

ABSTRACT

MORTIMER, LOREN MICHAEL. "Pageants of Sovereignty: 'Merciless Indian Savages' and American Nation-State Formation on the Northern Borderlands, 1774-1775." (Under the direction of Dr. Craig Thompson Friend).

When Thomas Jefferson denounced the Native American nations residing west of the thirteen colonies as "Merciless Indian Savages" in the Declaration of Independence, he willfully misrepresented the negotiated peace that prevailed in the borderlands in the summer of 1776. The British empire had lost its grip on its North American frontiers as early as 1774 with the death of Sir William Johnson, the superintendent for Indian Affairs. Presiding over a personal and political frontier empire of his own making, his larger than life persona substituted for enduring imperial institutions on the colonial frontier. His 1774 death left a power vacuum, which ignited long smoldering conflicts between competing colonial and native factions. Like the colonists, Native American nations had their own grievances with the British Crown and North America erupted in concurrent revolutions in 1775 as colonial and indigenous nations sought to dismantle British North America, replacing the monolithic empire with a plurality of sovereign nations—indigenous and European in origin. Within weeks of convening in 1775, the Second Continental Congress dispatched envoys to the northern frontier to negotiate treaties of neutrality. In the 1775 treaty councils at Albany and Fort Pitt, Native American and local colonial leaders affirmed Congress as an independent, sovereign body with legitimate diplomatic powers. Fear of a British-led Indian war compelled the colonies to cede the power of Indian diplomacy to the embryonic central government; it is a power the federal government has never relinquished. The 1775 treaties of neutrality contained the American Revolution—both the war and the political revolution—

to the thirteen colonies and transformed an endemically violent frontier into a neutral space where sovereign American nations were free to pursue their own revolutionary projects.

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Pageants of Sovereignty: “Merciless Indian Savages” and American Nation-State
Formation on the Northern Borderlands, 1774-1775

by
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BIOGRAPHY

Loren Michael Mortimer graduated from Hamilton College in Clinton, New York in 2007. After spending four years working in the political arena—where his work took him to Washington, DC, Iowa, Colorado, and New York—he returned to the academy to commence his studies in early American history. He will begin his doctoral studies at the University of California, Davis in the fall of 2013.

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Introduction

In Philadelphia on June 11, 1776, two North Americas converged—one ancient and one embryonic. For a moment, Congress paused its deliberations of American independence to receive dignitaries from the northern borderlands. Twenty-four Haudenosaunee chiefs and warriors, splendidly dressed and painted, stood among the congressional delegates’ powdered periwigs and frock coats as peaceful emissaries from a seemingly distant land. The Haudenosaunee, the league of six Native American nations that Europeans identified as the Iroquois, was the first sovereign power to ostensibly recognize the legitimacy of the Continental Congress as a national government through a treaty of neutrality negotiated a year earlier. From frontier diplomats and official congressional envoys, the Haudenosaunee had heard accounts of the “thirteen council fires” that now burned magnificently as one in Philadelphia. On a fact-finding mission for the Haudenosaunee Great Council at Onondaga, the Indian emissaries had come to see this grand assembly for themselves.¹

Pageantry—the more pomp, theatrics, and rhetorical eloquence the better—suffused every aspect of Haudenosaunee diplomacy. The Congress and the Haudenosaunee used the visit as an opportunity to publically reaffirm their treaty of neutrality and friendship. John Hancock, the President of the Second Continental Congress, declared that “we hope the friendship that is between you and us will be firm, and continue as long as the sun shall shine, and the waters run; that we and you may be as one people, and have but one heart, and be kind to one another like brethren.” Impressed with Hancock’s bearing, the

¹ *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, ed. Worthington C. Ford et al., 34 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904-37), 5: 429; *The Connecticut Gazette*, 24 May 1776; George Washington to Philip Schuyler, 9 June 1775, in *The Papers of George Washington Digital Edition*, ed. Edward G. Lengel (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008).

Haudenosaunee concluded the ceremony with an Onondaga chief conferring upon Hancock the name “Karanduaan,” meaning the Great Tree, an allusion to the Great Tree of Peace at the very core of the Haudenosaunee League. There was power in this gesture: a tree was permanent, ever growing, its deep roots tethering it to the timeless North American soil. As the American woodlands were forests of ancient trees and young saplings, so too was North America a continent of old and new nations. In a moment, which poignantly reminds us that there are no historical inevitabilities—even in the origination of the United States—here was a vision of the American Revolution that accommodated a plurality of nations coexisting on the North American continent.²

Shortly after the ritual gift-giving and Haudenosaunee delegation’s departure from the chamber, Congress resolved to form a five-man committee to draft a formal declaration of independence. Congress intended this declaration for a European audience; the visiting Haudenosaunee had already recognized Congress as a legitimate, sovereign council. Haudenosaunee recognition of colonial liberty, however, meant little to the Virginian tasked with writing the declaration, Thomas Jefferson. In the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson cast native peoples as villains in the revolutionary struggle against Britain, writing that “[The King] has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an

² Ford et al., eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 5: 429. For the constructions of “The Great Tree of Peace,” see William Fenton, “Structure, Continuity, and Change in the Process of Iroquois Treaty Making,” in *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League*, ed. Francis Jennings, et. al. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 16-18; Tahentorens (Ray Fadden), *Wampum Belts of the Iroquois* (Summertown, TN: Book Publishing Company, 1999), 80; Timothy Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy on the Early American Frontier* (New York: Viking, 2008), 17.

undistinguished destruction, of all ages, sexes and conditions.” With the strokes of Jefferson’s pen, native peoples had been figuratively cast to the margins of the new nation’s creation narrative, no more than “savage” allies of a tyrannical British monarch.³

The Haudenosaunee who had attended Congress in June 1776 were not the “merciless Indian savages” Jefferson depicted. Their visit testified to the fact that as of the writing of the Declaration, the thirteen colonies enjoyed relative tranquility on their nebulous western borders due to Congress’s successful policy of engaging indigenous peoples diplomatically rather than militarily. Contrary to Jefferson’s grievance, while some British officials had confidentially floated the idea of mobilizing Native American shock troops to their cause, neither the King nor his ministers actively pursued this policy in 1776.

The Declaration of Independence’s intentional mythology of the “merciless Indian savage” served an immediate practical purpose for Jefferson, Adams, Franklin and the other revolutionary luminaries gathered in Philadelphia. Religious scholar Michael Prior’s comparative histories on settler colonialism explain the utility for the mythology of a “savage” frontier: it provided the requisite legal basis to exclude indigenous people from the natural rights articulated within the founding document. Indeed, as legal historian John R. Wunder argued, the Declaration promulgated a “a cruel myth and a dire statement of purpose” for the United States’ future expansion into native lands: “merciless savages” existed beyond the perimeters of the American Revolutionary project; their historic collusion

³ Ford et al., eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* 5: 429.

with the British King disqualified them from enjoying the self-evident natural rights enshrined in the Declaration.⁴

Interrogating the charge of inciting “domestic insurrections amongst us” further uncovers anxieties underlying the American Revolutionary project. Wunder argued the Declaration’s charge of Native American “‘insurrection’ against the United States before it existed” coupled with “violations of the international laws of warfare” articulated the United States’ expansionistic designs to acquire Indian lands. Further consideration of Congress’s program of neutrality, however, complicates Wunder’s interpretation. In 1775, Congress accreted power from its constituent colonies to make war and peace with Native American peoples. In claiming power to negotiate with Native Americans as *foreign* powers rather than *domestic* insurgents, the Congress took a major constitutional step toward becoming a truly national revolutionary government. Before the Declaration of Independence, Congress articulated national sovereignty vis-à-vis its external affairs with Native Americans; after the Declaration, Congress asserted its national authority in defense of the United States’ independence from Great Britain.⁵

⁴ Michael A. Prior, “Fabricating Colonial Myths,” in *Zionism and the State of Israel: A Moral Inquiry* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 175-80; John R. Wunder, “‘Merciless Indian Savages’ and the Declaration of Independence: Native Americans Translate the Ecuinnaunuxulgee Document,” *American Indian Law Review* 25, (2000/2001): 66.

⁵ Wunder, “‘Merciless Indian Savages’ and the Declaration of Independence: Native Americans Translate the Ecuinnaunuxulgee Document.” This clause may be sufficiently vague to deny the existence of slavery and capacious enough to express fear both African Americans and Native American resistance. Duncan MacCleod saw the connection between slavery and Native American lands, arguing that the Revolution enabled the “greatest ever territorial expansion of that institution.” Duncan J. MacCleod, *Slavery, Race, and the American Revolution* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 1. Likewise, British historian Simon Schama explored British policies of co-opting African-American slaves into their efforts to suppress rebellious American colonists in *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves and the American Revolution* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005). Schama forcefully argued that the American Revolutionary War was a war in defense of slavery. “Domestic insurrections” is a racial code word imbuing the American colonists with the right to “defend” themselves from the alien “Others” who also resided on North America.

From the seating of the First Continental Congress in 1774 to July 1776, Congress had transformed itself from an ad-hoc assembly of fractious colonial elites into a unified national legislature asserting boldly a national independency from Great Britain. Understanding this process—and the racial anxieties expressed in the Declaration of Independence—requires a narrative shift away from the thoroughly colonized east coast of the American Revolution to the contested western margins of the thirteen colonies. In doing so, the western borderlands become the site for American national state formation. “The inhabitants of our frontiers,” settlers, Native Americans, slaves, and free persons of color, were the main agents in this narrative. The birth of the new American Republic, proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence, necessitated the death of the British empire in North America. When the British empire lost its grip on the western frontiers in 1774, the rest of North America quickly followed. Through Native American diplomacy, the Continental Congress asserted its power as a national government in a western power vacuum.

Between 1763 and 1775, the intervening years between the Seven Years War and the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War, British North America was a racially partitioned space between Native Americans and Euro-American colonists. Pontiac’s War of 1763-1764, a massive Native American act of resistance to British authority in North America that ethno-historian Colin Calloway called the “Indian War of Independence,” forced British officials to reassess imperial Indian policy. To maintain a fragile peace, King George III issued a royal proclamation in October of 1763 delineating a vast Indian reserve to the west of the Appalachian Mountains and confined Euro-American settlements to the eastern side of the line. Enforcing the frontier peace proved costly. As historian Richard

White argued in *The Middle Ground*, “Indian policy had become a major concern for the British ministry in the 1760s and 1770s. Attempts to force the colonies to bear part of the costs of the North American military establishment not only failed, but in the Stamp Act Crisis, precipitated a major challenge to Imperial authority.” The closure of western lands to settlement also frustrated colonial land speculators. As Thomas Perkins Abernethy demonstrated in his seminal *Western Lands and the American Revolution*, intra-colonial factions jockeyed to profit from new western land development. British policy in the west animated colonial antipathies in the east.⁶

During these interwar years, one man dominated Indian relations in the contested North American interior: Sir William Johnson, “His Majesty’s Sole Agent for, and Superintendent of the Affairs of the Several Nations of Indians in the Northern District” reigned over a personal frontier empire covering a vast swath of territory north of the Ohio River. Johnson maintained the peace, managed affairs along the Proclamation Line, and knit the British ministry in London to its Native American “subjects” residing within the Crown’s North American dominions. Johnson’s charisma, his extraordinary influence among Native American peoples, his vast personal wealth, and extensive land holdings substituted for well-defined British institutions on the frontier.

As explored in Chapter One, Johnson’s sudden death in 1774 at the height of the imperial crisis in North America, unfettered previously contained revolutionary forces on the northern frontier. Lacking sturdy British institutions, new groups clamored for the pieces of

⁶ Colin Calloway, *Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 2006; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 320; Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *Western Lands and the American Revolution* (New York: Appleton Century Company, 1937).

Johnson's frontier empire. With the approbation of the Haudenosaunee, Guy Johnson, the nephew of the late William Johnson, assumed the role of Superintendent for Indian Affairs. Although Guy Johnson proved competent for managing Indian diplomacy, he failed to recognize revolutionary fervor on the New York frontier and fled amid the rising tide of war. Nor could he prevent the Royal Governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore, from staging an illegal military incursion across the Proclamation Line. At the point of a musket, Dunmore forced the Shawnee to cede their claims to the Kentucky territory. The composite British empire—a world where colonists coexisted with indigenous people under the benign patriarchy of the British King—died with William Johnson.

Amid the collapse of British authority on the frontier, the Haudenosaunee watched their favored status within the British empire ebb as well. They exploited the American Revolution to reassert their own sovereignty in their homeland and their hegemony over “conquered” peoples in the Upper Ohio Valley. Their ancient constitution, the Great Law, remained the only remaining legitimate forum for social and political interaction among the various native peoples, colonial, and imperial powers operating on the western side of the Proclamation Line. For the Shawnees, Lenni Lenapes, Wyandots, and other indigenous nations residing in the Ohio Valley contesting the full extent of the Great Law's jurisdiction, they too reasserted their own independence from Haudenosaunee domination.

Following the outbreak of open warfare between the colonies and Great Britain in 1775, the Second Continental Congress gradually evolved into an ad-hoc national revolutionary government. Indian diplomacy represented an early major milestone in the formation of an independent American nation. To this end, it was not coincidental that

Congress created a Department for Indian Affairs on the same day it appointed George Washington commander-in-chief of a new Continental Army. Through the Department of Indian Affairs, Congress projected its authority into the contested western borderlands as a new and sovereign power. Mere congressional fiat and revolutionary patriotism alone were not enough to legitimize new governmental power: the respective colonies and the culturally diverse, autonomous Native American nations would have to accept this new authority in principle and in practice. In the summer and fall of 1775, Congress secured some of that recognition through a series of treaties of neutrality with the western Indians.

Eminent Native American historian and legal scholar Vine Deloria Jr. argued that early Revolutionary War treaties between Congress and Indian nations warrant fresh attention in that they represent the United States' first efforts to "exercise its independence in wholly diplomatic terms." Through a cultural analysis of two major treaties, the Treaty of Albany and the Treaty of Fort Pitt, this thesis aims to fill a critical gap in the Native American history of the American Revolution. Collectively, these treaties represent a national dialectic between the "Old World"—a multi-national, multi-ethnic vision of North America where indigenous kinship networks, tradition, and spiritual spaces knit peoples together in an economy of reciprocal obligation—and the "New" republican world that men like Jefferson hoped to forge in the crucible of their revolution. Steeped in their "living histories," indigenous people inhabited a landscape saturated with what ethno-historian Calvin Martin refers to as "the primordial power of nature which seemed to pulsate throughout all creation." By contrast, the American colonists were preoccupied with a revolutionary project which, as intellectual historian William Goetzmann argued, aimed to

create “a completely new society dedicated to an ideology of brotherly individualism in which the rights to life, liberty, property, equality, and the pursuit of happiness were the axioms and postulates of man’s existence.” Diplomacy needed to transcend disparate epistemologies. This is the story of how a plurality of cultures—Native American and European—briefly transformed their contested borderlands into neutral grounds.⁷

Over the past three decades, frontier historians have themselves staged something of a historiographical revolution, bucking antiquated Turnerian notions of inevitable American westward expansion. Richard White offered the “Middle Ground” as a dominant paradigm for colonial and indigenous collaboration and cultural accommodation in spaces where neither could fully assert hegemony. James Merrell’s *Into the American Woods: Negotiations on the Pennsylvania Frontier* offered a darker interpretation of colonial borderlands as a domain of the culture broker who negotiated the dangerous terrain between native and colonial worlds. Cultural intercessors improvised, cajoled, and negotiated peace in this space, but their efforts were “plagued by ignorance and folly, fraud and mistrust, cupidity and arrogance; indeed, as time wore on, the interference got worse rather than better.” More recently, colonial frontiers have been defined as sites of isolation and racialized fear. Peter Silver’s *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* and Craig Thompson Friend’s *Kentucke’s Frontiers* relate narratives of settler colonists building a cohesive society animated by fear of the “savage” lurking on dark and bloody grounds.

⁷ Vine Deloria, Jr., *Documents of American Indian Diplomacy: Treaties, Agreements, and Conventions, 1775-1979* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 12; Calvin Martin, “The Metaphysics of Writing Indian-White History,” in *The American Indian and the Problem of History*, ed. Calvin Martin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 29; William Goetzmann, *Beyond the Revolution: A History of American Thought from Paine to Pragmatism* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 7.

Interior frontiers could also become international spaces. Alan Taylor's *Divided Ground* explores the racial and international tensions created by new imperial borders between the United States and Canada, which divided the formerly contiguous Haudenosaunee homeland.⁸

Social historians have surveyed frontier communities as composite landscapes of contested identities. John Christopher Guzzardo's social histories of William Johnson's New York excavate a space where Native Americans, Germans, Scots-Irish, Dutch, and English communities submerged their ethnic and racial antipathies beneath Johnson's benign patriarchy. Alan Taylor's *William Cooper's Town* illuminates the economic contest for lands and easy riches within this British imperial framework in the years immediately preceding the American Revolution. Linford Fisher's *The Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America* joins Guzzardo in considering the ideological battle between New England scions of the Great Awakening and stalwart Anglicans for Native American converts. These narratives reveal northern borderlands as sites for colonial competition for native land and native souls.⁹

Native American histories have recovered Haudenosaunee participation in Britain's composite Native-Euro American empire. Francis Jennings's *The Ambiguous Iroquois*

⁸ James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York: Norton & Company, 1999), 202; *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: Norton and Company, 2008); Craig Thompson Friend, *Kentucke's Frontiers* (Bloomington, IA: Indiana University Press, 2010); Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground* (New York: Alfred A Knoff, 2006).

⁹ John Christopher Guzzardo, "Sir William Johnson's Official Family: Patrons and Clients in an Anglo-American Empire, 1742-1777" (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse University, 1975); Alan Taylor, *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early Republic* (New York: Random House, 1995); John Christopher Guzzardo, "The Superintendent and the Ministers: the battle for Oneida allegiances, 1761 - 75," *New York History* 57 (July, 1976), 263 – 264; Linford D. Fisher, *The Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Empire demanded a paradigm shift in how historians approached “Iroquois Confederacy” by rejecting the “myth” of an interior North American “Iroquois Empire” and placing a new emphasis on the very real Covenant Chain treaties between the Iroquois and the English. Jennings argued that the English fabricated the myth of an “Iroquois Empire” as a vassal state to the English crown in order to substantiate their claims to the North America interior. Early ethnographers, such as Cadwallader Colden writing in 1721, promulgated this legal fiction as truth, and two centuries of historians perpetuated this “conquest theory” as historical fact. Jennings emphasized the Covenant Chain as a genuine multi-cultural confederation between the Five Nations and the British: colonial powers for their own purposes thrust the Iroquois role as spokesmen for “tributary tribes.” Jennings’s treatment of the diplomatic history between the Haudenosaunee and the European empires revealed a multifaceted cultural league where the Iroquois viewed the Covenant Chain as an “organization of peers, unequal in real power, but equal in responsibility.” This was how a British official like William Johnson could present the Iroquois League as a monolithic political entity at the imperial level while still engaging individual clans and headmen at ground level.¹⁰

Jennings spawned a complete literature of the Haudenosaunee entanglement with European Empire. Daniel Richter added critical cultural and socio-economic dimensions to the scholarship on the colonial history of the Iroquois. To that end, he considered the cultural

¹⁰ Cadwallader Colden, *The History of the Five Nations of Canada, which are Dependent on the Province of New York and are the Barrier Between the English and the French in that Part of the World* (London: T. Osborne at Grey’s Inn, 1747); Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire* (New York: WM Norton Company, 1984), 10, Jennings 18-19, 170-71, 374.

exchanges between the Iroquois and European empires from a native perspective in his *Ordeal of the Longhouse*. Relationships based on kinship and obligation within the tribal structure knit individuals to one another. Richter emphasized the importance of the freedom and individual agency of nations and clans among the Haudenosaunee, arguing that a “shared belief in the ideal of consensus and in spiritual power that comes from alliances with others” bound the league’s constituent nations to one another and later to European allies. Haudenosaunee politics emphasized consensus building and alliances based on this kinship structure to resolve the natural factionalism that arose as a by-product of this individual agency within a given band. In a scholarly homage to Jennings, Richter considered the “Ambiguous Iroquois Empire” as a system of alliances whereby the Haudenosaunee operated the primary cultural brokers between colonial governments and tributary Indian nations.¹¹

On the eve of the American Revolution, the Haudenosaunee were William Johnson’s lynchpin in maintaining what Richard White termed “the Middle Ground” in the Upper Ohio Valley. Gail MacLeitch plumbed the voluminous Johnson papers, untangling economic and cultural ties which bound imperial, colonial, and indigenous groups together in the years leading up to the revolution. Her volume, *Iroquois Change and Persistence on the Frontiers of Empire*, narrated internal transformation within Iroquoia during the Seven Years War. Likewise, Michael McConnell’s *The Upper Ohio Valley and its Peoples* centers on indigenous peoples’ relations with the various empires and colonies which laid claim to lands outside the Haudenosaunee homeland. His narrative, which concludes on the eve of the

¹¹ Daniel Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).45, 137.

American Revolutionary War, illuminates a Native American world already in revolution against British and Haudenosaunee pretensions to power in the region. The rising tide of Native American resistance combined with several colonies' militant policies of westward expansion locates the origins of the multigenerational war for the Upper Ohio region.¹²

Even the contours of Haudenosaunee neutrality remain disputed. Historical definitions of Native America neutrality have typically been embedded in European assumptions that neutrality meant “non-combatant” status. By this definition, Haudneasunee neutrality in the American Revolution collapsed in the summer of 1777 at the Battle of Oriskany. Indeed, Barbara Graymont and Alan Taylor considered the 1775 Treaty of Albany as a milestone on the road to fratricidal battle at Oriskany in 1777. Their scholarship circumscribes treaty negotiations within the broader narrative of military operations on the Northern frontier under the general assumption that native and colonial actors operated in a European framework of neutrality.¹³

In a liminal space like the revolutionary borderlands, a fixed definition of “neutrality” remains elusive. Joseph T. Glatthaar and James Kirby Martin argued that the Haudenosaunee oriented their definition of neutrality toward the freedom of individual warriors to engage either side of a conflict. Caitlin Fitz, likewise, claimed that the Haudnesaunee maintained overall neutrality through limited, factional partnerships with both

¹² Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 226-300; Gail D. MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements: Iroquois Change and Persistence on the Frontiers of Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 211; Michael McConnell, *The Upper Ohio Valley and its Peoples, 1724-1774* (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

¹³ Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 69-77; Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground* (New York: Alfred A Knoff, 2006), 81-85.

the British and the rebels. This historiography tends to take neutrality for granted; the scholarship considers the reasons for the collapse of neutrality without considering how the Haudenosaunee initially entered into a treaty of neutrality with the Continental Congress.¹⁴

The historiography of diplomacy in the Upper Ohio region remains contested ground. The story of the 1775 Treaty of Fort Pitt had been largely encapsulated in the military history of the western theater of the American Revolution. In *Fort Pitt and the Revolution on the Western Frontier*, Edward G. Williams examined the strategic importance of Indian neutrality on the trans-Allegany frontier as a larger frame for Euro-American military engagements during the war. Williams identified the military utility of negotiated neutrality on the frontier as it allowed the storied frontier warriors like Daniel Morgan and his frontier riflemen to fight British regulars during the more famous 1775 siege of Quebec. In his story of Fort Pitt and the frontier, Native Americans fulfilled the traditional role as the nameless scourge menacing the familiar white frontier “heroes” from the shadows of a howling North American wilderness. When Williams discussed Indian diplomacy at Fort Pitt, he marveled at the eloquence of the “untutored children of the forest.” He failed to consider why the Ohio Indians wanted neutrality, what they hoped to gain from treaty negotiations, and how they asserted their autonomy in the clash between Britain and the thirteen colonies.¹⁵

Writing thirty years after Williams, Walter S. Dunn updated the military and diplomatic narrative, giving Native Americans agency in the story of the Treaty of Fort Pitt.

¹⁴ Caitlin Fitz, “Suspected on Both Sides: Little Abraham, Iroquois Neutrality, and the American Revolution,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 28 (fall 2008): 300; Joseph T. Glatthaar and James Kirby Martin, *Forgotten Allies: The Oneida Indians and the American Revolution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 79.

¹⁵ Edward G. Williams, *Fort Pitt and the Revolution on the Western Frontier* (Pittsburgh: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1978), 58.

However, he limited that agency to questions of political identity: Native Americans had a choice of joining the American rebel cause or aiding the British. Like their Euro-American counterparts, men—it was always *men*—were Loyalists or Patriots, and questions of political identity fell into this binary classification. Native Americans played a supporting role in a Euro-American drama, falling neatly into these camps. His assertion that Native Americans chose sides based on how they could “derive the most benefit” from the warring Euro-Americans was a half-truth that relegated the Indians to the role of mercenaries in their own homeland.¹⁶

Newer Native American scholarship demonstrates that the factional complexity in the Upper Ohio defied the Patriot-Loyalist divide. Timothy Shannon’s survey of Native American diplomacy in *Iroquois Diplomacy on the Early American Frontier* examines how Haudenosaunee pretensions to power in the Upper Ohio region challenged older narratives that represent the indigenous inhabitants as static, unified, and generally pro-British. Shannon considered how the Ohio Indians, peoples whom the Six Nations regarded as subordinate, exploited the conflict between the thirteen colonies and Great Britain to assert their own independence from the Six Nations. Individual bands of Native Americans chose to fight or remain neutral for their own political, cultural, and economic reasons.¹⁷

Colin Calloway also challenged the “pro-American” and “pro-British” taxonomies that historians have applied to Indian nations in the American Revolution, arguing that the Shawnee on the Upper Ohio “struggled to survive in a tumultuous situation not of their

¹⁶ Walter S. Dunn, *Choosing Sides on the Frontier in the American Revolution*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 59, 142.

¹⁷ Timothy Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy on the Early American Frontier* (New York: Viking, 2008), 9-10.

making.” Calloway emphasized the factional complexities and external pressures that characterized Shawnee relations with Euro-Americans during the American Revolution. He also blurred the stark dividing line between “Indian” and “Euro-American” identity, asserting both Indians and whites constructed unique hybrid identities in these cultural contact zones. Both sides adapted material culture and modes of living from the other that did not compromise their Native and Euro-American cultural identity. Daniel Richter also recognized the clash of cultures and economics in *Facing East from Indian Country*, in which he argued that the American Revolution was a war of settler-colonialism in which American colonists sought liberty to remove Indians from western lands. Indians fought for more than mere trade goods and preferred status in a Euro-American empire; they fought for their survival.¹⁸

The lasting historical significance of the treaties endured beyond the neutrality, which collapsed in 1777. In taking responsibility for declaring war and peace with the western Indians, human impediments to Euro-American settlement, Congress effectively set itself on a trajectory to manage westward settlement in the postwar years. Historians like Malcolm Rohrbough, Reginald Horsman, and Andrew Cayton have argued for the central role of the federal government’s role in post-revolutionary westward expansion, but historians of the Early Republic have largely overlooked the process through which the national government assumed this role.¹⁹

¹⁸ Colin Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 158.

¹⁹ Malcom Rohrbough, *Trans-Appalachian Frontier: People, Societies, and Institutions 1775-1850*, 3rd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008); Stephen Aron, “Lessons in Conquest: Towards a Greater Western History,” *Pacific Historical Review* 63 (1994): 125-47; Reginald Horsman, “The Dimensions of an

The historiographical project of reconstructing the federal government's apparatus for westward expansion begins with a return to the political formation of the United States. Domestic insurrections—native and colonial—reached flashpoint in British North America in 1775. As insurgencies coalesced into liberation movements, cultural and racial partitions gave way to new national boundaries. Territorial acquisition and native dispossession as United States policy emerged out of the earliest articulations of American sovereignty, principally through the 1775 treaties of neutrality with indigenous people on the northern borderlands. The Continental Congress accomplished this in spite of Native American revitalization and independence movements, which only heightened indigenous antipathy toward the American colonists. Congress consolidated a national power in a revolutionary atmosphere where colonial legislatures jealously guarded their prerogatives.

When congressional leaders dispatched commissioners to the frontiers to negotiate treaties of neutrality with the Native Americans, nationhood, let alone domination of North America, remained an open question. The treaties of Albany and Fort Pitt were open ended expressions of sovereignty without a definite trajectory; they accommodated multiple visions of North America and a plurality of nations. Perhaps the reason why historians have demurred from giving these treaties the fresh attention Vine Deloria Jr. called for is that they were oral agreements between nebulously constituted political bodies. The United Colonies—the political forerunner to the United States—operated under an ad-hoc

'Empire for Liberty: Expansion and Republicanism, 1775-1825,' *Journal of the Early Republic* 9 (spring 1989): 1-20; Andrew R. Cayton, "Separate Interests" and the Nation-State: The Washington Administration and the Origins of Regionalism in the Trans-Appalachian West," *Journal of American History* 79 (June 1992): 39-67; idem, "'Noble Actors' upon 'the Theatre of Honor: Power and Civility in the Treaty of Greenville,'" in *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830*, ed. Andrew Cayton and Fredrika Teute (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 235-269.

revolutionary national government. Likewise, Native American cohesion rested on the ideals of consensus and mutual obligation rather than formal political constitution. These treaties, too long subsumed into the military historiography of the frontier, have yet to be properly understood as both national and cultural encounters. The story I tell considers the complex interplay of intellectual, political, interpersonal, and cultural forces at work on the borderlands during a watershed moment in North American history.

My story begins where most histories of the colonial borderlands have ended: with the death of William Johnson and the collapse of the British Empire in North America. Historian Timothy Shannon contended that, “despite his indisputable fame during his lifetime, Johnson has not cast a long shadow in American history.” I challenge this assertion by delineating the severed skeins of empire resulting from his 1774 death. Arguing that Johnson’s personal empire substituted for enduring British imperial institutions, the first chapter of this thesis explores how the northern borderlands’ cultural, political, and economic factions devolved into hostile camps in the absence of Johnson’s charismatic policy of personal Indian diplomacy. I contend that Johnson’s shadow loomed so large in the revolutionary imaginary as to spur the Continental Congress to centralize its powers for Indian affairs in order to fill the void he left behind.²⁰

My micro-histories of the 1775 Treaty of Albany and Treaty of Fort Pitt, chapters two and three respectively, unshackle these narratives from the dominant military historiography and contextualize them within the new borderlands literature of the last two decades.

²⁰ Timothy Shannon, “Dances with Beavers,” review of *White Savage: William Johnson and the Invention of America*, by Fintan O’Toole, *H-AmIndian*, *H-Net Reviews*, May, 2011.

Shannon and Alan Taylor's scholarship epitomize the explanatory power of micro-history for unraveling complex frontier narratives, particularly in cases where events on the periphery directly affected the centers of political power. Considered in this vein, the 1775 Treaty of Albany between the United Colonies and the Six Nations represented both the first diplomatic articulation of the United States as a unified, independent polity. In proclaiming "neutrality," the Haudenosaunee asserted themselves as a sovereign entity, wholly independent of Great Britain and the United Colonies. Finally, the exploration of the Treaty of Fort Pitt considers how "neutrality" afforded antagonistic Native American and colonial powers a forum for the performance of power that neither group could wholly express in the Upper Ohio Valley. The 1775 Treaty of Fort Pitt was a pageant of pretended power on the margins of ambiguous empires. Diplomacy contained the formation of a North American republic to the east bank of the Ohio River. Fear of a British-led Indian war compelled the colonies to cede the power of Indian diplomacy to the embryonic central government; it is a power the federal government has never relinquished. The 1775 treaties of neutrality contained the American Revolution—both the war and the political revolution—to the thirteen colonies and transformed an endemically violent frontier into a neutral space where sovereign American nations were free to pursue their own revolutionary projects.

Chapter One:

Pageants of Death

I must avail myself of Every thing at such a Juncture, which must require the utmost exertion of my influence &^{ca.}, at the same time I have the mortification to find my Schemes & endeavours for preserving or restoring the tranquility are frequently defeated by the gross Irregularities of our worst Enemies the Frontier Bandetti.”²¹

- Sir William Johnson, July 4, 1774.

Under a waxing July moon in 1774, the mournful “Kwa-ah! Kwa-ah! Kwa-ah!” of the Haudenosaunee “sad wail” pierced the balmy night air. From east to west along the Te-non-an-at-che—the river Europeans named “the Mohawk”—the traditional mourning wail conveyed devastating news: Warraghiyagey was dead. In his life, he had been the greatest Haudenosaunee chief; in his death, he left behind a personal empire that rivaled that of any man or nation in North America—an empire competing Europeans and Native Americans sought to inherit. The Haudenosaunee “sad wail”, “Kwa-ah” cried out three times, heralded the contest for Warraghiyagey’s former domains.²²

British officials understood that The Great Law—the Haudenosaunee oral constitution—required that a deceased chief’s kin dispatch runners bearing black wampum belts to outlying villages. Hoping to control the flow of news until they stabilized the

²¹ Sir William Johnson to General Thomas Gage, 4 July 1774, in *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Milton W. Hamilton, 14 vols. (Albany: State University of New York, 1921-1965), 12: 1116.

²² William Martin Beauchamp, *Aboriginal Place Names of New York* (Albany: New York State Department of Education, 1906), 92; Guy Johnson to General Gage, 12 July 1774, in Hamilton, ed., 12: 1122; Arthur C. Parker, trans., “The Constitution of the Five Nations,” *New York State Museum Bulletin* 184 (April 1916): 40. For a full biographical narrative on the death of Warraghiyagey (Sir William Johnson), see John Christopher Guzzardo, “Sir William Johnson’s Official Family: Patrons and Clients in an Anglo-American Empire, 1742-1777” (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse University, 1975), 296-98; James Thomas Flexner, *Lord of the Mohawks: A Biography of Sir William Johnson* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979) 332-48; Fintan O’Toole, *White Savage: William Johnson and the Invention of America* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 2002), 314-25.

situation, British Indian Affairs agents begged nearby Haudenosaunee chiefs for one more day to put Warraghiyagey's affairs in order before the black wampum and "sad wail" traveled to the villages beyond the Mohawk Valley. Yet, Warraghiyagey's influence among the Haudenosaunee transcended Britain's imperial power on the western margins of its North American empire. No civil authority—neither colonial nor indigenous—could contain the death wails from reverberating across Warraghiyagey's frontier empire and beyond.²³

Warraghiyagey had been a man of dual identities who held power by suturing the Haudenosaunee League to the British empire. To the Mohawks, who had elevated him to the post of great civil chief, he was Warraghiyagey. To the British ministers who used his English name, Sir William Johnson, he was "His Majesty's Sole Agent for, and Superintendent of the Affairs of the Several Nations of Indians in the Northern District." Johnson's death opened a power vacuum on the western fringes of Great Britain's North American empire. The traditional narratives of the American Revolution portray the British empire's collapse on North America as occurring from east to west, privileging events at Boston and Philadelphia over the so-called "back country." William Johnson's death and its effect on his diverse constituencies demonstrate a collapse that radiated outward from the empire's western margins toward the Atlantic. William Johnson's death did not cause the disintegration of the British empire on the northern frontier, neither did it hasten the coming of the American Revolutionary War in 1775. His death exposed the British empire's inability to govern its North American holdings, as its moribund institutions and alliances decayed into the void Johnson's absence left.

²³ Guy Johnson to General Gage, 12 July 1774; Parker, trans., "The Constitution of the Five Nations," 40.

A mile from Warraghiyagey/William Johnson's lifeless body, great white men of Great Britain's middle colonies supped in a village tavern. Among the colonial grandees visiting New York's northern frontier were New Jersey Royal Governor William Franklin, Philadelphia commercial magnate Robert Morris, and justices of the colony's circuit court. These men knew Johnson well as a friend and business partner. Franklin and Johnson had shared designs on founding their own proprietary colony in the Ohio country. Franklin's father, the renowned Dr. Benjamin Franklin, was in London lobbying the British Ministry on the venture's behalf. When a Mohawk messenger burst into the tavern announcing Warraghiyagey's death, Franklin's western business and political fortunes began to falter.²⁴

Within the great edifice of Johnson Hall, Sir William Johnson's Georgian mansion situated on the western edge of New York's colonial frontier, John Johnson's legitimate title to his father's baronetcy hinged on a gold ring. As a young man, the notoriously libidinous William had bedded John's mother, his Palatine German housekeeper Catherine Weisenberg. Although William had later claimed Catherine as his wife, he treated her more as a domestic

²⁴ William J. Stone, *The Life and Times of Sir William Johnson, Bart* (Albany: J. Munsell, 1865), 377-78; "Death of Sir William Johnson," 1774, in *American Archives Fourth Series*, ed. Peter Force, 9 vols. (1843; reprint, New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1972), 1: 645; Fredrick W. Ricord and William Nelson, eds., "Letter from Benjamin Franklin to Gov. Franklin, on American Affairs," 7 September 1774, in *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of New Jersey First Series*, 10 vols. (Newark, NJ: Daily Advertiser Printing House, 1886), 10: 494-95. For a discussion on Johnson and Franklin's western business ventures, see Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *Western Lands and the American Revolution* (New York: Appleton Century Company, 1937), 55-58; Alan Taylor, *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early Republic* (New York: Random House, 1995), 46-52.

Only circumstantial evidence exists within the documentary record to place William Franklin in Johnstown on the night of Sir William's death. William J. Stone's imperfect biography of Sir William Johnson recorded the story of a Mohawk runner informing circuit court justices dining in a nearby tavern of Sir William's death. Benjamin Franklin's September 7, 1774 letter to his son William noted that he had heard that the Governor was "with [Johnson] at the time." "Letter from Benjamin Franklin to Gov. Franklin, on American Affairs," 7 September 1774, in Ricord and Nelson, eds., 10: 494-95. Contemporary accounts list Franklin as among Johnson's pallbearers within forty-eight hours of his death. It is plausible that William Franklin could have been dining with the local elites near Johnson Hall on July 11, 1774, but this fact cannot be proven with any certainty.

servant and upon her death in 1759, buried her as a common housemaid. Moreover, he never produced any formal documentation substantiating their purported nuptials. William Johnson's will claimed Catherine as his wife, but only a gold wedding ring with the date 1739 inscribed upon it substantiated John Johnson's inheritance as the "Second Baronet of New York," rather than as William's bastard. For the sake of John's inheritance within the British patrimony, everyone in William Johnson's family had paid lip service at least to this fiction. The ring accompanied William's remains into the grave, and John could not be certain of his future as an aristocratic patriarch on Britain's North American frontier. So long as John gave a dignified performance as the worthy heir to Sir William Johnson, he might be able to sustain the fiction until the estate could be probated formally.²⁵

While "Sir John" secured his claim to his late father's domestic patriarchy inside Johnson Hall, his cousin Guy Johnson hurriedly worked to consolidate authority over the six hundred Indians camped outside the Georgian mansion. Until the moment of his death, William Johnson held exclusive rights to negotiate treaties, mediate conflicts, and distribute

²⁵ Stone, *The Life and Times of Sir William Johnson, Bart.*, 529; Recollection of G. Washington Frothingham, Fonda, NY, 1913, in Flick, ed., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 8:197; Guzzardo, "Sir William Johnson's Official Family," 326-30. For a discussion on Johnson's relationship with Catherine Weisenberg, see Milton W. Hamilton, *Sir William Johnson: Colonial American, 1715-1763* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1976), 34-36.

John Johnson's legitimacy remained a contentious point of debate for residents of the Mohawk Valley through the nineteenth century. When Charles Kellogg, the rector at St. John's Episcopal Church in Johnstown, NY, had William Johnson's remains disinterred for reburial in 1862, he unearthed the gold wedding band buried on the deceased's remains. Victorian historians cited the date inscribed in the ring as indefatigable proof of William Johnson's legitimate marriage to Catherine. Curators at Johnson Hall State Historic Site, where the ring currently resides, are more suspicious. The ring is well worn, but the inscription appears to be freshly cut with metallic shavings still clinging to its surface. This raises the possibility that Johnson's heirs may have made the inscription near the time of his death or a morally righteous hagiographer of the Victorian era tampered with the artifact. The open question of John Johnson's legitimacy underscores the lengths to which future generations took to willfully disremember Johnson's Mohawk progeny by his second wife, Molly Brant. Wanda Burch, former site manager at Johnson Hall State Historic Site, e-mail message to author, August 16, 2012; Wanda Burch, interview with author. Phone interview. Raleigh, NC, August 27, 2012.

wealth among the indigenous peoples living on British North America's northern frontier. For thousands of Indians living north of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi, Johnson embodied King George III "across the Great Water." He certainly wielded more real power in North America than the King or any of his royal governors scattered throughout his colonies along North America's eastern coast. The Mohawks had adopted him as a great civil chief, requickening him as "Warraghiyagey," literally "Chief of Great Business." Neither a great chief nor an energetic imperial official could be all places at once in the vast territory he superintended. At the time of his death, his nephew and son-in-law, Guy Johnson, was among the cadre of relatives who enjoyed the superintendent's patronage. The affable Guy Johnson served as William's deputy for Indian Affairs for over a decade, but in the wake of his supervisor's death, the corpulent Irish immigrant dared not presume he could speak authoritatively on the King's behalf. All Guy Johnson could do was plead with the grief stricken chiefs from the Six Nations of the Haudenosaunee—the Mohawks, Oneidas, Tuscaroras, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas— to "retire to their encampments, assuring them that he shou'd early in the morning give them more particular information."²⁶

The Oneida chief Kanaghquassea was among those who "assembled in the most apparent Confusion" upon learning of Warraghiyagey's death, hoping to ascertain if Guy

²⁶ "Proceedings of Sir William Johnson with the Indians," 11 July 1774, in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, ed. E.B. O'Callaghan, 16 vols. (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons, and Company, 1857), 8: 479. For a discussion on Sir William Johnson's influence among Native Americans at the time of his death, see Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderlands in the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A Knoff, 2006), 46-77; Colin Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1-26. The Requickening Rite is part of the mourning process where the old chief is "reborn" in the person a new chief who has been adopted to replace the deceased. For the Haudenosaunee ritual forms associated with the Requickening, see William Nelson Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse: A Political History of the Iroquois Confederacy* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 180-90.

Johnson could treat with them with the same imperial authority as the late superintendent. When Guy Johnson publically demurred, publically feigning deference to the King's prerogative to appoint a successor to his late uncle, the chiefs turned to their Great Law for guidance on how to proceed. For Kanaghquassea and other conservative civil chiefs who steadfastly promoted traditional practices over European forms of diplomacy and statecraft, the law was clear: when a great chief died, runners bearing black wampum belts must set out immediately to inform the other villages within the Six Nations' homeland and their settlements in the Ohio Valley. Although Warraghiyagey was of Irish extraction and served an English King, his adoption into the Mohawk kinship network required Haudenosaunee funerary and condolence rites be performed before the chiefs could resume formal diplomatic relations with the British empire. Although the hour was late, the chiefs wanted to dispatch runners immediately, as the Great Law dictated "runners shall travel day and night." Guy Johnson pleaded for more time, assuring them he would address them the following morning. The chiefs agreed to give Guy Johnson until the next morning.²⁷

William Johnson's death reordered the lives of more humble individuals than royal governors and Indian chiefs. In William Johnson's patriarchal world, Jenny was a domestic slave, a "negroe wench . . . the sister of Juba." William's death irrevocably thrust Jenny into the matriarchal power structure of the Haudenosaunee, albeit still on the bottom of the social strata. He willed Jenny to Degonwadonti who was not merely a clan mother of the Mohawk's Tortoise Clan, but was a clan mother of all clan mothers within the Six Nations of

²⁷ "Proceedings of Sir William Johnson with the Indians," 4: 478-480; Parker, trans., "The Constitution of the Five Nations," 40. For a discussion on "traditional" factions within the Oneida Nation, see Joseph T. Glatthaar and James Kirby Martin, *Forgotten Allies: The Oneida Indians and the American Revolution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 80-85.

the Haudenosaunee. In the matriarchal Haudenosaunee world, Degonwadonti wielded more power than her Euro-American counterparts in colonial New York's patriarchal society. She held property in her own right, which now included Jenny. Although Johnson's death meant that Jenny had a new owner, the two were not strangers. Degonwadonti had been her mistress at Johnson Hall for at least a decade, although Jenny likely referred to her by her English name: "Miss Molly" Brant.²⁸

After fifteen years of companionate marriage to William Johnson, Mary "Molly" Brant was a widow. Although the two shared a genuine love, their marriage allowed both of them to wield considerably more power and influence in both the patriarchal British imperial and the matriarchal Haudenosaunee spheres of influence: Sir William and "Miss Molly" were what twenty-first century political commentators colloquially refer to as a "power couple." When the sun rose above Johnson Hall on the morning of July 11, Molly Brant had presided over the grand estate, its servants, and slaves as its mistress; by sunset, she was nothing more than its "prudent & faithfull housekeeper." Brant's suddenly diminished role belied her status as the most powerful and influential figure among the Indians encamped on its grounds. British patriarchal laws of primogeniture required Brant to maintain the polite legal fiction as housekeeper so that John Johnson could inherit his father's estate and title. The

²⁸ "The Last Will and Testament of Sir William Johnson, in Hamilton, ed., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 12: 1070; William Johnson to Thomas Flood, 31 March 1766, in Flick, ed., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 5: 138; Katherine M.J. McKenna, "Mary Brant (Konwatsi'tsailenni Degonwadonti): 'Miss Molly,' Feminist Role Model or Mohawk Princess" in *The Human Tradition in the American Revolution*, ed. Nancy L. Rhoden and Ian K. Steele (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resource Imprint Inc., 2000), 183-201.

Great Law, in contrast, recognized Degonwadonti's spiritual power as the widow of a great chief and her political influence as clan mother.²⁹

Molly Brant's absence from Guy Johnson's official accounts of the hours and days following William's death testifies to her power. A word from a clan mother—especially one of Brant's power and influence—could have spared Guy Johnson from pleading with the chiefs to delay their transmission of the black mourning belts. In Guy Johnson's zeal to present himself to his superiors as William's only logical successor, he cast himself as the confident steward of Sir William Johnson's Indian diplomacy. If he needed to rely on William's widow to leverage her influence on his behalf, he kept those details out of his official reports. Molly Brant may have spent the night of July 11, 1774 wrangling recalcitrant chiefs to Guy Johnson's authority or mourning her husband's death with their small children in the luxurious confines of her private apartments in Johnson Hall. Molly wielded her power in the oral, matriarchal Haudenosaunee kinship structure; Guy and John Johnson needed to aggrandize themselves in the pen and ink world of the British imperial patriarchy in order to lay claim to their pieces of William Johnson's personal empire. Subsequently, Molly Brant's

²⁹ "The Last Will and Testament of Sir William Johnson," 12:1070. For a discussion on Molly Brant and gendered power on the northern frontier, see Gail Danvers, "Gendered Encounters, Warriors, Women, and William Johnson," *Journal of American Studies* 35 (October 2001): 200. For a complete narrative on Sir William Johnson's marriage to Molly Brant, see Lois M. Feister and Bonnie Pulis, "Molly Brant: Her Domestic and Political Roles in Eighteenth Century New York," in *Northeastern Indian Lives 1632-1816*, ed. Robert S. Grumet (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 295-306; Fintan O'Toole, "Miss Molly," in *White Savage: William Johnson and the Invention of America* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 2002), 169-78. For a twentieth-century portrait of how Mohawks represent Molly Brant's grief at William Johnson's death in their historical memory, see Patrick Barron, "Maurice Kenny's Tekonwatonti, Molly Brant: Poetic Memory and History," *MELUS* 25 (autumn-winter 2000): 31-64; Maurice Kenny, "Molly at His Death," in *Carving Hawk: New and Selected Poems* (Buffalo, NY: White Pine Press, 2000), 264.

activities on the night of her husband's death exist only in the domain of historical plausibility.³⁰

While William Johnson lived, Johnson Hall represented the site where American populations merged in a generally peaceful, productive cultural synthesis. African slaves, Haudenosaunee chiefs, German freeholders, Highland Scottish tenant farmers, and Anglo-Irish magnates transacted business and intermingled within the Johnson mansion. At first glance, Johnson Hall seemed to embody what historian Richard White has termed “the Middle Ground”—where the native world of villages and the European world of empire came together through cultural exchange and mutual obligation. Perhaps that paradigm held true while William lived, but the ensuing chaos and cultural conflict immediately following his death revealed the fragility of “middle grounds.” William Johnson created a space where individuals could mutate their cultural identities to suit their needs. Johnson himself had exemplified this in his dual personae of “Sir William” and “Warraghiyagey.” To William Franklin and the colonial land speculating elite, the superintendent was a shrewd businessman who leveraged his position in the British imperial hierarchy to enrich himself and his business associates. To Kanaghquassea and his fellow chiefs, Warraghiyagey had been an accomplished civil chief and legendary warrior who embodied the Great Law. The two worlds embodied within Johnson collided and imploded without his towering presence.³¹

³⁰ “Guy Johnson to General Gage,” Johnson Hall, Johnstown, NY, 12 July 1774, in Hamilton, ed., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 12: 1121-24.

³¹ For an overview of the hybrid culture at Johnson Hall, see Colin Calloway, *New Worlds For All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 130-32; Timothy J. Shannon, “Dressing for Success on the Mohawk Frontier: Hendrick, William Johnson and the Indian Fashion,” *William and Mary Quarterly 3rd*, 53 (Jan. 1996), 13-42. For a discussion on William Johnson and an erosion of the Middle Ground in British North America, see Richard White, *The Middle Ground*:

Molly Brant, Guy Johnson, and Jenny were among the first to have their lives shaken by William Johnson's death. Revolutionary historians have abused the metaphor "fault line" when discussing points of conflict between Great Britain and her American Colonies, but the analogy aptly describes the chain of events that Johnson's death set in motion. Faults—great dismemberments in the substrata of the earth buried by layers of ancient bedrock—announce their presence to an oblivious world above. From the epicenter at Johnson Hall, violent tremors radiated outward and destabilized Britain's fragile claims of authority over its Euro-American and Native American frontier subjects, reverberating in colonial capitals from Boston to Williamsburg and across the "Great Water" to the corridors of power in London. Strained networks of imperial power and authority collapsed, and a "revolutionary frontier" emerged along the political and cultural fault lines that Johnson's death reactivated. British colonial officials felt ground shaking beneath their feet, but failed to identify its source buried deep in layers of imperial bureaucracy, colonial rivalries, and racial antipathies.

Sometime on the morning on July 12, 1774, a harried Guy Johnson took stock of his situation. With the immediate chaos at Johnson Hall contained until after sunrise, he considered his "more digested" response to the larger regional crisis that his uncle's death had triggered. Days earlier, a large delegation of Haudenosaunee gathered en masse at Johnson Hall to conference with the superintendent and his deputies, hoping to prevent a rash of Anglo-Native violence on the Ohio borderlands from escalating into a general Indian war.

Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 339-45. For an overview on mutable cultural and racial identity on New York's frontier, see William B. Hart, "Black 'Go-Betweens' and the Mutability of 'Race,' Status, and Identity on New York's Pre-Revolutionary Frontier," in *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830*, ed. Andrew Cayton and Fredrika Teute (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 88-113.

William Johnson had opened the “Congress” with the Indians on July 11 and delivered a two-hour speech with the rhetorical gusto expected of a paramount chief in such diplomatic proceedings. The aging Johnson “overexerted himself,” however, and “Was taken Suddenly ill with a fainting and a sense of suffocation.” His hasty departure shocked and surprised Guy Johnson, who noted that his uncle had been in good health. For a generation, Warraghiyagey sustained the Covenant Chain of Friendship between Great Britain and the Six Nations by sheer will. It was now up to his nephew to avert a general Indian uprising on the margins of British North America.³²

Guy Johnson was familiar with the dispatches from the Ohio country, the plaintiff pleas for help from royal governors fearful of a massive Indian insurrection, and travellers’ reports that had flooded Johnson Hall since the spring telling of a worsening crisis along the Ohio River. For a decade, Virginian and Pennsylvanian frontiersmen had trickled westward into Indian country in defiance of the unenforceable British Proclamation of 1763. In February of 1774, Virginia’s Royal Governor John Murray, Lord Dunmore, flagrantly ignored imperial prohibitions against western settlement and began issuing land grants to veterans of the French and Indian War along the Upper Ohio River. Virginians streaming onto the frontier clashed with indigenous Shawnees, who militantly opposed further Euro-American encroachments westward. Simmering tensions between Virginians and Shawnees exploded on April 30, 1774 when a party of frontiersmen murdered a party of unarmed

³² “Proceedings of Sir William Johnson with the Indians,” 4: 478-80. Guy Johnson to General Gage, Johnson Hall, Johnstown, NY, 12 July 1774, in Hamilton, ed., in *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 12: 1121-24; For an overview on Haudenosaunee mediation between Ohio Indians and the British Empire, see Jon Parmenter, “The Iroquois and Native American Struggle for the Ohio Valley, 1754-1794,” in *The Sixty Years War for the Great Lakes*, ed. David Curtis Skaggs and Larry Nelson (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998), 105-24.

Mingo men, women, and children at what came to be remembered as the Yellow Creek Massacre. Mingos and Shawnees attacked Virginian settlements in retaliation and began organizing a general confederacy to drive the Virginians back across the Appalachian Mountains.³³

Guy Johnson rightly feared that his uncle's sudden death would drive malcontent but otherwise neutral Indian nations into the Shawnee confederacy. He resolved to act without official instructions from London, hoping to firmly establish himself as "His Majesty's Sole Agent for, and Superintendent of the Affairs" in the eyes of the Haudenosaunee encamped outside Johnson Hall. William Johnson had "owned" and maintained the council fire at Johnson Hall. Under the Great Law, his death had extinguished his fire. Diplomacy halted until the Indians performed the condolence ritual and selected another to replace Warraghiyagey. Technically, the Great Law forbade Guy Johnson from formally addressing the Indians in an official capacity until after they covered Warraghiyagey's grave in accordance to the condolence ritual, presenting something of a quandary for Johnson as the

³³ Peter Force, ed., "Letter from Governor Penn to Sir William Johnson," 28 June 1774, in *American Archives Fourth Series*, 4 vols. (Washington: M St. Clare Clark and Peter Force, 1843; reprint New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1972), 1:641; Peter Force, ed., "Extract of a Journal of the *United Brethren's Mission on Muskingum*, from February 21 to May 20, 1774," in *American Archives Fourth Series* 1: 283-284; Sir William Johnson to General Gage, 4 July, 1774, 12: 1121-24; "Proceedings of Sir William Johnson with the Indians," 11 July 1774, 4: 478-80; For eyewitness accounts of the Yellow Creek Massacre, see *A Documentary History of Dunmore's War: Compiled from the Draper Manuscripts in the Library of the Wisconsin Historical Society* (Madison: 1901; reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: CJ Carrier Company, 1974), 9-19. For a description of Virginian violence against Ohio Indians, see Daniel Richter, *Facing Eastward from Indian Country* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 212-213; Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *Western Lands and the American Revolution* (New York: Appleton Century Company, 1937), 108-10. For a discussion on a Shawnee confederacy to resist white encroachments, see Colin Calloway, *The Shawnees and the War for America* (New York: The Penguin Group, 2007), 22-43.

Great Law also required the chiefs to send runners to announce the news—news that Johnson desperately needed to control.³⁴

Johnson also wanted to impress the British Ministry in order to formally secure his position as superintendent. A summary letter to General Thomas Gage, the Commander-in-Chief of British military forces in North America, sufficed. Gage was only five days hard ride away in Boston, trying to reestablish His Majesty's authority in the rebellious Yankee port. This was all slightly irregular, but Johnson sought to act in a manner that was in the best interests of the British empire, but also conformed to the Haudenosaunee Great Law. He hoped the chiefs and General Gage understood the exigencies of frontier peace required him to bend the rules slightly.³⁵

When Johnson addressed the chiefs the following morning, he stressed how the lapse in protocol was out of deference to them. "As it is not conformable to your customs that those who have suffered a great loss should speak first, I should have declined addressing you 'till after the Ceremony of Condolence," Johnson began, "did you not express so strong a desire to send extraordinary messages through the Nations of the late melancholy accident." As a breach in the ritual forms risked undermining diplomacy with the Indians, Johnson took no chances and reminded the chiefs that he bent custom out of courtesy to them. The acting superintendent proceeded to assure the chiefs that it had been his uncle's wish that Guy succeed him, projecting confidence and demonstrating a fluency in Haudenosaunee ritual forms to assure the chiefs that he was worthy to succeed the departed Warraghiyagey: "I trust

³⁴ Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse*, 570-72.

³⁵ Guy Johnson to General Gage, 12 July 1774, 1121-24.

that the *Great Spirit* will give me strength, and wisdom to conduct those important matters in some measure corresponding to [Warraghiyagey's] great example." Rather than insist the imperial business continue, Guy Johnson appealed to traditional Haudenosaunee values of consensus and collaboration in statecraft. He expressed his desire to work in partnership with the Six Nations; he did not dictate His Majesty's expectations like a highhanded imperial ambassador. "Send these words thro' the Nations," Johnson concluded, "the [council] fire still burns and the *Road* is open to this place."³⁶

So too was the road open away from Johnson Hall. Within twenty-four hours of William Johnson's death, the shockwave of his death radiated at the speed of runners' moccasins and horses' hooves. Indeed, the detailed map of frontier roads and Indian paths through the Haudenosaunee homeland, which Guy Johnson had prepared for the Governor of New York in 1771, visually represented both the dormant and active fault lines that William Johnson's death had activated on the northern borderlands and beyond. Settlements of German freeholders, Dutch fur traders, Mohawk "castles," and Scottish Highland tenant farmers dotted the plank road running east from Johnson Hall along the Mohawk River. To the west, past the imaginary Proclamation Line of 1768 separating British North America from the "Indian Reserve," a tangled network of ancient paths, British forts, and navigable waterways knit 200,000 Native Americans living in scattered villages. News of

³⁶ "Proceedings of Sir William Johnson with the Indians," 11 July 1774, 4: 479. For the importance of consensus and strict adherence to the Great Law in Haudenosaunee society, see Richter, *Facing Eastward from Indian Country* 135-37.

Warraghiyagey's death sped along these trade and transit networks, inflaming active and dormant cultural, ethnic, political, religious, and commercial tensions.³⁷

Down the plank road from Johnson Hall and east along the north bank of the Mohawk River, past the Mohawk towns of Canajoharie and Tionondorage, an express rider raced toward Boston bearing the news to General Gage. The rider carried a letter thick in Guy Johnson's self-serving language, implying that he was the only man on the continent worthy of succeeding his uncle. To avoid any imperial intrigues by others looking to poach the lucrative position from under his feet, he enclosed a copy of an April 1774 letter from his uncle to General Gage strongly endorsing Guy as next in line as superintendent. Other ambitious courtiers in the empire claimed the requisite aristocratic, "gentlemanly" bona fides to stake a claim to William's Indian Affairs fiefdom: Guy Johnson parlayed his tenure as deputy and blood relation in order to convince Gage that he alone possessed the influence and ethnographic expertise to keep the Indians loyal to His Majesty.³⁸

For the embattled General Gage in Boston, he needed all the loyal supporters he could rally. He arrived in April to suppress a very different "Indian" insurgency against British authority. In December 1773, Bostonian radicals—some of whom donned disguises as Mohawk Indians—boarded ships in the harbor and destroyed three hundred chests of tea in protest of Parliament's Tea Act. Parliament responded with the Coercive Acts, a legislative package aimed at subduing the rebellious Massachusetts Bay Colony. In addition

³⁷ "To His Excellency William Tryon Esq., Captain General & Governor in Chief of the Province of New-York. This Map of the Country of the (Six) Nations Proper, with part of the Adjacent Colonies is humbly inscribed by his Excellency's Most Obedient humble Servant Guy Johnson 1771," in O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 4: 1090.

³⁸ Guy Johnson to General Gage, 12 July 1774, 4: 1121-1124.

to concerning himself with frontier defense, Gage was now the colony's military governor and in command of an occupational force tasked with suppressing the growing insurrection. By the summer of 1774, the countryside around Boston had become so militarily volatile that Gage and his troops effectively confined themselves to the city. For Guy Johnson, this meant Gage could ill afford to spare soldiers to suppress a western Indian uprising: diplomacy must prevail.³⁹

Johnson's express rider covered two hundred miles in four days and delivered the news to Gage on the night of July 16, 1774. The letter stunned the besieged the Commander-in-Chief who expressed his sincere lamentation in a short reply to confirming Guy Johnson's authority to act as Superintendent for Indian Affairs until Gage heard otherwise from London. Publically, the General fully supported Guy Johnson. Privately, Gage wondered if the younger man was up to the enormous task and expressed doubts in a candid dispatch to the Earl of Dartmouth, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for North America and Gage's immediate superior in London. Gage lamented William Johnson's death as "a heavy loss at this Juncture," confessing his belief that the late baronet was the only man in North America capable of keeping peace on the Native American borderlands, fearing that "we might expect every Tribe would rise upon us, and I can only attribute it to Sir William Johnsons Influence over the Nations, and his skill in managing them, that any have been restrained from taking Revenge." Gage and his contingent of redcoats found themselves

³⁹ For a discussion on General Gage's response to insurrection in New England, see Timothy Breen, *American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 76-99; A.J. Langguth, *Patriots: The Men Who Started the American Revolution* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1988), 188-204. For a summary description of the Boston Tea Party and American collective memory, see Jill Lepore, *The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party's Revolution and the Battle Over American History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

trapped between insurgent Yankees in New England and growing Native American resistance to British authority in the West. Gage understood William's loss drew the pincers of a two-front insurrection closer, and the General had not the troops or resources to prevent it.⁴⁰

In the five days that it took Johnson's express rider to arrive at Gage's headquarters, news of William's death travelled eastward along the Mohawk River where it reached the Anglo-Dutch inhabitants of Albany, just south of the confluence of the Mohawk and the Hudson rivers. As Johnson's express rider traversed the Berkshires, a presumably radical inhabitant of Albany forwarded the news down the Hudson to New York's Committee of Correspondence in New York City. By July 16, a Philadelphia newspaper confirmed that New York's proto-revolutionary assembly circulated the news of Johnson's death to its network of correspondents.⁴¹

Boston and New York Committees of correspondence disseminated news of William Johnson's death to newspapers in colonial capitals from Philadelphia to Williamsburg; elevating Johnson's funeral from a localized homage to a fallen frontier patriarch into a continental pageant of imperial unity. A New York newspaper visually represented Johnson's funeral procession, transforming the corpse into a prop in imperial political theater. The engraving represents Johnson's coffin with two crossed swords embossed on the coffin lid, alluding to his military service to the British empire during the Seven Years War. Other obituaries featured written accounts of Johnson's martial exploits, but Hugh Gaine, the Tory

⁴⁰ General Gage to Guy Johnson, 17 July 1774, in Flick, ed., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 13: 637; General Gage to the Earl of Dartmouth, 18 July 1774, in Flick, ed., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 8: 1185.

⁴¹ "July 18 Letter from the New York Committee of Correspondence," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 20 July 1774.

editor of the *New York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury*, omitted these details in favor of a graphic representation of imperial power in the form of the crossed swords. Johnson's imperial heraldry, rich in the martial imagery of the British aristocracy, conspicuously lacked crossed swords, suggesting Gaine made an editorial decision to use Johnson's coffin as a visual projection of British authority.⁴²

The newspaper's graphical presentation of the funeral cortege emphasized Johnson's as an imperial official rather than a local patriarch. Purely textual renderings of Johnson's funeral procession matter-of-factly listed Johnson's mourners in order of importance. In the pictorial representation, the large coffin emblazoned with symbols of British power flanked with colonial magnates unambiguously overshadows the clergy, the chief mourners, and the family. Two thousand mourners processed behind Johnson's mahogany coffin. From Johnson Hall down to St. John's Anglican Church, ordinary people participated in rather than passively observed the imperial spectacle on the relatively less populated northern borderlands. Gaine tucked this fact in the bottom of the obituary, instead barraging his urban readers with oversized symbols of a distant empire.⁴³

Gaine's representation of Johnson's funeral procession also conveyed a sense of how the corpse had the power to unite political adversaries momentarily in the pageantry of empire. Even as William Johnson's death severed the commercial bonds of Whig and Tory elites, who had been in common business partnership with William Johnson for acquiring western lands. The men who carried Johnson's coffin were political enemies with common

⁴² August 1, 1774, *New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury*.

⁴³ "Death of Sir William Johnson," 1774, in Peter Force, ed., *American Archives Fourth Series*, 1:348; August 1, 1774, *New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury*.

cause. Within twenty-four hours of Johnson's funeral, New York merchant and land speculator Phillip Livingston received nomination from the New York Committee of Correspondence to participate in a Continental Congress scheduled to meet in Philadelphia in September; Governor William Franklin, who walked three places behind Livingston, actively worked to suppress the coming Congress. Major William Edmeston possessed a massive land tract in the Otsego country, which abutted a tract William Franklin had recently won in a lawsuit against George Croghan, former deputy to William Johnson. Robert Morris, who would go on to become the "financier of the Revolution," owned land grants to the south of Franklin. Goldsbroow Banyar made his fortune patenting Indian lands for William Johnson's friends. Indeed, the configuration of Sir William Johnson's funeral procession bears a striking resemblance to a map of Otsego land patents. The newspaper depicted the Mohawks processing behind the casket, following a cadre of land speculators who sought to acquire ancestral Haudenosaunee lands.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ "Death of Sir William Johnson," 1:644.; "The Corpse of Sir William Johnson," August 1, 1774, *New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury*; "Minutes of the New York Committee of Correspondence," 14 July 1774, in Force, ed., 1: 348. For Otsego Land Patentees, see Taylor, *William Cooper's Town*, 46-51.

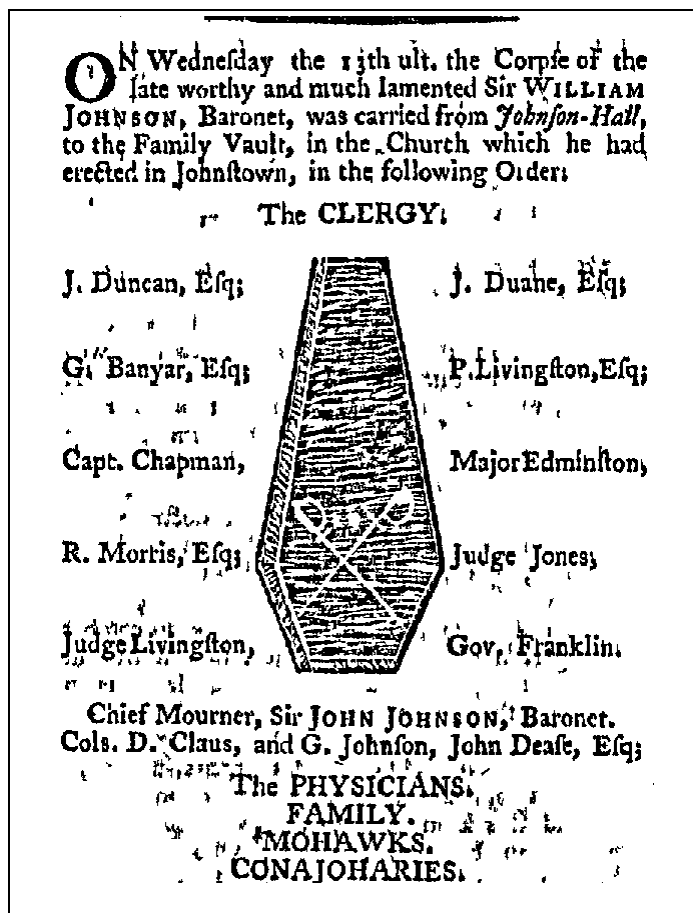


Figure 1.1: A pictorial representation of William Johnson's funeral cortege. New York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury (1 August, 1774).

The engraving of William Johnson's imperial funeral conveyed a sense of how adherents to the British imperial project in North America—men like Hugh Gaine—imagined themselves in an idealized empire. The oversized casket held aloft by the “great men” of the realm overshadowed the people on the margins of the imperial procession that marked other fractures in British North American solidarity. For example, “THE CLERGY” leading the cortege conveyed British institutional unity in the guise of the Church of England on its western periphery. The lone clergyman, the Reverend John Stuart, in fact divided his

time between his ministry to the Mohawks and his parsonage at St. John's Anglican Church. Johnson personally financed the construction of the Anglican churches where Stuart preached and held at bay the flood New England dissenting ministers who threatened to undermine the Church of England's tenuous hold on Native and Euro-American souls in the Mohawk Valley. Johnson's patronage permitted Stuart to preach the gospel of empire on the northern frontier. Seditious scions of regicidal New England Puritans had no place in Johnson's imperial funeral.⁴⁵

Even from his geographical remove from Johnson Hall, Gaine was himself integrally intertwined in William Johnson's frontier empire. The Mohawks and other Haudnesaunee marching in the funeral procession had received religious instruction from four hundred Indian prayer books printed at Gaine's New York press at Johnson's expense. To the tenant farmers who came to pay respects to the late patriarchs, some of them certainly came following lands for lease Johnson advertised in Gaine's *New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury*. Moreover, Gaine also helped satiated William Johnson's voracious appetite for news from Great Britain. Not only was the late Johnson a reader of Gaine's paper, but the superintendent employed Gaine as an agent to secure the latest books and periodicals from across the Atlantic. For Johnson, Gaine's press was an instrument through which he sought to transform the religious and demographic composition of his world into a thoroughly Anglicized constituency of the British Empire. Through Johnson's patronage, Gaine's press bound the frontier's commercial and intellectual ties to the British imperial

⁴⁵ Guzzardo, "Sir William Johnson's Official Family," 227-30.

center. Johnson's death not only cost Gaine the loss of a high profile customer, but weakened the northern borderlands' tether to the British ideological metropole.⁴⁶

Gaine's engraving conveyed British values as they *ought to be*, not as they actually were on the Northern borderlands. The depiction reinforced British constructions of patriarchy and primogeniture—an idealized performance. William Johnson's two marriages yielded ten surviving children, yet only Sir John Johnson, the new patriarch of Johnson Hall, appeared by name in any of Johnson's obituaries. The newspaper accounts politely omitted whether Degonwadonti and her young, mixed race children processed with the "FAMILY" or behind them with the "CANAJOHARIES." The newspapers single out the Canajoharie from among the other Mohawks processing behind Johnson. Canajoharie, where Degonwadonti owned a stone farmhouse and lands, was a thoroughly Anglicized Mohawk settlement with neatly laid out streets, stone houses, and the white clapboard Anglican Church which Johnson financed and outfitted with the a majestic steeple and bell. Canajoharie, a success story in Britain's "civilizing" influence on North American's "savages," featured prominently in Imperial representations of Johnson's funeral; his mixed race family remained elusive. The less "civilized" Native Americans marched at the back of the procession.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ William Johnson to Hugh Gaine, 8 September 1768, in O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 4: 387; Hugh Gaine to William Johnson, 8 September 1768, in O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 4: 397; Hugh Gaine to William Johnson, 21 August 1769, in O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 4: 416; Hugh Gaine to William Johnson, 24 December 1770, in Flick, ed., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 7:1047-1048; Hugh Gaine to William Johnson, 28 July 1772, in Hamilton, ed., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 12: 977; Hugh Wallace to William Johnson, 16 August 1773, in Flick, ed., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 7:1047-1048.

⁴⁷ "The Corpse of Sir William Johnson" August 1, 1774. *New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury*; For an overview of how Johnson patronized the Canajoharie village, see Lois M. Huey and Bonnie Pulis, *Molly Brant: A Legacy of Her Own* (Youngstown, NY: Old Fort Niagara Association, 1997), 13-25; for a history of William

No Anglo-Americans carried accounts of Warraghiyagey's funeral. Johnson's Euro-American peers—colonial land speculating grandees—committed his earthy remains to an elaborate vault prominently located beneath the chancel of St. John's Anglican Church on July 13, 1774. Warraghiyagey's Native American peers, the great chiefs of the Six Nations, covered their fallen brother's grave on July 14. The colonial elites attended the Haudenosaunee funeral as passive spectators. In William Johnson's imperial funeral, his eldest son John bore sole honor as his father's chief mourner. The Haudenosaunee mourned collectively. The Mohawks had adopted Johnson as a chief; under the Great Law, responsibility for condoling the Mohawks' loss fell to their "clear-minded" brothers from the junior moiety, the Oneidas, to ritually clear the tears from their eyes. After the ceremonies, which could take up to seven hours to perform properly, Oneida Chief Kanaghquassea delivered formal remarks addressed to Guy Johnson reaffirming that tradition redeemed life in the wake of bereavement: "It yields us vast pleasure to find that the *Fire* which was in danger of being totally extinguished by the great loss we have sustained is for the present rendered bright by you." Death and diplomacy served the same function in the Great Law. They were opportunities re-affirm kinship ties and to purify relationships. Kanaghquassea exhorted Guy Johnson to "send these words to the Great King," and the aspiring superintendent obliged by tucking a digest of the ceremony in his formal report to the British ministry; Native American eulogies for William Johnson did not appear in any of the London newspapers that King George III read.⁴⁸

Johnson's patronage of the Indian Castle Church at Canajoharie, see Wayne Lenig, "Archaeology, Education and The Indian Castle Church," *The Bulletin and Journal of Archeology for New York State* 69 (1977): 42-51.

⁴⁸ "Proceedings of Sir William Johnson with the Indians," 11 July 1774, 4:478-480; Fenton, *The Great Law and*

When the news broke in Philadelphia on July 20, another Mohawk learned that he had inherited—or re-inherited—a tract of his people’s ancestral lands. Fourteen-year-old Peter Johnson was William’s eldest son with Degonwadonti and had been working as an apprentice to a Philadelphia merchant when news of his father’s death appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. No evidence survived if Guy Johnson or the new “Sir” John Johnson dispatched an express rider to Peter, so Peter may have learned along with the rest of Philadelphia. William had made provision for his eldest son in his will, bequeathing him sizable tracts of land along the Mohawk River acquired from Peter’s Mohawk relatives. The young man inherited a house and lands in the German Flatts, so named for the number of German survivors of British labor camps who had settled the region. His next-door neighbor was Nicholas Herkimer, an organizer of the Tryon Committee of Safety within a month of William’s death. Peter Johnson’s patrilineal inheritance rendered the youth an Anglo-Mohawk-Tory landholder in a swath of country populated by farmers and traders who harbored generational hatred for the British and racialized suspicions of the Haudenosaunee. They had remained placid while William Johnson lived, but the younger Johnson commanded no such loyalty.⁴⁹

the Longhouse, 570-72. For a history of Haudenosaunee funeral rites, see Denis Foley, “Iroquois Mourning and Condolence Installation Rituals: A Pattern of Social Integration and Continuity,” in *Preserving Tradition and Understanding the Past: Papers from the Conference on Iroquois Research, 2001–2005*, ed. Christine Sternberg Patrick (Albany: University of the State of New York, 2010), 25-34.

⁴⁹ Milton W. Hamilton, ed., “The Last Will and Testament of Sir William Johnson,” 12: 1070; Jacob Snell to William Johnson, 12 January, 1763, in Flick, ed., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 4:12; Anita J. Morgan, “Questions of Land Ownership in Colonial New York: The Case of Eve Pickard,” *New York History* 91 (Winter 2010): 5-23; “July 18 Letter from the New York Committee of Correspondence,” *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 20 July, 1774. For a survey of the ethnic and political tensions that underlay settlements in the Mohawk Valley, see Guzzardo, “Sir William Johnson’s Official Family: Patrons and Clients in an Anglo-American Empire.”

Peter Johnson embodied the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural world that William Johnson had knit together at Johnson Hall, a world rapidly unraveling by the day. Through his mother's matrilineal pedigree, he was fully Mohawk under the Great Law and eligible to rise to a chiefdom in his own right. Through his father, he was a well-connected, aristocratic aspiring gentleman in Great Britain's commercial empire. A portrait by an unknown artists, of which only an 1830 copy exists, depicts him as an English gentleman proudly wearing the epilates and scarlet tunic of a British officer, but his tawny Mohawk skin peeked out like a penumbra between his grand white periwig and the white powder liberally applied to his face. He had been briefly educated in Reverend Eleazar Wheelock's School for Indians in Lebanon, Connecticut, where the scion of the Great Awakening dubbed five-year-old Peter "a fine genius indeed." Of course, Wheelock needed to write nice things about Peter: his mother, Degonwadonti, disliked Wheelock and pulled her brother out of Wheelock's school after the Reverend emasculated the Mohawk youth by requiring him to perform agricultural work. By 1767, Peter attended a school closer to home in Albany. Although William Johnson anglicized his son, the boy maintained his Mohawk identity. Perhaps conscious of his own exoticness during his 1774 apprenticeship in Philadelphia, he wrote his mother to send him "Some Indian Curiousitys as there are Gentlemen and Ladies here very desirous of Seeing them." In the same letter, he asked his father to send him a book printed in the Mohawk language, "for I am afraid I'll lose my Indian Tongue If I don't practice it more than I do."⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Eleazar Wheelock to William Johnson in Hamilton, ed., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 11:102; "Wheelock to William Johnson," 3 May, 1763, in O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History*

Peter Johnson's world collided with the nascent American Revolution before his father's death. In his last letter to his father, he reported that business at the mercantile firm to which he had been apprenticed ostensibly shut down as Philadelphia merchants boycotted British imports in protest of the Boston Port closure. His father's obituary appeared in *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, it appeared alongside announcements from the Boston and New York Committees of Correspondences declaring delegates to the upcoming Continental Congress. Closer to Peter Johnson's family business of Indian Affairs, the following week's edition printed a July 14 report on Virginia Governor Lord Dunmore who, "in order *to* take a view of the situation of the frontiers of this colony. It seems *his Lordship intends to settle* matters amicably with the Indians, if possible, and purposes *to* have conferences with the different nations, *to* find out the cause of the late disturbances." Dunmore pledged peace and promised to defuse the frontier crisis that Peter Johnson's father had sought to avert. No records survive detailing when Peter returned to Johnson Hall following his father's death or if he carried news of Dunmore's non-military intentions.⁵¹

Back on the northern borderlands, Haudenosaunee runners carrying black wampum belts and crying the "sad wail" hastened westward from Johnson Hall. The news raced past Peter Johnson's tracts, past the western terminus of the Mohawk River, and on to the "carrying place," a strategic commercial portage between the Mohawk River and Oneida Lake guarded by the decaying hulk of the recently abandoned Fort Stanwix. Just six years

of the State of New York, 4: 330-332; Alexander Flick, ed.; Peter Johnson to William Johnson, 30 April 1774, in Flick, ed., 8: 1139-1140.

⁵¹ General Gage to the Earl of Dartmouth, Boston, 18 July 1774, in Flick, ed., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 8: 1185; "July 18 Letter from the New York Committee of Correspondence;" "July 11 Letter from the Boston of Correspondence," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 20 July, 1774; "From Williamsburg, July 14" *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 27 July 1774.

earlier, William Johnson and the Six Nations had negotiated a treaty fixing the 1763 Proclamation Line on that spot. Claiming the right to speak for the Shawnees and Lenni Lenapes by right of conquest, the Six Nations ceded those nations' ancestral Kentucky hunting grounds to the British empire for settlement. The 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix incurred both Anglo-American and Native American outrage. William Johnson frustrated colonial expansionist designs by not acquiring enough land, and he enraged the Shawnees who refused to cede their homeland under the terms of the settlement. The uneasy agreement at Fort Stanwix lay at the heart of the mounting Indian resistance in Upper Ohio country that Guy Johnson desperately sought to defuse.⁵²

Within two days of the runners' departure from Johnson Hall, the grim news penetrated the "Indian Reserve," arriving at Chief Kanaghquassea's village at Old Oneida. The Oneida settlement represented a bastion for "traditionalists" like Kanaghquassea who resisted European religion, customs, and agricultural practices. Kanaghquassea himself was already at Johnson Hall to meet with the superintendent to find a solution to the mounting unrest in the Ohio country. His status as a leading traditionalist civil chief derived from a simmering from a power struggle within all six Haudenosaunee nations. Militarized war chiefs had supplanted the matrons and civil chiefs as the active leaders, declaring power

⁵² "To His Excellency William Tryon Esq., Captain General & Governor in Chief of the Province of New-York. This Map of the Country of the (Six) Nations Proper, with part of the Adjacent Colonies is humbly inscribed by his Excellency's Most Obedient humble Servant Guy Johnson 1771," in O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 4: 1090; For an overview of the tensions caused by the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, see Craig Thompson Friend, *Kentucke's Frontiers* (Bloomington, IA: Indiana University Press, 2010), 48-55; Colin Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 99-102; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 339-45. For Sir William Johnson's role in the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, see Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse*, 535-40.

through their ability to supply captives, pelts, and other necessities for economic and political survival. Looking maintain the traditional balance of power within his own village of Oneida, traditionalists rallied around Kanaghquassea who not only resisted European commerce, but actively rebuffed the Christian religion. In fact, Anglican and dissenting missionaries had visited his village in search of converts. Christianity had yet to take hold in any substantial way, in contrast to other Oneida settlements.⁵³

The Great Law reigned supreme at Old Oneida, and fittingly, Kanaghquassea performed the traditional condolence ritual, covering Warraghiyagey's grave and wiping the tears from Guy Johnson's eyes. As talks between Johnson and the Chiefs resumed, Kanaghquassea was among the hereditary chiefs who pledged to keep the Six Nations out of the Shawnees' resistance movement, but it was only a pledge. Closer to his home in Old Oneida, Kanaghquassea lamented his inability to control his restive "young men" and war chiefs who depended on warfare for their livelihood and status.⁵⁴

A half a day's travel from Old Oneida, Reverend Samuel Kirkland heard the "sad wail" cried aloud from a Haudenosaunee runner who brought the news of Warraghiyagey's death to the Oneida village of Kanonwalohale on July 15, 1774. Like Peter Johnson, Kirkland was an alumnus of Wheelock's school and preached to the Six Nations for most of his adult life, first as a missionary to the Seneca in 1765 and then to the Oneidas. The New Light Presbyterian minister had lived among the Oneidas for a decade, mastering their language and becoming an influential benefactor to his Oneida converts. Kirkland carried

⁵³ Glatthaar and Martin, *Forgotten Allies*, 31.

⁵⁴ "Proceedings of Sir William Johnson with the Indians," 11 July 1774, 4: 480-82; Walter Pilkington, ed., *The Journals of Samuel Kirkland: 18th Century Missionary to the Iroquois, Government Agent, Father of Hamilton College* (Clinton, NY: Hamilton College, 1980), 95.

New England's Great Awakening to the Oneidas, preaching a dissenting gospel fundamentally opposed to the institutional Anglican orthodoxy that William Johnson promoted among the Mohawks to the east and which underlay the plantation hierarchy Johnson had built at Johnson Hall. From his pulpit, he preached against the chattel slavery practiced at Johnson Hall and worked to export New England's regime of strict Calvinist piety, education, and industriousness to his Oneida converts. Kirkland positioned his mission at Kanonwalohale as a Yankee counterweight to Johnson Hall's British manorial society.⁵⁵

Kanonwalohale's white clapboard church, where Kirkland eulogized the late William Johnson on July 17, 1774, starkly represented New England's colonial encroachments into the deceased's Native American fiefdom. One year earlier, with funding from his Boston patrons, the missionary had supervised construction of the spacious new church, complete with a steeple. Kirkland had written his Boston sponsors that the new two-story meetinghouse was "the great Joy of the Indians." Indeed, the structure was grander and more spacious than the "Indian Castle" Anglican church that Johnson had financed for the Mohawks at Canajoharie. Afterward, William Johnson had lashed out at Kirkland's challenge to his patriarchal authority on the frontier, summoning him to Johnson Hall where he dressed down the minister and his allied Oneida chiefs for their defiance of his authority. Johnson had attempted to oust Kirkland from his missions, but the Oneida converts rallied

⁵⁵ Pilkington, ed., *The Journals of Samuel Kirkland*, 95. For an overview of Samuel Kirkland's exportation of the Great Awakening to the Oneidas, see Linford D. Fisher, *The Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 174-76; Pilkington ed., *The Journals of Samuel Kirkland*, xviii; Christine Sternberg Patrick, "The Life and Times of Samuel Kirkland, 1741-1808: Missionary to the Oneida Indians, American Patriot, and Founder of Hamilton College" (Ph.D. diss., SUNY Buffalo, 1993), 105-87.

around their missionary, fearing the loss of the Boston patronage that had enriched their village.⁵⁶

In a last act of defiance to William Johnson's authority, Kirkland delivered a backhanded eulogy in the meetinghouse that had drawn Johnson's "keenest resentment" in the last year of his life. The Reverend honored the "somber occasion" of the superintendent's death with a New England-style jeremiad that blended religious remembrance with calculating politics. Drawing from the Book of Jeremiah, he exhorted his Oneida congregation to "let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches" (Jeremiah 9:23). For all of William Johnson's magnanimity, his mightiness was nothing compared to that of Kirkland's God. Kirkland pronounced the Christian God the fountainhead for "loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth" (Jeremiah 9:24). Johnson's death afforded Kirkland the didactic opportunity to remind his congregation to take solace in *his* God: the Lord's religious patronage, not an imperial grandee, would see them through this tragedy. In the coming months, when the cohort of land speculators who had committed William Johnson's earthly remains into his final resting place took their seats in the Continental Congress, Kirkland would also use his pulpit to preach a new political gospel flowing northward from Philadelphia.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Pilkington ed., *The Journals of Samuel Kirkland*, 95; Samuel Kirkland to Andrew Oliver, 30 August 1773, Hamilton College Library Digital Collection <<http://elib.hamilton.edu/u/?arc-kir,624>>. For Kirkland's feud with Sir William Johnson over the Kanonwalohale meetinghouse, see Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 67-69; Glatthaar and Martin, *Forgotten Allies*, 73-74.

⁵⁷ Pilkington ed., *The Journals of Samuel Kirkland*, 95; Sir William Johnson to Thomas Hutchinson, 21 August 1771, in Flick, ed., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 8: 229-30.

As the news penetrated the “Indian Reserve,” Euro-Americans were on hand to document when and how individual communities learned of Warraghiyagey’s death. Using Guy Johnson’s 1771 map as a rough guide, the “sad wail” likely reached Onondaga, the spiritual center of the Six Nations, sometime on July 15 or July 16. The news travelled westward toward the Cayuga and Seneca homelands, then the British outpost at Fort Niagara, and southward along the Allegheny River where the news reached Fort Pitt at the forks of the Ohio River between July 25 and August 8.⁵⁸

Runners bearing the black belts from Johnson Hall arrived to find the inhabitants of Pittsburgh gripped with fear at an imminent war with the Shawnee. Alexander McKee, formerly William Johnson’s and now Guy Johnson’s agent on the Upper Ohio, struggled to maintain an uneasy peace in a region where British military power had waned drastically. Since the 1765 row over the Stamp Act, the 1767 Townshend duties, and colonial resistance to paying taxes in support a defensive army on the frontier had forced the British ministry to drastically cut its budget for North American defense. By 1774, the British regular army had withdrawn from the Upper Ohio region. The British regular army’s abandonment of its frontier outposts throughout the Upper Ohio region meant its defense defaulted to Virginian and Pennsylvanian colonial militias. McKee attempted to put a positive spin on the fleeting British power, telling a council of Shawnees that “Your Father the King of Great Britain”

⁵⁸ “To His Excellency William Tryon Esq., Captain General & Governor in Chief of the Province of New-York. This Map of the Country of the (Six) Nations Proper, with part of the Adjacent Colonies is humbly inscribed by his Excellency's Most Obedient humble Servant Guy Johnson 1771,” in O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 4:1090; Arthur St. Clair to Governor Penn, 8 August 1774, in Force, ed., 1: 682.

destroyed his own outposts, including Fort Pitt, “at considerable expense to convince you of his kind intentions toward you.”⁵⁹

Yet, McKee lacked the military and financial resources to contain the escalating cycle of murder and retribution raging between Virginians and Ohio Indians. Virginian militias in the area, under the pugilistic command of John Connelly, were interested in their own agenda of land acquisition through right of conquest. McKee, operating on a diminished budget and with the nearest redcoats hemmed in at Boston, had to rely on diplomacy and the goodwill of the Six Nations to keep the Virginians from inciting war and to prevent the Leni Lenapes, Mingos, Wyandots, and Hurons from joining a general Shawnee confederacy. Reports from Indian country informed McKee that these nations adopted a “wait-and-see” approach: the Hurons, Wyandots, and Ottawas were eager to “take up the hatchet,” but demurred until they learned of the Six Nations’ intentions in the gathering storm. By mid August, news of Six Nations’ neutrality tempered the problems that William Johnson’s death posed for McKee’s mission.⁶⁰

Antipathies between Pennsylvanians and Virginians at Fort Pitt further compounded McKee’s woes. Pennsylvania Governor John Penn and Virginia Governor William Murray, Lord Dunmore each claimed Pittsburgh within their jurisdictions. Pennsylvanian fur traders earned their living trading with the Ohio Indians; Virginian land speculators sought to remove the Indians from the Upper Ohio in order to claim choice lands before the British

⁵⁹ Report from Alexander McKee, 8 March 1774, in Hamilton, ed., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 12: 1122; “Journal of Alexander McKee,” in Hamilton, ed., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 12: 1095-99; Jack Sosin, *Whitehall and the Wilderness: The Middle West in British Colonial Policy, 1760-1775* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 108-12.

⁶⁰ “Speech of the Delawares to Mr. Croghan,” 23 July 1774, in Force, ed., 1: 680; “Arthur St. Clair to Governor Penn,” 8 August 1774, in Force, ed., *American Archives Fourth Series*, 1: 682.

Ministry planted its own proprietary colony in the region. Virginian militia routinely provoked the Shawnees, triggering a wave of violence against Euro-Americans that disrupted the Pennsylvanians' trade; the commercially-minded Pennsylvanians responded by selling guns to the Ohio Indians to repel the Virginians.⁶¹

As the governors feuded and the citizens of Pittsburgh hunkered down against Indian raids, Seneca Chief Goyasuta's importance to the British empire grew dramatically. Goyasuta claimed authority to speak for the Six Nations and its "props to the Longhouse" in the Upper Ohio. When runners from Johnson Hall arrived at Fort Pitt, Goyasuta received the black wampum belt and his instructions from the chiefs to "bury the hatchet" so deeply into the ground that it could not be taken up against the English. In diplomatic terms, Goyasuta was to isolate the Shawnee and prevent them from establishing a confederacy capable of rivaling the Six Nations. Goyasuta's "embassy"—as Guy Johnson referred to the chief's mission—forestalled the major Indian war, but it also removed any obstacles to Virginian designs on acquiring Shawnee lands. With William Johnson dead, the British military absent, and the colonial governments paralyzed by their own rivalries, Goyasuta was the last imperial envoy at Fort Pitt who carried requisite prestige, expertise, and authority to credibly negotiate with the Ohio Indians.⁶²

⁶¹ Abernethy, *Western Lands and the American Revolution*, 56-57; "Account of the Rise of the Indian War, 1774" in Samuel Hazard, John Blair Linn, William Henry Egle, eds., *Pennsylvania Archives First Series*, (Philadelphia: Joseph Severns & Company, 1853), 4: 568-69.

⁶² "Arthur St. Clair to Governor Penn," 8 August 1774, in Force, ed., *American Archives Fourth Series*, 1: 682; John Robinson Harper, "Revolution and Conquest: Politics, Violence, and Social Change in the Ohio Valley" (Ph.D. Diss. University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2009), 250-52; Edward G. Williams, *Fort Pitt and the Revolution on the Western Frontier* (Pittsburgh: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1978), 17-39.

Soon after news of William Johnson's death arrived in Pittsburgh, the *Virginia Gazette* reprinted the July 18 letter from the New York Committee of Correspondence. Within the month, Dunmore dropped all pretensions of a peaceful resolution to the conflict with the Shawnee and placed himself at the head of the gathering frontier militia. On October 10, the isolated Shawnees and their handful of Mingo allies attacked the Virginians at Point Pleasant, at the confluence of the Kanawha and Ohio Rivers, to stave off a Virginian invasion of the Shawnee homeland. The Virginians repulsed the attack, and Dunmore pursued the retreating Shawnees. By November 15, Dunmore's army had driven into the heart of Ohio territory and set up camp along the Scioto River at Camp Charlotte.⁶³

The Shawnees felt that the Six Nations had betrayed them and denounced Guyasuta as a *Schwonnack*, a derogatory term that characterized him as a collaborator with the "white" enemy. Guy Johnson reported to General Gage that although Guyasuta completed his mission successfully, "he has rendered himself obnoxious to the Shawneese and their friends." In late September and October of 1774, the Chief enjoyed Johnson's hospitality at the latter's riverside estate—Guy Park—before returning to the Ohio country with a "substantial present" for his services.⁶⁴

⁶³ *Virginia Gazette*, 18 July 1774; Randolph C. Downes, "Dunmore's War: An Interpretation," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 74 (Dec. 1934): 311-30; Jack M. Sosin, "The British Indian Department and Dunmore's War," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 74 (Jan. 1966): 34-50; Reuben Gold Thwaites and Louise Phelps Kellogg, eds. *A Documentary History of Dunmore's War: Compiled from the Draper Manuscripts in the Library of the Wisconsin Historical Society* (1901; reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: CJ Carrier Company, 1974), 301-06. For a study on the aftermath of Dunmore's War, see Calloway, *The Shawnees and the War for America*, 43-66; Reuben Gold Thwaites and Louise Phelps Kellogg, eds. *The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777: Compiled from the Draper Manuscripts in the Library of the Wisconsin Historical Society* (1908; reprint, Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1970), 34.

⁶⁴ Guy Johnson to General Gage, 6 October 1774, in Hamilton, ed., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 13: 637; Sosin, "The British Indian Department and Dunmore's War," 34-50.

At Dunmore's camp along the Scioto River, the royal governor forced the Shawnees to cede their hunting grounds in Kentucky to the Virginians. Moreover, by right of conquest, Dunmore claimed tracts of land on both the northern and southern banks of the Ohio River for himself. The Six Nations had technically ceded Shawnee lands south of the Ohio River at the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix. Dunmore's land grab in the Ohio Country presented a direct challenge both to Guy Johnson's authority as well as the interests of William Franklin and Pennsylvania land speculators who sought to establish their own colony in the region. Johnson denounced the Virginians as a "lawless banditti," but neither he nor General Gage possessed any real power to stop Dunmore from parceling out Shawnee lands to his Virginia elite. The year had begun with Sir William Johnson firmly in command of Indian Affairs in the Northern Department; it ended with a rogue colonial governor enforcing treaties of questionable legality at the point of a musket.⁶⁵

Through strength of his personality, not through imperial power, William Johnson had bound competing ethnic, cultural, business, and colonial factions, and he had created an extensive social and political network in North America and Great Britain. Within hours of his death, those same factions vied for power in the void. In his lifetime, Sir William had layered a veneer of British institutional coherence on a frontier that resisted acculturation. Dunmore's musket diplomacy on the Ohio frontier, General Gage's impotence in Boston, and Johnson's heirs' inability to quell revolutionary activity in their spheres of influence accelerated the decay of political authority. In the end, the only law that carried any weight

⁶⁵ Guy Johnson to General Gage, 6 October 1774, in Hamilton, ed., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 13: 637.

on the frontier was the Haudenosaunee Great Law. Guyasuta's embassy to the Ohio Indians and the Shawnees' resistance to the Six Nations reveal that even that system had limits.

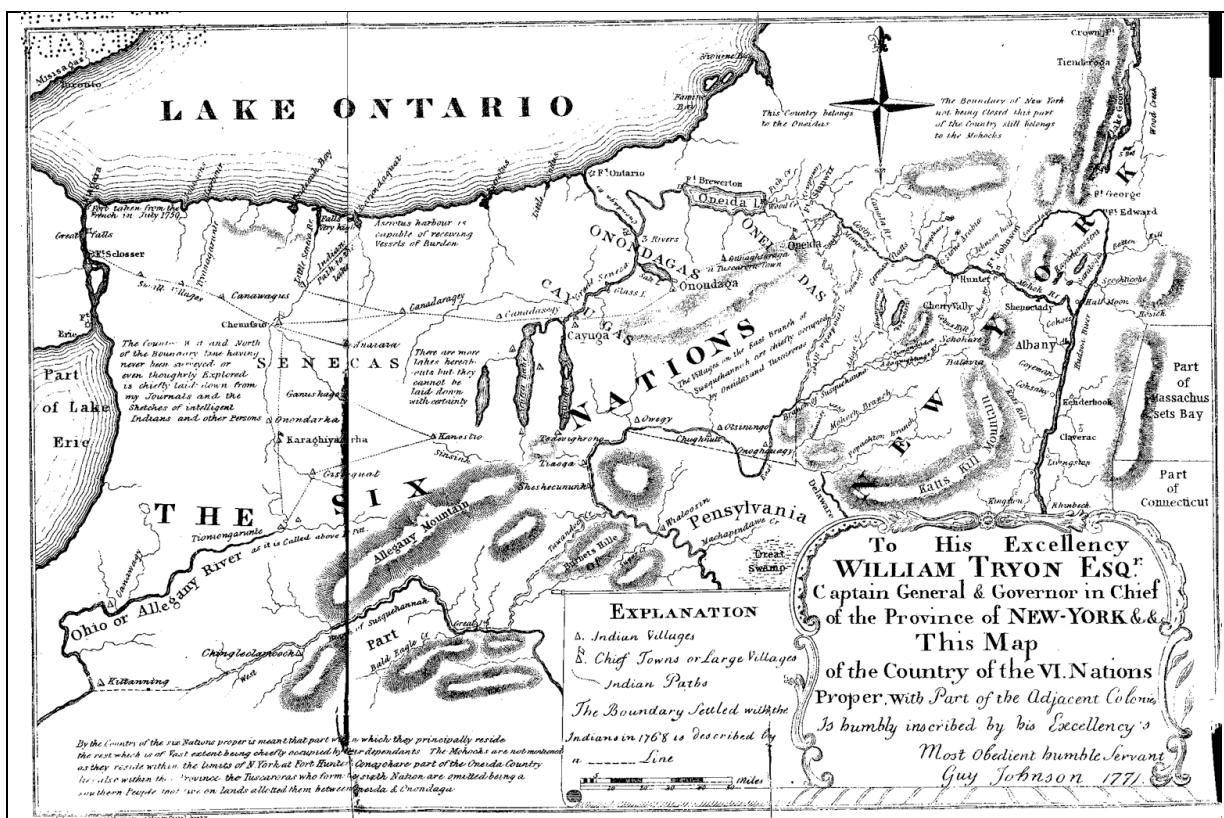


Figure 1.2. E.B. O'Callaghan, ed., "To His Excellency William Tryon Esq., Captain General & Governor in Chief of the Province of New-York. This Map of the Country of the (Six) Nations Proper, with part of the Adjacent Colonies is humbly inscribed by his Excellency's Most Obedient humble Servant Guy Johnson 1771," in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, vol. 4 (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons, and Company, 1853), 1090.

Chapter Two:

Pageants of Nations

“For 20 years he lived in what may be called a state of royalty, for no prince was ever so respected by his subjects as Sir William was by the different tribes of Indians. They speak of him now with a kind of adoration, they say there was never such a man and will never will be such another. Shakespear makes Hamlet speak the same sentiment of his father.”¹

In the waning days of British colonial authority on the northern frontier, death ominously punctuated Indian diplomacy. Precisely one year after William Johnson’s death and in the middle of another desperate treaty negotiation between embattled British officials and the Haudenosaunee, death once again stalked the Johnson family: this time, far from the security of Guy Johnson’s Mohawk River estate, Guy Park Manor. In a dilapidated British fort at Oswego, situated atop a windswept bluff overlooking Lake Ontario, the superintendent pleaded with fourteen hundred chiefs, women, and warriors of the Six Nations to “take up the hatchet” against American colonists in rebellion against the British empire. Only the Mohawks—many of whom were direct kin to the Johnsons—seemed receptive to Guy Johnson’s entreaties.²

¹ Oswald Tilghman, ed., *Memoir of Leut. Col. Tench Tilghman, Secretary and Aid to Washington, Together with an Appendix, containing Revolutionary Journals and Letters, Hitherto Unpublished* (Albany, NY: J. Munsell, 1876), 86.

² “Report of Guy Johnson’s Council with the Indians,” 31 August 1775, in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, ed. E.B. O’Callaghan 16 vols. (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons, and Company, 1857), 8: 621-22. For a discussion of Guy Johnson Anglo-Haudenosaunee relations at the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War, see William Nelson Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse: A Political History of the Iroquois Confederacy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 570-72; Kevin R. Muller, “Mohawks and Myth: Benjamin West’s Portrait of Guy Johnson,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 40 (spring 2005): 59-61.

While Guy Johnson pleaded with the Haudenosaunee to take up arms against the colonists, his wife labored in childbirth in the fort's rude quarters. Under normal circumstances, Mary Johnson would not have joined her husband on a diplomatic mission. Since April when British regulars engaged New England minutemen at Lexington, Massachusetts, revolutionary fervor had gripped the Mohawk Valley, and a prominent British official like Guy Johnson risked his life remaining among militant insurgents who had seized the reins of local government. With a small entourage that included Mary's half-brother Peter Johnson and the late William Johnson's Mohawk brother-in-law Joseph Brant, Mary endured the arduous journey via bateau from the comforts of Guy Park to Oswego. The perilous journey and subsequent childbirth proved too much for her; she died on July 11, 1775—exactly one year after her father. In contrast to William Johnson's imperial funeral cortege, only the modest flotilla which Guy Johnson had assembled for his escape to Quebec served as Mary Johnson's funeral procession. As the widowed superintendent, his Mohawk escorts, and Mary's corpse retreated up the St. Lawrence River to the safety of British Canada, British imperial authority on the northern frontier unceremoniously faded into oblivion.³

³ For an complete narrative of Guy Johnson's flight from the Mohawk Valley and the death of Mary "Polly" Johnson, see Isabel Thompson Kelsay, *Joseph Brant: Man of Two Worlds* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 152-55; Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 64-65. The legend of Guy Johnson's flight from the Mohawk Valley endured in the collective memory of the region's inhabitants well into the nineteenth century. It was nineteenth-century historians who collected these legends tended to romanticize the Brants, Johnsons, and other larger-than-life figures from the Revolutionary period. The challenge for twenty-first century historians aimed at recovering women and minority voices from the Revolutionary War era remains distilling these narratives which have become historical artifacts. Mary Johnson endured in the historical memory as an apparition; shortly after her death, so went one version of a nineteenth century legend, Mary's ghost returned to Guy Park manor much to the horror of the mansion's Whig occupants. For a complete recollection of this tale, see William Max Reid, *The Mohawk Valley: Its Legends and Its History* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1904), 138-42.

With Johnson in flight and the Haudenosaunee lukewarm to the British cause, new American actors scrambled to claim pieces of the shattered British dominion over the northern frontier. In June of 1775, which was more than a year before the Second Continental Congress formally divorced the thirteen colonies from the British empire, the rebel Congress convened in Philadelphia had already imagined redrawing North America's political map. In one of its earliest acts of sovereignty, Congress claimed authority over Indian relations in all of North America on behalf of its twelve constituent colonies. Congress used this new national power to negotiate treaties of neutrality with the sovereign Native American nations residing beyond the colonies' undefined western borders. In creating a neutral space to the west—a zone where native peoples aided neither the revolutionary cause nor British suppression efforts—Congress attempted to use Native American diplomacy to contain the revolution within boundaries of its own creation.

Realizing this vision in terms of actual power required more than legislative resolve: it required the Indians, frontier settlers, and colonial governments to accept Congress as the legitimate and supreme arbiter of Indian affairs. Therefore, Indian diplomacy was the first deliberate articulation of American national state formation.

By the summer of 1775, the American Revolutionary project's success or failure depended upon a treaty of neutrality with the Six Nations. Neither political elites gathered in Philadelphia nor local leaders on the frontier had any knowledge of Guy Johnson's failure at Oswego. American rebels imagined Johnson as a boogey man ready to unleash *his* Indians for a rash of scalping, arson, and inhuman terrors on the settler frontier at any moment. American colonists feared western Native Americans as barbarous "Others" and the mere

rumor of an Indian attack terrorized Anglo-Americans greater than the British redcoats temporarily contained in Boston. A British-orchestrated, Indian war on colonial borders threatened to undermine the survival of the nascent American rebellion; the colonial militias who swelled the ranks of George Washington's newly formed Continental Army regularly rushed back to defend their respective colonies from the "savagery" of an Indian war, abandoning their larger cause of defending against the British.⁴

Congress, like the British empire it sought to displace, operated under a legal fiction that the Six Nations held the western Indian nations, particularly those in the upper Ohio River Valley, as vassals. Securing Haudenosaunee neutrality, so the theory went, would in turn pacify the rest of the northern frontier. Domestic tranquility on the borderlands freed up militia—particularly veteran frontier troops—to remain as a *united* fighting force to combat the British. However, to achieve this goal, Congress's envoys needed to demonstrate mastery of Haudenosaunee ritual forms and diplomatic protocol—with equal felicity and flamboyancy as William Johnson had done—and prove that their neutrality in the conflict with Great Britain served the Haudenosaunee interests. In a borderland with ambiguous linguistic, cultural and racial divides, it was ceremony and material goods—not abstract

⁴ Samuel Ludlow Frey, ed., *Minute Book of the Tryon County Committee of Safety* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1905), 32-33; *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, ed. Worthington C. Ford et al., 34 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904-37), 2: 176. For a comprehensive overview of the racialized tensions between ethnic groups of European settlers and their fear of Native Americans, see: Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: Norton and Company, 2008), 228-40. For an analysis of the importance of Indian neutrality to the newly formed Continental Army, see Charles Patrick Neimeyer, *America Goes to War: A Social History of the Continental Army* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 101-118; for an overview of the inter-colonial challenges facing the organization of the Continental Army, see Charles C. Royster, *A Revolutionary People At War: The Continental Army and the American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 58-63.

Lockean rhetoric or allegorical symbolism of the Greco-Roman classics—that provided the universal language of exchange on the frontier.⁵

The Continental Congress's frontier project was far more ambitious than immediate military exigencies. The elite gentlemen who assembled in Philadelphia came from colonies clamoring for trans-Appalachian lands that the British had designated for the Native Americans since 1763. Many of those delegates, like Robert Morris of Pennsylvania and Phillip Livingston of New York, collaborated with the late William Johnson on speculative land ventures on the northern frontier. Likewise, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia and Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania had invested in rival land companies competing for lands in the upper Ohio River Valley. Not only did Congressional delegates have competing interests in the trans-Appalachian west, but they also represented colonies with rival visions for colonizing those lands. Pennsylvanians attacked Connecticut Yankees for settling along the Susquehanna River in 1773; Virginians and Pennsylvanians had taken opposing sides in Dunmore's War of 1774. The sonorous language of colonial unity against the British army in the east temporarily bridged the inter-colonial fault lines in the west, but those tensions simmered beneath the surface. In claiming sovereignty to negotiate war and peace with

⁵ For an overview of Haudnesaunee diplomatic ritual forms and the importance of flawlessly executed public performance, see Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 133-140; Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderlands in the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A Knoff, 2006), 80-82; Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse*, 136-37, 591-98. For the legal fiction of a cohesive Haudnesaunee Empire with "vassals" in the Ohio Country, see, Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire* (New York: W.W. Norton Company, 1984), 10-19. For an analysis of the importance of veteran frontier militia to the Continental Army, see Edward G. Williams, *Fort Pitt and the Revolution on the Western Frontier* (Pittsburgh: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1978), 58.

western indigenous people, the United Colonies first asserted their independence from Great Britain through the nationalization of Indian diplomacy.⁶

The Continental Congress recast the British as a “savage other” and the congressmen embedded the language of fear in its resolutions establishing a national Indian Affairs department. Congress accreted the sovereign power regarding Indian diplomacy from its constituent colonies out of the belief that the British “will spare no pains to excite the several Nations of Indians to take up arms against these colonies.” Subsequently, the delegates in Philadelphia charged their commissioners for Indian affairs to remain “active and vigilant in exerting every prudent means to strengthen and confirm the friendly disposition towards these colonies.” In a bold act of constitutional sovereignty aimed at Guy Johnson, Congress empowered its Indian affairs commissioners with the authority to arrest “the King's superintendants, their deputies or agents, or any other person whatsoever” if it were determined that they were “active in stirring up or inciting the Indians.” Applying this resolution to the Northern frontier, it meant that Guy Johnson, a duly appointed British imperial official, was subject to congressional authority. Indian affairs was now a national priority and those British officials who sought to rally native people to the imperial cause, men like Johnson, risked becoming national public enemies.⁷

⁶ For inter-colonial rivalries for western lands, see Anne M. Ousterhout, “Frontier Vengeance: Connecticut Yankees vs. Pennamites in the Wyoming Valley,” *Pennsylvania History* 62 (summer 1995): 330-63; Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *Western Lands and the American Revolution* (New York: Appleton Century Company, 1937), 55-58; Alan Taylor, *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early Republic* (New York: Random House, 1995), 46-52.

⁷ Ford et al., eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 2: 175-76. The Spirit of ‘76 is idiomatic in American national consciousness, but Charles Royster argued that the Spirit of ‘75 was the only instance in the American Revolution where a nationalized *rage militare* animated the eventual break with England. For his overview on the patriotic fervor gripping British North America, see Charles C. Royster, *A Revolutionary*

The congressmen faced a major practical dilemma in executing their plans: few, if any, of the delegates had any experience with Indian diplomacy on the frontier. Colonel George Washington of Virginia, had extensive knowledge of the Upper Ohio Valley, but on the same day Congress voted to assume the power of Indian Affairs, it unanimously appointed Washington to command the Continental Army at Cambridge, Massachusetts. Sixty-nine-year-old Benjamin Franklin had attended the Albany Congress of 1754 with the Haudenosaunee, the last treaty on the northern frontier brokered without a Johnson officiating. Congress appointed Franklin to serve as an Indian Affairs commissioner for the middle colonies, but like Washington, Franklin's other duties prevented him from active participation in frontier diplomacy. Indian affairs were a priority for Congress—one of many other necessary tasks for a fledging revolutionary government—but not one that conferred honor and prestige upon those who engaged in it. The responsibility for Indian diplomacy generally fell to gentlemen of lesser fame and experience than Franklin and Washington.⁸

Congress compensated for its own lack of practical experience in Indian affairs by resolving that its appointed commissioners should hire “gentlemen of influence among the Indians, in whom they can confide, and to appoint Agents, residing near or among the Indians, to watch the conduct of the superintendants, and their emissaries.” The frontier was filled with backwoods fur traders and mixed-race translators who could parlay with the Native Americans, but they hardly carried the dignity and prestige Congress deemed

People At War: The Continental Army and the American Character, 1775-1783 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 30-32.

⁸ Ford et al., eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 2: 95-96. For an overview of the social composition of the Continental Congress and occupations of the delegates, see Caroline Robbins, “Decision in '76: Reflections on the 56 Signers,” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 89 (1977): 72-87.

necessary for an envoy. After all, it had stipulated that envoys be *gentlemen*. In the eighteenth century, this meant a literate Euro-American male whose wealth, manners, and social rank were of sufficiently high status to be distinguished from the yeomanry. He need not have been fabulously wealthy or of the highest echelon of the colonial gentry like the members of Congress; men of the “middling sort” sufficed. To ensure the United Colonies’ duly appointed commissioners did not fail their diplomatic errand, Congress sought that rare breed of cultural brokers who was sufficiently “civilized” to be a trusted authority among the rebel elites in Congress and credible in council with the Chiefs of the Six Nations.⁹

Fortunately, for Congressional delegates, whenever they found themselves in need of talent, there always seemed to be somebody in a uniform advertising his availability for service. When Congress needed a commander for the Continental Army, they had looked farther than a delegate from Virginia clad in his tightly fitting militia uniform. Similarly, a Yankee missionary clad in the severe garb of a minister and far from his Oneida mission at Kanonwalohale was on hand, seemingly advertising himself as the ideal candidate to advance Congress’s agenda. The Reverend Kirkland spent much of July 1775 advising Congress on an ideal strategy for negotiating Indian neutrality. A year after he preached a backhanded sermon in memoriam of the late Sir William Johnson, Congress resolved to make Kirkland its lead envoy to the Haudenosaunee, instructing “the Commissioners of the Northern Department to employ the S[ai]d Mr. Kirkland among the Indians of the Six Nations, in order

⁹ Ford et al., eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 2: 176. Political historian Gordon S. Wood makes a case for the importance of recovering Revolutionary narratives from the middling sort and focuses his short article on arguing for the importance of historical studies in this arena. For an overview of the divide between the elite gentlemanly class and men of the middling sort, see Gordon S. Wood, “The Middling Sort in the American Revolution,” *Phi Kappa Phi Forum* 86 (summer 2006): 27-30.

to secure their friendship and to continue them in a state of Neutrality.” Kirkland successfully parlayed Congress’s fear of Guy Johnson and his capacity to wage an Indian war in order to secure Congressional patronage.¹⁰

Reverend Kirkland departed Philadelphia as the northern frontier’s plainspoken, pious republican alternative to the imperious Loyalist, Guy Johnson. In the months following William Johnson’s 1774 death, Kirkland had stepped up his own subversive, revolutionary activities among his Oneida adherents. The reverend increasingly mixed politics with piety, freely disseminating the proceedings of the First Continental Congress to his Native American Kanonwalohale congregants. By January of 1775, his mission to convert political souls had disturbed conservative chiefs who preferred to remain detached from the Anglo-American dispute. Kanaghquassea, the conservative, traditionalist Oneida chief who had performed the Haudenosaunee funeral rites for William Johnson, complained to Guy Johnson and requested he remove Kirkland from the Oneidas. Subsequently, Johnson rebuked Kirkland in a letter, accusing the reverend of “meddling in matters of political nature, & which might have had a dangerous tendency with the Indians.” Kirkland denied the charges to Johnson in an indignant reply and countered that Johnson had willfully “misrepresented his purpose to the Indians.” Kirkland, out of self-preservation, had lied to Johnson.¹¹

¹⁰ Ford et al., eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 2: 182; Christine Sternberg Patrick, “The Life and Times of Samuel Kirkland, 1741-1808: Missionary to the Oneida Indians, American Patriot, and Founder of Hamilton College” (Ph.D. diss., SUNY Buffalo, 1993), 188-92.

¹¹ Walter Pilkington, ed., *The Journals of Samuel Kirkland: 18th Century Missionary to the Iroquois, Government Agent, Father of Hamilton College* (Clinton, New York: Hamilton College, 1980), 105, 106-110; Patrick, 278-80. In later correspondence to a friendlier audience, Kirkland bragged that he had in fact “interpreted to the Indians the doings of the Continental Congress;” see Samuel Kirkland, Cherry Valley to Albany Committee of Safety, Albany 9 June 1775, in *American Archives Fourth Series*, ed. Peter Force (1843; reprint, New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1972), 2: 1309-10.

To his detriment, Guy Johnson myopically clung to a belief that the colonial dispute was strictly a Bostonian invention and that Kirkland was simply an outside agitator. If he merely expelled men like Kirkland, the political disturbances in his domain would desist. The superintendent failed to see the political fault lines rupturing around him in the Mohawk Valley. Within a month of William Johnson's death, insurgent committees of safety comprised of anti-British Whigs organized in Tryon County and Albany. Militias drilled and revolutionary committees formed within sight of Guy Park Manor. Johnson remained oblivious to the gathering storm until the Tryon County Committee of Safety turned its suspicions on him, fearful that Guy Johnson was gathering a force of Indians to suppress the rebellion. Johnson panicked, transformed Guy Park Manor into a fortress, and surrounded himself with an armed posse of his Scottish Highland tenants and Mohawks. The capture of Fort Ticonderoga by Ethan Allen and his Vermont militia on May 10, 1775, convinced Johnson that a New England attack on the Mohawk Valley was imminent. He arrested Kirkland as the reverend travelled from his Stockbridge, Massachusetts home back to Kanonwalohale, detaining the missionary at Guy Park Manor.¹²

Kirkland's detention proved short lived. General Gage dispatched a coded message to Guy Johnson ordering the superintendent to organize a force of Indians to attack New England via Canada. Evidently, the revolutionary Albany Committee of Safety caught wind of Gage's plan, and Johnson fled the Whig insurgents without losing face. On May 31, 1775,

¹² For an in-depth analysis of how Guy Johnson lost his grip on power in the Mohawk Valley, see John Christopher Guzzardo, "Sir William Johnson's Official Family: Patrons and Clients in an Anglo-American Empire, 1742-1777" (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse University, 1975), 335-40; Kelsay, *Joseph Brant*, 148-53. For an overview of Kirkland's feud with Guy Johnson in the winter and spring of 1775, see Patrick, "Life and Times of Samuel Kirkland," 281-86.

Guy Johnson, his immediate family including his pregnant wife, his Mohawk retinue, and local Loyalists departed for Oswego, never to return. Kirkland, whom Guy Johnson did not take with him as a prisoner, was once again free to continue his revolutionary project among the Indians without interference from Johnson.¹³

The Albany Committee of Safety prevailed upon the liberated Kirkland “to use his influence with them to maintain peace and harmony with the white people.” Yet once back among the Oneidas, Kirkland found that nation already organizing a “neutrality faction” within the Six Nations. Writing to Connecticut governor Jonathan Trumbull on June 19, the Oneida chiefs proclaimed, “we cannot intermeddle in this dispute between two brothers. The quarrel seems to be unnatural; you are two brothers of one blood. We are unwilling to join on either side in such a contest, for we bear an equal affection to both of you.” Kirkland transcribed and transmitted the speech to the governors of the New England colonies, casting himself as a reliable revolutionary go-between to the Haudenosaunee.¹⁴

Granting Kirkland the decisive role in securing Oneida neutrality, as Kirkland’s contemporaries and earlier historians had done, denies the Oneidas’ proper agency in determining the trajectory of Indian diplomacy at the outset of the American Revolution. The formation of an Oneida “pro-neutrality” faction appeared well underway before Kirkland returned to his mission. The signatures of traditionalist chiefs, like the pro-Johnson Kanaghquassea on the speech Kirkland transcribed to the governors of New England, suggest

¹³ William L. Stone, *Life of Joseph Brant-Thayendanegea Including the Indian War of the American Revolution* (New York: George Dearborn and Company, 1838), 73-75; Kelsay, *Joseph Brant*, 153.

¹⁴ “Letter from the Albany Committee to the Committee of Palatine District, in Tryon County,” 23 May 1775, in Force, ed., *American Archives Fourth Series*, 2: 841; “Speech of the Chiefs and Warriors of the Oneida Tribe of Indians to the four New-England Provinces,” 19 June 1775, in Force, ed., *American Archives Fourth Series* 2: 1117; Patrick, “Life and Times of Samuel Kirkland,” 272.

consensus within the Oneida nation between traditionalist and Europeanist factions. This speech represented a unilateral Oneida diplomatic initiative to lead the Six Nations into neutrality. Kirkland was as much an instrument for the Oneidas to steer the Haudenosaunee into a diplomatic course of their choosing as much as he was a committed partisan of the revolutionary cause.¹⁵

Kirkland's influential reputation in Indian relations had not escaped the attention of Phillip Schuyler, an Albany magnate who had recently received congressional appointment to command the Northern Department of the Continental Army. In June 1775, Schuyler found himself simultaneously preparing to fend off the rumored Guy Johnson-led Indian attack from Canada and the Albany Committee of Safety's unilateral efforts to establish diplomatic relations with the Haudenosaunee. The Oneidas had engaged the Committee of Safety to solidify Haudenosaunee neutrality in the war. Believing that Indian affairs were a matter of *continental* rather than local prerogative, Schuyler gently urged Congress to assume ownership of the negotiations while simultaneously encouraging the Albany Committee to "dismiss [the Oneida spokesmen] with presents, and assurances that they will speedily be requested to meet persons appointed for the purpose of holding a conference with them." He understood the Haudenosaunee owned their alliances through integration into their kinship structure. If Congress was going to supersede local and colonial governments in a continental

¹⁵ "Letter from the Albany Committee to the Committee of Palatine District," in Tryon County, 23 May 1775, in Force, ed., *American Archives Fourth Series*, 2: 841; "Speech of the Chiefs and Warriors of the Oneida Tribe of Indians to the four New-England Provinces," 1117; Joseph T. Glatthaar and James Kirby Martin, *Forgotten Allies: The Oneida Indians and the American Revolution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 83. For historians challenging earlier interpretations of Kirkland's role in securing Oneida neutrality, see David Levinson, "An Explanation for the Oneida-Colonist Alliance in the American Revolution," *Journal of Ethnohistory* 23 (summer 1976): 284-85; Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 80-82.

Indian Affairs program successfully, the national legislature needed to “own” and maintain a metaphorical chain of friendship with the Haudenosaunee. On July 3, Schuyler dispatched Kirkland with instructions to brief Congress on “the temper of the Indians of the Six Nations” and “of Colonel Johnson's nefarious designs.”¹⁶

Kirkland’s errand to Philadelphia proved to be the decisive moment for congressional action on Indian affairs. The frontier missionary’s briefing to Congress on “the situation and disposition of the Indians” impressed upon the delegates the urgency thwarting Johnson’s plans by opening formal diplomacy with pro-neutrality Indians. Recognizing the importance of trade goods in the Haudenosaunees’ economy, Congress authorized of \$6666 for presents “as the Indians depend on the Colonists for arms, ammunition, and cloathing, which are become necessary to their subsistence.” To oversee this largesse, Schuyler, Turbott Francis of Pennsylvania, and other leading gentry from their respective colonies received appointments to serve as commissioners of Indian affairs for the Northern Department. Having spent two weeks promoting himself as an indispensable expert on the Haudenosaunee, Kirkland was assigned as congressional agent to the Six Nations.¹⁷

¹⁶ Philip Schuyler, New York to Continental Congress, Philadelphia 29 June, 1775, in Force, ed., *American Archives Fourth Series*, 2: 1133; Philip Schuyler, New York to Continental Congress, Philadelphia 3 July, 1775, in Force, ed., *American Archives Fourth Series*, 2: 1536. For an overview of the culture of ownership in Haudnesaunee diplomacy, see Daniel Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 45.

¹⁷ Ford et al., eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 2: 172, 175. The full delegation of commissioners for the Northern Department included Volkert P. Douw (New York), Turbot Francis (Pennsylvania), Joseph Hawley (Massachusetts), Philip Schuyler (New York), and Oliver Wolcott (Massachusetts). As eminent citizens of Albany, Schuyler and Douw were both logical choices as commissioners. Furthermore, in his capacity as commander of the Northern Department of the Continental Army, Schuyler was, as Barbara Graymont characterized him, “the most important Indian commissioner from the Northern Department;” see Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 77.

On July 21, 1775, Kirkland departed Philadelphia, reborn as an evangelical revolutionary bearing the “Good News” from Philadelphia to the Haudnesaunee. With the Delaware River at his back, the reverend carried a speech from Congress to the Haudenosaunee in which the delegates, with Kirkland’s consultation, had framed their conflict with Great Britain in the metaphorical language of kinship familiar to native peoples. The speech imagined a fictive, halcyon past where native ties to the land bound the Haudenosaunee to the American cause, declaring “Brothers! we live upon the same ground with you. The same island is our common birth-place.” They conceived and articulated an American creation narrative, which indigenized Anglo-Americans to North American continent. Kirkland had hitherto preached a Christian gospel to his congregation; now he sought converts for a new civic gospel in which none other than the English King had commanded his “children” to leave their “native land” and settle across the great water. Consequently, “it was covenanted, that the fields, houses, goods and possessions which our fathers should acquire, should remain to them as their own, and be their children’s forever, and at their sole disposal.” The English settlement project of the seventeenth century had become a sacred Lockean dogma by the eighteenth century. The American revolutionaries declared that they had taken up arms to defend this covenant.¹⁸

As Kirkland traversed the King’s Highway through New Jersey, he conceived the wampum belt that would memorialize the United Colonies first treaty with a foreign power. Both the Haudenosaunee and the Anglo-Americans inhabiting North America venerated

¹⁸ Ford et al., eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 2: 182, 172; for the theoretical model of indigenization in settler colonialism, see Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 4-10; Jürgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2005), 15-17.

tradition, but each society differed in how it invoked its histories. Congress recorded its momentous declarations in ink on parchment; the Six Nations constructed elaborate and symbolically distinctive belts made of woven wampum—white and purple beads, made from the quahog shells indigenous to the shoals off the Long Island Sound—to memorialize events in the Haudenosaunee living history. In co-opting Haudenosaunee spiritual and material culture to serve Congress’s political agenda, Kirkland articulated the colonies’ native claims to North America by blending their history with those of an indigenous people. The New England missionary envisioned a new, grand wampum belt that represented a new, autonomous—if not independent United Colonies—in the living history of the Haudenosaunee.¹⁹

Before catching one of the sloops that plied the Hudson for relatively fast transit from New York to Albany, Kirkland purchased 39,000 high quality wampum beads in order to construct the union belt. Since the late seventeenth century, a cottage industry in wampum production had developed along the Long Island and New Jersey coasts. By 1775, Campbell’s Wampum Mint in Pascack, New Jersey had mass-produced beads for at least thirty years. The Haudnesaunee had always traded with outsiders for wampum before European contact, yet the Campbell Wampum Mint reveals the extent to which the Native American spiritual economy had become co-opted by European pre-industrial manufacturing.

¹⁹ Samuel Kirkland diary 21 July 1775, MS-867, The Papers of Samuel Kirkland, Rauner Special Collection, Dartmouth College Library (Hanover); for indigenous constructions of living history, see Darren Bonaparte, *Creation and Confederation: The Living History of the Iroquois* (Mohawk Nation at Akwesasne: Wampum Chronicles, 2006), 10-12; Tahentorens (Ray Fadden), *Wampum Belts of the Iroquois* (Summertown, TN: The Book Publishing Company, 1999), 210-15.

Reverend Kirkland was a man who could engage the luminaries of the Great Awakening in one instance and expertly design a decidedly “savage” spiritual object in the next.²⁰

From Albany, Kirkland returned to his home in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, itself an outgrowth of the Great Awakening among the New England’s Algonquian population. The Stockbridge Indians—an amalgam of Mahican, Wappinger, and Housatonic peoples—comprised the town’s population and had embraced European religion, agriculture, and education. Despite the Stockbridge Indians’ European acculturation, they nevertheless constituted props to the Six Nations’ “longhouse” as “little brothers” of the Oneidas. Upon his arrival on August 2, Kirkland employed three Indian women to fashion his 39,000 beads into the union belt. He micromanaged the initial phases of the belt’s construction to ensure it fit his exact specifications, writing that he was “obliged to attend them constantly for several days to lay the ground for the union belt that they might proceed without my directions.” Although women traditionally had gathered the quahog shells, fashioned the beads, and woven belts for centuries, native women, in Kirkland’s reckoning, could not be trusted with the responsibility of creating the first symbolic representation of the new United Colonies to be presented to the Haudenosaunee.²¹

²⁰ Samuel Kirkland to Volkert Douw, undated, Hamilton College Library Digital Collection <<http://elib.hamilton.edu/u/?arc-kir,745>>. For an overview of New Jersey wampum manufacturing, see Don Taxay, *Money of the American Indians and Other Primitive Currencies of the Americas* (New York: Nummus Press, 1970), 136-44; Charles L. Cutler, *Tracks that Speak: the Legacy of Native American Words in North American Culture* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 142-44.

²¹ Kirkland, diary 2 August 1775. For an overview of the religious acculturation of the Stockbridge Indians, see Linford D. Fisher, *The Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 47-50. For the condition of the Stockbridge Indians at the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War, Colin Calloway’s chapter “Stockbridge: The New England Patriots” provides the most comprehensive narrative; see Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 85-107.

While Kirkland directed the Stockbridge women's construction of the union belt, newly appointed congressional commissioner Turbott Francis completed his five-day voyage from New York City to Albany. Whereas Kirkland performed his duties for Congress with missionary zeal, the Pennsylvania patrician took a parochial vision of Indian diplomacy. While Francis was a congressional appointee and spoke on behalf of all of Congress's constituent colonies, his interests were hardly continental. Francis's diplomatic experience was limited to a 1769 condolence rite, where he filled in for Pennsylvania Governor John Penn, in a matter related to the murder of a Seneca. Although Francis pontificated on the grandiosity of Congress's supremacy in Indian affairs, his fellow commissioners suspiciously eyed him as a crypto-Loyalist. If Kirkland's elaborate Union Belt was to represent the new American identity in Haudenosaunee material culture, Francis was to be the United Colonies' first point of diplomatic contact.²²

Accompanying Francis was his nephew, Tench Tilghman of the Maryland tidewater gentry, who also served as the congressional commissioner's secretary. From the comforts of his family's estates, Tilghman had only read about the frontier: Dunmore's 1774 war on the Ohio River had provided tidewater newspapers with ample material for lurid tales of "savage" violence. Envisioning "a most romantic prospect" for adventure, Tilghman captured his first impressions of Albany in 1775, noting the four hundred or so houses "chiefly built in the old low Dutch Fashion." The Marylander captured the two most dominant features of the Albany skyline: the palatial Georgian mansion of Phillip Schuyler that contrasted with the

²² Oswald Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman* (Albany: Jay Munsell, 1876), 79-80; Oscar Jewell Harvey, *A History of Wilkes-Barre-Luzerne County Pennsylvania* (Wilkes-Barre, PA: Raeder Press, 1909), 494.

old English fort on the hill above the city, “now gone much to decay.” The British symbol of colonial power had fallen into disrepair, the shiny edifice of an ascendant American aristocracy became the new contact point for local and continental politics.²³

On August 10, Samuel Kirkland and congressional commissioner Volkert Douw joined Tilghman and Francis. The missionary used the opportunity to brief the commissioners on the current state of affairs in the Haudenosaunee homeland and likely provided the congressional emissaries with an overview of the elaborate, nine stage protocol of Haudenosaunee diplomacy. Native American treaties contrasted with the contractual, pen-and-ink European treaties in that they were performative, elaborate ceremonies which emphasized reciprocal obligation to each party to maintain and renew metaphorical chains of friendship. Diplomatic councils reinvigorated the Haudenosaunee living history in that renewed older agreements while simultaneously crafting new ones. The Haudenosaunee scorned pen-and-ink treaties and required Europeans honor indigenous diplomatic forms. Since the seventeenth century, Dutch, French, and English officials hoping to treat with the Haudenosaunee learned this lesson and adapted to traditional diplomatic protocol. If the United Colonies hoped to become the newest nation to establish diplomatic relations with the Haudenosaunee, its envoys needed to learn the diplomatic rules.²⁴

Kirkland informed the commissioners that he had initiated diplomatic overtures to the Six Nations, the first of nine rituals required to successfully complete a treaty. The

²³ Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman*, 79.

²⁴ Samuel Kirkland diary 10 August-11 August 1775. For the contrast between European and Haudenosaunee diplomatic forms, see Timothy Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy on the Early American Frontier* (New York: Viking, 2008), 81-85; Daniel Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 45.

missionary had dispatched Stockbridge Indian messengers with strings of wampum to ritually invite the Oneidas to the upcoming treaty negotiations at Albany. If the Indians accepted the overture, they would perform the second ritual in which a delegation of chiefs, warriors, women, and children processed to the site of the treaty for the Woods Edge Rite. This third ritual required the hosts, in this instance the commissioners, to greet the Haudenosaunee delegation by offering gifts and hospitality to their Native American guests. Other rituals followed over the course of several days, during which sides offered each other the “Three Bare Words” of friendship and understanding, and ritually opened the road to Albany as part of the “Path Belt Ceremony,” initiating the diplomatic stage. The fifth and sixth phases—the ritual lighting of the council fire and the recitation of the shared histories between the Haudenosaunee and the United Colonies—were to occur at Albany. With the first six rituals completed, only then could the congressional commissioners present the Continental Congress’s case for neutrality. Diplomacy would conclude with the presentation of the Union Belt which Kirkland’s Stockbridge Indians were currently crafting. Following a feast and the ritual exchange of presents, the Indians and commissioners would part ways.²⁵

As events unfolded, the commissioners had to perform the Woods Edge Rite sooner than they had anticipated. While Kirkland brought the commissioners up to date, the political fault line between local and national governments quaked. Late in the day, a Mohawk messenger arrived to inform Kirkland that a delegation from each of the Six Nations planned

²⁵ Samuel Kirkland diary 12 August 1775. For the structure of Haudenosaunee diplomacy, see William Fenton, “Structure, Continuity, and Change in the Process of Iroquois Treaty Making,” in *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League*, ed. Francis Jennings et. al. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 27-31; Daniel Richter, *Facing Eastward from Indian Country* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 135-37.

to travel to Albany to negotiate a treaty with the Albany Committee of Safety. Despite Schuyler's intercession, it seemed, the local revolutionary government had organized a council of the entire Six Nations without the knowledge of the congressional commissioners or Kirkland. Initially, Kirkland doubted the credibility of the report, as it originated from the Mohawks who maintained close ties with the exiled Johnsons. Having "conferred for some time with Col. Francis on Indian affairs," the delegation agreed to venture towards the Oneida country to assert congress's authority in Indian affairs.²⁶

The following morning, Francis, Tighman, Douw, Kirkland, and their staff of Dutch interpreters set out from Albany for the 115-mile trip westward to the Oneidas. Tilghman observed "this is most wretched Country I ever saw Nothing but pine Barrens" and observed "the province of N[ew] York is far behind any of the colonies in public spirit, her Bridges loose logs dangerous to pass, and everything bears the Mark of the true situation of the Bulk of the People, a State of Tenancy." Indeed, the legacy of British aristocratic patriarchy, of the sort that William Johnson had embodied on the northern frontier, was at odds with Tilghman's republican patriarchal ethos. Tilghman judged New Yorkers based on their land improvements—or lack thereof—that further reflected the rival visions for frontier lands the various colonies sought to advance.²⁷

While on the road, the commissioners learned the Haudenosaunee had begun the second phase of diplomacy: the procession to Albany. On August 12, about four miles west of Schenectady, Kirkland received confirmation from an unnamed New England Indian that

²⁶ Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman*, 80; Samuel Kirkland, diary 10 August-11 August 1775.

²⁷ Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman*, 81-82.

a party of two to three hundred Senecas, Onondagas, Tuscaroras, and Oniedas was in fact en-route to Albany. Kirkland reported this to Francis and Douw and encouraged them to send an express messenger ahead to inform the Indians of the commissioners' approach. The Commissioners delayed and ultimately Kirkland gently reminded them that giving the Indians forewarning of their arrival would show "respect to the Indians & what would be expected from the Commissioners." Still the commissioners obstinately delayed until ten that evening, when Kirkland volunteered to ride ahead and intercept the Indians at German Flatts, some fifty miles away. Kirkland departed, leaving the commissioners to travel without him.

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While Kirkland rode ahead, the commissioners took a detour to the Mohawk "castles," towns named a century earlier for the stockades that surrounded them in a more violent period in Haudenosaunee history, to invite that nation to participate in the treaty in Albany. Tilghman observed the Mohawks at Tionondorage, their "Lower Castle" on the Mohawk. "The Mohawks are become a civilized people," he wrote, "they live in good Houses and work their lands to the same advantage that whites do." Occupying lands east of the 1768 treaty line, the Mohawk "castles" were native enclaves in a zone of European expansion. While Kirkland rode through the night and most of the morning to meet the assembly at German Flatts, Francis and Douw met with Mohawk Chief Little Abraham who "seemed pleased" and agreed to bring a delegation of Mohawks to German Flatts as well. The commissioners met with another delegation of Mohawk Chiefs later that afternoon at Canajoharie, the "Upper Castle," where Tilghman lamented "the small remains of that once

²⁸ Samuel Kirkland, diary 12 August 1775.

Warlike & powerful Nation now dwell in a few miserable huts.” The project of Europeanization had begun at the “Lower Castle” before the arrival of William Johnson in 1739 and continued while he resided there at Fort Johnson before moving to his new estate at Johnson Hall in 1763. Tilghman admired the fruits of William Johnson’s frontier empire on the Mohawk River, even as he himself travelled with a diplomatic mission aimed at supplanting the Johnsons’ influence.²⁹

Ideology tinged Tilghman’s vituperative critique of Canajohare. While the “Upper Castle” was a Loyalist stronghold, it was not the rural ghetto he depicted in his journal. He ignored the elegant white-framed Anglican Church that William Johnson had patronized—its bell and steeple were the pride of the Mohawks. Accordingly, the Oneidas, so impressed by the Johnson Church, encouraged the construction of Samuel Kirkland’s rival church at Kanonwalohale in response to the enhanced prestige Johnson’s church had brought the Mohawks. Moreover, Tilghman happened upon the town when most of its male warriors were, at that moment, with Guy Johnson in Canada. Canajohare was not a ramshackle town of crude hovels Tilghman described; ignored the sturdy stone farmsteads, barns, and agricultural lands that dotted the town’s hinterland. Tilghman condemned the Mohawk land use, observing, “the Indians have a fine body of land at this place, mostly uncultivated.” Unimproved land was, in the eighteenth century Euro-American imaginary, a sign of moral depredation on the part of the owner. Reading deeper into Tilghman’s condemnation, he

²⁹ Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman*, 82-83.

seems to imply that earnest republican yeomanry might make better use of the Mohawk land than the pro-British “savages” leaving otherwise fertile land untended.³⁰

Tilghman’s diary entry is silent on the subject the European-style farmsteads at Canajohare, two owned by William Johnson’s widowed Mohawk wife Degonwadonti. Still, Tilghman offered his observations on the Mohawk matriarch when the Marylander repeated gossip, perhaps from Kirkland, observing “the favorite mistress of the late S^r. William Johnson now lives at Canajohare. But ‘fallen from her high estate.’” After Johnson’s 1774 death, Degonwadonti had departed Johnson Hall with her children and four slaves, taking up residence at her own farmsteads at Canajohare. While Degonwadonti, whom Euro-Americans called Molly Brant, was no longer the mistress of Johnson’s palatial Georgian manor, her situation was hardly as diminished as Tilghman gossiped. She had inherited \$200 from Johnson’s estate and a large farm at German Flatts, the commissioners’ destination. Moreover, Brant’s children by William Johnson inherited a third of the late baronet’s assets, valued at £32,000. Molly Brant’s personal wealth was not insubstantial, with the value of her goods and property amounting to roughly £1206. A year after Johnson’s death, as the congressional commissioners passed through Canajohare, Brant operated a store where Tilghman reported that Brant sold rum to the Indians. Tilghman did not bother to

³⁰ Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman*, 82. For a complete description of the historic Mohawk Village of Canajohare (which is situated about twelve miles from the modern New York village of Canajoharie), see Dean R. Snow and David B. Guldenzopf, “National Historic Landmark Application, Indian Castle Church” (National Park Service, 1971), <pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/NRHP/Text/71000540.pdf>; Kelsay, *Joseph Brant*, 48.

differentiate as to whether the clan mother sold the rum or redistributed it along with other trade goods, as was custom among the Mohawks.³¹

Tilghman paid more respect to Brant than Kirkland, recognizing the power women still held in Mohawk society. He repeated the pernicious rumor that William Johnson maintained a sexual relationship with Brant out of political utility, as “she was of Great use to S^r. William in his treaties with these people. He know that women govern the Politics of savages as well the refined part of the world.” Brant’s marriage to Johnson was not the calculated political alliance that Tilghman imagined, his comments were colored by his own Tidewater understanding of patriarchy and prejudiced by Kirkland’s antipathy toward Brant. She was at once the clan mother of the Tortoise Clan, the oldest and most sacred of the Mohawk clans, and was recognized as the clan mother of all clan mothers in the Haudenosaunee League. Tilghman seemed mistrustful of the power “the brown ladies of Canajohare” wielded in Haudenosaunee affairs; it was only a matter of time before the congressional commissioners were to confront that power.³²

As Tilghman, Francis, and Douw proceeded westward along the muddy roads that flanked the Mohawk River, Kirkland met the Senecas, Oneidas, Cayugas, Tuscaroras, and Onondaga at German Flatts and “introduced the matter in a formal manner—they expressed great satisfaction with the approach of the commissioners.” Binding his revolutionary errand

³¹ Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman*, 83. Brant’s legacy from Johnson’s estate was paid in New York colonial dollars. The probate records of Johnson’s estate calculated property values using the British pound; see “The Last Will and Testament of Sir William Johnson,” in Hamilton, ed., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 12: 1070; David P. Guldenzopf, “The Colonial Transformation of Mohawk Iroquois Society,” (Ph.D. diss. SUNY Albany, 1986), 204-205.

³² Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman*, 83; Katherine M.J. McKenna, “Mary Brant (Konwatsi’ tsiailenni Degonwadonti): ‘Miss Molly,’ Feminist Role Model or Mohawk Princess” in *The Human Tradition in the American Revolution*, ed. Nancy L. Rhoden and Ian K. Steele (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resource Imprint Inc., 2000), 183-201.

to the righteous religious fervor of the Great Awakening, Kirkland preached a sermon in English and the Oneida language and awaited the arrival of the commissioners. The commissioners arrived that night, but they chose not to inform the Indians of their arrival out of concern “if they ever got fooling we should never get rid of them for the Night.” Whether the Indians were raucous partiers or this statement reflected a negative stereotype held by Francis and Tilghman regarding Indians’ tendencies toward reckless drunkenness remains unclear.³³

The commissioners made a poor first impression on the chiefs, blundering their way through the Woods Edge Rite. Kirkland dispatched two Dutch assistants to inform the Indians of the commissioners’ arrival and to invite the chiefs to meet the commissioners at the commissioners’ lodgings. Whether Kirkland had not properly briefed the messengers as to the proper protocol for summoning a council or they had ignored his instructions, Kirkland complained that “the invitation not being Delivered in a formal manner, the Indians appeared very indifferent about going.” Kirkland personally intervened, convincing the chiefs to accompany him to the commissioners’ lodgings. Upon arrival, they discovered Francis had not yet awakened. To Kirkland’s chagrin, the chiefs impatiently waited for the purported congressional luminary to wake and collect himself.³⁴

While Kirkland expressed righteous horror at Francis’s boorishness, Tilghman expressed bemusement with the assembled chiefs waiting for his uncle to awaken. He commented that they drank a dram of rum, smoked a pipe, and indulged “in a most

³³ Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman*, 84; Samuel Kirkland diary 13 August 1775.

³⁴ Samuel Kirkland diary 14 August 1775.

immoderate breakfast of chocolate.” The sight of Indian chiefs starting their day like tidewater gentlemen confounded Tilghman’s imagined construction of a “savage frontier.” Chocolate was an indicator of the changing pre-industrial manufacturing economy of the northern frontier. By 1775, the colony of New York was a leading manufacturer of chocolate in North America; chocolate not consumed within the colony was exported to other North American ports. Chocolate mills operated along the rivers and streams surrounding Albany since the 1730s, and the Indians traded for it at one of the many shops in Albany and Schenectady that carried the confection at the affordable price of two shillings per pound. Molly Brant sold rum—costing between four and seven shillings per gallon at the outbreak of the revolution—she may have very well had the popular confection at her Canajohare store as well. However much “immodesty” of chocolate consumption rankled Tilghman’s tidewater sensibilities, it was a common, inexpensive, and locally produced luxury on the northern frontier.³⁵

If the Indians did not adequately play the role of “savages” as Tilghman imagined, his uncle Turbott Francis hardly conducted himself as a “civilized” gentleman. When Francis finally awoke and joined the assembled Indians, he crassly ignored the rigorous protocol for Indian treaties. To Kirkland’s dismay, Francis “very abruptly began to inform them of his business” without the proper ceremony and exchange of presents. To make matters worse,

³⁵ Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman*, 84. For a discussion on the material culture of chocolate on the northern frontier, see W. Douglas McCombs, “Chocolate Consumption in New York’s Upper Hudson River Valley, 1730-1830,” in Louis Evan Grivetti and Howard-Yanna Shapiro, eds., *Chocolate: History, Heritage, and Culture* (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, 2009), 383-384; James F. Gay, “Chocolate Production and Uses in 17th and 18th Century North America,” in Louis Evan Grivetti and Howard-Yanna Shapiro, eds., *Chocolate: History, Heritage, and Culture* (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, 2009), 290; Nick Westbrook, Christopher D. Fox, and Anne McCarty “Breakfasting on Chocolate: Chocolate in Military Life on the Northern Frontier, 1750-1780,” in Louis Evan Grivetti and Howard-Yanna Shapiro, eds., *Chocolate: History, Heritage, and Culture* (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, 2009), 401.

the interpreters Douw and Francis had hired proved ineffective translators. Francis grew visibly frustrated and “flew into a passion,” pressing Kirkland into service as interpreter. Kirkland, however, understood Francis made a poor first impression, recording that he felt “ashamed and afraid to introduce the important business of the Commissioners... lest they should sink in the esteem of the Indians.” He attempted to salvage the situation by gently reminding Francis that the initial encounter was not the place to introduce treaty business, but Francis chastised Kirkland and insisted he knew what he was doing. Kirkland “accordingly interpreted & made some apology to the Indians for his abruptness.” Hoping to smooth the harsher edges of the commissioner’s speech and bring it as best he could in compliance with treaty protocol. By whatever means Kirkland “interpreted” Francis’s meaning to the Six Nations, the Indians’ trust in Kirkland allowed both the commissioners and the Six Nations to overcome their own disgust with the men who purportedly were there to replace the Johnsons’ patronage.³⁶

Tilghman seemed to grasp Haudenosaunee treaty protocol more completely than his uncle, writing that “the Indians never enter into Controversy upon these occasions, but after hearing what you have to say, answer as above they will consider what you have said. Neither do they ever talk about the Matter in hand.” Francis resisted Kirkland’s instruction on proper procedure; Tilghman appeared to be more of an apt pupil.³⁷

Francis had more pressing matters than trifling with Kirkland. The Indians had performed the second diplomatic ritual—they “left home”—with the intention to treat with

³⁶ Samuel Kirkland diary 14 August 1775; Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman*, 85

³⁷ Samuel Kirkland diary 14 August 1775; Daniel Richter, *Facing Eastward from Indian Country*, 135-137.

the Albany Committee, not the Continental Congress. The commissioners then needed to establish themselves as the primary points of contact for Indian diplomacy. They rode out later in the day to formally greet the entire assembly of Indians. Tilghman commented how the “Behavior of the poor Savages at a public Meeting ought to put us civilized people to the Blush. The most profound silence is observed, no interruption of a speaker. When anyone speaks, all are attentive.” The commissioners offered presents of tobacco and rum and generally met with positive reception, although a chief spoke out against “the bad effects of drinking at a time of Business and desired the White men not have liberty to sell rum to their Young Men.” Chiefs derived power from distributing trade goods; the commissioners disrespected that authority through the general distribution of rum.³⁸

While Tilghman composed his diary entry on the banks of the Mohawk River “about sunset of a fine evening,” Kirkland received intelligence about British designs to induce the Six Nations to war against the American colonies. The Indians informed Kirkland that the proposed council at Albany as a pretense to dispatch Mohawk parties against rebels, Guy Johnson warning that the “white people intended to deceive the Indians, get them down as far as Albany, then fall upon & destroy them or deliver them into hands of the Yankees.” Rather than take up the hatchet, the Oneidas and Cayugas rebuked the Mohawks for “taking up arms in a peaceable country & making hostile preparations upon Col. Johnson’s pretended alarm - infuriating many white people & disturbing the peace of that Country.” Although a handful of partisan Mohawks from Canajoharie under Joseph Brant’s leadership remained with Johnson

³⁸ Samuel Kirkland diary 14 August 1775; Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman*, 86; Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 135.

ready to take up the hatchet, the majority of the Six Nations actively worked to preserve neutrality.³⁹

Kirkland's informants also related Johnson's threats against Kirkland's life: "to cut off his head as sure as he would a snake." The alarmed Cayugas, Senecas, and Tuscarora confronted the Oneidas, expressing their concern that Kirkland's capture or death could plunge the entire confederacy into violence either at the hands of vengeful New Englanders or against the British in avenging Kirkland. They conferred as to whether Kirkland should "retire for [the] present—or that all agree to support & Defend him at all adventures." The Oneidas soberly agreed that Kirkland should remain among them until Johnson returned from Canada, and only then should Kirkland depart for the sake of neutrality.⁴⁰

To further compound Kirkland's woes, he and his fellow commissioners confronted the power of the Haudenosaunee matriarchs. Molly Brant had accompanied a delegation of Mohawks that Francis and Douw had greeted on the road to the German Flatts. Brant's appearance made a powerful impression on Tilghman: "she was dressed in the Indian manner, but her linen and Cloathes were the finest of their kind." Her sallow appearance startled those who had not seen Brant since William Johnson's death; her grief had been immense, as she informed all that her gaunt appearance came from "the remembrance of a Loss that could not be made up to her." She fiercely chastised Kirkland for disrespectfully passing through the Mohawks' country without calling upon her. For Kirkland, the subtext of this rebuke hinted that Brant knew precisely what he was hoping to accomplish for the

³⁹ Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman*, 86; Samuel Kirkland diary 14 August, 1775; Kelsay, *Joseph Brant*, 152.

⁴⁰ Samuel Kirkland diary 14 August 1775.

United Colonies' cause. Her presence unnerved the commissioners, as Tilghman commented, "the Indians pay her great respect and I am afraid her influence will give us great trouble, for we are informed she is working strongly to prevent the meeting at Albany, being intirely in the Interests of Guy Johnson." As a clan mother, Brant had a voice in private council away from the Anglo-American commissioners, and the ghost of William Johnson spoke through her.⁴¹

For Kirkland, Brant's powerful presence magnified the commissioners' ineptitude. The Indians expected the commissioners to perform the Three Bare Words ritual to ensure clear communication between both parties. Kirkland waited until noon for Francis to rise from bed in order to practice the ritual speech. To Kirkland's dismay, he "found nothing done—or scarce thought of." Bungling the ritual potentially gave Brant and her allies the pretense they need to abandon the council at Albany. Kirkland reacted quickly and supplied the unprepared commissioners with a draft speech, which followed treaty protocol. The commissioners arrived at the Haudenosaunee encampment at four in the afternoon. Kirkland rued that "the Indians were quite impatient—having been assembled & waiting for many hours."⁴²

The congressional commissioners performed the mechanics of the rituals even as they failed to grasp their true significance to the Haudenosaunee. The first bare word and token of

⁴¹ Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman*, 87. For the political role of clan mothers in the Haudenosaunee League, see Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse*, 215. For an overview on Molly Brant's role in the British imperial power structure, see Gail Danvers, "Gendered Encounters, Warriors, Women, and William Johnson," *Journal of American Studies* 35 (October 2001): 200.

⁴² Samuel Kirkland diary 15 August 1775; for Haudenosaunee ritual forms and treaty protocol, see Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 135; William Nelson Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse: A Political History of the Iroquois Confederacy* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 589.

affection invited the Six Nations “to come down and sit at the council fire at Albany, that they may hear from us the sentiments of their brethren of the Twelve United Colonies.” The second word was a string of wampum to be sent to “all these absent brethren of the *Six Nations*, and invite them to come down and sit at the council fire at *Albany*.” The third was a belt to help “shut your ears and fortify your minds against any such evil and false reports; and if such liars and deceivers should appear among you, and attempt to poison your minds.” The chiefs elected Kirkland’s Oneida rival, Kanaghquassea to give their reply, addressing Francis by his newly bestowed Haudenosaunee name:

Brother Solihoany and our Albany Brother [Douw], Commissioners from the Twelve United Colonies: You have now opened your minds. We have heard your voices. Your speeches are far from being contemptible. But as the day is far spent, we defer a reply till tomorrow. As we are weary from having sat long in council, we think it time for a little drink; and you must remember that the Twelve Colonies are a great body.

Tilghman caught Kanaghquassea’s not-so-subtle hint: “the drink should be in proportion” to a great body.” He maintained his stereotype of the Indians’ insatiable thirst for rum, writing that “we knew the consequence too well to Indulge.” Kanaghquassea’s request for rum sought to measure Congress’s capacity to give gifts and patronage to the Haudenosaunee in lieu of the British. Kanaghquassea’s approbation of Kirkland’s ghost-written speech saved the Three Bare Words Ceremony from failing and prevented the negotiations from collapsing, but the commissioners’ parsimonious gift of rum to the chiefs hardly cast Congress as a suitable alternative to the British.⁴³

⁴³ “Proceedings of Commissioners Appointed to treat with the Six Nations of Indians”, in Force, ed., *American Archives Series Four*, 3: 473-74; Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman*, 87.

The commissioners completed the Path Belt Ceremony the following day, clearing the road to Albany. Unlike previous days, Francis managed to play his role as commissioner without offending the assembled Indians. “By this belt you desire that we may clear the road to Albany, that none of our people may injure you,” he declared; “the road shall be as clear for you to go to Albany, as it is for us to go to the country of the Six Nations.” Happy to secure full participation from the Six Nations in the Albany council, the commissioners remained dismayed that they refused to invite the Canadian villages where Guy Johnson had taken refuge. Tilghman recognized they were triangulating between the American rebels and the British: “it is plain to me that the Indians understand their game, which is to play into both hands.” Kirkland apparently failed to inform Francis that the Haudenosaunee constructed neutrality as a balanced, reciprocal relationship between belligerent empires, in contrast to European constructions of neutrality as a total “non-combatant” status. Neutrality required a neutral Haudenosaunee chief to give aid and comfort in equal proportion to both sides. Moreover, individual warriors and headmen, like William Johnson’s Mohawk son Peter and Molly Brant’s brother Joseph Brant, had liberty to choose sides. The Haudenosaunee maintained its balanced neutrality by supplying material and military support, when needed, to both belligerents.⁴⁴

Francis and his congressional cohorts had apparently grown weary of German Flatts and left hastily without making the proper ceremonial departure. Kirkland “was obliged to address them in the name of the commissioners—something they omitted—& advance a little

⁴⁴ Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman*, 88; “Reply of the Indians,” 16 August 1775 in Force, ed., *American Archives Fourth Series* 3: 474. For the Covenant Chain Alliance, see Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 221-22. For factional neutrality, see Caitlin Fitz, “Suspected on Both Sides: Little Abraham, Iroquois Neutrality, and the American Revolution,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 28 (Fall 2008): 300.

spending money to some of their head men which had been always customary that they might have it in their power to give a little drink to their young warriors.” He had fewer qualms about helping the Indians imbibe than did Tilghman. More than the commissioners, he understood that a little rum could undo any minor diplomatic faux pas. On the contested space of the northern frontier, rum was at once a dangerous vice, an essential trade good, a mark of prestige, and a diplomatic lubricant.⁴⁵

With the first four diplomatic rituals completed and the Haudnesaunee on the road to Albany, Kirkland attended to his project of the new union belt. He “rode the whole night” and “reached Stockbridge about day break—Sabbath morning.” He remained for two days, leaving “Wednesday morning before breakfast,” to return Albany with the completed belt in time for the opening on the ceremonial council fire.⁴⁶

Back in Albany, Phillip Schuyler in his capacity as a congressional official prepared to inaugurate a new era on North America, where the United Colonies would assume responsibility for the Covenant Chain Alliance. The Haudenosaunee constructed their alliances as metaphorical chains, connecting peoples through mutual responsibilities and reciprocal trading obligations. The Covenant Chain Alliance had bound the Haudenosaunee to Britain since the seventeenth century; the United Colonies claimed ownership of the Covenant Chain through their “native” connection to the land. As the patriarch of Albany and commander of the Northern Department of the Continental Army, Phillip Schuyler became the congressional commissioner who linked the present with the living history of the

⁴⁵ Samuel Kirkland diary 17 August, 1775; for an analysis of rum in mid-eighteenth century Haudenosaunee economy, see Gail D. MacLeitch, “‘Red’ Labor: Iroquois Participation in the Atlantic Economy, *Labor: Studies in Working Class Histories of the Americas* 1 (December 2004): 69-90.

⁴⁶ Kirkland Diary entries for 17 August, 1775, 19 August 1775, 23 August 1775.

Haudenosaunee. He occupied a spiritual role as a living descendent of Peter Schuyler, whom the Haudenosaunee had adopted into their kinship structure as *Queder* a century earlier.

While the Six Nations tended to apply the term *Queder* as the embodiment of the governing council at Albany, the commissioners co-opted the title in their addresses to the Six Nations to convey a sense of legitimacy and continuity in their own relations with the Six Nations. Congress depended on Schuyler's personal ties to the Six Nations to project itself as the legitimate government on the frontier. For the Haudenosaunee to recognize Congress's sovereignty, its commissioners—not Albany's revolutionary government—needed to “own” the relationship with the Six Nations. ⁴⁷

Despite Schuyler's spiritual claims to the council fire, the formal treaty proceedings in Albany commenced without any resolution as with whom the Six Nations would be formally treating: the Continental Congress or the Albany committeemen. Both sides recognized the importance of “owning” the ancient title of *Queder*, keeper of the council fire. As they proceeded up the hill, beyond the crumbling British fort above Albany, “some altercation happened between the Commissioners and the Committee of Albany” as to which body would be requickened as *Queder*. As the ceremonies commenced, the Congressman and the local officials continued their quarrel in front of the Indians, which had the effect of “sink[ing] their honor & esteem.” To own the council fire and assert dominance in Indian

⁴⁷ Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 77; “Address of the Sachems and Warriours of the Six Nations,” in Force, ed., *American Archives Fourth Series*, 3: 476; for an overview of the *Queder* kinship line, see Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 164; Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 82-83.

affairs, commissioners and committeemen, denigrated their decorum in order to so ingratiate themselves into the Six Nations' kinship-based system of governance.⁴⁸

The following evening, the conflict ignited again. A delegation of Oneidas insisted that, according to their custom, they had to honor the formal invitation from the Albany committee before formally treating with the congressional commissioners. Francis took offense to the request, believing it beneath his dignity that the Oneida "should desire to think of speaking to any person or body of men before addressing the commission."

Commissioners Phillip Schuyler and Oliver Woolcott, who had not been present at German Flatts, understood in the Oneida's request and saw no harm in allowing a separate meeting. Francis became apoplectic at this suggestion. As the dispute escalated, Kirkland requested, "that the committee might retire & settle matters among themselves as it would give the Indians great jealousy to see them dispute."⁴⁹

The commissioners resolved the dispute out of sight of the Oneidas, begrudgingly striking a novel compromise that would preserve the nominal supremacy of congressional commissioners without violating Haudenosaunee custom: the Indians would present their business to the local Albany committee first, which would defer its answer until after congressional commissioners had concluded their business. Prudent heads prevailed, although Kirkland confided to his diary that Francis was "disordered in the head." The treaty

⁴⁸ Samuel Kirkland diary 23 August 1775; for the ritual significance of owning the council fire in Haudenosaunee diplomacy, see Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 45.

⁴⁹ Samuel Kirkland diary 23 August 1775.

proceedings continued without major conflicts between the national and local revolutionary governments.⁵⁰

In addition to the usual politics, which attended diplomacy, Kirkland saw to it that the treaty was also a performance of the power of Protestant religion to “civilize” the frontier. He delivered two sermons on Sunday, August 27 in both the English and Oneida languages. His topic, the Ten Commandments, lent a Biblical legitimacy to Congress’s newfound role as supreme legislators in the land. The evangelical revolutionary minister’s service concluded with the singing of hymns by an Oneida choir. Kirkland’s pulpit oratory, however, failed to impress Tilghman. The Marylander expressed disappointment in the singing. “The voices of the Indians were well enough,” he observed, “but by endeavoring to make out Tenor, Treble, and Base, they spoiled the whole.” The fault for Tilghman, lay with the women who “always strained their voices too high.” Yet Kirkland and Tilghman likely agreed that Protestant Oneida women singing, albeit not to Baroque standards, were a far better alternative than powerful and well-connected Mohawk women speaking their minds in council.⁵¹

For the Six Nations, religion was more fundamental to their construction of neutrality. Indeed, they had been willing to go to war to protect their missionary, Samuel Kirkland, and cited Johnson’s highhanded efforts to remove him from their land as a reason for engaging in the treaty. Yet Kirkland was not alone among ministers whom the Indians held in esteem. John Stuart, an Anglican minister living among the Mohawks, also held an honored place. The Mohawks were “frequently alarmed with reports that their Minister

⁵⁰ Samuel Kirkland diary 23 August 1775; “Speech of Senghnagenrat (Oneida), an Oneida Chief, addressed to the Albany Committee,” 25 August 1775, in Force, ed., *American Archives Fourth Series*, 3: 477-478.

⁵¹ Samuel Kirkland diary 27 August 1775; Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman*, 95.

[Stuart] is to be torn away from them. It would occasion great disturbance, was he to be taken away.” Protecting culture brokers, particularly influential missionaries, was a critical sticking point for the Mohawks. Neutrality meant that dissenting ministers like Kirkland and Anglican ministers like Stuart would all be welcome on Indian land. The Commissioners conceded this point and agreed not to harm Stuart. The Haudenosaunee, not the lofty Enlightenment thinkers in Congress, first forced congressional action on religious freedom, albeit on Indian lands.⁵²

On the Monday following Kirkland’s sermon, the commissioners delivered the speech that Kirkland had helped to craft in Philadelphia the previous month. After presenting themselves as the genuine keepers of the old Covenant Chain, the commissioners formally promulgated their grievances with the King’s wicked ministers. Tilghman noted how that the speech had to be altered from its original form so that it could be translated and understood by the Indians, cheekily writing that “you might almost as well have read them a Chapter out of Locke or any of our most abstracted reasoners.” The speech fell flat not because it was too “highbrow” for the Indians, but rather because it dignified the colonizer at the expense of the indigene. “We think our cause is just; therefore, hope God will be on our side,” the commissioners declared. “We do not take up the hatchet and struggle for honour or conquest, but to maintain our civil constitution and religious privileges, the very same for which our forefathers left their native land and came to this Country.” How many Indians within earshot wished the commissioners’ forefathers had not “left their native land” at all?⁵³

⁵² Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman*, 94-95.

⁵³ Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman*, 95; “Address of the Continental Congress,” in Force, ed., *American Archives Fourth Series*, 3: 483.

Although Tilghman had earlier admonished the Six Nations for purported double-dealing, his uncle Turbott Francis dubiously worked at cross-purposes from his fellow congressional commissioners. Some time in the night of August 31, 1775, the commissioner discreetly left the sleeping town of Albany for a clandestine meeting with an Onondaga chief. More than three hundred chiefs, warriors, matrons, and children, representing all six Haudenosaunee nations, camped on the bluffs above the Hudson River just west of the city's crumbling fortifications. Meeting "in the bushes" with Chief Tiahogwando, Commissioner Turbott Francis convinced the Onondaga chief to sabotage the following day's closing ceremonies in exchange for a barrel of rum.⁵⁴

Earlier historians have assigned Francis and Tiahogwando the stereotypical roles of crypto-Loyalist and drunken Indian respectively, but this interpretation falls woefully short of understanding the true nature of their interactions. For all of Francis's bluster about the importance of Congress, he served two masters on the northern frontier in the summer of 1775, both of whom hoped to exploit the imperial conflict with Great Britain as an opportunity to lay claim to contested lands on the northern frontier. In addition to being a champion for congressional supremacy in Indian affairs, Francis was a political operative for Pennsylvania governor John Penn, with tacit orders to steer treaty negotiations toward favoring Pennsylvania's rather than Connecticut's claim to a disputed Haudenosaunee land purchase in the Susquehanna watershed. Although Francis fell squarely into the "Rebel" camp and often pontificated on the importance of Congressional supremacy in Indian affairs by day, under the waxing harvest moon, Francis willingly betrayed Congress's strategic and

⁵⁴ Harvey, *A History of Wilkes-Barre-Luzerne County Pennsylvania*, 494.

diplomatic agenda in order to secure Pennsylvania's title to questionably acquired lands. For all of his faults, Turbott Francis was hardly a proto-Benedict Arnold. Francis was a Pennsylvanian and a revolutionary, and he did not see himself as compromising his patriotism by subsuming his national identity in order to secure Pennsylvania's role as a powerbroker on the frontier.⁵⁵

Likewise, Tiahogwando was no mere drunken Indian. Rum carried economic value on the frontier and the barrel enabled him to enhance his prestige within his immediate band by redistributing the largesse. Publically lamenting the sordid details of a dubious land deal would have certainly resonated among traditionalists weary of any dealings with the United Colonists. Tiahogwando was not a childlike chief eager to drown his senses in a barrel of rum. The chief capitalized on an opportunity to enhance his own prestige and possibly increase his own reputation among anti-European factions.

The climax of the treaty negotiations came on August 31 with the formal conclusion of speeches and the presentation of the Union Belt to the Six Nations. Kirkland's investment in 39,000 wampum beads resulted in a suitably impressive gift. Kirkland permitted himself to privately succumb to the sin of pride: "the union belt rec'd with great satisfaction—such a belt & such a speech (said they) we never saw, never heard before." The Union Belt now became part of the Haudenosaunee living history, to be displayed among the other great belts stored at Onandaga and would, in the future, be brought out and interpreted at future council fires where the United Colonies would renew and brighten the Covenant Chain with the Haudenosaunee brethren. Presentation of the Union Belt to the Haudenosaunee was the first

⁵⁵ Harvey, *A History of Wilkes-Barre–Luzerne County Pennsylvania*, 494.

representation of a politically autonomous United Colonies to a foreign power, declaring their independence *in council*, August 31, 1775.⁵⁶

Of more immediate constitutional significance to the commissioners was how they managed to work out the question of congressional supremacy over Indian affairs through political accommodation and cultural compromise. Mohawk chief Little Abraham chided the commissioners for overlooking a final point of protocol. “According to our ancient custom, whenever a council fire was kindled up, and a tree of peace was planted, there was some person appointed to watch it. Now, as there is no person appointed to watch this tree, we of the Six Nations take upon us to appoint one. Let it be the descendant of our ancient friend *Queder*.” Whether an intentional sidestepping by the commissioners to avoid rankling the Albany committee or another oversight, they were displeased with Abraham’s request that *Queder* would own the relationship, responding unequivocally that Philip Schuyler and Volkert Douw, both of Albany, would be the keeper of the ceremonial fire. *Queder* would be an Albany native, but would draw his “authority from the Twelve United Colonies to keep the flame pure and bright.” Congressional supremacy prevailed over the Committee of Albany, but the compromise conformed to Haudenosaunee ceremonial custom and treaty protocol for it to be legitimate.⁵⁷

Before Kirkland took comfort in a successful treaty, the Onondaga Chief Tiahogwando raised the ugly, unresolved land dispute between New England and Pennsylvania over ill-gotten Haudenosaunee lands in the Susquehanna valley. Thisthis

⁵⁶ Samuel Kirkland diary 31 August 1775.

⁵⁷ “Reply of the Indians,” 31 August 1775, in Force, ed., *American Archives Fourth Series*, 3: 487; “Answer of the Commissioners to the Speech delivered yesterday by the Indians,” 1 September 1775, in Force, ed., *American Archives Fourth Series*, 3: 489

soured the Indians positive demeanor as they took offense to this breach of protocol. A chief warrior assured Kirkland that “no such thing was talked of that morning at their Indian council where everything was finished in answer to the Commissioners of Congress.” The other congressional commissioners did not suspect Francis of double dealing until December, 1775, but Kirkland saw Francis’s palm prints all over the unpleasant affair, writing “such things may be expect[ed] when a private good is set up instead of the public.”⁵⁸

Despite Francis’s erratic behaviors and overt attempts to sabotage the treaty, the United Colonies and the Six Nations achieved a workable neutrality. This could not have happened had the Six Nations not desired neutrality even in the face of the diplomatic blundering which could have easily allowed a militant pro-British faction to intercede. Kirkland’s constant intervention allowed the pro-neutrality faction to prevail. Moreover, Congress successfully consolidated and defended its authority to manage Indian affairs over the individual provincial governments. Throughout the treaty process, the Six Nations asserted their independence from British and Anglo-American hegemony and their efforts to rebuff British requests to join the imperial conflict represented an attempt towards their own sovereignty in the escalating conflict.

The Treaty of Albany established an ambiguous neutrality where competing constructions of the frontier coexisted without activating the fault lines that divided the numerous interests present in council during the late summer of 1775. Congress maintained its grip on Haudenosaunee diplomacy by resituating the council fire in General Philip Schuyler’s patriarchal bailiwick at Albany. For Turbott Francis and Samuel Kirkland, the

⁵⁸ Oscar Jewell Harvey, *A History of Wilkes-Barre – Luzerne County Pennsylvania* (Wilkes-Barre: Raeder Press, 1909), 494.

treaty deferred the question to a later date as to who would colonize the northern frontier: whether hoards of land speculators or patriotic scions of the Great Awakening would acculturate the Haudenosaunee and “relieve” them of their surplus lands remained an open question. To Tench Tilghman, the journey put him in a “mind of Don Quixote’s rambles thro,” a last chance to see the “noble savages” on the frontier before they vanished under a flood of Anglo-American settlers. Molly Brant construed neutrality as the liberty to continue to aid her family among the British at Canada, to fight to hold on to her ancestral lands at Canajohare, distribute rum to her thirsty kinfolk, and to let others provide the requisite aid and comfort to the United Colonies. Neutrality allowed Kanaghquassea and his traditionalist faction of chiefs to disengage, at least temporarily, in this “white man’s quarrel.” Finally, on the margins of the Haudenosaunee longhouse, at the Forks of the Ohio River, the neutrality brokered at Albany provided competing factions a diplomatic framework to negotiate their own accord to secure tranquility on the northern frontier.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman*, 101.

Chapter Three:
Pageants of Power

“RUN away from this subscriber...a remarkable white Indian Woman...was with Child”¹

Sometime in the summer of 1775, five-armed guards and their twenty-one-year-old prisoner, a fugitive African-American slave named Phebe, paused on the west bank of the upper Ohio River. That meandering watercourse not only demarked the boundary between Indian country to the west and the British colonies to the east, it also marked the line where Phebe ceased to be a person and once again became another man’s property. Presumably bound or manacled, Phebe faced continued bondage and punishment back in Virginia. Although once again a slave, she may have drawn strength from the fact that her young children were still free and in the care of a female Shawnee chief named Anipassicowa. Whatever the consequences of Phebe’s resistance to her enslavement, her legacy to her children would be their freedom—or so she thought.²

For a fleeting moment in October 1775, the trajectory of the nascent American Revolution depended on the fate of Phebe’s children. At Fort Pitt, situated at the confluence

¹ *Virginia Gazette*, 3 March 1775

² Reuben Gold Thwaites and Louise Phelps Kellogg, eds., *The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777: Compiled from the Draper Manuscripts in the Library of the Wisconsin Historical Society* (Madison: 1908; reprint, Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1970), 104; *Virginia Gazette*, 21 January 1775, 3 March 1775, 3; *Ibid.*, 115; There is no way to know conclusively if the fugitive slave among the Shawnees was Phebe Hardaway. According to two notices in the *Williamsburg Gazette* in January and March of 1775, both she and her husband Stephen were of mixed race, Phebe was pregnant in January of 1775, and they were headed west. The identity of the fugitive slave among the Shawnee is based on circumstantial evidence, but the scenario is plausible. Even if Phebe Hardaway was not the name of the slave who left her children among the Shawnee, the event did occur and it did affect the Treaty at Fort Pitt.

of the Ohio River, Commissioners from the Second Continental Congress and chiefs from the diverse Native American nations of the Upper Ohio Valley negotiated a treaty meant to ensure that the Ohio Indians remained neutral in the widening American Revolutionary War. Peace on the frontier seemed certain. As the Indians and Commissioners concluded their business, the Virginian commissioner demanded the Shawnees, who had been harboring Phebe's children, return them to their "rightful" Virginian owner. To compound the tension, the Virginians insisted that the Shawnees turn over hostages until the slaves had been delivered. Shawnee Chief Cornstalk refused, defiantly replying that the Virginians were free to cross the Ohio River and search for the children themselves, but he had no intention of delivering them up to a life of slavery. Both the Shawnee and the Virginians exchanged veiled martial threats. If the war of words escalated and talks broke down, the congressional commissioners risked pushing the Shawnees to the British side and unleashing the horrors of Indian warfare in the trans-Appalachian region.³

The fate of empires and the continent hung in the balance, and the Virginians seemed willing to go to war with the Shawnee over Phebe's children. Yet historians have excluded this part of the narrative, hardly stooping to notice the fate of a slave woman and her children in the larger history of Indian diplomacy on the frontier. Both the Continental Congress and that the Six Nations used the treaty as a stage to project power which neither body could effectively exercise on the frontier. Deep divisions between Native American and Euro-American communities occupying the contested lands between the Allegheny Mountains and British Fort Detroit threatened the pretended power the Six Nations and Rebellious

³ Thwaites and Kellogg, eds., *The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777*, 115, 117-19.

Continental Congress claimed over those lands. Although the Six Nations and the Continental Congress tried to stage unified “Native American” and “Patriot” blocs to one another, competing interests on either side threatened to unmake the civility. The neutrality both sides sought represented a diplomatic catch-all, a formless definition that was indicative of the nature of the Revolutionary Frontier. In the power play between men, women, nations, and cultures, Phebe’s children became theatrical props in two empires’ displays of fictive power.

In 1775, Virginia and Pennsylvania claimed jurisdiction over lands east of the Ohio River. The Second Continental Congress, by exerting its own authority over the colonies in military and Native American diplomacy, contested those claims. Shawnees, Leni Lenapes, Mingos, Wyandots, and other eastern Indians had from settler encroachments and called the Ohio Valley their homeland. The Haudnesaunee, with their homeland four hundred miles to the northeast, claimed sovereignty over the Native American communities in the Ohio Valley. The British empire, with its military outposts along the Great Lakes, continued to declare supremacy over all peoples in North America.

By most accounts, August of 1775 was a soggy, muddy affair in the Upper Ohio River Valley. Travellers’ narratives relate drenching downpours for days on end. Nothing short of a deluge could waylay Richard Butler on his often-traveled path into Indian country along the Upper Ohio River. He had only made it two miles from Fort Pitt when he pitched camp for the night on the western slope of Mount Gage, writing that he “Camp’d At the 2 Mile run,” as it “Rained All night.” The rains must have turned the river into a torrent and reduced the paths into muddy streams to halt Butler in his progress, Now, under the shadow

of a mountain named for the recently sacked commander of the British army, Butler and his two assistants braved their first night in the service of the nascent revolutionary cause.⁴

As the lone agent of the Continental Congress operating on the west bank of the Ohio River, Butler was a solitary revolutionary voice in the North American wilderness. Sharp summer rains sloughed off sheets of topsoil from the eastern bluffs as the Ohio River eternally recut its own path through North America. While nature reworked the familiar land and Congress sought to redraw the cultural and political boundaries of the trans-Appalachian frontier. At least for the night, Butler was a stationary figure in a region in motion. Under the punishing August rains, whole empires waxed and waned—exactly which empires were rising or contracting remained an open question. When the rains relented early the next morning, Butler too was the move again as he summoned the diverse native peoples of the Upper Ohio to a summit with commissioners from the new rebel congress.⁵

The political landscape in the Upper Ohio seemed just as muddied as the rain swelled rivers and creeks Butler needed to traverse. Dunmore's War of 1774 between the Shawnees and the colony of Virginia had turned the Upper Ohio country into a violently contested battlefield, shattering alliances between Native American nations, and setting Virginia on a collision course with Pennsylvania for hegemony in the region. Lord Dunmore imposed a humiliating peace on the Shawnees at the 1774 Treaty of Camp Charlotte, forcing the Shawnees to cede land and hostages. Dunmore planned to conclude the land acquisition

⁴ Samuel Thornely, ed., *The Journals of Nicholas Creswell 1774-1777* (1924; reprint, Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 2007), 99-103; Edward G. Williams, ed., "The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775: Continental Congress' Envoy to the Western Indians, Part 1," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 46 (October 1963): 390; idem, ed., "The Orderly Book of Colonel Henry Bouquet's Expedition Against the Ohio Indians, 1764," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 42 (March 1959): 17.

⁵ Williams, ed., "The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775...Part 1," 391.

through a formal treaty at Fort Pitt planned for the summer of 1775, but the outbreak of war at Concord and Lexington halted his plans. The royal governor fled Williamsburg, and a revolutionary Virginia Assembly assumed the lead role in finalizing the treaty with the Ohio Indians. The Revolution further disrupted the old balance of power on the frontier and hegemony had once again become an open question.⁶

Virginia's revolutionary assembly in Williamsburg sought to consolidate its authority in the contested Forks of the Ohio and appointed its own slate of commissioners to finish Dunmore's treaty. Virginia commissioner James Wood preceded Butler's mission by a month to summon the Ohio Indians to what would have been Dunmore's summer peace conference at Fort Pitt, but the foray yielded mixed results and nearly cost him his life at the hands of hostile natives. Reporting back to Peyton Randolph in Williamsburg, Wood wrote ominously, "from every discovery I was able to make the Indians are forming a general Confederacy against the Colony." For the Ohio Indians, the revolutionary turmoil provided an opportunity to settle old scores with the Virginians.⁷

⁶ For studies on the legality of Dunmore's War, see Randolph C. Downes, "Dunmore's War: An Interpretation," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 21 (December 1934): 311-30; Jack M. Sosin, "The British Indian Department and Dunmore's War," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 74 (January 1966): 34-50; Reuben Gold Thwaites and Louise Phelps Kellogg, eds., *A Documentary History of Dunmore's War: Compiled from the Draper Manuscripts in the Library of the Wisconsin Historical Society* (1901; reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: C.J. Carrier Company, 1974), 301-06. For a study on the aftermath of Dunmore's War, see Colin Calloway, *The Shawnees and the War for America* (New York: The Penguin Group, 2007), 43-66; Thwaites and Kellogg, eds., *The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777*, 34.

⁷ "Petition of several persons in that part of the County of Augusta which lies West of the Alleghany Mountains, presented by Mr. Bland, one of the Delegates to the Continental Congress, where it was first presented, Commissioners appointed to ratify the Treaty of Peace between this Colony and the Indians," Virginia House of Burgesses 14 June, 1775, in Peter Force, ed., *American Archives Fourth Series* (1843; reprint, New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1972), 2: 1208; for an analysis of colonial treaty making, see: Vine Deloria, Jr., *Documents of American Indian Diplomacy: Treaties, Agreements, and Conventions, 1775-1979* (Norman, OK, University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 12-20; Francis Jennings, "Iroquois Alliances in American History," in *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League*, ed., Francis Jennings et al. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 37-67; Thwaites

Hoping to succeed where Wood fell short, Congress needed an emissary more palatable to the Ohio Indians than a Virginian. Unlike Wood, Richard Butler identified as a Pennsylvanian and had vigorously denounced Dunmore's War as an unprovoked land grab. Congress had authorized its commissioners to hire "gentlemen of influence among the Indians, in whom they can confide." While there were many traders of various nationalities who could speak the native tongues working along the Upper Ohio, few fit the requirement of being a "gentleman," as it carried connotations of "civilization" over frontier "savagery." As a successful trader with military prestige and rebel bona fides, Butler was among that elusive breed of cultural brokers who was sufficiently "civilized" to be a trusted authority among the rebel elites in Congress. Likewise, his knowledge of native language, customs, religion, and rhetoric made him a credible spokesman for Congress around the council fire. In the months after fighting erupted at Lexington and Concord, leading diplomatic "heavies" who had dominated Indian affairs for a generation—familiar personalities including Guy Johnson, George Croghan, John Connolly, and Lord Dunmore—had fled in terror or marginalized as suspected Loyalists. Yankee culture brokers like Samuel Kirkland were indisposed trying to secure Haudenosaunee at Albany, but his mattered little in the Upper Ohio region as his influence did not extend beyond Haudenosaunee homeland. For the Congressional cause, Butler was the last culture broker standing who could credibly represent that body to the Ohio Indians.⁸

and Kellogg, eds., *The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777*, 49, 66; for a survey of colonial land disputes on the trans-Appalachian frontier, see Walter S. Dunn, *Choosing Sides on the Frontier in the American Revolution*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 9-25.

⁸ "Account of the Rise of the Indian War, 1774" in Samuel Hazard, John Blair Linn, William Henry Egle, eds., *Pennsylvania Archives First Series* 12 vols. (Philadelphia: Joseph Severns & Company, 1853), 4: 568-69;

Butler's errand assumed a new sense of urgency and danger as he proceeded westward. As Butler rode through the August heat, John Davidson, a grizzled old frontier interpreter of unspecified Indian descent, presented Butler with a copy of a British proclamation mustering militia to fight the growing rebellion at Fort Detroit. Fearing for Butler's safety as a congressional agent, Davidson advised Butler to "turn back" given the hostile disposition of the "Detroit people." Butler appreciated Davidson's concern, but noted in a letter to his superior, Congressional Commissioner for Indian Affairs James Wilson, that as "time is so short to complete my duty . . . therefore I shall make the best of my way."⁹

Proceeding on, Butler found himself among more friends than enemies. Dining in Loggstown, a former Ohio Indian community now principally inhabited with non-native fur traders, Butler discussed plans for the upcoming treaty with a ninety-year-old Lenni Lenape chief named Netawatwees. Often referred to as "King Newcomer" by Euro-Americans, he held the ceremonial title of principle chief among the Lenni Lenape bands throughout the Upper Ohio River valley and "Seemed pleased At the Invitation" to participate in a treaty at Fort Pitt. His enthusiasm for Butler's mission may have stemmed from his lifelong project to secure a permanent Lenni Lenape homeland in the region. Although Netawatwees held fast to the traditional customs and religion, he encouraged his kinsmen in the Turtle Clan to accept

Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789, ed. Worthington C. Ford et al., 34 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904-37), 2: 176; Congressional Commissioner James Wilson openly fretted over how to deal with George Croghan. Recognizing his influence among the Ohio Indians and his ties to the British Indian Affairs Department, Wilson wrote, "I cannot tell what to say about Croghan. I think it dangerous to employ him; and dangerous to let him alone," see James Wilson to John Montgomery, Philadelphia, 16 July 1775, in *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789*, ed. Paul H Smith, et al., 24 vols. (Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1976), 1: 630.

⁹ Williams, ed., "The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775...Part 1," 391; Richard Butler to James Wilson, 23 August 1775, Box 1, Folder 53, Darlington Autograph Files, 1610-1914, DAR.1925.07, Darlington Collection, Special Collections Department, University of Pittsburgh.

the Moravian faith in a project to secure a homeland through Christianization. The chief had also alienated his former Shawnee allies in keeping his people out of their recent conflict with Virginia. Among the Shawnees, Netawatwees and his people were *Schwonnacks*, a racially derogatory term that characterized him as a collaborator with a common white enemy. Under the auspices of the new Continental Congress, perhaps the Lenni Lenapes could repair their bonds of friendship with the Shawnees and secure a homeland on the Ohio.

10

Not all Lenni Lenapes shared Netawatwees's optimism in his project of security through Christianization, and this division cut through the nonagenarian chief's family. Netawatwees's son Bemino, whom Richard Butler referred to as "Old Killbuck," viewed the Moravians with more antipathy than did his venerable father. The son saw no utility in an affiliation with the Moravians and viewed their pacifist doctrine as a threat to Lenni Lenape freedom. Pacifist Moravian converts thinned the ranks of able-bodied warriors. Nonviolent Moravian communities would not militarily assist the Lenni Lenapes in time of war. Bemino entertained grand designs of personally calling upon King George III to request Anglican missionaries and schoolmasters who would better knit his people to the empire. Old Killbuck accepted Christianity begrudgingly, and cared for theological doctrine only insofar as it would enhance Lenni Lenape regional power. This internal debate amongst the Lenni Lenapes also laid bare the divergent viewpoints the various headmen held about the most

¹⁰ Williams, ed., "The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775...Part 1," 391; Hermann Wellenreuther and Carola Wessel, eds., *The Moravian Mission Diaries of David Zeisberger, 1772-1781*, trans. Julie T. Weber (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), 232, 485.

viable path to a permanent homeland.¹¹

There is no way to know if Richard Butler engaged Netawatwees in questions of high theology when they sat down to dinner or when he encountered Bemino on the road the following day. Both men's enthusiasm about a treaty conference with Congress and their willingness to assist Butler in his mission demonstrated that the Lenni Lenapes understood the continental ramifications of another Imperial contest for control over North America. The Lenni Lenapes viewed their coveted homeland in global terms, they imagining a fully realized homeland within British and potentially American imperial and economic framework. The Lenni Lenapes knew the importance of demonstrating strength in numbers and presenting a united front to rival Native American factions and Euro-Americans alike.¹²

Butler continued toward Conshocton, the principle Lenni Lenape town where most of the important headmen had gathered. He could catch them all if he hurried. Rain and exhausted horses, however, slowed Butler's progress, and it would be four days before he arrived at Conshocton. Still, the stormy weather had also prevented the headmen from dispersing and Butler found his message well received. The headmen shared a dispatch from British Indian Superintendent Guy Johnson warning the Lenni Lenapes to "Sit Still & Do No harm to Any Body till they hear from him Again or See him." The message did not rule out designs of a British-led, pan-Indian assault on the rebels, but at least Butler's mission to bring the Lenni Lenapes into a treaty of neutrality would not be endangered by an imminent

¹¹ Williams, ed., "The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775...Part 1," 391; David Jones, *A Journal of Two Visits Made to Some Nations of Indians on the West Side of the River Ohio, In the Years 1772-1773* (New York: Joseph Sabin, 1865), 98; John Robinson Harper, "Revolution and Conquest: Politics, Violence, and Social Change in the Ohio Valley" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2009), 23-30.

¹² Williams, ed., "The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775...Part 1," 391; Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country*, 292-93.

attack. Still, the Native Americans took no chances with Butler's safety and appointed one of their own as an emissary to ride with Butler's party to vouch for the Congressional agent's peaceful intentions among the Wyandots and Shawnees.¹³

Butler's route to the Wyandots crossed paths with another well-connected traveller—serendipitously in his estimation—the Seneca chief Goyasuta, the one time liaison between Guy Johnson, the Haudenosaunee and the Ohio Indians. The chief expressed concerns that the Shawnees planned to resume racialized violence against white colonists, saying there was “Something bad in their hearts.” Goyasuta had personally incurred the Shawnees' contempt for his efforts to keep the Lenni Lenapes from coming to the Shawnee's aid in the recent Dunmore's War. The Senecas and the other Haudenosaunee nations regarded the Shawnees and Lenni Lenapes alike as subordinate props to their longhouse. Shawnee Chief Cornstalk denounced Goyasuta as a “servant of the white people,” a fairly damning indictment given Goyasuta's leadership role in Pontiac's War of 1764. That the Shawnees measured “Indianess” in terms of how much a person or clan collaborated with whites did not auger well for Butler's mission. Convincing Shawnees to agree to a treaty with neutrality with the thirteen colonies—the hated Virginians among them—appeared a daunting task to Butler, particularly when the Shawnee seemed to be looking for a pretense to avenge their losses in Dunmore's War.¹⁴

Goyasuta's ambiguous role as frontier power broker was analogous to Butler's role.

¹³ Williams, ed., “The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775...Part 1,” 391-92.

¹⁴ Williams, ed., “The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775...Part 1,” 394. For a discussion of animosities between indigenous people following Dunmore's War, see Harper, “Revolution and Conquest: Politics, Violence, and Social Change in the Ohio Valley,” 250-52; Edward G. Williams, *Fort Pitt and the Revolution on the Western Frontier* (Pittsburgh: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1978), 17-39.

He served congressional commissioners who presumed their authority in Indian diplomacy as superior to the competing Pennsylvanian and Virginian governments. Guyasuta, too, represented a distant empire that imagined itself as sovereign over the Shawnees, Wyandots, and Lenni Lenapes who resided in the Upper Ohio. Neither Congress nor the Haudenosaunee possessed the power or wealth to project military force in the region, but both Guyasuta and his congressional counterparts James Wilson and Lewis Morris believed their role was to provide adult supervision to the quarrelling “children” in this contested space.

There was, of course, utility for both the Six Nations and the Continental Congress to operate under this legal fiction of pretended regional supremacy. For the Six Nations, they could find permanence and economic gain within their own homeland by diplomatically triangulating between the British and the American rebels. Moreover, while Butler made his journey into the Ohio country, Congress’s Indian Affairs commissioners were finalizing a treaty of neutrality with the Six Nations at Albany. Congress could leverage that neutrality to coerce the Haudenosaunee’s more unstable “props to the Longhouse” into neutrality on the Ohio frontier.¹⁵

Guyasuta decided to continue with Butler toward the Wyandot towns, both men perhaps realizing they could manipulate the others’ perceived cache and reputation to their respective advantages. As Butler proceeded west, he may have realized he needed all the help he could find from the natives, no matter what their personal agendas may be. A band of Mingos at Big Lick informed Butler that British Indian Superintendent Guy Johnson sent

¹⁵ Oswald Tilghman, *Memoir of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman* (Albany: Jay Munsell, 1876), 79; Daniel Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 221-22.

word to the Indians not to attend the treaty at Fort Pitt; that it was a feint, designed to lure the men away from the villages so the land hungry Virginians could burn their towns, destroy the corn, and mutilate the women and children. Alarmed by reports of cohorts of Virginians garrisoning “three strong Forts” in “Kaintuckky” as proof of the Virginians’ nefarious designs, the Ottawas, Wyandots, Mingos, and Shawnees all resolved not to attend the treaty council for fear it was “A Deception; & that it would be Running too Great A Risque.” At this moment, Virginia’s aggressive frontier expansion threatened to undermine the larger, continental mission for neutrality on the frontier. ¹⁶

With Guyasuta at his side representing the unified power of the Six Nations, Butler articulated Congress’s vision for a centrally managed Indian affairs policy. He noted that the invitation did not come from Virginia, but “Only The Whole of their brothers the English. On this great Island... the whole of the white people wanted to become their friends & be as one people.” In this act, Butler articulated an imagined vision of colonial unity and congressional sovereignty on the frontier not fully realized. Congress, not the squabbling Virginians or Pennsylvanians he insisted, would draw the new map of the Upper Ohio. After Guyasuta translated Butler’s honeyed speech to the assembled Indians, likely adding his own admonishments oriented toward maintaining the image of Haudenosaunee hegemony, the Mingos begrudgingly agreed to attend the council at Fort Pitt. ¹⁷

Butler avoided another setback, but it became apparent that the British were sparing no effort to keep Ohio Indians within their sphere of influence. At a hostage exchange at Fort

¹⁶ Edward G. Williams, ed., “The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775: Continental Congress’ Envoy to the Western Indians, Part 2,” *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 47 (January 1964): 32-33.

¹⁷ Williams, ed., “The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775...Part 2,” 33.

Pitt a month earlier with the Shawnees, the Virginians had reinforced their reputation for parsimony, and the native peoples of the Upper Ohio collectively grumbled at the paltry ritual gifts the Virginians offered. Guy Johnson had storehouses full of gunpowder and clothes at Fort Detroit. With the fall hunting season fast approaching, British arms and powder provided inviting incentives for taking up arms against the Virginians. Compounding Butler's troubles, Johnson's rumors of eminent American attacks had the desired chilling effect on Indian receptiveness to Butler's invitation. Butler possessed no trade goods to gain the Indians' trust, and both he and Guyasuta devoted considerable energy dispelling British rumors of impending massacre.¹⁸

Still, town by town, through Butler's patience and Guyasuta's coercion, Butler gradually succeeded in his mission. Perhaps the Ohio Indians took a cue from the Six Nations and hoped to profit, enhance their wealth, and establish permanence in the Upper Ohio region by cooperating with the British and American camps. Reaching the Wyandot towns on the Sandusky River on September 3, Guyasuta engaged in a considerable amount of negotiations behind the scenes; he could afford to be higher handed than Butler. After the assembled Wyandot and Mingo headmen agreed to participate in the treaty, Guyasuta replied with mock approbation and veiled threats, declaring the chiefs "behaved with great Spirit And Candour They Ans[er]wed that they would not Delay but that Accidents might Happen & hoped for a few days they would not be uneasy." Guyasuta's word choice, "accident," perhaps referred to the usual hazards and violence that typified daily life on the frontier that

¹⁸ Thwaites and Kellogg, eds., *The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777*, 68; Williams, ed., "The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775...Part 2," 36.

were beyond anyone's control. Or, given Guyasuta's mission to project the Six Nation's power over people in the region, Guyasuta meant "accident" as a euphemism for a violent end for anyone disrupting the Haudenosaunee diplomatic plan.¹⁹

The Wyandots pressed Butler to ensure that the Fort Pitt treaty agenda would address white encroachments into Kentucky. "They Asked me many questions of the White peoples Settlements on the Ohio & of their building Forts and placing garisons on Kaintucky river," wrote Butler, "All which I Evaded Answering positively but told them that they might be Asured that they should be Properly Sattisfied by the great men when they Arrived At Pittsburgh." The Wyandots wanted to control the agenda at the Fort Pitt and Butler obliged them by deferring his reply on this matter to the Congressional Commissioners. Through more subtle means than his Seneca counterpart Guyasuta, Butler made it clear that if the Wyandots desired to discuss white encroachments, they had to trust him enough to send a delegation to Fort Pitt. They agreed and Butler scored a minor victory toward resituating the diplomatic center of the Upper Ohio away from the British controlled Fort Detroit toward the thoroughly rebel Fort Pitt.²⁰

Butler and Guyasuta arrived among the Mingos on September 6. Butler found it increasingly difficult, however, to overcome Mingo distrust, as the British represented the entire Congress as puppets, "I Seem to think That the Com[man]d of Detroit makes the Indians believe that the Whole of the Colonies Are to be Considered As Virginians Since the Union of the Congress made them One *people*." Playing upon the Ohio Indians' mistrust of

¹⁹ Williams, ed., "The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775...Part 2," 37.

²⁰ Williams, ed., "The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775...Part 2," 37. For an overview of Anglo-Iroquois relations during the Revolution, see Doug George-Kanentiio, "The Haudenosaunee Confederacy, 1774-1777," *Akwesasne Notes* 23 (October 1992): 1-19.

Virginians, the British framed the American rebellion as a wholly Virginian project. Appropriating a myth that some American historians would come to regard as an article of faith, the British imperial Indian agents found utility in perpetuating a stereotype of all Americans as violent, land hungry Virginians in order to keep the Ohio Indians within the British sphere of influence. Butler and Guyasuta changed their tactics, emphasizing that Congress represented a plurality of American peoples. Downplaying his affiliation with the Virginians, Butler assumed the persona of an agent for “Brother Onash,” the Pennsylvanian government. Guyasuta likewise adapted his message, but not his imperious demeanor. Butler recorded that Guyasuta “Harangued them [the Mingos] On the Occasion & Advised them Very Strongly to go &hear their Brother Onash.” Guyasuta cared less about with whom the Mingos formally treated and more about enforcing Mingo deference to the Six Nations.²¹

By the time Guyasuta and Butler arrived at Shawnee Town on September 9, they had become practiced in their Pennsylvania narrative for the upcoming council at Fort Pitt. Their coordinated speeches convinced Shawnees to attend without fear of an imminent Virginian attack. Although The Maquachake division made up the bulk of Shawnee Town’s population, Butler’s journal revealed the heterogeneous and transient nature of the town’s inhabitants. Piqua and Chillicothe resided with Mingos, and Lenni Lenapes. Several Wyandots and Mingos, whom Butler and Guyasuta had encountered previously, came and went throughout the time Butler remained in the village. Indian country west of the Ohio River was a

²¹ Williams, ed., “The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775...Part 2,” 38, 39.

dynamic, diverse place where ethnic affiliation was not a reliable metric of an individual's political and military inclinations.²²

Among the Shawnee, women played a major role in shaping the course of diplomacy. The story of the 1775 Treaty of Fort Pitt is incomplete without recognizing women's leadership in negotiating the neutrality. Although Butler frequently mentioned women in his journal, he never recorded their names. Female captives and headwomen alike all formed a sisterhood of anonymity within Butler's journal, but his gender bias did not fully obscure their contributions to his diplomatic mission, as his meeting with a Shawnee headwoman illustrated.

An unnamed "headwoman of the Mequache Tribe" summoned Butler to call upon her at her home just outside the "Grenadier Squaw's Town" so that she might present the emissary with a more accurate picture of Shawnee political divisions. Unlike other stops recorded in his journal, Butler rationalized his decision to visit her, as her home "being On Our road to Pittsburgh." Butler never felt compelled to account for his decisions to treat with male chiefs.²³

From the unnamed headwoman, Butler learned that his Pennsylvanian persona did not garner the trust from the Shawnee men that he had hoped. She reassured him that the Maquachakes earnestly sought peace, but that Chillicothe and Piqua divisions masked hostile designs behind a peaceful veneer. Their mistrust, the headwoman told Butler, went deeper

²² Edward G. Williams, ed., "The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775: Continental Congress' Envoy to the Western Indians, Part 3," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 47 (April 1964), 145, 146-48. For a discussion of divisions within the Shawnees in 1775, see Craig Thompson Friend, *Kentucke's Frontiers* (Bloomington, IA: Indiana University Press, 2010), 54-55; Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country*, 160-61.

²³ Williams, ed., "The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775...Part 3," 148.

than mere Virginian or Pennsylvanian citizenship, it was a question of race, reporting that many Shawnee were “Not yet Reconciled to the white people, & that they Are Stired up by the Windots & Mingoës who both tells them [that] the White People Are Only Decieving them.” Mistrust ran deeper than racial divides; and it also caused acrimony among the Shawnees. The Piqua and Chillicothe divisions had lashed out at the Maquachakes, declaring, “that they have weded the white people & that they Are Not to be trusted.” Among the militant Shawnees, the Maquachakes were *Schwonnacks* by any other name.²⁴

The unnamed headwoman who explained the Shawnees internal divisions to Butler and her access to privileged information suggest she may be the Shawnee Chief Nonhelema Hokolesqua. Her title and proximity to “Grenadier Squaw’s Town” provide highly circumstantial evidence that she was the “Grenadier Squaw” herself. As sister to Cornstalk, the principle chief of the Maquachakes, Nonhelema would be in a position to know the inner workings of the council house. As a chief in her own right, she expressed her views in council without reservation. Without ruling out the possibility that Butler met with another female chief who owned her own home on the outskirts of Nonhelema’s town, this woman warranted enough importance for Butler to make her a present of an imported dress, leggings, and a shirt. Although the headwoman did not attend the formal treaty at council at Fort Pitt, she made it clear that it was on account of not having a horse that prevented her from making the two-hundred-mile journey to the Forks of the Ohio.²⁵

²⁴ Williams, ed., “The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775...Part 3,” 148.

²⁵ Williams, ed., “The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775...Part 3.” For a more detailed study of Nonhelema’s role in the American Revolution, see Craig Thompson Friend, “Searching for Kentucky’s Female Frontier: Nonhelema Hokolesqua, Jemima Boone Callaway, & Matilda Lewis Threlkeld,” in *Kentucky Women*, ed. Thomas Appleton and Melissa McEuen (Athens: University of Georgia Press, forthcoming 2013).

Guyasuta had used the visit to “Grenadier Squaw’s Town” to mend fences with the Shawnee. While Butler conspired with the headwoman, Guyasuta used the occasion to party with old friends. he “got Very Drunk & with Much Ado I got him Away.” This episode reveals more about Guyasuta’s standing among the Shawnee than it does about old stereotypes of drunken Indians. If Guyasuta had been unwelcome among the Maquchakes and stigmatized for his neutrality in Dunmore’s War, then Guyasuta’s revelry underscores that his purpose for accompanying Butler was to enhance his own diminished cache as well as that of the Six Nations.²⁶

During their time with Maquchakes, Butler and Guyasuta may have encountered Anipassicowa and Phebe’s children who were in her care. Residing in mixed Lenape and Shawnee village, Butler and Guyasuta may have availed themselves of her hospitality when they arrived at “the Old Delaware Town on the Licking Creek” en route back to Fort Pitt. Anipassicowa had a reputation for entertaining travellers and was “esteemed very rich.” Given Butler’s predilection against identifying women in his journals, there is no way to know for certain if they called upon Anipassicowa or if she had two young children in her care.²⁷

While Butler and the extremely hung over Guyasuta made their way back toward the Forks of the Ohio, the situation at Fort Pitt on the east side of the river proved no less contentious than the Indian country beyond the west bank of the Ohio. Fear of imminent Indian attack gripped the garrison at Fort Pitt and the surrounding settlement of Pittsburgh.

²⁶ Williams, ed., “The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775...Part 3,” 149.

²⁷ Williams, ed., “The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775...Part 3,” 149; Jones, *A Journal of Two Visits Made to Some Nations of Indians on the West Side of the River Ohio*, 87.

Although real and imagined threats of Indian violence united Pittsburgh's Euro-American denizens, vitriolic political tensions between Virginians and Pennsylvanians exerted an equally divisive pull on the populace. Dunmore's War had ignited bitterly partisan jurisdictional disputes between Pennsylvanian and Virginian governments. English traveller Nicholas Creswell confided to his journal that "Colonial disputes very high between Virginia and Pennsylvania and if not properly suppressed will end in tragical consequences." Despite its remoteness from Yankee Boston, revolutionary zeal also animated the residents on the east bank of the Ohio River. "The people here are liberty mad," Creswell wrote, "Nothing but War is thought of." British partisans like Creswell and his Loyalist Pittsburgh landlady found themselves objects of suspicion and contempt. Political and racial fears, mistrust and suspicion pervaded the factious frontier town.²⁸

Arriving with Wilson and his armed light horse escort on the evening of August 19, 1775 was Pennsylvanian magistrate Arthur St. Clair, who, like Richard Butler, had opposed the Virginians in Dunmore's War and reveled in the Governor's flight from Williamsburg. Indeed, St. Clair had spent most of the summer of 1775 jailing Virginian officials who claimed jurisdiction over Pittsburgh and its vicinity. He stuck close to his fellow Pennsylvanian and lobbied the commissioner to convince Congress to permit him to lead a military expedition through Indian country to capture the British Fort at Detroit. If Wilson or his fellow congressional commissioners considered how the Ohio Indians would respond to

²⁸ Williams, ed., "The Journal of Richard Butler, 1775...Part 3," 150; James Wilson to John Montgomery, Pittsburgh, 24 August 1775, in Paul H Smith et al., ed., *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, 1: 707; Thornely, ed., *The Journals of Nicholas Creswell 1774-1777*, 99, 114-16; For a study tensions between ethnic groups of European settlers and their fear of Native Americans, see Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: Norton and Company, 2008), 228-40.

an American army rampaging through their homeland, he never committed those concerns to paper.²⁹

As congressional commissioner James Wilson did his best to walk astride the numerous divisions he encountered in Pittsburgh, perhaps he saw more than just military expediency in St. Clair's call for military action against Detroit. Representing the United Colonies as a whole, Wilson needed to impress upon the Native Americans that the thirteen colonies were now a cohesive unit and that frontier peace was a *national* imperative. To do so, he needed to contain inter-colonial disputes in Pittsburgh and redirect antipathies toward a common British enemy. Pitting Virginians and Pennsylvanians against the British at Detroit could prevent them killing each other. A united fighting force poised westward would, nevertheless, enable Wilson and the commissioners to deal with the Ohio Indians from a unified position of strength.

With Richard Butler dispatching messages from the field indicting a British design to confederate the Ohio Indians against the Americans, Wilson became thoroughly convinced that Fort Detroit was an essential military objective to secure the safety of the frontier. While he waited for Butler to return from his mission, Wilson and commissioner Lewis Morris submitted their plans for a military expedition under St. Clair off to Philadelphia for congressional approval. Congress voted the measure down, and the President of Congress, John Hancock, wrote to Wilson and Morris "the Season is so far advanced, and the Congress

²⁹ Arthur St. Clair to J. Shippen Jr., 18 May 1775, Hazard, Linn, Egle, eds., in *Pennsylvania Archives First Series*, 4: 624; Thornely, ed., *The Journals of Nicholas Creswell 1774-1777*, 102 to John Montgomery, Pittsburgh, 24 August 1775, in Smith, ed., *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, 1: 707; Arthur St. Clair to J. Shippen Jr., 12 July 1775, Hazard, Linn, Egle, eds., in *Pennsylvania Archives First Series*, 4: 637; Diary of Richard Smith, Philadelphia, 13 September 1775, Smith, ed., *Letters of Delegates to Congress* 2: 9-10.

have not sufficient Light to direct their Judgment, they can not undertake to give their Countenance to the proposed Enterprize; more especially as an Enterprize is now on Foot, which, if successful, will necessarily draw that Place after it.” In other words, if the Continental Army captured Quebec and Montreal, the British would have to withdraw from Detroit. Moreover, such a military venture threatened to undermine the neutrality Wilson had been dispatched to broker. The Indians could not remain neutral if the Americans used their homeland as a staging ground to assault the British. Wilson and St. Clair’s zeal for military action betrayed private pessimism about the prospects for a workable neutrality with the Ohio Indians.³⁰

Inter-colonial conflict compounded Wilson’s apprehensions as Pittsburgh became an occupied town on September 15. Arthur St. Clair reported that one hundred armed Virginians took possession of Fort Pitt and worried that the maneuver would “have the tendency to alter [the Indians’] disposition” toward the treaty. The situation distressed Wilson and Morris to the point where they wondered if a Virginian occupation required them to change venues for the treaty. Nicholas Cresswell summed up the state of affairs, writing ruefully, “Here are members of Congress come to treat with the Indians, delegates of the Virginia and Pennsylvania Conventions for that purpose, and Commissioners from Virginia to settle accounts of the last campaign [Dunmore’s War] against the Indians. All Col[onel]s,

³⁰ Richard Butler to James Wilson, 23 August 1775; Diary of Richard Smith, 13 September 1775, 2: 9-10; Ford et al., eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 2: 246; John Hancock to James Wilson and Lewis Morris, Philadelphia, 15 September 1775, in Smith, ed., *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, 2: 16. For an overview of divisions in the Upper Ohio during the Revolution, see: Elizabeth Perkins, “Distinctions and Partitions Amongst us: Identity and Interaction in the Revolutionary Ohio Valley,” in *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830*, ed. Andrew Cayton and Fredrika Teute (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 205-34.

Majors, and Captains and very big with their own importance. Confound them all together.”

On the Revolutionary frontier, there were many leaders but nobody seemed to be in charge.³¹

The few Indians who did stream across the Ohio River to Pittsburgh feared for their lives. Unidentified assailants in white hunting shirts allegedly shot at a Mingo chief as he made his way to Pittsburgh. Perhaps wanting to do something other than wait for the Indians to arrive and hoping to assuage Indian mistrust, commissioner Lewis Morris tried his hand at crime scene investigation, interviewing witnesses, visiting the scene of the attack, and looking for stray bullets. He concluded the whole affair was an unfortunate accident. The commissioners, however, decided not to take any chances with security, especially now that Virginians occupied Pittsburgh. Morris and Wilson “recommended to the Indians to encamp near each other” and to designate white interpreters to inform them immediately if any “White Persons who shall go among them to disturb them.” Among the few Indians who did come to the Fort, linguistic and cultural barriers mixed with an intense current of mistrust further forcing commissioners to adapt their strategy to prevent the treaty from devolving into bloodshed. Among themselves, however, the commissioners wondered if the Indians would show up at all.³²

Fear of violence was not limited to the Indian encampments. Nicholas Creswell reported “nothing but fighting and quarrelling in every part of town,” and the disputes between the Pennsylvanians and Virginians reached such a fever pitch that Creswell expected “some lives to be lost on the occasion.” As the acrimony intensified, James Wilson learned

³¹ Arthur St. Clair to Governor John Penn, Pittsburgh, 15 September 1775, in Hazard, Linn, Egle, eds., *Pennsylvania Archives First Series*, 4: 659; Thornely, ed., *The Journals of Nicholas Creswell 1774-1777*, 114.

³² Thwaites and Kellogg, eds., *The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777*, 27, 33, 34; Samuel Thornely, ed., *The Journals of Nicholas Creswell 1774-1777*, 114.

that Congress had appointed Virginian Dr. Thomas Walker as the third congressional commissioner. Walker was a physician, explorer, and seasoned Indian diplomat with backcountry experience to rival Daniel Boone. How Morris and Wilson responded to their new colleague is unknown, but the appointment signified that Congress's illusory authority at Fort Pitt was fully linked to the interests of the Virginians.³³

The Indians finally arrived with fanfare and pomp on September 26, 1775. With drums, songs, and the peace dance, the Shawnees, Lenni Lenapes, and Ottawas flamboyantly announced their arrival as they crossed over to the east bank of the Ohio River. The commissioners and a company of Virginians greeted them at the riverside and saluted the processing warriors as the whole company theatrically retired to a specially built council house. The Indians' performance represented their expectations of equality with the commissioners. Divided as the Euro-Americans and Native Americans were internally, their ostentatious displays of fictive cultural and racial solidarity aimed to their power through pomp. Shawnee chief Cornstalk saw through the act of unity, chiding the commissioners "you are not all as one person as I Expected to find you."³⁴

Indian delegations continued to arrive over the next two weeks, and the commissioners greeted them with all the accouterments of fanfare available to them at Pittsburgh. Nations encamped separately from one another and appeared to be as divided as

³³ Samuel Thornely, ed., *The Journals of Nicholas Creswell 1774-1777*, 115; John Hancock to James Wilson and Lewis Morris, Philadelphia, 15 September 1775, in Smith, ed., *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789*, 2: 16. For a discussion of Walker's role in Euro-American westward exploration and migration, see Friend, *Kentucke's Frontiers*, 23, 48-49.

³⁴ Thornely, ed., *The Journals of Nicholas Creswell 1774-1777*, 115; Thwaites and Kellogg, eds., *The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777*, 74, 75. For a study on the performance quality of Indian diplomacy on the trans-Appalachian frontier, see Andrew Cayton, "Noble Actors' upon 'the Theatre of Honor.' Power and Civility in the Treaty of Greenville," in Cayton and Teute, eds., *Contact Points*, 235-69.

their Euro-American counterparts. Cresswell noted “The Indians seemed displeased at something. [They] Meet in Council House all day.” Indeed, for all the pretensions of solidarity and friendship, the Indians could never claim to speak as a united bloc. Where as the equally factious commissioners did their best maintain the façade of unity, the disparate Native American nations never met collectively in council to reply in-kind.³⁵

The only semblance of a united Indian front came from the women. Lenni Lenape women performed a formal speech expressing their expectations for the Treaty of Fort Pitt. They engaged the males on equal terms, and their speech reflected how Lenni Lenape women viewed neutrality as an avenue for sustained peace and stability on both sides of the Ohio River. Declaring that “God Almighty did not Create us to War with one Another we now also desire you Acquaint your Mothers our Elder Sisters the White Women what we have said.” On the Revolutionary frontier, women could still engaged diplomacy as equals. Lenni Lenape women’s reference to a Christian god and their pacifist language reflects the strong Moravian influence on their communities. By invoking solidarity with white women, they imagined a sisterhood of women that defied racial lines. If the status of their permanent homeland had yet to be determined, then at least they shared an imagined community of womanhood with their sisters on the east bank of the Ohio River.³⁶

The congressional commissioners replied in kind with a speech they delivered to every arriving Indian delegation. Wilson characterized the conflict with Great Britain as “Controversy that has arisen between the White People who live on this Island and some of

³⁵ Thornely, ed., *The Journals of Nicholas Cresswell 1774-1777*, 115; Thwaites and Kellogg, eds., *The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777*, 118.

³⁶ Thwaites and Kellogg, eds., *The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777*, 89.

the English who live on the other side of the Great Water.” In uncertain terms, Wilson framed the Revolution along racial lines. This was a “white man’s” fight. At the same time, Wilson set out to define the racial contours of the conflict with Britain, appropriating Native American’s indigenous ties to the land for the revolutionary cause. “We and you Sprung from the same Ground and live together on the same Island,” Wilson declared, “we Ought to live together and have Confidence in each other.” The land tied the American rebels to the Native Americans; it legitimized their claim for sovereignty in North America. The enemy, according to Wilson, was across an ocean.³⁷

Wilson’s effort to formally greet each Native American delegation demonstrate how the commissioner deployed the principles of the Scottish Enlightenment to foster comity between the respective Indian nations and the United Colonies he represented. Himself a scion of the intellectual, Wilson believed that manners and the public performance of politeness elevated individuals from “savagery” to a degree of “civilization” required for participation in a republican society. Suffusing daily life with rigorous adherence to common standards of civility engendered the comity and consensus required for self-governance. For Native Americans, treaty making was a sacred act governed by rigorous protocols. Whether intentional or merely coincidental, Wilson’s diligence in maintaining an atmosphere of dignified interaction between the commissioners and Indian nations enabled treaty negotiations to proceed without racialized conflict.³⁸

³⁷ Thwaites and Kellogg, eds., *The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777*, 78-79.

³⁸ For an overview of James Wilson as an exemplar of the Scottish Enlightenment, see James Walker Howe, *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 57-59.

Formal treaty proceedings began once Walker took his place among the congressional commissioners and all of the Indian delegations arrived on the east bank of the Ohio River. After months of planning, hundreds of harrowing miles travelled into Indian country, congressional delegates formally commenced the first diplomatic exchange between the United Colonies and the Ohio Indians on October 7, 1775. Lewis Morris delivered a speech in which he emphasized that he spoke for the “Wisemen of all our United Colonies who are as one Man.” The real keepers of the Revolution, the great men of the colonies, sought peace with the Ohio Indians. By extension, the lowborn frontier rabble was responsible for violating peace with the Ohio Indians.³⁹

The theatrical qualities of the treaty speeches extended beyond the target Native American audience. Nicholas Creswell captured the festival like quality of the negotiations, how the whole town of Pittsburgh turned out to watch the diplomatic drama unfold before them, and praised an Ottawa chief’s speech to be “one of the best speeches I ever heard from any man.” Each chief delivered an eloquent speech, all under the watchful eye of Guyasuta and the Six Nations. For their part, Guyasuta and other Haudenosaunee allowed the Ohio Indians to dominate the treaty proceedings, stepping in only to defuse potentially contentious issues. For the sake of appearing powerful before the Congressional Commissioners, Guyasuta had to ensure that the props to the Haudenosaunee Longhouse continued to take diplomatic direction from Onondaga. The Six Nations were neutral, so too must be their “nephews” the Shawnees, Lenni Lenapes, and Wyandots.⁴⁰

³⁹ Thwaites and Kellogg, eds., *The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777*, 82, 84.

⁴⁰ Samuel Thornely, ed., *The Journals of Nicholas Creswell 1774-1777*, 114; “Reply of the Indians,” 31 August 1775 in Force, ed., *American Archives Fourth Series* 3: 488.

The congressional commissioners, the Six Nations, and the Ohio Indians each projected solidarity as a display of their power. The commissioners' speech, aimed at building comity through dignity, was thick in polite, courteous language aimed at reaffirming familiar borders and the preservation of a peaceful status-quo. Indeed, given the apprehensions leading up to the conference, the commissioners role in the formal treaty proceedings was scripted, non-controversial, and anticlimactic. After the grand speeches and talks of peace, Lewis Morris and James Wilson thanked the assembled nations for their participation and withdrew to allow the Virginia commissioners to complete their business.

In contrast to the rigid politeness of the congressional commissioners, the Virginians adopted a more patriarchal demeanor, reminding the Indians that:

thirteen great Colonies of this Extensive Continent, Comprehending in the whole, at least One Million of Fighting Men, are now so firmly United and Inseparably bound together by one lasting Chain of Friendship, that we are now more to be Considered as Distinct Nations, but as one great and Strong Man, who if Molested in any one of his Members, will not fail to Exert the Combined force of his whole body to Punish the offender.

The Ohio Indians would have to contend with the whole of the United Colonies, which was a greater *man* than any of the assembled chiefs. This representation could not be further from the actual state of the union in 1775, but it was a powerfully emasculating metaphor to evoke the vision of how the rebels conceived of themselves. Additionally, the commissioners pledged to care for the Indian women and children and promised to supply the Ohio Indians with the material wants for the coming winter. The Indians could be loving children under Congress's paternal guidance or face obliteration. The commissioners then retold the history of Dunmore's War and cast the Shawnee and Mingos as the childlike perpetrators of the

conflict, reframed Virginia's land grab as the fault of recalcitrant Indian youths and declaring "whatever happened to some of your Young people last fall, was Owing to their disregarding the Wise Councils of the Six Nations." Peace on the Revolutionary frontier depended on Congress's and the Six Nations' patriarchal supervision of the white rabble and Indian young men alike.⁴¹

The Virginians proceeded to further emasculate the Shawnees, demanding they satisfy the humiliating terms of their agreement with Lord Dunmore to end the war. Even though the rebel Virginia convention had effectively deposed the governor, the Virginians conveniently enforced the terms of a treaty economically advantageous to their interests, demanding the Shawnees turn over all horses and slaves plundered in the conflict. Cornstalk balked at the demand, declaring that "we have delivered up all we possibly can." Moreover, Cornstalk rejected the Virginians' pretensions to power over his people, replying "Captain Russell sent five of his Men to our Towns we Delivered the Negro Wench but told them as the Children were Begat by Our People we thought it very hard they shou'd be made slaves of."⁴²

Of course the "Negro Wench," had a name: she was Phebe. She and her husband Stephen were both of mixed race parentage, presumably with Native American fathers and African American mothers. Among the Virginians, that made them slaves; among the Shawnees, they were kin. Their children, as far as Cornstalk was concerned, were Shawnee. Their parents' bondage was not heritable. As the adoptive wards of Anipassicowa, a chief in

⁴¹ Thwaites and Kellogg, eds., *The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777*, 94, 96, 99, 105.

⁴² Thwaites and Kellogg, eds., *The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777*, 104-05.

her own right, Cornstalk doubted the children would ever be given up, “as her Children are sprung from my Grandfathers the Delaware.”⁴³

Walker and the Virginians chaffed at Cornstalk’s defiant tone and reminded him that they could send an expedition to wreak havoc on their lands just as was done at the end of Pontiac’s War in 1764 and again in Dunmore’s War. Walker then placed the onus for peace on the Shawnees. He recommended they meet in council with the other nations and decide their course of action. Guyasuta then asserted himself, noting that “I represent the Six Nations and am the oldest and have greater Authority than any here I will endeavor to have it done.” The Six Nations would have the final word as to whether Phebe’s children would be raised as Shawnees or as slaves.⁴⁴

To the Virginians, Phebe’s children were tangible exemplars of the right to property the revolutionary Virginians claimed to be defending. In forcing the Shawnees to relinquish the children as a provision of the Treaty of Fort Pitt, the Virginian commissioners employed the accord as an instrument to make their western borderlands safe for the expansion of slavery. As long as fugitive slaves could escape to the Shawnees and other Ohio Indian communities, Virginia’s plantation economy could not penetrate the trans-Appalachian frontier. In recovering Phebe’s children, the Virginians did more than just symbolically articulate their commitment to defend property rights; they also sought to subordinate the Shawnees to their patriarchal authority. Walker and the Virginian commissioners asserted that the property rights of a distant master trumped those of a female chief and surrogate

⁴³ *Virginia Gazette*, 21 January 1775; *Virginia Gazette*, 3 March 1775; Thwaites and Kellogg, eds., *The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777*, 116.

⁴⁴ Thwaites and Kellogg, eds., *The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777*, 118-119.

mother, Anipassicowa. As Walker warned Constalk, the Virginians were prepared to enforce this assertion at gunpoint.

Thomas Walker's interest in the fate of Phebe's children may have been personal as well as political. The exact connection between Walker and Phebe's owner, Henry Hardaway of Dinwiddie County, remains unclear (their grandchildren would marry one another in 1819). Nevertheless, Hardaway proved to be relentless in recovering his property, issuing two notices in the *Williamsburg Gazette* for Phebe's capture and return. According to Cornstalk, Hardaway insisted that a small detachment of Virginia militia go into Shawnee country and recover the two children. For the Virginians, protecting the gentry's private property and making the frontier a safe zone for slave owners mattered more than the actual ties binding Phebe's children to their adoptive Shawnee mother. For all of the Virginians talk of solidarity and peace, in Phebe's children, the Virginians laid bare their designs to appropriate Shawnee lands for themselves.⁴⁵

The commissioners never recorded what the Shawnee said in council with the other Ohio Indians. Did the Shawnee women advocate keeping Phebe's children among the Shawnee? Did the Lenni Lenape women who imagined themselves in a peaceful sisterhood with their white sisters prevail upon the Shawnee to let the children go for the sake of peace? Or did they stand in solidarity with their Shawnee and African American sisters to keep the children free? That their words went unrecorded should not be taken as a sign of silent, passive resignation to distant powers that claimed authority in the region. The only certainty

⁴⁵John T. Rives, *Green Rives of Dinwiddie County, Virginia, and Lincoln County, Tennessee, and his Descendants* (Birmingham, AL: A.H. Cather Pub. Co., 1958), 10; Thwaites and Kellogg, eds., *The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777*, 104.

of these deliberations was that did not transcribe their internal councils. The following morning, Guyasuta informed the Virginians that he would supervise the Shawnees in complying with the Virginians' demands. As far as the Virginians, the Six Nations, and congressional commissioners, the matter was closed.⁴⁶

The Shawnees forced remonstrance of Phebe's children to their Virginian owner represents the only tangible outcome of the Treaty of Fort Pitt. The Mingos, Wyandots, and Shawnees never raised their concerns for Euro-American expansion into Kentucky. The congressional commissioners and Virginians gave the Lenni Lenapes only vague assurances that the Ohio River would remain the fixed border between Indian Country and white settlement. Sustained violence between settlers and Native Americans ensured Kentucky would remain a "dark and bloody ground" throughout the American Revolution. Once the treaty concluded and the children could no longer be leveraged, nobody bothered to record their fate. Presumably the Shawnees returned them to Henry Hardaway. When the curtain closed on the pageant at Fort Pitt, Guyasuta had the last word in a play that lacked a conclusive ending.

On the Revolutionary frontier, the appearance of power mattered more than the kinship, racial, or gendered ties that purportedly bound people together. Phebe's children's freedom was the price of peace. For the Virginians, the children were spoils of war and symbols of their power over the Shawnees. For Congress and the Six Nations, the children were a small price to maintain the pretension of hegemony.

⁴⁶ Thwaites and Kellogg, eds., *The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777*, 121.

In the Upper Ohio country—a zone ravaged by decades of unremitting violence—even the mirage sovereign power was enough to contain the American Revolution to the east bank of the Ohio River. The Treaty of Fort Pitt was a pageant where peoples, both indigenous and alien to North America, performed their visions of independent nationhood. The United Colonies, through its gentlemanly congressional commissioners, articulated American republicanism by adapting the principles of the Scottish Enlightenment to Native American diplomacy. The Shawnees, through their instance on keeping Phebe's children, attempted to project their own sovereignty of Virginian and Haudenosaunee cudgeling to return the children to slavery. Indeed, in attempting to keep the Shawnees under their political domination, the Haudenosaunee played the role of power broker independent of the British and the United Colonies. So long as each nation played its respective role, a neutral frontier that was safe for the expansion of slavery was a viable possibility.

Epilogue:

Memento Mori

From the Seneca town of Canandaigua in the bleak February of 1792, Samuel Kirkland penned an urgent report to Secretary of War Henry Knox as violence in the Ohio Country once again threatened to plunge the northern borderlands into a state of renewed warfare. A confederacy of Ohio Indians—primarily Shawnees, Miamis, and Leni Lenapes—crushed an invading United States army under the command of Arthur St. Clair at the Battle of the Wabash in November 1791. The Haudenosaunee, their hegemony broken in the War of American Independence, had remained removed from the Ohio Indian confederacy’s war against the United States despite pledges to commit warriors to their cause. In the wake of St. Clair’s defeat, the Haudenosaunee gathered in an exclusively Indian council at the Mohawk reserve at Grand River in British Canada to determine their next course of action. Militarily crippled and desperate to contain the escalating crisis, the Washington Administration ordered Kirkland to “spare no pains nor expense” to infiltrate the council. Yet, so great was the veil of secrecy and so troubling the news that even Kirkland’s most reliable Oneida informant “trembled to disclose what he discovered.”⁴⁷

Two Shawnee runners had arrived at Grand River from the Wabash bearing the dried scalp of Richard Butler, St. Clair’s ill-fated second-in-command. With it came a chilling message for the Six Nations. Addressed to Thayendanagea, the Mohawk chief also known as

⁴⁷ Henry Knox to Samuel Kirkland, 7 January 1792, Hamilton College Library Digital Collection < <http://elib.hamilton.edu/u/?arc-kir,1487>>; Samuel Kirkland to Henry Knox, 13 February 1792, Hamilton College Library Digital Collection < <http://elib.hamilton.edu/u/?arc-kir,1547>>. For St. Clair’s defeat, see Andrew R. I. Cayton, *Frontier Indiana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996) 157-61.

Joseph Brant and brother-in-law of the late William Johnson, the Shawnees admonished, “You chief Mohawk, what are you doing? Time was when you roused us to war, & told us that if all the Indians would join with the King they should be a happy people & become independent. In a very short time you changed your voice & went to sleep & left us in the lurch. You Mohawk chief! you have ruined us, and you shall share with us. Know it is not good for you to lie still any longer. Arise! and bestir yourself!” A generation’s worth of pent up rage and resentment gushed forth from the Shawnee messenger’s lips. The Six Nations’ game of imperial politics—of selective collaboration with the United States or Great Britain—had been a font of misery for the Ohio Indians, and the time had come for the Six Nations to atone. Old debts had come due.⁴⁸

Butler’s death marked a grim coda to the pageantry of treaty making in 1775. He was a casualty of the new world memorialized in the treaties he and Kirkland had been instrumental in crafting. Eclipsed in the public memory by the carnage of revolutionary war, the legacy of the treaties of Albany and Fort Pitt permeated the undulating landscape of William Johnson’s former empire. Federal Indian commissioners imagined themselves as the political successors to William Johnson’s patriarchal mantle, continuing to invoke his name even though Article 8 of the new constitution firmly ensconced Indian affairs as a power of the new federal government. That a national army had been annihilated on the Wabash and that Kirkland was working as an agent of the Washington Administration attested to this political reality. While states would continue to push back against the extent of this national

⁴⁸ Samuel Kirkland to Henry Knox, 13 February 1792; Isabel Thompson Kelsay, *Joseph Brant: Man of Two Worlds* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 547; Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderlands in the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A Knoff, 2006), 257.

authority throughout the nineteenth century, the supremacy of the federal government in Indian affairs was no longer an open question as it had been at Albany in 1775.

The Shawnee messenger's harsh words for the Six Nations remind us that the American Revolution was truly a continental conflict where a plurality of nations— colonial and indigenous—fought for diverse visions of independent nationhood. The United States had won its struggle against Great Britain; the Shawnees were still fighting. Abandoned by their British allies and the Six Nations, the Shawnees continued the struggle; Butler's scalp itself a testimony to their resolve. The Haudenosaunee, who had pursued their own independent path of factional neutrality, paid the price for aiding both the British and United Colonies through civil war and invasion. No longer would the Shawnees allow the Six Nations to betray them as they had done in Dunmore's War. No longer would a Haudenosaunee chief emasculate the Shawnees in a treaty council as had been done at Fort Pitt. Butler's scalp punctuated a Shawnee performance of ascendant power in the ongoing cycle of violence on the Ohio frontier.

The Treaties of Albany and Fort Pitt established indigenous nations as separate created from the United Colonies, excluded at the inception of the American Revolutionary project. The Indians who participated these treaties asserted their own independence in recognizing the United Colonies as an autonomous entity; the United States honored this arrangement by subjugating Native Americans by right of conquest. Haudenosaunee capitulation to the United States in 1784 snuffed out the 1775 vision of North America as a composite country of old and new independent nations. New treaties and new leaders emerged as the old generation faded away, the 1795 Treaty of Greenville and the rise of

Tecumseh looming large in the history of the old Northwest. The mythology of the American founding—forever etched into American imaginary in Jonathan Trumbull’s painting “Declaration of Independence” along with his other iconic imagery gracing the Capitol Rotunda—buried memory of long forgotten promises made in 1775. The United States devoted the nineteenth century to undermining indigenous sovereignty and treaty making followed a pattern familiar to men like Butler, Kirkland, and Thayendanegea: temporary and expedient stanches to the bloodshed, followed by renewed United States encroachments. The old Treaties of Albany and Fort Pitt were inconvenient relics of a time when Native American recognition of American nationhood demanded reciprocal recognition of native sovereignty.

At the dawn of the nineteenth century, the memory of William Johnson’s world vanished from the American creation narrative. A hero of legendary stature in his lifetime, even Johnson’s once celebrated body was forgotten by the town he founded. An 1836 fire consumed St. John’s Anglican Church, the “Old Stone Church” Johnson had erected, along with the north side of the town’s Main Street; Johnson’s tomb beneath the alter was lost. The vestrymen conceived a new expansive gothic revival St. John’s Episcopal Church on the site of the old, obliterating any trace of the old patriarch’s majestic tomb.

By the mid-nineteenth-century, mythmakers transformed the gritty, dark and bloody grounds of the revolutionary frontier into sites of heroics and romance. In the capable hands of James Fennimore Cooper and Francis Parkman, the myth of the vanishing Indian, of rugged individualism, of the triumphant advance of American civilization flowered in the American imagination. Sir William Johnson remerged as a heroic figure in popular

literature—a civilizing agent on a wild American frontier. In the spring of 1862, amid the carnage of the Civil War, Reverend Charles Kellogg, the new rector of St. John’s Episcopal Church, set out to find what remained of the old patriarch. His workmen discovered the broken tomb in what had become the churchyard. The fire had destroyed the vault containing his mahogany coffin, but largely spared the corpse. After exhuming Johnson, Kellogg secured funds to dedicate a new tomb to the rediscovered founder.⁴⁹

In the summer of 1862, William Johnson became the center of one last pageant. Beneath the shadow of St. John’s limestone walls, a “large attendance” of citizens and dignitaries inspected the deceased Baronet’s skull and other assorted bones in a grizzly act of public veneration. Kellogg reinterred William Johnson’s bones in a new granite tomb, and Bishop Alonzo Potter officiated the ceremony, lending an air of ecclesiastical dignity to the ceremony, as one observer recalled, to “resurrect” Johnson’s earthly remains and all assembled “felt the power of such a scene.” Under the skeletal visage of the gaunt Bishop Potter, his shock of white hair starkly contrasting his oversized black frock, the affair appeared more like a Medieval *danse macabre* than a somber Victorian memorial service. Potter *re-quicken*ed Johnson one last time, sanitizing the patriarch’s legacy to the era’s prevailing moralities. William Johnson became “Sir William,” the town’s own chivalrous feudal lord who tamed a howling wilderness. His unearthed wedding ring testified to the legitimacy of his white children. Among the most prized artifacts recovered was a musket ball that had lodged in his hip during the French and Indian War. Just as the sons of

⁴⁹ Washington Frothingham, *History of Fulton County Embracing Early Discoveries, The Advance of Civilization; The Labors and Triumphs of Sir William Johnson; The Inception and Development of the Glove Industry; With Town and Local Records; Also Military Achievements of Fulton County Patriots* (Syracuse: D. Mason and Company, 1892), 255-256.

Johnstown bled on the distant battlefields of the Civil War to defend the Union, so too had their patriarch spilled his blood to tame the “merciless Indian savages” for *their* American republic.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ William J. Stone, *The Life and Times of Sir William Johnson, Bart* (Albany: J. Munsell, 1865), 529. Recollection of G. Washington Frothingham, Fonda, NY, 1913, Alexander Flick, ed. in *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 8 (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1933) 8: 197; Mark Anthony DeWolfe Howe, *Memoirs of the Life and Services of the Rt. Rev. Alonzo Potter, D.D., LL.D., Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co, 1871), 9.

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