ‘exotic’ wares. Within Johnson’s first three years in British North America, he managed his uncle’s estate at Warrensburgh and set up an independent fur trading operation. Johnson’s proximity to Mohawk traders and his networks with Lt. Walter Butler, Hendrick, and other locals allowed his trade business to grow. But Johnson promptly learned that his role as his uncle’s factor also involved the procurement of exotic goods. In 1741, Johnson’s cousin, Lt. Michael Tyrrell, informed him that their uncle Peter Warren desired “3 or 4 paire of Garters and a fine Sword bellT and a paire of Shose” from the Iroquois. But these gifts were not for Johnson’s uncle. Instead, Tyrrell signified that though Captain Warren had “a Great fancy for those things he would make presents to Friends in England.”

Historian Timothy Shannon remarked that clothing projected “…the wearer’s social position, occupation, and elements of personal identity.” As mentioned before, Londoners found value in the acquisition and exhibition of Native American fashion articles. As Warren’s factor, Johnson fulfilled his uncle’s request to procure exotic items for Londoners. Johnson remembered this lesson from his uncle and utilized it when he sought to create and expand his own networks.

---

Johnson enhanced his patronal relationship with Governor Clinton through the exchange of gifts. Johnson facilitated favors, brokered land, and performed his duty to uphold the Covenant Chain as an Indian Affairs commissioner. In return, Governor Clinton connected Johnson with peoples of note. The two enjoyed an amicable relationship built on shared interests. Clinton utilized Johnson’s merchant network by requesting a pair of black stallions. Through Johnson’s Mohawk contacts, Clinton benefitted from various land schemes proposed by his client as well. In return, Clinton publicly supported Johnson to the assembly, colonial notables, and London: “I have recommended [William Johnson] to His [Majesty’s] Favour Thro ye Duke of Newcastle…” As Clinton’s client, Johnson proved himself adept at his duties and enjoyed a royal recommendation. While he maintained his relationship with Clinton through gift and favor exchange, he also sought other notable connections.

As an Indian Commissioner in 1748, Johnson entertained requests for Indian presents from a variety of colonial notables which indebted them to Johnson. For example, Boston official Leonard Lockman wrote to Johnson for “a beaver coat & a fine bow with a bundle of small arrows for I design to dres myself ones in a Indien dres...” Lockman desired to enhance his relationship with Boston’s elite by wearing Indian fashion which indicated Lockman’s ability to procure such atypical items. Additionally, it enabled Lockman to engineer his social identity and become a member of a new social order defined by their ability to procure exotic items. In their exchange of pleasantries, Lockman presented Johnson with moccasins and snowshoes. This exchange of exotic gifts created a reciprocal bond between the two men. Beyond their cultural

469 Clinton took the governorship position after a career in the navy because he had financial problems.  
470 William Johnson to George Clinton, September 16, 1752, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:377. See also SWJP  
471 George Clinton to William Johnson, December 10, 1746, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:68. This recommendation and William’s success paid off when Johnson was awarded £2836 for his services during the war in 1747.  
appeal, moccasins—waterproofed through a brain-dyed solution—provided wearers with footwear suited for backcountry travel.\textsuperscript{473} As New York’s Indian commissioner, Johnson traveled great distances across the New York area for Indian conferences, and the gift of moccasins and snowshoes were most likely welcomed. In return for Johnson’s exotic items, Lockman joined Johnson’s ever-expanding network of clients stating “I will take care…your services done to the Crown shal not only be made known to Sir Peter Warren but to the Ministry.”\textsuperscript{474} Through recruiting Lockman as a client with gifts, Johnson reaffirmed his public character and goodwill both to his uncle and the British ministry.

William Johnson consciously used gifts to forge patron-relationships, and he notably withheld gifts from requestors lacked any foreseeable benefit for Johnson’s networks. In 1751, Samuel Cramer visited Mount Johnson and complimented Johnson’s collection of Indian artifacts. In their conversation, Johnson played the gracious host and regaled Cramer on the various Indian crafts he encountered in his Anglo-Indian dealings. After the visit, Cramer reached out to Johnson and gave a detailed request:

> a Friend of mine in England whose Turn is a good deal to Curiositys desires I may bring him some from these Parts I remember when I had the pleasure of being at Mount Johnston you mentioned a piece of Ingenuity that rested with some of the Indians in your Neighbourhood which was an excellence they Poss[ess]ed in carveing a true representation or figure of themselves in their Proper Hunting Habits & their Bodys &ct Decorated in a Warlike manner both Sexes in their Different apparells if it is in your Power to help me to & Emblem of that kind in both Sexes within a moderate purchase you will extremely oblige me with my Sincere wishes for your Health & Happiness.\textsuperscript{475}

Cramer’s letter indicated that his experience with Johnson was a memorable one. Additionally, Cramer’s request revealed that Indian crafts—and accompanying stories—appeased a growing public curiosity on Indian culture. Those who provided detailed answers to curious questions—

\textsuperscript{473} Cangany, “Fashioning Moccasins,” 269.
enhanced by a material witness—received the esteem and favor of their peers. Notwithstanding Cramer’s request, Johnson refused it by ignoring it.\textsuperscript{476} A previous letter from Cramer illustrated that Cramer often behaved in shameless ways. In 1750, Cramer recounted his drunken escapades while trading from Mohawk County to Schenectady. Cramer admitted, “human Nature cannot for ever withstand the Potency of the Liquid god,” meaning liquor.\textsuperscript{477} Johnson most likely found little value in adding Cramer to his patronage network or wasting time or exotic gifts on Cramer’s unsophisticated behalf. While he regaled visitors with his own collection, Johnson also consciously screened which relationships deserved his attention—as indicated by his willingness to distribute exotic gifts—and which did not.

If he deemed a visiting dignitary as a gentleman and a valuable addition to his networks, Johnson presented guests with Indian gifts that created a mutuality of obligation between the two. The exotic items acted as a physical representation—and memorabilia—of unique experiences. Indeed, if Johnson made visits entertaining enough, visitors not only warmed to Johnson’s requests but also shared their experiences with friends and family. Thus, Johnson connected himself to other noteworthy networks through a gift paired with a memorable visit. In 1752, Mr. Thomas Benson graciously thanked Johnson for gentlemanly sport at Johnson’s residence: “The Company with whom I was so agreably entertained at Your house, often talk of it, Drink Your health, and join with me in present thanks and acknowledgments and we make boast of the Pidgeon Shooting Match all the Day long.”\textsuperscript{478} Johnson and his guests competitively shot pigeons for competition and sport that reinforced their masculine and aristocratic mentalities. The shared experience created a bond of comradeship; however, Johnson extended

\textsuperscript{476} No evidence exists that Johnson continued correspondence with Cramer in the Johnson Papers or it’s Day Calendar.


\textsuperscript{478} Thomas Benson to William Johnson, August 18, 1752, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 1:374
his patronage through fulfilling gift requests. As Benson recounted the enjoyable scene, he asked for an Indian dress. Benson accompanied his appeal with appreciation and some money which he feared was insufficient compensation. Benson apologized for his lack of a thoughtful reciprocation and stated his ignorance trespassed upon Johnson’s civility. In Johnson’s debt, Benson offered his services as a client. Part of those services entailed seeking ways of enhancing his patron’s fortunes by providing detailing political and economic news from New York urban centers. Because of Benson’s merchant connections, he often frequented London which also appealed to Johnson. Benson pledged: “It wod. give me Singular Satisfaction if I cod. do you any little Service there [in London], as a Conviction how much You have Engaged me to be Yor. most obliged & Obedt. Servt.” Through gentlemanly hospitality and several considerate exotic presents, Johnson acquired a talented advocate for his London affairs.

Johnson’s deployment of gifts also helped to sustain his faltering image and relations with family and friends in Europe. In 1754, Johnson communicated with his father, Christopher Johnson, who resided on a small farm in Ireland. Christopher reported that William’s reputation sorely suffered there. Surprised, Johnson exclaimed: “I am Sorely troubled to hear that some of my nearest Freinds, entertain so bad an opinion of my principalls…” When William Johnson initially left Ireland back in 1738, he possessed little prestige. Fourteen years later, however, Johnson created and maintained powerful networks of his own and became one of New York’s most prominent citizens. Due to Johnson’s extensive businesses and political maneuverings, it left him with little time to correspond with his immediate family. Sir Peter Warren's 1752 death also complicated William’s relationships with family. Warren left relatively
little for the Johnsons. Instead of leaving something for his nephew, Warren asserted William was “not wanting.” Warren claimed William owed him money from the latter’s time managing Warrensburgh. The affair caused a rift in family relations. However, Johnson mediated the matter entirely through word and gifts. Gifts provided the physical evidence of one’s words, social rank, wealth, and generosity.

William Johnson renewed his familial attachment to his father and equipped him with shareable, exotic goods. By way of Johnson’s merchant contacts, he sent “an Indian Pipe to smoak with, as it may be a Curiosity there, it is Cutt out of the solid stone by [the Iroquois], only with a Knife…” William’s brief description of the pipe’s creation enhanced its perceived value. Johnson also included a snuff box and tobacco for his father. Lastly, William included a costly portrait of himself. Johnson begged his father to remedy the “greatest fault in it” which was his “narrow hanging Shoulders.” William assured his father that his shoulders were “very broad and square.” His requested alteration revealed Johnson’s exhaustive attention towards how he wanted others to view him. If Christopher Johnson played host, the proud father could extol his son’s accomplishments, share his son’s generous pipe and tobacco, and celebrate William’s memory in view of William’s portrait. Johnson shored up faltering relations with his family and friends in Ireland through gifts; however, he usually found the most considerable political, social, and economic advantages by presenting exotic gifts to notables in North America or London.

---

485 William Johnson to Christopher Johnson, October 31, 1754, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:931. Clarification is mine.
486 William Johnson to Christopher Johnson, October 31, 1754, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:931. Clarification is mine.
487 William Johnson to Christopher Johnson, October 31, 1754, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:931.
488 William Johnson to Christopher Johnson, October 31, 1754, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:931.
During military campaigns, Johnson networked with military officers and earned their personal loyalty through gift-distribution. War provided a setting where Johnson acquainted himself with shrewd men that could augment Johnson’s networks. In the military campaigns of 1755, Johnson supplemented his military reports with small, exotic gifts. Johnson did so with Captain Robert Orme who served as General Braddock’s aide-de-camp and survived the Battle of Monongahela in which General Braddock lost his life. Johnson wrote Captain Orme before his return to England about his power-struggle with the new commander-in-chief, Massachusetts Governor William Shirley. While Johnson voiced concerns about Shirley, he also complained against New York’s Assembly. Johnson declared the Assembly was “prone to such backwardness & distrust, as often not only retards but Disappoints the public Service.” As customary for Johnson, he framed himself as a loyal, British gentleman in service and defense of the public good. However, the “Villains & Enemies to the Country” threatened the public good if London failed to financially and politically back Johnson. Johnson urgently explained to Captain Orme that only a direct intervention from the Lords of Trade could prevent “very fatal Consequences….” Johnson coupled his urgent appeal with some “Curiosities” in hopes to bind Captain Orme to his cause. Johnson’s letter saved mention of the small gifts at the end but also promised “[he would] look out for more.” The captain graciously accepted Johnson’s gifts and requested a more detailed report on Johnson’s situation so Orme could confidently treat with the President of the Lords of Trade and the Secretary of State. Johnson’s offer of service and gift also bound Captain Orme into Johnson’s network of clients as Orme offered “whatever Services

---

I may do you in England…I shall be glad to assure you how much I am Dr Sir Yr. most humbl. & obedt. Servt.”

Johnson sustained clients through the exchange of favor and gifts. Like other agents, Orme brought his own networks to Johnson’s service. In sum, Johnson included Captain Orme in his network of supporters through the careful deployment of words and gifts. The two exchanged pleasantries, gifts, and favors for mutual benefit.

When General Braddock commissioned William Johnson as Superintendent of North American Indian Affairs in 1755, Johnson rapidly expanded his reach for exotic goods through his clients. The flow of goods in Johnson’s world indicated the flow of patronal power. Johnson extended his patronage to handpicked Indian commissioners to help Johnson in his duties in regulating Anglo-Indian trade and diplomatic ventures. Additionally, Johnson often instructed those officers, among their other duties, to acquire Indian artifacts. During the Seven Years’ War, Johnson deployed his agents to key trading sites and frontier forts. Those Indian Affair Commissioners maintained the peace, facilitated trade, and coordinated war efforts between Anglo and Native American forces. After the war, those commissioners served as Johnson’s representatives in those various spaces of negotiation. Agents acquired exotic items and Indian curiosities in exchange for Johnson’s favor. For example, in 1771 Johnson instructed his agent Ferrall Wade to search for uncommon curiosities along the frontier. Wade acquired an extremely rare oddity: “[It] is a White Otter. it Differs nothing from Another but In the Colour. I don’t know whether you Ever saw One, for the most of the Indians we have shown it to says they never did.”

Wade adhered to Johnson’s desires to both provide information and supply rarities.

---

496 Robert Orme to William Johnson, September 2, 1755, Sir William Johnson Papers, 1:896.
498 Instructions to Jelles Fonda, December 9, 1758, Sir William Johnson Papers, 10:64-65.
499 Ferrall Wade to Sir William Johnson, May 29, 1771, Sir William Johnson Papers, 8:120. Some otter cubs can be born with white fur which is essentially the absence of several pigmentations known as leucism. It is an extremely rare occurrence.
Edward Cole, Johnson’s deputy agent in Detroit also kept Johnson informed about his search for Indian curiosities.\textsuperscript{500} In return, agents like Wade and Cole enjoyed the benefits of Johnson’s patronage.

William Johnson also supplemented his mercantile dealings with gifts. New York merchant William Darlington met and worked for Johnson initially in 1750. By 1762, the two possessed a mutually beneficial relationship and presented each other with gifts that accompanied business correspondences.\textsuperscript{501} For example, Darlington reported back on one of Johnson’s recent commercial orders and mercantile news from the Atlantic marketplace. Darlington accompanied his report with a keg “of Pickled Oysters” and salmon.\textsuperscript{502} Appreciative of both the news and victuals, Johnson sent Indian curiosities to Darlington. However, they never reached Darlington. Saddened, Darlington remained “uneasy about the Indian Curiosities you mention sometime past as I never received any Shoud be glad to hear of their being Safe.”\textsuperscript{503} Darlington’s inquiries after the curiosities soon ceased, indicating that he received the items in question.\textsuperscript{504} The items eventually found their way to Darlington, and the two resumed their business and gift exchange as indicated in Darlington’s 1766 gift of “a pair of Spectacles & Case...[and] hopes they will Suit you.”\textsuperscript{505}

The exchange of favors and gifts created a mutuality of obligation between William Johnson and other merchants like Irish-born Daniel Campbell. Campbell served in Johnson’s militia unit during King George’s War. Afterward, Campbell settled in Schenectady and became a reputable merchant by 1760 with Johnson’s help. In return, Campbell sent Johnson presents

\textsuperscript{501} Johnson sent his communications through Darlington to Johnson’s London-based merchants—the Bakers on occasion.
\textsuperscript{503} William Darlington to William Johnson, November 29, 1762, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 3:950
\textsuperscript{504} The goods were most likely delayed in Albany where Johnson earned a few enemies from merchant rivals.
\textsuperscript{505} William Darlington to William Johnson, April 7, 1766, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 6:155.
accompanying normal business correspondence. In 1763, Campbell sent Johnson a fine beaver coat and requested that Johnson appoint Campbell’s friend, Cornelius Glen, as a lieutenant in Captain Stephen Van Rensselaer’s unit.\textsuperscript{506} Campbell sent another beaver coat two days later that reaffirmed his desires.\textsuperscript{507} The two continued their exchange of gifts for years to come. In 1768, Campbell sent “Some good English Cheese & a Barrell Limes.” for Johnson’s enjoyment.\textsuperscript{508} Three years later, Campbell utilized his own contacts to procure a gift worthy of Johnson’s praise. In an amiable letter, Campbell presented Johnson with “a pair of Elks Horns—which as they are large & intirely whole makes them a little Curious.”\textsuperscript{509} Campbell’s ability to procure beaver coats, English cheese, limes, and Elk horns indicated he possessed formidable contacts of his own. Campbell offered Johnson detailed information on real estate schemes in Schenectady as well. In return, Johnson happily transacted ongoing business with Campbell and sent presents in return.\textsuperscript{510} Gifts and favors composed the medium that enabled the two to form a fast friendship and profitable business relationship. At the time of Johnson’s death, Daniel Campbell received the honor of being named an executor of William Johnson’s estate.\textsuperscript{511}

Another mercantile company helped Johnson connect to distant markets and exotic goods. Based out of Philadelphia, Baynton, Wharton & Morgan procured Indian trading goods for Johnson and his deputies. More than just supplying Johnson with goods, Baynton, Wharton & Morgan connected Johnson to Pennsylvania Governor John Penn and other provincial notables.\textsuperscript{512} Johnson enlisted the help of another prominent cultural broker in the Ohio area, George Croghan, and paid off Croghan’s excessive tabs. In return for Johnson’s dependable

\textsuperscript{506} Day Calendar of the Sir William Johnson Manuscripts, December 5, 1763, 191.
\textsuperscript{507} Day calendar 191 Dec 4, 1768.
\textsuperscript{508} Daniel Campbell to William Johnson, October 18, 1768, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 6:443.
\textsuperscript{511} Will of Sir William Johnson, January 27, 1774, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 12:1074
\textsuperscript{512} William Johnson to Baynton, Wharton & Morgan, June 7, 1765, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 4:760. Letter destroyed by fire but recorded in the Johnson Calendar.
credit in sustaining his officers, the merchants delivered a gift of Spanish chestnuts and a promise that: “If at any Time, There are any Curiosities…Which your Honour would incline to have…[we will]” procure them.\textsuperscript{513} This Mediterranean present verified the company’s extensive reach and goodwill towards Johnson.\textsuperscript{514} That accrued goodwill with Sir William Johnson paid off well for the merchant company.

During Pontiac’s War, Baynton, Wharton, & Morgan suffered substantial financial losses like many from Pittsburgh due to Indian raids; however, they utilized their connection to William Johnson to recoup their losses in extralegal means. To keep trading open and fair, the Indian Department stipulated that traders could only exchange goods with native peoples at British controlled settlements and forts. Johnson hoped by these measures he could diminish the amount of liquor being poured into the backwoods and cease the fur trade down the Mississippi to New Orleans.\textsuperscript{515} Other traders bought licenses and established storefronts in border towns and forts to compete with longstanding fur traders.\textsuperscript{516} Near the end of Pontiac’s War, Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan allegedly broke the law and set up a shop in a Shawnee town. The move infuriated Pittsburgh traders who began posturing for legal redress. Alarmed, the Baynton and Wharton defended themselves to Johnson declaring their goods were due for Fort Chartres and instructed their junior partner, Mr. Morgan, that “none of Them [should be] sold in any Part of the Indian Country…those which were forwarded from Scioto to the Lower Shawanese Town were without our Knowledge or Consent.”\textsuperscript{517} Mr. Morgan indicated he followed that direction until he was countermanded by the “solicitation of Mr. Croghan.” The merchants cunningly tied their fate to

\textsuperscript{514} The merchant company also helped facilitate communications between Sir William Johnson and Dr. Benjamin Franklin in favor of “the Illinois colonizing scheme.” 5:331. Destroyed by fire.
Johnson’s and appealed: “That your Honor will be so good, as to afford us your Protection and not suffer us to be sued, for doing an act, expressly required of us, by your Deputy.”

Johnson received the formal complaint from Pittsburgh traders who also appealed to General Thomas Gage. With Johnson’s approbation and promise for land, General Thomas Gage settled the dispute.

While some commissioners proved difficult to manage, Johnson heavily depended upon his deputy agents in the Indian Department. In exchange for their loyalty and ability to procure exotic items, William Johnson handsomely rewarded them. Longtime associate, Daniel Claus, fulfilled his duties as an Indian commissioner and transmitted foreign goods—both Native American and French—to Johnson after the conquest of Montreal. In October of 1760, Johnson instructed Claus “I would have you buy me some little curiosities [in Montreal]…& send them by the first opertunity…My brother lies Ill at New York.” Due to the impending defeat of New France, Johnson recognized that French goods would become scarce—and valuable. Additionally, Johnson wished to distract his brother’s attention from health concerns to a peculiar item that could occupy his mind and possibly raise his spirits. Unfortunately, Claus indicated that those exotic wares “…are all valuable.” Claus explained that Montreal prices were currently high. However, Claus speculated that after Quebec fell that many French families would return to France and offload their possessions thus creating a good time to buy French goods. Claus proved himself a shrewd businessman and loyal agent thus earning Johnson’s

---

520 William Johnson to Daniel Claus, October 10 1760, *Sir William Johnson Papers*, 3:268
respect. In return, Johnson loaned Claus money to purchase a captain’s commission and accepted Claus’s courtship of his daughter Ann (Nancy) Johnson.522

Johnson also warmly rewarded his other deputy agents for their loyalty and procurement of luxury and exotic goods. In 1770, Major Jelles Fonda sent Johnson some “verry acceptable” venison and oysters.523 Traditionally, venison and oysters were preferred gifts for British aristocracy.524 In return, Johnson invited Fonda to his residence to share in the victuals, and the two became close friends.525 Johnson’s deputy agent for the Ohio regions, George Croghan, expensed more than he should and often skirted around the law to enhance his Illinois trading enterprises.526 Croghan possessed close connections to Ohio Indians that Johnson simply could not replicate even with his Iroquoian intermediaries. Thus, Croghan made himself indispensable to Johnson, and Johnson tolerated Croghan’s underhanded activities. The two maintained their unsteady relationship through letter and gift. In 1764, Croghan sent Johnson an inkstand and “a few Trinketts fer Molly & the [Children].”527 A thoughtful gift for Sir William who wrote masses of letters, ornamental inkstands also indicated a genteel status. Combined with gifts for his wife and children, Croghan obliged Johnson which paid off in Croghan’s 1766 Shawnee trading scheme. Johnson always made sure his commissioners received raises as well.528 Lastly, Johnson evidenced the closeness he felt with his clients after his death. In his will, Johnson ordered his son to commission rings for his closest associations: John Johnson, Daniel Claus, Guy Johnson, John and Warren Johnson, Daniel Campbell, John Butler, Jelles Fonda, James Stevenson, Robert

523 William Johnson to Jelles Fonda, November 25, 1770, Sir William Johnson Papers, 7:1021.
525 William Johnson to Jelles Fonda, November 25, 1770, Sir William Johnson Papers, 7:1021.
527 George Croghan to William Johnson, August 4, 1764, Sir William Johnson Papers, 4:501.
528 Personnel of Indian Department, December 9, 1766, Sir William Johnson Papers, 5:446.
Adems, Samuel Stringer, John Dease, Henry Fry, and Joseph Chew.529 Priced at £300 each, the rings bore a literal, material witness to Johnson’s obligations with his clients in his patronage network.

Molly Brant shared Johnson’s ability to procure favor with various culture through gift-giving and presentation. As Sir William Johnson’s wife, Molly Brant reimaged herself through material goods, distributed items, and commanded the respect of New York’s dignitaries. Revolutionary soldier Joseph Bloomfield remarked that “Miss Molly…[had] every thing convenient around her & [lived] more in the English taste than any of her Tribe…[she] remains of a Very likely Person.”530 Three years after Johnson’s death, Patriot Lt. Colonel Tench Tilghman pointed out that Brant continually dressed with “linen and other Cloathes the finest of their kind.531 Indeed, Tench Tilghman referred to her as ‘Lady Johnson’ while Bloomfield called her “Miss Molly.” Both were honorary titles given to elite, colonial women. The fact that both men continued employing the title after Johnson’s death suggests that Molly Brant integrated herself remarkably well as part of New York’s gentility.

Like her husband, Brant obligated the elite of another culture through the distribution of food and customary civilities. Molly Brant commanded the respect of British colonials who sought Johnson’s favor when visiting Johnson Hall. Like her husband, Molly Brant navigated between two cultures with relative ease and flexibility due to her mastery of reciprocity and obligation. Witham Marsh visited Johnson Hall in 1764 and gave Johnson his most gracious compliments and gratitude to Molly.532 Parliament member, Lord Adam Gordon likewise visited Johnson in his estate, and specifically honored Brant: “Give My Love to Molly & thanks for her

529 The Will of Sir William Johnson, January 27, 1774, Sir William Johnson Papers, 12:1074-1075
531 Tilghman, Memoir of Lieut. Col. Tench Tilghman, 87
532 Witham Marsh to William Johnson, February 19, 1764, Sir William Johnson Papers, 11:70.
Another of Johnson’s clients, John Van Eps, delivered “a Legg of Vinneson for Madm. Mally.” Traditionally, venison was the preferred meat for aristocrats.

Commissary Norman Macleod “sent two Blankets to Molly.” In the winter of 1768, Joseph Chew and John Weatherhead realized they had left Johnson Hall without expressing gratitude for Miss Molly’s hospitality. Appalled, the two promptly apologized. Weatherhead specifically begged Johnson to “Assure [Miss Molly], that it was not for want…[but] the Effect of Stupidity.”

Each visitor paid homage to Miss Molly’s as she obliged them through graceful service, and they repaid her with kind words and gifts.

Brant’s influence extended well beyond material gifts from Anglo-Americans. Indeed, her networks of influence outperformed Sir William’s on occasion. This is evidenced by Johnson’s agent, James Stevenson, who begged both Johnson and Brant for their aid in a personal matter in 1770. Like Johnson, Stevenson married a prominent Iroquois woman, a fact which enhanced Stevenson’s reputation with the Seneca. Stevenson claimed his bride belonged to a prominent Seneca-French family and also brazenly declared his pairing reduced “the french blood & divert[ed] it into an English channel.” Stevenson’s off-handed remark indicated his conscious procreation served the interest of the Empire. Regardless, Stevenson used his relationship with this Seneca woman and employed her to distribute presents to the Seneca “…in order to keep up the good name of the English.”

---

536 Normand Macleod to William Johnson, January 23, 1769, 6:604
537 Joseph Chew to William Johnson, November 17, 1768, Sir William Johnson Papers, 6:461; John Wetherhead to William Johnson, November 17, 1768, Sir William Johnson Papers, 6:463. Wording is assumed as original is illegible.
nearly a year later, but the woman begat a child from their encounter. Stevenson learned about the birth of his son and desired guardianship. The mother exercised her prerogative and declined Stevenson’s ‘demand.’ Without the mother’s consent, Stevenson was helpless. In 1771, Stevenson turned to his patron for help: “I have a fine Boy amongst the Senecas & would be glad to get him from them, although it should be attended with some expence—now I should be glad of your advice & assistance in this matter.” William Johnson appreciated Stevenson’s work and took an interest in this case; however, Johnson either failed or relied entirely on Molly Brant. This is evidenced because three years after the request, Stevenson attributed the success to Johnson’s wife: “I beg my [compliments] To Molly and thank her for the pains she has taken relative to the Child…” Like her husband, Brant utilized gift-giving and persuasion that enabled her to navigate between cultures and connected Stevenson to his son earning the client’s everlasting obligation to the Johnson household.

Besides merchants, Indian commissioners, and family relations, Johnson also enhanced his reputation with North American clergymen through the exchange of favors and gifts. Achieving the goodwill of notable clergymen helped extend Johnson’s influence and connect to denominational networks throughout New England. Religious vibrancy increased and spread during the eighteenth century through animated orations or printed sermons. Despite rival Christian denominations, clergymen extended local pastoral care to encompass virtually all classes and peoples. Churches stitched together communities based on shared beliefs and ritualistic practices. But religiosity extended beyond the realm of theology and into social,

541 James Stevenson to William Johnson, March 13, 1771, Sir William Johnson Papers, 8:16.
542 James Stevenson to William Johnson, March 31, 1774, Sir William Johnson Papers, 8:1103.
543 The historical record is silent on the specifics of the boy’s ‘redemption’ and the fate of the mother.
544 Bonomi, Under the Cope of Heaven, 9.
545 Bonomi, Under the Cope of Heaven, 4.
economic, and political spheres which made it appealing for William Johnson.

Exchanging gifts, information, and favors, William Johnson secured the allegiance of clergymen from the Church of England. For example, Irish-native Thomas Barton arrived in British North America in 1750 and became a missionary for the Church of England in 1755. Barton briefly served in the Seven Years’ War as a chaplain and corresponded with Johnson by August 1763. Like the notable Benjamin Franklin, Sir William Johnson became engrossed with scientific matters. Barton recognized this attribute in Johnson and communicated information about an “Electrical Aparatus” and earned the latter’s favor. Barton seized upon Johnson’s goodwill and earned Johnson’s recommendation to Dr. Samuel Auchmuty. In appreciation, Barton procured tradesmen to help with one of Johnson’s developments. By 1765, Barton presented Johnson with “acceptable Articles” and “very Agreeable presents.” The generous gifts and display of gentlemanly behavior impressed Johnson to the point where Johnson desired Barton’s service:

I cannot but highly approve of any Young Gentmn bred to physic, with the Character You have given…the Country here requires a Skiffull practicioner, Such a one Would be highly agreeable to me & usefull to my family…I shod be glad I could serve him in my Department, but that is not now in my power, no provision being yet made for so necessary a person, Altho’ I don’t despair but that on a proper representation, the Crown might approve of it.—

Sufficiently impressed, Johnson mused that he possessed the power to create a new office under

---

547 Day Calendar of the Sir William Johnson Manuscripts, 174.
548 Like dancing, poetry, or music, science was another form of knowledge that the genteel enjoyed displaying to prove their higher station in life and to indicate shared tastes with other members of the elite. Wood, *Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 32.
550 William Johnson to Thomas Barton, November 21, 1765, *Sir William Johnson Papers*, 4:876. These gifts were most likely crafted by British colonials as indicated by Johnson’s wording.
552 William Johnson to Thomas Barton, November 21, 1765, *Sir William Johnson Papers*, 4:876
the Indian Department specifically for “a Man of Worth” such as Barton.\textsuperscript{553} As winter approached, Johnson thoughtfully accompanied his request with a beaver blanket and a pair of Indian shoes.\textsuperscript{554} Despite the gifts, Reverend Barton felt compelled to establish an Indian school in Lancaster and politely declined the generous offer. Although the relationship did not work out the way Johnson hoped, the two continued their correspondence. Johnson eventually sent his son Tagawirunta—William of Canajoharie—to attend Barton’s school.\textsuperscript{555} Furthermore, Johnson bequeathed a fair tract of land in Mohawk Country to Barton in 1771, and Barton publicly praised the generosity of the superintendent.\textsuperscript{556} Thus, Barton and Johnson maintained their advantageous friendship through consistent letters, gifts, and favors.

As his reputation as an Anglican sponsor grew, lay representatives solicited William Johnson’s aid in filling ministerial vacancies. In 1768, Schenectady churchwarden J.W. Brown turned to Johnson for aid in recruiting Reverend Alexander Murray from Pennsylvania to serve as their minister.\textsuperscript{557} Unfortunately for Brown, Murray claimed the distance from his recent bride and the meager salary would not suffice, so he decided to remain in Pennsylvania.\textsuperscript{558} Despairing, Brown and other churchwardens watched in dismay as Schenectady Presbyterians successfully recruited Reverend Andrew Bay. Denominational rivalries were important because without a persuasive clergyman, churchwardens feared “of losing some part of our Congregation by their Joining the Dissenters, as they have provided themselves with a Gentleman who is much

\textsuperscript{553} William Johnson to Thomas Barton, November 21, 1765, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 4:876.
\textsuperscript{554} William Johnson to Thomas Barton, November 21, 1765, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 4:877.
\textsuperscript{555} Eleazar Wheelock threw Tagawirunta out of his school for his pride at the end of 1766. Johnson then sent Tagawirunta to Barton for his education.
\textsuperscript{556} Thomas Barton to William Johnson, July 8, 1771, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 8:184-185.
\textsuperscript{557} Mr. JW. Brown to Sir William Johnson, August 5, 1768, \textit{Documentary History of New York} 4:383. A churchwarden was a local, voluntary, peace-keeping position for Anglican parishes.
admired.” The churchwardens again put their faith in William Johnson to provide an alternative to Reverend Bay and reinforce Anglicanism in Schenectady. Johnson turned to his merchant resource in Schenectady, Daniel Campbell. In late November, Campbell and Goldsboro Banyar informed Johnson about an effectual preacher named William Andrews who awed Schenectady’s Anglican congregation with a brief sermon as he passed through the town. In December of 1769, Johnson made contact with Andrews. In exchange for Johnson’s favor and letters of recommendation, Andrews proposed “I cou’d prevail upon [Irish clergymen] to come over, and settle in [New York’s] Vacancies…” Of course, Andrews meant himself. In 1770, the Bishop of London, Thomas Sherlock, appointed Andrews as the missionary at Schenectady. In 1771, Andrews set up a grammar school and entered into Johnson’s patronage. Furthermore, Johnson’s measures rendered the churchwardens and their congregation in Johnson’s debt.

William Johnson also supplied his children with exotic items that helped them forge their own networks of power. Those who procured Native American cultural material and language also enjoyed increased esteem in major colonial cities such as Philadelphia. In 1774, William Johnson’s son, Peter Warren Johnson, wrote his father about his stay in Philadelphia. Although Peter was half-Mohawk, his parents desired him to receive a formal, British education which brought Peter into circles of the rising elite of British North America. Peter informed his father that “there are Gentlemen & Ladys here [at Philadelphia who are] very desirous of Seeing

562 Mr. Andrews to Sir William Johnson, December 10, 1769, Documentary History of New York 4:422.
564 The fact that Johnson utilized his uncle’s name reveals his attempt to connect his children to his uncle’s powerful legacy. Historian Gordon Wood declared “Family relationships determined the nature of most people’s lives…Parents almost always named children after themselves or relatives.” Woods, The Radicalism of the American Revolution, 44-45.
Peter requested Iroquois crafts, clothes, and items from his mother and inquired after an Indian book from his father. Peter’s familiarity and access to Iroquois material culture, ability to speak the Mohawk language, and generous nature enhanced his standing—and that of the Johnson family—in Philadelphia as he satisfied the curiosity from the colonial genteel.

Through gifts and favor exchange, Johnson exemplified how networks of power operated in both directions on the hierarchy. He gained the favor and attention of New York’s notables through obligating them with gifts. Johnson also expanded his mercantile reach, enhanced his relationship with his commissioners, and earned the respect of clergymen from the Church of England. But Johnson did more than just facilitate the movement between favors and gifts. He also presented his residence as a significant space of exchange. Colonists considered artifacts that one could display or share as the most useful because those articles established communities of shared taste and enabled social restructuring. Historian Wanda Burch highlighted that an impressive array of artifacts indicated leisure, knowledge, and money—three traits that indicated one belonged among the American gentry. The arrangement and display of curiosities revealed the owner’s taste—another fundamental social indicator. Johnson presented his guests with an experience not likely forgotten.

Through the meticulous display of curiosities and genteel setting, Johnson earned the respect and approval of visiting dignitaries. Initially at Mount Johnson, William Johnson later moved his residence to Johnson Hall and decorated the mansion with the various relics and curiosities. His collection impressed visiting native and British dignitaries as Johnson displayed

---

both luxury and exotic items. Johnson possessed a keen memory throughout his life and regaled visitors with stories about each piece at his home. Furthermore, some friends begged the favor of having their gifts displayed in his great hall.\textsuperscript{569} Completing the experience, Molly Brant, William’s Mohawk consort, endeared herself to native and British guests alike.\textsuperscript{570} Furthermore, her background equipped her to easily fulfill curious questions about displayed Iroquoian items. Johnson presented his home as a peculiar space that entertained his guests and left them indebted. Inspired visitors shared their experiences with friends and family which only expanded Johnson’s gentlemanly reputation and social influence.

Material gifts also evidenced Johnson’s inclusion to the provincial elite as he displayed gifts from noble adversaries. After the Battle of Lake George, William Johnson transferred Baron Dieskau, the captured commander of French forces, to his home. The battle left Johnson and Dieskau injured, and they most likely recuperated together at Fort Johnson. For Johnson, the capture of an enemy commander was no small feat. Indeed, the British crown awarded Johnson with a baronetcy and a small fortune. Johnson ensured Dieskau possessed all the amenities required by men of their station and kept the commoners who had “little…Decency and good Manners” away. Indebted by Johnson’s gentlemanly treatment, Baron Dieskau later gifted Johnson his sword. Johnson graciously wrote the Baron “it shall be the Ambition of my Life to manifest to the World in general that I am not unworthy of your Friendship, & to Convince you on every occasion…that I honour your Character & am unfeignedly disposed to render you every Mark of my Esteem & Affection.”\textsuperscript{571} A friendship with another member of the nobility, despite

\textsuperscript{571} William Johnson to Baron Dieskau, January 18, 1756, \textit{Sir William Johnson Papers}, 2:422. Upon capturing French General Baron Dieskau and Aid de Camp, Johnson instructed his subordinates to let the baron heal at Johnson’s house and prevent the common mobs from pestering the Baron as they had “little…Decency and good Manners.”
his French affiliations, helped Johnson materially justify his advancement in British society. After receiving the sword, Johnson proudly displayed the sword in his home in a way that evidenced Johnson’s heroic exploits and aristocratic mannerisms.

While Johnson received many gifts, he deliberately selected only the best and most impressive for display. Most of those items reflected qualities and memories that Johnson found valuable such as statesmanship, entrepreneurship, distinction, loyalty, camaraderie, and valor. Two years after Johnson’s 1774 death, Patriot Lt Joseph Bloomfield of the 3rd New Jersey Regiment visited Johnson’s manor and provided a snapshot of the interior of Johnson Hall. In his will, Johnson left his house and possession to his son John Johnson. In 1776, Lt. Bloomfield recorded that John Johnson’s wife, “shewed me Sir Wm. Johnson’s Picture…surrounded with all kinds of Beads of Wamphum, Indian curiositys and Trappings of Indian Finery wh. He had received in his Treatys with different Indian Nations, Curiositys sufficient to amuse the curious.”

Additionally, Bloomfield remarked on Johnson’s coat of arms, other items, and specifically “good old King Hendrick’s Picture.” William Johnson decorated his walls with native treaties and various types of medals from Europe. Bloomfield admitted an account of everything would “exceed the bounds of my Journal.” William Johnson consciously chose to hang a portrait of himself surrounded by what he considered his most significant accomplishments which included various Native American gifts, weapons of war, a portrait of his Mohawk friend and teacher, diplomatic treaties, and pieces of European finery. Johnson regaled his guests with tales from his past, and the portrayed items emphasized Johnson’s life of achievement and power. Beyond material trophies that decorated his walls, Johnson also exuded

572 Bloomfield, Citizen-Soldier, 49.
573 Bloomfield, Citizen-Soldier, 49.
574 Bloomfield, Citizen-Soldier, 53.
575 Bloomfield, Citizen-Soldier, 53.
his prominence through gardening.

Displaying scientific knowledge bolstered Johnson’s credentials as a gentleman. Johnson’s merchant contact, Samuel Stringer, dispatched a variety of seeds from the West Indies that included *Cassia Fistula*—also known as the golden rain tree native to India’s subcontinent—and the Mediterranean-native *Convolvulus cammonia*. Stringer also delivered Persimmon fruit seeds and the English-grown *Centaurium erythraea* flower seeds. Along with a collection of varying seeds, Stringer included detailed instructions on how to care for each plant. Johnson’s household staff ensured that the gardens of Johnson Hall flourished. Moreover, although Johnson used portions of his gardens for medicinal purposes, he mainly enjoyed the benefits of exhibiting his rare collection of plants to visiting dignitaries, royal officials, and colonial elite. Swedish naturalist Peter Kalm graciously thanked Johnson for hosting his stay and requested seeds of *fol. Avoine*, a type of corn, per care of Johnson’s merchants in London. In return for Johnson’s hospitality and procurement of seeds, Kalm declared “if you have had the Kings command to do me all the favour that has been in you power to do me, you could not have done me so great kindness, as you have done… I shall an other time have a better opportunity to let the world know your great qualities.” John Arthur, a writer from London wrote in both Latin and English, expounded upon his experience at Johnson’s residence: “I was in a musing humour, Walking in those Newly Cultivated fields, & pleasant Gardens about Johnson Hall…How happy I think myself, who have seen and am become Acquainted with that great Warrior, and at the same time,
so Gallant, So Accomplished a Gentleman!” Arthur, like other dignitaries, tied the garden and experiences at Johnson’s home with Johnson himself which culminated in an approbatory verdict on William Johnson’s character and social standing. That reputation justified Johnson’s position on the political and social hierarchy within the British Empire.

Combined with the exchange of gifts, pleasantries, and favors, Johnson amplified his networks and efficiently weathered the crises of the mid-eighteenth century. Furthermore, Johnson reinforced his relationships as he bound others to his goals. When difficulties arose, Johnson leveraged his accumulated goodwill from those within his patronage network on his or the Covenant Chain’s defense. While many engaged in Anglo-Indian affairs, none achieved the status Sir William Johnson did in the eighteenth-century. He efficiently exemplified how networks of power operated through cultivating powerful connections, engaging with gift-giving diplomacy, and exchanging favors and gifts. Through these methods, Johnson scaled the hierarchal ladder of patronage in the British Empire and left a memory that both Patriot and Loyalist contested during the American Revolution.

Epilogue

Facing mounting pressure from disgruntled natives with similar concerns that Metacom voiced to Massachusetts almost a century prior, Sir William Johnson utilized a lifetime of experience and influence to maintain the Covenant Chain. He summoned a large conference to convene at Johnson Hall in 1774. The Iroquois and other native peoples sent delegations to meet with the superintendent. Johnson, nearing sixty-years-old, relied upon his mastery of gift-giving ceremonies to advocate and uphold the Covenant Chain and alleviate native concerns. As usual, Molly Brant honored guests as an elegant and gracious hostess. The superintendent acknowledged their concerns on continual land intrusions and assured the representatives that the king would give them justice for the trespasses against the Covenant Chain. Johnson assured them that he would “use all his endeavors for their satisfaction, that they shou’d patiently wait without attempting any act of violence…”  

Johnson presented the sachems with pipes, tobacco, and liquor, so they could make themselves comfortable and discuss Johnson’s words. In less than two hours, Sir William was seized upon by “a fit in which he suddenly, and most unfortunately expired.” Confused, participants of the meeting soon learned what transpired from Sir William’s nephew Guy Johnson and inquired whether he now possessed his uncle’s same authority. Guy assured them that he would carry on his uncle’s work.

Two days later on July 13, over two-thousand mourners accompanied the superintendent’s body to its final resting place in nearby Johnstown. His son, Sir John Johnson led the funeral procession with his family followed by Molly and her children. Johnson’s

---

582 At a Congress with the aforementioned Indians, July 11, 1774, Documents Relative to the Colonial history of the State of New York, 8:479.
583 Guy Johnson to the Earl of Dartmouth, July 12, 1774, Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 8:471.
584 At a Congress with the aforementioned Indians, July 11, 1774, Documents Relative to the Colonial history of the State of New York, 8:479.
Masonic order trailed behind Molly while Mohawk, settlers, Iroquois, and other native peoples followed.\(^{585}\) His large funeral procession evidenced a man who influenced people from two worlds and those that existed in between. Unfortunately, the world Sir William Johnson helped maintain through negotiation and gift-giving diplomacy progressively unraveled.\(^{586}\) But larger forces caused this breakdown. London officials repeatedly implemented uniform approaches to American governance, Anglo-Indian relations, westward expansion, and tax collection since France’s defeat in the Seven Years War. For example, colonists paid taxes to local assemblies, but Parliament introduced a new series of London-based taxes. Anglo-Americans considered those measures a breach upon their liberties as Britons which set a dangerous precedent. In a series of widely-publicized actions, American colonists hoped their resistance served to dissuade England from their unjust attempts to impose greater control over the colonies. It failed. London persisted, and the Thirteen Colonies revolted in 1775.\(^{587}\)

The Covenant Chain took on new meanings during the American Revolution. During the war, colonists generally fell into two categories: Patriots or Loyalists. Patriots supported independence while Loyalists, as their name implied, remained loyal to the crown. Colonel Dayton rode into the Mohawk Valley with his Patriot forces to confiscate Loyalist property but met with the late Hendrick’s brother, Abraham. Instead of meeting each other with gifts, the two greeted each other with threats. Abraham declared if the Patriots harmed Sir John or his family that they would declare war in honor of their kinship with Sir William. Colonel Dayton, however, threatened if Mohawk warriors intervened that “He would break the Covenant Chain, He would burn their upper & lower Castles on the Mohawk River, would burn all their houses, destroy their Towns & Cast the Mohawks with their Wifes & Children off of the face of the

---


\(^{586}\) Flexner, *Lord of the Mohawk*, 349-351.

Earth…” The threat of aggression backed by the emerging republic redefined the Covenant Chain as one backed by violence. The British, on the other hand, generally tried to re-energize Sir William’s previous Anglo-Iroquois networks to secure Iroquois loyalty during the war.

Although Guy Johnson pledged to uphold the Covenant Chain, he lacked the experience and relations his uncle possessed. Furthermore, imperial policies alienated colonial factions to a point where even Sir William, with all of his accrued influence, struggled to sustain the Covenant Chain. During the American Revolution, the Iroquois Confederacy attempted to remain neutral; however, divisive factions tore it apart from within. Johnson’s networks of power operated even without him. Johnstown fed and provisioned Iroquois visitors and delegates. Molly Brant and her step-brother Joseph Brant led a dominant Anglophile faction that convinced the four of the Six Nations to join the British. Samuel Kirkland, a Presbyterian missionary and former friend of the Johnsons, convinced the Oneida and Tuscarora peoples to join the Americans. Backing different Anglo-European powers, the Iroquois Confederacy that had endured for centuries broke down.

After the Americans won the Revolutionary War in 1783, the Covenant Chain remained important for a time. In British Canada, the crown allocated land to Loyalists and Iroquois that supported England during the revolution. In America, “the Senecas helped the federal government to assume the legacy of Sir William Johnson.” In the end, the Covenant Chain and other Native American agreements became more of a nuisance than a solution for the westward-expansionist policies of the American Empire.

---

589 Bloomfield, *Citizen-Soldier*, 70-71.
Bibliography

Primary Sources


Colden, Cadwallader. *The History Of The Five Indian Nations Of Canada Which Are Dependent On the Province of New-York in America, And Are the Barrier between the English and French in That Part of the World; With Accounts of Their Religion, Manners, Customs, Laws, and Forms of Government; ... To Which Are Added, Accounts of the Several Other Nations of Indians in North-America, Their Numbers, Strength, &c. ...* London: Osborne, 1727. [https://archive.org/details/cihm_39577](https://archive.org/details/cihm_39577)


https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans/N09177.0001.001/1:3?rgn=div1;view=fulltext


Tilghman, Oswald, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman*. Albany: Jay Munsell, 1876.

Texts, with English Translations and Notes. Cleveland: Burrows, 1897.  
http://puffin.creighton.edu/jesuit/relations/  


Williams, John. The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion: Or, A Faithful History of Remarkable Occurrences in the Captivity and Deliverance of Mr. John Williams, Minister of the Gospel in Deerfield, who in the Desolation which Befel that Plantation by an Incursion of the French and Indians, was by Them Carried Away, with His Family and His Neighborhood, Into Canada. Deerfield, MA: Hopkins, Bridgman, and Company, 1853.  

https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044014187892?urlappend=%3Bseq=341
Secondary Sources


Eccles, W. J. *Frontenac, the Courtier Governor.* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1959.


Peña, Elizabeth S. "Wampum Diplomacy: The Historical and Archaeological Evidence for Wampum at Fort Niagara," *Northeast Historical Archaeology* 35. https://doi.org/10.22191/nehavol35/iss1/20


-------- “The Iroquois as Allies in Colonial North American Campaigns, 1676-1760.” *William and Mary Quarterly*


