

SIR WILLIAM JOHNSON, BARONET

By the Reverend W. N. P. Dailey, D.D.¹

Sir William Johnson, Baronet, was one of the prominent leaders in the Colonial Period of the mid-eighteenth century.² He was born in 1715, in the county of Meath, Ireland, son of Christopher and Anne Warren Johnson, the latter a daughter of Commodore Warren, and a sister of Admiral Sir Peter Warren. Of Johnson's youth we know very little. His uncle, Peter Warren, wrote of him in his diary in 1726, "He is a Spritely Boy, well grown, of good parts, Keen Wit, but Most Onruly and Streperous. I see in him the Makings of a Strong Man. Shall keep my Wether Eye on this lad."

The Johnson family selected army or navy service for the lad, but William chose the law and entered the Academy at Newry, from which he was expelled for assaulting the schoolmaster. In 1737, on the eve of his becoming a barrister, his uncle, Peter Warren, who had acquired a large grant of land in New York Province, "Situate

¹ This article presents a subject outside the field of southwestern history, yet its publication in *The Chronicles* is a contribution to Oklahoma history since Sir William Johnson was the first superintendent of American Indian Affairs, of note, serving by appointment under the British government. Furthermore, the policy established by the British in dealing with the American Indians afterward was observed and closely followed by the United States through its Office of Indian Affairs. During his life, Sir William Johnson was associated with the Seneca Indians. Some bands of the Seneca tribe settled in Oklahoma during the period of Indian removal in the 1830's and their descendants live in the state to-day. The Cherokee Treaty of 1833 (Act of Congress, Feb. 14, 1833, 7 Stat. L. 411, Proclamation Mar. 22, 1833, article 2) provided a tract of 60,000 acres to these Seneca bands, in what is now Northeastern Oklahoma. The author of this article, the Rev. Dr. W. N. P. Dailey, is an experienced writer, a contributor to outstanding historical publications, and historian for the Dutch Reformed Church in New York.—M.H.W.

² The following estimate of William Johnson was made by Francis Parkman: "Nature had well fitted him for the position in which his propitious stars had cast his lot. His person was tall, erect, and strong; his features grave and manly. His direct and upright dealings, his courage, eloquence, and address, were sure passports to favor in Indian eyes. He had a singular facility of adaptation. In the camp, or at the council-board, in spite of his defective education, he bore himself as became his station; but at home he was seen drinking flip and smoking tobacco with the Dutch boors, his neighbors, and talking of improvements or the price of beaver-skins; while in the Indian villages he would feast on dog's flesh, dance with the warriors, and harangue his attentive auditors with all the dignity of an Iroquois sachem. His temper was genial; he encouraged rustic sports, and was respected and beloved alike by whites and Indians.

"His good qualities, however, were alloyed with serious defects. His mind was as coarse as it was vigorous; he was vain of his rank and influence, and being quite free from any scruple of delicacy, he lost no opportunity of proclaiming them. His nature was eager and ambitious; and in pushing his own way, he was never distinguished by an anxious solicitude for the rights of others."—Francis Parkman, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac and the Indian War after the Conquest of Canada*. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1891), Vol. I, pp. 92-3.

in the Valley of Mohock," made him overseer of these lands. He arrived in New York in December of 1737 and spent the winter there with his aunt, Mrs. Peter Warren at One Broadway.³ To evaluate the career of William Johnson, Baronet, and to form a just estimate of his life and influence in the colonies while in the service of the British, is not an easy task even though he left so many papers showing his varied activities.⁴ Nearly all writers of the past who have biographed him have placed him in the sphere of foremost importance in colonial history; the founder and patron of all movements, industrial, educational, even religious, and the man above all others of the whites whom the Indians trusted. Jephtha Simms, who wrote in the early forties, and Francis Parkman, of ten years later date, and William Joel Stone, and Jared Sparks, President of Harvard, and now Kenneth Roberts, all reveal the human side of Johnson, but tradition, romance, fiction still hold him up as a man of great renown.

William Johnson's dream was that of a great feudal empire, patterned after the vast estates in the mother country, in the territory between Western New York Province and Canada. He had acquired some 200,000 acres, but his land dream visioned a tract of 14,000 square miles where the Johnson family and their descendants were forever to rule supreme.⁵ While superintending his Uncle Peter Warren's lands, he engaged one Catherine Weisenberg as his housekeeper, who became the mother of Sir John Johnson, and his sisters, Nancy Anne and Mary.⁶ William Johnson, Commissioner of Indian Affairs after 1743, followed the Iroquois custom of allowing to distinguished visitors the choice of their Indian maidens while in camp. The French colonists, urged on by their king, adopted the same practice. It is to be noted that the Dutch and German settlers, with equal opportunity, abhorred the custom. In his long will Johnson refers to Molly Brant, who bore him nine children, as his "housekeeper." She and all her children, save perhaps Peter, went back,

³ This house was made famous as the headquarters of Generals Howe, Clinton, and Carleton. It was from this place that Major Andre set out to aid Arnold who sought to deliver West Point to the British.

⁴ New York State has published to date eight volumes of "Johnson Papers" and more are coming, evidencing his busy administration for the crown.

⁵ W. Pierrepont White, *Johnson's Dream of Empire* (1930).

⁶ Simms, writing in 1845, knew people who knew Johnson, and he says that Catherine was a "High Dutch girl" whose passage from Europe was paid by Johnson. Paying the passage of an immigrant girl and then marrying her was a custom observed in several of the early American colonies. Others have made Catherine the daughter of Reverend Jacob Weisenberg, a Lutheran missionary among the Indians in the Mohawk Valley, but no trace of Weisenberg is discoverable. Tradition says that Johnson married her on her death bed, she having borne him three children,—John (b. 1742), Mary (b. 1744) and Nancy Anne (b. 1740). The Fort Hunter Indian Mission Baptismal records (extant) show that these children were baptised as Weisenbergs, not Johnsons, though later, they took that name. For notes on the life of the eldest son, John Johnson, Baronet, see *Addenda*.

after Johnson's decease, to the Indian life, and aided Brant and Butler and Sir John Johnson in their raids in the Mohawk Valley.

The correspondence of William Johnson clearly shows that, at least during the King George War (1743-1748), he vigorously supported England's policy of scalping the Canadian French and the Algonquin and other Red Men who were regarded as enemies of the Crown. He wrote complaining that the money and gifts promised for the scalps that were being brought to Fort Johnson were not forthcoming, and especially commended the brutal Walter Butler for his success in this practice.⁷ The walls of Fort Johnson afforded a gruesome sight, plastered with the scalps taken of the men, women and children for which the usual price was around eight dollars each. In contrast it is said that the only scalp lifted during the Revolution by the patriots was that of Walter Butler, when he lost his life in the Battle of Johnstown, and this was done by an Indian in revenge for Cherry Valley. Johnson, native European, colonist and baronet, was adopted by the Mohawks and given the name of "Warraghiiyagee," meaning "Administrator."

Johnson's first residence was on the south side of the Mohawk, opposite what is now Amsterdam, New York. Here he lived for five years. Unbeknown to the Admiral, Johnson bought in 1740 a large tract of land on the north side of the Mohawk where he built a house that he called, "Mount Johnson," and a grist mill. Later, in 1749, he erected a square stone house, still standing, now the Montgomery County Historical Society Headquarters. He brought sixty Scotch-Irish families from Ireland to work his lands. He rose rapidly to power—an Indian Commissioner in 1743, when Col. Peter Schuyler resigned, a Colonel in a West Albany New York Regiment in 1744, and in 1745 the King's Magistrate. In 1748, Governor Clinton made him Colonel-in-Chief of the Albany County Militia though he knew absolutely nothing of military tactics. While all this was taking place, Johnson was adding to his real estate which in 1756 received the sanction of his king and was called "The Royal Grant." In 1745 Catherine Weisenberg died and Johnson then (1745) engaged Caroline, daughter of Hendrick, a Mohawk sachem, as his housekeeper. She bore him three children, William, Caroline, and Charlotte.

On July 20, 1749, a great Indian Conference was held at Albany, New York. It was attended by seven of the Colonial Governors, with their uniformed staffs and families, also the Indian chiefs from the various tribes with their families, all attired in gorgeous

⁷ It has been said that scalping was unknown among the American Indians until the arrival of the European. But Cartier saw five scalps at Quebec in 1535, and Landonniere saw them among the Florida Indians in 1564. Champlain says that the Algonquins used to carry away the heads as war trophies.

raiment. Much has been written of this conference by Johnson and others, but, aside from the presentation of gifts to the Indians, nothing of any practical use was accomplished. In 1751 the Provincial Assembly refused Johnson funds for his Indian work and this made him resign the post as Commissioner but in 1755 General Braddock, Commander of the British forces in America, reappointed him superintendent of Indian Affairs and gave him the rank of Major General. Admiral Warren died in 1752 willing what lands were left of his in the valley to Johnson. In the following year the French began to be troublesome again, winning over the Senecas to their side and taking all the Ohio tracts. On July 5, 1753, Johnson was directed to confer with the Senecas, the Onondagas, and the Cayugas. In the fall he met with them at Onondaga, where he was regally entertained, but found no cause of trouble.

Caroline Hendrick, Johnson's housekeeper, died in 1754, and, in her place, Johnson installed her niece, Molly Brant. She was a sister of Joseph Brant, whom Jared Sparks, noted historian of the Revolution, and other annalists, maintain was the natural son of Molly's mother by Johnson.⁸ Molly Brant lived with Sir William till his death in 1774, and bore him nine children: Peter Warren, George, Elisabeth, Magdalene, Margaret, Mary, Susanne, Anne, and a girl who died an infant.

It seems most singular that while there are several large tomes of Johnson's official and personal papers extant, only scant vestiges of the records of his many years of tenure of the office of Indian Commissioner exist. It is said that the Board of Indian Commissioners was originally set up in 1676, to be composed of five members, one of whom must be a minister.⁹

Major General Sir Edward Braddock called a Council of Colonial Governors at Alexandria, Virginia, to map out a campaign against the French. Johnson and Ben Franklin attended. The plan adopted was for Braddock to expel the French from Nova Scotia, and Johnson to lead a force to reduce Crown Point. He was promised a force of 3,500 from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut and New York, while he was to gather a force of a thousand Iroquois (600 came). Johnson's force was to gather at Albany, New York, about August 1, 1755. Braddock was defeated on July 9 at

⁸ Jared Sparks, LL. D., was president of Harvard University. Parkman dedicated his "Conspiracy of Pontiac" (*op. cit.*) to him, and refers to Sparks' distinguished service to the cause of American history.

⁹ In General Johnson's time, the minutes of the Board were kept by Peter Wraxall, of Albany, his aide-de-camp and his "Boswell." No matter what the situation, Wraxall favored his commander and was severely critical of those who opposed. A four volume abridgement existed which was lost in the Albany (New York) fire of 1911. Sketches of the records are said to be in the Canadian archives. A transcribed partial copy is in the Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park, New York. Harvard University published the Wraxall Abridgement (1678-1751) in 1915.

Fort Duquesne. On August 6, Johnson sent Colonel Lyman to erect a defense at Fort Edward on the Hudson, and on July 26 the commander himself, with a force of 3,400, followed.

Meanwhile, de Vaudreuil, Governor of Canada, to whom had been sent Braddock's papers revealing the campaign, ordered Baron de Dieskau to attack the English under Johnson. Through an error the French took the road leading to Lake George instead of to Fort Edward, and, suddenly, found that the British army was but four miles away and ready to attack. This is known as the Battle of Lake George.¹⁰ Although but partially successful, the failing of its objective, it was the only success of the campaign. General Johnson has been severely criticised for his part in this conflict. In extenuation of the results of the contest it must be recalled that William Johnson knew nothing of military strategy, and his appointment as leader of the affray was due, not to any military ability possessed but to his standing with the British regime and his supposed influence with the American Indians. On the other hand, New England had furnished the main body of the army and to find their men under the command and obstinate "tyranny" of a New York General was a sort of "Promethean vulture to New England vitals." There was a bitter feud between Governor Shirley and General Johnson, and Johnson's own staff was divided by jealousies and disputes. He insisted on recognition of his "new dignity and station," while his secretary, Wraxall, continually magnified in many ways the commander's importance in writing to the Lords of Trade and the Colonial Governors, never forgetting to belittle General Shirley's actions.

Both the English and French seemed to know each other's position prior to the battle. On September 5, Johnson sent Colonel Williams with a force of one thousand, with four hundred of the Indians under King Hendrik, to attack the French. Within an hour Williams' force was ambushed, the Indians deserted, both Colonel Williams and Hendrik slain, the remnant retreating to the camp. So sure of easy success, Dieskau had left two-thirds of his force at Fort Ticonderoga. Both Johnson and Dieskau were wounded in the initial skirmish, and neither took any part in the battle. General Lyman assumed command of the British force, and to him belongs the credit of defeating the French. The Indians deserted the battle-

¹⁰ On the defeat and death of Braddock in the summer of 1755, General Shirley became the Commander-in-chief. He ordered Johnson to march to Crown Point. Four months had now been wasted at Albany in acrimonious jealousies between Johnson and the New England forces. It was not until August 9, 1755, that the English army began to move, altho two divisions under General Lyman and Colonel Ephraim Williams had gone to Fort Edward. These experienced military leaders objected to Johnson's plan of battle, but he overrode all protests, even of King Hendrik, the Mohawk chief, which caused confusion of orders and almost utter lack of discipline. Colonel Williams was killed in the Battle of Lake George. His estate was used to found Williams College.

field and contented themselves with robbing and scalping the dead on both sides. Baron Lonquiel and his French force were almost annihilated, and their bodies thrown in a nearby water which to this day is called "Bloody Pond." General Lyman urged Johnson to let him pursue the French remnant and try to take Fort Ticonderoga, but Johnson refused. The desertion of his Indians, the death of Hendrik, at odds with Lyman and his field officers, facing discontent and drunkenness in the camp, wrangling with everyone under him—perhaps realizing his errors of strategy, Johnson let the chance of a great victory slip away, and sent Wraaxall back to Albany in October to report to the Colonial Governors and the Lords of Trade on the insubordination of the army; bitterly condemning it in true Tory fashion as the "democratic fabric" of his force. At a final council, held November 24, 1755, he agreed to abandon the camp and return to Albany.

Johnson's secretary, writing a report of the battle for the Commander to the King and the Colonial Governors, on December 2, 1755, caustically criticised the political and selfish motives of the leaders of the force under Johnson, praised the latter and himself as paragons of military ability and of outstanding devotion to the royal cause. In none of the letters that Johnson wrote to the Governors, nor in his report to the London Board, did he mention the name of General Phineas Lyman who commanded the force in the battle. The King made Johnson a Baronet (November 27, 1756) and added a gift of five thousand pounds. On his return to Albany, Johnson resigned his commission. Secretary Fox of the London Board of Trade sent him a royal commission as Superintendent of the Six Nations at a salary of six hundred pounds, and as much more for the expense of his office.

England formally declared war against France in 1756. The nation that could take and hold the great war path between Albany and Montreal through the Hudson Valley was the people who would decide the fate of the colonies and the rule of the American continent. In 1757, General Montcalm took Fort William Henry on Lake George from the English. Sir William Johnson led a force of two thousand Provincials and six hundred Red Men against Montcalm's six thousand, whose Canadian Indians slew and scalped the disarmed garrison after they had surrendered. In 1757, the "praying" Indians from the north swooped down upon the Mohawk and Schoharie valleys, pillaging and burning the settlers' homes. Johnson sought to attack these marauders with a force of three hundred militia and half as many Indians, but the French and their allies usually got away.

In 1758, Abercrombie with a force of fourteen thousand, the greatest British army known to that date, undertook to wrest Fort Ticonderoga from the French. Colonel John Johnson and his In-

dians were a part of this army but what part they took in it we do not know. Montcalm had 3,600 regulars at Fort Ticonderoga. Abercrombie lost that number before he began his ignominious retreat. Probably the death of Lord Howe on July 6 had much to do with the defeat of the British. However, ere the year closed, Amherst had captured Louisburg and Forbes had taken Duquesne. In December 1758, Amherst planned to reduce Ticonderoga and Niagara, and to attack Quebec from the sea. Sir William Johnson was second in command in the attack on Fort Niagara, but became commander when General Prideaux was accidentally killed on July 19. The French, after a skirmish, surrendered. Johnson's report to Amherst gave full credit to General Prideaux for the success of the expedition, a contrast with his treatment of General Lyman who won the Battle of Lake George for his Commander. With the reduction of the forts at Niagara and Crown Point, and the fall of Quebec, and, later, Montreal, Sir William Johnson's military career came to an end. On September 12, he and his Indian allies (1,350) returned to Oswego where his force was disbanded, and he went on to his home at Fort Johnson, to resume his real estate ventures and the erection of his dream empire.

In the spring of 1761, Sir William Johnson called for a grand council of the Indians at Detroit, which was held in August. In the party was his son, John, and a nephew, Guy Johnson, who had married Sir William's daughter, Mary.¹¹ At Oswego, he gave silver medals to certain Indians who were with him in the Montreal expedition, reserving a gold one for himself at Amherst's behest. At Onondaga he was present at a memorial service held for the Red Men who had fallen at Niagara. The Detroit Council lasted three weeks. The Indians bitterly complained of their treatment in the taking of their lands and the results of their fur trade, but Johnson persuaded them to remain loyal to England.

East of Fort Johnson, Sir William built a two story stone house for his daughter, Mary, who had married Colonel Guy Johnson, and, midway between this and Fort Johnson, another for his daughter, Nancy, who had married Colonel Daniel Claus.¹² A mile square tract of land was attached to each house. In 1763, Sir William left his house on the Mohawk to his son, John, and removed to Johnstown, New York, a few miles in the interior, and built his third residence, a spacious house with stone wings on either side. The main frame structure is still standing, and is called "Johnson Hall." He erected other houses on his vast estate, one at what was called

¹¹ Guy Johnson died in London, March 5, 1783. Mary, his wife, died July 11, 1775, at Oswego.

¹² Colonel Daniel Claus, deputy Indian superintendent, died in November, 1787. Mrs. Claus died in Canada in 1798. A daughter, Mary, married Lord Clyde (Sir Colin Campbell) whose Highlanders raised the siege of Lucknow, India.

“The Fish House,” where the Misses Wormuth were housekeepers, and another at Broadalbin, New York.

It was in this summer of 1763 that Johnson first became aware of the growing conspiracy of Pontiac, although his scouts were roaming the country but made no report of it to him. This wily chief of the Ottawas, and the western tribes, who were abetted by the French, had completely outwitted him. The Iroquois, inimical to the English, carried their conquests and depredations from Canada to the Carolinas, and from the western prairies to the forests of Maine. The origin of the Hodanosaunee, as these Indians called themselves, is not known. Some writers say that they arose out of the North, others out of the West, and still others that it was out of the soil of New York that they came. A century before the Dutch came to Manhattan (1609), the Iroquois were well established along the banks of the Mohawk and in the Onondaga hills, the Oneida and Cayuga forests, and on the shores of Seneca Lake and in the Genessee country.

In September of 1760, Sir Jeffrey Amherst ordered Major Robert Rogers to proceed to take the garrison at Detroit and other western posts which the French had surrendered to the English. On November 7, Major Rogers met Pontiac, the calumet was smoked and all seemed peaceful. On November 29, 1760, Detroit was turned over to the British.¹³ However, among the Indians there was a deep seated hatred against the English. Sir William Johnson complained that the Government treated the Indians niggardly, and even the agents kept most of the material tokens given, or traded them to the Indians for great gain.¹⁴ The fur traders were base fellows for the most part who robbed and cursed the Indians. The lands of the Delawares were invaded by the whites; settlers from Connecticut entered the Wyoming country; the lands of the Mohawks were patented without their consent but with the government approval. George Croghan, a deputy under Johnson, pleaded with General Amherst to change his policy toward the American Indians, but Amherst remained arrogantly indifferent. The Indians began to prepare for revenge, for relief from the cruel wrongs suffered. But Pontiac, falsely persuaded by the French, decided against the English in the hope that the French could recover Canada as well as drive the British out of the province of New York and the great western lands.

¹³ Up to the time of the conference between Major Rogers and Pontiac, the latter had been a firm ally of the French. Shrewd and ambitious, with canny intuition, he saw the waning of the French power and hoped to advance himself and his tribe by going over to the English. Of the incipency of Pontiac's conspiracy much is gleaned from Major Rogers' *Journals* and his *Concise Account of North America* (London: 1765). The poetic tragedy, "Pontiac," printed in London in 1766, may have been written by Major Rogers. There is a copy in the British Museum. It reveals Chekitan, son of Pontiac, to be in love with Monelia, daughter of King Hendrik, the Mohawk Chief. Monelia is slain by Philip, the brother of Chekitan, who, in turn, kills Philip.

¹⁴ Letter to Governor Colden, of New York, dated December 24, 1763.

All the tribes of the Algonquin linguistic family gathered to Pontiac and with them were the Wyandots and the Senecas, the rest remaining aloof under Johnson's influence. Amherst was for annihilating the Senecas but Johnson persuaded him that it was not the tribe but individuals in it who were rebellious. Amherst hung two of the offenders at Ononddaga Castle, and imprisoned seventeen others in Manhattan where they were kept till the time of Pontiac's surrender in 1766. The initial plan of Pontiac was to seize Detroit with its garrison of a hundred and twenty, but Major Gladwyn discovered the plot in time to avert it.¹⁵ Pontiac and his six hundred warriors began to attack the fort in May and ceased not till the end of 1763 when the French withdrew their support.

On September 7, 1763, Sir William Johnson called a conference at Fort Johnson for the purpose of cementing the alliance of the Indians with the English. Chiefs and warriors of all the tribes, save the Senecas, together with the deputies of the tribes on the St. Lawrence and from Canada, came together. In an adroit mixture of threats, promises, and much argument, Sir William eased the Indian discontent, and banished from their minds any thought of a revengeful war against the British, as that in which Pontiac was then engaged. But he urged on them to fight the western tribes who were hostile to the Crown. However, despite the apparent conversion of the Indians, the Province of New York suffered greatly from depredations in Ulster, Albany and Orange counties, and the western settlements in the Mohawk valley. Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania were fertile fields for incursions by the Indians. The massacre of settlers in the valley of the Wyoming that occurred October 15, 1763, was unusually atrocious.¹⁶ It was a year of disaster for the English colonies. Johnson wrote the London Board of Trade in the spring of 1764, on behalf of the Indians, citing their wrongs and suggesting a plan of reconciliation. This was adopted but illy executed. General Amherst was prejudiced against the Indians, and against anyone who was not English, nobleman or soldier. In mod-

¹⁵ Major Gladwyn's letter to Amherst, dated May 14, 1763, quoted in *Conspiracy of Pontiac*, op. cit., pp. 227-8. Parkman extolled the prowess of Pontiac but expresses regret that his life was stained with cowardice and wanton treachery. In his nature, Pontiac revealed the faults and virtues of the Indian race. The "Johnson Papers," op. cit., have a great deal on this Pontiac "Conspiracy."

¹⁶ In 1762, some settlers from Connecticut had taken possession of lands in the valley of the Wyoming, an east branch of the Susquehanna River. This had been done in defiance of the Pennsylvania colonial government and had angered the Indians of the region. A party of Pennsylvania volunteers set out to remove the settlers, arriving in the valley of the Wyoming two days after the Indians had burned the settlement and killed twenty inhabitants most of whom had suffered terrible torture (October 15, 1763). This event should not be confused with the Battle of Wyoming, best known in the history of the region as the "Wyoming Massacre," which took place during the American Revolution between the Colonial troops and the Tories with their Indian allies on July 3 and 4, 1778. Some writers have stated that Joseph Brant took part in the later "Wyoming Massacre," though most historians now hold that he was not present and had no part in it.—M.H.W.

ern time we have his counterpart in General Custer whose only good Indian was a dead one. But this was long before the Battle of the Little Big Horn (1876).

General Amherst was made Governor of Virginia in 1764, and in July of that year Johnson called the "western confederacy" to meet in council at Niagara. At first the Senecas refused to attend, but were persuaded to do so when told that their refusal would mean the destruction of all their settlements by the English forces. Treaties were made at this council between the various tribes, hitherto under Pontiac, and the English.¹⁷

After the winter of 1765-1766, the Indians began to enjoy a season of peace; the fur trade was resumed, their poverty and distress were abated. In the spring of 1766, Pontiac started to make a promised visit to Sir William at Oswego. Little did he dream that his rule over the Indians of the West would soon be over forever. The batteries of Oswego saluted as he approached and Sir William and the Iroquois chiefs gave him a royal welcome. Belts of wampum were extended, "one to wipe away the tears of sorrow from their eyes, another to cover the bones of their relatives, a third to open their ears that they might hear, and one more to clear their throats that they might speak with ease."¹⁸ Pontiac's pipe of peace was passed and smoked. On July 24, 1766, Sir William made his address, and was followed the next day by Pontiac.¹⁹

In 1768, another council of the Indians was held at Fort Stanwix (Rome, New York) to agree upon the boundaries of the lands of the New York Province and the Iroquois lands. Later the Iroquois sold most of their lands to the states of Pennsylvania, Virginia and Kentucky.

In 1769, Sir William's patents of land obtained in various ways from the Indians were 200,000 acres, all of which had royal sanction. This vast estate was called, The Royal Grant. Except for these real estate deals, and his erection of buildings at Johnstown,²⁰ New York, his later life was a quiet one—save that there was a constant throng of the Indians from all the tribes visiting him, which meant a great deal of entertainment.

The troubles between the colonists and the Indians, and between the colonists and the mother country, seriously affected Sir William.

¹⁷ In 1765, Johnson reported to the London Board of Trade, the pamphlet being entitled, "Review of the Past and Present of the Indian Trade and Relations."

¹⁸ Parkman, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

¹⁹ The Minutes of this Council are in the office of The Secretary of State, in Albany, New York. Pontiac died in April, 1767, at the hands of a hired assassin.

²⁰ Among the buildings erected were a court house and jail, still standing, paid for by the provincial assembly.—Letter of Guy Johnson to Sir William Johnson, dated February 10, 1773.

With prophetic vision he saw the clouds of conflict gathering. The Fort Johnson Indian conference of 1774 was indicative of what was surely to happen once the Indians had freed themselves from his hold upon them. He knew only too well that the liberty-loving Dutch, and the Palatines, with their half century of English oppression behind them, the duplicity that had deprived them of the "Schorie" lands, would eventually bring independence to all.

William Johnson had received lavish gifts of gold and lands and honors from his King. He had visited England the year before and knew the mind of the English ministry and the war lords. In vision fearful, he saw the slaughtered tribes of his beloved Red Men, and the devastation of the homes of the settlers about him. It is a tradition that in conversation with close friends he had said,—"I see the conflict coming but I will never live to experience it." On the day of his demise (July 11, 1774) he was exhausted with the details of the Indian conference, listening to the complaints of the Indians and trying to appease them. While thus busy, a package of mail arrived from abroad and he left to examine it. In that hour Sir William Johnson, Baronet, passed away.²¹

Tradition has it that his last words were addressed to Joseph Brant—to control his Indian brethren. Instead, Brant, with Butler and Sir John Johnson, abetted by the Tories, wrought their murderous atrocities, even for years after the war was ended and the peace signed. Sir William was first buried beneath the altar of the stone church which he had erected at Johnstown. The body rested in a mahogany case, which was covered with lead. The latter was removed during the Revolution for making bullets. When St. John's church was burned in 1836 and rebuilt the vault was without the edifice. In 1862 the remains were reinterred in the adjacent ground and a monument erected.

Perhaps nowhere in American history can one find such a chapter that reveals the complete dissolution and utter collapse in so short a time of so ambitious a plan to establish a magnificent family kingdom in this western world. The vision splendid that filled all the sky of the soul of this protege of King and Admiral, and having a substantial basis of actuality in an already acquired boundless estate, soon crumbled into dust. The envy of the Indian, a builder of homes and buildings that still stand after centuries of time since

²¹ " * * * * When the tempest which had long been brewing seemed at length about to break, and signs of a speedy rupture with the mother country thickened every day, he stood wavering in an agony of indecision, divided between his loyalty to the sovereign who was the source of all his honors, and his reluctance to become the agent of a murderous Indian warfare against his countrymen and his friends. His final resolution was never taken. In the summer of 1774, he was attacked with sudden illness, and died within a few hours, in the sixtieth year of his age, hurried to his grave by mental distress, or, as many believed, by the act of his own hand."—Parkman, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-2.

their erection, courted by prominent men here and abroad, Sir William Johnson lives today for the most part as a great name in his day. In the real making of the Mohawk Valley, and in its spiritual, industrial and cultural progress, and in all that realizes the vision that Arent Van Curler (beloved by the Red Man) who saw in the Mohawk Valley a land of beauty and settlement, we must turn to those hardy pioneers and their descendants, the men and women who came to this virgin valley before Johnson and after him, and turned this wilderness of the Mohawk into a land of homes and industries, of churches and colleges, and made it the great gateway to the west.

ADDENDA

Notes on Sir John Johnson, Baronet.

Sir John Johnson was born at Warrensbush, south of Amsterdam, New York, in 1742. The record of his birth is in the Fonda, New York Archives and shows that when he was baptised in the Fort Hunter Indian Mission he was baptised, as were his two sisters, Mary, born in 1744 and Nancy Anne, born in 1740, with the name of Weisenberg the mother, who was the housekeeper for Johnson. She was (Simms) an immigrant German girl who was engaged by Johnson soon after his arrival at Warrensbush. Some writers have made her the daughter of Reverend Jacob Weisenberg, who is said to have been a Lutheran missionary for many years among the Indians of the Mohawk Valley. But diligent research fails to find any such person. He is also reported to have been a member of the Board of Indian Commissioners but there is no reference to him in any of the "Johnson Papers" as published by New York State. Sir John Johnson did not wait to inherit the baronetcy from his father but secured it prior to the latter's decease—just how under the circumstances of his birth is an enigma.

Sir John Johnson, following in the wake of his father, installed at Fort Johnson, as his housekeeper, Clarissa Putman, at the time fifteen years old. We are not sure who Clarissa Putman was but she probably came out of the Putman family of Fort Hunter of Tribes Hill. This was in 1766. A son, William, and a daughter, Margaret, were born to Clarissa. On his return from a visit to London (1773), Johnson married Mary Watts of New York on June 30. Meanwhile Clarissa was first removed to the town of Florida, and later went to Schenectady where she spent the rest of her life. She died July 1, 1833 (Schndy. "Cabinet"), and is buried in Vale Cemetery (there was a re-interment from another graveyard) the stone giving her age as eighty-one. Her home in Schenectady was later the site of Van Horne Hall, and now the Schenectady Building and Loan Association on State Street.

Mary Watts (familiarly called "Polly"), was born October 27, 1751. At the time of her marriage she was twenty-two and Johnson was thirty-one. She died August 7, 1815, fifteen years prior to Sir John's decease. Her parents were John and Anne de Lancy Watts, the granddaughter of Robert and Mary Nicoll Watts. Mary Nicoll Watts was a sister of Frances Nicoll who married Edward Holland. Mary Nicoll Watts was the daughter of William Nicoll. In 1786, Mrs. Edward Holland was living in Bethlehem, Albany County, New York. The wife of Sir John Johnson, during her stay in Albany, after Sir John had broken his parole and escaped to Canada, spent a great deal of her time with "Aunt Holland."

On January 6, 1880, Major General Jn. Watts de Peyster delivered a lecture before the New York City Historical Society on "Sir John Johnson, the First American Born Baronet." This lecture was later pamphleted (12 pp.) but it bears no date or place of imprint. There is an appendix (pp. I-XII) which is titled "Proofs Considered in Connection with the Vindication of Sir John Johnson, Bart, Being an Address delivered before the New York (City) Historical Society at its Annual Meeting 6th of January 1880." A second appendix on pages XIII-XXXVI is also headed, "Proofs Considered." These writings of J. W. de Peyster are generally regarded as prejudiced and not authentic.—References: Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, vol. II (1846-1847): New York Genealogical and Biographical Quarterly, vol. IX, p. 129; Introduction to John Watts Letter Book in New York Historical Society Collections for 1928.